

POLÁNYI PUBLICATIONS

LARYSA TAMILINA

THE POLITICAL FOUNDATION OF NATIONS –
THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL FACTORS ON THE
FORMATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN
UKRAINE AND RUSSIA

I.2023/WP01

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the impact of different political situations on the disparate formation of national identity in Ukraine and Russia. Drawing upon the theory of ingroup identification, the analysis distinguishes 12 political factors. The four-mode model of identity proposed by Roccas et al. (2008) is applied to classify these factors into importance-, commitment-, superiority-, and deference-driven variable groups. World Values data are used to analyze how each of the factors predicts the likelihood of one's identification with the nation. The results show that the importance- and commitment-driven political determinants primarily influence the national identity in Ukraine. In contrast, the Russian national identity is largely shaped by superiority- and deference-driven political variables. Based on these findings, the study concludes that the two countries differ in their identity profiles and the meanings assigned by the members of their nations to identification.

Keywords: National identity, political factors, Ukraine-Russia disparities, identity model, ingroup identification

The Political Foundation of Nations – The Impact of Political Factors on the Formation of National Identity in Ukraine and Russia

Larysa Tampilina

Identity is associated with various political and socio-economic outcomes, ranging from nation-building to government effectiveness (Ahlerup & Hansson 2011; Qari, Konrad & Geys 2012). Despite this critical role, the possible factors behind identity formation are not yet precisely understood. Research provides evidence suggesting that identification is a result of both personal disposition, which is relatively stable and personality-based (Realo, Allik & Vadi 1997; Triandis & Gelfand 1998), and context-driven forces (Jones & Smith 2001; Kunovich 2009; Turner 1999). While dispositional predictors have been effectively accounted for, contextual factors remain insufficiently addressed by scholars in the field. Particularly under-researched is the influence that the political situation can have on identity, especially in unstable political settings.

This study aims to eliminate this drawback by considering national identity as the main subject of analysis and by limiting the geographical focus of research to Ukraine and Russia. These countries represent good cases for examining how identity is formed and modified given their shared past and dissimilar experiences with the transition to democracy (Sasse and Lackner 2018). Their ongoing conflict since 2014 can additionally contribute to illustrating how ideological aspects can significantly redefine identification, diversifying the nation-building processes in the region.

The analysis primarily focuses on examining the impact of the countries' political situation on identification with the nation. More specifically, it aims to clarify whether political forces affect national identity and whether their impact in Ukraine resembles that in Russia. The study considers political factors as a source of identification rather than as a component of, or identification, per se. Since this approach has received much less attention from scholars in the field, focusing on the political dimension can provide a valuable contribution to clarifying how the context influences one's identity.

Theories of Identity: A Literature Overview

For the purpose of this study, I focus on national identity defined as the subjective feeling one shares with a group of people about a nation, regardless of one's legal citizenship status (Guibernau 2004). Alternatively, national identity can be understood as a sense of belonging to one or more states or to one or more nations (Ashmor et al. 2004). Since national identity can be broadly reinterpreted as identification with a single group (the nation), the research on ingroup identity is used as the main conceptual framework of analysis. Identification with groups studies the links among individuals that are symbolic rather than based on frequent face-to-face interactions and, hence, effectively captures the type of relations that the formation of national identity involves.

The literature primarily focuses on analyzing the internal structure of identity while explaining identification with groups. Social identity theory and self-categorization theory have laid the foundation for the theoretical debates and subsequent model expansions in this field of research. Social identity theory provided the initial framework of analysis (Rubin, Milanov & Paolini 2014) by distinguishing between three components of social identification, such as cognitive, evaluative, and affective (Hale 2004; Tajfel 1978). The cognitive component was defined as the knowledge and awareness of group membership. The evaluative component highlighted the positive or negative value of the group membership derived from social comparisons between one's group and relevant outgroups. The affective component equalized the emotional significance or psychological centrality of the group membership.

In contrast to the social identity approach, self-categorization theory shifted the focus from viewing the individual as different from others to emphasizing similarities with ingroups (Leach et al. 2008). Accordingly, identification was re-conceptualized through the shift away from the perception of self as a unique person, different from others in many respects, towards the image of self as an interchangeable exemplar of some social category. This new interpretation described the group as sharing commonalities and defined the self as similar to an ingroup prototype.

In addition to the two above explanations, scholars offered a number of theories that intentionally narrowed their analysis to the identification with the nation. The majority of these studies focused on explaining the superiority of one nation over other nations in the choice of national identity while also attempting to define the foundations for commitment to the nation of choice. In line with these objectives, their analysis introduced patriotism and nationalism as distinct and broad components of national identity.

More specifically, Adorno, Frenkel, Levinson, and Sanford (1950) made the distinction between pseudo-patriotism and genuine patriotism. The authors defined pseudo-patriotism to be the blind attachment to certain national cultural values, requiring uncritical conformity with the prevailing group and rejection of exterior nations as outgroups. In contrast, genuine patriotism was described as love for the country. Similarly, Kosterman and Feshbach (1989) limited patriotism to an unconditional feeling of attachment to one's nation. Further refining the typology, the authors renamed the concept of "pseudo-patriotism" as "nationalism" and limited it to viewing one's nation as superior and dominant.

By focusing solely on patriotism, Staub (1997) proposed to distinguish between blind, constructive, and conventional patriotism. In line with Adorno et al. (1950), he associated blind patriotism with rigid and inflexible devotion to the country. In contrast, constructive patriotism included the opportunity for criticism and was defined as an attachment to a country in the form of critical loyalty. Conversely, conventional patriotism emphasized the emotional side of identity and was characterized as an affective attachment to one's nation. However, Duckitt, Wagner, du Plessis & Birum (2002) demonstrated that even the affective identification with a nation can require conformity from group members to group norms, unconditional obedience to group leaders, and intolerance for persons who do not follow these rules.

In an attempt to integrate the existing theories of identification, Roccas et al. (2008) introduced a four-dimensional model of identity. According to the authors, these numerous theories can be broadly combined into four groups, out of which they derived four modes of identification: importance, commitment, superiority, and deference. They argued that the four modes should not be seen as components but as sources of identity. In particular, the importance mode combined the main explanations of social identity and self-categorization approaches by emphasizing the perception of the group as an important part of the individual's self-definition and the sense of being similar to, and having shared goals with other members of the group. Linked to the constructivism of patriotism, the commitment mode referred to one's willingness and altruistic motivation to contribute to the welfare of the salient group. Similar to pseudo-patriotism or nationalism, the superiority mode was defined as the perception of the ingroup as worthier and better than the exterior groups. Finally, the deference mode picked up on the affective devotion to the nation in terms of the idealization of, and submission to the central symbols of the group (Figure 1 illustrates the connections among the overviewed theories). This multi-dimensional approach to identification was repeatedly recognized as a successful integration of the existing understandings of identity formation or change (Rubin, Milanov & Paolini 2014).

