

# 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?