

EXPLAINING SUPPORT FOR VLADIMIR PUTIN: CULTURE VERSUS PERFORMANCE

©**Roman Nikolaev** is a Ph.D. student in Political Science at the School of Government and Public Policy, University of Arizona. He graduated from Fatih University, Turkey summa cum laude with degrees in English Language and Literature and Political Science and Public Administration. His research interests include democratic transition of the post-Soviet states, contemporary Russia and Russian political elites, and influence of culture and religion to politics. (rnikolaev@email.arizona.edu)

The leader of the 'new' Russia, Vladimir Putin, has had high popularity since the day he was elected as a president for the first time. Using the New Russia Barometer dataset, the paper tries to explain support for Putin for one of the years of the peak of his presidency (2004). In order to understand the support, I employ two competing theories – performance (in economic and political spheres) and political culture – which were suggested by the existing literature. The analysis, surprisingly, does not lead to significant results for performance in economic sphere, but political culture and performance in politics matter. As a result, I show that Putin embodies a figure of a strong leader that assures Russian population of stability (one of the features that Russians value a lot). At the same time the citizens pay attention to the accountability in the political arena – successes in political performance lead to the increase in support of Putin.

Key words: culture, performance,

Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union not only changed the international system, but also brought radical shifts in governing of the ex-Soviet states. Together with the collapse, there was fear of unpredictable future as well as hope for change. Russia, as the successor of the USSR, abandoned almost 70 years of authoritarianism when the political elites decided to turn to a more representative type of rule.

After the collapse, Russia stepped on the path of democracy and is said to be in transition up to the present day. During the first several years, the “new” Russia resembled to a country where democratic institutions started to appear – several different parties were established and the elections to the parliament seemed fair and transparent. Although it was a huge change, indeed, Russia approached to democracy only from the institutional part – all other factors relevant to the contemporary Western democracies the country has been lacking. All changed in 2000 when a new leader came to power. A young and energetic Vladimir Putin was seen as a good alternative to the previous president Boris Yeltsin. However, Putin’s stay on the political arena strengthened centralization of Russia and brought back the authoritarian tendencies that were supposed to diminish in the democratic transition.

If we put aside the authoritarian factor and look closer at the important feature of any rule – political support of the incumbent – we see that during the years of Putin’s presence on the political arena, his popularity, overall, has stayed very high. The main question of this paper is: “what factors can explain such a high amount of support that Putin has had?” The usual theory probably would link this question to Putin’s performance. If people enjoy how the incumbent performs, they support him more. However, the angle of this paper will be a bit different, because it will incorporate two theories of support. Using data from the New Russian Barometer (NRB), I am planning to look at two different angles of analysis – performance of Putin and the Russian political culture. I will analyze two competing theories in hope of understanding to what extent they might have influenced the support.

Answering the main question of the paper is significant in understanding the mindset of the Russian population. Depending on which theory can better explain the phenomenon, the result may lead to inferences which are important in explaining why Russia is still in a democratic transition and for 20 years has not incorporated democratic principles to the full extent.

The structure of the paper is divided into five main parts. In the review of the literature I am musing on the theoretical framework which explains why and how I chose my main research question and which works provided me with the highest insights. In addition, I show how my research fits in the literature. The review is divided into three main parts – each describing literature on one of the two main hypotheses, and the part which incorporates both. The next part explicitly describes the main theory and hypotheses. It also

touches upon the main concepts whose clear understanding is vital for the analysis. Observations and measurement are the topic of the following part, and the actual statistical analysis is in the next section. For the statistical analysis, the dependent variable that I use is support for Putin. The independent variables are derived from the hypotheses that compete with each other. There is a set of independent variables that describes performance as well as a set that incorporates aspects of the Russian political culture. For the quantitative analysis I use the New Russia Barometer data for 2004, collected by one of the most prominent public opinion centers – the All Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion (VTSIOM). The survey was created using multistage stratified random sampling. The interview places vary geographically, the age limits of the interviewees is 18-91 with the mean of 45 years old. I chose the year 2004 since it was one of the peak years of Putin's presidency. It was also a year of stability in-between the economic crises of 1998 and 2008, thus the crises would not anchor people's perception and would not give invalid results. I assume that in a year of economic stability the respondents' answers to the survey would be accountable enough to evaluate Putin's performance to the full. The final section is the conclusion where I evaluate all the findings and present ideas for the future analysis.

