

Life Cycle, Generational and Period Effects on Protest Potential in Yeltsin's Russia

OLENA NIKOLAYENKO *Stanford University*

Introduction

The concept of age has been prominent in social science research (Glenn, 1974; O'Rand and Krecker, 1990; Riley, 1987). A large body of literature has investigated how age affects public opinion, including party identification (Abramson, 1979; Converse, 1976), voting (Blais et al., 2004; Goerres, 2007; Waas, 2007), and democratic support (Finifter and Mickiewicz, 1992; McFaul, 2003; Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer, 1998). There is, however, little consensus about the mechanisms through which age shapes political dispositions. Within this body of literature, the distinction between life cycle, generational and period effects has drawn considerable attention. One strand of research emphasizes attitudinal and behavioural adjustments associated with the passage through various life stages (Braungart and Braungart, 1974; Jarvikoski, 1993; Watts, 1999). Another line of inquiry posits that generational replacement accounts for value change (Inglehart, 1977; Jennings, 1987; Tessler et al., 2004). Additionally, others argue that dramatic external shocks, including wars, epidemics and revolutions, affect individuals irrespective of age or generational membership (Beck and Jennings, 1979). Though empirical research on this subject spans several decades, the debate still continues. A recent wave of regime change in Central and Eastern Europe

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Olena Nikolayenko, Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, Encina Hall, 616 Serra Street, Stanford University, Stanford, CA, USA 94305-6055; olenan@stanford.edu

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affords a fresh opportunity for re-evaluating the importance of age against the backdrop of dramatic social transformations.

This paper represents an attempt to assess the impact of life cycle, generational and period effects on protest potential in post-communist Russia by analyzing data from three waves of the World Values Survey. Over the course of Boris Yeltsin's ten-year presidency, the survey was administered three times—in 1990, 1995, and 1999—offering a snapshot of public opinion at various stages of the transition period. The substantive focus on protest activity is appropriate not only because this form of political participation is emblematic of a remarkable departure from the habitual patterns of mass mobilization under communism, but also because direct political action constitutes an important part of democratic politics.

There are at least three reasons why the concept of age merits further systematic attention in the post-communist world. First, attending most previous research in advanced industrial democracies has been the stability of the political regime and the relative mildness of economic shocks. In the absence of macro-level traumatic events, it is reasonable to expect that generational and period effects will be hard to find in mature democracies. Post-communist citizens, in contrast, have lived through immense political, economic and social transitions that might have exacerbated age-related cleavages in society. A cross-time analysis of public opinion data from post-communist states will broaden our knowledge of life cycle and generational effects in times of social turmoil.

Another reason for directing more academic attention toward the age-graded study of public opinion in Eastern Europe lies in connecting two bodies of literature that emphasize either short-term or long-term effects on political attitudes. Over the past decade, scores of post-communist studies sought to explain patterns of political behaviour by concentrating on such short-term factors as subjective well-being, evaluations of incumbent performance or issue opinions (for example, Barnes and Simon, 1998; Colton, 2000; Kluegel and Mason, 1999). Though age is routinely included in statistical models on political participation, the tripartite distinction between life cycle, generational, and period effects is rarely made. This paper argues that the integration of political socialization and developmental psychology arguments in empirical studies of protest potential will aid our understanding of political attitudes in the region.

Finally, a close inspection of generational patterns has far-reaching implications for regime change in countries that fall somewhere between democracy and dictatorship. Sovietologists have long searched for a sign of intergenerational rifts within the ranks of the Communist Party as a precursor of possible policy shifts (Bahry, 1987; Beissinger, 1986; Lodge,

Abstract. Regime change in Eastern Europe affords an excellent opportunity for investigating linkages between age and politics in times of social turmoil. Using data from three waves of the World Values Survey, this paper explores life cycle, generational and period effects on protest potential in Yeltsin's Russia. The study finds that an individual's position in the life cycle is the strongest predictor of protest potential in the post-communist state. Furthermore, the analysis suggests that citizens socialized during periods of relative socioeconomic stability exhibit the highest protest potential under conditions of uncertainty characteristic of the transition period.

Résumé. Les changements de régime en Europe de l'Est permettent d'examiner la relation complexe entre l'âge et la politique pendant les périodes d'instabilité sociale. S'appuyant sur les données de trois vagues du World Values Survey (sondage mondial sur les valeurs), cet article explore l'incidence du cycle de vie, de la génération et de la période sur le potentiel protestataire dans la Russie d'Eltsine. L'étude démontre que la position de l'individu dans le cycle de vie est le plus puissant facteur de prédiction du potentiel protestataire dans la société postcommuniste. En outre, les citoyens socialisés pendant des périodes de relative stabilité socio-économique présentent le potentiel protestataire le plus élevé dans des conditions d'incertitude caractéristiques de la période de transition.

1968). Likewise, early studies of the post-Soviet citizenry sought to identify a clear break with communism (for example, Gibson et al., 1992; Hahn, 1991). By gauging the magnitude of generational differences, analysts may gain valuable insights into the dispersion of democratic ideas across population groups.

The remainder of the paper proceeds in the following manner. The first section presents hypotheses derived from major theoretical approaches to the study of age. Next, the paper outlines methodology employed in this study and discusses the findings. The paper concludes by drawing out implications of age-related differences for political stability in Russia.

