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## **A Psycho-Historical Analysis of Nations: The Example of Ukraine and Russia**

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# **A Psycho-Historical Analysis of Nations: The Example of Ukraine and Russia**

## **Abstract**

This study investigates the influence of historical encounters with invasions and territorial fragmentation on the formation of a democratic political culture. Utilizing individual-level psychological theories, I illustrate that enduring occupations tend to foster pro-democratic values, such as a sense of resistance and autonomy. Additionally, the historical presence of territorial fragmentation contributes to the proliferation of diverse opinions, stimulating social dialogues and prompting citizens to advocate for a greater say and increased participation in the political sphere. Conversely, regions acting as occupiers and avoiding territorial division typically exhibit authoritarian governance, fostering submission to authorities and a distorted understanding of power. To validate these propositions, I employ Ukraine and Russia as illustrative examples. By applying a structural equation modeling to the World Values Survey data, I demonstrate that Ukraine, characterized by dynamic occupations and territorial fragmentation throughout its evolution as a nation, is more likely to belong to a class reflecting a more democratic political culture. In contrast, Russia's history of a unified authoritarian state is associated with an increased probability of belonging to a class describing a less democratic culture.

**Keywords:** History and politics, political culture, psychology of nations, Russia, Ukraine.

# **A Psycho-Historical Analysis of Nations: The Example of Ukraine and Russia**

## **Introduction**

Historical experiences of Ukraine and Russia provide a unique example for researchers to explore how shared racial features, language, and religion can lead to different political values. Even before the recent conflict, many studies showed that Ukraine and Russia were heading in different political directions since the early 2000s (Reisinger, Miller, et al. 1994; White, McAllister, et al. 2010). Ukraine was leaning towards a more democratic system, while Russia was gradually embracing authoritarian governance (Aliyev 2019). This divergence was primarily attributed to Ukraine having a more democratic culture compared to Russia (Brudny and Finkel 2011; Pop-Eleches and Robertson 2018).

Democratic values like political resistance and activism were present in Ukraine even during the Soviet era and gained momentum after the collapse of the communist bloc (Musliu and Burlyuk 2019; Reznik 2016; Turchyn, Sukhorolskyi and Sukhorolska 2020). Ukraine, with a strong civic component, managed to incorporate the voice of its citizens into the post-soviet oligarchic structure, moving towards more democratic elections and increased public influence (Onuch and Hale 2022; Zabyelina 2019). In contrast, Russia, lacking a similar civic component, developed more authoritarian and centralized forms of governance in politics, while maintaining a free-market framework for its economic system (Evans 2011).

Although studies acknowledge that initial differences in political cultures influenced recent political developments, explaining why a more democratic culture emerged in Ukraine but not in Russia remains a puzzle. This is especially interesting given the shared history, language, and Orthodox religion between the two nations that go back centuries. This study aims to clarify

the issue by applying psychological theories to scrutinize the historical experiences of these nations. Drawing parallels with individual-level psychological analysis, the study views the history of nations as early "childhood" experiences, fostering collective memories that shaped their current political values and preferences.

The anticipated contributions of this research are twofold. Firstly, it seeks to provide valuable insights into the underlying causes of the ongoing conflict between the two nations. Secondly, the example of Ukraine and Russia can provide a foundational basis for comprehending the political cultures of nations more broadly. The analysis aspires to establish a novel approach for explaining how historical experiences influence political cultures, employing psychology as the primary analytical framework.

The study commences with a critical and comparative examination of the historical backgrounds of Ukraine and Russia. Subsequently, it analyses their historical experiences using individual psychological theories, aiming to derive potential implications for the mental processes and reactions shaped by these experiences. The study proceeds to validate these propositions by applying a structural equation modeling to data retrieved from the World Values Survey. Finally, the results are leveraged to formulate foundational principles for understanding the psychology of a nation in general terms, with applicability to deciphering the political culture of any nation, at least in Europe.

### **Literature Review**

According to historical records, Russia and Ukraine trace their origins as nations back to Kievan Rus, a medieval East Slavic state that also included Belarus (Zhdan 1988). While there may be ongoing debates about which nation exerted greater influence during the Kievan Rus

period, it is widely accepted that the invasions by the Mongols (Golden Horde) played a pivotal role in the dissolution of this statehood in the 13th century, marking the commencement of independent development for the three nations (Belyayev 2012).

For Russia, the Mongol invasions led to the dominance of the Golden Horde over a substantial portion of its territory, which imposed a highly centralized and authoritarian system of governance, laying the groundwork for the subsequent trend of centralization (Baiburov 2005). Russia's geopolitical characteristics, notably its vast expanse and the absence of significant geographical barriers, facilitated and sustained centralization by enabling a central authority to exert control over distant territories (Tsygankov 2022).

An important aspect of this political centralization was the alignment of the state with the prevailing religion. Given the historical affiliation of the Russian Orthodox Church with the Byzantine tradition, it fostered a "symphony" between the church and the state (Köllner 2021). This cooperative relationship involved the church providing spiritual guidance to the state, reciprocated by the state protecting the church.

These historical events set the stage for the establishment and consolidation of a centralized imperial system in Russia. Even after Ivan the Great successfully challenged Mongol rule in the late 15th century, he preserved centralization by positioning himself as the sole legitimate ruler of the Rus lands and asserting Moscow's supremacy over other Russian principalities (Tsygankov 2022). Subsequently, Ivan the Terrible formalized central power by assuming the title of the first Tsar of Russia in 1547. Capitalizing on the advantages of centralization, he significantly expanded the autocratic authority of the Russian monarchy while curbing the influence of the nobility. Despite later Westernization and modernization efforts initiated by Peter the Great in the 18th century, Russia retained its status as a highly centralized

state, always prioritizing reforms aimed at further strengthening the power of the central authorities (Tsygankov 2022).

Ukraine's encounter with the Mongol invasions in the 13th century differed significantly from Russia's experience. Due to the remote location of Ukrainian lands, only certain parts of Ukraine were incorporated into the Golden Horde, resulting in a fragmented political landscape with various principalities. Unlike in Russia, the Mongols could not enforce their centralization attempts across the entire territory of Ukraine, contributing to the persistent fragmentation that hindered the establishment of centralized governance in the country.

