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## Civil liberties and voluntary work in six former Soviet Union countries

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## **Civil Liberties and Voluntary Work in Six Former Soviet Union Countries**

### **Abstract**

To contribute to the debate as to whether volunteering is an outcome of democratization rather than a driver of it, we analyze how divergent democratization pathways in six countries of the former Soviet Union have led to varied levels of voluntary work. Using data from the European Values Study, we find that Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia - which followed a Europeanization path - have high and increasing levels of civil liberties and voluntary work. In Russia and Belarus, following a pre-emption path, civil liberties have remained low and voluntary work has declined. Surprisingly, despite the Orange Revolution and increased civil liberties, voluntary work rates in Ukraine have also declined. The case of Ukraine indicates that the freedom to participate is not always taken up by citizens. Our findings suggest it is not voluntary work that brings civil liberties, but rather that increased civil liberties lead to higher levels of volunteering.

**Keywords:** voluntary work, nonprofit sector, cross-national comparison, democratization, former Soviet Union countries

## **Introduction**

Numerous authors have emphasized the political and economic importance of voluntary organizations and voluntary work in modern societies (see amongst many Fung, 2003; Linz & Stepan, 1996; Tocqueville, 1864). Despite this, the way that political change affects levels of voluntary work is not resolved consistently in the literature. In this paper we attempt to clarify the relationship between democratization and voluntary work by examining trends in voluntary work in six countries of the Former Soviet Union (FSU).

Most of the theories and comparative studies on cross-national differences in voluntary work have focused on comparing the rates of voluntary work across countries with different political regimes (see for example Grönlund et al., 2011; Halman, 2003; Hustinx, Cnaan, & Handy, 2010; Salamon & Anheier, 1998). These approaches have often focused on one point in time, providing a snapshot of the relationship between voluntary work and political regime. They do not consider the impact of the political-institutional context on voluntary work over time and so say little about how political change affects volunteering rates. To address this gap, we focus on varied pathways of democratization and institutional change and how they have impacted voluntary work. We do so by looking across both multiple contexts within the democratizing states of the FSU and over a period of time from 1999 to 2008.

The FSU presents a unique situation with respect to political-institutional change. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, 15 independent states emerged, with the political antecedents of a centralized, undemocratic Soviet state that they were part of for five decades following the end of World War II. Despite this common institutional and political inheritance<sup>1</sup> these successor states embarked on their own paths to social, political and economic reforms taking differing institutional development trajectories (Stark, 1991). One of the key differences

in these reforms was the extent to which they facilitated the strengthening of civil liberties as part of the democratization process. The political-institutional development within each of these countries influenced the shape and scope of civil liberty development. Therefore civil liberties and their change over time provide an ideal proxy for institutional development vis-à-vis democratization in these six countries.

Studying voluntary work in the FSU enables us to shed light on some fundamental assumptions about how public participation or voluntary work relates to processes of democratization and emerging democratic governance and civil liberties. The freedom to assemble and participate freely in organizations is a key aspect of democratization (Diamond, 1999). These are often seen as basic freedoms of a democratic society (Linz & Stepan, 1996) and a pre-condition for the existence of civil society and its agents such as nonprofit organizations (Muukkonen, 2009). Consequently, civil liberties as an outcome of democratization and institutional changes form an important pre-condition for voluntary work.

We draw on European Values Study data (EVS, 2011) which demonstrates substantial variations in voluntary work rates, aligned with the different political-institutional development trajectory taken across the six countries studied. We have divided our paper into five sections. We turn first to examining the issue of political conditions and their effects on voluntary work, specifically drawing out the insight provided by studies comparing volunteering across different geographical contexts. Part 2 provides an in-depth elaboration of the development of civil society, volunteering and the political-institutional context of each of the six FSU countries, which are the subject of our study. We then describe the methodology of our study before presenting the results, looking first at country-level developments, before comparisons across the six case countries. We end our paper with a discussion of the results.

## **Institutional Context and Volunteering**

Since Tocqueville's (1864) work on democracy in the United States, voluntary work and public participation has been of interest to several generations of social scientists. However, the volunteering literature is still dominated by a multiplicity of definitions of voluntary work and a myriad of theoretical explanations for its existence and national differences (Hustinx et al., 2010). This notwithstanding, the broad literature provides insights into many aspects of voluntary work, particularly about why individuals might volunteer (Wilson, 2012).

