

WAR AND STATE-MAKING IN UKRAINE: FORGING A CIVIC IDENTITY FROM BELOW?

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Abstract. *This paper contributes to the study of the effects of war on societies and states. Tilly's famous dictum about the close link between war-making and state-making refers to the effects of war on central state capacity and the monopoly over violence. However, wars also shape the attitudes and identities of people experiencing challenges to the territorial integrity of their state. Based on original survey data from 2017–18, this paper traces these dynamics amidst the ongoing war in eastern Ukraine. It identifies a significant shift towards a civic identity centered on the Ukrainian polity in this time period. Thus, contrary to the official state rhetoric presenting an increasingly narrow ethno-linguistic definition of the Ukrainian nation-state at the time, Ukrainian society put forward a more inclusive state identity from below. This discrepancy between society and the governing elites was reflected in the 2019 presidential elections.*

Keywords: *Ukraine, Donbas, war, state-making, identity, citizenship, ethnicity, attitudes*

Introduction

In the 2019 presidential elections, the incumbent president Petro Poroshenko campaigned on the slogan 'Army. Language. Faith', thereby explicitly linking the experience of war with the status of the Ukrainian language and the newly created Ukrainian Orthodox Church. The slogan summarized the increasing securitization of identity issues and state policies in the context of war. The fact that Poroshenko was defeated by Volodymyr Zelenskyy, an openly Russian-speaking and politically inexperienced candidate campaigning on little more than the slogan of 'unity' across Ukraine, promising peace and an end to corruption, highlights the limitations of the state identity projected onto society by the Ukrainian government and parliament in recent years.

By tracing changes in public attitudes across Ukraine based on original survey data from 2017 and 2018, this article shows that the election result is neither a complete surprise nor irrational behaviour on the part of the electorate. Instead, it has deeper roots in societal perceptions of the Ukrainian state. The cross-sectional data at the heart of the analysis presented is from the regular nationally representative KIIS survey (without Crimea and the non-government-controlled territories), supplemented by specific questions commissioned by the Centre for East European and International Studies (ZOiS).

In this article we focus on two major issues: people's self-reported identities, and on the attitudes regarding the future political status of the Donbas, a question that goes to the heart of peace-making but also relates to the conception of the territorial and political make-up of the Ukrainian state. The issue of autonomy or 'special status' is a highly sensitive one in Ukraine. It is closely connected to the idea of state sovereignty. The Ukrainian government has been opposed to the concept of autonomy, though the 2015 Minsk Agreement contains a provision for a 'special status' for specified territories in the non-government-controlled areas. Russia's support for the self-declared people's republics of Donetsk and Luhansk and its repeated calls for the federalization of Ukraine have further eroded the political space in Ukraine for a discussion about decentralization at the regional level. Nevertheless, ideas about autonomy and decentralization are typical elements of peace agreements and the management of conflict-potential more generally. Therefore, public opinion on these issues helps to gauge the scope for political solutions to the war in eastern Ukraine and the underpinnings of identities during war.

This paper contributes to the study of the effects of war on societies and states. Tilly's famous dictum about the close link between war-making and state-making refers to the effects of war on central state capacity and the monopoly over violence. However, wars also shape the attitudes and identities of people experiencing challenges to the territorial integrity of their state. This is our focus in this article.

We proceed as follows: we first provide an overview of the literature on cleavages in Ukraine and the broader comparative literature on the effects of war on identity and statehood. Ultimately, we seek an answer to the question if identities change during war and engage with the polarization hypothesis that characterizes much of the literature on

war: does the experience of war bring about or reinforce a polarization of (ethnic) identities? We find that even within a single year during a war, identities can change significantly. From 2017 to 2018 a 'Ukrainian ethnic identity' has been replaced as the primary identity by a civic identity centred on the more inclusive notion of Ukrainian citizenship. This identity shift maps an element of state-building from below that goes against the polarization hypothesis in the study of war and, more specifically, against the official state rhetoric during the Poroshenko presidency (2014–19).

Similarly, Ukrainian society has become more open to different notions of autonomy, even though the majority of people still prefers the *status quo ante* without any special status for parts of the Donbas or other regions of Ukraine. Together, these changes in public opinion help to explain the outcome of the 2019 presidential elections where ethno-linguistic cleavages and the war in eastern Ukraine failed to mobilize voters for the incumbent president.

The effects of war on identities

In the study of war, the consequences of war have been given less attention than the causes of war. Scholars have acknowledged that potential identity shifts amidst war or in its aftermath remain insufficiently explored (Esteban and Schneider 2002; Kalyvas 2008; Sambanis 2002; Wood 2015). Ethnic, regional and other political identities can be an important part of mobilization for war, and, in turn, war puts these identities to a test. A war setting provides a window onto the dynamics of identity shifts (Onuch, Hale & Sasse 2018). The hypothesis that war reinforces divisive identities resulting in an increase in polarization along the conflict lines is widespread, but often remains unsubstantiated in the absence of data collection during war (Posner 1993; Esteban & Schneider 2000; Fearon & Laitin 2003; Gurr 2000). However, empirical research on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, for example, has shown that those directly affected by war do not become more ethnonationalist (Dyrstad 2012; Massey et al. 2003; Sekulic 2004), thereby calling the polarization thesis into question. In the case of Ukraine, recent survey data has also revealed that the experience of war does not only streamline identities, but can maintain or even reinforce mixed identities (Sasse & Lackner 2018).

Wars and state-building are intertwined processes. Tilly's phrase about "wars making states, and states making war" is a frequent reference point in this regard (Tilly 1985). Scholars before and after him have tried to spell out parts of this dynamic interrelationship (e.g. Cohen et al. 1981; Coggins 2014). Tilly's focus was on the formation of the modern European state but his thesis has been applied both as a loose description and a research hypothesis to contemporary cases in and beyond Europe. Some scholars have criticized the overstretching of Tilly's argument, while emphasizing the detrimental effects of war on states as well as the greater importance of non-state actors in contemporary wars (e.g. Leander 2004). This strand of research is related to the vast literature on 'state capture' and 'state failure'. In the public debate the term 'failed state' is at times used when discussing Ukraine, but we do not consider the term an adequate concept framing contemporary developments in Ukraine.

Building on the two key strands of Tilly's work, Tarrow tried to link the politics of contention to the study of war (Tarrow 2015). His focus was on the role of contention in the mobilization for war—though he also briefly referred to the possibility of preventing war through mobilization—and the emergence of movements and contention in the aftermath of war rather than the dynamics during war. In this article our emphasis is not on organized social movements, but on the conflict-defusing and state-building potential reflected in societal attitudes.

