

Voting in Russia, what is the meaning in a meaningless context?

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Abstract

In the last 15 years Freedom House has downgraded Russia's status from “intermediate” regime into “consolidated authoritarian”. Despite its gradual sliding in terms of political rights and civil liberties since the arrival of Vladimir Putin in Kremlin, Russia has not seen any significant change, either upward or downward, in terms of voting turnout in the federal elections. Why people vote in Russia after all, a country where voting does neither change the government nor seems to influence its decisions? What is the meaning to make such an inconsequential political act without been physically forced?

This paper answers the question by hermeneutically analyzing Russian public opinion expressed within the frame of the World Values Survey. Beyond the specific Russian case, this research bridges the gap existing between statistical and interpretative approaches in political science. It provides cultural studies with rigidity of statistical methodology, and statistics with the interpretative richness of hermeneutics.

Going beyond personal interests or expectations, traditionally central for explaining voting turnout, this study finds clues to something conceptually very close to a Russian version of what André Blais calls “sense of civic duty” as a voting determinant. In the Russian case, however, the puzzling phenomenon of persistent voting behavior can mainly be explained in terms of cultural significance by the persistent high level of national belonging coupled with the pride of such belonging. On this rather large foundation four independent cultural add-ons suggest the existence of cultural sub-groups that understand voting as either a form of confidence toward the strong political leader, or as a vote of confidence toward all public institutions, or as a form of altruism, or, lastly, as a form of traditionalism.

Introduction

What explains the turnout stability in the Russian federal elections, both presidential and parliamentary, despite the country's sliding in terms of political rights and civil liberties since the arrival of Vladimir Putin in Kremlin? What reasons trigger such persistent electoral behavior if considered that voting in Russia does neither change the government nor seems to influence its policies? The presence of this counter-intuitive political phenomenon lies at the core of the present research. Answering these questions represents its input in the advancement of knowledge.

Methodologically, this paper answers the research question by applying innovative hermeneutic analysis on available statistical information, using the most recent World Values Survey in Russia. Unlike traditional statistical analysis looking for quantitative correlation between variables that represent operational concepts, this research looks for possible meanings that make sense of investigated phenomenon. Thus survey respondents become keys for unlocking the world of possible

meanings regarding research question. Once the main findings are presented, their key elements are filtered down to those proper to Russia after matching them with two additional cases of persistent turnout in post-communist context: Hungary and Belarus.

The main findings suggest that Russian citizens consider their voting behavior as an expression of their national belonging and pride. In addition to this, they relate their national pride to the presence of charismatic leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections. Separately, significant number of proud-to-be Russian citizens consider their voting behavior as a reflection of their general confidence toward social and political institutions. Yet another way to understand non-eroding voting turnout in Russia would be to link it to the willingness of many citizens to do something for the good of society, a willingness coupled with their strong preference in having a democratic political system. Lastly, another sub-group with persistent voting turnout looks at the tradition as an important part of life, tradition understood as customs handed down by religion or family. The common element among these signifiers of persistent voting turnout is the high sense of national belonging and pride. The other elements, such as general confidence in public institutions, the willingness to do something for the good of society, and the importance of tradition are not mutually correlating. The findings in Belarus largely match those made in Russia. As far as Hungary is concerned, some important signifiers are missing, such as the correlation between national pride and strong leader, the presence of confidence bloc toward public institutions, and the importance of tradition.

Research questions and methodology

Russia's political development since the arrival of Vladimir Putin in Kremlin has been one of a gradual erosion of political rights and civil liberties in the country (see Graph 1). During the first term of Putin as a president of Russia (2000-2004), the country remained “partly free” but the overall democratic score went down from 3.5-4.5 in the preceding years to an average of 5.0. During his second term in office (2004-2008), Putin's Russia was downgraded to the status of “not free” country with a democratic score average of 5.5 which it keeps as to the most recent report.