Both individual characteristics and institutional arrangements are important factors in determining volunteering (Anheier & Salamon, 1999; Grönlund et al., 2011; Handy et al., 2010; Hodgkinson, 2003; Salamon & Anheier, 1998; Salamon & Sokolowski, 2003). Cross-national comparative studies demonstrate that factors predicting an individual's motivation to volunteer, for example age, level of education, religion, race, life course, parental volunteering, income or psychological state, are relatively similar across different contexts (Wilson, 2012). However, as volunteering rates differ across contexts, it is institutional factors, such as a country's economic development, government policy and spending, the age of democracy, level of religiosity or level of political and civic rights (Halman, 2003; Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2004; Inglehart, 1997; Penner, 2002; Ruiter & Graaf, 2006; Salamon & Anheier, 1998; Salamon & Sokolowski, 2003; Snyder & Omoto, 2008), that lead to varying volunteering rates across countries (Hodgkinson, 2003; Voicu & Voicu, 2009), and also between regions within one country (Rotolo & Wilson, 2012). Contexts with higher level of religiosity also have higher volunteering rates (Forbes & Zampelli, 2012; Hodgkinson, 2003; Ruiter & Graaf, 2006). Halman (2003) also asserts that democratic history (i.e. how long a country has had working democratic governance

arrangements) is an important factor in determining volunteering rates. However work that has attempted to look at more than one country or setting has failed to establish which if any of these factors lead to more volunteering (Hodgkinson, 2003; Musick & Wilson, 2008; Ruiter & Graaf, 2006; Wilson, 2000, 2012). Thus further clarification is required about how institutional factors and political conditions affect volunteering in comparative settings. We now turn to the theoretical framework guiding our analysis.

### ***Social Origins Theory (SOT)***

From a theoretical perspective democratization/modernization theory, varieties of capitalism, welfare state theory and social origins theory could all be considered relevant in this study as they consider the link between democratic development and institutional factors<sup>2</sup>. The varieties of capitalism approach, although enabling the consideration of voluntary work, is however, ultimately concerned with economic output (Hall & Soskice, 2001; Hall & Thelen, 2009). Democratization theory/modernization theory does make a link to voluntary work more directly by suggesting that improved economic circumstances lead to changes in cultural values resulting in, among other things, raising self-expression and thus political participation and engagement in voluntary work (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Lipset, 1959). However, within this theoretical perspective, explanations of voluntary work align with demographic considerations (i.e. social heterogeneity, income levels and similar (Musick & Wilson, 2008)) rather than link it directly to the prevailing political institutional context and changes therein. Welfare state theory (Esping-Andersen, 1989) focuses on the strength of the social entitlements of individuals. A key assumption is that voluntary work provides help to individuals to offset the lack of social entitlement services (Esping-Andersen, 1989). Salamon and Anheier (1998) take up this idea and develop the social origins theory (SOT) as a framework

to explain the existence of nonprofit organizations. SOT groups countries into civil society regimes based on government welfare spending (as % of GDP) and the size of the nonprofit sector (measured by % of paid employment in legally registered non-profit organizations). This results in the categorization of civil society into liberal, corporatist, social-democratic and statist. Previous research shows that social democratic and liberal regimes have higher rates of volunteering (Hodgkinson, 2003; Inglehart, 1997; Salamon & Anheier, 1998; Salamon & Sokolowski, 2003), corporatist regimes have moderate levels of volunteering while statist regimes have relatively low levels of volunteering (Hale, 2002; Salamon & Anheier, 1998; Salamon & Sokolowski, 2003). Most crucially for this paper, SOT is the only framework that links voluntary work directly to institutional factors bringing together the existence of the relevant infrastructure for volunteering (i.e. nonprofit organizations (Wilson, 2012) and government welfare spending (Esping-Andersen, 1989). Thus SOT provide the most advanced theoretical framework to compare volunteering across contexts (Hustinx et al., 2010).

Salamon and Sokolowski (2003) argue that although SOT predicted volunteering rate differences well in developed democratic contexts, it did so less consistently for post-Communist countries. Given the post-Communist nature of FSU countries, these insights call for the adjustment of SOT to better capture contexts which are still undergoing processes of democratization (Wagner, 2000); where voluntary work outlets (the nonprofit organizations) are still developing or are in flux. Salamon and Sokolowski (2003) argue that neither government spending nor percentage of employment are viable to use in classifying countries into regimes in post-Communist contexts. This is due both to a lack of reliable data and a less professionalized and resource-poor nonprofit sector. Government welfare spending - initially understood as a response to institutional decisions made by a government due to public preferences (Esping-

Andersen, 1989; Salamon & Anheier, 1998) – also suffers from data reliability issues in the post-Communist context. In particular in some FSU states, rather than public preferences influencing government decision-making, welfare spending drastically decreased in the early years of economic transition as a result of budgetary constraints imposed by the Washington Consensus (Titterton, 2006).