Theories of Life Cycle, Generational, and Period Effects

Life Cycle Effects

The underlying assumption of life cycle theories is that each life stage is associated with a distinct set of biological needs, cognitive functions, and psychosocial characteristics (O'Rand and Krecker, 1990). The development of cognitive skills during adolescence equips individuals with the ability to grasp abstract ideas and exercise critical thinking skills (Adelson and O'Neil, 1966). Concomitantly, quest for identity influences adolescents' social behaviour (Erickson, 1959). By the middle age, individuals tend to sharpen their cognitive skills and assume a variety of social roles linked to marriage, parenthood, and career advancement (Willis, 1999). Aging gradually leads to a decline in physical strength. A common false belief is that senior citizens also experience a marked

loss of cognitive skills. Empirical research, however, confirms that intellectual skills derived from accumulated experience increase with age (Fischer et al., 2003).

The salience of age-specific developmental characteristics motivated social scientists to put forward life cycle interpretations of political behaviour. Evidence abounds that youth, with its propensity to rebel against traditional norms and challenge parental authority, has been a major carrier of revolutionary ideas (Braungart, 1975). For instance, Watts's (1999) analysis of the link between protest and age in Germany finds an inverted U-relationship: there is a steady rise in protest potential until the mid-20s and a monotonic decline afterwards. Participation in mainstream politics, on the contrary, is skewed to the middle aged (Leighley, 1995). National election results from 22 European countries, for example, indicate that young people are less likely to participate than older voters (Fieldhouse, Tranmer, and Russell, 2007).

At the same time, recent demographic changes in advanced industrial democracies suggest that senior citizens may remain engaged in politics upon retirement. Campbell, for example, shows how Social Security and Medicare programs in the United States have created a constituency of citizens willing to defend their welfare privileges through political action (2003). As citizens in advanced industrial democracies live longer and enjoy a wider range of opportunities for self-realization, the literature has responded to the social change by revising conventional expectations about age-specific behaviour. One of the arguments in this line of research is that individual's position in the labour market structure, rather than biological age, is a strong indicator of a life cycle phase (Kohli, 1994).

Still, biological age is a defining feature of a life phase in contemporary Russia. First, the demographic situation in the former Soviet republic stands in stark contrast with population trends in North America and Western Europe. While advanced industrial democracies have experienced an increase in longevity, the average life expectancy in Russia dropped from 69 years in 1990 to 65 years in 2000, with women living longer than men.¹ By 1995, for example, male life expectancy has sunk to 57 (Specter, 1995). In comparison, male life expectancy in Canada has increased from 60 in 1931 to 75 in 1991 (Denton and Spencer, 2000). Second, dismal economic performance under Yeltsin's presidency has narrowed down employment opportunities of senior citizens. Compared to their Western counterparts, Russian pensioners possess scant resources for challenging age-specific norms and improving their quality of life. Ample empirical evidence documents abysmal living standards of Russia's senior citizens who struggled to survive on meagre pensions in the 1990s.²

Electoral studies provide insights into the relationship between age and political behaviour in post-communist societies. Research shows that

young people are less likely to vote than older age groups (Colton, 2000). According to White, Rose, and McAllister, for example, nonvoters in Russia's 1993 parliamentary election were "twice as likely to be under 30 as over 55" (1997: 121). Meanwhile, it is widely held that young people are more prone to protest because they have less access to positions of power and fewer commitments associated with adult roles (Jarvikoski, 1993: 82; Marsh, 1974: 124). Consistent with this view, this study hypothesizes that younger respondents are likely to exhibit a higher level of protest potential than older age groups.

Generational Effects

A key argument of the generational theory is that pre-adult socialization exerts enduring effects on political attitudes (for example, Reshon, 1977; Sears and Valentino, 1997). Proponents of this approach postulate that adolescence is a pivotal period for the development of political thinking (Jennings and Niemi, 1981; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). Influenced by Mannheim's seminal work, this strand of research defines each political generation in terms of its "common location in the social and historical process" during the formative years (1952: 291). Yet the manifestation of generational differences in the political sphere is quite rare due to the irregular occurrence of tumultuous events (Tessler et al., 2004). Opinion polls from post-communist Russia support the claim that dramatic social change exacerbates cross-generational differences. According to the 1998 poll, for example, 62 per cent of Russia's respondents aged 50 or older stated that social reforms had sharpened generational confrontations in the country.³

Since Soviet times, generational turnover has been a vexing issue in studies of Russian society. The ascendancy of a new political elite in the post-Stalin period has spawned an academic debate over the unity of the Communist party and the stability of the political system (Beissinger, 1986; Lodge, 1968). Likewise, the introduction of *glasnost*, a new information policy, and *perestroika*, economic restructuring, has revived hopes about the emergence of the young generation capable of dismantling the communist regime (Finifter and Mickiewicz, 1992; Gibson, Duch, and Tedin, 1992).

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union opened up fresh opportunities for examining the extent of generational cleavages in the region. Utilizing 1994 survey data from 11 post-communist states, Rose and Carnaghan find significant generational effects on the level of approval of the communist regime (1995). Similarly, Mishler and Rose demonstrate that Russia's older generations report higher levels of support for the communist regime (2006).

Consistent with earlier research, the study distinguishes political generations based upon four periods in Soviet history: Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Gorbachev.⁴ As the name of each historic period suggests, the political leadership of the Communist party had a strong bearing on life experiences of ordinary citizens in the Soviet Union.⁵ The rampant use of political violence in the form of massive purges and forced collectivization is likely to have made members of the Stalin generation, born 1907–1935, quite wary of expressing dissent in the public arena. Nikita Khrushchev's subsequent denunciation of the cult of personality coupled with a rehabilitation of political prisoners and a "thaw" in cultural sphere leads us to believe that citizens born 1936–1946 are prone to protest more than the preceding generation.

