

AUTHORITARIAN PREFERENCE AND LOCUS OF CONTROL IN RUSSIA

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ABSTRACT

Amanda Sophia Ashley: Authoritarian Preference and Locus of Control in Russia
(Under the direction of Jonathan Weiler)

Political preferences and behavior are rooted in psychological traits. Locus of control theory describes in terms of internality or externality whether individuals believe they exercise a lot of influence over events in their lives, or whether they attribute such events to outside forces such as luck, fate, or some authority. I applied this theory to political science to explore whether this construct can predict authoritarian preference. I focused on Russia and hypothesized that Russians may be more predisposed toward an external locus of control and preference for authoritarianism than are citizens of liberal democracies. I use Pew Research Center's Spring 2011 Survey data to test effects of locus of control on authoritarian preference, controlling for country and for economic strength preference. Preference for a strong economy most strongly correlates with preference for a strong-hand leader, but I also find a significant effect of locus of control and country on authoritarian preference.

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Authoritarian Preference and Locus of Control in Russia

The intersection between psychology and political science is a well-traveled one, yet one that finds itself consistently in need of more attention in order to understand political attitudes and behaviors. When we peel away at the political behavior of elites, political parties, and voters, what is left at the core is mental processes. When voters form their opinions about a particular issue and who best represents their interests, they draw from an understanding of the world informed by their own experiences, values, religious beliefs, personality traits, and so forth. The schemas individuals use to interpret the world and people around them influence how they perceive and feel about that world. Recent spikes in right-wing authoritarianism in the West and elsewhere provide a new opportunity to question how the field of psychology might explain authoritarian preference (“Rise of ‘Authoritarian Populism’”, 2017). Rather than view authoritarianism as something primarily imposed from the top-down, I argue for a less popular view, that authoritarianism is actually co-constructed and is as much supported from the bottom-up phenomena as it is imposed from the top-down. I suggest that preference for authoritarian or nonauthoritarian governance is intrinsically rooted in the human psyche, just as is any perspective or preference. One important psychological concept that represents how an individual interprets and understands events in their life and the world around them is that of locus of control.

This concept, first defined in 1966 in a psychological study on reinforcements, describes how individuals interpret the world in terms of how much control they believe they exercise over it (Rotter, 1966). Those who believe they have a strong degree of influence over events in their lives have an internal locus of control, while those who attribute events to forces beyond their control – be it fate, luck, chance, or a higher authority – have an external locus of control. The way Russians have often been described as fatalistic might effectively describe the ultimate external locus of control. Stereotypes of

Russians are frequently characterized by a perception of the Russian people as apathetic or seemingly indifferent in the face of tragedy, disaster or political circumstances (Meyers, 2007). Is there any truth to such a fatalism (conceptualized here as an external locus of control) existing in Russia today? If it does exist, to what extent is it unique to Russia and to what extent should we expect to find a similar “fatalism” in other former Soviet States or certain types of cultures? Asking such questions allows us to think more deeply about the nature, creation, and reinforcement of psychological traits across cultures and nations. Under the assumption that authoritarianism is co-constructed, how might external locus of control in Russia (and elsewhere) mediate preference for authoritarian governance as seen in continuous popular support of leaders like Vladimir Putin? Can locus of control help to explain why some people prefer a strongman authoritarian leader while others prefer a more liberal alternative?

According to locus of control theory, an individual who believes his or her actions can influence outcomes is more likely to act upon his environment. Applying this theory to political science, I use data from the Spring 2011 Nations Survey conducted by Pew Research Center, to address a twofold hypothesis. The first is whether, in a comparison of individuals, those having a more external locus of control will be more likely to prefer authoritarian governance than those having a less external locus of control. The logic behind this hypothesis is founded in locus of control theory’s main assertion, that those with a more internal orientation are more likely to act upon their environment. Thus, in terms of political participation, someone who attributes events to external forces such as fate, luck, or chance, should logically place less importance on political participation and thus value democratic processes less. Likewise, it is logical that someone who believes he or she has a great deal of influence over events in their life would place greater value on political participation, believing they really can make a difference in their world. Thus, someone with an internal locus of control ought to reasonably prefer more democratic governance, while someone with an external locus of control might reasonably prefer more authoritarian governance.

The second part of my hypothesis is designed to address the idea of Russian fatalism. I hypothesize that, compared to residents of Western democracies such as the United States, Russians will tend to have a more external locus of control. In addressing this hypothesis, I test whether Russians, in general, are more fatalistic than citizens of other countries by controlling for country. Research has shown that individuals in collectivist societies like Russia and China tend to have a more external locus of control than do individuals in more individualistic societies like the United States (Cheng, et al., 2013; Smith, et al., 1995). Whether or not there exists some uniquely Russian “fatalism”, there is reason to suspect that a more collectivist culture like that found in Russia will score relatively higher on a measure of external locus of control than will more individualistic cultures. In addressing this hypothesis, I draw attention to important questions about cultural traits and generalizations, and to what extent patterns of behavior are really unique to a certain group.

On a larger scale, I am questioning whether we might be able to predict the survival and persistence of authoritarian regimes once they are in place based on how the majority of the population is oriented on a locus of control scale. My emphasis highlights the agency of citizens in the maintenance and persistence of authoritarian regimes once they are in power. I do not argue that citizens at large are responsible for the initial establishment and consolidation of authoritarian power, but rather that their choices not to protest or to prefer authoritarian stability to perceived risky alternatives directly contributes to the persistence and survival of authoritarian regimes. To be sure, many other variables influence each individual’s political attitudes and behavior as well. However, locus of control is arguably central to all variables in that it theorizes about when some peoples’ beliefs will translate into action and why others’ will not.. While individuals may be highly motivated to vote or to prefer an alternative to authoritarian leadership for any number of reasons, are motivation and preferences negated by a belief that one cannot control the world around them? Precisely because locus of control has never been explored in this context, it is important that we ask these questions.

