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Political Factors as Possible Determinants behind the Sense of Identification with the Nation,
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Abstract

This study focuses on comparing the identity formation processes between Ukraine and Russia. Drawing upon recent findings on the diversity of ethnicities, this analysis distinguishes between national, civic, and social identity types. World Values data are used to demonstrate that each of these identities is significantly influenced by the political values and preferences of the respondents. To define the political dimension, I discuss the contrasts between the two countries in terms of their political systems and dominant narratives of nationalism. My results suggest that of the wide range of the selected predictors, the value of voting, past participation in national elections, intolerance to control, and greater trust in the press essentially increase the likelihood of opting for Ukraine for at least one of the chosen identities. For Russia, strong evidence supports the current discourse on the imperial vision. My analysis demonstrates that individuals are more likely to identify themselves with Russia if they display greater trust in the government and support more authoritarian methods of governance such as tolerating surveillance and restrictions on freedom.

Keywords: Ethnic identity, civil identity, social, identity, Ukraine, the WVS, political factors of identification

Introduction

Identity is associated with various political and socio-economic outcomes, ranging from nation-building to government effectiveness (Ahlerup and Hansson 2011; Qari, Konrad, and Geys 2012). Despite its critical role, the possible mechanisms that define its formation are not yet precisely understood. The literature usually describes the sense of identification as a reflection of deep, historically rooted societal conventions that emerge and develop over a long period of time (Dimitrova-Grajzl et al. 2016; Gellner 1983). National identity should first enter the society and be shared by its members through a polity's network, taking multiple generations until the diffusion reaches satisfactory levels (Anderson 1991; Elkins 2010; Greenfeld 1992, 2001; Wimmer and Feinstein 2010). Simultaneously, scholars admit that identities can change relatively quickly in response to more contemporary events (Jones and Smith 2001; Kavetsos 2012), such as military conflicts or foreign invasions (Frahm 2012). War mobilizes people and unites them against a common aggressor, strengthening the sense of belonging to the state or nation (Wimmer 2012).

This study considers Ukraine as the subject of analysis. The country represents a good case for examining how a sense of identity can be formed or modified given its divided society, regional cleavages, and Russia's ongoing invasion (Sasse and Lackner 2018). My primary scope is to define the major predictors contributing to self-identification with Ukraine as opposed to Russia. To achieve this objective, I used recent findings on capturing ethnicities in Ukraine (Onuch and Hale 2018) and adopted a broad definition of identity.

Additionally, this research expands the conventional set of determinants by including political visions and preferences in the crucial criteria influencing individuals' choices regarding their affiliation with the nation, state, or society. In doing so, I attempt to clarify how political

factors affect the formation of identities, while juxtaposing their effects across a wide spectrum of identity types.

Identity Formation in Ukraine: A Literature Overview

Identity is conventionally viewed as one's stance regarding the human environment, which is defined by categorizing oneself and others (Hale 2008). By allowing the individual to realize where one belongs, identity acts as a cognitive uncertainty-reducing mechanism that facilitates coping with the vast complexity of one's social environment (Gaertner et al. 2002). Since the social context has multiple faces, identities are also recognized as multiple, and represent a spectrum of dimensions, each describing a particular aspect of the social world (Hale 2004). Ethnic, national, civic, racial, and linguistic are only a few examples that disentangle social milieu into specific dimensions.

Each of the multiple identities is usually analyzed as being located along a continuum with two extreme points (Kulyk 2018). The lower end is constrained by membership given at birth and draws upon the objective, consciousness of the individual, descent-related factors. In this view, identity is influenced by either genetically inherited or cultural attributes (Chandra 2012). The upper end is defined by voluntary membership and reflects one's stance regarding oneself and others, which results from an individual's personal experiences and life circumstances. As such, identity is no longer seen as a static or unchangeable concept, but rather as something that could be adjusted to one's current understanding of social processes.

The distance between these two points represents the continuum of identity choices available to the individual. It covers the entire spectrum of options, ranging from the simple essentialism of descent-related belonging to a pragmatic realism shaped by the individual's

personal circumstances. When choosing any specific location on this continuum, people use criteria vital to them at that particular moment. Scholars argue that social conditions define these criteria (Hale 2004).

Drawing upon the above simplification, Ukraine's analysis of identity choice focuses on three specific aspects, giving rise to three distinct approaches. The first is derived from essentialist theories that stem from the lower end of the identity continuum. Accordingly, the region of birth or residence is viewed as a primary source of identity formation (Arel and Khmelko 1996). Regions are believed to accumulate historical, political, and socio-economic peculiarities, significantly affecting their population's values and preferences (Kuzio 2001). Considering the vast regional divide in Ukraine, self-identification was ultimately linked to the pragmatic division between the east and west of the country. Eastern areas are characterized as being more attached to Russia-related attributes, ranging from speaking the Russian language to one's tolerance of authoritarian methods of governance (Arel 2006). In contrast, western regions are associated with more pro-democratic attitudes, intolerance of authoritarianism, and a strong preference for autonomy and independence.

The complexity of regional heterogeneity in Ukraine has contributed to the emergence of a second approach which focused on the most apparent aspect of societal cleavage between regions: language. As such, language practice and preferences were perceived as the primary criteria for identity definition (Kulyk 2018). Associated with specific interests and viewpoints, language can shape the belief-structure and behavioral norms of an individual, thereby influencing the process of self-identification. This approach depicted Ukraine as a country traditionally divided into two linguistic groups: Russian and Ukrainian speakers. (Kulyk 2016).

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2014 provided a third approach to identity formation. According to it, the war created a new reality in the country by strengthening the sense of political and civic unity (Smirnova and Iliev 2017; Pop-Eleches and Robertson 2018). Russia's aggression triggered mass ethnic defenses that united the people and boosted their sense of civic belonging. It mobilized the population, including Ukrainian Russian speakers, on the government's side (Aliyev 2019). Ukraine witnessed a significant consolidation of society not only in the western part of the country but also in the bilingual east. Commensurate with other countries' experiences (Frahm 2012), the war increased the notion of Ukrainian citizenship as opposed to ethnic Ukrainian (Sasse and Lackner 2018). Many people who previously identified themselves with Russia felt more Ukrainian. Russian speakers reconsidered their sense of national identity as well as their stance toward the country's official language. They began to view Ukrainian as their native language, even without knowing it (Kulyk 2018).

Even when linked to the social environment and recent events, political factors were rarely included in the identity analysis. Omitting the political dimension from self-identification was a considerable drawback since the political process played an essential role in configuring the Ukrainian society. The post-communist transition and rise of new pro-democratic ideologies, visions, and attitudes were important factors shaping contemporary Ukraine. This suggests that political considerations may have entered the process of self-identification as an essential criterion for defining one's position on the identity continuum. Whether one identifies himself or herself with Ukrainians or Russians could be linked to the political ideologies, political values, and political interests that each nation or state defines as their intrinsic characteristics and inner attributes against which individuals compare their own beliefs in understanding where they belong.

This line of reasoning is increasingly applicable to the case of Ukraine and Russia since the two countries showed a wide gap in their political settings. Russia is characterized by a hegemonic identity with a preference for authoritarian and less democratic forms of governance. In contrast, Ukraine developed more liberal and democratic institutions as the majority of its population adopted more pro-democratic values. Given this gap, political factors can potentially be an essential basis for comparison in choosing the nation or country to which an individual feels closer as a group member.

The current study aims to address this issue by raising the question of who opts for Ukraine. I initially focus on testing whether political values and preferences may potentially participate in the identification process in Ukraine, as opposed to Russia. The primary scope of this analysis is to clarify which political factors may predict individuals' identification with the nation, state, or society in the two countries. Parallely, I am interested in defining what distinct values each political variable should take for the residents of these countries to opt for a particular identity.