This negative democratic development counter-intuitively does not pull the Russian citizens away from exercising their political rights to vote in federal elections during the same time (see Graph 1). In the presidential elections between 1996 and 2012 the turnout varies between the low of 64.3% (2004) and the high of 69.7% (2008). In the elections for the lower house of the parliament, the State Duma, the turnout between 1995 and 2011 varies between the low of 55.7% (2003) and the high of 63.7% (2007). Non-declining turnout in post-communist Russia is rather an exceptional case among the other former communist countries in East Central Europe, the Balkans, and in the former Soviet Union. Northmore-Ball (2012) points out that only two more countries from this group of 28 nations, Belarus and Hungary, experience similar persistent turnout dynamics.

Current literature does not provide satisfying answer to this question as far as the case of Russia is concerned. In the post-communist political context Kostadinova (2003), Kostadinova and Power (2007), and Pacek et al. (2009) argue that it is the collapse of transitional election euphoria that leads to lower electoral turnouts. If this suggestion is correct, then we should expect to watch some non-diminishing election euphoria in Russia in particular. In fact, it is the political cynicism, the opposite to idealist euphoria, that best describe modern political life in Russia. Gudkov (2013), director of the analytical Levada Center and editor-in-chief of the journal *The Russian Public Opinion Herald*, says that polls today reflect a mass cynicism in Russians' social consciousness and thinking. “People believe that everyone in public life, whether members of the government, politicians, oligarchs, NGOs or even church people, acts from the lowest possible motives.”

Radically different explanation for the persistent turnout comes from Myagkov and Ordeshook. They claim that electoral turnout in Russia is at least partly falsified by the government. It is the Kremlin that wants to appear enjoying broad electoral support, because high turnout rates provide

political legitimacy to the incumbent politicians (Czesnik, 2006). In order to boost their political legitimacy, the authorities, first in the ethnically mixed republics and later in the rural and urban regions, stuff ballot boxes and artificially augment election counts (Myagkov and Ordeshook). This explanation is supported by Goodnow, Moser, and Smith (2014), but only in the context of politically volatile ethnic republics with predominant Muslim population. Bader (2013), using the example of Russian legislative election in 2011, on the contrary, argues that new voting technologies had a significant effect in terms of fraud reduction. The reason I find the governmental fraud explanation not entirely convincing is the fact that Russian citizens report to have voted in similar percentages as officially reported when polled by independent international agencies, such as the World Value Survey. If electoral fraud on a large scale really takes place in Russia, it may deal less with the electoral turnout in general than with the relative share of votes cast for each party or candidate.

Benito and Bastida (2009) take a more traditional approach toward explaining fluctuations in electoral turnouts. They focus mainly on budget transparency, positing a positive statistical correlation between it and the electoral turnout. They however make their conclusion based on a large sample of 41 countries. How precise this observation is regarding Russia in particular? The Open Budget Index, compiled by International Budget Partnership¹ gives some credit to this explanation. Russia moved from intermediate group of countries in which governments provide some budget information into the group of countries in which governments provide significant budget information. This upgrading however only took place after 2010. Therefore, we cannot attribute the constant post-communist electoral turnout in Russia to this factor only.

Again, on a more intuitive note, Birch concludes that perceptions of electoral integrity are positively related to turnout. Electoral integrity here refers to international standards and global norms governing the appropriate conduct of elections (Norris, 2014). Once more, Birch uses a large sample of 31 countries, which leaves open the question about the possible correlation between these variables in the context of Russia. Regarding this issue, the literature is unanimous. Russia represents low perceptions of electoral integrity (Rose and Mishler, 2009; Mcallister and White, 2014²).

Denny and Doyle (2009), analyzing British politics, launch an interesting hypothesis that explains persistence in voting behavior with voting history. The results imply that voting in one election increases the probability of voting in a subsequent election by 13%. They, however, do not discuss the meaning of this persistence. Are the voters willingly imitating their past behavior for the sake of appearing persistent? Are the voters automatically following the same behavioral pattern without attributing any particular significance to it?

