Reassessing Mass Support For Political and Economic Change in the Former USSR

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Using survey data collected in Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuanian in 1990–92, we reexamine findings reported by Finifter and Mickiewicz (1992). Our analysis indicates a significant link between political and economic reform orientations. Individuals who prefer political reforms of a democratic nature also favor a decreased role of the state in guaranteeing social well-being. In addition, our finding that better-educated Soviet and post-Soviet citizens are more likely than the less-well-educated to prefer individual responsibility for well-being is in direct contradiction to the findings reported by Finifter and Mickiewicz. The differences in the two sets of conclusions give rise to very different substantive conclusions regarding the economic and political changes now occurring in these societies.

Finifter and Mickiewicz (1992) present data from a survey of public opinion in the former USSR. They use these data to analyze some of the critical issues in the transition toward new political arrangements, including popular views of whether the state or the individual should be responsible for securing the well-being of the citizenry, as well as popular orientations toward political and economic reform. Their article warrants attention from a wide audience because it presents data from the “first large-scale true personal interview survey in the Soviet Union” (p. 859), because of the centrality of the theoretical issues they address, and because of some unexpected findings. They conclude, for example, that those who have obtained a higher level of education, as compared with the less-well-educated, may be more likely to prefer a strong governmental role in promoting social well-being. They also find significant similarity in the political and economic attitudes expressed by different ethnic subgroups across various republics of the former Soviet Union. Both of these findings are surprising in light of conclusions drawn earlier from the Soviet Interview Project and from research based outside of this region.

Given the importance of the issues that Finifter and Mickiewicz tackle, it is crucial to compare their findings with those obtained from other data so as to prevent preliminary conclusions from becoming accepted as “received wisdom” before they have been verified. Therefore, we reexamine several key arguments put forth by Finifter and Mickiewicz using data both from a series of three large-scale surveys conducted by the University of Iowa and the USSR Academy of Sciences (now Russian Academy of Sciences) in 1990–92 and from American National Election Studies (NES) data, which permit a broader cross-systemic comparison. Based on these analyses, we are able to reinforce and confirm some of their findings, but more importantly, our results contradict several notable conclusions reached by Finifter and Mickiewicz.

Specifically, our reexamination of these issues demonstrates that the proportion of those who believe that the individual, as opposed to the government, should be responsible for producing social well-being is rather close to the levels found among Americans. The average level of this individualism increased from 1991 to 1992, thereby casting doubt on the argument that 70 years of societywide Soviet indoctrination (although the socialization was admittedly less than fully effective) account for the levels found. In addition, differences in support for individual versus governmental responsibility are influenced significantly by variables (such as income and gender) that Finifter and Mickiewicz found to be unrelated to locus of responsibility and, even more significantly, by variables that they did not even include in their analyses (personal economic situation and rating of the Communist party). Furthermore, the better educated are more likely than the less-well-educated to prefer individual responsibility for well-being over governmental responsibility, thus directly contradicting the findings reported by Finifter and Mickiewicz. Another contradiction involves popular support for political reform, which, contrary to Finifter and Mickiewicz, is influenced by the respondent’s nationality. Finally, our data call into question Finifter and Mickiewicz’ argument that attitudes toward the locus of responsibility and toward political reform represent distinct dimensions, thereby permitting economic and political reform to move in different directions. Rather, our analyses show strong, positive correlations between the two even when controlling for other key factors.

The discussion and data analysis supporting these contrary conclusions proceed by first examining more fully the concept and measurement of locus of responsibility. Then we turn to testing the four major hypotheses guiding the analysis. The first hypothesis involves reexamining the relationship between edu-
cation and locus of responsibility. Our expectation is that the better-educated will be more supportive of individual responsibility. Second, using a multivariate analysis we investigate the hypothesis that political and economic conditions influence preferences for individual rather than governmental responsibility for well-being. Third, to test the hypothesis that nationality differences are a factor influencing political and economic attitudes, we include nationality as one of the independent variables predicting the locus of responsibility and political reform measures. The expectation here is that attitudes toward political reform should be influenced more strongly by nationality differences than are economic orientations toward the locus of responsibility. Finally, we examine the fourth hypothesis, which involves an expected relationship between attitudes toward political and economic reform.

Our analysis differs from that of Finifter and Mickiewicz in certain respects. Because we have data from only three former republics (Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuania), we cannot fully reproduce their analyses. We can, however, offer a more in-depth understanding and analysis of the relevant hypotheses in these three countries because our sample was designed to be representative of each of these former republics. (See the Appendix for a description of the data.) The Finifter and Mickiewicz sample, on the contrary, was not designed to be representative of particular republics but was supposed to represent the broader Soviet Union. Thus very few respondents were found in any given republic, except Russia. Also, with regard to questionnaire construction, although several of the questions asked by Finifter and Mickiewicz were very similar to those asked in our surveys, none of the items that they reported employed exactly the same wording as was used in our interviews. Because specific survey questions are slightly different, we do not reproduce any of their earlier published tables here for direct comparison. We do encourage the reader, however, to make those direct comparisons on their own. Also, to avoid problems associated with attempts to make direct comparisons across individual questionnaire items, we will employ multiple-item scales to tap equivalent underlying concepts. Our time frame is also different: the Finifter and Mickiewicz interviews were undertaken only once, at the end of 1989, while our interviews were administered in three annual waves beginning in the summer of 1990 and finishing in the summer of 1992. Because the 1990 survey included fewer survey items relevant to the analysis presented here, we will draw most heavily from the 1991 and 1992 survey data.1

