

**ЦИВИЛИЗАЦИОННЫЕ ПРОЦЕССЫ  
В СОВРЕМЕННОМ МИРЕ: СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ  
CIVILIZATIONAL PROCESSES IN CONTEMPORARY WORLD:  
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

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**ЦИВИЛИЗАЦИОННАЯ НЕКОМПЕТЕНТНОСТЬ  
ПОСТКОММУНИСТИЧЕСКИХ ГОСУДАРСТВ?  
СРАВНИТЕЛЬНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ  
УСТОЯВШИХСЯ ДЕМОКРАТИЙ ЕВРОПЕЙСКОГО СОЮЗА  
И ПОСТКОММУНИСТИЧЕСКОЙ ЕВРОПЫ В 2008 г.**

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**CIVILIZATIONAL INCOMPETENCE  
OF POSTCOMMUNIST STATES?  
A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL CULTURE  
IN ESTABLISHED EU DEMOCRACIES  
AND POSTCOMMUNIST EUROPE IN 2008**

*Согласно С.М. Липсету, «анализ социальных условий, способствующих установлению демократии» — один из важнейших вопросов политической социологии. В контексте процесса демократизации часто выделяют две из его ключевых целей: создание политической системы с демократическими институтами (например, демократические процедуры, свободные и честные выборы, свобода выражения и т. д.) и создание демократической политической культуры (субъективные ориентации людей, ценности и убеждения, поддерживающие демократию). Ранее отмечалось (Штомпка 1993), что культурное наследие посткоммунистических обществ (так называемая цивилизационная компетентность или негражданская / недемократическая политическая культура) сдерживает эффективность новых демократий. Проведенные эмпирические исследования подтверждают эту гипотезу. Целью данного исследования стал анализ последнего World Values Study (Survey) (2008) и сравнение политической культуры установившихся и посткоммунистических европейских демократий. Результаты частично подтверждают предшествующие данные.*

*According to S.M. Lipset, one of the political sociology's prime concerns is "an analysis of the social conditions making for democracy". In the context of*

*the process of democratization two of its final goals are often emphasized: the formation of political system with democratic institutions (e.g. democratic procedures, free and fair elections, freedom of expression, separation of power, etc.); and the formation of democratic political culture (people's subjective orientations, values and beliefs, which are supportive of democracy). It has also been argued that post-communist states bear a cultural legacy (so called civilizational incompetence or uncivic/undemocratic political culture) that inhibits effectiveness of the new democracies. Past empirical research has largely confirmed this hypothesis. The aim of the present research was to analyze the newest World Values Study (Survey) (2008) and compare political culture in established and post-communist European democracies. The results do not uniformly confirm previous findings. Implications of the results are discussed.*

**Ключевые слова:** *цивилизационная некомпетентность, посткоммунистическая Европа, демократическая политическая культура, кросс-национальные исследования, ценности.*

**Keywords:** *civilizational incompetence, post-communist Europe, democratic political culture, cross-national studies, values.*

### Introduction

According to Lipset (1960/1969), one of the political sociology's prime concerns is "an analysis of the social conditions making for democracy". In the context of the process of democratization two of its final goals are often emphasized: the formation of political system with *democratic institutions* (e.g. democratic procedures, free and fair elections, freedom of expression, separation of power etc.; see Schumpeter 1943/2003; Dahl 1972; Linz and Stepan 1996; Inglehart 1997); and the formation of *democratic political culture* (people's subjective orientations, values and beliefs, which are supportive of democracy; see, for instance, Pridham and Lewis 1996: 2; Inglehart 1997; Welzel 2007). In other words — though within the minimalist understanding of democracy authors equate democracy primarily with democratic institutions and procedures (see Dahl 1972; Sartori 1987; Linz and Stepan 1996), other researchers emphasize that such elements of "formal" democracy (Welzel et al. 2003: 350) do not necessarily guarantee actual, "effective" democracy (Rose and Shin 2001; Inglehart and Welzel 2007).