Despite a large number of conceptual approaches, analysis of identity formation in Ukraine remains insufficient. Two major deficiencies can be drawn from the existing research. The first refers to the narrow focus on the self-categorization theory in explaining the process of identification in Ukraine by limiting its primary sources to the regions and language (Kuzio 2001; Kulyk 2016). Considering the vast regional divide in Ukraine, national identification was initially linked to the pragmatic division between the east and the west of the country (Arel 2006). This regional gap was further supported by the unequal distribution of the Russian-speaking population across the country (Kulyk 2018). Ukraine was ultimately depicted as traditionally divided into two linguistic groups (Russians and Ukrainians), with national identity being directly linked to the primary language of communication (Chayinska, Kende & Wohl 2021). However, the recent conflict between Ukraine and Russia questioned the validity of these explanations (Pop-Eleches & Robertson 2018). Recent studies have shown that the conflict in the east of Ukraine strengthened the civic component in the identity of Ukrainians (Smirnova and Iliev 2017), consolidating the Ukrainian society across regions (Aliyev 2019). In light of these events, there was also an obvious detachment of the choice of the nation from language (Onuch & Hale 2022). Many Russian speakers reconsidered their sense of national identity as well as their stance toward the country's official language by recognizing Ukrainian as their native language, even without knowing it (Kulyk 2018). This evidence opened anew the debate about the sources that govern the process of identification in Ukraine, especially after the outbreak of the conflict.

The second deficiency refers to the fact that political forces were rarely accounted for by identity research. Instead, a wealth of studies focused on the impact of identity on political attitudes or choices among Ukrainians (Onuch and Hale 2018). Omitting the political dimension from the analysis of identification was a profound mistake if considering that political processes played an essential role in configuring Ukrainian society (Brudny & Finkel 2011). The post-communist transition and rise of new pro-democratic ideologies, visions, and attitudes were important factors shaping contemporary Ukraine (Musliu & Burlyuk 2019; Turchyn, Sukhorolskyi & Sukhorolska 2020). This suggests that political considerations may have a far-reaching influence on the identification process of Ukrainians. Whether one feels closer to Ukraine or Russia can be linked to the political ideologies, political values, and political interests that each state defines as intrinsic characteristics and inner attributes against which individuals compare their own beliefs.

This line of reasoning is increasingly applicable to the case of Ukraine and Russia if considering that the two countries are characterized by a wide gap in their political regimes. In

recent years, Ukraine showed a strong dedication to a more western-like democracy (McGlynn 2020; Reznik 2016), while Russia gradually returned to authoritarianism (Evans 2011). Given these disparities, I argue that the political dimension can intervene in the choice of the national identity in both countries. To explore this issue, I initially focus on clarifying what political factors may potentially intervene in the process of national identity formation. Next, I compare their roles in Ukraine and Russia to determine whether the two countries differ in their national identity profiles or in the extent to which these profiles are conditioned by their political situations.

Political Sources of Identity Formation

For the purposes of this research, I adopt the four-mode framework of identity proposed by Roccas et al. (2008). The choice is justified, on the one hand, by the success of this model in uniting the majority of dominant theories about sources and components of identification. On the other hand, the model's clear division of the multiple sources of identity can permit the definition of the possible links between the political dimension and in-group identification. In line with Dannreuther (2000), the political regime is used to approximate the political dimension. According to his study, a "democracy versus autocracy" comparison provides an insightful framework for juxtaposing the social and political developments in different regions of the world.

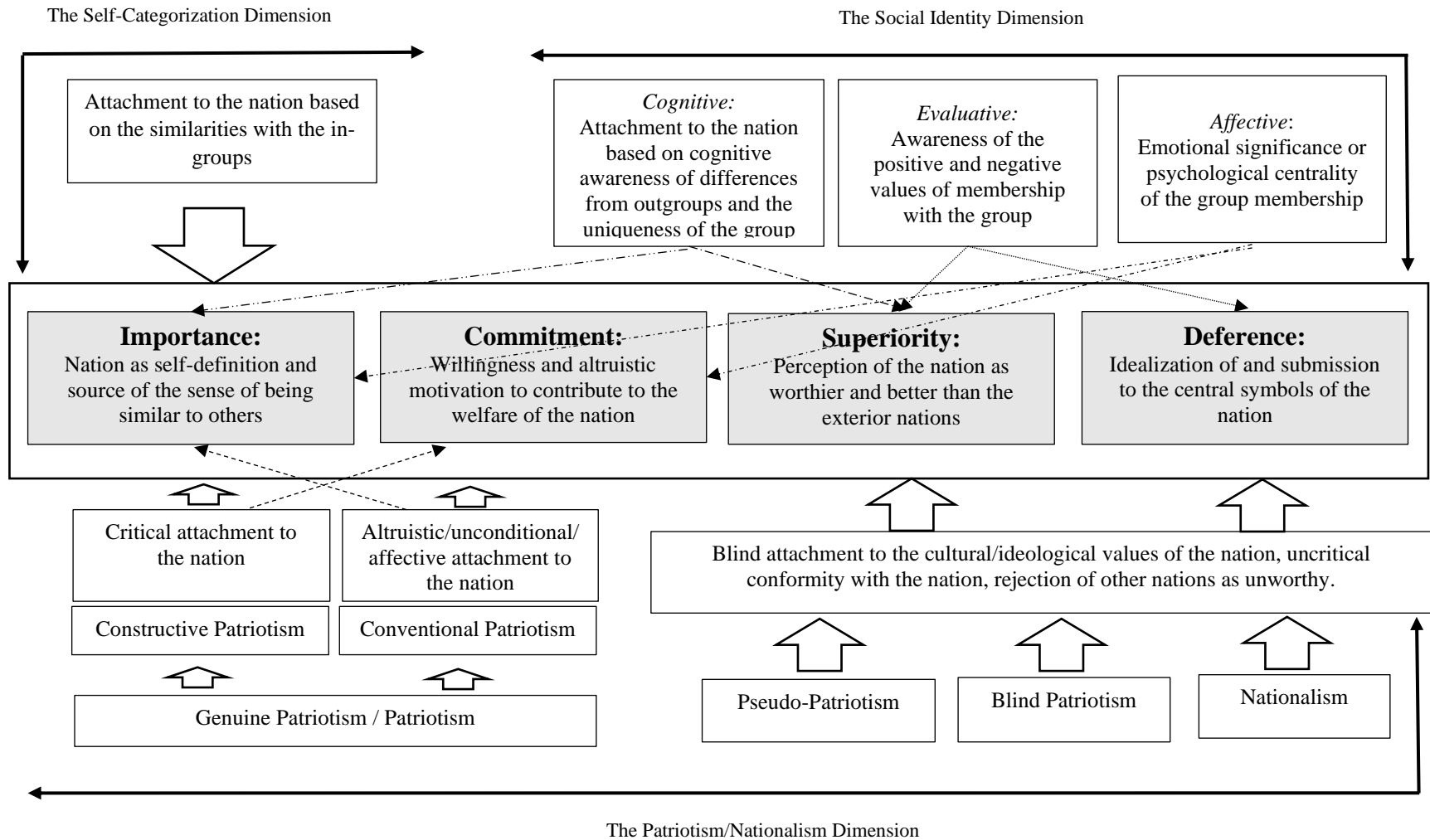
The political regime has been shown to play a considerable role in influencing national identity if analyzed as a division between democracy and autocracy (Duckitt, Wagner, du Plessis & Birum 2002). In particular, authoritarians tend to place greater value upon their group memberships than democrats (Blank 2003) or to assign a different importance to various identity components (Roccas et al. 2008). Additionally, the political regime can effectively capture the major differences between Ukraine and Russia in terms of their current political situation since the two countries represent opposing cases in the democracy-autocracy divide. Ukraine showed substantial divergence from Russia in visions and institutions from the onset of the transition (White, McAllister & Feklyunina 2010). The country was characterized by a strong inclination toward more democratic governance (Turchyn, Sukhorolskyi & Sukhorolska 2020) and a more democratic political culture (Reisinger, Miller, Maher 1994). Common political values were adopted by the majority of the political elite and population that supported the democratization process (Reznik 2016). Conversely, after a short period of relative freedom in the early 1990s, Russia returned to a more authoritarian approach to governance (Evans 2011). Russia's political elite actively opposed the adoption of democracy and Western-like