Wagner (2000) offers the idea of the ‘public sphere’ - the societal space where individuals can assemble freely and express opinions without restriction (Habermas & Burger, 1996) - as alternative proxy for the nonprofit sector size. According to Wagner (2000), the governance context can be either government-dominated with little public participation or pluralistic with frequent public participation. Whether the public sphere is government-dominated or pluralistic is also mirrored in the level of civil liberties. Thus we argue that a government-dominated context is reflective of absolute state power with the state influencing economic matters (e.g. state-corporatism) and social life (e.g. direct and indirect control of the media) and often materialized in low levels of civil liberties. A pluralistic context is an institutional setting characterized by constant and public negotiation between various societal actors (the state, the economy, the NPO sector) without one actor having absolute influence - and thus resulting in high levels of civil liberty.

Thus, we operationalize this idea of the public sphere by drawing on the Freedom House Index of Civil Liberties and operationalize this in place of the government welfare-spending dimension of SOT (i.e. the independent variable). The Freedom House Index of Civil Liberties measures a variety of dimensions pertinent to volunteering such as the freedom to develop views, institutions and personal autonomy outside of the state, including freedom of association. Hence it provides an ideal proxy for the concept of a public sphere that is either pluralistic or dominated



by the state. Moreover, similar to government welfare spending, nonprofit sector employment data for the early transition period is unreliable within many FSU countries. Further, much of the nonprofit sector employment that did exist in Ukraine or Russia was taking place in the informal economy (Round, Williams, & Rodgers, 2008). Thus measuring nonprofit sector size as a % of employment might not be reflective of actual size. Hence, we gauge the size of the nonprofit sector by using the proxy of the degree of voluntary work in formal organizations (i.e. dependent variable).

Using the governance context (civil liberties) and aggregate volunteering rates, it can be hypothesized that the civil society regimes in FSU countries can be reliably classified into two groups – those pursuing democratization and those experiencing anti-democratization.

Consequently, drawing on this revised Social Origins Theory, we would expect that at any point in time *higher and increasing levels of civil liberties are associated with higher levels of voluntary work* (Hypothesis 1). We now turn to illustrating the institutional development trajectories of the FSU countries in order to formulate further hypotheses.

### ***The FSU Context***

Citizen participation contributed to bringing the Soviet Union to an end. Using the new freedoms afforded to it by Gorbachev's policy of perestroika, the environmental movement - the only dissident group that had been tolerated by the regime - led protests on air quality and other public health issues (Weiner, 1999). This was followed by strikes in key industries including the mining regions of the Donbass (now in Ukraine) and the Kuzbass in Siberia (Friedgut & Siegelbaum, 1990). The movement of the population in this way meant that they and their demands could no longer be ignored; reforms were inevitable.

This mass mobilization at the end of the 1980s indicates that there was potential for high levels of voluntary work within the Soviet sphere, yet nonprofit organizations and pressure groups across the FSU have found it difficult to capitalize on this since (Crotty, 2003, 2006). This can be attributed to a number of factors. First, during the Soviet period voluntary work was compulsory. In turn post-Soviet citizens have often asserted their right *not* to volunteer (Kuti, 2004). In so doing they failed to join the myriad of nonprofit organizations and other civil society groups that splintered across the FSU when the Soviet Union to an end (Crotty, 2006). In tandem, the continuing dominance of Soviet cultural values in political and social institutions (Howard, 2002b; Lenzi, 2002), specifically clientelism – the exchanges of goods and services for political support with implicit or explicit *quid pro quo* (Hicken, 2011; Stepanenko, 2006) – has re-enforced perceptions of corruption, dysfunction and a lack of trust in government and other institutions by the wider population (Howard, 2002b; Uhlin, 2010). The dominance of these factors is such that individuals there perceive that such systems cannot be changed (Stepanenko, 2006).

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union however, the democratization trajectories and institutional development paths of the FSU countries diverged (Leiber, 2007; Manning, 2004). Due to data limitations we focus on six of the fifteen successor states in this study. The differing political trajectories within these six however are sufficiently distinct to draw meaningful conclusions from a comparative analysis. Based on their institutional development and in line with SOT theory we are able to distinguish three distinct groupings. The Baltic States (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) aggressively sought European Union membership establishing a democratic system of governance akin to that of other EU member states. Other FSU states experienced public disillusionment with economic development and democratization (Mierîna &

Cers, 2014) with two different outcomes. After disputed election results, Ukraine experienced a non-violent, citizen-led revolution where the mass mobilization by civil society organizations succeeded in affecting changes in governance towards potential further democratization. On the other hand, the Russian Federation and Belarus did not witness mass mobilization and effectively retained a *brand* of semi-democratic governance by mixing some democratic participation and authoritarian rule (Wegren & Konitzer, 2007).

