

Civic Community, Communist Support, and Democratization in Russia: The View from Smolensk

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By many indicators, Smolensk seems to approximate the ideal of a civic community. It has many clubs and cultural associations. Local companies sponsor numerous public social and cultural activities, such as the Smolensk soccer club and a public medical facility. Moreover, Governor Prokhorov is active in voluntary associations and is very athletic; he even refers to his administration as his “team.” Voter turnout meets or exceeds the country’s average in elections, sometimes by as much as 15 percent. Do these facts mean that Smolensk is a civic community in Putnam’s sense of the word? And, more important, will these attributes facilitate Smolensk’s transition to democracy and the free market?

Smolensk has other attributes that seem to be at odds with its civic qualities—it is staunchly Communist and plagued by corruption. In the Duma elections of 1993, 1995, and 1999 and the presidential elections of 1996, the Smolensk electorate gave greater support to the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) than any other party. Moreover, the regional assembly is controlled by a Communist Party faction, and the region’s governors have either been members of the CPRF or carried Zyuganov’s personal endorsement (as was the case with Prokhorov). Perhaps more disconcerting, members of the regional procuracy and Ministry of Internal Affairs have been linked to organized crime groups in the oblast. Why is it that the civic engagement we find strongly associated with democracy and effective democratic governance in the West seems to be correlated with support for the Communist Party and with political corruption not only in Smolensk but across Russia?¹

Smolensk: A Thriving Civic Community?

Smolensk is an average-sized oblast located in Russia’s central region along the border of Belarus, approximately 400 kilometers southwest of Moscow. Situated

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along the historic route from Western Europe to Moscow, Smolensk has also been cursed with a rich history, as the city has served as the first line of defense against invaders, from the Teutonic Knights to Napoleon and Nazi Germany. The inscription on the fortifying wall that surrounds the capital city's ancient center signifies this aspect of its past: *Smolensk—shchit Rossii* (Smolensk—the shield of Russia). Smolensk's important historical role was recognized in 1985 when its capital city was honored with the Soviet designation "gorod-geroi" (heroic city). Today, Smolensk's location is more propitious, as it is situated along the main rail and road route between Europe and Moscow, giving it a favorable commercial location.

Smolensk has a population of nearly 1.2 million, 94 percent of whom are ethnically Russian, with an additional 4 percent being of Belarusian and Ukrainian ethnicity. The region has a strong industrial base and is relatively urbanized. More than one-quarter of the region's population lives in the capital city of Smolensk, with another 10 percent residing in one of the region's other large cities (Roslavl' and Vyaz'ma). Economically, Smolensk is in a depressed economic state, as are most of the regions of central Russia. It has not, however, suffered any major financial crises, nor has it been the recipient of major amounts of foreign aid. Finally, the population of Smolensk is relatively well educated, and public information is easily accessible (see table 1). Based on several of its attributes, Smolensk can be considered an "average" Russian region, in some ways similar to a "Middletown," USA.

Despite the region's many typical qualities, Smolensk has certain attributes that make it stand out from the rest of the country. As noted, its populace is very active in voluntary and cultural associations.² It is in the top quarter of Russia's regions in terms of the number of clubs and cultural associations.³ In comparison with other regions in central Russia, Smolensk has by far the largest number of labor and professional associations, with 1,169.⁴ This is in comparison with 621

TABLE 1. Comparative Socioeconomic Indicators for Smolensk Oblast and the Russian Federation

Indicator	Smolensk Oblast	Regional average
Education (residents with some higher education per 1,000)	772	798
Degree of urbanization (percentage)	69	66
Degree of industrialization (percentage)	93	84
Newspapers (number published per 1,000 persons)	22	36
Clubs and cultural associations (total)	757	676

Source: The First Book of Demographics of the Republics of the Former Soviet Union (Shady Side, MD: New World Demographics, 1992), F-3-F-5; *Demograficheskii Ezhegodnik Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (Moscow: Goskomstat Rossii, 1994), 22; *Sravnitel'nye Pokazateli Sotsialno-ekonomicheskogo Polozheniya Naseleniya Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (Moscow: Goskomstat Rossii, 1995), 29-30, 479-81; and Christopher Marsh, *Making Russian Democracy Work: Social Capital, Economic Development, and Democratization in Russia* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1998), 152-54.

