

# The Impact of War on Voting Behavior?

## The Case of Ukraine

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## Motivation: War-Time Voting & Post-EuroMaidan Ukraine



# Motivation: Theoretical Expectations

## Theoretical Expectations

1. International conflicts can generate support for incumbents (Abramowitz 1988; Box-Steffensmeier 1996; De Mesquita and Siverson 1995).
  - ▶ **Mobilization 'ralliers'** (move to the incumbent)
2. Political violence = detrimental effect on voter engagement, mainly depressing it (Allison 2010; Blattman 2009; Jarstad and Sisk 2008; Reilly 2008).
  - ▶ **Demobilization** in form of **'exitters'** (intended to vote but did not after period of violence)

## BUT

- ▶ Few able to isolate effects of war over 2 election cycles.
- ▶ Know little: who becomes a 'rallier'/'exiter' or why/what drives this change in voting behavior.

During war-time elections which citizens 'rally'  
and which 'exit' the electoral arena all together?

What drives 'rallying' and what drives 'exiting'  
the electoral arena all together?

# The Case: War-Time Elections in Ukraine

May - Poroshenko decisive win = 55% of vote

- ▶ Rally'round oligarch - branded as EM 'leader' (Hale et. al. 2018)

Conflict escalates & scholars hypothesize

- ▶ ethno-linguistic + regional underpinnings of separatism
- ▶ rising support for RRWPs (Ishchenko 2014; Kudelia 2014; Sakwa 2014)

# The Case: War-Time Elections in Ukraine

26 Oct parliamentary elections = rallied around moderate political blocs + shunned RRWPs + peacefully elected new parliament.

- ▶ 65% pro-EM parties
- ▶ 44% President's + PM's parties

Voter turnout lower than in past w 52% (a 7% drop from 2012)

- ▶ Lowest (32%) in eastern oblasts, nearer to + in occupied territories of Donbas (Central Election Commission of Ukraine 2014)

A case of war-time elections?!

# Electoral rallying & exit in times of war

We should observe:

**A rally effect** (De Mesquita & Siverson 1995; Hogan 2001; Somit 1994; Tufte 1975)

- ▶ W1 only 18% planned to vote for PP
- ▶ W3 35% reported having voted PB in the Parliamentary elections
- ▶ = a rallying to the incumbent of 17

**An exit effect** (Allison 2010; Birnir & Gohdes 2018; Blattman 2009)

- ▶ W1 72% planning on voting in the Parliamentary elections
- ▶ W3 only 64% reported doing so.
- ▶ = 8% exited from the electoral arena.

## Existing Explanations: Area Studies/Ukraine Specialists

- ▶ ethno-linguistic identities = hypothesized as central to voter preference + engagement (Chaisty & Whitefield 2018; Sakwa 2014)
- ▶ + pointing to low turnout in east hypo = region + proximity to the conflict zone = driving war time vote changes (Sakwa 2014)

Idea is that war = hardening ethno-linguistic + regional divisions which mediate any change in voting behavior.

# Existing Explanations: Political Behavior

- ▶ partisanship (Bartels 2000)
- ▶ clientelist networks (Liu 2011; Szwarcberg 2012; Weitz-Shapiro 2012)
- ▶ general appraisal of incumbent's dealing with the war (Bernhardt and Ingberman 1985; King 1991)
- ▶ policy alignment (Lipset & Rokkan 1967)
- ▶ media consumption (Prior 2006)

BUT logic still = factors exacerbated by the war context.

# It's The Economy Stupid! [or rather Economic Security]

Importance of economic factors in driving voting behavior  
(Anderson 2000; Duch & Stevenson 2008; Tucker et al. 2006)

- ▶ Sasse & Lackner (2018) + Giuliano (2018) = competing hypothesis
  - ▶ socio-economic wellbeing, or there lack of
  - ▶ + a feel of being 'left behind' (or not listened to)
  - ▶ = driving support for separatism btw 2014-2017.

And thus, in a similar light, we hypothesize:

- ▶ rather than variables connected to the conflict itself or ethno-linguistic identity variables
- ▶ instead economic security + believing that one is being/going to be listened to - could be driving drive 'rally' and 'exit' behaviors.

# The Data

## The Ukrainian Crisis Election Panel Survey (UCEPS)

W 1 May 16-24, 2014, N=2010

W 2 June 24-July 13, 2014, N= 1405

W 3 November 24-December 30, 2014 N= 1,373

- ▶ Face-to-Face interviews, nationally rep. sample minus Crimea.
- ▶ Wave 1 UCEPS included the Donbas fully.
  - ▶ As combat widened, respondents dropped out of the survey, especially in the Luhans'k region.
  - ▶ Margin of error = 3.3%

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## Operationalization: DVs 'Exit'

Table 1 Become Non-Voters (Exit) Wave One - Wave Two

Became Non-Voter	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
0	1,113	81.36	81.36
1	255	18.64	100.00
Total	1,368	100.00	

## Operationalization: DVs 'Rally'

Table 2 Switched To Poroshenko Bloc (Rally) Wave One - Wave Two

<b>Switched to Poroshenko Bloc</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>
0	1,258	85.87	85.87
1	207	14.13	100.00
Total	1,465	100.00	