The further fragmentation was also linked to Ukraine's geopolitical position as a crossroads between Eastern Europe and the Eurasian Steppe. Facing frequent invasions from Russia, Poland, and the Ottoman Empire, Ukraine struggled to establish or preserve a unified state. Throughout its history, the western regions fell under the influence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, experiencing a degree of decentralization due to the considerable power of the Polish nobility (Belyayev 2012). Meanwhile, the eastern regions, under Russian control, became integrated into the strongly centralized Russian governance, devoid of political rights (Düben 2020).

Despite differences in governance methods, both Poland and Russia viewed the local population as "others," inspiring Ukrainians to gain independence. In the central and eastern regions, the Cossack Hetmanate emerged as a semi-autonomous state during the 17th and 18th centuries, with the Cossacks playing a crucial role in struggling for autonomy (Düben 2020). However, the Russian Empire fiercely destroyed the Cossacks at the end of the 18th century, suppressing any further attempts at liberation through upheavals (Subtelny 2000).

Ukraine's historical path, marked by invasions and territorial fragmentation, lacked a dominant power capable of consolidating the entire territory under a centralized system. These factors contributed to a more fragmented political landscape, with various local powers and institutions emerging in Ukraine. The territorial fragmentation also influenced religion, giving rise to various branches of Christianity in different Ukrainian regions and contributing to a less unified relationship between the church and the state compared to Russia (Brudny and Finkel 2011).

Therefore, the differences in historical experiences between Russia and Ukraine can be simplified as centralization versus decentralization. These dissimilarities can be attributed to whether or not a country experienced prolonged occupation throughout its history and whether it maintained territorial unity or faced fragmentation during its formation as a state. I argue that these features, likely influenced by geopolitical location, may explain the political cultures that gradually emerged in the two nations.

Building on the assumption that the two nations' historical experiences presented above could shaped their political culture, this study introduces a new approach called a psycho-historic analysis of nations. This approach assumes that collective experiences throughout a nation's history trigger psychological mechanisms or reactions among individuals that, on a collective scale, may produce long-lasting influences on political cultures and ideologies among the population. By understanding these psychological processes within a country's broader historical context, a psycho-historic analysis may, hence, offer valuable insights into explaining the formation of a nation's political values and preferences.



## **A Psycho-Historic Framework of Nation Analysis**

The psycho-historic analysis is conceptualized as an analytical framework that applies individual psychological theories to examine a nation's historical experiences, aiming to understand the evolution of its political cultures. This approach looks into how historical events influence the psychology of a nation by triggering specific psychological reactions among individuals in the population, ultimately shaping collective political values and behaviors. By integrating history, psychology, and political studies, the psycho-historic perspective seeks a nuanced understanding of historical factors that mold the identity and ideologies of nations.

Commencing with Russia, it is crucial to remember that the nation's historical trajectory primarily unfolded through the reinforcement of centralized governance and territorial unity, resulting in the dominance of an authoritarian political culture. This authoritarian milieu carries the potential to generate diverse adverse consequences for individual psychology on a collective scale. Drawing on the self-determination theory, posited by Deci and Ryan (1985, 1995), individuals subjected to excessive control often exhibit proclivities toward low self-esteem and feelings of helplessness, fostering a sense of insecurity. If a majority of individuals undergo this fear of insecurity within the country, it may cumulatively transform into a collective apprehension, instigating a demand for security and propelling the issue of national security to the forefront of political preferences. This aligns with the contemporaneous emphasis placed by Russians on national security within their political landscape (Mankoff 2022).

Furthermore, the perception of insecurity in individuals exposed to authoritarian environments tends to cultivate a distorted understanding of power dynamics (Cudd 2006). Consequently, these individuals fail to form healthy relationships with authoritative entities (Kernis 2000) by subconsciously accepting the beliefs and values of the oppressor and

assimilating them into their own self-concept or value/belief scheme (Cudd 2006). Both outcomes can contribute to the unwarranted acceptance of limitations and control, fostering a biased interpretation of actions undertaken by the authoritarian source (Adorno, Frenkel, et al. 1950). Such individuals often opt to willingly subject themselves to the oppressor without feeling the necessity to rationalize this submission (Staub 1997). This implies that a nation's protracted experience with authoritarian governance may foster a collective inclination toward submission to the governing authority and an endorsement or acceptance of actions and policies implemented by these authorities. In accordance with this perspective, recent events indicate elevated levels of submission to the government within the Russian population and unquestionable acceptance of the government's policies and actions (Düben 2020).

This inclination towards submission to governing authorities is typically accompanied by a dearth of political and civic activism within authoritarian contexts. Drawing from the psychosocial development theory posited by Erik Erikson (1959), excessively strict or authoritarian environments can impede the development of an individual's sense of independence and self-efficacy. When individuals experience excessive control and are denied opportunities to make decisions and assume responsibility for their actions, it can engender passivity, hindering their capacity to assert themselves and make autonomous choices. Similarly, the self-determination theory suggests that individuals lacking autonomy and a sense of control are prone to developing a fear of failure and a lack of initiative, leading to diminished resistance to external influences, particularly oppressive ones (Deci and Ryan 1991). This phenomenon may explain the weak political and civil resistance observed in Russia (Düben 2020).

Additionally, authoritarian governance played a crucial role in enabling Russia to confront occupations and maintain territorial unity across its historical timeline (Tsygankov

2022). This engendered a sense of national pride among its population, with authoritarianism being embraced as a contributing factor to the country's historical accomplishments. In line with this argument, recent studies indicate that patriotism in Russia is closely tied to pride in the nation's historical legacy and geopolitical influence in the region (Mankoff 2022). This perspective is directly linked to the importance placed on the Russian language as a unifying element of the nation and a primary force for exerting influence in the region (Gudkov, Zorkaya, et al. 2020). There was always a concerted effort to introduce and preserve Russian as the official language of communication in conquered territories, thereby limiting the use of native languages of the conquered populations (Feklyunina 2016).