An increasing number of scholars have concentrated on post-war state-building. Scholars working on different conflicts around the globe have pointed to a critical commitment problem at the heart of conflict-related security dilemma (e.g. Coyne & Boettke 2009; Keefer 2008; Posen 1993; Walter 2002). In particular, the scope and limitations of public trust in post-war settings have attracted more scholarly attention in recent years (De Juan & Pierskalla 2016; Wong 2016). Research on the long-term effects of external and internal conflicts has found that violent conflict tends to embed low institutional and inter-group trust in society (Grosjean 2014). This finding is in line with the hypothesized hardening of identities undermining a sense of civic unity.

More recently, survey research has helped to spell out the dynamics behind the lack of public trust in the new or old authorities providing security and public goods, linking them to instability and further violence (Bakke et al., 2018; Blair 2016; Blattman 2009; Cassar et al. 2013; De Juan & Pierskalla 2016). However, another strand of research focusing on the implications of war on the prospects for democratization has also highlighted that war-related experiences do not have to inhibit and can even foster democratization (Bermeo 2003, 2007; Jarstad & Sisk 2008; Roeder & Rothchild 2005; Zürcher et al. 2013).

From the as yet inconclusive literature on the effects of war, our analysis engages with the three dominant and interrelated hypotheses discussed above: the polarization of identities during war, the mobilization for war, and the erosion of public trust or a sense of a shared polity. Our analysis departs from the bulk of the literature that is concerned with the aftermath of war, and instead explores the dynamics of state-building *during* war.

Identity and Cleavages in Ukraine

Identities are multi-layered and changeable categories (Brubaker 2009; Fearon & Laitin 2000; Hale 2004), though the moment and nature of identity shifts is difficult to pinpoint empirically. Political crises have the potential to disrupt and reassemble identities and provide scholars with a window to study these processes (Onuch, Hale & Sasse 2018).

As a result of its history, the Ukrainian state in its post-1991 boundaries is characterized by regional, ethnic, linguistic, socio-economic and political diversity. Scholars have analysed and argued over the electoral and general political salience of individual cleavages, in particular the role of language, ethnicity and region (e.g. Arel 1995, 2014; Barrington 2002; Barrington & Faranda 2009; Birch 2000; Bremmer 1994; D'Anieri 2007; Frye 2015; Holdar 1995; Lushnycky & Riabchuk 2009; Kubicek 2000; Kulyk

2011; Osipian & Osipian 2012; Pirie 1996; Shevel 2002, 2009; Zimmermann 1998). The conditions under which particular cleavages gain in importance remain underexplored, although scholars have warned against seeing Ukrainian politics solely through the prism of ethnicity and language (Kulyk 2014) or equating “region” with these cleavages (Sasse 2010, Shulman 2004).

Research on the dynamics of the Euromaidan protests has shown that language or ethnicity was not a significant factor shaping political attitudes and action (Onuch & Sasse 2016). In a similar vein, it has been argued that the political developments since 2013 have strengthened the sense of political unity and state identity in Ukraine, including a higher regard for the Ukrainian language as the symbolic marker of this state identity (Alexseev 2015; Kulyk 2016, 2018).

In our analysis, we probe the relative importance of different cleavages in times of war and test the polarization hypothesis drawn from the literature on war vs. the recent suggestion that a civic state identity and identification with the Ukrainian language have become more important as a result of the political developments since 2013.

Data and Methodology

The survey data at the heart of this article was collected by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS). KIIS regularly conducts a cross-sectional all-Ukrainian public opinion poll ‘Opinions and Views of Ukrainian People’. For the KIIS surveys in May–June 2017 and May–June 2018, the Centre for Eastern European and International Studies (ZOiS) commissioned a set of specific questions asking about people’s identity, native language, views related to the war in Donbas, and personal ties to Russia and the EU. KIIS applies a stratified random sample design, and interviews were held with respondents from 110 settlements in Ukraine (2017: 2,040 respondents; 2018: 2,025 respondents). The data was weighted for gender, six age groups, four macro regions and urban/rural to adjust for socio-demographic differences between the samples and the overall population.

Dependent Variables. This article is concerned with potential changes in public opinion in Ukraine between 2017 and 2018. Our analysis focuses on the following issues: ethnic, civic and linguistic identity, and attitudes towards the war in Donbas and the Minsk Agreement. Corresponding question items on these issues were operationalized as the dependent variables in our regression analysis.

Respondents were asked to choose the identity most important to them from a list of ten different options, such as ‘Ukrainian citizen’, ‘ethnic Ukrainian’¹, ‘ethnic Russian’, ‘European’ etc. From this list, ‘Ukrainian citizen’ and ‘ethnic Ukrainian’ emerged as the

¹ We deliberately chose the category ‘ethnic Ukrainian’ to juxtapose an ethnic identity with a civic identity linked to Ukrainian citizenship. Although the reference to ethnicity is a more recent addition to the Ukrainian- and Russian-language discourse about identities and may not be the wording chosen by respondents in open-ended questions, we wanted to introduce a clear distinction rather than risking conceptual confusion when using the widespread term ‘nationality’ (natsional’nist’). In the Soviet era, the term ‘nationality’ had a stronger ethnic connotation but it seems to have moved towards a more civic understanding over time (Kulyk 2016, 2018).

most frequent choices. Each of these two answers was recoded as a dummy variable. With regard to the symbolic category 'native language', respondents could choose between 'Ukrainian', 'Russian', 'both' or 'other'. As before, dummy variables were generated for each answer category.

Another question inserted by ZOiS into the KIIS survey tried to gauge the respondents' views about the status for the non-government-controlled areas and the Donbas region as a whole. Respondents were presented various statements on what should be done, and they had to choose the one with which they agreed most. The categories included options ranging from 'give the occupied territories the same status as before the war' to 'give up on the occupied territories and let them be officially or unofficially administered by Russia'.² Four statements were used in the regression analysis: "Give the occupied territories the same status as before"; "Give the occupied territories a temporary autonomy status within Ukraine"; "Give the occupied territories a permanent autonomy status within Ukraine"; and "Give up on the occupied territories and let them be officially or unofficially administered by Russia". The statements were recoded as dummy variables, with a 1 for everyone agreeing with a given statement, and a 0 for everyone who had chosen a different statement.

In order to measure attitudes towards the Minsk Agreement, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the following statements:

1. 'The Minsk process is slow, but there is no alternative to this attempt at conflict-resolution.'
2. 'Without the Minsk process there would not have been any ceasefire and the death toll would have been higher.'
3. 'Ukraine should stop participating in the Minsk negotiations as the framework demands more of Ukraine than of Russia.'
4. 'A new international format is needed that includes the US.'

