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POST-
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**A Tale of Three
Regions**



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Is there a democratic political culture – a pattern of political attitudes that fosters democratic stability, that in some way “fits” the democratic political system?
Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*
(1989[1963], 337)

With the downfall of Communist rule, democracy entered Russian politics not only at a national level, but eventually also at a regional level. As early as March 1990, pseudo-competitive elections were held to the local and regional soviets (Hahn 1997, 133-6). Then, in the aftermath of the dispersal of the Russian parliament in October 1993, president Yeltsin issued a decree dissolving the soviets and calling for elections to new regional legislative assemblies. These elections were held in almost every region of the Russian Federation between December 1993 and December 1995 (Slider 1996). Meanwhile, Yeltsin reluctantly accepted that heads of the regional executive, mostly called governors, were to be elected. The bulk of these elections took place between June 1996 and March 1997 (Solnick 1998). Thus, by the turn of the twenty-first century, the basic principles of democracy had reached the most important subnational political institutions in post-communist Russia.

Similar to the situation at the national level, however, the holding of competitive elections did not mark the final stage of regional democratisation. Several recent studies have argued that the state of democracy differs significantly among Russia's regions (Hahn 1997, 151-61; Stoner-Weiss 1997; Gel'man 1999a; Marsh 2000a, 2000b; McMann and Petrov 2000; McMann 2001a; Moraski and Reisinger 2001). The measures of “democracy” in these studies vary. Some are case studies of a small number of regions, whereas others rest on statistical analysis of a large number of regions. But they all arrive at one common conclusion: regions differ in their level of democratic development. What explains this difference?

In this paper I will argue that one of the key determinants of regional democracy in Russia may be found at the mass level: in the hearts and minds of ordinary Russian citizens. Drawing on a recent opinion survey conducted in the regions of Sverdlovsk, Nizhegorod and Tambov, I will thus present a case for a “culturalist” interpretation of regional democratisation. The argument proceeds in six steps. First, I review the literature linking democracy to political culture at the national level. Second, I argue for the importance of studying this relationship in the context of Russia’s regions in general, and in the three selected regions in particular. Third, the survey methodology employed is introduced. Fourth, the patterns consistent with my argument are presented, and, fifth, I assess the support for a causal relationship between political culture and democracy. In conclusion, I discuss the implications of my findings.

Theories and comparative evidence: What does democracy demand of its citizenry?

The seminal work relating political orientations at the mass level to democracy in the political system, without any doubt, is Almond and Verba’s *The Civic Culture*, first published in 1963 (Almond and Verba 1989[1963]). In a five-nation comparative study, Almond and Verba purported to show that “the development of a stable and effective democratic government...depends upon the orientations that people have to the political process – upon the political culture” (ibid., 366). More specifically, they found that the citizenry in the more stable democracies of Great Britain and the United States had a more developed “civic culture” – in particular, stronger feelings of citizen competence and higher levels of political participation at the local level – than the people of the younger and more fragile

democracies of Germany, Mexico and Italy (ibid., 142, 173, 187, 206f; cf. Lijphart 1989[1980], 41).

Almond and Verba also found that Americans and Britons displayed higher levels of interpersonal trust, cooperativeness and memberships in voluntary associations than did Germans, Mexicans and Italians. Echoing this finding, Putnam (1993) found that what made "democracy work" today in 20 regions of Italy was the varying stocks of "social capital" – "features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks" (ibid., 167) – they had accumulated over the centuries. Although only partially substantiated in his empirical indicators, this theoretical interpretation has had an extraordinary impact on future research within the field (cf. Jackman and Miller 1996). In his recent efforts to extend this hypothesis to the US, however, the explicit concern with democracy as a systemic feature has faded considerably (Putnam 2000). Instead, others have tried to follow the example set in his book on Italy, that is, to trace variations in the workings of democracy to differences in stocks of social capital across systems of government (see, for example, Booth and Richard 1998 and Gibson 2001).

Of particular importance for the present paper in this regard are two studies trying to link democracy to political culture at the mass level within Russia's regions. First, Stoner-Weiss (1997), in her penetrating study of what explains regional political performance in Nizhegorod, Tiumen', Yaroslavl' and Saratov in 1990-93, argued that neither the "civic culture" professed by Almond and Verba, nor the "civic community" explored by Putnam, were the causal factors at work. Drawing upon the political economy literature, Stoner-Weiss instead argues that in regions with high levels of economic concentration, such as Nizhegorod and Tiumen',

economic interests can overcome collective action hurdles and organise interest groups, which can then cooperate with the regional government. As a result, institutional performance is promoted (Stoner-Weiss 1997; see, in particular, 151-63, and chap. 6).

A result that is down-played in Stoner-Weiss' study, however, is the fact that membership in voluntary organisations – arguably the most important of Putnam's empirical indicators – *did* match the regional pattern of democratic performance. Both Nizhegorod and Tiumen' displayed higher levels of organisational membership than did Yaroslavl' and Saratov (ibid., 158f; cf. 198f). This is also the key finding in Marsh's (2000a, 2000b) statistical analyses of social capital and democracy in Russia's regions, although his case rests on somewhat dubious measurements.¹ Moreover, Stoner-Weiss did find considerable support for a consistent attitudinal pattern across her four regions: several independent measures displayed higher levels of what may be termed "regime support" in Nizhegorod and Tiumen' as compared to Yaroslavl' and Saratov. However, Stoner-Weiss treated these as indicators of one component of her *dependent* variable, that is, the *responsiveness* of the regional democratic system (ibid., 115-28).

The most broad-ranging cross-national study of democracy and citizen attitudes to date is no doubt the work on the *World Value Surveys* conducted by Ronald Inglehart. In a series of books and articles during the past decade, Inglehart (1988, 1990, 1997) has purported to show that, quite consistent with Almond and Verba's original argument, both the inauguration and stability of democracy is promoted by certain traits of political culture among the citizenry. The specific set of cultural indicators used, as well as the exact nature of the dependent variable "democracy", have

varied somewhat over the years. However, in the contribution widest in scope, Welzel and Inglehart (2001) present evidence that a leading factor behind the “Third Wave” of democratisation, roughly occurring between 1985-95, was the distribution of “liberty aspirations” – “demands for personal freedom for self- and co-determination” – across some 60 societies.²

This short survey of empirical studies linking democracy to political culture merits three general comments bearing upon the present study. First, the concept of “political culture”, as should be evident, is seldom precisely defined, and does not constitute a single, coherent phenomenon. Although most researchers pay lip service to the definition given by Almond and Verba (1989[1963], 13) – “the particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of the nation” – this definition gives enormous leeway for specifying different versions of political culture in different contexts. Thus, whereas some indicators such as interpersonal trust have figured prominently in most studies or theories of democratic political culture, others, such as life satisfaction, have appeared more recently. Moreover, components such as organisational involvement and political activity are strictly speaking not “orientations” at all, but facets of the social networks surrounding individuals, or part of their actual behaviour.

Reflecting this state of affairs, the current study will use a wide range of indicators of attitudes, perceptions, social connections and actual behavior, all of which share one common denominator: they appear at the mass level. Admittedly a broad concept, it still deserves pointing out what mass political culture is *not*. To begin with, it must obviously be distinguished from *elite* political culture, that is, the orientations and behaviour of political elites. Moreover, the intentional or behavioural micro-level phenomena called mass

political culture is something different from the structural, macro-level requisites of democracy, such as the size and geopolitical location of the polity, the electoral or governmental system, or the most empirically well-established of them all: the level of economic development. At the same time, elite and mass political cultures, much as political culture and structural determinants, do not necessarily form mutually exclusive pairs of explanations. As argued by Mahoney and Snyder (1999) among others, structure- and agency-oriented theories of democratisation are not inherently incompatible, although they are commonly couched in such terms. And as I will argue in this paper, certain forms of socioeconomic development at the individual level can certainly be linked to indicators of mass political culture.