As the present research seeks to answer questions about locus of control and political preference, it is important to acknowledge that all personality traits and political attitudes exist not in a vacuum but within a particular context. A certain personality trait may behave differently in different settings. Thus, after first discussing important literature from the field of psychology, I then outline the developments over the last three decades in Russia with an eye toward protests and political activism, and how historical events have shaped the existing context, both politically and psychologically. I then briefly discuss what I mean by authoritarianism and make some important distinctions between authoritarian personality and authoritarian governance. I build off existing theories and add to them by placing my research within the context of Russia. I then use variables from the Spring 2011 Nations Survey dataset to conduct statistical analysis of the relationships and significance between locus of control and authoritarian preference, controlling for country. Lastly, I end with a discussion of the limitations of the present study and avenues for future research.

Why Locus of Control?

Locus of control offers a way of conceptualizing and measuring individuals' perceptions of the causes of outcomes. It differentiates between levels of perceived control among individuals. Locus of control theory suggests that an individual who believes his or her actions can influence outcomes is more likely to act upon his environment. The psychological concept of "locus of control" originally developed out of social learning theory by Julian Rotter in 1954, and in the course of his research on expectancies and reinforcements, Rotter defined the concept of locus of control as follows:

When a reinforcement is perceived by the subject . . . as the result of luck, chance, fate, as under the control of powerful others, or as unpredictable because of the great complexity of the forces surrounding him . . . we have labeled this a belief in external control. If the person perceives that the event is contingent upon his own behavior or his own relatively permanent characteristics, we have termed this a belief in internal control (Rotter, 1966).

Moreover, Rotter derived important behavioral correlates from the construct. He discovered that an individual who views outcome as a result not of his or her own efforts, but of fate, chance, luck, or influence by powerful others is likely to refrain from seeking to influence his or her environment.

Where does locus of control come from? In short, the development of locus of control is a product of nurture rather than nature. It is associated with family style and resources, cultural factors, stability, and experiences with effort leading to reward (Meyerhoff, 2004). As developmental psychology understands it, most individuals with an internal locus of control were raised in homes that modeled typical internal beliefs; for example, emphasizing effort, education, and personal responsibility and thinking. Parents who typically give their children rewards they promise them are enforcing an internal locus of control. By contrast, individuals with an external locus of control tend to come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and did not consistently receive rewards promised them (Cohen et al., 2001; Meyerhoff, 2004). Research also shows that societies experiencing social unrest have an increased expectancy of events being out-of-control, and thus people in such societies become more external in their orientation (Meyerhoff, 2004). In effect, locus of control is a product of family life and culture, and is linked to the degree of stability and validation of reward expectancies one receives at a young age. The dominant view in psychology is that locus of control is one of several core personality traits which remain consistent over time (Judge, et al, 1997).

In the wake of Rotter's study, locus of control was used to explain a broad array of behaviors, from the field of personality psychology to health psychology, social, and clinical psychology. Locus of control helps explain a host of issues, ranging from personality dimensions and traits such as dogmatism and levels of aspiration, to behaviors such as risk-taking behaviors and interpersonal reciprocity (Clouser & Hjelle, 1970; Milgram, 1970). Whether or not individuals attribute causes internally or externally predicts a host of behaviors from family life to politics, but has been especially applicable to health psychology. One study on risk-taking behaviors examined whether or not safe-sex practices correlated to an internal or external locus of control. As we might expect, their research shows that individuals with

more external orientations are less likely to practice birth control than are their more internally oriented counterparts (MacDonald, 1970). The reason is that those who attribute outcome to personal action are more likely to behave responsibly – that is, those with more internal orientations are more likely to take fewer risks.

While less research has extended Rotter's concept of locus of control into other fields, there exists a broad array of literature linking locus of control with political science. For example, voting behavior, opinions about global warming, and anti-immigrant sentiment have been studied using locus of control (Harell & Iyengar, 2016; Mostafa, 2016). One of the earliest applications of locus of control to political science sought to explain why black voters and voters of lower socio-economic status were less likely to vote, even though they had fought rigorously for suffrage and were arguably more motivated to do so. Research showed that while education, age, and other factors were important predictors, whether or not voters had an external locus of control was the best predictor of voter turnout (Majete, 1987). Other studies suggest those with an internal locus of control are more likely to have higher socioeconomic status, are more likely to be politically involved (e.g., following political news, joining a political organizations, etc.) (Cohen et al, 2001), and are more likely to vote (Blanchard & Scarborough, 1973; Deutchman, 1985). In addition, cross-national studies of locus of control show that individuals in collectivist societies tend to have a more external locus of control than do individuals in more individualistic societies like the United States. This suggests that citizens in more collectivist countries like Russia will tend more toward an external locus of control, whereas citizens of Western nations will tend to have more internal orientations of locus of control. Such studies are important examples of how the construct of locus of control is behaviorally far-reaching and does indeed have important implications for the political world.

Given the predictive value of locus of control for political attitudes, it is perhaps surprising that there is not more literature specifically on regime-type preference and locus of control. While there are a host of factors that undoubtedly work together to explain why individuals in Russia continue to prefer

authoritarian government, locus of control is both neglected in this sphere and particularly useful. It is especially useful for explaining political preferences in a context as complex as Russia because it is a relatively simple construct that is easy to measure. Scales of measurement for locus of control allow us to apply a widely used and well-tested construct to poorly understood phenomena. Effects of locus of control have been successfully replicated repeatedly across multiple fields, and a wide variety of scales of measurement have been developed and refined for use.

Among scales of locus of control, there are two broad categories: general measures and subject-specific measures. The latter includes health measures, age-specific measures, and parental measures, among others. One example of a subject-specific measure is Adrian Furnham's Economic Locus of Control Scale, a seven point Likert-type scale is used to assess an individual's belief in how much control they have over the work and money-related aspects of their lives. Questions ask to what extent respondents agree with statements like: "Becoming rich has little or nothing to do with chance" (Halpert & Hill, 2011). Unfortunately, there is not yet any widely used political-specific scale.

The most widely used general scale is Rotter's Internal-External locus of control scale, a 23-item forced-choice scale in which a person chooses between an internal or external interpretation (Jenning). Rotter's scale is a general measure, not designed for specific domains, but rather to measure a person's general orientation across all domains. Rotter believed that orientations could vary based on circumstance and that individuals could tend toward internality or externality as a personality trait; his scale reflects this belief and was designed to assess locus of control generally. A student of Rotter's developed a second general measure, called the James Internal-External locus of control scale, which is also widely used. This measure uses a Likert-type scale in which participants rate how well a statement applies to their own thinking, using ratings ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 3 (strongly agree) (Halpert & Hill, 2011).