LOCUS OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR WELL-BEING

As Finifter and Mickiewicz note, a core element of socialist ideology involves the locus of responsibility for social well-being. In order to gauge public support for ideological tenets, we focus on public perceptions of who should be responsible for individual economic well-being: the state or the individuals themselves? Under socialist systems, the state has assumed the major role in caring for individual well-being. As a matter of ideology (and also practice), the socialist state controls property, the means of production, and most aspects of the economy that directly influence one's economic well-being. Socialization within this system, therefore, could be expected to promote both an expectation that the state will continue to provide for social well-being and a preference for the state to assure a high standard of living for every citizen. On the other hand, preferences for individual responsibility are likely to be more prevalent in systems characterized by relatively more laissez-faire market economies. Given these cross-system expectations, the distribution of public attitudes toward the locus of responsibility for the former Soviet Union is of considerable theoretical importance.

The distribution of responses to the question on locus of responsibility for a sample of Russians, Ukrainians, and Lithuanians interviewed shortly before the August 1991 coup attempt and one year later are presented in Table 1. Comparing the responses of the total sample from the 1991 and 1992 studies to those reported by Finifter and Mickiewicz reveals a great deal of similarity. The comparison cannot be made directly, however, because the question asked in our surveys had a middle (pro/con) category, whereas their individual-versus-state-responsibility indicator was dichotomous. But when the percentages for our data are recalculated after excluding the middle category, the distributions are nearly the same as what Finifter and Mickiewicz report. In 1991 only slightly more than half (53.7%) preferred state responsibility and in 1992 the division was virtually the same as the 50.7% found by Finifter and Mickiewicz (see Table 1). Across the three former republics, only Russians displayed a statistically significant, although slight, shift toward individualism between 1991 and 1992. Lithuanians, however, expressed more individualism than did Russians or Ukrainians in both years, thereby confirming a finding reported by Finifter and Mickiewicz. Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, these attitudes, at least at the aggregate level, appeared quite stable across time. At first glance, therefore, this stability may be attributed to basic, enduring socialization.

Comparable data from the NES, however, provide a cross-national comparison suggesting that the distribution of preferences may have less to do with ideological indoctrination than with current economic circumstances and realistic judgements regarding what the Soviet state and successor governments could be expected to do under existing economic conditions. The 1988 NES dichotomous distribution excluding the middle category (see Table 1) had 64.1% preferring individual responsibility, signifi-
For state responsibility to strong preferences for individualism, 2 the set of four items included the variable discussed in Table 1, a question on concerns about economic inequality, an item measuring preferences for maintaining state or collective property versus the establishment of private property, and a question on attitudes toward “businessmen” (understood in the Soviet context to mean entrepreneurs). The text of the questions are presented in the Appendix.

Briefly, the pattern of responses to the three questions not already discussed tends to indicate a slight shift in an individualistic direction between 1991 and 1992. For example, 43% of the total respondents in 1991—as compared with 35% in 1992—felt that economic inequality was a grave danger to social stability. Also, 43% of the 1991 respondents said they had nothing in common with businessmen, whereas in 1992 that figure declined to 40%. On the question of owning property, among the 1991 sample 33% preferred state or collectively owned property, while 31% favored private property (the remainder wanted some combination). In 1992, the data revealed only 26% favoring state-owned property, while 43% preferred private property. This overall shift in the direction of individualism is also clearly evident in the mean value of the four-item locus of responsibility index. (Overall, the mean shifted from 6.72 to 7.13, where high values indicate support for individualism.) The index means also differed across republics. In both years, Lithuanians were more individualistically oriented (7.77 and 7.84 in 1991 and 1992 respectively) than Russians or Ukrainians (means of 6.67 and 6.73 for the two countries in 1991 and 7.07 and 6.83 in 1992), a difference that is not surprising given Lithuania’s historically closer ties with Europe and their early movement to secede from the Soviet Union. In 1991, Russian and Ukrainian preferences were not significantly different. However, the most rapid across-time shift in these attitudes occurred among Russians. By 1992, therefore, Russians were more individualistically oriented than Ukrainians.

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Source: University of Iowa’s Post-Soviet Citizen Surveys.

*The survey question scale initially ranged from 1 = state responsibility to 5 = individual responsibility for economic well-being. Here we have collapsed the scale as follows: 1-2 = state, 3 = pro/con, 4-5 = individual. The U.S. data employed a seven-point scale, so the collapsing was 1-3 = state, 4 = pro/con, 5-7 = individual.

*In this collapsing of the initial scale, we eliminated those responding 3 = pro/con and recalculated the percentages, still having 1-2 = state, 4-5 = individual. The U.S. data also eliminated the center category.
EDUCATION HYPOTHESIS

Our major concern with the Finifter and Mickiewicz report, however, is not the distribution of responses to the locus-of-responsibility questions. On the contrary, in the case where we have comparable questions, the estimate of the distribution derived from their data and that presented in Table 1 are very similar. Rather, the major problem is how these attitudes on responsibility for well-being are related to other variables, particularly such demographic variables as education and income.