This relates to the second point. Already at its inception doubts were raised about the actual *causal* relevance of the political culture argument. In his famous critique of *The Civic Culture* study, Barry (1970, 51) questioned whether a “democratic political culture” could not be the *effect* of democratic institutions rather than their cause. In a similar vein, Rustow (1970) argued that “democracy makes democrats” rather than vice versa. The direction of causality imputed between democracy and political culture has also been subject to some empirical scrutiny (see, e.g., Rose et al. 1998: chap. 6; Muller and Seligson 1994; and Sides 1999). Since this is a highly relevant critique of some of the bolder assertions within political culture studies, it will be dealt with at some length below. To anticipate, I will present some support for an exogenous interpretation of political culture by specifying one of the leading mechanisms behind democracy posited in the literature: socioeconomic modernisation.

Third, the political culture argument claims to be a contribution to both of the two dominant strands in comparative democracy studies (Munck 2000), or what is sometimes referred to as "transitology" and "consolidology" (Schmitter and Karl 1994). That is, political culture is conceived of as a causal factor driving both transitions to democracy, and the stability of democratic systems once established. However, although this is a distinction of utmost theoretical importance, I will disregard it in this paper. The main reason is methodological: to uphold the distinction would require a dynamic research design. When the level of democracy in a set of polities are only depicted at a single time point, stability cannot be observed independently. Since the present study falls under this cross-sectional category of research designs – just as did Almond and Verba (1989[1963]) – there is no need to distinguish between the possible effects of political culture on the stability versus the level of democracy in the system.

The case(s) in point: Three regions of Russia

Considering the often heard view that democratisation in Russia is rendered futile by the persistence of an authoritarian political culture (for an overview of such arguments, see Hahn 1991), the study of mass orientations and the state of democracy is arguably of particular importance in this country. Instead of cross-national comparisons with other democratising countries, however, another path will be pursued in this paper: that of understanding differing experiences with democracy *within* Russia. Being a federation, Russia is composed of 89 "Federal Subjects", of which 21 are ethnically based republics, two are the federal cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg, 11 are "autonomous districts" and 55 are the territorially based "regions proper", called "oblasts" or "krais" (Nicholson 1999, 14ff). While emerging from the same monolithic

Soviet political system, which left little room for differences in political institutions across regions or by level of government (Hahn 1997, 132f; Gel'man 1999a, 942), these regions have turned out to display an impressive diversity in terms of their degree of living standards (Nicholson 1999, 26), economic development (van Selm 1998; Hanson and Bradshaw 1998, 1999) and political structures (Gel'man 1999b; Golosov 1999). By drawing on this diversity, I will thus unpack the single case of Russia, using the regions as a sort of "living laboratory" to understand contemporary Russian political developments.

This has a notable advantage over cross-national comparisons. Considering the large number of possible confounding factors threatening a political culture explanation, to study variations within a single overarching national political structure at least allows some important institutional determinants to be held constant. But one could also argue that the regional dimension of democratisation deserves merit in its own right. Theories of democratisation generally concentrate on the national political institutions in the capital city, whereas notions on how democracy becomes territorially diffused *within* a democratising country are underdeveloped (McMann 2001b). Regional pockets of authoritarian resistance to a newly imposed democratic regime can even impinge on the national democratisation process. In the words of Sakwa (1996, 210), "The fate of the democratic experiment in Russia will be settled as much in the regions as in the central institutions of the state". Thus, to understand democracy in Russia's regions may be a way of understanding Russian democracy itself.

Following Stoner-Weiss (1997), only a small set of regions will be selected in order to allow samples large enough to draw conclusions about their entire regional population. What we thus

need to ensure is some variation in the extent to which the regions under study have developed their regional “democracy” – in a broad sense of the word. Since “democracy” is a highly contested concept, it is even disputed whether Russia as a whole may be labeled by that name (Fish 2001). In a fairly basic sense of the word, however, it is commonly argued that Russia could still be called an “electoral democracy”, in that free, competitive and at least not outrageously unfair elections to the highest political institutions of the country take place at regular intervals (Diamond 1999, chap. 1-2; Anderson 2002; Roeder 2002). Much the same could be argued at the regional level, but whether democracy actually extends beyond the basic electoral threshold – and incorporates such things as constitutional constraints on the executive powers, the existence of multiple and independent opposition groups and movements, an independent media, extensive and equal civil rights, and maybe even an independent judiciary and the rule of law – is an open question (cf. Gel’man 1999a, 940f). Thus, how are we to find three regions that are positioned at different levels of democratic development in this more demanding sense?

There are three independent arguments as to why Sverdlovsk, situated in the Urals, Nizhegorod on the middle reaches of the Volga river, and Tambov in the heart of the fertile Chernozem region, fit this description. To begin with, Gel’man’s (1999a) categorisation of different regional regimes in Russia points at Sverdlovsk as a more democratic regime than Nizhegorod. By crossing two dimensions – on the one hand the “competitiveness” of the top political actors in the region, on the other whether the predominant political institutions are “informal” and “arbitrary”, or more “formalised” and even approaching “rule of law” – Gel’man classifies Nizhegorod as a “hybrid regime”, but Sverdlovsk as corresponding to a “democratic situation”. His main argument for this characterisation of Sverdlovsk

seems to hinge upon the highly developed competitive party system in the region. After the then governor Eduard Rossel was dismissed by Yeltsin in early 1994 for trying to establish an autonomous "Urals republic", he staged his comeback on the political scene by building a political party, the "Transformation of the Urals". This party and its local organisational branches played a key role in Rossel's victory in the 1995 gubernatorial election, and the 1996-98 elections to the regional Duma. Meanwhile, his main contestants to political power had to keep up in the competition by establishing their own party organisations. As a result, competition for power in the Sverdlovsk region is structured by a formal political institution: the regional party system (Gel'man 1999a, 951; Gel'man and Golosov 1998; cf. Golosov 1999).

By contrast, Nizhegorod did not experienced a similar development towards institutionalised competition. After having been appointed as Governor in 1991, Boris Nemtsov managed to establish a regional "pact" with the communists in opposition as well as the most important enterprise directors in the region (Campbell 1994, 238-46). This pact was, in effect, the key behind the high institutional performance of Nizhegorod registered by Stoner-Weiss (1997, 172-7) in the early 1990s. The flip side of the coin, however, was that the pact hampered political competition and implied that the overarching structure wherein governing took place was *informal* in nature. Although competition for the post of governor after Nemtsov had left for Moscow in 1997 was rather fierce, it never occurred along regional party lines (Gel'man 1999a, 948f; Gel'man 1999c). Perhaps as a symptom of the region's "fall from democratic grace", a member of the Communist faction in the State Duma, and the former head of the regional administration under Soviet power, Gennadii Khodyrev, won the gubernatorial election in 2001.³

Tambov region was not included in Gel'man's study, and has in fact not been subject to much scholarly attention at all. It could be argued, however, that Tambov is quite similar to the "authoritarian situations" Gel'man actually mentions, such as Saratov and Ulyanovsk. Tambov has generally been considered a Communist stronghold, firmly located in the so-called "Red Belt" of Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) vote support south of Moscow. Reflecting this popular sentiment the communist Alexandr Ryabov, after his victory over the Yeltsin-backed head of administration Oleg Betin in the 1995 gubernatorial election, promised to restore Soviet power (Sakwa 1996, 210). Moreover, the only political party represented in the regional Duma is the CPRF, controlling nearly a third of its seats (Golosov 1999, 1344f, Table 2).⁴

The second argument for the selection of cases comes from a macroregional statistical analysis of the diversity in social, demographic and economic characteristics of Russia's regions. Although based on somewhat dated figures (from 1995), the results indicate the presence of three fundamental dimensions in the socioeconomic architecture of Russia's regions (not counting the Federal Cities, Chechnya and Ingushetia, and the 11 "lesser autonomies"):

