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Violence and political outcomes in Ukraine – Evidence from Sloviansk and Kramatorsk

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Violence and political outcomes in Ukraine – Evidence from Sloviansk and Kramatorsk

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Abstract

In this paper, we study the effects of violence on political outcomes using a survey of respondents in Sloviansk and Kramatorsk – two cities that were affected heavily by the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. We show that experiencing physical damage goes together with lower turnout, a higher probability of considering elections irrelevant and a lower probability of knowing one’s local representatives. We also find that property damage is associated with greater support for pro-Western parties, lower support for keeping Donbas in Ukraine and lower support for compromise as a way to stop the conflict. Our paper thus shows the importance of investigating the impact of different kinds of victimization, as different degrees of victimization can have different, sometimes even conflicting outcomes. Our paper also suggests that one of the more optimistic conclusions of previous studies, that victimization can increase political participation, does not necessarily carry over to Ukraine, which illustrates the importance of country and context-specific studies.

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1. Introduction

Armed conflicts affect societies in many different ways. In a recent literature review, Blattman and Miguel (2010) distinguish between the impact of wars on physical capital and investment, on life, labour and human capital and on institutions and society. While the impact on physical and human capital most often is found to be negative, the impact of violence on norms and institutions is much more controversial.

Indeed, a number of recent studies suggest that the experience of violence can raise rather than decrease the civic and political engagement of people. For example, in a study of the effect of the 1991–2002 Sierra Leone civil war on civic and political participation, Bellows and Miguel (2009) find that respondents from households who directly experienced war are more likely to attend community meetings, more likely to join local political and community groups, and more likely to vote. In a similar spirit, Voors et al. (2012) find that people in Burundi who are living in communities that have been violently attacked or who have experienced violence themselves display more altruistic behaviour.

Studies for former Communist countries confirm that some positive effects are possible: Grosjean (2014) shows that victimization in recent civil wars goes together with a higher likelihood of active participation in groups, or in collective actions and of membership in political parties. At the same time, victimization goes together with reduced trust in central institutions, their perceived effectiveness and generalized trust in other people. Hence, Grosjean (2014) argues that this increased civil participation may be of a ‘dark’ nature consistent, for example, with Cassar et al. (2013) who show that victims of the Tajik civil war, willing to participate in groups, are exactly those who trust state and people less.

In this paper, we investigate the effect of personally experiencing the consequences of violence on political participation, views and knowledge, using individual level data from the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. After the Maidan revolution that replaced the then-president, Victor Yanukovich, in February 2014, pro-Russian militants in the East of Ukraine started to take control of government buildings in several cities in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions during the first two weeks of April 2014. On 15 April 2014, the Ukrainian government launched a counter-offensive, deploying government troops in the East of Ukraine. Initially, this counter-offensive had limited success and the Ukrainian army only made major advances after separatist forces pulled out from the city of Sloviansk on 5 July 2014.

We use a survey carried out at the end of November 2014 in Sloviansk and the neighbouring Kramatorsk, to investigate how personally experiencing violence affects political participation (voter turnout), political knowledge (of one’s political representative) and political views (whom to vote for and how to solve the conflict). Studying the impact of violence on these political outcomes is important, as these outcomes will affect both the chance of reaching a stable peace (see for example, Bigombe et al., 2000) as well as the speed of the post-war economic recovery (see for example, Flores and Nooruddin, 2009). If violence turns people away from the formal democratic political process or stimulates the views that war is the only solution to solve the conflict, then the conflict is more likely to last longer and less likely to be solved in a non-violent way. If violence affects whom people vote for, pro-Western or pro-Russian parties in the Ukrainian case, then violence will influence the kind of institutions that will develop in this region, given the vastly different and even opposing world-view these parties adhere to.

This paper adds to the existing literature in several ways. First, we show that how violence is defined matters: when we create an overall measure of personally experiencing the consequences of violence, we find no effect on political participation. But when we differentiate between different degrees of

experiencing violence (various inconveniences, property damage, physical damage), we find that physical damage goes together with decreased participation, while other types of damage do not seem related to turnout. At the same time, we find that political views are more often related to property damage than to physical damage.

Second, our findings suggest that context matters and that the results of studies for one country do not necessarily extrapolate easily to other countries. While results for Sierra Leone (Miguel and Bellows, 2009) suggest people who experienced violence are more likely to turn out, and results for Uganda (Di Luca and Verpoorten, 2015) suggest there is no relationship between violence and turnout, our study of two Ukrainian cities finds a substantial negative relation between experiencing violence and turnout. Similarly, while Bellows and Miguel (2009) found some evidence of a positive relation between victimization and knowledge of local political figures in Sierra Leone, we find the effect depends on the extent of victimization, with inconveniences having a positive effect while property damage or physical damage has a negative effect.