The reactions to the Minsk-related questions drew on a five-level Likert-scale ranging from 'agree' to 'disagree', including a neutral middle category. This neutral category was recoded to missing, as it was considered to be conceptually close to the answer 'don't know'. Then, the categories 'agree' and 'somewhat agree' were coded as 1, and the categories 'disagree' and 'somewhat disagree' as 0.

Independent Variables. The main interest in our analysis are the potential changes in public opinion between our data points in 2017 and 2018. Given that we are dealing with cross-sectional rather than panel data, this change was measured by comparing the

² Question: "In your view, what should the government do in response to the situation in the Donbas?" Answer categories: 1 "Give the occupied territories the same status as other region"; 2 "Give the occupied territories extended rights in comparison with other regions of Ukraine"; 3 "Give the whole of Donbas, including the occupied territories, extended rights in comparison with other regions of Ukraine"; 4 "Give the occupied territories a temporary autonomy status within Ukraine"; 5 "Give the occupied territories a permanent autonomy status within Ukraine"; 6 "Give the whole of Donbas, including the occupied territories, an autonomy status"; 7 "Give all oblasts of Ukraine an autonomy status"; 8 "Give up on the occupied territories and let them be officially or unofficially be administered by Russia".

2017 and 2018 samples with each other. Thus, the datasets from 2017 and 2018 were merged into one, and a dummy variable was generated which has the value 0 for all respondents in the 2017 sample, and the value 1 for all respondents in the 2018 sample.

Furthermore, several standard sociodemographic controls were introduced. Gender as well as whether the respondent lived in an urban or rural area were measured with the help of dummies (female=0, male=1; 0=rural, 1=urban). A 9-level income variable based on monthly estimates from 'less than 1001 UAH' to 'more than 10000 UAH' was introduced as a continuous variable, as was age (measured in years, starting from age 18).

A simplified variable indicating the educational level of the respondent was introduced, reducing an eight-level scale to a dummy variable: the levels 'vocational secondary (technical school etc.)', 'incomplete higher education (3 years and more)' and 'complete higher education' were combined to make up the value 1, while all lower educational levels were coded as 0.

The respondents' religious denomination was controlled for in three ways. First, all orthodox respondents were compared with all others with the help of a dummy variable (all others=0; orthodox=1). Second, a dummy variable was introduced in order to compare Greek Catholics with all others (all other=0; Greek Catholics=1). Third, a factor variable was introduced to compare the effects for followers of the Kyiv and the Moscow Patriarchate³. This variable is a three-level variable with the followers of the Kyiv Patriarchate being the reference category (2=Moscow Patriarchate; 3=all others). Lastly, a factor variable was introduced controlling for the macro region of the respondents; people from southern, central and eastern Ukraine were compared to the reference group 'western Ukraine'.

Analytical Strategy. Our analysis is based on cross-sectional data. Thus, it captures opinions from different sets of people at two points in time rather than from the same panel over time. We first present the descriptive statistics for the variables of interest. As the observed differences between the 2017 and 2018 samples may stem from the specific socio-demographic composition of the respective sample (e.g. gender, age, education), this article includes the results of regression models that control for the main socio-demographic effects and investigates the links between the two samples as well as factors accounting for the reported trends.

As all dependent variables are dummy-coded, logistic regression models were applied. Independent variables were introduced step by step in three models to investigate possible overlaying effects. The regression results are reported as odds ratios.

Descriptive Statistics

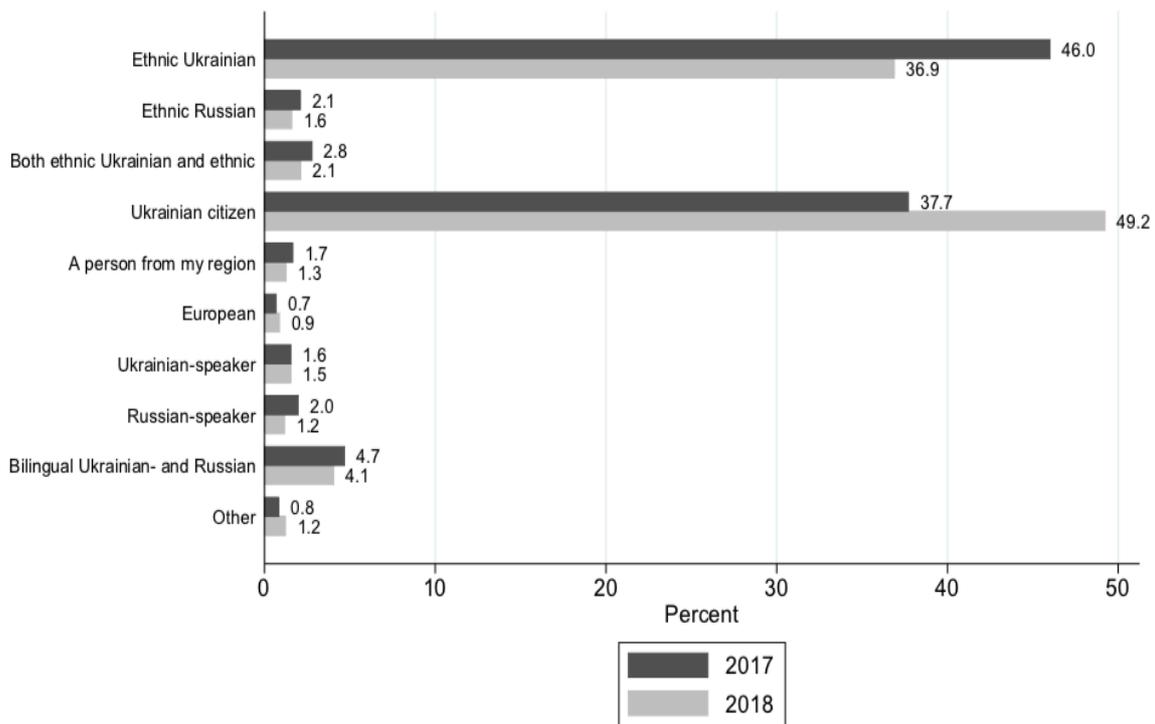
Figure 1 highlights the two most prevalent answers to the survey question about the respondents' primary self-identification: 'ethnic Ukrainian' and 'Ukrainian citizen'. The trends over time point in opposite directions: the ethnic identity appears to have become

³ The research was conducted before the establishment of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in 2019 and therefore asked for the old denominations.

less important, while the civic identity tied to the Ukrainian state becomes stronger. In 2017, 46 per cent of the respondents self-identified as ‘ethnic Ukrainians’; and about 37 per cent of the 2018 sample chose this answer category. Conversely, ‘Ukrainian citizenship’ was chosen by about 38 per cent of respondents in the 2017 sample and by 49 per cent in the 2018 sample.

Figure 1

What personal identity is currently most important to you?