This paper answers the research question by applying innovative qualitative analysis on available statistical information, using the World Values Survey³ waves on Russia. Unlike traditional statistical analysis looking at the vertical data, representing aggregated variables and operational concepts, I look at the horizontal data, representing the possible sets of answers as an interrelated cultural system. Instead of searching for correlation coefficients between columns, this study qualitatively compares and analyzes the way different groups of people combine answers, thus establishing clusters of meaning. Instead of searching for the most statistically relevant variable that accounts for particular phenomenon, it looks for possible interpretations that informants put into their answers. The goal is not to reverse the data frame on its side and look for co-variations between rows instead of columns. The goal is to embrace the complexity of answers and try to give each particular answer an interpretation that will, as much as possible, not contradict this complexity. I base this possibility on the premise that respondents are cultural beings who try to keep themselves consistent, i.e. who try not to contradict themselves while answering different questions.

Unlike the bulk of qualitative studies, this research does not look for triangulation of possible

1 <http://internationalbudget.org/what-we-do/open-budget-survey/rankings-key-findings/rankings/>

2 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/17457289.2014.911744#preview>

3 www.worldvaluessurvey.org/

valid interpretations through the use of independent sources of information. Such triangulation, of course, is always possible given the abundance of ethnographic material on societies where statistical surveys are produced. I purposefully reject this opportunity even if such triangulation will indisputably increase the level of confidence in produced interpretative findings. Again, unlike other qualitative studies, this research cannot apply internal validation of findings. Internal validation is a stage in qualitative study in which the researcher goes back to the field and tries to check the validity of findings by interviewing informants about their own interpretations of the reality. Choosing statistical surveys for interpretative purposes makes impossible to access identity of respondents that is kept confidential.

Quantitative and qualitative methods

Quantitative and qualitative studies start from different premises about social reality, answer different types of research questions, and therefore usually follow quite different methodological protocols. Regarding the premises, quantitative methodology assumes the sameness of identical acts, akin the acts of nature. Without such premise, there would be no solid ground for trying to understand these acts as part of other social or individual phenomena. Only as part of the same level of social reality, the votes can be correlated to social and economic conditions and to psychological traits. The same premise applies to these independent variables. Voting today and hundred years ago is part of the same order to behavior. Quantitative methodology is ontologically anti-historic and is in constant quest for laws, akin of those in natural sciences. A typical question within this methodology is “what causes X?” The usual protocol involves the following operations: demonstrating covariation, eliminating spurious relations, establishing time order of occurrences, and analyzing, looking for causal inferences (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1976, 8). Quantitative studies are part of a potentially limitless research program. Any established causation relation risks to be replaced by another with both stronger correlation and stronger theoretical foundation.

Qualitative interpretative studies, on the other hand, start from a quite different premise about social reality. The starting point is the quest for meanings, which is considered to be a central and constant part of human life (Paille and Mucchielli, 2010, 25). Contrary to the positivist vision of social sciences as application of natural sciences in social context, the hermeneutics as philosophical foundation of qualitative studies does not look for universal laws of causality between social phenomena. Instead, it looks for interpretative solutions to unlock a world of possibilities. Particular interpretation is not intrinsic part of social phenomenon. Therefore, hermeneutics refuses to apriori accept the sameness of seemingly identical acts and tries instead to delve into the significance these acts represent to the social actors. Instead of asking the questions “why people vote?” the qualitative researcher would ask the question “what does mean the act of voting for different people?” Instead of looking at one or a few independent variable(s) with strong correlative variation, they will holistically look at the informants’ world of significance and try to find the place of voting within it. The investigated phenomenon therefore would be the logical element within this world of significance. Like quantitative studies, qualitative studies are part of a potentially limitless research program. Once a holistic set of significances is established, another one that better grasps the entire universe of behavioral attitudes and affections may replace it.

Given the limited raw data for interpretation, the interpretative analysis of statistical data-frames will unfortunately look like trying to recreate the whole skeleton of a dinosaur based on a few bones or like trying to recreate an ancient vase based only on few small fragments. I will apply a conservative approach in my research, which means to limit myself only to interpretation that stands theoretical discussion and not to jump into the territory of pure speculation.