Meanwhile, political dispositions of the Khrushchev generation are likely to bear close resemblance to those of the successive generation, born 1947–1965. Notwithstanding divergent leadership styles, Khrushchev and Brezhnev were committed to salvaging the communist system through the build-up of its economic might and the expansion of welfare services. For example, thousands of Soviet households have benefited from Khrushchev's housing policy that increased the availability of separate apartments as a substitute to communal, dormitory-like residences (*kommunalki*). By the same token, Brezhnev's "stability of cadres" policy fostered widespread expectations about lifelong employment. This streak of relative economic prosperity and unprecedented welfare security has nurtured complacency and political passivity.⁶ Hence, the study hypothesizes that members of Khrushchev and Brezhnev generations will be more reluctant to engage in protest activity than members of the last Soviet generation.

This inquiry begins with assumption that the Gorbachev generation, born 1966–1973, will exhibit the highest level of protest potential. Individuals socialized during this period have witnessed a wave of political liberalization that has accelerated the collapse of communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The new information policy spawned not only media criticism of inept factory managers, but also a close scrutiny of the moribund political system. By the same token, an outbreak of nationalist mobilization erupted in the regions, delivering another blow to the legitimacy of the communist state. It is reasonable to assume that the last cohort of the Soviet citizenry will be most prone to political action against the authorities.

Period Effects

Like generational theories, this theoretical approach is preoccupied with the role of historic events in influencing political attitudes. Yet, rather than assuming the importance of formative years, the period effects argu-

ment posits that macro-level traumatic events affect each individual regardless of one's membership in a political generation or life cycle phase. The emphasis on period effects is evident in American studies of mass mobilization during the Vietnam War. Beck and Jennings (1979), for example, find a liberal participation bias both among young respondents and their parents in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In Central and Eastern Europe, the late 1980s and early 1990s represent a period of extraordinary political, economic, and social transitions (White, 1991). A wave of ethnic mobilization pushing for the collapse of communism brought thousands of people into the street in the late 1980s (Beissinger, 2002; Gorenburg, 2003). The disintegration of the Soviet Union, however, failed to create an institutional context conducive to political and civic engagement of ordinary citizens in Russia. Instead, spurred by the increasing freedom from compulsory political participation and expanding opportunities for the pursuit of private solutions to individual problems, "disengagement became a respectable position" in the post-communist state (Roberts and Jung, 1995: 165).

According to numerous accounts, citizens identify the right to decide for oneself whether or not to engage in politics as a major personal gain of living in the post-Soviet period studies (Alexander, 2000: 150–57; White et al., 1997: 132–33). The Communist system coerced individuals into compulsory and unanimous voting. According to official statistics, voter turnout reached 99 per cent in the former Soviet Union. The so-called "compliant activism" also involved membership in the Communist party (Letki, 2004). Since the collapse of communism, the intensity of political engagement has subsided. Levels of voter turnout have significantly dropped in East-Central Europe (Kostadinova, 2003). Moreover, citizens are now reluctant to join political parties. In their study of Russian electoral behaviour during the early 1990s, White, Rose and McAllister find "the absence of commitment to a party by almost three-quarters of the electorate" (1997: 137). In addition, post-communist citizens refrain from joining voluntary organizations (Howard, 2003).

In line with the disengagement argument, the present study expects to find lower levels of protest in Russia in the second half of the 1990s, compared to the travails of 1990. Throughout the 1990s, President Yeltsin governed the country. From the historian's perspective, Yeltsin's tenure may be treated as a single period. Yet, from the political scientist's standpoint, it is imperative to distinguish between the first years of transition from communism marked by political and economic liberalization and the last years of Yeltsin's presidency sprinkled with non-democratic measures and opaque business ventures. The consolidation of political and economic power coupled with public acquiescence to the status quo is likely to have deflated protest potential in Russia.

Data and Methods

Case Selection

This study treats Russia as a “critical case” that holds “a strategic importance in relation to the general problem” (Flyvbjerg, 2004: 425). The case of Russia can clearly confirm or falsify propositions about generational cleavages in the post-communist region. Of all the former Soviet republics, Russia endured the lengthiest period under communism. The Baltic states, for example, were coerced into joining the Soviet Union during the Second World War and, thus, had one generation less living under the Soviet system. Another reason why other former Soviet republics are excluded from this analysis has to do with cross-national variations in political openness. For instance, Belarus under President Lukashenka developed into a more repressive political regime than Yeltsin’s Russia.

Data Source

The present study uses data from the World Values Survey administered in Russia three times over the past decade.⁷ The first wave of survey research was carried out in October–November 1990, less than a year before the August 1991 coup and Gorbachev’s removal from power. The second wave of data collection occurred in November 1995–January 1996, almost half a year prior to Yeltsin’s re-election for a second term in office. Finally, the third wave of survey research was administered in April–June 1999, during the last months of Yeltsin’s presidency. A total of 6,501 respondents aged 18–90 participated in the survey.

Dependent Variable

Protest Potential. The survey gauges protest potential by asking respondents to indicate the likelihood of their participation in five types of protest activity: (1) signing a petition, (2) joining a peaceful rally, (3) joining a boycott, (4) joining a strike and (5) occupying an administrative building. Each indicator is measured on a three-point scale with the following response categories: never, might do, and have done. Using these five indicators, the additive index of protest potential is computed.⁸ The value of Cronbach’s alpha is greater than 0.7 implying a high degree of internal consistency.⁹ Since the contrast between protesters and non-protesters is of primary interest to this study, the resultant index is recoded into a dichotomous variable, with 0 representing low protest potential and 1 representing high protest potential.¹⁰

Independent Variables

Life Cycle. Biological age is used as a conventional way to distinguish between three life phases: youth, middle age, and older adulthood. Those aged 18–30 are coded as young. Respondents aged 31–55 belong to the middle age category.¹¹ Finally, respondents aged 56 and more are coded as the elderly. This coding of age categories seeks to reflect local perceptions of the old age. According to the 2005 survey of Russians, one-fifth of respondents indicate that old age (*starost'*) begins at the age of 50–54, and 47 per cent of the surveyed raise the threshold to 55–64.¹²

Political Generations. Using the structure of Russia's educational system as a guideline for drawing temporal boundaries of the so-called formative years, this study treats middle and late adolescence (14–23) as crucial for the development of political attitudes. Prior to making a transition to a vocational college or high school, Russian adolescents enter the final year of compulsory schooling at the age of 14. Those who obtain a university degree usually enter the job market by the age of 23.

