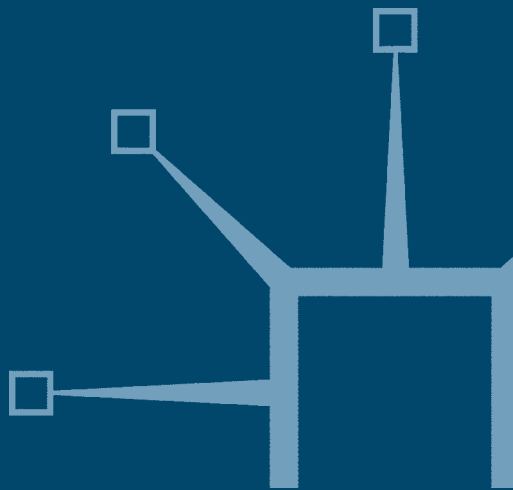


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# Political Culture and Post-Communism

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# Political Culture and Post-Communism

Edited by

Stephen Whitefield

*Fellow in Politics, Pembroke College and University Lecturer,  
Oxford University*

palgrave in association with  
macmillan St Antony's College, Oxford



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*To Pat and Archie Brown*

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# Preface

The initial impetus for this book came from a desire to mark Archie Brown's retirement from his formal post at Oxford University, though readers should have no doubt that Archie will continue to make many significant contributions to St Antony's College, the university and the broader field of Russian studies and political science. Reversing the usual order, first came the idea of the book and only then came the conference – at which many of these chapters were presented in the panel on political culture – held at St Antony's in June, 2005 under the title: Political Leadership, Political Institutions and Political Culture in the Soviet Union and Russia: A Conference to Mark the Retirement of Professor Archie Brown. (Brown's law, as all students of the Soviet Union will remember, concerned trends in the power of General Secretaries of the Communist Party.) The breadth of issues raised in the conference's three panels is testament to the many ways in which Archie has influenced the field. (The panel on political leadership was based on contributions to another book edited by one of the conference's co-organisers. Cf., Alex Pravda ed., *Ruling Russia: Putin in Perspective*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005.)

This volume brings together a diverse group of scholars of Russian and post-Communist political culture, who are united by their connections to Archie Brown and his work. A number of us were Archie's students and owe a great deal more than just our intellectual development to his influence. The scholarly diversity of approach and interest that emerges in the chapters of this book, moreover, may be testimony to Archie's commitment to 'discriminating methodological eclecticism' (Brown, 1974, p. 10). At the same time, the fact that all my contributors got along so well, despite their clear differences of opinion on some issues, is evidence of the political culture of enquiry that Archie helped socialise into us. I would summarise this approach as: an intellectual commitment to Russia (and other states of the former Soviet Union), and to the discipline of political science broadly conceived, and to the gains to understanding that arise from the tensions that occasionally arise between the two.

As editor, I need first to thank the reviewers and editors at Palgrave for their support, and of course my contributors, who responded energetically and fully to my comments, suggestions and requests to keep to time. Transliteration of Russian words into English has followed the Library of

Congress system, with a few exceptions. For example, in cases where there are references to Russian authors with published work both in English and in Russian, the transliteration of the English language publication (regardless of the transliteration system it used) is the one used for all the author's cited publications. This hopefully makes an author's identity clear and consistent; e.g., Yanov not Ianov. I am very grateful to Helen Hardman at Oxford University for her tremendous assistance with transliteration, with checking the long and diverse list of references, and with spotting along the way other errors that I had missed. Again, remaining mistakes are entirely my responsibility.

My work on this book has been immeasurably assisted by the Leverhulme Foundation, which awarded me a 3-year Major Research Fellowship that will unfortunately come to an end around the time this volume is published. Leave to take up this Fellowship was given by the Department of Politics and International Relations, Oxford University and by Pembroke College, and I am grateful to them for allowing me this opportunity and for some tangible and very helpful resources in putting this book (and the conference) together.

Stephen Whitefield

# Notes on Contributors

**Stephen Whitefield** completed his doctorate at Oxford in 1991 under the supervision of Archie Brown and after a period at SSEES, University of London, he returned to Oxford in 1993 as Fellow in Politics at Pembroke College, Oxford. He is the author of *Industrial Power and the Soviet State* (OUP, 1993), editor and contributor to *The New Institutional Architecture of Eastern Europe* (Macmillan, 1993), co-editor (with Robert Rohrscheider) and contributor to *Public Opinion, Party Competition and European Union Integration in Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (Berghahn, 2005), as well as numerous journal articles and book chapters on questions of political culture in post-Communist states, including 'The Politics and Economics of Democratic Commitment: Support for Democracy in Transition Societies' (with G. Evans), *British Journal of Political Science*, 25, 1995, 485–514, 'Support for Democracy and Political Opposition in Russia, 1993 and 1995' (with G. Evans), *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 12, 1996, 218–242, and 'Political Culture versus Rational Choice: Explaining Responses to Transition in the Czech Republic and Slovakia' (with G. Evans), *British Journal of Political Science*, 29, 1999, 129–55, 'Support for Foreign Ownership and Integration in Eastern Europe: Economic Interests, Ideological Commitments and Democratic Context' (with Robert Rohrschneider), *Comparative Political Studies*, 37, 2004, 313–39, 'Russian Mass Attitudes Toward the Environment, 1993–2001', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 19, 2003, 95–113, and 'Political Cleavages and Post-Communist Politics', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 5, 2002, 181–200.

**Alexander Lukin** received his first degree from Moscow State Institute of International Relations and a doctorate from Oxford University. He worked at the Soviet Foreign Ministry, Soviet Embassy to the PRC, and the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. From 1990 to 1993 he was an elected deputy of the Moscow City Soviet (Council) where he chaired the Sub-Committee for Inter-Regional Relations. He is the author of *Three Journeys through China* (Moscow, 1989, with Andrei Dikarev); *The Political Culture of the Russian 'Democrats':* (Oxford University Press, 2000), *The Bear Watches the Dragon: Russia's Perceptions of China and the Evolution of Russian–Chinese Relations since the Eighteenth Century* (M.E. Sharpe, 2003) and numerous articles on Russian and Chinese politics, and Russian foreign policy.

In 1997/1998 he was a visiting fellow at the Belfer Centre for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University. In 2000/2001 he worked as a research fellow at the Centre for Northeast Asia Policy Studies of the Brookings Institution. He teaches at the Department of Comparative Political Science of Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO, a university of the Russian Foreign Ministry). He is also the Director of the Centre for East Asian Studies at MGIMO, Research Associate at the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies of the George Washington University, and an Advisor to the Governor of the Moscow Region on Foreign Economic Relations. He also serves on the editorial board of the journal *International Problems* (Belgrade, Serbia).

**Pavel Lukin** graduated from Lomonosov Moscow State University. In 1999 he received the degree of Candidate of Historical Sciences (PhD). He is a research fellow at the Centre for Early Russian History at the Institute of Russian history, Russian Academy of Sciences. He is the author of *Narodnye predstavleniya o gosudarstvennoj vlasti v Rossii v XVII veke* (Popular Political Beliefs in 17th century Russia) (Moscow, 'Nauka', 2000) and as well as articles, chapters and encyclopaedia entries on Russian ancient and medieval history. In 2003 his book won the Russian Academy of Sciences medal and prize for young researchers.

**Richard Sakwa** is Professor of Russian and European Politics at the University of Kent. He took his BA (Hons) at the London School of Economics and Political Science (1972–75), and his PhD at the Centre for Russian and East European Studies (CREES) at the University of Birmingham (1984). While completing his doctorate on Moscow politics during the Civil War he spent a year on a British Council scholarship at Moscow State University (1979–80), and then worked for two years in Moscow in the 'Mir' Science and Technology Publishing House. He lectured at the University of Essex and the University of California, Santa Cruz, before joining the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Kent in 1987. He has published widely on Soviet and Russian affairs and their impact on European politics. His books include *Soviet Communists in Power: A Study of Moscow During the Civil War, 1918–21* (London, Macmillan, 1988); *Soviet Politics: An Introduction* (London and New York, Routledge, 1989), a second edition of which was recently published as *Soviet Politics in Perspective* (London and New York, Routledge, 1998); *Gorbachev and His Reforms, 1985–90* (London, Philip Allan/Simon and Schuster, 1990; Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall, 1991); *Russian Politics and Society* (London and New York,

Routledge, 1993, 2nd edn 1996, 3rd edn 2002); *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union, 1917–1991*, a book of annotated documents (London and New York, Routledge, 1999); and *Postcommunism* (Buckingham and Philadelphia, Open University Press, 1999). He has recently completed a book called *Putin: Russia's Choice* (London and New York, Routledge, 2004). His current research interests focus on problems of democratic development in Russia, the nature of post-communism, and the global challenges facing the former communist countries.

**Charles King** is Chairman of the Faculty and Ion Ratiu Associate Professor in the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, with a joint appointment in the Department of Government. A former Marshall Scholar, he has worked as a research fellow at New College, Oxford, and as a research associate at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. He is the author of *The Black Sea: A History* (2004) and *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (1999), as well as articles in *Foreign Affairs*, *World Politics*, *International Security*, *Slavic Review*, and other journals. He holds a doctorate in politics from Oxford University (St Antony's College), where he was supervised by Archie Brown.

**Mary McAuley** held lectureships at the Universities of Glasgow and York, before moving to the University of Essex in 1969. She subsequently moved to become Tutor and Fellow in Politics, St Hilda's College, Oxford and then headed the Ford Foundation's Office in Moscow. Her major publications include, *Labour Disputes in Soviet Russia 1957–1965* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1969), *Politics and the Soviet Union*, Penguin, 1977 (reprinted 1978, 1979, 1985, 1987, Braille, Hong Kong), *Bread and Justice: State and Society in Revolutionary Petrograd 1917–1922*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1991, *Soviet Politics 1917–1991*, Oxford University Press, 1992 and *Russia's Politics of Uncertainty*, Cambridge University Press, 1997. She contributed a seminal chapter to the Brown 1984 political culture volume. She is currently engaged in researching and writing a policy-oriented book on alternatives to custodial sentencing for young offenders in Russia.

**Stephen Welch** completed his doctorate at Oxford University under Archie Brown's supervision and is now Lecturer in Politics at the University of Durham. He has made major contributions to the study of Russian political culture from a comparative and theoretically informed perspective. He is the author of *The Concept of Political Culture* (Macmillan, Basingstoke; St Martin's Press, New York), 'Culture, Ideology

and Personality: Robert C. Tucker's Analysis of Stalinism and Soviet Politics', *Journal of Communist Studies*, 12(1), 1996, 1–37, 'Issues in the Study of Political Culture: The Example of Communist Party States' (Review Article), *British Journal of Political Science*, 17(4), 1987, 479–500, and 'Political Culture and Communism: Definition and Use', *Journal of Communist Studies*, 5(1), 1989, 91–98. In addition to his work on political culture he has recently been writing on themes in American politics and in international relations, for example 'Pressure Groups, Social Movements and Participation', in Gillian Peele *et al.* (eds), *Developments in American Politics 4* (Palgrave, Basingstoke and New York, 2002), 53–71 and (with Caroline Kennedy-Pipe) 'Multi-Level Governance and International Relations', in Ian Bache and Matthew Flinders, *Multi-Level Governance* (Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2004), 127–44.

**Jeffrey W. Hahn** is a Professor of Political Science at Villanova University specializing in Russian politics. He also serves as the Director of the Russian Area Studies Concentration (RASCON) at Villanova. Professor Hahn received his B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania in 1966 and his Ph.D. from Duke University in 1971. He is the author of *Soviet Grassroots: Citizen Participation in Local Soviet Government* (Princeton University Press, 1988) and co-editor (with Theodore H. Friedgut) of *Local Power and Post Soviet Politics* (M.E. Sharpe, 1994). In February of 1996, a book was published which he edited entitled *Democratization in Russia: The Development of Legislative Institutions*. In October 2001, Johns Hopkins University Press published another book edited and written by Dr. Hahn: *Regional Russia in Transition: Studies from Yaroslavl*. He has also published articles on political culture, on political participation, and on local government in Russia. These have appeared in the *British Journal of Political Science*, *Slavic Review*, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, *Problems of Communism* and *Polity*, among other journals. Many of Dr. Hahn's recent publications draw on fieldwork conducted in Russia from 1990 to 1998 supported by grants from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, from the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, and from the International Research and Exchange Board (IREX). In 1998, Professor Hahn received 'The Outstanding Faculty Research Award' from Villanova University. Hahn is currently (2004–2005) conducting research on Russian attitudes toward democratic values and institutions in Yaroslavl' Russia with the support of a research grant from the National Council for East European and Eurasian Research.

**Archie Brown** is Professor of Politics at Oxford University and a Fellow of St Antony's College, Oxford. He was elected a Fellow of the British



Academy in 1991 and an Honorary Foreign Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2003. He is the author of numerous highly influential books and articles in addition to the two edited volumes on political culture that provided the intellectual impetus for the current volume. His books include *The Demise of Marxism–Leninism in Russia* (editor, 2004), *Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Putin: Political Leadership in Russia's Transition* (co-editor with L. Shevtsova, 2001), *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader* (editor, 2001), *The British Study of Politics in the Twentieth Century* (co-editor with J. Hayward and B. Barry, 1999), *The Gorbachev Factor* (1996; winner of the W.J.M. Mackenzie Prize and the Alec Nove Prize), *Political Leadership in the Soviet Union* (editor, 1989), *The Soviet Union since the Fall of Khrushchev* (co-editor with M. Kaser, 1975) and *Soviet Politics and Political Science*, 1974).

# 1

## Political Culture and Post-Communism

*Stephen Whitefield*

It is more than twenty years since the publication of Archie Brown and Jack Gray's *Political Culture and Political Change in Communist States* (Brown and Gray, 1977) and Archie Brown's *Political Culture and Communist Studies* (Brown, 1984a). While Communist power has in the interim largely receded into history, the premise of this book is that the need to consider the value of the concept of political culture in the face of post-Communist realities has not.

The study of political culture, as this book itself amply demonstrates, has never been monolithic conceptually or methodologically. But a similar set of questions confronts all those who have utilised a 'political culture' approach in their various ways. Should the conditions of post-Communism have an impact on the value we learned to assign to political culture as a result of these two important edited volumes, and indeed from many other writings by Brown and others that followed from the initial opening? Has our understanding of the value of political culture been significantly altered by the availability of greater information and data, and more importantly by the removal of many of the obstacles to free expression of cultural commitments by citizens of post-Communist states? How much, finally, has our estimation of the explanatory value of political culture to post-Communist conditions been affected by other developments in social science in the past twenty years, including not only developments in political culture research itself but also some of its conceptual alternatives that place greater emphasis on rational agency and the strategic environments in which individuals make choices?

Each of the chapters in the current volume engages in its own way with whether and how the insights into political culture that emerged in Communist studies may be updated and applied to post-Communist

conditions. Contributors were not asked to agree to a single definition of 'political culture' and readers will note differences across chapters in how authors conceptualise and engage with political culture research. These differences reflect the diversity of opinion within social science generally and within the political culture and post-Communist studies sub-disciplines.

Two very broad political culture perspectives – and two sceptical commentaries on them by Alexander and Pavel Lukin and by Stephen Welch – may be discerned in the chapters here, though each contribution contains considerable nuance and breadth of argument that tend to cross narrow conceptual boundaries. First, there are those (Stephen Whitefield and Jeffrey Hahn) who approach political culture as a *particular form* of individual-level social psychological attribute that can, in principle at least, be measured and tested for its relationship both to *other kinds* of psychological attributes and to overt political behaviour. (The manner of valid measurement and testing, of course, varies considerably across scholars who adopt this approach.) Political culture, from this perspective, has characteristics at the psychological level that make it comparable across countries; the research questions to be addressed, therefore, concern (i) whether political culture in any given context or situation is of empirical weight and (ii) the particular content of any operative cultural commitment. In the context of this book, therefore, these are questions about whether political culture, so understood, 'matters' in post-Communist conditions and, if so, about the kinds of cultural commitment that matter most.

By contrast, the second approach, favoured in this volume by Richard Sakwa, Charles King and Mary McAuley, tends to see political culture as a property of *social collectives* and embedded in the historically conditioned social practices and resources that define social meanings and possibilities of action for institutions and individuals that operate within these collectives. Studying political culture, from this perspective, is precisely to investigate the ways in which historical inheritances, both material and mental, shape the possibilities for change and development in social and institutional practices.

As is often the case, differences between these two positions can be overdrawn. (It is even known in social science and Russian studies for scholars to quarrel over such issues.) As editor of this volume, of course, I have had of necessity to see the value in both perspectives, despite the clear line of reasoning and evidence I bring to bear on the subject of political culture in the rest of this introduction and in my substantive empirical chapter. The desire for peace aside, however, it is important

not to lose sight of the commonalities and complementarities of these two broad approaches. While the first approach focuses on the psychological characteristics of political culture, it depends empirically on the sort of understanding of historically conditioned and socially located beliefs that can only come from the insights provided by practitioners of the second approach. And while the first approach focuses on individuals' attitudinal states, the second arguably can tell us much more about many aspects of the day-to-day practical and complex interactions among individuals within institutions (broadly defined). Therefore, while the next section advances an argument about the study of political culture in post-Communist conditions, – and, to some degree, *against* elements of the second approach – it does so fully cognisant of the need for a range of approaches to understanding complex social realities. Indeed, the book aims to demonstrate the scholarly value of both inter- and intra-disciplinarity.

## **An argument about political culture and post-Communist studies**

Drawing on the first perspective just outlined, this section develops a set of propositions about the concept of political culture, the characteristics of post-Communism, and how the two may interact to affect the value of political culture as an explanatory tool.

### **The concept of political culture**

The first set of propositions concerns the concept of political culture itself. These propositions aim at clarifying the application of the term and how it may be distinguished from alternative approaches explaining political attitudes and behaviour. To repeat: they are not claimed as the only way in which a political culture approach can be described, but they do strike the author as common to much of the classic social science research on the subject as it has developed from Almond and Verba (1963) and others, defensible conceptually, and importantly testable. They raise the general question: to what extent empirically does a political culture approach match up to its distinct theoretical claims?

*Proposition 1.1:* Political culture is two-sided – operating at the individual and the group level. As a subjective category, it is found in individuals as a set of psychological states and propensities. But to speak of an individual's political culture is conceptually senseless. The concept is only meaningful and useful if it can be observed as a property of a group,

whose members are defined as being of a common political culture by the fact that, as a result of shared political experience or historical conditioning, they also share cultural orientations (cf., Reisinger, 1995).

There has been some discussion about the psychological plausibility that individuals may share psychological orientations in the requisite way (cf., Schull, 1992), and this perspective certainly challenges an inter-subjective view of political culture. Proposed alternatives to the inter-subjective approach, therefore, focus more broadly on sets of social practices, common ways of speaking or behaving that can be recognised at the group level. However, by including too much in political culture, these behavioural accounts end up removing any clear distinction between political culture and other ways of explaining political orientations and behaviour. Either political culture becomes merely (thickly) descriptive or the weight of causation in producing shared attitudes and behaviour is found in political institutions that provide 'rational' and instrumental incentives to individuals to comply for reasons that obviate the need for a cultural approach.

*Proposition 1.2:* Political culture is concerned with fundamental normative orientations to the world that are in their very nature comparatively stable over time at the individual and group level (Eckstein, 1988). These shared orientations concern the most basic relationships to the social and political world and include views of the role of individuality versus community, equality versus hierarchy, order and stability versus change and innovation, right versus desert, and so on. Such orientations are learned by children under instruction from family, schools and other socialisation mechanisms, and the terms of instruction are frequently by reference to historical foci and ways of organising society – seminal events and (often invented) traditions that form bonds of group loyalty, institutional arrangements that become identified with national histories, and so on. Individuals tend subsequently to take in and process new information in ways that concur with their existing normative commitments. In this sense, political culture may be distinguished from rationalist (or instrumentalist) accounts of how individuals make political judgements. Naturally, people can abandon existing orientations to the world and may in the process acquire new ones, but this generally occurs only in conditions of very significant social and political change at the individual or group level. This does not mean that decision-making based on normative orientations is 'irrational' since these may offer an effective way to achieve co-ordination among individuals who might otherwise lack any mechanism for agreeing to common rules of social

engagement. But it does raise the possibility of groups operating with shared norms 'goose-stepping out of line', as they continue to apply norms that are inappropriate to changed conditions of the world, at least until political or social disaster strikes.

*Proposition 1.3:* The development of shared cultural orientations requires socialisation and so the groups to which we impute culture must be capable of sustaining the conditions necessary for normative orientations to emerge and be maintained. The sort of groups that may plausibly achieve this must therefore be relatively stable, defined and powerful. Modern states are the most obvious mechanism for cultural transmission but other formal and informal organisations with such capacities can be noted, including national and ethnic groups, local communities, social occupations and classes, educational institutions, religious groups, and others. In so far as membership in these groups may overlap, the relationship among political cultures may be complex, sometimes non-antagonistic and sometimes contested. With respect to political cultures, the modern state has been particularly jealous but its success in cultural homogenisation has been limited and has varied according to state capacity. Even in Communist states, where state capacity was in many ways high, its success in remoulding values was surprisingly limited (Brown and Gray, 1977; Brown, 1984a).

*Proposition 1.4:* A political culture approach does not maintain that all political beliefs or judgements – and especially in authoritarian states certainly not actions – should be culturally explained. Instead, its focus may be on the extent to which political acts – often carried out by a small elite group – are accepted and complied with, or rejected, by ordinary citizens. But for a political culture approach to be of value, it must hold that a significant range of such compliance/rejection behaviour can be better understood by reference to culture than, for example, by reference to institutional incentives. Importantly, it must also specify the conditions under which compliance for cultural reasons is likely to be the case.

In particular, people often operate and are therefore likely to have recourse to fundamental orientations about how to organise the political world in the following circumstances: when (i) the world is so confusing and information is so scarce that there are no other decision mechanisms readily available (Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock, 1991); or (ii) people find themselves in circumstances of open normative conflict (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2004). Conversely, people are less likely to rely on

normative orientations and to make 'rational' calculations in stable and information rich conditions where normative conflict is (comparatively) absent. The extent to which normative orientations are utilised, therefore, varies both across societies and across groups. Social classes differ in the extent to which they have access to and are able to process information, and therefore classes may differ in the extent of their reliance on cultural orientations in making decisions (Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock, 1991). This point, however, must clearly be distinguished from the claim that some groups may advance for the superiority of 'rational calculations', which should be seen as a cultural orientation of that group, one that is often highly contested by others.

### **The conditions of post-Communism**

The second set of propositions concerns the conditions of post-Communism in Russia and many other states of the former Soviet that are of relevance to the points just made about political culture. As is the case in many fields, there can be disagreement about exactly what these conditions are, and indeed whether a common set of conditions exists at all (cf., King, 2000 and this volume), and so it is necessary to consider competing propositions. It is also important to note that these conditions may have changed in the now significant period of time that has elapsed since the Communist system and the Soviet Union collapsed.<sup>1</sup>

*Proposition 2.1:* Russia and the other states of the Soviet Union have been involved in systemic change that relates to the economy, politics and state structures. In some of the new independent states, such as the Baltic countries, the outcome of this transformation has been the emergence and to a large degree the consolidation of democracy. In other states, the outcome of the transformation is – depending on viewpoint – still in process and certainly not consolidated, or alternately, has resulted in the emergence of an amalgam in varying degrees in different states of corrupt pseudo-market plutocracy and state authoritarianism. (Scholars have advanced a number of more succinct terms for this amalgam. See the discussion in Brown, 2001a.) In all cases, however, the Communist system with its distinct and comparable set of institutions and official ideology has largely collapsed – though in some countries and situations there are clear institutional legacies – with profound effects on the discourse of politics and most of all on how individuals engage in their daily lives.

*Proposition 2.2:* One important element in this systemic change has been the challenge posed to individuals and the new states by the collapse of the Soviet Union, with which many Soviet citizens strongly

identified. The newly independent states have emerged in conditions of varying availability of agreed post-Soviet national and state identities and many of them have lacked institutional capacities. While Russia and Russians have had some advantages in meeting this challenge because Russia was the clear successor state to the Soviet Union, Russians were also most likely to identify themselves as Soviet, and in part as a reflection on this, a large diaspora of Russians live outside Russia's borders in the newly independent states. The policy of the Russian state towards the newly independent states may have sent mixed messages to Russian citizens about Russia's 'historic space'. On the one hand, Russia has been willing to accept both EU and NATO membership and association for some states; on the other hand, it has continued to use hard and soft power in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in pursuit of its regional interests.

*Proposition 2.3:* Communist power notoriously operated to destroy civil society and even to 'atomise' individuals by inhibiting the organisation of social classes or local communities' homogenisation (Ossowski, 1963; Wesołowski, 1979; Connor, 1988). However, while there was a significant upsurge in civil society activity in the Gorbachev period, in many states including Russia a combination of economic and political pressure in the post-Soviet period has led to diminished social mobilisation (Lang-Pickvance, 1998), and greater organisation control by the state (Shevtsova, 2004). The decline in media independence may have abetted this tendency. At the level of social classes, the character of development is more difficult to ascertain. Certainly, a new Russian 'middle class' has to an extent emerged and social class appears to have become more important in shaping interests and even political behaviour in the 1990s, though this trend may have been stabilized subsequently (Evans and Whitefield, 2006). Class or occupational organisations such as trade unions or professional associations, however, have remained weak.

*Proposition 2.4:* The conditions of post-Communism, therefore, involve social, economic, political and national flux such that at all levels of life individuals have experienced great uncertainty, instability, confusion and in many cases fear – of economic hardship and unemployment, crime, medical failure, social disorder, displacement, repression and even war. The extent of this, naturally, has varied across countries and, importantly, over time. While the outcome of the transition has in many cases not been the establishment of democracies, in many states – though not all – economic, social, and political relationships and institutions have stabilised. Indeed, much of Putin's popularity may be



attributed to his success in stabilisation by comparison with the on-going conflict that was endemic to the politics of his predecessor, Boris Yeltsin (Whitefield, 2005a).

### **Political culture and post-Communism**

How, then, might the conditions of post-Communism just outlined impact on the value of the concept of political culture to post-Communist Russia and the FSU? Are these conditions that would lead us to believe that the propositions about political culture developed above are more or less likely to apply than was the case under Communist Party rule? And what might be hypothesised from the conditions of post-Communism about the impact of political culture – by comparison with more narrowly ‘rational’ calculations – on the political attitudes and behaviour of Russians and other post-Communist citizens?

The answers to these questions, both theoretically and in the existing empirical literature, do not point in a single direction. But the points made above suggest ways in which cultural commitments might be of greater – and indeed also lesser – relevance to our understanding of the judgements and behaviour of Russians and other citizens of post-Communist states. Again, it is also important to take into account how the consolidation of the post-Soviet order may have impacted on the importance of cultural factors in explaining political attitudes and behaviour.

### **Arguments for the importance of political culture in post-Communist Russia and the former Soviet Union**

In general, where political judgements are rooted in fundamental normative orientations, political culture explanations are likely to be of great value.

First, there is considerable evidence that Russians, along with citizens throughout the post-Communist world, see politics in highly normative terms and that political parties tend to frame political competition as about system-level differences, in particular in terms of the value of markets and democracy *per se* (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2004).

Second, the value of political culture accounts may be increased when competing norms are rooted in differing ‘fundamental foci of loyalty and identity’ associated with state structures that instantiate these competing norms. In Russia and Ukraine particularly, system level issues are linked to judgements about the very political and historical space that citizens inhabit (Whitefield, 2005b); what do they make of the Soviet past or the independence of the new states; with which state – old or new – do they identify?

Third, there is considerable evidence that citizens in post-Soviet Russia and other states hold strong and varied social identities. (This point is compatible with the fact that they are socially and politically disorganised and hold only weak partisan attachments – though these latter have grown somewhat over time.) Among these clear and strong identities are class, ethnic/national, and local attachments. People self-identify as workers, entrepreneurs or intelligentsia, as Russians, Tatars, Ukrainians, and others, or as from Crimea, West Ukraine, Moscow or St Petersburg. Weak formal organisation, therefore, may not have had as negative an effect on the capacity for socialisation of identities as might have been expected. Moreover, there is some evidence that these sub-national identities are also connected to fundamental normative orientations.

There may be competing explanations for why normative orientations should be so important. For some commentators, this may be a response to the difficulties of calculating ‘pay-offs’ in conditions of great uncertainty; alternately, it may be because of the very fact that system-level change is at stake, with major consequences for the operative norms of political and social institutions. Either way, however, in the strength of importance to fundamental normative stances, post-Communist citizens and parties differ from their counterparts in developed democracies where sectional, distributional, and incrementalist politics tend to dominate in both individual judgements about politics and parties’ electoral strategies. Where parties fail to provide cues about how to calculate pay-offs – as is the case with weak parties in Russia and many parts of the FSU – citizens may be even more likely to fall back on traditional beliefs about political and economic outcomes, and therefore, to relapse into conformist patterns of political behaviour.

Moreover, some evidence over time suggests that the strongly normative bases to citizens’ judgements have remained predominant (Rohrscheider and Whitefield, 2004). Indeed, it might be argued that because the operative means of deciding about political issues is about the value of different ways of organising political and economic life, self-interested ‘rationality’ is less likely to be a useful explanatory concept because it is precisely one of the norms that is being contested.

### **Arguments against the importance of political culture in post-Communist Russia and the former Soviet Union**

Even if it is conceded that citizens in post-Communist Russia and the former Soviet Union have strong normative commitments that are related to national and sub-national identities, this is very far from making the case for their explanatory value to many important political

and social issues. One value of the political culture approach is in linking orientations to attitudes and political behaviour. For this, however, the evidence in post-Communist states is much weaker because intervening conditions that might aid in establishing these linkages are largely absent. Most obviously, many post-Soviet citizens may simply have much more pressing immediate interests that mean that they cannot afford to make judgements or act upon their normative beliefs – ‘first comes the food, then come the morals’. Alternately, citizens may have strong and contested normative orientations, but face the problem that they simply do not know how to apply them or how to act upon them in such new conditions. Norms may be useful in confusing circumstances, but that should not lead us to forget the confusion.

First, post-Soviet citizens are confronted with a range of practical issues that have arisen in the course of the transformation since 1991. These include issues that are relatively central to the politics of established democracies, such as tax and welfare policy, environmental regulation, foreign policy choices, crime and punishment issues, and others. Even if fundamental normative orientations may be the best way that Russians are able to make judgements about such complex issues, this does not mean that they are able thereby effectively to make sense of them. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that Russians have found many such issues not only confusing but increasingly so (Whitefield, 2003).

Second, organisations at various levels (parties, civil society and even the state itself) may be essential to developing citizens’ understanding of policy issues, but these have failed to work effectively in post-Communist Russia (Ryzhkov, 2004; Sestanovich, 2004; Fish, 2003) and other states. Organisations are most effective in helping citizens to relate norms to political outcomes when they are able to relate policies to the concrete interests of their constituents – and indeed it might be argued that until concrete interests are at stake, the trade offs that are inherent in policy choices will necessarily remain abstract and difficult for ordinary citizens. The link that is found in developed democracies between economic interests and specific policy choices appears lacking in many parts of the former Soviet Union – but this may be less because norms are so important and more a consequence of the weaknesses of organisations that are vital to developing coherent policy perspectives.

Third, the particular cultural orientations that have emerged, for example, in Russia from historical foci of identification may simply not be adequate to a range of new issues. There is evidence, for example, that public attitudes towards issues such as the death penalty, abortion, pornography, and homosexuality are much more likely to be understood

and structured by underlying normative orientations in Catholic societies in the post-Communist world – and of course in all Western societies since the emergence of the new politics of the 1960s – than they are in Russia where religious and recent political traditions are quite different (Whitefield, in preparation). In other words, Russian political culture historically may have simply failed to supply normative bases to aid citizens in integrating and responding to some issues that have emerged in post-Communist conditions.

## **Overview of the volume**

Naturally, each of the propositions developed above about the concept of political culture, post-Communist conditions, and the possible explanatory value of political culture in such conditions may be subject to debate and legitimate disagreement. And indeed, the book shows the liveliness of the debate about these issues.

The first contribution by Alexander and Pavel Lukin poses a set of sceptical questions about many applications of political culture research that have relied upon certain assumptions about the authoritarian character of Russia's history. These questions apply equally to those who look at survey research to assess whether Russia has developed a 'democratic' political culture and to those who see in elements of Vladimir Putin's policies the heavy hand of Russia's authoritarian political culture and traditions. Drawing on recent Russian historiography, Lukin and Lukin argue that attempts to simplify Russian history and to sharply distinguish the country's development from other European states where democracy has been consolidated are highly problematic, and that contemporary authoritarianism, whether rooted in political culture or institutional interests, is not easily explained by the weight of Russian history.

This does not mean, as Richard Sakwa, Charles King, and Mary McAuley argue, that contemporary institutions operate unconstrained by historical cultural legacies, only that – following Lukin and Lukin – these legacies need to be explicated and clearly linked to the choices made by present day actors.

Historical cultural constraints may take a number of forms, which does not imply the absence of choice or contingency; as Richard Sakwa argues, 'there is always a choice of traditions from which to choose'. In his discussion of the problems of Russia's current efforts to deal with the economic and technological challenges posed by the West – which sort of effort has been ongoing in Russia over centuries – Sakwa points to the

ways in which historical legacies of governance and understanding have given rise to a 'third way' under Putin that entails a 'partial adaptation' which melds 'radical neo-liberal adaptation and reactionary traditionalism by forging a modernising traditionalist consensus'. The implementation of this 'third way', however, points to contemporary mechanisms that in many aspects reproduce central elements of Russia's political power structure.

Mary McAuley also deals with historical cultural constraints in a chapter that takes issue with what she sees as the inadequacies of both narrow rational choice institutionalism and narrow survey-based political culture research to explain the failures of post-Soviet institution-building. Quoting North (1990), she argues that material and cultural constraints 'embodied in customs, traditions, and codes of conduct ... not only connect the past with the present and the future, but provide us with a key to explaining the path of historical change'. These constraints are closely analysed to develop an understanding of the ways in which the Russian judiciary responded to efforts at reform since 1991 – ways often unanticipated by reformers who failed to take such cultural constraints seriously.

Charles King, in his chapter, develops the concept of 'culture-as-context'. Again, rejecting the psychological approach to political culture discussed above, King regards culture as a 'host of context-specific relationships, interactions, and institutions'. Thus, he takes the focus away from the individual agent and puts it on the communal conditions 'that may create and enhance perceptions, beliefs, and values but whose primary power lies in conditioning social action'. Taking post-Communist Eurasia as his comparative case, King investigates examples of political mobilisation that led in some circumstances to violence and in others did not and roots the differences in the variety of 'ensemble of texts' available to actors in different contexts.

Drawing mainly on evidence from experimental psychology that shows the malleability of attitudes under different measurement conditions, Stephen Welch sounds another sceptical note in his assessment of the value of attitudinal surveys as vehicles for the study of psychological states, including ones that are purportedly 'cultural' in character, that may be meaningful for political or other forms of action. These points serve as cautionary tales to survey practitioners like Jeffrey Hahn and myself and, of course, to readers of our chapters, though we argue that at least some of the force of Welch's criticism can be dissipated by use of a range of standard procedures in the best survey research, including

that undertaken for this book: careful questionnaire design and sampling to minimise bias; multiple measurement and reliability tests for key concepts; retests for stability of results; verification of concept validity against external measures and predicted consequences, and so on. As editor, however, I find it both ironic and refreshing that the preponderance of contributions to this volume stands as such ready evidence against the very 'disciplinary normalisation' about which Welch is rightly concerned.

The chapter by Whitefield utilises a narrower concept of political culture, conceived of – following Brown – as a set of 'fundamental normative orientations, including the historical foci of loyalty and identification that are shared by members of communities'. In line with the theoretical concerns addressed in the previous section, the chapter attempts to compare the relative impact of cultural versus alternative instrumental bases for state identity choice, and it provides statistical evidence that points in both directions; to the critical value of cultural orientations in initially shaping such choices, and to the importance of instrumental considerations for marginal changes over time in these choices. The chapter, therefore, shows both the extent and limits of one view of political culture for post-Communist conditions.

Jeffrey Hahn uses both surveys and focus groups to investigate how citizens of Yaroslavl' view local and national democracy and how these views have evolved since Hahn first surveyed opinion there in 1990. Using these longitudinal data, he is able to consider the extent to which the authoritarian tendencies evident in Putin's policies are reflected in a shift over time in the democratic values and assessments of Yaroslavl' citizens. Against the current of much of the literature, Hahn argues that citizens remain committed to a form of democracy, albeit one that is supportive of 'trustee leadership'. He also notes that these democratic commitments are for the most part unconnected with economically instrumental factors and thus, Hahn also infers support for the value of political culture in explaining Russians' attitudes to many aspects of democracy, though the character of these cultural commitments differs significantly from expectations of authoritarianism.

Given that the intellectual impetus for this book was found in the Brown and Gray (1977) and Brown (1984a) volumes, it is fortunate and apposite that Archie Brown should contribute the concluding chapter. Brown has continued to work on political culture over the years and his conclusion develops further his own (and our) understanding of the value of this concept in post-Communist Russia. His chapter demonstrates once again how important it is to consider political culture from a

multi-disciplinary and multi-methodological perspective, to treat political culture as part of a range of explanatory factors, including 'institutions, interests, leadership, power, and ideas', and to avoid the excesses of cultural (or other forms) of determinism in social science.

## **Note**

1. Archie Brown has also, correctly in my view, pointed out that as a result of Gorbachev's policies the collapse of the Communist power preceded the collapse of the Soviet Union.

# 2

## Myths about Russian Political Culture and the Study of Russian History

*Alexander Lukin and Pavel Lukin*

A belief in the dominance of authoritarianism in Russian history is widely held by political scientists. Scholarly proponents of this view – Zbigniew Brzezinski, Thomas Remington, Stephen White, Archie Brown and others – share the opinion that ‘there is no getting away from the predominantly authoritarian nature of Soviet and Russian political experience’ (Brown, 1989, p. 18; see also White, 1979, p. 22; Barghoorn and Remington, 1986, p. 5; Brzezinski, 1976, pp. 69–70) which, in their view, to a great extent determined or at least significantly influenced the country’s development in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, impeding the emergence of the Western-style institutions. Brzezinski formulated this proposition in a concentrated form:

The central and significant reality of Russian politics has been its predominantly autocratic character. Unlike its western European neighbours, Russia had not experienced a prolonged feudal phase. The overthrow of the Tartar yoke gave rise to an increasingly assertive and dominant autocracy. Property and people were the possessions of the state, personalised by the Autocrat (designed as such explicitly and proudly). The obligation of well-nigh complete subordination of any individual to the personalised symbol of the state was expressly asserted. Control over society – including the church by the state – among other means, through a census mechanism adopted centuries ahead of any corresponding European device, was reminiscent of Oriental despotisms and, in fact, was derived directly from that historical experience. The result has been to establish a relationship of state supremacy over society, of politics over social affairs, of the



functionary over the citizen (or subject), to a degree not matched in Europe; and differences of degree do become differences of kind. (Brzezinski, 1976, pp. 69–70)

This perspective, which we label ‘authoritarianist’, finds considerable support among many scholars who have been prominent in developing a ‘political culture’ approach to Russian and Soviet politics. But, as political scientists with limited knowledge of the writings of Russian and Soviet historians, these scholars have tended to rely in their descriptions of the political culture and political development of pre-1917 Russia on the works of Western ‘experts’ on Russian history, the most prominent among them being Richard Pipes (1974), Edward Keenan (1986), Robert Tucker (1992) and Tibor Szamuely (1974).

Drawing on these sources, the following assumptions about Russia are usually made: (1) absence or weakness of self-government institutions which, unlike in the West, failed significantly to influence the political system; (2) absence of significant Western (including Byzantine) influence on Russian politics (another popular assumption runs to the contrary, arguing that the Russian politics was and still is completely ‘Byzantine’); (3) absence of strong connection and continuity between the Muscovite state and Kievan Rus’; (4) formative influence of Mongol political institutions on the political system of the Muscovite Rus’; (5) fatal influence of geography on the Russian political culture which manifested itself in the idea of ‘collection of lands’ (*sobiraniia zemel’*) and their protection leading to the militarising of the country; (6) absence of independent cities and city development, which in the West led to the emergence of the entrepreneurial bourgeoisie; (7) absence of feudalism in medieval Russia which was characterised by a special political system based on unlimited centralised power, extreme weakness of representative bodies, virtual absence of private property and complete merging of the executive and judicial powers.

But, as we argue in this chapter, the historical basis of these assumptions is based on excessive generalisation and on overly broad and ill-founded conclusions that fail to take into account recent developments and findings in the study of Russian history. Rethinking these assumptions, therefore, may put Russian political culture, and the constraints it may impose on the country’s political development, in a different light.

The rest of the chapter, therefore, is devoted to investigating these seven assumptions. We take each assumption in turn and show that contemporary historiography will not support such generalisations about Russian history, and so will not sustain many common conclusions

about the character of Russian political culture or, therefore, claims about the impact of authoritarianism on contemporary political development.

### **Weakness of self-government as the basis of contemporary democracy**

Self-government existed in the territory of contemporary Russia for hundreds of years and, in some periods, it played a significant role. Already in the times of the Great Migration, the Byzantine historian Procopii Caesariensis wrote about the social system of Slavs: 'And these peoples, Sklavins and Ants are not ruled by one man, but have been living in democracy since ancient times' (Haury, 1963, p. 357). Regardless of how one understands the term «δημοκρατία», it is clear from this and other reports of Byzantine authors that although princes existed in Ancient Slavic society, their power was significantly limited by the population participating in the political life (Łowmiański, 1970, pp. 84–85).

The so-called 'tribal unions' of Eastern Slavs, which preceded the formation of the Ancient Russian state, also knew collective forms of decision-making (Likhachev, 1996, p. 27; Sverdlov, 1997, p. 111). The formation of a united state with its centre in Kiev in the ninth and early twelfth centuries) naturally meant the emergence of a strong power of the prince. However, even in this time the rule of the Prince coexisted with collective forms of power. A significant role was played by the retinue (*druzhina*) – a professional army turned into a social elite not only in Rus' but also in other early Slav states (Poland, the Czech state). Without the agreement of the retinue members, the Prince could not take any significant decision (Likhachev, 1997, pp. 498, 504; Likhachev, 1996, pp. 48–49).

With the growth of cities in Rus', chronicles began to mention political gatherings of the city population, the *veche*. The first mention of a *veche* goes back to 997 in Belgorod near Kiev (now – the village of Belgorodok). In Novgorod, the *veche* is first mentioned in 1015; in Kiev, it is mentioned only in the twelfth century, but the first evidence of the political activism of the population of Kiev dates back to 968.

After the disintegration of the ancient Russian state in the first half of the twelfth century, 14–15 independent Russian lands appear. The systems of administration in these lands naturally differed but they also had some similarities. It is important that in none of them was the Prince the sole ruler and in every one of them there existed institutions or social and political factors that limited his authority. In the vastest of

them, Novgorod land, the Prince eventually turned into a magistrate with very limited powers (commanding the troops in the event of a major war, participating in the court proceedings). The supreme authority in Novgorod belonged to the *veche*, a meeting of competent Novgorodians.

In another major Russian land, Galich, the Prince also had to reckon with other influential forces, first of all, the boyars (see Hrushevskyĭ, 1993, p. 52; Pashuto, 1950; Zernack, 1967, pp. 108–112). Moreover, in the thirteenth century, a new term *mestichi* appeared in the Galich-Volyn' chronicle which designated citizens who enjoyed the right to participate in political life (Pashuto, 1965, p. 39).

A popular assumption that the political system in the third major Russian land, Vladimir (the so-called Vladimir-Suzdal' principality), lacked self-government is also groundless. It is in the Vladimir chronicle that one finds the classic characteristic of the *veche* operation in the Ancient Rus': 'The people of Novgorod from the very beginning, and of Smolensk, and Kiev<sup>1</sup> and every *volost'*, assemble for consultation to the *veche* and whatever the senior [cities] decide, the subject towns accept' (PSRL, v.1, coll. 377–378<sup>2</sup>). This is a part of a lengthy description in the Lavrent'ev chronicle of the struggle for the Prince's throne in Vladimir, in which the boyars and city-dwellers of Rostov, Suzdal, Vladimir, Pereeslavl' and other centres of the North-Eastern Rus' participated as separate social and political forces. The arenas for this participation were the *veche* meetings. It is also quite clear that in Vladimir princes had to reckon with the aristocracy, the clergy, and the merchants, whose influence was expressed through various institutional mechanisms (PSRL, v.25, col. 108).

With the strengthening of the power of the Prince after the Mongol invasion, *veche* meetings eventually became rare. They were often connected with uprisings and mutinies and as a rule were criticised by the authors of the chronicles (which had never been the case before the Mongol invasion). However, during this period in the principalities of the North-East Rus', including Moscow, an important role began to be played by the Boyar council. In the Moscow principality, it evolved into a governing body – the Boyar Duma. There is considerable evidence in the documents of the time that decisions were made by the prince not individually but after consultation with the boyars. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the most important government decisions were taken jointly by the Tsar and the Boyar Duma according to the formula, 'the Ruler instructed and the boyars ruled' (*Gosudar' ukazal, boiare prigovorili*).

The political system of the Russian state in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is often called limited monarchy with representation of estates. Even if this is an exaggeration – it is true that the question of estates in the Russian state is extremely complicated and that the authority of the estate institutions was much more limited than in Europe – the emergence and existence of elected representative bodies of power and self-government both in the centre and in the regions is an indisputable fact. Although the development of the system of estate representation began in the early sixteenth century, a great push to it was given by the reforms of the Chosen Council (*Izbrannnaia Rada*). The government of the Chosen Council in 1556 abolished the system of feeding (*kormlenie*).<sup>3</sup> The authority of the governors was transferred to the *guba* headmen and in the cities to the city stewards (*gorodovoĭ prikazchik*), who were elected by the nobility. In the absence of the nobility, officials were elected as a rule by rich free (*chernososhnye*) peasants. The authority of the new organs was rather wide; they were in charge of allotting and collecting taxes, realisation of government decisions, and they also had some judicial authority (Nosov, 1969).

In the sixteenth century, the Assemblies of the Land emerged – the central governing organs of estate representation – which discussed the most important problems of the country and expressed their opinion to the tsar who took the final decision. The first Assembly of the Land is believed to have been convened in 1549 in Moscow after the fire and the uprising of 1547. The heyday of Assemblies of the Land was in the first half of the seventeenth century. During the Time of Troubles in the wake of the Polish and Swedish intervention, when the central authority virtually collapsed, it was the local estate representative bodies (city councils) that formed the basis of resistance. In 1613–1622, after the victory over the invaders, the Assembly worked almost permanently reviewing all important government issues. The most significant was the Assembly of 1613 that elected the new tsar, Mikhail Fedorovich Romanov. It was also the most representative; among its delegates were elected representatives of the local nobility, the service class (*sluzhilye liudi*), the Cossacks, townsfolk and even free and palace peasants. During the seventeenth century, the Assemblies were formed on the basis of estate representation. But from the 1630s they were convened less often. According to most historians, the last full Assembly of the Land, which discussed the reunification of Russia and the Ukraine, took place in 1653. After that, until the end of the century narrower estate conferences were convened (Cherepnin, 1978).

Despite the strengthening of absolutism, elected self-government survived in Russia throughout the eighteenth century. In 1699, a decree by Peter I introduced elected self-government in the cities (bailiffs in provincial cities, a town council in Moscow). Although the provincial (*guberniia*) reform and subsequent administrative changes to a great extent invalidated local self-government, Tsar Peter did not abandon the idea of introducing elected authority in the cities. In the beginning of the 1720s, magistrates were established that were elected from 'the first worldly people' (i.e., mainly from the merchants). The tsar formed the magistrates 'on the basis of Riga and Revel regulations', that is according to the European model. Catherine II held elections to the Legislative Commission (*Ulozhennaia komissiia*). Although the Committee failed to evolve into a parliament, it became a place for lively debates. In 1775, an attempt was made to separate the judiciary from the administration, in accordance with the principle of separation of powers. Elected estate courts were created, although their independence turned out to be limited. At the same time, according to the Charter to the Nobility (1785), elected provincial and district (*uezd*) nobility assemblies got real authority, which included the right to elect nobility marshals and local government officials. According the Charter to the Towns (1785), elected estate bodies were introduced in the cities. As a result of the land (*zemskaia*, 1864), city (1870) and judicial (1864) reforms, Russia saw the emergence of a relatively developed civil society. The organs of local self-government were now deep rooted and worked according to a new, non-estate principle, while courts won real independence. Finally, as a result of the October 17, 1905 Manifesto, multi-party and parliamentary systems emerged; a partly elected State Council and fully elected State Duma worked on a permanent basis (although they were formed according to an archaic electoral system discriminating of the lower estates and enjoyed somewhat limited authority).

Even during the Soviet period when real self-government was eliminated or turned into a fiction, some elements of genuine elections (e.g., in research institutions, the Orthodox church, etc.) survived. Besides, the Soviet Communist Party and the Soviet State preserved formal election procedures, which began to gain real meaning as soon as the Communist dictatorship weakened.

Thus, elements of self-government existed in Russia during every period of its history that at times played an important role. The question, however, is whether this role at all stages was significantly smaller than in other now democratic European countries and whether, if it was, this could determine for Russia an authoritarian recent past or present.

A comparative analysis with Russia's neighbours shows that traits that are often described as uniquely Russian in reality are characteristic of the entire region of Eastern and Central Europe – Ancient Rus', later Russian lands, Poland, the Czech state, Hungary. The most important among them is the significant role of the state, which at the early stage was represented by the Prince and his retinue. The state determined the social and political life and actively influenced the economy. This tendency manifested itself, among other things, in the existence of the so-called 'service organisation', the goal of which was meeting the special economic needs of the ruling elite (the Prince and the members of the retinue). It consisted of various groups of people engaged in service and cooking (cooks, bakers, launderers, etc.), looking after the cattle (shepherds, grooms), craftsmen, fishers and huntsmen (persons in charge of hounds, falconers, beaver-hunters).<sup>4</sup> These people were exempt from common taxes and duties and were not part of the administrative and territorial structure that included the rest of the population (Floria, 1992, p. 58).