**Baltics (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia).** All three Baltic States took a similar approach to their extraction from Soviet control as the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. This was led by citizen mobilization. Across the Baltics a non-violent singing revolution drove resistance to Soviet control (Ginkel, 2002; Thomson, 1992), resulting in all three countries ceding from the Soviet Union in August 1991. Following this, the development path of the Baltics was marked by a policy of Europeanization (Stubbs & Zrinščak, 2009). This demanded that the Baltic countries make legislative adjustments that changed ‘patterns of economic and political practice’ (Manning, 2004, p. 230) and developed and promoted international and domestic nonprofit organizations (Aspalter, Jinsoo, & Sojeung, 2009). This pursuit of ‘Europeanization’ by the Baltic states meant that they chose to establish a consolidated and functioning democracy (Diamond, 1999). Hence we would expect that *all countries where civil liberties have significantly improved would also experience an increase in volunteering/voluntary work rates over time* (Hypothesis 2).

**Ukraine.** Despite striking miners in the Donbass contributing to the wave of protest that brought the Soviet Union to an end (Friedgut & Siegelbaum, 1990), Ukraine’s extraction from Soviet control was driven primarily by the political establishment rather than public mobilization. The public was only to support this process retrospectively by a referendum, fueled

in part by a resurgence of Ukrainian rather than Russian or Soviet identity. The subsequent institutional development process and democratization was however ridden with political power-jostling and in-fighting and so democratic progress was slow, at least until the presidential election of 2004. As a precursor to recent developments the Orange Revolution was as much an ideological battle between those who looked to Europe for Ukraine's future economic and political trajectory and those who looked to the old Soviet bloc (predominantly the Russian Federation). Following an exit poll showing that the election had been rigged, Ukrainians mobilized in mass demonstrations demanding that the result be annulled. However, this wave of public participation did not act as a springboard for a functioning and flourishing civil society. Following the so-called revolution the old in-fighting that had dominated Ukrainian politics returned (Tudoroiu, 2007). This again left Ukraine's economic and democratic development constrained. The 2013 protests and annexation of the Crimea by the Russian Federation and subsequent unrest in Eastern Ukraine demonstrated once more the potential for mass mobilization, and thus the potential for increased formal voluntary work activities. However, with the failure to capitalize on the events following the Orange Revolution in 2004, and with a subsequently constrained democratization path we would expect that *when the democratization trajectory is contested neither civil liberties nor volunteering/voluntary work rates would have seen significant changes over time* (Hypothesis 3).

**Belarus and Russia.** Both Belarus and the Russian Federation achieved their independence from the Soviet Union by political declaration. Following the election of reformers Stanislav Shushkevich as the head of the Belarussian Soviet Republic and Boris Yeltsin as the head of the Russian Soviet Republic in the summer of 1990, declarations of independence were inevitable. Following these declarations however their paths to economic and democratic reform

diverged. In Belarus Shushkevich's attempts at reform were halted by the election to the presidency of former collective farm boss Alexander Lukashenko (Marples, 2006). Lukashenko sought to retain many aspects of Soviet life including state control of key enterprises and restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly. He also altered the constitution allowing him to be re-elected to the post of president more than twice. He was last re-elected in October 2015.

In Russia, almost immediately after Yeltsin was elected leader of the Russian Soviet Republic the Soviet Union faced a coup from hardliners hopeful they could undo Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* reforms. The coup faced widespread opposition from the public with the citizens of Moscow surrounding the White House (the focal point of the coup) in protest (Gibson, 1997). As a result it only lasted 3 days. After the failure of this coup the collapse of the Soviet Union was inevitable and it ceased to exist on Christmas Day 1991, with the Russian Federation having declared independence the previous summer.

Following its collapse, and with popular support, Yeltsin embarked on a radical period of economic, social and democratic reform. However although now politically free, the wider Russian population suffered economic hardships that a centrally planned economy had insulated them against. The public watched as a selected few became exceptionally wealthy while their economic and financial security disappeared (Gerber & Hout, 1998). Public disillusionment with the reforms was highlighted when, as Yeltsin's tenure came to an end, former KGB field officer and lawyer Vladimir Putin was elected president. Reflecting elements of Lukashenko's retrenchment policies in Belarus, Putin renationalized key enterprises and sought to 'manage' Russia's democratic reforms. Then, following the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, where overseas nonprofit organizations had demonstrated through an independent exit poll that the presidential

election had been rigged, both countries sought to constrain a similar ‘revolution’ in their own countries (Hrycak, 2010; Silitski, 2005). Both the Russian Federation and Belarus now have regulations that curtail or restrict the activity of nonprofit organizations and other public organizations (Crotty et al., 2014; Ljubownikow & Crotty, 2013). In combination these regulatory restrictions are likely to act as a brake on volunteering. With a semi-democratic structure we would expect that *if over time civil liberties either remain stable or deteriorate so would voluntary work rates* (Hypothesis 4).