Most surprising is the negative correlation they find with education, namely, that the better-educated favored state responsibility for well-being, whereas the lesser-educated favored individual responsibility (Finifter and Mickiewicz, 1992, 866). As Finifter and Mickiewicz point out, this negative correlation is contrary to that found earlier with data on Soviet emigres (Silver 1987). In addition, Duch recently found a correlation between education and endorsement of free-market culture variables (1993, 102) that was the opposite of the finding reported by Finifter and Mickiewicz (although we are not arguing here that the measures of free-market culture and locus of responsibility are tapping the same attitudes). The negative relationship reported by Finifter and Mickiewicz also runs counter to the correlation obtained with the single-item measure in our 1991 and 1992 data and even contradicts the relationship found with U.S. data (see Table 2). Moreover, the correlation between the four-item locus-of-responsibility index and education is positive and significant (.19 and .15 in 1991 and 1992 respectively). Given this overwhelming evidence, one can only conclude that the better-educated in both the former Soviet republics and in the United States are significantly more likely to endorse individual responsibility for providing a high quality of well-being than are the lesser educated. Thus, the results in Table 2 are not only consistent across time and cross-culturally, but they better match theoretical expectations than those presented by Finifter and Mickiewicz.

The interpretation that Finifter and Mickiewicz brought to the education relationship they found was twofold. First, they argued that the better-educated were really the ones who were benefiting from the material and psychic gratification provided by the Soviet state (1992, 866). Second, the better-educated were altruistically concerned about providing a safety net for the less fortunate in society, so that they were more supportive of the state bearing the burden of providing social welfare for its citizens (p. 867).

The data in Table 2, however, suggest a very different interpretation. It is more likely that the less-fortunate in the former Soviet societies realized their dire need for state support simply to survive. The better-educated, on the other hand, preferred a system that allowed for more individual initiative and entrepreneurship either because of materialistic motivations or because they desired more freedom and self-determination. Since they were more likely to benefit from a system that gave more emphasis to individualism, they were also more willing to accept greater individual responsibility for their own well-being.

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCE HYPOTHESES

The analysis presented by Finifter and Mickiewicz, however, went well beyond the correlation of education and locus of responsibility. To explain the variation and differences in locus of responsibility, Finifter and Mickiewicz utilized a multivariate regression analysis (1992, 869, Tbl. 8) incorporating a number of demographic variables and a measure of life satisfaction. A comparable analysis using our 1991 and 1992 data is presented in Table 3 (cols. 1–2, 5–6). As might be expected with a dependent variable that is a multiple-item index and thus is more reliable and has less-restricted variance than a single question, the explained variance for the equations presented in Table 3 is three times the magnitude of that found by Finifter and Mickiewicz. More importantly, only two of the six (excluding ethnicity controls) independent variables included in the equations—age and life satisfaction—exhibit relationships with the locus-of-responsibility measure that confirm the Finifter and Mickiewicz analysis. In both 1991 and 1992, younger Soviets and those with a more positive sense of life satisfaction were more likely than older and dissatisfied people to prefer individual orientations to government responsibility for social well-being. The regression coefficients for these two variables are similar to those displayed by Finifter and Mickiewicz (1992, tbl. 8).

The major discrepancies between the Finifter and Mickiewicz study and the data reported here arise with respect to education, gender, income, and ethnicity. The contradiction involving the education relationship was mentioned earlier. It is sufficient,
therefore, to note that the additional controls for other variables do not change the relationship observed in Table 2; that is, better-educated Soviets favored individual solutions to attaining well-being, while the lesser-educated were more likely to look to the state—exactly opposite to the finding reported by Finifter and Mickiewicz. Furthermore, Finifter and Mickiewicz reported that gender and income had no significant impact on locus of responsibility. The data in Table 4, on the contrary, reveal a consistent and relatively strong effect for gender: in both years, women were more likely than men to favor the state as the provider of social well-being. Likewise, Soviets with lower incomes, particularly in 1992, expressed the stronger preferences for the state as the guarantor of social well-being. Regarding nationality differences, Lithuanians were more supportive of individual responsibility than were Russians and Ukrainians. However, the impact of nationality will become more meaningful when we return to a broader discussion of this variable.

Except for life satisfaction, all the predictors included in the Finifter and Mickiewicz analysis were social-structural variables. As they point out, life satisfaction was included because it has been seen as a cultural attitude that influences the development of political democratization and economic reform (Inglehart 1990). We shall not here attempt to discuss or empirically examine a number of other theoretically relevant political and economic variables that go well beyond the largely demographic variables utilized by Finifter and Mickiewicz. We point out, however, that none of the variables used by Finifter and Mickiewicz indicate the extent to which locus of responsibility...
was a response to recent change in economic conditions. Also, none of their variables are explicitly political in nature, so they failed to capture the potential impact of contemporary political circumstances. In an effort to address these limitations, we shall briefly extend our investigation to an analysis of how public response to the economic and political circumstances of the time may have affected locus of responsibility orientations.

Earlier findings from political-economy research suggest that both economic and political circumstances could potentially influence public attitudes toward the role of government in guaranteeing the basic economic well-being of citizens, as well as support for a particular type of economic system. (For extensive reviews of this literature, see Kiewiet 1983 and Lewis-Beck 1988.) This research implies that perceived changes in national economic circumstances (sociotropic considerations) will influence collective economic evaluations more strongly than personal or "pocketbook" concerns (Kinder and Kiewiet 1979). Additionally, the earlier research suggests that prospective expectations of how economic conditions may develop in the future can influence political and economic orientations as much as retrospective assessments (Fiorina 1981; MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson 1992; Miller and Wattenberg 1985).

Duch has recently applied these various arguments to an analysis of survey data collected in the former Soviet Union in 1990 (1993, 591). In doing so, he hypothesized that Soviet citizens who were experiencing a deterioration in their own economic situation or perceived the national economy as deteriorating, as well as those who expected these economic failures to continue in the future, would be more likely to support free-market changes because they would blame the command economy for the current and future economic woes. This same argument could be extended to incorporate the impact of economic circumstances on attitudes toward the locus of responsibility. Also, if the Soviet regime was being blamed for economic failures, both national and personal, then we should expect that those citizens who were most negative toward communists should be most supportive of economic reform. We would hypothesize, therefore, that anticommunist sentiment should promote support for an individually oriented locus of responsibility throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s.