Concerning Ukraine, historical developments took a markedly distinct trajectory, resulting in the formation of a unique system of political values among Ukrainians. Specifically, Ukraine underwent division among multiple political powers and endured prolonged periods of occupation throughout its history following the collapse of the Kievan Rus. This historical context thwarted efforts to promote centralization or achieve territorial unification, shaping specific attitudes and preferences among Ukrainians.

During periods of occupation by foreign states, Ukrainians faced a deprivation of autonomy and were denied opportunities for assimilation within the occupying state. Historical events, such as the 1932 - 33 genocide (Holodomor), illustrate that occupations of Ukrainian territories often led to the exploitation of the local population and their resources without integrating Ukrainians on equal terms (Yekelchuk 2015).

These negative experiences with foreign states could have a dual impact on the psychology of Ukrainians. On the one hand, the harsh governance and oppression could instill a profound distrust towards governing authorities (Cudd 2006), fostering a tradition of skepticism

among Ukrainians about the authorities that remained till recently (Izha, Knyazeva, et al. 2020). On the other hand, the dynamic nature of the occupation, with changing political powers taking control and relinquishing Ukrainian lands, contributed to linking Ukrainians' attitudes towards the authorities to their experiences with them. Even presently, Ukrainians continue to associate their overall level of institutional trust with the success of government-led reforms (Sasse and Lackner 2018).

The occupation and oppression experienced by Ukrainians could also shape attitudes towards freedom, political resistance, and civic engagement. In accordance with the self-determination theory, autonomy represents a fundamental psychological need: individuals possess an innate desire for freedom, choice, and control over their actions and decisions (Deci and Ryan 1995). When autonomy is denied, individuals may experience frustration and dissatisfaction, prompting them to actively seek opportunities to regain their sense of independence and self-direction. Applied to Ukraine, the prolonged historical experience of occupation may have cultivated a deep-seated desire for self-determination among Ukrainians, elevating freedom to a foundational value of the nation and positioning resistance as the primary means of achieving that freedom (Musliu and Burlyuk 2019). On a collective scale, this elucidates the aspirations of Ukrainians for an independent and autonomous state (Reznik 2016).

The pursuit of freedom is directly correlated with political resistance. According to the reactance theory, individuals experiencing constraints on their freedom and autonomy may undergo a psychological state known as "reactance." Specifically, when people perceive limitations on their autonomy, they are motivated to restore their freedom by resisting the controlling influence and reclaiming a sense of control over their lives (Mühlberger and Jonas 2019). Examined collectively, this process is expected to foster the practice of political resistance

to the occupiers. Applied to Ukraine, the numerous upheavals during the country's history of occupations and unwanted political influences substantiate this line of reasoning and underscore the significance attributed by Ukrainians to resistance as a means of opposing occupation or oppression (Reznik 2016).

Similarly, occupations have the potential to instigate civil activism among individuals. The empower and agency approach posits that oppression can diminish an individual's sense of agency, which is the belief in their ability to influence their environment and make decisions that affect their lives. The desire to regain a sense of empowerment and control can motivate individuals to become agents of change, striving not only for their personal freedom but also for the liberation of others facing similar challenges. Psychological empowerment, or the belief in one's capacity to effect change, can drive individuals to engage in efforts to advocate change for themselves and others (Bandura 2006). This mechanism could contribute to the formation of civic values in Ukraine, which manifests in a vibrant civil society with active non-governmental organizations, grassroots movements, and a history of civil activism in the country (Onuch and Hale 2022).

Finally, oppression by foreign powers and marginalization of Ukrainians within their states could play a significant role in shaping the value of the national identity among Ukrainians (Chayinska, Kendel, et al. 2022). According to minority stress models, marginalized individuals may form social groups that share similar experiences, seeking social support to cope with common stressors. (Valentín-Cortés, Benavides, et al. 2020) These groups can provide validation and a sense of belonging, enhancing the feeling of being part of a collective identity (Tajfel 1978). In the case of Ukraine, the historical marginalization of Ukrainians by occupying nations strengthened the sense of a unique national identity (Kulyk 2018). Marginalization

became a shared feature that united Ukrainians from the occupied territories (McGlynn 2020). Language added an additional element that reinforced the sense of belonging to the same group, serving as an essential symbol of nationhood (Smirnova and Iliev 2017).

Simultaneously, the fragmentation resulting from the partitioning of Ukrainian territories among various, often shifting, political powers could result in a divergence of values and attitudes among Ukrainians, instilling a preference for plurality. Drawing from social identity and intergroup relations theories, the process of fragmentation tends to give rise to numerous subgroups within the population. As these subgroups converge, individuals are compelled to negotiate and integrate diverse perspectives and values to forge a cohesive national identity (Hogg, Abrams, et al. 2004). In accordance with this perspective, when unified, Ukrainians had to assimilate different views and opinions into a single system of values, fostering a culture of plurality. The absence of centralization facilitated this process by preventing the suppression of values and preferences that deviated from central ones.

Moreover, unifying subgroups into a singular identity demands communication among various population groups and branches of power (Pettigrew 1998). Positive interactions between members of different subgroups can mitigate prejudice and cultivate understanding, thereby enhancing social dialogue. When diverse subgroups converge, positive intergroup contact becomes an opportunity, fostering the development of social bonds within society. Consequently, Ukraine's history of territorial fragmentation might have contributed to the promotion of social dialogue, laying the groundwork for the emergence of democratic attitudes among the Ukrainian population.

In summary, dissimilar historical experiences between Ukraine and Russia have significantly influenced the collective psychology of their populations, leading to the

development of distinct political cultures in each nation. As Figure 1 illustrates, Russians tended to form complex relationships with their authoritarian state, displaying a notable tolerance for the control imposed by authorities, thereby diminishing the inclination for resistance or engagement. The bond with the state directly correlated with an augmented perception of insecurity, giving rise to a distorted relationship with authorities, manifested through an elevated predisposition towards submission and acceptance of governmental policies and control. Furthermore, Russians navigated their interaction with the authorities by channeling it through the prism of national identity founded on collective pride for the historical accomplishments of their authoritative state. Overall, the state overshadowed individual initiatives throughout Russia's historical evolution.