in Vladimir or 541 in Kaluga. Although Moscow oblast contains 980 such organizations, Smolensk greatly exceeds this number on a per capita basis. In fact, across a wide range of various nongovernmental organizations, including political organizations, Smolensk outstrips all of the other regions in central Russia on a per capita basis.⁵

Another civic attribute that makes Smolensk stand out is its high electoral participation rates. For every election, beginning with the Congress of People's Deputies elections in 1989, turnout rates have met or exceeded the average for the country as a whole by as much as 15 percent (see table 2). Perhaps more important, Smolensk's electoral turnout exceeds that of many advanced democracies—including the United States.

In addition to electoral participation, competition for elected offices is also high. As an example, in the 1998 gubernatorial election, at least five serious candidates ran for the office of governor. In the December 1999 Duma elections, nine and twelve candidates ran in Smolensk oblast's two single-mandate districts, respectively. Moreover, the candidates in those elections represent virtually the entire political spectrum, from Zhirinovskiy's bloc and the Union of Rightist Forces to the Communist Party and the Pensioners' Party. Many others choose not to affiliate with any party, thus widening the field further. Some candidates justify such a position by running on the platform that they represent the interests of constituents, not parties.⁶ The strong electoral competition that this represents provides the people with a wide choice at the polls and contributes to the formation of political pluralism.

TABLE 2. Comparative Voter Turnout Rates for Smolensk Oblast and the Russian Federation

Election	Smolensk Oblast	Regional average
1989 CPD elections	94	87
1991 presidential election	82	76
1993 referendum	71	64
1993 referendum and elections	65	54
1995 Duma elections	68	64
1996 presidential elections—1st	72	69
1996 presidential elections—2nd	69	68
1999 Duma elections	59	59

Source: Data compiled from L. Smirnyagin, *Rossiiskie Regiony Nakanune Vyborov-95* (Moscow: Yuridecheskaya Literatura, 1996), 155; Tsentral'naya Izbiratel'naya Komissiya, *Vybory Deputatov Gosudarstvennoi Dumi 1995* (Moscow: Ves'Mir, 1996), 51–52; Tsentral'naya Izbiratel'naya Komissiya, *Vybory Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii 1996* (Moscow: Ves'Mir, 1996), 48–49; and Federal'nii Informatsionnii Tsenttr, 1999 and 2000 (<http://www.izbircom.ru>).

Note: The regional average was calculated by summing the turnout rates for each of the regions and dividing by the number of regions. The figure represents the variation in electoral turnout among the regions.

Contrary to what the literature on civic engagement and democracy in the West might lead one to expect, Smolensk's civic community has consistently put its strongest support behind the Communist Party in practically all elections held since 1991. The Communist Party enjoys the largest faction in the regional assembly, the governor from 1993 to 1998 was a member of the party, and his successor had the personal endorsement of Zyuganov himself. Given this track record, it is no surprise that the Central Electoral Commission of the Russian Federation characterized Smolensk as "monolithic opposition."⁷ Smolensk and similar regions are commonly referred to as part of the so-called red belt.

If the Communist Party and its politicians are effective at governing, support for them should be considered democratic. Is this the case, however, or is there another explanation for the phenomenon? These questions are not only significant for the people of Smolensk and Russia as a whole, they are also important for scholars engaged in the study of democratization the world over. To answer them, let us first examine the role performed by the civic community and what other scholars have found regarding its function and utility, both in Western countries and in Russia.

Civic Community, Democracy, and Democratization

The common assumption in the academic literature on the civic community is that a strong causal relationship exists between civic engagement and democratic success. Whether it be Putnam's study of Italy, in which the civic community and social capital are found to be responsible for the democratic success of Italy's northern regions, or his work on the disappearance of social capital in America and the decline of civic virtues in our country, an underlying assumption is that civic engagement leads to a more vibrant and democratic polity.⁸ Putnam, of course, is not the only scholar to comment on such issues. Sandel, Elshtain, and others also attribute aspects of the failures of American democracy to our nation's civic decline.⁹ Moreover, the topic has not proceeded without considerable debate.¹⁰ It is important to understand, however, that the debate does not center on whether civic engagement and social capital play a positive role in democracy. The main points of contention are the way in which civic engagement is measured and whether the disappearance of social capital has actually occurred.¹¹

It did not take long for the increased attention to civic engagement in the study of American democracy to spill over into the study of postcommunist democratization. After all, if a civically engaged citizenry and a vibrant associational life are necessary in any democratic polity, these issues need to be explored in democratizing countries such as Russia. Several studies have sought to explore the issue on a variety of levels of analysis, from the detailed study of one region, to the attempt to measure quantitatively civic community in all of Russia's subjects.