However, by 1991—and certainly by 1992, after the collapse of the Soviet Union—the impact of deteriorating economic conditions may have taken a different turn than that hypothesized by Duch (1993). Under perestroika (Gorbachev’s economic restructuring program), a good deal of lip service was given to new economic freedoms and the encouragement of new entrepreneurship. Indeed, by 1991, there were emerging signs of these changes. For example, citizen-owned cooperatives were starting to spring up. The collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 also produced a dramatic increase in the possibility for new entrepreneurship. Real economic conditions continued to deteriorate, but the possibility for individual economic improvement changed significantly during this period. An alternative hypothesis, therefore, is that those who were hardest hit by the collapsing economy needed to look to the state for assistance, whereas those who were actually doing equally well or better during this period, relative to the past, could only hope that they would do even better under a market-oriented, private enterprise system that gave more emphasis to individual responsibility.

The empirical evidence from 1990 to 1992 confirms that this was a period in which former Soviet citizens perceived a dramatic deterioration in their economic circumstances. The percentage of respondents reporting that their personal financial situation worsened “relative to the past year” rose from 40% in 1990 to 56% in 1991 and 61% in 1992. Over this same period, only 8–10% said their economic situation had improved relative to the past. Nonetheless, expectations regarding future economic circumstances actually became slightly more optimistic during this period. In 1990, when respondents were asked to look ahead one year, 63% said they would be worse off in the future. By 1991, respondents giving that pessimistic assessment had dropped to 49% and it fell to 45% in 1992. At the same time, respondents saying they would be better off in the future rose from 7% in 1990 to 11% and 15% in 1991 and 1992 respectively. Likewise, over this period of time former Soviet citizens were increasingly negative in their evaluations of the Communist party. Ratings of the communists became sharply more negative between 1990 and 1991 (rising from 49% to 60% rating communists negatively in the two respective years) and remained predominantly negative through 1992, when 62% rated the communists negatively.

Clearly economic and political circumstances in the former Soviet Union changed significantly between 1990 and 1992—but with what impact on broad economic orientations such as the preferred locus of responsibility? To answer this question and to test the hypotheses we have raised, the regression equations presented in Table 3 were recomputed after adding four new predictor variables to the analysis. The first two items are the retrospective and prospective assessments of one’s personal financial situation. The third measure indicates the respondent’s judgment of whether the national economy had improved or worsened during the past year, while the fourth measures evaluations of the Communist party on a five-point scale.

The resulting coefficients demonstrate that both personal economic change measures and attitude toward communists had a strong impact on preferred locus of responsibility in 1991 and 1992. Statistically, these new variables contribute nearly 10% more explained variance beyond that provided by the original set of variables in Table 3. The results suggest that changing economic conditions had a major impact on attitudes toward responsibility for economic well-being. Between the times when the two surveys were
in the field, Russian president Boris Yeltsin and his administration undertook a series of governmental measures that liberalized prices, ended government subsidies of some industries, and capped some wages. The result was hyperinflation that reduced or eliminated many people’s savings and replaced limited supplies of cheap goods with readily available goods that few could afford. To maintain an adequate standard of living for one’s family required most adults to scramble for extra income. This new challenge produced tension, fears for the future, and (for some) a higher appreciation of Soviet-era conditions. Those who succeeded in securing adequate income to keep pace with inflation were likely to enjoy the wider range of available goods, but those whose living standards fell were likely to be disillusioned with what is often called “barbarian capitalism.” Similar trends were underway during this period in Lithuania and in Ukraine—the latter because its economy was closely interconnected with the Russian economy. For these reasons, we would expect that individual success in surviving harsh economic circumstances would condition one’s outlook on market reforms. Indeed, the coefficients in Table 3 demonstrate that Soviets who felt that their own personal economic situation had improved or stayed the same were more inclined toward individualism than those who perceived a worsening situation. Similarly, respondents who were optimistic about future economic improvements were more likely to express support for individual responsibility. Also, those who rated communists very negatively were much more likely to place responsibility for social well-being with the individual than were those who rated communists more positively.

An unexpected result revealed by Table 3 is the weak statistical effect for concerns about national economic conditions. This finding contradicts those studies arguing that sociotropic concerns generally outweigh the impact of pocketbook concerns. The results obtained here, however, point to an important set of circumstances, relevant to contemporary Eastern European and post-Soviet societies, that condition the relative impact of pocketbook and sociotropic assessments. Because the economic deterioration in these countries has been so widespread and visible, a large majority perceive that the national economy has declined and will most likely decline even farther before it begins to improve again. Under these circumstances, similar to those of a depression in Western democracies, individual survival and opportunity become far more important to each person than concerns about what is happening at the national level. Indeed, by 1991 the perception that the Soviet national economy had worsened during the past year had become almost universal (92% of the survey respondents said it had worsened), thereby providing virtually no explanation for differences in attitudes toward the locus of responsibility. Despite slightly more variance in the 1992 public assessments of the national economic performance in these new post-Soviet countries, 85% of the combined respondents said that the national economy of their country had further deteriorated during the past year. Given such widespread pessimism about the national economy, it is understandable that differences in more immediate, personal concerns are predominant.