It has also been argued (Sztompka 1993) that postcommunist states bear a cultural legacy (so called *civilizational incompetence* or uncivic/undemocratic political culture) that inhibits effectiveness of the new democracies. Specifically, Sztompka defines *civilizational competence* as "complex set of rules, norms and values, habits and reflexes, codes and matrixes, blueprints and formats the skilful and semi-automatic mastery of which is a prerequisite for participation in modern civilisation" (Sztompka 1993: 88). According to Sztompka civilizational competence consists of four dimensions. The first dimension is *enterprise culture* (e.g., achievement orientation, individualistic orientations, emphasis on rational calculations etc.). Second dimension is *civic culture*, which is a central component of citizens' participation in public life (motivation for participation, interest in public issues,

respect of opponents, etc.). The third dimension, *discursive culture*, consists of pluralist and tolerant orientations, while some of the components of the fourth dimension, *everyday culture*, are punctuality, orderliness and ability to handle technical devices (Sztompka 1993; also see Adam et al. 2005).

Sztompka's concept of civilizational incompetence is akin to Almond and Verba's (1963) concept of *subject* political culture. Specifically, in their seminal study Almond and Verba described three ideal types of political culture (i.e. subjective orientations, beliefs and values toward political and social object among members of a society): *parochial*, *subject* and *participant* political culture. Even though there is a mix of these types of political cultures in each society, there is a tendency that one of them is predominant. In (post)communist countries, *subject* political culture is supposed to be most widespread (see Dyker 1979; Pantić 1998; Galić 2000; Miheljak 2002; Tomšič 2002; Fink-Hafner and Kropivnik 2006; Pantić and Pavlović 2009).

Subject political culture is characterized by perception of hierarchical social structure, authoritarian value orientations and subordinate and passive relationship of citizen toward political and social authorities. In addition, (post)communist citizens generally do not perceive themselves as politically competent, and their political elites are perceived as non-responsive (low internal and external political efficacy). Also, members of these societies suppose to have low interest in public affairs, in particularly in political affairs, infrequently follow political media and express low political interest. In addition, the legitimacy of democratic institutions is low (see Tomšič 2002: 145; Makarović and Tomšič 2010).

Many authors argue that members of (post)communist societies are not "citizens" (in Almond and Verba's sense of the word) since they perceive themselves as "subjects". Even though these subject political orientations are mostly seen as a consequence of communist past (Rose and Shin, 2001), it has to be emphasized that this type of political culture was already largely present in (post)communist societies even before communism. It seems that the latter has both continued and also contributed to widespread subject political culture (Adam 1989: 26; Sztompka 1993; Gallagher 1998: 44–45; Tomšič 2002: 146).

In addition to subject political culture being a central type of political culture in (post)communist societies, numerous authors also argue that subject political culture is more widespread in postcommunist countries than in established western democracies. Past empirical research has largely confirmed this hypothesis (see, among others, Klingemann et al., 2006). Subject political culture, it is also argued, represents a danger to postcommunist democracies since these are "fragile" by definition (Pridham and Lewis 1996: 1). Spread of modern (democratic) orientations among postcommunist citizens and decline of authoritarian, non-democratic, subject political orientations is said to be crucial for the political development of postcommunist democracies (Vassilev 1999; Fuchs and Klingemann 2006).

### **Present study rationale and hypotheses**

As already mentioned, past research has shown that political culture of postcommunist countries differs from the one in established democracies (Klingemann et al. 2006). The aim of the present research was to analyze the newest 2008 wave of

European Values Study and compare political culture and public participation of citizens in established and postcommunist European democracies. We formed two hypotheses: our first hypothesis was that postcommunist citizens are less often engaged in public participation than citizens of established EU democracies. Hypothesis 2 stated that citizens of postcommunist states express higher levels of civilizational incompetence (are higher on non-democratic, subject political culture measures and vice versa, are lower on democratic political culture).

### **Method and Sample**

The employed dataset in our analyses was the newest 2008 wave of European Values Study. World Values Survey (and within WVS also EVS) is the largest quantitative dataset gathered by scientists from a significant part of the world. The aim of WVS and EVS is to study changes in mass values and political orientations and their influence on social and political life. Surveys in all countries included in WVS were carried out with national funding. Combined, the WVS surveys included almost 90 % of world population. WVS and EVS have in the past been carried out in 97 countries. All national surveys were carried out on representative national samples. Samples were drawn from the entire population of 18 years and older, and the minimum sample was 1000 respondents. In majority of countries there was no upper age limit imposed and some form of stratified random sampling was used to obtain representative national samples (To 2008; for additional methodological information see <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>). In EVS 2008 database 24 former postcommunist countries were included and thus analyzed in present research. The established democracies country pool consisted of 17 established EU member states\*.

