In History's Shadow: Persistence of Identities and Contemporary Political Behavior

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Abstract

I demonstrate that political identities and associated norms of behavior can persist for a surprisingly long time even in the face of hostile material and formal institutional environments. Making use of a natural experiment of history, a partition of a homogenous population of ethnic Ukrainians between Austrian and Russian empires, I show how differences in political identities that came about as a result of a historical accident have persisted over the course of several centuries. I record contemporary differences in political attitudes and behaviors in a survey of over 1,600 individuals residing in settlements that are located no further than 15 miles from the long-defunct Austrian-Russian imperial border. Residents of the two survey strata differ primarily on attitudes toward Russia and Europe, historically the key issue of contention in the region. The broader significance of this finding is that informal institutions matter enormously to political behavior even though they are largely ignored in most scholarly work.[*]

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INTRODUCTION

Culture is an elephant in the porcelain shop of the social sciences. In principle, the study of culture has a well-established pedigree in our discipline. Already in 1893 Émile Durkheim (1968) argued that social order is best understood as a product of cultural not material relations. Several decades later Max Weber (1976) postulated that capitalism was a product of the Protestant ethic. In 1963 in an instant classic Almond and Verba proposed a classification of different types of political cultures, and Lipset and Rokkan (1967) followed up by conceptualizing political cleavages through the lens of culture. More recently, Inglehart (1988) has argued that high levels of civic culture bring about democratization, and Putnam (1993) famously hinted at the possibility that current differences in social capital between northern and southern Italy might be best explained with reference to differences in the pattern of conquest in the early Middle Ages. Huntington (1996) then sought to give a powerful corrective to the field of international relations when he argued that in the post Cold War world cultural identities would be the source of all conflict. In 1996, in an overview of the then still fledgling field of historical institutionalism Hall and Taylor highlighted the untapped potential of sociological/ cultural institutionalism to the study of polity and society.

In practice, the study of culture has become largely discredited, and rightly so, as the discipline became increasingly weary of concept stretching and poorly substantiated claims of causal relationships. Culture, this repository of common ignorance, came to be seen as a smoke screen for innate prejudices (e.g. Said 2001). Scholars also began to question the direction of the causal relationship between democracy and social capital and to look askance at research designs which sold correlations as evidence of causality (e.g. Muller and Seligson 1994). Does all of this mean that the study of culture should be abandoned altogether? Doing so would be tantamount to throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Substantive research concerning the role that informal institutions, like identities and norms of behavior, play in shaping social interactions should not be given up just because the concept of culture is now so very tainted. In fact, there has been some excellent work on culture in the past decade, although it usually steered clear of the term itself. Consider, for instance research on the impact of political, ethnic, and national identities on partisanship attachment, voter behavior, and patterns of conflict (Green *et al.* 2002, Posner 2005, Darden forthcoming). In short, to move the research on political culture forward the concept of culture must be re-defined or, more precisely, defined more carefully and tackled anew with the most up-to-date methodological tools. This is precisely what I attempt to do in this article.

Specifically, I demonstrate that political identities and norms of behavior that arise out of these identities are capable of persisting in the face of hostile material and institutional environments. Put differently, I show that in situations where identities and associated norms come into conflict with formal institutions it is the identity that gains the upper hand and thus comes to define political behavior. This argument is built on evidence from a natural experiment of history. In it a homogenous population of co-ethnics became divided between two different empires for 150 years as a result of an accident of history. Over the course of these 150 years the two empires pursued diametrically opposed strategies in constructing local political identities. When these two populations of co-ethnics were once again reunited within the same state in 1939 it transpired that they were very different in terms of their political and economic preferences and behaviors. The post-1939 state tried hard to erase these differences, but as I demonstrate via a survey of settlements located within 15 miles of the long defunct imperial borders these differences have persisted into the present. From this discussion it is already apparent that I equate culture and political identity. However, identity is a passive category, and we, as students of society, are more interested in observable manifestations of culture such as norms and rules of behavior that arise out of political identities and in political behavior itself.

The action takes place in what today is western Ukraine. Between 1772 and 1795 this region became divided between Austrian and Russian empires at the partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Both empires faced the same problem in their new borderlands: the threat of Polish secessionism. As a counterweight to the powerful Polish minority Austrian authorities actively sponsored the emergence of a Ukrainian national identity loyal to the Crown and hostile to Russians and Poles. By contrast, Russian imperial officials suppressed all expressions of local cultural and political distinctiveness out of fear that the process of Ukrainian identity formation would fall into the hands of the Polish nobility. The political identity of the Ukrainian subjects of the Russian territories was shaped in the interwar period by the Soviet and Polish authorities. When these Austrian and Russian populations of ethnic Ukrainians were reunited within Soviet Ukraine initially in 1939 and then more decisively in 1944 it became clear that they were now very different from one another. So much so, that the only civil conflict on Soviet soil took place in 1944-1947 when Ukrainian inhabitants of the former Austrian territories took up arms against the Soviet government for the cause of complete Ukrainian independence from the USSR. In quelling this conflict the Soviets completely overhauled all formal institutions in western Ukraine. However, evidence from a contemporary survey of 1,675 respondents in 247 settlements located immediately either side of the former Austrian-Russian imperial border suggests that the whole might of the Soviet totalitarian apparatus failed to erase differences in political identities that date back to the 19th century. Ethnic Ukrainians residing in the former Austrian settlements are today much more pro-European and anti-Russian than their next-door neighbors in the former Russian settlements. These differences shape the respondents' evaluation of the recent Soviet past and also translate into differences in voter behavior.

At a conceptual level this finding has major theoretical and practical implications for the way in which we think about democratization, development, and institutional reform. If political identities and associated norms of behavior persist in the face of change in formal institutions, then what we as students of society and policy-makers should care about is not just changes in formal rules but, more importantly, conditions under which informal norms and rules of behavior are altered. This finding also suggests a corrective to the research linking formal institutions, quality of democracy (for an overview see Carey 2000), and the pace of economic development (e.g. Acemoglu and Robinson 2012) or theories linking initial factor endowments with patterns of economic growth (e.g. Engerman and Sokoloff 1997). Political identities and associated norms of behavior are at least as important, if not more, to explaining the nature of a given nation's level of political or economic development. This argument is hardly new. Rather, my aim here is to introduce new and compelling evidence to support it.

The next section describes the natural experiment, which forms the foundation of this study. In that section I also briefly outline the nature of the independent variable, the historical 'treatments' that have created lasting differences in political identity between the two populations under study. Then I go over some of the details concerning the survey in the section on research design; the survey instrument was used to measure the dependent variable—contemporary differences in political attitudes, associated norms, and resultant behaviors. In the results section that follows I present a selection of the survey findings, and these are then discussed in the penultimate section where I also go over the main alternatives to my argument. One of the more interesting follow-up questions about this research concerns the mechanism by which identities and norms persist in a hostile institutional environment. I briefly outline the transmission mechanism behind norm persistence in the conclusion.

THE NATURAL EXPERIMENT

Experimental studies, and natural experiments as part of that paradigm, are understood to be the gold standard for establishing causality (Dunning 2012,

Diamond and Robinson 2010). Standard observational techniques ordinarily do not allow the researcher to go beyond correlational analysis due to the ever-present uncertainty that some unobserved phenomenon might be responsible for the reported association between two or more variables. By contrast, in the experimental paradigm the researcher holds constant background conditions, thus controlling for unobservables and is therefore able to precisely measure the effect of a specific causal variable, conventionally termed 'treatment' in imitation of the hard sciences. However, true natural experiments are rare. The 'treatment' must be shown to be assigned at random or 'as if' randomly in such a way that any unit of the population under observation has the same chance of ending up in the 'treatment' group as any other.