Of the numerous studies of the various functions of civic engagement and civil society in Russia, only a few have looked explicitly at the impact of these factors on regional governance and democratization. The first comprehensive examination of civic attributes and regional politics is Stoner-Weiss's study of the performance of regional governments in post-Soviet Russia.¹² In this ambitious study,

Stoner-Weiss looks at the role performed by social capital, as measured by associational membership and societal-level trust, to explain why some regional governments have performed better than others in the post-Soviet period. She concludes, however, that these factors had little to no impact on performance, with a region's level of economic concentration being the most powerful determinant.¹³

One scholar who has found a strong correlation between the existence of a civic community and democratic success in the post-Soviet transition is Nicolai Petro.¹⁴ In his study of Novgorod, Petro finds a vibrant associational life and a responsive local government—confirming the relationship between civic community and democratic effectiveness found in America and Western Europe. The relationship, moreover, seems to be causal, as Novgorod's civically engaged public promotes the efficiency of democracy in the region.

Finally, in a recent cross-regional study of the correlates of democratization, a strong quantifiable relationship between civic community and democratization was found.¹⁵

Although the civic community was positively correlated with indicators of democratization, such as electoral participation and competition, the relationship between the civic community and support for Yeltsin in the 1996 presidential election actually proved to be *negative*. This means that the civic community may actually contribute to support for the Communist Party and other opposition groups. Indeed, the civic community was positively correlated with support for Zyuganov in those same elections, as this is the statistical inverse of support for Yeltsin (discounting the percentage that voted against both candidates). This relationship holds true on the regional level of analysis for several regions of Russia, including Smolensk. It does not explain, however, why the civic community seems to support the Communist Party and its candidates. Such a question is not reliably investigated in a large-*N* cross-regional analysis. A more detailed look into the actual political situation in one such region is necessary.

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Post-Soviet Smolensk under Communist Rule

The fact that Smolensk's civic community consistently supports the Communist Party and its candidates would make perfect sense if the officials elected were efficient and effective administrators, and this then formed the basis for the electorate's support. It is important to bear in mind that Communist Party members—and this is particularly true in local politics—are often among the most well-qualified and experienced candidates for positions in government administration. If such politicians are effective at governing, their support by the electorate must be considered democratic. After all, that would not be altogether different from Italy, which had a strong socialist party throughout much of its postwar history.

In Smolensk's early post-Soviet administration, under Governor Glushenkov, who held that post from 1993 to 1998, the region did better than the average Russian region in terms of exports (it ranks third in the central region behind Moscow oblast and city), most likely because of its advantageous location along the rail and road ways from Moscow to Minsk and Warsaw. Although the region has been relatively successful economically, Glushenkov had very little public support and actually received quite a bit of blame for the region's ills. In the local press he is labeled "ineffective," with a local pundit declaring that the people of Smolensk would "not remain on their knees in the service of Glushenkov."¹⁶ Low public support in a civically engaged community means only one thing—defeat at the polls.

When the next gubernatorial election rolled around in spring 1998, the electorate was intent on getting rid of Glushenkov. In a poll conducted in April 1998 that rated the candidates, incumbent Glushenkov received only 15 percent of public support, while Smolensk mayor Alexander Prokhorov received an overwhelming 62 percent.¹⁷ A few weeks later, Prokhorov emerged victorious over Glushenkov and several other contenders to capture the governor's seat.

Following Prokhorov's election, the press immediately expressed its delight. He was referred to as "young and energetic" (he was forty-five when elected and was the youngest candidate), and he was believed to "know the situation better than all the others."¹⁸

By many indicators, Alexander Prokhorov epitomizes a civic-minded leader. He is active in voluntary associations and clubs and is a nationally competitive chess player. Prokhorov, a one-time international basketball champion,¹⁹ even refers to his circle of advisers as the "team" (*komanda*). Insofar as a politician's character can be gauged by such activities, Prokhorov seems to approximate the ideal of a civic leader.

