The Impact of War on Voting Behavior?
The Case of Ukraine[1]

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ABSTRACT: What are the effects of conflict on voting behavior? While scholars have examined the effects of engagement in war on sustained incumbent support (Abramowitz 1988, Berinsky 2009, Box-Steffensmeier 1996, De Mesquita & Siverson 1995, Goodliffe 2001, Hess & Orphanides 1995, Hogan 2001, Somit 1994, Tufte 1975), and the shift from violence to voting (Allison 2010, Blattman 2009, Jarstad & Sisk 2008, Reilly 2008), few have been able to examine the effects of an escalating war over the course of two election cycles. Employing original panel survey data (which we combine with geographic data accounting for proximity to conflict) this paper assesses the extent to which factors related to the war in the Donbas region of Ukraine influenced voting in the 2014 presidential and parliamentary elections and weighs them against the influence of factors that more commonly influence voting. We do not find that factors related to the conflict drive electoral behavior, nor do we find conclusive evidence that any change in voter behavior is mediated by proximity to conflict zone. Instead we find that economic security and/or feeling that one is represented by the selection of parties/candidates on the ballot is more significant in driving both rallying around the incumbent and leaving the electoral arena altogether.

KEYWORDS: Ukraine, voting behavior, war, conflict

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Introduction

It is known that that international conflict can generate support for incumbents during wartime elections (Abramowitz 1988; Box-Steffensmeier 1996; De Mesquita and Siverson 1995). We know very little, however, about who precisely is shifted in times of conflict to incumbent support. We also know that experience and fear of political violence have been found to have a detrimental effect on voter engagement, mainly depressing it. Yet we also know relatively little about who specifically becomes demobilized. Thus, in times of conflict, the literature would have us expect both mobilization in the form of 'ralliers' (those who move to the incumbent) and demobilization in form of 'exiters' (those who intended to vote pre-conflict but ultimately did not after a substantial period of violence), but little understanding what drives these shifts in behavior. This paper uniquely attempts to unpack which citizens rally and which exit the electoral arena in times of unfolding conflict.

Moreover, while scholars have examined the effects of engagement in war on sustained incumbent support (Abramowitz 1988; Berinsky 2009; Box-Steffensmeier 1996; De Mesquita and Siverson 1995; Goodliffe 2001; Hess and Orphanides 1995; Hogan 2001; Somit 1994; Tufte 1975), and the shift from violence to voting (Allison 2010; Blattman 2009; Jarstad and Sisk 2008; Reilly 2008), few have been able to isolate and examine the potential effects of an escalating war over the course of two election cycles. The case of the first year of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, which escalated, turning 'hot' in the aftermath of the May 2014 Presidential elections, provides us with the capacity to investigate both patterns. Employing original panel survey data (which we combine with geographic data accounting for proximity to conflict) this paper assesses the extent to which factors related to the war in the Donbas region of Ukraine influenced voting in the 2014 presidential and parliamentary elections and weighs them against the influence of factors that more commonly influence voting.

Interestingly, contrary to mainstream expectations, we do not find that factors related to the conflict drive change in electoral behavior (rally or exit), nor do we find conclusive evidence that any change in voter behavior is mediated by proximity to conflict zone. Instead we find that economic security and/or feeling that one is represented by the parties/candidates listed on the ballot are more significant in driving both rallying around the incumbent and exiting the electoral arena altogether.

We present an argument that key identity divides, if they did in fact matter, were already baked in through experiences of the EuroMaidan revolution and initial building seizures by May 2014. Importantly, this means that the *prolonged exposure to the war* itself does not seem to have systematically promoted identity voting. We

2

explicitly find that patterns of switching to support the incumbent and shifting to non-voting are not mediated by identity, or even by media. Instead, 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. Though transition winners, presumably those elites who had gained the most since independence and hence have the most to lose now, were also likely to break *away* from the incumbent. Furthermore, prolonged conflict also seems to have led transition winners to become more disillusioned, less likely to vote than they were before.

Next, we present the case of Ukrainian 2014 wartime elections and unpack some of our theoretical expectations. Following this, we present our data, methodology and analytical approach. And finally, we briefly summarize our main findings identifying directions for further analysis and some preliminary findings.

The Case: War-Time Elections in Ukraine

In the aftermath of both the EuroMaidan mass protests and the Russian annexation of Crimea, on 25 May 2014 for the first time since Ukraine's first Presidential elections in 1991, a candidate won outright in the first round. With 55% of the vote, Ukrainians united around President Petro Poroshenko - an oligarch chocolate magnate branded as a EuroMaidan 'leader.' Although the victory was decisive, it was clear that many divisions continued to exist among the Ukrainian population. For instance, as they escalated the conflict, Russian and separatist leaders justified their actions as protections for the rights of ethnic Russians and Russophones residing in Ukraine. Moreover, relying on past findings that Ukraine is a country divided along ethnic, linguistic, and regional lines, journalists and scholars alike widely assumed that ethno-linguistic identity was not only central to the developments in Ukraine, but also concurrently shaping Ukrainians' policy preferences and political behaviors. This thinking was in-line with longstanding theories in political science linking the hardening of ethnic, linguistic and national identities to the aggravation of conflicts (Connor 1994; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Posen 1993). As the conflict continued to escalate, observers reiterated hypotheses the ethno-linguistic and regional underpinnings for separatism, as well as, the rising support for radical rightwing parties (Ishchenko 2014; Kudelia 2014; Sakwa 2014). And yet, once the parliamentary elections took place on 26 October 2014, Ukrainians once again seemed to rally around moderate political blocs, shunning right-wing parties, and peacefully elected a new parliament. Over 65% of those who voted supported pro-EuroMaidan parties, with 44% specifically turning to the newly elected President's and the interim Prime Minister's parties. The second war time election in in five months, once again represented a significant show of incumbent