Table 1 summarizes the coding scheme employed to group respondents into political generations. Each respondent is assigned to a particular generation based upon the position in a historic period for at least five first years of the formative ten-year span. For example, an individual born in 1968 turned 14 in 1982 and spent the first two formative years under Brezhnev's rule. Yet it would have been misleading to classify this person as a member of the Brezhnev generation, since he spent a larger part of his pre-adult years during the Gorbachev period. Consequently, this person is assigned to the Gorbachev generation. For the purpose of logistic regression, four dummy variables are constructed representing each political generation.

Periods. The logistic regression model includes dummy variables representing two time points (1995 and 1999), with the year 1990 as

TABLE 1
Classification of Respondents by Political Generations

Political Generation	Historic Period	Year Born	Age in 1990	Age in 1995	Age in 1999	Percentage of Respondents
Stalin	1925–1953	1907–1935	55–83	60–88	64–92	24.4% (1,488)
Khrushchev	1954–1964	1936–1946	44–54	49–59	53–63	17.6% (1,070)
Brezhnev	1965–1983	1947–1965	25–43	30–48	34–52	44.1% (2,681)
Gorbachev	1984–1991	1966–1973	17–24	22–29	26–33	13.9% (847)
Total						100% (6,086)

the reference category. Throughout the decade, according to Freedom House rankings, Russia was “partly free,” scoring 4.5 in 1990, 3.5 in 1995 and again 4.5 in 1999 on a scale from one to seven.¹³ By the end of Yeltsin’s presidency, a whiff of political liberalization was gone, signalling a rollback of democratic reforms. In addition, poverty rates were on the rise in late 1990s, jumping from 11.5 in 1990 to 26.2 in 1995 and 34.2 in 1999 (Shorrocks and Kolesnikov, 2001). A combination of political and socioeconomic factors characteristic of each time point (1990, 1995, and 1999) is likely to produce cross-time variations in protest potential.

Control Variables

Four additional variables are used as controls: income, gender, political interest and trust in government. Prior research shows that socioeconomic status is positively associated with unconventional political participation (Barnes and Kaase, 1979). As an indicator of socioeconomic status, income is here measured on a ten-point scale, with greater values implying higher income. Respondents are grouped into three categories representing low, medium, and high levels of income. The high level of income is then treated as a reference category. Another control variable is gender (male=1). Empirical evidence suggests that being female negatively affects the odds of unconventional political participation (Burns, 2002). Based upon the survey of 504 Moscow oblast residents, Tedin and Yap (1993), for example, conclude that Russian women are less politicized and less likely to become involved in protest activity than men.

This study also hypothesizes that interest in politics provides a strong motivation for citizens to become engaged in political activity. The variable “political interest” distinguishes between those who report low levels of political interest (“not at all interested” or “not interested”) and those who express high levels of interest in politics (“very interested” or “somewhat interested”). In a similar vein, trust in government is coded as a dichotomous variable distinguishing between low (“none at all” or “not very much”) and high (“quite a lot” or “a great deal”) levels of trust. Low levels of trust in government are likely to breed discontent and propel political action (Gamson, 1968; Milbrath, 1965).

Data Analysis Methods

Binary logistic regression analysis is performed to estimate the odds of protest potential with the help of age-related variables. A principal advantage of using logistic regression is that it does not assume a linear rela-

tionship between the dependent and the independent variables (Hosmer and Lemeshow, 2000). The general form of a logistic regression equation is:

$$P = \frac{\exp(b_0 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + \dots + b_kx_k)}{1 + \exp(b_0 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + \dots + b_kx_k)}$$

where P is the probability of the event, \exp is the exponential function written as $\exp(x)$ or e^x (e is the base of the natural logarithm and is approximately equal to 2.72); b_0 is the intercept; b_1 is the coefficient for the explanatory variable; x_1 is the value of explanatory variable. Specifically, the logistic regression equation used in this study is as follows:

$$P = \frac{\exp(b_0 + b_1(\text{generation}) + b_2(\text{young}) + b_3(\text{old}) + b_4(\text{year1995}) + b_5(\text{year1999}) + b_6(\text{pol int}) + b_7(\text{govtrust}) + b_8(\text{gender}) + b_9(\text{incomelow}) + b_{10}(\text{incomemedium}))}{1 + \exp(b_0 + b_1(\text{generation}) + b_2(\text{young}) + b_3(\text{old}) + \dots + b_{10}(\text{incomemedium}))}$$

A glaring methodological conundrum in longitudinal studies of political attitudes derives from the linear dependency of age, generation and year (Magnusson, Bergmann, and Rudinger, 1991; Mason and Fienberg, 1985). To reduce multicollinearity, the present study excludes from a model several dummy variables measuring membership in a political generation. Each regression model includes dummy variables for two life cycle phases, two historic periods, and a single political generation. Admittedly, the survey period is rather short to unequivocally separate generational effects. Age and belonging to a political generation are likely to be strongly correlated. Given these limitations, the results need to be considered with caution.