Although Prokhorov defeated the Communist Party incumbent, his election did not actually bring an end to Communist rule in Smolensk; Prokhorov had the personal endorsement of Zyuganov and has continued to maintain close ties to the CPRF. Shortly after Prokhorov's election to the post of governor, he helped to install one of his close protégés as mayor (I. Averchenkov).²⁰ Prokhorov's electoral campaign was financed by Alexander Shkadov, the general director of Kristall (Russia's largest diamond processor). Not only was Shkadov considered Prokhorov's "political father,"²¹ but Prokhorov's wife is also the chief of personnel at Kristall. Shkadov was said to have paid for Prokhorov's luxurious house and elaborate vacations in Greece.²² In early August 1998, Shkadov was killed by a professional assassin, a further comment on the actual political climate in Smolensk.²³ It is still unclear who was responsible for Shkadov's murder, although the speculation is that "Shkadov had too much economic, political, and social influence for his own good."²⁴

Recently, Smolensk has become the subject of an investigation into the criminal activities of several local officials, including officials of the law enforcement and tax agencies. Although the scope of corruption is still unknown, the Russian general procurator has filed more than two hundred criminal cases dealing with tax evasion, embezzlement, and other economic crimes.²⁵ The situation is so dire,

in fact, that President Putin has ordered the procurator to look into replacing some of the implicated officials. Prokhorov, outraged at the allegations, has agreed to replace the heads of seven regional agencies, and may even make Presidential Representative Viktor Timoshenkov his deputy governor.²⁶ It is still too early to determine the causes and culprits of this latest turn of events; it is clear, however, that politics in Smolensk more closely resembles clientelism than effective democracy.

Clientelist and corrupt politics in Smolensk does not, of course, disprove the efficacy of the civic community. All that can be expected is that, once given the opportunity at the voting booths, the engaged electorate "will vote the scoundrels out." Perhaps Prokhorov was viewed as a civic leader, and that served as the basis for his strong popular support during the 1998 gubernatorial election. The fact that he has turned out to be less civic than expected does not exclude the efficacy of Smolensk's civic community, nor its existence. It only shows its failure to achieve the desired outcome. The next gubernatorial election is not scheduled until 2002, so we must look elsewhere if we hope to shed further light on the relationship between Smolensk's civic community and its support for the CPRF.

Civic Engagement, Strategic Coordination, and Electoral Structures

We must also consider the possibility that although Communist Party candidates have emerged victorious from the elections, this may not be the outcome desired by a majority of the electorate. Electorates do not always get the leaders they desire because of coordination problems. Russia's recent legislative elections provide us with the opportunity to examine the situation and to determine if coordination problems contributed in some way to Communist victories in Smolensk.

In December 1999, Russia had its third set of elections to the State Duma, the lower house of the Russian Federal Assembly. The Duma is composed of 450 deputies, half elected in single-member districts and half chosen from party lists. Each voter receives two ballots, one to cast for a candidate in his or her electoral district, and one to cast for the party of one's choice.

As in the Duma elections of 1995, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation received the largest share of the vote, with 24.29 percent (see table 3). The newly formed movement Unity (*Yedinstvo*), also known as *Medved'* (Bear), received the second-largest total, with 23.32 percent. The Fatherland-All Russia (FAR) bloc came in third, with 13.33 percent. From there, support dropped off dramatically, with the remaining three parties that passed the 5 percent threshold receiving less than 10 percent of the vote. Although twenty parties failed to pass the 5 percent threshold, 81.37 percent of the votes cast went to parties that did meet the minimum requirement. This is a dramatic improvement over the elections of 1995, when only four out of forty-three parties passed the threshold, resulting in a legislature elected by slightly more than 50 percent of the population.