Let me illustrate the difference in the logic of demonstration of these two methodologies by providing an example from current literature. This example (Blais and St-Vincent, 2011) represents a

typical study using quantitative methodology. As such, it is a good illustration of all quantitative social studies. What makes it even more appropriate is the fact that it analyzes data frame quite similar to the one I will use in my analysis, namely an internet panel survey conducted in the Canadian provinces of British Columbia and Quebec, first at the time of the Canadian federal election that took place in October 2008 and then at the time of the two provincial elections that were subsequently held in Quebec in December 2008 and in British Columbia in May 2009 (Blais and St-Vincent, 2011, 395). The article examines the link between personality traits, political attitudes and the propensity to vote in elections. It first establishes that the two most proximate attitudes that shape one's propensity to vote are political interest and sense of civic duty. The analysis then looks at specific personality traits (altruism, shyness, efficacy and conflict avoidance) that could affect level of political interest, civic duty and the propensity to vote in elections. In the last part of the analysis, a model is proposed, tested and statistically confirmed, according to which the impact of personality traits on propensity to vote is indirect, being mediated by interest and duty. In other words, personal traits affect political interest and the civic duty, which in turn affect the propensity to vote in elections.

This is the picture a typical quantitative study looks like. The authors take for granted particular concepts (in this case these are personal traits, attitudes, voting behavior) and try to establish a model where theoretical coherence and significant co-variation will match. From the point of view of hermeneutics, however, some elements are missing. Has the sense of civic duty the same meaning for all eligible voters? Does voting imply the same significance for them? Are some of the personal traits, e.g. altruism, hermeneutically neutral? In other words, are people becoming altruistic for the same reasons? These questions are not part of traditional quantitative studies. If they are asked, the whole building of seemingly one-dimensional data frame will collapse. What good to know that there is strong positive correlation between variables X and Y, if part of X is not really part of X and part of Y is not part of Y? A typical quantitative study does not critically assess these variables before considering them part of the same group. The physical sameness of the behavioral act, in this case the voting, is sufficient to put all votes within the same class of objects.

What the quantitative researchers take for granted their qualitative interpretative colleagues try to assess critically. Instead of trying to establish co-variations as stronger as possible within coherent theoretical models, they look for possible splits in the field of significance within the class of seemingly identical concepts, such as voting, civic duty, and altruism. Although such qualitative reading of statistical data seems logical, no such approach has been demonstrated so far. The comprehensive dictionary of qualitative methods and techniques of Alex Mucchielli (2009) does not mention such technique. There is no space for speculations here as for the reasons why qualitative studies have so far neglected a vast raw data of social knowledge that statisticians have accumulated for quantitative analysis. The undisputed fact that this raw data was not originally designed to be interpreted hermeneutically is not a sufficient excuse for such neglect. The social reality in general, reality this raw data is only a small part of, was not originally designed to be interpreted hermeneutically, at least not in the frame of positivist social science. Yet the qualitative research has made important advancement of social knowledge. The goal of this study is to start revealing the world of significance extracted from positive statistical social data.

This study is different from mixed methodology. This methodology usually comes into three shapes: mixed model research, mixed methods research, and multimethod design (Humble, 2007). In an mixed model research, a researcher conducts surveys with a large group of individuals, and also conducts in-depth interviews with a sub-sample of those individuals. In the mixed methods research, respondents first answer closed-ended questions, and second provide answers in their own words on any question. In the multimethod design, a research conducts two separate projects; each designed to answer different types of questions, each using either quantitative or qualitative methodology, and each having a different sample of respondents. All three ways to administer mixed methodology, on the one hand, consist of separately employing quantitative and qualitative techniques of analysis. This study, on

the other hand, looks for the meanings into the statistical data frame itself, not into its margins, where respondents provide in-depth answers.