Significantly, precise data on the service organisation survived only for the countries of Central Europe, while its existence in Rus' has been established only recently on the basis of indirect evidence. In Poland, the Czech state and Hungary, the service organisation gradually disintegrated in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as a result of the growing feudal estates. In Russia, it survived and in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it seemed to flourish once again (the system of services (*puti*), state organs like the Office of Stonemasonry that was in charge of all the stonemasons in Russia, etc.).

The character of social development was similar in the entire region of Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, Rus' knew even more elements of 'democracy'. Thus, although the phenomena similar to the Russian *veche* (*placita*, *conciones*, *concilia*, etc.) existed in Poland and the Czech state in the early Middle Ages, they played a much less important role and are mentioned only episodically. Some historians compare the 'city republics' in Szczecin, Volin and other cities of the Pomeranian Slavs, with those in Novgorod and Pskov. In the Pomeranian 'city-republics', social structure was relatively primitive and the republics themselves ceased to exist by the middle of the twelfth century after having found themselves under the rule of the West Pomeranian Dukes and later Poland. By contrast, in North-Western Rus' there emerged states with a developed republican system of government.

For its part, estate representation existed in all European countries and each of them was characterised by some unique features. Here again, the closest to Russia were countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In the

Czech state, the dominant role in the highest estate representative body (*snem*) was played by the magnates and the representatives of the cities, while the majority of the nobility was sidelined. The major role in the Hungarian Diet and Polish General Assembly (*sejm walny*), conversely, was played by the members of the king's council (an analogue of the Russian Boyar Duma) and elected representatives of the nobility, while cities were weak (in Poland and especially in Hungary the bourgeoisie remained weak even until much later; for example, the revolution of the 1848–49 was led exclusively by the nobility). The difference with Russia was that in these countries the highest bodies of estate representation had much clearer responsibilities than Russian Assemblies of the Land. They voted on extraordinary taxes and later even adopted new laws. In the case of Poland, where the right of any single member of the gentry (*szlachta*) to veto an already taken decision (*liberum veto*) was gradually formed, their responsibilities were even excessive.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Russian empire was hardly less democratic than the Hapsburg Empire, where the two-chamber parliament (*Reichsrat*), like the State Duma in Russia, was elected by indirect elections, but unlike it, met only once a year. According to article XIV of the Austrian constitution, the monarch enjoyed the right to issue decrees between sessions of the parliament that had the power of a law. In 1907, universal suffrage was introduced in Austro-Hungary but, with the beginning of the war in 1914, the parliament was dissolved and did not meet until 1917. In Russia, the Duma worked normally during the First World War and was officially dissolved only in February 1917 when the revolution began.

Thus, although self-government in Russia was perhaps less developed than in some countries of Western Europe, it existed and played an important role at all stages of its history and was not weaker than in many other European countries that are currently democratic. At the same time there are many countries in the world, with much weaker traditions of self-government than Russia, which became democracies much earlier (India, Sri Lanka, Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, Taiwan). Therefore, the weakness of the self-government tradition can hardly explain the difficulties with democracy in contemporary Russia.

## **The Muscovite State and the West: Russia and Rome. The problem of cultural influence**

Supporters of the theory of Russia's eternal authoritarianism stress the lack of connection between Russian and European political cultures.

Thus, according to Tibor Szamuely: 'Every country of modern Europe either was at one time a province of the Roman Empire, or received its religion from Rome. Russia is the sole exception. Russia is the only country of geographical Europe that owed virtually nothing to the common cultural and spiritual heritage of the West' (Szamuely, 1974, p. 8). Such generalisations are absolutely groundless.

It is true that the Russian territory has never been part of the Roman Empire, but this explains nothing. Scandinavia, for example, has also never been part of the Roman Empire, but it was in the Scandinavian countries that developed elected organs of estate representation emerged very early in history and where they directly evolved into contemporary parliaments (even their names have survived until today; *Althing* in Iceland, *Riksdag* in Sweden, *Storting* in Norway). The same can be said about Ireland. The 'religious' argument also does not stand. Russia got Christianity not from Rome, but from Constantinople, the 'Second Rome', and through it, naturally, from the 'First Rome'. From this point of view, Russia is not unique in Europe; Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Cyprus are all Orthodox Church dominated countries that in the Middle Ages were, together with Russia, parts of the Byzantine Commonwealth described by Dimitri Obolensky (1971). Their medieval culture was very close to that of Russia, especially that of Bulgaria and Serbia, which shared with Russia the Cyrillic alphabet.<sup>5</sup>

Russia may be considered to be unique for *both* not having been part of the Roman Empire and not getting its religion directly from it. But the democratic political system in the twentieth century emerged and stabilised in many countries with a much more remote connection with both the Roman Empire and Catholicism than Russia, where the rulers for centuries were called 'Tsars' (from the Latin *caesar* or the Greek *kai-sar*) or with no connection at all (India, Japan, South Korea, or even Mongolia whose ancient nomads are often accused of bringing Oriental despotism to Rus'). A separate question is how specifically the Roman tradition influenced the culture of contemporary European states that had once been a part of the Roman Empire. For example, to what extent did the Roman law influence the way of solving property conflicts in the countries of the former Yugoslavia or in Albania?

There is also a clear contradiction in identifying the Roman and Catholic traditions. If we were to believe that Catholicism is the only truly European tradition, then many non-Catholic States (some of them already members of the EU) would be artificially cut off from Europe. If both Western and Eastern Christianity are recognised to be European,



then Orthodox Russia should be included in Europe. Understanding this controversy, the most radical believers in Russia's non-Europeanness deny the Byzantine influence on the Russian culture. Such a denial became popular among many 'authoritarianists' (Barghoorn and Remington, 1986, p. 5; Simon, 1995, p. 244). Thus, according to a typical conclusion by Edward Keenan:

[I]t cannot be demonstrated ... that during its formative period (i.e., 1450–1500) Muscovite political culture was significantly influenced by the form or by the practice of Byzantine political culture or ideology. Nor is there convincing evidence that any powerful Muscovite politician or political group was conversant with Byzantine political culture, except perhaps as the latter was reflected in the ritual and organisation of the Orthodox Church, which itself had little practical political importance in early Muscovy and little *formative* impact upon Russian political behaviour. (Keenan, 1986, p. 118)

It is impossible, however, seriously to argue for the absolute absence of Byzantine influence on the political life of Ancient, including Muscovite, Rus'. The Orthodox religion, and the Cyrillic alphabet that came from Byzantine, provided the very language of the Russian culture including the language of politics. Not only was Russia influenced by Byzantium but it, together with some other countries, was also a part of the Byzantine Commonwealth (Obolensky, 1971).

The specific questions of Byzantine influence on Russia have been investigated in numerous specialised publications that seem to be unknown to the supporters of the separation of Russia from the West. Already, the first such study by V.S. Ikonnikov demonstrated that Orthodoxy brought to Russia the main ideas that constituted the foundation for most pre-Petrine political theories, most important of all the idea of the divine origin of the authority of the tsar (Ikonnikov, 1869, pp. 314–315).

Even if one takes an artificially limited period of time, determined by Keenan on unclear grounds, one can find multiple examples of the influence of Byzantine theological and political thought on the Russian literature of the time. Thus, the Archbishop of Rostov Vassian Rylo, in his *Epistle to Ugra*, in which he tried to persuade Ivan III to begin decisive actions against the Horde, not only compares the Great Prince with the Roman Emperor Constantine (Likhachev, 1982, p. 524), but also quotes Democritus on how to build relations between the ruler and his advisors (Likhachev, 1982, p. 524).

The works of Byzantine theologians deeply influenced the views of the leader of *iosifliandstvo* – one of the two major spiritual currents within the Russian Orthodox Church in the second half of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries that later became the foundation of the ideology of the Russian state. Abbot Iosif of Volotsk 'routinely quotes ... the texts by the Holy Fathers, particularly Ioannes Damaskenos and St. Basil the Great' (Prosvetitel' prep. Iosifa Volotskogo, 1859, p. 436).

So, the argument of the absence of Ancient Greek and Roman as well as Byzantine influence on the Russian social and political culture is wholly unconvincing. At the same time, according to most experts Byzantine influence did not manifest itself in any specific political theory. Russian thinkers chose those elements of the Byzantine tradition that they thought to be interesting and important according to their own views and beliefs. The author of a classic study of the political thought of Ancient Rus', Vladimir Val'denberg, concluded that Byzantine influence 'could not consist of mere transfer of ready-made notions and could not give birth to just a *single* trend which could be named Byzantine. Byzantium could give Russian thinkers a stimulus for development and material for the substantiation of very different theories of the power of the tsar – all of which with equal reason can be called (or not called) Byzantine' (Val'denberg, 1916, p. 81).

Thus, although the influence of Byzantine was significant, the idea that Russian politics became completely Byzantine is also wrong. Russia did not become a second Byzantine in the same way that the United States did not become another Britain, Brazil another Portugal, and Japan another China. (The last comparison is the closest to the Byzantine-Russia case since China has never controlled Japan politically although no historian would deny China's influence on the Japanese culture.) Continuing Keenan's analogy with socialism, the Russian political ideology of the period he discusses is less 'Byzantinism in one country' (since there had never been a unified 'Byzantine' ideology) than 'Byzantinism with Russian characteristics', as the Chinese communists call their socialism, selectively adopted and amended according to the realities and the political traditions of China. There is nothing specifically Russian in this pattern of adopting foreign ideas. In the same way, Roman culture was adopted in various European countries.

## Kievan Rus' – Vladimir Rus' – the Muscovite State

The idea of the absence of continuity between the Muscovite State and the Kievan Rus', which is actively promoted by Pipes, Keenan, Simon

and other 'authoritarianists', is often attributed to the founder of the Ukrainian nationalist historiography, Mykhailo Hrushevskyi (who is quoted by Pipes). Since Hrushevskyi's time, this thesis has been disproved by many authors. Nevertheless, it is still often used by those who would like to place an artificial border of 'the West' between the Ukraine and Russia.

Meanwhile, even Hrushevskyi understood that there existed an obvious continuity between Kievan and Muscovite Rus' in culture and literature. He argued that it was Ukrainian Kievan Rus' that influenced 'Great Russian' North-East Rus'. The discussion on whether Kievan Rus' was 'Ukrainian' or 'Great Russian' has nothing to do with history, since the Kievan state existed at a time when the Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian nationalities (which currently populate its former territory) had not yet separated from each other. Its meaning is no greater than that of a discussion on whether the Roman Empire was Italian, French or Spanish. (The erection of the monument to Great Prince Vladimir in the centre of London with an inscription calling him the Great Prince of the Ukraine clearly demonstrates the extent of twentieth century intoxication with nationalism.)

It is clear that the political cultures of Kievan and Muscovite Rus' differed in many respects. However, it is hardly possible to deny any continuity between two states that shared religion and had many similar political concepts. As can be seen from Hrushevskyi's writings, this continuity was obvious even for the most radical Russophobes. This bigger question is, in fact, the extent of continuity between Kievan and Vladimir Rus' since, on the one hand, continuity between Vladimir Rus' and the Muscovite state is not questioned by anybody, and, on the other, a study of continuity between Kievan Rus' and the Muscovite state can be meaningful only if the intermediate link, Vladimir Rus', is taken into consideration.

Arguing that some important political novelties were introduced in the Muscovite state that made its political system very different from that of Kievan Rus', Pipes admits that it would have been strange if the political system of the Russian state (which was formed in the second part of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries) did not differ from that of the Kievan state (which disintegrated in the early twelfth century). Therefore, he tries to find fundamental uniqueness in the political, social and economic system of the North-East Rus', which later allegedly formed the basis of 'Moscow authoritarianism'. He writes:

In Kievan Rus' and in all but its north-eastern successor states, the population antedated the princes; settlement came first and political

authority followed. The north-east, by contrast, had been largely colonised on the initiative and under the auspices of the princes; here the authority preceded settlement. As a result, the north-eastern princes enjoyed a degree of power and prestige that their counterparts in Novgorod and Lithuania could never aspire to. The land, they believed and claimed, belonged to them: cities, forests, arable, meadows and waterways were their property because it was they who caused them to be built, cleared or exploited. By an extension of this thought, the people living on this land were either their slaves or their tenants; in either event, they had no claim to the land and no inherent personal 'rights'. A kind of proprietary attitude thus surfaced on the north-eastern frontier. (Pipes, 1974, p. 40)

Unfortunately, the American author does not take the trouble to quote any source or even literature,<sup>6</sup> and his claims therefore have no evident foundation in historiography. However, since these claims are in fact based on certain historical concepts and are still rather popular both outside and more recently, inside Russia, we discuss them briefly.

Despite the fact that colonisation of the territory of North Eastern Rus' by Eastern Slavs took place later than that of many other territories of the Ancient Russian state, there are no fundamental peculiarities in this process. For example, the phenomenon of 'transfer of cities' that took place in the ninth and tenth centuries was characteristic of the entire Russian territory. Instead of ancient settlements, 'tribal' centres (such as Iskorosten' of the Drevliane) or the so-called 'open trading' and artisan settlements (such as the Riurik settlement, Timerevo, Sarsk settlement, Gnezdovo, Shestovitsy), new cities were founded – Vruchiĭ [Ovruch], Novgorod, Yaroslavl', Rostov, Smolensk, Chernigov (Petrukhin and Pushkina, 1979; Mel'nikiova and Petrukhin, 1986).

The initiative came from the state authorities represented by the prince and his retinue. Generally the idea of chaotic colonisation of the territory of Eastern Slavs, which goes back to Vasiliĭ Kliuchevskii's 'vagrant Rus'' theory, is completely outdated. The active role of the early medieval state in the opening up of new territories is well-established (Nasonov, 1951; Beskrovnyi, 1975; Kuchkin, 1984).

## Cities

Another popular idea of the 'authoritarianists' is that Russia lacked Western-type cities. Pipes believes that cities in the North-East Rus' were the property of the princes, while Simon claims that there were no independent cities in Russia at all.

The erroneousness of such views, which (although in a much milder form) can also be found in the old Russian historiography, was demonstrated already by A.N. Nasonov (1924) who showed that the cities of Suzdal land had a *veche* system that had no fundamental differences with the *veche* system of the cities of other Russian lands. It is very important that the classic phrase about the *veche* system in Rus' appeared in the Vladimir chronicle (see above, *PSRL*, v.1, coll. 377–378). Lithuania has nothing to do with this since, during the time referred to by Pipes, it was only in the process of building statehood and had no Russian territories within its borders. Thus, the socio-economic and socio-political system in the Vladimir principality was generally the same as in other Russian lands – although it naturally had some differences, which, contrary to Pipes's claims, were not so fundamental. The fate of this system is a different question, as is how, in the process of formation of the unified Russian state, a new social system emerged that was quite different from that of the pre-Mongol Rus'. This problem is real and its study should be based on careful analysis of the very few available sources. But this is not the way it is approached in the works under review.<sup>7</sup>

City self-government existed in Russia as in other European countries (see earlier). While it was not as strong as in Western Europe, its level was comparable with that of Central European Empires – Prussia and the Holy Roman Empire (Austria). The development of the Russian bourgeoisie by early twentieth century was also quite comparable to that of these countries; it had political ambitions, its own political parties and rather significant influence. In any case, the bourgeoisie was surely more developed than in many countries of other regions that, at present, are democratic.

## Mongol impact

The idea that it was Mongol influence that pushed Russia's development away from the 'European' way (the Kievan Rus' in this scheme is assumed to be a part of the Western world) by introducing 'Oriental' institutions goes back to the Russian historian Nikolai Karamzin (1766–1826). Despite being quite outdated, it is very popular among essayists of various persuasions and even among some historians who either praise this influence (as the 'Eurasianist' Lev Gumilev) or criticise it (as 'Westernisers' Andrei I Urganov and Igor' Danilevskii).

In reality, by now all attempts to attribute any Russian political or social institution to Mongol tradition have failed. In principle, one

should not completely exclude the possibility of such influence, but by now no convincing example has been given. Usually, attempts to find Mongol roots of various social and political institutions in the Muscovite Rus' are the result of poor knowledge of the history of pre-Mongol Rus' and its lands, where almost all of them already existed (the decimal system, prince's court, the boyar council) (Ostrowski, 1990; Iurganov, 1998, pp. 155–62, 165–70) or because authors are already committed to the notion and so choose the account that best fits their preferred concept – for example, by attributing the Russian word *blagoslovenie* (blessing) by the Great Prince of his sons with appanage principalities (*udel'nye kniazhestva*) to the Mongol *soiurgala*, on the basis that their meanings agree, while ignoring the fact that the Latin *beneficium* in Western Europe had the same meaning of land grant.

A solid criticism of these concepts was provided by Anton Gorskiĭ who, on the basis of real sources, but not historiosophic or ideological beliefs, convincingly concluded that one should discuss not mythic borrowings from the Mongols but only 'possible changes of functions of some of them [institutions] under the influence of the Horde's system' (Gorskiĭ, 2004, pp. 228–30).

Russian émigré historian Valentin Riazanovskii also concluded that the influence of Mongols on the Russian culture and law 'was of insignificant and secondary character', was only 'one indirect factor in the emergence of autocracy in Rus'' and exerted 'some transient influence on the taxation system' (Riazanovskii, 1993, p. 162). But even this marginal influence is doubted by other historians.

## Geography

The idea that Russia's historical territorial expansion eastward formed a peculiar syndrome of the 'collecting of lands' and predetermined Russia's eternal authoritarianism by developing a strong spirit and policy of imperialism and militarism needed to defend the vast territory (White, 1979, p. 5) is not worth lengthy discussion. There are many big countries in the world (United States, Canada, Brazil, and India) that today are democratic. Some of them also knew a spirit similar to the Russian 'collecting of lands' but are hardly authoritarian. A good example is the US 'frontier' spirit, part of which was associated with American settlement westward (Turner, 1920). One could argue as well that imperialism and at times militarism may characterise US state policy, though neither has yet given birth to authoritarianism. There are also many small countries that are non-democratic. Thus, while geography

perhaps is a factor that contributes to the formation of the political culture and national identity, it can hardly predetermine a country's political system.

Recently another author, Geoffrey Hosking, advanced the argument that, as a result of a three-hundred-year history of empire building at the expense of national identity (beginning from the sixteenth century), neither church nor state was able to project an image of 'Russian-ness' that could unite elites and masses in a consciousness of belonging to the same nation (Hosking, 1997). This view of Russian history, which resembles Vladimir Lenin's concept of two cultures in the tsarist Russia (the culture of the aristocracy and the culture of the people), disregards well-known historical facts. The notion of 'nation' is hard to define especially in the Middle Ages and early Modern periods. Some would argue that at that time nations had not yet been formed anywhere in the world. The sense of belonging to a country-like common entity called 'the Land of Rus' (*Russkaia zemlia*) existed already in the Kievan period and, according to the opinion of some historians, even in the pre-Christian time. (Likhachev, 1996, p. 33). By the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, an important role for identification was played by the Orthodox religion, while the notion of '*Russkaia zemlia*' survived until modern times (Gorskiĭ, 2001, pp. 62–69). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Russians (both aristocratic generals and ordinary soldiers) fought and died for 'Holy Russia', a country that was both Russian and Orthodox. This construct has been analysed in many studies (see Cherniavsky, 1961).

Hence, to argue that Russians did not have a consciousness of belonging to the same nation even in the late imperial period is odd. It is true that the concept of either the 'Land of Rus' or 'Holy Russia' did not have much of ethnic meaning, but such ethnic understanding of the nation-state emerged only in some European states and only as late as the second half of the nineteenth century. To a great extent, the ethnic basis of nation is an ideal type that does not correspond to any real country. Which ethnic nation represents, for example, such multi-ethnic countries as Britain or Spain?

## Feudalism and Russia

The definition of feudalism is an extremely complicated problem. Historians disagree not only on what it is but also on whether it existed in any country in a pure form at all. Its broad definition as 'political fragmentation' allows one to call feudal the political system of such

non-European countries as China and Japan. If the distinctive feature of feudalism is recognised to be the system of seigniorial (in Russia, *votchina*) land ownership, as was argued among others by Marxists, then feudalism can be found practically everywhere from Ancient Egypt (which had large land ownership with landowners exploiting the immediate producers) to Medieval Europe.<sup>8</sup> A narrow definition, as a set of rules and principles formulated in the West European literature, can lead to a position that feudalism existed only in ideology and that no real political system matched the ideological ideal (Reynolds, 1994). In any case, if we are to accept that Russia did not know classic feudalism, we have to recognise that during all periods of the Middle Ages it had certain rules governing relationships between members of the ruling elites, some of which were formulated in written documents, such as rules of inheritance, service, treaties, and the like.

Even if it is accepted that no part of Russia knew pure feudalism, a question arises. Why did similar non-feudal social and economic forms give rise to very different political regimes; Moscow's developing autocracy and *veche* 'republics' in Novgorod and Pskov (which existed until 1478 and 1510 respectively and were destroyed by force). It seems that the sources of Moscow's political pattern should be looked for not in feudalism but somewhere else.

## Private property and patrimonial state

Pipes defines the political system of Muscovite Rus' as that of a 'patrimonial' (*votchinnoe*) state. Following him, Simon summarises:

The Moscow tsardom formed as a patrimonial state, with an oversized princely court and budget, in which there was only one owner: the autocrat. In principle, there was no difference between the property of the rulers, the state and the subjects. No distinction was drawn in the Moscow state between property (*dominium*) and rule (*imperium*). A separation between the public and private sphere, between public and private law, which developed in old Europe under the influence of Roman law, remained unknown in Russia until into the 18th century. (Simon, 1995, p. 247)

The 'patrimonial state' theory was first put forward by the Russian historian Vasilii Kliuchevskii. Since the real content of this notion is not very clear we discuss its various components (as described by Pipes) separately.



Pipes discusses very complicated problems about which opinions of historians differ. In every case, his interpretation is one-sided and is obviously aimed at proving the 'patrimonial state' concept, while facts that do not fit into this concept are simply ignored. For example, Pipes does not mention the Assemblies of the Land, elected local self-government, certain levels of legal and economic independence of the Church, and the right of boyars to leave the prince, which existed until the sixteenth century and directly contradicts Pipes's dictum that borders in Russia have always been sealed (Pipes, 1974, p. 110).

Many facts quoted by Pipes can be interpreted differently. For example, the notion of *votchina* (or *otchina*) was used to designate a principality already in Ancient Rus' (PSRL, v.1, coll. 256–257). But an entry for the year 1146 in the Ipat'evskaia chronicle demonstrates that while princes possibly wanted to regard their principalities as a *patrimonium*, the reality was much more complicated. At the time, Prince Vsevolod Ol'govich not long before his death bequeathed Kiev as an *otchina* to his brother Igor', but the people of Kiev had a different opinion regarding the legitimating power. They dispatched messengers to the representative of another line of Riurikovich's, the grandson of Vladimir Monomakh Iziaslav Mstislavich, and told him that they did not want to be inherited and wanted to be ruled by him (PSRL, v.2, coll. 321–24). They then convened a *veche* and overthrew and later killed Igor', while Iziaslav became the prince.

Much later, in seventeenth century Moscow, judgements based exclusively on documents representing the official ideology could easily lead to the conclusion that the Russian state at the time was a personal possession of a pious tsar who cared about his serfs (*khology*) as his own children while they honoured him as an earthly God. However, non-official documents (investigation records on political and heresy cases, documents on city uprisings, works of the Old Believers, etc.) show a much more complex picture. Here one can find the idea of the power of the tsar limited by 'divine law', which was understood not in the secular sense as a set of religious norms separated from the secular life but very broadly, as Archpriest Avvakum put it, including in it the 'worldly truth'. Here one can also find ideas of personal liberty and dignity (which were expressed especially in the writings of the Old Believers), although not in the European secular but in the medieval Orthodox form. Here is the belief that all affairs of the state should be decided by the tsar in consultation with the 'entire land' (*so vseĭ zemloĭ*). Moreover, in their real functioning, local land bodies often confronted the administration of the governor (*voevoda*) and overcame it (Pokrovskii and

Aleksandrov, 1991). However, while these questions are discussed by contemporary historians, they are ignored by 'authoritarianists'.

## The struggle between authoritarianism and democracy in Russian history

In the recent years, some political scientists have questioned the theory of absolute dominance of the authoritarian tradition in the Russian political culture. They have challenged it with a concept of the coexistence of 'two cultures' that supposedly opposed each other for centuries; the official and the oppositional, the centralising and the decentralising, the authoritarian and democratic. In a book published in 1995 Nicolai Petro charged: 'By assuming that official political expression reflected popular sentiment most analysts failed to recognise that democracy, or *narodovlastie* in Russian, has deep roots in Russian history'. In his view, 'the struggle for Russian civil society can be traced from Muscovite times through the collapse of communism and beyond'. He finds manifestations of the alternative political culture in the ideas of limiting the monarchy and the functioning of representative bodies, in the 'symphonic' ideal of the relationship between the secular and spiritual authority, which was promoted by the Orthodox Church, and in the search for a national ideal within the framework of the concept of 'the Russian idea'. All these tendencies he believes to be direct cultural predecessors of the independent groups of the Soviet and post-Soviet period (the dissidents, the 'informals' (*neformaly*), alternative publications (*samizdat*), and so on (Petro, 1995, pp. 2–3).

Although new for Western political science, Petro's approach – which includes many anti-Western tendencies into the alternative political culture that supposedly fought for the civil society in Russia – repeats in many aspects the ideas of the Soviet author Aleksandr Yanov (who later emigrated to the United States), which he expressed in a *samizdat* manuscript in 1973. In the manuscript entitled *Nekotorye problemy russkoï konservativnoï mysli XV–XVII stoletii* (*Some Problems of Russian Conservative Thought of the XV–XVII centuries*), Yanov also included many 'conservative' anti-Western movements into the opposition counter-culture aimed at limiting the despotic rule (Yanov, 1973). We can also mention in this connection, Marc Raeff, according to whom, two political cultures coexisted in Russia, at least at the beginning of the twentieth century – that of the progressive liberal intelligentsia and of the backward peasantry (Raeff, 1993, pp. 93–106).

Such 'two culture' theories became popular among some Russian political scientists who were also trying to find a foundation for contemporary democracy in the Russian past. A typical example is the chapter on political culture in a 1993 textbook, authored by IU. Lepeshkin. Although acknowledging that alternative democratic political traditions 'have not properly developed', Lepeshkin finds them in every period of the Russian history: in the *veche* republics of Novgorod, Pskov and Viatka, the free communities of Cossacks, Assemblies of the Land, and the like. Interestingly, while 'authoritarianists' believe the village communes to be part of the anti-individualist authoritarian tendency, Lepeshkin sees them as an element of the democratic political culture (Lepeshkin, 1993, pp. 260–61). Another example is a book by Aleksandr Obolonskiĭ, *The Drama of the Russian History: System against Individual* in which the entire Russian history (as well as that of the world) is approached from the angle of the permanent struggle between 'two incompatible worldviews': system-centrism and individual-centrism (Obolonskiĭ, 1994, p. 9).

Although the supporters of the 'two cultures' theory often sharply criticise 'authoritarianists', they share with them an ahistorical methodology; contemporary beliefs and goals are ascribed to the ideologues and social movements of very different periods, although not along one but rather two lines. As a result, Ivan the Terrible is proclaimed to be a totalitarian ruler while, say, Stepan Razin is a supporter of democracy.<sup>9</sup> Whereas Russian history can provide multiple examples of both the struggle for absolute autocracy and for its limitation, for centralised government and for wider local self-government, for a closed society and for its openness, a historical approach makes one recognise that neither of these tendencies was connected with building democracy or civil society (or against them) since the very terms 'democracy' or 'civil society' did not exist at that time. Novgorod or Pskov *veche* 'republics' were not 'democratic republics' in contemporary, or even in the Ancient Greek sense. They should be studied in the context of the realities of the time.

## **Continuity between the Russian and Soviet political cultures**

Many supporters of the 'authoritarian' theory believe that the Soviet period, with its centralised power and disregard for the individual, was the logical development and culmination of previous Russian history. According to this theory, the Bolsheviks were more Russian traditionalists

than Marxist internationalists. In Brzezinski's words:

Leninism in its political style and organisational form thus became – for all of its sincere revolutionary content and obvious revolutionary social significance – a continuation of the dominant tradition rather than its termination. Stalin further revitalised the autocratic tradition – though he gave it a qualitatively new character ... It is because of this experience, and its institutional and procedural legacies that have continued to this day, that one is justified in asserting that on the plane of politics, the Bolshevik seizure of power marked not the end but the renewal and extension of a tradition deeply rooted in the Russian past. (Brzezinski, 1976, pp. 70–71)

'Authoritarianists' differ slightly on which traditions of which particular period were responsible for Soviet political culture. Some of them (Brzezinski, Szamuely, Simon) do not mention any period and see a unified authoritarian tradition throughout all Russian history. Others (White and Pipes) believe that the conditions for Bolshevik totalitarianism were created during the latter part of the Russian empire when in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Russia allegedly turned into a centralised police state and during the First World War was ruled by extraordinary laws (Pipes, 1974, p. 317; White, 1979, pp. 166–67).

Keenan's opinion is different. He believes that all changes in Russia after Peter the Great were an unsuccessful attempt to alter Muscovite political culture, while Bolshevism was a return to it. As a result, according to Keenan, 'the political culture that emerged and became stabilised by roughly the end of the 1930s was marked by so many features of the earlier traditional political culture – in a new synthesis – that the new may be seen, in long historical perspective, as the continuation of the old' (Keenan, 1986, pp. 164–72).

These views are opposed by those who believe that Soviet political culture disrupted the Russian tradition or grew from just one part of it. Thus, Alain Besançon writes that the Soviet Union 'resembles the pre-revolutionary society by silhouette only, but it is devoid of blood and the warmth of life ... There is only one exception: everything that served as a reservoir of the state's might – the army, nationalism, military technology – develops as a cancer tumor' (Besançon, 1986, p. 128). This position is close to the approach of the supporters of the 'two cultures' concept, according to whom Soviet rulers borrowed and developed only the official authoritarian Russian pre-1917 political culture while trying to destroy all achievements of the alternative democratic culture.

According to Raeff, the Bolshevik victory in 1917 'destroyed both the old intelligentsia and the pre-revolutionary social classes, in particular, the peasantry' and disrupted the possibility of any continuity (Raeff, 1993, p. 106, 100).

There is nothing new in these approaches. Both were formulated right after the 1917 revolution. The idea that the Soviet polity was a mere caricature of tsarist Russia – and that not Karl Marx's but Nikolai Gogol's characters acted in it – was formulated by Nikolai Berdiaev already in 1918, and he later developed this idea in many influential works (Berdiaev, 1991, p. 251).

At the same time the supporters of the revolution and its most radical rightist enemies, for various reasons, claimed that Soviet reality was the final departure from the Russian past and that the latter was totally destroyed. This position was powerfully supported, among others, by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1984).

This discussion was transferred to the West by Russian émigrés. At first, the belief that the Soviet regime succeeded in creating the 'New Man' became popular and the official ideology was seen as shared by the population. Within the framework of the concept of 'totalitarianism', the Soviet polity was thought to be closer to that of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy than pre-1917 Russia. However, beginning from the publication of the Smolensk archives, and especially after the Harvard Project on the Soviet Social System, a gap between the 'official' and 'dominant' political cultures (in the terminology of Archie Brown) was discovered. One of the explanations for this gap was provided by the application of the political culture concept to Russian reality, which one-sidedly stressed the continuity between the Russian past and the Soviet present. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, there was a short period of 'democratic' euphoria. The predominant opinion once again was that Russia had finally broken with its authoritarian past. However, very soon when it became clear that democratisation in Russia was beset with various problems, the continuity theory was revived and the idea of the fundamental opposition of Russia and the West once again gained popularity.

## Politics and research

The idea of the opposition of Russia and the West has a long history. In fact, no elements that are put forward by the 'authoritarianists' as fundamental differences are original, all having been discussed since the eighteenth century. While studying the development of this idea one should take into consideration two major factors: (1) the fact that it

is deeply rooted in politics and has little to do with research and, (2) its clear Eurocentrism (or later Occidentocentrism), that is, connection with a belief in the supremacy of Western civilisation. The belief that the Oriental world did not know feudalism and a notion of private property, or that the all-mighty Oriental despot owned all the land in the country, or that the class of bureaucrats brutally governed the ordinary folk who in fact all were mere serfs of the supreme ruler – all became the basis of the concept of Oriental despotism that became an important element of European, especially French politics in the eighteenth century. Since that time, Russophobes of various persuasions have transferred this model to Russia, claiming that it was part of a hostile and despotic Oriental world, while Russophiles tried to prove that Russia in its development was generally following Europe, although for various reasons perhaps lagged behind a little.

Both tendencies have survived until today practically unchanged and both can provide material on European thought and politics, but not on Russian society. The extreme Occidentocentrism of both manifests itself in the belief that only Western type society (which is also often perceived as an ideal ideological model) is natural and progressive and every other society in the world should be evaluated according to how far it has gone along the road leading to this ideal. All phenomena in another society that match the 'West' are considered to be positive and welcomed while everything else, regardless of its real meaning, are believed to be a sign of stagnation, underdevelopment, and hostility to the West. Besançon graphically applied this approach to Russia. Following the ideas of the Russian nineteenth century Westernizing thinker Petr Chaadaev, he concluded that Russia had neither historic permanency, nor continuity, nor traditions but only 'a catalogue of empty and obsolete forms' (Besançon, 1986, p. 129).

The most informed academic studies of Russian history, that provide solid material for the study of the Russian political culture, developed parallel to these political theories and ideas. But the work of Soviet and contemporary Russian historians devoted to specific problems of the country's history – to say nothing of such sources as chronicles, writings of the Russian thinkers of the pre-Petrine period, archive documents – are hardly used in the studies of Russian political culture discussed in this article.

A careful study of Russian history shows that the Russian culture, like any other culture, changed over time. Recognition of change, of course, does not mean rejection of continuity. But the question of continuity and innovation should be approached historically, without transferring

contemporary political concepts to the past or looking for proof of one's political views in one-sidedly arranged historical facts or outdated general theories.

Today the study of political culture, and political science in general, seems very far from separating political agendas from academic research, or as Max Weber put it, from cognising 'the existing' and 'what ought to exist'. Studies of political culture particularly seem to have stuck in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, approached not on the basis of sources but general theories, in which often remote analogies or historical parallels are seen as proof of influence and problems. Studies of political beliefs in Russia conducted in recent years, including those undertaken by the authors of this chapter, show that the political culture of a particular period is a product of a combination of the evolving political culture of the previous period and outside influences. It continuously changes with a cut of any particular period being slightly different from that of the previous one. Under these conditions, the further any two periods are from each other in history, the weaker is continuity (Lukin 2000a). Thus, the culture of contemporary Russia is much closer to that of contemporary Britain or China than to that of Kievan Rus' – with whom modern Russians would be unable to communicate at all because of the difference of language and customs.

With this in mind, we suggest that students of political culture (including that of Russia) should pay more attention to a deeper study of the belief systems of specific periods. At the first stage, scholars should look at periods that are close to each other in history, and preferably that follow each other, with a special emphasis on detailed analysis of the mechanisms of socialisation, continuity and innovation. Only when this study brings solid results should they turn to more general conclusions.

In the field of study of Russian political culture, very little such work has been done yet. Some interesting studies of the political beliefs of the Soviet period based on such sources as the reports and protocols of NKVD investigations, documents from the CPSU archives, letters of individuals to various party and government organs and newspapers, and others, have been published (Sokolov, 1998; Lebina, 1999). Some work of a similar kind on earlier periods has been done (Gorskiĭ, 2001; Lukin, 2000). But all these studies were conducted almost exclusively by historians and exist somewhat separately from the writings of the political scientists, especially in Russia where most writing on the political culture continues to reproduce extremely broad and unfounded discussions, repeating and retelling in different versions the themes of the

Russian essayists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (such as 'Russia between East and West' or 'Russia as a Turan civilisation') and of the above mentioned Western Sovietologists. A closer look at the most ambitious projects of recent years in this area, such as *The Russian System* by IUrii Pivovarov and Andrei Firsov (2001), and *The Orthodox Civilisation* by Aleksandr Panarin (2002), makes it clear that most of them are non-original compilations of these two flows of literature based on poor knowledge of Russian history and the recent achievements of historical research.

A focused analysis of the political culture of specific periods, the specific mechanisms of accepting the new and preserving the old will be much more helpful for understanding Russian (and world) history than abstract discussions of the essence of the Russian soul, the Russian spirit, the Russian system or Western civilization. When, in the late 1980s, it became possible to conduct public opinion surveys in the Soviet Union some students of Russian political culture began to use their results. Although opinion poll data are not ideal as a source and not many authors pay attention to the problem of bias, these studies are at least based on real data and not on general theories and therefore are much more useful.<sup>10</sup>

## Conclusions

We write this chapter not to support or reject any specific theory. We do not claim that Russia is (or is not) European, was or was not 'predominantly authoritarian',<sup>11</sup> that it can (or cannot) become democratic, or that Russian traditions impede (or stimulate) the development of the civil society and the legal state. Rather, by writing this chapter we want to stress two main points.

First, although some ancient traditions may indirectly and through many mediating generations – seriously be changed in the process – be transferred over time, they can hardly predetermine or even significantly influence contemporary politics. Can German Nazism be explained by the German tradition? It surely can; the Prussian spirit! And can contemporary German democracy be explained by the same tradition? Even more easily; the traditional respect for law and private property, long experience of feudalism and self-government, and the Weimar republic democratic experience! When the countries of the Confucian realm were underdeveloped and poor it was often explained by Confucian traditional authoritarianism, collectivism and disregard for trade. Now, when most of these countries have experienced extraordinary economic progress, the explanation also refers to the Confucian tradition;



its collectivism (manifested in strong corporate ethics), stress on organisation and hard work. Similar explanations of virtually anything can be easily found in the Russian tradition as well. While some elements of the ancient culture, although greatly transformed during generations of socialisation, may have survived until modern times, it is much more reasonable to look for the reasons for the contemporary situation in the much more recent past.

Second, continuous repetition of outdated theories and data supporting sweeping generalisations is not good political science or history. Only a deep investigation of specific periods based on historical sources and evidence can be fruitful. Such investigation should provide a solid base for comparative political studies without which they would degenerate into a meaningless intellectual exercise.

## Notes

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1. Radzivillovskaja and Moscow Academic Chronicle also mention Polotsk.
2. A similar entry can be found in the Pereeslavl' chronicle 'Letopisets Pereeslavlia Suzdal'skogo' (*PSRL*, v.41, p. 104).
3. System by which boyars responsible for local administration retained revenues for their own use.
4. Interestingly, the names of respective localities come from the names of settlements of the servicemen who were a part of the service organisation.
5. Europe also includes Muslim countries. Even if one does not count Turkey, there are also Bosnia (Muslim in its large part) and the predominantly Muslim Albania. It can hardly be argued that Roman traditions significantly influenced their political cultures.
6. Elsewhere Pipes sometimes supports his opinions with references but mostly to literature that was already outdated at the time his book was published (1974).
7. Some claims made by Pipes are quite bizarre. For example, he believes that by the time of the Mongol invasion (thirteenth century) the Mongols 'were in almost every respect culturally superior to the Russians' (Pipes, 1974, p. 56, note). To prove this point he refers to the opinion of an English traveler of the end of the sixteenth century, Giles Fletcher. Any person can surely have his own beliefs about what 'culture' is. However, it is hard to imagine that the American professor sincerely believes a nomad economy to be higher than a settled one or that paganism is more cultured than Christian monotheism. We do not even mention the artistic culture.
8. There existed a theory of the feudal character of Ancient Oriental societies in official Soviet historiography, where it coexisted with theories of the 'Oriental Mode of Production' and slavery.

9. This is almost literally the approach of Robert Tucker, for whom the Russian history is just a constant repetition of same phenomena: the Soviet system is a new tsarist autocracy, labor-day minimums in *kolkhoz* are a new *barshchina*, instability in the Yeltsin period is a new 'Times of Troubles', Gorbachev is another Alexander II, etc. (Tucker, 1992, pp. 175–96).
10. For use of survey data to analyse post-Soviet Russian political culture, see Brown, 2005.
11. In fact, as Archie Brown aptly put it, 'It is worth keeping in mind that in every land where today democracy prevails there was at one time authoritarian rule' (Brown, 2005).

# 3

## Partial Adaptation and Political Culture

*Richard Sakwa*

A revolution may well put an end to autocratic despotism and to rapacious or power-seeking oppression, but it will never produce a true reform in ways of thinking. Instead, new prejudices, like the ones they replaced, will serve as a leash to control the great unthinking mass.

(Kant, 1784/1970, p. 55)

For most of the modern era Russia has been looking for a suitable political form to institutionalise its diversity and to defend its identity while searching for effective ways to interact with the rest of the world. This tension can be defined, on the one hand, as self-affirmation, the attempt to remain loyal to some sense of self-identity (*samobytnost'*) rooted in national traditions, and on the other hand, adaptation to the norms and technological imperatives of parts of the world that have taken the lead in defining the nature of the advanced modernity of a particular time. The debate over the nature of the transition in contemporary Russia is, once again, a debate over Russia's past and how to draw the balance between self-affirmation and adaptation. The 'self' to be affirmed, of course, does not remain a constant, since it is modified by previous patterns of affirmation and adaptation. By the same token, the political form taken by defenders of self-affirmation in contemporary Russia is not homogeneous, but in broad terms can be characterised as 'traditionalist', whereas the adaptationists tend to be liberals, of whatever stripe. As the dominance of economic liberalism during post-Communism demonstrates, adaptation can be lopsided.

## Partial adaptation

When it comes to politics, adaptation is necessarily a partial process. It would be absurd for one country to try to copy wholesale the institutions of another. It is the nature and parameters of this *difference* that the political culture approach can help us explore. For traditionalists, of course, the essence of post-transitional consolidation would be to maximise difference, appealing to nativist political culture as the basis for rejecting external models. For the economic liberals of 1990s Russia, the difference was reduced to almost nothing. The core of President Vladimir Putin's leadership in the 2000s was the attempt to negotiate a new balance, if not a third way, between adaptation and affirmation. A system of 'partial adaptation' emerged, appealing explicitly to Russian political culture while at the same time being shaped and constrained by earlier attempts at adaptation. The partial nature of Putin's adaptation strategy is derived not only from the traditional imbalance between economic and political facets of modernisation, but primarily from a belief that excessive adaptation could be as dangerous as too little. While committed to a certain type of democratisation, the Putin leadership recognised that democracy needs to be rooted in, and congruent with, national conditions (*samobytnost'*).

The strategy of partial adaptation is therefore a delicate balancing act torn by its inherent dualism. The outcome is necessarily uncertain, in danger of losing the support of traditionalists while failing to win that of Western-oriented liberals. The Putin strategy for political and economic modernisation cannot rely on the strata or institutions traditionally relied on by modernising regimes, such as the army or Western-educated elites, and is itself forced to adapt to the social milieu in which it finds itself – the practice of dual adaptation (to external modernity and domestic reality). The modernising technocratic regime becomes increasingly reliant on the bureaucracy, which is oriented to the power system itself. The existence of this bureaucratic mass provides an opportunity for innovation since it can provide critical support for a modernising leadership, but at the same time it subverts modernising elements and its striving for regulation and control may well extinguish liberty itself.

The question today is whether the country's apparent lack of democratic traditions under both the Tsarist and Communist regimes forever doom it to an authoritarian system, or will Russia this time be able to join 'the high road of world civilisation', as it is often put. Can Russia achieve a liberal democracy based on civil society and a market economy? Has Russia the political and social resources to establish a viable

and enduring political order based on congruence between what Eckstein calls 'patterns of authority' of the government and other units of society? Can a stable balance be drawn between self-affirmation and adaptation, and will this be recognisably democratic? Putin and a large part of the Russian political establishment appeal to Russia's sense of itself, not necessarily in conflict with the West but distinct from it, as the source of the legitimacy of their rule. Again, this is not necessarily undemocratic, but too often it appears distinct from a fully pluralistic, accountable and law-governed democracy.

At the same time, the equivocal nature of a strategy of partial adaptation provides rich opportunities for entrenched social interests, including the security apparatus, economic regulatory bodies and entrepreneurs of various sorts (including the denizens of the shadow economy) to exploit the ambiguities and lack of institutional consolidation to advance their own interests. In short, does the element of self-affirmation, necessary for any legitimate rule in a world of nation-states, have to come into contradiction with adaptation, the attempt to come into conformity with the prevalent norms of Western modernity? In the contemporary Russian case the technocratic modernising regime and its bureaucratic allies sought to find yet another distinctive ('third') path between the two.

We discuss Eckstein's ideas later, but for now note that commentators are caught in an apparent bind. If there is a primordial logic for Russian self-affirmation to lead towards the establishment of a monocentric power system, then by what mechanism is it possible to break out of this logic? If none, then those fighting for accountable government and the rule of law may as well pack up their tents and stay at home. However, this would be a clear case of the abuse of the political culture approach. Political culture is always far better at predicting the past than the future. As Fang Lizhi, one of the inspirers of the democracy movement in China in 1989 put it, we must beware of the false premises of the 'law of conservation of democracy'; the idea that in society, just as with the law of conservation of energy in nature, nothing can be added or subtracted but that the constants only change their form (*The Independent*, 18 January 1989). Instead, this paper argues, on the basis of the Russian example, that we need to think more politically about the political culture approach, and suggest there is a greater mutability in patterns of societal development than simplistic applications of political culture would allow. At the same time, there is a limit to what is possible at a given stage of development, and these constraints include the political cultural prejudices of a society. Wholesale external adaptation can be as destabilising as uncritical affirmation.

## History: determinism and possibilities

In his meeting with Western scholars and journalists on 6 September 2004, Putin three times stressed that 'Russia's history and unique differences render it such that many things do not function here as they do in the West' (personal notes; *Izvestiia*, 10, 11 September 2004). The role of political traditions in assessing the prospects for democracy is clearly a pivotal issue, yet there is no consensus over Russia's past. While the 'rebirth of history' school of thought played a prominent part in the interpretation of the Central European transitions (Glenny, 1990), in Russia the question is usually posed not as a return to the past but of 'overcoming the past', to use the phrase common in Germany after the war and once again following unification in 1990. Does Russia possess what is now called 'a usable past', traditions that can sustain and legitimise the current democratic transition that is as radical as anything Russia has ever endured? To what degree is Russia locked into a pattern of 'path dependency' from which it cannot escape (Bunce, 1999).

## Historical patterns of partial adaptation

Numerous commentators have argued that Russian history has stymied the sources of democratic openings. Leo Hartog (1996), for example, argues that two centuries of Mongol rule established a dynamic towards 'oriental despotism' as the model of imperial rule. This interpretation of Russian political culture has a long pedigree. It is astonishing how many Western visitors on the basis of an acquaintance of a few days have been bold enough to write devastating commentaries on the country. When Alexis de Tocqueville wrote *Democracy in America* in 1829, he did so on the basis of extended travels up and down the United States. By contrast, the Marquis De Custine appeared to take a journey into the heart of darkness, based on a thirteen day stay in Russia in 1839. For Custine, 'Government in Russia is military discipline in place of civil order, a state of siege which has become the normal state of society' (1991, p. 44). Custine insisted that 'In Russia, the government rules everything and vitalises nothing' (p. 225). Custine notes the selective importation of Western techniques to reinforce archaic patterns of governance, a feature of Bolshevik rule:

Since Peter I, the problem confronting the rulers of Russia has been to take advantage of administrative progress in the European nations in order to govern sixty million people in the Oriental manner. The reigns of Catherine the Great and Alexander merely prolonged

the systematic childhood of this nation which still exists only in name. (p. 102)

Custine's letters form the basis of a tradition of thinking about Russia that was brilliantly summarised by Tibor Szamuely in his *The Russian Tradition* (1974). According to him, 'Most incomprehensible and alien of all, pervading and colouring every Western description of Russia, was the awesome sway of an omnipotent state exercising unlimited control over the persons, the property and the very thoughts of its subjects' (1974, p. 8). He proposed a variant of the 'frontier thesis', arguing that the absence of natural borders and a relentless cycle of invasions and repulsions, of occupation and colonisation, shaped the omnipotent Russian state. The picture that Szamuely draws, however, is no doubt exaggerated, and he appears to have projected on to the Tsarist past the extreme features of the Soviet state's dominance over society. A common feature of much Central European writing, typified by Milan Kundera's influential article (1984), is the attempt to cast Russia out of Europe into the outer darkness while stressing their own Europeanness. An important strand in Russian thinking has done the same, though from the opposite perspective. Yet the ambiguities constantly reveal themselves, and the one-dimensional aspect of much of this literature remains startling and reveals as much about Westernising arrogance as it does about Russia.

Tim McDaniel (1996, pp. 10–14) has talked of a 'cultural trap' inherent in Russian society that has prevented it adapting successfully to the Western modernisation model. In part this is due, in his view, to 'the Russian idea', a messianic belief that Russia can find a better path to modernity by drawing on its own institutions and values that distinguish it from the West (cf. Duncan, 2000). These include the peasant commune, serfdom, the Orthodox church, a strong sense of 'community' based on peasant isolation, a highly developed spirituality, a popular egalitarianism and the idea of the people (*narod*). The 'Russian idea' is at the core of an identity that is both religious and progressive. According to McDaniel, the attempt by the tsars to Westernise while remaining loyal to a residual conception of the Russian idea, an earlier version of partial adaptation, provoked contradictions that ultimately led to the fall of autocracy. For Tucker (1987), the Soviet system represented a continuation in new forms of traditional Russian authoritarianism, a view that tended to divert attention away from the sources of authoritarianism within the Bolshevik movement.

Daniels (2000a) sees the Soviet regime as part of Russia's complex modernisation, with the ideological part of their project (above all

soviet democracy and workers' control) failing more or less from the beginning, but 'in relation to what we might call the real tasks that history imposed on it, the Soviet 'experiment' was far from a complete failure' (p. 264). The transition model in the post-Communist era, in his view, failed to understand the actual achievements of modernisation of the Soviet epoch, and thus rushed to embrace 'an obsolete Western ideology', leaving the post-Soviet policy elite with 'no intellectual tools for grasping the realities of the modernization process' (p. 266). In our terms, Russia's post-Communist liberals rushed to adapt to some externally generated model, and inadequately affirmed the achievements of the system that they inherited. Much the same could be said of the Bolshevik modernisers in the first place, and Russia's repetition of 'leaps into modernity', and the repeated perverse effects, is a notable trait of Russia's political culture (White, 1977). The resistance to yet another Western modernisation project in the post-Communist era according to Truscott (1997) took the form of the assertion of a 'Russia first' reaction, which in certain respects laid the basis for Putin's partial adaptation strategy based on his understanding of congruence.