Choice of Political Factors for the Identity Analysis

In linking political factors to one's sense of identification, I adopt the common assumption that there are multiple identities, and each is defined based on specific criteria that position the individual on a particular point of the identity continuum. I assume that these criteria are, to some extent, similar to the entire range of identities. At the same time, I anticipate that some of them can be more important for certain identity types and only marginally influence others. Even if various identities overlap, they often appear to be distinct, with each capturing only a certain aspect of the social milieu (Onuch and Hale 2018).

My key challenge is to define the political factors that may act as criteria employed by the individual to self-identify with the nation, state, or society. I used a double strategy to capture

the range of possible choices that would result in a comprehensive set of political variables. On the one hand, I consider it necessary to account for the critical differences between Ukraine and Russia in their political systems. These should reflect the current divergence in their political settings and provide the initial criteria. On the other hand, I use recent studies on the key features behind the dominant narratives of the two countries about nationalism to discern additional determinants relevant to the political dimension.

In comparing the political systems, my point of departure is that Ukraine showed substantial divergence from Russia in its visions and institutions from the onset of the transition (White, McAllister, and Feklyunina 2010). The country is characterized by a strong inclination toward more democratic governance and Western-type development (Turchyn, Sukhorolskyi, and Sukhorolska 2020). Scholars explain this trend by the democratic political culture deeply entrenched in Ukraine (Resinger et al. 1994). Mass political values were adopted by the majority of the political elite and population, supporting the democratization process (Kachanovskiy 2012; Reznik 2016). Democracy was evolving following the conventional principles that theory defined as its critical foundations, such as free and fair elections, a plurality of opinions, freedom of speech, and so on (McGlynn 2020). In the aftermath of the Orange Revolution, when mass public protests prompted a reversal of the fraudulent presidential election, Ukraine became (with the exception of Baltic states) the most democratic country in the post-Soviet region (Musliu and Burlyuk 2019).

Conversely, after a short period of relative freedom in the early 1990s, Russia returned to a more authoritarian approach to governance (Evans 2011). Russian political elites actively opposed the introduction of democracy and Western-like political relations, on the grounds that these institutions were alien to the population (Brudny and Finkel 2011). Instead, Kremlin leaders claimed that Russia possessed its own “gene” of democracy (Otkritie Media 2022) that

presupposed the incorporation of a Soviet meaning of power into a seemingly liberal institutional framework. This trend included increased governmental control of the economy and a return to authoritarian methods of governance. Over the last two decades, Russia has witnessed worsening indicators of freedom of speech, electoral fraud, and increasing corruption. The incumbent regime, which has been in power for more than 20 years, gradually banned independent media, restricted access to social media, and criminalized opposition to the government to propel Kremlin's view, unobstructed by critical voices (Mankoff 2022).

The difference in the dominant forms of governance is closely linked to the ideology prevailing among the residents of the two countries regarding the state and nation, which brings me to the second line of strategy. Ukraine and Russia have followed very different narratives regarding their nations. The most apparent cleavage emerged from their perception of the reasons that united them into a distinct group. If in Russia, this unity was seen as a political one, historically established by "a great state" and its achievements, Ukraine emerged as a distinct society that existed as an inclusive group of diverse people.

In particular, Russia based its nationalism on the historically established idea of a "great state." This imperial vision primarily rested on the recent experience of the Soviet Union in which the Russian nation was dominant and considered entitled to dominate over the subordinated Soviet republics (Willerton, Goertz, and Slobodchikoff 2015). This imperial nationalism presupposed the absolute right of the state to rule over people's preferences, as well as the residents' devotion to the incumbent regime and its government. Additionally, the narrative of "a great state" was coupled with the idea of constant danger coming from the "Western block." This included positioning Russia against the West as a global anticapitalist force. As such, there was a constant expectation of aggression from the West, aiming to undermine Russia and shrink its sphere of

influence (Mankoff 2022). Thus, Russian imperial identity gradually evolved into a kind of militant patriotism closely linked to the idea of the strong state as the basis of the nation and the West as a source of permanent danger.

In contrast, Ukraine followed an entirely different logic in uniting its people. Studies repeatedly showed that the country's historical experience as a colony, subordinated and exploited by Russia over the entire duration of their shared past, created a rather hostile perception not only of the "Russian world" but also of the idea of the state (Feklyunina 2016). Ukraine was always characterized by low levels of institutional trust, which was indicative of adverse attitudes toward subordination to foreign authorities in power. Instead, Ukraine emerged as a unity of people, in which society became the reference point for identification (Szostek and Orlova 2022). The rise of voluntary organizations and strong civil mobilization, which took place in Ukraine recently, provides evidence that there was always a vital social element detached from the idea of the state (Zabyelina 2019). This collective spirit could be linked to the shared remembering of Soviet practices and the historical legacies of oppression exercised by Russia against the Ukrainian population (Chayinska, Kende, and Wohl 2021). They served as a glue in bonding Ukrainians into a society beyond the state, promoting trust, not in the authorities, but in their fellow residents.

Inevitably, the country saw convergence between Ukraine as a state and Ukraine as a society over the last decade. This became especially apparent after the Russian invasion in 2014. The primary sign was that people commenced associating themselves with major state attributes, such as the official language, without speaking it (Kulyk 2018). In line with other countries' historical experiences, the Russian invasion acted as a catalyst for nation- and state-building in the country by consolidating the population of all linguistic and regional backgrounds behind the government. Russia's recent invasion of 2022 also highlighted the idea of the nation being framed

by common territorial boundaries. The fight against the Russian occupation made it clear that Ukraine should exist as a political entity that required the residents to define their position toward Ukraine as a territorial unity.

Drawing upon these considerations, I propose that the following set of political factors should be included in the analysis of self-identification in Ukraine, as opposed to that in Russia:

- Preference for democratic forms of governance
- Preference for autonomy and freedom
- Devotion to the state and the idea of state dominance
- Perception of national security
- Emphasis on human society in uniting the population

I argue that these political factors can effectively capture the complexity of the political environment in which individuals try to position themselves with regard to Ukraine, as opposed to Russia. These are expected to provide a necessary, even if not sufficient, range of criteria used by residents to make their decision regarding which country they feel closer to. For the self-identification process to be complete, there should be an overlap between the personal visions regarding the selected political factors and what each of the two countries offers.

Thus, whether individuals identify themselves with Ukraine is expected to depend on whether they hold political visions that are closer to the actual characteristics of Ukraine's political system or expectations regarding their potential change in the future. If this overlap is achieved, individuals will identify themselves with Ukraine. If this overlap is not achieved, the identification process cannot be completed for this particular country. Individuals will fail to opt for membership with Ukraine, choosing Russia among the available alternatives as their national, civic, or social identity.

Since the existing divide is formed mainly around the two groups of identities, namely the Ukrainian and the Russian, I formulate my expectations in the following way:

Hypothesis 1: The individuals who support democracy are more likely to identify themselves with Ukraine than with Russia.

Hypothesis 2: The individuals who are characterized by a strong attachment to the state or to the idea of a strong leader are more likely to identify themselves with Russia than with Ukraine.

Hypothesis 3: The individuals who value plurality and freedom are more likely to identify themselves with Ukraine than with Russia.

Hypothesis 4: The individuals who put a lot of emphasis on security have a higher probability of identifying themselves with Russia than with Ukraine.

Hypothesis 5: The individuals who value society are more likely to identify themselves with Ukraine than with Russia.