Review of the Literature

The theoretical framework of this paper stems from the work by Kornberg and Clarke (1992). In the discussion of the theories of support, they mention several influential ones, such as theories that “emphasize the subconscious and symbolic elements of support” and those “based on the effectiveness of the regimes” (Cornberg and Clarke, 1992: 20). This paper takes on those two approaches and operationalizes the former one as the theory of political culture and the latter as the theory of performance. Since this paper tends to test two competing theories, the literature review can be divided into three main parts: literature on the Russian political culture, literature on economic and political performance, and literature which incorporates both theories. I would like to start with the research made on the Russian political culture.

The background for developing my theory was found in the works by Broderick (2000), Gibson (1996, 2002) and others. The claim that “congruence of political culture and political system is a necessary condition for political support” (Rogowski, 1974: 6) is an insightful approach which shaped the theory of support being dependent on political culture. In addition, the other literature provided me with

the idea that the certain values of the Russian political culture might influence Russian perception of politics and have a significant role in understanding political support. Broderick made a qualitative research on the Russian political culture emphasizing favor for an authoritarian ruler as one of its main features. Through the strong historical evidence she offers, she is able to show that “political culture [...] can also be a hindrance to democratic consolidation” and that Russian political culture’s major principle is authoritarianism (Broderick, 2000: 152). Crawford and Lijphart mention that legacy of the communist past “casts a long shadow on the present, shapes the environment” (1995, p. 172), thus, prevailed communist “one man” political culture flows in minds together with this past. Another important idea is that they distinguish political culture in all post-Soviet countries from other countries’ saying that “common experience with Soviet imperialism and Leninist political systems separate their responses from those of other regions” (Crawford and Lijphart, 1995: 173). Another research on this matter includes the article by Gibson et al. where they state that one of the important features of political culture in Russia is the “desire for order” (1992, p. 334). Findings by Wyman (2007) support the claim that there is a need for the “iron hand” which brings stability and order. Because his data are of 1991, the reader can reflect on the type of the political culture which was in place during the birth of the new Russian state. Although twenty years passed since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the political culture of Russians has not fully changed to incorporate the tenets of Western democracies and still bears legacy of authoritarianism (Wyman, 2007: 37). Furthermore, a “strong, highly personalized form of leadership” is the overall feature of the Russian culture present in other literatures on the question (Wyman, 2007: 33).

All of the findings in the literature imply that order and stability which Russians are in pursuit of can exist in the country if it is ruled by a strong leader. If we make a comparison between the first two presidents of Russia Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin, I would argue that the latter has a higher rating and support because he embodies the cultural concept of a strong leader more than the former one.

It is important to note that political culture in itself is a very complex phenomenon. Instead of the analysis of the pure notion of political culture, the terminology I use implies perception of political culture. All the characteristics discussed above are the subjective features scholars develop in order to explain the phenomenon. Like Plato’s εἶδος, political culture in its ideal form is fully indescribable, it is the



analysis of the perception of culture that interests scholars – and this is the main concern of the paper within the relevant theory.

The performance theory is influenced by the works of Gibson, Mishler and Rose (2001) and others. The link between the development of economy and support of the incumbent seems to lack a thorough analysis in the literature, because that dependency is usually an assumption scholars make. In spite of it, there have been studies on the dependency of other features of political culture on economy, and within these studies I can infer the importance of economy for my theory. Gibson's research (2002) helps in finding those inferences. In his words, the overall literature presents the assumption that "support for incumbent at least is dependent on economy" (Gibson, 2002: 313). And it makes total sense since, logically, the richer people become the more favorable they behave towards the leader who improved the economy. In addition, the common wisdom dictates that political attitudes are caused by economic attitudes, and support for political reforms has a strong link with the performance of economy (Gibson 1996). Since political support is one of the various political attitudes, I may infer the importance of economic situation on public opinion about Putin. Although Gibson's own analysis shows that perceptions of economy do not have direct link with political tolerance (Gibson 2002), it does not mean that there is no effect on the support of the incumbent. Treisman (2011) follows the pattern that economic performance is the major factor determining popularity of the incumbent. He also adds that "personal style" of an incumbent might also have significant results (Treisman, 2011: 593) – this notion is coherent with the idea of the importance of political culture.