### **The 'mono-centric' state and displaced sovereignty**

While the 'peculiarities of German history' have been analysed in terms of the distinctive development of German society and capitalism (Blackbourn and Eley, 1984), from the above it is clear that analysis of Russia's peculiar path focuses more on the over-development of the Russian state at the expense of society. In modern idiom, this could be put as the hypertrophy of the state and the atrophy of civil society. From the struggle against the Mongol occupation to the defeat of the Swedes and the Turks, the French and the Germans, and today's struggle against terrorism (Putin, 2004), the question of Russian statehood has been central while the development of popular sovereignty, even in pre-democratic forms, has been stymied. In political terms we can identify a four-fold dynamic to state development: (1) the state as a defensible geopolitical entity, in its imperial guise expanding influence to neighbouring territories; (2) the relationship between state and society, in which societal development takes second place to the pursuit of the geopolitical interests of the state (the infantilisation of the nation, as Custine put it); (3) the internal organisation of the state (the state as administration); (4) and the state as an element in the system of international relations.

The interaction between these factors has been accompanied by the development of what Pivovarov and Firsov (2001) call a monocentric



system of power, dubbed by them the 'Russian System'. Emerging during what they call 'the great autocratic revolution' (1517–1649), Russian Power (*Vlast'*) became the only active social subject in the realm, creating the social order, the Russian System proper, in which the people were reduced to a 'population'. With the October revolution the Russian System took on a mass character to become a Power-population system (*Vlastepopuliatsiia*), distant from any substantive notion of society. Not only was sovereignty once again displaced from the people to the power system, but the nation itself, echoing Custine's argument, is left undeveloped as a subject of the political process. The Russian System was wracked by four great redistributions of power and property: the *oprichnina* of Ivan the Terrible; the reforms of Peter the Great; the Bolshevik revolution; and the Gorbachev-Yeltsin transformation. The development of the *nomenklatura* system in the Soviet years allowed the full potential of the Russian System to emerge and to dominate the whole country, and for its anti-capitalist features to triumph.

According to Pivovarov and Firsov (1997, p. 90), the autonomy of independent actors is rarely seen and usually lasts only briefly: 'Russian Power is the Mono-subject, whose normal functioning presupposes either the absence of other subjects in general (in theory), or their subaltern, incomplete, secondary and functional (in relation to Power) subjectivity'. Thus the *longue durée* of Russian history is presented as a single process until the decay of the Soviet manifestation of the Russian System. Pivovarov (2002) took the analysis a step further in his analysis of Russian political culture's focus on Lenin and its obsession with property forms, what he called the 'redistributional Russian power system'. According to him, Russian political culture today remains remarkably similar to the system that emerged during the rise of the Russian state from the thirteenth century, which in the new conditions could drive Russia once again into an impasse. This is an impressive rendition of essentialist approaches to Russian political culture, but fails to identify sources of renewal and the complexity of state–society relations.

Steven Marks (2003) has taken the power system argument to its logical conclusion, arguing that Russia's perceived particularism lies in its rejection of liberal democracy and market institutions while acting as the rallying point of enemies of the West and liberal democracy everywhere. He uses Tolstoy and Dostoevsky to demonstrate the case that Russia's distinctiveness has been seen to be pathological. This tendentious view of Russian history epitomises the political culture approach at its most primitive. Kaspe (2001–02, p. 20) comments on this approach as

being imbued with 'the shadow of fatal destiny in the spirit of A. Akhiezer, A. Yanov and other constructors of fundamental (and monstrously primitive as a result of this very fundamentalism) "base stereotypes of Russian civilisation" '. A more sophisticated approach, drawing on Milyukov's 'state school' of Russian historiography that has deep resonance today, is that the history of Russia is the 'thousand-year process of unifying the Russian state, a process unexampled in perseverance and heroism' (Pozdnyakov, 1993, p. 5).

Even from the historical perspective, the thesis of the Tsarist state's omnipotence has been challenged, especially by those influenced by Russian patriotic thought. The revisionist view of Russian history has been developed furthest by Sergei Pushkarev. In his view, when the carpet of history is lifted not only skeletons are to be found. He insists that, 'The widespread belief that the Russian people have always lived in slavery, are used to it and are incapable of ordering their lives on the basis of freedom and independence is contrary to the historical facts' (1988, p. xv). He drew a thick line between the Tsarist regime and the totalitarianism that came later. Rather than the Soviet system being a continuation of Tsarism, he sought to demonstrate the elements of democracy and freedom that illuminate Russian history and which proved, in his view, that there were various alternatives for the free development of the country. He cites many examples of what he considers to be an enduring struggle for self-government and individual liberty marked by restraints on princely power, in particular citing the role of such institutions as the Boyar Duma and the Veche (1988, p. 2). Interestingly enough, in his 6 September 2004 meeting, mentioned above, Putin noted that the democracy of the Novgorod Veche, where motions were carried by those who shouted loudest and longest, was reminiscent of the raucous chaos of contemporary democracy.

Instead of focusing on the relative strength of the state *vis-à-vis* society, a fruitful approach is to examine the nature of Russian statehood itself. The absence of a developed civil society denied the Russian state a firm foundation and gave it a superficial and almost military occupational character. This view is summed up in Gramsci's well-known adage that, 'In Russia the state was everything and civil society was gelatinous' (1971, p. 238). But even here there were other tendencies at work that refute Gramsci's argument. Thurston in his book on *Liberal City, Conservative State* (1987) discusses the development of Moscow politics on the eve of the revolution. He does not put it in this way, but his material supports the argument that hegemonic strategies of rule were beginning to emerge. Moscow, a city of Old Believers and dominated by the textile

industry that used primarily native capital, had moved away from the St. Petersburg model of coercive rule, dominated by foreign capital and the metal industry. In Moscow civil society was far from gelatinous, and would have been able to resist the Bolshevik seizure of power if not for the outside intervention of Kronstadt sailors and Latvian Riflemen. Bradley provides much evidence for the emergence of a vibrant civil society before the revolution (2002), although he notes that this public sphere lacked effective integration into the political order of the day (1995).

The Soviet regime, too, was marked by that two-fold deficiency typical of the Tsarist system: strong state power vitiated by the underdevelopment of the autonomous institutions of the state; and a relationship between regime and society that once again suggests military analogies. Marx had seen the solution of the class conflicts of modern society in the abolition of civil society; and Lenin had found that an effective way of achieving political integration in a revolutionary society was simply to abolish politics (Polan, 1984). The managerial rule of the Communist Party and personalised leadership, notably under Stalin, vied for dominance, but the state remained an administrative force rather than an autonomous political institution. Gorbachev's attempt during *perestroika* to separate the Communist Party from the state resulted in the collapse of both. However, Brown's argument (1984a, p. 188) that by the late Soviet period three 'cultural supports for the status quo' had emerged, the fear of chaos, patriotism, and reverence for the Soviet pantheon of leaders, above all Lenin, has a resonance today in the continued nostalgia for the Soviet period. This suggests that some sort of congruence had taken place, at least at the cultural level, although the relative ease with which the Soviet system dissolved and the Soviet state disintegrated suggests a major political failure. (For a discussion of the reformability of the Soviet system, see Cohen, Brown and Kramer, all 2004.) The central question remains today: can a modern functionally differentiated state based on consensus and modern forms of legitimacy in its relationship with society be created in Russia?

## Political culture: constraints and contingency

Political culture is very good at predicting the past; the question remains whether the concept has any explanatory power for the present. As Brown (1989, p. 21) notes, while political cultures do not change overnight, neither are they immutable. And what is the concept meant to explain: the behaviour of elites, popular orientations to power and

authority, the diversity of sub-cultural factors and tendencies? White's (1979, p. 1) definition of political culture as 'the attitudinal and behavioural matrix within which the political system is located' reflects this extremely broad agenda. Recognising the methodological problems involved in analysing the cultural bases of politics, White later warned against 'futile attempts to import the methodology of the natural sciences into the study of human affairs' (1984a, p. 352).

From the discussion above it is clear that debate over patterns of Russian historical development have veered between extreme determinism and exaggerated possibilism. Is some sort of synthesis of the various views possible, and if so, what form could such a synthesis take? At its most sophisticated, a resolution of the argument about the role of political culture in shaping political change would transcend sterile antinomies and provide a conceptualisation able to incorporate all views while not denying contradiction. Such a synthesis is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, the sections later try to provide a framework for such an analysis. There are different kinds of uses to which the political culture approach can be turned. Below we shall suggest a number of ways in which the approach has something to offer; to us as observers, to politicians as actors, and to an overall understanding of patterns of historical development.

### **Multiplicity of cultural traditions**

James Alexander (2000, p. x) notes how he was 'appalled at times by the seemingly superficial and misguided attempts to represent Russian beliefs, behavior, and expectations', provoking him to embark on an extended study of the complexity and multi-layered nature of Russian political culture. He focused on the concept of 'culture' and its potential for change rather than any narrowly defined notion of 'political' culture. He insists that a nation's political culture cannot be reduced to one or two simple and measurable parameters but that it is a complex web of malleable relations and contradictions; and he seeks to understand them by using what he insists are non-standard approaches. The author insists that it is misleading to suggest that there is a homogeneous national political culture, and instead argues that each community will have contours of its own. He identifies two types of political culture: 'democratic' and 'authoritarian', although Alexander allows some subtle blending of the two. He adds another variable, Eckstein's notion of 'formlessness', to suggest the flux undergone by political culture in a period of accelerated change. The basic conclusion is that Russian political culture still bears the imprint of Soviet authoritarianism, yet was 'primed' (p. 3) for liberal

democracy as it exited communism. This is an argument developed by Nicolai Petro (1995). In his view, a nation's political culture is usually multi-layered. He identified a dual political culture in Russia, with the second represented by a latent democratism. Petro's later study of Novgorod (2004) applied the idea of multiple traditions and the importance of historical memory as a rich source of political capital that can help root democratic adaptation in a native idiom (cf. Putnam, 1993).

### Causal determinism

Few would suggest that there is a direct link between political culture and the design of political institutions and political behaviour. Nevertheless, the fundamental postulate of theories of political culture is that the basic beliefs of society in one way or another shape the political system. The question becomes whether the values of a particular society are conducive for democracy, and how to measure them. In addition, it is equally unclear how these beliefs shape public policy choices. Moreover, as we suggest later in our discussion of Eckstein, if a gulf opens up between popular orientations and elite institutions, then the stability of the polity is in danger. This appears to have been the case in the late Soviet period, with a nascent civil society, complex economy and increasingly differentiated society coming into contradiction with an ever more obviously archaic political order. Putin's consolidation of the state is today seen by many as representing a similar contradiction, represented above all by the emergence of a middle class some 13 million strong by 2004 (*Moscow News*, 15–21 September 2004). For Barrington Moore (1967, p. 418), as is well known, there could be no democracy without a bourgeoisie. While Seymour Martin Lipset (1959, 1994) and others (e.g. Rueschemeyer *et al.*, 1992), have devoted much attention to the causal links between levels of social development and democracy, the political cultural orientation of the new bourgeoisie in Russia remains a topic to be studied. The direction of causation remains unresolved. As Evgenia Albats puts it, 'Has the nation's preference for authoritarianism given rise to the Putin regime, or has Kremlin propaganda, aimed at suppressing political and economic opposition to the regime, been so successful in disseminating this myth that it has taken on the appearance of truth' (*Moscow Times*, 17 May 2004). The notion of political culture here is useful in that it forces us to ask a certain type of question; and at its best encourages sophisticated models of causation.

### Historical embeddedness

The Soviet system as a whole did not dissolve but instead it fragmented, and great chunks of the old system remain firmly lodged in the

post-Communist body politic. The main element that dissolved was the Leninist party system, of which few traces remain other than an authoritarian and personalised style of politics. In addition, the Leninist political order was predicated on the political infantilisation of the allegedly sovereign people, where political solutions emerged not out of a political process and structured pluralism but from a priori resolved positions. The Soviet system was an extended exercise in the displacement of sovereignty. In part, this emerged out of the survival concerns of the power system itself, and in part from the over-riding attachment to an ideological project (however much the precise details of this project changed and the instrumental purposes to which it was subordinated). The modernisation project of post-Communist Russia has perpetuated some aspects of Soviet infantilisation and the displacement of sovereignty. This is reflected, for example, in Reddaway and Glinksy's (2001) characterisation of the Yeltsin era as 'market Bolshevism'. The elites that emerged out of the Soviet Union concerned themselves with redistributive politics (as noted by Pivovarov) without third party enforcement, while the masses were left to console themselves with the politics of identity. The political culture approach helps identify certain repetitive patterns that transcend the features of any particular regime or epoch.

### **Leadership and political capital**

How can we explain the marked shift in leadership politics in the transition from Yeltsin to Putin? In part, clearly, the character and political personality of the individual leader has a role to play – the contingency that has forever attended the development of human affairs. Leadership qualities, moreover, clearly interact with the historical moment in which they operate, and are shaped by the specific tasks facing a society at any particular time. Drawing on the concept formulated by James MacGregor Burns (1978), Archie Brown contrasts 'transformational' leaders, who change not just policy but the system as well, with 'transactional' ones, who may well achieve major policy changes but who remain within the bounds of the existing order (Brown, 2001, pp. 6–8). The characterisation of any particular leader depends on the categories of transformation that are chosen, and in the case of Putin this is particularly important since he was very much the consolidator rather than the revolutionary, and yet he was able to transform the way that the system, inherited from Yeltsin, worked.

Putin was quite explicit in drawing on aspects of Russia's political tradition. For him, this was undoubtedly a reserve of political capital that shaped his view of the role of politics in a modernising society.

The theme emerged in his very first major political statement, the *Millennium Manifesto*, in the section on 'statism':

It will not happen soon, if ever, that Russia will become the second edition of, say, the US or Britain in which liberal values have deep historic roots. Our state and its institutions and structures have always played an exceptionally important role in the life of the country and its people. For Russians a strong state is not an anomaly to be discarded. Quite the contrary, they see it as the source and guarantee of order, and the initiator and the main driving force of change. (Sakwa, 2004, p. 257)

In the same document he spoke of Russia's greatness (*derzhavnost'*) and traditions of patriotism and social solidarity, while simultaneously rejecting any attempt to impose on Russia any monolithic vision of 'the Russian idea' or totalitarian forms of political dominance. Putin clearly sought to balance what he perceived to be aspects of Russia's political culture with the political and social pluralism required to allow the country to take its place as a worthy partner in the international community of states. The whole Putin project represents an original attempt to find a new balance between self-affirmation and adaptation. For this he drew on past political capital, while the search for a new synthesis was one of the main generators of new political capital. (For an excellent exposition of how this worked in practice at the popular level, see Shestopal, 2004.)

It later became clear that for Putin unregulated democracy represented as much of a danger to his modernising agenda as did Communist restorationism. Such a view once again left the political regime dangerously exposed, asserting itself as the arbiter of permissible levels of independent political activism – the monocentric power system intolerant of independent actors discussed earlier. Our point here is not whether such a system was viable, but to stress Putin's use of these aspects of Russia's traditions as a normative resource in his attempt to restore the efficacy of the Russian state. This programme had widespread popular resonance as seen from his consistently high poll ratings in his first term and in his re-election as president in 2004, but began to break down in his second term. The Putin balancing act between self-affirmation and adaptation unravelled, and he became increasingly reliant on the neo-Soviet part of the administrative system, which had always been sceptical (undoubtedly, with good reason) of contemporary Western modernity.

### Inability to digest the past

Marshall Poe (2003) argues that self-affirmation rather than adaptation (to use the language of this paper) is the key to Russia's survival as a nation. The measure of success is the ability to borrow from (rather than adapt to) the Western model of modernity while forging a political entity robust enough not only to survive in a hostile environment (repeatedly attacked from all sides) but also to insulate itself from the modernisation process. This was achieved by limiting the development of the public sphere, regulating the economy, and devoting resources to the military; the subordination of society to the imperative of state survival. The autocratic model (in its imperial and Soviet guises) in its own terms, according to Poe, was a phenomenal success; only when measured against conventional democratic and constitutional standards is Russia found wanting. It was the confrontation with Western powers that forced Russia onto its peculiar path; the very Europe that at the same time emerged as the model of modernity to which the progressive part of society sought for Russia to adapt. The West for Russia has always had a dual face – as threat and as a model; it has never unequivocally been, to use the language of identity politics (cf. Neumann, 1995, 1999) Russia's constitutive other.

The tension between Russia as an autonomous and autochthonous great power and its drive for integration into the late modern political and economic world order (see Goldgeier and McFaul, 2003) is far from transcended and was vividly in evidence in the period after the Beslan school massacre of 1–3 September 2004. The differences in interpretation, with Putin viewing the events as a matter of Russia's national survival as a state, while the West worried about the retrenchment of democratic norms, provoked the deepest discord between Russia and the West since the fall of the Soviet Union and vividly illustrated not so much a 'values' gap, as an epistemological gulf rooted in the problematic analysed by Poe.

The attempt to pursue a non-Western path to modernity, neither 'European' nor 'Asian' but 'Russian', is fraught with contradictions that are once again being played out in the post-Communist era. The demand by many *soi-disant* 'democrats' for Russia to repudiate the imperial and Soviet eras is highly problematic; but the failure to 'repent' and come to terms with the Stalinist past, to use Solzhenitsyn's formulation of the problem, allows the Stalinist political conjuncture to remain a live force in contemporary Russian politics (Boobbyer, 2005). Applebaum (2003) vividly describes how the long shadow of the gulag throws its dark light on contemporary Russia, where there have been no truth and



reconciliation commissions, no lustration laws, no apologies and no compensation. All that there has been, through the instrument of Alexander Yakovlev's commission, is 'rehabilitation', a peculiarly Soviet acknowledgement of the sufferings endured by the victims of the Soviet system.

Garry Kasparov, chair of the liberal 'Committee 2008: Free Choice', which fought to ensure that the elections in that year would retain at least some elements of pluralism and alternativity, called Putin an 'exemplary Stalinist': 'He speaks the old Soviet language in virtually all areas. He presses the freedom of the press, hinders free commerce, he has knocked Russia off its democratic path' (Mosnews.com, 14 September 2004, in *Johnson's Russia List* 8368/1). The source of Russia's post-Communist neo-traditionalism, in his view, was the failure to acknowledge the guilt of its Soviet predecessors. Putin's 'third way' programme of an autochthonous path for Russia at one time appeared to provide a way of finally transcending the tension between self-affirmation and adaptation (Sakwa, 2004). However, rather than the tension between the repudiation and the appeal of the past being a contradiction that might prove fruitful for synthesis and transcendence, it appeared that Russia was once again locked in an antinomy, a tension that cannot be resolved.

The political culture approach helps locate the social origins of the failure to resolve this contradiction, typical of all developing societies. The pattern of antinomism, of axiological politics and emergency rule, where the power system remains distant from society but where nevertheless a peculiar adaptation of democracy to Russian political culture has taken place, and has provoked repeated political breakdowns (Bliakher, 2002). Only when society, as it were, is able to digest contradiction and allow contradiction to take political forms, can order replace the endless balancing act of stability politics. However, when contradiction takes excessively political forms it generates the closure of politics, antinomy, and renders the whole political system brittle and prone to breakdown. Putin's regime appeared to be moving into this dangerous zone following the 'constitutional coup' of 13 September 2004 when, post-Beslan, he announced a raft of measures, including the appointment of regional governors, representing a step backwards in terms of the development of democracy and federalism. This was seen by many as Russia's long-anticipated lurch back to its traditional authoritarianism. Others justified the move by arguing that despite attempts to adapt to Western ideas, Russia was 'objectively incapable' of acting according to European patterns: 'Because of the peculiarities of our historic development, the genesis of national psychology and national character,

Russia has created its own ... Eurasian model of political behaviour' (Igor Toporovskii, *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, 14 September 2004).

### **Empirical identification of the Russian citizen**

The fall of Communism removed restrictions from the analysis of the political orientations of the Russian citizen, and today we enjoy an abundance of detailed studies. In contrast to common assumptions about the innate authoritarian proclivities of the Russian public, the picture that emerges from this work is one of complexity and a multi-layered and exceptionally sophisticated social consciousness. While traditional interpretations of Russian political culture have seen it as primarily passive, collectivist, state oriented, leader-dominated and messianic (Keenan, 1986; Yanov, 1978, 1981, 1987; Laqueur, 1993; McDaniel, 1996), much recent work has discovered a strong commitment towards the substance of democracy (the separation of powers, elections, accountability, the rule of law and so on) and civil liberties, although the word 'democracy' on its own is not particularly popular (Hahn, 1991; Whitefield and Evans, 1996; Wyman, 1996; Miller, White and Heywood, 1998; Colton and McFaul, 2002). Opinion about democracy is negative, associated with the mass immiseration and political conflicts of the 1990s, but support for political differentiation and social toleration suggest a value orientation close to the proclaimed principles of Western modernity.

Studies of electoral behaviour tend to confirm this view, with Colton and McFaul (2003) arguing that Russian voters approached the choice of parties and candidates within much the same rational framework as the Western voter, and they argue that the poor showing of liberal parties in the 1999 election was based on a sober analysis of their ability to deal with the problems facing Russia (p. 159); a negative assessment that was repeated in 2003 and saw the main liberal parties expelled as a significant force from parliament (Sakwa, 2005). Colton and McFaul note that authoritarian attitudes were only one factor that prompted voters to support Putin, stressing that 'even in the realm of political values, pro-Putin citizens were not unambiguously authoritarian. They were much less apt than Zyuganov voters to favor a revival of the unreformed Soviet regime. On Chechnya, they were no more hawkish than the rest' (p. 220).

An important recent analysis suggests that in terms of political efficacy, 'the Russian public has more in common with Western publics and is less influenced by the legacy of repressive regimes than many would believe' (Karaman, 2004, p. 45). The author distinguishes between 'internal efficacy', a sense of personal awareness of politics where there

is a positive correlation between levels of political knowledge and perception of ability to influence government. The notion of external efficacy focuses on attitudes to the existing government and immediate policies. An individual may have a strong sense of political commitment (internal efficacy), but be sharply critical of contemporary political and economic reforms although feel unable to achieve changes (poor external efficacy). The implication is that as political understanding rises, the more the citizen will feel empowered to overcome the gulf between internal and external efficacy.

Kulberg and Zimmerman (1999) are undoubtedly correct in identifying a 'values gap' between a Western-oriented liberal elite and a people concerned with social rights and welfare issues; in conditions of mass poverty, this is hardly surprising, and may reflect no more than opinions of the present rather than any deeper values or profound attitudes. However, Gerber and Mendelson (2002) found popular support for economic rights and weak support for individual rights and civil liberties, and indeed a willingness to see civil rights suspended in favour of order and national security. The dilemmas of the trade-off between order and liberty is explored by Rose and Munro (2002), although their findings are not so unequivocal as Gerber and Mendelson. In the wake of the terrorist assault against Russia in the summer of 2004, including the downing of two planes and the Beslan school massacre, opinion veered towards support for security at the price of civil liberties, a shift already noted in the United States following 9/11. The depth of commitment to democracy, in the post-Communist world and elsewhere, is tempered by concerns of personal and national survival (Gibson, 1996).

Support for Putin's consolidation of the state reflected an appreciation of the real dangers facing the country, but did not necessarily reflect a deeper political culture of authoritarianism. Support for a strong presidency of the Putin (or Gaullist) type is not incompatible with support for fundamental democratic values. As Elena Nemirovskaja, the founder of the Moscow School of Political Science, argued, the strengthening of the presidency 'shows that Russia was capable of building this strong institution out of the chaos that reigned in the 1990s. This institution, however, is close to the Russian tradition. It is part of this tradition.' She insisted that other democratic institutions, 'like the Federation Council, the Duma, the media, courts, regional governments and local self-governments', needed to be strengthened as well, and those that argued that the opposite was taking place should devote themselves to building them up and thus contribute to the modernisation of Russian political and public life, a process that was far bigger than the leadership of

a Yeltsin or a Putin (*Russia Profile*, Issue 3, August–September 2004, p. 27). This is the model of internal political efficacy in action, confirming the importance of Karaman's work on political culture.

### **Congruence: regime and society**

Above all, what is the nature of the nascent political order? In a recent restatement of his ideas, Eckstein (1998) outlines two basic principles. The first is that:

Governments perform well to the extent that their authority patterns are congruent with the authority patterns of other units of society. (p. 4)

The second focuses on the viability and performance of democratic governments and runs as follows:

Democratic governments perform well only if their authority patterns exhibit 'balanced disparities' – that is, combinations of democratic and nondemocratic traits. (p. 4)

This is an important corrective in the post-Communist context, where too often there has been excessive emphasis on abstract principles and processes of 'democratisation' at the expense of framing constitutional orders appropriate to distinctive national conditions (pp. 26–29). In other words, partial adaptation is the only way that a viable political order in some way congruent with national traditions can be established. As Kaspe notes (2001–02, p. 23), long-term outcomes can differ considerably from intermediate (transitional) results. 'Russian democracy', he argues, 'if fated to survive for any significant period, can only be organically tied to its sub-strata, even at the price of marked deviation from the ideal type (it is ideal because all actual societies to some degree or other deviate from it), or will be rejected'. From this perspective Putin's presidency, for all of its contradictory features, can be seen, according to Kaspe, 'as objectively obstructing this rejection, something that was a real possibility by the end of Yeltsin's leadership'. Congruence theory is a useful complement in the examination of dilemmas of affirmation and dual adaptation in a democratic transition.

The problem, of course, lies in defining what are the appropriate historical and cultural factors that constitute 'national conditions'. Lukin (2000a) suggests that even Russia's so-called democrats were imbued with non-democratic attitudes and behavioural traits. The ascription of

some primordial anti-pluralism and impatience with alternatives in the democratic movement was earlier examined by Biriukov and Sergeev (1993). In other words, personal and institutional behaviour is conditioned by a broader cultural matrix; not everything is possible in a democratic transition, as Pye argued so many years ago (1965). Comparisons with the study of the travails of democracy in Asia (Pye 1985) and Latin America (Booth and Seligson, 1993) suggest that the conceptual problem of balancing the respective roles of structure and agency, of national character and political volition, has been far from resolved. The human agents, of course, are not disembodied, but draw on social and cultural capital to build hegemonic positions for their ideas and political platforms. At the same time, leaders can be agents in the formation of public values and in shaping agendas. The multi-faceted nature of Putin's leadership and his ability to shape the political climate is the reason that Bjorkman (2003) takes a relatively positive view of the prospects for democratisation in Russia; but only if he receives adequate support and understanding from the West – something that can only be based on understanding Russia's need for self-affirmation while achieving international adaptation.

The problem of congruence is one that was highlighted by Putin in his meeting on 6 September 2004. His insistence that democracy could only advance in correspondence with the level of development of society, the degree of institutional consolidation, and the aspirations of the nation is a vivid example of congruence theory in action. The paternalistic aspect of Putin's thinking, where society cannot be trusted to decide for itself, reflected a central feature of Russian liberalism from the start. The 13 September 2004 measures reflected Putin's view that democracy allowed the election of criminals in regions such as Maritime *krai*, pervasive corruption in state institutions, quite apart from the threat of terrorism and the disintegration of the state. Putin's consolidation of the technocratic-bureaucratic state, however, did little to develop political pluralism and constitutionally limited government. This could be taken as a typical response of Russia's leaders since at least Peter the Great and reflects what Satter (2003, p. 35) in general terms describes as 'the psychological inheritance of communism'.

## Self-affirmation and dual adaptation

The discussion above would suggest that political traditions are more malleable and open-ended than the partisans of the political culture approach of an earlier generation suggested. There is always a choice of

traditions from which to choose, as Alexander (2000) and Petro (1995) stress, and very often they are 'invented' to sustain the ambitions of particular elite groups. The mass production of traditions in the post-Soviet area is now reaching an intensity and scale comparable only to that in Europe and Africa in the four decades before the Great War (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1984). As in the earlier period, also a time of profound social change, the invention of political traditions (alongside the continuing regeneration of cultural and social traditions) is often conscious and deliberately undertaken by institutions that try thereby to gain legitimacy for their rule. The generation of the purported symbols and traditions of nationhood, 'cultural artefacts of a particular kind', as Benedict Anderson (1983, p. 13) puts it, has reached epidemic proportions. What is the nature of Russia's present *national* rebirth, and what relationship does it have to forms of *state* organisation? Does Russia today suffer from a lack of inventiveness?

The fundamental tension is that between adaptation to Western-style governance and commitment to the preservation of the country's *samobytnost'*, considering its original, unique and distinctive features. Russia in this view is a distinctive civilisation that can only fully adapt to external norms at the peril of its own destruction as a distinctive entity. This civilisational trap gives rise to what we can call partial adaptation: the attempt to achieve economic and technological modernisation by bringing the country up to the levels prevalent elsewhere in advanced countries by extensive borrowing, while retaining spheres 'guarded' from this modernisation. These reserved areas endow Russian politics with its characteristic dualistic feel. Typically in the tsarist era there was intense resistance to the dilution of autocratic power even while the country entered into accelerated modernisation, a feature that became the core, in new ways, of the Soviet regime. While the Soviet regime 'borrowed' its political ideology from the West, it achieved the remarkable feat of inverting its emancipatory potential to create a new form of archaic governance that repudiated the very spirit of modernity while posing as the champion of societal modernisation. Some commentators have noted a similar logic in the consolidation of regime power under Putin.

Convergence with the West takes place on the industrial, military and infrastructural level, and divergence in the political sphere. The problem of dual development induces the logic of contradiction into social processes. Through Westernisation, Russia disassociates itself from its own past, and thus provokes resistance by conservative if not reactionary forces. However, those in favour of a more traditional political culture

lack a spatial focus. The archaisation of political life in the late monarchical period in Iran was accompanied by a locational shift from oppositional life in unions, parties and the media towards mosques, seminary schools and bazaars, places dominated by religious conservatives. All this contributed to the de-secularisation of public life and the evolution of a more traditionalist political culture that in the end dominated politics. Partial adaptation provoked civilisational and or cultural resistance to wholesale Westernisation at the cultural and political level. However, Japan represents an example of a more successful dual adaptation model of modernisation (Eisenstadt, 1978; Eisenstadt and Eyal Ben-Ari, 1990), while China is today struggling with the dilemmas posed by such a strategy.

The model of dual adaptive modernisation, to the West and to Russian native traditions, is inherently contradictory. Putin sought to transcend the antinomies that traditionally marked the logic of modernisation by devising a 'third way' between radical neo-liberal adaptation and reactionary traditionalism by forging a modernising traditionalist consensus. Putin's model of liberal conservatism harks back to Russia's constitutional monarchy phase between 1906–13, with dynamic economic growth accompanied by the vigorous development of liberalism, parties, and civil society within the carapace of a relatively insulated political regime. However, as with so many earlier state-guided attempts to transcend Russia's modernisation blockage, the enhanced role of a self-proclaimed progressive bureaucratic elite tends to reinforce archaic forms of political management. One of the consequences of partial adaptation is the imposition of a logic of political insulation of the ruling group, provoking what Michael Urban (1994) has noted is the logic of binary opposition as the characteristic feature of Russian political culture. In practical terms, the administrative regime seeks to insulate itself from the legal constraints of the constitutional order, while at the same time resisting accountability to popular forces and institutions from below. It is not so much the legacy of the past but the politics of the present that shapes the regime.

This dualistic logic is explored by Robert Crummey's edited volume (1989). Modernising reform becomes torn between the struggle to preserve the autonomy and integrity of the agent of modernisation that strives to insulate itself from the modernisation process. As Walter Pinter asks of tsarism, 'why should we expect a regime with such an autocratic tradition to abandon the basic principles on which it is founded' (1989, p. 97). The fundamental driver for modernisation was to ensure that Russia did not fall behind in terms of geopolitical competitiveness, but

the modernisation process would have to be selective and partial. As Allensworth (1998, p. 329) puts it, 'To modernize means to disrupt, maybe destroy, societies that have preserved themselves for centuries ... On the other hand, *not* to modernize may be just as deadly for backwardness potentially leaves the nation's fate in the hands of the technologically superior Other.' The tension to preserve *samobytnost'* and to achieve international competitiveness remains to this day. The selective appropriation of Western institutions and practices is accompanied by attempts to ensure, as Von Laue put it (p. 34), that these 'assume a peculiarly Russian form'. Selective modernisation and partial adaptation, however, evoke tensions and contradictions that have provoked revolutions or other forms of political breakdown. This was as true of Gorbachev's *perestroika* as it is of the tsarist regime before 1917, and it may apply to Russia's post-Communist modernising regime as well.



# 4

## Culture, Context, Violence: Eurasia in Comparative Perspective

*Charles King*

The links between culture and violence are as old as theorising about the concepts themselves.<sup>1</sup> From Thucydides to Weber to Samuel Huntington, problems of social order and the cultural transformations produced by violent behaviour have been perennial subjects of concern. Despite this long tradition, political scientists have normally shied away from thinking systematically about their connections. Culture seems too slippery a concept to be easily grasped, and implying that there is a cultural dimension to large-scale organised violence – from riots to genocide to full-scale war – seems dangerously close to a kind of crude determinism: that some societies are simply fated to live in more violent ways than others because of their imponderable cultural proclivities. Even when writers have taken a slightly different tack, such as in Huntington's (1998, 2004) argument about the durability of social conflict along broad cultural cleavages, empirical analysis has usually shown the idea of some fundamental consonance between culture and conflict to be bunk (Fox, 2002; Henderson, 2004).

Recently, however, political scientists have begun to combine methods from several disciplines, from history to anthropology, to arrive at a more nuanced understanding of how cultural factors interact with actors' strategic calculations in violent settings. Rather than simply being an autonomous variable that pushes groups towards violence, culture becomes rather an array of tools on which violent entrepreneurs can call when the routine channels of political life break down. This emerging trend has particular resonance in the context of Eastern Europe and Eurasia, where 'cultural conflicts' – over ethnicity, national identity, and national territory – have been one of the defining elements

of the post-Communist transition. If political scientists often failed to take culture seriously, there were plenty of political entrepreneurs on the ground who knew its power instinctively and managed to use it for nefarious purposes, from Bosnia to Kosovo to Nagorno-Karabakh.

This chapter ties this newer literature, exemplified in the work of Mark Beissinger and others, to the pioneering research of Archie Brown and some of his colleagues, who were central voices in the application of theories of political culture to the Communist world.<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to argue that there was ever a clear intellectual passing of the torch here, of course. Indeed, there was always a disconnect between what scholars understood by political culture and what Communist elites themselves meant when they used it: In Soviet parlance, the idea of 'political culture' was if anything, an antidote to disorder, not a way of analysing it; having a 'high political culture', being a 'cultured' person, meant among other things that one was civilised enough not to engage in antisocial behaviour, whether violent or otherwise (Brown, 1984b, pp. 104–05). However, the discussions of the 1980s about the power of political culture certainly contributed to the rise of more culturally sensitive, almost anthropological work on Eastern Europe and Eurasia two decades later. Just as the political culture revival was in large part a response to the dominant developmentalist paradigm, so too the newer cultural turn in the study of social violence is in many ways a response to the dominant rationalist trends in the discipline today.

This chapter also argues for reorienting our conception of political culture away from psychological states – which, in any case, are notoriously difficult to unearth – and towards the panoply of identifiable social mechanisms that enable social action. This understanding of culture, as a host of context-specific relationships, interactions, and institutions, seems to me more in keeping with the idea of culture as it is used in the other social sciences: not as a set of normative orientations and beliefs, even if shared widely across a given society, but rather as a context – a set of social mechanisms that may create and enhance perceptions, beliefs, and values but whose primary power lies in conditioning social action. Seeing culture as context, or as 'an ensemble of texts' in Clifford Geertz's famous formulation (Geertz, 1973, p. 452), also helps to get around the thorny problem of whether belief and action should be separated or conflated in political culture studies. If we understand culture as social relationships, connections, iterated interactions, knowledge environments, and hegemonic ways of speaking about social action, we bracket actors' psychologies and instead focus on the ways in which particular actions can be enabled and conditioned by the contexts in which

they occur. While here I take the culture discussion in a direction rather different from that pioneered by political culture studies of the Communist period, there are clear ways in which this literature helped pave the way for one of political science's most fecund research areas today: the study of the contextual dimensions of social violence.

## **Understanding culture, context, and violence**

The cartoon version of political culture arguments is that the Soviet system was simply another version of the tsarist autocracy. But the literature was always more subtle than that. The great contribution of the renaissance of political culture studies in the late 1970s was its emphasis on thinking hard about the deep, perennial dimensions of Soviet – particularly Russian – politics. Rather than seeing the Soviet system as just another route towards political development, theorists of political culture cautioned that there were likely to be dimensions of political behaviour that would be difficult to change, precisely because they rested on more durable values, norms, and beliefs about political life in general. Further, a study only of formal institutions or leadership styles, if divorced from the various dimension of political culture, would likewise remain incomplete. Interestingly, the triple focus on institutions, leadership, and culture in understanding Soviet politics anticipated the emerging consensus, in the 1990s, on research programmes built around structure, rationality, and culture (Lichbach and Zuckerman, 1997; Laitin, 2002).

The stress on the enduring dimensions of political behaviour did not necessarily make theorists of political culture pessimistic about the possibility of systemic reform in the Soviet and post-Soviet cases; rather, it made them particularly attuned to the power of historical contingency. Culture might make itself felt in subtle ways in terms of preferences and values, but the power of a single leader – such as Gorbachev or Yeltsin – to move history in unexpected directions, both positive and negative, cannot be dismissed (Brown, 2004). In the end, the political culture literature may yet prove to be more than a bit prophetic. President Vladimir Putin's revamping of Russia's constitutional structure, including the appointment of regional administrative heads and the introduction of a full party-list system for Duma elections, not to mention the possibility of an extension of his presidential term past 2008, looks nothing if not authoritarian. The political culture dimension, of course, is that he has moved in these directions with what seems to be the considerable support of the Russian population.

As regards the question of social violence, there are at least three insights that might be gleaned from the Soviet-era work on political culture, even though violence was not a major theme in this literature. First, there was a certain scepticism about rationalist or developmentalist explanations that fail to take into account longer-term causes rooted in the particular environment in which social phenomena occur. In Archie Brown's work, for example, context has always meant not the imponderable tide of 'history', but rather discrete and identifiable 'subjective perceptions of history and politics, the fundamental beliefs and values, the foci of identification and loyalty, and the political knowledge and expectations which are the product of the specific historical experience of nations and groups' (Brown, 1977, p. 1). Brown and others have long debated the degree to which beliefs should figure into an analysis of political culture, but there was a certain consensus that the particular context in which political and social events take place is a critical dimension of explaining them. It is possible to offer an account of just about any political outcome based on a bounded vision of rationality or any other deductive template derived from other cases. But giving an explanation is not the same thing as explaining. The first thing simply models social processes; the second seeks to make the model fit with the perceptions of those whose actions one is trying to explain.

Second, there was an implicit call for multidimensional, even interdisciplinary analysis. In the context of Soviet politics, this was perhaps more revolutionary than it might now seem in retrospect. Area studies specialists had long prided themselves on their interdisciplinarity; knowing something of the languages, histories, and cultures of Eastern Europe and Eurasia was fundamental to how many graduate students were trained. But if one actually looks back on the record of political science scholarship in the field, things are perhaps less encouraging than the historical memory of our own profession allows. Rather few people had actually spent any extended periods of time in the Soviet Union. The use of indigenous sources necessitated reading around the language of Marxism-Leninism. And entire techniques of analysis – surveys, systematic interviews, participant observation, archival digging – were either closed off entirely or severely restricted. In this generally data-poor environment, theorising sometimes took the place of real research.

This, in fact, is the central irony in the history of Soviet studies. While the field was often criticised for being out of step with developments in 'mainstream' political science, it was never really isolated from them. By

the late 1970s, the developmentalist and modernisationist paradigms, which in various guises had dominated much of Western political science since the 1950s, were no less in evidence in Soviet studies than in other fields. Against this rather uncritical application of Western models to the Soviet experience, theorists of political culture argued that the relative stickiness of 'that part of a culture which bears relevance to politics' (Brown, 1977, p. 1) could have an identifiable impact on behaviour. The irruption of political culture as a subject of research in the late Soviet period did not so much open up Soviet studies to the wider theoretical universe as help make Soviet studies sceptical of the implicit teleology that underlay the dominant focus on development, modernisation, and institutional analysis in the discipline as a whole.

Third, there was an insistence on separating the analysis of belief from the analysis of behaviour. In designing a research project on the power of 'culture', the clear temptation is to structure the analysis so that one variable becomes a function of the other – for example, setting up a project to understand the ways in which subjective perceptions influence behaviour or vice versa. The problem is that this research strategy can flirt with the tautological: inferring values, beliefs or perceptions from behaviour and then in turn using them to explain behaviour (Brown, 1977, p. 9). Unless there is some *ex ante* way of getting at what goes on in people's heads, explanations that link belief and behaviour end up as nothing more than circular arguments. Bracketing psychological states and reorienting discussions of culture towards something more explicitly social – the wide relational, institutional, and knowledge context in which events occur – may help to resolve this problem.

All of these insights are particularly relevant to the study of political and social violence. It is tempting to think of collective violence as anomalous, episodic, and irrational. The predominant image is one of a crowd running amok, consumed by the elemental passions of the group, lost in a bewildering mix of hatred, fear, and exhilaration. There are no doubt instances of violence of this type, but they are hardly the norm. Violent episodes are patterned forms of social interaction, even when they involve seemingly inscrutable bonds of identity or culture. They have a certain lifecycle that begins with precipitating events such as persistent prejudices or rumours, progresses through a brief burst of bloodletting, passes through a lull, then rapidly escalates into a series of massive deadly attacks. De-escalation happens gradually, either because of an intervention by the forces of order or simple fatigue on the part of the perpetrators (Horowitz, 2001).

At the same time, admitting the patterned nature of violence does not undercut its often contingent features. Consider the example of targeting.

In episodes of large-scale violence – from the interethnic clashes in the Fergana valley to the full-scale war between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Nagorno-Karabakh – groups and individuals are specifically targeted, often with surprising care, even in the midst of what seems an otherwise chaotic event. But knowing whom to target can be a problem. Linguistic ability can be one criterion, but in environments of multiethnic interaction and multilingual repertoires such as Eurasia, language ability is a slippery desideratum. Skin colour may matter, but then humans have an infinite capacity for parsing gradations of skin tone. Frequently, targeting seems to be based on more subtle characteristics of the victim: occupation, clothing, perceived social status, the football team he supports – all of which can convey important information about religion, social status, ethnicity or other traits. The point is that none of this can be understood without appreciating the context-specific – perhaps even ‘cultural’ – dimensions of how victims are selected.

Consider also the question of leadership and organisation. Both are obviously critical; someone has to begin the violent episode, and unless there is some minimally organised group to keep it going, it is unlikely to be sustained. But the picture of receptive masses whipped up by an unscrupulous leader – the vision that came to dominate popular understandings of the Balkans in the late 1990s (Doder and Branson, 1999; Cohen, 2002) – is not quite true to life. Violence is in reality closer to a pick-up game (Horowitz, 2001, p. 266). It certainly requires a group of activists to get things going. Beyond that, however, there are a host of other facilitating conditions that have little to do with the organisational skill or capacity of those who might have originally had an interest in fomenting disorder. There must be social norms that either allow for the prospect of violence or, more frequently, at some level condone it. ‘The victims had it coming’, ‘they were in collusion with the enemy’, ‘we just did it to them before they did it to us’ – all are common modes of justification after the fact, for the actual perpetrators as well as in the wider society of which they are a part. There must also be a set of accepted social rules governing how the violent game is played: who is a legitimate target; the level of violence that can be meted out, from destruction of property to murder; and what counts as a sufficient condition for escalating from one level of violence to the next.

None of this is to argue that a disembodied ‘culture’ is at work in promoting social violence. On the contrary, emphasising cultural factors narrowly defined – such as ascriptive identity – can blind researchers to the micro level mechanisms that link culture and behaviour (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000). Shoring up the boundaries of a putative ethnic

population and ensuring that they do not defect to the other side, either in the midst of a mobilisational episode or over the longer term by marrying out, can be one of the chief functions of violence itself. It raises the stakes of defection by presenting both perpetrators and victims as threatened; it makes it more difficult to move across inter-identity boundaries once one side comes to be blamed by the other for instigating violence. As one example, in the 'lynching era' in the US South – from the early 1880s to the early 1930s – a fifth of all lynchings were intraracial, whites killing whites and blacks killing blacks. The highest incidence of these within-group attacks occurred before the period when new racial laws had reestablished the clear social boundaries between racial groups that had been eroded by the Civil War and Reconstruction. Lynching was thus not only an abhorrent form of inter-group violence but also a method of in-group policing (Beck and Tolnay, 1997). Violence does not always make identity, of course, but it can certainly play a role in making one identity the most salient.

But understanding culture in a broader sense – as the host of social mechanisms that enable social action, but which may also create and enhance perceptions, beliefs, values, and foci of loyalty, independent of the content of those psychological states themselves – can point towards intriguing research questions. Fundamentally, it causes one to take seriously the power of context and the ways in which violence itself can shape social reality. Sometimes, violent behaviour can become routinised, even ritualised. Putative root causes can become illusory (Tambiah, 1996). Anyone who has spent time in violent settings, from societies plagued by sectarian discord to an English football match, can understand how successive iterations of violence are difficult to distinguish from one another, both analytically and causally. Slicing into the complex narrative of first causes and iterated grievances can provide a cross-sectional image of a conflict at one point in time, but it can also be misleading. Any single episode of violence may be part of an intricate web of meanings connected with previous events and acting as precipitants for those to come. Mapping the social context in which violence occurs, and the ways in which violence itself alters that context, should be a central feature of any research programme.

## **Culture as context: Eurasia and India**

But what precisely might culture as context mean as a research problem? There is now a vast literature on violence in the post-Communist world, from the wars of the Yugoslav and Soviet successions to the intermittent

struggles between ethnic groups for control of land and resources on the former Soviet periphery. Most often, work has focused on broad structural variables, particularly the administrative structure of the state or the machinations of elites (Suny, 1993; Bunce, 1999; Kaufman, 2001; Saideman, 2001). There has been some notable research on social networks and the role of emotion (Petersen, 2001, 2002), but rarely has there been serious engagement with the micro-level processes that facilitate violence. Where this kind of research has been undertaken, it has almost universally been the work of anthropologists, not political scientists.

But there may now be an important turn underway in the field: a move away from theories that focus exclusively on social structure and instead try to work out the precise mechanisms via which structure and culture interact to fuel the breakdown of social order.<sup>3</sup> In the post-Communist context, the most important representative of this emerging school is Mark Beissinger. Beissinger's work is not explicitly connected to the political culture literature in Soviet studies, but in many ways it is its heir. The fruit of more than a decade of careful data collection and analysis, Beissinger's research (2002) has involved the compilation of the most extensive list available of mobilisational episodes in the Soviet Union from the late 1980s through the early 1990s – marches, demonstrations, protests, strikes, riots, pogroms, civil wars – based on a careful multiple-source coding of events reported in more than 150 western and local newspapers and other periodicals. No other researcher has yet had at his disposal as detailed a catalogue of the accelerating street politics of the late Gorbachev period and the rising tide of popular unrest that attended the Soviet Union's demise.

The shape of protest activity in the late 1980s and early 1990s cannot be understood, much less modelled, without taking account of the contextual dimensions of mobilisation itself. The organisers of demonstrations and even average participants were acting within a particular knowledge environment. They knew of mobilisational episodes and state responses in other parts of the Soviet Union. They were often in direct contact with, and emboldened by, activists from other republics and regions. Their calculus of costs and benefits, such as it was, was demonstrably influenced by their assessment of what had succeeded and failed in other circumstances. Any single protest was thus a wave in a much larger period of what Beissinger calls 'tidal politics'.

It was the very context in which individual events took place that accounts for how the impossible – an uprising by the people in a political system that was self-defined as a people's democracy; interethnic violence within a country premised on the 'friendship of peoples'; the



swift disappearance of the world's largest state – in time came to be seen as inevitable. The bounds of the politically imaginable expanded because, as Beissinger says, history 'thickened' in the late Gorbachev period. Mobilisational events were clustered in time, a feature graphically clear from the dataset. These individual events were not only the key arenas of contention between mobilised groups and the state; they were also the crucibles in which the solidarity that bound together those mobilised groups were formed (Kenney, 2002). Structural features matter, of course; a combination of resource endowments, formal political structures, and political opportunities were critical to producing a mobilisational outcome. Yet if any particular Soviet ethnic group lacked one of these structural advantages, there was always a ready and fungible substitute: the mere knowledge that other groups had already mobilised effectively. Over time, structurally disadvantaged groups – with small populations, no clear history of grievances, no institutional resources – experienced a rapid broadening of the bounds of their mobilisational horizons.

Having an appreciation for how actors themselves understood their environment allows us to get at two of the most pressing questions about the nature of the Soviet collapse. First, why were some ethnic groups 'early risers' – early and eventually successful mobilisers against the Soviet centre – and others relatively passive until the centre failed to hold? And, second, why did some groups engage in almost universally peaceful protest, even in the face of extreme reactions by the state, while others turned to violence?

Until the actual breakup of the Soviet Union, the standard way of answering the first question was to point to the power of identity. The Soviet Union was, after all, a land of 'captive nations', as the ideology of the West had it, which would ultimately yearn to breathe free. At the highest level of abstraction that was certainly true; the Soviet Union ended and 15 new countries, each one named for one of the 15 constitutive republican nationalities of the Soviet federation, emerged on its ruins. But it is worth remembering that those who made this argument before the late 1980s were relatively few, and those who did almost universally bet on the wrong horse: the greatest threat to the Soviet system was thought to be the 'Muslims' of Central Asia, the various ethnic populations that, in fact, turned out to have the lowest levels of mobilisation. The common response today, more than a decade on, is to focus on structure, particularly the formal institutional resources – a republic-level parliament, Party apparatus, and newspapers, among other things – upon which mobilised ethnic groups could draw.