Data and Methods

To test the above hypotheses, I use data from the most recent wave of the World Values Survey (WVS) that belong to 2017 for Russia and 2020 for Ukraine. The sample includes 2095 cases, out of which 830 cases correspond to Ukraine and 1265 cases correspond to Russia. The primary scope of my empirical analysis is to test whether one's political values and preferences are associated with multiple identities in the way formulated by the hypotheses.

The selected set of identities includes ethnic, civic, and social. They constitute the key dependent variables. Ethnic identity is the ethnic group that the respondents identify themselves with. I distinguish between two major ethnic groups for each country: Ukrainians and others in

the case of Ukraine, and Russians and others in the case of Russia. Civic identity specifies whether the respondents feel to be a citizen of their country. Social identity describes if the respondents feel to belong to their social community. Both take the value of one if the respondents answer “I strongly agree” or “I agree to a large extent,” and the value of zero if any other answer is specified.

The model explaining identity formation is viewed as composed of three groups of determinants. First, I predict the three identities through the set of conventional socio-demographic characteristics, such as the respondents’ age, income scale, education levels, and whether they were born in their country of residence (Kunovich 2009). The second step includes augmenting the previous model with the regional, linguistic, and conflict variables capturing the conventional sources of the identification mechanism in Ukraine. As such, I include the set of regions, the primary language of communication at home, and the fear of a foreign invasion.

Regions are variables that reflect the geopolitical division of the two countries into regions. For Ukraine, territorial binary variables are constructed based on the geographical division map provided by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Administrative_divisions_of_Ukraine#/media/File:Ukraine_KIIS-Regional-division2.png). They include West, East, Center, South, and Kyiv. For Russia, I use regional variables provided by the World Values Survey, such as North Caucasian, Central, Volga, Urals, Far East, South, Siberia, and North West. The linguistic variable is operationalized by asking the respondents to specify whether they use their country’s official language to communicate at home. The war variable describes how much the respondents worry that a war with any other country can occur on their country’s territory. The responses are measured on a

binary scale, with the value of one corresponding to “very much worried” and “a great deal worried” and the value of zero corresponding to “not really worried” or “not at all worried.”

The third step involves augmenting the previous model with the selected political factors and exploring the added value that their inclusion in the analysis brings to explaining the self-identification process. The preference for democratic forms of governance is initially measured through the role of a strong leader and elections in the political system. As such, I include whether the respondents viewed a strong leader as the foundation for a good political system. The responses are coded on a binary scale, with the value of one corresponding to “I strongly agree” or “I agree” and zero corresponding to “I disagree” or “I strongly disagree.” Similarly, I use the questions asking the respondents to specify whether their country’s leader should be chosen through elections. Again, the responses “I strongly agree” or ‘I agree’ are assigned the value of one, while the value of zero corresponds to “I disagree” or “I strongly disagree” with this statement.

Additionally, I measure the frequency of one’s participation in the national elections by creating a binary variable *Voted_in_National_Elections*. It takes the value of one if the respondents consistently or most of the times voted in the national elections. If this was not the case, the variable takes the value of zero. The devotion to the state is measured through institutional trust by asking the respondents to specify if they have confidence in the national government. The positive responses, such as “a great deal of confidence” and “a lot of confidence,” are assigned the value of one. The negative responses that correspond to “no confidence at all” or “little confidence” are assigned the value of zero.

The preference for plurality and freedom is proxied by three relevant measures. First, I include confidence in the press to capture the freedom of speech. The responses are provided on

a binary basis, with the value of one referring to “a lot or some confidence” and the value of zero reflecting “little or no confidence” in the press. Second, the surveyance variable is measured by asking the respondents whether the government should have the right to survey citizens in their country. The binary responses include the values of one and zero corresponding respectively to “should have” and “should not have” this right. The third measure refers to the preference for freedom of say and is operationalized by assigning the value of one to the statement that “giving people more say” should be the country’s main aim. The importance of security for the respondents is captured by the question asking them to choose whether they value freedom more than security. The variable takes the value of one if the preference is given to security and the value of zero if the preference is given to freedom instead.

Finally, the value of society has two measures, such as the preference for human society and social trust. The preference for human society is a binary variable that takes the value of one if the respondents choose that “progress towards a more human society” is most important for them as individuals and the value of zero if other choices were specified. Additionally, social trust is used to approximate the quality of interpersonal relations in society. To operationalize this variable, I use the conventional question, “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people?” It is codified as a dichotomous variable taking the value of one if respondents believe that “most people can be trusted” and the value of zero if they think that “you need to be careful when dealing with people.”

The descriptive statistics of the key variables used in the analysis are summarized in Table 1. Since all dependent variables are binary, logistic regression models are applied. To facilitate the interpretation of logit results, I report the average marginal effects describing each

factor's impact on the three identity types. The average marginal effects show the average change in an individual's likelihood of identifying oneself with Ukraine or Russia when raising a given factor from its minimum to its maximum value and keeping the other variables constant. This measure provides a clear picture of the full range of variation that a given variable may produce on the self-identification process in a manner that enables comparison with the influence of other predictors.

Table 1 near here

The Political Context in Ukraine and Russia: A Descriptive Analysis

To demonstrate the correctness of my approach, I first analyze the contrasts between Ukraine and Russia for the selected set of political measures. To make this comparison more illustrative, I ran a one-step ANOVA and calculated the differences in the mean values between the two countries. The results are summarized in Table 2 and visualized in Figure 1.

Table 2 near here

Briefly, despite the common culture and shared past, the two countries showed an apparent gap in their key political features. In line with their imperial vision, Russians appeared to be more attached to the state and its authorities. More than half of them declared that they trusted their government, while not even a quarter of the people could do so in Ukraine. More

Russians than Ukrainians recognized the value of a strong leader in their political system, with this difference amounting to 10.8 percentage points.

In contrast, Ukrainians surpassed Russians in their belief that any leader should be chosen through elections to be an influential political actor in the country (81.8 vs. 77.1 percent). They also actively carried out this belief through their actual behavior and, thus, were more inclined to vote in elections than Russians were (56.6 vs. 44.2 percent).

Additionally, the WVS data suggest that greater trust in the state coexisted in Russia, with more tolerance for governmental control, unlike in Ukraine. The Russian population was more likely to accept surveillance by the state as compared to the Ukrainian population (63.1 vs. 50.5 percent). Conversely, Ukrainians attached greater value to autonomy and freedom, viewing them as unique and nontradable attributes. In comparison to 24.4 percent of Russians, 31.3 percent of Ukrainians declared that freedom was more important than security. More Ukrainians than Russians also believed that allowing people more say should become their country's main objective (19.2 vs. 15.9 percent).

Partly because of the weak inclination toward the state, more Ukrainians were characterized by pro-social behavior. Thus, almost one-third of the Ukrainian population declared that they trusted others, whereas this percentage could only reach 23.9 percent in Russia. A strong state acted as a substitute for civil society, crowding out private initiatives. Conversely, a strong society serves as a complementary element to the weak state in Ukraine. Many studies demonstrated that where the state failed in Ukraine, civil society or self-organized groups tried to replace the existing gap by promoting change or even restoring justice (Szostek and Orlova 2022; Zabyelina 2019).

In summary, the comparative analysis suggests that devotion to the state uniquely characterized Russia. Russian residents showed high trust in their government and tolerance of authoritarian methods of governance or limitations on their freedom. As a result, they were less inspired to exercise their right to vote and participate in the elections. In contrast, pro-democratic values and visions uniquely characterized Ukraine. Aspirations for freedom, in general, or freedom of speech, in particular, were more prominent in the Ukrainian society than in Russian society. Ukraine was also a more trusting community where relatively high levels of trust could emerge among residents.