## **Methodology**

### ***Data and sample***

We use data from the third (1999) and fourth waves (2008) of the European Values Study (EVS, 2010) from six former Soviet Union countries: Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. We chose these six FSU countries because they participated in both waves of the EVS and thus enabled us to examine any changes that occurred over time.

The EVS collects data from a nationally representative multi-stage or random stratified sample of individuals 18 years old or older, regardless of their nationality, citizenship or language. The net sample size in 1999 was roughly 1000 respondents per country. Russia was an exception with 2500. In 2008 the sample size was approximately 1500 respondents per country. The total sample size in the six countries in 1999 was 7731 and 9035 in 2008. The average age of the sample was 46 (SD =17) in 1999 and 47 (SD =18) in 2008 and very similar across all countries. There were slightly fewer women (57%) in the sample in 1999 than in 2008 (62%). We used the post-stratification weights supplied in the EVS in order to adjust the distribution of the socio-demographic characteristics (age and gender) in the samples to the distribution of gender and age in the country population.

## *Measurements*

**Dependent Variable.** The *participation in voluntary work* was measured by asking participants to consider a list of 15 types of voluntary<sup>3</sup> organizations and then indicate which, if any, they were doing unpaid voluntary work. To test our hypothesis, all participants who mentioned doing unpaid voluntary work for least one type of voluntary organization were coded as '1' (Volunteers). Those who did not mention any volunteering were coded as 0 (Non-volunteers).

**Independent and Control Variables.** We included one independent variable and several control variables in our study drawing on standard practice in volunteering research and cross-national volunteering research (Hodgkinson, 2003; Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2004; Wilson, 2012):

**The Freedom House Index of Civil Liberties.** This was our main variable of interest. The index of civil liberties is part of the annual Freedom in the World Survey that in many countries over the world assesses the level of freedom - the opportunity to act spontaneously in a variety of fields outside the control of the government and other centers of potential domination. The Civil Liberties Index includes measurements of the freedom of expression and belief (e.g. the independence of media, freedom of religious expression), association and organizational rights (e.g. freedom of assembly, demonstration, association), the rules of law and human rights (e.g. the presence of an independent judiciary, freedom from government inference and corruption), personal autonomy and economic rights (e.g. freedom for open and free private discussion, personal autonomy, equal opportunities and rights). The Civil Liberties Index takes into account both constitutional guarantees and actual practice. This index is measured on a seven-category scale, from 1 being the most free to 7 being the least free. For the clarity of

presentation and ease of interpretation we reversed the coding so a higher value represents a higher level of civil liberties.

**Control variables.** We also incorporated measures of those characteristics that are standard to control for in any analysis of volunteering (Wilson, 2012). They were: gender, age, education (no university degree versus university degree), whether the participant considers themselves a religious person (non-religious/atheist, religious and non-respondents), employment status (unemployed, employed, self-employed or retired) and harmonized relative household level of income (low, medium, high or non-response).

### **Data analysis methods**

To analyze the data, we used the chi-square test for bivariate analyses (to examine changes in volunteering rates) and logistic regression analysis for multivariate analyses (to examine patterns of volunteering and country-level impacts on volunteering) and calculated predicted probabilities of voluntary work in each country. When estimating the logistic regression model with this variable included, we specified that individuals are clustered in countries. The advantage of this approach is that more accurate standard errors are produced than by simply using a logistic regression. In all analyses we used the listwise deletion method, which excludes cases with missing values for any of the variables in the model. Only 88 cases had missing values, and all non-responses were to the questions about employment or educational status.

## **Results**

### ***Trends in the Index of Civil Liberties and Volunteering Rates***

In Figure I we have mapped the Index of Civil Liberties for the six countries in our sample for the period between 1991 and 2014.



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Figure I about here  
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Although after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s all six countries in our sample began from a similar starting point – a medium level of civil liberties - by the mid-1990s divergent directions could already be observed; as can be seen in Figure I. While Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia set out on the path of increased civil liberties, the level of civil freedom was already on the decline in Russia and Belarus, and remained at the medium level in Ukraine. Over following two decades all countries remained on their chosen paths. In the Baltics increasing civil freedom remained high throughout the period. In Russia and Belarus civil liberties declined further in the second part of the 1990s and since then have remained very low. Ukraine remained partially free in terms of liberties until the early 2000s, when, after the Orange Revolution, civil freedom increased substantially. Figure II illustrates the relationship between civil liberties and the development of the volunteering rates in the six countries at both measurement points with arrows denoting the direction of change in civil liberties and volunteering rates.