Including the personal economic situation variable in the multivariate analysis does more than just demonstrate the strong impact that short-run changes in the economy can have on broader economic orientations such as locus of responsibility. The addition of the personal economic variable also changes the interpretation that can be given to the social structural variables included in the equation. Variables such as age, education, and place of residence (urban/rural) have previously been used by some writers as indicators of longer-term change, such as socialization or modernization effects (see e.g., Hahn 1991; Lapidus 1989). However, each of these indicators can also be expected to be correlated with short-term fluctuations in economic conditions. For example, the quality of life among elderly people on fixed incomes will be influenced far more by rapid price increases than will the life-style of younger people. Having controlled for the confounding effects of recent economic change, the statistically significant social structural variables actually take on increased relevance as indicators of longer-term socialization effects and the impact of social change (e.g., modernization) on the development of individualistic responsibility.

Yet more revealing, however, is the substantial impact of anticommunist sentiment on locus of responsibility. Even without trying to impose a particular causal interpretation on this relationship, it is important because it demonstrates a substantial link between broader economic ideology and political evaluations. Support for the communist system and striving for individualism were clearly at odds. Indeed, a separate analysis for 1991 that went beyond Table 3 reveals that the highest levels of endorsing individualistic effort as the source of well-being occurred among those who were alienated from the all-union government while trusting the republic-level leadership. Clearly political orientations were among the most important factors affecting locus of responsibility. Moreover, the strong impact of anticommunist sentiment on locus of responsibility demonstrates that materialistic benefits were not the only motivations underlying broader economic orientations.

**SUPPORT FOR REFORM: NATIONALITY DIFFERENCES**

The inability to confirm the results presented by Finifter and Mickiewicz also extends to their analysis of Soviet attitudes toward political reform, especially as political reform relates to nationality differences. For example, Finifter and Mickiewicz conclude that “Russians, Ukrainians and Balts did not differ very much from each other in the degree of support for
political change” (1992, 862). Yet recent scholarship reveals that major forces for reform came from social and regional groups mobilized on the basis of nationalist symbols, grievances, and demands (Clemens 1991; Lapidus 1992; Motyl 1992).

Our hypothesis, which arises from our earlier work on identities (Miller, Hesli, and Reisinger 1993), is that nationality has a profoundly different impact depending upon the issue or policy area under consideration. More specifically, attitudes that relate directly to political reform can be expected to be more strongly influenced by nationality differences, while orientations related to economic reform and responsibility are less subject to nationality differences. These expectations arise from an understanding that the notion of political reform at the end of the Gorbachev era had clear anti-Soviet-state underpinnings and that support for political change often implied support for a restructuring of the Soviet system of authority. Thus political change became a rallying point for the multiple nationalist movements operating in the period from 1989 through 1991. Economic reform, however, presumably was less closely tied to nationalist aspirations, and a broader range of orientations toward state versus private ownership and economic responsibility should be apparent within national groupings.

To test the hypothesis that the relative impact of nationality depends upon the issue area, we included nationality as one of the independent variables predicting the locus of responsibility and the political change indices. Table 4 reports the distribution of a multiple-item index constructed by drawing from our surveys those items most similar to those employed by Finifter and Mickiewicz. The items include three questions from an agree/disagree battery:

1. It is better to live in an orderly society than to allow people so much freedom that they become disruptive.
2. These days Stalin is not given adequate credit for building of socialism.
3. Political reform in this country is moving too rapidly.

Also included in the index is a rating given of the Communist party, according to the following instructions:

Now we would like to get your feelings toward certain groups using a five-point scale, where 5 indicates a very positive view and 1 a very negative view. You may use any number between 1 and 5 to tell me how favorable or unfavorable your feelings are for each group. If you have difficulty answering, just tell me and we will go on to the next one.

These items were selected because of their internal theoretical consistency: each item represents an important aspect of the reform process. Item 1 corresponds most directly with Finifter and Mickiewicz item q22d, which makes reference to the trade-off between freedom and order. Item 3 corresponds to Finifter and Mickiewicz item q18, which makes specific reference to the pace of change. Item 2 is included because the repudiation of Stalin played a critical role in early efforts to legitimize the new reform effort. The reference to the Communist party is included because the focus of much of the reform effort was the intransigence, corruption, and lack of responsiveness of the Communist party.

It is noteworthy that both Russians and Ukrainians were generally less supportive of rapid change than were Lithuanians. Many of the explanations that have been offered in the literature for the relatively weaker manifestations of perestroika-era nationalism in Ukraine as compared with the Baltic countries, may account as well for the hesitancy of Ukrainians whole-heartedly to support rapid reform (see Armstrong 1990; Laitin 1992; Motyl 1987; and Nahylo 1991). Ukrainians from the eastern and southern regions exhibited levels of assimilation (russification) unmatched anywhere else in the Union, with the possible exception of Belorus. Adoption of Russian as their native language by Ukrainians in these regions was extremely high, while in West Ukraine (which was incorporated late into the Soviet Union during World War II and where most of the nationalists tended to reside) knowledge of Russian was much lower. Thus the majority of the population of Ukraine (found in the southern and eastern regions) were uncomfortable with the demands for radical change emanating from outside of their own region.

As of 1992, however, the republics were independent and formally in control of their own destiny. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, we might
expect the notion of political change to take on a different meaning—a shift that is suggested by the 1992 data in Table 4. In general, the data reveal a decline, as of 1992, in support for rapid reform (across all three national groups). Nevertheless, even after taking the general trend of declining support for political change into consideration, Lithuanians continued to exhibit stronger pro-reform orientations, thereby contradicting the Finifter and Mickiewicz findings.