Figure 1 near here

In contrast, Ukrainians, owing to factors such as prolonged occupation by foreign powers, territorial fragmentation, and decentralization prioritized societal ties and activism over their connections with authorities. As Figure 2 summarizes, occupation stimulated distrust towards the authorities and an intrinsic yearning for independence, fostering political and civic resistance, active civil engagement, and the formulation of an own identity distinct from that of the occupiers (Kuzio, 2001). Parallely, territorial fragmentation during occupations introduced diversity in opinions and values, promoting pluralistic ideals and fostering social dialogue. Collectively, these factors contributed to the formation of a more democratic political culture in which individuals are active participants in the formation of the state and nation.

Figure 2 near here

Building upon the noted distinctions, I propose the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1:* Given Russia's historical experience as an authoritarian unified state, I expect that the political culture of Russians is characterized by less democratic values, such as greater devotion and submission to the state, elevated support for more nationalistic tendencies along with weak skepticism about the governing authorities and limited desire for individual autonomy and participation in politics.

*Hypothesis 2:* Given Ukraine's historical experiences of occupation and territorial fragmentation, I expect that the political culture of Ukrainians is characterized by more democratic values, such as striving for autonomy and a greater say for the population in politics, along with skepticism about the governing authorities and less nationalistic tendencies.

### **Data and Methods Description**

The principal data utilized in this investigation is derived from the World Values Survey (WVS). This encompasses all survey waves in which pertinent questions were asked in both countries. More specifically, I select waves 3, 5, 6, and 7, conducted in 1995, 2006, 2011, and 2017 for Russia and in 1996, 2006, 2011, and 2020 for Ukraine respectively. Structural equation modeling serves as the primary method for the empirical investigation. This technique enables the estimation of a system of equations, accommodating variables measured with error and those that cannot be directly measured (Sinha, Calfee, et al. 2021). The main goal of the analysis is to define and explore latent classes on a set of selected variables. The latent classes are expected to represent political cultures that exist among the populations of the two countries.



The chosen variables in this study comprise four Welzel indexes that measure an individual's attitudes toward authorities. The first index, termed 'nationalism' is calculated as a standardized measure of how proud individuals are about their nation on a reverse scale from 0 to 1. The second index, denoted as 'skepticism,' is calculated as the mean of inverse levels of trust in the army, police, and judicial institutions. The third index, labeled 'autonomy,' encompasses three measures, including the importance of independence and imagination as kid quality and a reverse measure of the importance of submission. The autonomy values vary from 0 to 1 on a continuous scale. Lastly, the fourth component is labeled 'voice' and is calculated based on the extent to which respondents choose to have more say about how things should be in politics as a first or second main aim for their country as opposed to maintaining order in the nation. A comprehensive explanation of the methodology employed in the calculation of the four constituent indexes can be found in Welzel (2014) or accessed on the official World Values Survey website. The descriptive statistics for the selected measures are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 near here

The analytical strategy aims to employ the above variables to construct a latent class model with two unobserved behavior classes, one corresponding to a less democratic political culture and the other to a more democratic political culture. More specifically, a logit model will be fit for each observed variable in which the intercept,  $\alpha_{jc}$ , is allowed to vary across the classes of the latent variable while also estimating the variances of the error terms. More specifically, for Class 1 we fit

$$Nationalism = \alpha_{11} + e_{nationalism}$$

$$Skepticism = \alpha_{21} + e_{skepticism}$$

$$Autonomy = \alpha_{31} + e_{autonomy}$$

$$Voice = \alpha_{41} + e_{voice}$$

For Class 2, we fit

$$Nationalism = \alpha_{12} + e_{nationalism}$$

$$Skepticism = \alpha_{22} + e_{skepticism}$$

$$Autonomy = \alpha_{32} + e_{autonomy}$$

$$Voice = \alpha_{42} + e_{voice}$$

The STATA *gsem* command is utilized to calculate the probabilities of class membership and estimate the mean for each item in each class. Since class membership can be influenced by other variables, we will conduct a robustness check in which the above two-class model will be recalculated by controlling for the respondents' primary socio-demographic characteristics.

### **Empirical analysis and results**

Anticipating the presence of distinct political cultures in Ukraine and Russia, the analysis commences with the implementation of a two-class model. The coefficient estimates for each of the two classes are presented in Table 2. Notably, the first latent class aligns with a less democratic culture, displaying relatively weak associations with the four chosen indexes. Conversely, the second class is indicative of a more democratic culture, exhibiting significantly stronger loading on all of the four items (refer to Table 2, Model 1).

Table 2 near here

Considering that the nationalism and skepticism measures operate on an inverse scale, it implies that the first class is indicative of a culture that places significant emphasis on national pride and confidence in the army, police, and judicial system. Moreover, this class diminishes the value of cultivating independence and imagination among individuals from their childhood while encouraging submission. Additionally, this class assigns a lower value to the importance of giving more say to the population, instead prioritizing the goal of maintaining order in the nation. In contrast, the second latent class comprises individuals whose political cultures exhibit a lower emphasis on national pride and trust in authorities. This class promotes adherence to autonomy and emphasizes the value of giving people more say in politics.

In the absence of predictors in the initial model, the coefficients can be construed as the anticipated mean values for specific classes of the associated variables. In Class 1, the mean for the reverse index of national pride is estimated at 0.199, whereas it is 0.741 in Class 2, suggesting a greater level of nationalism in the first than in the second class. Similarly, the reverse index of confidence in authorities, as indicated by the skepticism measure, has an estimated mean of 0.507 in Class 1 and 0.635 in Class 2, indicating that individuals in Class 1 exhibit less skepticism towards authorities compared to those in Class 2. Additionally, the estimated mean for the autonomy measure is 0.373 in Class 1 and 0.407 in Class 2, pointing to a slightly greater adherence to autonomy in Class 2 compared to respondents in Class 1. This lack of significant distinction is likely due to the fact that the autonomy measure has been assessed through the importance of the relevant values in society by nurturing them among children rather than linking the relevant measures to the political domain directly.

