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## Chapter Four

# Political Culture in the Baltic Region

Ursula Hoffmann-Lange

Since the publication of Almond and Verba's path-breaking study *The Civic Culture* in 1963, it has become commonplace that liberal democracies cannot flourish without having a political culture that is congruent with its democratic institutions. This implies that the political values and beliefs of citizens play an important role in stabilizing or undermining political systems. This is particularly true for liberal democracies that are based on the free competition of political parties and require the active political involvement of voluntary associations and individual citizens for ensuring an open public discourse about government policies and filling political offices. Almond and Verba identified several crucial dimensions of citizen values and beliefs toward the political system: the level of political information, the degree of affective attachment to the political institutions, civic competence and political engagement, as well as linkages between citizens and political parties.

The major drawback of the theories of political culture is their failure to specify the relative importance of their indicators and their lack of predictive power. While no political scientist disputes the importance of political culture for understanding the functioning of political systems, it is equally obvious that some democracies such as Italy have been rather stable over long periods despite widespread political dissatisfaction among their citizens. Likewise, electoral turnout is not only low in most postcommunist democracies, but also in longstanding democracies such as Switzerland and the United States. Does this imply that we need not be worried about voter dissatisfaction in Italy or low turnout in the postcommunist democracies? May stark deviations from crucial features of a "democratic civic culture" contribute to or even

trigger the demise of democracy? These questions cannot be answered today with sufficient precision.

Thus, the concept of a democratic political culture is not only broad and underspecified, but also lacks in predictive precision because it has so far not been possible to determine lower thresholds for crucial variables below which the survival of a political regime is seriously endangered. This is due to the fact that the probability of regime change does not only depend on a high degree of citizen disaffection with the present regime, but even more so on the strength of existing political institutions, on the activity and unity of oppositional forces, and on elite decisions to apply or lift repression against dissident movements, as well as on facilitating historical circumstances. Political cultural explanations should therefore only be applied after controlling for structural and contingent factors operating at the system level that can be assumed to be of more immediate relevance for the stability of political systems (Elkins and Simeon 1979). At the same time, Inglehart and Welzel (2005) claim that the globally increasing demands of citizens for more government responsiveness tend to undermine modern authoritarian systems and will eventually contribute to their demise, thus assuming a decisive impact of political culture on the chances for their democratization.

Even though it is not possible to specify critical combinations or thresholds of variables, the study of political culture is an important tool of comparative political research. It helps to understand similarities and differences in political values, attitudes, and involvement of citizens across nations and also shows degrees of congruence or incongruence between the political values and beliefs held by citizens on one side and the institutional characteristics of the political system on the other side. Therefore, the study of political culture is an important part of political analysis. In the case of the Baltic countries it provides insights into the legacies of communism that continue to influence the political values and beliefs of citizens in the postcommunist democracies by comparing them to those of the citizens in the stable democracies of the region. Moreover, the example of a number of West European countries that have developed from instable democracies, authoritarian, or even totalitarian regimes into stable democracies after World War II confirms that public support for democracy, trust in the democratic institutions and the active political involvement of citizens have increased over the years (e.g., Baker et al. 1981; Almond and Verba 1980). These latter results indicate that political culture may also be considered as a dependent variable and that it may be the result rather than the cause of democratic stabilization.

The European Social Survey of 2012, in which eight of the nine countries of the Baltic region participated, allows comparing the political cultures of

four types of countries with rather different social, economic, and political backgrounds:

- Three Scandinavian European Union (EU) member countries: Denmark, Finland, Sweden.
- Three postcommunist democracies that are now EU member countries: Poland, Estonia, Lithuania.
- Germany, which after reunification in 1990, had to manage the integration of the former communist German Democratic Republic into the Federal Republic of Germany. This required East Germans, who had been socialized under a fundamentally different political regime, to adapt to a sudden change in living conditions and political institutions.
- Russia as the only non-EU member among the Baltic countries.

According to all international databases, the three Scandinavian countries belong to the group of most democratic countries in the world. Table 4.1 includes the governance scores for the nine Baltic countries and a number of other major countries from different continents included in the most detailed and well-researched set of comparative international data on the democratic quality of countries collected by the World Bank (cf. Kaufmann et al. 2008; Kaufmann and Kraay 2010).<sup>1</sup> The five governance indicators tap three different dimensions—that is, the guarantee of individual freedom and political participation rights, the quality of governance, as well as the rule of law. For all five indicators, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark reach the top scores, closely followed by the longstanding democracies Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The scores for the three Baltic republics and Poland are somewhat lower but still fairly high, although they also show deficits on the rule of law indicator. The scores of Brazil, South Africa, and India are still lower and hover around zero, while the Russian Federation and China have negative scores on all five dimensions.

The following analysis will highlight some important indicators of political culture in the eight countries for which the 2012 European Social Survey (ESS)<sup>2</sup> provides data, starting out with life satisfaction and trust in political institutions, followed by aspects of political involvement, support for democracy, satisfaction with the performance of the political system, and finally attitudes on international issues. The survey data for Germany allow to distinguish between the answers of East and West German respondents and will show to what extent the East Germans who until 1989 lived under similar conditions as the citizens of the other communist countries, show more similarities with those or with their West German counterparts. For some aspects that are not covered in the ESS, indicators from the World Values Survey (WVS) will be used to fill the gap.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 4.1. Governance Indices of the World Bank for the Baltic Countries plus Important Other Countries in Different World Regions<sup>a</sup>**