# IVs: Drivers of Electoral Rallying & Exit in Times of War

## Geographic proximity to conflict (Birrir & Gohdes 2018)

- ▶ we expect 'ralliers' to reside further away from war zone + exiters to reside closer to the conflict.
  - ▶ averaged distance from locality to Luhansk + Donetsk cities

## Appraisal of incumbent's dealing with war = shapes likelihood of vote + rally (Bernhardt and Ingerman 1985; King 1991; Reilly 2008)

- ▶ we expect voters + ralliers = higher support for ATO policies
  - ▶ all who agree + mostly agree with government's ATO tactics = 1 & all others = 0

## We control for two binary variables

- ▶ elections not held in region = 1 & all others = 0
- ▶ local station closed on election day = 1 & all others = 0

# IVs: Drivers of Rallying & Exit in Democratizing Contexts

## Partisanship (Bartels 2000)

- ▶ we expect partisans not to exit.
  - ▶ all members of party = 1 & all others = 0

## Patronage or clientelist networks (Auyero, et. al. 2009; Levitsky 2007; Liu 2011; Weitz-Shapiro 2012)

- ▶ we expect members of competing party or oligarch networks = less likely to switch votes + more likely to vote.
  - ▶ Akmetov/Poroshenko oligarchic network = all who said they/their friends/family worked for A's/P's indust. = 1 & all others = 0
  - ▶ Party of Regions/Batkivshchyna/UDAR competing party network = all who said they/their friends/family members of party = 1 & all others = 0

# IVs: Drivers of Rallying & Exit in Democratizing Contexts

**Media consumption** = important mediator of rallying + exit (Prior 2006)

- ▶ Ukr context = Russian television, Russian language television content, and social media use specifically VKontakte (Dyczok 2014; Kozachenko 2014; Kulyk 2014; Onuch 2015; Szostek 2014)

Media consumption = five binary variables

- ▶ watching Russian television channels for political news = 1 all others = 0
- ▶ watching internet television (streaming) for political news = 1 & all others = 0
- ▶ using Odnoklasnyky = 1 & all others = 0
- ▶ using VKontakte = 1 & all others = 0
- ▶ using Facebook = 1 & all others = 0

# IVs: Analyzing Drivers of Electoral Behavior in Ukraine

**Ethnic/Linguistic/Regional Divisions** Four dimensions of ethnicity  
(Onuch and Hale 2018)

1. personal language preference = lang of survey = Ukrainian = 1  
all others = 0
2. language embeddedness = lang spoken either at work =  
Ukrainian = 1 all others = 0
3. ethnolinguistic identity = mother (native) tongue = Ukrainian  
= 1 all others = 0
4. National identity = forced choice measure = Ukrainian = 1  
all others = 0

+ control for KIIS 'West' region 1/0

# IVs: Analyzing Drivers of Electoral Behavior in Ukraine

**Policy alignment** correlations btw positions on foreign policy (EU + NATO) & on domestic policy & behavior (state promotion of the Ukrainian language) (D'Anieri 2007; Herron 2011; Kuzio 2008)

- ▶ support for joining NATO (the EU, Russia + Russian becoming an official state lang) agree + mostly agree = 1 all others = 0

**EuroMaidan factor** those who participated + suffered personal risk = vested interest in the 'winning' post-EuroMaidan coalition + its survival.

- ▶ we expect EM more likely to rally and Anti-Maidan and Pro-Russian rallies more likely to exit
- ▶ EM participants and Anti-EM participants = 2 binary variables participation = 1 all other receiving a 0.

## IVs: Economic Deprivation and Security

**Political economy variables** (Duch and Stevenson 2008; O'Loughlin 2001; Sasse 2010).

- ▶ Giuliano (2018) who has highlighted that socio-economic inequalities and feelings of being 'left behind' where the most important for those most affected by the conflict in east.
  - ▶ We include a seven-point scale of the respondent's family's financial situation and a binary variable to capture transition winners relative to 1991.
  - ▶ N.B.: We checked for ego-tropic & socio-tropic evaluations as well

**Standard controls** = age (years), gender (female), education level (six categories), the respondent's family's financial situation (scale of 1-7), and residence in an urban environment (a population point of at least 50,000 residents).

# Statistical Analysis: Logistic Regression

We conducted a stepped **logistic regression**.

We report the "**full effects**," = when all variables are scaled from 0 to 1.

- ▶ FE = **the average change a factor makes** in an individual's **estimated likelihood of being a supporter** of a EM master narrative **if everyone** in the dataset began **at the minimum** observed **value** of a given variable but then **was raised** to that variable's **maximum value**.

