

# Orthodox Christianity, Civil Society, and Russian Democracy

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**Abstract:** Scholars have identified numerous obstacles that appear to stand in the way of democracy taking root in Russia, including the country's religious heritage. In an attempt to understand the role of Orthodoxy in Russian society more accurately, this article explores the civic, political, and democratic values of devout Orthodox Christians and more secular-leaning "cultural Orthodox." The findings suggest that whereas Russian citizens are only loosely predisposed toward democratic governance, devout Orthodox Christians as a group are somewhat more favorably inclined toward democracy than are other Russians. Moreover, religious belief and practice have virtually no impact on democratic values, suggesting that Orthodoxy may not be the obstacle to democracy that some have made it out to be.

**Key words:** Christianity, Orthodoxy, religion, Russia

**D**uring the Soviet era, many people assumed that the Communist Party dictatorship was all that stood in the way of democracy in Russia. Once the Soviet Union entered the dustbin of history, however, the path to democracy in Russia was clearly plagued by other, perhaps more formidable obstacles than the decaying monolith of the Soviet state. Indeed, the body of scholarship on Russian democratization since the collapse of the Soviet Union has been a virtual enterprise of identifying the many obstacles to democracy in Russia. The range of such obstacles is dizzying and seemingly endless, extending from the country's autocratic past, to the authoritarian tendencies of President Putin, and even to some regional leaders, such as Novgorod Governor Mikhail Prussak and Tatarstan President Mintimer Shaimiev, not to mention the debate over the absence or existence of a democratic political culture and civil society in Russia.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Russia's religious heritage has had its share of blame for the country's woes. Shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union,

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Samuel Huntington proclaimed that “the cultural division of Europe between Western Christianity . . . and Orthodox Christianity and Islam” was reemerging, and that “the eastern boundary of Western Christianity in the year 1500” was “the most significant dividing line in Europe.”<sup>1</sup> Huntington not only predicted that the Orthodox world would clash with the rest of Europe, but that Orthodox societies seemed “much less likely to develop stable democratic political systems.” In a similar vein, Michael Radu later announced the “burden of Eastern Orthodoxy,” arguing that the Eastern churches were only interested in promoting nationalism and could not contribute in any meaningful way to the construction of civil society and democracy in postcommunist Europe.<sup>2</sup> As Prodromou has argued, such ideas are not the exception, but rather part of a “cultural map” that has been drawn, dividing Europe between the “modern” and “civilized” West and the “anti-modern” and “uncivilized” East, with the region’s Orthodox religious tradition serving as a major defining characteristic.<sup>3</sup>

Given the seriousness of the implications that follow from such characterizations, the topic certainly warrants a more detailed and robust examination than that offered by Radu, Huntington, and others. If we are to understand the role of Orthodoxy in Russian society accurately, we must do more than analyze the political maneuverings of the Moscow patriarchate and the religious rhetoric of pragmatic politicians who seek to appeal to the spirituality of Russian citizens; we must look to the actual civic, political, and democratic orientations of Russian Orthodox Christians themselves. This is what I do in the pages that follow, as I explore the civic, political, and democratic values of devout Orthodox Christians and the more secular-leaning “cultural Orthodox,” whose connections to the church are more cultural than religious. The findings suggest that although Russian citizens are only loosely predisposed toward democratic governance, devout Orthodox Christians as a group are more favorably inclined toward democracy than are other Russians. Moreover, religious belief and practice have virtually no impact on democratic values, suggesting that, although Orthodox religiosity may not be the miracle that Russian democracy has been waiting for, neither is it the curse many have made it out to be.

### **Russian Orthodox Religiosity**

Before one can explore the civic, political, and social values of Russian Orthodox Christians, one must first probe the religious beliefs and practices of Russians, to determine just who can be considered a practicing Orthodox Christian.<sup>4</sup> Although it is clear that Orthodox Christianity is the majority religion of Russia, estimates of the number of adherents range from 55 to 80 percent, depending on how one calculates the figure. The degree to which Russians are actually connected to the church, however, is a matter of great debate. What is clear is that levels of church attendance in Russia are among the lowest in all of Europe, with as few as 2 percent of Russians attending church services regularly. How then does one conceptualize of Russian Orthodox religiosity? In the two most thorough analyses of Orthodox religious life in Russia, Chesnokova has shown that religiosity and churchliness are complex processes that cannot be gauged by any single indicator.<sup>5</sup> Her analysis