Findings and discussion

The 6th wave of the WVS in Russia allows extracting information that tests several hypotheses regarding persistent voting turnout in this country (see Table 1). The first column shows particular answers taken from numerous questions within the data-set that tend to suggest certain correlation with the voting behavior. The exact wording of these questions is presented in the Appendix. The second column measures the relative frequency of these answers regarding the research question. The third and fourth column represent the levels of probability that the difference between the voting behavior with or without the presence of the answers in the first column are due to simple hazard. The *P* value, which ranges is from 0 to 1, will measure this probability; thus, lower *P* values will represent more significant correlation between the variables in column one and the voting behavior. The level of significance for one particular variable is relative to the level of significance of all variables. Thus, the answer “Very much like me” to the question v77 (*P* value = $0.37 \div 0.47$) represents more significant correlation than the answer “Very much like me” to the question v79 (*P* value = $0.42 \div 0.50$) but less significant correlation than the answer “Very important” to the question v7 (*P* value = $0.35 \div 0.43$).

Table 1 suggests that at least 21 variables, mostly independent from one another, establish significant correlation with the voting behavior in the federal elections in Russia. These variables can be framed within the following theoretical approaches:

- Voting represents specific activity for those who consider the politics to be important in their lives or for those who declare to be interested in politics in general (v7, v84). In these cases answering affirmative to the general statement necessarily imply answering affirmatively to the question of voting behavior.
- Voting represents special case in people's mental self-image as moral and altruistic persons (v74, v77, v143). By the same token, answering affirmatively on these general statements may lead necessarily to answering affirmatively on the question regarding voting behavior.
- Persistent voting may be regarded as a proof of tradition-based risk-avoiding behavior (v72, v76, v79). Within this understanding, the active voters consider themselves socialized within this activity outside its immediate rational context.
- Voting represents significant level of confidence toward public institutions in general and therefore people with persistent voting behavior should also express high rates of confidence toward other public institutions, political and non-political alike (v108, v109, v115, v116, v118).
- Voting represents rejection of the possibility to see the political power go into the hands of unelected technocrats (v128). Unlike the other groups of significance, this one mobilizes voters not in order to produce particular positive result, but in order to prevent negative result from happening.
- Voting represents a proof for the presence of particular identity, global, national and/or local (v212, v213, v214) as well as a proof for the presence of group pride, e.g. national (v211).

Once these significant correlations as clusters of meaning are established, the next step is to determine whether they are relatively independent from one another or just representing different facets of only one phenomenon. In other words, one possible question is whether the significant level of confidence toward several public institutions overlaps with the rejection of seeing political power go into the hands of unelected experts. If all clusters of meaning in addition of having significant correlation with the voting behavior are just epiphenomena, implying that they have high positive correlation among themselves, then we may conclude that they all represent one undivided major complex of significance regarding the research question. If, on the contrary, they, or at least some of them, show no such positive correlation, we may conclude that different equally plausible cultural

understandings may cumulatively contribute to unlocking the secret of persistent voting in Russia. The results of this tabulation for all correlating variables is presented in the Table 2. The correlations are either positive (Y) or negative (N) or inconclusive (?). They are produced when the original correlation between particular variable and voting behavior are filtered through the second variable.

From 464 binary variables those without significant correlation slightly dominate (169), followed by the group with significant correlation (158) and that with inconclusive answers (137). Therefore, among all variables with significant correlation to voting behavior some are also more likely to be overlapping with the other variables and some are barely correlating with others the beyond the voting behavior. The variables v211 and v214, which show high levels of positive correlation with almost any other variable will be expected to be located much closer to the voting behavior. On the opposite side, the variables v62 and v63 will be expected to be located at the farthest from the research locus because they have the least chance to show positive correlation with most of the other variables. The variables v108, v109, v115 and v118 are located among these two extremes.

The main points from analyzing Table 2 regarding the main research question are, first, that there is a basic cultural link between the acknowledgment of respondents of their national belonging, their pride of this belonging and persistent voting behavior; second, that strong national pride is positively correlated to having a strong political leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections (v127), but negatively correlated to having experts making decisions (v128); third, that strong high national pride is positively correlated to strong confidence toward public institutions (v108, v109, v115, v116 and v118); those later also show significant correlation with having the army as best type of government (v129); fourth, that there is positive correlation between persistent voting and the idea of doing something good for society (v74), which in turn is correlated to the idea of the rule of experts (v128) and to the democratic rule (v130) as best type of government; and fifth, that there is positive correlation between persistent voting and the idea of living in unchanging environment (v72) where the tradition is kept (v79), which, again, is in turn positively correlated to the idea of the rule of experts (v128) and democratic rule (v130). To sum-up the main preliminary conclusions, the Russian puzzling phenomenon of persistent voting behavior can mainly be explained in terms of cultural significance by the persistent high level of national belonging coupled with the pride of such belonging. On this foundation, four independent cultural add-ons suggest the existence of sub-groups that understand voting as either a form of confidence toward the strong political leader, or as a vote of confidence toward the public institutions in general, or as a way to do something good for society, or, lastly, as a way to secure traditional social environment.