3

support and rallying. On the other hand, voter turnout was significantly lower than in past elections[4] with only 52% of eligible voters turning out (a 7% drop from the 2012 parliamentary elections). Turnout was particularly low in eastern oblasts (provinces), nearer to and in the occupied territories of the Donbas, where it was as low as 32% (Central Election Commission of Ukraine 2014). Immediately, pundits revived two central hypotheses as to what affected both voters 'rallying' (moving their support to the newly elected President's party) and 'exiting' the electoral arena all together. First and foremost, ethno-linguistic identities were hypothesized as central to voter preference and engagement, with Ukrainian speakers and ethnics 'rallying' and Russian speakers and ethnics 'exiting' (Chaisty and Whitefield 2018; Sakwa 2014). Secondly, scholars pointing to the low turnout in the conflict-torn east, proposed that region and specifically proximity to the conflict zone had the greatest effect on driving war time vote changes (be it party preference or deciding to vote at all), with those further away from the conflict more like to 'rally' around the incumbent and those closer to the conflict more likely to disengage altogether (Sakwa 2014). Thus, the war may be not only hardening ethno-linguistic and regional divisions, these would be more likely in the time of war to mediate any change in voting patterns.

Furthermore, electoral behavior literature would lead us to expect that all things being equal other important variables such as partisanship (Bartels 2000), membership in clientelist networks (Liu 2011; Szwarcberg 2012; Weitz-Shapiro 2012), the general appraisal of the incumbent's tactics in dealing with the war (Bernhardt and Ingerman 1985; King 1991), policy alignment with the party (Lipset and Rokkan 1967) and media consumption (Prior 2006) could be if not more that equally important in driving both 'rallying' and/or 'exiting.' The logic again being that these factors could be further exacerbated by the war context.

And yet, in-line with research on the importance of economic factors in driving voting behavior (Anderson 2000; Duch and Stevenson 2008; Tucker et al. 2006), recent research by Sasse and Lackner (2018) and Giuliano (2018) provide us with a competing hypothesis as to which factors would be most important in driving behavioral change in Ukraine. Sasse and Lackner (2018) and Giuliano (2018) have both shown that socio-economic wellbeing, or there lack of, coupled with a feel of being 'left behind' (or not listened to), has been *most* significant in driving support for separatism in the period between 2014-2017. And thus, in a similar light, in this paper we argue that it is possible that rather than variables connected to the conflict itself voters who were - at the time of the commencement of the conflict -

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[4] Some scholars have pointed out that previous turnout estimates may have been significantly inflated due to electoral manipulations, specifically in the Donbas region where clientelistic machine politics dominated.

economically better off were also more likely to later move their vote to the winning camp 'rallying' around the incumbent, or put otherwise align themselves with the 'winner.' And inversely those individuals who were less well off, felt that their vote would not count or noted that their chosen party was no longer on the ballot, would be more likely to exit the electoral arena altogether.

In this paper we test these competing propositions in order to not only better understand the Ukrainian case but also develop new theoretical argument about why voters are pushed to rally around incumbents or leave the electoral arena all together in times of war. Before we move to the analysis, we first delve deeper into the theoretical expectations around the potential divers of rallying and exit, explaining how we operationalize them in our study.

Drivers of electoral rallying & exit in times of war

As we noted above, the mainstream literature on war-time elections, like those held in Ukraine in 2014, expects two phenomena to unfold among divergent groups of the electorate. Firstly that we should observe a rally effect, seeing at least some rise in support for the incumbent and his/her party (Abramowitz 1988; Berinsky 2009; Box-Steffensmeier 1996; De Mesquita and Siverson 1995; Goodliffe 2001; Hess and Orphanides 1995; Hogan 2001; Somit 1994; Tufte 1975). According to our data we observe exactly such a rise. In wave one of our study, we find that whilst only 18% of the population were planning on voting for Poroshenko's party by November approximately 35% reported having voted for incumbent's party in the Parliamentary elections – thus, we see a rallying to the incumbent of 17%. At the same time, scholars have noted that conflict can depress voter turnout and force people to exit the electoral arena (Allison 2010; Birnir and Gohdes 2018; Blattman 2009). Thus, accordingly we should also simultaneously expect that elections taking place in a time of unfolding and ongoing conflict would result in a significant portion of the population to exit. As mentioned earlier, although turnout declined by more than 10%, approximately 72% were in May 2014 planning on voting in the Parliamentary elections, but only 64% reported doing so in October 2014. Thus, approximately 8% exited from the electoral arena. The accepted logic found in the scholarly literature would first and foremost expect that variables directly associated with the conflict itself would *best* explain what drives both the rallying and exit effects we observe.

To this end, we could first expect that the geographic distance to the conflict itself may be highly significant in driving both exit and rallying. Birnir and Gohdes (2018) for instance note that those voters living in the closest proximity to the conflict

would be most likely to exit[5] (become non-voters) as: a) the elections may not be held in their region, b) their particular electoral station remained closed on election day, or c) they may fear violence at the ballot box. This follows on from recent findings by Coupé and Obrizan (2016) who found that personal experiences violence go together with lower turnout as well as a higher probability of an individual considering the elections irrelevant. Employing this logic, we could expect that 'ralliers' would most likely to reside further away from the war zone and while exiters would be more likely reside closer to the conflict. To capture this factor in our analysis we measured the averaged distance (in kilometers) from the locality where each of our respondents resided to Luhansk and Donetsk cities which by the October parliamentary elections were both firmly under separatist/Russian control. Secondly, to capture whether the fact that elections were not held in a respondent's region, or that the local station was closed on election day was *most important* in driving 'exit,' when analyzing the drivers of becoming a non-voter we found it important to also control for two binary variables[6] captured in wave three which provide us with a measure of an individual's personal reasons for not having voted in the parliamentary elections. With each of these two options (elections not held in the individual's region and local station being closed on election day) receiving a 1 and all other responses receiving a 0 respectively.[7] We argue that if the theory around any change in voting patterns beinga reflection of the war context holds true we would expect that when controlling for other variables (and most particularly for 'western' region of residence) the effect of proximity to conflict would not diminish or disappear.