	Voice and Accountability	Political Stability and Absence of Violence	Government Effectiveness	Regulatory Quality	Rule of Law	Control of Corruption
<i>Baltic Countries</i>						
Denmark	1.68	0.95	1.97	1.80	1.87	2.41
Estonia	1.09	0.73	0.98	1.43	1.16	1.11
Finland	1.58	1.36	2.17	1.85	1.93	2.19
Germany	1.41	0.93	1.52	1.55	1.62	1.78
Latvia	0.74	0.57	0.88	1.03	0.75	0.27
Lithuania	0.92	0.92	0.82	1.13	0.79	0.36
Poland	0.97	0.95	0.71	1.05	0.79	0.55
Russian Federation	-1.01	-0.75	-0.36	-0.37	-0.78	-0.99
Sweden	1.67	1.13	1.89	1.89	1.95	2.29
<i>Other Countries</i>						
Brazil	0.37	-0.28	-0.08	0.07	-0.12	-0.12
China	-1.58	-0.55	-0.03	-0.31	-0.46	-0.35
India	0.41	-1.19	-0.19	-0.47	-0.10	-0.56
South Africa	0.58	-0.06	0.43	0.41	0.13	-0.12
United Kingdom	1.32	0.48	1.47	1.77	1.67	1.68
United States	1.08	0.61	1.50	1.26	1.54	1.28

Source: World Bank 2015 (<http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.aspx#doc>)<sup>a</sup> Index values are standardized scores with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

## ATTITUDES TOWARD THE POLITICAL COMMUNITY

David Easton (1965) introduced the distinction between two types and three objects of political support. Support may be based on generalized feelings (diffuse support) or concrete experiences (specific support), and it may be directed toward the political community, the political regime, or the political authorities. While these analytical distinctions are plausible, the attitudes of most citizens are not so neatly organized. In particular, empirical research that has tried to test the validity of the distinction between the two types of political support does not confirm the expectation that attitudes measuring generalized feelings toward politics (diffuse support) are empirically distinct from evaluations of the actual performance of governments and that they are also more stable. The distinction between the three objects of political support is instead intuitively easier to grasp and also easier to operationalize in public opinion surveys (Westle 1989; Fuchs and Klingemann 2009).

The most basic level of attachment is the feeling of belonging to the national community. In the ESS, respondents were asked if they belonged to a group discriminated against. Such feelings are considerably more widespread

**Table 4.2. Feelings of Discrimination among Noncitizens (%)**

Country	Citizenship	Percent of Respondents	Percent Member of a Group Subjected to Discrimination <sup>a</sup>
Denmark	Yes	96.8	3.1
	No	3.2	11.8
Estonia	Yes	84.9	7.6
	No	15.1	35.1
Finland	Yes	97.5	7.9
	No	2.5	17.0
West Germany	Yes	94.4	3.6
	No	5.6	13.2
East Germany	Yes	98.3	5.5
	No	1.7	11.1
Lithuania	Yes	99.8	11.4
	No	0.2	20.0
Poland	Yes	100.0	5.0
Russian Federation	Yes	99.4	6.6
Sweden	No	0.6	25.0
	Yes	97.1	8.2
	No	2.9	7.5

Source: European Social Survey 2012.

<sup>a</sup> Question: Would you describe yourself as being a member of a group that is discriminated against in this country?

among non-citizens, as can be seen in the second column of Table 4.2. The first column of Table 4.2 shows the percentage of citizens and non-citizens among the respondents in each country. With the exception of Estonia (15.1% non-citizens), this percentage is below 10 percent. These figures need to be interpreted in the light of large differences in the actual share of ethnic minorities though. Regardless of their citizenship status, the presence of fairly large Russian minorities of close to 30% in the three Baltic states and of residents with an immigration background in Germany<sup>4</sup> are a problem of considerable magnitude, while the share of ethnic minorities is fairly low in the other countries.

Looking at the other side of the coin, the attitude toward immigrants is slightly positive. The three Scandinavian countries achieve the highest scores, while East Germans, Estonians, and especially Russians are the least welcoming, making it more difficult for immigrants to become a part of the national community.

Life satisfaction is a classic and at the same time general indicator of the perceived quality of life in a country (Holtmann et al. 2014, 142). Table 4.3 also includes the scores for social trust as well as for trust in parliament, the police, and political parties. The highest scores can be observed in the three Scandinavian countries, followed by West Germany, while East Germany, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, and Russia show the lowest values. Trust in people is higher in Estonia and Lithuania than in Germany, probably because these are small countries with strong social ties among people. Amazingly it is lowest in Poland—even lower than in Russia—which stands in stark contrast to the fairly high life satisfaction found in Poland. The fairly low social trust score in Poland is mirrored by extremely low levels of trust in parliament and political parties, which are again lower than in Estonia and Lithuania. These results are rather puzzling given Poland's vanguard role in forcing the Communist Party out of power and introducing democratic institutions.

Comparing the four trust items across the countries, it can be seen that trust in the police is generally higher than trust in people and in the country's parliament, while trust in political parties is lowest by far. These results are similar to many other studies on political trust, which usually show that trust in neutral state institutions (police, public administration, and courts) is higher than trust in political institutions and political parties, which are more "political" and involved in taking controversial policy decisions (McAllister 1999; Newton and Norris 2000). Results for the political parties generally show a convergence between a decreasing trend in the traditional democracies and the failure of the new postcommunist party systems to establish themselves as trustworthy mediators of citizen interests. Finally, the fact that trust in the national

**Table 4.3. Life Satisfaction and Trust in People (Means, Scores 0–10)**

	Denmark	Estonia	Finland	West Germany	East Germany	Lithuania	Poland	Russian Federation	Sweden	Average
Life satisfaction (0 = extremely dissatisfied to 10 = extremely satisfied)	8.58	6.25	8.10	7.75	6.96	5.86	7.09	5.81	7.90	7.14
Most people can be trusted (0 = you can't be too careful (0) to 10 = better place)	6.95	5.52	6.57	5.00	4.62	5.13	4.10	4.39	6.06	5.37
Immigrants make country a better place to live (0 = worse place to 10 = better place)	5.98	4.81	5.64	5.49	4.91	5.00	5.97	3.30	6.43	5.28
Trust in country's parliament (0–10)	6.01	3.99	5.96	4.94	4.30	3.15	2.95	3.34	5.96	4.51
Trust in the police (0–10)	7.96	5.93	8.09	7.07	6.46	5.47	5.28	3.52	6.74	6.28
Trust in political parties (0–10)	5.25	3.22	4.93	3.85	3.38	2.80	2.22	2.99	4.91	3.73

Source: European Social Survey 2012.

