

Alexeev, Michael; Pyle, William; Wang, Jiaan

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## Russian Society, Democratic Values, and the Legacy of the Early-1990s Economic Shock

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Poschingerstr. 5, 81679 Munich, Germany  
Telephone +49 (0)89 2180-2740

Email [office@cesifo.de](mailto:office@cesifo.de)  
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# Russian Society, Democratic Values, and the Legacy of the Early-1990s Economic Shock

Michael Alexeev\*

William Pyle†

Jiaan Wang‡

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## Abstract

Although it has been speculated that the pain and dislocation of the early 1990s left Russians with an abiding distaste for the values that animated the transition from communism, the quantitative evidence for a lasting effect is thin. Drawing on a large, regionally representative survey from 2010, we show that in regions where the embrace of liberal values declined most in the early 1990s, support for democratic values remained weakest a generation later. Instrumenting for the change in values in the early 1990s with variables that capture Soviet-era economic distortions, we connect the vulnerability of a region to the market liberalization shock of 1992 to its diminished support for liberal political values in both shorter and longer runs, particularly for the older cohorts who would have experienced the early 1990s as adults. The endurance of the effect of the early 1990s economic shock stands in contrast to research from other contexts that the attitudinal effects of economic shocks experienced after early adulthood are short-lived. We speculate that a possible explanation for why the effect of the early 1990s endures in Russia was the amplification of the economic shock by an “identity shock” related to Russia’s post-imperial loss of status. In support of this hypothesis, we use multiple waves of the Integrated Values Survey (IVS) to show that in Russia, the demand for democratic values declined in the first half of the 1990s relative to other former communist countries, opening a values gap that persisted through at least 2017. Lastly, we draw on a recent survey experiment to show that respondents primed to consider the economic collapse of the early 1990s, and to a lesser extent the dissolution of the Soviet Union, are less likely to embrace democratic values than those in a control group.

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\*Indiana University

†Middlebury College

‡Carnegie Mellon University

# 1 Introduction

Communism’s collapse was generally greeted with relief and jubilation throughout Eastern Europe and most post-Soviet successor states. In Russia, it resonated differently. There, the shock of market liberalization was not cushioned by the kind of optimistic “liberation and independence” narrative that buoyed populations throughout much of the region. Instead, “[w]hat was initially celebrated [elsewhere]...was mourned in Russia as a loss of territory, population and global stature” (Krastev and Holmes, 2019). Some have speculated that the trauma of the early post-Soviet period paved the way for the illiberal and revanchist turn Russia has taken in the twenty-first century. But the evidentiary basis for the enduring effect of those years is thin.

As communism endured in the beliefs and attitudes of the peoples who lived through it (Pop-Eleches and Tucker, 2017), so, we hypothesize, did the potentially wrenching experience of leaving it behind, perhaps uniquely so in Russia where the initial economic pain was not alleviated by the same emotional high experienced elsewhere. We focus specifically on Russians’ well-documented weak support for democratic values, the comparative data for which are striking. At the turn of the century, the World Values Survey (WVS) and the European Values Study (EVS) asked representative samples from almost 80 countries whether having a democratic system is a “very” or “fairly good way of governing your country.” In more than half of the countries, more than 90 percent of the respondents responded positively, as did more than two thirds of the respondents in all countries except one, Russia (Inglehart, 2003).

Russia’s outlier status in this regard has been remarkably consistent since at least the mid-1990s when large multi-national survey projects first began asking such questions. Using responses from a consistent group of former communist countries, Table 1 reports the percentages that support democratic governance in six waves, the two earliest of which draw on the WVS and EVS question reported above. The remaining draw on all four waves of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development’s *Life in Transition Survey*. The percentages reported represent those who agree that “democracy is preferable to any other form of political system” as opposed to “under some circumstances, an authoritarian government may be preferable to a democratic one,” or “for people like me, it does not matter whether a government is democratic or authoritarian.” In all waves but one, the support of Russian citizens for democratic governance is the weakest, in some years by a good margin; and in Russia, over time, the level of support is remarkably stable.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>In our analysis of support for democratic values below, we draw on different measures. Our primary source of evidence is a regionally representative survey that asks Russian respondents to select priorities from a list of political freedoms and economic rights. In subsequent cross-country analysis, we draw on a question from the *Integrated Values Survey* that similarly requires making selections from a list of democratic freedoms and socioeconomic concerns. That question also has the virtue of being asked in Russia in 1990 before the start of the rapid market liberalization program, providing a useful benchmark for the change in preferences attributable to the reforms. The kind of question used to generate the data in Table 1 was first asked in Russia in 1995. Moreover, though questions about preferences for democratic governance, such as those used in Table 1, are widely reported and thus useful in motivating our research question, we are sympathetic to concerns that asking directly about “democracy,” as opposed to specific values and freedoms associated with democratic governance, can be problematic. “Democracy” can be interpreted differently depending on the national and cultural context (Bratton et al., 2005; Dalton et al., 2007; König et al., 2022); and a type of social

Since support for democratic governance generally increases with average income (Lipset, 1959; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005), the fact that these surveys include a large number of countries poorer than Russia only adds to the puzzle. Although deep historical forces cannot be discounted as one explanation, the country’s painful transition from communism is also a plausible candidate. Early-1990s economic pain, unmitigated by the sort of optimistic liberation narrative that prevailed in other former communist countries, may have become associated with the new democratic freedoms in a manner that left an unusually deep imprint on the Russian mind. If so, we could reasonably expect that the Russians who suffered the most economically during those years would, years later, offer weaker support for democratic governance and norms.<sup>2</sup>

To explore this possibility, we draw on a large regionally representative survey conducted by the Public Opinion Foundation in 2010 to show that in regions where the embrace of democratic values declined most in the early 1990s, support for democratic values remained weakest a generation later, a result that is robust to instrumenting for the early-1990s change in values with variables that capture structural distortions inherited from the Soviet era. The vulnerability of a region to the market liberalization shock of 1992, that is, explains its diminished support for liberal political values in both the shorter and longer runs. The effect is greatest for those who were working-age adults at the time of the early-1990s economic upheaval.

We speculate that the enduring effect of the early 1990s may be due to the economic crisis having been amplified by an identity shock in the sense that Russians, more than citizens of other post-communist countries, experienced the period as one of lost status. To explore this possibility, we draw on cross-country evidence from the Integrated Values Survey (that is, a combination of the WVS and the EVS) to compare the trajectory of Russian political values with those of citizens from other European countries, including some of the former Soviet republics, also exiting communism. Consistent with our hypothesis, between 1990 and 1995, Russian political attitudes became more illiberal relative to those elsewhere in the region. Furthermore, subsequent IVS waves show that the attitudinal gap has grown. Whereas in other countries, support for democratic values rebounded after the mid-1990s, the illiberal turn that Russia took in the early 1990s endured. In addition, we use geographic markers in the most recent wave of the IVS to bolster our main result, showing that, within Russia, the drop in a region’s embrace of democratic values in the early 1990s explains the weakness of its citizens’ support for those values in 2017.

In a final exercise, we introduce results from a recent survey experiment in which respondents to a

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desirability bias may turn respondents into “questionnaire democrats.” Dalton (1994); Inglehart (2003); Schedler and Sarsfield (2007)

<sup>2</sup>Our hypothesis is not dissimilar to the one explored by Lueders (2024). Specifically, he writes of the years immediately after reunification: “East Germans learned to associate the emerging democratic order with economic hardship, chaos, and insecurity. They came to see democracy as responsible for their economic woes...” Empirically, he shows that current residents of what used to be East Germany report lower levels of satisfaction with democracy if prompted to think about a time in their lives when they felt economically insecure, a relationship that he did not find among Germans living in the former states of the West. He also shows with survey data collected between 2005 and 2020 that the relationship between a feeling of economic insecurity and reported satisfaction with democracy is greater among older residents of former East Germany and among residents of former East German counties that experienced higher rates of unemployment in 1993.

nationally representative survey were randomly assigned to read one of three vignettes about Russia in the early 1990s. Two of the three groups were presented with paragraphs lifted from a recently published high school history textbook: one paragraph highlighted the economic shock from that period, whereas the other drew attention to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Relative to those in a control group who read a vignette about Russian pop culture in the early 1990s, those confronted with memories of one of the era’s twin shocks were subsequently less likely to express support for democratic values. The effect of the economic shock vignette is particularly robust. These results resonate with research pointing to the Putin regime’s strategy to highlight the hardships of the 1990s for its own political ends, including to restrict democratic freedoms, while also demonstrating that the evocation of memories from the immediate post-Soviet period continue to shape Russians’ political values up to the present day.

Although our analysis does not seek to explain directly the nature of Russia’s governing institutions, it is grounded in an assumption that a society’s support for democratic values determines, at least in part, the degree to which it is supplied by ruling elites. The quantitative evidence causally connecting the demand for democracy in society with the nature of its governing institutions may be contested.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, we know that authoritarian leaders are not immune to popular pressures, and a society in which the demand for democracy is weaker is one, *ceteris paribus*, in which an autocrat incurs a lower cost for rolling back democratic rights and privileges.

In what follows, Section 2 highlights the relevant research on measuring democratic values and assessing their economic roots. Section 3 provides historical context for our study and reviews the post-communist political economy literature to which we contribute. Section 4 introduces the data that underlie our empirical analysis. Section 5 first presents our methodology and results, before Section 6 summarizes extensions and robustness checks. Section 7 presents the results of a related survey experiment conducted in spring 2025. Section 8 offers concluding thoughts.

## 2 Support for and economic roots of democratic values

### 2.1 Measuring support for democracy and democratic values

Measurement of public support for democracy has evolved significantly since the beginning of the third wave of democratization, especially since the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Most early efforts relied on survey questions that asked respondents directly to rate “democracy” as a system of governance or express a preference for it relative to non-democratic alternatives. Although intuitive, these approaches have been heavily criticized (Claassen et al., 2024; Mattes, 2018).

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<sup>3</sup>Inglehart and Welzel (2010) review evidence that modernization leads to enduring mass attitudinal changes that improve democracy’s prospects.

One weakness of measuring democratic support through direct survey questions is the ambiguity of the term “democracy.” Respondents in different national and cultural contexts interpret the concept in different ways. Some may associate democracy with civil liberties, while others may equate it with electoral competition, economic prosperity, or even social stability (Bratton et al., 2005; Dalton et al., 2007; König et al., 2022). Furthermore, questions asked directly about “democracy” may be prone to social desirability bias. The global spread of democratic norms and institutions since the 1990s has created a context in which “questionnaire democrats” may feel compelled to affirm their support for democracy (Dalton, 1994; Inglehart, 2003; Schedler and Sarsfield, 2007).