A third commonly used measure is the Levenson IPC scale. This scale is one that distinguishes between multiple dimensions within the external orientation of locus of control. The Levenson IPC scale specifies whether externality is attributable to chaos/chance or to powerful others, such as political

leaders, parents or God. It also uses a Likert-type scale rather than forces choice, to place orientation on a spectrum rather than forced-choice. Levenson's research (1972; 1973; 1974) and studies using his scale shows that distinguishing among external orientations has a significant effect on predictions of a wide variety of behaviors. In other words, this scale allows us to measure whether an individual attributes outcomes to a chance/luck or to a powerful authority. This could be useful for measuring political preferences, especially in the Russian context where a powerful authority has certainly influenced any sense of externality.

In sum, locus of control provides an effective measure by which we can address important questions about behavior. It allows us to make predictions about whether or not individuals are likely to act on their environment. Applied to the context of support for authoritarianism in Russia, locus of control offers a theory of why Russians continue to support an illiberal regime and Putin's stay in power. Locus of control allows us to question the role of internality versus externality in mediating one's support for a particular form of governance via political action or inaction. In the case of Russia, should we expect to find more externality in locus of control? Given historical context and the development of a high tolerance for discomfort among Russians, can locus of control help explain why many continue to support a repressive government like Putin's?

Russia in Context

Russia is a particularly interesting case for locus of control study, given the paradoxical pairing of autocracy with protest and revolutions throughout its history. The last century in Russia has seen more turmoil and trauma than most of us can fathom. From the fall of the Russian empire during a time of war-exhaustion, the takeover of the Bolsheviks, and the formulation of the Communist project to the devastation wreaked by the second World War, mass persecutions and abuses by Stalin, famine, the failure of the Communist project, and the chaos of the wild nineties – the Russian people have faced nearly every kind of trauma one can imagine in the last 100 years alone. I argue that the result has been the creation of a society marked by trauma and a people with an exceptionally high tolerance for their

environment – be it political, economic, or weather conditions. As far as modern memory extends, Russians, in general, have lived outside their comfort zone. Through years of historical experience of war, famine, political and economic turmoil, and harsh weather conditions, the Russian people have no doubt built up a high tolerance to environmental extremes. This in no way subtracts from the agency of the Russian people, but rather helps us better understand where Russians generally draw the line in terms of political action or protest. For the purpose of this study, it not necessary to understand every source of discomfort the Russian people have faced in the last several centuries, only to understand that Russian comfort with discomfort has been a gradual project. Deeply entrenched over time, a high tolerance for harsh conditions forms the cornerstone of the set of traits we might associate with Russian people.

At the same time however, it is equally important to our understanding of the Russian people to acknowledge the democratic opening of Russian society at the collapse of the Soviet Union and the spirit of Russian protests. The very act of protesting a government runs contrary to what we should expect of an external locus of control. In the case of Russia, if citizens believe they do not control events in their lives, why would they ever take to the streets in mass protest against their government as we have seen them do? In this way, Russian protests and political activism are a paradox if we accept the idea that a Russian fatalism exists and is defined by excessive comfort with discomfort.

Yet the democratic opening in the late eighties saw mass protests across the Soviet region, and mass protests more recently in Russia in 2011 and 2012 posed a significant challenge to the government. Moreover, mass protests continue to demonstrate that Russians are willing to take to the streets to challenge Putin's government, even amid mass arrests. Pew Research data from 2012 show that a majority of Russians believe protests give people an opportunity to express their opinions, and they support protests in order for an election to be free and fair (Pew Research Center, 2012). The fact that Russians seem to value the act of protest poses a clear challenge to my theory of locus of control and expected effect of Russian fatalism. In this section, I address the political behavior and attitudes of many Russians today, which run counter to my hypotheses.

For the purpose of this study, I highlight the period from just before the Soviet Union collapsed until present because it is most relevant in terms of understanding the context in which the Russian people find themselves today. The drastic political and social changes that have occurred since the end of the Soviet Union are important for understanding the psychological and political preferences of Russians today amid the spirit of popular protests, even while Putin holds onto power with high favorability. First, however, it is worth noting the state of Russian society after generations of Soviet rule – in particular, how Russians generally thought about their relationship to the state at the time of collapse.

Especially during the height of Stalin's rule but in the years after as well, the state was a central and ubiquitous presence (Fitzpatrick, 2000). The state was not only the puppet master of the economy and distributor of all goods, but it was also the primary source of employment for urban citizens. The state regulated nearly every aspect of life, sketching a glum picture of the inefficiency of bureaucracy and the ineffectiveness of law in the minds of Russians. Not only this, but it instilled in the general population a sense that all things were ultimately in hands of the regime and out of their control. In describing everyday life in the Stalinist era, one scholar describes it as follows:

In the first place, [the state] was the formal distributor of goods and the near-monopolistic producer of them, so that even the black market dealt largely in state products and relied heavily on state connections. In the second place, all urban citizens worked for the state, whether they were workers or typists or teachers or shop assistants: there were virtually no alternative employers. In the third place, the state was a tireless regulator of life, issuing and demanding an endless stream of documents and permits without which the simplest operations of daily life were impossible. The Soviet bureaucracy . . . full of inexperienced and unqualified officials, was slow, cumbersome, inefficient, and often corrupt. Law and legal process were held in low regard, and the actions of officialdom, from top to bottom, were marked by arbitrariness and favoritism. Citizens felt themselves at the mercy of officials and the regime; they speculated

endlessly about the people “up there” and what new surprises they might have in store for the population, but felt powerless to influence them (Fitzpatrick, 2000).

Such pervasiveness of the state in the everyday lives of Russian citizens cannot be overstated, nor should the effect it had on the Russian people be underestimated. Although everyday life was influenced by many other factors, which changed a great deal in post-Stalin years, be it war, famine, or economic developments, the general structure and role of the party and state remained more or less fixed until Gorbachev’s leadership. If Soviet rule left Russians with an impression of what government meant, it would surely be arbitrary in rule of law, corrupt, and beyond their control.