Structural conditions certainly mattered. All things being equal, having your own republic and being numerically larger, more urbanised, and less linguistically assimilated to Russian were good things for would-be mobilisers. Yet while these facilitating conditions might explain the onset of mobilisation, they do not explain the fact of mobilisation. For less well-endowed groups, there were certain benefits to backwardness. They could learn from the experience of the early risers, avoid costly mistakes, and engage in remarkably rapid mobilisational activity in a short period. Over time, the power of context grew relative to the power of structural conditions.

Violence, too, was part of the mobilisational mix. In a remarkable statistical model, Beissinger shows that the involvement of an ethnic group in an episode of collective violence produced a 3.1 per cent increase in the incidence of public demonstrations by that ethnic group in the following week (Beissinger, 2002, p. 142). Those groups that by and large failed to mobilise at all – very small minorities within the Russian Federation and, by and large, central Asians – were saddled with remarkably unpropitious structural conditions or had local leaders who actively blocked the tidal influences coming from other parts of the Soviet Union.

The second question, about the variability in the use of violence, is trickier. Overall, the collapse of the world's largest state was unexpectedly peaceful, with probably under 2000 people killed and perhaps another 13,000 injured in interethnic violence. (The post-Soviet wars in Chechnya and elsewhere are another matter, where perhaps 200,000 people have died – though these are still an order of magnitude lower than the number in decades of war in Sudan or Afghanistan.) During the period of collapse, from 1987 to 1992, violence came in waves, in several senses. It started in particular regions then moved to others. It involved large numbers of people in some periods and far fewer in others. It began with the use of less sophisticated weapons, literally sticks and stones, and then after 1991 rapidly escalated to the use of heavy artillery.

Once again, however, structure seems to be a poor explanation for the variability of violence, both across space and time. Structural factors – a previous historical experience of mass violence, various demographic features, institutional resources, being 'Islamic' – turn out to be weak predictors. Groups that had the highest levels of previous violent conflict with the Soviet state within living memory, Baltic groups and ethnic Germans, for example, engaged in virtually no violent activity; and

even the Chechens only became involved in mass violence once the Soviet Union was long dead. Instead, violence seems to have emerged from three rather different sources. It could have erupted as a reaction to an initial use of force by the state. It could be a strategy pursued by ethnic leaders on the back end of the mobilisational cycle, as a way of raising the stakes at a time when peaceful protests were winding down. Or it could arise, after the end of the Soviet Union, as part of the contentious politics associated with defining borders and new political institutions within the successor states. The tragic irony is that a mobilisational cycle that was relatively peaceful should have led on to violent – and, at least in Chechnya, seemingly interminable – conflicts in the new political systems that it produced.

The knowledge environment of late Communist mobilisation – the culture-as-context, in other words – turns out to have been the best predictor of the variable behaviour of social groups during the years of the Soviet collapse. The explanatory leverage of this approach is even clearer in a comparative light, particularly in recent work on communal rioting in India (Varshney, 2002). As in the Soviet cases, social mobilisation and collective violence involving India's two largest communal groups – Hindus and Muslims – is not equally distributed geographically or temporally. Since 1947, some Indian states have experienced recurrent episodes of communal rioting with high casualties; others have remained relatively peaceful. Even within high-violence states, such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, there is a marked diversity from one city to another. In cities where the relative size of the communal populations and other structural variables are similar, some are violence-prone – that is, there has been a consistently high incidence of intercommunal rioting – while others have seemed generally immune. (A third category consists of locales where violence is rare but intense.)

The city seems to be the lowest level that the available data (official police reports and datasets derived from event-counts from Indian newspapers) can reach, and it is also a level with a sufficient degree of complexity to ensure that some large-scale social processes are at work – something beyond, for example, violence prompted by a family feud or a stolen car in an individual village or neighborhood. How the city-level variation in the incidence of intercommunal rioting can be explained is Varshney's central question. The answer, in brief, is that low-violence cities have strong associational ties between Hindu and Muslim communities. It is one thing to interact on a daily basis with members of another communal group, to buy your newspaper from a Muslim, your flowers from a Hindu, and your food from a Sikh. But these informal

contacts are not good enough; they are ephemeral, non-binding, and not necessarily intergenerational. Associations, on the other hand, are durable, and they have certain ancillary qualities that turn out to be crucial when exogenous shocks threaten the peace. They provide channels of communication between elite groups in the ethnic communities. They raise the stakes for those who would upset the peace. They bring together – and, indeed, even create – interest groups that do not readily emerge merely from everyday interactions. Associations are how the strategic decisions of elites become concretised, and they can have a major effect on the durability of communal peace.

Arguing that differences in associational life map differences in communal violence is a correlation without an explanation, however. As it turns out, levels of associational engagement mirror longer-term patterns of communal interaction, but those patterns were not bequeathed to particular cities merely by social structure (Hindu–Muslim demographics, levels of wealth, etc.) or by ‘history’. Rather, they, too, were the products of political action within a particular social context, in this case during the period of the all-India national movement from the 1920s to the 1940s.

Elites in different cities chose different responses to the politics of mass mobilisation during these decades, creating what Varshney calls a ‘master narrative’ – a hegemonic way of speaking about the nature of intercommunal relations. In some, the master narrative became one of caste, with Hindu and Muslim elites cooperating against low-caste Hindus. In others it became one of communal identity, with Hindu leaders reaching across caste lines to mobilise against an indigenous Muslim dominant class. In the former, the choices of elites encouraged cooperation across the Hindu–Muslim divide, a form of cooperation cemented in the creation of bicommunal associations, from trade unions to business alliances. In the latter, intercommunal differences were infused with political significance, and the salience of ethnic lines as political dividers discouraged the establishment of lasting associations. Since independence, the first road has led to relative peace, the second to deadly ethnic riots.

## **Taking culture seriously**

The study of social violence can be enriched by taking up the central challenge of the literature of the 1970s and 1980s: to think systematically about the broad context in which behaviour occurs and to disaggregate norms, attitudes, and beliefs from action itself. In all of this, there are

certain practical implications for how new research in this field might be structured.

### **Contextualisation**

Violent events are often clustered spatially and temporally. Existing research practice has been to treat the cluster itself – something called ‘the Bosnian war’, for example, or ‘the Rwandan genocide’ – as the only serviceable dependent variable. Cases, in other words, have become coterminous with conflicts. Yet in most instances, the contours of the case are fuzzy. Even at the lowest level of disaggregation – the individual violent event – bounding the case can still be frustratingly difficult. Previous episodes of violence may be invoked as rallying points. What outside observers see as discrete episodes may be, in the minds of participants, multiple iterations of the same dispute. Violent events, in other words, are not natural kinds. They are themselves constructed as part of the process of social violence, wrapped up in the constitutive power of collective action.

What constitutes an analytically singular event is thus both a conceptual and an empirical question. But how exactly does one go about ordering the varied and often contradictory versions of the truth that normally swirl around episodes of collective violence? One technique is simply to rely on press reports in local languages and to make sure that those reports come from a variety of different, mainly indigenous sources. That, at least, takes one as close as possible to the action without requiring a multi-source account of every killing. Another technique is to write an ethnography of event-making, to examine systematically the various meanings attached to violent episodes and to explore the ways in which one is marked off from another (Malkki, 1995; Kakar, 1996; Brass, 1997). That approach is less amenable to quantitative analysis, but focusing on the construction of meaning itself can provide a valuable corrective to the idea of the violent event as a naturally occurring species.

A third approach is to do enough micro level work to know when an episode of large-scale, mass violence was truly imminent but instead turned into something smaller, a lynching, for example. Following this strategy would no doubt dampen scholarly ambitions, but in an ultimately positive sense. It would cause researchers to take very seriously the bounding of both cases and events. It would remind us to be honest about what we are really studying is one small, bracketed space on a scale of behaviours running from murder to total war. Knowing with some certainty why a massacre did not escalate to genocide is not nearly as attractive as saying why one country is war-torn and another peaceful.

But it brings the focus as close as possible to the action itself, treating 'culture' not as a disembodied variable floating above the heads of those who do the acting, but as a general label for a host of precise, context-specific mechanisms enabling action.

### **Interdisciplinarity**

The new micro politics of social violence is explicitly theory-focused. Its aim is to develop broad hypotheses about political and social behaviour and then test them using an array of sophisticated empirical tools. But what is perhaps most appealing about this turn in the field is an implicit argument about what constitutes theory-building in the social sciences – an argument, in fact, that harks back to many of the political culture discussions of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Contemporary political science privileges a particular notion of what theory is: a set of careful propositions meant to link cause and consequence. There is debate, of course, about the epistemological status of such propositions, but those debates take place within a paradigm in which theory is conceived as a mainly positivistic statement concerned with explanation. This view is remarkably out of step with most of the other social sciences, all of which have vigorous theoretical discussions that deal with issues beyond the narrow goal of explanation. One need only have a conversation with an anthropologist or a historian to understand that the realm of theory is both broader and richer than the discipline of political science has come to understand it – involving such varied enterprises as clarifying concepts, honing analytical categories, and reflecting critically on one's own research practice.

The intriguing subtext in much of the new micro foundational work on social violence is a call for what might be called theory-building as sense-making: a multifaceted understanding of what constitutes theoretical work, grounded in the goal of integrating the self-conscious perspectives of participants themselves. Varshney, for example, is careful to elucidate the multiple interpretations of violent acts and to caution against broad generalisations disconnected from the particular vision of rationality in which these acts are imbedded (Varshney, 2003). Beissinger (2002) likewise focuses on the social environment in which mobilisation takes place, an environment infused with the knowledge about what other people in structurally similar situations have done or are likely to do. Most explicitly, Stathis Kalyvas (manuscript) has demonstrated that multiple methods – from large-n data collection to participant interviews and careful archival work – can yield a far more complex picture not only of interests and intentions of violent actors,

but also the durable cultural meanings with which those acts are invested. The goal of this type of work is not to reduce behaviour to individual calculation – although a kind of soft rationalism is implicit – but rather to understand why a particular set of otherwise puzzling behaviours might, from the vantage point of those who perform them, make sense.

In practical terms, theorising these micro level processes implies embracing the full panoply of available empirical sources as the acceptable purview of political science and to use those sources in ways consonant with the best practices of other disciplines. If we use archives, we must use them properly: reading systematically, using accepted archival notation, and being suitably critical about the textual evidence they contain. If we use interviews, we must conduct them with an appreciation for the kaleidoscopic nature of memory and a sensitivity to the potential costs to our interviewees, not only in terms of their time but, in many environments, the potential threats they may face to their livelihood and personal security. If we use press reports, we have to handle them with the care, scepticism, and crosschecking of the best historians. Being even more explicit about the empirical substance of our work, not just the elegance of its manipulation, is crucial. In short, we need to consider carefully what constitutes *evidence* in research on social violence, not just the reified category of *data*, which political science has come to use for the stuff of what it studies. Data carry with them the seductive promise of their own objectivity. Evidence, as any trial lawyer knows, does not.

### **Belief, identity, action**

When ‘ethnic conflict’ joined the mainstream of comparative politics and international relations in the early 1990s, there was a tendency to look uncritically at the labels applied to violent episodes. Actors were categorised according to ascribed identities – usually ethnic, but also sometimes religious or linguistic – and typologies were developed which separated conflicts into allegedly discrete types accordingly. There are two obvious problems with this way of proceeding. One is what might be called the implicit teleology of ascriptive difference. It is often too easy for labels to masquerade as causes; to declare a conflict ‘ethnic’, say, usually rests on a set of assumptions about the roots of the conflict and the unusual levels of violence said to characterise it.

Another is that the way participants themselves label a conflict is often an essential part of the contentious event, not analytically prior to it. The power to define a hegemonic discourse about a conflict is a self-conscious strategy pursued by belligerents – to convince outsiders, for

example, that the opposite side is composed only of ethnic militants, fanatical hardliners, terrorists, separatists, and so on. Who people say they are, who they say others are, and what they say they believe must not be conflated with what, in fact, they do. Culture – like ethnicity, race or any other socially constructed concept often held to be primordially given – is about performance, not ‘identity’ (Brubaker, 2004). Any analysis of it should therefore focus not on a putative set of shared psychological states, but rather on the ways in which social action is enabled by an existing web of social relations, repertoires, and institutions.

None of this, however, is to argue for a postmodern rejection of analytical categories altogether. On the contrary, labels should be taken even more seriously than they normally are. What they mean, how they are used, and why some stick and others do not, should be part of the raft of research questions that one asks. Taking culture seriously means being ready to interrogate the concept itself – to figure out the ways in which it can be an analytically useful tool as well as the ways in which it is merely a by-word for processes too difficult to model in other ways. In the field of Russian and east European studies, a willingness to do precisely that will remain one of the legacies of the renaissance of political culture in the late Brezhnev period. In the study of social and political violence, scholars are now beginning to see the wisdom of asking hard questions about the power of culture, context, and contingency.

## **The condition of post-Communism**

Are any of these issues different in the specific context of post-Communism? In his introduction to this volume, Stephen Whitefield sets out several ways in which the concept of political culture might have a special resonance in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, even more than a decade beyond the end of the Communist system. Elsewhere, I have been sceptical about whether it is possible to identify a specific set of conditions that would justify thinking of post-Communism as a meaningful category (King, 2000). The diversity of regime types, levels of development, and social structure among the post-Communist cases is so great that treating them as a single category of cases seems impossible, and it is equally difficult to see how one might attribute the wide variety of political trajectories over the last fifteen years to any set of initial, ‘Communist’ conditions. Others, however, have argued that there are in fact a set of fundamental commonalities, for example, the generally low level of associational life, even when controlling for other factors such as regime type and level of economic development (Howard, 2003).



As concerns social violence, there may be reasons for thinking that culture-as-context might actually have more purchase in the post-Communist world than in other areas. Over many parts of this region, social groups still see themselves as being part of a single regional subsystem. Violent mobilisation in one part of this subsystem is thus likely to be seen by people in other parts as having more of an impact on their own contexts than, say, violence in sub-Saharan Africa or Southeast Asia. Thus, the reemergence of the mobilisational cascades that Beissinger identifies might still be possible across much of the territory of the old Soviet Union, even though the state itself has long since disappeared.

Moreover, both Communist states and their successors have, by and large, been radical culture-makers. State elites see the manipulation of formal high culture (language, literature, art) as their proper purview, and a certain preference for state institutions that mirror ascriptive lines of language, ethnicity, and religion remains a central component of statecraft. Social mobilisation thus often takes place along lines of identity perceived by elites and masses as primordial and intergenerational, not along other social lines such as class. Of course, there are instances in which violence has occurred along other cleavages, such as the multiple incidents of state-organised but allegedly anarchic violence in Romania in the 1990s (Gledhill, forthcoming). But for the foreseeable future, 'culture' is likely to continue to be considered, on the ground, as a reasonable excuse for throwing one's neighbour down a well. Thinking hard about political culture, particularly if we conceive of it as the broad context in which action occurs, might help us begin to make sense of why some post-Communist transitions have been violent while others, against all odds, have remained remarkably peaceful.

## Notes

1. Parts of this chapter were first published as King, 2004.
2. For an overview of authoritarian systems, including the political culture dimension, see Brown, 1999. An insightful look at the new resurgence in political culture studies in the late 1990s is provided by Wilson, 2000.
3. For an outline of the main concerns of this new research orientation, see Kalyvas, 2003.

# 5

## Bringing Culture Back into Political Analysis: The Reform of the Russian Judiciary

*Mary McAuley*

This chapter makes an argument for bringing culture into the study of politics, but not for a political culture approach. Why? Because I take it for granted that culture – shared patterns of understanding, responses, patterns of behaviour – both identifies and informs the activities of a community, group, or organisation. We cannot conceptualise the politics of a society without including these aspects, nor can we explain certain outcomes of institutional change.

But this is not the same as saying that we can or should identify something called ‘political culture’ in order to explain how political systems evolve or to predict democratic development or authoritarianism. Attempts to isolate and agree on the content of a ‘culture’ variable, to weigh its influence compared with others (variables) across a range of cases, seem to me misguided. The factors responsible for change, or lack of it, vary and interact with each other in different ways over time, even within one society. Although we must simplify in order to analyse a complex reality, there is a danger that, without a more nuanced, anthropological approach to the study of political change, we leave the floor to those who expect institutional choices to produce the desired behaviour and to those who (when hopes are not realised) argue that ‘culture’ makes such behaviour impossible. Either stance, when translated into policy, can have damaging consequences.

In what follows, therefore, I develop an alternative account of how we should introduce culture into the analysis of regime change, and demonstrate this approach with a case study based on the workings of the court system in Russia in the 1990s.

## The debate over culture versus institutions

There is only one real debate among political scientists analysing developments in Russia today: were institutional choices or is Russian political culture responsible for the political system that has taken shape since the ending of Communist Party rule?

The institutionalists argue that the choice of institutional frameworks, and agreements between key groups to abide by the rules or not, are the critical factors that determine the future trajectories of political systems. For Fish, the choice of a super-presidential system, the decision not to hold elections in 1991, to proceed with the 'loans for shares' policy, and the 'neglect of the agencies of public order' have been responsible for Russia's not becoming 'a full-blooded democracy' (Fish, 2001, p. 244). Gel'man suggests that cultural explanations fall into the 'residual category' trap, and argues that culture cannot explain the differences between the types of political regimes that emerged in different regions of the Russian Federation or between the countries of the former USSR (Gel'man, 2003, p. 9). Their opponents, both Russian and Western scholars, identify Russian culture or today's political culture as the critical factor responsible for the failure of democratic institutions to take root.<sup>1</sup>

There is something baffling about this debate – would we not expect both institutional and cultural factors to play a part? Has the debate then something to do with politics or with political science? Both, we suggest.

In the global environment of the 1960s, Western political scientists became preoccupied with 'democracy' and 'requisite conditions' (Lipset, 1959). It became important to define democracy and they focused on particular characteristics of a political regime. Governments, freely-elected, on the basis of universal suffrage became the key component, although subsequent elaborations included other elements. The search for necessary and sufficient conditions (economic or cultural) for this institutional order provided a wealth of interesting comparative data but no conclusive answers. This encouraged those studying Latin America to look for strategies that could result in a transition from authoritarian to democratic government (O'Donnell, Schmitter, Whitehead, 1986). By the 1980s, they had identified elite pacts, strategic decisions to accept compromises, electoral constraints as ways to introduce the basis of (for) a democratic order. And developments in Southern Europe and Latin America supported the hypotheses.

Not surprisingly, as Communist Party power collapsed, Western political scientists studying Russia drew upon this literature. But as important

as the theoretical approach was the political context: the upsurge of democratic movements encouraged the belief that given the right institutional context, and if the Communists were kept out, demands would be translated into appropriate practices. Western institutionalists dominated the field, and Russian scholars were in a state of shock. It was also relevant that with rare exceptions (notably Hahn, 1991, and Jowitt, 1992a), those who had participated in the earlier lively debate over political culture and Communist Party systems, in which Brown had played a key role, had by the late 1980s turned to other things. Although Western and Russian social scientists interested in survey research had a field day, their findings were inconclusive and anthropologists or sociologists, interested in, or with the resources to do, detailed field work, were few and far between. Fleron, reviewing the findings, concluded that 'We are still left with questions concerning the causal efficacy of political culture' (Fleron, 1996, pp. 252–53). While historians had developed a new interest in culture, political scientists were seeking theoretical advances to inspire a new research agenda (Laitin, 1988, 1995; Ross, 1997; Formisano, 2001).<sup>2</sup>

However, when the question 'What went wrong in Russia?' began to dominate the discussion, among both Russian and Western analysts cultural explanations came back into vogue. Unfortunately, we would argue, the ways the culturalists argue their case leaves the debate where it stuck in the 1980s. At the risk of oversimplifying, there are those who ask us to accept their version of a Russian (and Soviet) political culture, based upon imaginative readings of the past (favourite traits include etatism, *sobornost'*, passivity, lack of legal consciousness, lack of individualism, paternalism), and there are those who base their arguments upon today's survey data. Among a collection of Russian analyses in *Pro et Contra*, Akhiezer (2002) describes the outlines of Russian political culture in grand philosophical–historical terms (a Manichean view of good and evil); the contributions by Batalov (2002) and Pivovarov (2002) assume Russian political culture to be inappropriate for democracy. The theoretical discussion concentrates on how best to adapt what is taken as the basically correct approach of Almond and Verba in order to apply it to Russia and rarely draws upon subsequent criticisms of the approach. These authors do not engage with the question of causal direction (there is no reference to the arguments that institutional arrangements can be the generator of values), they rarely provide empirical evidence in support of their statements, or comparative analysis. This literature is difficult to read for someone steeped in an Anglo-Saxon way of thinking. Testing of hypotheses is not the name of the game. One states

a belief and then fleshes it out; it would seem strange to look for evidence against it.<sup>3</sup>

But there are the surveys on values, attitudes to past and present institutions, conducted by both Russian sociologists and Western political scientists, which some interpret as empirical evidence of an authoritarian political culture, responsible for today's outcomes. Let's look at one institutionalist response, one that highlights the weak explanatory power of a political culture approach based on 'values' from survey data, but simultaneously leaves the authors exposed to the charge that some concept of culture is needed to flesh out their explanation.<sup>4</sup> Colton and McFaul (2002) take issue with the claim that Russian popular attitudes or values should be described as authoritarian. A more discriminating analysis of survey data, they suggest, reveals a much more nuanced set of values among the population, including those favouring democratic procedures or practices: 'even Putin's own electorate is more pro-democratic than the talk of Russia's authoritarian trend would have it' (pp. 93–94). Hence, they argue, the population's values cannot be responsible for today's illiberal system; it is the values of the elites ('less democratic' than the people) that have determined the outcomes – if they could have agreed to play by the rules of democratic procedures, they would have been supported in this by a not insignificant proportion of their fellow citizens, and the shift towards authoritarianism would not have happened.

Their discovery of a different set of values reminds us of some of the reasons why the search for a population's political culture through survey data fell into disuse. It is not only the question of method; nor the problem that we cannot compare these 'values' with those pre-1990 because of lack of comparable data. It is also, as they agree, one thing to answer questions to an interviewer, another to act. And if we want to understand the acting we must look elsewhere. The most Colton and McFaul feel able to do, on the basis of their data, is to make a cautious suggestion that while popular resistance to authoritarianism cannot be counted on, 'the infliction of a full-blown dictatorship would not be an easy task' (p. 118). In other words, as soon as they try to draw conclusions regarding behaviour from the survey data, they have to move away from it and look for causal factors elsewhere. We are left with a gap between the 'values' and 'political behaviour' and no idea of what we could use to connect the two. We still want to know why the elites were unable to behave differently, and what will prompt the population (or some sections of it) to act in one way or another.

The institutionalists, rightly, are anxious to refute the claim that if a society does not have an appropriate culture/set of values it is doomed

to continue along a particular path, at least for a long period. They can draw upon a comparative literature, which suggests the relevance of institutional arrangements for the establishment of democratic regimes in previously undemocratic or culturally very different societies. Yet why the need to overstate their case? Although Fish, in his excellent article, draws our attention to factors that have undoubtedly strongly influenced the shape and form of the new political regime in Russia, an institutionalist approach encourages the author to place too much weight or responsibility for outcomes on the actions of and choices made by key actors. Yes, a super-presidential constitution has built-in mechanisms that encourage certain tendencies, but the way in which it will develop or operate will be influenced by a range of practices, both inherited and new, and by the accidents of history (Yeltsin's health and the choice of Putin). Yes, 'loans for shares' had damaging consequences, as did the loss of control over the law and order agencies; but the development of Fish's full-blooded democracy or even of an anemic democratic regime requires the presence of competing elites, of freedom of information and organisation (and willingness and ability to organise to defend one's or other interests), a state apparatus whose members can distinguish public from private interest (even though they may not always observe it in practice), and relatively independent judges. To account for the presence or absence of these institutions we have to dig deeper – into the Soviet inheritance, into institutional cultures, into social practices and beliefs, and to include the influence of the outside world. By ignoring this, the institutionalists let the culturalists off the hook: they are not asked to demonstrate how 'culture' plays its part in a complex performance.

Do institutionalists have to leave culture out? Gel'man (2003) is concerned to explain the dominance of what he terms 'informal institutions' (arbitrary actions by the leadership, selective use of the electoral system, patron-client relations, *blat*, etc.) in today's politics in Russia. Informal institutions, he tells us, tend to be identified with customs, traditional and cultural constraints and hence, in the Russian case, are either explained by reference to the 'neo-traditional' inheritance from a Leninist regime (Jowitt) or to Russia's unique historical path. But, he argues, cultural explanations cannot explain the variations in political regimes among Russia's regions, or the lack of the rule of law. Hendley's argument that a 'legal consciousness' is lacking (1997, 2001) does not, he suggests, stand up. There is noticeable demand for law from pensioners – the weak – and from businesses when the contracts are between themselves (less so when one party is the state). Gel'man

concludes that it is not lack of demand but inadequacy of supply from formal state institutions. Although, he agrees, some informal institutions continued their existence because they were survival mechanisms, others can best be explained by looking at the interplay of interests of political actors, ideology, access to information, critical decisions taken both as regards legislation (and bad legislation which left loopholes), in circumstances of great uncertainty.

If Gel'man's analysis of the development of electoral politics is convincing, the puzzle is his insistence that cultural explanations have no place. Although he is right to suggest that we cannot explain electoral machinations, similar to those found in many new democracies, in terms of an inheritance from the past, once he moves on to the reasons for the practices, it is difficult to see why he so adamantly wishes to exclude culture as a contributory factor. He refers to lack of clarity or gaps in the legislation, advocated by some deputies as a way of leaving room for manoeuvre, which are then filled by informal practices, and to the influence of the past on the ideology of the participants.<sup>5</sup> And this is precisely why I argue that to understand the behaviour of *some* institutions or *some* institutional outcomes, including the post-Communist Russian legal system, we need to bring culture in.

The question remains: when an authoritative political system collapses, how will people and how will society's institutions react? To take but one example, will the pensioners turn to the courts with their claims? And how will the judges respond if they do? In some cases, past experience or current practices will be critical. And if we do not recognise this, there is a danger that new formal institutions will be introduced with little understanding of the constraints under which they will be operating. Patterns of behaviour, accepted conventions, attitudes to authority, can matter exceedingly. We want to find a way to plot their contribution to the evolution of a new system, and for that we need a concept of culture that includes them, but not one of 'political culture' as it is often narrowly understood.

### **Bringing culture back in, but not 'political culture'**

Societies develop webs of relationships, and cultures (shared patterns of understanding, shared social practices that allow groups to recognise outsiders), to manage what are, after all, very complicated matters. The politics and law of a community is the way it manages part of its affairs (who gets what, dispute settlement) and hence cannot be isolated from the way the community, or groups within it, go about managing other

affairs (religion, the production of goods and services, family relations, etc.). States, through their political systems, attempt to encourage a culture that identifies its subjects as the group. This is one way to strengthen the rulers' authority or legitimacy. Simultaneously, the institutions that provide the backbone of the political and legal systems develop their own shared social practices, both in their internal operations and in their relationships with each other and with citizens. And groups within society (with their own sub-cultures)<sup>6</sup> develop ways of dealing with or interacting with the political and legal institutions, thus contributing to the ways in which politics or law is conducted.

This view of culture presupposes that 'culture' does not itself create the institutions. Factories, a civil service, police force, a two-chamber system of government, all owe their origins to a number of factors. But it implies that any institutional arrangement begins to create its own culture (if the arrangement is short-lived, that is an end to it) that will contain elements that are inspired by the rules or tasks of the institution, its structure, and by the specific environment in which the institution operates. From this perspective, to talk of an institution or community's culture means referring to practices that are well established, and recognisable. Some institutions share cultures across national boundaries more easily than others – policemen recognise other policemen, for example, doctors other doctors – but do elected deputies? (McAuley, 1997, pp. 264–72). This suggests that institutions in different societies, while sharing some common traits also have their specific features; factory culture in the United Kingdom, Japan, and Russia has similarities and differences (and all resort to *Italian* strikes). This view of culture recognises that recruits can learn to adopt new practices; peasants can become workers but, in the Russian case, the *artel* may become the brigade. Newly enfranchised citizens and privileged elites can learn to follow new democratic rules while retaining their previous sense of themselves as different.

This perspective is close to Jowitt, when he argues that just as a factory has a formal and informal organisation, so 'it is the informal organisation of the state' that can be referred to as 'political culture – the informal, adaptive postures – behavioural and attitudinal – that emerge in response to and interact with the set of formal definitions' (Jowitt, 1992a, p. 55). Intuitively (and from experience) we know that patterns of behaviour, and attitudes to authority, are part of the way a political system and its component parts function. You cannot conceptualise the politics of a community without these elements, just as you cannot tell us how a factory works without reference to the factory culture. An



institution, a written constitution, only becomes real – acquires life – when it begins to operate, and this means the involvement of people who must act according to some criteria.

But the factory analogy only works up to a point. It seems appropriate when talking of individual institutions (the police force, the civil service) but less so when our focus is the state or system of rule, embedded in a society with its cultural patterns, a state influenced by and influencing a tracery of changing relationships. Then surely the complexity – the clash of cultures that accompanies politics – makes it misleading to talk of *the* political culture of a society or system of rule. It is much more difficult to identify practices, attitudes, and patterns of behaviour that are common to a particular institutional type of rule and cross geographic and time boundaries easily. Can we really identify those that accompany established democracies, and do they cross boundaries easily? Does one democratic citizen recognise another as part of the same fraternity?

Hence I am arguing that while the term ‘political culture’ can be used loosely, in ways that we understand, it is not helpful as a concept or tool for analysing changing systems of rule and it is misleading if applied, in this way, to a society. Someone may write of ‘the political culture of 1917’ and we understand what s/he will be writing about – the clash of political ideologies, of attitudes and aspirations, of cultures brought from factory, field and battlefield, the language of the time. This is perfectly valid, just as we may say ‘the political culture of the north is very different from that of the south’ and we are understood to mean that people conduct their politics differently in the two regions. (The reasons for this may or may not have little to do with culture.) But ‘the political culture’ of a country? Is this not best left to the likes of Custine or Tocqueville? An illuminating account by an outsider that captures certain features of a particular society? (See Richard Sakwa’s chapter for an interesting further discussion of Custine and Tocqueville.)

Note that I am not criticising cultural analyses of periods of institutional change or of particular institutions. Recent work by historians has illuminated many aspects of the revolutionary or Soviet period. There are fascinating cultural histories waiting to be written of the 1990s. A historian will surely show us how actors, in the search for identities, looked back and (consciously or unconsciously) drew upon symbols, rituals, myths, from the Soviet or more distant Tsarist past that resonated in the new environment. But, whatever the history, the historian will take it for granted that an extraordinarily complex, multi-faceted historical process took place when a crumbling Soviet system (with its economic, political and cultural traits) found itself adrift in a bewildering world

where new and old actors vied for the spoils, and one that could not be explained by 'institutions' or 'culture' alone (Formisano, 2001).

Close the factory, and the factory culture disappears. A system of rule collapses. But collapse the state and do all the state institutions and accompanying practices disappear? North (1990, p. 6) reminds us that, 'Although formal rules may change overnight as the result of political or judicial decisions, informal constraints embodied in customs, traditions, and codes of conduct are much more impervious to deliberate policies. These cultural constraints not only connect the past with the present and the future, but provide us with a key to explaining the path of historical change.' Jowitt would, of course, agree that there is a legacy, a Leninist legacy (1992, ch. 8). But I want to argue that the legacy will be a complex one – multi-cultural, if you like, composed of many bits and pieces – and will make itself felt in different ways depending upon a variety of factors.

### **Institutional legacies<sup>7</sup>**

Regime breakdown means the disintegration of a complex set of political relationships. It takes time for a new political order, with its rules and conventions, to emerge. The questions we are interested in here are: Will the new formal rules favour some past practices and undermine others? Which elements in the old will people draw upon, and which will be discarded? Suppose, to adopt North's analogy of a game, a moment comes when the players call a halt: we are not going to play football any more, we want a new game. Then the questions arise: what should be the aim of the new game? Who should devise it, and its rules? What kind of informal conventions will they prompt, given too the wider environment and past memories or practices? Without wanting to push the analogy too far, we would expect to see those with particular skills (resources) wanting a game that will favour them, some may advocate a very popular game that is played in other societies, those who were left out of the previous game may want one that includes them. Even if the formal rules can be agreed on, the playing of the actual game will be influenced by players' skills, expectations of each other and of the game, the use or not of existing amenities and equipment, memories of past practices, and by the way their opponents play.

While key actors, ideas, control of or access to resources, and expectations, will all influence outcomes, as will the new institutional rules and older ways of doing things, their relative weight will not be the same in all areas. The scope for people to adopt new strategies of behaviour, or to draw upon older ones, to create new or maintain existing institutions

will vary depending on extent to which the original structures are dismantled and the type of new institutional arrangements. With the ending of Communist Party rule, certain institutional arrangements (Communist Party control over decision-making, privilege, censorship, one-candidate elections) disappeared. The new rules created some new institutional arrangements (competitive elections, sharing of powers) that both provided scope for new institutions to come into being (stock-exchanges, a Constitutional Court, political parties, NGOs) and gave some existing institutions (the Soviets, the courts) either wholly or partly new roles to play. For other institutions (the army, the police, some of the ministries) it was far less clear what, if anything, was to change. We suggest, for a start, that players trying to create new institutions (in a blank space) will be under different influences from those inheriting existing institutions with their established cultures. We can posit several scenarios regarding the different ways we might expect the culture of the past to make itself felt.

First, when the new rules (a constitution) create or provide scope for new institutions that have no past history. This poses the participants with the most problems. They are devising new rules of behaviour and practices without being able to draw upon the old – they are both handicapped by lack of experience or models to draw from and are at the same time freer (Ross, p. 65). They may consciously reject past practices, they may use some that for them are neutral or invisible (Laitin, 1988);<sup>8</sup> they will draw upon past professional and social practices with which they feel comfortable, and they will adopt or devise new ones that work to their benefit. Here, we would expect to see the most conflict, within the new institutions over what the practices should be, and between institutions. Popular response will be highly dependent upon expectations, and past experience of political activity.

Second, when the new authorities pass laws to reform existing institutions (e.g., the court system) in order that they should now work to new rules. In this case, the adaptability of the existing institutional culture will be relevant; known practices will continue to appeal to their practitioners unless there are powerful incentives not to use them; the response of the population, or the workforce, will be conditioned by expectations and alternative options.

Third, when the new authorities leave existing institutions (their tasks, internal structures and their role) almost untouched. In this case, institutional culture will play a key role and change can only come from pressure (expectations and resources) of groups within the population or from other institutions.

In a fourth case, the new authority issues inadequate laws to regulate a new sphere of activity and the existing law-enforcement agencies are unable to respond. In a lawless environment, where valuable assets are being redistributed, the rule of the strong, accompanied by violence, will quickly dominate until the political authority establishes control over this sphere. In this case, there is little need to look for explanations that include culture, except for the criminal sub-culture that will favour certain forms of extortion and sanctions.

To test these hypotheses by investigating institutions instantiating each of these scenarios would, of course, be quite a daunting task. It would require us to identify both specific institutional cultures and broader sets of shared attitudes or practices that formed part of the society's culture at the time the previous system of rule collapsed. Nonetheless, with the wealth of materials from the *perestroika* period about attitudes and activities – from radio, TV, official and unofficial publications, and participants – it would be possible to explore the evolution of many institutional situations, for example, ministries and local authorities, the military, trade unions, higher educational institutions, factories, firms, banks, or human rights organisations. Here we offer an outline for looking at one 'second scenario' institution, the court system, an institution that was to be reformed and play a new role.

The aim is not to add to or to dispute the good and detailed accounts that exist of different aspects of the court system or of legal practices (see, e.g., Butler, 2003; Hendley, 1997, 2001; Mikhailovskaia, 1997; Pashin, 1997; the symposium in *East European Constitutional Review*, 2002; Smith, 1996; Solomon, 1997). It is rather an attempt to show how we might introduce culture (but not the presence or absence of a 'legal culture') into the analysis of institutional developments and practices.

## **Reforming a court system**

In the early 1990s reformers, both in Russia and in the West, hoped that the judicial system – with its Codes, courts, judges, lawyers, and procedures – would emerge as an independent and respected institution, providing fair and unbiased trials for its citizens and acting as a check on the political rulers. This has not been realised, despite the redrafting of Civil and Criminal Codes, the creation of a Constitutional Court, development of arbitration courts, bringing the penal institutions under the Ministry of Justice, new rules for the Bar, and a whole raft of institutional changes that bring Russia in line with Council of Europe requirements. Corruption among all branches of the legal profession is rife and, where politics is

involved, compliant judges can be found. So how do we explain this? How, at least at first glance, did different factors, including the new tasks and existing cultures, whether of the institution or of the population, contribute to this outcome?

We exclude expectations that those who staffed the institutions would suddenly start behaving like Dutch, or Scottish, or American lawyers or judges. Not even the most convinced institutionalist would argue that changing formal rules would change the behaviour of a conservative profession overnight. Overnight? Perhaps in ten, twenty years, depending upon the pressures and the incentives? Hence we need to include in the analysis the existing institutional culture, the pressures and incentives for change, both from above, and from the wider environment. We do not exclude the possibility that there is something rooted in the community's preferred way of settling disputes that cannot accommodate elements of a civil law tradition, but we would need to identify this.

We can think of 'law, simply as some sort of social glue, among others' (Glenn, 2000, pp. 65–66), one way of settling conflicts that arise and threaten the community. It requires an authority and the acceptance or enforcement of the decisions. Mediation and conciliation are other ways; so is the use of force by the stronger party. A number of legal traditions (chthonic, Talmudic, Islamic, civil, common law, Hindu, and others) exist in the world today; almost everywhere, the legal systems in established states contain strands of different traditions, plaited together, and within one society, communities may settle disputes in different ways or certain types of conflict may be settled by one type of 'law', others by another. (Labour disputes may be regulated by law in one society, by collective agreements in another.) Further, legal systems are often important as means of last resort – to be used when other means have failed – prompting people to find other ways of settling disputes.

The connection with politics (activities relating to the distribution and exercise of power and authority) is clear. A centralised authority, striving to extend its reach over the territory as a whole, and all who live in it, claims priority for its rules, and needs to be able to enforce them. Taxation, defence of the realm, and order are critical. And maintaining order involves the political authority in the settlement of disputes, between citizens or groups, between citizens and the state, and between state institutions themselves. 'Law' as a mechanism enables the sovereign to divest itself of everyday involvement in what are tiresome matters yet to retain authority (Glenn, 2000; Holmes, 2003). Although, in practice, the central authorities – whether in established states in

Europe, or in colonies, or in newer states – often leave untouched existing ways of settling disputes, what is important is their claim that they have the right to make the rules. Their authority is undermined when they manifestly are unable to control or suppress challenges to their right to make and enforce rules.

By the eighteenth century, the civil law and common law traditions that originated in Europe had, to differing degrees in different countries, become closely associated with new political institutions that contained mechanisms (including courts) to check the rulers' power. But while, on the one hand, the law constrained the sovereign, on the other, it preserved the rights and privileges of the wealthy and powerful. This kind of law favours the preservation of the status quo; it is rarely used as a weapon to advance the rights of the poor and disenfranchised.<sup>9</sup> Which are the elements associated with a continental (civil) law tradition? We can identify the creation of Codes; an emphasis on rules and sanctions as a way of attaining social cohesion; judges whose job it is to know the law but not make it; professional lawyers; the investigative system; a system of appeal. The degree of independence enjoyed by the judiciary – and systems of appointment – varies, as does the role of Constitutional Court, if there is one. In other words, even within the countries of Europe that share a continental law tradition, we find a considerable variety of practices and of views on how best to solve disputes. Judges are more or less corrupt, more or less independent, police more or less brutal. And it would not be very sensible to start trying to decide which legal system corresponds most closely to an ideal 'civil law tradition' – because there isn't one.

And as for 'the rule of law'? This is even more difficult, given the disagreements over the concept. O'Donnell, while agreeing that the 'rule of law' is a much contested concept, lists the attributes of a 'rule-of-law' system that, together with the political requirements (free, fair elections, etc.) would allow us to talk of a democratic legal state (O'Donnell, 1999, p. 317). But as soon as we start to measure specific countries against such a yardstick, we run into difficulties. Is India a rule-of-law state, or Italy? How, for example, would one fit Japan into such a framework, a society that incorporated elements of Confucianism into Shintoism, embraced first French, then German, translations of Civil and Criminal Codes in the nineteenth century (where the translators simply made up parts that seemed more appropriate in the Japanese context), adopted a civil-law system, let it fall into disuse under military rule, had it re-imposed, together with an American-inspired Constitution, after defeat in 1945? Does Japan have a civil-law culture,

a rule of law? It has few judges, and very low levels of litigation. There exist simultaneously other ways of resolving disputes and maintaining social cohesion. Does Japanese democracy work because of the introduction of a US-style Constitution? The way that politics function in Japan is different from that which was assumed should/would happen by the American designers. Business and the civil service have developed their own particular working relationship (Haley, 1992). Does this mean that either the introduction of Civil law Codes or of a Constitution has been irrelevant to legal or political developments in Japan? No: there is a civil law system that operates as part of society's way of resolving disputes, and plays a greater part today than it did fifty years ago; the Constitution has provided a symbolic underpinning, a political correctness to ways of conducting politics that include relatively free and fair elections based on adult suffrage (Noda, 1976; Oda, 1992). But the relationship between 'law' and 'government' is a very different one from that found in the United Kingdom, which in turn is very different from that in the United States. The 'rule of law' seems to be saying something about independent judges and about state officials obeying their own laws, both important aspirations, rather than offering us a set of characteristics of the legal system to be found in specific states.<sup>10</sup>

We recognise, then, that (a) we find mixes of different legal traditions in most societies in the world today, (b) even when a particular one (civil law or common law) is associated with a state, the way this appears is always 'specific' to that state/society, and (c) 'law' changes as societies and their politics change. To understand what may be the consequences of introducing particular legal institutions, in a specific environment, we start by asking:

- How are disputes resolved within that society at present; what are the models or mechanisms for resolving disputes between citizens, and between citizens and the state?

And then move on to ask:

- What is likely to be the result of the interaction between existing ways of behaving – and the demands and expectations of those involved – and the introduction of new rules?

## **The Russian case**

Russia, by the beginning of the twentieth century, was home to a tension-riven mix of legal arrangements: autocratic rule-making and

enforcement through a bureaucracy and the military; a tradition of Codes, but now accompanied by new Western ideas of Civil and Criminal Codes, of professional judges, lawyers, and a jury system. The expanding legal profession contained members, often sophisticated and in close touch with their European counterparts, but the civil law system was subordinate to autocratic rule. Its officers could not challenge the sovereign or his servants (Butler, 2003; Solomon, 1997; Smith, 1996). Peasant communities had their own legal mores and practices; the legal traditions of the different peoples (Islamic, Jewish, chthonic) incorporated into the Empire, continued, to varying degrees, to exist. How these different traditions would have developed, interacting with each other, had the revolution not intervened, we cannot tell. Just as the introduction of common law traditions into India and African countries, or of civil law/common law in Latin America, has produced different results, depending upon the way it was done and existing legal traditions, so a Russian legal system, in the absence of revolution, would have developed its own specific features.

In 1990, the key features of the dispute-settlement environment were the following.

1. There existed a set of recognisable continental (civil) law institutions and procedures: codes; a hierarchy of courts, judges, prosecutors, and defence lawyers working within an investigative framework; law professors, legal consultants; support and enforcement from police and penal institutions. The disputes these legal institutions were responsible for embraced an extensive range of citizen-state activities (employment, social security, family, residence, access and distribution of information, and criminal activities) but private relations between citizens (in particular, contract law) barely featured. The system allowed for corruption (as do all civil law systems) but Party and the Procuracy could and did intervene. Further, all rights or entitlements emanated from the state, were based in state legislation, and subject to change at any point in time. Where the Party saw a political enemy, the legal system was a repressive punitive instrument.

2. The legal institutions were an extension of, or part of, the state apparatus, under the control and supervision of the ruling Communist Party; justice officials had no brief to challenge or check the rulers and their public servants. The judges' task was to apply the laws, not only in accordance with the Codes and legislation, but to respond to political directives on how to assess evidence and pass judgment. These could be from on high or from local officials, and Communist Party members



received different treatment. Unlike its counterpart in liberal democracies, it was not slanted in favour of the wealthy or privileged; where neither political nor personal interests were involved, the poor stood as reasonable a chance of winning a case as did their opponent, a state institution.<sup>11</sup> But the privileged elite stood 'outside' the law.

3. The system, spawned a large number of lawyers, professional and academic, but not surprisingly neither judges nor others acquired a high social status. The Procuracy – both the most punitive arm of the law and, at the same time, the one that appealed to those who wanted to root out corruption – had the greatest potential for power. Although among the lawyers there were a few who, reading the literature on the role of an independent judiciary or an adversarial system, tried to defend clients against unjust charges or convictions on the basis of inadequate evidence, the profession as a whole ranked among the more conservative ones.

4. Simultaneously other ways of solving disputes existed, either recognised and encouraged, or inherited from older traditions, or devised to cope with the problems of everyday life.

- (a) Local Party officials acted as 'judges', according to rules of their own making, in disputes between institutions or individuals.
- (b) Although fading by 1980s, the use of collective censure, and the use of the workplace as the reformatory – responsible for the wrongdoer – existed (shaming mechanisms).
- (c) To a limited extent among the minority peoples, older ways of resolving disputes (chthonic law) still operated; possibly in some peasant communities traditional methods still were used; and the criminal fraternity managed its own affairs.
- (d) Whereas all these methods can be found in many communities, Soviet society differed from many in the marked absence of either state or non-state but legitimate methods of regulating property rights and exchange, and buying and selling between individuals, and of acquiring resources to meet obligations. Given their illegality, such transactions were managed through sets of informal, personal relationships; conflicts arising out of them could only be resolved on a personal basis, and out of sight of the authorities.
- (e) Similarly, the unwillingness of the authorities to allow independent organisations or associations to exist encouraged the use of personal relations to solve disputes, for example, between workers and foremen or shop superintendents, or those between professional employees and directors of institutions. More major disputes could often only be resolved by turning to the outside authority, the Party.

How might we expect the parties in this 'dispute-resolution environment' to react if, simultaneously, the old 'ruling authority' disappeared and the new authority (still disputed) announced that now 'what is not forbidden, is permitted', decreed that the court system, now independent, would be responsible for deciding disputes between citizens and the state, and between institutions, that it should also adjudicate disputes in the new fields of private ownership, buying and selling, private economic activities, and that a new Constitutional Court would rule on the constitutionality of laws, decrees, and on the application of the law in court decisions?

From what we know of the development and behaviour of civil-law institutions in general, and from the existing Soviet variant, could we make any predictions of likely responses from its officers? It might be that the new 'authority-less environment' would give a powerful boost to judges and lawyers, anxious to see the justice system as independent and prestigious. For this to be realised, not only would a substantial and influential segment of a conservative profession need to be convinced of the desirability of change, the judges would also need (a) security of tenure (which they got, but which probably strengthened the position of the more elderly, conservative elements in the profession), (b) a level of remuneration that would dampen down corruption (which they did not get), and (c) the ability and resources to demonstrate to the population that the way of judging would meet their needs – courts are a time-consuming method of settling disputes and expensive in terms of resources for judges as well as clients – and neither of these was present. There was a dramatic expansion in the number of lawyers, especially among defence lawyers working for fees and in those specialising in the new private and commercial law fields, where there was money to be earned. But the courts and the Procuracy remained underpaid and unable to cope with mastering the new legislation, which appeared with dizzying speed, was often poorly drafted, and sometimes contradictory. Case loads, both civil and criminal, increased dramatically. Corruption (fees for verdicts) or collusion (between prosecutors and judges, judges and defence counsels), and non-implementation of decisions in civil cases, all lowered the already low standing of the legal institutions. The persistence of political interventions by local or national leaders in cases where they had an interest further undermined the prestige and authority of judges, whose hierarchy remained as before.

There is nothing here to suggest that Russian judges stand out as unusual. The role a civil law system ascribes to judges encourages corruption if they are poorly paid. And nothing in their past prepared

Russian judges to withstand political pressure, especially if now it was accompanied by the threat of economic sanctions. What could shift them in a new direction? Public pressure? How might we expect people, in this new non-Communist Party environment, to set about settling disputes – either with each other or with the new authorities?

Where new types of activity either came aboveground or were really new – buying and selling of assets, investing, banking, and the like – it took time for new rules (laws or otherwise) and mechanisms for resolving conflict to be established. In their absence, violence, intimidation, and personal debts or loyalties, all weapons of the strong, prevailed. These included buying or threatening judges where necessary, though most of this type of dispute settlement took place outside the ‘law’ (Volkov, 2002). But in those areas where laws had long existed, the population increasingly turned to the Courts and to the Procuracy for the adjudication of disputes (housing, consumer rights, social benefits, etc.), and enterprises to arbitration.

More data are needed to gain a better sense of which issues drive people to take their case to court, but the overloading of the courts and the decision to introduce justices of the peace is witness to the demand for law. The fact that turning to court is not a welcome choice or that people hold judges in low esteem is hardly peculiar to Russia. A civil law or common law system encourages people not to go to court, if they can possibly avoid it. Perhaps, given the poor working of the system, what is surprising is that *so many do look to the courts* to resolve their disputes.

How can we explain this? First, an impressive array of legal rights was passed on from the Soviet period and, with the massive non-observance of these rights by government institutions and private business, some hoped that the judges would act ‘fairly’. Second, where else could they turn? The choice is often between the local authority department (with whom the dispute may be in the first place) and the court. Whereas in other societies, people would think of turning to their deputies, or their trade union, or citizens’ advice bureau, these alternatives were lacking. Some now turn to the ombudsmen, where they exist, some have gone to the human rights organisations,<sup>12</sup> which find themselves overwhelmed by cases. Thousands have sent their cases to Strasbourg. What has been the response of the human rights organisations? To acquire legal skills and to take the cases – pensions, child allowances, inheritance, housing, prisoners not being allowed their parcels, police brutality, citizenship cases – to court. The interesting question is why they have chosen this course of action. The answer is both because they assume that the legal system is the appropriate mechanism for resolving disputes, and because

they are anxious to strengthen it as an independent institution. It may be that the bombardment of the courts with 'legal rights' cases of all kinds and the pursuit of particular 'impact' cases will achieve changes in governmental, judicial, and employers' behaviour. But how strong is the evidence that using the courts in this way leads to an independent and incorruptible judiciary? Or, are changes in judicial behaviour usually led from the top, that is, by political decisions and leadership from senior judges?