(i) The set up

In this natural experiment of history I compare the outcome of two different 'treatments' on a homogenous population. The 'treatments' in question—exposure to two different identity-building projects—were triggered at the partition of the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth in the late 18th century. The partition was a product of Great Power politics, as a result of which Poland disappeared from the map of Europe after being divided between Austria, Prussia, and Russia (in a move foreshadowing the division of Poland between Nazi Germany and the USSR in 1939). The new borders did not follow logical ethnic, religious, or geographic boundaries. Alfred Rieber, a leading historian of imperial Russia, notes that "the outcome [of Great Power competition] virtually dictated that the delimitation of Russia's international frontiers would be an arbitrary process reflecting power relationships and not following natural geographic or ethnic boundary lines" (1994: 67). Piotr Wandycz, a scholar of post-partition Poland, echoes this view by noting that "the newly drawn borders corresponded to neither historical, ethnic, economic, nor geographical criteria… the determining factor was the balance of power…" (1974: 11). Such was the logic of the partitions that the new imperial border between the Austrian and Russian possessions in western Ukraine did not follow any pre-existing administrative boundaries within the Polish-Lithunian Commonwealth other than for a short stretch in the northeast. In fact, the placement of the border was so haphazard that some large landed estates were divided in two by the new frontier (Lukowski 1999: 94).

The random nature of the border placement is further confirmed by the fact that the border agreement signed by Austria and Russia on 5 August 1772 could not be adhered to because a faulty map was used at the partition negotiations. Lukowski, a historian of Polish partitions, tells the story best:

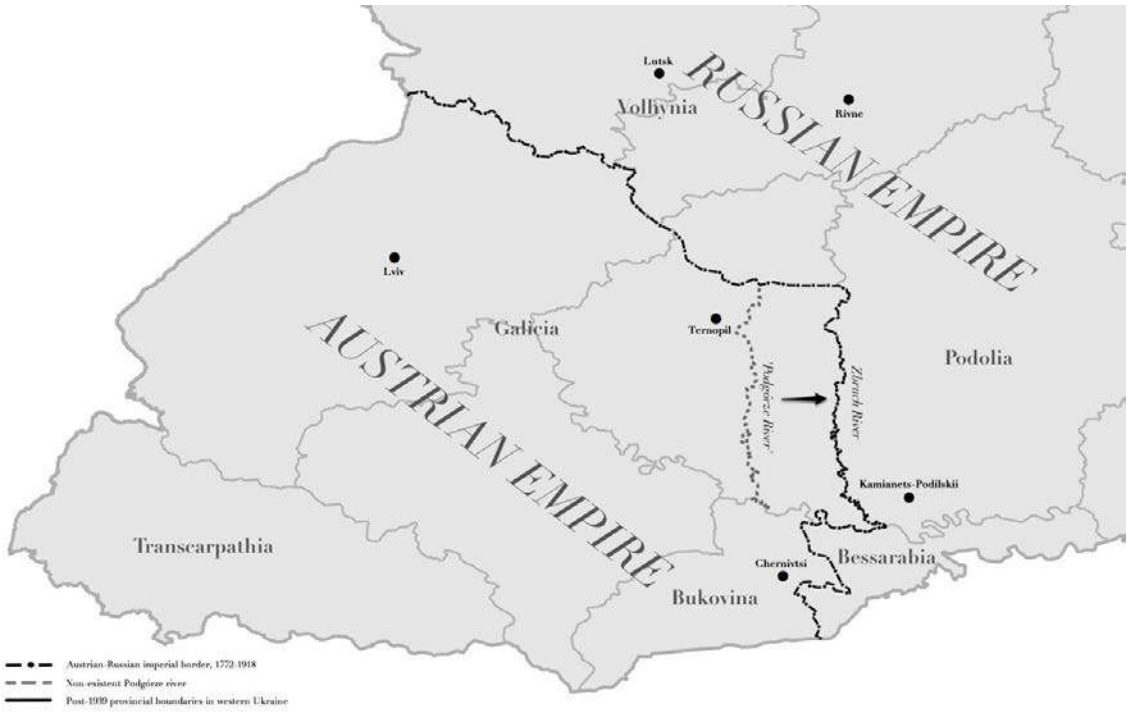
> "On Giovanni Zannoni's map… used to mark out the Partition, the eastern boundary of the Austrian share was to run along the river Podgórze. But the map was wrong: there was no such river. The only alternatives were the Seret [to the west], or the Zbrucz, about twenty miles further to the east. Joseph [II of Austria], inspecting his new prize in August 1773, was much taken by the fertility of the area: the Zbrucz it would be" (1999: 89).

In short, the precise placement of the eastern segment of the Austrian border was a product of a chance event, and as a result a number of settlements that were originally supposed to go to Russia ended up in Austria. The actual placement of the border along with the fictional Podgórze river (as a dotted line) is shown in Map 1. Accidents of history like the one described here are relatively rare and make for a great opportunity for leveraging historical variation when testing for causal relationships between a historical variable and a contemporary outcome.

(ii) Historical 'treatments'

On the eve of the partitions of Poland the Rus' (historical name for ethnic Ukrainians) peasants who would soon find their heartlands divided by an international border lacked an articulated political identity. The Rus' people are known to

MAP 1. Russian-Austrian Imperial Border, Late 18th-Early 20th Centuries



have been settled in the territories of what is now western Ukraine at least since the time of the first chronicles of the region in the 10th century C.E. In the mid-14th century the Viking-ruled and Rus'-populated principalities of this region were conquered by the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; these two states merged in 1569 to form the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Magosci 1996: 115, 132). From the perspective of a Rus' peasant little changed over the next two centuries. When Austrian and Russian troops marched into this area in 1772 they found a sea of Rus' peasants, who made up 70-80% of the population, living in neo-feudal conditions under the rule of a small but powerful class of Polish nobles, the so-called magnates (10-15% of the population).[1] The peasants did not have the right to own property and could be sold freely without any consideration for their family status. Peasants' labor obligations were exceedingly heavy and varied from between three and seven days of unpaid labor on the lord's estate per week (ibid: 143-45). The authority of the local lord was supreme; magnates appointed local court officials, village priests, and tavern keepers, and many maintained private armies (Sysyn 1985: 11-13). The Rus' spoke a different dialect from Poles and were Greek Catholics by contrast to their Roman Catholic masters. The Greek Catholic Church, a church of the eastern Orthodox rite but nevertheless controlled from the Vatican, was founded in 1595.[2] It would later come to play a crucial role in the construction of a distinctive Austrian Ukrainian political identity. In the late 18th century Rus' peasants were already aware that they were different from Poles. Nevertheless, unlike contemporary Bohemians or Hungarians—other Eastern European minority populations within states ruled by elites of a different ethnicity—the Rus' of western Ukraine lacked political entrepreneurs who would

[1] There was also a large Jewish population (7-10% of the total) settled in towns across the region. I omit any discussion of the urbanized Jewish minority in this article because their interactions with the local Rus' peasants were limited until the pogroms of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

[2] The Greek Catholic church came about in part as an attempt by the Poles to sever the Rus' links with Moscow and Constantinople and in part as a genuine effort by the Rus' elites to become better integrated into the Polish society.

mobilize them as a distinct national group. (ibid: 35).