Strong civic and social elements coexisted in Ukraine, with a significant linguistic divide and persistent regional disparities. These negative factors may have caused heterogeneity in the views and opinions of the Ukrainian population. They, however, did not affect how Ukrainians felt about their nation, state, and society. More people adopted their national identity in Ukraine (95.1 percent) than in Russia (86.6 percent). Similarly, despite the high level of institutional trust, fewer Russians than Ukrainians felt like citizens in their own country (80.8 vs. 85.9 percent). In particular, 85.9 percent of Ukrainian respondents identified themselves as citizens of Ukraine, regardless of their low levels of trust in their government. Ukraine also appeared to have a more inclusive unity of people, despite being characterized by wide linguistic diversity. Of the respondents, 85.2 percent declared that they belonged to their community in Ukraine, whereas only 79.8 percent did so in Russia. Ukrainians created an extremely open society into which anyone could easily integrate independent of their linguistic or regional background.

Figure 1 near here

Thus, my descriptive analysis confirmed that the two countries differed significantly in terms of the quality of their political factors (see Figure 1). This suggests that the political dimension could be an important criterion for deciding where an individual belongs. The inclination toward a strong state and security, coupled with the tolerance of authoritarian methods of governance, was more associated with the Russian identity. A high propensity to trust, preference for pro-democratic forms of governance, and intolerance of state violations of personal freedoms could lay a solid foundation for choosing Ukraine. The next section addresses this issue by empirically testing whether political factors can impact the process of self-identification in Ukraine and Russia.

Main Empirical Results and Findings

I analyzed each of the three identities separately and summarized the results in Tables 3 and 4. Owing to space limitations, I have only reported the final models that include all the predictors described in the methodological section. Accordingly, ethnic identity was primarily determined by descent-related factors in both the countries. For Ukraine, these included whether the individuals were born in the country and whether they used the Ukrainian language to communicate at home. In addition, intolerance to surveillance by the state was associated with choosing Ukraine as one's nation. People who denied the government's right to surveil its residents, were more likely to identify themselves as Ukrainians.

Tables 3 and 4 near here

As Figure 2 shows, ethnic identity formation followed a pattern similar to that in Russia. Whether the individuals were born in the country and used the Russian language to communicate strongly, affected their inclination to identify themselves with the Russian nation. A certain variation of ethnic identity was also established across regions: people from the North Caucasian district were less likely to feel Russian than residents of the Central District, Urals, Siberia, and North West Russia. In addition, two new variables, the importance of a leader for the country's political system and trust in the government, were associated with an increased likelihood of identifying oneself with the Russian nation. Nonetheless, I restrained myself from making strong inferences regarding the influence of these variables because their coefficients were statistically significant only at a five percent level.

Figure 2 about here

The language used by respondents at home continued to play an important role in the formation of civic identity (see Figure 3). Those speaking Ukrainian had a higher probability of feeling like citizens in Ukraine. This effect was coupled with minor regional variations in the likelihood of civic self-identification. People living in the central regions were less likely to identify themselves with the Ukrainian state than those living in the east of Ukraine. The most significant factor was the impact of fear of foreign invasion. In search of protection, the prospect of war pushed Ukrainians toward their state, increasing their civic aspirations.

Additionally, the results suggest that the preference for elections as a framework for choosing political leaders and actual participation in voting significantly increased the likelihood of opting for Ukraine as one's civic identity. Commensurate with the idea of an inclusive society,

more trusting individuals were characterized by a higher propensity to feel like citizens in Ukraine. In summary, those who spoke Ukrainian, trusted their co-citizens, believed in elections, and actually participated in them tended to identify Ukraine as their state.

In contrast, descent-related factors continued to strongly affect the formation of civic identity in Russia. The regional variables and whether the individual was born in the country significantly impacted the likelihood of identifying oneself with the Russian state. Respondents who viewed a strong leader as the precondition for a well-functioning political system were more likely to make this choice. Nevertheless, civic identity was positively associated with the idea of elections. The individuals who believed that this leader should be elected, and participated in the national elections were more likely to specify “Russia” as a state to which they belong. Regardless of these pro-democratic tendencies, one’s sense of civic identification was strongly influenced by authoritarian tendencies. Respondents who displayed greater trust in the government were characterized by a higher probability of adopting a Russian civic identity. Similarly, people who distrusted the press, preferred security over freedom, and denied the need to enforce freedom of speech were more likely to feel like citizens in Russia. Such people also assigned little value to promoting a more human society in their country.

Overall, the Russian civic identity was common among those who trusted the government, believed in a strong leader—even if this leader was chosen through elections—had no confidence in the press, accepted increased surveillance from the state, tended to refuse freedom in exchange for security, or denied the freedom of speech and the human foundation of society. These features reflected the dominant imperial vision in Russia, not only among politicians but also among regular citizens.

Figure 3 about here

Regarding one's identification with the community, my analysis provided a distinct pattern of relationship with the selected predictors (see Figure 4). For Ukraine, language and, to some extent, regionalization continued to shape social cohesion in society. Fears of foreign invasion further united Ukrainians into a single community. Among the political factors, only two appeared to significantly impact the identification process—adhering to elections for choosing a leader and displaying confidence in the press—and were closely linked to a higher likelihood of feeling a member of the Ukrainian society.

For Russia, respondents' socio-demographic characteristics and region of residence acted as the main determinants defining their social identity. Those born in the country, with lower educational levels, or living in the Northern Caucasian district were more likely to declare that they belonged to their community. Fears of foreign invasion (promoted by imperial ideology) also contributed to gluing Russian society together. Valuing security over freedom strengthened the social identity of Russian residents. Commensurate with their imperial visions, trusting the government acted as a strong predictor of belonging to Russia as a society, even though participation in elections was still a positive factor of social cohesion. This positive relationship between confidence in the government and social identity is a rather surprising finding since a strong state usually crowds out individual initiatives, acting as a substitute for social bonds in the society. Finally, my analysis showed a marginal but still positive impact of trusting others on social identity formation in Russia.

Figure 4 about here

Overall, the results show that political considerations played a considerable role in the formation of various identities. Political views and aspirations were important criteria that defined the success of the identification process of many forms, with this influence being significantly stronger for Russia than for Ukraine. Figure 5 illustrates this finding by comparing the estimated probabilities of identifying oneself with the nation, state, and society, depending on the value of the political variables in each country. Generally, Ukrainian identity is associated with more pro-democratic beliefs and behaviors. More specifically, this includes assigning greater importance to elections in choosing the country's leader, more active participation in national elections, greater confidence in the press, and intolerance to state control through surveillance. These political features were positively related to at least one of the selected identity types.

Figure 5 about here

My results also confirm that the Russian imperial visions prevailing among most of the population were directly reflected in the three identity types. Those who identified themselves with Russia, either as a nation, state, or society, 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.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study aims to juxtapose the identity formation processes between Ukraine and Russia. My key argument is that given the contrasts in the political systems and ideologies of nationalism between the two countries, political considerations might play a significant role in one's decision to opt for Ukraine or Russia. The analysis comprised three identity types: ethnic, civic, and social.

These 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 Ukraine 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 Ukraine for at least one of the selected identity types. This finding is commensurate with the idea that people holding more pro-democratic values choose to identify themselves with the Ukrainian nation, state, or society. In contrast, the residents who believed in a strong leader, put great trust in the government, had low confidence in the press, valued security over freedom, and denied the need to support freedom of speech or human society tended to identify themselves with the Russian nation, state, or community. Generally, those who chose Russia were more likely to display an increased attachment to the state and a greater tolerance of authoritarian methods of governance.