explored the Orthodox religiosity of Russians using a complex array of indicators, including belief in God, regular church attendance, taking communion, offering confession, fasting at prescribed times, praying at home with the use of church prayer books (*molitoslov*), and knowing enough Old Church Slavonic to understand the liturgy. By these qualifications, only a very small number of self-identified Orthodox Christians were “fully churchied,” while the majority of respondents exhibited extremely low levels of churchliness. These findings, although perhaps more nuanced, are in line with the conclusions reached by several other Russian scholars who have argued that the number of “real,” “traditional,” or “churchly” Orthodox in Russia is no larger than 5 to 7 percent of the population, with other Orthodox believers being only “nominal” Orthodox, or as Varzanova has phrased it, Orthodox only in a “cultural sense.”<sup>6</sup>

Although the work of Chesnokova and her team is a major contribution to the field of the scientific study of religion, the fact that their survey does not contain a sufficient number of questions on issues of politics, society, and economics means that it will be difficult to incorporate their achievements into studies that concern themselves with issues such as democracy and civic values. To examine the religious and political value orientations of Russian Orthodox Christians, therefore, I rely upon data from the World Values Survey. Although today there is a plethora of surveys about Russia available, no other survey has the range of questions relating to religious belief, practice, and spirituality, along with accompanying questions on social values, civic engagement, and political orientations. Moreover, use of the World Values Survey allows the findings reached here to be tested in other parts of the world, including other countries in the midst of the transition from communism. This study uses data from the most recent wave (1999–2001) of the World Values Survey, released in the spring of 2004. This dataset gives us a reliable look at contemporary Russian society after more than a decade of social, economic, and political change, including advances and setbacks made on the path to democracy.

Because my concern here is primarily with Orthodox believers in Russia, as opposed to all religious believers of various persuasions, I initially coded all respondents as members of one of two groups—either Orthodox Christians (1,187 self-identified Orthodox believers) or nonreligious Russians (1,210 respondents who did not identify as a member of a religious community). I excluded the remaining non-Orthodox believers—seventy-five Muslims, three Buddhists, one Jew, seven Protestants, six Catholics, and eleven “others,” making a total sample size of twenty-five hundred—from the analysis. Although it is unfortunate to have to exclude these cases from the analysis, the relative numbers of these respondents is insufficient to be able to generalize about their broader religious traditions (for instance, it is not possible to generalize to all Protestants in Russia based upon the seven Protestants in the survey). The option of including all believers in a single category is also not a suitable solution, since the particular beliefs and practices of such diverse traditions as Islam and evangelical Christianity would certainly skew the results. These methodological choices, however, leave us with an excellent dataset to analyze Orthodox Christians alongside nonreligious Russians.

For members of Abrahamic religions, belief in God is the sine qua non of religiosity. Although it is not very surprising that less than 30 percent of those who did not identify themselves as members of any particular religious tradition said that they believed in God, only 97 percent of Orthodox Christians felt the same way, meaning that 3 percent of Orthodox believers polled did not believe in God, despite identifying themselves as Orthodox Christians. Perhaps not as surprising, but equally problematic, is that only slightly more than 5 percent of Orthodox Christians attend religious services weekly, although 11 percent do so at least once per month. The low levels of church attendance should not be taken to imply that the religious experience of such believers is vacuous, however, as more than one quarter pray at least once per day, indicating a dimension of Orthodox spirituality that exists “beyond the church walls,” as Naletova has phrased it, but which is a genuine expression of religious commitment all the same.<sup>7</sup> There does appear to be a spiritual disconnect for many Orthodox Russians, however, as only 60 percent responded that God played an important part in their lives.

As table 1 shows, these levels of religiosity are much higher on every question for Orthodox Christians than for the nonreligious, indicating that the categorization made between Orthodox Christians and nonreligious Russians is a valid and useful one. The data also indicate, however, that there are great divisions among those who identify themselves as Orthodox. For example, only a small percentage of self-identifying Orthodox Christians attend church regularly, and some even state that they do not believe in God, leading one to wonder how such individuals construe their responses in their own minds. This observed variation in relative levels of religious devotion, along with the insights gleaned from Chesnokova’s work, has led me to develop a categorization method that breaks the group of Orthodox believers down into two distinct categories.<sup>8</sup> The first category, the devout Orthodox, includes only those respondents who identified themselves as Orthodox Christians, stated that they believe in God, and attend church services at least once per month, all central indicators of Orthodox religiosity. According to these selection criteria, devout Orthodox Christians in the survey number 186.