Broderick's empirical analysis shows strong ties between the development of economy and support for democracy in Russia (2000, pp. 147-149). Although her findings are from years 1991-1994, I can infer that citizens reflect on the economic situation and, consequently, approve or disapprove the government. The rational choice theory also suggests that factors of political performance of the incumbent should directly influence his or her support, since "no rational creature can be supposed to change his condition with an intention to be worse" (Rogowski, 1974: 25). Because of it, the theory of performance I am employing here would be a good alternative to the theory of political culture in Russia in understanding support for Vladimir Putin.

An important work which shapes the theoretical framework for my research question is the article by Mishler and Rose (2001). This

work incorporates the two main theories I apply, and is a good example of what has been previously done on the subject of study. Not only does it show that Russia is an “incomplete” democracy (Mishler and Rose, 2001: 305-307), thus supporting the assumption that Russia is in transition, but also it looks at different features of political support. The article has greatly influenced this paper because of the angle it measures political support. Mishler and Rose see the dichotomy within the independent variables, because they try to measure support using legacy of the old regime (that is the impression that the old regime left on people’s culture) from one side and performance from the other side (which is divided into economic and political performances) (Mishler and Rose, 2001: 307-310). This idea is crucial to the concept of political support. Even though the authors measured support for democracy, the strategy is also valuable for the support of the incumbent. This paper implies similar techniques in the measurement of the support for Putin.

Within their discussion on two types of measurement for political support – idealist and realist – Mishler and Rose adhere to the latter one, because it leads to a better understanding of the survey questions by the citizens, and, thus, allows for a more precise measurement. The critique the authors have for the idealist approach is that it confuses the interviewees with the abstract words such as democracy. The realist approach, on the other hand, makes a valid measurement of values and ideas in transitional democracies because it asks questions meant for a comparison between the old and the new regime. I think that the critique of the idealist approach is well argued in the authors’ article. Because of this, many of the independent variables I use are appropriate for the realist approach since they do not include abstract terms that may confuse the interviewees. The few idealist independent variables that I incorporate will be put under thorough explanation if they yield statistically significant results.

An important work by Rose et al. (2011) is probably the latest quantitative study done on political support in Russia. It also incorporates notions of political culture and performance. By stating importance of unity of Russia and Putin’s adherence to it, the authors use Marx’s quote that environment determines the consciousness of citizens (Rose et al., 2001: 84). The quote is relevant to the topic of study because it implies that historical background has the power to determine political culture of the population. At the same time, it is the main assumption I make for my hypothesis of political culture in Russia. The authors find it “self-evidently reasonable” to think that “the regime support depends on political values and government

performance” (Rose et al., 2001: 91). From this I can infer that support for the president can be explained in the same categories. However, it is important to understand which category matters most – that is why this paper makes these approaches compete. The cultural approach the work takes is that of the presence of authoritarian values in culture because of the historical developments. The performance approach evaluates the importance of economic performance with the dilemma whether it is national economy that matters or individual household situation (Rose et al., 2001). I take this idea into the actual regression, where among the independent variables I use are variables showing both types of economic change. From all the features that political performance incorporates in the study, I take equality before law as one of the independent variables, since lack of the equality has been one of the greatest problems in the Soviet Union and Russia. By logical reasoning, evaluation of political performance of the incumbent should depend on the amount of the equality before law that Russia has relative to the past, along with other variables discussed in the measurement section.

As the reader can see, the tools I am to employ had been previously incorporated in several other works. However, to my knowledge, they (apart from Treisman 2011, although the model is different) have not been used to explain support for an incumbent. This paper fits this gap – it uses the known tools to explain a new dependent variable.

The literature discussed above engages into the topic of support from different angles and uses different means. The main ideas, however, support the relevancy of both hypotheses I propose in the next chapter.