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Figure II about here  
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We can already see significant differences among these countries in the level of civil liberties and voluntary work in the late 1990s. In 1999 on average only 14% of adults reported voluntary work in at least one nonprofit organization, but this proportion was much higher in Latvia and Estonia and in Belarus; much lower in Russia and around the average in Ukraine and Lithuania. This relationship between country and the incidence of voluntary work was

statistically significant ( $\chi^2(5, N = 7731) = 168.99, p < .01$ ). With the exception of Belarus and Lithuania, in 1999 we could already observe a stratification of countries into those with high levels of civil liberties and voluntary work (Latvia, Estonia) and countries with low civil freedom and low rates of voluntary work (Russia). By 2008 the paths taken by various countries in our sample had become even clearer, and five of the countries in our sample had taken the paths that confirm our hypotheses. Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia (the Baltics), which joined the European Union in 2004, experienced an increase in both the level of civil liberties and the extent of voluntary work. In contrast, a decline in volunteering was observed in Belarus and Russia, while civil liberties remained at the same low level. Unexpectedly however, in Ukraine – a country that experienced the Orange Revolution and a rise in levels of civil liberty – the voluntary work rate also declined, suggesting the failure of nonprofit organizations to capitalize on this public mobilization. As a result of these changes the differences in voluntary work rates across countries were statistically significant in 2008 ( $\chi^2(5, N = 9035) = 302.04, p < .01$ ).

### ***Regression results***

The results for logistic regression analysis presented in Table 2 show that even when demographic, socio-economic characteristics and religiosity of individuals were taken into account, the level of civil liberties was a significant predictor of involvement in volunteering in both 1999 and 2008. These results suggest that a political context which favors democratization has impacted positively on formal volunteering: the higher the level of civil liberties in a country the more likely people in that country are to participate in voluntary work.

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Table I about here

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Odds ratios<sup>4</sup> suggest that in 1999 each additional point on the level of the civil liberty scale increased the likelihood of volunteering 1.17 times but in 2008 that had increased to 1.2 times.

Also, in both 1999 and 2008, individuals with a degree, students, housewives and people in employment were considerably more likely to volunteer than individuals who were unemployed and/or without a degree (See Table II). These findings are consistent with the broader literature on the antecedents of voluntary work (Wilson, 2012).

Unexpectedly, in contrast to findings from other studies, religiosity had a negative effect on voluntary work in 2008 and no effect in 1999.

## **Discussion**

The aim of this study was to analyze how political change affects civil liberties and how that is related to changes in the extent of voluntary work in countries undergoing democratization. We hypothesized that higher levels of civil liberties are associated with higher levels of voluntary work and that an increase in the level of civil liberties is associated with an increase in the rate of volunteering. In other words, countries with higher levels of civil liberties also have high levels of voluntary work the level of civil liberties in a country is increasing, so is voluntary work. Using six former Soviet countries as a case study we expected that, according to this hypothesis, since 1999 the Baltics and Ukraine should see an increase in aggregated voluntary work rates with Russia and Belarus experiencing a stagnation of or decline in aggregated volunteering rates.

To do this we proposed a revised version of the Social Origins Theory, arguing that the civil society regimes in FSU countries can be reliably classified into two groups – democratization and anti-democratization - along two dimensions: the governance context (civil

liberties) and aggregate voluntary work rates. Our empirical results only partially support our hypothesis and suggest that our classification needs to be revised. We demonstrate the emergence of clear distinctive trajectories of institutional development and change, such as extensive democratization and Europeanization (the Baltics); pre-emption of civil society (Russia and Belarus) and struggle to maintain and advance democratic gains through public mobilization (Ukraine) and their impact on voluntary work in these post-Communist countries (see Table II). These divergent trajectories have only become clear by taking a long-term view.

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Table II about here  
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These trajectories reflect the political paths FSU states have taken following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Following their entry into the European Union, the Baltics have moved back to a Western European-type democracy with higher levels of civil liberties. This has resulted in increased and comparably high levels of voluntary work, though these rates are still lower than those found in the developed democracies of northern and western Europe (Newton & Montero, 2007); reflecting the historical antecedents of the Soviet Union.

Constraining democratization and moving away from this model are Russia and Belarus, with a continued low level of civil liberties and decline in voluntary work in the period between 1999 and 2008. At the same time we also observe a distinct and unexpected path taken by Ukraine where an increase in the level of civil liberties is not related to the increase in the extent of voluntary work. We term this trajectory mobilization, as citizens mobilize when it is crucial but this might not transcend into high levels of voluntary work. In Ukraine while the mobilization potential of the population is high (as demonstrated by the political protests of the

so-called 2004 Orange Revolution and the later Euromaidan protests in late 2013 and early 2014 regarding the government's failure to sign a promised trade treaty with the European Union) nonprofit organizations seemed to have failed, at least following the events in 2004, to harness and convert this into formal voluntary work arrangements (as evidence from 2008 suggests). This may reflect in part the failure of the 2004 Orange Revolution to deliver a more transparent government (Tudoroiu, 2007). Whether institutional changes and development and its effect on voluntary work in Ukraine takes a similar path following the 2014 events confirming the mobilization trajectory, it is yet to be established.