Riding on the coattails of an era of state saturation of everyday life, Gorbachev’s *glasnost* and *perestroika* policies eventually brought about the unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union and ushered in a period of disorganized corruption and organized crime. There are many convincing explanations of why the Soviet Union collapsed when and how it did, but what took its place in Russia was a similar centralized state that inherited many of its predecessor’s problems, yet one that confronted a democratic opening. On the one hand, widespread corruption and organized crime ran rampant during the wild nineties, creating at the social level a tumultuous place to live where rule of law was nearly obsolete and movement across social strata was a product of who one could bribe. On the other hand, even amid the political repression of the final years of Soviet rule, the late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed an unparalleled spread of democracy, winding down what Samuel Huntington calls the “third wave” of democratization. Political scientists pronounced these cases evidence of global “transition to democracy,” a process of democratization that had begun with Southern Europe in the 1970s before spreading to Latin America, Africa, and Asia by the late 1980s (Bunce, 1995). At the time, the enthusiasm with which the downfall of authoritarianism and tyranny was greeted made the triumph of democracy seem inevitable and irreversible. As one author writes:

Who can forget the scene of Alexander Dubcek, the tragic hero of the 1968 Prague spring, returning to Prague in the fall of 1989 to the roar of the crowds in Wenceslas

Square? Or the utter triumph of the Solidarity movement in Poland's first competitive election of the postcommunist era, in which the ruling communist party lost practically every seat that was subject to legitimate competition? Or the crowds that flowed into the streets of Santiago, Chile, upon the news that General Pinochet had lost his plebiscite to extend his personal rule? (Seligson & Tucker, 2005).

Likewise, in the Soviet space, mass protests across the Balkan states, in Armenia, and among Crimean Tatars in 1986 and 1987 set the stage for others to use the streets as a new political platform (Beissinger, 2010). As Mark Besseinger writes in the context of nationalist mobilization, “as challenging acts gained a momentum of their own, they grew increasingly autonomous from the constraints of institutions, even coming to transform the character of the institutions that once stifled them” (2010, p. 49). Significantly, Beissinger argues that not only do different movements influence each other, but that what people want is influenced and sculpted by these changing movements. According to his argument, why people protest is determined by their environment, which changes over time. Yet, not everyone participated in even the largest protests near the fall of the USSR or after. What motivates some to take to the streets and not others, and how can we best understand collective action in the post-Soviet space in terms of locus of control?

Protest threshold. Research on when mass discontent generates a popular uprising has mainly focused on popular uprisings of revolutionary magnitude, rather than inconsequential protests. However, some discussion of Timur Kuran’s work on protest threshold is relevant. In short, Kuran posits that individuals will protest when they reach their “revolutionary threshold” (1991). This occurs when the internal cost of preference falsification (believing one thing privately and supporting another publicly) grows higher than the cost of external payoff – that is, the risks of facing arrest or persecution for protesting versus the rewards of successful change or opposition victory. The external payoff changes with the size of public opposition – the more public opposition there is, the less risk there is associated with protesting. Thus, protests

commonly occur when the size of public opposition grows and lowers the cost of external payoff for individuals, or when the psychological cost of preference falsification grows to an extent that the individual would rather face the risk of external persecution than the cost of internal cognitive dissonance due to their own strong antigovernment sentiment. Thus, collective action culminates in protests when citizens reach a tipping point between internal payoff and external payoff.

I accept Kuran's theory that individuals protest as a result of strategic calculations – conscious or unconscious – of the internal and external costs of protesting. However, I argue that individuals also operate under some awareness of how much influence or effect their actions can have. To incorporate locus of control into Kuran's framework, I conceptualize it as one component of the internal payoff. The more internal individuals' locus of control is, the more control they perceive, and so the cost of remaining publicly silent becomes higher and the payoff of protesting grows. On the inverse, we should expect the opposite of individuals with a more external locus of control. Their belief that they exercise little control should lower their internal payoff and they should be less likely to protest because there is little incentive to do so. There is less cognitive dissonance and lower internal costs of remaining silent when one believes they have little control. All individuals hold some opinion about how much influence they wield as citizens, and collective actions theories should account for these beliefs when calculating when citizens will or will not protest. Taken in the context of Soviet control that preceded the democratic opening of Russia, we should recall the general sense that the Soviet bureaucracy was beyond their control. If that view of government remains among Russians today, we should expect to find more externality in locus of control and a higher protest threshold.

In sum, mass protests have been a somewhat regular occurrence over the last thirty years in Russia, usually centering on economic demands and more recently on anti-corruption. A first round of mass protests took place in the late 80s and early 90s at the fall of the Soviet Union. A second round occurred in the late 90s over economic problems, and a third began in 2007 over

environmental concerns, anti-Putin, and anti-corruption demands, culminating in the 2010-2011 protests that rocked Moscow with calls for a Russia without Putin (Elder, 2011). Mass protests and arrests continued throughout 2017, from anti-corruption protests after revelations of Dmitry Medvedev's embezzling schemes in the spring, to election protests in the fall (Bennetts, 2017). Even as they remain a regular occurrence, Putin continues to hold on to power and, at the time of this writing, has just won an easy reelection for another 6-year term in office with more than 76% of the vote ("Russia Election", 2018). On the one hand, mass protests clearly challenge the idea of a Russian fatalism. On the other hand, continued majority support for Putin and contentment with the current government stands in contrast to fringe protests. Russian approval of Putin continues to hover at a high of about 80% approval (Carroll, 2017).

To be sure, mass protests exemplify an important element of Russian society, but they do not yet represent public majority opinion. Overall, Russians continue to prefer strong hand authoritarian rule by Putin to any more-democratic alternative (Carroll, 2017). Even as the Russian people bear the brunt of economic consequences from sanctions because of Putin's decisions, the majority of citizens continue to be comfortable with such discomfort. To what extent are they external in their locus of control, believing they have little influence beyond expressing opinions into a void, and how might this be influencing their beliefs about Putin's regime? Would changing Russian beliefs about how much control they exercise, change their political attitudes?