political relations, on the grounds that these institutions were alien to the population (Brudny & Finkel 2011). Instead, they claimed that Russia possessed its own “gene” of democracy (Otkritie Media 2022) that assumed (in practice) the incorporation of the Soviet authoritarian meaning of power into a seemingly liberal institutional framework.

By projecting the political regime through the four identity modes, I attempt to define the key political factors influencing identification. The procedure is based on comparing the political characteristics of Ukraine with those of Russia across each mode of identification. Focusing on every mode individually is expected to reveal political factors that result from the differences in the political processes influencing identity formation in the two countries.

In particular, Roccas et al. (2008) suggest that the importance mode, emphasizing the importance of the group as part of the individual’s self-definition, can be significantly modified by shocks in the external environment, such as the outbreak of war or change in the political regime. Such events trigger cognitive processes facilitating the reorganization of identities (Amiot, de la Sabloniere, Terry & Smith 2007) through a conscious departure from one group and identification with a new group. Drawing upon this assumption, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2014 can be defined as an importance-driven political factor causing shifts in national identity. In contrast to Russia, Ukraine absorbed most of the shock and experienced significant shifts in civic and ethnic identity due to the conflict (Kulyk 2018). Another contrast is that this conflict only marginally affected Russians and was insufficient to trigger a substantial change in their identification. Instead, the importance of national identity was nurtured in Russia by

FIGURE 1. An Overview of Theoretical Approaches to Identification



Source: Author's visualization.

increasing authoritarianism and the strengthening of imperial visions among the population (Mankoff 2022).

Directly linked to the concept of political regime is commitment, understood as one's willingness and altruistic motivation to contribute to the nation (Rocca et al. 2008). In this respect, Ukraine's democratic institutions tended to support more participatory forms of contribution from group members such as civil activism and opposition (Onuch & Hale 2022). Strong civil mobilization was recognized as a vital social element in shaping the idea of the Ukrainian state or nation (Zabyelina 2019) and was reinforced by the shared memories of oppression exercised by Russia against the Ukrainian population (Chayinska, Kende & Wohl 2021). In contrast, Russia's authoritarian governance methods restrained civil activism or opposition (Mankoff 2022) and promoted more passive forms of participation by emphasizing compliance with the rules of the regime in power such as voting in national elections.

In analyzing the superiority of some nations as worthier and better than other nations, the literature stresses ideology as the most relevant political force (Rubin, Milanov & Paolini 2014). Ideology comprises one's beliefs and attitudes about the nation defining the characteristics that the individual should possess in order to be able to belong to the group, on the one hand. On the other hand, it assigns the relative position of this nation in comparison to other nations providing a justification for the idea of superiority (Hale 2008). In both instances, ideology is viewed as derived from the specific historical and cultural background of the nation (Sellers et al. 1998).

In this respect, Russia and Ukraine showed a significant difference in the ideologies promoted by their nations. Russia related its ideology to the narrative of the "empire" drawing upon the experience of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union in which the country was dominant and considered entitled to dominate over the subordinated territories (Willerton, Goertz & Slobodchikoff 2015). This ideology consequently presupposed the superiority of the Russian nation over other nations, as well as the expectation of unquestionable devotion of their populations to the Russian government and its policies. The submission to the Russian nation was justified by assigning to Russia the status of a protector of the subordinated regions and the title of a global anticapitalistic force (Mankoff 2022). Thus, Russian imperial identity gradually evolved into a kind of militant patriotism closely linked to the idea of the uniqueness of Russia as a state and western capitalism as a source of permanent danger to the nation.

In contrast, Ukrainians' historical experience as a colony, subordinated to Russia over the entire duration of their shared past, created a rather hostile perception of the idea of the state (Feklyunina 2016). Instead, Ukraine emerged as a unity of people, in which an

independent society became the reference point for ideology (Szostek & Orlova 2022). The collective memory of oppression became the foundation for uniting the country's population into a single nation (Chayinska, Kende & Wohl 2021), defining freedom and independence as the main pillars of the national ideology. This ideology was characterized by the lack of any comparison between the Ukrainians and other nations, excluding entirely the issue of superiority from the political discourse.