An alternative approach to asking directly about democracy focuses on assessing attitudes toward democracy’s constituent values and norms. This method assesses support for political rights and freedoms, as well as democratic norms and institutions, rather than relying on questions directly asking about support for “democracy.” Building on the pathbreaking work of Dahl (2008), the well-known Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) project, for instance, operationalizes liberal democracy through multiple components, including freedoms of expression and association, as well as the right to elect government representatives (Coppedge et al., 2016). Studies using this approach have shown that while formal support for democracy remains high in many countries, the extent to which citizens support its core principles and institutions varies significantly (Mattes, 2018). In the Russian context, notable early contributions to this tradition include Gibson et al. (1992) and Whitefield and Evans (1996).

## 2.2 The effect of economic security on political preferences

The literature arguing that economic development leads to democratization is voluminous.<sup>4</sup> In a major contribution, Inglehart and Welzel (2005, 2010) posit that the connection between the two is made through the intervening variable of “mass orientations” or political culture. Economic development, they write, comes not only with an increasing demand for an articulate and independent-minded workforce: “[R]ising levels of economic security bring growing emphasis on self-expression values that give high priority to free choice (552, 2010).” Greater economic security frees people to place greater emphasis on individual autonomy. They become more likely to embrace and push for democratic privileges, including freedom of speech, thought and association, and the right to participate in civic and political life. For governing elites, it means that “[r]epressing mass demands for liberalization becomes increasingly costly...(553, 2010).”

Inglehart and Welzel focus on the consequences of economic development for feelings of economic security and popular support for democratic values in the longer run. The effects of shorter-term changes in economic fortunes have also been hypothesized to produce shifts in political values. Sudden economic shocks, that is, may themselves be a source of insecurity that move political preferences in

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<sup>4</sup>In a seminal contribution to “modernization theory,” Lipset (1959) argued that economic development – characterized by higher levels of income, education, and industrialization – creates conditions that favor the establishment and sustainability of democratic institutions. He famously stated that “the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances it will sustain democracy.”



an illiberal direction Margalit (2019). Global financial and trade shocks, for one, have been shown to increase the popularity of “authoritarian values” and far-right parties (Ballard-Rosa et al., 2021; Dippel et al., 2022) and decrease the satisfaction with democracy and trust in democratic institutions (Armingeon and Guthmann, 2014). Indeed, empirical research on the electoral consequences of liberalization-induced shocks has grown rapidly in recent years, with many contributions exploring the within-country effects of greater international economic integration (Autor et al., 2020; Choi et al., 2024; Margalit, 2011). Natkhov and Pyle (2023) show that the liberalizing reforms introduced in Russia in 1992 contributed most to the drop in support for the presidential incumbent Boris Yeltsin (arguably, a reasonable proxy for diminished support for democratic values) in regions whose industrial inheritance left them most vulnerable to market competition.

In a well-cited review of the literature, Margalit (2019) suggests a need for further research on the endurance of the attitudinal effects of economic shocks. Pointing in part to evidence that the electoral consequences of a shock diminish as the time between it and the election increases (Bagues and Esteve-Volart, 2016; Bechtel and Hainmueller, 2011; Hall et al., 2021),” he argues that “a growing body of evidence indicates that postshock changes in attitudes tend to be short-lived,” with the possible exception being for those who experience the shock in young adulthood, a period often referred to by social psychologists as the “impressionable years.”

### 3 The Russian Context

#### 3.1 The Soviet collapse, electoral politics, and economic reform

As the 1990s dawned, the Soviet Union was on its last legs. Externally, its empire in Eastern Europe had collapsed. Internally, Mikhail Gorbachev’s attempts to introduce limited reforms had not met with success. The economy had worsened and across the Union’s fifteen republics, anti-communist and pro-independence democratic movements were quickly growing in popularity. In June 1991, the citizens of the Russian Federation went to the polls to elect a president.

Months of mass rallies and strikes had prepared a highly-charged atmosphere ... Both the democratic and the workers’ movements had ratcheted their rhetoric upward, demanding an end to the communist order itself. The dichotomy evident in the previous political discourse between the authorities and a suppliant – albeit, perhaps disappointed and even angry – population had been succeeded by a new understanding that more and more framed public discussion: *the business of government is our business, not just theirs* (Urban, 1992).

Boris Yeltsin, running as an independent, rode this wave of mass support for democratic change. His candidacy was championed by Democratic Russia, a loose coalition of political parties and civic organizations whose platform called for the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the removal of the

Communist Party from all state and public institutions. Although there were massive demonstrations in support of his candidacy, Yeltsin himself neither actively campaigned nor laid out specific policy priorities. Nikolai Ryzhkov, the former Prime Minister and one of five candidates who were members of the Communist Party, was his only serious opponent. Yeltsin received 58.6 percent of the national vote, a majority that ensured victory after just one round.

In December, several months after a coup that he helped foil, Yeltsin and the leaders of Ukraine and Belarus signed an accord proclaiming the end of the Soviet Union. On Christmas day, Gorbachev resigned from office, and a day later the Soviet Union was formally dissolved. Only a week later, as 1992 dawned, Yeltsin's government rolled out a radical economic liberalization program. With the stroke of a pen, government ministries were stripped of their long-held power to plan the economy. Overnight, the ruble was made convertible, and nearly all consumer and producer prices were freed. As enterprises scrambled to adapt to market forces, a stunning collapse ensued. Over the next several years, real household incomes and life expectancy plunged, while wage arrears, inflation, and inequality all soared.

Each successive year, over the next half decade, the Russian economy shrank in size. As a consequence, when Yeltsin launched his campaign for reelection early in 1996, he was widely predicted to lose to the Communist Party candidate, Gennadii Zyuganov. However, in a dramatic two-round election, characterized by a leading Russia watcher as "the last 'referendum' on communism" (McFaul, 1996), Yeltsin defied the predictions, first securing a 36 percent plurality in a crowded initial round and then winning 57 percent of the vote over Zyuganov in a two-candidate runoff.<sup>5</sup> Economic circumstances were undoubtedly responsible for Yeltsin's diminished support from one election to the next. Experiencing wage arrears at the time of the 1996 election was a particularly strong predictor of not casting a vote for Yeltsin (Richter, 2006).

Post-election surveys identified a sharp division among Yeltsin and Zyuganov supporters in terms of political values. Of the 38 percent who reported having positive feelings about Russia's current political system, 79 percent were Yeltsin voters; of the 60 percent that reported having positive feelings about the system "before *perestroika*," 59 percent backed Zyuganov. Attitudes toward authoritarianism, moreover, were shown to be a strong predictor of one's vote (Rose and Tikhomirov, 1996).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Public opinion surveys revealed widespread dissatisfaction with Yeltsin, his government's policies, and the state of the economy. Toward the beginning of the campaign, a group of "hardliners" around Yeltsin advised him that campaigning as a "democrat" would be a mistake. A second group, however, convinced him to frame the election as a referendum on a return to communism. He lost weight, quit drinking, made frequent public appearances, addressed (or gave the appearance of addressing) the payment of back wages, and brought an end (or gave the appearance of bringing an end) to the war in Chechnya. The last of these proved key to securing the support of Yegor Gaidar and several of the leaders of Democratic Russia. The Zyuganov campaign, which regarded the electorate as split equally between "democrats," communists, and nationalists, sought to capture the "nationalist" middle by casting Yeltsin and his team as corrupt and his reforms as having destabilized Russia. Grigory Yavlinskii ran in the first round, but his effort was hobbled by the pressure Yeltsin's campaign put on bankers and industrialists to refrain from backing him financially or giving him access to the airwaves. Only five candidates received more than one percent of the votes cast: Aleksandr Lebed, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Yavlinskiy, Yel'tsin, and Zyuganov. (McFaul, 1996; Rose and Tikhomirov, 1996).

<sup>6</sup>Admittedly, a vote for Yeltsin was not a clear expression of policy preferences. As Rose and Tikhomirov (1996) argue on the basis of post-election surveys: "Yel'tsin won a *negative* mandate by blaming the communist legacy for the country's current ills and by threatening a turn for the worse if the Communist Party regained power. A heterogeneous coalition ranging from Yegor Gaidar and Viktor Chernomyrdin to Aleksandr Lebed created a "fuzzy" agenda for governance."

Although a great deal of commentary emphasized the stability of the disproportionately urban and well-educated Yeltsin electorate across the two elections (McFaul, 1996, 1997; Berezkin et al., 1999), Gehlbach (2000) observed that at the provincial level, the Yeltsin votes in 1991 and 1996 were poorly correlated (see Figure 1.) Building on his finding and a diverse literature that highlights the bloat and technological backwardness of post-Soviet manufacturing (Hughes and Hare, 1992; Senik-Leygonie and Hughes, 1992; Ericson, 1999; Gaddy and Ickes, 1999, 2002), Natkhov and Pyle (2023) demonstrate that the geographic reorientation of the support for Yeltsin was a function of Soviet industrial geography. The decline in his vote was greatest, that is, in regions with high shares of manufacturing employment, generally, and specifically in manufacturing sub-sectors in which the Soviet Union possessed a “revealed comparative disadvantage.”<sup>7</sup> Below, we exploit the plausibly exogenous shock of the nation-wide liberalization program and inter-regional differences in inherited structures of production to build a case for the causal linkage between the economic shock of the early 1990s and Russians’ weak support for democratic values in the twenty-first century.

### 3.2 Russian society’s political values

In 2005, Vladimir Putin famously – and to some, shockingly – described the Soviet Union’s collapse as “a major geopolitical disaster of the century” and “a genuine drama for the Russian nation.” Referencing the devaluation of household savings, the spread of mass poverty, and the rise of an unfettered oligarchic class, he proceeded to remark that “In those difficult years, the people of Russia had to... accomplish the most difficult task: how to preserve their own values... We had to find our own path...” His fundamental point – whether rooted in political calculation, sensitivity to the country’s social dynamics, or both – was not particularly remarkable, nor should it have been surprising to attentive observers of Russia, particularly to readers of ethnographies and oral histories of the period (Shevchenko, 2008; Parsons, 2014; Alexievich, 2017). It is difficult to come away from the personal accounts of life experiences in those years without an appreciation for their emotional weight. In his book, *The Patriotism of Despair*, the anthropologist Sergei Oushakine (2011), in fact, remarks on the banality of Putin’s words: “As in many other cases before, Putin’s address did not offer a distinctively new vision but mostly articulated an opinion that was already widespread in the country (80) ...” The first half of the 1990s was a time of almost unprecedented disorientation.

The survey-based literature tracking the changing political values in Russian society in the first half of the 1990s is voluminous. In the late Soviet years, quite a few researchers, often to their surprise, found that Russian citizens generally endorsed democratic practices and principles, e.g., competitive elections and freedom of expression (Gibson et al., 1992; Hahn, 1991; Reisinger et al., 1994). However, support for them entered a steep decline soon after the Soviet Union collapsed and market liberalizing reforms were introduced. Looking at similar questions asked in 1993 and 1995 and drawing on nationally

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<sup>7</sup>Gaddy and Ickes’ (1999) stylized model of the Russian economy takes the point to the extreme by characterizing the Soviet manufacturing sector as wholly “value-subtracting” and only capable of surviving the transition to competitive markets if kept afloat through subsidies from a value-adding natural resource industry.”

representative samples of more than two thousand citizens, Whitefield and Evans (1996) found that support for democratic norms was falling.