A Note on Authoritarianism

Autocracy in its many forms is nothing new, but the form it commonly takes today as authoritarian government warrants mentioning before I provide an analysis of its relationship to locus of control. This study sees authoritarian regimes not as something solely imposed from the top-down as a result of the state and leadership cooptation, but rather sees it in terms of the "co-construction" of autocratic power" (Greene & Robertson, 2017). Leadership certainly plays a role in the construction and

maintenance of the power dynamic, but endogenous factors also work from the bottom up to reinforce authoritarian power once in place. It is thus imperative to understand what shapes and reinforces support for authoritarian governance at the psychological and individual level. Here I clarify what I mean by authoritarianism and authoritarian personality and discuss the relationship between the two.

I define authoritarianism as a form of government characterized by a strong centralized power and limited political freedoms. Authoritarian governance is marked by limited individual freedoms and unchecked power of the state. Looking to the influential work of Juan Linz on regime-type criteria, political systems may be categorized according to varying levels of political pluralism, their basis for legitimacy, social mobilization, and how the well-defined the executive power is (2000). Authoritarian regimes are lacking in political pluralism, their basis or legitimacy is emotion-based (especially in fear of an alternative), they have minimal social mobilization, and a poorly defined executive power. Specific features of authoritarianism are well known, such as fraudulent elections or anti-immigrant and anti-minority sentiments, which continue to bring authoritarianism to the forefront of headlines and discussion. Authoritarianism as a regime-type is not to be confused with authoritarian personality, although they are related in that individuals with authoritarian personalities are more likely to prefer authoritarian governance (Stenner, 2005).

With respect to authoritarian personality, I define it here simply as a tendency to submit to authority (Altemeyer, 1981). However, the “authoritarian personality” has its roots in the theoretical 1950 work of Adorno et al., which describes a potentially fascistic personality type, an individual who is susceptible to anti-Semitic ideology and anti-democratic political beliefs due to intrapsychic conflicts that result in insecurities. Adorno and colleagues viewed the authoritarian personality as marked by personal insecurities, resulting in adherence to authority. In more recent theoretical work, Bob Altemeyer has done extensive work on what he calls right-wing authoritarianism (1998). He describes this personality type as a set of three tendencies as noted in attitudinal clusters: submission to legitimate authorities; aggression towards sanctioned targeted minority groups; and adherence to values and beliefs perceived as sanctioned

by authorities. While there has been plenty of theoretical work on authoritarian personality, the concept itself is not a simple or agreed-upon one. There remains no consensus on whether authoritarianism is a personality, an attitude, or an ideology (Schuman et al., 1992). In this study, I view authoritarian personality more as an ideology, as a way of viewing the world.

In order to understand what an authoritarian worldview means, I turn to the work of Hetherington and Weiler, who employ a useful definition of authoritarianism as a worldview motivated by a need for order at its center (2009). This approach focuses on the effects of authoritarianism rather than the concept itself. In their emphasis of a need for order, the authors do not dismiss the distinctive role that authority plays. I accept their conceptualization of authoritarianism which emphasizes a strong desire for order, but I add that the inverse is actually more useful for understanding the effects of authoritarianism. That is, a fear of instability and disorder rather than a desire for order motivates individuals scoring high in authoritarianism. Certain authoritarian behaviors seem irrational - voting against one's economic interests, supporting less freedom of the media and fewer human rights protections, to name a few – in terms of sacrificing one's self-interest for fear it could be worse. Understanding authoritarian behavior as marked not by desire for order but rather by fear of disorder allows us to better understand seemingly irrational behaviors in support of authoritarian governance.

Moreover, this conception of what drives authoritarianism allows us to understand why individuals may tolerate something which to others might seem intolerable. While fear of disorder may be the primary driving force behind authoritarianism, political attitudes remain a product of a host of other psychological factors beyond fear or desire for order. Several studies have already examined this relationship between psychological factors and support for authoritarian governance. One such study looks at the Big 5 personality traits and finds that 'agreeableness', a personality trait associated with a desire to maintain positive relations with others that is usually peripheral to politics, is the most important and consistent trait in predicting authoritarian support (Greene & Robertson, 2016). Given the linkage between authoritarian personality and support for authoritarian governance, a better understanding of the

features of an authoritarian personality helps us better understand when and why individuals support authoritarian governance. The question of how locus of control relates to and predicts authoritarian personality and support for authoritarian regimes is especially interesting.

Introduction to Data Analysis

What emerges from different fields of research and seemingly disparate subjects is that locus of control and authoritarianism seem to be quite intertwined. Beliefs about how much control one exercises over outcomes has a direct application to political beliefs and support for or opposition to authoritarian governance. In the case of Russia, if a set of traits that underlie the Russian fatalism stereotype do exist, I posit that we can measure it by conceptualizing it as an external locus of control. Moreover, I suggest that locus of control correlates with greater support for authoritarian governance, that authoritarian preference can be predicted based on whether one has an external or internal locus of control. To test my hypotheses, I use a dataset from Pew Research Center's 2011 Spring Nations survey. I use the same dataset to control for country and explore whether there is initial evidence to support my second hypothesis that Russians tend to have more external orientations on locus of control measures than do citizens of other countries. I also introduce a second control variable to test whether there is a relationship between authoritarian preference and preference for economic strength, as I suspect these two are closely related.

Data Analysis

In order to test both of these hypotheses, I use the 2011 Spring Global Attitudes Survey dataset from Pew Research Center, which collected responses on a range of issues from respondents in twenty-four different countries across the globe. Survey results are based on telephone and face-to-face interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International.

Measurement. I use survey question 57 (variable name “Q57”, which I refer to hereafter as “Authoritarianism”) as the dependent variable and survey question 60 (variable name “Q60”, which I refer to hereafter as L.O.C. for locus of control) as the independent variable. Because I am interested in what influences authoritarian preference, the dependent variable is used as a measure of authoritarian preference and measures survey responses from Lithuania, Ukraine, Russia, and all Muslim countries to the following question: “Some feel that we should rely on a Democratic form of government to solve our country's problems. Others feel that we should rely on a leader with a strong hand to solve our country's problems. Which comes closer to your opinion?” Response options included: 1) Democratic form of government; 2) Strong-handed leader; 8) Don't know; or 9) Refused. Using STATA, I recoded the dependent variable to count 8 and 9 as missing values and change 1 (democratic government) to 0 and 2 (strong leader) to 1. I use this variable as a measure of authoritarian preference, as it asks respondents to prioritize either democracy or a leader with a strong-hand.