Modernity arrived in these Ukrainian territories on the back of Austrian and Russian bayonets. Both empires faced an identical problem in their newly acquired Ukrainian borderlands: the threat of Polish secessionism, which endangered the territorial integrity of these vast multi-national empires. Poles staged three unsuccessful insurrections over the course of the 19th century: in 1846 in the Austrian empire and in 1830 and then again in 1863 in the Russian territories. The two empires responded to this challenge very differently largely because of initial differences in state capacity.[3] Austrian authorities sought to nurture a Ukrainian political community as a counterweight against the troublesome Poles. Russian officials, by contrast, settled on a blunt policy of suppressing the expression of all political identities in their Ukrainian possessions out of fear that the community of ethnic Ukrainians would once again fall under the sway of their Polish lords. Where the Austrian government elevated the Greek Catholic church to the same status as Roman Catholicism (in 1781), Russian officialdom banned the Greek Catholic church altogether (in 1839). Where Vienna sponsored the establishment of a Ukrainian political party (the Supreme Ruthenian Council) in the run up to the 1848 parliamentary election, St. Petersburg suspended the right to political assembly in the aftermath of the 1830 and 1863 Polish rebellions. Where Austria sponsored the publication of periodicals and books in the Ukrainian vernacular starting in 1848 and granted equal rights to all minority languages in the 1867 Constitution, Russia explicitly banned the publication of any literature in the Ukrainian vernacular in 1863 and prohibited the use of Ukrainian in schools in 1875 (Magosci 1996).[4] In short, political elites of the Austrian empire thought of Ukrainians as an independent political community that could be fruitfully nurtured in the service of keeping the empire together. Russian high officials, by contrast, thought of Ukrainians as Little Russians (*malorossy*), younger brothers of the Russian peasant, who had to be kept away from the supposedly Polish-sponsored heresy of an independent political identity.

A consensus view among leading historians of the region is that the Ukrainian political identity in the Austrian territories was fully formed by 1900 (e.g. Himka 1988: xxv; Magosci 1996: 446). It was built on the moral precepts of Josephinism, a set of ideas originating in the enlightened reign of Joseph II (1765-1790): loyalty to the Crown and self-betterment through education, diligence and thrift. Loyalty to the Crown translated into distrust and even open hatred of the Poles and later (when relations between Austria and Russia soured in the 1860s) into rejection of Russian cultural hegemony over the Ukrainian territories. This identity was carried to the Ukrainian peasantry, popularized, and policed by local elites, who were almost exclusively Greek Catholic priests until the 1880s and later also schoolteachers and wealthy literate peasants. The role of the Greek Catholic priesthood in the construction and popularization of the Ukrainian political identity cannot be overstated. Clerics were the mainstay of moral authority in the Austrian countryside throughout the 19th century. The first Ukrainian political party in the Austrian Empire, the Supreme Ruthenian Council, was headed by a Greek Catholic bishop, and three of the five presidium seats were held by priests (Himka 1988: 26). Greek Catholic priests

[3] For instance, in 1860 Russia only had 1.1 to 1.3 public officials per one thousand subjects compared to 2.8 in Austria in 1840 and, say, 4.1 in Britain in 1851 (Starr 1972: 48). The Russian Empire faced other problems too that impeded sound management: a poorly educated officialdom, heavy reliance on the noble estate to assist with governance, and terrible infrastructure.

[4] This historical narrative is, of course, highly schematic because of space constraints. Notably, in the 1830-40s the Russian imperial government did launch an abortive attempt to nurture an independent Ukrainian identity in imitation of Austrian policy. Austrian officials, on the other hand, began to lose interest in the Ukrainian project by the 1860s; but it survived and even flourished because by that time the Ukrainians had their own political entrepreneurs.

were permitted to marry, and the Ukrainian intelligentsia of the late 19th century—teachers, lawyers, and doctors—were almost universally the progeny of clerics. The Ukrainians of the Austrian Empire had ample occasion to demonstrate their allegiance to Vienna throughout the 19th century. Already during the Napoleonic wars the Ukrainians came to be known as 'Tyrolians of the East' for their loyalty to the Habsburg cause (Wandycz 1974: 144). In 1846 they slaughtered those Polish nobles who invited them to join the Polish insurrection against the crown (Himka 1988: 24), and a few years later Ukrainian peasants formed volunteer detachments to assist Vienna in the pacification of rebellious Hungarians, another minority nationality of the Austrian empire (Magosci 1996: 33). At the outbreak of World War I Ukrainians volunteered en masse for service in the Ukrainian Sich Riflemen, an ethnic unit within the Austrian Army (ibid: 41). In World War II, many Ukrainian residents of the former Austrian territories (the Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed in 1918) initially sided with Nazi Germany in the hope that Hitler would support the cause of Ukrainian independence. When that dream proved foolish the Ukrainian Insurgency Army (UPA) fought first against the Nazis and later against the Soviets and the Poles.

By contrast, when the Russian Empire collapsed in November 1917 its Ukrainian population largely lacked an independent political identity. A sense of Ukrainian distinctiveness was shared only by a small group of intellectuals in major cities, and even among these few individuals there was initially much resistance to the idea of Ukraine becoming independent from Russia (Suny 1997: 150). In the former Russian territories Ukrainian political identity was forged by Soviet authorities in the 1920s and '30s, obviously with the interests of the Soviet state in mind. The residents of Soviet Ukraine were now finally permitted to learn Ukrainian in schools and to read periodicals and books in their own language. However, the Ukrainian identity was to be "proletarian in content, [but] national [only] in form" (Martin 2001: 90). In an ingenious about-face the Soviet government came to espouse what was effectively the policy of the late Russian Empire: the Ukrainian peasantry was to be taught that Russians and Ukrainians were one people divided in the 14th century by their common enemies (Poles and Lithuanians) and finally reunited thanks to the efforts of the Greater Russians. The peasantry was also to be taught respect for Soviet authorities, the party, and, starting in 1928, the institution of collective property ownership. Soviet authorities had ample means at their disposal for rapid dissemination of this message. The government introduced mandatory schooling for children and adults alike. Literacy rates shot up from 42% in 1926 to 98% in 1938, and the population was continuously bombarded with well-honed messages in the press and by government propagandists at mass meetings (Magosci 1996: 543). Many members of the elites whose views differed from the official line perished in show trials (notably, the Skrypnyk affair) and the Great Purge of the 1930s (Martin 2001: chapter 9).

(iii) A few wrinkles

All in all, it should now be apparent that the two competing Ukrainian political identities—one forged in the Austrian empire, the other in imperial Russia and Soviet Ukraine—were diametrically opposed to one another by the time that Ukraine came into its current boundaries in September 1939 at yet another partition of Poland. Core differences between these two political identities centered on attitudes toward Russia and consequently toward political and economic institutions sponsored by Moscow. However, the story that I told in the previous section presents two ideal types. The historical record is a little more complicated because the imperial borderlands were made up of five regions, each with a slightly distinct historical trajectory. It is difficult to do justice to all of the historical complexity in a short article, and I will only summarize the main points here, which are also outlined in Table 1. Austrian possessions in western Ukraine—that is, territories immediately west of the imperial border—consisted of Galicia to the north and east and Bukovina to the south. In the north,

Austrian Galicia abutted on the Russian region of Volhynia, and to the east Galicia bordered on Podolia along the river Zburch. Bukovina was situated immediately across from the northern tip of Bessarabia. These five regions are labeled on Map 1.

The first thing to note is that before the arrival of Austrian and Russian empires Bukovina and Bessarabia were part of the principality of Moldavia, a vassalage state of the Ottoman Empire and the precursor of modern Romania. Because Bessarabia and Bukovina had different starting conditions from the other three regions (which were part of Poland) any comparison between Bessarabia and Bukovina on the one hand and the three other regions on the other is observational, not experimental. In practice, this is not a major concern—northern Bukovina and Bessarabia were also populated predominantly by ethnic Ukrainians living in a neo-feudal society controlled by Romanian (not Polish) nobles (Magosci 1996). The crucial and persistent difference between Bukovina and Galicia—both were under Austrian control in the 19th century—was that only Galicia had the Greek Catholic Church; Bukovina held onto eastern Orthodox rite.