A second theoretical expectation of the effect of war time on electoral behavior is based on research by Bernhardt and Ingerman (1985), King (1991) and Reilly (2008), which highlights that one could expect that a would-be voter's positive appraisal of the incumbent's policies or tactics of dealing with the war would be instrumental in shaping both the likelihood that they would turn out to vote and especially rally around his/her party. Thus, in the case of Ukraine in 2014, we would expect that

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[5] Of course, it is possible that some of those who intended to vote but did not exited our panel survey. Thus, our DV measure is likely to be slightly truncated, with some of the non-voters closest to the conflict not appearing in wave 3 at all since they fled.

[6] There are many reasons why some people do not vote in elections. Please tell me, which one best describes your reason for not voting? 1) My region is not part of Ukraine, 2) This election was illegal/illegitimate, 3) I am not interested in politics/I do not care about politics, 4) I do not know enough about politics, 5) None of the parties on the ballot represented my interests/ The party I most liked was not on the ballot, 6) I do not believe that the election was fair, 7) I had to stay at work all day, 8) The queue at my polling station was too long, 9) My polling station was closed, 10) I feared violence, 11) It was already clear who would win, so my vote was not needed, 96) Other, 97) H/S, 98) Refuse, 99) Missing.

[7] It should be noted that as part of robustness checks we also tested for the statistical significance of other responses reported in the appendices.

voters and ralliers would specifically report higher rates of support for the government's Anti-Terrorist Operation (which included the forcible re-taking of lost properties and territories). We capture this sentiment by coding all those who agree or mostly agree with the government's ATO tactics with a 1 and all others with a 0, as measured in a wave one item.[8]

Next, we will explore broader theoretical expectations found in political behavior literature which may or may not also be exacerbated by the conflict context.

Drivers of rallying & exit in democratizing contexts

Political behavior literature has further propositions as to which drivers might push a voter to rally or exit: partisanship, party networks and media consumption all rank as being potentially highly influential. Scholars of democratizing states have developed these expectations to the less stable contexts they study. One such line of thinking, rooted in behavioral literature, highlights the significant role of partisanship in both increasing the likelihood of turning out and decreasing the likelihood of not voting (Bartels 2000). Here the thinking follows that those individuals who become members of political parties are likely to remain loyal to that party and thus, less likely to switch their vote preferences to the incumbent if they did not plan of voting for them in the first place. Moreover, we would expect partisans to not to exit the electoral arena as they have been found to feel a particularly strong connection to politics in the first place. We account for this expectation by coding all those who are members of party as receiving 1 and all others a 0.[9]

Moreover, in the case of newly democratizing states in eastern Europe and Latin American beyond just being a member of a political party, scholars have also underscored the importance of patronage or clientelist networks in driving voting behavior (Auyero, Lapegna, and Poma 2009; Levitsky 2007; Liu 2011; Szwarcberg 2012; Weitz-Shapiro 2012). For instance, having friends or family involved in party politics might also increase loyalty to a particular party reducing or inducing the likelihood of switching votes depending on which network one's family/friends were part of. Although, social aspects and pressures of voting have been

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[8] Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements ... The central government should continue to use force to regain control of any state buildings seized by pro-Russian forces in eastern Ukraine: 1) Completely agree, 2) Somewhat agree, 3) Somewhat disagree, 4) Completely Disagree, H/S, REF.

[9] Now let's talk a little about politics. Please tell me you are a member of a political party? YES 1, NO 2, H/S 7, REF 8 13. What political party is it? _____ H/S 97, REF 9 8

documented by several scholars (Liu 2011; Szwarcberg 2012; Weitz-Shapiro 2012) but also, as pointed out by Auyero, Lapegna, and Poma (2009) being part of such networks can have its privileges (patronage) and thus, network members would be incentivized to ensure that their party stays in power. The same can be said for having friends and family working for industries owned by particular oligarchs who are seen to control these parties and their networks. Thus, if these related parties were to lose elections not only could the perks of belonging to such patronage networks disappear, even worse there may be direct costs experienced as a result of such losses. We would thus, expect that those who belong to competing party or oligarch networks would be less likely to switch votes. We would also expect that members of such networks would be more likely to vote as their livelihoods may be associated with the success of opposing (and not the incumbent's) parties doing well in the elections. Similarly, if one was not intending to initially vote for the incumbent's party, but their family members, who work for one of that incumbent's industries, have received threats or incentives to switch their vote to the incumbent's party – they would too be more likely to vote for the incumbent.

For this reason, employing questions from wave two of our survey, we control for belonging to oligarchic networks by coding all those respondents who replied that they or their friends or family members worked for one of Akmetov's, Poroshenko' industries as 1 respectively, with all other respondents receiving a 0. To capture belonging to competing party networks we code those respondents who replied positively to a question asking whether they or their friends or family members belong to either the Party of Regions, Batkivshchyna, and UDAR receiving a 1 respectively, with all other respondents receiving a 0.[10]

Furthermore, prior research has firmly established that media consumption (Prior 2006) can be an important mediator or moderator of rallying around the incumbent and/or leaving the political arena altogether. In regards to the crisis in Ukraine, three media sources have been critically discussed by politicians, policy makers, and scholars as being as less 'pro-Ukrainian' informational sources specifically in terms of political content. These are Russian television, Russian language television content, and social media use specifically VKontakte (Dyczok 2014; Kozachenko 2014; Kulyk 2014; Onuch 2015; Szostek 2014). Fear of the assumed push factor that these media sources have on political preferences and behavior of ordinary Ukrainians is so strong that the Ukrainian government has banned Russian

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[10] Please tell me, do you have any friends or family, including you, who are or were at one time members or activists of the following parties? YES 1, NO 2, H/S   7, REF 8. 56. Please tell me, do you have any friends or family, including you, work for the companies / enterprises that are (at least partially) owned by the following individuals? YES   1, NO 2, H/S   7, REF 8.