Similarly, the estimated mean for the voice measure shows some difference between the two classes (0.267 versus 0.306), indicating that individuals in Class 2 prioritize giving more say to their citizens as a primary goal for the country. Lastly, the estimated variances of the error terms do not differ between the two classes, suggesting that class-specific estimates of variable variances are similar between Class 1 and Class 2 and that they primarily differ in their estimated mean values.

Accounting for respondents' socio-demographic characteristics in the selection of latent classes yields results that remain largely unchanged (see Table 2, Model 2). However, it is essential to note that this analysis incorporates only major socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, rural versus urban habitat and income satisfaction levels), excluding numerous conventional predictors of political cultures. This selective approach is justified by the intention to circumvent the potential issue of significantly reducing sample size due to the absence of relevant questions in one of the selected countries or across some waves.

The association between the two latent classes and the two countries can be established by categorizing each individual in the dataset based on the predicted posterior class probabilities and then summarizing the outcomes by country. As indicated in Table 3, approximately 60% of individuals predicted to be in Class 1 originate from Russia, while only 40% come from Ukraine. This suggests a higher likelihood for Russian respondents to belong to Class 1, characterized by a less democratic political culture that emphasizes devotion and confidence in authorities while diminishing individual autonomy and the voice of its citizens.

Table 3 near here

Conversely, Ukrainian respondents are more likely to be classified in Class 2 rather than Class 1, signaling a more democratic culture characterized by reduced allegiance to authorities and a greater emphasis on individual autonomy and voice. However, the differences observed are not remarkably substantial. This may be attributed to the limitation that the data available in the World Values Survey (WVS) only partially captures the intended notions of the four constructs.

Furthermore, the robustness of the results persists when the analysis is confined to a singular wave. The recalculated outcomes in Table 4, based on the latest wave (7), highlight a more pronounced presence of two latent classes, revealing an increased disparity in the estimated means between Class 1 and Class 2. Importantly, the fundamental rationale underlying this divergence remains unchanged. Class 1 continues to align with a political culture that encourages citizens' devotion to authorities, lower values assigned to autonomy and a diminished emphasis on residents' voice. Conversely, Class 2 displays higher mean values across the four measures, indicating a more democratic political culture, characterized by diminished citizen allegiance to authorities, heightened skepticism towards these authorities, and a focal emphasis on autonomy and independence as societal values. It also prioritizes increased citizen participation as a pivotal goal for the country's development as opposed to maintaining order in the nation.

Table 4 near here

Finally, the classification of respondents from the last wave into the two classes by country (Table 5), based on their predicted probability of class membership, further reinforces the earlier findings. Specifically, when focusing on data from the last wave, the trend of

Ukrainian respondents being overrepresented in Class 2 rather than Class 1, and Russian respondents in Class 1 rather than Class 2, becomes even more pronounced.

Table 5 near here

In summary, our results support our hypotheses, indicating that Ukraine exhibits a more democratic culture when assessed through the four measures derived from the World Values Survey. In contrast, Russia is typified by a less democratic culture, as reflected by the corresponding four measures. Importantly, these results maintain their robustness even when major socio-demographic variables are considered predictors of class membership and when the results are recalculated based solely on the last wave of data.

Furthermore, these outcomes align with existing studies that consistently demonstrate Ukrainians holding more pro-democratic attitudes and expressing support for democratic values and preferences to a greater extent than Russians. More specifically, the present findings are commensurate with the previous research conducted by Musliu and Burlyuk (2019), Reznik (2016), Turchyn, Sukhorolskyi, et al. (2020), according to which democratic values have roots in Ukraine that extend back to the country's history of centuries. Additionally, my results are in line with Onuch and Hale (2022) who argued that Ukraine is characterized by a robust civic component and successfully integrated citizen voices into the political domain. The above outcomes also support Zabyelina (2019), who demonstrated that Ukraine is characterized by a heightened public influence of the masses. Finally, this study substantiated the previous findings (Evans 2011; Tsygankov 2022), demonstrating that Russia tends to develop more authoritarian

and centralized governance while enhancing the value of nationalism, security, and devotion to the authorities among its population as key elements of national and international politics.

## **Discussion**

The cases of Ukraine and Russia serve as foundational examples for understanding the political cultures of nations in general. More specifically, I propose that the psycho-historic approach may prove instrumental in defining the primary determinants of political culture in any nation, particularly within the European context. In other words, an examination of a nation's history, encompassing experiences of occupation and territorial fragmentation, may enable the identification of key attributes characterizing the political culture of this nation.

In particular, a nation's historical experience can be presented as evolving along two main lines: (1) whether the nation has experienced occupation or has acted as an occupier throughout its history, and (2) whether or not the nation has undergone territorial fragmentation. These criteria justify the development of the key political features within a nation. Firstly, nations that have served as occupiers tend to foster a culture marked by respect for authorities, and the value of nationalism. In contrast, nations that have experienced occupation develop a distinct emphasis on autonomy, freedom and independence. Furthermore, nations acting as occupiers often cultivate a culture of submission and obedience to authorities, while those that have been occupied tend to value resistance and opposition to their governing bodies.

The second criterion, relevant to territorial fragmentation, contributes to the proliferation of diverse opinions and fosters an environment of tolerance and acceptance of differences. Conversely, the absence of fragmentation tends to cultivate a disposition of intolerance towards a diversity of opinions and foster the adherence to uniform opinions created by the governing

authorities. Additionally, a history of territorial division can stimulate social dialogues, thereby prompting citizens to advocate for a greater say and increased participation in the political sphere. In contrast, unified states tend to discourage citizen involvement in political affairs.