Our longitudinal data also fail to support the Finifter and Mickiewicz findings regarding the impact of context on the attitudes of Russians residing in non-Russian republics. At the outset of the 1990s, approximately 24 million Russians lived in the non-Russian republics. This substantial presence of Russian minorities in a variety of places where the culture and climate of opinion is very different from that found in Russia raises the possibility that the local context may have influenced the attitudes of the nonindigenous Russians in a way that would produce preferences that differ from those expressed by Russians in Russia. Indeed Finifter and Mickiewicz contend that their data support the general argument that “the political attitudes of individuals who change their residential locations tend to be influenced by the political and social context into which they move; such individuals tend to change their attitudes in the direction of conformity with their new neighbors” (1992, 864). The evidence they provide in support of this contention is that Russians living in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine were very similar to the indigenous nationalities in terms of their attitudes toward political change (see p. 863). Likewise, they conclude that “the Baltic peoples . . . do not differ significantly from Russians in Estonia on support for political change” (p. 864).

Given that we have already demonstrated a similarity between Russians and Ukrainians in 1990 and 1991 in outlooks on the pace of change, the most telling comparisons involve a focus on differences between Russians and Lithuanians. As indicated in Table 4, indigenous Russian and indigenous Lithuanian attitudes toward change do differ, so that it is possible to test a hypothesis that predicts a similarity of attitudes between Russians living in Lithuania and Lithuanian nationals. Among Russians living in Lithuania in 1992, the group mean on the reform index is 4.96. This indicates that Russians living outside of Russia are very similar (as a group) to those living inside of Russia (see Table 4) but are different from Lithuanians. In fact, across all three years, the reform attitudes of Russians living in Lithuania are more similar to those of Russians in Russia than they are to those of titular Lithuanians.

The finding that Russians in Lithuania fail to share the attitudes of indigenous Lithuanians makes a good deal of sense. After all, Lithuanians on the whole were relatively negative toward Russia and Russians, sentiments that stem from their forced entry into the Soviet Union after World War II. Moreover, with independence came increased discussion about exclusionary policies that would make voting and the holding of public jobs dependent on the ability to speak Lithuanian—changes that could limit the opportunities for people who speak only Russian. Russians in Lithuania, therefore, would have good reasons to support slower change and to be concerned about possible social disorder, because they, as a group, would be disadvantaged by rapid change.

In order to assess the impact of nationality on support for reform relative to other potential social cleavages in post-Soviet society, we included nationality and a number of other demographic characteristics in a multiple regression predicting pro-reform attitudes. The particular demographic predictors included in the equations were selected so as to produce a multivariate analysis similar to the one presented by Finifter and Mickiewicz (1992, tbl. 8). Our analysis confirms the Finifter and Mickiewicz findings for a number of the predictor variables, particularly the effects for age, education, and gender on attitudes toward political change (see Table 5). The propensity of younger people to be relatively more supportive of political change is apparent in both 1991 and 1992. These age differences may reflect generational socialization effects, or they may indi-
icate that young people are better able to withstand the traumas of the times and are less negatively impinged on by dramatic changes in the system. Similarly, the more highly educated respondents were consistently more reform-oriented than their less-well-educated counterparts. We agree with the Finifter and Mickiewicz explanation that the principle beneficiaries of the recent political changes have more often been the better-educated sectors of Soviet and post-Soviet society (1992, 866). The results reported in Table 5 also confirm that women have been uncomfortable with the pace and direction of political change. Finifter and Mickiewicz interpret this finding as meaning that women are generally more conservative than men (p. 867). However, as we have previously argued, orientations toward reform are not necessarily a reflection of women being more conservative but rather of women perceiving the changes that are currently taking place as having a disproportionately negative impact on them (see Hesli and Miller 1993).

The rest of the multivariate analysis fails to support the Finifter and Mickiewicz findings. First, it is noteworthy that the power of the demographic variables to explain the variance in pro-reform attitudes drops over the period. The fact that these same variables could explain less variance in pro-reform attitudes in 1992 indicates that political change took on a different meaning after 1991. The decline in explained variance over this period may suggest that socialization and modernization effects were more important predictors of pro-reform attitudes in the early phases of the Gorbachev period but that other factors (presumably more current political and economic forces cutting across demographic cleavages) had greater impact at the end of the Gorbachev era.

Other contradictions involve the significant impact of Lithuanian nationality and the relationship with urban/rural residence in 1991. The Lithuanian case provides support for the hypothesis that even with controls for other demographic characteristics, Lithuanians expressed more support for political change than did Russians or Ukrainians. In addition, the magnitude of the coefficient associated with Lithuanian nationality is greater in Table 5 than in Table 3, indicating a more powerful impact of nationality differences on political rather than economic reform orientations. Place of residence (either urban or rural) also had an independent and significant impact on orientations toward reform in 1991. The direction of the relationship in 1991 indicates that people living in the rural areas were less comfortable with rapid reform than were their urban counterparts. It is noteworthy that the rural residence effect is not operative in 1992. If urban/rural differences can be explained by a simple reference to “greater conservatism in rural areas” (Finifter and Mickiewicz 1992, 868), then rural respondents in 1992 should also be more conservative. A full-fledged explanation of observed differences is beyond our present scope, but let it be said that the particular circumstances of the times must be taken into account when offering explanations for anti-reform orientations. Rural people cannot in all cases be assumed to be conservative and traditional. (For more on this argument, see Turner et al. 1993).

