Democratic Values and the Transformation of the Soviet Union

Measurement and Theory of Democratic Attitudes
Outline

Intro

Democratic Values/SU
  Data etc.
  Scale
  Findings
  Distribution

Summary
Who?

- James L. Gibson: Comparative Politics & Democratisation, specialises in Post-Apartheid South Africa and the politics of courts
- Raymond M. Duch: World-famous numbercruncher, specialises in political economy, electoral behaviour, public opinion
- Kent L. Tedin: Public opinion, survey methods, statistics

Why Russia?
Data/Timescale

- 504 citizens interviewed
  - Interviews conducted in the Moscow Oblast (province, roughly 6 million inhabitants)
  - From Feb 17 until March 4 1990
  - Data quality seems to be relatively high

- Rapid political change in CEE, but uncertainty re direction
  - Article published in May 1992
  - Soviet Union formally dissolved in December 1991

- Democratic political culture necessary, but not sufficient for democratisation
Research question

- Focus: support for . . .
  - Core democratic rights & liberties
  - Democratic institutions
- Structure of democratic attitudes (belief system)
- Distribution of attitudes → likely direction/shape of change
The ideal democratic citizen (Dahl)

- beliefs in individual liberty
- politically tolerant
- distrust of political authority
- trustful of fellow citizens
- obedient but willing to assert rights against the state
- supports the rule of law, democratic institutions and processes
Previous findings on SU political culture

- Strong authoritarian tradition
- Plus seven decades
- Strong support for ‘order’
- But
  - Urbanisation
  - Economic growth (at the time of the survey?)
  - Electronic media (?)
  - Rising levels of formal education
- Positive trend during early 1990s?
Seven sub-dimensions

1. Tolerance
2. Valuation of Liberty
3. Support for democratic norms
4. Rights consciousness
5. Support for dissent
6. Support for independent media
7. Support for competitive elections
Tolerance: Table 1

- Neo-Nazis, Homosexuals and Nationalists top the list
- ‘Pluralistic’ distribution
Tolerance: Table 2

- Not very tolerant
- But ambiguities
Liberty: Table 3

- Everyone likes liberty
- So: conflict between liberty and order
(Abstract) support for democratic norms: Table 4

- Soviets not so different from Americans
- What does it mean?
Right Consciousness: Table 5

- Rights claimed or granted?
- Not much different from Western Europe
Support for Dissent: Table 6

- Moderate/high levels of support
- Items ok?
Support for independent media: Table 7

- Medium/high levels of support
- Items relevant?
Support for competitive elections: Table 8
Expectations

- Effect of education unclear
- Wealthy people opposed to change, but who is wealthy?
- Women more conservative?
- Age/cohort: Stalinism as a watershed
- Communist party leadership?
- Opinion leadership
Results

- Strong effects of education
- Effects of age and gender
Summary

- Relatively high levels of support
- Possibly an outcome of modernisation
- Democratisation inevitable?
- Democratisation a value in itself or a means to toward economic change?
Class questions

- Which items/scales do you deem problematic?
- Is democratisation inevitable, and what does it mean for China?
- Has democracy flourished in Russia since 1992?