Concepts, Theory and Hypotheses

Conceptualization and operationalization of concepts are important features of every academic work. In order to be on the same track with the reader, there is a need of precise definitions of the main concepts. In this section, I would like to reflect upon the three main concepts that shape my theory – political culture, political support and performance.

The abstract definition of political culture involves beliefs, values and attitudes of the citizens of a state towards politics (Gibson, 2002; Shively, 2007; Garner et al., 2009). Shively adds that the concept inherits the term “culture” from anthropology which is the



organizing concept of the way of thinking in that field of study (2002, p. 161). However, when speaking about culture, anthropology implies not only the mental but also material values. In order to operationalize this concept for this study, I leave the material values side away. The concept of political culture that I employ covers a set of beliefs and attitudes which are cumulative (meaning that the new knowledge is added) and common (meaning that the ideas are spread across the population). Political culture is said to change slowly, even to have generational pattern (Gibson, 2002: 313). A sort of Hegelian *zeitgeist*, political culture depends on history, ideological background and the contemporary changes in politics. Subjective history of a state highlights the “victorious” moments and they tend to remain in the minds of the population letting them to think in a particular way. The idea of the “Golden Past” is also a very relevant phenomenon that can influence political culture of an individual. Furthermore, if people find themselves in an ideology (especially, if it is a state ideology), it influences their sets of beliefs and attitudes, thus brings change to political culture. Contemporary changes, I would argue, is a weaker phenomenon compared to the two previous phenomena, because in order to get validity for and assuredness of one’s beliefs, substantive amount of time ought to pass. Nevertheless, contemporary changes may invoke an urge for a change in attitudes and beliefs. Political culture of a person can be analyzed by a survey which would ask for comparative attitudes towards states, governments, politicians, political values etc.

Political support in its conceptual terms is related to “citizens' adherence to the principles or ideals” of the issue or a person (Mishler and Rose, 2001: 303). This paper talks about personal political support. It implies that political support is the condition when a number of citizens feel inclined toward a particular person’s political views, performance or appearance. They do not only feel this inclination, but want it to continue for longer time. In a case when political support depends on political views of a person, there is an ideological base of the support. When performance is considered as a sufficient condition for support, misperformance may bring the downfall of it. When people support a person because of his or her looks or/and charismatic personality, support, I would argue, would be strongest due to the fact that appearance is not quality which can be easily taken away. Political support of the last category can be measured by the analysis of political culture and parallelization of the vivid patterns in it with the characteristics of the politician.



Performance is the last importance concept I employ. In general terms, performance is the level of accomplishment of a task. For this paper, however, performance is the evaluation of a person's deeds by the general public. The performance I employ here is divided into economic performance – evaluation of the condition of the economy under Putin's presidency – and political performance – evaluation of Putin's deeds with relation to politics and social life. Performance can be measured by asking people about the rule of law, corruption and other social issues, and also about performance of the incumbent on the international political arena.

The theory of this paper seeks to explain the high amount of support for Putin during a year of his presidency. I do not draw a parallel between support for Putin and support for democracy in Russia, since Putin is not an embodiment of a democratic leader, and Russia during his presidency was an "undemocratic regime" (Rose et al., 2011). If it was democratic and if Putin was seen as the one bringing democracy to the country, the question of support might have been associated directly with the growth of democracy. Since this is not the case, the theory I employ has lack of institutional definitions (such as democracy), but rather has cultural and practical empirical sides in it. The two main hypotheses come directly out of the literature review and the concepts.

The first one takes from a culturalist perspective, because it claims that support of Putin depends on the Russian political culture. It implies that Putin is seen as an embodiment of a leader who is thought to be in favor by the Russian consciousness and mentality. The argument is that because of the legacy of authoritarianism and "one man" political culture, in addition to stability and unity of the state which Russians seek, Russian political culture will have a favor for a strong leader with the significant amount of authoritarianism. Hence, the more authoritarian values political culture has, the greater support for Putin will be.

The second hypothesis is concerned with performance. Because of the literature I analyzed above, I assume that performance of a politician influences his or her support. In Putin's case, the better Putin performs the greater support he will have. Since I divide performance into two parts, they will reflect the change and relative condition towards the past in both spheres – economy and social and political life.