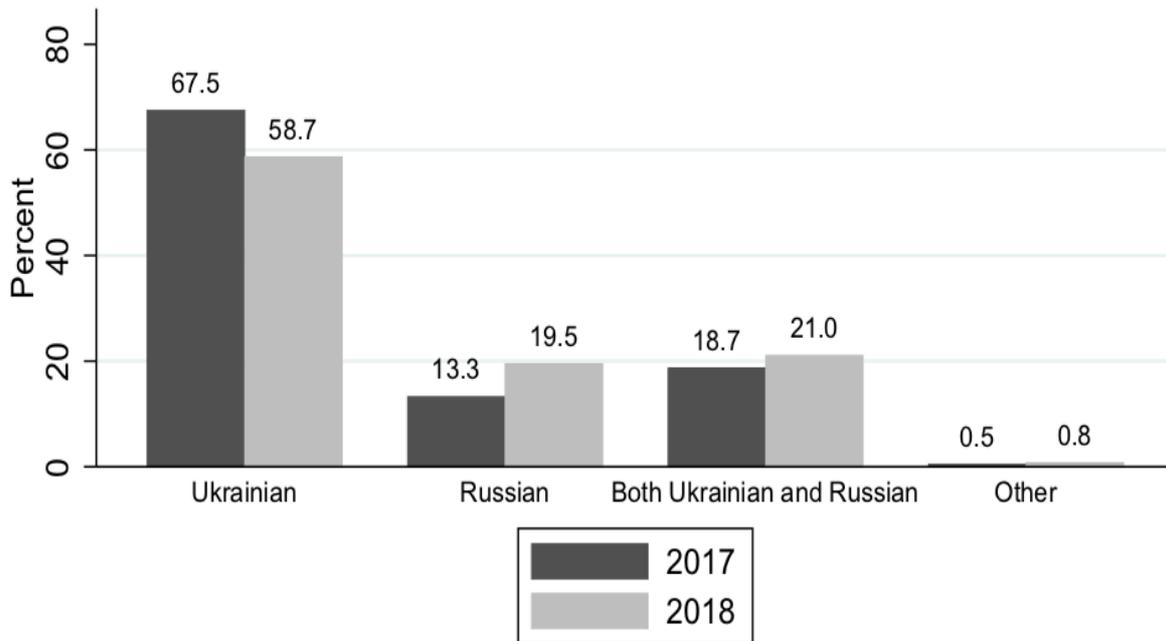


2017: n=1963 ; 2018: n=1927

Language identities can be different from both citizenship and ethnic identities. The ZOiS survey question asked about the more symbolic category ‘native language’ rather than language practice. It allowed for the choice between ‘Ukrainian’, ‘Russian’, ‘both Ukrainian and Russian’ and ‘other’. Figure 2 displays the results for 2017 and 2018. The majority of the respondents (about 68 per cent in 2017 and 59 per cent in 2018) said that they considered Ukrainian to be their native language. The choices ‘Russian’ and ‘both Ukrainian and Russian’ were less prevalent but increased from 13 to 20 per cent and from 19 to 21 per cent respectively between samples.

Figure 2

What language do you consider to be the native one for you currently?

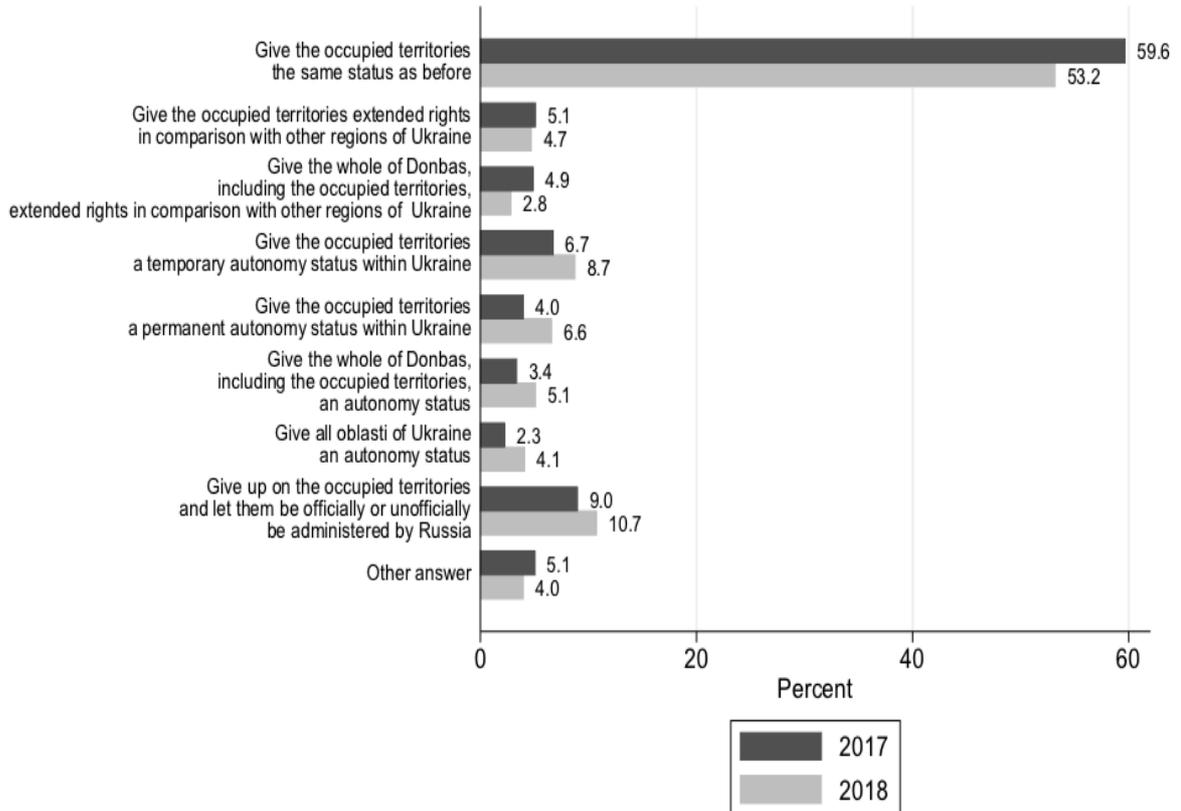


2017: n=2033 ; 2018: n=2013

With respect to the status of the non-government-controlled territories in the Donbas, the ZOiS question in the KIIS survey asked respondents to choose one of nine institutional templates. Figure 3 displays the descriptives for those templates and demonstrates that the majority of respondents in 2017 and 2018 said that they would like the non-government-controlled areas to have the same status as before the war, i.e. as parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts without any special status (2017: 60 per cent; 2018: 53 per cent). All the other answer categories were met with similarly low approval rates in both years, with less than 10 per cent of respondents choosing any one category.