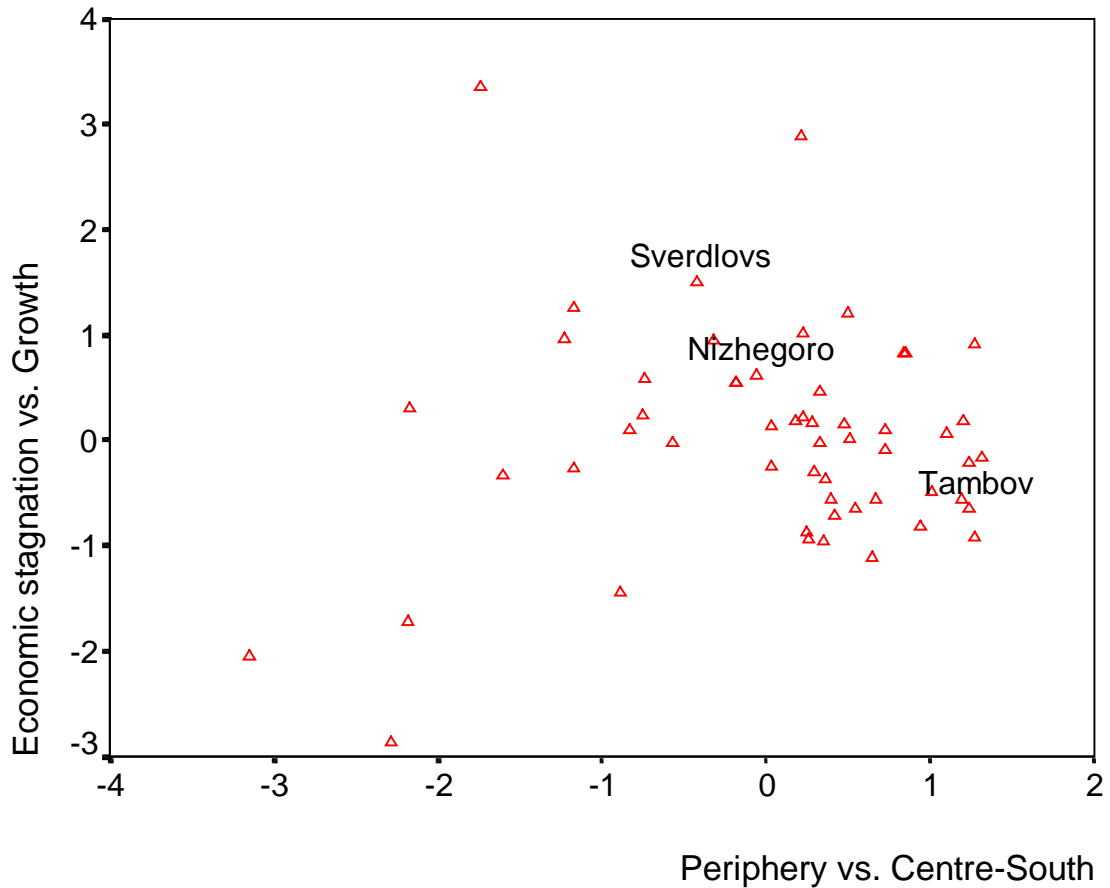
1. The first is the "ethnic" dimension, which separates the regions in terms of their Russian heritage, as opposed to being based on some kind of ethnic minority status. This dimension also to a large part coincides with having an industrialised versus an agrarian economy. By ignoring the Autonomous Republics, however, this dimension can be basically held constant. Thus, in what follows we will concentrate on the ethnically "Russian" parts of Russia.

2. The second dimension could be called "Periphery versus Centre-South", in that it separates the vast, scarcely populated regions of the North and the East from the more compact regions of Central and South European Russia. This geographical positioning turns out to correlate with a number of sociodemographic indicators, the most important for present purposes being the macroregional pattern of support for Yeltsin and the democratic movement versus the CPRF in the founding elections of 1993 and 1995-6: quite consistent with earlier studies of the importance of the so-called "fifty fifth parallel" (Slider et al. 1994, 718-24; Hahn 1997, 159f), democratic support was strongest in the North and the periphery, and weakest in the South.

3. The third dimension is a clear cut distinction between economically developing and stagnating regions. It separates the regions in terms of their real gross regional product, real industrial productivity and economic growth. Since one of the most established facts of comparative democracy studies is the positive impact of economic development on the level of democracy (more on that below), we should expect democracy to be more developed in the economically more well-off regions.

If the second and third dimensions are crossed, Russia's regions can be located as outlined in Figure 2.⁵ The variation we are looking for should occur along the upper-left to lower-right diagonal, since in the upper-left corner we have economically developed regions with stronger electoral support for the democratic movement, whereas in the lower-right corner are the regions with a stagnant economy and Communist preferences. As can be seen, Sverdlovsk, Nizhegorod and Tambov fall neatly on a line parallel to this hypothesised diagonal.

Figure 1. Russia's Regions in a Socio-Geographical and Economic Space (N=55) *Source: Data from Goskomstat (1997), data processing by the author.*



The third argument for including these three regions comes from an expert panel of Russian scholars specialising in Russian regional politics. The panel was in 1997 asked to rate the level of democracy in Russia's non-ethnically based regions. More precisely, they were asked to name the 10 regions they considered most democratic – given Dahl's (1971) standard definition of democracy to be applied by all panelists – and, correspondingly, the 10 regions they considered the least democratic. By aggregating their figures, it turned out that Sverdlovsk was ranked second in level of democracy (St. Petersburg was ranked first), whereas Tambov was ranked 46 out of a possible 57. Nizhegorod again fell somewhere in

between, especially when the survey was repeated in 1999, two years after Nemtsov had left for Moscow (McMann and Petrov 2000, 160, Table 1; 175).

Data and method: Comparing three regional surveys

This paper is based upon 600 face-to-face interviews carried out in October 2000 in each of the three regions just selected (that is, 1800 interviews in all). In each case an attempt has been made to draw a sample as representative of the regional population, aged 16 years or more, as possible. To accomplish this a stratified multi-stage sampling technique has been employed (for details, see Teorell 2002). All interviews were standardised, with exactly the same questionnaire used in each region.⁶ The average interview lasted just less than an hour.

Including some 1800 cases, this material is of course amenable to statistical analysis as far as individual characteristics are concerned. However, in trying to establish a relationship between mass political culture and *systemic* characteristics – such as democracy – that path cannot be pursued. At that level of analysis, in effect, we only have three cases. What we must do, then, is to systematically compare the average result of each surveyed attribute and test whether the regional *differences* match the pattern of regional variation in democracy, as hypothesised by the criteria for case selection. In other words, does the population of Sverdlovsk turn out to be the most “democratically oriented”, the population of Tambov the least, whereas the population of Nizhegorod falls somewhere in between?

More precisely, let S stand for Sverdlovsk, N for Nizhegorod and T for Tambov. There are then three possible pairwise

comparisons, the outcomes of which should be as follows when perfectly consistent with the hypothesis: $S > N$, $S > T$, and $N > T$. However, each of these pairwise comparisons may also be inconsistent with the hypothesis (that is, $N > S$, $T > S$ or $T > N$), or inconclusive due to a tie or a lack of statistical significance (that is, $S \approx N$, $S \approx T$, or $N \approx T$). Thus, there are $3^3 = 27$ logical combinations. Of these, however, eight lead to intransitive rank orderings, and could thus be ruled out as logical impossibilities, which still leaves us with 19 possible outcomes. Apart from the perfectly consistent outcome, one of these is of course the perfectly inconsistent outcome (i.e., $N > S$, $T > S$, and $N > T$), whereas one is the perfectly inconclusive outcome (that is, $S \approx N$, $S \approx T$, and $N \approx T$). The question then is: how should we judge the 16 outcomes in between these extremes? Should any pattern in between the inconclusive and perfectly consistent outcome be considered as supportive of our hypothesis? Or should we perhaps consider any pattern except the perfectly consistent one as disproving the cultural argument?

To strike a balance, I have in what follows rigged the test in favor of *disproving* the hypothesis by treating an absolute majority of the middle-range patterns as inconsistent. However, I have still allowed three types of patterns, apart from the perfectly consistent one, to be considered as consistent evidence. There are two minimal requirements for these patterns: (1) the rank ordering of the three regions, without taking statistical significance into consideration, must be consistent with the hypothesised pattern of regional differences in democracy; and (2) the difference between the two extremes in this rank ordering, that is, Sverdlovsk and Tambov, must be statistically significant. According to these requirements, then, the following patterns are treated as "consistent": $S > N$, $S > T$, $N > T$; $S > N$, $S > T$, and $N \approx T$; $S \approx N$, $S > T$, and $N > T$; and $S \approx N$, $S > T$, and $N \approx T$.