The overall theory is to compete the two hypotheses and test to what extent they influence the support. I do not expect that there will be a

certain “winning” hypothesis (meaning that all independent variables of one of the hypotheses will yield enormously significant coefficients). They may both have coefficients that are significant for the analysis. Rather, I want to see their influences on the independent variable and contrast in relation to each other. The theoretical framework I employ deals with importance of both hypotheses, so it is important to test both of them and what aspects of each one influence the support.

Observation and Measurements

This paper is a study which can be best described as the available-data analysis. I use the New Russia Barometer data set which was collected by the All Russian Center for the Study of Public Opinion VTSIOM – one of the main independent centers on public opinion research in Russia. The data set I use was produced by the multistage stratified random sampling. The interview places vary geographically, the age limits of the interviewees is 18-91 with the mean of 45 years old.

The data were collected in March, 2004 after Putin’s second victory on the presidential election. The interviews were done with face-to-face contact. With the response rate of 75.2 percent, the total complete interviews number is 1602. However, due to some missing data for some variables, the actual regression employs a smaller number. Although the interviews were meticulously prepared to decrease the threat to validity, we must acknowledge that nevertheless there might be some difficulties regarding the data set. The possible threat to validity might be history. Although it was a stratified random sample, there may be an option that in Russia there is still a fear of authority. The population might have answered so positively about Putin not because they believe so, but because they might have possessed the Soviet mentality and have thought that the interviewer worked for an intelligence agency. Another way history may affect some surveys is present when we look at the outside events that happened before the survey was held. For example, the 2009 survey was held right after the world economic crisis. This might have influenced in a negative way the perception of economy and thus made the test invalid. An economic crisis is usually not an instant phenomenon – the economic conditions get worse much earlier leading to the crisis. Therefore, the drawbacks in economy might have started in 2007, whereas the crisis is attributed to 2008. The year I choose to analyze the data from – 2004 – is almost in the middle of two major economic crises Russia experienced in the modern history – crises 1998 and 2008.

Therefore, 2004 bears stability in economy and politics, which is extremely important since it does not anchor people's opinion with other matters.

Maturation can also be of a great concern to validity. The questionnaire is very long, so the interviewees might have felt hunger, or might have been concerned about other business. Therefore, there is a possibility that they did not give enough thought for the answer because they were in haste. Because it is the available-data analysis, there is nothing to do about the maturation problem. However, due to the substantively large number of respondents I hope that maturation occurred within a minor group, thus not influencing much of the outcome.

There is another important limitation which stems from the assumption that the distance between the categories in variables is the same. Since the variables I employ are ordinal, i.e. not interval which would be better for the analysis, I must assume the equal distance between categories, because otherwise the measurement will not be fruitful. Some variables, such as my dependent variable, have 1 – 10 or -100 – +100 scale which can be regarded as quasi-interval. However, the limitation with those variables (especially with 1 – 10) is that they do not fully incorporate a desire of a person and thus are not fully exogenous. For example, for some more enthusiastic people 10 may be different from less enthusiastic people, because if there was a more extensive scale they probably would have given a greater score than 10. This is a quite serious limitation; however, since there is a possibility of having quasi-interval variables, the regression is still able to provide us with substantive results. Furthermore, it seems that the Gauss-Markov assumptions are pursued well with a possible exception of the omitted variables – there may be some other important independent variables, but due to the nature of available-data analysis, they might be omitted.

In order to show the measurement, there is a need to tie together concepts and variables. As I described earlier, the three main concepts I use in the paper are political support, political culture and performance. For political support, which is my dependent variable, I use Vladimir Putin's rating whose scale ranges from 1 (the lowest) to 10 (the highest) scores. Almost 65 percent of the sample approve Putin with the score of 6 and higher. This is how I operationalize support.