Figure 3

In your view, what should the government do in response to the situation in the Donbas?

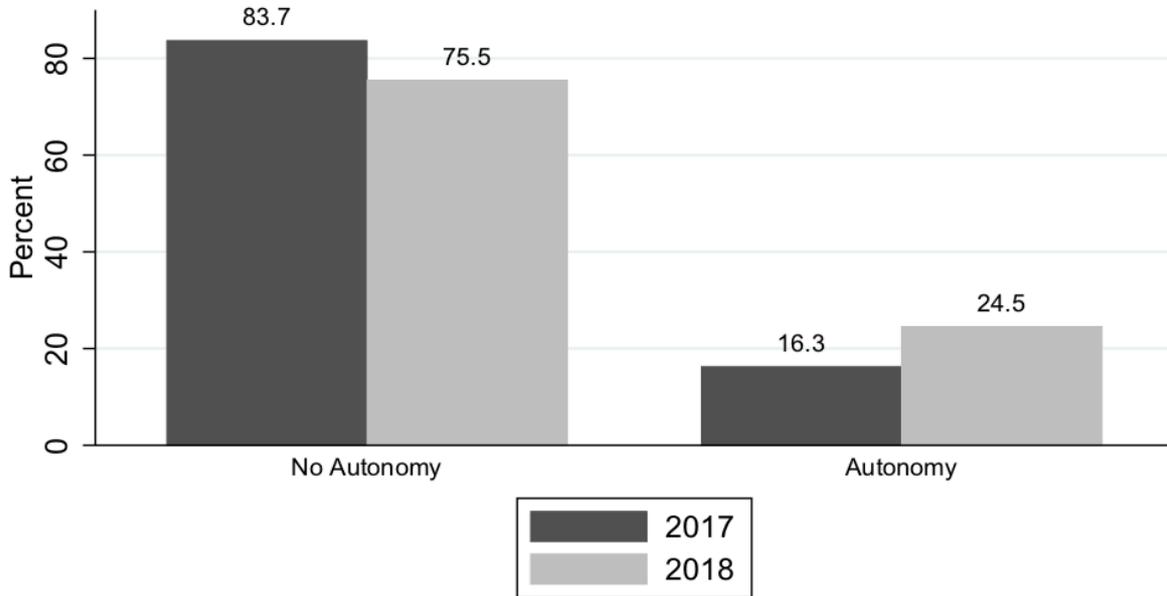


2017: n=1524 ; 2018: n=1487

In a second step, we wanted to know the relation between people who preferred an autonomy status (of whatever kind) for the Donbas region or parts thereof, versus those who rejected any kind of autonomy. Figure 4 shows that in 2017, altogether 16 per cent of the respondents supported some sort of an autonomy status; in 2018 support stood at about 25 per cent.

Figure 4

Support for any kind of autonomy

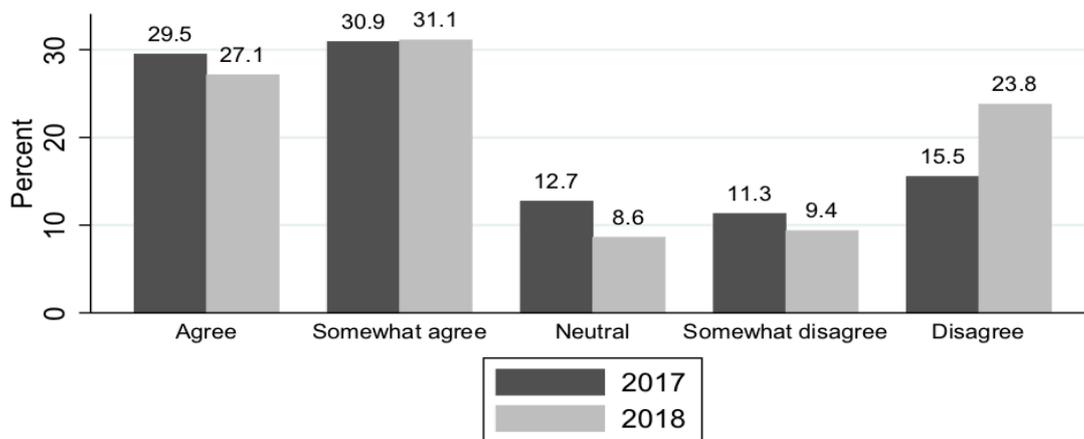


2017: n=1524 ; 2018: n=1487

The ZOIS survey questions related to the Minsk Agreement tried to establish the public mood regarding the negotiation process as well as potential add-ons like a more formalized US involvement. Figures 5 to 8 show the descriptive results for each of the questions.

Figure 5

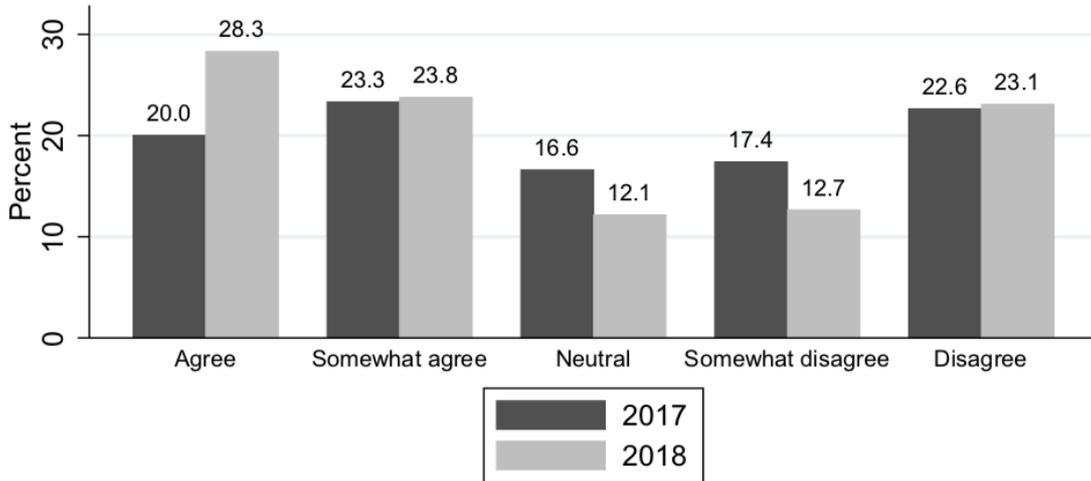
Without the Minsk Process there would not have been any ceasefire and the death toll would have been higher