Our findings have important implications for theory-building and future research on cross-national differences in voluntary work and civil society. Our observed variations indicate that political-institutional changes and macro-structural political developments affect an individual's decision to engage in voluntary work, even when some individual factors predicting such behavior are taken into account. This study has shed fresh light on the link between democratization and voluntary work in countries undergoing political transition. Our findings suggest that volunteering is an outcome of democratization and democratic governance rather than the other way around. Volunteers are not carriers of democracy (Halman, 2003) and it seems that the focus of many development agencies both in the past and present on building civil society is somewhat misguided in this assumption. Moreover, reflecting Stark's (1991) observations on the process of privatization and establishing of market economies, we also see that the extraction process from Soviet rule appears to play an important role in regard to the institutional development trajectory taken post-Communism. Countries which showed early signs of mass mobilization (the Baltics), seem to have transitioned more successfully to governance arrangements that drive democratization. But they already had a history of

democratic institutions that was interrupted by Stalin after WWII. Countries where extraction from Soviet rule was primarily driven as an elite response have not. Thus in the latter FSU countries, institutions which shape development trajectories have witnessed less dramatic changes, explaining the path-dependent outcomes of stagnating civil liberties and decreasing voluntary work. Ukraine remains an exception with improvements in civil liberties and perhaps decreasing or stagnating rates of formal voluntary work, but data limitations make such a conclusion difficult. Hence, more research is required exploring path-dependent linkages and, in particular, the divergent development of the Ukrainian case.

In general, using our results we propose that a revised version of the Social Origins Theory can more reliably predict cross-national differences in the levels of voluntary work in countries that are not well-established democracies. We propose that in the FSU settings, civil society could be classified into four distinct categories using two dimensions: the level of civil liberties and the extent of voluntary work, as illustrated earlier in this paper. Mirroring Salamon and Anheier's (1998) original liberal classifications, the Baltics have high levels of voluntary work and civil liberties. Low levels of voluntary work and high levels of civil liberties can be found in Ukraine whilst Russia and Belarus have low levels of civil liberties and voluntary work. Despite all four countries sharing a common starting point with high levels of compulsory voluntary work and low levels of civil liberties (see Soviet Union in Table II), the development trajectories and path dependencies of the six countries in this study have resulted in different civil society regimes.

Our conclusions have to be seen in light of the limitations of the study. Firstly, the paper draws on only a small sample of countries due to the availability of data for both time points. Secondly, in this paper we focus on voluntary work within a formal setting, limiting examination

of other types of voluntary work and volunteer behavior, and also other types of engagement in civil society (e.g. campaigning, participating in protests etc). Conceptually we focused on formal volunteering; that is, volunteer work in an organizational setting. Although the organizational setting is more directly affected by macro-institutional development within the post-Communist context and so provides a good basis to examine the relationships between governance and voluntary work; voluntary work also frequently takes place outside such formalized settings (Kuti, 2004). This is an area that requires further examination. This notwithstanding, our results in this paper dovetail with the extant literature on the relative weakness of formal voluntary work in the post-Communist context that have lagged behind vis-à-vis democratization (Howard, 2002a, 2002b; Voicu & Voicu, 2009).

To sum up, using the FSU context we have highlighted how the institutional context and its changes over time shape both voluntary work and its nature. Our revised version of the Social Origins Theory can be applied to predict development in voluntary work in countries undergoing rapid political change, if the civil society regimes in these countries are classified along two dimensions: the institutional context and the extent of formal voluntary work. Our findings suggest it is not voluntary work that brings civil liberties; rather that higher civil liberties usually lead to higher voluntary work rates, although, as in the case of Ukraine our evidence suggests the freedom to participate is not always taken up by citizens. When more data becomes available, further analysis undertaken subsequently by researchers on post-2014 developments in Ukraine may prove otherwise.

## **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that although before the WW2 the Baltics were independent democratic states with active civil society, their civil society was eradicated by two Soviet mass deportations of civil society activists and their families and fifty years of Soviet rule.

<sup>2</sup> We thank one of the anonymous referees for outlining these different theoretical perspectives in order to delineate the Social Origins Theory.