In summary, five important conclusions can be drawn from this analysis. First, there is a specific pattern of formation for each selected identity. Consequently, identities differ not only in the dimension of social life they capture but also in the set of factors that predict them. This

implies that the analysis of a specific identity should rely not only on the general theory of identification but also account for the distinct nature of the identity of interest. Failure to do so may result in false conclusions regarding the primary sources of identification in each specific dimension of one's social milieu.

Second, it can be concluded that the formation of ethnolinguistic identity is complete in Ukraine. The WVS data also showed significant progress in the formation of civic and social identities. These positive trends impose restrictions on the analysis. When a large number of people declare belonging to the same nation, state, or society, there is only a slight variation in the respective variables. Hence, there is little chance of empirically detecting the key covariates that explain cross-individual differences in identity choices. This was the case for the Ukrainian ethnic identity, for which more than 95 percent of the respondents gave a positive answer. Considering the relatively small sample size for Ukraine, it was a challenge to establish what exactly covaries with the decision to choose either the Ukrainian or other ethnic groups as one's identity.

Third, the three fundamental theories of identification in Ukraine should still be considered valid. The language of communication at home was associated with each of the three identity types. However, this relationship may weaken significantly in the aftermath of the Russian invasion of 2022, which should become the subject of analysis for future research. Similarly, the initial conflict with Russia that raised the first fears of war was positively connected to civic and social identities in Ukraine. In line with existing theories (Frahm 2012), the Russian invasion united the Ukrainian population in an attempt to protect their state and society against the common aggressor. The ongoing war is likely to intensify this process. Furthermore, regional variables marginally influence the sense of identification in Ukraine but

still matter for certain types of identities. However, many studies have shown that regional disparities have diminished significantly since 2014. I expect that they may entirely disappear in the aftermath of the war of 2022 owing to the unprecedented scale of internal and external population displacement.

Fourth, political visions and considerations matter in one's decision regarding where to belong. In the case of Ukraine, people holding more pro-democratic values and visions are more likely to identify themselves with Ukraine as their nation, state, and community. These people also value freedom over security and support freedom of speech in their country. They want a strong leader, but they demand that the leader be chosen through elections. They request the right to vote and follow their civic duties by participating in elections. The above political values and aspirations characterize Ukraine as a nation, state, and community, to a great extent.

Fifth, my analysis provides strong evidence supporting current discussions on the imperial visions of Russia. The country's residents are more likely to identify themselves with Russia if they have greater trust in the government and support more authoritarian methods of governance, such as tolerating surveillance and restrictions on freedom. The idea of the state exists over society and individuals, in Russia. The narrative of "Russia's greatness" and insecurity caused by the fear of aggression from the West is the foundation for uniting Russians.

Overall, the analysis shows that the identification process follows a distinct causal pattern in the two countries. Regarding Ukraine, there are still many questions about the complete set of determinants that may define a sense of 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- and state-building processes. Future studies should, therefore, focus on accounting for a broader range of political factors in analyzing how and which political

visions can potentially influence the identification with the country or community.

Understanding these trends may allow the identity theory to go beyond the conventional cleavage or extremism approach when studying effects of conflict. Instead, more attention should be paid to path-breaks in identity formation during or in the aftermath of wars and the key factors that define one's choice of a new location on the identity continuum.

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TABLE 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Key Variables

VARIABLES	Mean	St. dev.	Min.	Max.
Ethnic Identity	0.901	0.297	0	1
Civic Identity	0.829	0.375	0	1
Social Identity	0.821	0.383	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
Education			0	1
Lower	0.118	0.405	0	1
Middle	0.226	0.418	0	1
Upper	0.656	0.475	0	1
Used the Official Language to Communicate at Home	0.791	0.406	0	1
Fears of War	0.859	0.347	0	1
Importance of Leader	0.615	0.487	0	1
Choice of Leader through Elections	0.791	0.407	0	1
Voted in National Elections	0.494	0.500	0	1
Trusted the Government	0.407	0.491	0	1
Trusted the Press	0.322	0.467	0	1
Accepted the Surveyance	0.579	0.494	0	1
Freedom over Security	0.273	0.445	0	1
Supported the Freedom of Say	0.173	0.378	0	1
Should Promote Human Society	0.153	0.360	0	1
Social Trust	0.267	0.442	0	1

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

TABLE 2. A Comparative Analysis of Means and Variances for the Key Variables between
Ukraine and Russia

VARIABLES	Mean values		Contrast	Analysis of variance	
	Ukraine	Russia		Between groups	Within groups
Ethnic Identity	0.951	0.866	0.085***	5.347	268.8
Civic Identity	0.859	0.808	0.051***	1.871	425.4
Social Identity	0.852	0.798	0.054***	2.151	441.1
Importance of Leader	0.468	0.676	-0.104***	7.060	629.6
Choice of Leader through Elections	0.818	0.771	0.046***	1.519	483.9
Voted in National Elections	0.566	0.442	0.124***	11.097	743.5
Trusted the Government	0.202	0.548	-0.346***	85.459	626.1
Trusted the Press	0.309	0.331	-0.022	0.343	649.2
Accepted the Surveyance	0.505	0.631	-0.126***	11.415	712.9
Freedom over Security	0.313	0.244	0.069***	3.445	583.6
Supported the Freedom of Say	0.192	0.159	0.033**	0.803	435.0
Should Promote Human Society	0.141	0.162	-0.021	0.356	395.8
Social Trust	0.306	0.239	0.067***	3.337	588.1

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

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

TABLE 3. Key Factors behind Identity Formation in Ukraine

VARIABLES	Ethnic Identity	Civic Identity	Social Identity
Born in the Country	0.081*** (0.022)	-0.031 (0.058)	0.006 (0.060)
Age	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.000 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Income	0.005 (0.005)	-0.002 (0.007)	-0.012* (0.007)
Education			
Lower	Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category
Middle	0.031 (0.031)	-0.042 (0.046)	0.054 (0.046)
Upper	0.041 (0.027)	0.019 (0.044)	0.081* (0.042)
Regions			
East	Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category
Kyiv	-0.017 (0.024)	-0.027 (0.049)	-0.137*** (0.046)
West	0.000 (0.032)	-0.011 (0.058)	0.001 (0.056)
Center	0.018 (0.035)	-0.140*** (0.048)	-0.058 (0.050)
South	0.042* (0.022)	-0.061 (0.040)	-0.034 (0.043)
Used the Official Language to Communicate at Home	0.156*** (0.048)	0.111*** (0.034)	0.081** (0.034)
Fears of War	0.025 (0.031)	0.143*** (0.033)	0.071* (0.038)
Importance of Leader	-0.012 (0.019)	-0.027 (0.026)	-0.021 (0.027)
Choice of Leader through Elections	0.019 (0.024)	0.054** (0.027)	0.068** (0.029)
Voted in National Elections	0.000 (0.017)	0.061*** (0.023)	0.005 (0.025)
Trusted the Government	0.004 (0.028)	0.006 (0.031)	-0.035 (0.030)
Trusted the Press	0.011 (0.022)	0.040 (0.026)	0.057** (0.028)
Accepted the Surveyance	-0.042** (0.020)	-0.013 (0.023)	0.005 (0.024)
Freedom over Security	0.012	0.006	-0.003

	(0.022)	(0.025)	(0.026)
Supported the Freedom of Say	0.020	-0.010	0.012
	(0.025)	(0.029)	(0.031)
Should Promote Human Society	-0.013	0.008	0.007
	(0.030)	(0.034)	(0.035)
Social Trust	-0.025	0.057**	0.024
	(0.018)	(0.027)	(0.027)
VIF	1.28	1.34	1.23
Observations	629	830	825

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

Notes: The last row reports the mean VIF estimations (VIF=variance inflation factor). Standard errors are reported in parentheses.