Finally, the fourth identity mode focuses on justifying submission and difference to the central symbols of the nation. Studies usually suggest that authoritarians believe in submission to established authorities and easy acceptance of the social norms they promote (Altemeyer 1998). This belief is likely to lead individuals to defer to national symbols and policies of authorities. Considering Russia's authoritarian political regime, Russians should be more likely to show high tolerance for authoritarian ways of governance and a higher propensity to submission. In contrast, a more democratic political situation in Ukraine should not demand or support the submission to neither authorities or its symbols that rejects the significance of the deference mode of identification from the identity structure of Ukraine.

Overall, the democracy-autocracy divide has enabled the definition of possible political forces influencing identity formation in Ukraine and Russia. Based on their relation to the four modes of identification, they can broadly be grouped as:

- (1) Importance-driven factors including the features of, and shocks in the political regime;
- (2) Commitment-driven factors including the dominant modes of participation in the processes and fate of the nation;
- (3) Superiority-driven factors including the prevalent ideology about the nation and its stance towards other nations;
- (4) Deference-driven factors including the submission to, and tolerance for the policies and symbols promoted by the incumbent political regime.

Considering the democracy-autocracy divide between Ukraine and Russia, I argue that there are substantial differences in identity profiles between the two countries that can be summarized in the following expectations:

***Hypothesis 1:** The influence of political factors on identification is heterogeneous between Ukraine and Russia.*

***Hypothesis 2:** Given the prevalence of more democratic forms of governance, I anticipate an increased role of political factors related to the importance and commitment modes of identity for Ukraine.*

***Hypothesis 3:** Given the prevalence of more authoritarian modes of governance, I anticipate a strong influence of political forces related to the importance, superiority, and deference modes of identity for Russia.*

Data and Methods

To test the above hypotheses, I use data from the most recent wave of the World Values Survey (WVS) that belongs to 2017 for Russia and 2020 for Ukraine. The sample comprises 1875 cases, out of which 653 cases correspond to Ukraine and include both Ukrainian and Russian speakers, and 1222 cases correspond to Russia. The primary scope of my empirical analysis is to test whether the selected political factors are associated with national identity and whether their effects are homogenous in the two countries.

The main dependent variable is national identity measured by asking respondents about the extent to which they agree with the statement “I see myself as a citizen of the Ukrainian nation” for the Ukrainian respondents and “I see myself as a citizen of the Russian nation” for Russian respondents. The initial responses are combined by assigning the value of one to positive choices (“I strongly agree” and “I agree”) and the value of zero to negative responses (“I disagree” and “I strongly disagree”). Overall, about 86 percent of Ukrainians and 81 percent of Russians agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

The model explaining identity formation is viewed as composed of three groups of determinants. The first group comprises a set of conventional socio-demographic characteristics such as the respondents’ country of birth, age, income, and region of residence. The second group includes one’s preference for liberal and democratic forms of governance operationalized by asking the respondents about their propensity to civil opposition and whether competition and private ownership are good for the economy. The third group encompasses political predictors influencing national identity.

The importance-driven group of factors consists of one’s preference for a strong leader, language, and fear of war. The importance of a leader captures the extent of adherence to authoritarianism while speaking the official language reflects the degree of similarity with the ingroups. Fear of war should reflect the probability of external shocks. The commitment-driven group of variables includes the need for elections in choosing leaders and one’s participation in national elections or lawful demonstrations. The superiority-driven group of predictors is

limited to confidence in the government, one’s preference for freedom over security, and the need for human society. The deference-driven group of political forces is measured through one’s acceptance of surveillance and restrictions on freedom of speech, along with confidence in the press. The descriptive statistics of the key variables used in the analysis are summarized in Annex 1, while Annex 2 provides a detailed description of the operationalization approaches applied to the construction of variables.

Table 1 reports mean values for the political factors while comparing them between Ukraine and Russia. Briefly, despite their common culture and shared past, the two countries showed a wide gap in their key political features such as voting in national elections, confidence in the government, one’s tolerance to state surveillance and confidence in the press. In particular, Ukrainians were more inclined to vote in elections than Russians were. In contrast, Russians appeared to be more attached to the state and its authorities. This increased confidence in the state coexisted in Russia with more tolerance for governmental control. The Russian population was more inclined to accept state surveillance than Ukrainians. Conversely, Ukrainians attached greater value to autonomy and freedom, viewing them as unique and non-negotiable attributes. More Ukrainians than Russians also trusted the press. However, unlike Russia, Ukraine was characterized by a significant linguistic divide, with almost 40 percent of the population abstaining from using Ukrainian as their main language of communication.

TABLE 1. A Comparative Analysis of Mean Values for the Key Political Variables between Ukraine and Russia

VARIABLES	Mean Values		Contrasts
	Ukraine	Russia	
National Identity	85.9	80.9	5.0***
Importance of the Leader	65.8	55.4	10.4***
Use of the Country’s Official Language	61.0	94.5	-33.5***
Fear of War	92.5	82.2	10.3***
Choice of Leaders through Elections	85.6	81.1	4.5***
Participation in National Elections	58.8	42.4	16.4***
Willingness to Demonstrate	54.3	53.2	1.1
Confidence in the Government	20.2	53.7	-33.5***
Preference for Freedom over Security	31.7	24.4	7.3***
Preference for Human Society	16.0	17.3	-1.3

Tolerance for Surveillance	50.5	65.3	-14.8***
Importance of Freedom of Speech	19.1	16.2	2.9
Confidence in the Press	45.7	32.8	12.9***

Source: Author's calculations using the WVS (2017 and 2020).

Notes: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Since all dependent variables are binary, logistic regression was employed for the analysis. The STATA *logit* command was used to calculate the model parameters. To facilitate the interpretation of results, I reported the average marginal effects. The final model applied to the data for parameter estimation took the following form:

$$P(\text{National_Identity}_{ij} = 1) = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 \text{Born_in_the_Country}_{ij} + \gamma_2 \text{Age}_{ij} + \gamma_3 \text{Income_Scale}_{ij} + \gamma_4 \text{Region}_{ij} + \gamma_5 \text{Importance_of_Private_Ownership}_{ij} + \gamma_6 \text{Importance_of_Competition}_{ij} + \gamma_7 \text{Propensity_to_Revolt}_{ij} + \gamma_8 \text{Importance_of_the_Leader}_{ij} + \gamma_9 \text{Use_of_the_Country's_Official_Language}_{ij} + \gamma_{10} \text{Fear_of_War}_{ij} + \gamma_{11} \text{Choice_of_Leaders_through_Elections}_{ij} + \gamma_{12} \text{Participation_in_National_Elections}_{ij} + \gamma_{13} \text{Willingness_to_Demonstrate}_{ij} + \gamma_{14} \text{Preference_for_Freedom_over_Security}_{ij} + \gamma_{15} \text{Preference_for_Human_Society}_{ij} + \gamma_{16} \text{Tolerance_for_Surveillance}_{ij} + \gamma_{17} \text{Importance of Freedom of Speech}_{ij} + \gamma_{17} \text{Confidence_in_the_Press}_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

Here, ε_{ij} is the individual-level variance. Annex 2 provides a detailed description of the covariates used in the model including their operationalization approaches and response values.