A small empirical literature emphasizes how the early 1990s contributed to a shift away from the more liberal values that animated the transition from communism. Gaber et al. (2019), for example, draw on the second and third waves of the *World Values Survey* to explain Russia’s “democratic deficit” as it entered the 21st century. Pyle (2021) uses a retrospective question in the EBRD’s 2006 *Life in Transition Survey* to show that for Russians, but not for post-communist citizens elsewhere, experiencing labor market hardships in the years just after the collapse of the Soviet Union explained diminished support for democracy a decade and a half later, even after controlling for respondents’ economic circumstances at the time of the survey. Similar relationships have been explored by Lueders (2024) for Germany and Person (2016) for several post-Soviet countries.

## 4 Data

To test our hypothesis that Russians who suffered more economically during the early 1990s market shock show persistently weaker support for democratic values in later years, we employ two principal data sources. Our primary analysis uses the 2010 *Georating* survey, a nationwide, regionally representative public opinion survey conducted by the Public Opinion Foundation (FOM). We supplement this with the *Integrated Values Survey* (IVS), both to compare the support of Russians for democratic values with those of citizens from other post-communist countries and to test the robustness of our main finding from the *Georating* survey.

### 4.1 The 2010 *Georating* survey

The *Georating* survey, conducted in face-to-face in-home interviews, is unlike most public opinion surveys in that it is representative at the regional level.<sup>8</sup> The 2010 wave employed here was administered to 500 adults in each of 82 regions, for 41,000 observations in total. It includes the following question directly addressing the political values of the respondents:

Which of the following rights and freedoms are most important to you personally? (Up to five responses are possible).

Possible responses are drawn from a long list including both democratic freedoms and economic rights. Table 2 presents these in order of popularity. The highest percentage of respondents mentioned economic rights, for example, free medical care, employment, and social security in old age. Democratic

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<sup>8</sup>The Public Opinion Foundation uses a three-stage stratified random sample (at the level of the region, the locale, and the household). Face-to-face surveys are the norm in former Soviet states, where telephone penetration is generally insufficient to achieve a representative sample.

freedoms, including the rights to free expression and to elect one’s representatives, were mentioned with less frequency.<sup>9</sup> To combine these 18 survey items into a single index representing the primary underlying dimension common to all items, we performed a principal component analysis. Factor loadings, also recorded in Table 2, ranged from  $-0.455$  (social security in old age) to  $0.346$  (express oneself, freedom of speech). The resulting component score is standardized with a mean of zero and reflects the common variance across all 18 items. Observing the factor loadings, it is clear that respondents prioritizing democratic freedoms over economic rights would have a higher component score.

In addition to the principal component analysis, we construct alternative measures of democratic values. We construct a 0-2 “double-star” index in which for either of the rights marked with two stars in Table 2 – freedom of speech and participation in governance – we add 1 to the index; that is, the index equals 0 if the respondent chose neither of the responses, 1 if they chose one, and 2 if they chose both. The summary statistics in Table 3 show that the mean was 0.207: 80.6% chose neither of the two, 18.0% chose one and 1.4% selected both.

We construct a second 0-2 “starred” index using responses marked with one or two stars in Table 2, with the index equal to 0 if the respondent chose none of these options, 1 if they chose one, and 2 if they chose more than one. The summary statistics in Table 3 show that the mean for this index is 0.456: 64.0% of respondents chose none, 26.5% chose 1, while only 9.6% of respondents chose 2 or more democratic rights.

## 4.2 *Integrated Values Survey*

To compare democratic values between Russia and other post-communist countries across time, and to test the robustness of our results from the analysis of the *Georating* survey, we draw on the Integrated Values Surveys (IVS), a combination of the European Values Study (EVS) and the World Values Survey (WVS), both of which are large-scale, cross-national, repeated cross-sectional, nationally-representative surveys that include many questions replicated over several decades.

Russia’s inclusion in the IVS commences in 1990, corresponding to Wave 2, and continues in all subsequent waves, including the most recent, Wave 7, in 2017. For comparison purposes, we incorporate IVS data from the eleven other post-communist countries that participated in at least five of the six waves between Wave 2 and Wave 7. As laid out in Table 4, the years in which the respective waves were implemented differs by country. And in Russia, Wave 5 includes both an EVS conducted in 2008 and a WVS conducted in 2006.

Since we are particularly interested in a potential shift in support in the support for democratic values between Waves 2 and 3 as well as the trajectory in subsequent years, we focus on a question asked in Russia every wave between Waves 2 and 7:

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<sup>9</sup>Table 18 in the appendix provides the Russian language terms presented to the respondents

If you had to choose, which one of the following is the most important? And which is the next most important?

- a) Maintaining order in the nation
- b) Giving people more say in important government decisions
- c) Fighting rising prices
- d) Protecting freedom of speech

Over the years, across many publications, Ronald Inglehart and his frequent co-author, Christian Welzel, used this question to generate a “4-item index” of materialist / postmaterialist values. First introduced and tested against theoretically relevant attitudes and behaviors (e.g., large-scale student demonstrations) in six European countries (Inglehart, 1971), Inglehart applied it to study cross-country differences in political culture, describing it in one article as “a strong predictor of how democratic a society is (Inglehart, 2003).” Like him, we use the question to generate a scaled variable from 0 to 3: taking the value of 3 if items (b) and (d) are listed as the top two priorities; 2 if one of (b) or (d) is listed as top priority but the other is not listed as the second priority; 1 if one of (b) or (d) is listed as second priority but the other is not listed as the top priority; and 0 if neither (b) nor (d) is listed as one of the top two priorities. Like the 0-2 (“double-star”) index that we generate from the *Georating* survey, Inglehart’s “4-item index” increases in support for freedom of expression and democratic governance.

### 4.3 Main Explanatory Variables

Panel B of Table 3 presents our explanatory variables, our main one being the difference in the respondent’s region’s vote share for Boris Yeltsin between the 1991 and 1996 presidential elections. Following argumentation in Natkhov and Pyle (2023), this variable proxies the economic shock resulting from Yeltsin’s 1992 rapid market liberalization. It is plausibly exogenous to persistent regional political preferences because, as indicated in Figure 1, the support levels of Yeltsin in 1991 and 1996 were only weakly correlated at the regional level ( $R^2 = 0.03$ ), indicating a fundamental restructuring of Russia’s political geography. The mean decline in Yeltsin’s vote share across regions was 19.7 percentage points, with substantial heterogeneity; some regions experienced declines exceeding 40 percentage points while others registered increases of more than 40 percentage points.

Although a regression of political preferences in 2010 on the change in Yeltsin vote between 1991 and 1996 and some controls could suggest the persistence of political preferences over time, it would not provide any explanation of this relationship. Moreover, both of these variables might be affected by some other factors, introducing endogeneity between our dependent and main explanatory variables, potentially biasing the results. To address these concerns, we instrument the difference in votes for

Yeltsin using two plausibly exogenous variables that capture structural economic distortions inherited from the Soviet planning system: manufacturing employment as a share of the regional workforce and the region-level revealed comparative disadvantage. The share of manufacturing employment, measured using a 1989 industrial census, reflects the degree of industrial specialization imposed by Soviet planners, with higher shares indicating greater exposure to the disruption of state-controlled industrial networks during the market transition. The regional revealed comparative disadvantage index, calculated following the methodology of Natkhov and Pyle (2023), captures the vulnerability of regional economies to market liberalization by measuring the extent to which the production structure of a region deviated from comparative advantage patterns under central planning. These pre-reform structural characteristics plausibly influenced the severity of economic dislocation experienced during the early 1990s transition through their effect on regional adaptation capacity to market mechanisms, but should not directly affect democratic values measured in 2010 except through their impact on the economic transformation process, particularly if we include similar variables for 2010 as regressors, satisfying the exclusion restriction.

#### 4.4 Other Variables

We include additional demographic variables, as well as geographic and regional controls. We control for the respondents' gender and age, which was broken down to three different age cohorts: under 30, 31 to 45, and 46 and above. We also control for the size of the population center in which the respondents live, as well as their region's logged distance to Moscow. To capture pre-market-shock ideological differences across space, we also control for 1991 electoral support for Yeltsin in the respondent's region. As indicated in Table 3, in our sample, 45.3% of the respondents are male, and 28% of them were under 30 years old, 25.3% were between 31 and 45, and 45.8% were above 46 years old. 16.5% of the respondents lived in a population center with a population larger than 0.5 million people, while 30.1% of the respondents lived in smaller population centers, but ones with populations greater than 50 thousand.

In some specifications, we incorporate 2010 regional economic indicators: per capita income adjusted for the region's cost of living, the share of manufacturing in overall employment, and revealed comparative disadvantage. These contemporaneous controls allow us to test whether the effects of early 1990s economic dislocation on democratic attitudes persist beyond current economic conditions.

In robustness checks, we introduce a third instrument using data on the number and scale of Soviet Gulag forced labor camps, addressing Kapelko and Markevich (2014)'s argument that post-Soviet political attitudes have been significantly shaped by the legacy of repressive institutions. Plausibly, tolerance for and patience with post-Soviet liberalizing reforms are greater in regions with greater Soviet-era repression. We calculate total person-years of Gulag imprisonment for each region, capturing both the scale of camp operations and their temporal duration. This measure provides a comprehensive indicator of each region's cumulative exposure to the Gulag system, as regions hosting larger

camps operating for extended periods accumulated substantially greater person-years than those with smaller or shorter-lived facilities. On average, each region contained approximately five camps, but the distribution is highly skewed; many regions had no camps, while others hosted more than twenty and millions of person-years of forced labor. Given this skewed distribution, we employ the natural logarithm of person-years in our empirical analysis, coding regions without camps as zero. This log transformation yields a mean of 8.445 and a standard deviation of 5.420.

As an additional robustness check, we supplement our primary analysis using *Georating* survey data with evidence from Wave 7 of the *Integrated Values Survey* (IVS/WVS), collected in 2017. Wave 7 represents the only wave containing regional identifiers for Russian respondents and was conducted within the same decade but more recently than the 2010 *Georating* survey, providing valuable comparative evidence. The IVS/WVS sample contains 3,665 valid responses with broadly comparable demographic composition: 41.6% male respondents (versus 45.3% in *GeoRating*), 31.5% under 30 years (versus 28.8%), and 36.0% in the middle age category (versus 25.3%). However, the substantially smaller sample size requires careful interpretation of results, particularly given the reduced statistical power for detecting regional effects.