**TABLE 1. Orthodox Christians and Their Religious Beliefs and Behavior**

	Orthodox Christians (%)	Nonreligious Russians (%)
Believe in God	97	29.6
How important is God in your life? <sup>a</sup>	60.4	12.4
Pray outside of religious services daily	27.9	3.8
Church attendance: once per week (once per month)	5.4 (11.0)	.3 (1.3)

*Note.* <sup>a</sup>7–10 on ten-point scale.

The remaining 1,001 self-identifying Orthodox, some of whom do not even believe in God and none of whom attend church services more than a few times per year, are labeled cultural Orthodox, following Varzanova.<sup>9</sup> The third category remains the same, comprising the 1,210 respondents who listed no religious affiliation. Using these two distinct categories of Russian Orthodox Christians, we can examine the true nature between Orthodox religiosity and civic and democratic values.

### Orthodox Christianity and Civil Society

Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union, scholars have regularly identified low levels of interpersonal trust in Russia as a major obstacle to political reform and social development.<sup>10</sup> As the

data in table 2 indicate, levels of trust are even lower for the devout Orthodox than they are for other Russians. Less than a quarter of all Russians polled agreed that most people can be trusted, with the percentage agreeing with that statement highest among the cultural Orthodox and the nonreligious (23.6 and 23.1 percent, respectively), compared to 19.3 percent for the devout Orthodox. This may be attributable to the religious outlook of devout believers. Orthodox Christians, not unlike many other Christians, believe in the fallen nature of this world and the existence of evil, perhaps leading to distrust for the general public, as opposed to coreligionists or those with whom they have frequent contact. Given these numbers,

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**TABLE 2. Orthodox Christians and Civic Engagement**

	Devout Orthodox (%)	Cultural Orthodox (%)	Nonreligious Russians (%)
Most people can be trusted	19.3	23.6	23.1
Trust in churches: great deal (quite a lot)	73.3 (19.3)	32.6 (43.9)	5.7 (30)
Often discuss political matters	20.9	20.7	18.9
Belong to local political organization	.5	.2	.6
Belong to a political party	.5	1.2	1.1
Interested in politics <sup>a</sup>	34.7	41.4	38.7

*Note.* <sup>a</sup>very interested and somewhat interested.

however, we should be careful about ascribing too much significance to this difference, although the topic certainly warrants further study. Here it is sufficient to note that the levels of trust among citizens in Russia are on par with those of other countries of the former Soviet Union, which tend to be higher than in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>11</sup>

Surveys also regularly find that the church is the most trusted institution in Russian society, with approximately 60 percent of all Russians expressing confidence in this important civil society institution. Using two distinct categories for Orthodox believers, we can see that there is great variation in levels of trust in the church. The devout Orthodox have the highest levels of trust in the church, with more than 92 percent saying that they have either a great deal of trust in the church (73.3 percent), or quite a lot of trust (19.3 percent). It is also significant that the devout Orthodox group is the only one that has more responses in the “great deal” category than in the “quite a lot” category. The cultural Orthodox still have a high level of trust in the church, with more than 76 percent for both positive responses, but more have quite a lot of trust in the church (43.9 percent) than a great deal of trust (32.6 percent). The devout Orthodox group thus is more trusting of the church numerically and by degree. Interestingly—and something that has remained overlooked by those who look at trust in institutions—very few nonreligious Russians have a great deal of trust in the church, although a modest 30 percent do respond that they have quite a lot of trust. The ability of the church to act as a bridge across the various factions of civil society would appear, therefore, to remain limited.