Television, Odnokslanyky and VKontakte all together and is currently working to restrict the level of Russian language content on air. Although political behavior research on the effects of media consumption are mixed we still feel it is vital to account for this 'controversial' media consumption in Ukraine as the conflict was unfolding. For this reason, we capture media consumption with the following five binary variables: watching Russian television channels for political news, watching internet television (streaming) for political news, using Odnoklasnyky, VKontakte or Facebook. We code each respondent who replied positively to using these media sources with a 1 whilst all others received a 0.

Because we are dealing with a particular country it is also important that we consider case specific empirical expectations around what drives political behavior, and specifically electoral behavior in Ukraine. We turn to this literature next.

Analyzing drivers of electoral behavior in Ukraine

As expressed above, when explaining patterns of political behavior (or political preferences) in Ukraine, scholars have focused on at least three central divides, with the precise relationships among them still in dispute among scholars. These include: a *regional* divide, generally agreed to feature poles in Ukraine's East (especially Donbas) and West (especially Galicia), reflecting different historical experiences and other place-related factors (Dyczok 2014; Kozachenko 2014; Kulyk 2014; Onuch 2015; Szostek 2014); a *linguistic* divide pitting Ukrainophones against Russophones (Arel 1995; Colton 2011; Kulyk 2011); and an *ethnic* divide centered around categories like Ukrainian and Russian (Arel 1993; Bremmer 1994; Hale 2008; Kulyk 2001). This research would expect pro-Poroshenko (branded as EuroMaidan leader) views to be strongly associated with some combination of geographic location (closer to the West and further from the East), speaking or identifying with the Ukrainian language (and not doing so with Russian), and identification as ethnic Ukrainian (and not as ethnic Russian). Building on this literature, we argue that in case of Ukraine it is vital to control for region when assessing the effect of proximity to the conflict. Here we use the KIIS macro regions and specifically include the critical 'west' region in our our controls. But when it comes to our operationalization of ethno-linguistic measures, we are inspired by new developments in the field.

Recent research has shown that Ukrainians are less divided by ethno-linguistic variables than previously thought. Scholars have even noted that there are new emerging identities in Ukraine. Kulyk (2018) has found that in the last two decades we have observed a 'shedding' of 'Russianness' and exponentially higher rates of civic identification. Robertson and Pop-Eleches (2018) employing panel data from before and after the 2013/2014 EuroMaidan, also found a significant increase in people thinking of Ukraine as their 'homeland,' highlighting that attachment to state

has been growing while ethnic identities and language practices have not, contrary to expectations, shifted or hardened as a result of conflict. Furtehrmore, this trend has not only been identified among the population living in un-occupied territories, but also in the war torn east. Sasse and Lackner use original data that simultaneously tracks those living in Ukrainian controlled territories, in the self-declared Donetsk Peoples Republic and Luhansk Peoples Republic, internally displaced people in Ukraine, and those Ukrainians who fled to Russia following the commencement of fighting. They too find, that civic identities have either remained stable or have strengthened among these populations and that, once again contrary to expectations that the war did not shift ethno-linguistic identities.

Connected to these new findings, Onuch and Hale (2018) find that different measures of Ukrainian ethnicity, previously thought to capture the same thing are actually capturing distinct things, pointing our that past research on Ukraine might have been getting things slight wrong, when it comes to the importance of ethnic and linguistic identities. They identified four dimensions of ethnicity: *personal language preference* (the language they choose to conduct the survey in); *language embeddedness (*the language spoken in respondents private lives as well as the tongue they primarily use at their place of employment); *ethnolinguistic identity (*a standard question asking people to report their mother (native) tongue (as practiced by Ukrainian census takers); and *National identity,* measuring a "forced choice" measure when people are then required to choose the single category with which they most strongly identify.

Adapting this approach in our analysis, we capture personal language preference by employing a measure of the language that the respondent chose to conduct the survey in, with a 1 for all those who chose Ukrainian. We capture language embeddedness by coding all respondents who reported that they primarily use Ukrainian at their place of employment.[11] We expect this binary variable to capture embeddedness in Ukrainian-speaking social environments. To capture ethnolinguistic identity, we make use of a standard question asking people to report their mother (native) tongue (as practiced by Ukrainian census takers), creating a binary variable coded 1 for people who select Ukrainian.[12] We capture national identity by employing a "forced choice" measure that records the answers

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[11] "Now let us talk a little bit about language. Please tell me ... (1) Which language do you typically speak in your private life? If you speak several languages in your private life, please, tell me, which one you consider the main one. (2) Which language do you typically speak at work: Ukrainian, Russian, Other, Ukrainian and Russian equally?"

[12] "Now let us talk a little bit about language. Please tell me ... (3) What language do you consider your native language: Ukrainian, Russian, Other, Ukrainian and Russian equally?'

respondents were required to choose the single category with which they most strongly identify.[13]

Beyond questions around the role of identity, research on Ukraine has also long found strong relationships among attitudes in Ukraine, documenting significant correlations among different positions on foreign policy questions like Ukraine's relationship to the EU and NATO and on domestic policy questions like state promotion of the Ukrainian language (D'Anieri 2007; Herron 2011; Kuzio 2008). We thus include a binary variable capturing an important policy positions (support for NATO[14]) in separate models we also included binary variables capturing support for joining the EU, support for joining Russia and support for Russian becoming an official state language.[15]