2017: n=1502 ; 2018: n=1543

Figure 6

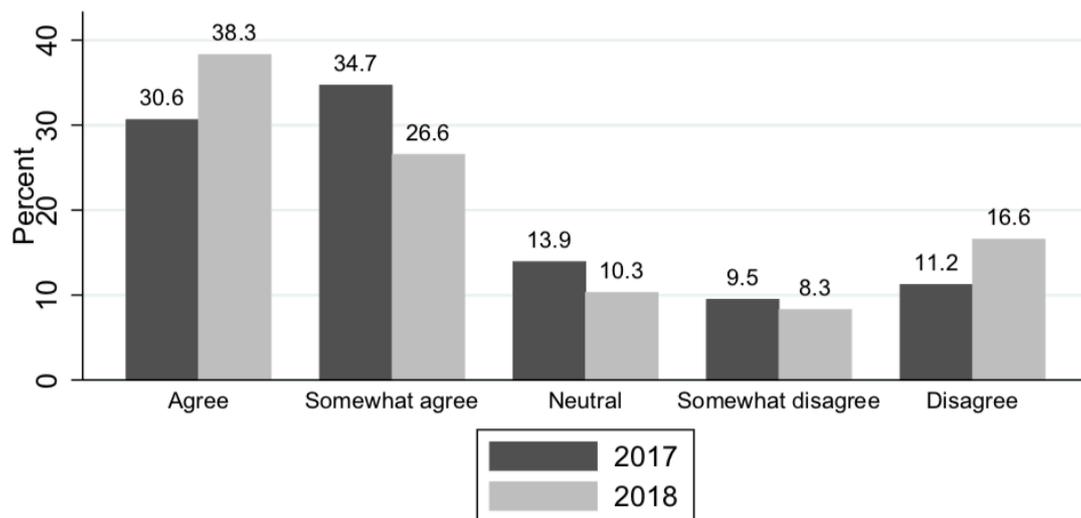
Ukraine should stop participating in the Minsk negotiations as the framework demands more of Ukraine than of Russia



2017: n=1374 ; 2018: n=1311

Figure 7

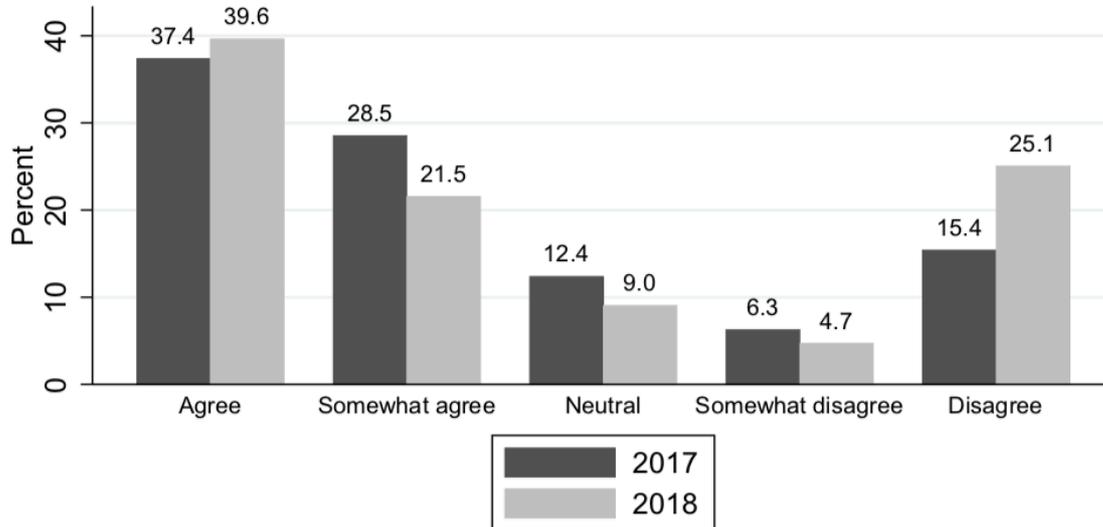
The Minsk process is slow but there is no alternative to this attempt at conflict-resolution



2017: n=1472 ; 2018: n=1438

Figure 8

A new international format for negotiation is needed that includes the US



2017: n=1416 ; 2018: n=1465

Figures 5 to 8 show that the propensity to remain neutral on all Minsk-related questions was lower in 2018, and there was a tendency for the respondents in 2018 to choose the end points of the scale (‘agree’ or ‘disagree’) instead of the softer categories ‘somewhat agree’ or ‘somewhat disagree’. The descriptive results for all four statements confirm that the Ukrainian population is divided in its views on the Minsk Agreement and potential add-ons. This is most apparent in the case of the third question (‘Ukraine should stop participating in the Minsk negotiations as the framework demands more of Ukraine than of Russia’), where answers are almost equally spread across the five different answer categories. About 60 per cent in both years agree or somewhat agree with the statement ‘Without the Minsk Process there would not have been any ceasefire and the death toll would have been higher’. The discrepancy suggests that the formulation of the questions affects the self-positioning vis-à-vis the Minsk process. Disappointment with the underperformance of the format is apparent, as is an overall consensus that without the Minsk Agreement the situation would have been worse.

Findings

Our analysis requires us to test the statistical significance of the observed descriptive differences between the years 2017 and 2018, including various sociodemographic control variables. Table 1 displays the significant results for the logistic regression models on the primary self-reported identity and native language, reported in odds

ratios.⁴ The descriptive results had indicated both a decrease in the importance of a Ukrainian ethnic identity, and an increase in the importance of a Ukrainian civic identity. Our regression analysis confirms this result: there is a significantly lower chance that respondents would choose ‘ethnic Ukrainian’ in 2018 as their primary identity compared to 2017 (reduced by 40 per cent), and a significantly higher chance for respondents to self-identify as ‘Ukrainian citizens’ (increased by close to 80 per cent), irrespective of the somewhat different socio-demographic profile of the two samples.

Table 1. Identity and Language

	Ukrainian citizen	Ethnic Ukrainian	Ukrainian language	Russian language	Both languages
2018 Wave	1.765**	0.594**	0.491***	1.898***	
	(0.360)	(0.106)	(0.0643)	(0.324)	
Male	0.781*	1.343***	1.252*		
	(0.0724)	(0.112)	(0.120)		
Income	1.111*			1.165**	
	(0.0446)			(0.0605)	
Age					0.987**
					(0.00395)
Urban			0.417**		2.294**
			(0.124)		(0.674)
Higher education			0.673**		1.457**
			(0.0911)		(0.202)
Orthodox					
Greek Catholic			15.68***	0.0357***	0.153***
			(6.273)	(0.0219)	(0.0694)
Moscow Patriarchate (vs Kyiv)			0.482***	3.190***	
			(0.0942)	(0.709)	

⁴ Recall that our data had to be weighted (using SVY logistic regression in Stata). This is why no pseudo R-squared figures are reported here: pseudo R² is computed using log likelihoods, and log likelihoods assume that cases are all independent of each other, which is not the case in clustered data.