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

TABLE 4. Key Factors behind Identity Formation in Russia

VARIABLES	Ethnic Identity	Civic Identity	Social Identity
Born in the Country	0.181*** (0.023)	0.106** (0.052)	0.106** (0.051)
Age	0.001 (0.000)	0.001* (0.001)	0.001** (0.001)
Income	-0.010** (0.004)	0.009 (0.006)	0.009 (0.006)
Education			
Lower	Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category
Middle	-0.009 (0.027)	-0.024 (0.042)	-0.105** (0.046)
Upper	-0.014 (0.024)	-0.019 (0.038)	-0.092** (0.043)
Regions			
North Caucasian	Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category
Central	0.083** (0.034)	-0.242** (0.095)	-0.310*** (0.113)
Volga	-0.013 (0.032)	-0.192** (0.096)	-0.308*** (0.114)
Urals	0.072* (0.041)	-0.269*** (0.098)	-0.210* (0.118)
Far East	0.038 (0.041)	-0.234** (0.105)	-0.349*** (0.120)
South	0.049 (0.040)	-0.102 (0.105)	-0.293** (0.119)
Siberia	0.073** (0.037)	-0.279*** (0.097)	-0.300*** (0.116)
North West	0.107** (0.045)	-0.093 (0.104)	-0.181 (0.120)
Used the Official Language to Communicate at Home	0.250*** (0.022)	-0.012 (0.054)	-0.025 (0.058)
Fears of War	-0.010 (0.018)	0.032 (0.027)	0.071*** (0.026)
Importance of Leader	0.025* (0.014)	0.055** (0.022)	0.015 (0.022)
Choice of Leader through Elections	0.005 (0.017)	0.072*** (0.024)	0.005 (0.026)
Voted in National Elections	-0.006 (0.015)	0.094*** (0.024)	0.111*** (0.024)
Trusted the Government	-0.029* (0.016)	0.079*** (0.023)	0.060*** (0.021)
Trusted the Press	0.012	-0.068***	0.013

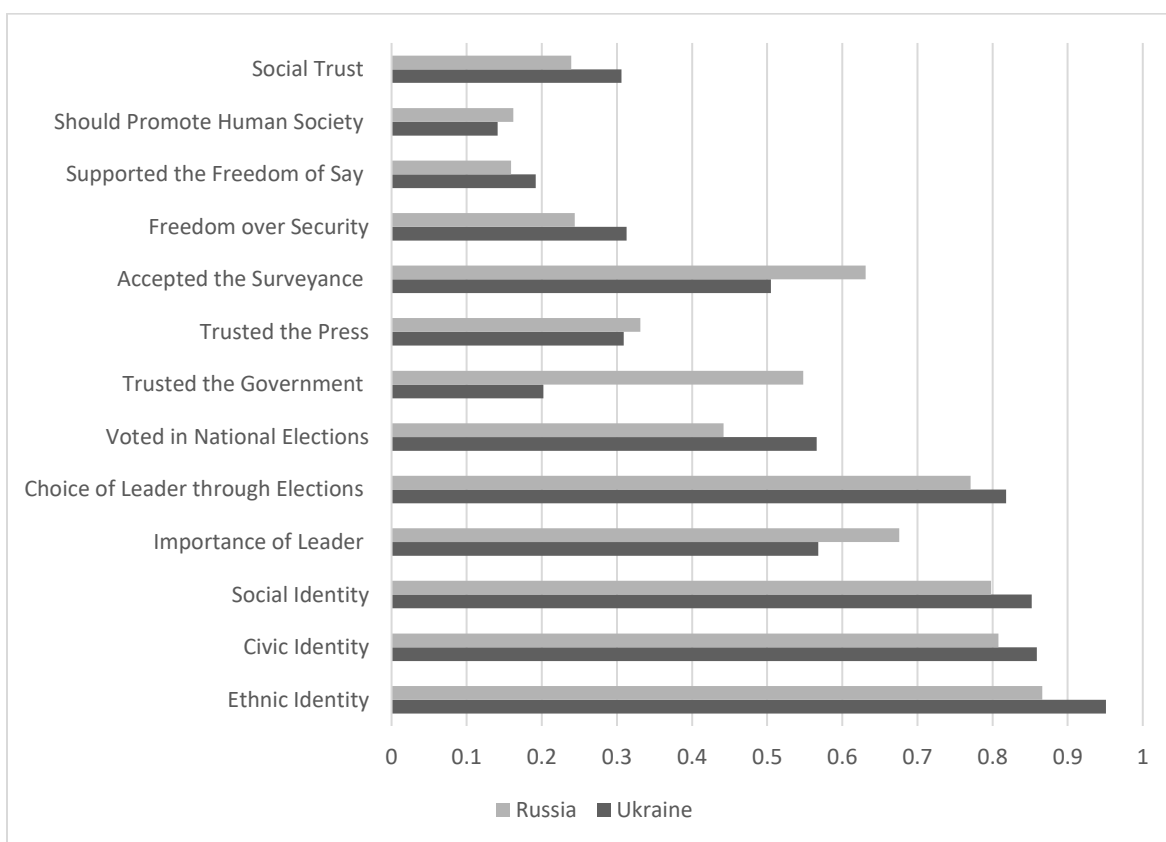
	(0.015)	(0.024)	(0.026)
Accepted the Surveyance	-0.012	0.023	0.024
	(0.015)	(0.022)	(0.023)
Freedom over Security	-0.022	-0.095***	-0.055**
	(0.016)	(0.023)	(0.025)
Supported the Freedom of Say	0.023	-0.065**	-0.038
	(0.020)	(0.026)	(0.028)
Should Promote Human Society	-0.005	-0.066**	0.004
	(0.018)	(0.026)	(0.029)
Social Trust	-0.024	0.044	0.048*
	(0.016)	(0.027)	(0.028)
VIF	1.38	1.32	1.45
Observations	1,265	1,251	1,244

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

Notes: The last row reports the mean VIF estimations (VIF=variance inflation factor). Standard errors are reported in parentheses.

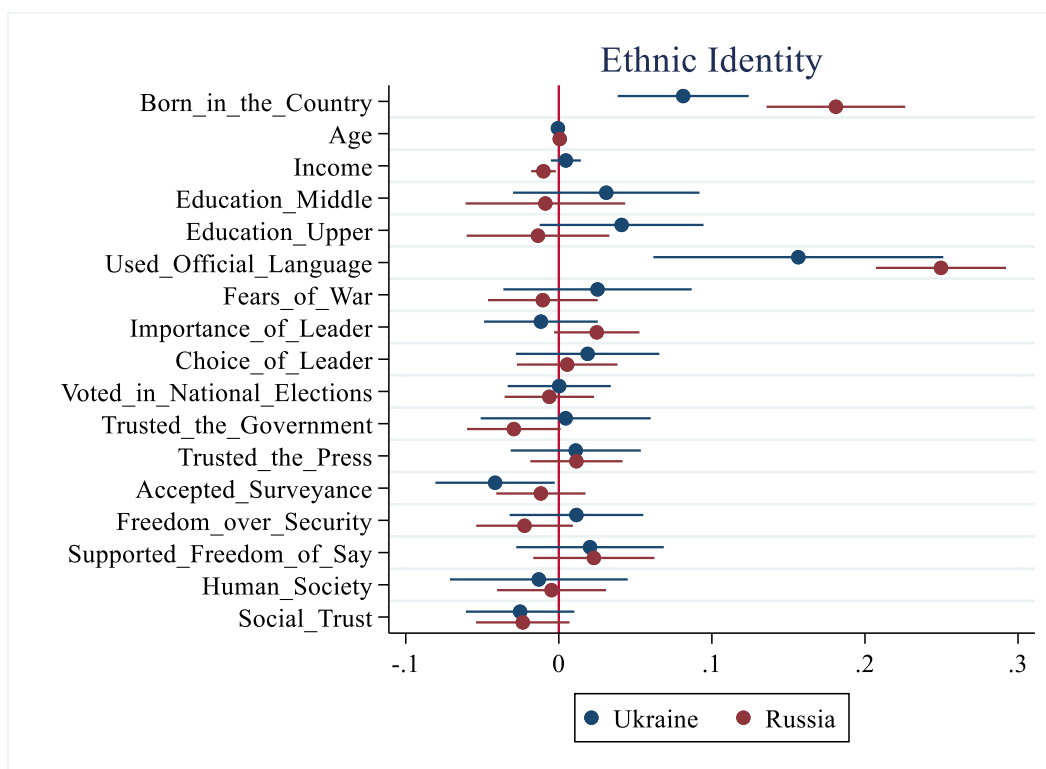
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