The district-level results for Smolensk differ in two important ways from the national-level returns. First, support for the first- and second-place parties was substantially higher in Smolensk, with the CPRF and *Medved'* together receiving approximately 58 percent of the vote, compared to 47 percent on the nation-

TABLE 3. Comparative Results of the 1999 Duma Elections

Political Party	Percentage of Vote		
	Russia	Smolensk district	Vyaz'ma district
Communist Party	24.29	31.37	31.69
<i>Medved'</i> (Unity)	23.32	26.41	27.11
Fatherland—All Russia	13.33	6.69	6.3
Union of Rightist Forces	8.52	7.33	5.72
Zhirinovskiy's bloc	5.98	6.78	7.12
Yabloko	5.93	less than 5	less than 5

Source: Smolensk statistics were furnished by the Smolensk Branch of the Central Electoral Commission. The nationwide data are from the Central Electoral Commission's Web site at (<http://www.fci.ru>).

al level. This is an important development, for if Russia is going to develop an effective party system it must reduce the number of parties in the legislature to a manageable number. Giving the majority of its support to only two parties contributes to that process.

Second, although only five parties passed the 5 percent threshold in Smolensk, this represented 78 percent of the ballots cast. Although this means 3 percent more ballots cast were "wasted" in Smolensk (went to parties that did not pass the threshold) than the national average, it also means that a larger percentage of ballots were cast for fewer parties. Again, this contributes to the development of a manageable party system, both directly by eliminating fringe parties and indirectly by providing an incentive for such parties to unite and coordinate their actions. This points to a potential problem in democratizing states. For newly democratic polities to be successful, they must have active and interested electorates, competitive elections, and effective political parties and movements. Those factors do not operate in a vacuum, however, as electoral outcomes are affected by the institutional structures within which they are generated.

In Russia, that is clearly visible by the failure of liberal and reform parties to coordinate strategies. As Cox points out, "A group with enough votes to elect some number of candidates in a given [legislative or executive] race will in fact elect that number only if it can make its votes count by concentrating them appropriately."²⁷ If multiple parties or candidates compete for the votes of the same segment of the electorate, for instance, a smaller but unified segment of the electorate may prevail at the polls despite their lower support numerically. For example, with an electorate that is composed roughly of 60 percent liberal voters and 40 percent conservative, if two liberal parties or candidates compete against each other they may split the liberal vote evenly (30 percent each), in which case the unified conservative minority (40 percent) would prevail at the polls. In such a scenario, the majority is unable to make its votes count because of coordination problems.

That is precisely what happened in Smolensk. Parties such as the Union of Rightist Forces, *Medved'*, and Fatherland-All Russia, which are all ideologically close, split the reformist vote and reduced their influence by running against each other in the Duma elections. The net result was that the Communist Party won a plurality with less than 25 percent of the vote, although together the three liberal parties secured 45 percent.

Those results do not create an insurmountable obstacle for a parliamentary system, however, because a coalition of closely aligned parties can form in the legislature and command a majority. In Russia, coalition building among those parties has not taken place, as they compete vigorously for support from the same segment of the electorate and have little interest in working with each other. That is why *Medved'* joined a coalition with the CPRF, to the dismay of Fatherland-All Russia and the Union of Rightist Forces. Although this gives the Duma a working majority, a coalition of such diverse parties is not very conducive to the legislative process.

Moreover, that is not the most pressing concern facing the development of democratic institutions in Russia. Although coordination failures among Russia's parties may lead to problems, any party that passes the threshold still gains representation in the legislative body. Considering the ephemeral nature of Duma coalitions and the weak party cohesion regarding voting in that body, those deputies are not excluded from the legislative process and still play an important role. When seats are determined by single-member districts, however, the losers do not gain admission into any institution and their constituencies are not represented. Under such electoral rules, if ideologically similar candidates fail to coordinate, they split the vote and allow an ideologically distant candidate to win—an outcome in neither their interests nor those of their constituency. That is the most pernicious result of failed coordination and may in fact be the cause of Smolensk's "support" of the Communist Party.