The independent variable (L.O.C.) measures external locus of control. It asks respondents from all countries except Egypt and Japan¹ the following question: “Thinking about people in our country who do not have a job, in general would you say this is mostly their own fault or is it mostly because of forces outside their control?” Responses included: 1) Mostly their own fault; 2) Mostly because of forces outside their control; 8) Don't know; or 9) Refused. Using STATA, I recoded the independent variable to count 8 and 9 as missing values and change 1 (own fault) to 0 and 2 (outside forces) to 1. I use this question as a measure of locus of control because it is typically included on measurement scales of locus of control, such as the I-E scale. For example,

¹ Countries included or excluded from the data analysis were not an intentional choice on my part, but were based on what was available in the data.

on the Rotter I-E scale of locus of control, one survey item asks respondents to choose between: “Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it” and “Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time” (Jenning). Both questions address causes of having or not having a job, and ask respondents to choose between internal causes and external causes.

Next, I introduce two control variables, one controlling for country (variable name “COUNTRY”), and one measuring whether respondents more highly value economic strength or good democracy (variable name “Q58”, which I hereafter refer to as “Economy”). The variable COUNTRY simply accounts for where respondents are from. For the purpose of this analysis, I recoded the COUNTRY variable (with the new variable name “COUNTRY_RUS”) so that all countries other than Russia are coded 0 and Russia is coded 1. I use this variable to test whether the effect of locus of control is stronger in Russia than for other countries, and thus whether the Russian fatalism hypothesis has merit.

As for the second control variable (Economy), it asks respondents from Lithuania, Ukraine, Russia, and all Muslim countries²: “If you had to choose between a good democracy or a strong economy, which would you say is more important?” Response options included: 1) good democracy; 2) A strong economy; 8) Don’t know; or 9) Refused. I recoded this variable as “Q58_dum” to count 8 and 9 as missing values and change 1 (good democracy) to 0 and 2 (strong economy) to 1. I use this question to test whether the relationship between L.O.C. and Authoritarianism is affected by preference for a strong economy, given the context of economic instability that has plagued Russia in recent history. In the context of Russia, it is likely that this

² Countries included or excluded from the data analysis were not an intentional choice on my part, but were based on what was available in the data.

variable is taps into opinions of the 1990s and 2000s and the economic instability that characterized this time.

Descriptive Statistics. Cross-tabulations for the dependent variable (Authoritarianism) with each of the independent variables (L.O.C, COUNTRY_RUS, and Economy) are provided in the Appendix (see Table 1.1, Table 1.2, and Table 1.3, respectively). Frequencies are given over percentages. See Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2 in the Appendix for bar charts of the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable, controlling for country and for economic strength preference. The pattern of the relationship between each set of variables is additive, with differences of similar tendency and magnitude across values of the control variable.

Inferential Statistics. Below is a correlation matrix of the independent-dependent variable relationship controlling for each of the control variables, attained using STATA. The first is the correlation matrix with COUNTRY_RUS as the control variable.

	Authorit	L.O.C	COUNTR~S
Authorit	1.0000		
L.O.C	0.0809	1.0000	
COUNTRY_RUS	0.0935	-0.0493	1.0000

Next is the correlation matrix for with Economy as the control variable:

	Authorit	L.O.C	Economy
Authorit	1.0000		
L.O.C	0.0818	1.0000	
Economy	0.3437	0.0482	1.0000

As shown, the correlation coefficient for the independent variable, L.O.C., and the dependent variable is nearly the same in both analyses at .0809 and .0818 and runs in a positive direction.

That is, as locus of control becomes more external, preference for a strong leader increases. The relationship between COUNTRY_RUS and the dependent variable is .0935 and is also positive – that is, when the country is Russia, respondents express greater preference for a strong leader than for democracy. For the Economy control variable, the correlation coefficient is positive for both the dependent variable and the independent variable, with the highest coefficient being between the Economy control variable and the dependent variable at .3437. Preference for a strong economy most strongly correlates with preference for a strong leader. It is also worth noting the correlation between the Economy variable and L.O.C. variable is positive .0482, showing they are only slightly less correlated than the L.O.C. variable and Country.

Regression. Using STATA, I attained linear regression models for the relationship between L.O.C. and the dependent variable, Authoritarianism (Model 1), the relationship between L.O.C., Authoritarianism, and COUNTRY_RUS (Model 2), the relationship between L.O.C., Authoritarianism, and Economy (Model 3), and the relationship between L.O.C., Authoritarianism, COUNTRY_RUS, and Economy (Model 4). See Table 1.4 in the Appendix for a table of regression models. For each of these models, there is a significant relationship between each of the variables and the dependent variable. Model 4 is the best fit model because its R^2 value tells us this model explains 12.69% of the variance in the dependent variable and includes every variable with a significant effect. It is clear from this statistical evidence that Economy explains the most variance in Authoritarianism. For a table with the logistical regression for Model 4, see Table 1.5 in the Appendix. The results of logistic regression produces a Pseudo R^2 value of .0951, which tells us that this model predicts .0951 of the variance in the dependent variable. Coefficients in the logistic regression are all positive and significant and do not challenge the results of the linear regression.

Results. I can safely reject the null hypothesis that locus of control, L.O.C., and COUNTRY_RUS explain 0 variance in the dependent variable. Both of these variables do in fact define a small but statistically significant effect on authoritarian preference, as measured by Authoritarianism. Individuals who are more likely to explain joblessness as outside of one's control are more likely to prefer "strong hand" governance. For both control variables, there is an additive relationship, with the stronger relationship being between preference for economic strength, Economy, and the independent and dependent variables. P-values being equal to 0.000 across all analysis shows clear statistical significance in the results. Those who prefer a strong economy also tend to prefer a strong hand leader and explain joblessness as due to outside forces. Likewise, those who prefer good democracy also tend to prefer democratic governance to a strong hand leader and to explain joblessness as due to one's own fault. Based on this analysis, it seems authoritarian preference can be predicted by measures of locus of control, and thus my first hypothesis is supported. Referring to Figure 1.1, it is clear that respondents from Russia tend to have higher scores on the measure of external locus of control, and thus the results also support my second hypothesis. The relationship is weak, but it is statistically significant.