Other Religion (vs Kyiv)				2.662*	
				(1.122)	
Central (vs West)	2.001*		0.250**	3.084*	5.175***
	(0.548)		(0.0999)	(1.602)	(1.788)
South (vs West)			0.0693***	8.592***	10.48***
			(0.0192)	(3.581)	(3.452)
East (vs West)			0.0275***	15.07***	13.49***
			(0.0145)	(7.934)	(4.442)
Observations	2743	2743	2838	2838	2838

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses

NOTE: Logistic Regression, dependent variable is dummy-coded

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

In both samples, socio-demographic factors had an effect on the self-reported primary identities. Among the control variables, gender, income and region had significant effects on identity choice across both years. Overall, men were 22 per cent less likely to choose 'Ukrainian citizen' as their main identity. Being part of a higher income group translated into a higher chance (by about 10 per cent) to self-identify as a 'Ukrainian citizen'. Furthermore, people in Central Ukraine were twice as likely to choose Ukrainian citizenship as their main identity, compared to people in Western Ukraine. As for the category 'ethnic Ukrainian', the only socio-demographic variable with a significant impact across both samples was gender: men were over 30 per cent more likely than women to say that they primarily think of themselves as 'ethnic Ukrainians'.

With respect to language, the Ukrainian language is by far the most important 'native language' in both years. However, the descriptive results had suggested that the identification with the Russian language had grown, while identification with the Ukrainian language had weakened somewhat from 2017 to 2018. This trend holds when controlling for socio-demographic differences between the two samples. The chances to say that Russian is one's 'native language' increased by 90 per cent from 2017 to 2018, while the chances for Ukrainian to be described as the 'native language' decreased by about 50 per cent. Chances for choosing both languages (i.e. a bilingual notion of 'native language') did not change significantly from one year to the next, although this mixed category remains an important counterweight to the choice between the two languages.

Several socio-demographic factors shaped the native language choices across both years. Men were 25 per cent more likely to say that Ukrainian is their native language than women; the chances for the urban population were almost 60 per cent lower, and

for people with higher education the odds were about 30 per cent lower. Living in Western Ukraine significantly increased the likelihood of identifying with the Ukrainian language compared to people living in Central, Southern or Eastern Ukraine. For people describing themselves as Ukrainian Greek Catholics (concentrated in Western Ukraine), the odds were more than fifteen times as high than for people of other confessions. Among followers of the Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate the odds to consider Ukrainian one's native language were about 50 per cent lower compared to people following the Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate.

A higher income level increased the chances of describing 'Russian' as one's native language, (by about 17 per cent across both samples). People living in Central, Southern or Eastern Ukraine were significantly more likely to identify with Russian as their native language than respondents in the western regions (for example, residents in Eastern Ukraine had a fifteen times higher chance compared to those in Western Ukraine). In comparison to followers of the Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate, followers of the Moscow patriarchate were more than three times as likely to indicate that Russian was their native language.

While no significant difference could be found for the bilingual category across the two years, several socio-demographic factors had an effect in both samples. A higher age slightly reduced the chances (by 1 per cent) to say that both languages are one's native language. Conversely, living in an urban area more than doubled these chances, and being a follower of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church increased the chances of reporting native bilingualism by 46 per cent. Respondents from Central, Southern and Eastern Ukraine were five, ten and thirteen times more likely than respondents in Western Ukraine to say that both Ukrainian and Russian were their native languages.

We also examined people's change in opinion with respect to the status question in the Donbas. Four statements concerning the Donbas were singled out and tested in our regression analysis: "Give the occupied territories the same status as before"; "Give the occupied territories a temporary autonomy status within Ukraine"; "Give the occupied territories a permanent autonomy status within Ukraine"; and "Give up on the occupied territories and let them be officially or unofficially be administered by Russia". Furthermore, a variable had been generated testing any kind of autonomy preference versus the rejection of any kind of autonomy.

Table 2. Status of DNR/LNR

	Same status as before	Temporary autonomy status	Permanent autonomy status	Give up the occupied territories	Any kind of autonomy status
2018 Wave	0.681*		1.820**		1.966**
	(0.122)		(0.388)		(0.444)
Male					

Income					
Age				0.987 [*]	
				(0.00618)	
Urban					
Higher education					
Orthodox					
Greek Catholic	1.931 ^{**}		0.0990 [*]		0.404 [*]
	(0.404)		(0.102)		(0.138)
Moscow Patriarchate (vs Kyiv)	0.603 [*]				1.680 [*]
	(0.140)				(0.334)
Other Religion (vs Kyiv)					
Central (vs West)			0.398 [*]		
			(0.163)		
South (vs West)				0.332 ^{***}	2.004 [*]
				(0.103)	(0.547)
East (vs West)			3.406 [*]		2.712 ^{**}
			(1.632)		(0.903)
Observations	2200	2200	2200	2200	2200

The descriptive results suggested that in 2018 fewer people thought that the non-government-controlled areas should have the same status as before the war. Our regression analysis (Table 2) confirms a statistically significant decrease by about 30 per cent from 2017 to 2018 in the support for a return to the status quo ante. Across both samples, the chances to opt for the 'same status as before' was about 90 per cent higher among Ukrainian Greek Catholics than for respondents of other religions denominations, and followers of the Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate were 40 per cent less

likely to opt for this option compared to followers of the Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate.

According to the descriptive results in Figure 3, in 2017 only 4 per cent of the respondents thought that the non-government-controlled areas should receive a permanent autonomy status, a figure that increased to about 7 per cent by 2018. Even though the overall percentages are low, the statistical analysis shows that significantly more people chose this option: the odds for choosing this answer in 2018 were increased by about 80 per cent. Region once again had a clear effect: respondents based in Eastern Ukraine were over three times as likely (compared to people in Western Ukraine) to agree with a permanent autonomy option, while respondents in Central Ukraine were 60 per cent less likely to favour this option, making them more critical of autonomy than the respondents based in Western Ukraine.

No statistically significant difference could be found between 2017 and 2018 with regard to the preferences for a temporary autonomy status or giving up on the non-government-controlled territories. Yet, across both samples older respondents had a slightly reduced chance (by 1 per cent for each year of age) to opt for giving up on the non-government-controlled territories, and people in the South were about 70 per cent less likely than people in the West to choose this option.

Figure 4 had shown that in 2017, altogether 16 per cent of the respondents supported some sort of an autonomy status, while in 2018 support stood at about 25 per cent. The regression analysis confirms a significant increase by 2018: the odds of agreeing with the principle of autonomy, however defined, increased by over 90 per cent. The chances of respondents from the southern and eastern regions to agree with one of the suggested types of autonomy were twice and almost three times as high compared to the western regions. Moreover, across both years, Greek Catholics were particularly sceptical of autonomy (60 per cent less likely to be in favour compared to all other religions), and followers of the Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate were about 70 per cent more likely than followers of the Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate to support the idea.