Further, to determine whether the findings does only apply to Russia, or are somehow related to the phenomenon of persistent voting behavior within the context of all post-communist nations, I will test them on two more post-communist cases of unusually persisting relatively high voting behavior: Belarus and Hungary (Northmore-Ball, 2012). The raw data, as in the case of Russia, is provided by the 6th wave of World Values Survey. As far as Belarus is concerned, the respondents in this country, in general, have identical distribution of answers compared to their Russian counterparts. The high voting behavior there, on the top of the national belonging and pride, is related to the personality of the strong political leader, to the strong confidence toward public institutions, to the social altruism and to the traditionalism. The only small disagreement between Russia and Belarus comes when the social altruism is extended toward the forms of political rule. In Russia respondents are suggesting possible links toward democratic and expert rule; in Belarus the democratic goal is much less present and the expert rule is clearly neglected. As far as Hungary is concerned, the sense of national belonging and national pride also is significantly correlated for those with strong voting behavior. Contrary to Russia and Belarus, however, Hungarians do not relate this belonging and pride to a strong political leader that does not bother about parliament and elections. Regarding the confidence toward public institutions, the Hungarians are more ambivalent, showing confidence toward only some of them. Their level of social altruism is high, but it is not related to democratic goal or to the rule of experts. Finally, the

Hungarians who persistently vote are not tempted by the traditionalism. To sum-up, the common points between all three cases: Russia, Belarus and Hungary, is the strong sense of national belonging and pride, some confidence in public institutions, and the strong sense of social altruism.

Finally, to test the model against false positive indicators, it is necessary to validate its elements to randomly chosen post-communist countries with declining voting behavior. To prove that the model is correct, at least some of these elements must be missing or declining in countries with declining voting activity. The countries chosen are Azerbaijan, Estonia, and Georgia, the first three in alphabetic order (except for Belarus) for which there is data within the 6th wave of World Values Survey and which show declining electoral turnout in national elections⁴. As in the case of Russia, there are significant positive correlations in all three countries between respondents who vote and those who feel proud of their respective nationality. On the contrary, the level of confidence toward the public institutions is not significantly different for those with higher voting activity for Georgia, but quite significant for Azerbaijan and Estonia. There is no significant difference in terms of social altruism between voting and non-voting Georgians, but quite significant for Azerbaijanis and Estonians. By contrary, there is some positive correlation between voting behavior in all three countries and the value of traditionalism. The absence of traditionalism in Hungary and its presence in Azerbaijan, Georgia and Estonia provides additional confirmation that it cannot be part of the explanatory model of persistent voting turnout.

Thus presented, the new explanatory model looks very much like the concept of Andre Blais of “civic duty” as key determinant for electoral turnout (Blais 2000; Blais and Rubenson, forthcoming). The rational choice model of voting largely neglects this determinant and instead focuses on costs, benefits and institutional intensives and obstacles associated with one or another politician, party and/or political platform. Blais, however, never provides a straightforward definition of “civic duty”. The description he makes of the social context where this duty is exercised, however, leaves little space for ambiguous interpretation; for him this concept epitomizes the power of society to make particular behavior mandatory even if it is not officially declared compulsory in legal terms. For this reason, Blais measures the level of civic duty by the level of guilt voters feel when they do not exercise their duty. This sense is a direct result of the social norm in the form of Freudian SuperEgo. People vote regardless of their immediate gratifications in terms of benefits. Their main compensation is the voluntary prevention of the unbearable sense of guilt.