Discussion

My strongest finding is the relationship between preference for economic strength over democracy and preference for authoritarian government. This finding is not surprising, given the way both the Authoritarianism question and the Economy question ask respondents to choose either democracy or an alternative (either strong hand leader or a strong economy). It is also not surprising that Russia positively correlates with preference for strong economy over democracy, given the historical context discussed previously. Considering the economic turmoil Russia experienced in the 1990s and has only gradually (and quite shakily) recovered from during

Putin's tenure, the fact that Russians, in general, would reject democracy in favor of economic well-being is not surprising. I also suspect that rather than simply measuring democratic preference again, this variable sees a greater effect in Russia due to opinions of the 1990s and 2000s and the economic instability that characterized this time period.

What is more interesting is the relationship of locus of control to both authoritarian preference and to country. Locus of control does have a significant effect in the direction predicted, lending support for the argument I make in this paper that measures of locus of control can provide important predictors of authoritarian support. It also lends support to the proposition that Russians, in general, may be more likely than citizens of Western democracies to have an external locus of control. In the context of recent Russian history, some Russians are more inclined to choose good economics over democracy than are others, and locus of control helps to explain these individual differences. Whether one has an internal or external locus of control explains why some people support authoritarian leadership while others do not. While the data lend support to the my theories discussed here, there are plenty of limitations worth noting.

Conclusion, Limitations & Future Research

Firstly, it is worth revisiting the concept of Russian fatalism within the context of the results of this study. Just as any culture consists of unique individuals with a host of individual differences, Russia is no exception to this rule. No generalization can accurately be made which applies to every person within a population. The data show that survey respondents from Russia tend to explain joblessness as due to external causes, more so than respondents from other countries. This does not necessarily mean Russian fatalism exists as a measurable concept that is unique to Russia. It is very likely that if I had controlled for Ukraine or Lithuania instead of Russia, that I might also have found people there tend to explain joblessness as due to external

factors. On the other hand, I would expect dramatically different results if I asked this question in the United States, where right-wing authoritarians are known to place blame for joblessness squarely on the backs of jobless individuals. Moreover, cultural differences are much more complex than any one construct.

If this study concludes anything about the stereotype of Russian fatalism, it is that such a broad, clichéd construct is not useful for understanding the nuances of personality traits across individuals, much less across large swaths of the globe. By breaking down such a construct into a set of traits, one of which we can measure as locus of control, we can better address the role these traits play in motivating and shaping individual behavior. Understanding individual behaviors in terms of a set of specific, measurable traits then allows us theorize about patterns of social and political behavior in meaningful ways.

Turning to methodological weaknesses, the present dataset is admittedly not ideal for testing theories of this scope, as it falls short both in breadth and in depth. In terms of depth, the way the Authoritarianism and Economy survey questions are worded forces a choice between two things that are not actually mutually exclusive. Why can a country not have both a good democracy and a leader with a strong hand? Does having a strong-handed leader necessarily speak to the degree of democracy in a given system? Similarly, why can there not be a good democracy and a strong economy? By framing the questions in a way that these items seem mutually exclusive, the survey may actually be aligning “good democracy” as an opposite to “economic strength” or a “strong leader” and thus producing response bias.

In terms of breadth, the present data are limited by having only one question that broadly assesses the two complex variables I am most interested in: authoritarian preference and locus of control. An ideal method would survey respondents from various countries using a verified locus

of control scale and measure of authoritarianism to collect nuanced responses from collectivist and individualist cultures and from Western liberal democracies and hybrid regimes like Russia. The present data also lack measures of socioeconomic status. Such factors could very well explain the relationship we see between variables. For example, people who report that democracy is more important than economic well-being might already be economically better off than those who say a strong economy is more important. Other factors like age might also explain why some citizens prefer democracy and others do not and even why some respondents are more internal or external in locus of control. If such socioeconomic factors were introduced into this model and locus of control remained significant, it would constitute a stronger finding in favor of locus of control.

A good next step to further test whether there is a causal relationship between locus of control and authoritarianism, would be use a random sample of Americans or citizens of other Western democracies and a group of Russians and conduct a survey within each group that measures both locus of control and authoritarian preference, controlling for socioeconomic factors. Doing so might begin to address the question: to what extent does external or internal locus of control behave differently in different settings? We know from past research that higher socioeconomic status correlates to more internal orientations of locus of control (Cohen et al., 2001), and so including such factors are likely to alter the results. Adding age as a factor might address the question, to what extent do historical experience and memory influence how individuals view control? For future research, one might consider surveying Russians who participate in popular protests and those who do not and assessing the same locus of control, authoritarian, and socioeconomic variables among them.

In sum, despite obvious limitations in this study, based on the literature and my data analysis, there is reason to believe a relationship exists between locus of control and preference for authoritarianism. Individuals with an external locus of control are more likely to prefer authoritarianism. Respondents from Russia were more likely to be external in their locus of control and to prefer authoritarianism and a strong economy. The strongest relationship found is that between preference for economic strength and preference for a leader with a strong hand. Future research should explore these relationships more fully in order to gain a better understanding of psychological factors motivating political preference for authoritarian leadership in places like Russia. Future research might also aim to expand the literature by formulating a theory of protest threshold that accounts for locus of control.