Another important historical wrinkle concerns the interwar period, when at the collapse of the Austrian and Russian empires all the regions with the exception of Podolia reverted back to their pre-imperial masters: Galicia and Volhynia fell to Poland, and Bukovina and Bessarabia to Romania. Podolia was the only region to go directly to Soviet Ukraine in 1920. The interwar period did not leave much of a mark on Bukovina and Bessarabia where the Romanian government, distracted as it was by infighting between socialists and conservatives at the center, failed to implement a consistent policy toward the ethnic Ukrainian community. In the formerly Austrian region of Galicia a distinctive political identity was already fully developed. Where the interwar period did make a difference was in the case of Volhynia, a former Russian possession. When Poland acquired Volhynia in the summer of 1919 it found a community of ethnic Ukrainians who were generally positively pre-disposed toward Russia (and even had their own branch of the Communist party) but were still politically uncommitted. In a policy that became known as the Volhynia Experiment Polish authorities began to mimic Soviet actions elsewhere in Ukraine, except that the Poles were attempting to foster a Ukrainian political identity that would be hostile to

TABLE 1. Historical Trajectory of the Sub-Regions under Study

	Before 1772	*1772-1918*	*1918-1939*	*1944-present*
GALICIA	Poland	AUSTRIAN EMPIRE *(Greek Catholic Church)*	Poland‡	Ukraine
PODOLIA	Poland	RUSSIAN EMPIRE††	Soviet Ukraine‡‡	Ukraine
VOLHYNIA	Poland	RUSSIAN EMPIRE††	Poland‡	Ukraine
BUKOVINA	Romania†	AUSTRIAN EMPIRE* *(Orthodox Church)*	Romania	Ukraine
BESSARABIA	Romania†	RUSSIAN EMPIRE**	Romania	Ukraine

† Principality of Moldavia at that time.
†† Russian Empire acquired Volhynia and Podolia in 1795.
‡ Poland established complete control over Galicia and Volhynia in July 1919.
‡‡ Soviet authorities established complete control over Podolia in July 1920.
* Austrian Empire acquired Bukovina from the Ottoman Empire in 1774.
** Russian Empire acquired Bessarabia from the Ottoman Empire in 1812.

Moscow and friendly toward Warsaw. All parties other than the government-sponsored Volhynian Ukrainian Alliance were banned, and the authorities made an active effort to educate the local population via schools, reading rooms, and the government press. The Ukrainians of Volhynia were taught about the historical cultural and political union between the peoples of Poland and Ukraine, and Russia was painted in somber colors as an imperial oppressor of political liberties (for a more detailed description of the Volhynia Experiment see Snyder 2005).

The differences in historical trajectories between the five regions that I sketched out here provide very useful analytical leverage for understanding how distinct political identities took root and persisted. Galicia and Podolia are the two ideal types that conform closely to the account of the historical 'treatments' laid out in the preceding section. On the other hand, if we want to tease out the role that the Greek Catholic church (present in Galicia but not Bukovina) had played in the establishment of a distinctive political identity then a comparison between Galicia and Bukovina would prove highly fruitful. Finally, Volhynia makes for a useful counterpoint to Podolia given that the two regions have identical historical trajectories but for the fact that Volhynia was subject to Polish administrative manipulation during the interwar period. By way of previewing the findings I will divulge already at this point that differences in contemporary political identities are greatest between Galicia and Podolia with Volhynia and Bukovina falling somewhere in between the two ideal types.

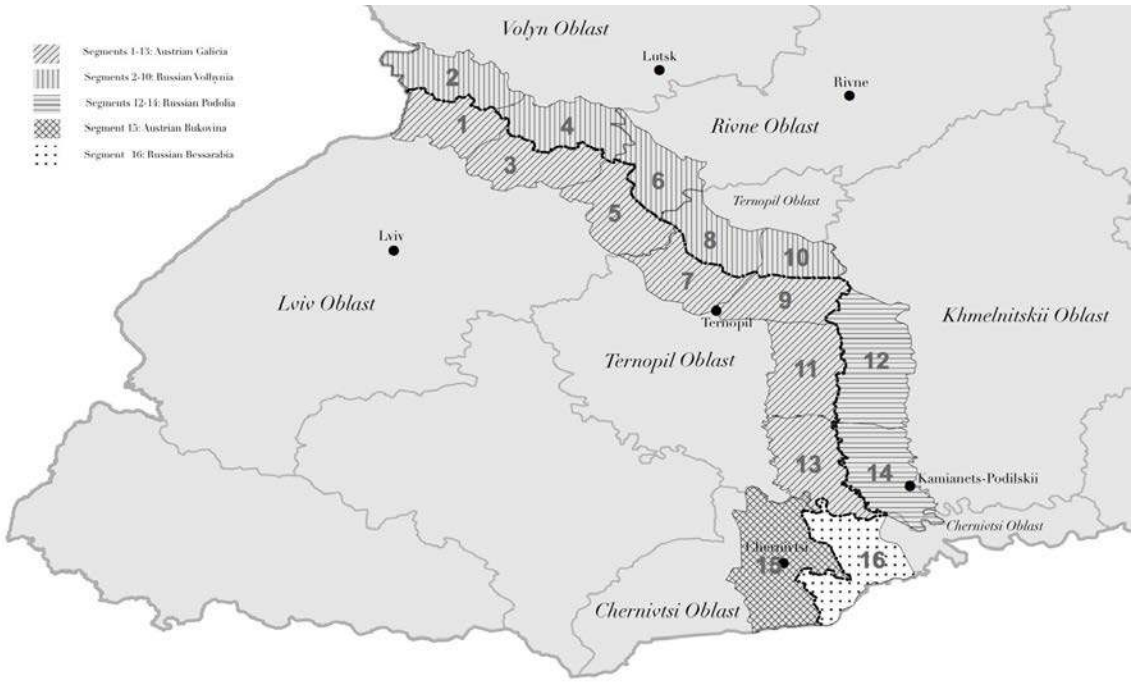
RESEARCH DESIGN

In the remainder of the paper I focus on the dependent variable—contemporary differences in political identities and associated norms between populations residing either side of the long-defunct Austrian-Russian imperial border. In order to measure the dependent variable I designed and put in the field a social survey. My primary aim was to ensure that everything was held constant other than the 'treatment' variable, the presence of the historical border. The most logical thing to do was to sample settlements located within immediate proximity of the border thus controlling for soil fertility, type of agriculture, availability of economic opportunities and infrastructure, and other related variables. Survey area is shown in Map 2. All sampled settlements are located within 15 miles/25 kilometers of the former historical border. The survey area, which is 260 mi/420km in length and 30mi/50km in width, crisscrosses some of Ukraine's most rural and particularly fertile agricultural areas. It consists of 16 segments, each 15 miles in width and 15-20 miles in length. I divided the survey zone into segments so that data for specific historical regions could be teased out from the general sample. Odd-numbered segments are on the Austrian side of the border: 1-13 are Galicia and segment 15 is Bukovina. On the even-numbered Russian side segments 2-10 correspond to Volhynia, segments 12 and 14 to Podolia, and segment 16 to Bessarabia.