Results

This study begins with identifying a cross-time pattern of protest potential. The initial analysis also distinguishes between types of protest activity. The results presented in Table 2 confirm Barnes and Kaase's argument regarding a hierarchy of unconventional political participation (1979). As intensity and resource demand of protest activity increase, protest potential declines. For example, 30 per cent of respondents signed a petition in 1990, whereas ten times fewer individuals went on strike. Similarly, one-third of respondents attended a rally in 1990, and only 4 per cent of the surveyed joined a boycott. The same trend is observed in mid- and late 1990s. According to the results from the 1995 survey, the number of

TABLE 2
Protest Potential by Year

Protest Potential		Year		
		1990	1995	1999
<i>Sign Petition</i>	Never	26.4	52.4	57.2
	Might	44.1	36.8	31.1
	Done	29.6	10.8	11.7
			Cramer's V	.208***
<i>Attend a Rally</i>	Never	24.9	45.8	44.1
	Might	42.1	33.1	32.0
	Done	33.0	21.1	23.9
			Cramer's V	.135***
<i>Join a Boycott</i>	Never	59.4	76.0	76.0
	Might	36.2	21.7	21.5
	Done	4.4	2.3	2.5
			Cramer's V	.117***
<i>Join a Strike</i>	Never	67.6	83.0	83.2
	Might	29.8	15.5	15.3
	Done	2.6	1.5	1.5
			Cramer's V	.121***
<i>Occupy a Building</i>	Never	87.1	93.6	91.6
	Might	12.1	5.8	7.7
	Done	.8	0.5	0.7
			Cramer's V	.065***
Total		(1,961)	(2,040)	(2,500)

Note: Column entries are percentages. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Cramer's V is a correlation coefficient that measures the strength of the relationship between categorical variables. Cramer's V ranges from 0 (no relationship) to 1 (perfect association).

Source: World Values Survey.

participants in boycott action was tenfold less than that of demonstrators. Across the ten-year period, less than 1 per cent of respondents claimed they had occupied an administrative building in an attempt to articulate their grievances.

Furthermore, the results clearly show that the extent of protest potential has markedly decreased since the early years of transition from communism. The reported participation in a rally has declined by 11 per cent from 1990 to 1995. A drop in the number of petition signatories has been even more dramatic, sinking from 29.6 per cent in 1990 to 10.8 per cent in 1995. Subsequently, the survey data capture hardly any attitudinal change between 1995 and 1999. The same proportion of respondents (76 per cent) during the last two waves of the survey claimed that they would never consider joining a boycott. Likewise, 83 per cent of respondents were reluctant to join a strike action. A cursory look at the dynamics of

TABLE 3
Protest Potential by Generation

Protest Potential		Generation			
		Stalin	Khrushchev	Brezhnev	Gorbachev
<i>Sign Petition</i>	Never	58.8	45.3	40.5	41.6
	Might	30.3	36.7	39.6	39.6
	Done	11.0	18.0	19.9	18.8
				Cramer's V	.108***
<i>Attend a Rally</i>	Never	48.6	36.7	33.6	38.7
	Might	25.0	33.3	40.0	40.1
	Done	26.4	30.0	26.4	21.2
				Cramer's V	.107***
<i>Join a Boycott</i>	Never	84.2	73.4	66.3	61.9
	Might	14.2	24.1	30.4	33.5
	Done	1.6	2.5	3.3	4.6
				Cramer's V	.126***
<i>Join a Strike</i>	Never	91.6	81.8	74.1	67.8
	Might	7.8	16.8	23.4	30.0
	Done	0.5	1.3	2.6	2.2
				Cramer's V	.145***
<i>Occupy a Build.</i>	Never	97.4	93.5	88.9	84.7
	Might	2.4	6.0	10.3	14.5
	Done	0.2	0.5	0.8	0.8
				Cramer's V	.108***
Total		(1,488)	(1,070)	(2,681)	(847)

Note: Column entries are percentages. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.
Source: World Values Survey.

protest potential in the 1990s suggests that period effects are at play here, with the peak of protest activity during the early phase of transition and a sharp decline afterwards.

Additional cross-tab analysis reaffirms the significance of period effects. The results show a systematic decline in protest potential from 1990 onwards, controlling for the location of the respondent in the life cycle. Moreover, differences in behavioural preferences of the young and the middle-aged shrink in the second half of the 1990s. For example, 68 per cent of young and 58 per cent of the middle-aged reported “high” protest potential in 1990, compared to 32 per cent in both age groups in 1999.¹⁴ The results also reveal a drop in protest potential across generations.

Next, this study examines a bivariate relationship between protest potential and political generations. The findings highlight, in particular, attitudinal differences between representatives of the Stalin and Gorbachev generations. As shown in Table 3, the Stalin generation is least inclined to engage in political action. Only 11 per cent of respondents

from this generation signed a petition and merely 1.6 per cent of them joined a boycott, while participation rates were much higher among the other generational groups. Forty per cent of respondents from the Gorbachev generation, for example, reported that they might participate in a rally, compared to 25 per cent from the Stalin generation. In addition, the findings suggest that members of the Stalin generation shy away, in particular, from radical forms of political action: an overwhelming majority of respondents born 1907–1935 would never consider joining a boycott or a strike. The Gorbachev generation, in contrast, is most open to the idea of engagement in these types of protest activity. Sixty-two per cent of respondents from the Gorbachev generation, compared to 84 per cent from the Stalin generation, would refrain from joining a boycott. Belonging to the Gorbachev generation is, however, strongly correlated with being young, and belonging to the Stalin generation is strongly correlated with being old.