When it comes specifically to the political realm, there appears to be a relatively healthy level of interest in politics, although it is not accompanied by any significant level of political involvement. Although approximately 40 percent of all respondents stated that they were interested in politics (41.4 percent for cultural Orthodox and 38.7 percent for nonreligious), the number of the devout Orthodox who agreed was the lowest of all three groupings (34.7 percent), perhaps reflecting an otherworldly orientation of devout believers. This idea is supported by the fact that the devout Orthodox were also less likely than the cultural Orthodox and the nonreligious to belong to political organizations. Although 0.5 percent of the devout Ortho-

**TABLE 3. Orthodox Christians and Their Political Efficacy**

	Devout Orthodox (%)	Cultural Orthodox (%)	Nonreligious Russians (%)
Sign a petition	10.7 (24.6)	10.6 (28.3)	11.5 (31.9)
Attend lawful demonstration	22.5 (23.0)	23.9 (30.5)	23.1 (32.8)
Join a boycott	1.6 (13.4)	2.4 (18.2)	2.4 (23.4)
Join an unofficial strike	.5 (6.4)	1.5 (12.3)	1.6 (17.4)

*Note.* Responses are for have done (might do).

dox respondents stated that they were either members of a political party or a local political organization, there was a greater likelihood for cultural Orthodox and non-religious Russians to belong to a political party (1.2 and 1.1 percent, respectively). This still represents a very small number in absolute terms, but this finding is not surprising given the current state of party development in Russia.

Involvement in the formal political realm remains low, but Russians show a healthy level of political efficacy and preparedness to participate in a variety of informal political activities, such as signing petitions, joining boycotts, and taking part in demonstrations and strikes. More than a quarter of all Russians are prepared to sign a petition, while more than 10 percent have actually done so. Approximately the same number are willing to attend a lawful demonstration, while more than 20 percent actually have. Significantly fewer are prepared to join a boycott, however, and it is an act that only approximately 2 percent have taken part in. Not surprisingly, the numbers are even lower for those taking part in an unofficial strike. Nevertheless, the data suggest that there is a large segment of society—nearly half—that exhibits healthy levels of political efficacy. The data are just as clear, however, in indicating that these levels are directly related to religious belief and religiosity, with identification with the Orthodox Church and religious devotion, respectively, strongly associated with diminished levels of political efficacy. The nonreligious Russians register significantly higher responses on every indicator while the devout Orthodox exhibit the lowest levels on each indicator.

Tables of survey responses can be very useful for discerning patterns such as those above, but to generate a more complete picture of the relationship between religiosity and civic engagement and political efficacy one must rely upon more sophisticated statistical techniques, such as multiple regression analysis. In table 4, I used various indicators of religiosity and Orthodox belief to predict two variables associated with civic engagement: frequency of discussing politics and interest in politics. Although there appears to be a statistically significant relationship in each model, the correlation is extremely weak. Using the survey response of “often discusses politics” as the dependent variable, the independent predictors together can only explain less than one percent of the variation in the dependent variable. With in Model A, the only variables that were even weakly correlated with the dependent variable were identification as Orthodox, daily prayer, and the belief that political leaders should believe in God. The results of Model B are more rewarding, as these same variables are correlated at much higher levels of significance, and with the model itself significant at the highest level and able to explain more than 1 percent of the variation in the dependent variable.

At first glance these models may not seem to tell us much about Orthodox religiosity and civic life in Russia today, but they do tell an interesting story. As shown in table 2, there is not much variation at all between the values and beliefs of the devout Orthodox, the cultural Orthodox, and the nonreligious Russians when it comes to civic engagement. These regression analyses show further that there is only the weakest statistical association between these variables, suggesting that Orthodox Russians are not significantly less engaged in civic life than other Russian citizens.

**TABLE 4. Regression Models of Religiosity Predicting Civic Engagement**

Predictor variable	Model A		Model B	
	Often discuss politics		Interested in politics	
Constant	2.155*** (.115)		2.632*** (.152)	
Orthodox Christian	-7.648^ (.042)	-.058	-.118* (.056)	-.067
Monthly church attendance	5.846 (.055)	.027	7.849 (.073)	.027
Believe in God	2.685 (.045)	.019	7.234 (.060)	.038
Daily prayer	7.679^ (.046)	.044	.117* (.061)	.051
Political leaders must believe in God	-2.999^ (.016)	-.049	-6.479** (.021)	-.080
Weight	-1.234 (.090)	-.003	.220^ (.119)	.044
<i>R</i>	.085*		.122***	
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.007		.015	

*Note.* Standard errors are given in parentheses beneath unstandardized coefficients.  
\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001. ^moderately significant at the .10 level.