FIGURE 1. Mean Values for the Key Variables: Ukraine versus Russia



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

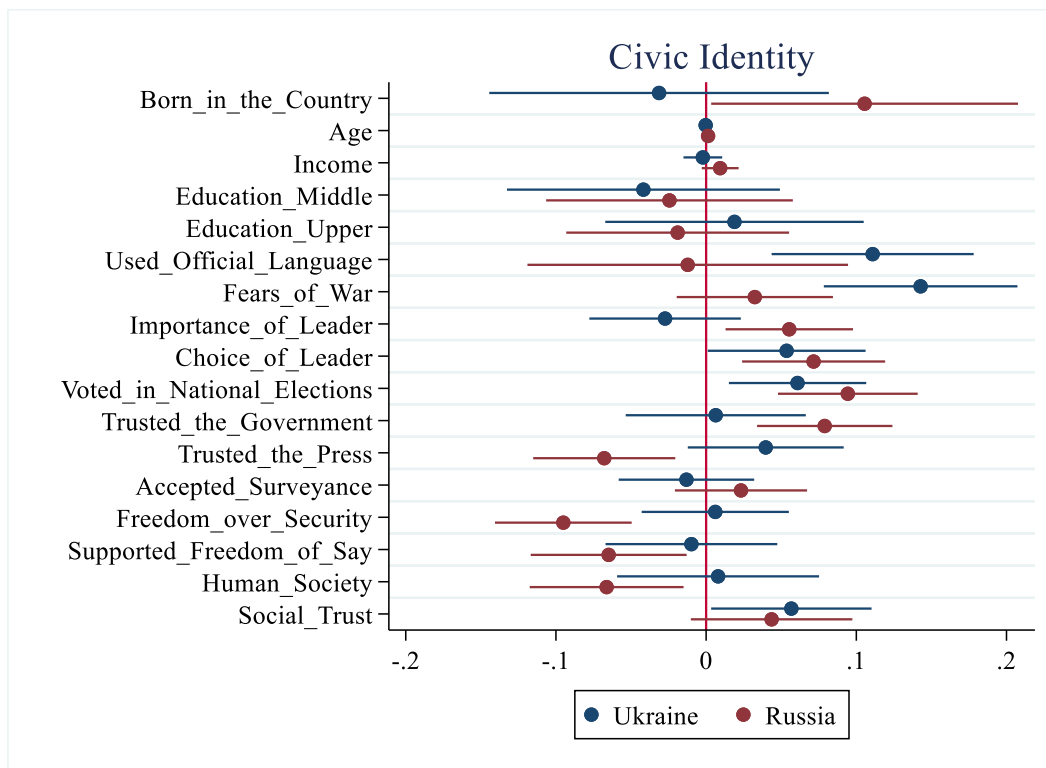
FIGURE 2. Average Marginal Effects on the Probability of Ethnic Self-identification: Ukraine versus Russia



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

Notes: The average marginal effects are calculated for each country separately based on the model 1 in Tables 3 and 4. Average marginal effects for the regional variable are not displayed due to the space limits.

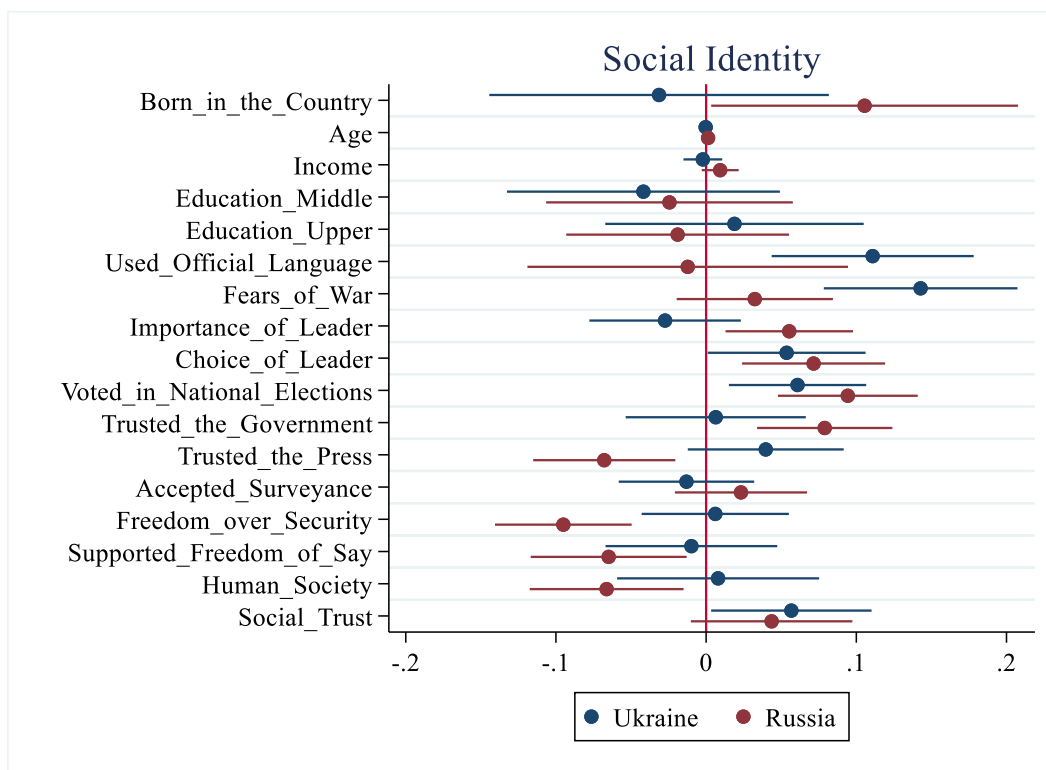
FIGURE 3. Average Marginal Effects on the Probability of Civic Self-identification: Ukraine versus Russia



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

Notes: The average marginal effects are calculated for each country separately based on the model 2 in Tables 3 and 4. Average marginal effects for the regional variable are not displayed due to the space limits.