## 5 Estimation Approach and Results

We employ a two-pronged approach to test our hypotheses. First, we estimate the relationship between regional voting patterns in the early 1990s and support for democratic values at least a decade into the 21st century. Second, we compare the prevalence of support for liberal political values in Russia and the other post-Communist countries since the early 1990s.

### 5.1 The 2010 *Georating* survey

We begin by estimating the following OLS regression:

$$y_{ir} = \alpha_{ir} + \beta_1 V_r + \beta_2 \Delta V_r + \lambda X_i + \mu R_r + \varepsilon_{ir} \quad (1)$$

where  $y_{ir}$  is the respondent's support for democratic values,  $V_r$  is the support for Yeltsin in the region  $r$  in 1991,  $\Delta V_r$  represents the drop in Yeltsin's vote between 1991 and the first round of the 1996 presidential elections (i.e.,  $\Delta V_r > 0$  if the share of the vote for Yeltsin declined),  $X_i$  is a vector of individual controls, including gender, (log) distance of the population center to Moscow, and dummy variables for age cohort and the size of the population center. Many specifications also include the vector  $R_r$  of regional economic indicators for 2010: per capita income adjusted for the region's cost of living, the share of manufacturing in overall employment, and a measure of revealed comparative



disadvantage.

The OLS results for regression (1), in which we use the first principal component from the *Georating* survey questions as the dependent variable, are shown in the first two columns of Table 5. The coefficients on our main variable of interest are statistically significant with the hypothesized sign. A larger drop in regional support for Yeltsin between 1991 and 1996 predicts less support for democratic values in 2010. These results are not only statistically significant, they are large in magnitude; a standard deviation decrease in the Yeltsin vote results in one-third of a standard deviation reduction in the measure of democratic values. The point estimates and significance of the coefficients of the drop in the Yeltsin vote are similar for the regressions with and without contemporaneous controls in columns (1) and (2).<sup>10</sup>

When controlling for the decline in Yeltsin’s regional support between the 1991 and 1996 elections, we also observe that respondents in regions more supportive of Yeltsin in 1991 were more likely to embrace democratic values almost two decades later in 2010. This finding is what we would expect if a region’s support for Yeltsin in 1991 captured its support at the time for democratic reforms and if the geographic dispersion of political values is at least somewhat sticky.

Although the OLS regressions demonstrate the persistence of the illiberal shift in popular attitudes from the early 1990s through 2010, they do not indicate what the reasons for it might be. As we argued earlier, this shift probably took place because of the economic hardship of the early 1990s. One approach to support this conjecture is to instrument the drop in Yeltsin vote with per capita household income in 1992 or 1993. Indeed, instrumenting the drop in Yeltsin vote by the log of per capita household income in 1992 and the change in income between 1992 and 1993 results in a first stage regressions satisfying all conventional tests and a highly statistically significant negative coefficients of the drop in Yeltsin vote in the second stage.<sup>11</sup> However, both household incomes in the early 1990s and the drop in Yeltsin between 1991 and 1996 could be driven by some deeper underlying factors and thus be endogenous.

To deal with this potential endogeneity, we instrument the regional change in the Yeltsin vote between 1991 and 1996 with late-Soviet-era regional measures for the share of the workforce in manufacturing and revealed comparative disadvantage. No sector embodied the pathologies of the Soviet Union’s centrally planned economy more than manufacturing (Hughes and Hare, 1992; Senik-Leygonie and Hughes, 1992; Ericson, 1999; Gaddy and Ickes, 1999, 2002). Burdened by outdated assets and bloated with redundant employees, its ill-preparedness for market competition was a major reason for Russia’s output collapse in the 1990s.<sup>12</sup> Extrapolating from input-output tables, as well as from world and domestic prices, Hughes and Hare (1992) conclude that one-quarter of Soviet manufacturing

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<sup>10</sup>In addition, the coefficients of these controls are not statistically significant. However, as will be seen later, the use of contemporaneous controls does reduce statistical significance of the drop in Yeltsin vote in some specifications. This is to be expected, since these controls might affect popular attitudes.

<sup>11</sup>See results in appendix.

<sup>12</sup>Gaddy and Ickes (1999), in fact, go so far as to tar the entire Soviet manufacturing sector with the label “value-destroying,” a blanket characterization that likely misses important sub-sector variation.

was “negative value added,” one-third was “highly competitive,” and the remainder was somewhere in between. We use the methodology of Natkhov and Pyle (2023) to capture within-manufacturing variation in vulnerability to market reform with Soviet era trade data. We apply their methodology to construct a “revealed comparative disadvantage” measure here.

In our view, these two instruments, late Soviet era regional measures of manufacturing employment as a share of the workforce and “revealed comparative disadvantage,” constitute plausibly exogenous indicators of the pre-reform regional economic structure. They capture distortions that determined the extent of the transitional economic slump.

The results of the first and second stages of the IV regressions are shown in columns (3)-(6) of Table 5. The coefficients on the the drop in the Yeltsin vote are negative and highly statistically significant. The first stages of the IV regressions pass all the standard tests for instrument validity, including Hansen’s over-identification test.

The IV coefficients of the drop in the Yeltsin vote are two to three times larger than the corresponding coefficients in the OLS regressions, suggesting that the latter may be downward biased. A plausible reason for this bias is that regions that were more affected by the negative economic shock of market reforms took stronger measures to counteract their impact between 1996 and 2010.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the effect of the drop in the Yeltsin vote between 1991 and 1996 had a weaker effect on liberal attitudes than would have been implied by the relative size of the shock in these regions.

The results of the first-stage regressions show that the pre-reform economic structure has a sizable effect on the drop in Yeltsin vote. One standard deviation increase in the share of manufacturing employment in 1989 leads to an increase of almost one-quarter standard deviation in the drop of the vote for Yeltsin, while one standard deviation increase in the relative comparative disadvantage results in about a third of the standard deviation of the drop in Yeltsin vote.

In addition to employing the rather mechanical principal component technique to create our dependent variable, we also use our intuition to select the respondents’ priorities that best capture democratic values. As mentioned earlier, these priorities are marked by one and two stars in Table 2. The “double-starred” index, by prioritizing freedom of expression and participation in democratic governance, mirrors the precise values highlighted by Inglehart’s “4-item index.” In Table 6, we can see that the results of IV regressions on the “double-starred” index are very similar to those based on the first principal component derived from the *Georating* question.<sup>14</sup>

Table 7 shows the results of the IV regressions for different age cohorts with and without contemporaneous regional controls. The relationship between the drop in Yeltsin’s support and democratic values is particularly robust for the two older cohorts that would have been adults during the early

<sup>13</sup>From early in the reform era, Russia’s regions operated with some degree of policy-making autonomy (Warner, 2001; Berkowitz and DeJong, 2003).

<sup>14</sup>See qualitatively similar results for the 0-2 “starred index” in Table 17 in the appendix. Although we use a standard linear probability model to estimate regressions in these tables, the results based on an ordered probit estimator are similar. See the discussion in the next section).

1990s, both those in the 31-45 cohort who would have been in or near their “impressionable years” at that time and the 46 and older group who would have had substantial lived experience in the Soviet era. The point estimates for our variable of interest drop in magnitude with age, but the effect of the early 1990s on 2010 attitudes can be seen even in the youngest cohort, who would not even have been adults during the early 1990s. This finding suggests a possible inter-generational transmission of values.

## 5.2 *Integrated Values Survey*

A limitation of our analysis to this point is that we draw on separate variables to demonstrate the persistence of democratic values across time, one based on election data from the early 1990s and another based on cross-sectional survey evidence from 2010. Neither variable, moreover, allows for comparisons between Russia and other former communist countries that experienced similar economic reforms and post-reform shocks at roughly the same time. Fortunately, the IVS data described above allow for such a comparison. For a common indicator widely used to proxy for democratic values, Inglehart’s “4-item index,” the IVS enables intertemporal cross-country comparisons.

Recall that we postulated that a reason why Russia’s experience in the early 1990s might produce an enduring shift in values is that its economic shock was amplified by a roughly contemporaneous identity shock associated with the country’s loss in status, both regionally and globally. Contrary to the general finding that outside the “impressionable years” the attitudinal impact of experiencing an economic shock tends to be short-lived (Margalit, 2019), we hypothesized that Russians’ experience of a second shock in the early 1990s might mean that an economic shock would leave a relatively deep and enduring imprint on their worldview. In so doing, we draw on both rich ethnographies (Shevchenko, 2008; Alexievich, 2017; Sharafutdinova, 2020) and a small survey-based literature that place Russia’s weak embrace of democratic values in a dynamic, comparative context (Gaber et al., 2019; Pyle, 2021).

In Figure 2, we plot the averages of Inglehart’s “4-item index” for Russia and a consistent group of post-communist countries: Poland, Hungary, Czechia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.<sup>15</sup> Approximately coinciding with the post-reform recession in the region, there is a substantial drop in support for democratic values between waves 2 and 3, which were administered in Russia in 1990 and 1995, respectively. The drop in Russia is not only larger than elsewhere, its effect persists. Although support for democratic values recovers along with the economy elsewhere in the region, the “4-item index” remains essentially flat between 1995 and 2017 in Russia despite a significant increase in household income during the 2000s. As with the within-Russia analysis above, this cross-country comparison highlights how the change in values in Russia in the early 1990s reverberates into the 21st century.

The explanation for this pattern in Russia must rely on more than material circumstances alone

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<sup>15</sup>In Wave 6, the question used to generate the “4-item index” was not asked in Hungary, Czechia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Latvia, and Lithuania.

during the exit from communism. The citizens of other countries in the region, after all, experienced those years as ones of increasing economic uncertainty and falling incomes. In Russia, something more must have been at work. One explanation consistent with the data is that only in Russia was the collapse of communism experienced as a loss of status. Whereas citizens of other former communist countries regarded the Cold War’s end as ushering in an era of liberation and independence, Russians equated it with post-imperial decline and humiliation. For them, this “identity shock” amplified the effect of post-communist economic hardships.

## 6 Robustness

In this section, we test the robustness of our finding that popular aversion to democratic values in Russia, a function of exposure to the early 1990s economic shock, persists into the 21st century. Using the same question from the *Georating* survey, we first explore alternative estimation techniques and the impact of an additional instrument. Then, using the most recent wave of the IVS, the first to include within-country regional indicators, we test whether the economic shock of the early 1990s continues to explain support for democratic values in 2017. In a final robustness check, we transition from democratic values to democratic behavior. Returning to the 2010 *Geortaing* survey, we test whether membership in civic organizations can be explained by the same causal logic. We ask, that is, whether an individual’s proclivity to join a non-government association in the 21st century reflects their region’s vulnerability to the shock of market liberalization and its resulting shift in political values in the early 1990s.