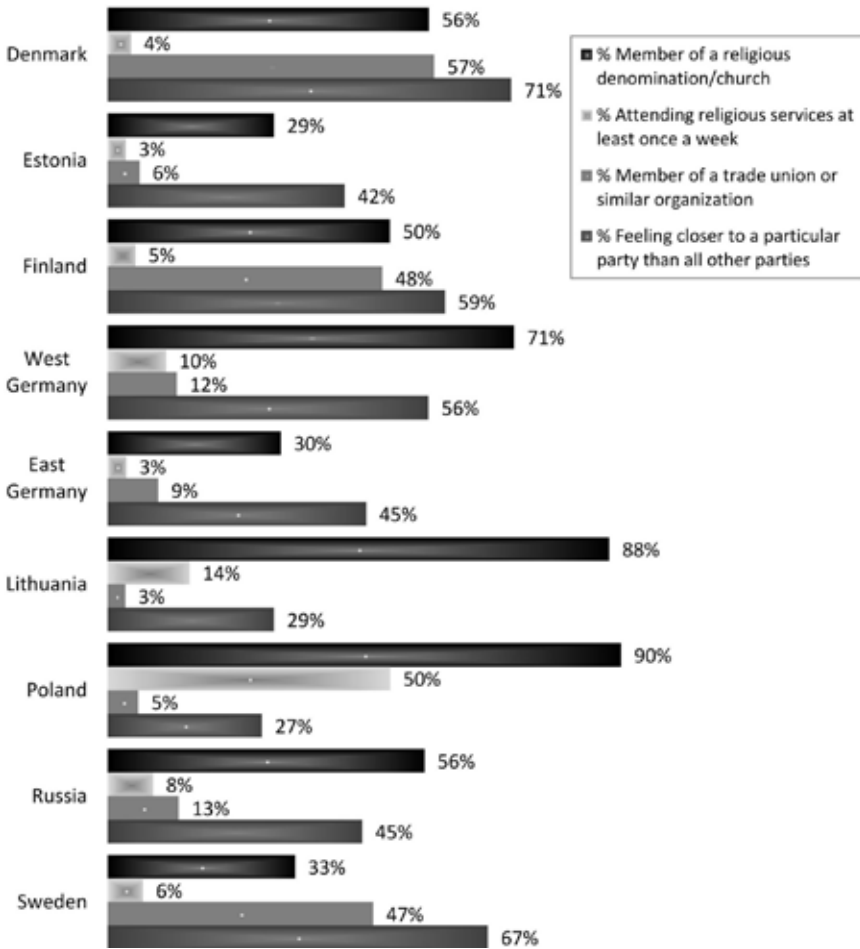
parliament and in political parties is higher in authoritarian Russia than in the new democratic EU member countries, is unexpected, to say the least.

## SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

The importance of voluntary associations as linkages between citizens and the state for democracy was already emphasized by authors such as Seymour Martin Lipset (1956) and William Kornhauser (1960). After three decades during which social scientists did not devote much attention to this aspect, its importance was rediscovered after the breakdown of communism in the late 1980s (Wnuk-Lipiński 2007). It became obvious that a strong civil society is a central precondition not only for providing mutual assistance beyond the primary bonds within the family and the social services provided by the state, but also for articulating political demands of citizens and by promoting their political involvement without which democratic societies cannot function properly (Putnam 1993). Wnuk-Lipiński also emphasized that only a vibrant civil society is able to prevent the corruption deriving from “the conversion of the political capital of the old elites into economic capital during the transition from command economy to market economy” (op. cit. 2007, 690).

Figure 4.1 shows that church membership, even though it has declined in recent decades, is still widespread in most countries of the region. Despite attempts by the communist regimes to obstruct the activities of church organizations and despite school curricula emphasizing secularism, church membership is even higher in Lithuania and Poland than in the traditional liberal democracies. Conversely, Estonia, East Germany, and Sweden are the most secularized societies in the region. With the exception of Poland where nearly half of the population (49.6 percent) report to attend religious services at least once a week, regular church attendance lies below 15 percent and thus indicates that all of these societies have become fundamentally secularized even where people have retained their church membership. This implies that the churches have lost much of their linkage potential. The same is true for the trade unions, even though unionization is still very high in the three Scandinavian countries.

It is obvious from figure 4.1 that the linkage power of traditional mass organizations in the postcommunist countries is not uniformly lower than in the older democracies. Church attendance is low in all countries but Poland. Trade union membership remains only high in the three Scandinavian democracies, but is very low in Germany and the postcommunist countries. Party identification is still high in Denmark and Sweden and fairly high in Finland and West Germany, but below 50 percent in all other countries. Even though it does serve as a linkage mechanism for those who still have a party identification, the great



**Figure 4.1. Membership in Intermediary Associations and Party Identification**

Source: European Social Survey 2012. Author’s own calculations.

majority of whom (from 61.7 percent in Poland to 78.5 percent in Finland) said that they felt close to that party. Robert Putnam has warned about the problematic effects of this ongoing erosion of “political capital” in the United States and other developed democracies (2000; Pharr and Putnam 2000).