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORM**

The most telling discrepancy between the Finifter and Mickiewicz findings and our replication, however, does not involve these demographic relationships. Rather, the most important divergence in the two sets of findings involves the relationship between support for political change and attitudes toward the locus of responsibility for economic well-being. Finifter and Mickiewicz report that preferences on political change and broad economic orientations reflect two separate independent dimensions of Soviet public opinion. The implication of this multidimensionality of attitudes, according to Finifter and Mickiewicz, is that economic and political change could occur independently of each other and take very different directions, at least if public preferences have a strong impact on changes. Such a finding is not only unexpected but certainly contradicts much of the broader literature on political economy, as well as the suggestions of some analysts of economic change in communist states (e.g., Mason 1992).

To reexamine Finifter and Mickiewicz’s finding of no significant relationship between political and economic orientations, we employ data from our 1991 and 1992 surveys. The results resoundingly disconfirm the Finifter and Mickiewicz conclusion that two independent dimensions underlie these attitudes. Our data reveal a strong positive correlation between support for political reform and preference for individualism and a market economy (the Pearson correlation coefficients are .431 for 1991 and .453 for 1992).

However, given that similar demographic variables influence both sets of attitudes, the correlations might be spurious. A more stringent test of the interrelationship of political and economic orientations would be to examine that interrelationship while controlling for demographic correlations. Because correlations do not reveal the direction of causality, we face the question whether the measure of political reformism or the measure of economic reformism should serve as the dependent variable. Others’ recent analyses suggest, however, that political orientations have a stronger impact on economic outlooks than vice versa (Duch 1993; Gibson 1993). We therefore employ the locus-of-responsibility measure as the dependent variable in a multivariate regression. The results of this regression are shown in Table 6.

In both years, a strong positive association exists between support for political reform and a favorable view of individual initiative even after controlling for various demographic characteristics and the signifi-
The impact of the prospective measure remains un-
as powerful an impact in 1992 as in 1991, whereas bet-
 tween the two years deserves note. Even after same, or became worse over the past year had twice of the respondent’s family had improved, stayed the question asking whether the economic situation adding the political reform measure to the equations, of support for political reform improves the explana-
tory power of both years’ models beyond that ob-
tained in Table 3.

The results of testing this model are largely the same for the 1991 and the 1992 data. One difference between the two years deserves note. Even after adding the political reform measure to the equations, the question asking whether the economic situation of the respondent’s family had improved, stayed the same, or became worse over the past year had twice as powerful an impact in 1992 as in 1991, whereas the impact of the prospective measure remains un-

cant economic (retrospective and prospective per-
sonal financial situation) and life satisfaction variables employed in Table 3. Moreover, adding the measure of support for political reform improves the expan-
yory power of both years’ models beyond that ob-
tained in Table 3.

The picture that our data present seems clear. Mass orientations toward economic and political reform are not independent of each other: they do not oppose but rather reinforce one another in the former Soviet Union. Those most accepting of the former Soviet regime’s political institutions and norms look least favorably on marked norms and institutions, and vice versa. This relationship holds true for both years of our surveys and even when we control for such key societal cleavages as age and level of education.

**CONCLUSION**

How do we explain the discrepancies between our findings and those reported by Finifter and Mickie-
wicz? In part Finifter and Mickiewicz themselves provide the answer, as they acknowledge that “single items are generally less valid than multi-item indica-
tors” (1992, 861). Our analysis certainly does suggest that there were some problems with their Q22a as a single-item measure of attitudes toward the econ-
omic system. Whether these were problems of translation, question clarity, or data entry errors we do not know. To a great extent the discrepancies revealed by our analysis focus on that single item. Thus the validity of the entire data set is not nec-
asarily called into question. (For more on concerns about the validity of the earliest surveys coming out of the Soviet Union, see Miller, Reisinger, and Hesli 1993.) Of course, the rapid change occurring in the Soviet Union during the Gorbachev era could also have contributed to the differences between our re-
sults and those reported by Finifter and Mickiewicz. The longitudinal data presented here, especially in Table 4, reveal the significant shifts in attitudes toward political reform that were taking place during the last days of the Soviet Union. It is possible, therefore, that some of the discrepancies could be accounted for by attitude volatility rather than limi-
tations in the data.

Regardless of the discrepancies between the two sets of data, we should not lose track of the fact that on a number of points the various data are in agree-
ment. Moreover, such data, particularly the longitudi-

nal data, provide an empirical basis for verifying hypotheses regarding life and politics in the former Soviet societies. Clearly this is a tremendous improve-
ment over what could be done in an earlier period when the collection of such data was not permitted.

The longitudinal data, as well as the regressions presented in Table 6, demonstrate that Soviet public attitudes on economic and political reform were more interconnected and consistent than Finifter and Mickiewicz suggest (1992, 869). Individuals who pre-
ferred political reforms of a democratic nature also favored a decreased role for the state as guarantor of economic well-being. Being a political reformist,
therefore, does imply an abandonment of the socialist system in favor of increased individual responsibility even when it comes to the social welfare of citizens. In short, perestroika, which included policies that presumably promoted both political democracy and a shift toward decentralization, was a reflection of public preferences.

In addition, the longitudinal data reveal significant variation, both cross-sectionally and across time, in support for democratic and economic reform in the Soviet and post-Soviet societies. The analysis demonstrates that the explanations for this variation in public support for reform are complex and multifaceted. The self-interested pursuit of material benefits suggested by Finifter and Mickiewicz (1992, 870), is no doubt one factor accounting for the variation in support of reform. However, socialization, political ideology, and the public's response to current economic and political change may be even more important for understanding variation in support or opposition to continued reform in the post-Soviet societies. All of this, of course, leaves us with a challenging agenda for future research.