There is no specific question within WVS that can enlighten the feelings of people who do not vote in order to observe in real time the level of social influence they experience. There is, however, another analytical way to conclude that the cultural model that accounts for persistent voting behavior in Russia contains elements that fall outside this SuperEgo mechanism. The altruism, the willingness to do something for the good of society, regardless of material compensation coupled with the unspecified trust toward public institutions and the willingness to keep the social environment from change, are the cultural keys that unlock the Russian puzzle. Among them, the altruism plays a special role. It requires that people move out from their parochial private world and invest themselves into the larger world of politics. This is not a duty understood as an external pressure. If it was so, then it would quickly be submerged into the sea of public cynicism. The result will be the opposite of the persistent relatively high voting turnout. This duty coupled with the public trust is mainly understood as something coming from inside out, and the voting behavior, therefore, is one of its external physical expressions.

Conclusion

Russian citizens persistently vote in national elections, both for president and for State Duma, because they consider this act as something important that they can do for the good of their political community, a community they are proud of belonging to. This behavior does not ask for material

4 <http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=17>; <http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=68>; <http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=79>;

compensation in terms of particular governmental policy. It is not a civic duty in a sense of obligations most people must perform under social pressure only. Ironically, this is the tool most Russian citizens use to prove to themselves and to the others that they are part of their political community and that they are altruistic. Being altruistic is synonymous to being a moral person. For the purpose of this study it is immaterial whether and to what degree this behavior is convenient for the ruling regime in Kremlin. For the time being it may appear that this persistent voting turnout confirms the regime's popularity among the general population. This research, however, suggests a very different conclusion. Instead of a passive population, casting ballots out of social conformism, it presents an active moral majority that cares about its country to the point that it is ready to persistently perform irrational acts based on internal conviction.

Table 1.

Survey questions (WVS, 6th wave, Russia)	v227: Vote in elections: National level ("Always"- 41.8%)	Chi- squared value (χ^2)	<i>P</i> value (dF=1)
v7 ("Very important")	60.6%	0.62 ÷ 0.89	0.35 ÷ 0.43
v51 ("Agree strongly")	38.9%	0.14 ÷ 0.15	0.70 ÷ 0.71
v62 ("Protecting freedom of speech")	50.1%	0.33 ÷ 0.39	0.53 ÷ 0.57
v72 ("Very much like me")	48.8%	0.29 ÷ 0.33	0.56 ÷ 0.59
v74 ("Very much like me")	57.1%	0.54 ÷ 0.73	0.39 ÷ 0.46
v76 ("Very much like me")	37.4%	0.21 ÷ 0.23	0.63 ÷ 0.65
v77 ("Very much like me")	58.7%	0.58 ÷ 0.81	0.37 ÷ 0.47
v79 ("Very much like me")	55.2%	0.49 ÷ 0.64	0.42 ÷ 0.50
v84 ("Very interested")	58.8%	0.58 ÷ 0.81	0.37 ÷ 0.45
v108 ("A great deal")	51.5%	0.38 ÷ 0.46	0.50 ÷ 0.54
v109 ("A great deal")	55.9%	0.50 ÷ 0.64	0.42 ÷ 0.48
v115 ("A great deal")	55.6%	0.50 ÷ 0.66	0.42 ÷ 0.48
v116 ("A great deal")	48.6%	0.30 ÷ 0.33	0.57 ÷ 0.59
v118 ("A great deal")	51.3%	0.37 ÷ 0.45	0.50 ÷ 0.54
v128 ("Very bad")	51.5%	0.38 ÷ 0.46	0.50 ÷ 0.54
v143 ("Often")	53.2%	0.43 ÷ 0.55	0.46 ÷ 0.51
v211 ("Very proud")	58.6%	0.57 ÷ 0.80	0.37 ÷ 0.45
v212 ("Strongly agree")	53.0%	0.42 ÷ 0.54	0.46 ÷ 0.52
v213 ("Strongly agree")	54.9%	0.48 ÷ 0.63	0.42 ÷ 0.49
v214 ("Strongly agree")	47.8%	0.25 ÷ 0.29	0.59 ÷ 0.61
v251 ("Very interested")	49.0%	0.30 ÷ 0.34	0.56 ÷ 0.58

$$\chi^2 = (\text{higher value} - \text{lower value})^2 / \text{higher value} \div (\text{higher value} - \text{lower value})^2 / \text{lower value}$$