Liberal Failures and Communist Victories

That Communist support in Smolensk is the result of failed coordination is readily apparent when considering the electoral results in the region's two single-member districts, Smolensk district 169 and Vyaz'ma district 168 (see table 4). The Communist Party incumbents won in both districts despite the fact that both ran very meager campaigns, while their competitors were very active and used the media extensively. Considering that the CPRF also won a plurality in the party list vote, the CPRF was the big winner again. One factor contributing to the result is that, as Krasnovsky points out, the rural electorate was the most active segment of the electorate in both districts,²⁸ and the rural population has continually proved to be the most supportive of the CPRF across Russia.²⁹

In both of Smolensk's single-member districts, support for the Communist Party candidates was approximately equal to the support given to the CPRF in the party list vote. In the Smolensk district, for instance, the CPRF received 31.37 percent, while Luk'yanov, running on the Communist Party ticket, received 31.88 percent in this district. Communist Party candidate Abramnikov won in Vyaz'ma

TABLE 4. Single-Member District Results of the 1999 Duma Elections

Candidate	Party	Percentage of vote received
Smolensk		
Anatoly Luk'yanov	CPRF	31.88
Yevgeny Kamanin	Yabloko	22.21
Sergei Kolesnikov	Independent (liberal)	18.88
Vyaz'ma		
Dmitri Abramenzov	CPRF	24.20
Viktor Derenzovsky	Fatherland—All Russia ^a	21.57
Vladimir Kishenin	Independent (liberal)	12.39

Source: Electoral results as published in Krasnovsky, "Vybory-99." Information on individual candidates was obtained from the local press and from interviews with Igor Irasnovsky and members of the Smolensk branch of the Central Electoral Commission (December 1999).

^aAlthough Derenzovsky is the head of the local branch of FAR, he actually ran as an independent and not under the party's name during his campaign. I use his party affiliation here simply to label his political orientation.

district in a slightly different scenario, however. The CPRF received 31.69 percent of the party vote (statistically identical to the results from Smolensk district), but Abramenzov received only 24.2 percent of the vote (which, interestingly, approximates the national average for support of the CPRF). In fact, he barely edged out the entrepreneur Derenzovsky, who received 21.5 percent. Despite the fact that Communists won in both districts, therefore, this did not account for more than 32 percent of the votes cast.

In fact, a liberal opposition exists in both districts that exceeds the support for the CPRF. In both Smolensk and Vyaz'ma districts, the second and third place finishers were liberal, reform-oriented candidates. Together, their support exceeded that of the Communist victor in each district. For instance, the second and third place finishers in Smolensk district together received more than 41 percent of the vote, and in Vyaz'ma they received approximately 34 percent. Moreover, the race in Vyaz'ma was very close, with the fourth and fifth place candidates each receiving slightly more than 7 and 6 percent, respectively. That shows a particularly egregious case of failed coordination, as the reformist segment of the electorate split its support among four candidates. It also seems to be symptomatic of Russia's fledgling electoral system, in which candidates often do not sufficiently distinguish themselves from one another, that voters have extreme difficulty deciding whom to support, and the net result is failed coordination and minority victories at the polls.

Civic Community, Divided Opposition, and Communist Support

There are several lessons to be learned from the Smolensk case. First, it is a mistake simply to equate electoral victories by the Communist Party and its candidates with popular support for the CPRF. The true nature of the situation becomes clear

when actual voting patterns are examined. Communists may be successful in elections, but that is not the outcome desired by a majority of the electorate. Rather, it is the result of failed electoral coordination among voters and candidates.

Although 30 percent may favor the Communist Party, a majority of the people in Smolensk favor reform candidates. In each district, the second-, third-, and fourth-place candidates were liberal reformers. By giving the electorate such a large choice (more than eleven candidates ran in each district; eleven is the national average), however, these candidates split the votes of those who wished to support more liberal, reform-oriented candidates. This occurred not only in the district races but for the party-list competitions as well. By failing to coordinate strategically, voters handed the election to the CPRF. That is a pattern for what has been taking place across the country.

The situation can be remedied in several ways. First, the liberal opposition must stop dividing itself. This can occur at the pre-entry and post-entry stages, so that like-minded candidates compete for the support of parties and campaign supporters prior to elections. Then only serious candidates are left for the voters to choose from. One reason party development in Russia is so crucial is that parties can develop primaries and caucuses, which allow the electorate and party members to choose among candidates before facing the opposition.

Unfortunately, many candidates in Smolensk oblast ran on the platform that they were not members of any party and therefore not bound by any party line, but rather they were free to protect the best interests of their constituencies. Although it sounds very attractive to have one's elected representatives representing one's interests, the sad reality is that such candidates cannot compete effectively, and they and their constituencies then lose out. Of course, the irony is that the Communist Party of the Russian Federation is perhaps Russia's most firmly established political party. By competing so effectively against other leftist parties, such as the Agrarians, they face only the disorganized liberal opposition.