Consistent patterns: A democratic political culture?

Applying this criterion, the consistent patterns that emerge across the three regions are presented in Tables 1-2.⁷ The results have been divided into two blocks, the first (Table 1) representing beliefs, attitudes and evaluations – or “orientations” proper – the second (Table 2) displaying measures of social networks and political action. In both tables the column for η^2 (“eta-squared”) includes a measure of how much variance in each variable can be explained by regional allocation. This is to allow for comparisons of which differences across all three regions are to be considered large or small, within the subset of consistent patterns.

To begin with: people in Sverdlovsk are generally more *satisfied with their life* than those in Nizhegorod, who in their turn are more satisfied than those living in Tambov. This indicator ranges from 0, which means “very dissatisfied” to 10, which means “very satisfied”, reflecting the average score in each region. This finding is consistent with the cross-national research referred to above that shows that the level of “subjective well-being” – whether measured in this way or by asking people whether they are “happy” or not – is higher both in countries with higher levels of democracy and with a more prolonged experience of democratic rule – even if economic development is taken into account (Inglehart 1997, ch. 6; Welzel et al 2001).

Table 1. Consistent patterns across the regions: political orientations.

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Sverdlovsk</i>	<i>Nizhegorod</i>	<i>Tambov</i>	η^2
Life satisfaction (0-10)	4,87	4,13	3,80	,025**
Satisfaction with democracy (% fairly or fully satisfied)	28,8	19,7	19,2	,021**
Regional political performance (0-10)	2,90	2,19	2,05	,026**
Evaluations of Russian history (-5 - +5):				
The time since the dissolution of the USSR (1991-)	-1,58	-2,61	-2,78	,029**
Glasnost' and perestroika (1985-91)	-0,74	-1,38	-2,13	,032***
The Brezhnev era (1964-82)	+1,10	+2,11	+2,89	,066***
The Stalin era (1930-53)	-0,82	-0,53	+0,13	,015***
The October Revolution of 1917	-0,50	+0,40	+0,90	,037**
The final years of the Tsarist regime (1905-17)	-0,10	-0,28	-0,80	,014***
Support for democracy (-7 - +7)	+1,30	+0,49	+0,11	,039**
Political interest (% fairly or very interested)	55,2	54,5	46,1	,009***
- local level	53,7	49,9	45,5	,004
- regional level	56,4	51,7	43,5	,011***
- national level	66,9	62,7	60,2	,004
- international level	54,0	49,9	51,1	,002

Difference between Sverdlovsk and Nizhegorod significant at: * .05 level † .10 level.

Difference between Sverdlovsk and Tambov significant at: ** .05 level †† .10 level.

Difference between Nizhegorod and Tambov significant at: *** .05 level ††† .10 level

Note: Figures are weighted to adjust for unequal numbers of eligible respondents living in the household; standard errors, and hence significance tests, are computed taking the design effect of clustering and stratification into consideration (see Teorell 2002).

Similar to this result is the finding that in Sverdlovsk people are more *satisfied with the way democracy works* in Russia (what Table 1 shows is simply the percentages who say they are “fairly” or “fully” satisfied). Note that this question should *not* be interpreted as gauging the level of principled support for democracy, since each respondent conflates the ideal standard with an evaluation of the existing system (Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer 1998, 100f). A more plausible interpretation is that this question picks up perceptions of “regime performance” (Klingemann 1999, 36). True, it may be argued that assessments of how democracy works in Russia in

general misses the point of *regional* democratisation. However, if we look at a similar question directly referring to the regional level – that is: to what extent the political leaders have been *successful in dealing with the problems of the region* (on a scale from 0 to 10) – a similar picture emerges. In Sverdlovsk there is more widespread support for the regime’s political performance than in Nizhegorod and Tambov.⁸

So what then about support for democracy in principle? An indirect, but as far as I am aware quite novel, approach to that question is to look at *how Russians view their own history*. More precisely, how do they assess the role played by different periods in the twentieth century for the history of their country, with answers ranging from –5 (a “very negative role”) to +5 (a “very positive role”)? As can be seen, all three regions are unanimous in their ranking of the most positive period in recent Russian history: the Brezhnev era! Similarly, they all agree that the current times are the most distressful hitherto experienced. In between those extremes, the rank order of the time periods within each region differs somewhat. Noteworthy results, however, are the generally positive perception of the October Revolution of 1917, which led to the inauguration of Communist rule, as well as the generally negative evaluation of the time period that broke the bone of this system, that is, the era of “glasnost’ and perestroyka”.

More important for present purposes, however, is that a very clear and consistent pattern emerges if we compare how each time period *separately* is evaluated across the three regions. Without exception, the time periods of “liberalisation”, as it were, are most positively evaluated by the people in Sverdlovsk, most negatively evaluated by the people in Tambov – with Nizhegorodians somewhere in between. This applies for the democratisation period

in the 1990s, for “glasnost’ and perestroyka” – and even for the comparatively moderate reform period of the last tsar Nikolay II. By contrast, all three time periods of the authoritarian Soviet regime are least approved of by the Sverdlovskians, most approved of by the Tambovians, with the citizens of Nizhegorod again located in the middle.

As a matter of fact, the regional differences in evaluations of history are among the most sizeable to be found in the survey (as measured by η^2). This seems to support the view that the past affects the present through the work of “collective memories” (Rothstein 2000). Different perceptions of one’s history lead to different assessments of what one wants for the future. On this interpretation, the people of Sverdlovsk have sought to bring their political system more in line with a democratic tradition from the past, whereas especially the Tambovians have relied more strongly on the Russian authoritarian legacy.

This consistent regional pattern reemerges when we look at a more direct measure of *support for democracy*. The scale on which these results are based is composed of five different questions on democracy as a political system compared to alternatives such as “having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections”, “having the army rule”, and “having the system of government of the Soviet times”. A person consistently rejecting all these alternatives, favouring democracy as a system of government instead, would get the figure +7 on the scale. By contrast, a person who favours all the alternatives over democracy would get a -7.⁹ As is evident, Sverdlovsk again stands out as having the population most supportive of the idea of democracy. And, again in line with our hypothesis, Tambov scores lowest on support for democracy, with Nizhegorod in between.

The remaining indicators in Table 1 lend additional support to the importance of orientations attached to the *regional* level of government. Although *general interest in politics* is higher in Sverdlovsk and Nizhegorod than in Tambov, the most sizeable difference is in the level of interest in politics *at the regional level*. When asked about other levels of government, such as the local, national and even international level, by contrast, there are no significant differences in political interest at all.

Let us now turn to social networks and political activity (Table 2). The first three groups of indicators can in one sense or another be considered as pertaining to the concept of “civil society” (cf. Gibson 2001, 52). The first and most prominent one is *involvement in voluntary associations*. The survey items employed here probably provide the most extensive and ambitious attempt ever to measure ordinary Russians’ organisational involvement. Earlier measures have in general used very short lists of organisational types, and have only asked about passive or active memberships (Rose 1998, 60f). By contrast, we used an extensive list of as many as 28 organisational types, ranging from sports and leisure activities clubs to interest groups and trade unions. Moreover, we asked not only about (formal) membership but also about whether the respondent – regardless of whether a member or not – had taken part in any activity arranged by an organisation, contributed money (apart from membership fees), or done voluntary (unpaid) work for it.

As Table 2 makes clear, there are sizeable regional differences in associational involvement, the people in Sverdlovsk being more involved than the people of Nizhegorod, who in their turn are more involved than the Tambovians. This difference is most prominent with respect to organisational memberships, but it

appears in terms of organisational activity as well. And the difference cannot be explained by looking at any particular organisational type: Sverdlovskians are more involved in voluntary associations of just about any kind.¹⁰ The difference between Nizhegorod and Tambov, however, can by and large be explained with reference to one organisational type: the trade unions, which allegedly still capitalise on their compulsory memberships from Soviet times (Fish 2001, 18). If the unions are taken out, then the difference between the two washes out. Nevertheless, the overall pattern brings Russia's regions in line with one of the sturdiest findings in cross-national research on political culture reported above: that a multitude of voluntary associations is conducive to democracy. It should immediately be noted, however, that another of the most well-researched indicators of social capital, namely interpersonal trust, does *not* fit the hypothesised pattern across regions.¹¹

Table 2. Consistent patterns across the regions: social networks and political action.