### 6.1 Democratic values

We first replace the linear probability model with a non-linear ordered probit estimator to explain the 0-2 double-star index for democratic values. Table 8 shows that our results hold. For the IV estimates, whether controlling for contemporaneous regional variables or not, our primary variable of interest remains significant at the 5% level.

Building on research by Kapelko and Markevich (2014) who argue that political attitudes in Russia’s regions have been significantly influenced by the legacy of Soviet-era repression, our next robustness check involves adding the log of person-years in Gulag labor camps as a third instrument. As can be seen in Table 9, the results remain similar to or perhaps even stronger than our earlier findings.<sup>16</sup> As expected, the coefficient of the Gulag instrument in the first stage is negative and significant, while the other two instruments remain positive and significant, as before.

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<sup>16</sup>We do not present the IV ordered probit specification with contemporaneous regional controls because the cmp procedure for it does not converge in their presence. Without these controls, the procedure converges and the results are similar to those without the Gulag instrument.

In another robustness check, we use regional identifiers from the most recent IVS wave to explore the relationship between the early 1990s and 2017 support for democratic values, as proxied for by Inglehart’s “4-item index.”<sup>17</sup> For Russia, the IVS sample has substantially fewer observations than the *Georating* survey, and at the regional level, the IVS samples are unrepresentative. (See Table 10) The regression results should thus be treated with caution. But they, nevertheless, can provide a useful supplement to our main results.

The OLS and instrumental regression results for the “4-item index” are shown in Table 11. The coefficients on our main variable of interest in the OLS and IV regressions without contemporaneous controls are positive and significant at the 5% level. In regressions with contemporaneous controls, the significance of these coefficients weakens to 10%. Again, the decline is not surprising, since contemporaneous controls are likely to explain at least some variance in political values. In summary, although the results based on the 2017 IVS data are not as strong as those based on the *Georating* data, it is reassuring that they are broadly consistent with our main findings.

## 6.2 Democratic behavior

A vast literature addresses the link between public support for democratic values and greater participation in civic associations. Although the relationship is generally viewed as reciprocal, several studies point to the possibility that democratic values and orientations themselves produce greater civic engagement (Almond and Verba, 1963; Paxton, 2002; Howard, 2003). In a final robustness check, we build on this possibility by exploring whether the economic shock of the early 1990s changed not only support for democratic values. We investigate here whether that same economic shock produced a change in democratically oriented behavior, operationalizing civic participation with a question from the 2010 *Georating* survey: “In your free time, do you regularly do community work, participate in the activities of civic organizations, initiative groups, etc.?” Only 2.9% of the sample responded positively.

Tables 12 presents the results of applying probit and IV probit estimators to equation (1) with this new dependent variable.<sup>18</sup> Table 13 presents the results for different age cohorts. The results may be a bit weaker than for our main dependent variables, but as we saw with them, the effect of the early 1990s economic shock persists for the full sample and increases with age. In regions more vulnerable to market liberalization in the early 1990s, the oldest cohort, those who would have experienced Soviet life as mature adults, are least likely to be engaged in public life. They are least likely to engage in democratic behavior.

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<sup>17</sup>Regional identifiers for earlier IVS waves are not publicly available.

<sup>18</sup>The results for applying linear probability models are similar.

## 7 Recalling the Early 1990s: An Embedded Experiment

### 7.1 Why an experiment?

The preceding sections have documented a robust and persistent relationship between the magnitude of the economic shock experienced across Russian regions in the early 1990s and the political values expressed by survey respondents years later. That relationship, while consistent with a large literature emphasizing the effect of macroeconomic shocks on political preferences, stands out for its endurance, particularly among those who would have experienced life in the Soviet Union and thus the early 1990s as mature adults. It is also in line with our broader hypothesis that Russians' relatively weak support for democratic values, when compared with citizens in other post-communist societies, stems from the traumatic confluence of both economic dislocation and perceived loss of great-power status.

Authoritarian states like Russia, of course, do not passively rely on lived experience to shape the political preferences of their citizens. As Sharafutdinova (2020) has shown for Russia and Xu and Zhao (2023) have shown for China, they also construct and reinforce specific components of national identity by leveraging collective memory. In their online survey experiment, Xu and Zhao (2023) demonstrate that contemporary attitudes can be causally influenced by crafted reminders of past trauma.

Inspired by this approach, we explore whether priming Russians with reminders of the early 1990s, a time of intense economic disruption and imperial dissolution, dampens support for liberal political values today. Our embedded experiment enables us to test, more directly than observational data alone, whether the enduring political legacy of the post-Soviet shock is activated not only by experience but also by memory. In doing so, we examine whether it is the economic or geopolitical dimensions of that memory that weigh the most heavily.

### 7.2 Experimental design

In May 2025, we collaborated with the Levada Centre to field an embedded experiment within their nationally representative *Omnibus* survey. The survey included over 1600 respondents randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions, each of which primed memory of a different aspect of the early 1990s: two that recalled the period's shocks and one, a control condition, that referenced benign cultural developments.

The treatment conditions presented short historical vignettes adapted from a 2023 Russian secondary school history textbook (Medinskii and Torkunov, 2023). Each respondent was randomly presented with one of three vignettes, the full versions of which appear in the appendix:

1. A narrative emphasizing the radical economic reforms of the early 1990s, their initially broad public support, and their ultimately dire consequences for large segments of the Russian popu-

lation.

2. A narrative emphasizing the dissolution of the USSR as the “greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century,” highlighting the fragmentation of the Soviet military and the dispersal of ethnic Russians beyond Russia’s new borders.
3. A benign account of popular cultural figures and events in 1990s Russia, including rock bands and entertainers, with no reference to politics or hardship.<sup>19</sup>

Following the vignette, respondents were asked to select from a long list of rights or freedoms (up to four) the ones they consider most important. The question was deliberately structured to resemble the split between democratic and economic rights reflected in the 2010 *GeoRating* survey questions. Table 14 presents the percentages of respondents who prioritized a particular right or freedom, as well as the loading of the associated first principal component, which we calculated in the same way as with the *GeoRating* survey question. As with the *GeoRating* data, liberal political values, such as freedom of speech, load positively, while economic rights load negatively. Consistent with the outcome variables we used in the analysis above, we also calculate a 0-2 index based on the percentage of respondents who included “speech” and “participate in public and political life.”

### 7.3 Results and interpretation

The results in Table 15 reveal that priming respondents with memories of the early 1990s alters the subsequent expression of political values. Compared to the control group, respondents exposed to the two “shock” vignettes were less likely to prioritize democratic rights and freedoms. Whether measured by the first principal component or the 0-2 index, recollecting the economic hardships of the early 1990s has a statistically significant effect.

These results provide causal evidence that collective memory of the 1990s can dampen support for liberal political values. They complement our observational findings in two important ways. First, they show that the legacy of the 1990s is not merely an inert historical residue but can be reactivated in the present. Second, they indicate that the economic content of that legacy exerts a more powerful influence on political values than does the narrative of post-imperial decline, consistent with our broader argument that it is the combination of hardship and loss, with the former playing the more enduring role, that explains the distinct trajectory of Russian political development.

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<sup>19</sup>The material for this vignette was taken from <https://foxford.ru/wiki/istoriya/duhovnaya-zhizn-strany-v-1990-e-gg>.

## 8 Conclusion

It is not self-evident that what happened in the immediate wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse would continue to shape the values of Russia’s citizenry well into the twenty-first century. After all, in terms of eras that might exercise influence over Russians’ beliefs and values, the early 1990s compete not only against more distant historical periods, they also come up against the power of the more immediate past, characterized as it is by increasing state control over the educational and media landscapes.

A sophisticated take, eloquently expressed by Sharafutdinova (2020), stresses how in the twenty-first century, political and cultural elites have exploited the 1990s as a kind of foil, equating them with social disorder and economic collapse to make Russian society comfortable with Putin’s illiberal turn. The research summarized above stands in agreement with this perspective to the extent that we point to the decade’s enduring importance and demonstrate with experimental evidence that strategically crafted narratives of collective suffering in the 1990s can help align Russians’ political preferences with Kremlin objectives. However, where we might part ways is over the role of Putin-era elites to the exclusion of other factors. If the nature of the weak Russian support for democratic values was shaped only by educational initiatives and propaganda campaigns backed by the Kremlin, we would not expect to see, as we do, regional patterns in beliefs that connect to sub-national economic developments in the early 1990s. The regional patterns that we observe strongly support the hypothesis that the steep decline in liberal values in Russia is rooted in the 1990s economic transition.

Uncovering connections between developments in the early post-Soviet years and the beliefs and values Russians espouse well into Putin’s tenure serves multiple purposes. It enriches our understanding of the country Putin came to lead a quarter century ago; it contextualizes the illiberal and revanchist tendencies he has embraced in office; and it clarifies the sort of society that he will ultimately leave to his successor. Noting that the origins of the Russians’ low regard for democratic values predate his presidency does not absolve Putin of the responsibility for the country’s authoritarian turn. The nature of Russian society, traumatized as it was by its exit from communism, has lowered the cost of Putin’s anti-democratic policies. Over the years, no doubt, tens of thousands of Russians have courageously stood up and protested the authoritarian turn over which Putin has presided. But Russia is a country of tens of millions and history’s hand is heavy.



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Table 1: Support for democracy

1995		1999		2006		2010		2016		2022	
Albania	0.99	Albania	0.99	Montenegro	0.90	Armenia	0.96	Armenia	0.92	Hungary	0.89
Croatia	0.98	Croatia	0.98	Albania	0.88	Georgia	0.90	Macedonia	0.85	Slovenia	0.89
Azerbaijan	0.97	Azerbaijan	0.97	Slovenia	0.87	Montenegro	0.86	Lithuania	0.82	Croatia	0.84
Montenegro	0.95	Montenegro	0.95	Estonia	0.85	Azerbaijan	0.85	Montenegro	0.81	Armenia	0.84
Bosn. Herz.	0.95	Bosn. Herz.	0.93	Azerbaijan	0.84	Macedonia	0.81	Hungary	0.81	Estonia	0.82
Slovakia	0.92	Serbia	0.92	Georgia	0.84	Estonia	0.78	Georgia	0.80	Georgia	0.82
Romania	0.91	Czechia	0.92	Lithuania	0.84	Slovenia	0.77	Estonia	0.76	Albania	0.81
Hungary	0.91	Georgia	0.91	Hungary	0.83	Croatia	0.74	Slovenia	0.75	Montenegro	0.81
Czechia	0.91	Romania	0.90	Slovakia	0.82	Hungary	0.73	Azerbaijan	0.71	Czechia	0.78
Georgia	0.91	Hungary	0.89	Czechia	0.78	Moldova	0.70	Romania	0.68	Azerbaijan	0.78
Serbia	0.90	Slovakia	0.88	Armenia	0.78	Bulgaria	0.68	Croatia	0.66	Latvia	0.73
Estonia	0.89	Slovenia	0.88	Croatia	0.78	Czechia	0.67	Albania	0.65	Slovakia	0.72
Lithuania	0.88	Estonia	0.88	Serbia	0.77	Lithuania	0.67	Czechia	0.65	Serbia	0.72
Latvia	0.87	Macedonia	0.88	Bosn. Herz.	0.76	Bosn. Herz.	0.66	Bulgaria	0.65	Bosn. Herz.	0.71
Slovenia	0.86	Latvia	0.87	Latvia	0.75	Albania	0.65	Bosn. Herz.	0.64	Bulgaria	0.70
Bulgaria	0.86	Lithuania	0.87	Macedonia	0.75	Slovakia	0.64	Moldova	0.63	Macedonia	0.68
Moldova	0.85	Bulgaria	0.86	Moldova	0.72	Serbia	0.64	Serbia	0.60	Lithuania	0.62
Armenia	0.85	Moldova	0.85	Bulgaria	0.72	Romania	0.60	Latvia	0.59	Romania	0.62
Macedonia	0.84	Armenia	0.85	Romania	0.67	<b>Russia</b>	0.54	Slovakia	0.57	Moldova	0.61
<b>Russia</b>	0.58	<b>Russia</b>	0.60	<b>Russia</b>	0.54	Latvia	0.51	<b>Russia</b>	0.50	<b>Russia</b>	0.48