Cases are won (a new generation of young public interest lawyers specialising in environmental cases, refugee and citizenship law, alternative service, media law, has emerged) but people are encouraged to think that the only strategy is to find someone to win your case for you. What other strategies might people adopt? The one that is markedly absent is collective action. How do we explain this?

If we look back at the Russian past, we find many examples of organised collective action from different groups within society but with rare and short-lived exceptions, none since the 1920s. Here is a major difference between Russia in 1917 and in 1989: the presence or absence of organised collectivities, professions, groups with interests, aware of them, and prepared to defend them. In the late 1980s, there was no living memory or experience of open organised activity in defence of a group's interests. The trade unions never *won* any of the workers' rights, any more than the veterans' organisations *won* the privileges for their members. The informal personal relationships and connections that had helped regulate relationships in the Soviet period constituted a very poor basis for collective action whilst encouraging individual action. Using Jowitt's phraseology (1998, p. 2), 'disconnected me's' rather than 'institutionally integrated we's', found themselves facing an inadequate court system as their only defence. In addition, in those areas where state-inspired social or professional organisations had existed (and in many cases continued to exist), members seemed to find it even harder to create an autonomous organisation or transform the existing one. Trade unions continue to ally with management, professionals fail to organise to protest salary cuts, and workers, while reckoning they have no rights, seek recourse in individual deals with management (*Stanovlenie*, 2004, pp. 148–53).

It is perhaps ironic that workers' rights are less well protected now, under the new labour code, than they were under the Soviet system. It may be that fewer are turning to court but what does this tell us? That here we have an example of how the Soviet civil law system differed from its European counterparts in that, as regards labour law, it was egalitarian and it was free, but that now it is beginning to resemble its liberal counterparts and to privilege the powerful (the employers) and

the better-off? (See too comments by Holmes, 2002.) Is a type of dispute resolution that arose and has been used for centuries by the powerful to protect their interests and maintain the order they prefer going to 'work' for a community where all are politically equal? Or, maybe we should rephrase this: which of the attributes of today's civil law and common law systems will need to change if this particular legal tradition is to move in step with democratic demands?<sup>13</sup> We need to remember that a legal system may be a very inadequate instrument for settling certain types of disputes that have, for one reason or another, fallen under its jurisdiction; workplace disputes for example, family conflicts, medical/ethical cases, or those involving young offenders.

These points are relevant to the specific subject of the 'litigious' attitude of the population towards the settlement of disputes. Groups of civic-minded law students, from across the country, if asked to prepare a bill of ten basic rights for an imaginary community, more often than not fail to include the right to a fair trial (but they do include freedom of speech). They tend to think, as do many of those turning to the human rights organisations, of rights as state-given. And correspondingly, state officials question the need or rationale for social organisations to defend citizens' rights; that, they argue, is the responsibility of the justice officials.<sup>14</sup> Few make the connection that the reason why government and courts break the rules, do not obey their own laws, and why corporations ignore their employees' rights, is because an active and organised citizenry is not participating in creating rights and defending them – through the legislature, political parties, trade unions, active professional associations, local communities. The perception that rights need to be defended, not just (or maybe not even primarily) by the courts but also by the threat of organised action by their constituents, is largely absent. But this is surely not enough to explain the total lack of political action by students or university teachers.

The litigious attitude is accompanied by another. In an analysis, based on the several thousand cases that have been brought to the Perm human rights centre, Averkiev identifies different understandings of rights held by people. A commonly held view is that human rights are rights of the poor; they need them, not the rich who can buy what they need in order to live a life of dignity (Averkiev, 2003). This view reflects those deeply-held beliefs in justice and fairness, beliefs that run far deeper than those in legal procedures: peasants have the right to their land, to a guaranteed minimum level of subsistence; workers to – 'a fair day's pay for a fair day's work'. (Twenty-first century additions include a right to bring up their children in an unpolluted environment and to medical

attention.) It is precisely these beliefs in justice and fairness, and the (correct) assumption that it is the poor in any society who lose out most of all that are a thread running through Russian society from earlier centuries.

In conclusion, we see how specific institutional strategies (a civil law system), the existence of a particular legal professional community (less well-educated, less well-off, less liberal-minded than its counterpart in 1917), a population, activists, and state officials all accustomed to a system of state-given rights and individual recourse to the courts or to officials as the way of settling disputes – how the interaction between these elements undermined the ability of the legal system to cope with the avalanche of disputes. The economic crisis and impoverishment of judges and clients accentuated the problems – the level of corruption, the quantity of cases, civil and criminal – but the issues were deeper. In the absence of other mechanisms, social and political, and of collective action by groups willing to employ sanctions against the authorities, the legal system was expected to carry the weight of adjudicating all society's disputes – a weight it could not bear.

## **Conclusion**

Unless we include a cultural dimension, we will not understand how institutions work, or why they do not work as was hoped or expected. But we must not assume that we know what 'the culture' is, that a particular set of cultural practices or attitudes will be present or relevant in all spheres. Instead we have to seek them out painstakingly, with the help of data on practices, documents, in-depth interviews, participant observation, study of language, of printed and visual media. We need to be aware of traditions, and of the way groups change and adapt them; of common features in institutional cultures across boundaries; and of the way new institutional arrangements elicit responses from people and groups responding in new and inherited ways to try and achieve their aims in the new context. Informal practices may arise out of earlier ways of doing things, or in opposition to them, or simply because people seize new opportunities and invent new strategies.

In the early 1980s, Sovietologists turned their attention to policy areas, to ministries, institutes and specialist discussions. Inevitably the research was very limited. But now we could study the changing relationship (if it is changing) between government officials, practitioners, and the public in particular sectors in order to understand the principles governing behaviour (past practices versus new incentives); we could see

whether certain customary ways of doing things (and if so, which) seem to prevail across sectors; we could compare the behaviour of the state apparatus in different post-Communist countries to try to identify the factors that influence the officials' behaviour and citizens' attitudes towards the state.

Focusing attention on regime characteristics led to ignoring the aspirations that lie behind the struggle for a democratic regime and distracted political scientists from asking, under what circumstances do the institutions chosen work for or against the realisation of these aspirations. If the institutional approach neglects this, so does a political culture approach that searches for values and neglects the complex interaction between new institutional arrangements and institutional cultures, aspirations, and social practices. In our study of the court system, we tried to show how both institutions and culture influenced outcomes. Perhaps then, by bringing both the state and culture back in, we shall get a better sense of the constraints (and opportunities) that the demise of a particular type of rule in a specific society will present to those who strive to introduce democratic institutions, and of what will be needed for aspirations to be realised.

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## Notes

1. For the debate, and key participants, see Fish (2001), Moser (2001), *Journal of Democracy* (1999); Colton and McFaul (2002, 91–93); *Pro et Contra* (2002).
2. Laitin (1988) had hopes that Putnam's impressive study might do this, and he himself struck out into a new field, but the thoughtful analysis of thick and thin approaches by Mishler and Pollack (2003) suggests we are still engaged with the same issues.
3. Biriukov and Sergeev (1993) provide detailed data on deputy behaviour but we struggle with their interpretation of this as evidence of *sobornost*. The analysis of perceptions of democracy held by 'democrats', advocated by Lukin (2000b), would seem much more illuminating. The question of the existence of different political cultures has been raised but remains under explored.
4. It is fair, I think, to call Colton and McFaul 'institutionalists'. Their argument implies that the elites could have crafted democracy institutions, and a democratic order would have ensued.

5. The only difference here between Gel'man's and Lukin's (2000b) argument – that the 'democrats' were no more 'democratic' in the liberal, rule-of-law, sense than their opponents since they perceived a democratic order as one in which they ruled, not one in which their opponents could through electoral means displace them – seems to be that Lukin gives overriding importance to this factor.
6. The use of the term indicates how the state has managed to privilege its reading of the group. The way different 'sub-cultures' within a national community – based on class, region, religion, social or political interests, etc. – relate to one another, and change, is reflected in its politics. We cannot assume that there is a common shared identity that overrides these or unites all; that is a matter for research.
7. I take the term from Laitin (2000, pp. 136–39) where he discusses research studies of this type.
8. Kharkhordin (correspondence) suggested the analogy of a fish unaware of the water in which it is floating. This introduces one of the tricky issues facing the anthropologist or anyone studying the role of cultural practices. It says to me that we need both the insiders and the outsiders to try to identify the relevant practices.
9. McClymont and Golub (2000) remind us how recent have been the attempts to use the legal system (as compared with other strategies) to gain political or social rights for the disenfranchised. Perhaps, with a different system of conflict resolution and dispute settlement, African-Americans would not have had to wait until the 1960s to gain equal voting rights. Independent judges did little to help women in Britain to become equal citizens.
10. The disagreements among lawyers are reminiscent of the debate among political scientists over 'democracy', with O'Donnell adopting a Dahl approach, while the definition of rule of law offered in UK texts ('independent judges') makes Bryce the equivalent of Schumpeter.
11. Hendley (2001) and Krasnov (2002) suggest that people rarely turned to court in the Soviet period but such statements need to be qualified (as does Krasnov in respect of labour cases).
12. For some the human rights organisation should exercise its authority as did the local party organisation. Averkiev, head of the Perm human rights centre, quotes a request from an elderly man: 'But if you ring him [the local official] and tell him ...' (Averkiev, 2003, p. 23). Another example of older attitudes persisting: early on the day of Stroeve's weekly visit to Orel, a queue of petitioners would form outside the governor's office; Stroeve would alight from the car and proceed down the line, granting, refusing.
13. O'Donnell is optimistic: if rulers use law to defend their interests, why should not the now sovereign people use it to defend theirs (p. 323)? But are the mechanisms of government or of the legal system, with their built-in procedures, and professional practices, which have served society's elites, able to meet a *qualitatively* new set of needs? Weingast's argument (1997) that the way mechanisms of constraint operate is equally appropriate for a system of limited representative government and when the people as a whole become the 'the sovereign' is surely questionable. The demands expected of this authority are *qualitatively* different: now *all interests* must be considered, reconciled, *all must be fairly treated*. Those basic demands, which prompted the



call for equal political rights – an end to poverty, for shelter, education, a fair trial, an end to privilege and power based on wealth – now have to be addressed. The close association of limited sovereignty with a particular legal tradition (civil law), may not stand up to the pressures that ensue from sovereignty of the people and demands for human rights for all. Boundaries between rule-making and adjudication within established states seem to become more porous as constitutional courts take decisions that have major policy consequences; supra-national courts claim jurisdiction over disputes between citizens and their governments (human rights), or over criminal behaviour (international criminal court).

14. Based on attendance at summer schools across Russia for law students working in legal clinics (1998–2001), comments from justice ministry officials to NGOs or to funding organisations.

# 6

## Political Culture, Post-Communism and Disciplinary Normalisation: Towards Theoretical Reconstruction

*Stephen Welch*

This chapter mounts a critique of much of the study of post-Communist political culture, suggesting its theoretical development is inadequate and that method has substituted for theory. The inadequacy of theory is traced to the failure to exploit the original interdisciplinarity of the concept. That characteristic was displayed most vividly in a set of divergent conceptualisations and uses that developed in political culture research within Communist studies, but these were not themselves adequately substantiated theoretically. Moreover a 'normalisation' of study has occurred in the currently prevalent mode of political culture research. The potential of interdisciplinary investigations to address the theoretical elaboration of political culture is illustrated by a discussion of some work in social psychology.

The concept of political culture emerged at a time of high confidence in the ability of political science to combine broad analytical scope with rigorous method (Welch, 1993, pp. 72–74). The concept, accordingly, has a distinctive multidisciplinary at its origins. But the fragility of the concept's theoretical establishment quickly showed itself in scholarship through a tendency for conceptualisations and uses to proliferate and diverge. In particular, maintaining the link between broad scope and rigorous method has proved a challenge, resulting in a series of alternating pronouncements of the death and rebirth of the concept.<sup>1</sup>

The concept's career in Communist and post-Communist studies is distinctive within this broad pattern. The Communist setting brought about a particular set of conceptual divergences, which were countered by an

argument for 'disciplinary normalisation' centred on a characteristic method. A new and distinct phase of political culture research was entered with the advent of post-Communism, the conditions of which have facilitated a more widespread normalisation of approach, in several respects. The new research setting involves the extension of already developed techniques to the newly open territories, and the use of these techniques to answer generic questions.<sup>2</sup> Whether or not democracy, or the market, has been consolidated in the post-Communist area, political science certainly has been. This extension of disciplinary grasp, whereby the mysteries of Kremlinology and the interpretivist epistemology of area studies have been replaced by the certainties of reliable socio-economic data and representative surveys of popular attitudes, has for the most part been welcomed. This chapter, however, enters a doubt, suggesting that the rush to exploit the vast new possibilities for empirical investigation using the already highly polished analytical techniques of political science may have exacerbated an existing tendency for method to substitute for theory (on that tendency in political science see Sartori, 1970).

The work of Archie Brown triggers the argument of this chapter, in a number of ways. Brown (1977) was a pioneer in the use of this relatively newly coined concept in the political analysis of Communist states, a use that subsequently fed back into and reinforced the discussion of the concept in the political science 'mainstream' (as it then was) (Almond, 1983). At the same time, Brown has also written an important essay (1984c) that was distinctive in reopening political culture research to influences from outside political science, specifically from anthropology and social psychology. Such disciplinary openness is a model for the present chapter.

But while Brown used this extra-disciplinary foray to defend both a specific conceptualisation of political culture and the approach as a whole, in this chapter the ultimate aim of theoretical consolidation will be served less directly, by an investigation that initially criticises and thus potentially destabilises prevailing usage of political culture and opens up other, neglected, possibilities. The assumption that all that remains for political culture research is empirical accumulation is premature; further theoretical work is necessary; and some arguments in social psychology not so far looked at by students of politics provide material for it: such is the argument of this chapter.

## **The origins of political culture research and its development in Communist studies**

A genealogy of political culture research has already been provided by its mid-twentieth century progenitor, Gabriel Almond (1989).

One noteworthy feature is the size of the Pantheon of intellectual precursors that Almond claims, which includes Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Montesquieu and Tocqueville. This reflects the inescapability of the phenomena to which culture-like concepts have responded in political science and its predecessors. It does not, however, help much in specifying the concept.

Only a little more specifically, Almond (1989, pp. 10–16) goes on to highlight the diverse origins of the political culture concept by describing several *disciplinary* influences: European sociology (mainly Weber, as transmitted via Parsons); social psychology (understood as a science of attitudes); and psychoanthropology (especially theories of ‘modal personality’). But the ‘catalytic agent in the political culture conceptualization and research that took place in the 1960s’ (Almond, 1989, p. 15) was, he says, a development in method: the attitude survey.

This combination of sources, not on the face of it an easy one, expresses the intellectual excitement and confidence characteristic of mid-century American political science, a mood whose fading Lucian Pye (2003, p. 6) has recently lamented. In the event, as soon as the early 1960s, with the publication of the first two classic studies of political culture, *The Civic Culture* (Almond and Verba, 1963) and *Political Culture and Political Development* (Pye and Verba, 1965), a tension was evident between two applications of the concept (Lane, 1992).

In the application that would become typical of *comparative politics* the method of statistical correlation and modelling prevailed, making use not only of survey-based measurement of political culture but also of quantitative political and socio-economic data in order to model causal relationships (if in a rather primitive manner at this stage, and not always in a way that facilitated inter-country comparison: Welch, 1993, pp. 14–22). In contrast, in the *area studies* application, evidence drawn from political history, religious studies, ethnology and literature was deployed in a methodologically eclectic though largely interpretive manner in the production of a synoptic view of political culture, presenting considerable impediments to systematisation and generalisation. Thus, in the first major works of political culture research, streams in the original disciplinary confluence were beginning to separate.

The insertion of political culture into Communist studies both displayed and developed this comparative politics/area studies tension, contributing to the theory of political culture through a debate over definition (for fuller discussion see Welch, 1987). Brown (1984d, p. 2) defined political culture in ‘subjective’ terms as ‘the subjective perception of history and politics, the fundamental beliefs and values, the foci of identification and loyalty, and the political knowledge and expectations

which are the product of the specific historical experience of nations and groups'. He took the utility of this definition to lie in its potential to reveal dissonance between political culture and prevailing political institutions and behaviour, a state of affairs which definitions that incorporated patterns of behaviour into political culture itself would obscure.

The positions opposed by this *attitude-continuity* conceptualisation are of three types.<sup>3</sup> One opposing view sought (consistently indeed with Brown's incorporation of 'historical experience' into his definition)<sup>4</sup> to derive a specification of political culture from a synoptic interpretation of a country's history. Work by Tucker (1977), White (1979), Keenan (1986) and Szamuely (1974) is illustrative, though not all refer to political culture. Its key focus is *historical continuity*. Brown's view is not however incompatible with the substantive findings of this approach. Indeed, for at least one of these writers, White, the more comprehensive definition seems largely to be a matter of evidentiary convenience: his theory (White, 1984b) of the means by which political culture is transmitted – via socialisation in family and educational institutions – marks an underlying commitment to the attitude-continuity position.

A second opposing position also involves a contribution from Tucker (1973),<sup>5</sup> as well as writers such as Fagen (1969) and Meyer (1972), and draws on arguments in cultural anthropology. This approach stresses the distinctiveness of Communist regimes as promoters of *cultural revolution*. Analysts argued that such a focus demanded a broader definition, not just a broader range of evidence, in order that resocialisation efforts not be seen as, in Fagen's terms, mere 'political advertising' (1969, p. 6).

Such arguments pioneer a 'cultural turn' that has been widely manifest in historical research in the last two decades, notably in the study of the Nazi, the fascist, and the Stalinist regimes (however we label them). Sometimes the term 'political culture' is employed, sometimes not, as in Falasca-Zamponi's (1997, p. 7) 'cultural-political analysis' of Italian fascism. In either case, these writers are drawing on the creative and aesthetic implications of the concept of culture (Williams, 1981, p. 11) in their work, just as did earlier students of cultural revolution. To quote Falasca-Zamponi (1997, p. 4) again: 'More than mere means of political legitimation, rituals, myths, cults, and speeches were fundamental to the construction of fascist power, its specific physiognomy, its political vision'. It always remains relevant to ask about the effect and efficacy of such efforts (Confino, 1997), but the supposition of these authors is that the question is posed too starkly as a matter of popular acceptance or rejection. Their claim is of a role for official discourse, ritual and

mobilisation that is in some sense 'constitutive' of political culture, rather than (as in the attitude-continuity position) subject to acceptance or rejection by it.

A third alternative is perhaps maximally incompatible with Brown's definition. It arises when we look not at the cultural impact of mass mobilisations, mythic discourse and other public interventions but at the structuring of everyday life by the regimes, as is invited by Jowitt's definition of political culture as 'the set of informal, adaptive postures – behavioral and attitudinal – that emerge in response to and interact with the set of formal definitions ... that characterize a given level of society' (Jowitt, 1992b, p. 55). Studies that have operated in this terrain of *cultural adaptation* range from sweeping theories of Communist society such as that of Zinoviev (1985) to more narrowly focused ethnographic work on the use of 'connections' (DiFranceisco and Gitelman, 1984; Ledeneva, 1998) and on hoarding as a defensive mechanism in the production apparatus (Swain, 1992, ch. 6; Kenedi, 1981). While cultural-revolution approaches focus on the public discursive and mobilisational displays that (at least some of the time) characterised the regimes, the focus of these cultural-adaptation studies is at a more intimate social level, on the 'lifeworld' of communism.

Four conceptualisations of political culture can therefore be identified within the 'subjective/comprehensive' definitional dichotomy. First, Brown's attitude-continuity usage is designed to expose and make researchable one aspect of the inauthenticity of the regimes – the failure of their resocialisation (attitude changing) efforts. Second, Tucker, White and many others (mainly in the Russian case) construe political culture in terms of historical continuity, emphasising one or another historical pattern, usually an authoritarian one. Third, the work of Fagen and Tucker emphasises the distinctively political-cultural revolutionary agenda of the regimes, and the magnitude of the efforts it sometimes involved. The method here is also interpretive, but with discourse, rituals and displays as the interpreted materials. Work on cultural adaptation instead focuses on the behaviour and the skills induced and inculcated by communism, distant both from the official aims of the regimes and from the behaviour that would have occurred in their absence, and thus neither strictly authentic nor inauthentic.

Such rival conceptualisations of political culture take their cue from selected empirical observations, but also reflect different uses of the term. They are not subject to straightforward empirical evaluation, as they are intended to direct attention to different sets of facts, and implicitly invoke different causal connections. It is perhaps arguable, in

a deconstructive mode, that they should be evaluated politically, in view of the extreme political importance, during the Cold War especially, of judgements about matters such as the authenticity and inauthenticity of Communist regimes.<sup>6</sup> But in this chapter a reconstructive rather than a deconstructive course is followed.

Its cue is Brown's reach into social psychology for support for his conceptualisation of political culture. For example, he derived from the substantial literature on 'cognitive dissonance' the finding that attitude change is more likely to be brought about among active Communist proselytisers (Brown, 1984c, p. 158), but also from the literature on 'reactance' that highly visible coercion tends to produce the reinforcement of the repressed attitude (Brown, 1984c, p. 166). Resources such as this, even though Brown admits that the findings he cites are not always so counterintuitive as to need the confirmation of social psychology (Brown, 1984c, p. 158), offer theoretical reinforcement by substantiating the psychological processes on which a subjective definition of political culture implicitly relies. But though the term 'psychological' has sometimes been reserved, by critics as well as supporters, for Brown's and similar definitions, it is clear that the alternative conceptualisations we have considered also contain an implicit psychology. One of their great weaknesses is that it has remained implicit. It is hard, for example, to know exactly what is meant by the 'constitutive' role of public political discourse, or how 'adaptation' works as a psychological process. With Brown's chapter as our model, we might hope for at least equal illumination from a cross-disciplinary foray that keeps these questions in mind.

## **Political culture research and post-Communism**

The collapse of Communism in Europe brought greater potential for the disciplinary normalisation that Brown's definitional argument had promoted. This was so for two reasons. The first was the possibility of using the method Almond had cited as the key catalyst for political culture research in the mainstream, the attitude survey. Its use under Communism, while not unknown, had certainly faced serious impediments. The other was the framing of post-Communist studies around the problem of democratisation, a generic problem whose posing suggested the possibility of subsuming post-Communist studies under the subdiscipline of 'transitology'. Together, these considerations amount to the abandonment of an area-studies approach to post-Communist political culture and the adoption of a comparative-politics one. One cost of

this has been the marginalisation of the alternative conceptualisations of political culture discussed in the preceding section.

The literature of empirical political culture research in post-Communist studies is now substantial. Critical reviews of this literature have already appeared (Fleron, 1996; Alexander, 2000, pp. 45–67), and only some general points are noted here. The survey method has produced somewhat ambiguous results concerning the question of political-cultural foundations of democratisation. Early writings expressed an optimistic view that political culture in former Communist states did not present a significant impediment to democratisation. Some later work has challenged this view, and in the course of attempts to resolve these disagreements there has been much discussion, some of it of a quite technical nature (e.g. Barrington and Herron, 2001, which criticises the use of multiple regression analysis), about the interpretation of survey findings. Survey research practitioners have occasionally voiced concerns about the problematic nature of the post-Communist contexts for the actual conduct of survey research, referring not just to problems of training and communication but also of an exacerbation of distorting 'response effects' (Swafford, 1992).

James Alexander (2000) makes a broader argument that 'cultural formlessness' is the main characteristic of post-Communist political culture, a condition that he takes to invalidate the attempt to measure political culture using surveys. Instead, he undertakes 'ethnographic' investigation (though not perhaps of a type that many anthropologists would recognise) based on in-depth interviews. The results he produces are, however, not strikingly different in form from what might be obtained by survey methods: he finds that his respondents fall into four types based on differences in their largely verbal reactions to the post-Communist environment. It is by no means clear why surveys should be thought less adequate in circumstances of cultural formlessness so long as stable groups of respondents can nevertheless be identified. Perhaps, indeed, the 'snapshot' characteristic often noticed and criticised in surveys (other than panel surveys) would be especially appropriate to this situation. A different indicator of political-cultural formlessness comes from surveys themselves – in particular the high incidence of 'don't know' responses in them. Ellen Carnaghan (1996), using quantitative methods, has suggested that these responses reflect apathy, though without providing much guidance as to *its* roots.

A less sweeping scepticism about survey methods has been expressed by Frederick Fleron (1996). His review of the specific findings of survey-based studies of post-Communist political culture suggests that 'there



has been little effort to examine the effects of timing and the wording of questions on survey results or the motives of citizens who express positive affect toward democratic values' (1996, p. 234). Moreover, differences *among* and relationships *between* 'orientations, attitudes, values, beliefs and norms' receive only 'scant attention' in the research Fleron (1996, p. 236) reviews.

It is not only in the field of post-Communist studies that objections have been made to the use of surveys to measure subjective phenomena. The theory of survey research itself has developed a large literature diagnosing problems such as question-wording and priming effects. Some critics and practitioners see these as setting limits to the 'science' of attitude surveying (Roper, 1983), others as providing scope for further scientific study and attempts to bypass the problems (Schuman and Presser, 1996; Zaller and Feldman, 1992). The survey situation itself has been examined for the presence of complex kinds of communication, familiar to researchers but not capable of being represented in survey results, such as 'rebelliousness, cynicism, outrage, intimidation, lies, shyness, hints, metaphors, bragging, hostility, sexual advances' – examined, in other words, as a *conversation* that masquerades as a scientific measurement (Eliasoph, 1990, p. 470).

Perhaps most fundamental for our present discussion is the question of whether political culture should be measured using the same instruments with which we measure public opinion. A caution has been entered by David Laitin, who suggests in support of ethnographic methods in political culture research that people 'are not fully conscious of the sources of their visions and, even if honest, would not necessarily provide the relevant data to survey researchers' (Laitin and Wildavsky, 1988, p. 592). Nevertheless, the practice is a feature of the disciplinary normalisation of post-Communist studies. It has been explicitly endorsed for instance by Matthew Wyman (1996, p. 123): 'to reject such evidence is to reject the only method we have that can get remotely close to representative data on political cultural attitudes'.<sup>7</sup> This sounds suspiciously like letting our methods dictate our concepts – something complained of by Sartori (1970, p. 1038), who emphasised that 'concept formation stands prior to quantification'.

In post-Communist studies, factors of normalisation such as the new capability to conduct attitude surveys and the insistent problem of democratisation, together rendering post-Communist studies a scarcely distinctive branch of comparative politics, have combined to produce a political culture research programme that is methodologically sophisticated but conceptually weak. In the political culture research of

Communism, a diversity subsisted not only of definitions but also of uses of political culture (with Brown representing the comparative politics mainstream but somewhat isolated in his own subfield: 1984d, p. 3). But in post-Communist political culture research a conceptual contraction has occurred. We can certainly obtain more information of the type yielded by surveys; but this need not mean better knowledge.

Considering that political culture research makes a number of psychological assumptions (possibly disparate and seldom explicit), it is surprising that its interest in social psychology has been so limited. The perils of extradisciplinary forays notwithstanding, the next section investigates the possibility that social psychology offers resources for the reconstruction of political culture *theory*.

### **Social psychology: attitudes, skills and discourse**

Although a definition of political culture that operationalises it via the attitude survey method has sometimes been called 'psychological', it is clear that all conceptualisations of political culture must in some way invoke psychology. Invoking 'attitudes' is indeed reason enough for paying attention to social psychology, given that that discipline has often been understood as the science of attitudes (see for instance Allport, 1973, p. 19), as it was by Almond. But what does it mean to say that political culture is at least in part a psychological phenomenon? What, indeed, is psychology's conception of an attitude? Even a brief investigation of social-psychological literature reveals that these are by no means settled questions.

A comprehensive study in the history of ideas by Donald Fleming (1967) traces the evolution of the concept of attitude to its current prominence in the human self-image. From an original meaning having to do with physical posture (even *imposture*), the concept was developed in the nineteenth century, under the influence of a radical materialism, in a physiological direction, as a state of physical readiness for action. But, as the need for materialism to proclaim itself so virulently against religious doctrine diminished, it became possible to consider mental as well as motor aspects of the term; aspects which eventually prevailed. With Thomas and Znaniecki's (1958; orig. publ. 1918–20) study of the adaptation of Polish immigrants to American life as a major influence, attitudes came to be seen as relatively enduring mental predispositions to act. A final major development occurred when 'opinion' became separated from attitude under the influence of Gallup's opinion polling. As opinion 'became the natural term for any preference that was

consciously avowed and correspondingly easy to tabulate' (Fleming, 1967, p. 349), attitude moved into a complementary niche by acquiring a connotation of *depth* – presumably not consciously avowed and less easy to tabulate.

It is at this point that the concept of attitude entered into political culture theory, with a connotation of depth that made it complementary to public opinion, but with no further conceptual specification and in association with a method – the attitude survey – that seemed to make the empirical determination of attitudes straightforward and was bound to lead to the *assimilation* of political culture to public opinion.<sup>8</sup> In this setting, its conceptual development pretty much stopped, to be replaced by progressive methodological refinement. The same was not, however, true in its original home of social psychology, where conceptual debate, influenced by experiment, has remained very much alive. In several lines of research, a strongly sceptical analysis of attitudes has developed.

The behaviourist tendency in psychology, with its programme of the elimination from science of mental phenomena, did not succeed in removing attitudes from social psychological study (DeFleur and Westie, 1963, p. 19), or indeed in retaining dominance in psychology. Nevertheless, the problem of the inaccessibility of attitudes continues to provoke theoretical responses. An important one was set out by Daryl Bem (1972) as the 'self-perception paradigm', which offered a new interpretation of the results observed in the literature on cognitive dissonance.

A key example of cognitive-dissonance research is the widely cited finding (Festinger and Carlsmith, 1959) that subjects' attitudes are modified in order to bring them in line with attitude-inconsistent behaviour induced by the experimenter. Specifically, when the experimental inducement to perform a previously derogated task is large, say \$20, no change in the evaluation of the task is produced; when the inducement is smaller, say \$1, presumably not a convincing reason for the induced behaviour, evaluations change to compensate. Bem (1972, p. 50) noticed that subsequent behaviour changed more reliably than reported attitudes, suggesting that attitude reports are themselves an inference from behaviour, and not a wholly reliable one. Bem's self-perception theory thus proposes that 'the individual is functionally in the same position as an outside observer' when seeking to describe 'attitudes, emotions, and other internal states' (1972, p. 2).

A different view of cognitive dissonance findings, but with similar negative implications for an introspectivist account of attitudes, is that

attitude reports – such as those eventuating from cognitive dissonance experiments – derive from concerns for self-presentation (Baumeister, 1982, pp. 11–12) or impression management (Tedeschi *et al.*, 1971; see also Gecas, 1982, pp. 20–1). In this theory, which also has its own experimental support, the subject responds in order to convey an impression of rationality and consistency and avoids conveying one of hypocrisy or gullibility.

While the thrust of these critiques may appear to be a pronounced scepticism about attitudes – compatible, at least in Bem's case as a 'some-time radical behaviorist' (Bem, 1972, p. 49), with doubt that attitudes even exist or have casual efficacy – they actually substantiate a less drastic but still significant conclusion: that what we can learn about attitudes from people's reports about them is limited. This has been the theme of another line of research that was stimulated by some of Bem's findings – Timothy Wilson's theory of *dual attitudes*.

The original essay, by Nisbett and Wilson (1977), reviewed experimental literature in both cognitive dissonance and self-presentation theories. The results, they concluded, 'confound any assumption that conscious, verbal, cognitive processes result in conscious, verbalisable changes in evaluations or motive states which then mediate changed behavior' (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977, p. 235). Wilson has developed this line of argument into the view that motivations for behaviour and the 'explanatory system' are psychologically distinct (Wilson *et al.*, 1981). The existence of two distinct mental systems, one that is 'conscious and attempts to verbalize, communicate, and explain mental states' and another that mediates behaviour but is inaccessible (Wilson, 1985, p. 16), has troublesome implications for conventional social psychological methods: 'It is even more difficult to investigate cognitive processes than generally believed' (Wilson, 1985, p. 30). Wilson has discussed the implications for survey research (Wilson *et al.*, 1990, 1996). Asking respondents to provide reasons for their attitudes can have the effect of changing the attitudes reported, with the original attitude sometimes resurfacing later. For instance, highly analysed purchasing decisions prove to be more often regretted later than spur-of-the-moment ones (Wilson *et al.*, 1990, p. 213). 'By including only explicit measures of attitudes', Wilson *et al.* (2000, p. 120) conclude, 'the vast literature on attitude change may have overestimated the extent to which change takes place. People may maintain implicit attitudes that continue to influence their behavior.' Proffered reasons, Wilson *et al.* suggest, are 'often a function of shared cultural theories about why people feel the way they do' (Wilson *et al.*, 1996, p. 95). The theory of 'dual attitudes'

has become bolder in Wilson's recent work (Wilson, 2002; Wilson and Dunn, 2004), where he has made an effort to rehabilitate for social psychology the idea of the unconscious. The unconscious now refers, for Wilson, not to the psychodynamic mechanisms described by Freud (nor to the 'subliminal effects' also discredited by psychologists: Wilson *et al.*, 1998), but simply to the inaccessible psychological sources of behaviour.<sup>9</sup>

The thesis that the psychological sources of behaviour are inaccessible 'implicit attitudes' supports the supposition of the psychological depth of political culture while at the same time making problematic the empirical grasp of political culture via surveys. A clue as to how, alternatively, empirical grasp may be had comes from illustrative reference by Wilson and Dunn (2004, p. 500) to recent work on motor learning and perceptual skills. This work has given experimental support to speculative philosophical arguments made by Michael Polanyi (1998, pp. 49–57) on the phenomenon of *skill*, namely the irreducibility of skills to explicit rules, and the disruption of the exercise of them by conscious reflection or monitoring. Implicit attitudes may work in the same way, and thus be accessible to study not via verbal reports but ethnographically, in the observation of skilful practice.

Cultural psychology has explored this kind of phenomenon cross-culturally, with interesting results. This sub-discipline emerged as a set of findings of difference and difficulty in the application of standard psychometric tests to non-Western populations. As this line of research progressed beyond critique to the development of its own positive agenda, it has moved, according to a review by Rogoff and Chavajay (1995), in new directions 'that involved testing cognitive skills that were seen as representing important skills tied to cultural practices rather than skills that were usually assumed to be general' (Rogoff and Chavajay, 1995, p. 863; see also Lehman *et al.*, 2004, pp. 695–97). One striking example is that 'Japanese abacus experts show specific but powerful consequences of their skill in the use of the abacus as a tool for mathematical operations' (Rogoff and Chavajay, 1995, p. 865), such as increased capacity to remember number sequences.

Different implications for political culture research arise from the view, present from the origins of the dual attitude theory, that the source of subjects' reports of their attitudes is the prevailing explicit cultural rules or implicit cultural theories. It is intriguing that social psychology, itself an obvious if seldom exploited source for developing the psychological basis of political culture, also finds it necessary to invoke an unanalysed 'cultural background' in its investigation of attitudes. However, other branches of social psychology have been less reticent in

the analysis of this context, in some cases guided by a programmatic intention to make social psychology more 'social'.

One such body of work is that on *social representations*. Taking a cue from Durkheim's concept of 'collective representations', Serge Moscovici and associates (Moscovici, 2000; Farr and Moscovici, 1984) have developed an approach that eschews laboratory studies and mainly takes the form of case studies of the emergence and spread through society of classifications and theories such as those of Freudian psychoanalysis. They constitute socially accepted common-sense ways of explaining phenomena, typically arising in scientific work but becoming generalised (in Moscovici's view) through conversational transmission, initially by being grasped in relation to an existing social representation. Moscovici gives the example of psychoanalysis being initially understood in terms of religious confession, whereas later in its career the social representation of the analyst's role could be used to elucidate that of the confessor (Moscovici, 1984, p. 26).

Somewhat related too has been the theory of 'cultural epidemiology' advanced recently by Dan Sperber (1985, 1996). Sperber is keen to revive disciplinary exchange between anthropology and psychology, dismissing fears, which have inhibited such exchange, that one discipline might be reduced to the other. Such reduction, he points out rather usefully for our present discussion, can happen to individual theories, but not to whole disciplines. Also construing culture as 'representations' (though without reference to the social representations literature), Sperber draws on the analogy of epidemiology to suggest that a theory of culture needs to concern itself both with what is spread (psychological phenomena) and the dynamics of that spreading, which will differ among representations as it does for different diseases and will involve objective conditions such as the physical mode of representation (i.e., the communications media). This view, in some ways a generalisation of Moscovici and his followers' case studies, can form the basis of an attempt to account for what frames and cultural recipes are available for the processes described by psychologists such as Wilson.

In terms of political culture research, what these arguments invite is a focus on discourse, and particularly on the way that local discourse and behavioural accounting draws upon a culturally available set of meanings whose origins may be obscurely intellectual. 'Toolkit' or 'repertoire' theories have been proposed by sociologists in the analysis of culture (Swidler, 1986; Archer, 1988), but with little psychological substantiation. Sources for such theoretical elaboration can be found in the work of Moscovici and Sperber, which goes beyond the mere listing of culturally available representations to the analysis of their passage through society.

This section has provided a highly selective review of some lines of research in social psychology which have implications for political culture research. The discovery of 'psychologically deep' causes of behaviour via surveys, a somewhat contradictory enterprise to begin with, is shown to be problematic by findings produced in the 'dual attitudes' theory of Wilson and colleagues. The findings show that there may indeed be psychologically deep sources of behaviour, but that their verbalisability is limited. The behaviour they give rise to may better be understood using the model of skilful practice, which is itself far from unobservable. Skills, moreover, show features relevant to the specification of political culture: variability across space and persistence in time. Ethnographic observation of cultural adaptation is supported by these social psychological insights.

A different source exists for explicit attitudes – attitudes that are reported by subjects as reasons for their behaviour and apparent to them on introspection. Such attitudes invoke prevailing cultural repertoires, the study of which (their origin, transmission and distribution) has been the subject of social representations research in social psychology. Research of this kind offers the possibility of psychological substantiation of the otherwise rather mysterious idea of the constitution of political culture by public discourse and display. Political culture research, especially in its cultural-revolution variant, has paid much attention to public discourse but has tended to address the question of constitution by definitional fiat.

There are, then, suggestive connections between work in social psychology and the alternative conceptualisations of political culture that emerged in the area studies mode of Communist studies. In the next section these connections are developed in the context of post-Communist political culture research.

## **Political culture theory and post-Communism**

The study of political culture in the post-Communist setting has undergone a process of disciplinary normalisation. Three aspects of this have been alluded to. In the first place and most obviously, the capacity to administer attitude surveys has been widely exploited, generating a large body of literature that, unlike much of the political culture-research undertaken in the Communist period, closely resembles the mainstream of empirical political science literature on political culture. A new empirical bounty has become available, rather like the newly accessible archives whose use has had such an impact on the historiography of

Communist states. The extra-disciplinary explorations of the preceding section have implications that offer a response to such disciplinary normalization.

Second, the political culture research of post-Communism has been largely subsumed under the rubric of the problem of democratisation. This has led to debates about the relevance of a mainstream transitology literature to the post-Communist cases (Bunce, 1995), but in political culture research its effect has been a largely undisputed importation of assumptions about the cultural prerequisites of democracy. There are some widely accepted standard accounts of these prerequisites (Linz and Stepan, 1996). Indeed, such is the degree of standardisation that political scientists have become accustomed to 'outsourcing' the production of relevant data to organisations such as Freedom House and Transparency International. Arguments about the meaning of democracy are thereby sidelined, as they have been in much of the 'empirical theory of democracy' (Bay, 1965; Skinner, 1973; Ricci, 1984), and the same has become true of political culture in the face of this pressure to provide answers. The chief merit of political culture research may, however, not be in answering the important but possibly too difficult question of how democracy may be consolidated, but rather illuminating what forms democracy may take (Sullivan and Transue, 1999). For this purpose a greater openness to conceptual revision would be an advantage rather than a threat.

Third, in consequence, post-Communist studies has had less of the character of area studies – eclecticism, multidisciplinary and interpretivism. Indeed area studies in general has come under simultaneous pressure from 'rationalist-scientific' and 'cultural-humanistic' standpoints, targeting respectively its contextual interpretivism and its supposed cultural essentialism (Katzenstein, 2001, p. 790). The merits and demerits of this transformation have been debated in general terms in the post-Communist field (King, 1994), but in post-Communist political culture research its effect has been one of theoretical simplification, excluding the alternative conceptualisations which were briefly explored above in connection with Communist studies. These are nowadays largely seen as unfortunate symptoms of the former scarcity of data.

In response to such developments the implications of the extra-disciplinary investigations of the preceding section may be set. The negative implications are easiest to see. Social psychology's study of attitudes suggests care in the interpretation of survey data as a record of mental contents. The possibility of limited access to attitudes, of a dual system of attitudes, and of the attitude-changing effects of asking about



reasons are all products of Wilson's line of research and its behaviourist precursors. Wilson expressly draws conclusions for the conduct of surveys, as we have seen. In general, the idea of surveys as an unimpeachable empirical record of what people think cannot be sustained. This is far from rendering them useless, but it does suggest the desirability of paying more attention to the evidently complex psychological processes of which survey responses are the result. While, as already noted, we always want to ask what the people 'really think' about the mobilisations they are swept into, or the ideological, aesthetic and myth-making discourse to which they are exposed, the difficulty of doing this may be more than a matter of the permissibility (and costs) of survey research. Political culture research cannot afford to continue to ignore social psychological thinking about attitudes in developing a research programme that rests methodologically on some evidently simplistic assumptions about that concept.

Studies that eschew the use of surveys do not by virtue of that necessarily rest on firmer psychological foundations. Alexander's arguments in *Political Culture in Post-Communist Russia* (2000), for instance, are based on longer and in-depth interviews, but his results do not give a great deal of insight into psychological processes (they can be both compared and contrasted with the pioneering work of Robert Lane (1962) in this respect). Alexander's thesis of 'cultural formlessness', derived from the arguments of Harry Eckstein (1988), is provocative but certainly under-specified in psychological terms. Given Eckstein's somewhat functionalist arguments about the economising advantages of cultural predispositions (1988, pp. 791–92), it is also questionable how long a condition of cultural formlessness could be expected to endure. Failing to get a clear view of political culture from surveys might be a result not of formlessness, but of the deeper-lying problems of conceptualisation that the 'dual attitude' theory highlights. Formlessness is perhaps a premature substantive inference from a methodological deficiency.

Nicolai Petro's *The Rebirth of Russian Democracy* (1995), despite its rather sweeping dismissal of previous work on Russian political culture, is readily assimilated to the interpretive historical-continuity approach of authors such as White and Tucker. Petro presents a historical survey of an 'alternative' political culture – alternative, that is, to a stress on the underdevelopment of democratic traditions in Russia. It is in fact discourses that he surveys: manifestoes, proposed constitutions and Slavophile philosophy are his materials (making Szamuely, 1974, also largely a study in political thought, the closest analogue in the

Communist studies literature). Petro's study usefully expands our view of the prevailing cultural repertoire, as expressed in elite and dissident discourse. But it suffers, as other studies of this type have, from a failure to trace the connections that would justify counting these discursive elements as part of political culture. Especially in view of the historical distance or (in Soviet times) the repression and isolation of this discourse, questions arise as to what extent it can form part of the culturally available basis of explicit political attitudes on the part of the population as a whole – and if it does, how that connection has been effected.

In *The Political Culture of the Russian 'Democrats'* (2000), Alexander Lukin deploys a method that, in contrast, clearly reveals the connections between culturally available elite discourse and explicit attitudinal responses. Such connections are indeed the book's topic. The achievement is, to be sure, easier in a study whose historical coverage is a mere six years (1985–91). Lukin's findings are derived largely from interviews, and his focus in these interviews has included not just explicit attitudes but life histories that have enabled the connections between public discourse and private attitude to be exposed. Lukin's study is narrow in social scope too. His 'democrats' are a tiny fraction of the population, and his study does nothing to back up its concluding observation that 'the democratic belief system of Soviet Russia profoundly influenced the broader political culture of the new Russia' (Lukin, 2000a, p. 299).

The focus of Kathleen Smith's *Mythmaking in the New Russia* (2002) is very much on the public aspect of political culture (not a term she uses), in the fashion of the cultural-revolution approach in Communist studies and in recent studies of political aesthetics such as Falasca-Zamponi's. Her topic is the attempt by post-Soviet leaders in Russia to construct powerful and evocative public symbols of their regime. In contrast with Petro's account of a resurgent but democratic Slavophilism and Orthodoxy, Smith gives a more differentiated picture of the capacity to evoke a strong response of the symbols 'proffered' (2002, p. 8) to the population. Combining democratic and reformist themes with nationalist symbolism has proved difficult: the problem is both the resistance of the recent historical materials to a heroic treatment and the lack of commitment to mythmaking on the part of post-Soviet leaders.

Contrasting with these studies of the public and discursive aspects of political culture is the work of Alena Ledeneva in *Russia's Economy of Favours* (1998). Like Lukin's study, Ledeneva's relies on interviews, but focusing in this case not on reported political attitudes but on skills and practices. It illustrates the phenomenon of cultural adaptation. It also displays psychological insight in noting how the use of '*blat*' in the

Soviet Union evoked feelings of guilt and denial that contribute to difficulties in speaking about it as well as lubricating its actual operation. *Blat* was systematically misrecognised by participants (Ledeneva, 1998, pp. 59–72), who had a variety of explicit attitudes towards it (rationalisations, denials, mitigations); nevertheless it occurred pervasively. The skills that it involved may be expected to persist as adaptations into the post-Soviet period.

A study with a focus more readily aligned with the interests of normal political science (particularly its recent preoccupation with social capital as a prerequisite of democracy) is Marc Morjé Howard's (2003) study of post-Communist civil society, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*. The principal method of this study is the quantitative assessment of levels of participation, derived from surveys enumerating individual membership of communal organisations. As a supplementary method, in-depth interviews seek to show how these patterns relate to individual experiences in the Communist lifeworld. The finding is a distinctively low level of communal participation in both Russia and eastern Germany, a legacy, Howard argues, of the radical separation between public and private that was an adaptation to the Communist setting. This adaptation has persisted, despite what theorists consider to be its inappropriateness in the democratic setting, because nothing has happened to require its significant alteration. In effect, it still works. Howard (2003, p. 150) concludes: 'the weakness of civil society [is] a distinctive element of post-communist democracy, a pattern that may well persist throughout the region for at least several decades'. We have here a proposal regarding political-cultural continuity that eschews reference to attitudes and thus need not take a position on the authenticity or otherwise of communist regimes. Practice itself does much of the explanatory work.

## Conclusion

As this brief review of some recent literature has shown, social psychological doubts about the attitude survey method of political culture research do not justify blanket endorsement of approaches that use other methods. The purpose of this chapter's exploration of social psychology was indeed in part to question the prestige attaching to the attitude survey method in the context of disciplinary normalisation, but it was also to explore what social psychology might offer for the theoretical consolidation of alternatives. Taking this purpose seriously also involves noting critical implications for the alternatives.

We have found a basis in social psychology, which to be sure is in need of much further exploration, for looking beyond survey responses to a dual manifestation of political culture, in the public realm as a constitutive background and in the realm of local and social practice as a set of implicit skills and adaptations. Much-needed theoretical support is thereby provided, on the one hand, for approaches to political culture that might have seemed consigned to the disciplinary dustbin; support that is ironically derived precisely from looking closely at attitudes, the methodological mainstay of the comparative politics mode of political culture research. On the other hand, the synoptic interpretive sweep of the historical-continuity approach to political culture is less well supported. The fundamental problem here is the ambiguous category of 'historical experience'. It is in need of considerable psychological unpacking. Narrowing the historical materials to patterns or traditions of discourse in the fashion of Petro (and of Szamuely) does not go very far towards making visible the psychological processes that may be involved. In particular, whether historically distant discursive or symbolic elements persist psychologically (via family socialisation perhaps) or are instead rediscovered in politically propitious circumstances remains unaddressed in most examples of the historical-continuity approach. For the other alternative approaches, too, theoretical reconstruction remains an ongoing task. Only its barest outlines, involving a dualistic conceptualisation of political culture relating it to public discourse and to local social practice, have been provided here. How far these can be developed remains to be seen.

Interdisciplinary work is harder and harder to achieve, not only because of the disciplinary normalisation that has been a particular feature of post-Communist studies, but because in general specialisation within political science is becoming ever more intense, producing in some cases theoretical consolidation by default. Political culture research originated in an ambitious reach beyond the existing limits of political science. But aside from Brown's efforts in the 1984 essay, the attempt has seldom been repeated. This chapter has sought to renew it.

## Acknowledgements

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## Notes

1. Recent examples of announcements of death and of rebirth are, respectively, Jackman and Miller, 1996a, 1996b, and Harrison and Huntington, 2000.

2. One can indeed speak of 'normalisation' with some (though incomplete) reference to Kuhn's notion of 'normal science', whose 'puzzle-solving' character he takes to demarcate scientific from other investigations (Kuhn, 1970, p. 6). To do this however begs the question of the 'scientific' status of political science (as much of the discipline in fact does). Kuhn withholds this designation from most of the social sciences. One might therefore speak of a 'premature normalisation', occurring before the full theoretical elaboration of a paradigm. This implies premature science.
3. The differences are variously substantive and methodological, a source of complexity that has not always been appreciated, as in the drastically oversimplified critical survey provided by Petro, 1995, pp. 1–27.
4. 'Historical experience' is a significantly ambiguous term. It could refer to historical events and processes themselves; to popular knowledge and understanding of them as they unfold; or to the retrospective knowledge and understanding possessed perhaps generations later, in other words 'historical memory'.
5. Tucker's complex position also contains a strand of psychoanalytical interpretation of Stalin and Stalinism. The combination is analysed in Welch, 1996.
6. An example would be Gleason's (1995) attempt to explain the use of the totalitarian model in terms of Cold War political imperatives.
7. Wyman goes on to make a contrast with 'oversimplified generalisations' such as Almond and Verba's 'subject' and 'participant' categories of political culture – yet these too were derived from surveys. Surveys always have to be *designed*, and the results *interpreted*: the method itself is no protection against 'oversimplification'.
8. Terminological usage in political culture research has to be sure been somewhat unstable. For example, Brown (2003, p.18) speaks of attitudes as 'more malleable and ephemeral' than 'values, deep-lying beliefs and sense of identity', while nevertheless devoting most of his survey of social psychological literature to attitudes and the attitude-behaviour relationship. Whatever the terminology, the question is whether political culture research has substantiated or even sufficiently examined its supposition of the 'psychological depth' of political culture. A purely *methodological* response is to propose that political culture is that portion of measurable opinion/attitudes which changes slowly, as discovered by surveys. This seems unsatisfactory in the absence of theoretical specification of the difference.
9. A more radical extrapolation of Wilson's findings has been made by philosopher of mind Stephen Stich (1983), who concludes from Wilson's theory of dual attitudes: 'In those cases where our verbal sub-system leads us to behave as though we believed some incompatible proposition, there will simply be no saying which we believe ... And under those circumstances I am strongly inclined to think that the right thing to say is that *there are no such things as beliefs*' (Stich, 1983, p. 231, original emphasis). Wilson might well demur from that extrapolation, but he does agree that in such cases it is impossible to say what is the *true* attitude (Wilson *et al.*, 2000). Merely asking the subject, even under unconstrained conditions, is inconclusive.