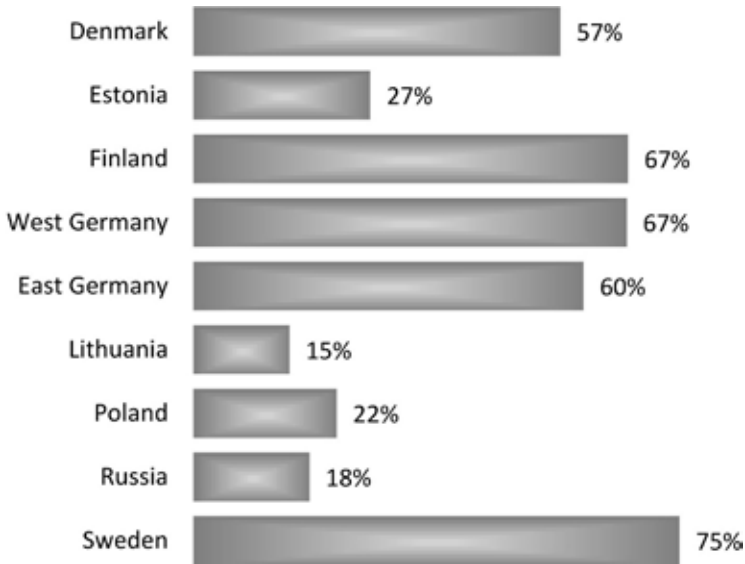
The figures for political involvement in table 4.4 and figure 4.2 indicate the existence of a considerable gap between the older democracies—that is, the Scandinavian countries and Germany on one side, and the postcommunist countries on the other side. Despite the decline in voter turnout over the last decades, interest in politics and political participation are highest in Denmark, Finland, Germany, and Sweden, but considerably lower in Russia, Estonia,

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**Table 4.4. Political Involvement (Percent)**

	Denmark	Estonia	Finland	West Germany	East Germany	Lithuania	Poland	Russian Federation	Sweden	Average
% Quite or very interested in politics	68.6	40.7	56.1	64.5	65.8	20.3	39.6	40.3	58.3	50.5
% Voted in last national election: Yes	87.3	60.2	77.7	73.0	75.1	52.0	65.4	62.9	80.8	70.5
No	5.4	26.9	14.0	14.6	19.5	43.5	29.0	30.3	8.6	21.3
Not eligible	7.3	13.0	8.3	12.3	5.4	4.5	5.5	6.7	10.7	8.2
% Contacted politician or government official last twelve months	16.7	13.0	17.9	15.8	11.9	6.9	7.3	7.2	16.8	12.6
% Worked in political party or action group last twelve months	4.0	2.5	3.1	5.1	3.5	3.4	2.5	3.2	4.7	3.6
% Worked in another organization or association last twelve months	24.7	5.4	37.5	32.3	27.2	2.4	7.1	5.4	34.6	19.6
% Worn or displayed campaign badge/sticker last twelve months	6.3	3.9	17.7	6.4	4.3	2.9	4.4	4.9	20.3	7.9
% Signed petition last twelve months	25.1	10.2	23.4	33.3	35.7	5.5	10.4	5.8	43.7	21.5
% Taken part in lawful public demonstration last twelve months	4.9	4.4	1.5	8.6	9.3	2.0	2.3	4.2	7.3	4.9
% Boycotted certain products last twelve months	25.7	7.2	35.3	37.5	24.5	1.7	5.6	3.6	43.7	20.5

Source: European Social Survey, 2012.



**Figure 4.2. Participation in at Least One Political Activity Beyond Voting During the Last 12 Months**

Source: European Social Survey 2012. Author's own calculations.

Poland, and especially Lithuania. The results for other forms of political participation confirm the outlier position of the latter country. At first glance, this result of lower political involvement in the postcommunist democracies seems strange because one should expect that after decades of political repression the citizens of these democracies cherish the opportunity to publicly express their political preferences and interests. On the other hand, one must not forget that communist regimes suppressed the autonomous articulation of political demands and the development of civil society associations.

The low levels of political involvement in the postcommunist democracies may also be due to some saturation effect. It may well be that after the very high level of political mobilization during the period of political transition citizens got tired of politics and have tried to focus on their private lives instead. Moreover, they have also had to cope with the transition to market economy and the ensuing economic hardships. There are thus reasons to expect an increase in political involvement in the postcommunist democracies over time.

These results imply that the high level of social trust observed in Estonia and Lithuania (and probably also in Latvia), as well as the high level of church membership and attendance of religious services in Poland cannot compensate for the lack of political involvement in these countries. If Wnuk-Lipiński is right, this weakness may be partly responsible for the fairly low

scores of all postcommunist countries on the control of corruption index of the World Bank in table 4.1.

For the four older democracies as well as for East Germany it can be concluded that Putnam's dire predictions about the decline of "social capital" may be wrong because he only took into account traditional mass organizations and did not adequately acknowledge that the spread of new types of informal political action groups has contributed to keeping up or even raising the overall level of political involvement. Still, the linkages provided by these political groups are weaker and more ephemeral than the more permanent membership in churches and trade unions as well as party identifications based on social class, religious, regional, or ethnic identities. Because of their smaller size, these organizations do also not command as much political clout as the old mass organizations. The proliferation of groups trying to bring their influence to bear in policy-formation processes has made the latter more complex, the formation of policy coalitions among groups more difficult, and their outcomes less predictable.

## SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY

Since many citizens of the countries of the Baltic region were raised under dramatically different political regimes and have experienced at least one regime change, the degree of support for democracy in the new EU member countries indicates if they have embraced the new democratic order and how satisfied they are with it compared to the previous communist regime. For Russia the data can show if the citizens accept the democratic deficits in the country or if the harsh repressive course of the present Russian government faces at least tacit resistance from a sizeable part of the population.