### **Measures**

Previous studies have measured civilization incompetence or subject (non-democratic) political culture and behaviour in different ways. We chose two sets of empirical measures within the EVS repertoire to assess the differences between established and postcommunist countries. As already mentioned, “subjects” are said to be passive members of societies. In addition, subjects do not perceive democratic political institutions as legitimate (Almond in Verba 1963: 19). Kirbiš (2001) has recently, based on previous theoretical and empirical literature, analyzed 10 political culture orientations within post-Yugoslav countries. We follow his construction of indices of subject political orientations and expand it to other postcommunist states, but due to space restrictions we investigate only two measures: one measure of democratic political behaviour (protest participation) and one measure of subject

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\* The following 24 postcommunist countries were included in our analysis: Albania, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, FYR Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine. The pool of established EU democracies consisted of the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and Sweden.

(non-democratic) political culture (authoritarianism) (also see Tavčar et al. 2011). Below we show the construction of our measures.

### **Protest participation**

Protest participation was tapped by three Likert format items: “signing a petition”, “joining in boycotts”, and “attending lawful/peaceful demonstrations”, “joining unofficial strikes” and “occupying buildings/factories” (1 = would never do, 2 = have done, 3 = would do)\*. We created a summation scale of protest participation based on the Cronbach’s alphas. Democracy index summation scale showed sufficient internal consistency with Cronbach’s alphas being  $\alpha = 0.78$  in total sample of postcommunist countries and  $\alpha = 0.76$  EU17 country pool.

Protest participation (and not other forms of conventional political participation) was chosen because previous research has shown that protesters are more democratically oriented than non-protesters (Guérin et al. 2004; Tavčar et al. 2011), while this is often not the case with those engaged in formal, institutional forms of political participation (e.g., party politics) (see Kirbiš 2011). In other word, previous research has shown that protesters are true “democrats”.

### **Democracy index (prodemocratic orientation)**

Our measure of democratic political culture was identical to the one used by Klingemann and colleagues (2006: 18–19). Four Likert format items were employed; two of them measured attitudes toward democracy and two of them concerned attitudes toward authoritarian political system.

The two “democratic” items were worded as follows:

“I’m going to describe various types of political systems and ask what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a (4) very good, (3) fairly good, (2) fairly bad or (1) very bad way of governing this country?”

“Having a democratic political system.”

“I’m going to read off some things that people sometimes say about a democratic political system. Could you please tell me if you (4) agree strongly, (3) agree, (2) disagree or (1) disagree strongly?”

“Democracy may have problems but it’s better than any other form of government.”

The two “authoritarian” items were worded as follows:

“I’m going to describe various types of political systems and ask what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a (4) very good, (3) fairly good, (2) fairly bad or (1) very bad way of governing this country?”

“Having a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections.”

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\* The actual question in the EVS questionnaire was framed as follows: Now I’d like you to look at this card. I’m going to read out some different forms of political action that people can take, and I’d like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have actually done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never, under any circumstances, do it.

I'm going to describe various types of political systems and ask what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a (4) very good, (3) fairly good, (2) fairly bad or (1) very bad way of governing this country?

“Having the army rule.”

Scores of items measuring attitudes toward authoritarian system as a form of government were added and subtracted from the sum of scores of two items measuring democracy as an ideal (see Klingemann et al. 2006). Since 4 items were included in the scale the scale values were then divided by 4. Final scale values ran from 1 (most authoritarian orientations) to 4 (most democratic orientations).

Democracy index summation scale showed sufficient internal consistency with Cronbach's alphas being  $\alpha = 0.44$  in total sample of postcommunist countries and  $\alpha = 0.61$  EU17 country pool.

### Results

First, we compared levels of protest participation in two regions: postcommunist countries pool and established EU17 member states (Figure 1).