Empirical Results

Tables 2 and 3 summarize the results from the national identity analysis for Ukraine and Russia separately. According to the reported coefficients, ethnic identity was not essentially determined by descent-related factors in either of the countries. Only marginally did they influence identification in Russia. In contrast, the regional variables significantly impacted the national identity of both populations. People living in the eastern regions were more likely to identify themselves with the Ukrainian nation than those living in the center of Ukraine. Similarly, people from the northwestern and southern districts of Russia were more likely to adopt the Russian national identity than residents of the North Caucasian district.

TABLE 2. Key Factors behind National Identity Formation in Ukraine

VARIABLES	1	2	3	4	5
Born in the Country	0.303 (0.591)	-0.080 (0.633)	-0.090 (0.639)	-0.113 (0.645)	-0.286 (0.652)
Age	0.001 (0.008)	0.001 (0.008)	-0.004 (0.009)	-0.004 (0.009)	-0.003 (0.009)
Income Scale	-0.046 (0.068)	0.001 (0.071)	0.006 (0.073)	0.001 (0.074)	-0.012 (0.077)
Regions					
East					
Kyiv	0.181 (0.520)	-0.208 (0.568)	-0.236 (0.581)	-0.286 (0.588)	-0.363 (0.598)
West	0.900 (0.569)	-0.025 (0.677)	-0.305 (0.700)	-0.347 (0.708)	-0.533 (0.729)
Center	-0.705* (0.428)	-1.458*** (0.537)	-1.601*** (0.565)	-1.628*** (0.568)	-1.760*** (0.593)
South	-0.964** (0.436)	-0.937** (0.444)	-0.916** (0.454)	-0.939** (0.455)	-1.015** (0.465)
Importance of Private Ownership	0.326 (0.345)	0.132 (0.358)	0.345 (0.368)	0.368 (0.371)	0.405 (0.377)
Importance of Competition	0.333 (0.250)	0.319 (0.269)	0.125 (0.287)	0.164 (0.290)	0.133 (0.294)
Propensity to Revolt	-0.544** (0.255)	-0.462* (0.267)	-1.121*** (0.355)	-1.161*** (0.360)	-1.196*** (0.363)
Importance of the Leader		-0.336 (0.284)	-0.377 (0.297)	-0.371 (0.299)	-0.465 (0.305)
Use of the Country's Official Language		1.280*** (0.381)	1.416*** (0.414)	1.375*** (0.418)	1.404*** (0.439)
Fear of War		1.582*** (0.360)	1.169*** (0.388)	1.169*** (0.390)	1.231*** (0.404)
Choice of Leaders through Elections			0.089 (0.058)	0.096 (0.059)	0.124** (0.060)
Participation in National Elections			0.504*** (0.190)	0.515*** (0.192)	0.558*** (0.200)
Willingness to Demonstrate			0.975*** (0.341)	0.989*** (0.344)	1.063*** (0.353)
Confidence in the Government				0.258 (0.338)	0.132 (0.354)

Preference for Freedom over Security				-0.003	0.027
				(0.292)	(0.297)
Preference for Human Society				0.234	0.216
				(0.414)	(0.422)
Tolerance for Surveillance					-0.737***
					(0.278)
Importance of Freedom of Speech					-0.122
					(0.349)
Confidence in the Press					0.585*
					(0.311)
Constant	1.525*	0.353	1.295	1.229	1.666
	(0.903)	(1.025)	(1.304)	(1.306)	(1.374)
Observations	653	653	653	653	653

Source: Author's calculations using the WVS from 2020.

Notes: Standard errors are reported in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Only a small overlap was observed between Ukraine and Russia in terms of the influence of political factors on their national identities. Of the importance-driven political forces, identification was strongly affected in Ukraine by linguistic homogeneity and external shocks created by the conflict with Russia. The two variables appeared to be the most significant predictors of the Ukrainian identity after the outbreak of the conflict in 2014. Commensurate with the existing findings, speaking Ukrainian was the foundation for the individual's feeling of belonging to Ukraine (Kulyk 2016) while the prospect of war pushed Ukrainians to unite in the face of the common aggressor, strengthening their national identity (Alyev 2019; Onuch & Hale 2022). In contrast, none of these factors related to identification in Russia. Instead, the importance of belonging to the Russian nation was determined by the recognition of the need to have a strong leader in the country.

Only partial overlap was established in the case of commitment-driven political determinants. The preference for elections as a framework for choosing political leaders and actual participation in voting significantly increased the likelihood of identification in both Ukraine and Russia. However, the national identity was also closely linked in Ukraine to the practice of civil resistance and opposition through lawful demonstrations, which was not the case in Russia. The commitment to the nation required a strong civil value for Ukrainians.

Opposite to the two previous groups of political factors, no overlap existed between Ukraine and Russia in terms of the impact of the superiority-driven variables. In contrast to Ukraine, national identity was strongly defined in Russia by one's attachment to the state and security. Commensurate with their imperial ideology, Russians' feeling of belonging to the nation was shaped by their confidence in the state and authorities. Thus, respondents who displayed greater trust in the government were characterized by a higher probability of adopting a Russian national identity. In addition, the preference for security over freedom further increased the likelihood of identification with Russia. In line with these findings, the people who assigned little value to the promotion of a more human society in their country were more likely to adopt a Russian national identity, even if only to a marginal extent. None of these political factors was related to identification in Ukraine. This suggests that Ukrainians assigned different meanings to their identity by devaluating or entirely excluding the superiority mode from its internal structure. In contrast, Russians, as authoritarians by their ideology and historical background, tended to emphasize the distinctiveness of their nation, which could explain the prominent role of the superiority-driven factors in the formation of their identity.

