



Religious influences on human capital variations in imperial Russia

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ABSTRACT

Historical legacies, particularly imperial tutelage and religion, have featured prominently in recent scholarship on political regime variations in post-communist settings, challenging earlier temporally proximate explanations. The overlap between tutelage, geography, and religion has complicated the uncovering of the spatially uneven effects of the various legacies. The author addresses this challenge by conducting sub-national analysis of religious influences within one imperial domain, Russia. In particular, the paper traces how European settlement in imperial Russia has had a bearing on human development in the imperial periphery. The causal mechanism that the paper proposes to account for this influence is the Western communities' impact on literacy, which is in turn linked in the analysis to the Western Christian, particularly Protestant, roots, of settler populations. The author makes this case by constructing an original dataset based on sub-national data from the hitherto underutilised first imperial census of 1897.

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1. Introduction

Does religion matter in accounting for spatially uneven patterns of human capital development in Russia? Religion has featured prominently in the debates on the legacy underpinnings of democratic variations in various settings (Bollen & Jackman, 1985; Huntington, 1996; Landes, 1998; Welzel, Inglehart & Klingemann, 2003). However, the substantial overlap between religion and imperial or, in the case of former colonies, colonial, tutelage has complicated the making of sound inferences about the weight of the specifically religious imprint on human capital variations, as opposed to that of the institutional legacies of imperial or colonial tutelage (Fish, 1998). For instance, Christian

nations that formed part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire are also largely Protestant or Catholic while those formerly part of the Russian or Ottoman Empires have large Eastern Orthodox and Muslim populations.

One possibility of addressing this dilemma is by conducting sub-national analysis employing the territorial domains of one imperial power as observations. Not only does such an analysis allow to hold imperial tutelage constant, but to also explore the effects of other potentially significant domestic variables in a more systematic way. As a successor to the Russian Empire covering most of its territorial landmass, Russia presents a good laboratory for refining our knowledge of how these respective variables might matter for human capital. However, these a dearth of scholarship on this topic. One apparent reason for this omission is that the predominant “centre-centred” (Snyder, 2001) national-level analyses have forced a Huntingtonian master narrative upon the discipline conceptualising Russia's Christian religious tradition largely in terms of its belongingness to Eastern Orthodoxy (Fish, 1998; Huntington, 1996; Pop-Eleches, 2007; Welzel et al., 2003).

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As a result, potentially important factors in long-term human capital development have remained understudied.

I address this omission by tracing how European settlement in imperial Russia has had a bearing on human development in the imperial periphery. The key causal mechanism that I propose to account for this long-term influence of Western populations is the settlers' impact on literacy, which is in turn linked in my analysis to the Western Christian, particularly Protestant, roots, of settler populations. The paper is part of a wider project to study the impact of historical legacies on present-day human capital in territorially large states like India and Russia. Assessing the impact of imperial legacies on post-communist spatial developmental variations is beyond the scope of this paper however uncovering factors influencing human capital variations in the imperial periphery will hopefully constitute building blocks for a more systematic exploration of how these factors may shape present-day spatial developmental variations.

For this study, I constructed an original dataset based on data from the hitherto underutilised first imperial census of 1897. The paper is structured as follows. First, I discuss the literature on historical legacies in formerly communist states and Russian regions. This is followed by an excursion into the history of European settlement and its impacts on human capital development through literacy in Russian provinces. I then present results of statistical analysis. Concluding observations follow.

2. Theorising legacies

Historical legacies have featured prominently in recent analyses of post-communist developmental variations (Hanson, 1995; Kopstein, 2003; Pop-Eleches, 2007). Legacy approaches have been advocated over those prioritising more temporally proximate causal pathways to markets, development, and democracy because the latter have arguably failed to account for substantial variations in developmental trajectories of Central and East European states. Scholars have critiqued modernisation theories for their failure to explore how industrial growth itself may be linked to historical-cultural contexts (Kitschelt, Mansfedova, Markowski, & Toka, 1999). At the same time, they argued that twentieth century regime legacies of communism, fascism, or authoritarianism could be linked to historically-conditioned forms of institutions and state-society relations that are likely to endure (Hanson, 1995, p. 313; Bunce, 1999, p. 785; Kopstein, 2003).

Recent legacy scholarship has overwhelmingly focused on Central European states however. Thomas Remington is one of the few scholars of Russian regions who have sought to systematically incorporate pre-communist developmental effects into his analysis of Russian regional developmental variations (Remington, 2010). He has employed 1926 literacy figures as a proxy for pre-communist development in his statistical analysis of political and economic regime variations in Russia's regions and found that it positively correlates with both urbanisation and democracy in the 1990s (Remington, 2009). He suggests that the 1926 census figure is in turn reflective of pre-revolutionary social

development legacies before industrialisation, collectivisation, and urbanisation drives of the Stalin and post-Stalin periods. The study therefore hints at the potentially important mechanism of past legacies of human capital and literacy in particular however, it stops short of extending the causality further to explore factors which account for variations in pre-communist human capital development.

Two other recent studies, albeit not specifically concerned with Russia, have more closely examined the educational component of pre-communist historical legacies. Schooling features as a key explanatory variable in Peisakhin's study of sub-national democratic orientations in formerly Russian and Hapsburg territories of present-day Ukraine however rather than focussing on the human capital component of the *quality* of schooling a more complex argument is proposed which privileges the *substance* of the curriculum. In a fascinating survey-based attempt to study history's natural experiment Peisakhin shows how the contrasting contemporary "behavioural scripts" in post-communist Ukrainian provinces which share a common legacy of communism, are rooted in the curriculum content that the various communities had been exposed to. These variations could be in turn traced to the institutional legacies of modes of the incorporation of minority ethnic groups going back centuries. Thus, residents of the formerly Russian imperial territories, subjected to a policy of the suppression of their Little Russian identity, only a few miles apart from their formerly Hapsburg Ukrainian neighbours where Ruthenian identity was actively encouraged, are far less likely to espouse critical attitudes towards the government and vote. Peisakhin suggests that the imperial-era Church and schooling systems were the key institutional determinants of local identities, nurturing or suppressing ethnic distinctiveness (Peisakhin, 2010).

Likewise, in their cross-national study of post-communist regime trajectories Darden and Grzymala-Busse suggest that pre-communist nationalist curriculum content in the more literate imperial peripheries accounts for variations in the willingness of East European nations to dislodge communist parties (Darden & Grzymala-Busse, 2006). An intriguing question however is what accounts for such stark variations in levels of schooling and specifically literacy before communism. Neither study systematically addresses this question, though Darden and Grzymala-Busse note the importance of variations in levels of socio-economic development among the least literate nomadic societies in Central Asia and their more literate Slavic counterparts and those in more developed Central European provinces. They therefore fall back on the modernisation argument in locating the roots of literacy in the variable levels of modernisation of imperial peripheries.

Given the well-known cultural differences between Central Asian Muslim or Animist, Slavic-Orthodox, and Western Christian societies, this reference to the stark literacy variations among the above societies begs the question of the extent to which modernisation may be itself a product of cultural factors that may need to be disentangled from other variables. Modernisation may shape political value orientations however culture, largely

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