### Orthodox Christianity and Russian Democracy

The question of civic engagement is important, because of both the theoretical literature on the subject and the empirical body of evidence from around the world, which suggest that a civil society plays a critical role in pushing for democracy and is necessary to sustain democratic governance once it is attained. In modern Russia, the latter is the central issue, as the advances made in Russian democracy in its first decade are beginning to lose ground to the growing authoritarian tendencies of Putin and several other leaders in Russia who support a strong-hand approach to governance. Aside from the issue of civic engagement, therefore, we must consider the issue of support for a democratic system in Russia. The two are not synonymous and it is entirely feasible that civic engagement might be associated with authoritarian forces that seek to bring back vestiges of the old system.<sup>12</sup>

Some of the evidence presented in table 5 certainly seems to support such an idea. When it comes to the issue of how one assesses the communist regime, the nonreligious Russians are significantly less likely to offer a positive assessment of the Soviet system. Although only 36 percent of the nonreligious Russians offered a positive assessment of the communist regime, 46 percent—nearly half—of the cultural Orthodox did so. Interestingly, the devout Orthodox responded more like the nonreligious than their Orthodox brethren, with 40 per-

cent offering a positive view of the communist regime. The finding that the non-Orthodox are less likely to have a positive assessment of the Soviet regime may be attributable to the fact that many of those in the survey who are nonreligious are also likely to be non-Orthodox (in terms of self-identification), and therefore highly likely to include a large number of non-Russians, who tend to have a more negative assessment of the Soviet Union than ethnic Russians. Similarly, the finding that the devout Orthodox are less predisposed to the communist regime can be explained by the fact that the Russian Orthodox Church was systematically attacked by the communist state, a historical fact that is not forgotten by the more devout Orthodox.

Before we draw any premature conclusions about what these findings mean, however, we must consider the actual views of Russian Orthodox Christians toward democracy. Only 8.6 percent of the devout Orthodox were either very satisfied or rather satisfied with the way democracy is developing in Russia; however, this is much higher than for the other two groups, with only 5.8 and 5.9 percent, respectively, offering a similar assessment. One must be cautious in drawing conclusions from this indicator alone, however, for given the state of democracy in Russia, greater satisfaction with the way democracy is developing could just as easily be an indication of political naïveté rather than attachment to democracy.

The devout Orthodox were also more likely to agree with the statement that democracy is better than other political systems, however, further supporting the idea that Orthodoxy might not be the obstacle to democracy that some suspect. Nearly 11 percent of the devout Orthodox strongly agreed with this statement, compared to 9.1 percent for cultural Orthodox and only 8.5 percent for nonreligious Russians. Although the devout Orthodox showed a greater tendency to more resolutely agree that democracy is a superior form of governance, all three groups are statistically

**TABLE 5. Orthodox Christians and Their Views of Democracy**

	Devout Orthodox (%)	Cultural Orthodox (%)	Nonreligious Russians (%)
Positive assessment of the Communist regime <sup>a</sup>	40.1	46.3	36
Satisfied with way democracy is developing in Russia <sup>b</sup>	1.1 (7.5)	.3 (5.5)	.4 (5.5)
Democracy better than other political systems <sup>c</sup>	10.7 (35.3)	9.1 (38.5)	8.5 (38.5)
Having a democratic political system <sup>c</sup>	9.1 (32.1)	6.2 (41.7)	5.0 (41.5)
Having a strong leader <sup>c</sup>	11.8 (27.3)	13.5 (27.8)	11.4 (27.8)

*Note.* <sup>a</sup>7–10 on ten-point scale; <sup>b</sup>very satisfied (rather satisfied); <sup>c</sup>strongly agree (agree).

very similar when both positive responses are combined, with approximately 47 percent being positively predisposed toward democracy. Likewise, more of the devout Orthodox said that they strongly valued having a democratic political system than either the cultural Orthodox or nonreligious Russians. Although the devout Orthodox once again exhibited a firmer commitment to democracy, more of the cultural Orthodox agreed in general when both positive responses are combined.