Finally, although several months on, because the election we are studying nonetheless follows on the footsteps of a mass protest wave, the EuroMaidan which ousted Poroshenko's predecessor we find it important to account for this in our analysis. As we noted above Poroshenko's own campaign for President in May 2014, branded him as a EuroMaidan 'leader' and his party's campaign rhetoric strongly referenced the EuroMaidan even coopting some its most important framing (Onuch and Sasse 2016). Leading up to the October Parliamentary elections, the Poroshenko Bloc also specifically sought to recruit some of the most high profile EuroMaidan figures (like journalist Mustafa Nayem - often times, mistakenly referred to as the father of the EM revolution) to its party list. The party did so rather successfully with at least 6 new members formerly being high profile EuroMaidan leaders or personalities. Taking this into account, one might expect that those who participated in this politically significant event, who themselves personally risked a great deal to see Yanukovych and his political regime gone, might have a vested interest in the 'winning' post-EuroMaidan coalition to survive. And thus, such individuals should be more likely to rally around this new incumbent. In a similar light, we might also expect that those individuals who participated in competing Anti-Maidan and Pro-Russian rallies to be less incline to vote entirely and more likely to exit the political arena all together. We capture both protest behaviors with a binary variable of

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[13] "If you had to register only one nationality, which would you choose? Russian, Ukrainian, Other (please specify: _____)"

[14] "Due to the deterioration of relations between Ukraine and Russia, many argue that Ukraine should strengthen its security. Please tell me if you agree or disagree with the following statements: … Ukraine should join NATO." Responses included completely agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree, and completely disagree.

[15] "Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: … The Russian language should be given the status of a second state language in Ukraine, equal in status to Ukrainian." Responses included completely agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree, and completely disagree. The former two responses are coded 1, all others 0.

having participated in either of the protests, receiving a 1 and all other receiving a 0.[16]

But inspired by recent studies conducted in the post 2014 period, we are not satisfied with the war time political behavior and Ukraine specific expectations, we find that it is worth considering the effects of economic security as much as physical security and the role of feeling that one can benefit politically or economically from the election of the incumbent.

Economic Deprivation and Security in Times of conflict

Theories of political economy are among the most pedigreed in social science, and Ukrainians are no exceptions in the longstanding expectation that economic circumstances, will influence their political behavior (Duch and Stevenson 2008; O'Loughlin 2001; Sasse 2010). These theories would lead us to expect that Ukrainians would be more likely to turnout to vote and support the party in power, the more they felt they would benefit from the incumbent staying in power and the less they believe they would have suffered materially from the incumbents electoral success. We feel that this materialist focus has been forgotten in the case of Ukraine, where ethnicity and not economic security have been considered to be the main dividing lines in the electoral arena. But closer inspection of (past as well as the 2014 presidential and parliamentary) electoral campaigns, highlights that campaign messaging around economic deprivation and populism was employed as often if not more by local and national candidates to secure electoral victories. There is some indication that those who are better often financially, and those who are better educated would be more likely to align with the successful incumbents over time between 1999 and 2014 in Ukraine.

Specifically, we are compelled in our thinking by the recent research of 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. She finds that these ow variables were the most significant in determining for policy preferences and voting behavior. Giuliano, explained that for eastern Ukrainians, feeling that the government has abandoned them, financial and politically, correlates highly with support for separatist conflict. We thus include in our analysis a seven-point scale of the respondent's family's financial situation and a binary variable to

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[16] Since autumn of last year, how did you participate in any of the following demonstrations? (Never Once More than once H/S REF.) (1) Euromaidan in Kyiv, (2) Anti-Maidan in Kyiv, (3) Euromaidan in your native region, (4) Anti-Maidan, (5) Pro- Russian meetings.

capture transition winners relative to 1991.[17] In separate models we also check if change in one's family's economic situation (ego tropic) a five-point scale on whether individuals felt they had become personally better off in the twelve months prior to the survey;[18] or change in the country's economic situation (socio tropic) a five-point scale on whether individuals felt Ukraine's economy as a whole had gotten better in those same 12 months.[19]

Finally, we also include a number of standard controls in political behavior analyses. All of our models thus include measures of age (years), gender (female), education level (six categories),[20] the respondent's family's financial situation (scale of 1-7),[21] and residence in an urban environment (a population point of at least 50,000 residents).

Data

Our study is based on original data of the Ukraine Crisis Election Panel Survey collected by the authors in collaboration with The Kyiv International Institute for Sociological Studies, the leading Ukrainian sociological agency. The survey was conducted in three waves. The first drew information from a nationally[22] representative sample of 2,015 individuals (selected through a stratified, multi-stage, area probability technique) and was conducted during May 16-24, 2014, right before the presidential elections on May 25, with a respectable 51% response rate. The second wave took place between June 24 and July 13, 2014, and consisted of interviews with 1,406 of the original 2,015 respondents. The third wave was

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[17] "In general, did your family win or lose as a result of the economic changes that have taken place since Ukraine became an independent country?" Responses included: won; mostly won; mostly lost; and lost. Volunteered responses of "won some and lost some" were also coded. Those answering that they "won" or "mostly won" were coded as transition winners.

[18] "How has your own family's material situation changed over this past twelve months?" Responses could be: improved a lot; improved a little; remained unchanged; worsened a little; worsened a lot.

[19] "What do you think, over the past twelve months has the economy of Ukraine . . . ? 1- Gotten much better; 2- Gotten somewhat better; 3- Stayed the same; 4- Gotten somewhat worse; 5- Gotten much worse."

[20] A six-point scale: none or elementary; incomplete secondary; secondary; secondary specialized; incomplete higher; and higher.

[21] A seven-point scale: "Which of the following statements best describes the financial situation of your family?: We do not have enough money even for food; We have enough money but only for the most necessary things; We have enough money for daily expenses, but to even buy clothes is difficult; Usually, we have enough money, but to buy expensive things, such as, for example, a refrigerator, a TV and a washing machine, it takes a longer time, we have to borrow or get credit; We can afford expensive purchases without too much difficulty, but buying a car is still beyond our means; We can buy a car without much effort, but buying a home is still difficult; At the present time we can afford anything we want."