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Sverdlovsk</i>	<i>Nizhegorod</i>	<i>Tambov</i>	η^2
Organizational involvement (0-28):	0,49	0,38	0,29	,016 ^{†**}
– holding membership	0,47	0,29	0,19	,037 ^{***}
– having participated in activities	0,26	0,12	0,14	,020 ^{**}
– having undertaken unpaid work	0,13	0,07	0,11	,006 [*]
– having donated money	0,04	0,04	0,05	,000
Civic skills: voluntary associations (0-3)	0,13	0,09	0,07	,006 ^{**}
Civic skills: work place (0-3)	0,23	0,22	0,13	,006 ^{***}
Practical assistance networks (0-8)	3,60	3,10	2,87	,018 ^{**}
Political participation: number of acts (0-19)	0,36	0,37	0,21	,007 ^{***}

Difference between Sverdlovsk and Nizhegorod significant at: * .05 level † .10 level.

Difference between Sverdlovsk and Tambov significant at: ** .05 level †† .10 level.

Difference between Nizhegorod and Tambov significant at: *** .05 level ††† .10 level.

Note: Figures are weighted to adjust for unequal numbers of eligible respondents living in the household; standard errors, and hence significance tests, are computed taking the design effect of clustering and stratification into consideration (see Teorell 2000).

Now voluntary associations can bring many politically relevant “goods” to those who join them, such as information, resources, and a wider sense of community. One of the roles played by voluntary associations that figures most prominently in the literature, however, is that they can work as “schools in democracy”. Organisations provide real-life experience of what it means to come together and take collectively binding decisions on important matters. With a term coined by Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995, chap. 11): voluntary associations provide opportunities for practicing *civic skills*. This is our second indicator of the vibrancy of civil society. More precisely, this measure taps the frequency of which respondents “participate in decisions at a meeting”, “plan or chair a meeting”, “prepare or give a speech before a meeting”, and “write a text other than a private letter at least a few pages long”.¹² Quite consistent with the finding on overall involvement in voluntary associations, it turns out that the regions differ in the extent to which their citizenry is practicing such skills: in Sverdlovsk more, in Tambov less, civic skills are practiced

– Nizhegorod falling somewhere in between. Of course, voluntary associations are not the only arena for such activities, which is why we also asked about the same set of activities *at work*. Again the same difference shows up, although Sverdlovsk this time is not at all far ahead of Nizhegorod. Tambov, however, clearly lags behind.

It has been argued that in post-communist societies, where the state for decades have systematically cracked down on any apparent formal manifestations of civic organisation, *informal networks* may play a role similar to that of voluntary associations in more developed democracies (Gibson 2001). This is our third measure of “civil society”. It gauges the extent to which the respondents have friends or acquaintances from whom they could get unpaid help with such things as “construction work”, “getting products on better terms than in ordinary stores”, “arranging large parties”, “discussing intimate matters”, “arranging transport” and to get “medical, economic and legal expertise”.¹³ These are networks that provide *practical assistance* of a non-political nature. Again, however, they seem to have political significance in that they figure most prominently in Sverdlovsk, to a somewhat lesser extent in Nizhegorod, and even lesser in Tambov.

Finally, we turn to *political participation* – the act through which citizens can become directly involved in the practice of representative democracy by making their demands heard by the political system. Turnout in elections is *not* what is being referred to here. Although turnout is of course a very important aspect of citizen participation, there are no significant differences in levels of turnout between the three regions. Instead, what is displayed in Table 2 pertains to other types of political behaviour that takes place in between elections. In the survey we asked about no less than 19 different acts of participation, ranging from contacts with

politicians and other officials, taking part in strikes and demonstrations, signing petitions and donating money, to more unconventional forms of participation such as “political consumerism”, that is, the act of deliberately boycotting or buying certain products for political or ethical reasons. This time Sverdlovsk equals Nizhegorod, but they both are way ahead of Tambov in political activity. The lion’s share of political participation in these three regions consists of money donations, petitions and contacts of various sorts – more prominently with non-elected officials than with elected representatives. Apart from this, each region seems to have its own distinct configuration of “popular” political acts, the sole consistent pattern throughout being that Tambov almost without exception harbours the most politically passive population.

We can thus trace a number of political orientations, as well as characteristics pertaining to the social networks surrounding an individual, that go together with our hypothesised measure of democracy at the regional level. Do these patterns go together at the individual level as well? In other words, is there an underlying individual propensity towards “democratic” attitudes and behaviour among the citizens of our three regions? If that were the case, it would enable us to speak of a coherent “democratic political culture” which at the individual level simply expresses itself in the various forms of indicators explored in Table 1-2.

This idea can be tested by performing a dimensional analysis of these indicators, the result of which is reported in Table 3. Basically we are looking at how strongly inter-correlated the orientations, networks and action variables are at the individual level, and whether the patterns of inter-correlations distinguish one single underlying dimension of democratic political culture. It should be noted at the outset that the existence of such a coherent political

culture is *not* a requisite for the “political culture” argument to hold (cf. Jackman and Miller 1996). For example, even if the group of people in one region who are highly satisfied with their lives is not the same group of people that are highly supportive of democracy, high levels of life satisfaction and support for democracy can still bring about democracy at the regional level. Thus, what matters for the argument that political culture *affects* political outcomes is not the coherence of the cultural syndrome at the individual level. However, if we want to understand what *explains* political culture, whether it is a single- or multidimensional phenomenon is a crucial piece of information.

Table 3. Dimensions of democratic political culture.

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Democratic regime support</i>	<i>Rejection of authoritarianism</i>	<i>Civic engagement</i>	<i>Political interest</i>
Life satisfaction	61	10	05	01
Satisfaction with democracy	69	06	-00	03
Regional political performance	65	-08	06	12
Evaluations of Russian history:				
The time since the dissolution of the USSR	59	28	03	-06
Glasnost' and perestrojka	59	28	03	-03
The Brezhnev era	-27	-65	-06	-02
The Stalin era	-00	-79	-09	01
The October Revolution	-02	-73	-06	-03
Support for democracy	31	56	08	03
Political interest (in general)	01	01	11	91
Regional political interest	03	-00	13	91
Organisational membership	11	04	78	-04
Civic skills: associations	06	-02	80	-04
Civic skills: workplace	01	14	62	14
Practical assistance networks	18	21	37	29
Political participation	-07	06	50	20

Note: Entries are factor loadings, multiplied by 100, from a varimax rotated solution of a principal component factor analysis based on pairwise correlations (N=1105-1790). Figures are weighted to adjust for unequal numbers of eligible respondents living in the household. The signs of the second dimension has been reversed for readability. The eigenvalues are 3,29 and 2,12, 1,48, and 1,36, respectively; the four factors together explain 51,5 percent of the variance in the variables.

As Table 3 makes clear, there seems to be four rather than one dimension of democratic political culture in the three regions under study.¹⁴ To begin with, there is *democratic regime support*: the extent to which the current political regime delivers what people demand from it. High ratings on this dimension are also associated with approval of the political developments in the country since the mid-1980s. Second, there is *rejection of authoritarianism*, or in other words, principled support for democracy and dissociation from historical times of repression. Third, there is *civic engagement* – the process of becoming involved in formal and informal arenas of social life, eventually leading to political action. Fourth and finally, there is *political interest*, distinguished from the former dimension by being a form of passive political involvement – being, as it were, politically engaged at a distance. These four dimensions, although

conceptually distinguished, are not unrelated. In particular, a person holding strong sentiments of democratic regime support also tend to reject authoritarian alternatives ($r=0,38$). Similarly, people with high civic engagement tend to support the democratic regime ($r=0,21$), reject authoritarian alternatives ($r=0,26$) and to be interested in politics ($r=0,29$).