TABLE 3. Key Factors behind Identity Formation in Russia

VARIABLES	1	2	3	4	5
Born in the Country	0.529 (0.341)	0.571* (0.343)	0.609* (0.359)	0.645* (0.367)	0.657* (0.374)
Age	0.019*** (0.004)	0.018*** (0.004)	0.012** (0.005)	0.009* (0.005)	0.010* (0.005)
Income Scale	0.051 (0.041)	0.058 (0.041)	0.083* (0.043)	0.080* (0.044)	0.084* (0.044)
Regions					
North Caucasian					
Volga	0.245 (0.214)	0.289 (0.216)	0.366* (0.222)	0.293 (0.226)	0.385* (0.230)
Urals	-0.550** (0.233)	-0.556** (0.235)	-0.366 (0.242)	-0.270 (0.248)	-0.263 (0.249)
Far East	-0.188 (0.341)	-0.216 (0.344)	0.059 (0.365)	-0.074 (0.368)	-0.008 (0.371)
South District	0.960** (0.379)	0.947** (0.381)	1.266*** (0.394)	1.187*** (0.398)	1.248*** (0.401)
Siberia	-0.162 (0.240)	-0.202 (0.242)	-0.339 (0.254)	-0.326 (0.260)	-0.302 (0.263)
North West	0.935***	0.892***	0.983***	0.916***	1.036***

	(0.325)	(0.326)	(0.334)	(0.336)	(0.341)
Importance of Private Ownership	-0.234	-0.211	-0.179	-0.118	-0.100
	(0.187)	(0.189)	(0.195)	(0.199)	(0.202)
Importance of Competition	0.227	0.224	0.016	-0.071	-0.046
	(0.154)	(0.155)	(0.162)	(0.166)	(0.168)
Propensity to Revolt	-0.083	-0.076	0.038	-0.117	-0.149
	(0.176)	(0.178)	(0.215)	(0.220)	(0.222)
Importance the of Leader		0.336**	0.422***	0.388**	0.403**
		(0.152)	(0.157)	(0.159)	(0.161)
Use of the Country's Official Language		-0.367	-0.435	-0.449	-0.522
		(0.343)	(0.352)	(0.359)	(0.363)
Fear of War		0.459**	0.254	0.212	0.221
		(0.184)	(0.192)	(0.195)	(0.198)
Choice of Leaders through Elections			0.154***	0.131***	0.126***
			(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.035)
Participation in National Elections			0.442***	0.590***	0.660***
			(0.112)	(0.113)	(0.114)
Willingness to Demonstrate			0.416**	0.328*	0.321
			(0.190)	(0.193)	(0.196)
Confidence in the Government				0.544***	0.629***
				(0.164)	(0.171)
Preference for Freedom over Security				-0.550***	-0.525***
				(0.175)	(0.176)
Preference for Human Society				-0.373*	-0.367*
				(0.192)	(0.193)
Tolerance for Surveillance					0.093
					(0.168)
Importance of Freedom of Speech					-0.530***
					(0.198)
Confidence in the Press					-0.484***
					(0.178)
Constant	-0.380	-0.630	-0.521	-0.176	-0.081
	(0.502)	(0.622)	(0.748)	(0.767)	(0.787)
Observations	1,122	1,122	1,122	1,122	1,122

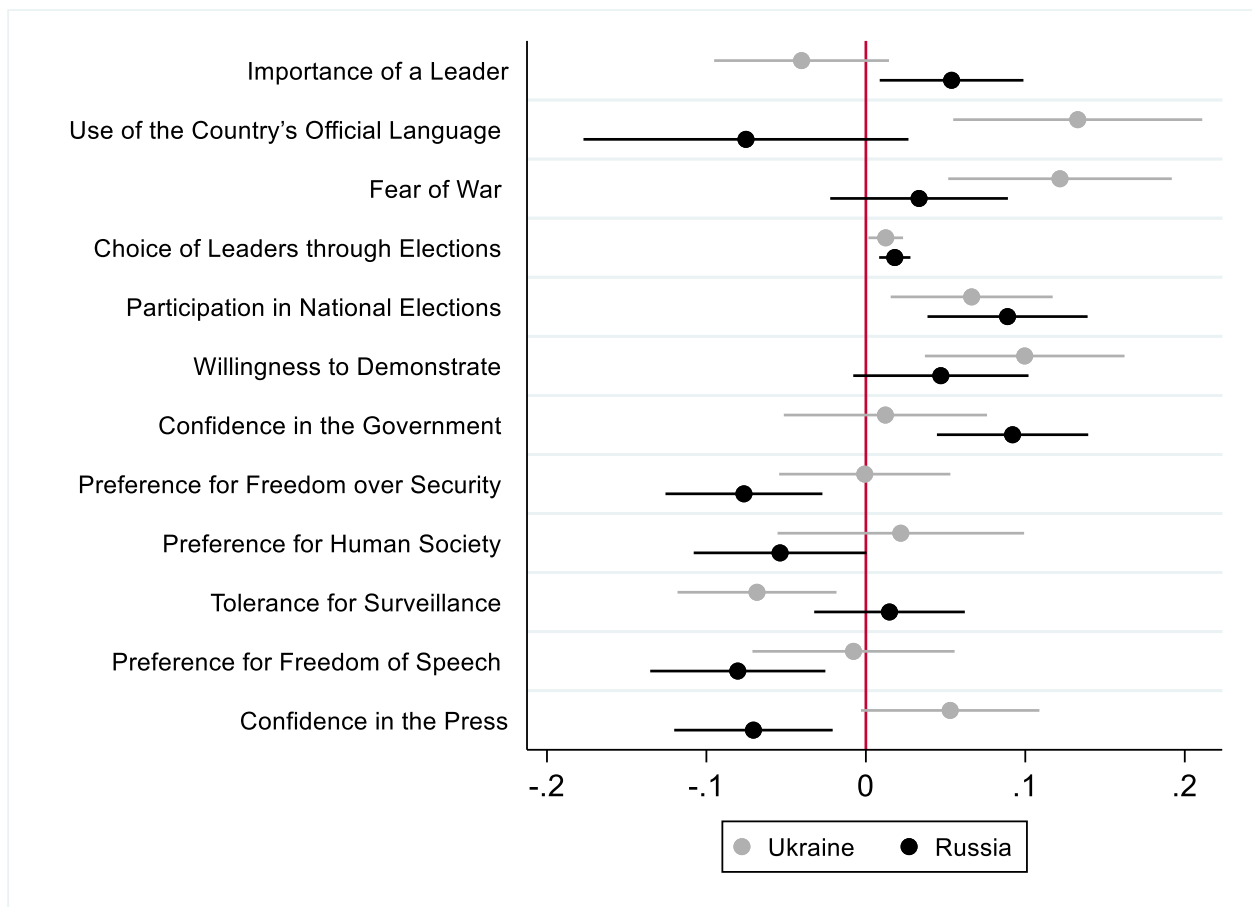
Source: Author's calculations using the WVS from 2017.