[22] Minus the already-annexed Crimea but including Donetsk and Luhansk.

conducted between November 24 and December 30, 2014 and consisted of interviews with 1,373 of the original 2,015 respondents. 23 The margin of error of our frequency estimates is no greater than 3.3%.

Dependent variables: 'rallying' and 'exit'

Among the questions asked in wave one, wave two, and wave three, we included survey items that were explicitly designed to measure any changes over time in voting intention/preferences/behaviors for parties in the parliamentary elections. Employing measures of a individual's a) intention to vote and b) party preference in the upcoming parliamentary elections, reported in the first wave of our survey prior to the presidential elections (May 2014), and then their reported participation and vote choice in the third wave of November-December 2014, we are able to trace if their vote preference and actually reported behavior differed over time. We treat the May 2014 measure as a pre-war measure, before the conflict became full-blown. Thus, the core comparison in this paper is between people's reported vote intention and preference as stated in May and how they self-reported actually voting in late 2014. We use wave two (June-July) (as the conflict escalated significantly) measure of vote intention and preference to check when any changes took place: early on in the conflict, or later on.

To capture 'exit' from the political arena (or those who went from intending to vote to becoming a non-voter between May and October 2014) we coded: a) all those who both said that they planned on voting in wave one *and* self-reported not voting in the parliamentary election in wave three as 1; and b) all those who both said they would vote in wave 1 *and* reported voting in wave 3, or all those who said they would not vote in wave 1 *and* reported not voting in wave 3, or all those who said they would not vote in wave 1 *and* reported not voting in wave 3 all received a 0.

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	

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[23] Though the war had spread by the time of the second wave, only 30 percent of the overall panel attrition occurred in Donets'k and Luhans'k regions. We take this into account by using, in our frequency calculations and regression analyses, probability weights calculated by the survey agency to bring each wave in line with official 2013 population statistics for age, sex, and region.

To capture 'rallying' to the incumbent (or those who went from not intending to vote for the Poroshenko Party to shifting their electoral preferences and reporting voting for the Poroshenko Bloc between May and October 2014) we coded: a) *all* those who both said that they did planned on voting for the Poroshenko Party in wave one *and* self-reported voting for the Poroshenko Bloc in the parliamentary election in wave three as 1; and b) all those who both said they would not vote for the Poroshenko Party in wave 1 *and* reported not voting for the Poroshenko Bloc in wave 3, or all those who said they would vote for the Poroshenko Party in wave 1 *and* reported voting for the Poroshenko Bloc in wave 3, or all those who said they would vote for the Poroshenko Party in wave 1 *and* reported not voting for the Poroshenko Bloc in wave 3 all received a 0. Thus, our main dependent variable of interest is a binary variable of all those who switched to Poroshenko Bloc = 1 and 0 for all those voted for another party or did not vote.

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

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

In the section below we will explain our modeling choices and process and present our preliminary findings.

Causal sequencing and analytical approach

We conduct a logistic regression to estimate the effects of the above described war related, partisanship and clientelism related, and economic wellbeing related variables of interest on our two binary dependent variables. Because logit coefficients (and odds ratios) are at times difficult to interpret, in the analysis below we report the estimated *full effects of* each factor on our dependent variables. A *full effect* is better understood as an *average marginal effect* when all variables are scaled from 0 to 1. Thus, the below results should be interpreted as the *average change* a factor produces in an individual's *estimated likelihood* of becoming a 'rallier' (moving their vote to the Poroshenko Bloc), or their likelihood of 'exiting' the electoral arena altogether (becoming a non-voter), when one *raises any given factor from its minimum to its maximum value* while holding all other variables at their actual values. We believe that *full effects* express a much clearer picture of the complete range of the

variation that a particular factor is found to produce whilst facilitating facile comparison with other factors effects on the dependent variable.

Secondly, when estimating the full effects of each factor, our modeling choices as to when a particular control variable should be included, follows on from previous work guiding us when making our assumptions about the causal sequencing involved in mediation of effects among our independent variables (see: Campbell et al. 1980; Colton 2000). Therefore, we include our variables of interest at different 'causal' stages into our equation. In the Stage 1 we include standard control variables such as observed demographic factors (including geographic variables (distance to the conflict, residence in Urban locality, language of questionnaire, level of education, gender, and age) or that are unlikely to be driven by the other factors of interest in our analysis. We also separate out what we consider to be declared demographic factors (in this case our measures of language embeddedness, ethnolinguistic identity and national identity) as second-stage variables – following on from research by Chandra (2012) which finds that these are more likely to be influenced by first-stage factors listed above as opposed to *vice versa*.

Next, we include six sets of independent variables all measured in the pre-war period (or in wave one of our survey) in separate stages. These include: in Stage 3 the perceptions of one's own family financial situation as well as being an economic winner of transition; in Stage 4 views on key foreign and national policies (joining NATO/EU and the Government's ATO policy); in Stage 5 protest participation in the EuroMaidan and Anti-Maidan protests; in Stage 6 partisanship; and in Stage 7 news media consumption.

In a second set of equations, we incorporate values that were collected after the escalation of the conflict (or in wave two of our survey). And thus, we add an 8th Stage capturing an individual's connection to oligarchic and party clientelist networks, and a 9th Stage accounting for having voted for Petro Poroshenko in the Presidential elections in May 2014. And finally, only when identifying what drove 'exit' from the electoral arena, in a sperate equation we add a 10th Stage where we include the respondents' own reported reasons for not voting collected in the third wave of our survey. Since we end with nine and ten stages for the 'rallying' and 'exit' dependent variables respectively, producing the full effects for each factor requires us to estimate nine and ten models respectively. To facilitate the reading of our results, in Table 3 and 4, we do not include confidence intervals or standard errors. Instead for simplicity we only report whether a result is statistically significant at the 95% level ($p<0.05$). Longer, more detailed tables can be found in the appendix as Tables A1 and A2.