Third, for the case of the two cities in Ukraine investigated here, we present evidence that property damage is unrelated to voter turnout but is associated with greater support for pro-Western parties. In addition, those who suffered from their property being stolen or destroyed are also less likely to support compromising with Russia or keeping Donbas part of Ukraine.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides an overview of relevant literature and gives additional background to the conflict and the experience of the two cities studied in this paper. Section 3 describes the data, while section 4 presents the analysis. Section 5 concludes.

2. Background

2.1 Existing literature

Several previous studies have considered the effects of victimization on political participation to study the legacy of conflict on post-war economic, social and political recovery. Bellows and Miguel (2009) find that an index of whether a respondent's household members had been injured, killed or made refugees during the war in Sierra Leone is positively related to the probability that the respondent voted or registered to vote, and to whether or not a respondent can correctly name their local representative. In contrast, Di Luca and Verpoorten (2015) find that respondents in Uganda in districts where there was more violence (measured by the number of days of violence) during the war were not more likely to vote. They do find a positive effect on the frequency of discussing politics and the frequency of attending public meetings, although the size of these positive effects decreases over time. Similarly, using data from several transition countries, Grosjean (2014) finds that respondents who had family members killed or injured in recent conflicts, are more likely to be members of a political party and more likely to participate in strikes or sign a petition.

This paper adds to this literature by using data from Ukraine to study the impact of victimization on voter turnout, on whether or not voters are discouraged and on whether voters know their local representative.

While some studies focus on voter turnout, more studies focus on how violence relates to voter support. In a study on Turkey, for example, Kibris (2011) finds that burials of police and soldiers killed by the PKK reduced the vote for government parties and increases the votes for parties that are less lenient

towards the PKK. Similarly, in studies using data from Israel: Berrebi and Klor (2008) find that in communities in Israel where civilians were killed, voters support parties that are more opposed towards the aggressors; while Getmansky and Zeitzof (2014) show how the vote share of right wing parties increases in communities that become within range for Palestinian rockets launched from Gaza. Finally, Lyall et al. (2013) show that the effect of violence depends on who commits it – in Afghanistan, ISAF violence decreases support for ISAF and increases support for the Taliban, while Taliban violence decreases support for the Taliban but does not increase support for ISAF.

In a similar spirit, this paper investigates how victimization affects the pro-Western (relative to the pro-Russian) vote.

A third strand of the literature focuses on political views rather than political choice, and distinguishes between the “angry” hypothesis when higher victimization leads to anti-peace views and the “weary” hypothesis which suggests a pro-peace effect of violence. For example, Hazlett (2013) shows that greater exposure to violence leads to stronger reported beliefs that peace is possible in Darfur. Lacina (2014) finds that people who fear the insurgents in Southern Thailand are no more likely to support autonomy of Southern Thailand or withdrawal of pro-military troops. Beber, Roessler and Scacco (2012) study how Northern Sudanese answer the question on whether Southern Sudan should stay part of the country and find that: “... Northerners who personally experienced rioting by Southerners in Khartoum in 2005 are more likely to support secession of the South but less likely to favor allowing Southerners to retain citizenship in the North.”

Our paper adds to this third strand of the literature by analyzing how victimization affects respondents’ views on whether the affected region should stay part of Ukraine and whether compromise with the opponents is possible.

Besides studying the abovementioned questions, we also investigate whether distinguishing between different types of victimization is important. We distinguish between property damage, physical damage and inconveniences caused by the conflict. That different kinds of victimization have different impacts is by now well documented in the medical, criminology and happiness literature. For example, Lurigio (1987) shows that victims of assault are less willing to go to court, compared to victims of burglary and robbery, while Hill (2003) shows that property crime victims show less extreme levels of distress (anxiety, hostility, distress) than violent crime victims. The impact of victimization on happiness is studied by Powdthavee (2005) who finds that having a household member killed has less of an impact on happiness than being a victim of a burglary. Similarly, Calvo et al. (2014) in a study of young, low-income, predominantly non-Hispanic Black single mothers, find that happiness one year after Hurricane Katrina was lower for those having lost a family member or suffered a diverse set of inconveniences, but was not affected by experiencing property damage. At the same time, Cheng and Smyth (2015) find that the decrease in happiness one experiences after being a victim of crime is similar to the decrease in happiness one experiences after having an acquaintance being a victim of crime.