Table 2: GeoRatings Rights and Freedoms, 2010

	Percent prioritizing	First principal component loading
Free medical care	57.0	-.420
Employment	47.9	.072
Life	42.0	-.174
Social security in old age	41.3	-.455
Own property	38.8	.053
Free education	37.5	.138
Social assistance during illness	34.7	-.108
Well-paid work in one's specialty	29.7	.067
Express oneself, freedom of speech**	15.3	.346
Information*	13.7	.247
Protection from arbitrary arrest	13.7	.310
Free movement	11.7	.290
Appeal to authorities*	8.9	.215
Religion	8.6	-.036
Participate in governance, elect representatives**	4.9	.235
Associate to represent and defend rights	2.5	.136
Disseminate information*	2.1	.084
Assemble and demonstrate*	1.3	.136

\* and \*\*, used in constructing 0-5 index; \*\* used in constructing 0-2 index

Note: The survey question reads “Which of the listed rights and freedoms are the most important for you personally?” (up to five responses allowed)

Table 3: Summary Statistics: GeoRatings

VARIABLES	(1) N	(2) mean	(3) sd	(4) min	(5) max
<b>Panel A: <i>Georating</i> 2010</b>					
Democratic values, first principal component	41,000	1.11e-09	1.000	-1.707	5.992
Democratic values, 0-2 “double-starred” index	41,000	0.207	0.437	0	2
Democratic values, 0-2 “starred” index	41,000	0.476	0.663	0	2
Participation in civic groups	41,000	.0291	.1682	0	1
<b>Panel B: Explanatory Variables</b>					
Yeltsin vote difference, 1991 to 1996	40,500	19.70	13.44	-44.68	40.60
<b>Panel C: Instrumental Variables</b>					
Revealed comparative disadvantage, 1989	40,500	-0.683	0.363	-1.876	-0.150
Manufacturing employment share, 1989	36,000	0.145	0.0537	0.0319	0.303
Number of camps	30,500	6.607	6.058	1	26
(Log) person-years	30,000	11.54	2.101	6.544	15.14
Number of camps (with missing region treated as 0)	41,000	4.915	5.968	0	26
(Log) person-years (with missing region treated as 0)	41,000	8.445	5.420	0	15.14
<b>Panel D: Controls</b>					
<i>Demographics</i>					
Male	41,000	0.453	0.498	0	1
Age, under 30	41,000	0.288	0.453	0	1
Age, 31 to 45	41,000	0.253	0.435	0	1
age 46 and over	41,000	0.458	0.498	0	1
(Log) distance to Moscow	41,000	7.102	1.402	0	9.250
Population, above 0.5 million	41,000	0.163	0.370	0	1
Population, above 50 thousand	41,000	0.301	0.459	0	1
<i>Contemporaneous Controls</i>					
(Log) income per capita, 2010	41,000	9.555	0.487	7.933	10.41
Revealed comparative disadvantage, 2010	41,000	-42.32	16.32	-96.87	-19.16
<i>Historical Controls</i>					
Yeltsin vote, 1991	40,500	53.39	11.83	15.25	84.80

Table 4: Integrated Values Survey

Wave	Russia		Others	
	Year	N	Year	N
2	1990	1,961	1989-1993	14,652
3	1995	2,040	1995-1998	12,685
4	1999	2,500	1999-2000	12,522
5	2006, 2008	3,537	2005-2009	22,553
6	2011	2,500	2011-2012	6,606
7	2017	3,635	2017-2022	19,647

Note: The other post-communist countries are Poland Hungary, Czechia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Six did not participate in Wave 6: Hungary, Czechia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Latvia, and Lithuania.



Table 5: Rights and Freedoms, 2010: First Principal Component

	(1) OLS	(2) OLS	(3) IV second	(4) IV first	(5) IV second	(6) IV first
Yeltsin vote difference, 1991 to 1996	-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.005** (0.002)	-0.013*** (0.003)		-0.015*** (0.005)	
Yeltsin vote, 1991	0.005** (0.002)	0.004** (0.002)	0.010*** (0.004)	0.754*** (0.168)	0.011** (0.005)	0.763*** (0.163)
Male	0.188*** (0.012)	0.188*** (0.012)	0.193*** (0.012)	-0.005 (0.035)	0.193*** (0.012)	0.007 (0.032)
Age, under 30	0.639*** (0.020)	0.638*** (0.020)	0.641*** (0.021)	-0.496** (0.218)	0.641*** (0.021)	-0.447** (0.214)
Age, 31 to 45	0.383*** (0.016)	0.381*** (0.016)	0.375*** (0.016)	-0.374* (0.196)	0.375*** (0.016)	-0.332* (0.186)
Population, above 0.5 million	0.080** (0.038)	0.077** (0.036)	0.076* (0.042)	-1.248 (1.593)	0.077* (0.042)	-1.237 (1.523)
Population, above 50 thousand	0.057*** (0.021)	0.058*** (0.020)	0.058** (0.023)	-0.875** (0.383)	0.057** (0.023)	-0.787** (0.363)
(Log) distance to Moscow	0.026* (0.014)	0.014 (0.015)	0.024* (0.013)	2.149** (0.840)	0.025 (0.017)	2.027** (0.881)
Manufacturing employment share, 1989				81.730*** (25.048)		54.318** (24.413)
Revealed comparative disadvantage, 1989				10.112*** (2.757)		10.649*** (3.291)
Under-id test (p-value)			.0008		.0081	
Kleibergen-Paap rk Wald F statistic			14.352		8.908	
Stock-Yogo weak ID test (20% max IV size)			8.75		8.75	
Hansen J statistic (p-value)			.8381		.9449	
Observations	40000	40000	36000	36000	36000	36000
r <sup>2</sup>	0.098	0.099	0.096	0.586	0.093	0.596
Controls for regional variables, 2010	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 6: Rights and Freedoms, 2010: 0-2 “double-starred” index

	(1) OLS	(2) OLS	(3) IV second	(4) IV second
Yeltsin vote difference, 1991 to 1996	-0.002*** (0.001)	-0.001** (0.001)	-0.004*** (0.001)	-0.004** (0.002)
Yeltsin vote, 1991	0.001** (0.001)	0.001* (0.001)	0.003** (0.001)	0.003* (0.002)
Male	0.014*** (0.004)	0.014*** (0.004)	0.017*** (0.004)	0.017*** (0.004)
Age, under 30	0.141*** (0.007)	0.141*** (0.007)	0.139*** (0.007)	0.139*** (0.007)
Age, 31 to 45	0.046*** (0.006)	0.046*** (0.006)	0.044*** (0.006)	0.044*** (0.006)
Population, above 0.5 million	0.017 (0.014)	0.015 (0.013)	0.015 (0.015)	0.015 (0.014)
Population, above 50 thousand	0.019** (0.008)	0.020** (0.008)	0.016* (0.009)	0.016* (0.009)
(Log) distance to Moscow	0.007* (0.004)	0.002 (0.004)	0.006 (0.004)	0.004 (0.005)
Revealed comparative disadvantage, 2010		-0.001** (0.000)		-0.000 (0.000)
Manufacturing employment share, 2010		-0.001 (0.001)		0.001 (0.002)
(Log) income per capita, 2010		-0.004 (0.014)		-0.016 (0.018)
Under-id test (p-value)			.0008	.0081
Kleibergen-Paap rk Wald F statistic			14.352	8.908
Stock-Yogo weak ID test (20% max IV size)			8.75	8.75
Hansen J statistic (p-value)			.1345	.3553
Observations	40000	40000	36000	36000
r2	0.022	0.023	0.020	0.020

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 7: Rights and Freedoms, 2010, by Age Cohorts: First Principal Component

	(1) Under 31 IV	(2) Under 31 IV	(3) 31 to 45 IV	(4) 31 to 45 IV	(5) Over 45 IV	(6) Over 45 IV
Yeltsin vote difference, 1991 to 1996	-0.012*** (0.004)	-0.008* (0.004)	-0.013*** (0.004)	-0.015*** (0.006)	-0.015*** (0.004)	-0.019*** (0.006)
Yeltsin vote, 1991	0.010** (0.004)	0.007 (0.005)	0.010*** (0.004)	0.011** (0.005)	0.011** (0.004)	0.014** (0.006)
Male	0.234*** (0.022)	0.235*** (0.021)	0.178*** (0.026)	0.179*** (0.026)	0.173*** (0.018)	0.174*** (0.018)
Population, above 0.5 million	0.080 (0.049)	0.077* (0.046)	0.130** (0.053)	0.131** (0.054)	0.045 (0.042)	0.046 (0.044)
Population, above 50 thousand	0.082** (0.032)	0.084*** (0.031)	0.092*** (0.030)	0.090*** (0.030)	0.024 (0.030)	0.021 (0.031)
(Log) distance to Moscow	0.001 (0.012)	-0.005 (0.014)	0.018 (0.015)	0.026 (0.021)	0.040** (0.016)	0.042** (0.021)
Under-id test (p-value)	0.0012	0.0097	0.0006	0.0065	0.0085	0.0085
Kleibergen-Paap rk Wald F statistic	13.138	8.080	15.029	9.592	14.718	8.977
Stock-Yogo weak ID test (20% max IV size)	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75	8.75
Hansen J statistic (p-value)	0.8631	0.8721	0.8298	0.7448	0.7007	0.8835
Observations	10191	10191	8919	8919	16890	16890
r <sup>2</sup>	0.013	0.018	0.015	0.013	0.009	0.001
Controls for regional variables, 2010	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 8: Rights and Freedoms, 2010: 0-2 “double-star” index (ordered probits)