Operationalization of political culture consists of several independent variables. They measure citizens' consciousness towards a strong authoritarian leader. The first variable seeks to see how citizens think about the place where they would like Russia to be on the democratic scale. It is a 200 unit scale with complete dictatorship being -100 and complete democracy being 100. This variable allows the reader to see whether complete democracy or life under authoritarian leader is what is desired. The next two variables ask for the attitude on suspension of parliament and elections and on using tough dictatorship as a means of improving the current situation. They have 1-4 scales. The next 1-4 scale ordinal variable measures the "one-man" political culture of Russia, because it asks whether president has a right to suspend the parliament and rule by him or herself. The variable after that is a dummy variable which asks whether it is good when all power is concentrated in the hands of Putin. The next variable asks whether it is better to see Russia as a great power or have high standards of living. It is a dummy variable with 1 being a great power. The last variable asks whether there has been a change in a political order during Putin's time vis-à-vis Yeltsin's period. Its scale is 1 to 5, and it is an important realist variable which can suggest whether the desire of order can influence Putin's support.

Variables for the operationalization of performance can be divided into two main parts – political and economic performance. Variables of political performance include evaluation of the current political system with the scale ranging from -100 to +100. Avoidance of corruption (and thus execution of the rule of law) is also an important feature of political performance (Mishler and Rose 2001); therefore, another variable would ask whether there was a change in the equality before law in the country in Putin's term vis-à-vis Yeltsin's period (1-5 scale). The next variables ranging on the 1-5 scale describe the realist approach of the comparison between the current situation and the old regime on the matters of freedom of speech, influence of citizens on government, possibility of illegal arrest and fairness of the treatment of citizens by the government. These variables are very significant in the sense that they let the reader see if there was a significant change in the political system since the USSR. The next realist variables are the change in Putin's time compared to Yeltsin for the following situations: bringing order to the society, social protection of the poor, and lowering crime levels. These variables are on the scale from 1 to 5. All the variables account well for the political and social performance of Putin's regime relative to the previous time.

The variables for economic performance include assessment of the work of current economy. It has a scale from -100 to +100. The next variable is for the individual economic situation. It asks to rate the economic situation of the family. Its scale ranges from 1 to 4. The last variable accounts for the realist approach because it asks to give comparison between the current economic situation and economy of the past. Its scale ranges from 1 to 5. More information on the variables can be found in Table 1.

Table 1.

Table of Descriptives					
Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Support for Putin	1561	6.47	2.25	1	10
Current econ system scale	1455	8.87	40.81	-100	100
Current family econ. Position	1589	2.86	0.67	1	4
Econ. Position compared to the past	1450	2.39	1.15	1	5
Current polit. regime scale	1421	12.95	41.69	-100	100
Freedom of speech (Now/past)	1540	1.75	0.85	1	5
Unlawful arrest (Now/Past)	1438	2.51	1.02	1	5
People can influence gov-t (Now/Past)	1464	2.84	0.96	1	5
Equality before law (Now/past)	1544	3.56	0.81	1	5
Soc. protection of poor (Now/past)	1557	3.53	0.81	1	5
Lowering crime (Now/past)	1538	3.18	0.81	1	5
Fair treatment of citizens by gov-t (Now/past)	1465	2.96	1.07	1	5

Polit. order (Now/past)	1563	3.66	0.76	1	5
Polit. regime in 5 years	1133	44.54	36.43	-100	100
Approval of Parliam. Suspension	1353	3.07	0.82	1	4
Dictatorship – only way out	1453	3.21	0.87	1	4
President can rule by decree	1424	3.05	0.9	1	4
Great power vs. High quality life	1563	0.41	0.49	0	1

Statistical Analysis

The statistical model I have employs the OLS regression. It is a usual tool in understanding the relationships between the dependent and independent variables. My biggest task in this regression is to understand what factors influence support for Vladimir Putin. I expect beta coefficients for some independent variables to be at least two times greater than the standard error. It will show that the variable is significant in understanding the dependent variable.

Table 2 shows the empirical specifications and results. As the reader can see, the variables on the economic performance are non-significant. It means that we basically can say that support for Putin may not be explained significantly by the economic performance during his presidency. It is a surprising result, because the insights of the literature I explained above (eg. Mishler and Rose) placed a high value on dependency of support on economic performance. Maybe the reason is that the literature explained support for democracy rather than support for an incumbent. However, common sense suggests that if people live better economically, they support the president who is thought to have brought these economic changes. The other explanation for the result may be that the improvement in economy had not been as good as would have been enough to increase support. This seems a more plausible explanation since the Russian economy still struggles to provide benefits for everyone.