Based on the two dimensions, a classification summarized in Figure 3 can be produced. Broadly, there are four types of political cultures. First, nations that have historically assumed roles as occupiers and witnessed territorial coherence or expansion often cultivate an authoritative political culture. The population of such nations typically exhibits pronounced nationalism, limited skepticism towards governing authorities, and a diminished inclination towards individual autonomy. Concurrently, there is a prevalent inclination towards deference to authorities, with an emphasis on upholding national order over providing the citizens with substantial influence in the political or civic sphere. These political cultures should exhibit notable resilience and demonstrate a proclivity to revert to authoritative governance, even following brief intervals of abrupt deviations. Therefore, this political culture can be called as a ‘resilient autocracy.’

Figure 3 near here

Second, countries with a history of acting as occupiers yet undergoing territorial fragmentation are distinguished by a relatively elevated tendency toward submission, devotion, and loyalty to the governing bodies within the population. However, this potential for submission and devotion to authorities is challenged by the diversity of opinions and visions rooted in their disparate historical experiences due to territorial fragmentation. The coexistence of these differences introduces a nuanced dynamic since they become arenas for ongoing debates on the



roles of distinct subgroups in the political domain. As this unfolds, a natural progression towards a pluralism of opinions becomes evident. Nonetheless, these political cultures face the inherent risk of being dominated by the central subgroup of the population. In such scenarios, citizens within these nations may exhibit minimal resistance or opposition to their dominance and are likely to accept the resultant power dynamics. This overarching scenario can be characterized as a 'fragile democracy.'

Third, nations that were subject to occupation but did not undergo any significant territorial fragmentation are anticipated to manifest a robust sense of independence, autonomy, and national freedom. Their population is expected to harbor a heightened level of skepticism towards their governing authorities, linking their attitudes towards the authorities to the efficacy of implemented reforms. Citizens are likely to be highly responsive to government policies, reacting strongly through opposition when expectations are not met. Nevertheless, these countries may exhibit limited tolerance for opinions and visions originating from nonnative subgroups, potentially curbing their participation in the political sphere. This description aligns with a democratic political culture characterized by governance that is highly sensitive to the demands of the central subgroup of the population, with a tendency to marginalize minorities. In essence, such nations can be characterized as a form of 'democratic nationalism.'

Fourth, nations that have historically borne the weight of oppression and marginalization due to occupations are characterized by a distinct yearning for independence, coupled with heightened skepticism towards governing authorities. Within such cultures, there is a pervasive inclination toward resistance to authorities, with a specific emphasis on providing citizens with significant influence in both the political and civic spheres. Territorial fragmentation further contributes to the cultivation of diverse opinions and fosters a need for promoting social dialogue

and participation. These political cultures inherently possess the potential to evolve into democracies. Therefore, they can be designated as 'potentially stable' democracies, harboring the foundational elements that may lead to the establishment of democratic governance.

It is essential to note that the four aforementioned types represent idealized categories, and various hybrid forms are plausible. The primary objective of delineating these types was to offer examples illustrating how historical experiences can explain the psychology of a nation. This psychology further influences the formation of distinct political values and preferences, giving rise to specific political cultures that persist and govern countries to the present day. Therefore, the above typology should serve as a basic framework for understanding the nuanced interplay between historical narratives and the shaping of a nation's contemporary political landscape.

## **Conclusions**

This research examined the impact of historical encounters involving invasions and territorial fragmentation on the development of political cultures. Employing individual-level psychological theories, the analysis argued that enduring periods of occupation tend to cultivate a sense of resistance, autonomy, and an independent identity. In contrast, regions characterized by a lack of prolonged occupations and typically governed authoritatively tend to instill a perception of submission and a distorted understanding of power among their residents. The study further proposed that the historical occurrence of territorial fragmentation is likely to give rise to diverse experiences, leading to a range of values across the nation. This diversity is expected to contribute to pluralism in political culture, necessitating social dialogue and participation within society.

These hypotheses were empirically tested using Ukraine and Russia as examples by applying a structural equation modeling to the four measures derived from the World Values Survey: nationalism, skepticism, autonomy, and voice. The analysis revealed two distinct classes: The first class was indicative of a less democratic culture, characterized by increased levels of nationalism, insignificant skepticism about authorities, diminished emphasis on individual autonomy, and reduced importance placed on citizen participation in decision-making. Conversely, the second class was associated with a more democratic culture, demonstrating lower levels of nationalism, increased skepticism about authorities, greater emphasis on individual autonomy, and a higher demand for citizen involvement in the political domain. The predictive analysis further indicated that individuals from Ukraine were more likely to align with the characteristics of the second class, signifying a greater inclination toward a more democratic culture. In contrast, individuals from Russia were more likely to align with the first class, suggesting a tendency toward a less democratic political culture in Russia.

The findings of this study carry significant implications for comprehending the recent conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Specifically, the observed divergence in political cultures between the two countries can be traced back to the distinctive nature of their historical experiences. The disparities in their political cultures are deeply rooted in the psychological makeup of individuals, shaped by their respective historical dissimilarities. Their shared attributes such as language, religion, or racial features, frequently highlighted by scholars as major dimensions of commonalities between Ukrainians and Russians, seem to be insufficient in neutralizing the pronounced differences in their political visions and preferences.

The ongoing conflict serves as tangible evidence that the two nations exhibit contrasting perceptions regarding the nature of relations between authorities and citizens. This conflict also

demonstrates that such historically emerged differences cannot be easily modified or subject to rapid transformation, nor can they be altered through acts of violence. Rather, these differences in political cultures resulting from their specific historical experiences might lead to the establishment of a path dependency in political visions and expectations among their populations.

Future research should replicate these findings through the design of more reliable measures for the principal facets arising from the historical evolution of nations. Additionally, the psycho-historic analysis should be expanded to encompass a more diverse array of nations, enabling an examination of the history-dependent evolution of political values and preferences in contemporary contexts. Ideally, this analytical framework should be underpinned by longitudinal data to accommodate the inherently dynamic nature of political changes on a global scale and define the extent to which historical experiences may impose constraints on these dynamic processes.

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Table 1. Summary statistics for the key variables used in the analysis.