Overall, 1,675 respondents were interviewed in 247 settlements: 15 towns and 232 villages. The population on each side of the border within the survey area is roughly equivalent in number—613,000 on the Austrian side and 635,000 on the Russian— therefore 121 settlements were sampled in the Austrian stratum and 126 in the Russian.[5] The standard population-proportionate-to-size (PPS) method was employed in designing the sampling frame with one notable exception. The number of respondents was augmented artificially in six survey segments (7-10 and 15-16) in such a way that an increase in respondents on the Austrian side would automatically bring about a corresponding increase in the paired Russian segment on the other side of the border. These six segments were oversampled because they are situated in areas where contemporary administrative

[5] I excluded two large cities (Ternopil and Chernivtsi), both of them in the Austrian stratum, from the sampling frame. Prior to 1941 Ukrainian cities were settled almost exclusively by Poles and Jews, whereas ethnic Ukrainians moved in only after World War II. Villages were more likely to have continuity of population and therefore more interesting from the perspective of this project.

MAP 2. Survey Area with the Imperial Border and Segment Numbers Marked out



provincial borders (drawn up in 1939) do not coincide with the historical imperial border. Therefore, these segments are particularly interesting because the matching pairs are situated within the same province (*oblast*) in contemporary Ukraine; this adds yet another control to the overall design. The survey was in the field in late spring and early summer of 2009.

FINDINGS

For reasons of clarity and space I report all the findings in this section at the level of the two survey strata—the Austrian and the Russian—without disaggregating them to the five regions. There will be an opportunity to consider the disaggregated findings later on in the essay. In addition, I will be reporting mostly differences of means between the two populations as has become standard practice in experimental studies in political science (see Gerber and Green 2012). For the more skeptical reader I will also show results from multivariate regressions with controls for several of the key survey questions. It bears stressing that none of the reported differences of means between the strata are affected when controls are introduced.[6]

[6] Full results are available upon request.

(i) Descriptive statistics

The first important thing to consider is how similar survey respondents are to one another either side of the former imperial border. Experimental design is premised on the assumption that survey respondents in the two strata are identical on all characteristics other than those that have been shaped by historical 'treatments.' It would therefore be reasonable to expect the sample to be balanced on income, ethnicity, education, and age. However, respondents should differ on their religious beliefs given that the Greek Catholic creed was such an important component of the Ukrainian political identity in the Austrian Empire (the Greek Catholic church was banned in 1946 by Soviet authorities and restored in 1991). These expectations are borne out by the data, which are reported in Table 2. An identical percentage of respondents in both strata (94%) self-identifies as ethnically Ukrainian. There are also no statistically significant differences between the two populations when it comes to income and education levels, age, or gender. An average resident of the area in the immediate vicinity of the defunct imperial border is a 50-year old Ukrainian woman living out in the country with incomplete

secondary education and sufficient income to purchase food and clothing but not expensive electrical appliances.

expect identities and associated norms formed in the 19th and early 20th centuries to persist if more than 50% of local residents

TABLE 2. Descriptive Statistics

	Austrian stratum	*Russian stratum*	*Difference of Means*
Age (years)	50 (.64)	49 (.64)	.54
% women	.62 (.02)	.62 (.02)	.00
Income[a]	2.80 (.03)	2.79 (.03)	.01
Education (years)	9.54 (.06)	9.34 (.08)	.20
% Ukrainians	.94 (.01)	.94 (.01)	.00
LANGUAGE (spoken at home):			
- Only Ukrainian	.91 (.01)	.81 (.01)	.10**
- Some mixture of Ukrainian and Russian	.03 (.01)	.12 (.01)	.10**
RELIGION:			
- Orthodox	.46 (.02)	.88 (.01)	.42**
- Greek Catholic	.47 (.02)	.03 (.01)	.44**
% village inhabitants	.76 (.01)	.70 (.02)	.06*
Family roots in the same province for over 100 years	.60 (.02)	.72 (.02)	.12**
N	*830*	*845*	*1675*

Statistical significance level: * p< .05 ** p< .01;
[a] Income is measured on a five-point scale where 1 is the lowest level and 5 the highest.

As expected, there are major differences on respondents' religious affiliations between the strata. Whereas only 3% of the residents of the Russian stratum self-report as Greek Catholic, 47% of their neighbors across the former Austrian-Russian frontier identify with the Greek Catholic church. All of these individuals must have converted to Greek Catholicism after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Interestingly, there are other early hints of the persistent effect of the historical 'treatments.' Although the proportion of ethnic Ukrainians is exactly the same in the two strata, residents of the former Russian territories are ten percentage-points more likely to speak a mix of Ukrainian and Russian in their regular lives as opposed to just Ukrainian. In fact, during fieldwork I quickly discovered that villages either side of the former imperial border speak very different dialects of Ukrainian. Another very important issue is the stability of the local population. It would be unreasonable to were transplants from outside of the imperial borderlands. Population stability is a major concern in this instance given that western Ukraine experienced two world wars, an international and a civil war, as well as deportations over the past century. Fortunately, 60% of respondents in the Austrian and 72% in the Russian stratum trace their roots back at least 100 years in their respective regions. This figure is lower for the Austrian stratum because these Soviet oblasts received a much larger number of ethnic Ukrainians who were resettled from eastern Poland in 1944-1946 thus diluting the locally rooted population. Whereas Lviv and Ternopil oblasts (both in the Austrian stratum) received 231,000 resettled Ukrainians, Volyn, Rivne, and Khmelnytskyi oblast in the Russian stratum accommodated only 39,000 individuals.[7]

[7] Data as reported by the first special department of Ukraine's ministry of the interior on 16 May 1947. Sprava 1/23/4963. Central State Archive

(ii) Substantive similarities across survey strata

Historical 'treatments' do not give rise to differences in political attitudes and behavior along every conceivable dimension because they are usually targeted toward some subset of salient issues. In this instance, state-sponsored identity-building projects that I described earlier were designed to speak to a narrow set of cleavages to do with Ukraine's position vis-à-vis Europe and Russia. As a result, there are many similarities between the residents of the two strata when it comes to political behavior, and I describe some of these in Table 3. The first thing to note is that residents of both strata are equally proud (or, to be precise, not proud) of being Ukrainian. As we will see a little later, it is not that one population considers itself Ukrainian whereas the other does not. Rather, the substance of what it means to be Ukrainian differs between the two populations. Likewise, both populations appear to be relatively apathetic when it comes to political engagement—only half of all respondents irrespective of location discuss politics with friends and family, and fewer than one-third believe that they can affect political change. Participation in elections is one notable exception to this general trend. About 80% of all respondents report voting in latest parliamentary election. It is difficult to explain this finding without additional research, but it is generally known that turnout rates are very high across the former Soviet space, and particularly so in rural areas. Attendance at polls on election day was strictly enforced in the Soviet Union, and it would seem that this practice has persisted in the post-authoritarian setting.

Another important finding concerns respondents' attitudes toward democracy. Seventy percent of those residing in the Russian stratum and 79% of respondents in the Austrian stratum say that they prefer a strong (understood to mean 'effective') leader to multi-party democracy. This is an unusually high level of support for authoritarianism and one that might be somewhat context-specific given that the survey was in the field in the spring and summer of 2009 at the height of the global economic downturn. My impression from over 250 interviews that I conducted is that the two populations express pro-authoritarian attitudes for different reasons. Whereas the population of the Russian stratum is pro-authoritarian because they have a positive view of the Soviet past, residents of the Austrian stratum tend to prize strong leaders because they live in a traditional and hierarchical society where both the Church and the family patriarch still command a great deal of authority. Setting general impressions aside, it bears stressing that the story told by the data is not about a modern and enlightened Austrian stratum against a backward and servile Russian stratum. Both populations are equally backward when it comes to political engagement and support for democracy. In short, I am not presenting some version of the modernization theory here (e.g. Lipset 1959)—the story is a bit more intriguing.