This study further explores the interplay between life cycle and generational effects by analyzing the distribution of protest potential by life cycle controlling for membership in a political generation. As shown in Table 4, the protest potential of respondents changes in sync with their transition from one life stage to another. The level of protest potential declines among those members of the Brezhnev and Gorbachev generations who move from the young to the middle age category. Similarly, the level of protest potential decreases when members of the Stalin and Khrushchev generations advance into the old age. But the level of protest potential is not uniform across all generations at the same stage of their life cycle. As youth, the Brezhnev generation exhibits higher levels of protest potential than the Gorbachev generation. Likewise, members of the Khrushchev generation in the middle age category are more likely to engage in protest activity than their counterparts in the Gorbachev generation. It is unclear, however, from cross-tab analysis how a combination of age-related variables affects protest potential controlling for socio-demographic characteristics and such political attitudes as trust in government and interest in politics.

Table 5 presents the results of logistic regression analysis using protest potential as the dependent variable. The results confirm the salience of life cycle effects on protest potential. Across models, the regression coefficient for “old” is negative and statistically significant (except model 1) indicating that older people are less prone to protest than youth in Yeltsin’s Russia. The results for model 3, for example, suggest that the probability of protest potential increases by 23 per cent for young people, compared to the elderly.¹⁵ As expected, the results also show that individuals protested at a lower rate in 1995 and 1999 than in 1990.

What is most interesting, however, is that the analysis finds statistically significant generational effects. Controlling for life cycle effects,

TABLE 4
 Protest Potential by Lifecycle Controlling for Generation

Protest Potential Generation		Life Cycle			Cramer's V
		Young	Middle	Old	
<i>Sign Petition</i>	Stalin		69.6	40.7	.076**
	Khrushchev		64.0	44.1	.203***
	Brezhnev	75.3	57.8		.108***
	Gorbachev	61.0	43.2		.128***
<i>Attend a Rally</i>	Stalin		70.4	51.0	.054*
	Khrushchev		67.8	58.2	.107**
	Brezhnev	78.3	65.1		.085***
	Gorbachev	62.6	53.3		.068*
<i>Join a Boycott</i>	Stalin		29.2	15.6	.050
	Khrushchev		33.5	18.8	.166***
	Brezhnev	48.5	32.1		.105***
	Gorbachev	40.3	25.4		.108**
<i>Join a Strike</i>	Stalin		24.0	8.1	.078**
	Khrushchev		22.0	13.9	.106**
	Brezhnev	42.9	24.1		.127***
	Gorbachev	34.4	19.3		.115***
<i>Occupy a Build.</i>	Stalin		12.0	2.4	.081**
	Khrushchev		7.7	5.2	.051
	Brezhnev	17.9	10.4		.070**
	Gorbachev	16.0	11.4		.046
Total		(1,404)	(3,135)	(1,960)	

Note: Column entries are percentages combining the response categories “might” and “have done.”

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Source: World Values Survey.

membership in the Stalin generation reduces the probability of engagement in protest activity. For example, the statistics for model 1 suggest that an older male respondent of the Stalin generation, with a low level of income, a high level of interest in politics and a low level of trust in government had .32 probability of having “high” protest potential in 1999.¹⁶ According to the results for model 2, the respondent representative of the Khrushchev generation with similar characteristics (old, male, a low level of income, a high level of interest in politics and a low level of trust in government) had .41 probability of having “high” protest potential in 1999. Contrary to the original hypothesis, belonging to the Gorbachev generation has a diminishing effect on the probability of protest potential.

One of the striking findings presented in Table 5 is that belonging to the Khrushchev and Brezhnev generations increases the probability of

TABLE 5
Results of Binary Logistic Regression for Protest Potential

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)	B	Exp (B)
<i>Political Generations</i>								
Stalin	-.696 (.135)***	.499						
Khrushchev			.189 (.092)*	1.208				
Brezhnev					.159 (.096)	1.172		
Gorbachev							-.072 (.155)	.930
<i>Life Cycle^a</i>								
Young	.276 (.096)**	1.318	.330 (.097)***	1.391	.384 (.110)***	1.468	.351 (.150)*	1.421
Old	-.226 (.121)	.798	-.728 (.081)***	.483	-.588 (.110)***	.556	-.713 (.081)***	.490
<i>Period^b</i>								
1995	-1.138 (.090)***	.321	-1.073 (.089)***	.342	-1.071 (.089)***	.343	-1.065 (.090)***	.345
1999	-1.072 (.342)***	.342	-.964 (.089)***	.381	-.972 (.089)***	.378	-.958 (.092)***	.384
<i>Control Variables</i>								
Political Interest	.892 (.070)***	2.440	.888 (.070)***	2.431	.898 (.070)***	2.455	.894 (.070)***	2.445
Trust in Government	-.220 (.076)**	.802	-.224 (.076)**	.799	-.221 (.076)**	.802	-.222 (.076)**	.801
Gender (male = 1)	.400 (.069)***	1.492	.406 (.069)***	1.501	.402 (.069)***	1.495	.404 (.069)***	1.498
Income: Low ^c	-.068 (.098)	.934	-.072 (.098)	.930	-.082 (.098)	.921	-.078 (.098)	.925
Income: Medium ^c	-.047 (.088)	.954	-.052 (.088)	.949	-.050 (.088)	.952	-.051 (.088)	.951
Intercept	.020 (.119)		-.081 (.119)		-.172 (.138)		-.053 (.118)	
-2 Log Likelihood	5092.279		5113.983		5115.432		5117.976	
Nagelkerke R-Square	.193		.187		.187		.186	

Note: Cell entries are logit coefficients b with standard errors in brackets and the odds ratio exp (b). Significance levels: *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

^aMiddle age is the reference category; ^b1990 is the reference category; ^cHigh level of income is the reference category.

protest potential. By invoking the concept of uncertainty, the study proposes an explanation for these findings. Scores of journalistic accounts document how post-communist citizenry have become caught in a stress spiral in the aftermath of mounting uncertainties, ranging from job insecurity and wage arrears to food shortages and price hikes (Wines, 2000). The study suggests that individuals who grew up during the tumultuous period of the late 1980s might have developed a better capacity for coping with uncertainty than those raised during an era of socioeconomic stability. Given a stark contrast between the economic equilibrium of the 1960–1970s and a swirl of dramatic changes in the 1990s, it is plausible to assume that members of the Khrushchev and Brezhnev generations exhibited a willingness to protest in a futile attempt to restore what they have lost in the course of the transition process.