The electorate itself must also start to calculate which candidates stand a serious chance of victory and make strategic calculations based on that assessment. There are few obstacles to their doing so because public opinion polls are conducted regularly in Russia, including in Smolensk, and they are published in the local press. Moreover, Smolensk's civic community should be a tremendous resource in the process, because it is a civic community that is likely to be informed. Unfortunately, institutional structures are slow in teaching the electorate their effects. Perhaps with time both the reformist candidates and their constituencies will recognize that fact and take appropriate measures.

There is another significant finding. Smolensk and many of the surrounding regions are part of the "red belt," the Communist Party's traditional stronghold, where its support hovers around 30–35 percent compared with a national average of 20–25 percent. If Communist support here is based on failed coordination, then other parts of Russia are even less supportive of the CPRF.

Smolensk may, in fact, be distinguishing itself from the rest of the red belt. Although it supported the Communist Party again in December 1999, in almost the same numbers as in 1995 (31.8 percent in 1996, 31.37 percent in 1999), there

was considerable support for Union of Rightist Forces and *Medved'*. Moreover, although Luk'yanov won, his support decreased slightly from 1995, from 37.1 percent to 31.88 percent. Local journalist and political pundit Igor Krasnovsky maintains that Smolensk voters "no longer march along in a Communist column. Real political pluralism has now appeared among us."³⁰

If Communist support is actually an unintended consequence and the result of failed coordination, it would mean that in an election in which the liberal opposition was not divided, a Communist candidate would lose despite receiving about 30 percent of the vote. That is precisely what happened in the 2000 presidential elections in Russia. Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov received 34.78 percent of the votes cast in Smolensk (compared with the national average of 29 percent), but Vladimir Putin won with 52 percent. Putin's support was higher in urban areas, hovering around 60 to 66 percent, and lower in the rural regions, and Zyuganov actually defeated Putin in two rural districts of Smolensk.³¹

Putin's victory is attributable not only to the fact that Communist support in Smolensk did not exceed 35 percent, but also to the electorate's support of him personally at the expense of other candidates. Perhaps the people realized that their votes would be best used by supporting Putin instead of another liberal candidate such as Yavlinsky. Krasnovsky attributes Putin's support to the people's faith in Putin personally and their instinct to support him and thus preserve the nation.³² Either way, the results of the 2000 presidential election seem to indicate that the people of Smolensk no longer support the Communist Party and can coordinate when the occasion demands it.

Smolensk's civic community seems at times unable to perform its proper function because of institutional constraints and incentives presented by the electoral system. With the passing of time and future elections, it is to be hoped that the candidates and the electorate will learn how to play by the rules of the electoral game. And with its civically engaged electorate, perhaps Smolensk will learn this lesson quickly.

NOTES

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1. See Christopher Marsh, *Making Russian Democracy Work: Social Capital, Economic Development, and Democratization* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000).

2. Following Nicolai Petro ("The Novgorod Region: A Russian Success Story," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 15, no. 3 [1999]: 242), it is interesting to note that both Novgorod and Smolensk are in the top quarter of all Russian regions in number of clubs and cultural associations on a per capita basis. A comparison of civic life in the two regions would make an interesting study but is beyond the scope of the current analysis.

3. Data collected by Valeriya S. Kalashnichenko, Special Order Department of

Goskomstat, in Moscow. See Christopher Marsh, "Making Russian Democracy Work: Social Capital, Economic Development, and Democratization in Russia," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Connecticut, 1998, 152–54.

4. Larry Dershem and Valeri Patsiorkovsky, *Needs and Capacity Assessment of the Third Sector in Central Russia: Kaluga, Yaroslavl', Smolensk, Tula, Tver', Vladimir, Ryazan', and Moscow Oblasts* (Moscow: Save the Children, Civic Initiatives Program, 1997).

5. The only exception to this trend regards the number of physical and sports associations, which number 1,200 in Yaroslavl', and account for over half of all of that region's associations. The average number of physical and sports associations registered in the other oblasts of central Russia is 90 (Smolensk has 86). In their study, Dershem and Patsiorkovsky do not mention why Yaroslavl' seems to be such an extreme case.