Notes: Standard errors are reported in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

The two countries also differed significantly in terms of the role of the deference-driven political factors. The Russian imperial identity required submission to the state, as a result of which one’s sense of identification was strongly influenced by authoritarian tendencies. People who denied the need to enforce freedom of speech and who distrusted the press and, hence, abstained from criticizing the government and its policies were more likely to adopt a Russian national identity. In contrast, Ukraine was characterized by a reverse relationship between the deference-relevant variables and identity. People who recognized the right of the state to surveillance of citizens were less likely to adopt a Ukrainian identity. In addition, trusting the press could increase the identification with the Ukrainian nation, even if only to a marginal extent.

FIGURE 2. Average Marginal Effects on the Probability of Adopting the National Identity: Ukraine versus Russia



Source: Author’s calculations and visualization using the WVS (2017 and 2020).

Notes: The average marginal effects for the political variables are calculated for each country separately based on Model 5 (Tables 3 and 4).

In summary, political forces played a considerable role in the formation of identity in Ukraine and Russia. However, they followed very distinct patterns of influence in the two countries which supports Hypothesis 1. As Figure 2 shows, in Russia, identification with the nation was reinforced by the recognition of a strong leader for the political system—even if this leader was chosen through elections—, greater trust in the government, the tendency to refuse freedom in exchange for security and little value assigned to the freedom of speech or confidence in the press. This pattern of influence reflected the authoritarian features of the dominant political regime and the imperial visions adopted not only among politicians but also among regular citizens in Russia.

In contrast, identity was shaped in Ukraine by the linguistic similarity, expectations of a foreign invasion, the high value attributed to elections, active participation in voting or lawful demonstrations, intolerance to surveillance, and, to some extent, by greater trust in the press. This pattern of influence is in line with the existing findings showing that national identity in Ukraine is defined not only by the ethnolinguistic component but also by a strong civic component (Onuch and Hale 2022).

The heterogeneous patterns of the relationship between the political dimension and national identity found for Ukraine and Russia suggest that the two countries have very heterogeneous identity profiles. Following Roccas et al. (2008), heterogeneous profiles mean that the two populations differ not only in the extent of their identification with the nation but also in the meanings assigned to this identification. The political dimension is broadly integrated into the Russian identity through each of the four modes and is in accord with the authoritarian methods of governance or the dominant ideology of Russian imperialism. As a result, the Russian national identity is influenced by political forces relevant to all four modes, including importance, commitment, superiority, and deference. Opposite to Russia, the nation-building process occurred in Ukraine largely through language policy and the enforcement of participatory forms of commitment to the nation, in addition to confronting the increased probability of a prolonged war (with Russia). These features contributed to increasing the value of importance and commitment while entirely omitting superiority and deference modes from the internal structure of identity. Therefore, these findings can be considered strong evidence supporting Hypotheses 2 and 3.

To further analyze the differences in the identity profiles, I calculated the mean values of the political factors separately for the individuals with and without national identity for Ukraine and Russia. As Table 4 shows, people who accepted the national identity in Russia were characterized by relatively high values on the majority of the selected political indicators for each of the four modes. In contrast, individuals who failed to do so are characterized by significantly lower values. Broadly speaking, such individuals hold political visions and preferences that do not load highly on either of the four modes. For Ukraine, the wide gap in the majority of the values primarily existed with regard to the importance-driven and commitment-driven political indicators. In contrast, no difference was established between those with and without national identity regarding the superiority-driven and deference-driven indicators, except for the tolerance for state surveillance.

On the one hand, these heterogeneous profiles suggest that the associated identity structure is different between Ukraine and Russia. Considering the divergent patterns of political influences on identity, it is possible to conclude that the overall overlap in identity structure is only partial or minimal between the two countries. This means that the individuals of Ukraine and Russia differ in the complexity of their representations of the relations among the people of the same nation and the reasons that unite individuals into a single nation (Roccas & Brewer 2002). Thus, the national identity of Ukraine is built on the importance and active civic commitment to the nation. In Russia, identification is more based on the importance and passive commitment reinforced by the superiority and deference modes.

On the other hand, these heterogeneous profiles point to an intercountry discord in the post-communist region regarding the definition of the nation. There is a large variation not in the level of identification between Ukraine and Russia but in the meanings assigned to the nation in each country. Since the difference in profiles appears to be large between the two countries, it is very unlikely that these dissimilar national identities can converge into a single, encompassing identification in the region. If considering the increased role of the civil component in the current national identity of Ukraine and significant shifts to the identification with their own state due to the war with Russia, Ukrainians can be expected to show high inclination to their own nation. Given also the great role of the ideology of superiority and deference of the Russian nation, there is little chance that Ukrainians would accept the Russian identity or the identity of the “Russian world” as their own. Thus, the heterogeneous identity profiles between Ukraine and Russia can contribute to explaining the resistance of Ukrainians to the Russian invasion of 2022.

TABLE 4. A Comparative Analysis of Mean Values for the Key Political Variables
by National Identity Type

Items	Ukraine			Russia		
	0	1	Contrasts	0	1	Contrasts
<i>Importance-driven factors</i>			Significant	Low	High	Significant
Importance of the Leader	72.0	64.7	7.3*	47.7	77.6	-29.9***
Use of the Country's Official Language	40.1	64.3	-24.2***	95.3	94.3	1.0
Fear of War	79.0	94.5	-15.5***	75.7	83.6	-7.9***
<i>Commitment-driven factors</i>			Significant			Significant
Choice of Leaders through Elections	77.8	86.7	-8.9***	73.8	83.2	-9.4***
Participation in National Elections	40.0	61.7	-21.7***	27.3	46.5	-19.2***
Willingness to Demonstrate	43.9	47.3	-3.4	37.5	48.2	-10.7***
<i>Superiority-driven factors</i>			Insignificant			Significant
Confidence in the Government	18.2	20.6	-2.4	38.6	57.5	-18.9***
Preference for Freedom over Security	31.0	31.8	-0.8	37.9	21.2	16.7***
Preference for Human Society	12.0	16.9	-4.9	25.4	14.6	10.8***
<i>Deference-driven factors</i>			Insignificant			Significant
Tolerance for Surveillance	58.0	49.3	8.7*	58.2	67.1	-8.9***
Preference for Freedom of Speech	17.0	19.2	-2.2	36.8	13.9	22.9***
Confidence in the Press	24.0	30.7	-6.7	34.0	32.4	1.6

Source: Author's calculations using the WVS from 2017 and 2020.