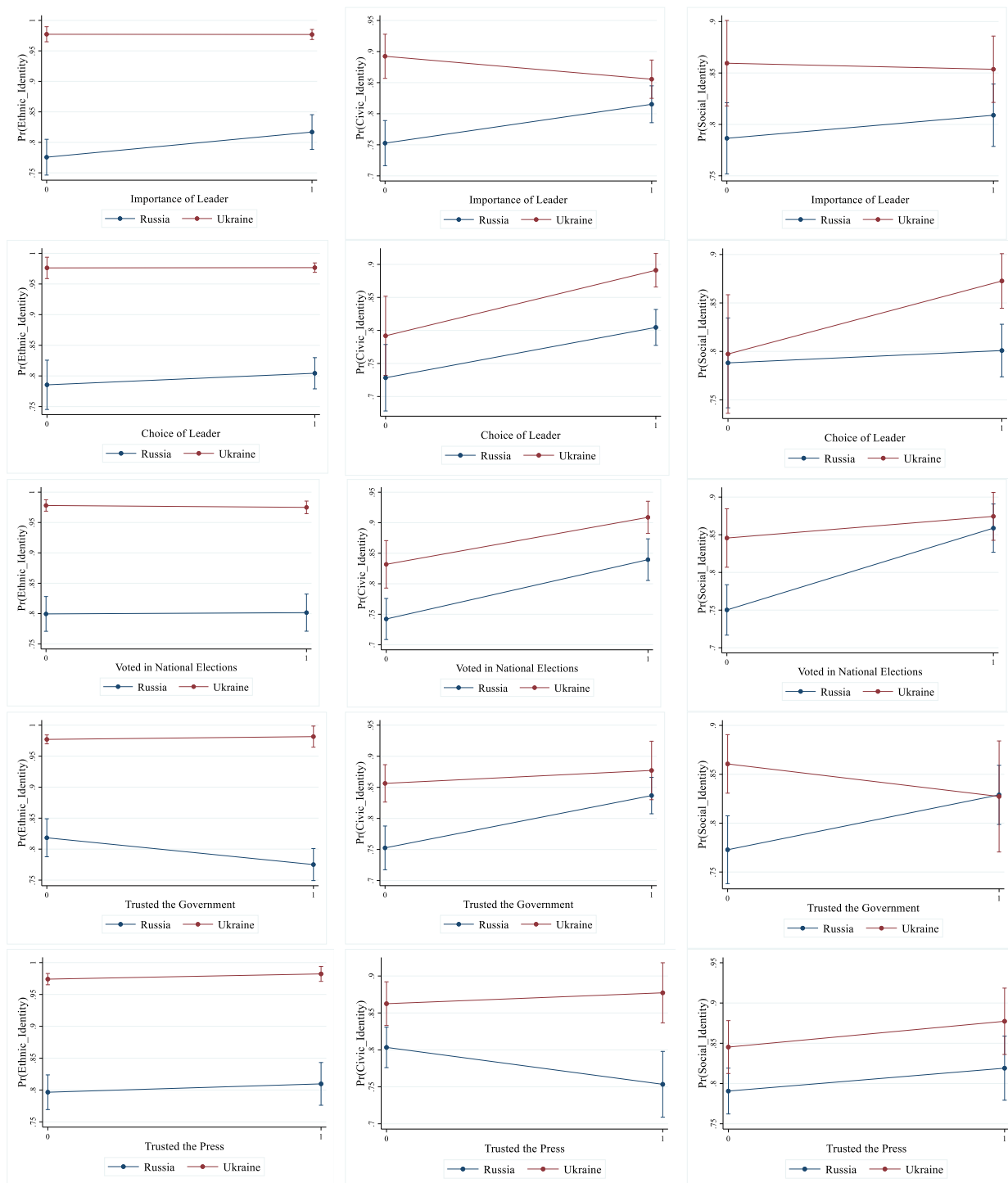
FIGURE 4. Average Marginal Effects on the Probability of Social Self-identification: Ukraine versus Russia



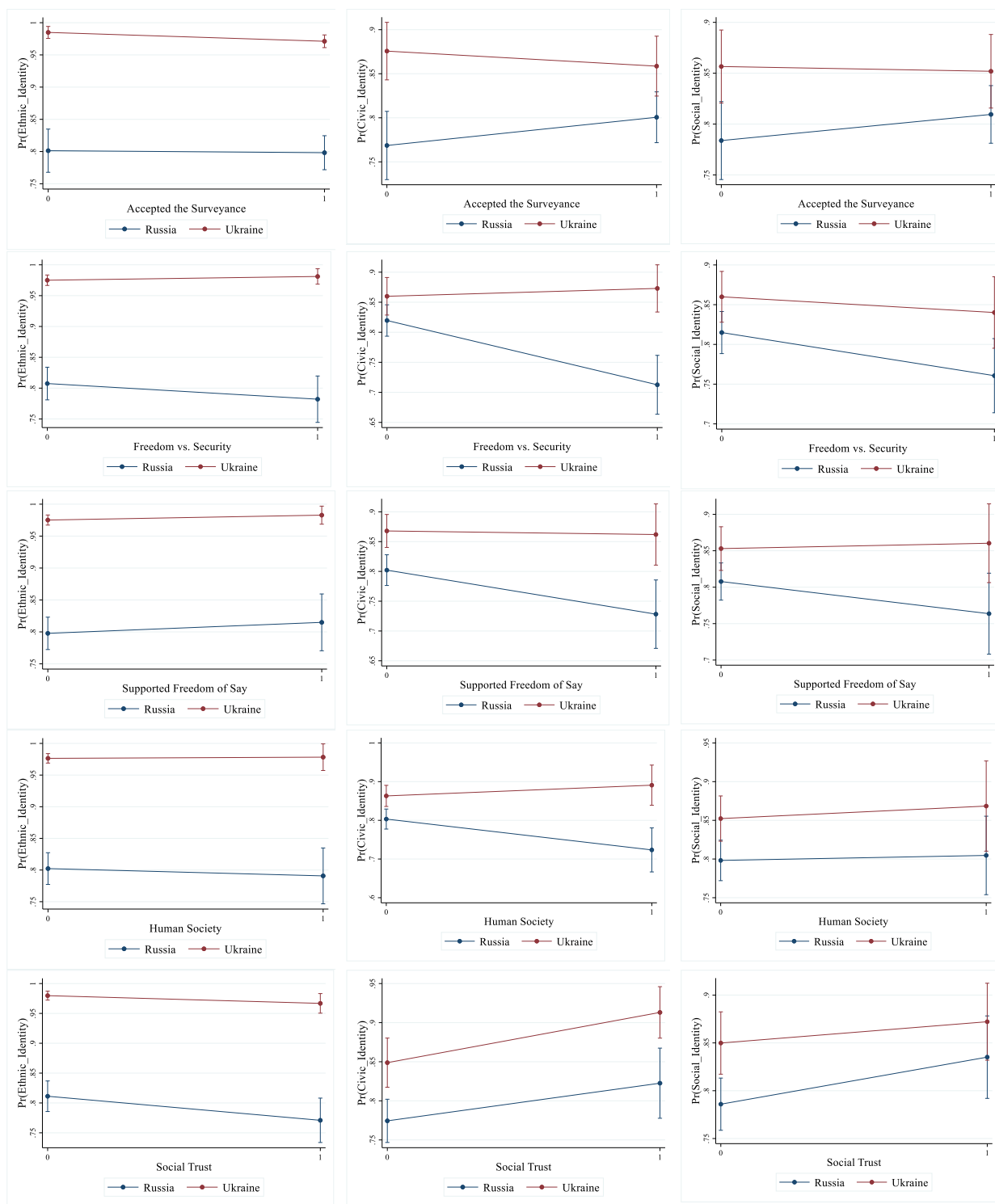
Source: Author's calculations and visualization using the WVS (2017 and 2020).

Notes: The average marginal effects are calculated for each country separately based on the model 3 in Tables 3 and 4. Average marginal effects for the regional variable are not displayed due to the space limits.

FIGURE 4. Average Marginal Effects on the Probability of Self-Identification by Country and by Political Factor



(continued)



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