APPENDIX

The goal of the University of Iowa's Post-Soviet Citizen Surveys (PSCS) conducted in 1990, 1991, and 1992 was to interview a representative sample of adult citizens living in three Soviet republics: Lithuania, Ukraine, and the portion of Russia west of the Ural Mountains. The particular republics were selected on the basis of size of population, economic importance within the Soviet Union, and political relevance. Russia and Ukraine are the republics with the largest populations and highest gross national products among the 15 republics of the former Soviet Union. Although Lithuania accounted for less than 2% of the Soviet population, it was politically very important because, being among the Baltics, it represented the early moves toward secession from the Soviet Union. Primary funding for the surveys was provided by National Science Foundation Grants SES 90-23974 and SCER 90-09698.

In 1992, the samples were divided into strata reflecting the extent of urbanization, geographic region, the distribution of nationalities, and population density. The second stage of the sample involved selecting a random number between 1 and n as the starting point and then selecting every nth person from that starting point. No substitution of respondents was allowed. The overall response rates in the studies were high by Western standards: 89.4%, 83.7%, and 87.4% 1990, 1991, and 1992, respectively. The response rates were virtually the same for each republic.

Questionnaire Construction

The survey instrument was designed through a series of meetings between the United States research team and a group of Soviet scholars: Andrei Melville, Alexander Nikitin, and Elena Bashkirova. The questionnaire was translated from English into Russian, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian and back-translated in the Soviet Union and in the United States using native-speaking Russians, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians. This translation-back-translation process was carried out a number of times until an agreement was reached on the particular translation to be employed. Prior to the final revisions, a pretest was conducted in Moscow, Kiev, and Vilnius. Neither the questionnaire nor the interviewers gave any indication that the survey was part of a collaborative project involving American researchers. The average interview took 38 minutes in 1990 and 45 minutes in 1991 and 1992. All interviews were conducted from 18 May to 21 June 1990, from 20 May to 25 June 1991, and in late June 1992. All questionnaires were later transported to the United States, where they were used to code open-ended questions and to correct any data entry errors.

Interviewing

The interviewers were recruited and initially trained by staff from the USSR Academy of Sciences, Institute of Sociology in Moscow, under the supervision of Elena Bashkirova. In addition, the American investigators provided further interviewer training sessions prior to the start of each study period. During the interviewing period, the American scholars traveled to the various sample points to supervise the data collection and to be certain that appropriate interviewing procedures were being followed.

Our experience of having conducted three waves of interviewing in the republics of the former Soviet Union has served to reinforce the need to take standard precautions aimed at assuring valid and reliable data. In addition to the usual concerns about sampling, proper translation of questions, and the appropriate training of interviewers, we feel that any researcher conducting survey research in the former Soviet Union must spend time in the field supervising the data collection, as well as verifying the quality of the interviewing and the accuracy of the recorded data. In addition, it is incumbent on the researcher to retrieve and archive the completed questionnaires so they can be used for correcting data entry errors. Finally, as a contribution to the advancement of the profession and as a means of checking the veracity of published results, all data used in scholarly work should be made available to others for secondary analysis through the ICPSR. The authors may be contacted for a more detailed description of the surveys.

Questionnaire Items Used in the Locus-of-Responsibility Index

1. Some people say the government of Russia [Ukraine, Lithuania] should guarantee everyone work and a high standard of living, others argue that every person should look after himself. On this card is a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 signifies that the government guarantees everyone work and 5 that every person should look after himself. Which position corresponds to your view?
2. There should be a mechanism regulating income such that no one earns very much more than others. (agree/disagree)
3. Speaking only of Russia [Ukraine, Lithuania], what type of property would be best: private property, collective property or only state property?
4. Some people think that certain groups in society have too much influence on life and politics in Russia [Ukraine, Lithuania] and that other groups don’t have as much as they deserve. Do you think “Businessmen” have too much, too little or the right amount of influence?

Notes

We wish to thank Chia-hsing Lu and Andy Peebler for assistance in the data analysis and Peggy Swails for her secretarial assistance.

1. The data from the 1990 survey is now publicly available through the ICPSR. The 1991 and 1992 survey data will be available for reanalysis by the end of 1994.

2. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients for a four-item scale were .68 and .63 for 1991 and 1992 respectively.

3. For statistical significance, we are restricting the probability of type I error to less than .01. The item, however, had relatively little variance, so that some evidence of a relationship between evaluations of the national economy and locus of responsibility does exist.

4. Cronbach’s alpha for the proreform index in each of the three former republics for 1991 and 1992 is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Ukraine</th>
<th>Lithuania</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>.635</td>
<td>.635</td>
<td>.448</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. The regression analysis for 1990 is not presented in Table. All demographic variables, and the single attitudinal indicator have the same directional impact as in 1991 and 1992. The major difference is the fact that the set of variables explains a larger portion of the variance in 1990 as compared with the later years. We excluded 1990 from the regression analysis because the proreform index can be expanded to a 17-point scale if we rely only on the 1991 and 1992 data. In these years, the options given to respondents on the agree/disagree battery employed five options from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In 1990, the options were limited to agree, neutral, or disagree.

6. Finifter and Mickiewicz actually report a slight negative correlation between locus of responsibility and political reform (1992, 861). But on the very same page they also report that the results of a factor analysis demonstrate that Q20a, the single item measuring locus of responsibility “is orthogonal to the other items.”

References