16

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

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9
Distance to Conflict	0.12*	0.15**	0.16**	0.18***	0.17***	0.17**	0.16**	0.16**	0.13*
Language Preference	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.01
Age	0.12**	0.11**	0.14**	0.13**	0.13**	0.13**	0.13*	0.13*	0.10
Woman	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Urban	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03
Education	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.05	0.05	0.03
National Identity		0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.04
Language Embeddedness		-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04
Ethnolinguistic Identity		-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.00	-0.00
Transition Winner			-0.05*	-0.05	-0.05*	-0.05	-0.05*	-0.05*	-0.06*
Family Financial Situation			0.16*	0.16**	0.16*	0.16*	0.16*	0.16*	0.15*
Join NATO				-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	-0.04
Support ATO				0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00
EM Participant					0.02	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.02
Anti-EM Participant					0.01	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.02
Partisanship						-0.12	-0.11	-0.11	-0.10
Language of TV Russian							0.01	0.01	0.01
Watches Russian TV							-0.02	-0.02	-0.02
Watches Internet TV							0.02	0.03	0.03
Odnoklasnyky User							-0.06*	-0.06*	-0.06*
VKontakte User							0.03	0.03	0.04
Facebook User							0.00	-0.00	0.00
Akhmetov Network								-0.02	-0.00
Poroshenko Network								-0.05	-0.06
PoR Network								0.05	0.04
Batkivshchyna Network								-0.01	-0.01
UDAR Network								-0.00	-0.01
Voted for Poroshenko									0.09***
N	1465	1465	1465	1465	1465	1465	1465	1465	1465

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

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

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10
Distance to ATO	-0.12	-0.08	-0.09	-0.07	-0.06	-0.06	-0.07	-0.07	-0.04	-0.05
Language Preference	-0.05	-0.03	-0.02	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.00	0.01
Age	-0.10	**-0.11***	**-0.13***	**-0.13***	**-0.14***	**-0.14***	**-0.15***	**-0.15***	**-0.13***	**-0.13***
Woman	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.02
Urban	0.06	0.05	0.06	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.07	0.06	0.06	0.05
Education	**-0.15***	**-0.15***	**-0.14***	**-0.13***	**-0.12***	**-0.12***	**-0.12***	**-0.12***	**-0.11***	**-0.10***
National Identity		-0.00	-0.00	0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.01	-0.01	0.00	0.01
Language Embeddedness		-0.06	-0.06	-0.06	-0.05	-0.05	-0.05	-0.05	-0.05	-0.04
Ethnolinguistic Identity		-0.02	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02	-0.01
Transition Winner			0.04	0.06	**0.06***	**0.07***	**0.06***	**0.06***	**0.07***	**0.07***
Family Financial Situation			-0.14	-0.14	-0.12	-0.13	-0.13	-0.11	-0.09	-0.08
Join NATO				**-0.07***	-0.06	-0.06	-0.06	-0.06	-0.05	-0.05
Support ATO				-0.01	-0.00	-0.00	-0.01	-0.01	0.00	0.01
EM Participant					**-0.12***	**-0.12***	**-0.11***	**-0.11***	**-0.10***	-0.08
Anti-EM Participant					-0.03	-0.02	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02	-0.07
Partisanship						-0.15	-0.15	-0.14	-0.14	-0.13
Language of TV Russian							-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02
Watches Russian TV							-0.04	-0.04	-0.04	-0.03
Watches Internet TV							-0.03	-0.04	-0.04	-0.03
Odnoklasnyky User							-0.00	-0.00	0.00	0.00
VKontakte User							-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02
Facebook User							-0.01	-0.01	-0.01	-0.02
Akhmetov Network								-0.04	-0.04	-0.03
Poroshenko Network								0.10	0.10	0.08
PoR Network								-0.03	-0.03	-0.04
Batkivshchyna Network								-0.15	-0.14	-0.12
UDAR Network								0.07	0.08	0.11
VotedPoroW2									**-0.10***	**-0.09***
Polling station closed										0.20
Party not on ballot										**0.24***
Region not Ukraine										0.04
N	1368	1368	1368	1368	1368	1368	1368	1368	1368	1368

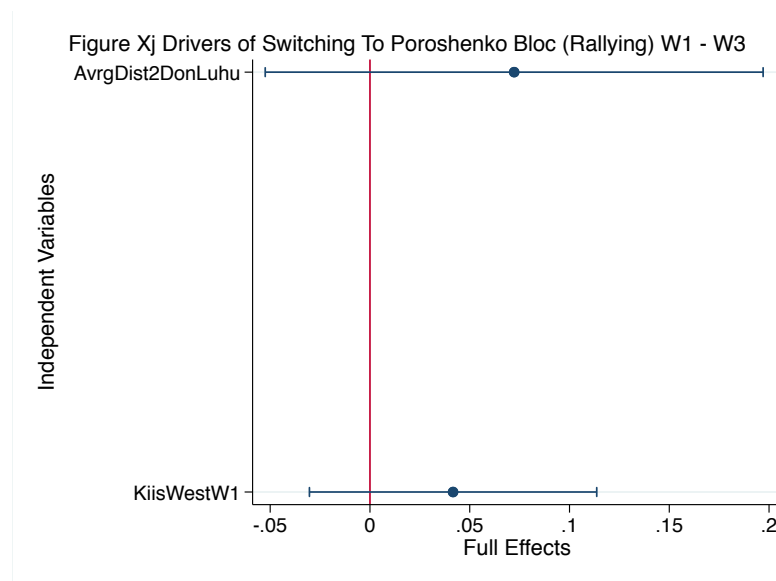Note: Calculated using logit model. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Preliminary results and discussion