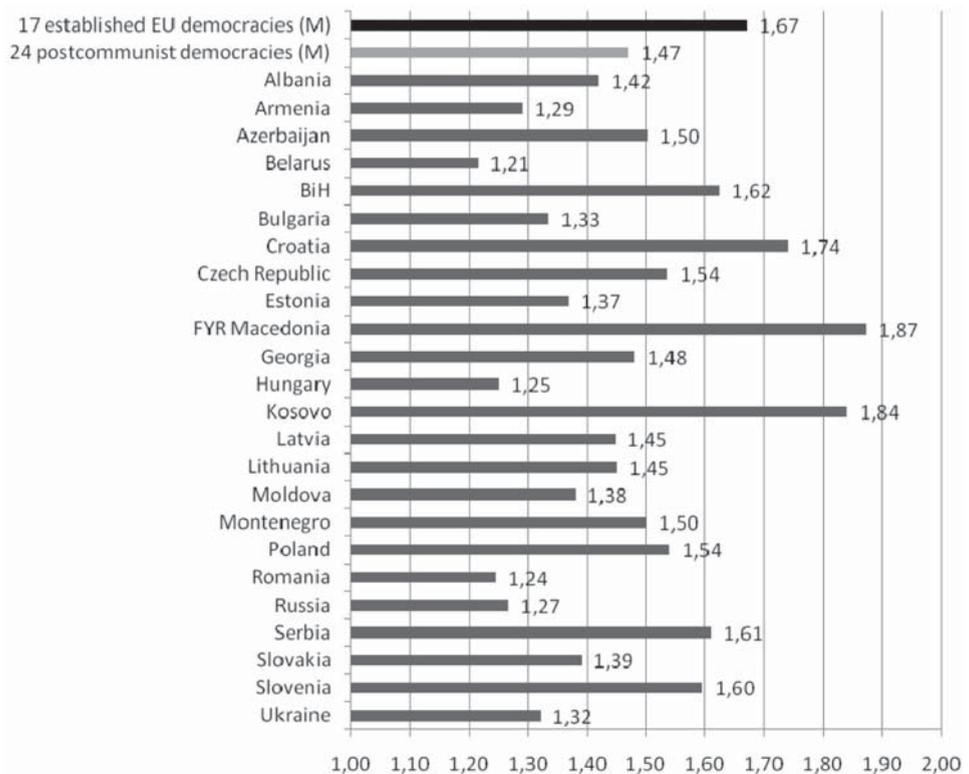


Figure 1: Mean levels of protest participation in post-communist countries pool and established EU member states.

Notes: Figure denotes mean levels of protest participation (1 = min, 3 = max)

The results in Figure 1 indicate that citizens in postcommunist states are on average less protest oriented and engaged ( $M = 1.47$ ) than citizens of western EU countries ( $M = 1.67$ ). The difference between both pooled samples is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ).

On the other hand, closer analysis shows that postcommunist country pool is diverse — the least protest oriented are citizens from Belarus ( $M = 1.21$ ) while Macedonians are most protest oriented ( $M = 1.87$ ). Besides Macedonians, Kosovars and Croats also exceed the EU17 protest mean. It seems that other factors (besides communist legacy) are at work here (e.g. cultural (religious) heritage, socioeconomic development, politicization etc.; see Inglehart and Welzel 2007). Nevertheless, based on our results hypothesis 1 can be confirmed: citizens of postcommunist states are less engaged in public participation than citizens of established EU democracies.

The results in Figure 2 indicate that citizens in postcommunist states are on average also less prodemocratic oriented ( $M = 3.02$ ) than citizens of western EU countries ( $M = 3.42$ ). The difference between both pooled samples is again statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ).

Interestingly, Figure 2 also shows that no postcommunist national mean is higher than the EU17 mean. Also, the figure shows large differences among postcommunist countries themselves. Citizens of Moldova ( $M = 2.63$ ) are least democratically oriented while Slovaks are most democratically oriented ( $M = 3.30$ ). Also, all 24 postcommunist country means are above the normative mean of 2.5. In other words, postcommunist citizens in all analyzed postcommunist countries on average favour democracy more than authoritarian system. Again, based on results in Figure 2 hypothesis 2 can also be confirmed: citizens of postcommunist states do express higher levels of civilizational incompetence (subject, non-democratic political culture).

### **Discussion and conclusion**

The aim of our study was to compare levels of protest participation and prodemocratic political culture in two European regions. We analyzed the newest wave of the World Values Study (2008) and both of our hypotheses were confirmed. Postcommunist citizens are less political engaged (measured by protest orientation, which was in previous research found to be the most democratic form of political participation; see Inglehart and Welzel 2007; Tavčar et al. 2011) and are also less democratically oriented (as measured by democracy index; see Klingemann et al. 2006) than citizens of established EU17 democracies country pool.