These correlations are based on standardised index scores, ranging from 0 to 1, the regional differences of which are presented in Table 4. Consistent with the cultural argument, Sverdlovsk scores highest on all these dimensions, Tambov scores lowest, whereas Nizhegorod is located somewhere in between. Judging from our measure of the strength of these patterns (that is, η^2), the regional differences in democratic regime support and rejection of authoritarianism are clearly the most conspicuous. In the case of civic engagement in Nizhegorod versus Tambov, and political interest in Sverdlovsk versus Nizhegorod, the regional differences are even insignificant. Yet the overall pattern, with 10 significant differences out of 12 possible, lends clear support to the idea that mass political culture drives democracy.

Table 4. Index scores across the regions.

<i>Index (0-1)</i>	<i>Sverdlovsk</i>	<i>Nizhegorod</i>	<i>Tambov</i>	η^2
Democratic regime support	0,39	0,31	0,28	,059***
Rejection of authoritarianism	0,52	0,45	0,39	,070***
Civic engagement	0,12	0,10	0,09	,022**
Political interest	0,49	0,47	0,42	,011***
Difference between Sverdlovsk and Nizhegorod significant at: * .05 level † .10 level.				
Difference between Sverdlovsk and Tambov significant at: ** .05 level †† .10 level.				
Difference between Nizhegorod and Tambov significant at: *** .05 level ††† .10 level				

Note: Figures are weighted to adjust for unequal numbers of eligible respondents living in the household; standard errors, and hence significance tests, are computed taking the design effect of clustering and stratification into consideration (see Teorell 2002).

Of chickens and eggs: The question of a causal relationship

Do the patterns hitherto presented reflect the fact that a political culture brought about and helped maintain a more developed democratic system in Sverdlovsk? And hence that the absence of the same political culture is what has led to the democratic shortcomings of Tambov? Obviously we have a clear example of the chicken and egg problem here. Much as political culture in the three regions may have fostered democratic development, the differences in cultural orientations may simply reflect different experience with democratic rule. Thus, echoing Barry (1970), we must ask whether democratic political culture could not be the *effect* of democratic institutions rather than their cause.

With only three cases and one measurement point, I clearly lack the adequate research design to provide any firm evidence on this score. However, with some plausible assumptions and a bit of formal modeling, I still believe it possible to gain some purchase on the question of a causal relationship. To structure the argument, I have summarised a model of how democracy and political culture

may be interrelated in Figure 2. This is a cross-level model, since we are trying to understand a macro or systemic level phenomenon – democracy – in terms of both macro- and micro-level prerequisites. At the very right hand side at the macro level is democracy – in either of the senses referred to above, that is, its level or stability – at time t . This is what we are ultimately trying to explain. Since the prospects for democratic development today is evidently a function of how well it had developed yesterday (Przeworski et al 1996, 40), I have included democracy at time $t-1$ on the very left hand side. Included in the macro model is also economic development, since this no doubt is the most well-known and empirically supported predictor of democracy (again in any of the two senses of the word) in cross-national research (see, e.g., Lipset 1959; Hadenius 1992; Vanhanen 1997; Przewoski and Limongi 1997; Gasiorowski and Power 1998; Welzel and Inglehart 2001). Moreover, although an effect of democracy on economic development cannot be ruled out, most empirical evidence to date supports the other direction of causality: economic development fosters or helps sustain democracy, but is in itself not a product of regime type (Helliwell 1994; Burkhart and Lewis-Beck 1994; Londregan and Poole 1997; Przeworski et al 2000: chap. 2-3). That is why the causal arrow linking democracy at $t-1$ to economic development has been barred.

At the individual level, our prime concern is with democratic political culture at the very right hand side, in any of the four dimensions revealed in Table 3. The challenge we are confronting is to be able to rule out the cross-level causal mechanism running from systemic democracy at $t-1$ to this individual-level cultural phenomenon. The solution I am now proposing is the following: There are of course determinants of political culture at the individual level. To the extent these alternative predictors (a) are not affected by the level of democracy at $t-1$, and (b) can account for the regional differences in democratic political culture, then at least democracy at time $t-1$ can be ruled out as a predictor of culture.

More specifically, cultural orientations may simply reflect demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, ethnicity and religion. Although the demographic composition of a regional population of course cannot be causally influenced by the macro level phenomena in a direct sense (democracy does not make people younger, for example), through inter-regional migration one could hypothesise a selection mechanism running in that direction. For example, younger people may move to more democratically developed regions, and hence give rise to a correlation between age and democracy at the regional level. Macro evidence from the Russian regions, however, make such selection highly unlikely, since the demographic composition of the regions have been fairly stable throughout the 1990s. The gender and age composition, for example, correlates nearly perfectly across Russia's regions between 1991 and 1999.¹⁵ Thus, to the extent that age or gender differences are what lie behind the cultural differences, the latter can at least be argued to be unaffected by the level of democracy.

Moreover, individual level indicators of economic development, part of the phenomenon sometimes called socioeconomic modernisation, may be hypothesised to have strong implications on political culture. Prominent individual-level indicators of socioeconomic modernisation include education, income, urbanisation, secularisation and what is sometimes referred to as “tertiarisation” – the extent to which there is a developed “tertiary” or service sector (see, e.g., Lipset 1959; Dahl 1971: chap. 5; Inkeles and Smith 1974; Inglehart 1997; Welzel et al 2001).¹⁶ In post-communist Russia, another plausible indicator of modernisation could be the scope of economic reform accomplished in the region, or what is more generally referred to as “privatisation”.

Again a selection effect of democracy through inter-regional migration is conceivable: the more democratically developed regions may have attracted the more socioeconomically “well off” parts of the population. But then again, that does not appear very likely when we look at the stability of these features at the regional level throughout the 1990s.¹⁷ Thus, to the extent we find that cultural differences between the regions can be accounted for in terms of individual-level socioeconomic modernisation, democracy at $t-1$ may again be ruled out as a predictor. However, macro-level economic development may be thought of as the prime mover of most of these individual level processes, even in a causal sense. As a result, we can claim to have found the causal mechanism connecting macro-level economic development to individual-level democratic political culture.

In order to fit this argument in our three regions under study, the demographic and socioeconomic indicators must display two characteristics. First, they must match the pattern of regional

differences in democracy as hypothesised by the criteria for case selection. Second, they must have an impact on democratic political culture, in any of its four dimensions. Table 5 explores the extent to which the individual-level predictors of political culture depicted in Figure 2 pass the first of these tests.¹⁸ To begin with, there is in our sample a small gender difference between the three regions (although this difference is not apparent at the population level; see Teorell 2002). If women are in general more inclined than men to harbour a democratic political culture, this could partially explain the difference across the regions. More importantly, the age structure of the three regions fits the hypothesised pattern: the population of Tambov is older than that of Nizhegorod, whereas Sverdlovsk has the youngest citizenry of the three regions, although the difference is not considerable. The same could be said about the regional differences in ethnic composition. Although Sverdlovsk appears to be slightly more ethnically heterogeneous than both Nizhegorod and Tambov, it is only in the share of Russians and Tatars that the ranking of the three regions turns out to be consistent. In terms of religious denomination, finally, the differences are slightly larger, the most important distinction being that Sverdlovsk has far more inhabitants who do not harbour any religious denomination at all, whereas both Nizhegorod and Tambov is more Eastern Orthodox.

Table 5. Demographic and socioeconomic differences between the regions.

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Sverdlovsk</i>	<i>Nizhegorod</i>	<i>Tambov</i>	η^2
A. DEMOGRAPHIC				
Sex (percentage women)	56,6	56,5	53,1	,001***
Age (mean years)	42,5	44,4	45,1	,004**
Nationality (percentages):				
Russian	91,3	95,5	96,7	,010**
Ukrainian	1,9	0,5	1,5	,003***
Belorussian	0,6	0,1	0,2	,001
Tatar	3,7	1,1	0,2	,013***
Other	1,4	2,7	2,5	,002
Religious denomination (percentages):				
Eastern orthodox	72,3	88,4	89,7	,045**
Islamic	3,2	1,2	0,2	,010†**
Other	1,9	1,6	0,6	,002††
Without religious denomination	22,7	8,8	9,5	,034**
B. SOCIOECONOMIC				
Education (mean years)	10,9	10,7	10,5	,002††
Household income (Rbls)	2897,1	2052,4	1520,6	,078***
Urbanization (percentages):				
Living in a city (200' < inhabitants)	40,9	45,1	25,5	,031***
Living in a town (5' -200' inhabitants)	40,8	21,0	26,9	,033**
Living in a village (<5' inhabitants)	18,3	33,9	47,6	,065***
Religious activity (0-6)	1,17	1,71	1,77	,035**
Tertiarisation (percentage working/having worked in the service sector)	60,0	47,9	51,6	,010**
Privatisation (percentage working/having worked in the private sector)	33,2	35,9	18,2	,029***

Difference between Sverdlovsk and Nizhegorod significant at:

* .05 level † .10 level.