In the literature on the effect of war violence, most papers focus on the impact of physical damage (for example, Grosjean (2014) focuses on whether any household member was injured or killed) or on victimization indices. Voors et al. (2014), for example, create a household level victimization index, a sum including experience of death, theft, ambush, forced labour and torture of household members. Lyall et al. (2013) similarly define “harm” as both physical injury and property damage. Finally, Bellow and Miguel’s (2009) study also uses a victimization index, an average of whether household members

were killed/injured or made refugees, but also run a specification with separate components, finding that they cannot reject the null of equal coefficients of the different components.

In our analysis we use three indicators, capturing a wider range of experiences than has so far been the case in the literature on the effect of war violence. We have a dummy for damaged property, a dummy for physical damage (personal injury or injury or death of relatives or close friends) and a dummy for different kinds of inconveniences. While the literature gives us little guidance on how different types of damage affect political behaviour and views, consistent with the victimization literature, we expect relatively minor damage (“inconvenience”) to have less impact than either physical damage or property damage. One could also expect physical damage to be more traumatic than property damage. However, in our case physical damage is widely defined including injury or death of relatives or close friends, while property damage is more narrowly defined as damage to one’s own property. This makes a clear ex ante ordering of expected impact less obvious.

2.2. The conflict in Ukraine

In 2014, Ukraine witnessed considerable violence. In February 2014, about 100 protestors were killed in the centre of Kyiv, during protests against the then-president, Victor Yanukovich. After the Ukrainian Parliament replaced Yanukovich on 22 February, the violence moved to the Crimean peninsula, followed by an outbreak of violence in Eastern Ukraine at the beginning of April, an outbreak which would take thousands of people’s lives.

While initially the violence in the East was limited to pro-Russian militants taking control of government buildings, this quickly turned into armed confrontations between Ukrainian military forces and heavily armed militia members. The fighting inflicted a heavy toll on both sides of the conflict and on the civilian population caught in the middle, with both sides using heavy weaponry and indiscriminate shelling:

“The escalation of hostilities led to a sharp increase in casualties among civilians, members of the armed groups and Ukrainian servicemen. From mid-April to 16 September, at least 3,517 people had been killed (including the casualties of the Malaysian airlines MH17 crash) and at least 8,198 wounded. While the HRMMU has not been able to obtain disaggregated data on casualties among civilians and armed elements, it appears that the majority of civilian victims were killed due to indiscriminate shelling in residential areas and the use of heavy weaponry. There were continued reports of armed groups positioning, and intermingling, within urban communities, endangering civilians. Some of the reported cases of indiscriminate shelling in residential areas can be attributed to the Ukrainian armed forces.” (OHCHR, 2014)

On 5 September, a cease-fire agreement was signed which more or less froze the conflict until mid-January 2015 when pro-Russian forces started a new offensive. In this period of relative calm, parliamentary elections took place in Ukraine on 26 October 2014, including in some of the areas in the East recaptured from the pro-Russian forces.

In this paper, we use a survey of inhabitants of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk. Both are mid-sized cities, with a pre-war population of over 100,000 (Sloviansk about 115,000, Kramatorsk about 160,000) and situated about 100 kilometres West of the regional capital Donetsk (see Figure 1).

[Figure 1 here]

Both cities were heavily affected by the war. While reliable statistics on internally displaced people are hard to come by, on 22 July 2014 the United Nations' Refugee Agency (UNHCR) wrote "According to various estimates, more than half of the city population fled their homes since the beginning of the conflict. Some 15,000 persons of them are reportedly returned to Slavyansk since July 5"³.

A UN-Commission damage assessment, reported by the United Nations Office of Coordination of Human Affairs (UN OCHA)⁴ indicated further that "The most affected territories, as of 14 July 2014, include Sloviansk (119 damaged facilities), Kramatorsk (117 facilities), Lughansk (73), Rubizhne (55), Krasnyi Lyman (20), Kreminna District (19), and Donetsk (small number of damaged facilities but huge monetary losses due to substantial damage to the local airport)." Press reports similarly mention 187 completely destroyed apartments, with 4,200 apartments being damaged⁵.

Numerous people, both civilians and military, were killed in Sloviansk and Kramatorsk. The exact number is hard to establish and estimates vary widely. One Wikipedia site⁶ that lists victims among separatist fighters suggests several hundreds of victims in Sloviansk and Kramatorsk. A similar page for military victims⁷ and civil victims⁸ lists about 40 casualties in both categories in these cities. It is unclear how many people were injured in Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, but UN statistics of the overall number injured are roughly double the number of people killed.