The other individual-level variables, except income, perform as hypothesized and achieve conventional levels of statistical significance. The analysis finds that women are less likely to become involved in protest than men. By the same token, trust in government reduces the probability of engagement in unconventional political participation. Interest in politics, in contrast, emerges as the strongest predictor of protest potential implying that those who took a keen interest in public affairs formed the core of protesters in Yeltsin's Russia.

Overall, the findings clearly demonstrate that three age-related explanations of political attitudes need to be treated as complementary, rather than self-exclusionary. The results suggest that life cycle effects have the strongest impact on protest potential. But the analysis also shows that generational and period effects are important in accounting for variations in unconventional political participation.

Conclusion

Scholars have long debated the salience of age in shaping political attitudes, but there is a dearth of empirical studies estimating life cycle, generational, and period effects in developing countries and post-communist societies. The purpose of this paper has been to fill this gap by investigating the impact of age-related variables on protest potential in Yeltsin's Russia. Taken together, the analysis furnishes evidence in favour of age-related effects on the propensity to protest. In line with life cycle theory, the study finds that protest potential declines with age. Moreover, the results suggest that generational differences in political attitudes persist in the post-Soviet period despite the traumatic experience of the regime change. At the same time, the study provides support for the hypothesis that a period of social turmoil increases the odds of engagement in political action regardless of one's age and generational membership. The paper concludes that each of the rival explanations contributes to a more nuanced

understanding of protest potential. A life cycle theory of political attitudes, however, has the strongest explanatory power.

Another important finding to be gleaned from this study is that generations socialized during periods of relative socioeconomic stability in the Soviet Union are most prone to protest against the status quo under Yeltsin's presidency. The 1990s were notorious for skyrocketing inflation, surging unemployment rate, and plummeting living standards. This study speculates that citizens socialized during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev's eras might have perceived the disorder associated with the shift from a planned economy to a market one as a startling deviation from the tranquil days of their youth. The resultant psychological stress might have aggravated individuals to the extent that they were willing to become engaged in protest activity.

One implication of these findings is that multiple approaches to the conceptualization of age-related differences need to be integrated in empirical analyses to provide a fuller understanding of political attitudes. A longitudinal examination of attitudinal and behavioural patterns is particularly useful in transition societies. Given cross-time differences in the scope, pace, and outcome of political and socioeconomic reforms in the post-communist world, a survey at a certain time point may obscure the dynamics of public response to societal changes.

These findings also have implications for political stability in post-communist Russia. One implication is that the importance of protest as a mechanism for channelling citizens' demands tends to decline with the advance of the transition processes. This shift away from unconventional political participation, however, may be contingent upon the performance of the incumbent government. Should trust in government drop to an all-time low, there might be a resurgence of political action. Another implication is that generational differences persist, notwithstanding a plethora of political, economic and social transformations in the post-Soviet era. Therefore, scholars need to pay greater attention to ways through which individuals develop political orientations and social norms supportive of the regime.

Notes

- 1 On population trends in Russia, visit the web site of Federal State Statistics Service (Goskomstat) <http://www.gsk.ru>.
- 2 For example, according to the 1998 opinion poll by the Moscow-based Public Opinion Foundation, 40 per cent of respondents aged 50 or older described themselves as poor and an additional 40 per cent reported that their income levels were below the average. In comparison, only one-fifth of respondents between 18 and 35 described themselves as poor. The wording of the question was, "Here is a list of social strata based upon income levels: rich, above average, average, below average, and poor. In which of these categories do you place yourself?" The survey was conducted in Decem-