	(1) ordered probit	(2) ordered probit	(3) IV ordered probit	(4) IV ordered probit
Yeltsin vote difference, 1991 to 1996	-0.005*** (0.002)	-0.004** (0.002)	-0.009*** (0.003)	-0.009*** (0.003)
Yeltsin vote, 1991	0.004** (0.002)	0.003 (0.002)	0.007*** (0.003)	0.007*** (0.002)
Male	0.049*** (0.013)	0.049*** (0.013)	0.049*** (0.013)	0.049*** (0.013)
Population, above 0.5 million	0.063 (0.044)	0.055 (0.042)	0.058 (0.045)	0.059 (0.045)
Population, above 50 thousand	0.064** (0.027)	0.065** (0.027)	0.061** (0.028)	0.061** (0.028)
(Log) distance to Moscow	0.023* (0.013)	0.007 (0.012)	0.022* (0.012)	0.022* (0.012)
Observations	40000	40000	40000	40000
Controls for regional variables, 2010	No	Yes	No	Yes

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 9: Rights and Freedoms, 2010: First Principal Component, Gulag instrument

	(1) IV second	(2) IV first	(3) IV second	(4) IV first
Yeltsin vote difference, 1991 to 1996	-0.014*** (0.003)		-0.016*** (0.005)	
Yeltsin vote, 1991	0.011*** (0.004)	0.785*** (0.164)	0.012** (0.005)	0.795*** (0.159)
Male	0.193*** (0.012)	0.001 (0.035)	0.193*** (0.012)	0.016 (0.032)
Age, under 30	0.640*** (0.021)	-0.474** (0.208)	0.640*** (0.021)	-0.430** (0.202)
Age, 31 to 45	0.375*** (0.016)	-0.333* (0.190)	0.375*** (0.016)	-0.286 (0.178)
Population, above 0.5 million	0.074* (0.041)	-0.759 (1.451)	0.076* (0.042)	-0.681 (1.383)
Population, above 50 thousand	0.057** (0.023)	-0.801** (0.378)	0.056** (0.023)	-0.728** (0.354)
(Log) distance to Moscow	0.024* (0.013)	2.282*** (0.743)	0.027 (0.019)	2.256*** (0.770)
Manufacturing employment share, 1989		80.838*** (24.990)		52.697** (25.318)
Revealed comparative disadvantage, 1989		7.570*** (2.662)		7.506** (3.219)
Log of person-years in camps		-0.393** (0.172)		-0.405** (0.170)
Observations	36000	36000	36000	36000
Controls for regional variables	No	No	Yes	Yes

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 10: Summary Statistics: World Values Survey Wave 7 Russia (2017)

VARIABLES	(1) N	(2) mean	(3) sd	(4) min	(5) max
(Log) distance to Moscow	1,831	6.405	2.234	0	9.250
Yeltsin vote, 1991	1,839	58.03	11.06	15.25	84.80
Male	1,812	0.412	0.492	0	1
Yeltsin vote difference, 1991 to 1996	1,839	21.79	9.613	-44.68	40.60
young	1,831	0.316	0.464	0	1
midage	1,831	0.364	0.481	0	1
manufacturing employment share, 2017	1,812	14.60	4.69	3.8	24.7
manufacturing employment share, 1989	1,788	14.80	4.95	3.19	30.33
revealed comparative disadvantage, 1989	1,812	-0.627	0.295	-1.624	-0.256
(Log) income per capita, 2017	1,812	10.35	0.30	9.101	11.120
revealed comparative disadvantage, 2017	1,812	-68.26	29.15	-159.61	-27.25
Inglehart's "four-item index", (0-3 scale)	1,757	0.752	0.908	0	3

Table 11: Inglehart's Four-item Index (0-3 scale), 2017

	(1) OLS	(2) OLS	(3) IV second	(4) IV first	(5) IV second	(6) IV first
Yeltsin vote difference, 1991 to 1996	-0.013** (0.005)	-0.010* (0.005)	-0.024** (0.012)		-0.022* (0.013)	
Yeltsin vote, 1991	0.012*** (0.004)	0.010** (0.005)	0.015** (0.006)	0.416*** (0.137)	0.015* (0.008)	0.552*** (0.130)
Male	-0.008 (0.041)	-0.010 (0.042)	-0.018 (0.043)	-0.044 (0.272)	-0.018 (0.043)	0.059 (0.239)
Age, under 38	0.177*** (0.061)	0.177*** (0.061)	0.151** (0.063)	-0.607 (0.497)	0.149** (0.063)	-0.578 (0.458)
Age, 38 to 52	0.025 (0.060)	0.026 (0.060)	0.036 (0.062)	0.198 (0.372)	0.038 (0.061)	0.199 (0.314)
Urban	0.113 (0.077)	0.115 (0.076)	0.086 (0.082)	-0.966 (1.264)	0.092 (0.081)	-0.457 (1.193)
(Log) distance to Moscow	0.027 (0.019)	0.022 (0.032)	0.045 (0.030)	2.813*** (0.425)	0.037 (0.040)	1.551** (0.763)
Manufacturing employment share, 1989				43.563*** (15.643)		24.187 (16.386)
Revealed comparative disadvantage, 1989				13.169*** (3.398)		19.386*** (4.883)
Under-id test (p-value)			.0006		.0061	
Kleibergen-Paap rk Wald F statistic			11.266		9.642	
Stock-Yogo weak ID test (20% max IV size)			8.75		8.75	
Hansen J statistic (p-value)			.9047		.6698	
Observations	1732	1732	1656	1710	1656	1710
Number of regions (clusters)	60	60	57	57	57	57
r <sup>2</sup>	0.034	0.037	0.025	0.474	0.029	0.553
Controls for regional variables, 2017	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 12: Civic Organization Membership, 2010

	(1) Probit	(2) Probit	(3) IV Probit	(4) IV Probit
Yeltsin vote difference, 1991 to 1996	-0.004* (0.002)	-0.004 (0.002)	-0.012* (0.007)	-0.021*** (0.008)
Yeltsin vote, 1991	0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.003)	0.011* (0.006)	0.018** (0.008)
Male	-0.201*** (0.028)	-0.202*** (0.028)	-0.205*** (0.031)	-0.203*** (0.030)
Age, under 30	0.072** (0.030)	0.072** (0.030)	0.073** (0.033)	0.068** (0.032)
Age, 31 to 45	0.093*** (0.030)	0.093*** (0.030)	0.097*** (0.032)	0.094*** (0.032)
Population, above 0.5 million	0.019 (0.061)	0.019 (0.061)	-0.016 (0.065)	-0.018 (0.068)
Population, above 50 thousand	-0.007 (0.042)	-0.005 (0.042)	-0.012 (0.044)	-0.017 (0.044)
(Log) distance to Moscow	0.002 (0.015)	-0.008 (0.016)	0.003 (0.017)	0.009 (0.025)
Observations	40000	40000	36000	36000
Controls for regional variables	No	Yes	No	Yes

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$



Table 13: Civic Organization Membership, 2010, by Age Cohorts (probits)

	(1) Under 31	(2) Under 31	(3) 31 to 45	(4) 31 to 45	(5) Over 45	(6) Over 45
Yeltsin vote difference, 1991 to 1996	-0.004 (0.008)	-0.012 (0.012)	-0.015** (0.006)	-0.017** (0.008)	-0.016** (0.008)	-0.028*** (0.009)
Yeltsin vote, 1991	0.001 (0.008)	0.010 (0.011)	0.015** (0.006)	0.016** (0.007)	0.014** (0.007)	0.024*** (0.009)
Male	-0.058 (0.053)	-0.061 (0.053)	-0.320*** (0.052)	-0.318*** (0.052)	-0.242*** (0.045)	-0.236*** (0.044)
Population, above 0.5 million	0.112 (0.084)	0.110 (0.087)	-0.165* (0.085)	-0.171** (0.084)	-0.018 (0.085)	-0.019 (0.089)
Population, above 50 thousand	0.116* (0.067)	0.110* (0.067)	-0.166** (0.072)	-0.168** (0.071)	-0.009 (0.052)	-0.020 (0.053)
(Log) distance to Moscow	0.001 (0.022)	-0.015 (0.030)	-0.014 (0.017)	-0.005 (0.025)	0.016 (0.023)	0.035 (0.032)
Observations	10191	10191	8919	8919	16890	16890
Controls for regional variables	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 14: Levada *Omnibus* Rights and Freedoms, 2025

	Percent prioritizing	First principal component loading
Free medical care	54.9	-0.476
Free and equal education	40.0	-0.415
Social protection and a decent standard of living	39.8	-0.313
Work, decent working conditions, fair pay	37.5	-0.270
Life, liberty and security of person	34.2	0.168
Speech*	20.0	0.397
Fair trial	27.1	0.122
Inviolability of property and home	23.7	0.024
Rest and leisure	17.3	0.226
Movement and choice of place of residence	14.4	0.166
Conscience and religion	12.8	0.205
Participate in public and political life*	7.9	0.113
Peaceful assembly	6.8	0.311

\* used in constructing 0-2 index

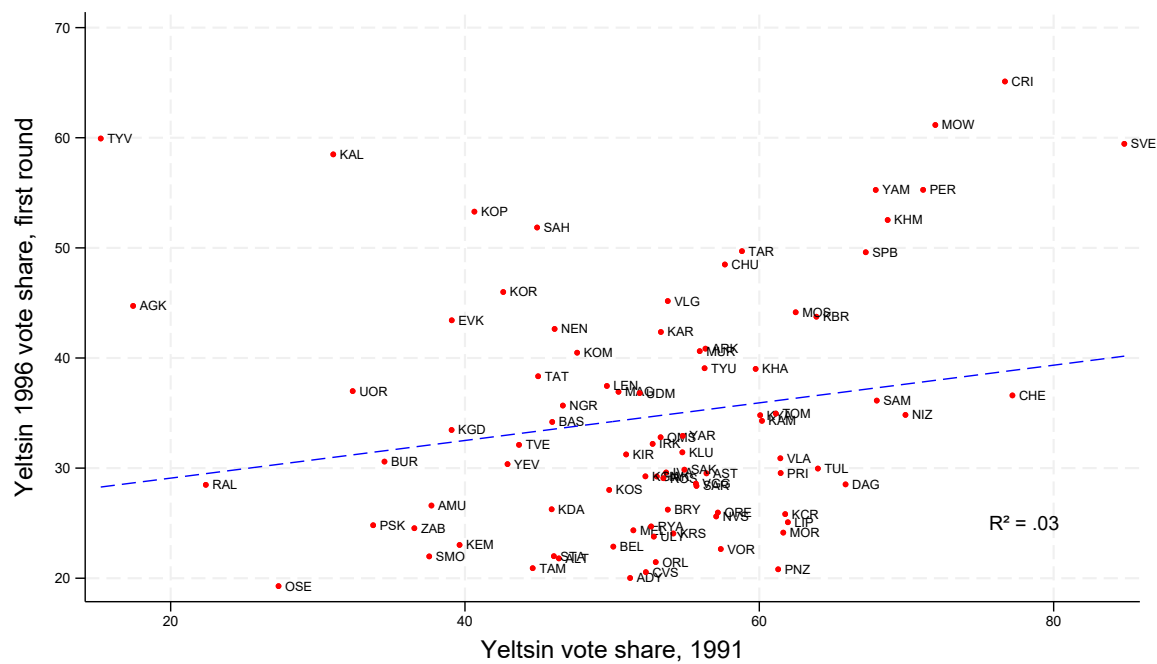
Note: The survey question reads “Which rights and freedoms do you think are the most important?” (up to four responses allowed)