VARIABLES	N	MEAN	ST. DEV	MIN	MAX
Nationalism	14,146	0.313	0.282	0	1
Skepticism	14,468	0.534	0.232	0	1
Autonomy	14,484	0.380	0.286	0	1
Voice	14,792	0.379	0.285	0	1

Table 2. Key parameters for the two latent classes.

	Model 1		Model 2	
	(Without additional controls for class membership)		(With additional controls for class membership)	
	Class 1	Class 2	Class 1	Class 2
Coefficient estimates				
Nationalism	0.199*** (0.002)	0.741*** (0.004)	0.200*** (0.002)	0.739*** (0.004)
Skepticism	0.507*** (0.003)	0.635*** (0.005)	0.506*** (0.002)	0.637*** (0.005)
Autonomy	0.373*** (0.004)	0.407*** (0.006)	0.372*** (0.003)	0.406*** (0.006)
Voice	0.267*** (0.002)	0.306*** (0.005)	0.267*** (0.002)	0.305*** (0.005)
Variances				
$e_{nationalism}$	0.033*** (0.000)	0.033*** (0.001)	0.033*** (0.000)	0.033*** (0.001)
$e_{skepticism}$	0.051*** (0.001)	0.052*** (0.000)	0.051*** (0.001)	0.051*** (0.000)
$E_{autonomy}$	0.081*** (0.001)	0.081*** (0.001)	0.081*** (0.001)	0.081*** (0.005)
$e_{voice}$	0.061*** (0.001)	0.061*** (0.001)	0.061*** (0.001)	0.061*** (0.001)

Notes: The set of control variables includes the respondents' age, gender, rural or urban habitat, and income satisfaction levels.

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

Table 3. Predicted probabilities of class membership by country.

Country	Predicted class		Total
	Class 1	Class 2	
Russia	6,897 <b>(58.25)</b>	1,486 <b>(47.29)</b>	8,383 <b>(55.95)</b>
Ukraine	4,944 <b>(41.75)</b>	1,656 <b>(52.71)</b>	6,600 <b>(44.05)</b>
Total	11,841 <b>(100.00)</b>	3,142 <b>(100.00)</b>	14,983 <b>(100.00)</b>

Table 4. Regression coefficients for the two classes calculated based on Wave 7.

Variables	Class 1	Class 2	Tests for differences in coefficients	
			Diff	Chi2-test
Nationalism	0.187*** (0.004)	0.725*** (0.015)	0.538***	1279.40 (0.000)
Skepticism	0.474*** (0.005)	0.697*** (0.017)	0.223***	155.86 (0.000)
Autonomy	0.404*** (0.005)	0.523*** (0.019)	0.119***	33.53 (0.000)
Voice	0.274*** (0.005)	0.391*** (0.019)	0.117***	32.90 (0.000)
<i>e<sub>nationalism</sub></i>	0.033*** (0.001)	0.033*** (0.001)		
<i>e<sub>skepticism</sub></i>	0.053*** (0.001)	0.053*** (0.002)		
<i>e<sub>autonomy</sub></i>	0.076*** (0.002)	0.076*** (0.024)		
<i>e<sub>voice</sub></i>	0.074*** (0.002)	0.074*** (0.002)		

Notes: Wave 7 was conducted in 2017 for Russia and 2020 for Ukraine. The Chi-squared test has a null hypothesis suggesting that the disparity in the mean value of the item between Class 1 and Class 2 is equal to zero. The final column presents the Chi-squared statistic value along with its corresponding p-value enclosed in brackets.

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

Table 5. Predicted probabilities of class membership by country calculated based on Wave 7.

Country	Predicted class		Total
	Class 1	Class 2	
Russia	6,675 <b>(59.69)</b>	135 <b>(46.08)</b>	1,810 <b>(58.41)</b>
Ukraine	1,131 <b>(40.31)</b>	158 <b>(53.92)</b>	1,289 <b>(41.59)</b>
Total	2,806 <b>(100.00)</b>	393 <b>(100.00)</b>	3,099 <b>(100.00)</b>