Political performance, on the other hand, seems to be more important for the support. Three variables among the political performance yield very significant results. The first one is the realist variable of the change in equality before law in Putin's period

compared to Yeltsin's period. The coefficient is more than three times larger than the standard error. Furthermore, when change goes up by one unit, support for Putin increases by 0.32 which is a significant result. Another important result is for the change in the social protection of the poor. It also seems to account for the support since it also is almost three times higher than the standard error. Its coefficient is .29 which shows the change in Putin's support per unit change of the social protection of the poor. The last variable with significant result measures change within treatment of citizens by the state in Putin's time vis-à-vis the old regime. Its coefficient is more than twice greater than the error. Hence, the one unit increase in fair treatment of the citizens by the government, results in .17 increase in Putin's support. Political performance results support the claims made by the previous literature, and it indeed influences support for the incumbent.

Political culture of Russian citizens also provides significant empirical results. Change in political order during Putin's term can be attributed to both political performance and political culture. I employ it for the latter, because, as literature above suggests, desire of order is what influences Russian attitudes to politics. And, indeed, the results show empirical support for this claim. The coefficient is almost four times greater than the standard error. It also suggests that by one unit change in order, support for Putin increases by 0.41. It is a very significant result which implies that desire of order is strong and positive towards support of Putin as the embodiment of a leader who can bring the order.

The next two variables with the significant results are similar in a sense that they both ask for a possible suspension of the parliament. The first one, however, asks normatively if it is better to have parliament and elections suspended, whereas the second one asks about the right of a president (i.e. main figure in "one-man" political culture) to suspend the parliament and rule by presidential decrees. Both variables result in significant coefficients. The former's coefficient is three times greater than the standard error, and it is strong and positive with the value of .27. Hence, the more people think it is better to suspend parliament and elections, the greater support Putin gets. It is not such a surprising result because authoritarian tendencies are still present in contemporary Russian society. The latter variable has a strong positive coefficient with the value of 0.4. It is four times greater than the standard error, and implies that the more people think that all the power should be in the hands of the president, the more they support Vladimir Putin.

Such high coefficients for both variables suggest serious support for “one-man” political culture in Russia.

The last variable with the significant result is the expectation of the regime in five years. It has a coefficient of 0.02 which is quite low, but its standard error is almost six times lower than the coefficient. Hence, one would think that the more democratic a society is, the greater support Putin will enjoy. However, this variable is not that simple, and the result may mislead the reader. According to surveys, we know that the majority of Russians would like to have a democracy “in accordance with national traditions” (Mishler and Rose, 2001: 75). As I explained earlier, one of those “traditions” is having a strong leader who can keep unity, stability and order. So, if one thinks that the result of the regression for democracy variable explains that Putin brings Western-type democracy to Russia, he or she is misled. What is meant by “democracy” is the Russian type of it which has notes of authoritarianism to reach the goals which Russian political culture poses. Therefore, the more the regime turns to what is expected by political culture, the greater support Putin enjoys.

As the reader can see, both hypotheses – performance and political culture – have some values that influence the support. In the performance variables, I found that economic performance does not have substantial influence, but political performance has. Theoretical half of the initial hypotheses was shown to support political performance as a possible reason for the support of Vladimir Putin. The second hypothesis also was supported by empirical results, therefore, it is possible that the interplay political performance and political culture results in the increase of political support of the incumbent.

The model accounts for 35% of variation. It is not much, but explaining one third of the model is not a bad result within the available-data method. The model could be strengthened by having additional data since the variables I employ do not cover all aspects of both hypotheses.

Table 2.