As with previous research (e.g., Klingemann et al. 2006) and as other authors have noted (Sztompka 1993; Adam et al. 2005), our results have confirmed that political culture of postcommunist countries and established democracies differ. Previous research has also showed that political culture is the main determinant of the quality of democratic institutions, which is, not surprisingly, higher in western democracies (Freedom House 2011). On the other hand, one must emphasize that political culture is not an “independent” variable. It is to a large extent determined by country’s level of socioeconomic development. In addition, other macro-factors also come into play (e.g., cultural/religious/civilizational legacy (see Huntington 2005), national welfare

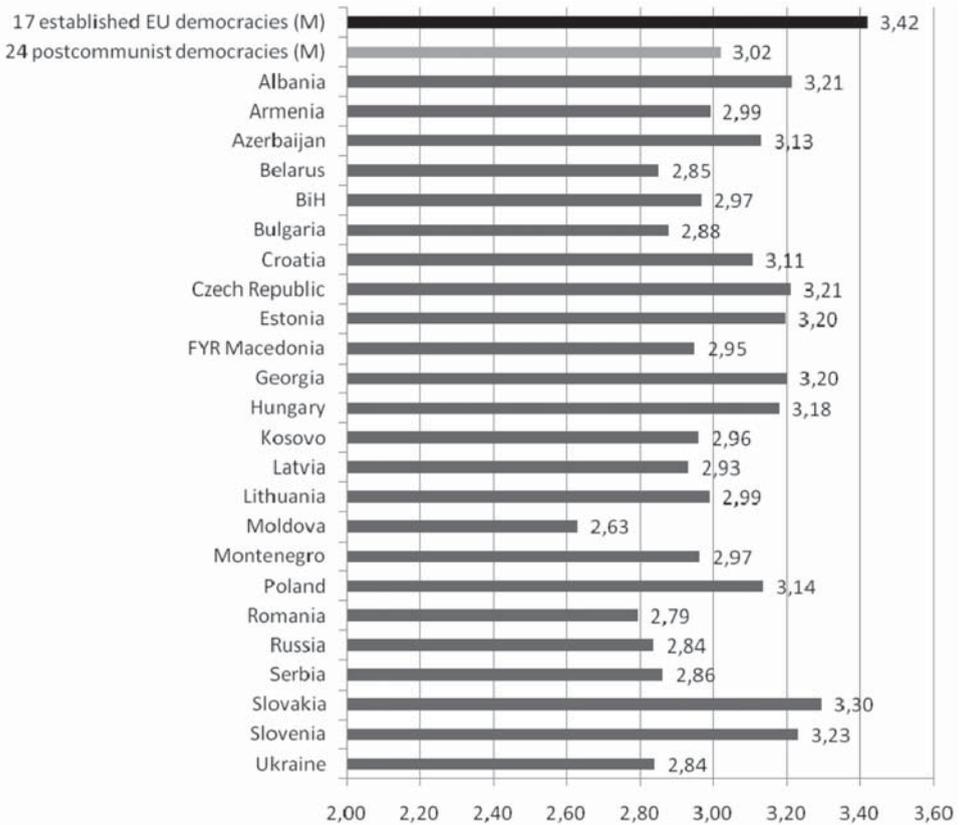


Figure 2: Mean levels of prodemocratic political culture (preferring democratic system and rejecting authoritarian rule) in post-communist countries pool and established EU member states.

Notes: Figure denotes mean levels of prodemocratic political culture (1 = min, 4 = max)

spending, levels of economic inequality, ethnic heterogeneity, etc.; see Inglehart and Welzel 2007).

In other word, in order for postcommunist countries to improve the functioning of their democratic institutions, their future socioeconomic development will play a decisive role. On the other hand, as some Arab countries show, the high levels of GDP alone cannot bring about change in political culture and functioning of democracy if the country's wealth is kept among the political/economical elites (Inglehart and Welzel 2007). It is thus necessary that the general public also reaps the benefits of socioeconomic development.

Let us also note that our study shows that the differences in political culture between western and postcommunist sample are not as large as it is often emphasized. It seems that there is more in common between both European regions and their publics than media and political elite would sometimes have us believed.

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