APPENDIX

Table 1.1

Cross-Tabulation for the locus of control (independent variable) and the authoritarian preference (dependent variable):

Q57. Democratic government or leader with a strong hand?	Q60. Thinking about jobless people, is it mostly their fault or due to forces beyond their control?	
	Mostly their own fault	Mostly because of forces beyond their control
Democratic	1,456.352 28.82	3,247.866 64.27
Strong hand	1,086.815 22.54	3,490.719 72.40

Table 1.2

Cross-Tabulation for country (control variable) and the authoritarian preference (dependent variable):

Q57. Democratic government or leader with a strong hand?	COUNTRY_RUS (Country)	
	Not Russia	Russia
Democratic	5,375.461 49.79	321.79248 32.18
Strong hand	4,589.868 42.51	571.548726 57.15

Table 1.3

Cross-Tabulation for economic strength (control variable) and the authoritarian preference (dependent variable):

Q57. Democratic government or leader with a strong hand?	Q58. Good democracy or strong economy?	
	Good Democracy	Strong Economy
Democratic	2,791.823 70.53	2,759.796 38.95
Strong hand	1,054.655 26.65	3,992.9421 56.36

Table 1.4

Coefficient	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	.42735	.40793	.21222	.20268
Q60 L.o.C.	.09067	.09607	.07319	.07714
t-value	7.47	7.95	6.40	6.76
p-value	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Country_Rus	-	.16949	-	.11733
t-value	-	9.74	-	7.02
p-value	-	0.000	-	0.000
Q58 Economy	-	-	.35569	.34961
t-value	-	-	33.65	32.85
p-value	-	-	0.000	0.000
R ²	0.0065	0.0161	0.1224	.1269

Source: 2011 Global Attitudes Spring Survey, Pew Research Center

Table 1.5

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Logistic regression
Number of obs      =      8,980
Wald chi2(3)       =      977.33
Prob > chi2        =      0.0000
Pseudo R2         =      0.0951

Log pseudolikelihood = -5694.1434
    
```

Authoritar	Coef.	Robust Std. Err.	z	P> z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
L.O.C	.3535653	.0525418	6.73	0.000	.2505853	.4565452
COUNTRY_RUS	.5400999	.080249	6.73	0.000	.3828148	.697385
Economy	1.500666	.0510413	29.40	0.000	1.400627	1.600705
_cons	-1.315955	.0564919	-23.29	0.000	-1.426677	-1.205233

Figure 1.1

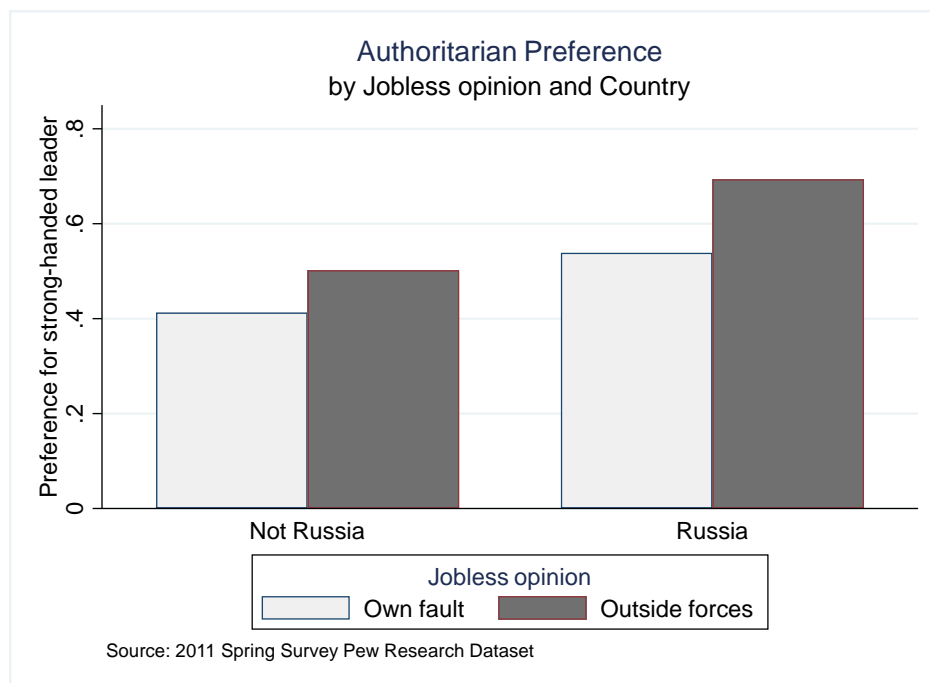
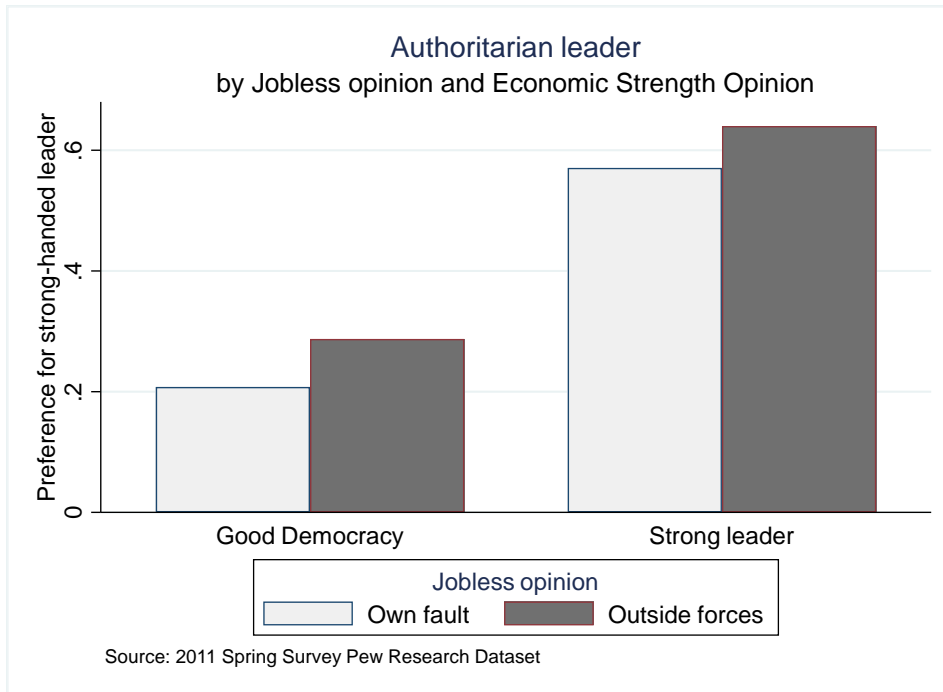


Figure 1.2



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