# 7

## Culture, Experience, and State Identity: A Survey-Based Analysis of Russians, 1995–2003

*Stephen Whitefield*

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of a newly independent state, Russia, people were faced with a major and difficult choice about their state identity. This chapter investigates the question of how Russians made choices about their state identities in post-Communist and post-Soviet conditions. Should they identify themselves with the Soviet Union in which most of them had lived all their lives or with the new Russian state that superseded it? And, in light of this question, the chapter considers the relative value of ‘political culture’ versus an ‘instrumentalist’ account of how individuals made the choice.

It is worth remembering, as the introductory chapter argued, that the relative importance of political culture versus instrumentalist accounts is a matter for empirical investigation and may well vary depending both on the nature of the choice at stake and the conditions under which people do the choosing. Political culture theory suggests one set of cognitive mechanisms that people might use in post-Communist Russia. Since state identities define group membership in politically and psychologically powerful and central ways, individuals may make such choices by reference to their fundamental normative orientations, including the historical foci of loyalty and identification that are shared by members of communities (Brown, 1984a; Eckstein, 1988). Moreover, the likelihood that normative orientations are operative in making choices may be increased when (i) people face choices that are systemic in character (Rohrshneider and Whitefield, 2004) and (ii) when there is great uncertainty and lack of information about the direct material impact on individuals of the choices they make (Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock, 1991).

This political culture approach can be contrasted with an instrumentalist account of how people might come to make a choice about state identity. From this perspective, people would perceive specific advantages to themselves in one state identity or another, and so we would be able to locate the source of choice in economic or political evaluations and expectations about the relative performance of the two states – as, for example, in Cichowski's (2000) account of support for supranational integration in post-Communist Eastern Europe.

From a political culture perspective, people might prefer the Soviet Union to Russia (and vice versa) because it was associated in their minds with central normative commitments about how state and society should work and/or with a set of traditions that people see as providing a basis for state loyalty. From an instrumentalist perspective, by contrast, people would prefer one state to the other because they had fared better – or expected to fare better – economically or politically under its rule. Within each of these camps, however, there is significant room for disagreement about which particular kind of norm or experience is likely to be of greatest importance.

Interestingly, this distinction between cultural and instrumentalist accounts of individual decision making fits well with a central distinction between 'primordialist' and 'constructionist' explanations in the literature on nationalism and nation-state building. The lines between these two accounts, as between cultural and instrumentalist explanations, can be drawn too sharply. Few, if any, contemporary scholars can be labelled as full-blooded 'primordialists', though some (Smith, 1986) are more primordialist than others (Gellner, 1983). The two approaches to nation-building point to different elements in the process that also bear directly upon the subject of state identity choice, and can be differentiated as follows.

Like the political culture approach, the 'primordialist' account points to the importance of pre-existing group identities and common group capacities (particularly language) in constraining and enabling the later success of nation-building movements (Smith, 1986). By contrast – and in common with the instrumentalist approach – constructionist explanations point to the use of institutional and other incentives by nation-building elites (Gellner, 1983) and emphasise the economic winners and losers of nationalism.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, therefore, presents us in a sharp way with the opportunity to assess the relative value of political culture versus instrumentalist (and primordialist versus constructionist) accounts. The question in this case, however, is less to do with choice of

nationality than with state identity, since in Russia, as in the Soviet Union, nationality may be considered a sub-state identity. It is, of course, necessary to investigate whether Russian nationality is a central part of the explanation of identification with the new Russian state.

Importantly, the questions to be addressed relate not just to the factors that at any given moment determine state choice but also to how and why changes over time may have occurred in the extent to which people choose one or another. State identity choice in Russia is unlikely to be stable at the aggregate or even at the individual level; new generations are faced with the choice for the first time and older generations may come to reassess the choices they have already made.

Again, political cultural theory has ways of thinking about how change may occur. In particular it suggests that change will occur slowly, and in ways that preserve the character of the existing ways of making judgements (Eckstein, 1988). 'Primordialists', for their part, are likely to point to the constraints that are imposed by existing identities and social relationships on the rapid transformation in identities. But it may also be that change over time may be better accounted for by the recent experiences and performance judgements that people make about the state itself and by the capacity of political actors rapidly to 'construct' and invent appropriate traditions to sustain new identities. As Ilya Prizel puts it (quoted in Zevelev, 2001, p. 276): 'While the redefinition of national identities is generally a gradual process, under situations of remarkable stress even well-established identities can change at a remarkable rate, and a people's collective memory can be "rearranged" quite quickly.'

As we investigate the relative value of cultural versus instrumental accounts, we also need to ask about which particular orientations and experiences are likely to be of most importance in shaping how people may choose between Russia and the Soviet Union. As was pointed out also in the introductory chapter, there are competing ways of thinking about the sorts of normative orientations that might be of most importance in shaping choices about Russian versus Soviet identity. In particular, we can point to differences between continuity approaches that emphasise Russia's pre-Soviet legacies and other accounts that point to cultural changes in the Soviet period that may have created the basis for the emergence not only of a Soviet but also a new Russian identity. There are also competing accounts of the operative instrumental experiences, between those that emphasise the primary value of economic performance and those that point to the importance of state institutions in generating state support (Evans and Whitefield, 1995).



The common elements between accounts of how individuals choose and how national or state identities may be established, therefore, are of considerable political significance in Russia. As a number of scholars have pointed out, Russian citizens were confronted by a variety of political programmes and parties that made distinct claims about how to organise post-Soviet political space (Zevelev, 2001; Bonnell and Breslauer, 2001; Piirainen, 2000; Allensworth, 1998). For many of these scholars, the collapse of the USSR resulted in great confusion about how Russian political space was to be defined, but also in great opportunities for successful political actors to shape the direction of public opinion. Though the precise names of these positions varies somewhat among commentators, it would be representative to refer – following Ivan Zevelev (2001) – to differences between ‘restorationists’ who wish for the re-establishment of something like the political (if not ideological) space of the Soviet Union, ‘ethno-nationalists’, ‘Eurasianists’, and CIS ‘integrationists’. How Russians identify with their political space, and more importantly why they do so, may constrain the success of one or other political camp. And which camp best matches Russians’ state identity may have great consequences for the security of Russia and the character of its political and economic transformation. As Bonnell and Breslauer (2001, p. 9) have argued: ‘As the imperial center is being transformed into an independent nation-state, Russian nationalism is undergoing a re-formation. The search for national identity may have many outcomes. A liberal, inclusive variant would provide an ideational buttress for stabilization, whereas a reactionary, exclusive and intolerant variant would surely facilitate an authoritarian or fascist ascendancy.’

### **Investigating culture and instrumental approaches empirically**

How then can we investigate these various explanations empirically? Clearly, as the chapters in this book ably demonstrate, there is no single privileged method of investigating political culture or of thinking about how culture may be important to political explanation. However, surveys of citizens do offer one way of considering simultaneously the relative extent to which many of the normative and instrumental factors discussed earlier are utilised by Russians of differing backgrounds. Of course, surveys are not without their limitations. They generally provide us with quantitative measures of responses to questions that have been put as simply and unambiguously as possible, and for many commentators this simplification of highly complex issues reduces the value of the

data that surveys generate, particularly in the fluctuating conditions of post-Communist societies (Alexander, 1997). However, surveys – at least those considered here – have the advantage against other methods of being representative for the population as a whole and enabling us to look at differences between population sub-groups within it; they allow us to investigate changes that have occurred over time; and they can differentiate norms of various sorts, including historical foci of loyalty and identification, as well as different economic and political experiences. In conjunction with other methods, therefore, surveys can provide an important and irreplaceable part of the broader picture.

One other thing surveys allow is the rigorous statistical testing of relationships. If, as has been famously argued, the aim of social enquiry is to replace proper names with variables (Przeworski and Tuene, 1970), then the analysis of survey data provides a direct means of pursuing this objective. In practice, we could say we had been successful in explaining differences between countries in citizens' responses towards a subject or outcome if those differences disappeared once we had included in the explanation some other factor that also varied across countries. For example, levels of support for democracy might vary across countries because of structural difference in economies – some might be more industrial – or the educational levels of the populations, or their experience of political institutions. If differences in any or all of these were to account for differences in democratic commitments, we could say we had fulfilled the aim of replacing proper names – in this case, countries – with the variables that explain the differences among them (Evans and Whitefield, 1995).

Cultural explanation relates to this endeavour in a particular way. On the hand, culture might be considered a 'residual variable' – that is, one would only infer that differences would be accounted for by culture if alternative instrumental (or compositional) factors could *not* account for them. But this approach to culture seems deficient in at least two ways. First, it would be better to have direct cultural measures of normative orientations and to see then whether political culture directly explains a given outcome. Second, this residual category approach does not deal with the endogeneity problem: are ways of experiencing the world, or indeed is institutional performance, not at least in part explained by cultural orientations themselves?

While the endogeneity problem is especially difficult to resolve, it may be less problematic when we consider a single country at different points in time since, by definition, cultural orientations are likely to be relatively constant in the ways in which they shape experience and

institutional performance. By holding country context constant, therefore, we ought to be able to see the extent to which differences over time within that country in political judgements can be accounted for by reference to shifting cultural orientations or, in contrast, by reference to shifting experiences and performance judgements.

That is the explanatory strategy of this chapter. The outcome of interest is a measure of whether citizens identify themselves with the Soviet Union or with Russia. Following the discussion in the introduction, it is expected that state identity will divide Russians and that decisions about which identity to hold most strongly will depend in part on cultural and instrumental factors. However, the chapter also enquires about the sources of change in identity as the Soviet experience recedes and as the new Russian state has become more entrenched. Again, expectations are that this may be the result of a combination of cultural and experiential factors, but because cultural change is relatively slow, experiential indicators might best account for the differences over time. This being the case, it raises the question of the extent to which state identity might not be malleable to further shifts in experiences.

### **State identity, culture and experience: the survey measures and hypotheses**

As the previous section has pointed out, the aim of the chapter is to find ways of considering the relative effects of cultural versus experiential factors on how individuals in conditions of post-Communism in Russia make the choice between Soviet and Russian state identities, and how these factors might account for changes in these choices with greater distance from the Soviet Union and greater familiarity with Russia.

To get at these issues, the chapter analyses data collected in surveys I organised with colleagues in Oxford (particularly with Geoffrey Evans) in 1995, 1996, 1998, 2001, and 2003.<sup>1</sup> These surveys were drawn from nationally representative samples and included more than 2000 respondents each year who were asked identical questions and measures to allow for over time comparability in responses. The questionnaire was initially translated by Russian experts and then separately translated back into English to check for any inappropriate linguistic uses, and the questionnaire was again re-checked by our Russian colleagues at each subsequent stage to ensure that shifts in Russian linguistic practice – which are also a very prevalent element of the country's transformation over the past decade – did not affect the meaning of the survey measure.

The questionnaire was designed to allow for precisely the analysis of the impact of the various explanatory factors outlined earlier. First, it contains numerous questions pertaining to the normative orientations of Russians. Norms may be considered as a set of beliefs about how society – or aspects of it – ought to be organised in an ideal sense. Norms are about how people think things should be. Second, it contains measures of the economic and political experiences and assessments of respondents. As distinct from norms, these concern how Russians think the world actually is. Third, it contains large amounts of information about the demographic characteristics and varied cultural identities of respondents, and has a sample size that is large enough to allow for analysis of the distinct ways in which population sub-groups may differ in how they relate to political issues. As a result, it permits us – within the limits of survey methodology – to find operational measures of the key concepts discussed in the introduction.

The first concept, and the dependent variable in the subsequent analysis, is state identity. This is measured in a question that asks respondents whether they personally identify more with the Soviet Union or with Russia. As such, the question operationalises one of the key conditions of post-Communism discussed in the introductory chapter – the choices that face individuals after the collapse of the Soviet state, in which so many respondents had spent the majority of their lives, and its replacement with a new independent Russian state. The question does not unrealistically suggest to respondents in these conditions that they could have only one state identity – after all, the new Russian state inherited many institutions of the RSFSR; but it does ask them to choose the identity that is closer to them. The explanatory task of the chapter is to try to account for why some people feel closer to the Soviet Union and others to Russia. As importantly, the chapter tries to explain the changes in levels of Soviet and Russian state identity over time.

One commentator (Dunlop, 1997, p. 69) has suggested that: ‘Faced with a choice between “empire-saving” and “nation-building”, the masses of ethnic Russians at first began to tilt in the direction of nation-building. The rapid de-ideologization of the Russian popular psyche following the break-up of the USSR led Russians increasingly to view themselves as a discrete ethnic group rather than as a “Soviet people”.’ But is this perspective justified both absolutely and by trends in identification?

As Table 7.1 shows, there is clear evidence that it is not. (i) The largest part of Russians identify more closely with the Soviet Union than with Russia; on an all time average over the years, 46 per cent of respondents said they felt closer or much closer to the Soviet Union as against

Table 7.1 Identification with Russia or the Soviet Union (percentages)

	1995	1996	1998	2001	2003	Total
Strongly identify with the Soviet Union	21.0	17.8	21.2	18.8	20.6	19.9
Identify with the Soviet Union	34.2	27.0	27.6	26.9	22.3	27.6
In between or don't know	20.5	25.7	26.2	26.2	22.5	24.2
Identify with Russia	18.4	23.6	18.8	18.4	23.3	20.5
Strongly identify with Russia	5.9	6.0	6.1	9.8	11.5	7.8
N	1999	2010	2008	2000	2000	10017

28 per cent who identified with Russia. (ii) These figures also show, however, that Russians are strongly divided in where they put their primary state identities. (iii) At the same time, the number of Russians who identify with the Soviet Union has tended to fall over time and conversely, the numbers identifying with Russia has increased, but is far from the precipitate rate suggested by Dunlop; while 54 per cent identified with the Soviet Union in 1995 and only 24 per cent with Russia, by 2003, the figures are 45 per cent and 35 per cent respectively.

There are, therefore, two *prima facie* puzzles – why do people make particular identity decisions and what accounts for change over time? A number of explanatory possibilities have already been outlined that may now be presented in the form of specific hypotheses.

### Cultural hypotheses

1a. *Choice of a Russian identity over a Soviet one is associated with a distinct set of normative commitments and distinct historical foci of identification and loyalty and is rooted in specific social identities.*

The nature of these most relevant cultural characteristics, however, may be the subject of disagreement within the 'cultural camp'. On the one hand:

1b. *Russian identity may be connected with pride in pre-Soviet Russian national traditions, in views of the particular claims of the nation on citizens' loyalty, on anti-Western nationalist traditions, and in Orthodox religious and Russian ethnic identities (Hellberg-Hirn, 1998; Theen, 1999).*

On the other hand:

1c. *Contemporary Russian state identity may be a reaction to the values and institutions of the Soviet Union and may be distinctly supported by those who*

*see the new Russian state as an opportunity to realise their normative commitment to building a democratic, market, liberal and pro-Western country, which values are most likely to have developed within the Soviet period and to be located among younger, more educated, and more urbanised sections of the population.*

Culture should also seek to explain the change we observe over time in the extent to which Russians identify with Russia.

*1d. From a cultural perspective, this change is most likely to be explained by the growing number of young people who have limited direct experience of the Soviet Union and whose political socialisation occurred in the new Russian state.*

Each of these cultural and identity variables has been operationalised from measures in the surveys. (Details on precise question wording can be found in the Appendix.) These include questions relating to how Russians see the ideal political and economic order, and to the normative bases – the ‘should’ and ‘ought’ aspects of life – of how Russia should engage with other states, of the political and economic responsibilities of the state, and of the rights and duties of citizens in the social, political and economic spheres.

### **Instrumental hypotheses**

The alternative perspective, broadly, refers to the importance of instrumental calculations and assessments of economic and institutional performance as generative of state identity choice. We need to distinguish, however, between the most relevant forms of experience. For example, economic pay-offs may be of greater or less importance than political and social ones. Alternately, calculations and assessments may relate to the benefits derived by individuals, families, or even broader social groups and communities; or, as historians of liberal nationalism in the nineteenth century have pointed out (Hobsbawm, 1990), some respondents might take the view that national (Russian) aspirations would be better achieved in a supra-national (Soviet) context.

Therefore, we may hypothesise

*2a. Choice of Russian over Soviet identity is associated with better retrospective assessments of household and/or national economic performance in post-Soviet Russia and/or higher expectations of future household or national economic performance.*

*2b. Choice of Russian over Soviet identity is associated with higher estimates of the performance of Russian political institutions and lesser concern about social and political conflict in the country.*

2c. *At the same time, the experiential approach would account for the changes in levels of Russian versus Soviet identity between 1995 and 2003 by reference to shifts in the ways in which Russians have assessed the political and economic performance of the new state – as experience has improved, so has willingness to identify with Russia.*

Again, these measures of experience were taken from the survey and details of precise question wording can be found in the Appendix. Measures include retrospective and prospective estimates of household and national economic circumstances, evaluations of the actual practice of the market and democracy in Russia (as opposed to these political and economic ideals), of the general level of social conflict in the country, and of the performance of the country's political institutions.

### **Testing the relative effects of cultural and experiential factors on state identity choice**

The previous section has pointed to a large number of factors – with, in some cases, differences as to the direction of their hypothesised effects – that may account for identity choice and how it changes over time. There is *prima facie* plausibility to many of them. For example, cultural factors – measured by the normative orientations in support of democracy, the market, and integration of Russia with the West – are all positively correlated with Russian identity choices. The same may be said, however, of many of the experiential indicators, with a positive correlation evident between pro-Russian identity as well as more positive estimations of personal and national living standards, and more positive evaluations of the democratic and market system in practice.

The aim of the chapter, however, is to test for the *relative* explanatory power of cultural and experiential factors – and to consider within each category which sorts of normative orientations or evaluations are most strongly associated with state identity choice and changes in it. To get at these questions, therefore, we must look at the relationships in a multivariate context – that is, to look at the impact of a given factor on identity choice controlling for the effects of all other explanatory variables.

We can see the results of this analysis in Tables 7.2 and 7.3, which show models for state identity choice for each of the survey years. Because social factors may be causally related to the attitudinal predictors and are less conceptually connected to the dependent variable, two models are shown for each year. The first includes only demographic and social characteristics and identities – including whether respondents have relatives in the CIS or in the West, ethnicity, language at

Table 7.2 Regression of Soviet or Russian political identification on to social demographic and identity variables (standardised coefficients)

	1995	1996	1998	2001	2003
Gender	.01	.12**	.04	-.00	.04
Age	-.21**	-.22**	-.32**	-.30**	-.34**
Education	.06*	.11**	.03	.02	.05
Entrepreneurs	.12**	.08**	.06*	.04	.05*
Managers	.03	.00	.05*	.05*	.02
Intelligentsia	.08*	.03	.05	.12**	.05*
Peasant	-.03	-.00	.00	.01	-.02
Other Class	.05*	.07**	.03	.06*	.04
Manual workers	—	—	—	—	—
Private industry	.01	.05*	-.03	.04	.03
Budget sector	-.03	.02	-.06*	-.03	.01
State industry	—	—	—	—	—
Student	-.01	.09**	.02	.02	.05*
Unemployed	-.01	-.02	-.09**	.03	.02
Retired	-.02	-.07*	.05	.03	.01
At home	.02	.03	-.03	-.02	.02
Employed	—	—	—	—	—
Family in West	.04	.02	.01	.03	.02
Family in CIS	-.06*	.01	-.03	-.04	-.02
City size	.03	.03	.12**	.06**	.09**
Russian Orthodox	.01	.06**	.03	-.06*	.01
Other religion	.02	.02	.07**	-.01	.01
Non-believers	—	—	—	—	—
Russian	.03	.04	.03	.02	.05*
<b>Adjusted r<sup>2</sup></b>	.09	.17	.20	.16	.17

Notes: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; — indicates reference category.

home, employment status, sector, self-identified social class, religion (including those without religious attachments), as well as education, age and gender. The second shows the attitudinal variables. Running two models in this way allows us to see the effects of social factors that may otherwise be removed or reduced when included alongside the more proximate effects of normative orientations or evaluations.

We consider the effects of the social factors first. Again, the expectations of each approach would be to find identity choice rooted in social locations and identities that are more plausibly associated with a cultural or an experiential account. For example, from one cultural perspective that emphasises Russia's Orthodox past, a Russian identity choice would be based in Orthodox religiosity rather than 'godless Communist atheism' that would be associated with a Soviet identity.



Table 7.3 Regression of Soviet or Russian political identification on to cultural and experiential factors (standardised coefficients)

	1995	1996	1998	2001	2003
<b>Instrumental factors</b>					
<i>Household living standards past 5 years</i>	.01	.04	.06*	.06**	.05
Household living standards next 5 years	.05	.07	.03	.08**	.11**
Country living standards past 5 years	.00	.04	.02	n.a.	-.01
Country living standards next 5 years	.02	.03	.04	n.a.	-.02
Market system evaluation	.01	.02	.03	-.01	-.02
<i>Democratic evaluation</i>	.07**	.06*	-.03	.06*	.10**
President evaluation	.01	-.01	-.04	-.01	.02
Political freedom evaluation	-.02	-.00	.01	-.02	-.05*
Social order biggest problem	.05*	-.01	.01	-.01	.02
State system biggest problem	.05*	.04	-.02	.00	.03
Social welfare biggest problem	.02	.02	-.02	.02	-.02
Economy biggest problem	—	—	—	—	—
Social conflict can be avoided	.01	.06**	.05*	-.03	.01
Ethnic conflict can be avoided	-.02	.04*	-.07**	.01	-.02
<b>Cultural factors</b>					
<i>Democratic norms</i>	.04	.04	.04	.05	.03
Market norms	.12**	.13**	.18**	.13**	.13**
Pro-private sector norms	.15**	.14**	.17**	.15**	.16**
Pro-welfare norms	.08**	.07**	.04	.12**	.10**
Pro-free speech and organisation	.06*	.05*	.02	.02	.04
Ethnic rights	-.07**	.01	-.02	-.03	-.01
Religious freedom	-.03	-.03	.03	-.04	.02
<i>Should support country, right or wrong</i>	.12**	.07**	.07**	.12**	.07**
Many things shameful in Russia's past	-.08**	-.04*	.04	.07**	.03
Wrong to criticise Russia	-.02	.06**	.05*	.03	.04
Russia should integrate with West	.09**	.12**	.14**	.10**	.09**
<b>Adjusted r<sup>2</sup></b>	.21	.27	.23	.20	.18

Notes: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; — indicates reference category.

Alternately, from an experiential perspective, choice of Soviet identity might be associated with certain economic sectors – the 'budget' sector is a case in point – that were relatively privileged in the Soviet period and that have fared particularly badly in post-Soviet Russia.

The results are shown in Table 7.2. It is notable immediately that the more experientially oriented predictors appear quite weak. While having family members in the CIS, links to whom may have been broken with the collapse of the Soviet Union, was associated with a Soviet identification in 1995, this experience seems to have declined as a predictor

after that. In all but one year – not surprisingly given the arrears crisis at the time, this was 1998 – employment sector (private and budget sectors are compared to state industry) had very limited association with identity choice. The same holds for most years for employment status, though there were some effects for retired people (even controlling for age) in 1996 and 2001 – less likely to identify with Russia – for unemployment (also less likely) in 1998, and for students in 2003. The strength of these effects, however, as can be seen in comparing the standardised coefficients, was comparatively small.

Some other plausibly cultural factors, however, also appear only marginally predictive of identity choice. Orthodox and other religious attachments are weakly and inconsistently associated with state identity and the overall relationship does not appear to have changed over time, despite growth in the numbers of people in Russia (and in our surveys) who profess to Orthodoxy. In a similar way, there is only one year (2003) in which Russian ethnicity is more associated with Russian state identity than is the case for other ethnic groups.

Other analysis (not shown here) that used a sophisticated 'objective' measure of occupational class<sup>2</sup> also suggested that the effects of economic status on identity choice appear relatively limited. However, there is far greater evidence that a Russian state identity is more likely to be chosen by people with distinctive class *identities* – and given the weakness of the objective economic indicators, identity here may be more plausibly interpreted in cultural rather than experiential terms. While the realities of Soviet life hardly supported the claim that it was a workers' and peasants' state, the evidence here does suggest that people identifying with these groups were more likely to feel closer to the Soviet Union than those identifying themselves as entrepreneurs and intelligentsia.

The strongest factor by far, however, is found in the effects of age, with the young being far more likely than older people to identify with Russia. Interpreting age effects in post-Communist societies has been the subject of some debate, with some scholars viewing it as a proxy for greater economic capacity or educational advantage (Kitschelt *et al.*, 1999). While this possibility cannot be wholly ruled out, it appears less likely in this case, given that: (i) when age is removed from the regression equations, the effects of all economic variables as well as education remain essentially constant and, (ii) unlike other social differences, the effect of age on Russian identity choice increases considerably and more or less consistently over time. These points suggest that age is more likely to be a cultural category. Younger people are at a greater and

an increasingly growing distance from Soviet socialisation and the fundamental foci of loyalty and identification associated with it; and they are much more likely to have been open to acquiring new foci of loyalty and identity as the new Russian state emerged and has sought to socialise its new citizens.

There is one further significant factor that is of interest in the analysis. There appears to be a clear impact for the later years of settlement size on identification; the larger the town, the more likely it is that citizens will identify with Russia. Again, it is worth remembering that this effect emerges independently of other factors controlled for in the model and, again, the strength of effects for these factors is not affected when settlement size is removed from the model.

At least from the evidence of its social bases, therefore, identity choice appears most plausibly to be rooted in culture rather than calculation. We see that it is only weakly connected with experience or expectations of sectoral or occupational advantages. Nor, however, is it based on some social identities, such as religion or ethnicity, which might be culturally associated with pre-Soviet Russia. On the other hand, it does seem to relate to class identities that make sense in terms of the cultural experience of Soviet life. Russia seems also to be the choice of the cities and, most importantly, of young people.

To what extent is this generally pro-cultural perspective supported by more direct measures of instrumental versus political culture positions? We can see this in the evidence presented in various models in Table 7.3. The results are divided into instrumental and cultural factors. Because we are concerned not just with which of these main categories are most explanatory, but also with distinguishing the most important sub-categories within each, the models shown include measures of economic experience, political experience and concerns, as well as expectations of class and ethnic conflict. Culturally, a range of normative commitments is considered, including views of democracy, markets and welfare, as well as political, religious and ethnic freedoms. Four measures of nationalism are also taken into account, including one that relates Russia to the West.

The results of this analysis show even more clearly the relative and absolute importance of cultural factors. Of all experiential factors, only one – how people evaluate the ‘actual practice of democracy’ in Russia – is a consistently significant predictor of identity choice. Importantly, this question does not require respondents to agree that Russia in fact has a democratic system. Many people who are ‘democratic’ in their normative orientations nonetheless have highly negative views about how ‘democracy’ has been practised. The question, therefore, may be

best understood as one about how Russians view the political system in the post-Soviet period. At the same time, the analysis shows that people are more likely to choose Russian state identity when they are willing positively to assess Russian 'democracy'. Other political experiences and expectations in general play only a weak role. Despite their very different characters, for example, evaluations of neither Yeltsin nor of Putin as presidents appears to have made any difference to whether people felt closer to Russia or the Soviet Union. Similarly, those identifying more closely with Russia are generally not more or less concerned about the state of political freedom in their country – though it is of interest that among Russian identifiers in 2003, there was a small but significant negative evaluation of political freedom in the country.

Economic experience and expectations appear hardly more predictive. For the first two years, for example, the economic variables appear to have no association at all with identification. Evaluation of the 'market' system in practice is never significant. However, it is worth noting that evaluations of household living standards – either past experience or future hopes – did become more significant in later years starting from 1998.

By contrast, the effects of the political culture measures are consistent and powerful. In this case, however, the effects are most strongly seen in the various economic norms rather than in political ones. While there are relatively weak effects on Russian identity for pro-free speech and organisation norms in 1995 and 1996, being more democratic in normative orientation does not appear in any year to be a significant factor; in other words, people do not choose to identify with Russia – other things considered – because they are more democratic, even if they are more likely to view Russia's post-Soviet political system more favourably in practice. Nor are Russia identifiers more likely to support ethnic or religious freedoms. Simply speaking: people identify more closely with Russia when they are pro-market, pro-private ownership and more anti-welfare.

There are also some effects for the various nationalism measures included in the models. Russia identifiers, as expected, are clearly more likely to see support for their country as a norm. Interestingly, there is a shift in the direction of effect for views of Russia's past; while in the early years, those who identify with Russia are more likely to see its history as a source of shame, this sign appears to have been reversed in later years (and significantly so in 2001).

It is also of great interest to note, by contrast with some historical understanding of Russian nationalism, that identification with post-Soviet Russia is strongly associated with openness to the West rather

than isolation from it. Moreover, the strength and direction of this effect has remained more or less constant comparing 1995 with 2003, despite shifts in state policy towards the West in that period. However, in line with the point made above that democratic norms play no role in shaping Russian state identification while economic norms dominate, we may suppose that the attraction of the West is based primarily in its economic rather than political attractions.

These results point, therefore, to the greater importance of cultural over experiential factors in shaping Russian versus Soviet state identification. What has not yet been explained, however, is the shift in levels of identification. Why do more Russians choose Russia rather than the Soviet Union as time passes? While the analysis has indicated a number of possible explanations, such as the growing number of young people whose primary socialisation is in the new Russian state, the aim of the next part of the analysis is to account in a formal statistical sense for the differences over time.

One way to think about this question is to try to construct a model that will remove (or at least significantly reduce) the coefficients for each of the years as shown in Table 7.4, model 1, which essentially reproduces the results shown in Table 7.1 earlier, and indicates the levels of Russian identification in all years as compared to 1995. As can be seen, the greatest difference is found in 2003, but these are also evident in 1996 and 2001. We could say that we have explained these differences if, by including other variables in an expanded model, these additional factors remove the significant effects of the year variables. Models 2 and 3 in Table 7.4 try to do this in different ways.

Model 2 considers the impact of changes in the normative orientations of Russians over time, and asks whether more people come to identify with Russia because more people have acquired the sorts of norms that are associated with that identity. However, while the analysis shows once again the considerable strength of cultural factors – the level of variance explained (adjusted  $r^2$ ) is much greater in model 2 than model 3 – cultural change does not appear to explain the differences in levels of identification with Russia over time.

Model 3, which includes the experiential variables, by contrast, is able very well to remove the differences between 1995, 1996, 2001 and 2003. In other words, while cultural factors are much better at explaining why people in the main choose Russia, change over time in levels of identification appears to be strongly related to changes in experience, and in particular to people's evaluations and expectations of household living

Table 7.4 Regression of Soviet or Russian political identification on to cultural and experiential factors plus year dummies (standardised coefficients). Pooled analysis

	All years		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<b>Year dummies</b>			
2003	.10**	.11**	.01
2001	.06**	.07**	.01
1998	.02	.05**	.05**
1996	.06**	.06**	.02
1995	—	—	—
<b>Experiential factors</b>			
<i>Household living standards past 5 years</i>			.11**
Household living standards next 5 years			.14**
Country living standards past 5 years			n.a.
Country living standards next 5 years			n.a.
Market system evaluation			.10**
<i>Democratic system evaluation</i>			.13**
President evaluation			-.03**
Political freedom evaluation			-.02
Social order biggest problem			.03*
State system biggest problem			.04**
Social welfare biggest problem			.01
Economy biggest problem			—
Social conflict can be avoided			.03**
Ethnic conflict can be avoided			-.01
<b>Cultural factors</b>			
<i>Democratic norms</i>		.07**	
Market norms		.16**	
Pro-private sector norms		.18**	
Pro-welfare norms		.09**	
Pro-free speech and organisation		.04**	
Ethnic rights		-.02*	
Religious freedom		-.02	
<i>Should support country, right or wrong</i>		.09**	
Many things shameful in Russia's past		-.02	
Wrong to criticise Russia		.03**	
Russia should integrate with West		.11**	
<b>Adjusted r<sup>2</sup></b>	.01	.20	.11

Notes: \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; — indicates reference category.

standards, and their evaluation of how well the 'market' system is working in practice.

We need be careful, therefore, to note the boundaries in explanatory power of both political culture and instrumental approaches. Neither account is wholly adequate to explaining identity choice; both accounts have something to say about different aspects of the question. Cultural orientations explain more of the choice itself; but experience better explains changes in the marginal propensity of people to choose in one way or another. The two approaches, in other words, must be thought of as complementary to a fuller account of how people make this important judgement.

## Conclusions

The analysis above points in two interesting directions. On the one hand, normative orientations appear to be much more important than experiences in shaping choices. This suggests that there is considerable ongoing value in a political culture approach to citizens' political attitudes even (or perhaps especially) in post-Communist conditions. Such a conclusion would fit well with a number of propositions developed in the introductory chapter. In conditions of great uncertainty affecting all aspects of life, people have relied to a large degree on their fundamental beliefs. The strongly normative basis of identification reflects the encompassing, system-level character of the choices that Russians have faced. Choices are rooted in social identities whose existence provides a mechanism for cultural transmission, despite low levels of formal involvement in political organisations.

The results do not, therefore, suggest that political leaders have great scope in times of uncertainty to 'construct' a new Russian state identity. Rather, and more in line with the 'primordialist' perspective, politicians on all sides must work with inherited and potent identities and orientations.

On the other hand, the most salient normative orientations point to a Russian identity that is at odds with at least some historical understanding and challenge in some ways our notion of the operative elements of political culture. Choosing Russia appears less rooted in long-standing historical foci of identity and loyalty and more on 'modern' norms and social locations: large cities and youth rather than religion or countryside; support for markets and the West, rather than egalitarianism and national isolationism. People who choose Russia still show clear signs of national pride when they say that people should support their country right or wrong. But in rejecting the Soviet Union, it is as if Russians have

moved on from some Russian cultural legacies that had become attached to an identification with the USSR. The nature of the cultural underpinnings of Russian state identity, therefore, appears more fitting of a new state whose self-identifying citizens invest it with their modernising aspirations.

There is one important caveat to this last point, however; or rather, it may say something about the character of 'modern' state identities. It is notable that the connection of normative commitment to democracy is essentially lacking as a factor shaping Russian state identity, as indeed for the most part are the other measures of political liberalism. The new Russian state seems to be supported in the main by people who hold a commitment to a market economy in its various aspects. As a community of identification, therefore, Russia is not socially founded on shared conceptions of political freedom. This may be a surprising conclusion given the background of Soviet authoritarianism, but at least by 1995 when the surveys used here began, the appeal of Russia had little to do with any democratic advancement over the later Soviet period and much more to do with how people view the economy in the ideal form. It may be for that reason that the trend in recent years towards ever more restrictions on political freedoms has had little negative impact on identities. While the nature of Russian identification, therefore, may not support a wholly reactionary form of nation building as feared by some commentators (Zevelev, 2001), neither does it support the liberal order *tout court*, as some others may have hoped (Bonnell and Breslauer, 2001).

While political culture appears to account for the largest part of the differences we are able to explain among individuals, it is economic experience in the main that best explains differences between average levels of identification over time. People identify with Russia mainly because they have certain norms, but it is positive experience and future expectations about their living standards that to the greater extent makes more Russian identifiers. While normative stances highly constrain citizens' choices, therefore, 'constructionists' may take some heart in the fact that politicians can affect identities through the performance of the economic and political system in marginal though significant ways. (Conversely, we should note too the vulnerabilities to increasing the numbers who profess a Russian identity if economic experience and expectations worsen.)

The relatively stable character of identities makes considerable sense from a political culture perspective, as does the impact of instrumental factors at the margins, since we may expect norms to shift only gradually as people acquire greater experience of the world – or new generations



emerge. Russian political identity is solidly founded in the normative commitments of many but it will only gradually build itself up precisely because a Soviet identity is similarly solidly founded in alternative normative commitments that are unlikely to change quickly.

As noted in the introductory chapter, political acts – often carried out by a small elite group – may be accepted and complied with, or rejected, by ordinary citizens. What, finally, does the analysis above tell us about the political consequences and implications of Russian versus Soviet state identification for the capacity of elite groups to impose their political and economic solutions on Russians?

On the one hand, we can see that important social strata – the young, the educated, people in large cities, entrepreneurs and the intelligentsia – are more likely to identify with Russia. Those identifying with Russia, therefore, are arguably people of greater economic and social power and significance. On the other hand, this process is occurring only slowly and growth in Russian identification is largely dependent on economic performance that may decline. Those who continue to identify with the Soviet Union operate with economic norms that are at considerable remove from even the limited market aspirations of Russia's rulers.

In so far as identification with Russia may increase the legitimacy of decisions taken by its authorities, the large-scale ongoing absence of such identification is problematic. In circumstances where voluntary compliance cannot be ensured, and where even economic carrots have only limited effects on identities, we may therefore expect the use of forceful methods to achieve political objectives, particularly when, as they are in Russia, political leaders are relatively unconstrained by either democratic institutions or even, once their views of the market economy are taken into account, by a distinctive commitment to democratic norms on the part of those who identify most with the new Russian state.

## **Appendix: survey questions and measures**

Each measure (unless otherwise indicated) is based on a five-point scale – strongly agree, agree, in-between/don't know, disagree, strongly disagree. Items have been recoded so that a high score (5) reflects support for – broadly speaking – pro-democratic and liberal values and positive evaluations and experiences and a low score (1) reflects support for anti-democratic, anti-liberal, and pro-Soviet stances, as well as negative evaluations and experiences.

### **Soviet and Russian identity**

I identify more strongly with the Soviet Union than with Russia.

## Cultural measures

*Democratic norms:* How do you feel about the *aim* of introducing democracy in the country, in which political parties compete for government?

*Market norms:* Thinking next about the economic system, how do you feel about the *aim* of creating a market economy with private ownership and economic freedom to entrepreneurs?

*Government role:* Tell me if you think it should or should not be the government's responsibility to ...

- provide a job for everyone who wants one.
- provide health care for the sick.
- provide a decent standard of living for the old.
- provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed.
- provide decent housing for those who can't afford it.

*Private ownership and business freedom/regulation:*

**Either:** The government should take all major industries into state ownership.

**OR:** The government should place all major industries in private ownership.

**Either:** The government should just leave it up to individual companies to decide their wages, prices and profits.

**OR:** The government should control wages, prices and profits.

Private enterprise is the best way to solve Russia's economic problems.

Allowing business to make good profits is the best way to improve everyone's standard of living.

*Political freedoms:* A good society would have ...

freedom to create social, economic, political and other organizations.

freedom of speech and the right to publicly express different opinions.

limits put on the public expression of opinions that are opposed to the views of the authorities.

limits put on the public expression of opinions that are opposed to the feelings and opinions of the majority of people.

*Ethnic freedoms:* Minority ethnic groups in Russia should have far more rights than they do now.

*Religious freedom:* People should be allowed to worship in their own way whatever their religious beliefs.

*National pride and historical foci:* There are many things in Russian history that Russians should be ashamed of.

People in Russia are too ready to criticise their country.

Russians should support their country, right or wrong.

**Either:** Russia should integrate as far as possible into the Western world.

**OR:** Russia should remain isolated as far as possible from the Western world.

## Political, economic and social evaluations

*Democracy evaluation:* How would you evaluate the actual practice of democracy in Russia?

There is freedom of organisation and speech in Russia.

People in Russia can speak out freely without fear of the consequences?

*Presidential evaluations:* Thinking about the performance of the president of Russia, how highly would you regard his activity?

*Conflict* (three point scale): Do you think there is bound to be conflict between members of different [social classes] in Russia today or do you think they can get along without conflict?

Do you think there is bound to be conflict between members of different ethnic groups in Russia today or do you think they can get along without conflict?

*Main problems facing country:* recoded into four categories: economic problems (including inflation, unemployment, falling production, high taxation – reference category), social order problems (including crime, corruption), state order problems (including loss of great power status, ethnic conflict, badly functioning political institutions), and social welfare problems (including health, education, and social welfare).

*Market evaluations:* And how would you evaluate the actual practice of the market in Russia so far?

*Economic evaluations* (for household and country): (Country question was not asked in 2001)

Compared with *five years ago*, do you think the standard of living of your household/the country has fallen a lot, fallen a little, stayed about the same, risen a little, or has it risen a lot?

And in *five years time*, do you think the standard of living of your household/the country will be a lot lower than it is now, a little lower than now, about the same as now, a little higher than now, or a lot higher than now?

## Notes

1. Data used in this paper were obtained from surveys conducted by the author and colleagues at Oxford University funded by INTAS (S. Whitefield and G. Evans, 'Ethnicity, Nationalism and Citizenship in the Former Soviet Union', 1995 and 1996; the UK ODA Know-How Fund (G. Evans and S. Whitefield, 'The Development of Social Class in Post-Communist Russia', 1998; and the British Economic and Social Research Council (G. Evans and S. Whitefield, 'The Development of Social Class in Post-Communist Russia'), 2001 and 2003. My colleagues and I also conducted a similar survey in 1993 (the British Economic and Social Research Council's East-West Research Program, Phase II, G. Evans, S. Whitefield, A. Heath, and C. Payne, Grant no. Y 309 25 3025 'Emerging Forms of Political Representation and Participation in Eastern Europe'), that, unfortunately, did not contain the measure of Soviet and Russian identity used in this chapter. Comparative

over-time analysis of other political attitudes that includes data from the 1993 survey, however, suggests that the patterns of change and continuity described here are likely only to have been strengthened by availability of data from that year.

2. The 'objective' class schema is derived from an occupational measure developed by Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992). See also Evans and Whitefield, 1999.

# 8

## Yaroslavl' Revisited: Assessing Continuity and Change in Russian Political Culture Since 1990

*Jeffrey W. Hahn*

The purpose of this chapter is to address the following questions. How has support among Russians for democratic values and institutions changed since 1990? Does such support depend on short-term calculations of economic and governmental performance or does it exist independently of such calculations? And finally, what are the implications of answers to these questions for the prospects for democracy in Russia?

The significance of the first question has become especially relevant since the transfer of presidential power from Boris Yeltsin to Vladimir Putin on 1 January 2000. From the beginning of the democratic experiment in Russia in 1990, Russians were led by Boris Yeltsin, the first popularly elected Russian president. Despite Yeltsin's public commitment to the building of democratic institutions, the system he left to his successor was at best a 'delegative' democracy in which an elected chief executive exercised power largely without institutional constraints (O'Donnell, 1994).<sup>1</sup> Most assessments of Yeltsin's impact on democratisation and support for democratic values among Russians are quite negative (Huskey, 2001; Shevtsova, 1999). As Archie Brown (Brown, 2003, p. 24) writes of this period: 'one is forced to conclude that the experience of the 1990s did little to reinforce that strand in Russian political culture supportive of democratic principles'.

Since 2000, Russia has been led by Yeltsin's chosen successor, Vladimir Putin, also popularly elected. Unlike Yeltsin, especially in his later years, Putin has enjoyed high popular approval ratings, and in 2004 was re-elected with over 70 per cent of the vote. Yet, assessments of his

successor's commitment to democracy have been even gloomier than for Yeltsin. One observer (Herspring, 2005, p. 295) concludes flatly, 'Putin is clearly more authoritarian than Yeltsin was.' Another (Daniels, 2000b) calls it a 'democratic dictatorship.' Harley Balzer has coined the term 'managed pluralism' to describe the Putin administration, but he makes it clear (2003, p. 220) that this does not correspond to democracy. These views are widely shared by others, some of whom suggest that the return to authoritarian rule is a natural fit with traditional Russian political culture.<sup>2</sup> The conclusion of Putin's first term in office and his re-election to a second term in March 2004 would seem, therefore, to be an opportune time to revisit the question of how much public support for democratic values has changed since the democratic experiment in Russia began.

Beyond the important substantive question of whether there is public support for democracy among Russians, a comparison of the political attitudes, values and beliefs held by Russians today with those held in the 1990s provides a sort of natural laboratory for testing theories of political culture. In particular, it may enable us to consider alternate paradigms for understanding post-Communist politics, notably those offered by institutional and rational choice perspectives. These perspectives would suggest that popular support for democracy is a function of how well institutions of government perform economically and politically. Put another way, people will prefer a democratic system to a more authoritarian one if they perceive that they are better off than they were. Because such calculations are essentially instrumental, popular support for democracy can change fairly quickly in response to relatively short term policy changes. In this view, any long standing normative commitments Russians may, or may not, have about democracy (the 'culturalist' explanation) are essentially irrelevant to democratisation in Russia because they are not particularly useful in explaining support for democracy.

This chapter offers tentative answers to these questions, both substantive and theoretical, on the basis of longitudinal research carried out by the author in Yaroslavl', Russia from 1990 through 2004. Much of the research was qualitative involving an average of one trip a year for observation and personal interviews. But, it was also quantitative. A fully representative opinion survey conducted in 1990 was replicated in 1993, 1996 and most recently, in 2004. While caution must be exercised about generalising from a single case, the advantage of this study is that it was conducted with a relatively homogenous population, one not dissimilar to other ethnically Russian areas of Western Russia. Furthermore it is a unique data set in that it enables us to compare political attitudes

and beliefs held by Russians at the very beginning of the democratic experiment with those held today.

## Literature review

The prevailing view of Russian political culture before Western social scientists were able to conduct independent survey research in Russia starting in 1989 was that it bore the hallmarks of Russia's authoritarian past. Much of what we thought we knew was based on an analysis of Russian history. The authoritarian traditions of pre-revolutionary Russia had not been changed by Soviet rule, the argument went, rather they were reinforced, suggesting that a continuity of political thinking by Russians made them predisposed to accept authoritarian political institutions. (A discussion of this historical understanding – or, in their view, misunderstanding – can be found in the chapter by Alexander and Pavel Lukin in this volume.<sup>3</sup>)

Two pioneers in the study of political culture in Communist societies shared this view in varying degrees. Stephen White was the first to write a book (White, 1979) exclusively on the question of political culture in the Soviet Union. White made it clear that in his view Bolshevik leadership did not mark a radical departure from the autocratic political culture prevailing in pre-revolutionary Russia. On the contrary, the political culture of the Soviet Union represented continuity with that inheritance. In a later publication, White (1984b) even more strongly articulated this point of view and suggested that political scientists should 'take the historical cure' and acknowledge a 'degree of causal weight' to political culture in understanding the distinctiveness of Soviet politics. If this 'cultural continuity' thesis proved accurate, prospects for successful democratisation in Russia would appear slight. Such a political culture would likely prove to be incompatible with democratic institutions.

The other pioneer in the study of political culture in Communist countries is Archie Brown. The ground-breaking book on political culture and change in Communist states, which he edited with Jack Gray, was published in 1977, but in fact had been in preparation since the early 1970s. Brown's views on the impact of Russian history on Russian political culture appear to be more open to the possibility of change than those of White. Writing in 1987 about what Gorbachev might mean for Russia, Brown (1989, p. 19) also noted the weight of history on Russian political culture. 'Because political cultures are historically conditioned, the long-term authoritarian character of the Russian and Soviet state constitutes a serious impediment to political

change of a pluralising, libertarian, or genuinely democratising nature.' Yet, impeding change is not the same thing as preventing it and Brown goes on later in the same piece to suggest that a continuation of Gorbachev's liberalising policies might be the catalyst. He writes that 'it is unlikely that such an unusually prolonged period of reform in Russian and Soviet history could fail to have a significant impact on the political culture' (p. 30).

Since 1989, when Gorbachev's policy known as *perestroika* first made it possible, Western social scientists have been able to use research methods commonly used to study political culture elsewhere, most notably survey research. The results of these initial studies were somewhat unexpected in that they indicated the existence of a good deal more support for democratic values and institutions than would have been predicted by the continuity thesis. My own findings (Hahn, 1991) based on research in Yaroslavl' in 1990 suggested that attitudes, values, and beliefs about democracy among Russians were not altogether different from what was found in other industrialised democracies, including the United States. Generally speaking, these findings were independently confirmed in a number of other studies (Gibson, *et al.*, 1992; Reisinger *et al.*, 1994; Gibson, 1996) based on survey research conducted in the early 1990s.

The results of these early studies came under increasingly critical scrutiny both substantively and methodologically in the mid and late 1990s. Substantively, new research became available which showed that the early optimism about Russian support for democracy may have been premature, an artefact of early enthusiasm for reform. As Archie Brown has pointed out (Brown, 2003, p. 21), 1990–91 were years of excitement and high expectations among Russians, but 'a decade later there was much more disillusionment'. My own research replicated in Yaroslavl' in 1993 and 1996 led me to conclude (Hahn, 2001, p. 106) that: 'By almost all the measures of diffuse support, including political efficacy, political trust, electoral commitment, and political interest, there has been an overall drop'. Especially after 1993, many Russians seemed to become increasingly disillusioned about what democracy in Russia meant. As the literature cited in the first section of this chapter suggests, most observers feel that Russia has become less democratic over the last decade and a half. It would hardly be surprising then to find a growing gap among Russians between a normative attachment to democratic values and an assessment of the current regime as being undemocratic.