The descriptive results had suggested rather diverse views of Ukraine’s population on each question item related to the Minsk Agreement.⁵

Table 3. Minsk Agreement

	The Minsk process is slow, but there is no alternative to this attempt at conflict-resolution	Without the Minsk process there would not have been any ceasefire and the death toll	Ukraine should stop participating in the Minsk negotiations as the framework demands more of	A new international format is needed that includes the US
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⁵ For the regression analysis the categories ‘agree’ and ‘somewhat agree’ were collapsed, as well as the categories ‘disagree’ and ‘somewhat disagree’. The neutral middle category was coded to a missing. Thus, a comparison takes place here between ‘agreeing/somewhat agreeing’ and ‘disagreeing/somewhat disagreeing’.

		would have been higher	Ukraine than of Russia	
2018 Wave				0.560*
				(0.145)
Male	0.677**			
	(0.0875)			
Income				
Age				
Urban				
Higher Education			0.716*	
			(0.112)	
Orthodox				5.085**
				(2.746)
Greek Catholic			2.358**	2.244*
			(0.697)	(0.827)
Moscow Patriarchate (vs Kyiv)				0.485**
				(0.114)
Other Religion (vs Kyiv)				
Central (vs West)				
South (vs West)	2.421***			0.329***
	(0.561)			(0.0778)
East (vs West)	2.317***		0.299***	0.170***
	(0.487)		(0.0938)	(0.0841)
Observations	1900	1980	1705	1881

Exponentiated coefficients; Standard errors in parentheses

NOTE: Logistic Regression, dependent variable is dummy-coded

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

The regression analysis (Table 3) reveals that in only one case there was a significant change from 2017 to 2018: in 2018, significantly fewer people agreed with the statement that Ukraine should stop participating in the Minsk negotiations (chances to agree were reduced by over 40 per cent compared to 2017). Several socio-demographic factors had a significant effect on both samples. People living in the southern or eastern regions were significantly less likely (by close to 70 and over 80 per cent respectively) than those in Western Ukraine to agree with the statement. Furthermore, Greek Catholics were more than twice as likely to agree than those identifying with other religious denominations. Followers of the Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate were half as likely to agree with the statement than followers of the Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate.

In both years, respondents in southern and eastern Ukraine were more than twice as likely to agree with the statement 'The Minsk process is slow but there is no alternative to this attempt at conflict-resolution', compared to people in western Ukraine. Men were significantly less likely to agree. There was no sociodemographic factor that had a significant effect on agreeing or disagreeing with the statement 'Without the Minsk Process there would not have been any ceasefire and the death toll would have been higher'.

Despite persisting regional and identity-based differences, the overall realization that there is no alternative to the Minsk Process has become more prevalent over time.

Conclusion

This article has traced recent trends and changes in public opinion across Ukraine on selected identity and war-related issues. We have shown that in only one year, attitudes in Ukraine have shifted quite significantly. While most respondents consider either 'Ukrainian citizen' or 'ethnic Ukrainian' their main identity, the notion of Ukrainian citizenship as the most prominent identity has increased in importance from 2017 to 2018 and overtook self-identification as an 'ethnic Ukrainian'. The time period 2017–2018 thus emerges as a critical period during which a broader identity shift from a more ethnic to a more inclusive civic Ukrainian identity occurred. Further research is needed, but our survey seems to have captured a rare moment of identity change. Thus, the research points to an important effect of war on state-building. It highlights the need to study state-building *during* war rather than only in the aftermath of war. Moreover, the finding that a civic self-identification with the Ukrainian state has intensified amidst war goes against the hypothesized ethnification, polarization, and mobilization for war—themes that dominate the scholarship in this field.

With regard to language identities, the surveys have confirmed that Ukrainian is the language most Ukrainians consider to be their native one. Yet, the propensity to say

that Ukrainian is one's native language has decreased somewhat from 2017 to 2018 regardless of age, educational background, religion, and other sociodemographic factors. Instead, by 2018 Ukrainians have developed a somewhat higher propensity to single out Russian as their native language. The direction of this change within the space of only one year is noteworthy. It seems that there was a perceived need on the part of the population to highlight the presence of the Russian language in Ukraine. This could be interpreted as a response to the official discourse and legislation at the time that aimed to strengthen the role of the Ukrainian language in schools and in public life. The bilingual native language category, which was clearly an important reference for a sizeable number of respondents in both years, further underlines this point, though this language identity did not undergo a significant change across the two years.

As for the highly contentious issue of autonomy, a majority of Ukrainians thinks that the non-government-controlled territories should have the same status as before the war, i.e. belong to Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts without any special status. While a clear majority of Ukrainians is still opposed to an autonomy status for the non-government-controlled areas, we have also shown that the level of support for autonomy as a principle has increased from 2017 to 2018.

Over the two years, Ukrainians continue to display a diversity of views on the Minsk Agreement and potential revisions of the negotiation format. Only one of the more categorical statements in the survey showed a statistically significant change: by 2018 fewer people thought that Ukraine should stop participating in the Minsk negotiations.

In sum, our analysis of public opinion over the course of one critical year in Ukrainian politics demonstrates that views and identities can change within a remarkably short period of time, in particular in a context of war. It is important to pay close attention to these trends, as they contain clues as to how closely the public at large is aligned with state policy and official rhetoric, about the role of inclusive or mixed identities in view of more exclusive state policies, and about the space for difficult institutional choices. As the survey results have shown, public opinion has been more nuanced than the official state rhetoric or policy on 'Ukrainianness' towards the end of the Poroshenko presidency.

The result of the Ukrainian presidential elections in the spring of 2019, which saw the inexperienced comedian Zelenskyy win a landslide against the incumbent Poroshenko, confirms the analysis presented in this article. Zelenskyy is a Russian-speaker from the south-east of the country who galvanized opposition to Poroshenko and projected a message of unity for all Ukrainians regardless of their ethnolinguistic or regional socialization. While the south-east was his strongest support base, he was popular across the country. Zelenskyy's emphasis on the diversity of identities in Ukraine was either openly endorsed by the electorate or at least not seen as objectionable. Whether a protest vote or an expression of hope, his message of unity channeled the population's unease about unnecessarily stark internal divisions that had been opened up by the outgoing Ukrainian leadership as part of its political strategy of state-making through war. The ballot box proved to be the corrective to this trend, at least for the time being. In a situation of war, identities can be expected to remain volatile and responsive to changes in policy or rhetoric. Thus, Ukraine continues to be an important case to track

the interaction between state-building from above and from below and the identity shifts this interaction can entail.

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