Notes: The t-test was applied to check for the statistical significance of contrasts in the mean values.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study aimed to juxtapose the identity formation processes of Ukraine and Russia. The results suggest that political variables are stronger predictors in Russia than in Ukraine. However, they still play an important role in deciding whether to choose Ukrainian as one's identity. Among these political factors, the importance of elections for the political system, past participation in national elections, intolerance to state control through surveillance, and greater trust in the press were found to increase the likelihood of self-identification with the Ukrainian nation. In contrast, those who adopted the Russian identity were more likely to display an increased attachment to the state and a greater tolerance of authoritarian methods of governance. These results confirmed the strong influence of imperial visions prevailing among most of the population on the identification process in Russia. Those who identified themselves with the Russian nation tended to have greater trust in the government and a preference for a strong leader. These individuals were also increasingly concerned about national security, which resulted in them valuing it over freedom. Commensurate with the incumbent political regime, the Russian identity required less democratic attitudes, such as low confidence in the press, restrictions on freedom of speech, and tolerance of authoritarian methods of governance, including the surveillance of residents. All of this accrued into a society that denied the need or value of humanism.

Overall, the analysis shows that the identification process follows a distinct pattern in the two countries. Regarding Ukraine, there are still many questions about the complete set of determinants that may define a sense of national identity. Ukraine is a relatively young state and society, still in the process of formation, and hence more research is needed to clarify which factors determine the country's nation-building dynamics. Future studies should, hence, focus on applying the four-mode model of identification proposed by Roccas et al. (2008) to the case of Ukraine by collecting data measuring each of the modes directly. In the ideal case, these data should be collected on a longitudinal basis. This would allow the analysis to control for the problem of reverse causality in the relationship between the political situation and national identification during or in the aftermath of war, and define the key factors determining one's choice of a location on the identity continuum.

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ANNEX 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Key Variables

VARIABLES	Mean	St. dev.	Min.	Max.
National Identity	0.901	0.297	0	1
Born in the Country	0.959	0.196	0	1
Age	46.307	16.902	18	91
Income Scale	0.465	0.193	0	1
Importance of Private Ownership	0.193	0.395	0	1
Importance of Competition	0.526	0.499	0	1
Propensity to Revolt	0.732	0.442	0	1
Importance of the Leader	0.615	0.487	0	1
Use of the Country's Official Language	0.791	0.406	0	1
Fear of War	0.859	0.347	0	1
Choice of Leaders through Elections	0.791	0.407	0	1
Participation in National Elections	0.494	0.500	0	1
Willingness to Demonstrate				
Confidence in the Government	0.407	0.491	0	1
Preference for Freedom over Security	0.273	0.445	0	1
Preference for Human Society	0.153	0.360	0	1
Tolerance for Surveillance	0.579	0.494	0	1
Importance of Freedom of Speech	0.173	0.378	0	1
Confidence in the Press	0.322	0.467	0	1

Source: Author's calculations using the WVS (2017 and 2020).

ANNEX 2. Description of Operationalization Approaches used to Construct the Key
Variables

Variable Name	Question	Response Scale	Response Values
Born in the Country	Are you born in the country of residence?	Binary	0 “No” and 1 “Yes”
Age	What is your age?	Continuous	From 16 to 89
Income Scale	Are you satisfied with the financial situation of your household?	Ten-point scale	From 0 “Dissatisfied” to 10 “Satisfied”
Region of Residence	In which region are you living?	Set of binary variables	
Importance of Private Ownership	What do you think about private versus state ownership of business?	Ten-point scale	From 0 “Private ownership of business should be increased” to 1 “Government ownership of business should be increased”
Importance of Competition	What do you think about competition?	Ten-point scale	From 0 “Competition is good” to 1 “Competition is harmful”
Propensity to Revolt	Would you participate in boycotts?	Binary	0 “Would occasionally or always boycott” and 1 “Would never boycott”
Importance of the Leader	Is it good for the political system to have a strong leader?	Binary	0 “Bad or very bad” and 1 “Fairly or very good”
Use of the Country’s Official Language	Which language do you use to communicate at home?	Binary	0 “Other languages” and 1 “Ukrainian” (for Ukraine) 0 “Other languages” and 1 “Russian” (for Russia)
Fear of War	Do you worry that a war can occur on your country’s territory?	Binary	0 “Not much or not at all worried” and 1 “A great deal or very much worried”

Choice of Leaders through Elections	To which extent do you agree with the statement that your country's leader should be chosen through elections?	Binary	0 "Disagree" and 1 "Agree"
Participation in National Elections	How often do you vote in elections (national level)?	Binary	0 "Never or occasionally" and 1 "Always"
Willingness to Demonstrate	What about participation in such political action as lawful demonstrations?	Binary	0 "Would never do" and 1 "Might do or have done"
Confidence in the Government	How much trust do you have in your government?	Binary	0 "Not at all or not very much" and 1 "Quite a lot or a great deal"
Preference for Freedom over Security	What is more important for you – freedom or security?	Binary	0 "Security" and 1 "Freedom"
Preference for Human Society	What is the most important aim for you?	Binary	0 "Other choices" and 1 "Progress towards a more human society"
Tolerance for Surveillance	Does the government have the right to keep people under video surveillance in public areas?	Binary	0 "Probably or definitely should not have the right" and 1 "Probably or definitely should have the right"
Importance of Freedom of Speech	What should be the second main aim of the country?	Binary	0 "Other choices" and 1 "Giving people more say"
Confidence in the Press	How much confidence do you have in the Press in your country?	Binary	0 "Not at all or not very much" and 1 "Quite a lot or a great deal"

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Larysa TAMILINA received her doctoral degree from Bremen University (Germany) and her master's degree from the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium). She was for many years employed by Zeppelin University as a lecturer and a postdoctoral researcher, where she worked on advancing theories of human capital accumulation and modeling individuals' decision-making regarding their participation in various forms of learning. Additionally, she studied the impact of formal institutions on economic growth rates and levels of social trust in Europe. Her current research addresses the conflict in Ukraine-Russia relations and the possible implications that the recent war might have on various aspects of political and socio-economic developments in the two countries.