# Statistical Analysis: Causal Sequence

Causal sequence = (Campbell et al. 1980; Colton 2000) - 10 stages

- ▶ Stage 1: observed demographic factors (distance to the conflict, residence in Urban locality, language of questionnaire, level of education, gender, & age) (W1).
- ▶ Stage 2: declared demographic factors (language embeddedness, ethno-linguistic identity & national identity) (W1).
- ▶ Stage 3: economic (family financial situation & economic winner of transition) (W1).
- ▶ Stage 4: policy alignment (joining NATO/EU and the Government's ATO policy) (W1).
- ▶ Stage 5: protest participation (EuroMaidan & Anti-Maidan) (W1).
- ▶ Stage 6: partisanship (W1).
- ▶ Stage 7: news media consumption (W1).

# Statistical Analysis: Causal Sequence

In a second set of equations:

- ▶ Stage 8: oligarchic and party clientelist networks (W2).
- ▶ Stage 9: voted for Petro Poroshenko in the Presidential elections in May 2014 (W2).
- ▶ Stage 10: controlling for respondents' own reported reasons for not voting (W3).

Table 3. Total Effects of Drivers of Switching To Poroshenko Bloc (Rallying) W1 - W3

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10
Distance to Conflict	0.12*	0.15**	0.16**	0.18***	0.17***	0.17**	0.16**	0.16**	0.13*	0.07
Age	0.12**	0.11**	0.14**	0.13**	0.13**	0.13**	0.13*	0.13*	0.10	
Transition Winner			-0.05*	-0.05	-0.05*	-0.05	-0.05*	-0.05*	-0.06*	-0.06*
Family Financial Situation			0.16*	0.16**	0.16*	0.16*	0.16*	0.16*	0.15*	0.15*
Odnoklasnyky User							-0.06*	-0.06*	-0.06*	-0.06*
Voted for Poroshenko									0.09***	0.10***
KiisWestW1										0.04
N	1465	1465	1465	1465	1465	1465	1465	1465	1465	

Note: Calculated using logit model. \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

# Results

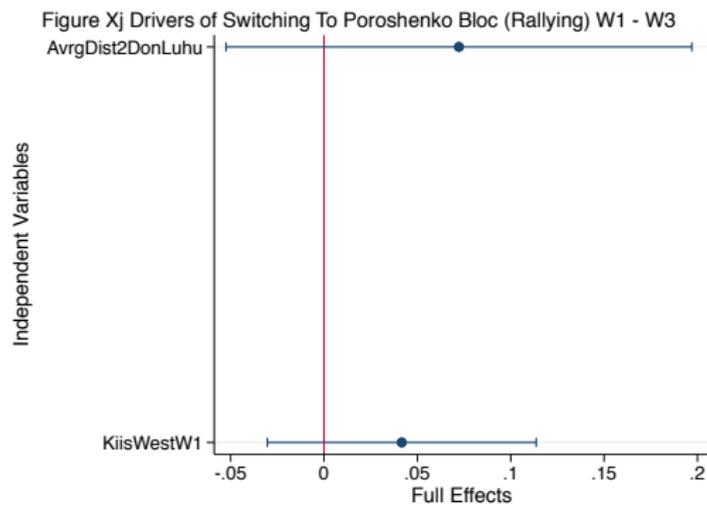


Table 4. Total Effects of Drivers of Becoming a Non-Voter (Exit) W1 - W3

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10
Age	-0.10	-0.11*	-0.13*	-0.13**	-0.14**	-0.14**	-0.15*	-0.15*	-0.13*	-0.13*
Education	-0.15**	-0.15**	-0.14**	-0.13**	-0.12*	-0.12*	-0.12*	-0.12*	-0.11*	-0.10*
Transition Winner			0.04	0.06	0.06*	0.07*	0.06*	0.06*	0.07**	0.07*
Join NATO				-0.07*	-0.06	-0.06	-0.06	-0.06	-0.05	-0.05
EM Participant					-0.12*	-0.12*	-0.11*	-0.11*	-0.10*	-0.08
VotedPorow2									-0.10***	-0.09***
Polling station closed										0.20
Party not on ballot										0.24***
Region not Ukraine										0.04
<b>N</b>	1368	1368	1368	1368	1368	1368	1368	1368	1368	1368

Note: Calculated using logit model. \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

# Preliminary Results & Discussion

- ▶ we find **no consistent support of war time factors having an effect** on increasing the likelihood of rallying or exit,
- ▶ we also **do not** find that **ethno-linguistic variables** to influence voters decisions.
- ▶ we found that those who were **more educated** and those who were **older** were **less likely** to become **non-voters** and **more likely** to move their vote to the **incumbent**.
- ▶ we find significant support for our central hypothesis that **economic security** (or there lack of) **drives rallying and exit**.

# Conclusions

- ▶ we argue that the prolonged exposure to the war itself does not seem to have systematically promoted identity voting or shifted political preferences and behaviors.
- ▶ we find that patterns of switching to support the incumbent and shifting to non-voting are not mediated by identity, partisanship, patronage networks or even by media consumption.
- ▶ we clearly and robustly find that the impact of prolonged exposure to conflict on voting seems primarily mediated by economic factors, with the most vulnerable people moving away from the incumbent.
- ▶ we also find that prolonged conflict = led transition winners to become more disillusioned, less likely to vote.
- ▶ preliminary findings call in to question some of the accepted theories.

THANK YOU