(iii) Key findings

As expected, biggest differences between Austrian and Russian strata have to do with attitudes toward Russia and the assessment of Russia's role in Ukraine's history. A selection of findings is presented in Figure 1. The proposition that Ukraine's future should be associated with Russia and not Europe is supported by 48% of respondents in the Russian stratum against 23% of those in the Austrian stratum. This difference of 25 percentage points is really rather substantial given that respondents live in identical conditions in extreme proximity to one another. A question about Ukraine's desired foreign policy affiliations might perhaps be considered a little abstract. A more focused question about attitudes toward the immediate Soviet past and, specifically, about the role of Vladimir Lenin, the revolutionary founder of the Soviet Union, in Ukraine's history exposes the same cleavage between the two populations. Sixty-five percent of respondents in the Austrian stratum think that Lenin played a negative role in Ukraine's history against only 41% in the

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of Civil Society Organizations (TsDAHO), Kyiv.

TABLE 3. Similarities between Survey Strata

	Austrian stratum	*Russian stratum*	*Difference of Means*
'I am proud of Ukraine's culture and language' (Q4)	.48 (.02)	.47 (.02)	.01
'I have discussed my political views with family and friends over the past year' (Q10)	.49 (.02)	.51 (.02)	.02
'An ordinary citizen like me can bring about change in government policy' (Q6)	.29 (.02)	.31 (.02)	.02
'A strong political leader is better than a multiparty system' (Q13)	.79 (.01)	.70 (.02)	.09**
'I voted in the past election' (Q14)	.83 (.01)	.79 (.01)	.04*
N	*830*	*845*	*1675*

Statistical significance level: * p< .05 ** p< .01.

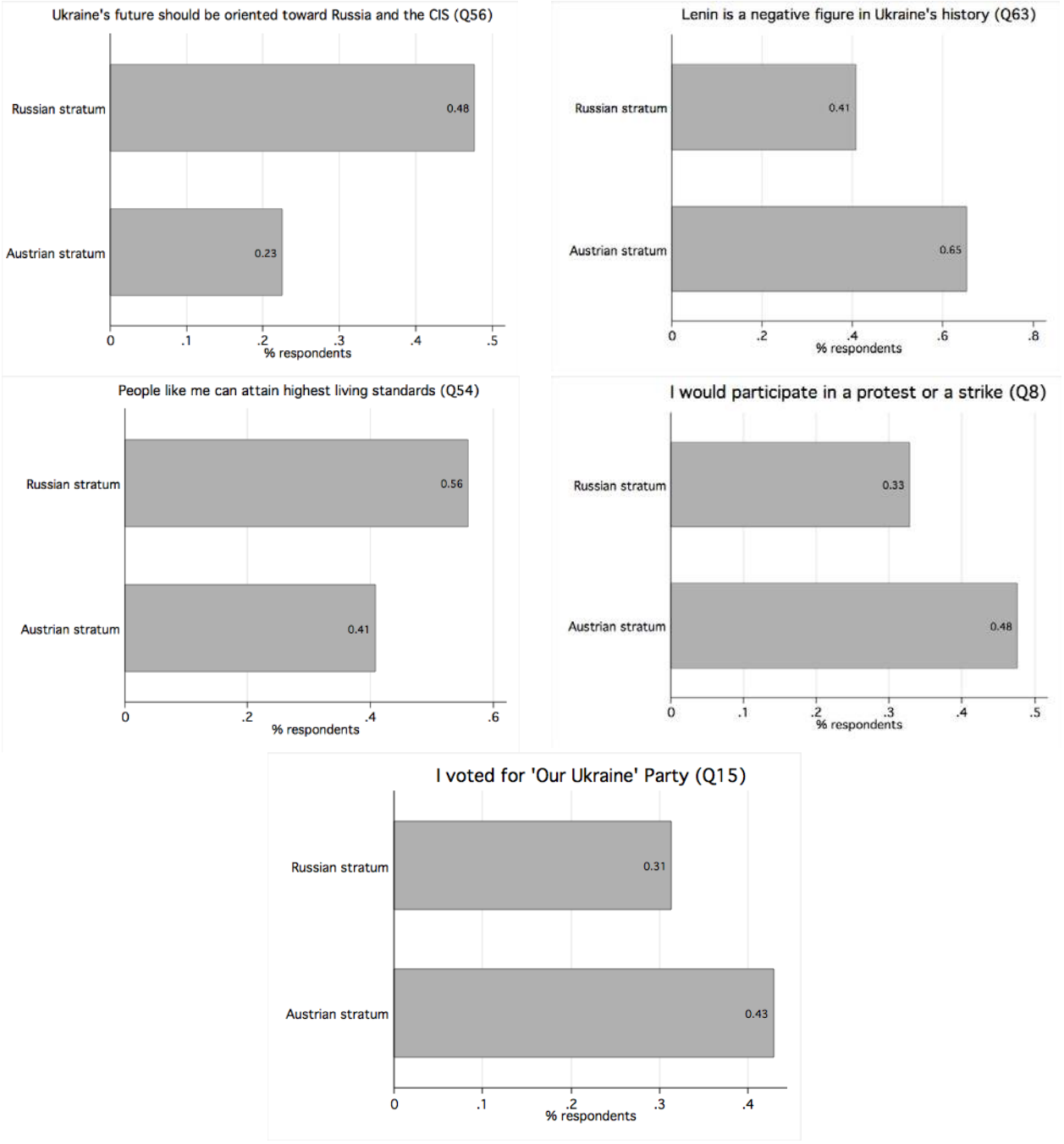
Russian stratum; this is a difference of twenty-four percentage points. Differences of a similar magnitude are replicated in a series of other questions about attitudes toward Stalin, the veterans of the Ukrainian Insurgency Army who fought against the Soviets in 1944-48 and even in questions about the tolerance for Soviet institutions like collective farms. I cannot report these additional findings here because of space constraints but plan to write about them in more detail in a different format.

The Europe-Russia cleavage is far from academic in contemporary Ukrainian politics. The issue of Ukraine's cultural and political destiny has dominated the political discourse at least over the past decade. For instance, the status of the Russian language has been at the center of a closely contested October 2012 parliamentary election. It is therefore not surprising that differences in political identities that translate into divergent assessments of Ukraine's foreign policy or the Soviet past also prompt differences in voting behavior. In the 2007 legislative election residents of the Austrian stratum were 12 percentage points more likely to vote for Our Ukraine bloc than their neighbors across the former imperial border. Our Ukraine actively promoted Ukraine's integration into the EU and NATO and was led by erstwhile president and the hero of the Orange Revolution Viktor Yushchenko. Former Austrian territories have been voting differently (i.e. in favor of more overtly pro-European candidates) than the rest of the country since Ukraine's independence. What is interesting is that differences in voting patterns fall along the Austrian-Russian imperial border and not the more recent provincial boundaries where the two are not coterminous.[8]

The population of the Austrian stratum does not live in blissful ignorance about their distinctiveness, which sets them apart from the rest of the country. When asked to assess their chances of economic and social advancement respondents in the Austrian stratum are 15 percentage points less likely to say that they and their families are capable of attaining highest living standards by comparison to their neighbors in the Russian area. Consequently, residents of the Austrian stratum also appear to be more disgruntled with state institutions and more willing to participate in protests. Whereas only 33% of respondents in the Russian stratum say that they would consider taking part in a protest or a strike, 48% of their

[8] I describe these patterns in my other work. More detailed information available upon request.