Table 15: Average by vignette treatment

	N	first principal component	0-2 scale
Vignette 1: economic shock	556	-0.126***	0.349**
Vignette 2: Soviet Union dissolution	537	0.022	0.352*
Vignette 3: control	520	0.112	0.406

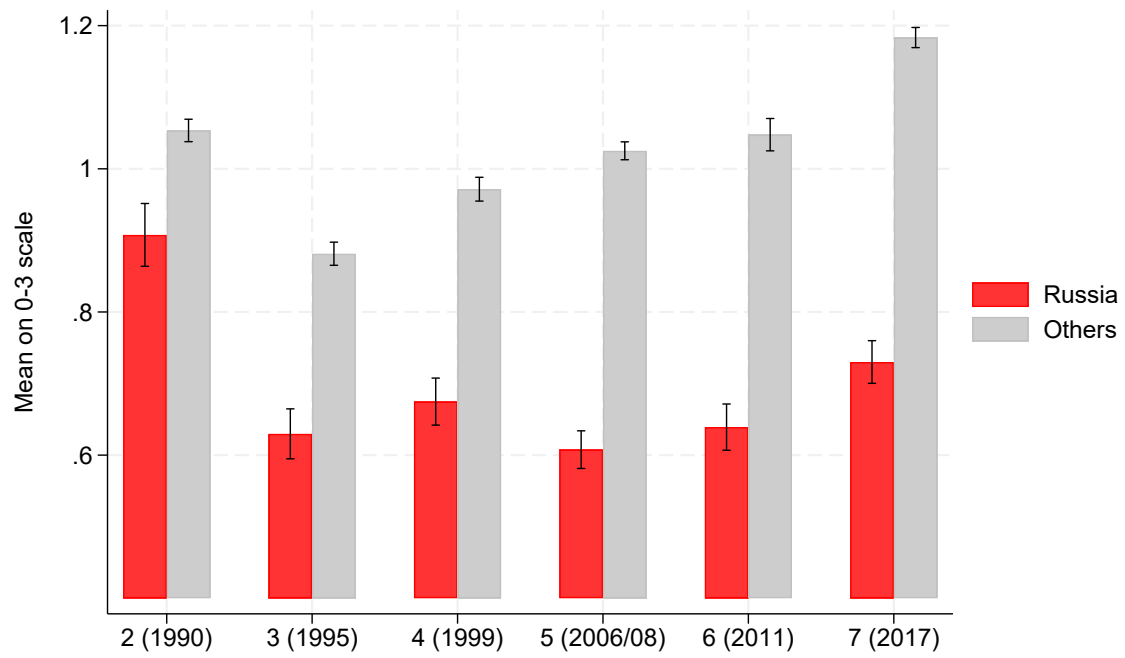
Note: The stars represent the difference in the means with respect to the control from a one-tail t-test: \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

Figure 1: Boris Yeltsin's Vote Shares, 1991 and 1996



Note: The 1991 share is for the first and only round; the 1996 share is for the first of two rounds.

Figure 2: Inglehart's Four-item Index by IVS Wave



Note: The other post-communist countries are Poland, Hungary, Czechia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Belarus, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In Wave 6, the question was not asked in Hungary, Czechia, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Latvia, and Lithuania.

# Appendix

## A Additional robustness

Table 16: Rights and Freedoms, 2010: 1992 and 1993 pc incomes as instruments

	(1) IV second	(2) IV first	(3) IV second	(4) IV first
Yeltsin vote difference, 1991 to 1996	-0.018*** (0.006)		-0.019*** (0.006)	
Yeltsin vote, 1991	0.015** (0.007)	0.954*** (0.179)	0.015** (0.007)	0.968*** (0.180)
Male	0.193*** (0.012)	-0.008 (0.039)	0.193*** (0.012)	-0.009 (0.039)
Age, under 30	0.632*** (0.021)	-0.697*** (0.227)	0.632*** (0.021)	-0.695*** (0.228)
Age, 31 to 45	0.371*** (0.016)	-0.420** (0.182)	0.371*** (0.017)	-0.421** (0.181)
Population, above 0.5 million	0.056 (0.046)	-1.104 (1.390)	0.058 (0.046)	-1.031 (1.376)
Population, above 50 thousand	0.053** (0.021)	-0.076 (0.365)	0.053** (0.021)	-0.056 (0.364)
(Log) distance to Moscow	0.027* (0.015)	-0.285 (1.097)	0.023 (0.015)	-0.399 (1.099)
(Log) income per capita, 1992		-9.960*** (2.517)		-9.854*** (2.535)
Per capita income difference, 1992 to 1993		-14.691** (7.222)		-13.773* (7.459)
(Log) income per capita, 2010			-0.032 (0.054)	-1.599 (1.604)
Observations	38000	38000	38000	38000
r2	0.083	0.576	0.083	0.578

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 17: Rights and Freedoms, 2010: 0-2 “starred” index

	(1) OLS	(2) OLS	(3) IV second	(4) IV second
Yeltsin vote difference, 1991 to 1996	-0.003** (0.001)	-0.002* (0.001)	-0.006*** (0.002)	-0.006** (0.003)
Yeltsin vote, 1991	0.002** (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)	0.005** (0.002)	0.005* (0.003)
Male	0.024*** (0.007)	0.024*** (0.007)	0.026*** (0.007)	0.026*** (0.007)
Age, under 30	0.211*** (0.011)	0.211*** (0.011)	0.207*** (0.011)	0.207*** (0.011)
Age, 31 to 45	0.077*** (0.010)	0.076*** (0.010)	0.074*** (0.010)	0.074*** (0.010)
Population, above 0.5 million	0.084*** (0.024)	0.080*** (0.023)	0.080*** (0.026)	0.081*** (0.025)
Population, above 50 thousand	0.054*** (0.015)	0.055*** (0.015)	0.051*** (0.017)	0.052*** (0.017)
(Log) distance to Moscow	0.002 (0.006)	-0.007 (0.006)	0.001 (0.007)	-0.004 (0.007)
Revealed comparative disadvantage, 2010		-0.001*** (0.001)		-0.001 (0.001)
Manufacturing employment share, 2010		-0.002 (0.002)		0.001 (0.003)
(Log) income per capita, 2010		-0.011 (0.023)		-0.034 (0.027)
Under-id test (p-value)			.0008	.0081
Kleibergen-Paap rk Wald F statistic			14.352	8.908
Stock-Yogo weak ID test (20% max IV size)			8.75	8.75
Hansen J statistic (p-value)			.2431	.8151
Observations	40000	40000	36000	36000
r <sup>2</sup>	0.024	0.025	0.021	0.022

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Table 18: GeoRatings Rights and Freedoms: Survey Response Options

**Which of the following rights and freedoms are most important to you personally?** (Up to five responses are possible.)

English	Russian
Right to work	<i>Pravo na trud</i>
Right to own property	<i>Vladieniye sobstvennost'yu</i>
Right to free education	<i>Belsplatnoye obrazovaniye</i>
Right to create independent organizations to defend citizens' rights	<i>Sozdaniye samostoyatel'nykh obshchestv, soyuzov, ob'yedineniy, predstavlyayushchikh i otstaivayushchikh prava grazdan</i>
Right to protection from arbitrary arrest	<i>Zashchitu ot nezakonnogo aresta i pytok</i>
Right to express one's own opinion, freedom of speech	<i>Vyrazheniye sobstvennogo mneniya, svoboda slova</i>
Right to information	<i>Informatsiyu</i>
Right to free movement	<i>Svobodnoye peredvizheniye po strane, bez ogranicheniy na registratsiyu</i>
Right to appeal to the authorities	<i>Obrashcheniye k vlastyam s pis'mennym trebovaniyem, predlozheniyem, zhaloboy, na kotoroye vlasti obyazany reagirovat' v ustanovlennom poryadke</i>
Right to participate in governance and elect representatives	<i>Uchastiye v upravlenii obshchestvom i gosudarstvom, izbirat' svoikh predstaviteley v organy vlasti</i>
Right to social assistance during illness	<i>Sotsial'nuyu pomooshch vo vremya bolezni</i>
Right to well-paid work in one's specialty	<i>Khorosho oplachivayemuyu rabotu po spetsial'nosti</i>
Freedom of assembly, demonstrations	<i>Svoboda sobraniy, manifestasiy</i>
Freedom of religion	<i>Veroispovedaniya</i>
Freedom of dissemination of information	<i>Rasprostraneniya informatsii lubym zakonnym sposobom</i>
Right to free medical care	<i>Besplatnuyu meditsinskuyu pomoshch'</i>
Right to social security in old age	<i>Sotsial'noye obespechiye starosti</i>
Right to life	<i>Zhizn'</i>



## B 1990s vignettes

Vignette 1: The disintegration of the unified country in 1991 went together with the social and economic crisis. But most Russian citizens, despite the sharp fall in the standard of living, initially supported the course of transformation. Society believed that the period of difficulties would be short. The government put forward a plan of radical reforms based on the principles of price liberalization, privatization and reducing the role of the state in the economy. However, the lack of experience in managing the real sector of the economy and the underestimation of the social consequences of the reforms led to dire economic and social consequences for a significant part of the country's population.

Vignette 2: On December 8, 1991, the leaders of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine met in Belovezhskaya Pushcha and signed an agreement on the dissolution of the USSR and the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The dissolution of the USSR became the largest geopolitical disaster of the 20th century. A serious blow was delivered to the country's defense capability. The most combat-capable forces of the Soviet army were located along the USSR's border. Their modern weapons and equipment passed into the hands of Russia's new neighbors. After the collapse of the USSR, millions of Russian-speaking people found themselves outside of Russia. Russians became the largest divided people in the world.

Vignette 3: In 1990, the leader of the band "Kino" Viktor Tsoi died in a car accident. At the same time, many rock groups continued to gather full halls and release commercially successful albums. Among them were "Akvarium" and Boris Grebenshchikov, the band "Piknik", the band "ddt". At the same time, Iosif Kobzon, Alla Pugacheva, Sofia Rotaru, and Nadezhda Babkina continued to perform concerts.