6. One candidate who quite explicitly took this position was Sergei Kolesnikov, an unsuccessful Duma candidate from the Smolensk district. See Sergei Kolesnikov, "Khochu Gordit'sya Svoei Stranoi," *Robochii Put'*, 17 December 1999.

7. Tsentral'naya Izbiratel'naya Komissiya, *Vybory Deputatov Gosudarstvennoi Dumi 1995* (Moscow: Ves' Mir, 1996), 193.

8. Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), and "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (1995): 65–78.

9. Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial* (New York: Basic Books, 1995); Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); and Francis Fukuyama, *The Great Disruption: Human Nature and the Reconstruction of Social Order* (New York: Free Press, 1999).

10. For a balanced account of the role of civic engagement in American democracy, see Theda Skocpol and Morris Fiorina, *Civic Engagement in American Democracy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press and the Russell Sage Foundation, 1999).

11. For a strong counter-argument to Putnam's "Bowling Alone," see Everett C. Ladd, "The Data Just Don't Show Erosion of America's 'Social Capital,'" *Public Perspective* 7, no. 4 (1996): 1, 5–22.

12. Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, *Local Heroes: The Political Economy of Russian Regional Governance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

13. *Ibid.*, 198.

14. Petro, "The Novgorod Region," 235–61. See also his forthcoming book, *Jump-starting Democracy*.

15. Marsh, *Making Russian Democracy Work*, and "Social Capital and Democracy in Russia," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 33, no. 2 (2000): 183–99.

16. Tatiana Asadova, "S Takim Gubernatorom Voennym Dolgo Ne Vidat," *Smolenskie Novosti* 54 (1998).

17. Smolenskii Obschestvennyi Institut Sotsiologicheskikh Issledovaniy, "Reyting Kandidatov na Post Glavi Administratsii Smolenskoï Oblasti," *Smolenske Novosti* 44 (1998).

18. Asadova, "S Takim Gubernatorom Voennym Dolgo Ne Vidat'."

19. D. Raichev, "V Kachestve Poslednego Slova," *Smolenskie Gubernskie Vedomosti* 19 (1998); "Glava Administratsii Smolenskoï Oblasti," from the Smolensk Regional Administration's official Web site at: <http://www.admin.Smolensk.ru/vlast/glava.htm>.

20. The mayor of Smolensk is not elected directly but instead through a competitive election organized by the city council. See Jean-Charles Lallemand, "Politics for the Few: Elites in Bryansk and Smolensk," *Post-Soviet Affairs* 15, no. 4 (1999): 321.

21. "Smolensk Diamond Director Murdered," *EWI Russian Regional Report* 3, no. 31 (1998).

22. Jean-Charles Lallemand, "Who Rules Smolensk Oblast?" *EWI Russian Regional Report* 3, no. 40 (8 October 1998).

23. "Smolensk Diamond Director Murdered."

24. Lallemand, "Who Rules Smolensk Oblast?"
25. Arsenty Ledovskoi, "Putin Warns Smolensk Governor on Corruption," *EWI Russian Regional Report* 5, no. 16 (26 April 2000).
26. Alexander Ledovskoi, "Prokhorov Outraged by Federal Investigation," *EWI Russian Regional Report* 5, no. 18 (10 May 2000).
27. Gary Cox, *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 4.
28. Igor Krasnovsky, "Vybory-99: Golosovanie Ne Prineslo Siurprizov," *Rabochii Put'*, 25 December 1999, 1.
29. Jerry Hough, Evelyn Davidheiser, and Susan Goodrich Lehmann, *The 1996 Russian Presidential Election*, (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1996); Robert Ortung and Anna Paretskaya, "Presidential Election Demonstrates Rural-Urban Divide," *Transition* 2, no. 19 (1996): 33–38.
30. Igor Krasnovsky, "Neozhidannosti Smolenskikh Vyborov," *Rabochii Put'*, 25 December 1999, 2.
31. Ibid.; "Putin Pobedil Kak Neulovimiy Dzho: Ego Neozhidannaya Populyanost' – Eto Vspyshka Instinkta Samosokhraneniya," *Rabochii Put'*, 27 March 2000, 2.
32. Ibid.