FIGURE 1. Differences in Political Identities between Austrian and Russian Strata



Austrian counterparts appear to be willing to become involved in a protest movement. This, too, is a difference of 15 percentage points, and one expressed at a time when the country was ruled by a pro-European president, Viktor Yushchenko of Our Ukraine. In short, historically rooted differences in political identities that I have been describing are far from being just nebulous concepts with little relevance to contemporary political life.

Thus far in presenting the findings I have relied exclusively on a simple comparison of means. While this is acceptable in presentation of experimental findings, a more skeptical reader might prefer to see the results of multivariate regression analyses. These are reported in Table 4. I ran the regressions for all five questions in Figure 1 and included standard controls for income and education levels, age and gender, and dummies for residents

TABLE 4. Primary Differences between the Strata

	Q56: Future with Russia	Q63: Lenin-a negative figure	Q54: Social mobility possible	Q8: Readiness to protest	Q15: Voted for 'Our Ukraine'
Austrian stratum	-24** (.02)	.25** (.02)	-.14** (.03)	.17** (.02)	.12** (.03)
Income[a]	.00 (.01)	.03* (.02)	.10** (.02)	.04** (.01)	-.01 (.02)
Education (yrs)	-.00 (.00)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.00)	.01** (.01)	-.01 (.01)
Town dwellers (dummy)	.11** (.03)	.03 (.03)	.03 (.03)	.10** (.03)	.00 (.03)
Have roots in the region	-.00 (.00)	-.00** (.00)	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	-.00* (.00)
Age (yrs)	-.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	-.01** (.00)	-.00 (.00)	.01 (.00)
Age^2	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	.00** (.00)	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)
Female	.00 (.02)	-.12** (.02)	-.02 (.02)	-.16** (.02)	.00 (.03)
Russian stratum	.49** (.11)	.21 (.11)	.58** (.12)	.37** (.11)	.17 (.14)
N	*1636*	*1636*	*1385*	*1636*	*1335*
R-squared	.08	.09	.09	.12	.04

Statistical significance level: * p< .05 ** p< .01.
[a] Income is measured on a five-point scale where 1 is the lowest level and 5 the highest.

of towns and respondents who said that they could trace their family roots in the relevant historical region at least a century back. The constant in all of these regressions is the response in the Russian stratum. The first thing to note is that differences between Austrian and Russian strata are always statistically significant and identical in magnitude to the differences of means that I presented earlier. Experimenters caution against interpreting statistically significant covariates in randomized studies with balanced samples, but I will offer a few short remarks for the benefit of those who are not convinced that this study merits the experimental label. It is interesting to see that the dummy for historical roots does not appear to impact the results: even though it is statistically significant on occasion, the magnitude of the effect is negligible. This suggests that the minority of local residents who do not have historical roots in the region have fallen into step with locally dominant political norms. Attitudes in towns can be statistically different because there social networks are likely to be weaker. Both gender and education largely work in ways in which we would expect them to. Wealthier interviewees are more likely to believe in economic and social mobility and are more willing to protest. Women, by contrast, are less likely to join a protest movement, and, curiously, are 12 percentage points more reluctant than men to speak badly of Lenin. I am not quite sure how to interpret the latter finding and can only hazard a guess that traditional social

mores make women less likely to speak badly of any specific individual. All in all, the findings are robust to different methods of analysis and to inclusion of standard demographic covariates.

DISCUSSION

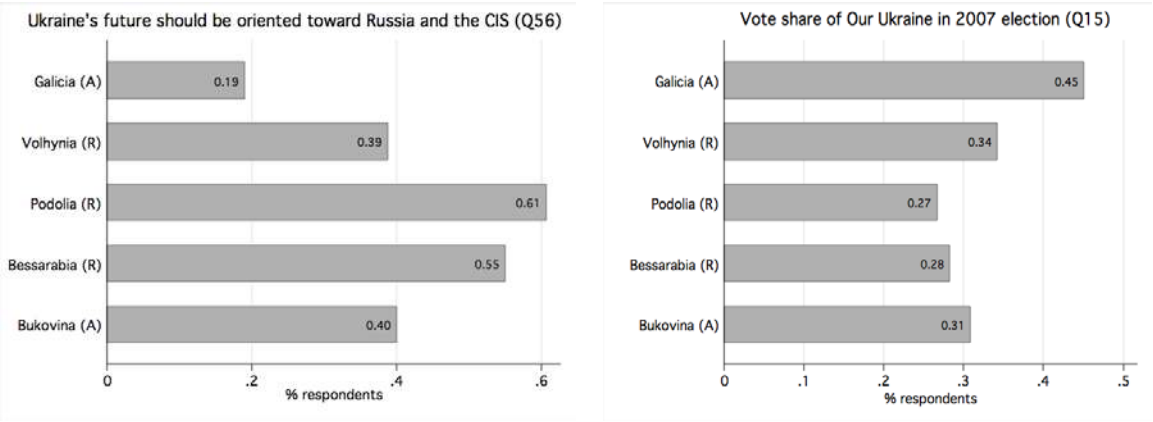
(i) Alternative explanations

Yet, history is a fickle mistress. The five regions that constitute western Ukraine had complicated trajectories before they were finally united within Soviet Ukraine in 1939/44. Could it be that differences in political identities that I have described are a product of a much more recent set of causal factors that have nothing to do with 19th century borders and divergent strategies of imperial identity building?

It should already be quite clear that no contemporary differences in material or institutional environment are capable of explaining this pattern of findings. Descriptive statics reported earlier demonstrate that the defunct imperial border does not divide a wealthier or a better-educated population from a poorer or less educated one: survey respondents either side of the border are identical when it comes to basic demographic covariates. Economic conditions are also very similar across the area covered by the survey—this is a rural and highly fertile region with few opportunities outside of agriculture. As to the contemporary institutional environment, educational and cultural policies are the prerogative of the central state in Ukraine, and there are no regional political parties of any significance (the misleading name of one of the nationally-dominant parties, Party of the Regions, notwithstanding). Provincial-level administrative institutions are identical across western Ukraine given economic homogeneity in this part of the country. Furthermore, differences in political identities are just as pronounced between segments within the same administrative province as they are in the sample at large. For instance, segment pairs 7 & 9 (Austrian Galicia) and 8 & 10 (Russian Volhynia) are today both located within Ternopil province (see Map 2), yet only 18% of interviewees in the Austrian segment pair support Ukraine's orientation toward Russia against 39% in the Russian segment pair (this difference is statistically significant at $p < .01$).

The complexity of the interwar period and of the events in the immediate aftermath of World War II are more of a serious challenge to my claims. In the twenty-year lull between the two world wars four regions under study reverted back to their pre-imperial rulers; Podolia went directly to Soviet Ukraine. Austrian Galicia and Russian Volhynia thus became part of newly independent Poland. Could differences in political identities between Austrian and Russian strata really be due to the Polish interwar 'treatment' and not to a deeper legacy of empires? The answer is an unequivocal no. In Figure 2 I present responses to survey questions on pro-Russian attitudes and voting behavior that we have already encountered, but this time results are reported separately for each of the five historical regions. The letter after the region's name indicates the imperial affiliation of that region: "A" for Austria and "R" for Russia. Differences across regions are all statistically significant at $p < .01$ with the exception of the Podolia-Bessarabia and Volhynia-Bukovina pairs for both questions and the Bessarabia-Bukovina and Podolia-Bukovina pairs for the vote-share question. Given that Austrian Galicia and Russian Volhynia were both part of Poland in the interwar period, it would be reasonable to expect these two regions to have identical political identities today had Polish rule been pivotal to identity formation. Yet, Galicia and Volhynia are different. When it comes to anti-Russian attitudes Volhynia, originally in the Russian Empire and then under Polish control, falls halfway between Galicia and Podolia, the Austrian and Russian ideal cases. Polish authorities did initially attempt to implement identical policies in Galicia and Volhynia by way of promoting a pro-Polish and anti-Russian Ukrainian political identity (Snyder 2005: 75). As survey responses indicate this policy was at least partially successful in Volhynia where ethnic Ukrainians did not have a strong political identity at the collapse of the Russian Empire. But Poland failed in Galicia because there a powerful

FIGURE 2. Differences in Political Identities by Region



NOTE: (A) next to the region name means that the region was in the Austrian Empire, whereas (R) denotes its historical affiliation with the Russian Empire.

political identity was already fully established.