According to Larry Diamond, the catchword democracy nowadays evokes positive associations all over the world and even autocrats claim to be democrats.<sup>5</sup> Diamond therefore argued that asking respondents if they wish to live in a democracy does not carry much information and that it is better to ask if they prefer democracy over an authoritarian regime instead (2008, 31–34). The WVS has regularly asked respondents to rate various types of political systems on a four-point scale ranging from very bad to very good:

- Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections
- Having the army rule
- Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country
- Having a democratic political system

Experience shows that a rule by experts evokes positive associations of competent decision makers and draws a lot of support even in traditional democracies, especially since respondents are not forced to make a choice among the four options. Military regimes, although not infrequent in other parts of the world, have no tradition in northern and central Europe and do not receive much support in the Baltic region. Therefore only the ratings for the first and the last option are displayed in table 4.5. For determining the percentages in figure 4.3, the score for an autocratic leadership was deducted from the score for democracy. The resulting scores (–3 to +3) were then re-coded. Negative scores and a score of 0 are combined to the category “none” (no preference for democracy), the other scores are interpreted as weak, medium, and strong preference for a democratic political system.

Strong support for democracy on this index is a demanding criterion since it requires that a respondent has given democracy the highest score (3) and autocratic leadership the lowest (0). Therefore, even in the two countries in which support was highest, only 45.8 percent (West Germany) and 38.7 percent (Sweden) of the respondents fulfilled this criterion. At the same time,

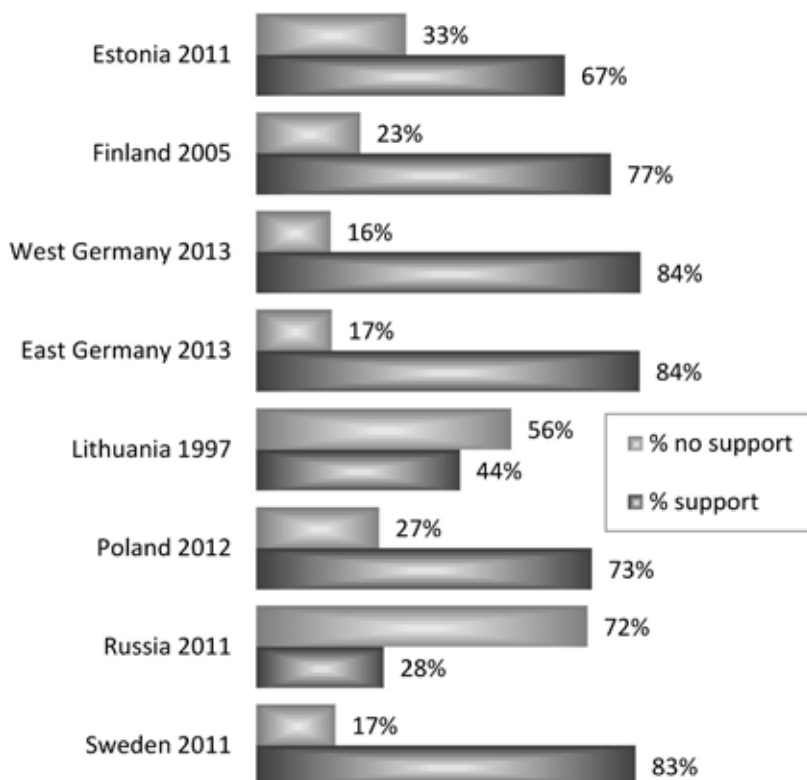
**Table 4.5. Preference for a Democratic Political System over Autocratic Leadership in the World Values Survey<sup>a</sup>**

Country <sup>a</sup>	Wave/Year <sup>b</sup>	Mean Score for Democratic Political System	Mean Score for Autocratic Leadership	Differential
Estonia	1996	3.25	2.21	1.04
	2011	3.15	2.10	1.05
Finland	1996	3.02	2.00	1.02
	2005	3.29	1.86	1.43
West Germany	1997	3.54	1.40	2.14
	2013	3.61	1.72	1.89
East Germany	1997	3.35	1.67	1.68
	2013	3.51	1.81	1.70
Latvia	1996	3.08	2.43	0.65
Lithuania	1997	3.10	2.79	0.31
Poland	2012	3.01	1.90	1.11
Russian Federation	1995	2.53	2.53	0.00
	2011	2.99	2.99	0.00
Sweden	1996	3.58	1.86	1.72
	2011	3.66	1.89	1.77
Average	1995–1998	3.18	2.11	1.07
	2010–2014	3.32	2.04	1.28

Source: World Values Survey.

<sup>a</sup> No data for Denmark available.

<sup>b</sup> The World Values Surveys are organized and the data-files are merged by waves: The two waves included here are wave three (1994–1998) and wave six (2010–2014), for Finland wave five (2005–2009). Although Poland participated in the wave three survey, this question was not asked in 1997.



**Figure 4.3. Support for Democracy**

Source: World Values Survey. Author's own calculations.

less than one-fifth of respondents in both countries did not prefer democracy over autocracy. East Germans do not differ much from West Germans in their rejection of autocracy, while this percentage is somewhat higher in Finland, but has decreased since the mid-1990s from 32.1 percent to 22.7 percent. Rejection of autocracy was also rather strong in Poland and Estonia. Unfortunately, no recent data are available for Latvia and Lithuania, but given the rather stable figures in Estonia for the two waves of the WVS, it seems not very likely that support for democracy has increased much over the last twenty years. Lithuania is the only postcommunist democracy where support for democracy is somewhat lower than indifference or preference for an autocratic system. But this may be due either to the situation in the mid-1990s or to a peculiarity of that wave of the WVS in Lithuania. As the first row in table 4.6 shows, the importance attributed to living in a democratic country, while second lowest in Lithuania, is still quite high with a score of 7.43, which amounts to 78.5 percent who gave a score of six and above.