Regression Results					
Support for Putin	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	P> t	95% Confid. Interval
Economic Performance					
Current econ. system scale	0.001	0.002	0.53	0.593	-0.003 .005
Current family econ. Position	-0.1	0.1	-0.94	0.349	-0.31 .11
Econ. position compared to the past	0.002	0.06	0.03	0.978	-0.11 .11
Political Performance					
Current polit. regime scale	-0.002	0.003	-0.54	0.591	-0.007 .004
Freedom of speech (Now/past)	-0.09	0.09	-1.04	0.299	-0.27 .08
Unlawful arrest (Now/Past)	0.07	0.08	0.82	0.415	-0.09 .23
People can influence gov-t (Now/Past)	-0.05	0.09	-0.57	0.569	-0.23 .12
Equality before law (Now/past)	0.32	0.1	3.28	0.001	.13 .51
Soc. protection of poor (Now/past)	0.28	0.11	2.6	0.01	.07 .49
Lowering crime (Now/past)	0.01	0.1	0.09	0.927	-0.18 .2
Fair treatment of citizens by gov-t (Now/past)	0.17	0.08	2.17	0.03	0.02 0.32

Regression Results					
Support for Putin	Coefficient	Standard Error	t	P> t	95% Confid. Interval
Political Culture					
Polit. order (Now/past)	0.48	0.11	4.25	0	.26 .71
Polit. regime in 5 years	0.014	0.003	5.11	0	.009 .02
Approval of Parliament suspension	0.27	0.09	2.96	0.003	.09 .44
Dictatorship – only way out	0.02	0.08	0.24	0.807	-.15 .19
President can rule by decree	0.39	0.08	4.91	0	.23 .55
Great power vs. High quality life	0.08	0.14	0.61	0.542	-.19 .35
_cons	-0.35	0.84	-0.42	0.675	-2 1.3
Number of observations = 721	R-squared = 0.3524, Adj. R-squared = 0.3367		Root MSE = 1.7703		

Conclusion

Although the regression showed variables which can significantly influence support, there is no winner between the competing hypotheses that I employed. Both, performance and political culture of the Russian society influence support for Putin. All of them, however, do it in different ways. Regression showed that economic performance does not have much influence on support, but performance in political and social spheres does. This finding is important because it allows the reader to think that there is still a notion, which is valued by Russians, of accountability of a politician. If he or she performs badly in political and social spheres, support of his or her may decrease. There is the Western democratic principle

of accountability in this idea, hence, there may be an understanding that Russian citizenry does not fully succumb to authoritarianism. On the other hand, since authoritarian values are still present in the Russian political culture, a strong rule is to be favored by the citizens. It seems that the results show us that the interplay between performance and political culture will guide Russian politics for some time more. Even though the survey was done in 2004, the situation in 2011 has not changed much, because de facto Putin still has a big influence on the ruling of the country. However, since performance (which is getting lower) and political culture still fight for dominancy in support, Russia is a quasi-democracy – a democracy on the borderline. And little by little, it seems that performance is getting a higher position in this struggle. The best example of it can be seen in the results of the recent Parliament (Duma) elections on December 4, 2011 where Putin's party could not get 50% of the votes. It is a sign that the Russian perception of ruling changes, and that although authoritarian culture is present in people's minds, it changes towards the greater incorporation of the performance variable.

I would also like to show how this research is good in practice. I would argue that since a substantive part of my findings of 2004 results shows the preference of a strong leader, the politicians who can show strength in character will be more successful in the elections than those who cannot do so. However, it also implies that the elected politicians will have to have a good performance; otherwise staying for the second term will not be possible. Hence, if a politician has a charismatic personality which is supported by a relatively good performance, he or she will enjoy support of the majority. The research shows that strong personality and performance are two sides of a successful politician in Russia.

The research I undertook is not perfect. I acknowledge that there are weaknesses and threats to validity which I described in the measurement section. Since it is a research based on available data, there are not many ways to improve it. Since the sample is large enough, I assume that deviations which depend on maturation and other threats will not significantly influence the result. I also assume the quasi-interval nature of the variables. If the variables were truly interval, I would be able to talk of the result with the greater assuredness.

In the future research, it would be interesting to make a cross-time analysis of performance and political culture to see how these categories developed and what is the current stage (i.e. if the

hypotheses are still valid up to date). It is hard to do it right now since full NRB data for 2010 and 2011 are not available yet (the available part covers only 2011 Duma elections). It is also possible to compare support for the leader and its reasons in the former Soviet Union countries. Because of the fact that for 70 years they shared the same history with Russia, there should be some similar patterns. However, there are clear differences in democratic development between, for example, Russia and Belarus, and Russia and Lithuania. Why such differences exist can be a great research question for the later works.

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