Another analytically compelling alternative hypothesis has to do with the timing of the onset of Soviet rule. Soviet institutions arrived in Podolia in 1920, twenty years earlier than in the other four regions. Is it possible that reported differences in political identities are a product of the fact that residents of Podolia simply had longer to acclimatize to Soviet rule? This hypothesis is not supported by the data. If it were true then Podolia should have accounted for all variation on the dependent variable, and the other four regions should have been identical to one another. The data obviously do not conform to this pattern. Likewise, the argument that differences in the nature of Soviet rule before and after World War II could explain all the variation can also be laid to rest given that Soviet authorities treated Volhynia and Galicia exactly the same after the war, and yet these regions are different today. All in all, the data indicate strongly that substantial differences in the nature of political identities between the Austrian and Russian strata that I have exposed must be traceable to divergent policies of identity building in the imperial period by elimination of all alternative hypotheses if for no other reason.

Moreover, variation between the five regions reported in Figure 2 also helps prize open the black box of identity formation and persistence. For instance, the Austrian region of Bukovina is consistently less anti-Russian than Galicia, its Austrian neighbor to the north. The Greek Catholic Church is responsible for this difference: it was present in Bukovina but absent in Galicia, whereas both regions had a very similar schooling system. The relative placement of Volhynia by comparison to Podolia and Galicia is also very interesting. The fact that Volhynia is situated half way between the two contrasting ideal cases is evidence for the effectiveness of the Polish interwar identity-building project, the Volhynian Experiment. As I briefly explained earlier, under the policy that became known as the Volhynian Experiment Polish authorities used schools, government-controlled press, the parties, and, for a time, the Orthodox Church to create a Ukrainian population loyal to Poland and hostile to Russia. They clearly succeeded in part. This schematic discussion of the mechanics behind the construction of political identity will have to suffice for now; I plan to return to these complex and fascinating issues in another work.

(ii) External validity

The temptation to dismiss much of what I had to say in this essay as an historical aberration, a sort of accident of history predicated on the uniqueness of the Ukrainian experience, must not be insubstantial. And, it is, in fact, true that the historical laboratory of the Ukrainian

borderlands, this playground of empires, is relatively *sui generis*. That is exactly why it makes for such a fascinating place to study. However, this need not mean that the *process* of persistence of political identities and associated norms of behavior in the face of changes in material and formal institutional environments is unique to Ukraine. It is generally well established that formal institutions, like parliamentary systems (North 1989), legal codes (Lange and Ruschemeyer 2005), missionary enterprises (Woodberry 2012), and systems of land tenure (Banerjee and Iyer 2005), all have a major effect on consequent institutional evolution via path dependence. There is no reason why informal institutions should not persist in some way, be it similar or different. Admittedly, persistence of identities and norms has not been studied extensively because of the illusive nature of informal institutions (cf. Putnam 1994 on the Italian South or Nisbett and Cohen 1996 on the culture of honor in the US South). In short, my hunch is that persistence of political identities even in the face of hostile formal institutions is commonplace, but this issue certainly needs much more attention.

CONCLUSION

I set out to demonstrate that political identities and associated norms of behavior, for instance voter choice, can persist for a surprisingly long time even in the face of hostile material and formal institutional environments. I showed how differences in political identities that came about as a result of an accident history, a partition of a homogenous population between two competing empires, have persisted over the course of several centuries. These differences in political norms, expressed in the case of the populations of western Ukraine as variation in attitudes toward Russia and consequently the Soviet past, are still palpable today in neighboring settlements located immediately either side of a long defunct imperial border. The question of relations with Russia and of the status of the Russian language within Ukraine is the most pivotal and hotly contested issue in contemporary Ukrainian politics, and therefore these differences in political identities can be very consequential indeed. My methodological aim in this paper was to demonstrate that big questions about macro-level processes, especially those that are particularly evasive or poorly understood, can be very fruitfully studied at the micro-level in relatively controlled settings. I hope that I have managed to convince the reader that careful micro comparisons, although not without their limitations, are considerably more useful than sweeping generalizations for the study of complex historical processes.

This finding offers a major corrective to the way we think about political behavior and institutional evolution and is of relevance to literatures on democratization, economic growth, and political choice among others. If exceptionally sticky political identities and associated norms play a decisive role in shaping important behaviors like engagement with formal institutions and voting, then our focus should be less on the low-hanging fruit of formal rules and more on the evolution of informal institutions and conditions under which political identities change. This is not to say that political identities are capable of explaining all interesting variation in political and social outcomes. For instance, regional political identities in Ukraine are narrow (attitudes toward a regional hegemon and his institutional model), but they do impact on a highly salient issue. Another caveat has to do with the way political identities operate. Here I move briefly beyond the scope of this paper and into the speculative realm. Individuals likely conform to communal political identities to varying degree; their conformity level is a product of the extent of their integration into the relevant community and of their need for approval and recognition from fellow community members. Because conformity levels vary from individual to individual a dominant political identity is unlikely to produce identical behavior across the whole community, rather there will be clustering around a specific set of attitudes or behaviors. That is exactly what we observe in the Ukrainian case. Generally, though, the microfoundations behind the operation of political identity require a great deal of research.

It would be unfair to the reader to close this article without saying a few words about the mechanism behind identity persistence, which is the subject of an altogether separate essay. Some readers will feel that the most interesting thing about this project is not that different political identities came about in the imperial period or that they persisted but rather the specific mechanism by which these identities survived. What little existing work there is on identity persistence argues that identities are conserved within churches (Wittenberg 2006) and schools (Darden forthcoming). I argue that both priests and schoolteachers are specific examples of a general class of social actors best described as local elites. Local elites—be they priests, teachers, or simply prominent wealthy or highly educated individuals—transmit and police political identities. Every social network will have its set of nodal actors, who are the local elites. If these elite actors have internalized the identity in question, then that identity has a high chance of persisting largely unchanged for as long as the social network persists. Therefore, the surest way to alter a political identity is to destroy the local elite that nurtures it or to displace it. This is something that the Soviets understood extremely well. Here is Nikita Khrushchev, then the leader of the Communist Party of Ukraine, speaking on 14 February 1946 at a closed meeting of provincial heads and senior security officials in western Ukraine:

> "It is true that the young are joining the [covert nationalist] groups, but we have not yet reached the young with our Bolshevist word, our Bolshevist truth; we have failed in the fight for their souls. Therefore the main task before us is not construction of administrative institutions, nor organization of security battalions, although we need that too; our main task is political organization of the masses, political work among the masses. That is our primary task."[9]

The little known fact about the Soviet Union is that Soviet authorities, despite all their might and intent, continued to fail in the fight for the souls of the young western Ukrainians because they never managed to fully penetrate rural political communities and replace local elites in the former Austrian territories. That is how the political identities that I have described here have survived.

[9] Sprava 1/23/2884. Central State Archive of Civil Society Organizations (TsDAHO), Kyiv. My translation.

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