Table 2.

	v7	v51	v62	v63	v64	v72	v74	v76	v77	v79	v84	v108	v109	v115	v116	v118	v128	v143	v211	v212	v214	v251	
v7	---	N	?	N	N	?	Y	?	?	?	Y	?	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	?	Y	Y	?	Y	
v51	N	---	N	N	?	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	?	?	?	Y	Y	?	N	
v62	?	N	---	?	Y	N	?	?	N	N	?	N	N	?	N	?	N	?	?	N	?	N	
v63	N	N	?	---	Y	N	?	?	N	?	?	N	N	N	N	N	N	?	?	?	Y	N	
v64	N	?	Y	Y	---	N	?	N	Y	N	N	N	N	?	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	?	
v72	?	Y	N	N	N	---	Y	?	Y	Y	?	N	N	N	Y	N	?	?	?	?	N	Y	
v74	Y	N	?	?	?	Y	---	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	?	N	?	N	?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
v76	?	Y	?	?	N	?	Y	---	N	?	?	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	?
v77	?	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	N	---	Y	?	N	Y	N	N	N	N	?	?	N	Y	Y	
v79	?	Y	N	?	N	Y	Y	?	Y	---	?	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	?	Y	
v84	Y	N	?	?	N	?	Y	?	?	?	---	?	?	?	Y	?	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	
v108	?	N	N	N	N	N	?	N	N	Y	?	---	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Y	Y	N	Y	N	
v109	Y	N	N	N	N	N	?	N	Y	Y	?	Y	---	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	
v115	Y	N	?	N	?	N	N	N	N	N	?	Y	Y	---	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	
v116	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	?	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	---	Y	?	N	Y	N	?	N	
v118	Y	?	?	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	?	Y	Y	Y	Y	---	?	N	Y	?	?	N	
v128	?	?	N	N	N	?	?	N	N	N	N	?	N	N	?	?	---	?	N	N	?	Y	
v143	?	?	?	?	N	?	Y	N	?	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	?	---	?	Y	Y	Y	
v211	Y	Y	?	?	Y	?	Y	N	?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	?	---	Y	Y	Y	
v212	Y	Y	N	?	Y	?	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	?	N	Y	Y	---	Y	?	
v214	?	?	?	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	?	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	?	?	Y	Y	Y	---	?	
v251	Y	N	N	N	?	Y	Y	?	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	?	?	---	

Appendix

Survey questions (WVS, 6th wave, Russia)

v7 - For each of the following, indicate how important it is in your life. Would you say it is: Politics

v51 - On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do

v62 - If you had to choose, which one of the things on this card would you say is most important?

v72 - Schwartz: Living in secure surroundings is important to this person; to avoid anything that might be dangerous

v74 - Schwartz: It is important to this person to do something for the good of society

v76 - Schwartz: Adventure and taking risks are important to this person; to have an exciting life

v77 - Schwartz: It is important to this person to always behave properly; to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong

v79 - Schwartz: Tradition is important to this person; to follow the customs handed down by one's religion or family

v84 - How interested would you say you are in politics?

V108 - How much confidence you have in the churches?

V109 - How much confidence you have in the armed forces?

V115 - How much confidence you have in the government (in your nation's capital) ?

V116 - How much confidence you have in political parties?

V118 - How much confidence you have in the Civil service?

V128 - Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country.

v143 - Thinking about meaning and purpose of life

v211 - How proud are you to be [Nationality] ?

v212 - I see myself as a world citizen

v213 - I see myself as part of my local community

v214 - I see myself as part of the [country] nation

v251 - Respondent's interest during the interview

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World Values Survey

Graph 1.

Freedom House
rating

Electoral
Turnout (%)