**Table 4.6. Evaluation of Democracy and Political Satisfaction (Means, Range 0–10)**

	Denmark	Estonia	Finland	West Germany	East Germany	Lithuania	Poland	Russian Federation	Sweden	Average
Scale values 0 = not at all to 10 = completely										
How important for you to live in democratically governed country?	9.43	8.03	8.97	9.14	8.49	7.43	8.16	6.52	9.36	8.39
How democratic is your country overall?	8.14	5.77	7.48	7.34	6.32	5.56	5.84	4.39	7.80	6.52
How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in your country?	7.31	4.93	6.88	6.37	5.25	4.97	4.88	3.83	7.03	5.72
How satisfied are you with the national government?	4.74	3.90	5.90	4.91	4.42	4.22	3.38	4.25	5.63	4.59
How satisfied are you with the present state of economy in your country?	5.54	4.14	6.00	5.98	5.34	3.98	4.18	3.77	6.14	5.01

Source: European Social Survey 2012.

The considerably lower support for democracy of the Russian respondents stands out and has even dropped since the mid-1990s. In the last wave of the WVS (2011), 27.7 percent even preferred an autocratic system or gave equal ratings (44.5 percent) for both regime types. The results of the ESS show somewhat more support for democracy, with 63.9 percent of the Russian respondents claiming that this was important to them. But following Diamond's observation that only a preference vote can be considered as a stringent test of support, the citizens of Russia and Lithuania cannot be considered as staunch democrats, to say the least.

In all countries, the ratings for the democratic quality of the country are considerably lower. The line-up is similar to the results for the previous question. The mean scores on a scale from zero to ten are high in the four old democracies (between 7.34 in West Germany and 8.14 in Denmark) and somewhat lower in East Germany (6.32). They range between five and six in the postcommunist democracies, while Russia achieved the lowest score. Satisfaction with democracy, the national government and the state of the economy are even lower. The low satisfaction with the state of the economy, especially, reflects the actual economic situation in the different countries.

The 2012 European Social Survey also included a battery of questions asking respondents to indicate which aspects of democracy they valued most and to what extent these were actually realized in their countries.<sup>6</sup> The results for these questions confirm that "Europeans have a broad notion of democracy which is not limited to a purely procedural conception," but also includes a social dimension (Ferrin and Kriesi 2014, 7). While the differences in the meaning of democracy are relatively minor across Europe, the differences in satisfaction with democracy are considerable. The latter result confirms the findings of the present analysis. "Clearly the most satisfied with the functioning of their democracies are the Northern Europeans, followed by the Western Europeans, whilst evaluations of democracy by Southern and Central-Eastern Europeans lag behind" (op. cit., 12). With respect to the evaluation of the different dimensions of democracy, the respondents' ratings for the direct democratic and especially the social dimension showed the largest gap between importance and realization, leading the authors to the conclusion that "there is an evident failure of democratic governments to live up to public expectations" (op. cit., 14).

## ATTITUDES ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

Table 4.7 provides the results for the few questions on international issues included in the two surveys. The first row shows that the question of the further

**Table 4.7. Attitudes toward European Integration and Immigration (Means, Scores 0–10)**

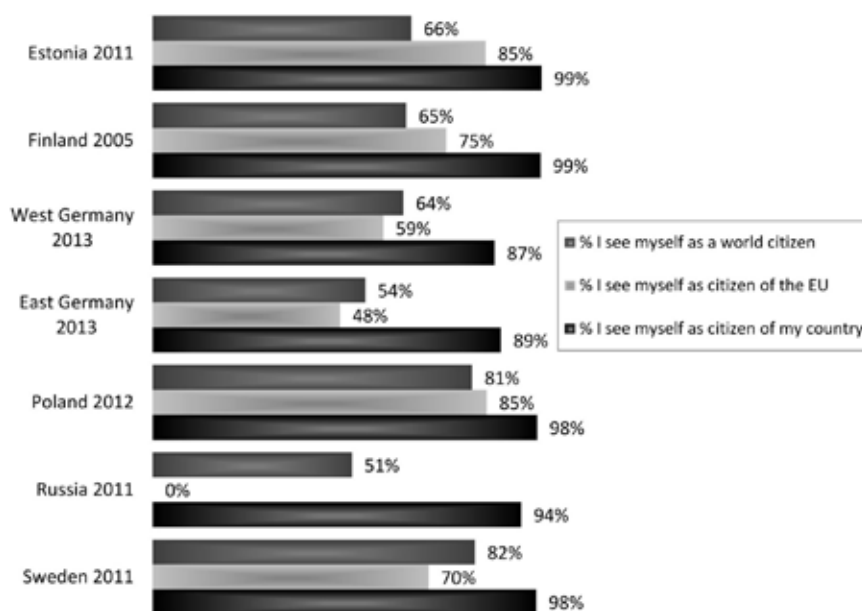
	Denmark		Estonia		Finland		West Germany		East Germany		Lithuania		Poland		Russian Federation		Sweden		Average
European Union: European unification should go further or has already gone too far (0 = gone too far to 10 = should go further) <sup>a</sup>	5.61	4.57	4.37	5.62	5.15	5.69	5.68	4.90	4.71	5.68	4.90	4.71	5.14						
Trust in the European Parliament (0 = no trust at all to 10 = complete trust) <sup>a</sup>	5.07	4.75	5.11	4.43	4.04	4.71	4.22	3.53	4.75	4.51									
Trust in the United Nations (0 = no trust at all to 10 = complete trust) <sup>a</sup>	6.55	5.24	6.57	5.08	4.81	5.01	5.04	3.71	6.29	5.37									
Immigrants make country better place to live (0 = worse place to 10 = better place) <sup>a</sup>	5.98	4.81	5.64	5.49	4.91	5.00	5.97	3.30	6.43	5.28									
Worried about a war involving my country (% very much and a great deal) <sup>d</sup>	55.0		22.2	43.1	47.1	69.2	11.3	41.3											
Worried about a terrorist attack (% very much and a great deal) <sup>d</sup>	47.1		34.0	45.1	45.5	22.5	45.5												
Worried about a civil war (% very much and a great deal) <sup>d</sup>	43.6		13.1	22.6	39.6	64.4	6.9	31.7											