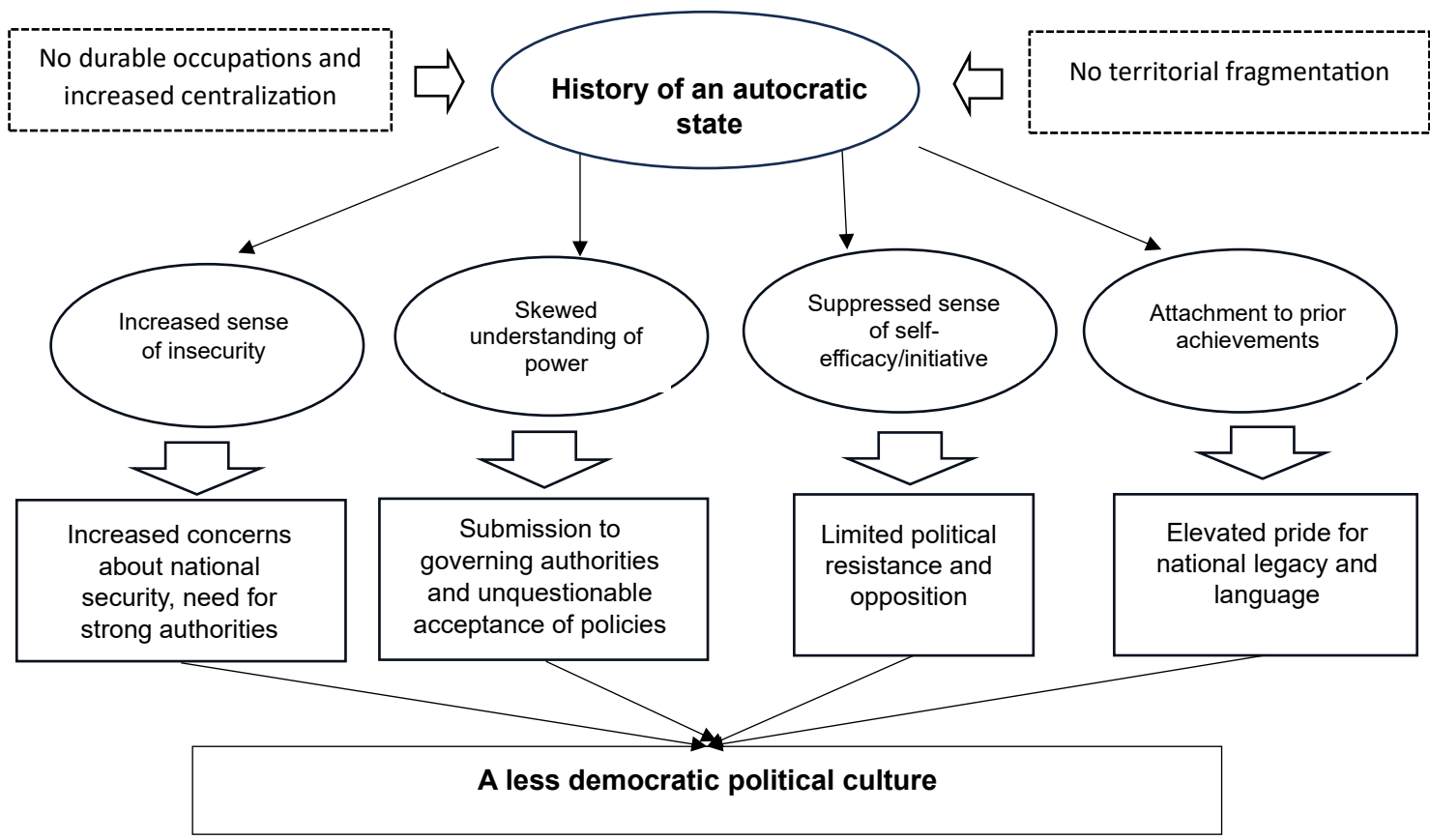


Figure 1. The impact of historical experiences on the political culture in Russia.



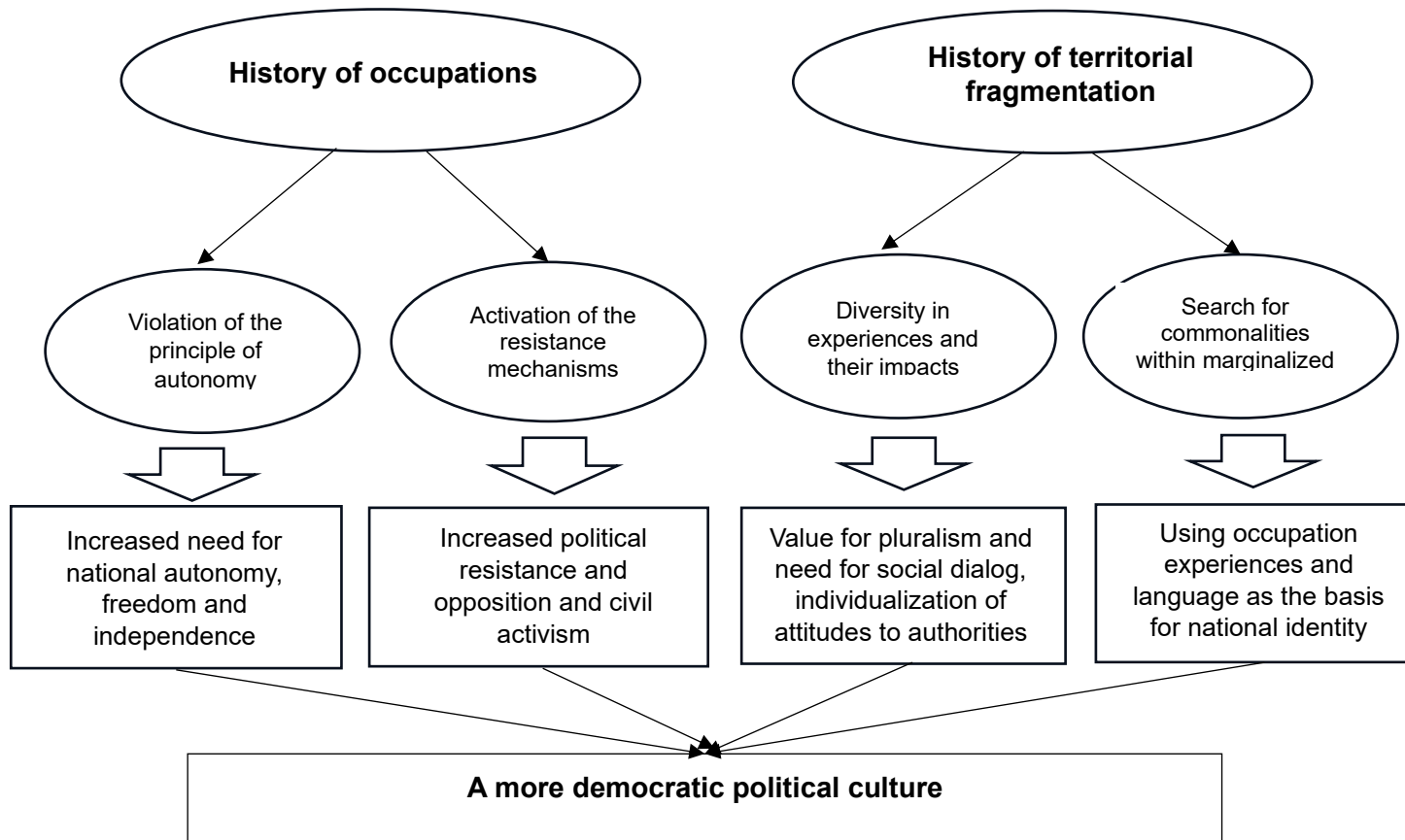


Figure 2. The impact of historical experiences on the political culture in Ukraine.

		Occupation	
		Occupier	Occupied
Territorial fragmentation	No	Resilient Autocracies	Democratic Nationalism
	Yes	Fragile Democracies	Potentially stable democracies

Figure 3. Types of political cultures depending on the history of occupation and territorial fragmentation.