When it comes to alternative forms of rule, it is the cultural Orthodox as a group who are most likely to support a strong leader (13.5 percent), while the devout Orthodox and nonreligious Russians exhibited lower and almost identical levels of agreement (11.8 and 11.4 percent, respectively). When both positive responses are summed, each

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group was more positively predisposed toward democracy than a strong leader. Although having a strong leader is not incompatible with democracy, if Lord Acton is right, then a citizenry that values a strong leader much more than democracy is not likely to remain a democracy for long.

As with our analysis of religiosity and civic engagement, multiple regression analysis can generate greater insight into the impact of religiosity on democratic values. In table 6, I used the same indicators of religiosity and Orthodox belief to predict two different indicators of democratic values: valuing having a democratic political system and agreeing that democracy is a better political system than all others. As with the earlier regression analyses, there appears to be only a weak statistical relationship, although both models are statistically significant at the highest levels. In regressing the religiosity variables against the survey question of the value of having a democratic political system, only the belief that political leaders should believe in God was significantly correlated with the dependent variable, although belief in God itself was only moderately significantly correlated within the model. In the second model, belief in God became very significantly correlated, and daily prayer also became significantly correlated with the dependent variable inside the model. Although exhibiting more predicative power than the models in table 4, the result is still very modest and can only explain approximately 2 percent of the variation in the dependent variable, leaving much to be explained.

### **Orthodoxy, Civil Society, and Democracy in Russia**

Whether it be the coming clash of civilizations or the cultural impediments to economic growth, an emerging body of evidence from across the social sciences is rediscovering the primacy of culture.<sup>13</sup> As Harrison phrases it, culture matters. The future of Russian democracy is perhaps no less impacted by culture than it is by issues such as institutional reform, constitutional provisions, and political

**TABLE 6. Regression Models of Religiosity Predicting Democratic Values**

Predictor variable	Model A		Model B	
	Value having democratic political system		Democracy better than other political systems	
Constant	3.070*** (.144)		2.689*** (.142)	
Orthodox Christian	-8.525 (.054)	-.057	2.564 (.053)	.017
Monthly church attendance	-2.198 (.073)	-.009	4.068 (.142)	-.016
Believe in God	-9.869 <sup>^</sup> (.057)	-.062	-.158** (.056)	-.099
Daily prayer	7.908 (.061)	.038	.148* (.060)	.074
Political leaders must believe in God	-4.317* (.020)	-.062	-2.206 (.020)	-.003
Weight	-.411*** (.113)	-.099	-.286* (.113)	-.069
R	.142***		.125***	
R <sup>2</sup>	.020		.016	

*Note.* Standard errors are given in parentheses beneath unstandardized coefficients.  
\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ . <sup>^</sup>moderately significant at the .10 level.

party development. In fact, all of these factors can also be said to operate within a distinctive cultural milieu. If one wishes to speculate about the prospects of Russian democracy, therefore, it is wise to also give serious consideration to the role played by the country's religious heritage.

Across a wide range of indicators, Russian Orthodox Christians tended to be more civic minded and committed to democracy than many of their non-Orthodox fellow citizens. Such a result should not be surprising, particularly given the research of White and McAllister, which has shown that Russians who attend Orthodox churches frequently are more likely to participate in political processes such as elections.<sup>14</sup> The data analyzed here, however, do seem to indicate that the interest of the more devout Orthodox Christians in society and politics has been slow in evolving into direct political participation. And although active in the life of the church, charitable activities, and social programs, their membership in actual political organizations remains low.

The devout Orthodox were somewhat less politically efficacious than their fellow citizens, although not terribly far behind other Russians who, on the whole, exhibited a relatively healthy level of civic engagement. The devout Orthodox were actually more likely to agree with the statement that democracy is better than other political systems, further supporting the idea that Orthodoxy might not

be the obstacle to democracy that some suspect. Although there does appear to be a tendency for the more devout Orthodox to hold some views distinct from their fellow countrymen, they are not so drastic as to warrant the speculation that this should somehow derail the country's path to democracy. And given their relatively modest numbers, somewhere in the area of 10 to 15 percent of the population, their impact is likely to remain limited.