Methodologically, a growing number of specialists argued that traditional Western survey research failed to capture what Russians really



think about politics. In his book on political culture in post Soviet Russia, James Alexander writes (Alexander, 2000, p. 56) that: 'There is considerable doubt whether surveys are the best means for carrying out this research' citing problems of attitudinal volatility, as well as problems of writing good questions and of interpreting meaning (see also, Wyman, 1996, p. 131; Whitefield and Evans, 1994). Alexander Lukin offers a quite different critique in his analysis of the political culture of those who led the democratic movement in Soviet Russia during *perestroika*. Noting that Western survey research became more cautious about Russia's democratic prospects after 1993, Lukin argues that the real problem with this type of research, and indeed all Western research on democratisation in Russia, is that it is Eurocentric. He uses the term (p. 33) 'occidocentric' to describe the Anglo-American theoretical bias he says is built into Western research and which he believes prevents Western survey research from understanding Russian political culture.

This brings us to more current research. Timothy J. Colton and Michael McFaul claim (2002, pp. 91–92) that there is an emerging 'narrative' about Russian political attitudes to the effect that Russians are 'giving up on democracy'. According to the authors, this narrative revisits arguments cited earlier about cultural continuity by 'anchoring present day anti-democratic sentiment in an unbroken continuum of Russian values and traditions'. They also acknowledge the argument being made that Putin's emphasis on the need for order resonates with Russians because it is congruent with an essentially authoritarian political culture. In short: democratic consolidation has failed to take hold in Russia because Russia lacks democrats. It should be emphasised that Colton and McFaul go on to reject this view arguing that while many Russians reject their current system as undemocratic, they do not reject democratic values. On the contrary, their data show considerable support for them. Based on an analysis of survey data gathered between November 1999 and May 2000, they find (p. 117) that 'the people have assimilated democratic values faster than the elite have negotiated democratic institutions'.

A similar conclusion is reached by James L. Gibson, one of the first to conduct survey research in post-Soviet Russia showing that there was broad support for democratic values and institutions. In an analysis based on three panel surveys conducted between 1996 and 2000, he investigated the effect of poor economic performance on Russian support for democracy and addressed the question of whether it had declined as a result. His findings (Gibson, 2001) indicate that Russians' perceptions of economic performance have had little impact on support

for *political democracy* although they have had more of an effect on support for market reforms. He also found that attitudes had changed little from the late 1990s. Gibson concludes (p. 123) that: 'The overwhelming conclusion of this research is that the nascent democratic culture in Russia has not eroded over the course of the last part of the 1990s. Russian culture may not be very supportive of a market economy, but the evidence is that few prefer an alternative to democratic governance.'

Stephen White offers quite a different assessment. Continuing his earlier interest in political culture in Soviet Russia, White has closely watched the evolution of Russian public opinion since the collapse of the Soviet Union. In an article published in 2002 and based, in part, on opinion surveys he and his colleagues conducted in 2001, he asks: 'Ten Years On, What do Russians Think?' His answer is not encouraging at least for creating a 'liberal democracy' in Russia rather than merely an 'electoral democracy.' He found that many Russians prefer Communist rule to what they have now. When asked which political system was most appropriate for Russia, nearly a third expressed support for the Soviet regime as it existed until 1985. While there was some expression of general support among respondents for democratic values and institutions, the data reveal low levels of confidence and high levels of mistrust in the system as it exists in Russia today. White concludes (2002, p. 49) by suggesting that the continuity hypothesis may not have entirely outlived its usefulness in Russia because today's political system is 'more likely to emphasise the Soviet and pre-revolutionary tradition of executive authority than the Western tradition of limited and accountable government based on the consent of a mass electorate.'

As noted previously, one of the principal theoretical challenges to political culture comes from the perspective of rational choice theory. There have been a number of recent attempts to use research conducted in post-Communist societies to compare the explanatory value of the two approaches using survey research. In one case, Whitefield and Evans (1999) examined public opinion about the democratic transitions that have taken place in two former Communist countries – the Czech and Slovak republics. The authors sought to determine whether differences in levels of commitment to democracy among their respondents were better explained by long standing normative orientations acquired in the process of political socialisation (a culturist explanation) or by short-term calculations of economic and political performance (a rational choice explanation). The authors found (p. 149) that higher levels of support for democracy in the Czech Republic were best explained by

short-term economic performance 'without recourse to notions of long-standing political culture'.

However, in his chapter for this book Whitefield (2005c) offers a more nuanced assessment. He suggests that at least one important element of post-Communist Russian political thinking – an individual's choice of state identity – may be better explained by long standing normative beliefs, at least in conditions of uncertainty. He concludes that political culture and instrumental approaches may be jointly necessary for understanding public attitudes and that 'there is considerable ongoing value in a political culture approach to citizens' political attitudes even in post-Communist conditions'. A similar assessment regarding the two approaches is found in an analysis of political efficacy in Russia. Tatyana Karaman (2004) concludes that while external efficacy is better explained by economic satisfaction, internal efficacy is more a function of political awareness, a cultural variable. The research presented in this chapter proposes a similar test of the explanatory value of these two theoretical approaches.

## Concepts/hypotheses

Since the introduction of the term into the political science literature in the 1950s, few concepts have engendered more controversy and criticism than political culture. This is not the place to review the history of the concept, which in any case has been done by others, notably Archie Brown (Brown, 1996a; Brown, 2003). Given the controversy, however, it is incumbent on the author of a chapter dealing with political culture to make clear where he stands on at least some of the issues. At a minimum, we need to answer the following questions. What do we mean by the term? Does our definition include behaviour? How do we distinguish between opinion and political culture? Why do we think the concept matters? And, finally, what measurements are appropriate for its study? Because the author has addressed these questions at some length elsewhere (Hahn, 2001, pp. 76–79), what follows is a summary of his positions. The issues of measurement are discussed in the section on research design later.

Following Almond (1990), Brown and Gray (1977), and most of those who have used the concept, this research adopts a definition that understands political culture as the subjective values, attitudes and beliefs which members of society hold about political life.<sup>4</sup> While these orientations at the individual level may be cognitive (what one thinks they know about political life), normative (preferences about how things

should be) and evaluative (what they think of how things are), political culture ultimately refers to values shared collectively by national, or sub-national, groupings.<sup>5</sup> Political culture is distinguished from public opinion because it refers to deeper, sometimes even subconscious, *values* that are enduring and that are learned by an intergenerational transfer known as the process of political socialisation. As a result, while political cultures can and do change, they do so only slowly over time.

The significance of political culture is independent of its ability to explain political behaviour, although the two may be related. This author agrees with Brown (1984a) in excluding behaviour from the *definition* of political culture. However, as he notes (p. 150), 'To define political culture in such a way as to exclude behaviour in no way implies a lack of interest in behaviour.' Nor does excluding behaviour from the definition of political culture preclude finding correlations between them. In a similar vein, one must be cautious about assuming that political outcomes are *directly* linked to, or explained by, political culture. One of the problems with the 'continuity thesis' referred to earlier is that it conveys a certain determinism with respect to political change in Russia (e.g., Russian political culture is so historically freighted with authoritarianism that democratic outcomes are precluded). Instead, this author shares the view that institutional outcomes and political culture are mutually dependent and that the causal arrow can go either way. While political culture may condition political outcomes and institutions, it is equally clear that political institutions can and do shape political cultures.

The preceding review of the literature suggests at least two alternate answers to the first of the questions asked at the beginning of this chapter. If we find that whatever support there was for democratic values and institutions as measured by the variables of diffuse support used in this study (efficacy, trust, civic duty, interest, and support for a multi-party system) have declined, it may suggest that those cited above who feel Russians are becoming more illiberal are correct. Indeed, given the erosion of support found between 1990 and 1996 (Hahn, 2001, p. 106) it would be reasonable to expect to find further erosion of such values since 1996. Similarly, we would expect to find an increase in support for variables related to a strong state system and authoritarian leadership. *Alternatively*, however, if we find little change in these measures, especially those that measure *values* and not merely attitudes,<sup>6</sup> then we may tentatively conclude that at some level there is a normative commitment to democracy even though Russians don't believe they live in one. The strong support for Putin noted earlier need not be inconsistent

with such a conclusion. Approval of Putin may reflect general satisfaction with governmental performance over the past four years without necessarily undermining the publics' estimation of democracy. If anything, it would not be surprising to find a modest rise in support as government performance begins to coincide with public expectations. The implications of such findings for future democratic prospects in Russia are a matter I consider in the conclusions to this chapter.

The second question asked at the outset sought to explain any variance in the values and attitudes measured here as a function of short-term calculations of economic benefits. Following from the rational choice (or instrumental) perspectives reviewed previously, we would expect to find that any changes in support for democratic values and institutions can be explained by short-term situational factors related to evaluations of economic and political performance. Specifically for our study, we would expect that assessments of economic well being, both socio-tropic (societal) and egocentric (personal), would explain most of the variation in political attitudes, as well as their assessment of political reforms. Put another way, for respondents whose perceptions of economic and political performance since 1996 have been negative, attachment to democratic values and institutions will have declined more than for those whose situation improved since 1996.

## Research design

To explore these issues further, longitudinal survey research on public opinion about politics conducted in 1990, 1993 and 1996 in a single Russian city, Yaroslavl', was again replicated in 2004. Yaroslavl' is an industrial city of about 650,000 people located nearly 200 miles north-east of Moscow in what is known as the 'Golden Ring' of ancient cities surrounding Moscow. Critics of the earlier research (Brown 2003, p. 20; Wyman, 1996, p. 131) raised questions about how representative the population is for other areas of Russia and the degree to which one can make generalisations from a single case.<sup>7</sup> In fact, there is no way to know how generalisable our findings are without replicate studies elsewhere. The conclusions offered can only be asserted with any confidence for the population that was surveyed.

At the same time, however, Yaroslavl' is overwhelmingly an ethnically Russian city (over 95%) and there is no *a priori* reason to believe that the responses of those interviewed are so far out of the mainstream of Russian public opinion as to constitute a unique case. On the contrary, by such measures as size, education, age, per cent of the population

engaged in industry and other indicators commonly used in determining comparability, Yaroslavl' appears to be similar to other regions of European Russia. Certainly, it is more typical than Moscow or St. Petersburg where the populations are more heterogeneous than in most Russian cities. In any event, the research findings presented in this work do not claim to offer universally generalisable conclusions about Russian attitudes towards democracy, but rather seek to generate usable propositions about attitudinal change in Russia, especially after one term of Putin's presidency, which may be refuted or confirmed by other research.

The research presented in this chapter compares data collected in August–September 2004 with data from the opinion surveys conducted in 1990, 1993 and 1996. Those surveys interviewed respondents drawn from voter lists using a skip interval random sample. Sample sizes in each case were about 1250 with the actual number of those interviewed being 975, 1019, and 962, respectively. In 2004, because comprehensive voter lists were no longer available, sampling was based on an initial quota sample using age and gender in proportion to the population. Electoral districts down to the precinct level were then chosen on a randomised basis and apartments were chosen randomly on a skip interval basis. Interviews were conducted only when respondents matched the assigned quotas for age and gender. As a result of the change in sampling procedures, the response rate in 2004 was higher. Of 1217 surveys turned in, 85 had to be discarded, leaving a net total sample of 1132. Interviews were conducted in person by experienced interviewers who were also trained in use of the specific questionnaire. In 2004, approximately 28 per cent of the interviews were verified to make sure they had actually taken place. All four surveys were overseen by Tatiana Rumiantseva, a professional sociologist who is now Director of the Centre for the Study of Public Opinion and Sociological Research of Yaroslavl'. Rumiantseva is a native of Yaroslavl' as were the 39 trained and experienced interviewers she employed in 2004. In short, every effort was made to ensure that the survey results would be representative of the population within a margin of error of plus or minus 3 per cent at a .95 level of confidence.<sup>8</sup>

The questionnaire used in the first survey was prepared in advance in the United States by the author with the assistance of Dr. Alexander Gasparishvili of Moscow State University's Centre for Sociological Research. Many of the questions included were drawn from standard measures of political culture used in the West. Dr. Gasparishvili is fluent in English and has taught in the United States, while the author is fluent in Russian. Back-translating the questions used in the Western survey

research helped to ensure that the questions used would elicit meaningful responses while laying the basis for comparability. The second survey replicated most of the questions used in the first, but added some additional items designed to measure attitudes towards political and economic reforms. The third survey replicated the questions used in the second and added several more related to the measurement of economic performance. This third survey was used with minor modifications in the fourth survey conducted in August–September 2004.

In this research, we look primarily at sources of diffuse support (Easton, 1965, p. 273) for democracy.<sup>9</sup> Data are also reported regarding how respondents view their leaders and how they feel about economic and political reforms currently underway. The dependent variables chosen for analysis are those commonly associated with diffuse support: political efficacy, political trust, support for elections, political interest and support for a multi-party system.<sup>10</sup> They come from studies of American voting behaviour which have been conducted since the early 1950s and measure diffuse support for the American political system over time (Miller and Traugott, 1989, ch. 4). It may be questioned whether measures of diffuse support used in democratic countries are meaningful in countries which are not democracies or are only partially democratic. It must be acknowledged that answers to some of the questions used here (e.g., some of the items measuring political efficacy in Table 8.1 or those for political trust in Table 8.2) could measure support for non-democratic regimes just as well. There are several reasons for the approach used here. First, it enabled us to compare how similar or different Russian responses would be to those found in a country regarded as a modern democracy, a major concern of the original study (Hahn, 1991). While additional questions were added for subsequent surveys, the original questions are those that provided the basis for replication. Finally, these variables arguably measure enduring political *values* associated with living in a democratic society, although it is a major conclusion of this study that political trust is an *attitude* subject to short term situational change rather than a value. For each variable there is a brief discussion in the body of the text below on findings as to how these variables have been linked to support for democracy.

For each variable with multiple measures, additive scales were created to form single dependent variables. These are used in the bivariate analysis that follows.

Finally, there are a number of variables aimed at measuring orientations more specifically related to political and economic reforms. Some of these were also combined into additive scales. Independent variables

Table 8.1 Comparative political efficacy measures for local and national government in Yaroslavl', 1990, 1993, 1996 and 2004 (in percentages)

	1990 (N = 975)	1993 (N = 1019)	1996 (N = 962)	2004 (N = 1132)
<b>National government</b>				
<i>People like me don't have much say about what government does</i>				
Agree	84.8	89.0	87.9	90.3
Disagree	9.0	6.3	6.7	6.7
Don't know	6.3	4.7	5.5	3.0
<i>I don't think public officials care much what people like me think</i>				
Agree	55.9	72.3	84.9	84.6
Disagree	29.4	15.4	7.9	9.5
Don't know	14.7	12.1	6.8	5.9
<i>Sometimes government seems so complicated that people like me can't really understand what is going on</i>				
Agree	69.4	70.9	74.3	67.1
Disagree	23.2	8.0	18.0	25.6
Don't know	7.5	8.4	7.7	7.3
<i>Generally speaking, those we elect lose touch with the people quickly</i>				
Agree	61.0	87.4	81.9	88.2
Disagree	16.3	3.5	7.9	4.9
Don't know	22.6	9.0	9.9	7.0
<b>Local government</b>				
<i>People like me don't have any say about what the local government does</i>				
Agree	83.3	83.6	82.2	84.3
Disagree	10.4	8.5	10.2	11.3
Don't know	6.0	7.9	7.6	4.6
<i>Sometimes local government seems so complicated that a person like me can't really understand what is going on</i>				
Agree	59.7	62.9	58.3	57.8
Disagree	30.6	23.8	30.8	34.0
Don't know	9.7	13.2	10.9	8.2

used in this analysis include measures of how respondents evaluate the government's economic performance, both socio-tropically and egocentrically, and prospectively and retrospectively. Due to limits of space, the effects of socio-economic status variables (education, income, occupation), as well as standard demographic variables, including age, gender and place of birth cannot be included here, but will be examined in future analyses. An additive scale was created measuring respondents' overall evaluation of economic performance.



Table 8.2 Comparative measures of political trust for local and national government in Yaroslavl', 1990, 1993, 1996 and 2004 (in percent)

	1990 (N = 975)	1993 (N = 1019)	1996 (N = 962)	2004 (N = 1132)
<b>National government</b>				
<i>How much of the time do you think government makes the right decisions?</i>				
Almost always	18.3	6.4	3.9	7.4
Half the time	39.2	38.6	31.9	46.6
Rarely or never	26.3	32.4	51.5	37.9
Don't know	16.2	22.7	12.9	8.1
<i>Would you say that government, when it makes decisions, takes care for the well-being of all the people or only a few?</i>				
Benefits all	36.3	14.3	7.7	10.3
Sometimes all	26.2	23.7	24.5	26.6
Benefits few	29.6	53.2	62.4	60.6
Don't know	7.9	8.8	5.4	2.5
<i>Do you feel that a majority of those running the government are capable or do you think only a few are?</i>				
A majority	24.7	13.0	8.5	15.9
About half	24.9	22.9	22.8	31.9
A minority	37.0	46.2	56.2	43.3
Don't know	13.2	18.0	12.4	8.9
<b>Local government</b>				
<i>How much of the time do you think your city government makes the right decisions?</i>				
Almost always	6.3	12.2	11.5	13.3
Half the time	23.1	38.4	41.7	48.2
Rarely or never	36.3	19.5	30.6	25.3
Don't know	34.3	29.9	16.3	13.2
<i>Would you say that your local government when it makes decisions takes care for the well-being of all people or only for a few?</i>				
Benefits all	15.2	17.0	13.7	13.3
Sometimes all	23.3	31.2	33.0	37.1
Benefits few	46.3	38.7	46.9	42.8
Don't know	15.3	13.2	6.4	6.8

The first section of the data analysis presents a comparison of the frequency distributions for responses to the same questions at four points in time (1990, 1993, 1996 and 2004) for each of our dependent variables. These give some indication of whether there has been any erosion over time of diffuse support associated with democratic systems. The second section explores the question of whether variance in our dependent variables is a function of how well institutions of government

have performed economically. To do this, in cases where more than one item of measurement was used, additive scales were constructed to provide summary measures of the dependent variables. They are then cross-tabulated with the independent variables. Specifically, we want to know if respondents who feel that the economic life has gotten worse, societally and personally, are also less likely to support democratic values. We compare the relationship between these variables for 1996 and 2004.

As noted earlier there have been a number of criticisms about using survey research to assess the depth of the Russian commitment to democracy (Welch, 1993; Alexander, 2000). One of these is the argument that survey research fails to get at the deeper meanings of culture that might be revealed by anthropological methods. Another criticism (Brown, 2003, p. 20) is that survey research is more appropriate to studying attitudes in stable societies; the Russian transition has been too rapid and turbulent to allow for more than transitory conclusions. And there is the argument (Bahry, 1999) that close-ended questions with forced choices do not enable the researcher to get at the differences that may be embedded within different layers of the respondents; poorly framed questions may miss these nuances. Nevertheless, there does seem to be a grudging consensus that, as Stephen White puts it (White, 2002, p. 36): 'With all its limitations, it is survey research that can most readily answer questions of this kind.'

One technique which may help to get at the deeper meanings and ambiguities that underlie responses to a survey questionnaire is the use of focus groups. As Richard Krueger (1994, p. 239) writes, 'Focus groups provide a special type of information. They provide a richness of data at a reasonable cost. They tap into the real life interactions of people and allow the researcher to get in touch with participants' perceptions, attitudes, and opinion in a way that other procedures do not.' Although the earlier research, which the 2004 project replicated, did not use focus groups, the 2004 study did. Between 30 September and 11 November, three focus groups with ten participants each and one with eight were held. The three groups of ten were divided into age cohorts, a younger group between 20 and 30 years of age, a middle group between 30 and 50 and an older group of individuals over 50. A final group of eight included members from each age group. Sessions lasted about two hours and were videotaped and later transcribed. The sessions were conducted under the guidance of Tatiana Rumiantseva at the Centre for the Study of Public Opinion and Sociological Research by moderators who have experience in this type of research. The author of this chapter worked out a list of prompts in advance with Rumiantseva. The material obtained

in this manner is analysed along with the survey data in order to elaborate on the possible meanings of the responses gathered through the questionnaires.

## Findings

### Attitudinal change over time

*Efficacy.* Political efficacy measures the degree to which people feel they can exercise control over the decisions by government that affect their lives. The concept was originally developed by Angus Campbell and his colleagues (1954) whose now classic study of American voting behaviour sought to explain why people voted or abstained. Many of the questions used by the authors to measure political efficacy were used in this study in order to provide a basis for comparison.<sup>11</sup> The argument that subjective competence was central to a 'civic' or participant political culture was also made by Almond and Verba in *The Civic Culture* (1963). More recent analyses have emphasised the distinction between feelings of *internal* and *external* efficacy. The former indicates an individual's perception of his or her own ability to understand political life, while the latter indicates whether they feel the government is actually responsive to their input (see discussion in Karaman, 2004). Questions one, two, four and five in Table 8.1 were used to measure external efficacy while questions three and six measure internal efficacy. Questions one to four in Table 8.1 measure efficacy regarding *national* government; questions five and six ask similar questions, but for *local* government.<sup>12</sup> 'Disagree' responses in each case indicate low efficacy.

Several observations can be offered based on the data reported in Table 8.1. First, overall our respondents do not feel that they have very much control over what the government does, locally or nationally. In no case does an *efficacious* response gain more than 34 per cent. There was clearly a decline in efficacy at the *national* level from 1990 to 1993 suggesting support for the view (Brown, 2003, p. 21) that early surveys of opinion were excessively optimistic reflecting the enthusiasm of the time. But from 1993 opinions on feelings regarding efficacy remain little changed or declined. However, there is one noteworthy exception to this generalisation. Responses to measures of *internal* efficacy (questions three and six) show a steady increase from 1993. Moreover, the figures for *internal* efficacy are generally higher than for *external* efficacy (questions one, two, four and five). In both 1996 and 2004, they are higher by a difference of 15 to 21 per cent. It appears that although government is not perceived as being very responsive to citizen input, at

least in some cases it is not because people lack a sense of subjective competence.

Moreover, although the level of powerlessness is high both nationally and locally, the data suggest that local government may be perceived as a bit more responsive than the national one. As the data in Table 8.1 indicate, while levels of efficacy declined from 1990 to 2004 on the *national* level, they did not do so at the *local* level. Nevertheless, regarding local government, in 2004 when we asked whether the respondents thought they could do anything if the city council made a decision they felt was wrong,<sup>13</sup> 65 per cent said there would be 'nothing' they could do, almost identical with the figure of 66 per cent from 1996. Only eight per cent indicated that they had ever tried to influence local decisions, up slightly from six per cent in 1996. It is interesting to note that although most of our respondents thought there was little they could do to have an effect on an unjust decision by their local government, when asked if they felt it is necessary for the voters to have more means of influence on the decisions of the city government than they have now, 68 per cent thought there should be.

*Political Trust.* Political trust is an evaluative orientation towards government based on how well the government meets normative commitments. Low levels of political trust are associated with political cynicism (Campbell, 1979, pp. 87–95). Although most scholars would agree that political trust is essential to the functioning of democracy, there is disagreement about whether it is a source of specific or diffuse support (Hetherington, 1998, p. 792). Those who argue the former position maintain that a decline in political trust reflects public judgment of the incumbent government's performance and can be changed by an improvement in that performance. Others maintain that political trust is a source of diffuse support because it is related to the public perception of regime legitimacy. Again, for the sake of comparison, the measures of political trust used in Table 8.2 are similar to those that have been used to measure political trust in the United States.

The data reported here suggest several points of interest. Overall, levels of political trust among our respondents are higher than levels of political efficacy. Why people might trust a government they feel they cannot influence is a question we turn to later. There are some important differences that emerge when one looks at trust of national and local governments. At the *national* level, political trust declined steadily from 1990 through 1996, but rebounds by 2004. This can be most clearly seen by combining the first two responses for each question. Thus, for example, in 2004, 54 per cent of the respondents thought the government

made the right decisions half the time or more, up from 36 per cent in 1996 and closer to the 57 per cent thinking that in 1990. At the *local* level, however, the change has been steadily higher. In 2004, a fairly robust 61 per cent thought their city council made the right decisions half the time or more compared with only 29 per cent who thought so in 1990.

There are some other data from the survey which shed light on the question of political trust among our respondents but which are not reported in Table 8.1. In some ways, these data appear contradictory. On the one hand, our respondents perceive widespread corruption among those in government. 55 per cent thought that 'all or almost all officials (*dolzhnostnykh lits*)' take bribes while 25 per cent thought it was only about half of them; 58 per cent thought 'all or almost all officials' showed favouritism to friends and connections with another 22 per cent saying this was true for half. Dispiritingly, the numbers for both of these questions rose over those for 1996. On the other hand, it seems clear that political trust in executives is higher than for those in the legislative branch. This is especially true for President Putin who is much more trusted than his predecessor. In 2004, 78 per cent said they trusted their current president somewhat or completely, compared with 22 per cent saying the same for Yeltsin in 1996. The data also suggest that the mayor of Yaroslavl' is more trusted than the city council members. It may also be significant that while very few respondents could name their representative to their legislatures, or the heads of the legislatures, over 95 per cent could name the mayor and the governor of Yaroslavl'.

*Elections and Voting.* Electoral competition is perhaps universally regarded as the most central requirement for a democracy. Starting with the parliamentary and local elections held in March 1990, Russian elections have been competitive, though not necessarily always free and fair (Brown, 2001b, pp. 554–56). One measure of public attitudes towards electoral participation is their sense of citizen, or civic duty. Students of American voting behaviour early on concluded that this attitude was a result of childhood socialisation and that it was strongly correlated with voter turnout. As one author (Campbell, 1979, p. 239) puts it, 'Without a sense of citizen duty, very few people bother to vote; no other attitude can make up for this lack.' The present study uses the questions developed by Angus Campbell (1960) and his colleagues at the University of Michigan to look at levels of civic duty among our respondents.

Like other studies (Colton and McFaul, 2002, p. 103; White, 2002, p. 45), the data indicate widespread support for the idea that voting is

important. Generally speaking, this is true for all four of our surveys. However, it is interesting to note that the sense of civic duty among our respondents was *stronger* in 2004 than in 1996 and is closer to the figures for 1990 which was, arguably, a year when the novelty of competitive elections might have been expected to produce unusually high enthusiasm. Why? One answer may be that popular trust in political institutions, or at least in some political personalities, also rose. We have already noted the greater trust in Putin and the mayor of Yaroslavl', but there are data to suggest that this approval also extends to 'Unified Russia', the political party which the public associates with support for Putin, and to the State Duma itself, though nowhere near as strongly.<sup>14</sup>

What is the significance of support for electoral participation? Stephen White (2002, p. 45) has argued that while competitive elections are welcomed by Russians in principle, that support doesn't necessarily translate into a feeling that voting matters much. Our findings on political efficacy reported earlier indicate a similar discrepancy between a strong sense of civic duty and low levels of efficacy. Indeed, it may be that while Russians support democratic values and institutions in the abstract, they feel, as White argues, disempowered when it comes to the current system. Two caveats may be offered to such a conclusion. However disempowered they may feel, our respondents do vote; 77 per cent voted in the 2003 Duma elections and a robust 73 per cent reported voting in the presidential and municipal elections held in March 2004. Another point of interest is that levels of civic duty are considerably higher for *local* elections (question #1, Table 8.3). Combined with the earlier finding of greater political efficacy at the local level, it may be that people feel voting matters more locally.

*Other Indicators: political awareness; a multi-party system.* There are two other indicators related to popular support for democratic values and institutions for which the author has gathered replicate data over four surveys. These relate to political awareness and support for a multi-party system. Political awareness has long been identified as necessary for a functioning democracy. Almond and Verba (1963) argued that those living in participant or civic culture would characteristically be more aware of, and informed about, politics. More recently, Tatyana Karaman (2004) concluded that political awareness was closely related to measures of internal efficacy among Russians. Like Almond and Verba, she maintained that political interest and political cognition are two components of political awareness. Using the standard question generally employed to determine political interest,<sup>15</sup> those reporting interest 'most' or 'some of the time' declined from a high of 82 per cent in 1990 to 68 per cent

Table 8.3 Comparative levels of popular support for democratic elections in Yaroslavl' 1990, 1993, 1996 and 2004 (in percentages)

	1990 (N = 975)	1993 (N = 1019)	1996 (N = 962)	2004 (N = 1132)
<i>A good many local elections aren't important enough to bother with</i>				
Agree	14.0	27.1	21.8	18.9
Disagree	82.5	62.8	66.4	74.4
Don't know	3.5	10.8	11.8	6.8
<i>If a person doesn't care how an election comes out, then that person shouldn't vote</i>				
Agree	44.2	51.2	36.4	32.8
Disagree	50.8	37.5	53.1	61.9
Don't know	5.0	10.8	10.5	5.3
<i>So many other people vote in national elections that it doesn't matter whether I vote or not</i>				
Agree	27.5	39.3	28.8	29.2
Disagree	68.3	53.7	62.2	66.4
Don't know	4.2	7.1	9.1	4.3
<i>It isn't so important to vote when you know your party (candidate) doesn't have a chance to win</i>				
Agree	28.2	37.2	36.3	33.7
Disagree	62.0	52.2	52.7	60.4
Don't know	9.8	10.6	11.1	5.9

in 1993 and less dramatically from 64 per cent in 1996 to 61 per cent in 2004.<sup>16</sup> More encouragingly, responses to four questions used in 1996 and 2004 to measure respondent's political knowledge showed an increase in political cognition in every case.

There is a substantial body of literature establishing the important place that competitive political parties hold in both sustaining and consolidating democracy.<sup>17</sup> Parties help voters structure their choices in meaningful ways, act to aggregate the public interest, recruit people into political participation and they can act as a source of accountability for those in power. Despite the obvious value of political parties to democracy, parties in Russia remain weakly institutionalised, explained in part, perhaps, by the weakness of Russia's civil society (Sakwa, 2001, p. 106). The data from our surveys suggest a disconnection between multi-party politics as an abstract concept and the way people actually feel about political parties. When asked if they felt the country needs a multi-party system, 58 per cent of our respondents in 2004 said it did, up a few points from 1996 (54%) and 1990 when it was 52 per cent. About a quarter of the respondents replied in the negative for each year.

Yet, when asked which party they had confidence in, 30 per cent replied 'no party' with 40 per cent supporting the current party of power, Unified Russia. All others received less than 10 percent.

Before turning to the next section of this chapter, there are certain seeming anomalies in the preceding findings that merit attention. For one, our data indicate very low levels of political efficacy among our respondents, especially regarding the national government. Yet, levels of political trust are significantly higher. As we asked earlier: why would people place trust in a government they feel they cannot influence? Furthermore, following Stephen White's analysis cited earlier, how do we explain the finding that there is broad support among Russians for electoral participation, when people don't feel voting matters much? Finally, why do respondents think political parties are such a good idea in the abstract, yet express indifference to them in practice? Because the questions used in our survey analysis don't readily address these questions, we turned to the results of our *focus group interviews* to try to understand what lay beneath the data.

The prompts we used in each two-hour session were designed to determine what respondents understood democracy to mean (cognitive), whether they thought such a system desirable (affective), whether they thought Russia had a democracy (evaluative) and how they would explain any discrepancy between the ideal of democracy and the political system they thought actually exists in Russia. For all four of our focus groups, although in varying degrees, there was a fairly high level of cognition. People thought that democracy was about more than just elections, but was also about civil rights, equality of opportunity, a rule of law, and public accountability for those in office. Most also held the view that democracy was their preferred system of government, but they almost all also felt that Russia was not one. As one pensioner said, 'Russia is about 30 percent a democracy; the rest is authoritarian'.

Beyond these generalisations there are some important nuances, and some important generational differences. What emerges from our respondents, especially the older ones, is the view that democracy indeed requires political trust, but trust means that a good government (*gosudarstvo*) will take care of its citizens. At the same time, they seem to be saying that what such a government does *not* necessarily require is public input. It is a view of government that comes closer to the idea of *trusteeship* representation (Pitkin, 1967, pp. 127–28) than to an 'instructed delegate' or mandate model. In a trusteeship model those elected exercise their best judgement about what to do on behalf of their constituents independently of whether their constituents agree. The following



exchange between a young woman aged 21–25 and a pensioner over 50 captures this view and the generational differences:

*Moderator:* 'How do you imagine democracy?'

*Younger girl:* 'For me, democracy is not only being equal before the law, but also about participating in making laws. It's also knowing your responsibilities and therefore knowing your rights.'

*Pensioner:* 'The girl talks about participating, rights and everything – that's wonderful, but imagine you work all day; do I really want to participate in politics? No!'

*Girl:* 'But you do participate when you're voting, don't you?'

*Pensioner:* 'Elections are a separate conversation. We don't have real elections ...'

*Girl:* 'But you have to trust your representatives.'

*Pensioner:* 'I don't have to trust anyone. When I can just live peacefully and let them make decisions at the top, that's when it's democracy.'

*Girl:* 'But that just develops a passive citizen who doesn't care what's going on.'

*Pensioner:* 'Democracy is just a term. In reality it's responsibility from the top (*gosudarstvo*), responsibility for me, and my children and for every person. From my side, it means trust in the officials, government bodies, and members of the soviet [sic!]. Democracy is not done through the Duma or what we have now. It's done through one person. It's not dictatorship though, it's democracy. My trust, I trust them – there is nothing for me to do in the government.'

In the middle age group which consisted of eight women and two men between the age of 30 and 50, all possessing higher education, the same sense of government as *trustee* of the public good was expressed. One of the participants was a woman named Lena who explained that 'we can't have democratic elections in Russia because people don't know who they are electing' and that people aren't really equal anyway. Her view of government comes close to paternalism.

*Moderator:* 'So, Lena, to describe your position better, democracy as a form of equal rights doesn't exist?'

*Lena:* 'We can't have 50,000 people governing. We have to have a government *for* the people, a national government (*narodnaia vlast'*). Democracy is for everyone; it brings people closer to it. It's just like a parent deciding which child needs what and giving them that. That's how a democracy is, giving everyone what they need.'

Variations on this theme reappear throughout the interviews. For most, the answer to the question about how people can trust a government that they are powerless to influence is not a contradiction; a government that performs well is worthy of trust. As we show later, the one political variable clearly linked to governmental performance is political trust. Only for the younger generation aged 21 to 25 who came of age after the Soviet Union collapsed, is there a sense that they can and should participate (internal efficacy).

The focus group responses also hint at an answer to why support for elections and for a multi-party system might be fairly strong in our survey responses, yet respondents don't feel they can influence government and don't identify with political parties. The participants on our focus groups demonstrate a pretty good grasp of how democracies work ideally, but they also know that what they are living in falls far short of the ideal. Therefore, one can endorse the need for elections and even a multi-party system as necessary in a democracy, and yet not see them as functioning very meaningfully in Russia under current conditions. From this point of view, support for a strong leader is not inconsistent with democracy; on the contrary, it is the strong leader who makes things work well that deserves public trust. As Reisinger *et al.* (1994) caution, a response from Russians indicating support for a strong leader does *not* necessarily mean they want an authoritarian regime. As the authors write (p. 215) about their Russian, Ukrainian and Lithuanian respondents 'those desiring strong leadership were not expressing a wish for arbitrary or harmful leadership. Rather they were expressing a desire for "good government" by means of finding the proper leaders and letting them govern'. This brings us to the next set of findings from this research: the significance of economic performance to support for democratic values and institutions.

### **Does economic performance explain political attitudes?**

We turn now to consider findings related to the second question that guided this research. To what extent do the measures of political support for democratic values and institutions used in this research reflect instrumental calculations of whether governmental performance has been effective or not? Following from the perspectives of rational choice theory, we hypothesised that those whose assessment of economic performance was negative would be less likely to hold attitudes favourable to democracy and also to be less supportive of political and economic reforms associated with building democracy in Russia.

To test this hypothesis, we first used responses to four questions measuring the respondent's assessment of economic performance. These measures are found in Table 8.4. The first two items are socio-tropic, and were asked both retrospectively and prospectively. The fourth item is egocentric and retrospective for three years, while the third item specifically asks what the government's economic role was over the previous year. Items three and four were both retrospective. Each item was correlated separately with the attitudes, values and beliefs related to diffuse support for democracy explored in the first section of this paper. An additive scale was created from the four items measuring perceptions of economic performance and was also correlated with the political variables.

Perhaps the clearest finding that emerges from this table is that the political variable most strongly correlated with economic assessments is political trust. This is true for all four of our independent variables. In almost all cases the correlation is greater than .20 and for the overall

*Table 8.4* Effect of assessments of economic performance on political attitudes; Yaroslavl', Russia, 1996 (N = 962); 2004 (N = 1132). The correlation statistics for 1996 are reported above those for 2004 in each case

Assessment of economic change	Low political participation	Low political efficacy	Low political trust	Low support for elections	Low political interest	Favours multi-party system
1. Russia's economy has <i>worsened</i> the past 12 months	n.s.	.11	.31	.09	.11	-.10
	n.s.	n.s.	.19	n.s.	n.s.	-.08
2. Russia's economy will get <i>worse</i> in the next 12 months	n.s.	n.s.	.31	n.s.	.09	n.s.
	-.11	n.s.	.23	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
3. Federal policies have made Russia's economy <i>worse</i> over the past 12 months	.09	.16	.39	n.s.	.09	-.09
	n.s.	.10	.34	.08	n.s.	n.s.
4. Respondent's material well-being has <i>worsened</i> in the past three years	n.s.	.14	.22	.10	.06	-.14
	n.s.	n.s.	.15	.08	n.s.	n.s.
5. Scaled economic assessment (items 1-4)	n.s.	.16	.41	n.s.	.11	-.14
	n.s.	.12	.41	.09	n.s.	-.10

*Note:* Pearson's R correlations were used in all cases. Only correlations significant at the .05 level are reported. Correlations are between negative assessment of economic performance and the political and economic variables in the direction indicated for each.

scale it is a robust .41. For most of the political variables other than political trust, the correlation with economic assessments is weak or not significant (n.s.). No other correlation exceeds .16, a more modest degree of association.<sup>18</sup> In short, what the data seem to be telling us is that, political trust is indeed a function of how well the government performs just as rational choice theory would predict. Such a finding would seem to substantiate the position of those, like Jack Citrin (1974), who argues that levels of political trust are not necessarily long lasting, but can change fairly quickly in response to more effective policies pursued by political leaders. For this reason, political trust should not be regarded as a *value* by which to measure political culture, but as an *attitude* that reflects short-term calculations of personal advantage.

The other interesting finding that is also supported by Table 8.4 has to do with the differences between 1996 and 2004. With two minor exceptions, all the correlations for 2004 are *lower* than for 1996.<sup>19</sup> What that seems to tell us is that assessments of the economic situation were more important for how respondents felt politically in 1996. The explanation for this difference may lie in the fact that Russia was better off economically in 2004 than in 1996, a year of continuing economic dislocation for many and so economic issues were less salient for them. This interpretation would appear to be supported by other data from the survey that indicate that people were feeling better about the economy in 2004. Thus, in 1996, 44 per cent rated the 'provision of goods and products to population' to be an acute problem; by 2004, only 11 per cent did while 58 per cent responded that there was no problem. Another explanation may be that Putin is regarded so much more favourably as a leader than Yeltsin was.

The data from our survey also enable us to offer another look at the importance of economic assessments in explaining political attitudes. Tables 8.5 and 8.6 summarise responses to a series of questions designed to find out how our respondents feel about the political and economic reforms often associated with building democracy in Russia. Table 8.5 presents responses to two sets of three questions related to political attitudes. One is intended to measure support for popular participation in politics, and the other, preferences for a strong leader. The first three questions were chosen to see if Russians trust public participation in decision-making while the latter three go to the issue of whether Russians really prefer a more authoritarian form of leadership. On the question of popular participation, there seems to be some support for having the opportunity to do so, even though about 60 per cent feel that some decisions are beyond their competence, a finding similar to

the one reported earlier for internal efficacy. On the question of a strong leader, the data here confirm findings by other scholars (Reisinger, *et al.*, 1994) that Russians prefer a ‘strong hand’, although as noted earlier they go on to argue (p. 189) such an attitude is not necessarily inconsistent with democratic leanings. About three quarters of our population seem to favour a rule of men over a rule of laws.

Table 8.6 looks at economic attitudes. The first three questions are aimed at measuring resentment of those who acquire more than their neighbour, a view that Russian folklore holds to be traditional. Yet, while it seems clear that our respondents feel that wealthy people

Table 8.5 Attitudes related to political reform in Yaroslavl'; 1993 and 1996, 2004 (in percentages)

Political attitudes	1993 (N = 1019)	1996 (N = 962)	2004 (N = 1132)
<b>A. Popular participation</b>			
<i>The complexity of today's problems allows only the simplest questions to be exposed to public scrutiny</i>			
Agree	58	64	61
Disagree	42	36	39
<i>A high level of public participation in making decisions often leads to unwanted conflicts</i>			
Agree	76	66	62
Disagree	23	35	38
<i>All citizens should have equal opportunity to influence government</i>			
Agree	80	82	85
Disagree	20	18	15
Summary scale (mean score)*	x = 1.97	x = 2.08	x = 2.06
<b>B. Strong leader</b>			
<i>Talented, strong-willed leaders always achieve success in any undertaking</i>			
Agree	81	82	82
Disagree	19	18	18
<i>A few strong leaders could do more for their country than all laws and discussion</i>			
Agree	76	77	72
Disagree	25	28	28
<i>There are situations when a leader should not divulge certain facts</i>			
Agree	88	83	80
Disagree	12	17	20
Summary scale (mean score)*	x = 2.07	x = 2.20	x = 2.12

Note: \* The range for the summary scales is 1.00–3.00. The lower the mean score the greater the support for the variable. Scale reliability tests were performed and all scales exceeded the minimum mean inter-item correlation of .088. Correlation of .088.

Table 8.6 Attitudes related to economic reform: Yaroslavl' 1993 and 1996, 2004 (in percentages)

Economic attitudes	1993 (N = 1019)	1996 (N = 962)	2004 (N = 1132)
<b>A. Egalitarianism</b>			
<i>An upper limit should exist on earnings so that no one accumulates more than anyone else</i>			
Agree	51	53	48
Disagree	50	47	52
<i>If others live in poverty, the government should react so that no one can become wealthy</i>			
Agree	63	65	58
Disagree	37	35	42
<i>Wealthy people should pay more than the poor</i>			
Agree	93	94	85
Disagree	7	6	15
Summary scale (mean score)*	x = 2.08	x = 2.06	x = 2.15
<b>B. Free market economy</b>			
<i>A system based on profit brings out the worst in human nature</i>			
Agree	50	52	51
Disagree	50	48	49
<i>A system of private enterprise is effective</i>			
Agree	68	69	71
Disagree	32	31	29
<i>State regulation of business usually brings more harm than good</i>			
Agree	56	59	56
Disagree	45	41	45
<i>The share of the private sector in business and industry today should be increased</i>			
Agree	70	61	59
Disagree	31	39	41
<i>People accumulate wealth only at the expense of others</i>			
Agree	60	64	60
Disagree	40	36	40
Summary scale (mean score)*	x = 2.00	x = 2.15	x = 2.17

Note: \* The range for summary scales is 1.00–3.00. The lower the mean score the greater the support for the variable. Scale reliability tests were performed and all scales exceeded the mean inter-item correlation of .088.

should pay more than the poor, only about half think there should be a limit on how much one can accumulate. The second set of five questions measures people's attitudes towards a free market economy. The response to the benefits of a market economy is mixed, but on the

whole favourable; most think the private sector should be expanded and that state regulation of the economy 'does more harm than good'. What is quite remarkable about the data reported here is the relative consistency for all four measures in Tables 8.5 and 8.6 over time. There are no dramatic swings of opinion between 1993, 1996 and 2004.<sup>20</sup>

Each of the four sets of questions from Tables 8.5 and 8.6 was used to create four additive scales that became our dependent variables in Table 8.7. Table 8.7 reports the findings when these variables were correlated with the independent variables measuring assessments of economic performance used in Table 8.4. There are two significant findings that emerge from this table. First, it seems clear that assessments of economic performance have little or nothing to do with the *political* preferences of our respondents, but they do appear to be related to how they feel about *economic* reforms. This finding would seem to be consistent with the conclusion offered by James Gibson (Gibson, 2001, p. 123) that Russian views of economic reform may be driven by economic considerations, but not their political views. The second finding is that in almost all cases the strength of association is weaker in 2004 than in 1996 suggesting that assessments of economic performance are less important

*Table 8.7* Assessments of economic performance on support for political and economic reforms, Yaroslavl', Russia, 1996 (N = 962); 2004 (N = 1132). The correlation statistics for 1996 are reported above those for 2004 in each case

Assessment of economic change	Favour a strong leader	Favour popular participation	Favour economic equalization	Favour a market economy
1. Russia's economy has <i>worsened</i> the past 12 months	n.s. n.s.	n.s. n.s.	.19 n.s.	-.15 -.14
2. Russia's economy will get <i>worse</i> in the next 12 months	n.s. n.s.	n.s. n.s.	.07 .08	-.13 -.13
3. Federal policies have made Russia's economy <i>worse</i> over the past 12 months	n.s. n.s.	n.s. n.s.	.08 .08	-.15 -.14
4. Respondent's material well-being has <i>worsened</i> in the past three years	n.s. n.s.	n.s. -.13	.20 .06	-.17 n.s.
5. Scaled economic assessment (items 1-4)	n.s. n.s.	n.s. n.s.	.18 .16	-.25 -.22

*Note:* Pearson's R correlations were used in all cases. Only correlations significant at the .05 level are reported. Correlations are between negative assessment of economic performance and the political and economic variables in the direction indicated for each.

in 2004, perhaps reflecting an improved economy. Such a finding would appear consistent with the one reported earlier from Table 8.3.

## Conclusions

The major purpose of this chapter was to determine how much change had taken place in support for political attitudes, values and beliefs associated with democracy since serious survey research into the democratic experiment in Russia began in 1990. More particularly, we wanted to see if there had been any significant change from the Yeltsin years after his successor's first term in office. As noted earlier, the findings offered here are based on replicate survey research conducted among the predominantly ethnically Russian population of Yaroslavl' in 1990, 1993, 1996 and 2004. Focus group interviews conducted in 2004 were also used to help understand some of the anomalous findings that emerged from the survey data.

Our general finding is that there has been relatively little change in political attitudes, values and beliefs of our respondents since 1993. Because earlier analyses of these data (Hahn, 2001) showed an erosion of support for these variables, especially from 1990 to 1993, our expectation was that further erosion would be likely. Yet the comparison of data from 1996 to 2004 does not suggest any such erosion. On the contrary, there was, if anything, an upswing of support for most variables, including, political trust, civic duty, political interest and cognition, and support for a multi-party system. Levels of political efficacy remained low, but improved after 1993 for some measures of subjective competence. Only political interest showed a modest decline in this period. Moreover, the attitudes related to political and economic reform examined in Tables 8.5 and 8.6 similarly show little change from 1996 to 2004.<sup>21</sup> Among the measures used, it is important to reiterate that *political trust* as a variable seems to be an attitude responsive to government policies of the day and subject to short-term fluctuation, not an enduring value which can be associated with support for democracy as the other variables seem to be. This finding would seem to support the argument that the other measures used in this study are *cultural* rather than instrumental.

The other major finding here is that short-term assessments of government performance explain some, but by no means all, of the variance in our political variables, offering only partial support for our second hypothesis. Of the political attitudes, values, and beliefs discussed in the first section of this chapter, only *political trust* clearly



seems to be related to perceptions of how well the government is performing economically. The other variables were at most weakly related to such perceptions. Thus, this variable at least would appear to be a *specific and contingent* source of support. Finally, one finding regarding the importance of perceived economic performance that clearly emerges from our analysis is that such assessments appear to have a definite impact on how people feel about *economic* changes, but not about *political* ones. This would appear to confirm the findings of James Gibson (2001) cited earlier.

Finally what are the implications of our findings regarding prospects for democracy in Russia? At least for our respondents, there seems to be at some level a continuing normative commitment to democracy, even though most feel that contemporary Russia is not very democratic. Putin's systematic undermining since 2000 of *institutional* sources of accountability such as the media, regional executives and the legislature, among others, does not appear to have been accompanied by any steep erosion of this normative commitment. Nevertheless, Putin enjoys widespread popular support. Why? The most straightforward explanation for this apparent contradiction is that most people feel better off than they did under Yeltsin; that is, for many, government has become more effective. Yet, it would clearly be a mistake to conflate support for governmental performance with support for democracy, although they are also certainly not necessarily contradictory; those living in democratic societies would surely value both. It would also certainly be wrong to equate support for Putin with support for democracy. However, it would also be a mistake to conclude that support for Putin necessarily signifies a return to authoritarianism among Russians. If it did we would have found evidence of a change in that direction among our respondents and we did not. In short, Putin may well continue to implement undemocratic policies, but it seems from the findings presented here that he should not assume that there is a strongly authoritarian Russian political culture that will indefinitely support them.

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There are many people who contributed to the research reported here, too many to thank individually; they know who they are. But, two deserve special

mention. I am indebted to Nurit Friedman who performed the data analysis with exceptional speed and competence. He would also like to thank his graduate student at Villanova, Lilit Poghossian, for her work in making transcripts of the focus groups sessions and for her analysis of them.

## Notes

1. Not all scholars conclude the Yeltsin's Russia was entirely without institutional constraints. See Remington (2000) on parliamentary constraints and Golosov's argument (2004) that at least until 2000, Russia's regions also acted to limit central authority.
2. See the discussion by Colton and McFaul (Colton and McFaul, 2002) of the 'new narrative' they say is emerging about how Russians' preference for Putin signals a return to their authoritarian roots. Colton and McFaul go on to dispute this view. Also, see the chapter by Lukin and Lukin in this volume.
3. For a further review of this literature see Hahn, 1991, pp. 397–99. An alternative version of the cultural continuity thesis which argues that there were important democratic elements in pre-revolutionary Russian political culture that may contribute to the process of democratisation in Russia can be found in Petro (1995).
4. While Brown (2003) is probably right in saying (p. 18) that 'a majority of scholars who employ the concept in a serious way' use the subjectivist approach, there are those who disagree. Among them are those who favour a more 'interpretivist' approach that includes behaviour in the definition. It is associated with the anthropological methods used by followers of Clifford Geertz and Max Weber. Stephen White's approach to Soviet political culture (White, 1979) is closer to this school of thought. Stephen Welch (Welch, 1993) rejects both the subjective approach, which he labels 'comparativist', and the interpretivist school, in favour of a phenomenological one. In his view (pp. 108, 162), political culture, indeed all culture, emerges through human experience with the world. As humans interact with the world around them they attribute meaning to it and through a process of 'habitualisation' eventually 'man constructs his own nature'. Welch's approach has been adopted by Alexander Lukin (2000a, p. 4) in his attempt to understand the political culture of the leadership of the democratic movement during *perestroika*.
5. This approach is similar to that of Donna Bahry (Bahry, 1999, p. 843). As Brown has pointed out (Brown, 2003, p. 18) within any state a variety of sub-cultures is likely to exist, but that this doesn't preclude speaking of widely shared assumptions, such as the right to influence political outcomes in democratic countries, within a state as a whole. However, Brown cautions that when the notion of political culture is applied to whole countries, it should not be taken to imply that there are no values differences *within* the society.
6. One of the main findings in this chapter is that the political trust variable appears to be explained by short term economic assessments related to government performance. As such it must be regarded more as an attitude than an enduring *value* related to democracy. The other variables, however, do appear to be values related to democracy.
7. Brown made this criticism without having available the subsequent replicate research carried out in 1993 and 1996. In a later work (Brown, 2005) Archie

Brown generously revised his assessment of what can be learned from research in one area of Russia if it is replicated. Referring to my book (2001) he writes 'What Hahn finds in this one Russian region appears to hold good for much of Russia including its central government, namely that "while progress in introducing the *forms* of democracy has been undeniable, changing the norms and practices that go with it has been less successful" '.