- ber 1998. For more information, see <http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/humdrum/income/t8045317> (accessed March 2007).
- 3 The wording of the question was, "Everybody knows about the so-called generational conflict—a confrontation between "fathers" and "children." In your opinion, have current reforms in the country made this problem more acute, less acute, or has it remained the same?" The survey was administered in October 1998. For more information, see http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/societas/social_group/pensioner/t8041910 (accessed March 2007).
 - 4 The Lenin generation is excluded from the analysis, since hardly anyone socialized during the early years of the Soviet Union was alive in the late 1990s. Moreover, members of the Yeltsin generation were too young to participate in the 1990 wave of the World Values Survey. Only 96 respondents socialized during the Yeltsin period participated in the 1995 survey. Finally, a total of 309 respondents, representative of the Yeltsin generation, took part in the 1999 survey. Using only the data from the 1999 survey, I examined the bivariate relationship between protest potential and the variable "political generation" with five categories (Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev, and Yeltsin). The results suggest that members of the Yeltsin generation attended a rally in fewer numbers than any other generation. Similarly, the youngest generation is less likely than others (except the Stalin one) to have signed a petition. At the same time, respondents representative of the Yeltsin generation are more open than others to the idea of joining a strike or occupying a building. It is reasonable to assume that lower levels of actual participation in protest activity by the Yeltsin generation are related to the overall decline in protest during the late 1990s.
 - 5 There are numerous examples of how the Soviet political leadership had a bearing on life experiences of Soviet citizens. For instance, Friedgut's analysis of electoral processes, local councils, and neighbourhood committees illuminates changes in political participation of Soviet citizens from Khrushchev's thaw to Brezhnev's stagnation (1979). Fiszman indicates how Brezhnev identified "types of dissent considered tolerable" (1983: 234–35). More recently, Remington illustrates how Gorbachev's *glasnost* policy facilitated an improvement in the media performance and a turnover of the media personnel (1988, 153–54). For a succinct discussion of Soviet history and political leadership, see Brown (1989), Sakwa (1998).
 - 6 The "communist reform" movement of the 1960s (*shestidesiatniki*) was limited to a small portion of the Soviet population, mainly the intelligentsia.
 - 7 Administrative districts (*rayons*) are used as the primary sampling units. Each rayon is a geographically localized territory that contains both urban and rural settlements. The response rate was 75 per cent in 1995 and 73 per cent in 1999. It must be noted that the data from the 1990 survey were collected in Soviet Russia only. Further information about the survey can be found online at <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>. The dataset is provided by European Values Study Group and World Values Survey Association (2006).
 - 8 When the additive index is constructed, each type of protest activity is assigned equal weight following a common practice in survey research. On this topic, see Barnes and Kaase (1979), Marsh (1974).
 - 9 Cronbach's alpha is a coefficient of reliability measuring internal consistency of items in a scale.
 - 10 Sixty-four per cent of respondents are concentrated in the three bottom categories. The mean equals 2.01. The categories of the index are collapsed as follows: 0 through 3 equals 0 (low protest potential) and 4 through 10 equals 1 (high protest potential).
 - 11 Given diverse social changes in contemporary societies, there is an emergent literature suggesting a distinction between early midlife and late midlife (for example,

- Moen, 1991). When the dummy variable “middle age” is divided into two (representing those aged 30–45 and those 46–55), the results of binary logistic regression analysis are identical to those reported in Table 4.
- 12 A total of 1,500 respondents participated in the national representative survey administered by the Public Opinion Foundation in April 2005. The question wording was, “In different historic periods and different countries, people define the starting point of old age in different ways. When do you think the old age begins in contemporary Russia?” The response categories were as follows: before 40, 40–49, 50–54, 55–59, 60–64, 65–69, 70–74, 75–79, 80 and older. For more information, see http://bd.fom.ru/report/cat/societas/social_group/pensioner/d051804 (accessed March 2007).
 - 13 Freedom House ranks countries on a scale from one to seven based on the total number of raw points awarded to the political rights and civil liberties checklist questions. Then each pair of political rights and civil liberties ratings is averaged to determine an overall status of “free” (1.0–2.5), “partly free” (3.0–5.5) or “not free” (5.5–7.0). For a detailed overview of *Freedom in the World* survey methodology, see <http://www.freedomhouse.org>.
 - 14 The value of Cramer’s V, measuring the strength of the relationship between the three-category variable “life cycle” and the dichotomous variable “protest potential” controlling for the year of the survey, decreases from .248 in 1990 to .092 in 1999.
 - 15 Holding other logit coefficients in model 3 constant, the probability of high protest potential for young is calculated as follows,

$$P = \exp(-.172 + .384) / \exp(1 + (-.172 + .384)) = 1.24 / 2.24 = .55.$$

For old, $P = \exp(-.172 + (-.588)) / \exp(1 + (-.172 + (-.588))) = .47 / 1.47 = .32$.

- 16 To calculate the probability of protest potential for an individual case, I put specific values of the independent variables in the equation:

$$P = \frac{\left(\begin{array}{l} \exp(.020 + (-.696)(Stalin = 1) + .276(young = 0) \\ + (-.226)(old = 1) + (-1.138)(year1995 =) \\ + (-1.072)(year1999 = 1) + .892(polit\ int = 1) \\ + (-.220)(govtrust = 0) + .400(gender = 1) \\ + (-.068)(incomelow = 1) + (-.047)(incomemedium = 0) \end{array} \right)}{1 + \exp(.020 + (-.696)(Stalin = 1) + \dots \\ + (-.047)(incomemedium = 0))}$$

$$P = \exp(-.750) / 1 + \exp(-.750) = .32.$$

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Appendix. Questionnaire Wording and Coding of Variables

Variable	Survey Item	Coding of Categories
Protest Potential	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. Sign petition Join boycott Attend demonstration Join strike Occupy building	Stand-alone variables: 0 – never 1 – might do 2 – have done Dichotomous Variable 0 – low (“never”) 1 – high (“might” and “have done”)
Life Cycle	Age (in years)	1 – young (18–30) 2 – middle-aged (31–55) 3 – old (56–older)
Political Generations	Based upon the year of birth, four dummy variables are computed in accordance with the number of formative years spent during a certain historic period: Stalin Khrushchev Brezhnev Gorbachev	0 – other 1 – the generation
Period	Year of the survey interview	Three dummy variables: T1: 1 – 1990, 0 – other T2: 1 – 1995, 0 – other T3: 1 – 1999, 0 – other
Gender	Gender	0 – female 1 – male
Income	Here is a scale of incomes (from 1 to 10). We would like to know in what group your household is, counting all wages, salaries, pensions and other incomes that come in. Just give the letter of the group your household falls into, before taxes and other deductions.	1 – lowest 10 – highest
Political Interest	How interested would you say you are in politics? Very interested Somewhat interested Not very interested Not at all interested Don't know	0 – low (“not at all interested” and “not very interested”) 1 – high (“very interested” and “somewhat interested”)
Trust in National Government	Could you tell me how much confidence you have in national government? Is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?	0 – low (“none at all” and “not very much”) 1 – high (“a great deal” and “quite a lot”)