There was often significant difference in the opinions expressed by devout Orthodox and those of the other two groups, but there was little difference of opinion between the cultural Orthodox and nonreligious respondents. This seems to suggest that although Orthodox religiosity varied among respondents, many actual underlying values did not. That is, most Russians seem to share a very large set of common values based upon their common culture and history. In a society such as Russia, where Orthodoxy has played a powerful role since its inception in 988, it is perhaps only natural for religious and cultural values to become fused in this way. The idea of being culturally Orthodox, regardless of whether or not an individual adheres to the church's teachings or participates in the life of the church, begins to make real sense.

The data analyzed here indicate that there is only the weakest association between Orthodox religiosity, on the one hand, and civic and democratic values, on the other. It appears that Orthodox Russians are not significantly less engaged in civic life or less committed to democracy than other Russian citizens. In fact, the opposite may be true. Understood this way, the picture looks quite different than that offered by other analysts who have seen in their findings evidence of diminished civic behavior among Russian Orthodox believers. For example, in their analysis of similar phenomena, Hesli et al. found that nonreligious Russians were more likely to take part in a variety of political activities, leading them to conclude that Orthodox Russians are more subject-than-civic-oriented.

These findings are in line with several others who have argued that Orthodox Russians, as a group, have been somewhat laggard in exhibiting a robustly civic orientation, and that "much of the traditional 'subject orientation' of Russia's political culture is directly traceable to the prevailing religion."<sup>15</sup> Such conclusions may be premature or even downright off the mark. Not only does rigorous statistical analysis fail to show evidence of this, Russian Orthodox Christians are not as necessarily passive (and I include here submissive to the Church hierarchy itself) as some suggest. After all, in the waning days of the monarchy and the early days of the Soviet period, the Russian Orthodox Church was anything but submissive to political authority, as it sought to reform itself under the tsar and then fought for its survival against the Bolsheviks.<sup>16</sup> Although such thoughts may reflect the prevailing trend in studies of Russian political and religious history, the relationship between Orthodoxy, civil society, and democracy is more nuanced than some present it to be. Probably the safest conclusion that scholars on the subject can reach at this point is that offered recently by Buss: "The spirit of the Orthodox religion does not appear to have an elective affinity with any type of political regime, but to be indifferent towards all."<sup>17</sup>

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8. This method is developed and applied to the topic of church-state relations in my article "Russian Orthodox Christians and Their Orientation toward Church and State," *Journal of Church and State* 47, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 545–61.
9. This approach is a significant departure from Hesli et al. who, in their analysis of religion and political choice in Russia, grouped together all Orthodox adherents, regardless of their particular beliefs or levels of attendance at church services. Vicki Hesli, Ebru Erdem, William Reisinger, and Arthur Miller, "The Patriarch and the President: Religion and Political Choice in Russia," *Demokratizatsiya* 7, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 42–72.
10. Richard Rose, "Russia as an Hourglass Society: A Constitution without Citizens," *East European Constitutional Review* 4, no. 3 (Summer 1995); Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 183–85; see also Christopher Marsh, "Social Capital and Democracy in Russia," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 33, no. 2 (June 2000): 183–99; and Christopher Marsh, "Social Capital and Grassroots Democratization in Russia's Regions: Evidence from the 1999–2001 Gubernatorial Elections," *Demokratizatsiya* 10, no. 2 (Winter 2002): 19–36.
11. See Helen Albert, "The Impact of Culture on Economic Growth: A Cross-country Study of Twenty Post-Communist Societies." (master's thesis, Baylor University, 2004), 50.
12. Such a pattern was indeed evident among Communist Party supporters in the late Yeltsin years. See Christopher Marsh, *Making Russian Democracy Work: Social Capital, Economic Development, and Democratization* (New York: Mellen Press, 2000); and Marsh, "Social Capital and Democracy in Russia."

13. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*; Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996); Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington, eds., *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001); Peter Berger and Samuel Huntington, eds., *Many Globalizations: Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

14. Stephen White and Ian McAllister, "Orthodoxy and Political Behavior in Postcommunist Russia," *Review of Religious Research* 41, no. 3 (2000): 359–72.

15. James W. Warhola, *Russian Orthodoxy and Political Culture Transformation*, Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, 1006, 15, Center for Russian and East European Studies, University of Pittsburgh.

16. James W. Cunningham, *A Vanquished Hope: The Movement for Church Renewal in Russia, 1905–1906* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981); Dmitry Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime, 1917–1982* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984).

17. Andreas Buss, *The Russian-Orthodox Tradition and Modernity* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2003), 56.