Most significantly, as can be seen from tables 3 and 4 we find no consistent support of war time factors (mainly as noted above, proximity to war, support for ATO tactics - but also in our robustness checks fear that a civil war is likely and number one concern facing Ukraine being the conflict) having an effect on increasingly the likelihood of rallying or exit, we also do not find that ethno-linguistic variables (often assumed to be at the heart of this conflict) to influence voters decisions to move their support to the incumbent *or* exit the political arena. The inclusion of our standard controls resulted in some interesting findings, we found (as would be expected by electoral behavior literature) that those who were more educated and those who were older were less likely to become non-voters in 2014 and those who were older were more likely to move their vote to the incumbent. We do though find significant support for our central hypothesis that economic security would drive both rallying around the incumbent and decrease the likelihood that and individual would become a non-voter. We also find some preliminary support for the idea that rather than experiences of conflict, it is an individual's believe that their vote is not warranted or because their party is not on the ballot that they are more-likely to exit the political arena. In the discussion that follows we examine our findings in relation each of the major theoretical expectations detailed above whilst making some preliminary conclusions as to what drove rallying and exit in Ukraine in 2014.

War time factor effects on 'rallying' and 'exit'

Overall, our results run counter to major theoretical expectations around the effects of conflict on rallying or exiting. The only conflict related variable that we find some support for is that of proximity to the war itself. In our analysis, we initially find strong support for the hypothesis that distance from the conflict might induce a rallying effect. In Table 3 we can observe that an increase in the average distance to the conflict zone produces a 12% increase in the likelihood of rallying around the incumbent. But when we account for region of residence (as can be seen in Figure Xj) we find that this effect completely dissipates. Thus, we cannot conclusively state that effect is conflict related, but rather connected to other long standing and underlying patterns of macro region related behavior. Secondly, if the above theories regarding the proximity to conflict hold true we should also see that distance to conflict has a significant effect on increasing the likelihood of becoming a non-voter – we find no such effect. Furthermore, although highly endogenous, when we test for effects of self-reported reasons for non-voting on reported voting itself we do not find support for the ideas that conflict zone polling stations being closed or the respondent's region no longer being in Ukraine as significant – but we instead find support for the notion that people did not vote because their preferred party was not on the ballot (increasing the likelihood that someone became a non-voter by a whopping 25%), we

also see that to a lesser extent a respondent feeling that their vote did not matter also increased the likelihood that they would become a non-voter.

Figure Xj Drivers of Switching To Poroshenko Bloc (Rallying) W1 - W3

We do not find any support for the fact that positively aligning with the government's ATO policy increases the likelihood that an individual would rally around the incumbent's party. We also find no effect of holding this position on increasing or decreasing the likelihood that someone would vote. Furthermore, we do not find any evidence that partisanship or membership in party or oligarchic networks increased the likelihood of rallying of exiting the electoral arena.

Ukraine specific factor effects on 'rallying' and 'exit'
Perhaps more surprising for observers of Ukrainian political behavior we find no evidence that any of the measures of ethno-linguistic identity or linguistic practice had any effect on driving rallying or exit effects. Similarly, we find no indication that typical policy dividing lines had any effect on driving rallying or exit in the 2014 Parliamentary elections. To test the robustness of this finding we use different measures of language/ethnicity and we also reduced the number of ethno-linguistic variables to only one language and nationality variable and we still found no significant results. Furthermore, we replaced the Join NATO variable with Join EU, believing that democracy is a good fit in Ukraine, and believing that civil war is possible. All understood to be highly divisive measures of preference, values and attitudes and all resulting in no effect on either increasing the likelihood of rallying or exit.

While we find little support that media consumption more generally had a significant effect on an individual rallying around the incumbent or exiting the political arena. In fact, we find no significant effects of consuming a particular media

source becoming a none voter. To check the robustness of our findings we also included measures coding those respondents who are regular viewers of 5-Kanal (the President's channel), 1ˢᵗ National (the state channel), as we could expect both channels to help rally voters to move their votes to the President's party. But found no effect of either.

We do find some support that using the Odnoklasnyky social media network decreased the likelihood that someone would shift their vote to the Poroshenko Bloc by 6%. This finding is surprising and significant as few scholars have focused on the use of Odnoklasnyky as a vehicle for passing on political information – most having focused on Facebook and VKontakte. Secondly, this is one of the social media networking sites that were blocked by the Ukrainian government in 2017. Further analysis needs to be conducted to better understand this media effect, but on initial investigation use of this network is not statistically significantly connected a particular age group, region or political disposition – thus, making its effect intriguing.

Although we find no evidence that EuroMaidan participants were more likely to rally and move to the Poroshenko Bloc (only 2% voted for the Bloc at all), we did find that EuroMaidan participants were 12% less likely to exit and become non-voters. Thus, it is clear that they were committed to voting in post protest elections, which they may have understood as protecting their interests and ensuring that the risk they took were not for nothing.

Economic security factor effects on 'rallying' and 'exit'
In line with accepted political economy theories, we find that Ukrainians are significantly more likely to turnout to vote and support the party in power, as a result of a feeling that they would benefit from the incumbent staying in power and the less they believe they would suffer materially from it. We find that those were better off financially were 16% more likely to shift their vote to the incumbent. We believe this is indicative of the fact that socio-economic inequalities and feelings of being 'left behind' are highly important driving political preferences and behaviors in Ukraine.

Conclusions

Based on our above findings, 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. Our findings are surprising, in that 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.

Instead, 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 also seems to have led transition winners to become more disillusioned, less likely to vote than they were before. Thus, our preliminary findings call in to question some of the accepted theories especially employed when studying Ukrainian political behavior and demand further exploration of economic motivations of electoral patterns. In future analyses we also feel it necessary further develop our measure of proximity to conflict.

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