Difference between Sverdlovsk and Tambov significant at:

** .05 level †† .10 level.

Difference between Nizhegorod and Tambov significant at:

*** .05 level ††† .10 level

Note: Figures are weighted to adjust for unequal numbers of eligible respondents living in the household; standard errors, and hence significance tests, are computed taking the design effect of clustering and stratification into consideration (see Teorell 2002).

The regional differences in socioeconomic modernisation are by and large more sizable than their demographic composition. The most notable exception is the level of education, which hardly displays any regional differences at all. But in terms of household income, urbanisation and religious activity, Sverdlovsk turns out to

be a more “modern” region than both Nizhegorod and Tambov. That is, the inhabitants of Sverdlovsk are economically more well-off, they are more urbanised (especially when attention is solely directed to the distinction between living in a city/town or on the countryside), and they are less frequent attendants of religious services. The Nizhegorodians, in their turn, appear more modern than the Tambovians, at least in terms of income and urbanisation. However, the development of the service sector (or “tertiarisation”), and the scope of privatisation, do not match the overall pattern of regional differences in democracy. Tambov appears to be more “tertiarised” than Nizhegorod, but the latter region is more privatised than Sverdlovsk. Thus, these two indicators of socioeconomic development can be dropped from the following analyses.

When we turn to the second criterion, that these indicators must have an impact on the dimensions of democratic political culture, we can discard three additional ones. It turns out that neither nationality, nor religious denomination or activity, exerts any significant influence on the cultural orientations towards democracy. The analysis based on the ones that do have an impact, however, has been summarised in Table 6.¹⁹ Although I have omitted the exact effects of each control variable, their levels of significance can be read off for each dependent variable. These controls accumulate across the rows, that is, each single control variable is added to the ones entered before. Moreover, age is represented by two variables, with a squared term added to the simple measure in years. The rationale for this is that some of the cultural dimensions turn out to be non-linearly related to age: the association is bell-shaped, with the strongest (or weakest) signs of democratic culture turning up among the youngest and the oldest age-strata. As is clear, age and education exert some influence on

each of the four dimensions of political culture, income on three of them, whereas gender and urbanisation have a significant impact on only two.

Table 6. Controlling for demographics and socioeconomic modernity (percentages).

<i>Dimension of democratic culture</i>		<i>Sverdlovsk vs. Nizhegorod</i>	<i>Sverdlovsk vs. Tambov</i>	<i>Nizhegorod vs. Tambov</i>
A. DEMOCRATIC REGIME SUPPORT				
<i>Controlling for:</i>	Gender *	-0,0 *	-1,0*	-2,2*
	Age *			
	Age ² *	+11,8*	+6,5*	-5,0*
	<i>Demographics subtotal:</i>	11,8	6,5	-5,0
	Education †	+1,2*	+1,1*	+0,9*
	Income *	+18,4*	+9,7*	-9,2†
	Urbanisation *	+23,5*	+19,0*	+9,2†
	<i>Modernization subtotal:</i>	23,5	19,0	9,2
	TOTAL:	35,3*	25,5*	4,2†
B. REJECTION OF AUTHORITARIANISM				
<i>Controlling for:</i>	Gender	-0,0*	-0,0*	-0,0*
	Age *			
	Age ²	+7,2*	+6,6*	+5,8*
	<i>Demographics subtotal:</i>	7,2	6,6	5,8
	Education *	+2,9*	+2,4*	+1,8*
	Income *	+9,5*	+13,8*	+19,2*
	Urbanisation *	+5,2*	+17,4*	+32,4*
	<i>Modernization subtotal:</i>	5,2	17,4	32,4
	TOTAL:	12,4*	24,0*	38,2*
C. CIVIC ENGAGEMENT				
<i>Controlling for:</i>	Gender	0,0*	-0,0*	
	Age *			
	Age ² *	-7,5*	+5,6*	
	<i>Demographics subtotal:</i>	-7,5	5,6	N/A
	Education *	+11,9*	+8,0*	
	Income *	+47,5	+56,0	
	Urbanisation	+58,4	+62,2	
	<i>Modernization subtotal:</i>	58,4	62,2	
	TOTAL:	50,9	67,8	
D. POLITICAL INTEREST				
<i>Controlling for:</i>	Gender *		-3,3*	-4,3*
	Age *			
	Age ² *		-15,3*	-0,0*
	<i>Demographics subtotal:</i>	N/A	-15,3	-0,0
	Education *		+11,5*	+2,2*
	Income		+26,6*	+15,7†
	Urbanisation		+39,9*	+33,6
	<i>Modernisation subtotal:</i>		39,9	33,6
	TOTAL:		23,8*	33,6

* Significant at .05 level

† Significant at .10 level

Note: Entries are the extent in percentages to which each pairwise regional difference increases (negative sign) or decreases (positive sign) when the control variables are taken into account. Figures are weighted to adjust for

unequal numbers of eligible respondents living in the household; standard errors, and hence significance tests, are computed taking the design effect of clustering and stratification into consideration (see Teorell 2002).

To focus on essentials, Table 6 only displays the pieces of evidence pertaining to the core question of causality as modeled in Figure 2. That is, to what extent does demographics and individual-level modernisation explain the regional differences in democratic political culture? The results are presented separately for each dimension of political culture and each of the three pairwise regional comparisons, excluding the two cases where there were no significant regional differences to begin with (see Table 4). The table entries show in percentages how much of each pairwise regional difference that can be accounted for by the control variables. For example, if nothing remained of the 0,074 difference in democratic regime support between Sverdlovsk and Nizhegorod after the control variables has been taken into consideration, then a full 100 per cent of that regional difference would have been accounted for. Instead, the remaining difference is 0,048, which means that $1 - 0,048 / 0,074 \approx 0,35$, or around 35 per cent, can be attributed to demographics and modernisation. Hence, this figure (excluding rounding errors) is reported in bold in Table 6.

In order to separate the effects of demographic and modernisation variables, moreover, I have subdivided each column of percentages into two subtotals. With few exceptions, the subtotal for socioeconomic modernisation is larger than the one for demographics. Thus, the former are more important as explanations of political culture than the later. However, the sum of these parts, albeit to a varying extent, lends some support to my causal argument. For some dimensions, most notably civic engagement, the amount of explained difference is quite sizeable. It appears that more than half of Sverdlovsk's advantage over Nizhegorod and

Tambov in levels of civic engagement is due to the differences in socioeconomic modernisation between the regions. Moreover, none of these regional differences remain statistically significant after taking the control variables into account. In the case of regime support, rejection of authoritarianism and political interest, however, the results are more mixed – and most regional differences remain statistically significant. But still, on average the control variables explain some 30 per cent of the pairwise differences in democratic political culture across the three regions. This of course means that we can far from rule out the possibility that democracy has affected the political culture of the regions. Equally important, however, we *can* rule out the claim that this is the whole story. Political culture cannot *only* be a product of previous experience with democracy, since it is partly linked to socioeconomic modernisation. True, the part of each regional difference that we cannot account for, which admittedly is some 70 per cent on average, may be the effect of democracy at $t-1$. However, it could just as well represent the stocks of democratic political culture that exerts an autonomous influence on democracy, without being related to socioeconomic development. Thus, to put it in more positive terms, we have found support for the view that political culture is *at least to some extent* exogenous to democracy.