<sup>a</sup> Source: European Social Survey 2012.<sup>b</sup> Source: World Values Survey wave 6 (2010–2014), for Finland wave 5 (2005–2009), no data for Denmark and Lithuania.<sup>c</sup> Source: World Values Survey wave 6 (2010–2014), for Finland wave 5 (2005–2009), no data for Denmark and Lithuania, question not asked in Russia.<sup>d</sup> Source: World Values Survey wave 6 (2010–2014), no data for Denmark, Finland and Lithuania.

development of European unification is controversial. All country means are close to the numerical midpoint of the scale—five. On average, slightly more than one-third of the respondents (36.2 percent) feel that it has already gone too far, one-fifth (22.1 percent) feel that the achieved degree of unification is sufficient, while two-fifths (41.7 percent) feel that unification should go further. Support for further integration is rather low in Finland and Sweden (26.9 percent and 31.4 percent), while about half of the citizens in Denmark (51.0 percent), West Germany (50.0 percent), Lithuania (52.5 percent), and Poland (50.0 percent) would support it. The share of opponents (already gone too far) is highest in Estonia (45.6 percent) and in Finland (47.6 percent).

The results for trust in the European parliament and in the United Nations are likewise somewhere in the middle region of the scale. Interestingly enough, the citizens of the new EU member countries exhibit higher trust in the European parliament than in their national parliaments, while it is the other way around in the old member-states. Trust in the United Nations is particularly high in the postcommunist democracies, and it is higher in all countries than trust in the national parliaments.

The question if respondents consider themselves as citizens of their own nation, as EU citizens or as world citizens (figure 4.4) reveals that national identities are still stronger than transnational attachments. Between 88.6



**Figure 4.4. Levels of Political Identification**

Source: World Values Survey. Author's own calculations.

percent (East Germany) and 99.0 percent (Estonia) see themselves as citizens of their own country. Identification with the EU is also fairly high, but interestingly much lower in Germany, the only founding member of the EU in the region. Conversely, it is very high in Estonia and Poland, the only new EU member countries for which data are available. Sweden and Poland are the countries with the most cosmopolitan citizens. More than 80 percent of the citizens in these countries consider themselves as world citizens. But the shares are also above 50 percent in the other countries, which indicate that globalization has led to an increased awareness of transnational issues.

Worries about a future war are fairly widespread in Russia where nearly 70 percent of the respondents confess to being afraid of a war involving their country. In Estonia (55.0 percent), Russia's small neighbor country and former Russian satellite, the Russian military intervention in Ukraine has also contributed to increased concerns. The same is true for Latvia, as a recent survey shows,<sup>7</sup> and probably no less in Lithuania (see also Hyndle-Hussein 2015). Even 45.5 percent of the Polish citizens and many East Germans (45.1 percent) share these feelings of insecurity.

Worries about terrorist attacks are very high in Russia and very low in Sweden, with an average across the countries of 45.5 percent. It would be interesting to see if these figures have gone up since the time of the surveys that were conducted between 2011 and 2013. Nearly two-thirds of the Russian respondents and 43.6 percent of the Estonians are finally worried about a civil war in their countries, which is probably due to the ethnic tension in these countries. Hyndle-Hussein (2015) claims that the weakening sense of security in the Baltic republics was triggered by riots of members of the Russian minority in Tallinn and cyberattacks that paralyzed key sectors of the Estonian state in 2007. On the other hand, she concedes that the danger of an uprising of the Russian minority is much smaller in the three Baltic republics because the much higher standards of living in these countries contribute "to limiting the radicalism within the minorities and weakens separatist tendencies" (op. cit., 6). The fairly high percentage (39.6 percent) of Polish respondents who worried about civil war is more difficult to interpret, especially since Poland is the most ethnically homogeneous country in the region.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis has shown the relevance of comparative research on political culture and has revealed some systematic differences between the old and new democracies in the Baltic region. It has confirmed the results of previous longitudinal research on the development of political culture in West Germany

after World War II, which showed that cultural patterns are tenacious and cannot be expected to change over night. In West Germany, it took more than two decades to overcome the traditional “subject culture” diagnosed by Almond and Verba in the second half of the 1950s, which was characterized by a high level of interest in politics on one side and cautiousness in articulating political opinions in public as well as low levels of personal political involvement on the other side (Baker et al. 1981, chap. 1; Conradt 1980).

With respect to the first set of questions dealing with feelings of social inclusion and with linkages to the broader political community, national patterns seem to be more relevant than socialization under different political regimes. Ethnic heterogeneity is an important factor. The presence of ethnic minorities in the three Baltic republics and Russia, or substantial immigration as in Denmark, Finland, and Germany, has nurtured feelings of social exclusion on the side of such minorities. Sweden is a counter-example, though. It is the EU country that has admitted more immigrants from non-EU countries per capita than any of the others, yet it has developed what Germans now call a *Willkommenskultur* (culture of welcoming) and thereby prevented feelings of discrimination among immigrants. This is confirmed by the fact that Sweden has the highest percentage of respondents saying that immigration makes the country a better place to live.

Life satisfaction is strongly influenced by the actual economic situation. It is considerably higher in the wealthy countries, but also seems to depend on feelings of relative deprivation. East Germans, who are much better off than their neighbors in Poland, are on average less satisfied because they compare themselves with the more well-to-do West Germans rather than with their postcommunist neighbor countries. Social trust is higher in the less populous countries of Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, and Sweden.