8. Further details of how the sample was taken and how the survey was conducted will be readily made available by the author.
9. The distinction between specific and diffuse source of political support was first made by David Easton. Specific support is more closely tied to political outputs and regime performance while diffuse supports are based on longer term sources of loyalty and a willingness to accept the regime as legitimate.
10. In addition, however, we look at levels of political participation.
11. Data on American responses from 1952 to 1987 to similar questions measuring political efficacy and the other variables measuring diffuse system support used in this study can be found in Miller and Traugott, 1989. More recent data up to the present can be found on the web site maintained by Centre for Political Studies at the University of Michigan. See: <http://www.isr.umich.edu/cps/>
12. Questions on national efficacy contained qualifier 'of the country' (*pravitel'stvo strani*) while those referring to local government asked about the city administration (*gorodskaiia administratsiia*) or the municipality (*munitsipalitet*).
13. The question was: 'Imagine that the city municipal council has made a decision which you consider incorrect or capable of causing damage. What do you think you could do in such a situation?'
14. Confidence in the Russian State Duma rose from 27 per cent expressing some or complete confidence in 1996 to 38 per cent in 2004. In both years 51 per cent also expressed little or no confidence.
15. The question comes from the University of Michigan ICPSR National Election Studies survey conducted annually. It reads: 'Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and politics most of the time, whether there's an election or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government most of the time, some of the time, now and then, or hardly at all?'
16. While these figures represent a decline of political interest, they are not far from those found in other democratic countries. The comparable figure for the United States in 1994 for example was 69 per cent.
17. A useful summary of much of this literature can be found in Ross (2002), pp. 96–97.
18. Only two other variables seem even modestly responsive to economic assessments, political efficacy and unexpectedly, support for a multi-party system. But neither variable correlates with the prospective measure of performance (item 2) and neither exceeds a correlation of .16 for any association with most associations being non significant (n.s.).
19. The two exceptions are item 2 and political participation, and item 3 and support for elections.
20. The questions in tables 5 and 6 were not asked in the 1990 survey, so comparisons from that date are not possible.

21. Within this general finding there are two positive indicators worth emphasising. One is that both efficacy and trust measures are greater at the *local level of government* and, at least trust has increased steadily. The other is that measures of *internal efficacy* are higher than those for external efficacy, suggesting that people may be more ready to participate politically, especially locally.

# 9

## Conclusions

*Archie Brown*

Although the term ‘political culture’ was used as early as the eighteenth century by Johann Gottfried von Herder (Barnard, 1969), the *concept* has occupied a place in the lexicon of political science for just under half a century (Almond, 1956). In that time it has been variously undervalued and oversold. Rational choice analysts, whether in political science or economics, tend to take a dim view of explanation in cultural terms, and sometimes those who enthusiastically invoke political culture provide fuel for their fire by attempting to explain too much by reference to culture. Thus, faced by certain authoritarian tendencies in contemporary Russia, one oversimple response has been to say that this ‘reversion to type’ is exactly what we should expect in the light of our understanding of Russian political culture. Such an interpretation (already, Alexander and Pavel Lukin argue in Chapter 2, involving oversimplification to the point of distortion of Russia’s political history) raises the question of how and why the Russian political system could have become substantially pluralist between 1987 and 1990 – a process which should have cast serious doubt on culturally *determinist* interpretations.<sup>1</sup>

Although there are writers for whom a cultural mode of understanding politics is an all-embracing one – and it is for them alone that the term, ‘culturalist’, should be reserved – others (including this author) see culture as just one of the elements to be explored in political analysis, alongside institutions, interests, leadership, power, and ideas. The centrality of one or other of these components to an explanation of *particular* political change or continuity will vary greatly from case to case. Although there is a broad preference in the social sciences for parsimonious explanation over rich interpretation, more often than not understanding major events in the real political world involves study of the interrelationship among several or all of the aforementioned

elements.<sup>2</sup> That is certainly true of something as momentous as the changes in the Soviet Union in the second half of the 1980s, which led to the very 'post-Communism' that is the primary context in which political culture is examined in this book.<sup>3</sup> As Stephen Whitefield noted in Chapter 1, it is no part of the case for the significance of political culture that it should be expected to account for all political beliefs and actions; the claim is, rather, that in a significant range of cases it contributes something essential to understanding and is not a mere residual factor. Subsequent chapters, including those by Charles King and Whitefield (Chapter 7), spell out the special contribution to an understanding of identity politics offered by a focus on political culture. Richard Sakwa, in his broad-ranging survey, pays particular attention to the sense of identity of that part of the political elite most supportive of Vladimir Putin. He sees a process of 'partial adaptation' of Russian political culture whereby Russia is perceived as being 'not necessarily in conflict with the West' but yet 'distinct from it'.

As many of the earlier chapters have noted, there has been a significant revival of interest in political culture over the past decade and a half. Among the authors who have contributed significantly to that literature is William Reisinger who has correctly observed that 'the link between orientations and behavior' is an 'extremely difficult question'. His examples, though, pose problems only for those who wish to provide overarching cultural explanations for *all* important political events. Thus, Reisinger observes: 'Culturalist approaches that stressed the antipathy of, say, Polish culture toward Soviet-style rule could explain why large-scale protest was a potential outcome but not why it happened when it did' (1995, p. 343). The rise of Solidarity in Poland and the limited period of *de facto* political pluralism in 1980–81 have to be seen in the context of a society in which Communist control was further from being 'totalitarian' than in any other Warsaw Pact country. The cultural specificities of Poland, including widespread respect for the Catholic Church as a symbol of Polish national identity, meant that the election of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła as Pope in 1978 was hugely significant, as was the Pope's triumphal visit to Poland in 1979. The party leaders in Poland also contributed to their own difficulties by reckless borrowing to achieve higher living standards which, by the later 1970s, could not be sustained. Some of the causes of what Reisinger calls 'large-scale protest' may be identified as cultural, others owed more to the mistakes of particular individuals and the boldness of others (Ascherson, 1981; Brumberg, 1983; Garton Ash, 1983; Staniszkis, 1984; and Touraine, 1983).

There is no reason why acceptance of the value of political culture as a concept and as part of the explanation of some political change (or, in other circumstances and places, lack of change) should place its proponents under an obligation to predict the timing of tumultuous events, something which is beyond the reach of the social sciences as a whole. More generally, to be aware that Poles, or Czechs, would move rapidly to a pluralistic political system – as they did in 1989 – once they could be reasonably confident that there would be no Soviet military invasion to prevent them from doing so was by no means inconsequential knowledge. The change in the Soviet Union itself, however, that determined the timing of the introduction of pluralist democracy in Poland and the Czech Republic is a phenomenon that cannot be explained primarily in political cultural terms. That may be a difficulty for some versions of cultural theory or for those who wish to think of political culture as a comprehensive *approach* to the study of politics, but it does not invalidate political culture as a concept, still less as (in Reisinger's more modest term) a 'rubric'.

Political culture is a notion that has entered everyday language. It appears in quality newspapers and politicians sometimes use it, though often with only a rather vague idea of what they wish to denote. Even within political science, as other contributors to this volume have observed, political culture has been defined in a number of different ways. That, though, hardly marks it off from other significant political concepts, including such a central one as 'democracy' which few would wish to jettison on that account. The most important starting-point is for each author to make clear what he or she means by the concept, a requirement that the contributors to this volume have endeavoured to meet. Moreover, notwithstanding certain definitional differences, there are also common elements to be found in their understanding of the scope of this notion.

For the most part, the authors accept that political culture refers to the *subjective understanding of politics* and is concerned with people's *values*, their *perceptions* of history – as distinct from history *per se* – and with their *foci of identification*.<sup>4</sup> As Jeffrey Hahn put it in the previous chapter, political culture 'is distinguished from public opinion because it refers to deeper, sometimes even subconscious, *values* that are enduring' and which result from a process of political socialisation. It is widely agreed that while political cultures can and do change, they tend to change slowly. A useful recent formulation is that provided by Richard W. Wilson:

In the most general sense political cultures are socially constructed normative systems that are the product of both social ... and

psychological ... influences but are not reducible to either. They have prescriptive qualities that stipulate not only desired ends but also appropriate ways to achieve those ends. The norms are not coterminous with legal codes, although they often overlap. (2000, p. 264)

Many authors see attitudes as being key components of political culture. Indeed, quantitative attitudinal research, based on sample surveys, has been the major method of investigating political culture ever since Almond and Verba's pioneering work on *The Civic Culture* (1963). Getting at attitudes and distinguishing them from values is not, however, a straightforward matter. Students of values accept that they can change over time, but argue that, as a rule, they change only gradually. 'They should be inertial enough', in the words of Stanley Feldman, 'to lend stability to evaluations and behavior' (2003, p. 479). Following the pioneering work of Milton Rokeach (1973), a body of research has developed that attempts to conceptualise and operationalise the study of values, distinguishing, at the same time, values from attitudes. As Feldman puts it: 'Attitudes refer to evaluations of specific objects while values are much more general standards used as a basis for numerous specific evaluations across situations' (ibid., p. 481). Feldman notes, however, that there is still a shortage of theory that specifies 'how values or value structures should be related to attitudes' (ibid., p. 489).

Among the authors of the preceding chapters, Stephen Welch, in particular, draws on social psychological research to emphasise the problem of taking at face value many of the 'attitudes' that are elicited from respondents when they are required to come up with answers to questionnaires. He distinguishes reported attitudes from 'implicit attitudes' which are much more difficult to measure but may be of greater significance in terms of political cultural explanation. (They may also have something in common with what Feldman and others would refer to as values.) Welch argues that the inaccessibility of 'implicit attitudes' makes 'problematic the empirical grasp of political culture via surveys'. While he does not go so far as to dismiss survey research as of no consequence for the study of political culture, he holds that 'the idea of surveys as an unimpeachable empirical record of what people think cannot be sustained'.

The strongest proponents – and most active practitioners – of survey research in this volume, Stephen Whitefield and Jeffrey Hahn, are careful not to make exaggerated claims for their findings. They do, however, draw attention to the distinctive advantages of surveys as one of the most systematic ways of investigating political culture. Thus Whitefield,



in Chapter 7, observes that only professionally conducted surveys combine the advantages of being representative of the population as a whole, of enabling differences among population sub-groups to be discerned, and (when replicated) of showing belief and attitudinal change over time. While endorsing such a view, Hahn favours the supplementary use of focus groups in order to probe deeper meanings and nuances that close-ended surveys are unlikely to bring to light.

Against Welch's scepticism, one may – in addition to the response of Whitefield in the Introduction – note the relative stability of some attitudes or beliefs, as demonstrated, for example, in the surveys reported by Hahn and Whitefield in their contributions to this volume and elsewhere. Their cumulative work and also the findings – to take just one notable example – of Yury Levada in Russia indicate that well-conducted quantitative research is capable of distinguishing between the ephemeral and contingent, on the one hand, and more firmly held views or beliefs, on the other. Thus, for example, when Russians have been asked by Levada at five-year intervals to choose their ten 'most outstanding people of all times and nations', Peter the Great is selected more consistently than anyone else. When the question was first put in 1989, Lenin still headed the list (named by 75 of respondents), although Peter was named by 41 per cent in that year, 41 per cent in 1994 and 45 per cent in 1999 (Dubin, 2003a). (While support for Lenin had fallen by the post-Soviet period, he dropped no further than to second place among the 'all-time greats' in the two replicated surveys of the 1990s.)

Mary McAuley, alone among the contributors, wishes to eschew the use of 'political culture', while taking it 'for granted that culture ... both identifies and informs the activities of a community, group, or organisation'. This does not, it seems to me, put her at odds with most of the other contributors to this volume to the extent she implies. In the first place, many authors, including the present one, see political culture not as something distinct from culture more generally but as that part of a culture that bears relevance to politics. Or, as Stephen Welch has put it: 'Culture is not a set of givens of which political culture is a subset; it is a process, and "political culture" refers to that process in its political aspects' (1993, p. 164). Second, McAuley's objection to the use 'of something called "political culture" in order to explain how political systems evolve or to predict democratic development or authoritarianism' would be quite widely shared. While some writing on political culture may come close to embracing such a cultural determinism, it is not the position of the contributors to this volume. They are also keenly aware of the limits of prediction in the real political world where factors

other than those under immediate investigation cannot be held constant. This is not to say that cultural inheritances, which vary from one country to another, provide equally propitious circumstances for the establishment and possible consolidation of democracy. To suggest that, in order to democratise, Russia may have more cultural obstacles to overcome than Estonia or the Czech Republic (but significantly fewer than, say, Uzbekistan) is very different from saying that Russia will never become a democracy. Even the most democratic countries in the world today were, in each and every case, at one time under authoritarian rule.

Among those who deploy the concept of political culture, there is a small but significant minority who pay attention to the (quite diverse) understandings of culture embraced by anthropologists. Those political scientists who do draw on anthropological literature have tended to come up with omnibus definitions of culture by relying upon an outmoded strain of writing in cultural anthropology. As Marc Howard Ross observes: 'current anthropological investigations focus on culture as meaning systems and distinct from social structure, and behavior' (2000). A large claim for the centrality of culture is made by James Clifford, whose view is summarised by Adam Kuper in his critical survey of anthropological accounts of culture: 'The concept of culture provides us with the only way we know to speak about the differences between the peoples of the world, differences that persist in defiance of the processes of homogenization' (1999, p. 212).

To recognise differences is not necessarily to approve of them. Kuper, an anthropologist anxious to relegate culture to a firmly subordinate place, surely goes too far, however, when he concludes his examination of anthropological conceptions of culture by observing: 'Finally, there is a moral objection to culture theory. It tends to draw attention away from what we have in common instead of encouraging us to communicate across national, ethnic, and religious boundaries, and to venture beyond them' (1999, p. 247). The prescriptive, as distinct from descriptive, component of the last sentence I would heartily endorse. Not all cultural diversity is to be celebrated, as Brian Barry has eloquently argued (Barry, 2001). However, neither good description nor good theory should lead anyone, as Kuper fears, to feel bound to accept, and conform to, a 'primary cultural identity' (1999, p. 247), especially since he fully recognises that we have a variety of possible identities. One could devote a lifetime to studying and theorising the cultures of immigrant groups within a society and still agree with Brian Barry that 'nationality should not be defined in terms of descent' (2001, p. 87) and that there

are, furthermore, some practices hallowed by cultural tradition that are morally indefensible.<sup>5</sup>

Well before the coinage of the *concept* of political culture, the *substance* underlying that notion was recognised to be an important element in political understanding. As Sidney Verba observed in the mid-1960s:

Surely the works of Montesquieu, Tocqueville, and Bagehot represent contributions to the study of political culture, and one finds concerns with such problems at least as far back as the Greeks ... These disclaimers about the political culture approach are needed because of an unfortunate tendency in the social sciences to oversell new concepts and to assume that the mere labelling of an old phenomenon with a new term represents a breakthrough in our understanding. (1965, pp. 514–15)

The phraseology, '*the political culture approach*' (italics added, AB) is somewhat misleading in the statement quoted, as, indeed, Verba himself makes clear elsewhere in that same valuable contribution to the political culture literature published four decades ago. Among the authors of chapters in this book, perhaps only Stephen Welch uses political culture as a holistic (as well as, quite rightly, a multi-disciplinary) approach to understanding politics. For the others it is one among a number of dimensions to the study of politics and an element which may be much more important in some contexts than others.

Welch is surely right in arguing, however, that there is still much to be done in terms of developing political cultural theory, although there is already a substantial body of more general cultural theory to choose from. Even so, all but committed 'culturalists' are likely to accept, with Ross, that 'cultural analyses are no better than any other partial theories, such as interest or institutional ones, available in comparative politics. There are some phenomena for which each is most powerful, and some aspects of change are not best explained in cultural terms' (Ross, 1997, p. 65). Nevertheless, Ross, following Frederic Fleron (1996), suggests that a political cultural analysis is 'probably a good deal better at accounting for the ebb and flow of politics' since 1989 in the former Soviet bloc 'than many of its rivals' (Ross, *ibid.*).

Fleron himself, however, concluded his survey of investigations of post-Soviet Russian political culture conducted up until the mid-1990s by writing:

if the development of a democratic political culture is an effect rather than a cause of democracy, then a continuing quest to find a

democratic political culture (or sub-cultures) may be quixotic. We might instead focus our attention on the development of a democratic political order (or sub-orders) in Russia. Only after democratic institutions and practices have taken firm hold on the national and sub-national levels would we then expect to find the steady growth and consolidation of a democratic and civic political culture. (1996, p. 253)

We need not, though, take the view that political culture must be *either* cause *or* effect.<sup>6</sup> In the case of dissonance between a political culture and an imposed authoritarian regime – as, for example, in Communist Poland or in Czechoslovakia after the Communists seized full power in February 1948 – that lack of fit becomes part of the explanation of subsequent political change. The Communist movement itself, in Gabriel Almond's words, can, indeed, become 'as much or more transformed than transforming' (1990, p. 168). This process could be observed within the ranks of the Communist Party intelligentsia in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia – especially clearly in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

A political culture evolves in a reciprocal relationship between institutions, on the one hand, and values, fundamental political beliefs and implicit understandings, on the other. The consonance between the two is greatest when the institutions have developed from within the society rather than being an authoritarian imposition from without. Coerced behaviour, as we know from the literature on social psychology, is much less likely to lead to attitudinal change than behaviour voluntarily embraced (see, e.g., McGuire, 1985, pp. 289–90; Moscovici, 1985, pp. 359–61; and Eiser, 1980, pp. 134–42). Thus, we should not expect Communist institutions to engender a supporting value system comparable with that of democratic political institutions. In a democracy, a decision to vote for the first time for a political party is likely to lead to a closer identification with that party. (It is reason, indeed, why Western political parties in a majoritarian system, such as that of Britain, should be very wary of encouraging their supporters to engage in 'tactical voting' for another party in order to prevent the election of someone from their principal rival party.) The essentially involuntary act of voting for the ruling party in a Communist state was far less likely to lead to such an identification. That is especially true of a country like Poland or Hungary, where Communist rule was seen as an alien imposition – a system thrust upon the population, essentially by Soviet force of arms, as a geo-political consequence of the Second World War – than in Russia where the Communist party-state, however dictatorial, had been an indigenous creation and development.

## Political culture and Russian history

All historical generalisations of necessity involve an element of simplification, but Alexander and Pavel Lukin (in Chapter 2) draw attention to many instances of what they see as quite unwarranted assumptions about Russian history made by a broad swathe of Western political scientists and historians. While effectively rebutting some of these assumptions, they are on especially solid ground when they observe that a number of countries with still less of a tradition of self-government than Russia have made more progress towards democracy than the contemporary Russian Federation, among them Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. They do recognise a distinction between Russia's political experience and that of most of Western Europe. Within the world as a whole, however, West Europe (not least Britain), together with the United States have constituted the exceptions, rather than the rule, in terms of relatively early development of political pluralism.

Alexander and Pavel Lukin quote with disapproval a statement of mine, written before mid-point in the Gorbachev era (and published more than a year later): 'There is no getting away from the predominantly authoritarian nature of Soviet and Russian political experience' (Brown, 1989, p. 18). Notwithstanding much that is persuasive in what follows in the Lukins' chapter, I would not wish to withdraw any part of that remark. The adverb, 'predominantly', is important here, as is the caution on the same page of that 1989 volume that the 'unremittingly authoritarian character' of 'the Russian tradition' was overstated by Tibor Szamuely in his book of that title (1974). I went on to suggest that Soviet and Russian political experience (which was quite different for the Balts than for the Russians) is better understood in terms of 'a dominant political culture that does not exclude subcultures or alternative traditions even among the Russian population' (Brown, 1989, pp. 18–19).<sup>7</sup> When all due allowance is made for the islands and episodes of self-government delineated by the Lukins, Russia had centuries of autocratic rule prior to the twentieth century. Still more pertinently, throughout most of that last century it had a Communist regime that was for decades totalitarian and at best highly authoritarian. This altered fundamentally only with the Gorbachev reforms of the late 1980s which produced qualitative change, although in post-Soviet Russia democratic forms have not been matched by democratic substance. Indeed, Alexander Lukin is among the rather numerous Russian liberals who now go so far as to describe the Russian polity under Vladimir Putin as 'authoritarian'.<sup>8</sup>

Lukin himself made an important contribution to understanding the political culture of Russia's self-consciously 'democratic' activists in the last years of the Soviet Union in his book, *The Political Culture of the Russian 'Democrats'* (2000a). That well-argued study is based on a careful examination of a wide range of sources, including the documents of 'democratic' groups in different parts of Russia and Lukin's interviews with the activists. The book's main argument is that even the most overtly critical Russian opponents of the Soviet system during the last years of the Soviet Union had been influenced by Soviet ways of looking at politics and world affairs – to an extent far greater than they realised. Thus, for example, they continued to see international relations as an arena of struggle between two social systems, socialism and capitalism, but with the important difference that it was now capitalism that had become the model. They still saw history as moving in stages towards the 'most perfect form of human society' which had now, however, become 'democracy', not full communism (*ibid.*, pp. 237–45). Moreover, the understanding of democracy of the Russian 'democrats' (Lukin himself puts quotation marks around 'democrats' and 'democratic' activists throughout his book) was moulded by Soviet political culture in ways imperceptible to them. The 'democrats' decisively rejected most of the ideological content of Marxism–Leninism but they retained an absolutism, an impatience, and a lack of concern with the institutional requirements of political pluralism that owed much to their upbringing in a longstanding, and indigenously established, Communist system. As Lukin concludes:

Many beliefs borrowed from the West were reinterpreted within the framework of a belief system that saw democracy as an ideal society which could solve all of mankind's material and spiritual problems. The noble goal of achieving such a society made it acceptable to disregard 'formalities', including the laws of the existing 'totalitarian' society. The state was seen as the main obstacle to an ideal democracy, and the maximal weakening of the state was believed to be the most important condition for its creation. Finally, 'democratic' activists viewed democracy not as a system of compromises among various groups and interests, or as the separation of powers, but as the unlimited power of the 'democrats' replacing the unlimited power of the Communists. (2000a, p. 298)

Lukin himself relates some of the failures of democratic institution-building in post-Soviet Russia to such a belief system, observing that

'people who shared these beliefs could hardly create a liberal democracy based on the rule of law, the separation of powers, an independent judiciary, and respect for individual initiative and human rights' (2000a). It should be added, of course, that few of the 'democratic' activists gained positions within the Russian power structures after the fall of Communism, although one of the leaders of the movement, 'Democratic Russia', Boris Yeltsin, did become Russia's first President and it is arguable that *his* understanding of 'democracy' embodied many of the oversimplifications which Lukin detected in the documents and statements of Russian democratic activists during the perestroika years. Lukin's interpretation, in his book on political culture, of their belief systems may suggest one reason why there has not been more vigorous political resistance to post-Soviet creeping authoritarianism comparable to the growing opposition in 1989–91 to what was left of the Communist order.<sup>9</sup> As those dates indicate, that itself became something resembling a mass movement only after the previously punitive costs of criticising the Communist system had, as a result of *glasnost* and perestroika, become negligible – especially, indeed, after the system had ceased to be, in a meaningful sense, Communist (Brown, 2004).

Alexander Lukin's own research, then, provides some of the best evidence for the imprint of Soviet patterns of thought on the belief systems even of those who imagined they were most liberated from such an outlook. One may suppose the impact to have been still greater on people who had not overtly opposed the Communist system. Two Russian scholars who provide some elaboration of the point are Yury Levada and Alena Ledeneva. Levada, with due acknowledgement to Orwell, has written about a special form of 'doublethink' which developed in the Soviet Union and did not die with it (2001). Ledeneva has described a form of circular control and mutual protection (*krugovaia poruka*) as 'a persistent feature of Russian political culture' which has constituted 'both an impediment and a resource' for Russia and Russians (2004, pp. 85–108, esp. p. 87). According to Ledeneva, non-transparent unwritten rules of the game have undermined formal institutions in post-Soviet Russia and, while these unwritten rules are crucial to an understanding of 'how Russia really works' (2001), they are antithetical to the building of democracy and the rule of law. Thus, for example, since breaches of law 'are so pervasive, punishment is selective and depends on informal, extra-legal criteria'. Unwritten rules, accordingly, 'also form the basis for selective inducements' (Ledeneva, 2004, p. 107). That is not the same as a 'legal nihilism', which is often attributed to Russians and seen as a product both of their Soviet and pre-Soviet

experience. James L. Gibson, on the basis of careful research, has argued that the 'widespread disrespect for the law' of major political and economic actors in Russia should not be conflated with mass opinion, and holds that 'were ordinary people to have their way in contemporary Russia, they would choose to live in a society in which the rule of law prevails'. Gibson adds that what the latter 'want from their political system is often not the same as what they get' and that it would be naïve 'to argue that mass preferences inevitably determine the actions of elites or even public policy' (2003, p. 90).

It is important not to cross the line that separates acceptance of the reality of cultural influence from attribution of cultural determinism. My reading of the writings in the post-Soviet period of Western political scientists and of Russian analysts on the subject of Russian political culture suggests that the latter come closer than the former to embracing a cultural determinism. In the kind of generalisation that incurs the wrath of Alexander and Pavel Lukin (although most of *their* examples are Western ones), many Russian writers emphasise centuries of authoritarianism, lack of experience of civil society and of the exercise of civil and political liberties, which they depict as having engendered a political quietism and fatalism, and yearning for stability and order, rather than for freedom and meaningful democracy. (See, e.g., the special issue of *Pro et Contra* (2002) – particularly Pivovarov (2002) and Akhiezer (2002) – on political culture; also Volkov (2003) and Liubin (2002) who himself provides a survey of Russian writing on political culture during a period when Russia is at a 'transformational crossroads'.<sup>10</sup>) Yet, as Mary McAuley appositely observes in Chapter 5, this body of Russian literature does not engage with the argument that institutional arrangements can generate values and she notes that the authors 'rarely provide empirical evidence in support of their statements' or engage in comparative analysis.

Western studies, especially those based on survey research, have frequently emphasised that there is more support for the norms of democracy than for the political institutions that have been presented to Russian citizens in the name of democracy in the post-Soviet period. Important cases in point, apart from the contributions of Stephen Whitefield and Jeffrey Hahn to this volume, are the works of Geoffrey Evans and Stephen Whitefield (especially 1995), James L. Gibson (1996 and 2001), Jeffrey W. Hahn (2001), Timothy J. Colton and Michael McFaul (2002), and Richard Rose and Neil Munro (2002). These authors have produced nuanced analyses based on sophisticated survey research. (The same is certainly true also of some of the sociological research generated in Russia, including, not least, the work of Yuri Levada and



his associates.) Colton and McFaul note, for example, that there has been 'scant willingness' among Russians 'to make sacrifices for democracy in post-Soviet Russia'. Yet they also pertinently observe that 'bitter disappointment with the practicalities' of what has been called 'democracy' has not up to now 'produced a rejection of the ideals of democracy' (2002, p. 117). Sakwa, in Chapter 3, rightly stresses that the empirical research conducted on post-Communist Russia by Western scholars does not bolster generalisations about 'the innate authoritarian proclivities of the Russian public'. Rather, the picture that emerges is both complex and multi-faceted.

In evaluating the significance of political culture in the post-Soviet period, it is important to keep in mind that it is not the history of professional historians that is of greatest relevance, but history as it is widely perceived. Thus, the fatalism and pessimism among many Russian intellectuals about the prospects for democracy in Russia – *their* interpretation of Russian political culture, their understanding (or even misunderstanding) of Russian history, and what they see as its baleful consequences – are likely to have a more direct bearing on the course of events than the specialised research of historians. In political practice, elections have become less meaningful or, in the case of gubernatorial elections, non-existent; the electronic media have become more conformist; and the legislature has become more supine. Yet only weak challenges have been mounted against the executive which has willed those ends. Charles King, in commenting on Vladimir Putin's authoritarian tendencies in Chapter 4 observes: 'The political culture dimension, of course, is that he has moved in these directions with what seems to be the considerable support of the Russian population.'<sup>11</sup>

The oft-repeated assertion that Russians have a predilection for a 'strong leader' is the kind of generalisation that should not be accepted uncritically. Yet, there is quite a substantial body of empirical evidence to support it. In addition to the findings of Jeffrey Hahn, discussed in his contribution to this volume, and the replicated research by Yuri Levada and his team on Russian perceptions of the greatest people of all time (already cited in the present chapter), Levada's institute conducted a survey in the year 2000 on Russian leaders in the twentieth century, in which support for leaders who were not only 'strong', but also totalitarian or highly authoritarian, emerged as substantial (Dubin, 2003b, p. 34). Respondents, who were allowed to name only one person, were asked: 'Which of the politicians who have led our state in the twentieth century do you consider the most outstanding?' Stalin came top with 19 per cent, Lenin second with 16 per cent, and Andropov third

with 11 per cent, with Nicholas II and Brezhnev tying for fourth place with nine per cent. They were followed by Gorbachev, named by seven per cent, Yeltsin with four per cent, and Khrushchev with three per cent. There were differences among respondents, as might be expected, according to age and education. Thus, Stalin's support was highest among those over 55 years of age and lowest in the age group, 18 to 24, although even in that age cohort he was named by 14 per cent. Of the three levels of education – higher, middle, or less than middle – Stalin's support was lowest among those with higher education. With Gorbachev it was the other way round. In sixth place in the rankings overall, he had twice as much support from respondents with higher education – indeed, the same level from that section of the population as Stalin (14%) (*ibid.*, p. 34).

The fact that the principal creator of a totalitarian system, Lenin, and its principal executioner (in both senses), Stalin occupy the top two places in popular esteem sits slightly oddly with the support for the norms of democracy reported by Whitefield, Hahn, and Colton and McFaul, among others. It has to be said, however, that the evaluation of Stalin illustrates quite well the fact that Russian political culture, like other cultures, has undergone change and that far from being unified, it is, on this important question, deeply divided. On the one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of Stalin's birth in December 2004, the Levada Centre asked respondents in 46 regions of Russia which of ten opinions about Stalin they most agreed with – a repeat of a survey Levada had conducted in 1999. In only one of the ten statements (and respondents were allowed to express agreement with up to three of them) was the difference five years on or more than three percentage points. The outcome indicated a society fairly evenly divided between those who evaluated Stalin more positively than negatively and those who took the opposite view. It was at least encouraging that the strongest anti-Stalin opinion – 'Stalin was a cruel, inhuman tyrant, guilty of the annihilation of millions of innocent people' – attracted more agreement (that of 31% of respondents in 2004, 32% in 1999) than any of the other nine statements about Stalin put to citizens of the Russian Federation in 2004 (Levada Centre, 2004a). Moreover, to balance the fact that more people, as noted above, chose Stalin than any other leader as the 'most outstanding' of the twentieth century, the same researchers found that Stalin was named far more than anyone else when the question posed in 1999 was: 'which person, in your view, was the most terrible for the history of Russia?' (as he was when a similar question was phrased as 'which of the following leaders would you name the 'evil genius' of Russia in the twentieth century?') (Dubin, 2003a, p. 15).<sup>12</sup>

## Culture and interests

Disentangling cultural explanations from explanations in terms of interests or institutional incentives is seldom straightforward. Charles King has rightly emphasised the importance of specific context and Richard Sakwa has reminded us that within every society there are alternative traditions upon which political actors can draw in such concrete situations. Nicolai Petro has devoted a book-length study to what he sees as the relative success of the Novgorod region – as compared, at least, with many other regions of Russia – in terms of democracy-building and the development of markets. This, he argues, has been in large part due to the skilful manipulation of political symbols, including what he calls the ‘Novgorod Myth’ – exaggerated claims for the strength of democracy and of free markets in Novgorod’s distant past – by the regional political elite in the 1990s (Petro, 2004, esp. pp. 155–59). These views are consistent with the argument of Paul DiMaggio, drawing on the literature on cognitive psychology, which portrays culture as a ‘toolkit of strategies’ and as something which ‘both constrains and enables’ (1997, pp. 267–68).

It is partly for this reason, no doubt, that Sakwa remarks in Chapter 2: ‘Political culture is always far better at explaining the past than the future.’ While that is broadly true, it is worth recalling, as several other contributors to this volume have done, that part of the Western literature relating to political culture in countries ruled by Communist Parties pointed to the dissonance in a number of these societies between, on the one hand, widespread popular beliefs and foci of historical identification and, on the other, official doctrine and the ideologically approved version of the country’s history. From the relative failure of the party-state’s political socialisation process, it followed that, notwithstanding the superficial stability of Communist systems in the Brezhnev era, there was a potential for rapid change – especially in East-Central Europe – should there be even a partial liberalisation of ideology or of foreign policy in the regional hegemon, the Soviet Union.

Jack Hayward, taking a minimalist view of the predictive potential of political science, has remarked: ‘Political scientists have the capacity to offer some hindsight, a little insight and almost no foresight’ (1999, p. 34). While that may be overstating a cautionary note, it is a reminder that Sakwa’s ‘better at explaining the past than the future’ has a more general application. It does not apply simply to studies of political culture. In particular, it is no less true of rational choice analyses. ‘Interests’ – like ‘culture’ and political culture – constitute a sufficiently malleable concept

that almost anything can be seen in retrospect to have been determined by the broadly defined interests of the parties concerned, just as it can, equally unconvincingly, be seen as having been culturally preordained. Referring to the social psychological research of Sears and Funk (1991), which found in a wide range of cases studied that 'self-interest' does not, as a rule, 'have much effect upon the ordinary citizen's sociopolitical attitudes', Robert E. Lane goes so far as to describe it as 'fatal' for 'rational choice as well as self-interest theories'. Certainly, as he observes: 'if people use internal referents, as contrasted to the contingent, stimulus-response theory implied by rational choice and self-interest theories, the meanings of rationality and self-interest change and threaten circularity and tautology' (2003, p. 761; see also Kinder and Sears, 1985, pp. 671–72).

Similarly, Charles Taber has noted that 'self-interest has been nearly as slippery a concept as rationality, and for related reasons'. Following Sears and Funk (1991), he suggests that to be meaningful, the notion of self-interest, as it relates to public opinion, must satisfy three criteria: 'first, the interests involved must be tangible or material; second, the self involved is the individual (or perhaps the individual's family); and third, self-interest concerns imminent outcomes' (Taber, 2003, p. 447). He goes on to exclude 'psychic gratification, concern for others, and future consideration' on the reasonable grounds that 'they tend to stretch self-interest beyond recognition and render it theoretically tautological and empirically unmeasurable' (*ibid.*). Like culture – and political culture – interests *can* be an important part of the explanation of specific political behaviour, but often they are not. As Charles King observes in Chapter 4: 'It is possible to offer an account of just about any political outcome based on a bounded vision of rationality or any other deductive template derived from other cases. But giving an explanation is not the same thing as explaining.' Analyses in terms of interests are useful only when 'interest' is defined sufficiently rigorously not to become as much of a catch-all notion as 'culture' has become in some of its sloppier usages.

The attempt to explain the voluntary acceptance of burdensome duties by active participants in voluntary organisations, including political parties, as an extension of interest – on the grounds that participation brings psychological benefits – is as worthless as the generalisation that Russia's political culture preordains an authoritarian future in keeping with its authoritarian past. Bert Klandermans, drawing on his own studies of Dutch trade unions and other psychological research on collective political action, has observed: 'Empirical evidence suggests that most core activists are perfectly aware of the fact that they are giving

90 percent or more of the movement's supporters a free ride, but don't care. On the contrary, this is what seems to motivate them to take the job. "If I don't do it, nobody else will do it" is the most frequently given motivation' (2003, p. 691).<sup>13</sup>

More than one of the contributors to this volume has cited the significant comparative research of Marc Morjé Howard on the weakness of civil society in post-Communist Europe. While in an earlier publication, Charles King suggested that the vast differences among formerly Communist countries meant that 'post-Communism' was no longer a meaningful category (2000), in his chapter for this book King modifies that view, partly in the light of Howard's analysis (which combines statistical cross-national comparison of membership of associations with in-depth interviews). Howard convincingly shows that, even when compared with other post-authoritarian countries with similar levels of economic development and civil liberties, the post-Communist countries display a particular reluctance on the part of citizens to join public organisations, especially political parties (Howard, 2003). The Communist legacy in very different countries – including Russia which has been a major focus of attention in the present volume – has left citizens mistrustful of voluntary organisations. While there is a minority among those who were activists in the Communist period who saw their experience then as positive and who *remain* active, a more characteristic response is that of a 45-year-old professional worker in publishing in St Petersburg who explained why he never attended meetings or paid his dues to the cultural organisation of which he was, automatically, a member by saying:

Well, really, I don't have time, and I'm not interested. But the most important is that, well, the Soviet system, it installed an antipathy or aversion, because any experience with organizations was unpleasant. That is ... an organization is that which imposes an obligation. And obligations under socialism were so rigid that now I just don't want to participate. Maybe they [organizations] are completely different, but I just don't want to. (Howard, 2003, p. 125)

As an alternative to organisational participation, Howard notes, people under conditions of post-Communism continue to rely greatly on private friendship networks formed in the Communist era and still persisting from that time (*ibid.*, p. 148), a finding very much in line with the research on the significance of informal networks conducted by Alena Ledeneva (1998, 2001 and 2004). Yet, important as they were for

survival strategies in a non-market economy and a highly authoritarian political system, informal networks are no substitute for civil and political society associations if post-Communist systems are to become democratic and tolerant rather than degenerate into a different type of authoritarianism. Associations, including political parties, which bring together people from different ethnic and religious groups, may even, as Charles King points out in Chapter 4, make the difference between communal peace and inter-communal violence.

Identity has had an important place in studies of political culture and Stephen Whitefield, in Chapter 7, has shown clearly the relevance of political-cultural explanation for Russians' identification with the new post-Soviet Russian state. While there is still a widespread nostalgia for the Soviet Union, young people are the strongest identifiers with the present Russian state. This is not just a feature of higher levels of education or their greater economic success, for, as Whitefield notes, 'when age is removed from the regression equations, the effects of all economic variables as well as education remain essentially constant'. More generally, he finds 'identity choice appears most plausibly to be rooted in culture rather than calculation'. The best predictor of identity choice turned out to be the question which asked people how they evaluated the 'actual practice of democracy' in Russia. The question might have been better phrased – as an evaluation of the post-Soviet system – not only because of the highly dubious inference that Russia is a democracy but also because (and this constitutes one of Whitefield's more important findings) it turned out that people did not identify with Russia because they were more democratic, but when they were more 'pro-market, pro-private ownership and more anti-welfare'.

Whitefield finds that while normative orientations have been most salient in shaping identifications with the Russian state, the marginal propensity of people to change their identification over time is more closely associated with economic factors, including their expectations of household living standards. In that dynamic element, at least, economic motivation and instrumentalism count for more than culture. Even, however, for the majority whose choice is, in Whitefield's words, 'rooted in social identities', it is potentially significant that identification with the post-Soviet Russian state is founded on support for a market economy rather than 'on shared conceptions of political freedom'. It leads Whitefield to the important conclusion that in contemporary Russia political leaders are not only relatively unconstrained by democratic institutions but also by any particularly strong commitment to democratic norms on the part of those who identify most with the new Russian state.

## A summing-up

This book as a whole suggests that to attempt to understand developments in the post-Communist countries – and Russia most specifically – without taking account of the cultural dimension is to omit something very important. It does not present political culture as *the* key that unlocks all mysteries, and none of the authors embraces a cultural determinism. The contributors, in fact, bring out the variety of ways in which political culture may fruitfully be investigated and how much remains to be done in terms of the theoretical elaboration of the concept of political culture. In practical terms, the authors are in agreement that the kinds of institutions that are created and the way elites use, or manipulate, those institutions will make an impact on the political culture of the society. Equally – for, as several authors have emphasised, the causal arrow runs both ways – the values and political orientations within the society will vary considerably from one post-Communist country to another in the extent to which they constrain or facilitate movement in a more authoritarian direction.

One theme that has not been a major focus in this volume is that of transnational influences on political cultures. These, too, have varied over time and across space. For the peoples of East-Central Europe, the idea of Europe – and convergence with the norms of Western Europe – has been a salient notion and motivating force. Moreover, the prospect of EU membership has conjoined institutional incentives and cultural proclivities, underscoring the need to develop and consolidate democratic and market institutions. For Russia, Europe – along with attitudes to the Soviet past (and to Soviet leaders) – remains a touchstone of division within the society rather than a template for the future. In the last years of the Soviet Union and the earliest post-Soviet period Western influence on Russia was strong, but with Western governments and international advisers apparently more interested in building capitalism than in building democracy – and with these same Western and international institutions turning a blind eye to the manifest unfairness of the privatisation of Russia's rich natural resources during the 1990s – it is hardly surprising that many in Russia, both within the political elite and the broader society, sought refuge in those elements in Russian political culture which emphasise the country's distinctiveness and who, accordingly, stress that its political system must reflect Russia's uniqueness. Vladimir Putin has exemplified that tendency and has attempted, in the words of Richard Sakwa in Chapter 3, to forge 'a modernising traditionalist consensus'. As Sakwa, though, also observes, this

has led to the creation of a regime which 'seeks to insulate itself from the legal constraints of constitutional order, while at the same time resisting accountability to popular forces and institutions from below'.

Democratic institutions come in many forms, as President Putin likes to note when addressing international audiences. The problem in a number of the post-Communist states – of which approximately half may be categorised either as clearly authoritarian or as hybrid regimes in which authoritarian tendencies have been gaining ground – is not with the variety of democratic forms,<sup>14</sup> but with the lack of democratic substance. There are certain principles of democracy – including fair and meaningful elections and the right of citizens to hold their leaders to account – which are of universal applicability. It is encouraging that, even in Russia – in which some degree of political pluralism still survives, however tenuously, but which only ten per cent of Russians regard as a democracy (Levada Centre, 2004b), and in this instance the majority are surely right – there is still significant popular support for the *norms* of democracy. It would appear, indeed, that there is more support for democratic principles among the Russian people as a whole than there is in the highest echelons of the political elite – if, at least, the way the latter have truncated elections and the independence of the legislature and the mass media is taken to be reflective of their beliefs.

The actions of the Russian political elite can reasonably be interpreted as a defence of their immediate interests. It can be seen as consolidating their hold on power and facilitating their access to the wealth that flows from control over the country's rich mineral resources, whether they are in state or private hands, since political loyalty has become a necessary condition of business survival for those who were, somewhat prematurely, termed 'oligarchs' in the 1990s. But interests are also culturally mediated. West European political leaders, it is fair to say, not only accept the rules of democracy for their own sake but also recognise that there are clear advantages in the fact that to lose elections is not to lose everything. It does not mean disgrace, exile or possible imprisonment. Already in the first five years of the present century we have witnessed the overthrow of the rulers of three post-Soviet states, brought about by massive popular demonstrations against hybrid or authoritarian regimes riddled with corruption. It remains to be seen whether democracy will be consolidated in Georgia, Ukraine or even Kyrgyzstan. For the Russian people, and for the more enlightened segments of the Russian political elite, the sight of political power being determined on the streets just may constitute a persuasive argument for the greater political security



and more lasting stability that come with genuinely pluralist democracy.

## Notes

1. That is not, of course, the same as saying that political-cultural interpretations are necessarily irrelevant to the actual political change of the late 1980s. There is a serious case to be made for some political-cultural change having occurred in the Soviet Union between Stalin's death and 1985, not least as a concomitant of rising educational levels and as a result of the private *glasnost* that preceded the public *glasnost* of the perestroika era by approximately a generation (Rigby, 1990, p. 215; and Brown, 1996b, pp. 18–23).
2. There is, indeed, much to be said for what Charles King, in Chapter 4, calls 'theory-building as sense-making' – a more 'multi-faceted understanding of what constitutes theoretical work'.
3. The pluralisation of the Soviet political system and its consequences – both intended and unintended – constitute far too large a subject on which to digress in this chapter. My own interpretations are to be found, inter alia, in Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Brown, 'Transnational Influences in the Transition from Communism', *Post-Soviet Affairs*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2000, pp. 177–200; and Brown, *Seven Years that Changed the World: Perestroika in Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming, 2006).
4. In the mid-1970s, in a definition that gained some currency, I chose to regard political culture as 'the subjective perception of history and politics, the fundamental beliefs and values, the foci of identification and loyalty, and the political knowledge and expectations which are the product of the specific historical experience of nations and groups' (Brown and Gray, 1977, p. 1).
5. Thus, for example, Barry notes: 'Jewish identity is now unquestionably compatible with English identity. Furthermore, the social distance between secular Jews and gentiles of the same social class is essentially non-existent, and intermarriage rates are so high that a good deal of assimilation in the strong sense of disappearance of distinct identity is occurring' (Barry, 2001, p. 86). More broadly: 'Over almost the whole of the history of England as a separate entity, Englishness cannot have been defined [in terms of descent]: otherwise it would be impossible to explain how the English could be descended from such a heterogeneous collection of invaders and migrants' (ibid., p. 87).
6. I made that point more than twenty years ago – in the last endnote to my edited volume, *Political Culture and Communist Studies* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 203–04: 'Political culture in general and values and basic political beliefs more specifically are clearly the product of political experience and it is possible, in principle, to explain how they have come to take the form they have. That in no way precludes their being part of an explanation of political change consonant with such values and beliefs when constraints which have previously been placed upon their expression become less severe'.
7. Far from offering a culturally determinist view of Russian political development in that chapter written before the most radical political reforms of the

Gorbachev era were introduced, I noted change as well as continuity in both Soviet ideology and political culture, observing: 'The idea that Marxism-Leninism never changes is ahistorical nonsense, and the notion that "the Russians" never change is often thinly disguised racism' (Brown, 1989, p. 31).

8. See, for example, Alexander Lukin, 'Authoritarianism Deposing "Clan Democracy"', *Moscow Times*, 21 January 2004, p. 11; Lukin, 'Authoritarianism and its Discontents', *Moscow Times*, 12 February 2004, p. 8; Lukin, 'A Short History of Russian Elections' Short Life', *Moscow Times*, 17 March 2004, p. 11. See also Lilia Shevtsova, 'Rossiya – god 2005: logika otkata', *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 21 January 2005. Shevtsova's describes the contemporary Russian political system as a 'bureaucratic-authoritarian regime of power' (p. 10) and suggests that, instead of Fukuyama's 'end of history' we are seeing in Putin's Russia the 'end of politics'.
9. In an electronic textbook on political science, the Russian author, N.M. Sirota, devotes substantial space to political culture and, in particular, to a discussion of Russian political culture (2000). He emphasizes patriarchy in a way that the Lukins, in Chapter 2, disapprove, but remarks both on its reinforcement in Soviet conditions and on signs of political-cultural change under conditions of post-Communism. Thus, Sirota writes: 'The total control of the party-state guaranteed the reproduction of the patriarchal orientation of the population. Its stability and mass character impeded the attempts to reform the political system which N.S. Khrushchev and M.S. Gorbachev undertook'. While arguing that 'in the political culture of Russian society values of a patriarchal type prevail', Sirota sees growing support for the idea that pluralism is a necessary quality of the political process, and concomitant support for the right to vote, the right to engage in business activity, and the right to travel abroad (and to return). He sees one of the major tasks of reform of the Russian state and society as consisting in the transformation of the political culture 'on the basis of democratic values'. While the picture, as he perceived it in 2000, was very mixed, he saw grounds for optimism in the generational change that was underway. While Sirota does not provide empirical evidence to support that plausible contention, Jeffrey Hahn, in his contribution to this volume, does find significant generational differences in orientation to democratic values. On the basis of his Yaroslavl' research, he writes: 'Only for the younger generation aged 21 to 25, who came of age after the Soviet Union collapsed, is there a sense that they can participate [in the political process] and should.'
10. Liubin, for example, writes about a contradiction between 'Russian mentality' and the recent transformations and holds that the choice between democracy and authoritarianism has always been influenced by 'profound tendencies in Russian social consciousness and ancient national traditions' with a disposition to return to the authoritarian path conditioned by Russia's 'politico-cultural genetic type'!
11. James Alexander, on the basis of research in two regions of the Russian Federation, emphasizes societal inertia and concludes by asking whether Russian political culture is 'an obstacle to the development of an authoritarian polity'. His response: 'The simple answer to such a question: no, it is not' (Alexander, 2000, p. 219). See also Volkov (2003).

12. Stalin was named by 24 per cent of respondents. Boris Yeltsin had the dubious honour of running Stalin closest in the 'most terrible' stakes; he was mentioned by 15 per cent, followed by Gorbachev (seven %), Lenin (six %) and Beria (five %) (Dubin, 2003a, p. 15).
13. Klandermans also observes: 'Collective political action is not only about effectiveness but also about passionate politics. That is not to say that effectiveness is likely to become irrelevant altogether. Obviously, sooner or later something should change. If nothing ever happens, a social movement will collapse, or fade, or turn into a social club or self-help organisation' (Klandermans, 2003, p. 697).
14. That is not to discount the literature on institutional design, including the vigorous advocacy by a number of scholars, among them Linz and Stepan (1996), of the advantages for the development and consolidation of democracy, following authoritarian rule, of parliamentarism over presidentialism (or semi-presidentialism).

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