Concluding remarks

Stated in general terms, democracy in Russia's regions requires four things. First of all, it rests on two related but different sets of attitudinal support, sometimes characterised as "diffuse" and "specific" support (Easton 1965; cf. Dalton 1999). The former is based on moral conviction, and is related to the basic principles of government. The latter, by contrast, is based on evaluations of regime performance, and relates to the output of the political

system. As mentioned earlier, Stoner-Weiss (1997) found patterns of *specific* support matching her other indicators of regional political performance. This study, however, demonstrates that democracy relies on *both* diffuse and specific support (although I have called the former “rejection of authoritarianism” and the latter “democratic regime support”). Democracy must deliver on its promises in the short run. At the same time, it must be safeguarded against instability ensuing from performance failure by drawing upon more long-term affections. This is tantamount to saying that democracy in Russia’s regions requires two forms of legitimacy: “performance” and “procedural legitimacy” (Huntington 1991, 258f). That is, the democratic regime must be considered legitimate both in terms of the basic principles regulating its process and in terms of the specific outcome of this process.

Apart from support, democracy is fostered by well-developed “intermediate structures” linking the individual to the political system (cf. Kornhauser 1960). What I have termed “civic engagement” – the vibrancy of associational life, the opportunities to experience small-scale democracy in practice, and a wide array of non-political informal networks surrounding the individual – is conducive to democracy in the regions. In this regard, my results bear an astonishing resemblance to what Putnam (1993) found in Italy’s regions, where democracy prospered wherever organisations and horizontal networks at the societal level were abundant. This confirming evidence may come as a surprise considering the relatively gloomy picture generally painted of the prospects for a civil society in Russia (see, e.g., Rose 1995; Gibson 2001, 52f; Fish 2001, 18). Even Putnam himself, in a much-cited passage, asserted the pessimistic prediction that “Palermo” – the essence of democratic failure in the Italian South – “may represent the future of Moscow” (ibid., 183). My argument, however, is that whatever

the status of Russian civil society as a whole, there appears to be important regional differences. Some regions, such as Sverdlovsk, have a more highly developed civil society than others, and those same regions also tend to be more democratically developed. As noted above, this pattern was also visible already in Stoner-Weiss's (1997) study from the early 1990s. Moreover, anecdotal evidence has it that "Sverdlovsk manifested an impressive record of social mobilization and organizational development" already in the late 1980s (Fish 1995, 141).

One of the important functions performed by this civil society is to link individuals into political activity. If the will of the people is to be heard by the governing elite, it must somehow be voiced. That is why political participation matters for democracy. At the same time, however, regional democracy in my study does not rely on "participant citizenship" alone (cf. Inkeles 1969). A passive, but yet *interested*, approach to politics matters as well. This the fourth component of the democratic political culture. Echoing the findings of Almond and Verba (1989[1963], 347) some 30 years ago, we might say that what matters for democracy is not simply "the active citizen", but equally so "the *potentially* active citizen" (italics added).

Although the evidence is far from unequivocal, I have argued that these four dimensions of democratic political culture are *at least partly* exogenous to democracy at the regional level. This causal sequence is well in line with what Welzel et al. (2001) has termed "the Human Development syndrome", allegedly present on a global scale in the so-called "Third Wave of Democracy". According to this argument, macro-level economic development led to individual-level socioeconomic empowerment. With the objective means that enable people to pursue self-determination in place,

“cultural modernisation” – or mass aspirations for individual liberty – ensued. As a result, political regimes democratised. The point of convergence in these three processes of change is their focus on growing individual choice on a mass level, or “human development”. In the socioeconomic realm, this means “resource allocation”, in the cultural realm that “aspirations” become “mobilised,” and at the regime level that “freedom of opportunity” is “codified” (i.e., democratisation).

It is important not to fall prey to the deterministic flavour of this causal argument. In the words of its originators: “There is no iron law of linear progress but rather a probabilistic tendency for coincidence to either narrow or widen the range of human choice within societies” (Welzel et al 2001, 6). Similarly, my results should not be interpreted as depicting an invariable path to democratic development and stability in Russia’s regions. Above all, there are political actors present in these subnational political systems, not only at the mass but evidently at the elite level as well. Most prominent of these in Russia’s regions are the governors. Equipped with all the crucial resources of executive power, and oftentimes a firm grip over local economic enterprises and the local media, the governors – to be sure – exert a strong influence on regional politics. It may come as no surprise, then, that the varying fate of democracy in Russia’s regions has been explained with reference to the acts of governors (McMann and Petrov 2000, 168-71; Gelman 1999a, 945f). How does that square with my mass political culture argument? Could it even be that the distinct mindsets and specific backgrounds of governors Eduard Rossel in Sverdlovsk, Boris Nemtsov in Nizhegorod, and Aleksandr Ryabov in Tambov, are the real forces behind the differences in democracy I have been trying to account for?

I have three reasons to prefer the mass explanation. First, it borders on tautology to explain democratisation or democratic stability, both of which ultimately manifest themselves as forms of elite behaviour, with reference to behavior of the same elite. In this respect, mass political culture is a more remote, and hence conceptually more distinct, cause at work. Related to this is the second point, namely that my mass cultural explanation may be hypothesised at least partly to work through causal mechanisms operating at the level of elite actors. For example, cultural orientations could have translated into support for democratic or undemocratic political leaders such as the aforementioned governors. Since elections were installed at a fairly early time point in the regional democratisation process, the electoral strength or weakness of the democratic opposition might have exerted some influence on latter developments towards – or away from – democratic rule.²⁰

However, third and most importantly, I have a piece of more positive evidence to show that my cultural explanation is at least partly independent from the actions of regional elites. When reflecting upon what may explain the differences in macro-economic development across Russia's regions, Hanson and Bradshaw (1999, 10) do not attribute any merit to the governors:

It is doubtful whether differences in policies among regional leaders have made much difference to the outcomes. The economic structure inherited from the past, including population size and the presence or absence of major conurbations and natural-resource industries, look to be far more important.

If we return to the model posited in Figure 2, this means that much as regional economic development does not depend on the

level of democracy, it does not depend on the actions of the elite. Consequently, the 30 per cent or so of mass political culture which could be accounted for in terms of demographics and socioeconomic modernisation, cannot be an effect of elite behaviour. Thus, the same amount of democratic political culture that is exogenous to democracy should be exogenous to elite behaviour as well.

ENDNOTES

1. Drawing on Vanhanen (1997), Marsh purports to measure the level of democracy in a region by studying the regional turnout and competitiveness of the 1995-96 Duma and Presidential elections. Then, in trying to replicate Putnam's (1993) "civic-ness" index, he constructs a "civic community" index by adding the level of turnout in the 1993-95 elections to the regional legislative assemblies, turnout in the two national referenda of 1993, the number of newspapers produced per capita, and the number of clubs and cultural associations registered in the region according to Goskomstat figures (Marsh 2000a, 131-9; 2000b, 188-90). However, with election turnout on both sides of the equation (albeit at different levels of the federal system), it should hardly come as a surprise that "democracy", measured in this way, is highly correlated with "civic community". In the 79 regions from which he has data, the correlation is 0,58 (Marsh 2000a, 139; 200b, 194). Moreover, it is highly questionable whether regional *democracy* is really what is being measured in the first place. Since we know that high turnout in national elections mainly reflects a pro-Communist sentiment within the region (McAllister and White 1998, 59f), it appears as a somewhat shaky basis for a measure of "democracy". Much the same could be said about the measure of "competitiveness", which in effect is composed of two inherently contradictory elements: the vote share *not* going to Yeltsin in the 1996 presidential election, and the vote share *not* going to the CPRF in the proportional ballot of the 1995 Duma elections. Thus, there are a number of reasons to question the validity of Marsh's findings.
2. This last finding relates to another important strand of recent theories on the cultural requisites of democracy: the notion that stable, "consolidated"

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Jan Teorell is Assistant Professor of Political Science in the Department of Government, Uppsala University, Sweden. He received his PhD in 1998 for a thesis on intra-party decision-making and the internal democracy of Swedish political parties. Currently his main research interest is the role of mass political culture in Russia's transition to democracy and the process of democratic consolidation. He is co-principal investigator of the *Russian Citizen Survey*, a panel survey on political behaviour and attitudes towards democracy in present-day Russia. His other research specialities are democratic theory, political participation in Sweden and Europe, social capital, and political methodology, especially the intersection between intensive ("qualitative") and extensive ("quantitative") research designs.

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