Integration in intermediary organizations likewise depends more strongly on national peculiarities than on political regime experience. Apart from East Germany, Sweden is the most secularized country in the Baltic region, but at the same time still has high levels of unionization and of party identification. The two latter figures have to do with the longstanding party system where trade union membership is an indicator of integration into the social democratic milieu. While membership in churches is still higher in Denmark than in Sweden, church attendance is similarly low. Denmark shows similar patterns with respect to its high degree of unionization and party identification. In Poland the strength of the Catholic milieu compensates for the much lower levels of unionization and party identification.

Regarding political involvement, support for democracy, and political satisfaction, the results confirm the distinction between the four country types mentioned in the introduction. The established Western democracies and older EU members—including West Germany—generally achieve higher values than the postcommunist democracies, while Russia shows the lowest or second-lowest values on all of these indicators. Democracy has even lost

ground in Russia since 1995. While the share of respondents who prefer an autocracy has remained stable over the last twenty years, the number of respondents indifferent to whether they live in a democracy or an autocracy has increased from 28.8 percent in 1995 to 44.5 percent in 2011 at the expense of the number of supporters of democracy.

With the exception of political interest and support for democracy, East Germans show somewhat lower values than West Germans on nearly all indicators. For the indicators of belongingness to the political community, this implies that the East German society is more atomized and satisfaction with living conditions remains lower than in West Germany even after twenty-five years of German unification. The same is true for satisfaction with democracy and trust in the democratic political institutions. A recent report comparing East and West Germans with respect to their evaluations of living conditions and their political attitudes confirms the persistence of these differences, but concludes that they have become much smaller over the last decade (Holtmann et al. 2014). Moreover, four-fifths of the respondents in both regions believe in the advantages of unification, especially for East Germany. While the expectations of the former GDR citizens of what this would involve were not very precise at the outset (op. cit., 184), support for a liberal democratic order was strong from the beginning. However, the authors state that this support was not very stable initially and that there is still an East-West gap of about 10 percent (op. cit., 187). Their very detailed data analysis also indicates that the same is true for political participation (op. cit., 214). Overall, the empirical evidence confirms that East Germans have embraced a Western-style liberal democracy much faster than their counterparts in the other postcommunist democracies. One should add that the objective conditions were also much better in East Germany because of the enormous transfers in terms of money and know-how from West Germany, which eased the process of socioeconomic and political transformation.

## NOTES

1. These scores are based on a large number of databases provided by global organizations and therefore cancel off the flaws of being based on subjective evaluations. They are standardized scores, which implies that they have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

2. The ESS (<http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>) is an academically driven cross-national public opinion survey based on representative samples of the resident population fifteen years and above in European countries, including Turkey and Israel. The fieldwork is funded by national sources, while the coordination (academic standards for data collection, questionnaire development, coordination of fieldwork, production of the comparative data-sets, etc.) is EU-funded. The survey is conducted

biannually, starting in 2002. The number of participating countries varies, depending on availability of national funding, and has increased from twenty-two in 2002 to twenty-nine in 2012. Its three aims are

- to monitor and interpret changing public attitudes and values within Europe and to investigate how they interact with Europe's changing institutions;
- to advance and consolidate improved methods of cross-national survey measurement in Europe and beyond; and
- to develop a series of European social indicators, including attitudinal indicators

The ESS questionnaires include a stable set of core questions and rotating modules for which cross-national academic teams may apply and which will be determined on a competitive basis. The data of wave seven, conducted in 2014, were not available yet.

3. The World Values Survey ([www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org)) is conducted by a global network of social scientists studying changing values and their impact on social and political life. It started out with ten countries in the first wave (1981–1984) and has been followed by five more waves, a seventh wave being on its way. The most recent wave for which data are available is wave six (2010–2014) in which fifty-five countries participated, among them five from the Baltic region.

4. Since it has become much easier to get German citizenship in recent years, the overall proportion of people with a “migration background” (i.e., who are first or second generation immigrants), amounts to altogether 19.5 percent. It should also be noted that most of the immigrants live in West Germany and only very few in East Germany. Source: [https://www.destatis.de/DE/PresseService/Presse/Pressemitteilunggen/2014/03/PD14\\_081\\_12521.html](https://www.destatis.de/DE/PresseService/Presse/Pressemitteilunggen/2014/03/PD14_081_12521.html) (accessed February 23, 2015).

5. Victor Orbán, the Hungarian prime minister, for instance, claims that he is a democrat, yet he openly advocates an “illiberal democracy.”

6. The scholars who developed these questions distinguished five different dimensions: the electoral dimension (free and fair elections, vertical accountability, deliberation, responsiveness), the liberal dimension (rule of law, horizontal accountability, minority rights, freedom of the press), the social dimension (protection against poverty, reduction of income inequality), the direct democratic dimension (referendums), the inclusiveness dimension (participation rights for migrants) and the type of representation (majoritarian vs. proportional) (Ferrin and Kriesi 2014: 5).

7. An article in the *Baltic Times* of November 2014 on public opinion surveys in Latvia shows that fear of war has risen from 35 percent in 2011 to 51 percent in 2014 (<http://baltictimes.delfi.lv/news/articles/35812/>, accessed February 26, 2015).

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## APPENDIX A

### COUNTRIES AND RESPONDENT NUMBERS IN THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL SURVEY (ESS) 2012 AND IN WAVES 3 AND 6 OF THE WORLD VALUES SURVEY (WVS)

Country	ESS 2012	WVS Wave 3 1994–1998	WVS Wave 6 2010–2014
Denmark	1650		
Estonia	2380	1021	1533
Finland <sup>a</sup>	2197	987	1014
West Germany	1948	1017	1132
East Germany	1010	1009	914
Latvia		1200	
Lithuania	2109	1009	
Poland	1898	1153	966
Russian Federation	2484	2040	2500
Sweden	1847	1009	1206
Total	17523	10445	9265

<sup>a</sup> Finland did not participate in wave 6 of the World Values Survey. Data from wave 5 (2005) were used instead.