<sup>3</sup> The list included: social welfare services for elderly, handicapped or deprived people; religious or church organizations; education, arts, music or cultural activities, trade unions; political parties or groups; local community actions on issues like poverty, employment, housing, racial equality; third world development or human rights; conservation, the environment, ecology, animal rights; professional associations; youth work (e.g. scouts, guides, youth clubs etc.); sports or recreation; women's groups; peace movements; voluntary organizations concerned with health; other groups.

<sup>4</sup> Odds ratios were calculated by exponentiating beta coefficients.



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## Tables

**Table I: Levels of Civil Liberties and other Predictors of Voluntary Work 1998-2008**

	Voluntary work in 1999		Voluntary work in 2008	
<b>The Index of Civil Liberties</b>	0.16***	(0.02)	0.19***	(0.02)
<b>Age</b>	-0.0052	(0.00)	0.00023	(0.00)
Sex (Female) Male	-0.027	(0.07)	0.23***	(0.07)
<b>Education</b> (no degree) Degree	0.66***	(0.08)	0.45***	(0.07)
<b>Religiousness</b>	.	.	.	.
(Non-religious/atheist)				
Religious	0.089	(0.08)	-0.22**	(0.07)
Non- response	-0.27*	(0.13)	-0.40**	(0.15)
<b>Employment</b> (Unemployed)	.	.	.	.
Retired	0.47*	(0.19)	-0.017	(0.21)
Other (student, housewife, other)	0.94***	(0.18)	0.54**	(0.20)
Employed or self-employed	0.96***	(0.15)	0.84***	(0.18)
<b>Relative harmonized income</b>	.	.	.	.
(Low)				
Medium	0.14	(0.10)	-0.082	(0.08)
High	0.031	(0.10)	-0.0040	(0.09)
Non- response	-0.17	(0.15)	-0.18	(0.11)
Constant	-3.25***	(0.25)	-3.72***	(0.25)
N	7715		8968	
F	20.43		25.59	

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

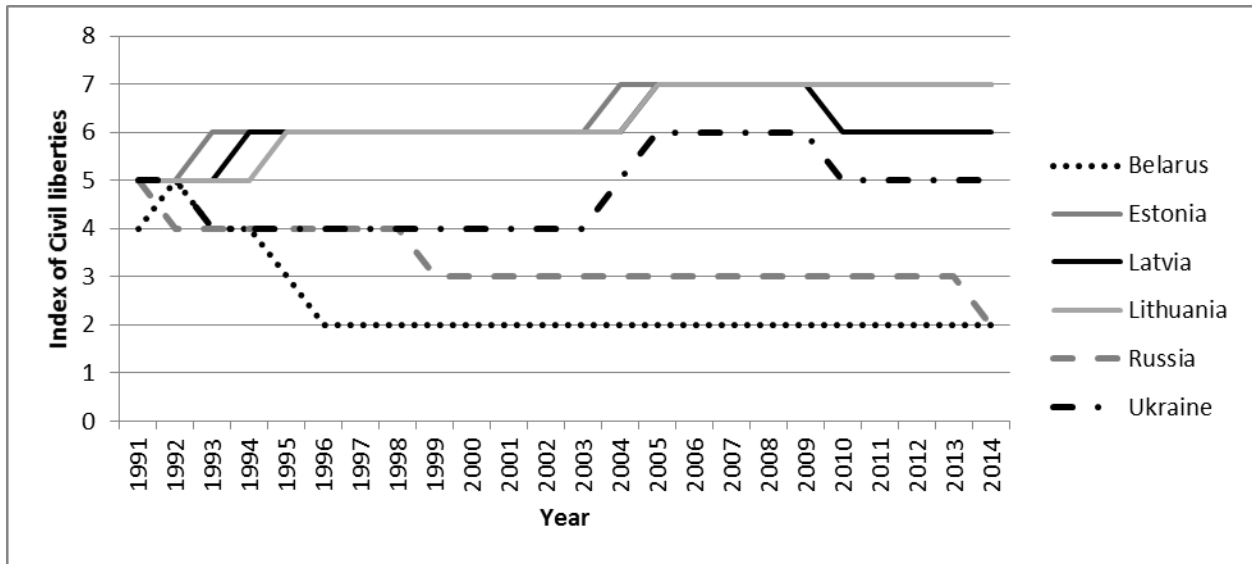


**Table II: Voluntary Work Regimes in six FSU countries**

	<i>Voluntary work: low</i>	<i>Voluntary work: high</i>
<i>Civil liberty: high</i>	Mobilization (Ukraine)	Europeanization (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia)
<i>Civil liberty: low</i>	Pre-emption (Russia, Belarus)	Compulsory voluntary work (Soviet Union)

## Figures

Figure I: Changes in the Index of Civil liberties (1991-2014)



**Figure II: Index of Civil Liberties and Volunteering Rates 1999 & 2008**