3. Data

The Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation together with the Razumkov Centre organized an opinion poll in Sloviansk and together with Ukrainian Sociological Service in Kramatorsk in the period 22-27 November 2014. Kramatorsk and Sloviansk are two cities where intense fighting, between the middle of April 2014 and the beginning of July, led to a withdrawal of separatist forces. Hence, they are cities where the separatists were in power for a substantial amount of time and where both sides used significant amounts of force, including shelling.

A total of 1,010 people were interviewed. We have restricted the sample to people who lived in these cities before the conflict, excluding 92 people who arrived in town recently (most likely these are mainly internally displaced persons). We further exclude 34 people who did not answer the question concerning nationality, 3 people who did not answer the question about language and 20 people who did not answer the question about whether or not they voted. Cleaning the sample in this way leaves us with 861 respondents.

³ <http://unhcr.org.ua/en/2011-08-26-06-58-56/news-archive/1304-unhcr-provides-humanitarian-assistance-to-slavyansk>

⁴ http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SitRep-Ukraine_20140801.pdf

⁵ <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/7/27/sloviansk-city-normalcy.html>

⁶ [https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Втрати_проросійських_сил_внаслідок_російського_вторгнення_в_Україну_\(2014—2015\)](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Втрати_проросійських_сил_внаслідок_російського_вторгнення_в_Україну_(2014—2015))

⁷ [https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Втрати_силових_структур_внаслідок_російського_вторгнення_в_Україну_\(до_серпня_2014\)](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Втрати_силових_структур_внаслідок_російського_вторгнення_в_Україну_(до_серпня_2014))

⁸ [https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Користувач:Tagira/Цивільні_втрати_внаслідок_російського_вторгнення_в_Україну_\(2014\)](https://uk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Користувач:Tagira/Цивільні_втрати_внаслідок_російського_вторгнення_в_Україну_(2014))

3.1 Measuring exposure to violence in Sloviansk and Kramatorsk

The survey includes a question that reflects the extent of victimization:

“Did you bear some losses during the battle actions or while the town was under control of people from DPR?”

Nineteen different options were presented and respondents could choose more than one option. Based on this question, we created 4 indicators. First, we created a dummy for damaged property (residential space being partially or completely destroyed or property being stolen). Second, we created a dummy for physical damage (personal injury or injury or death of relatives or close friends). Third, we created a dummy for other kinds of inconveniences (got sick and no treatment was available, there was no medicine, food, water, electricity, money, phone connection, lost job, savings or documents, quarrelled with friends or relatives, or other). Notice that the three categories for violence are not mutually exclusive (for example, it is possible to report injury and some property damage). Finally, we created a dummy for people who indicated they were unaffected by the events.

Note that for those reporting damage we do not know whom the respondents hold responsible for the damage and hence cannot distinguish whether government violence or separatist violence have different (possibly even opposite) effects as in Lyall et al. (2013). At the same time, during the conflict in Ukraine, in many cases, attributing the violence to one or another party has been far from straightforward, with both sides of the conflict blaming the other side for civil victims and damage.

Table 1 presents the distribution of violence by types. Thirteen percent of respondents indicated they suffered property damage, 19% suffered physical damage while about 89% suffered one or another inconvenience. Most people (65%) were affected by only one kind of damage, 21% suffered from two types and 5% from all three types of damage. Slightly more than 9% of respondents indicated they were not affected by the conflict in any of the abovementioned ways.

[Table 1 about here]

3.2 Control variables

In addition to our indicators of how respondents were affected by the violence, we have for each of the respondents, a wide range of mostly exogenous demographic information (with descriptive statistics provided in Table 1⁹).

We know whether the respondent lives in Kramatorsk (base category) or Sloviansk, their self-declared nationality (Ukrainian or Russian, Russian being the base category), what language they speak in the family (Russian is the base category, Ukrainian¹⁰ or both Ukrainian and Russian as alternative), their gender (female being the base category), their age (in years), their level of education (basic as base category, secondary or higher), whether the person works (not working being the base category¹¹), and

⁹ Comparing the age, gender and nationality distribution of the sample to the 2001 census numbers gives fairly similar results. See Appendix I for details.

¹⁰ Very few answered they only speak Ukrainian.

¹¹ An additional question asked how the conflict affected their job situation which allowed us to construct a variable reflecting the work situation before the conflict.

whether a person is religious or not (religious being the base category). Similar variables have been included in previous analyses of the voting behaviour of the Ukrainian electorate. Katchanovski (2006) shows that a regional pro-Communist/pro-Russian vote index for the period 1991–2006 is negatively correlated with the percentage of Catholics, the percentage of Ukrainian speakers and the percentage of ethnic Ukrainians. Similarly, Clem and Craumer (2008) find more “Ukrainian” regions voted less in favour of the Party of Regions in the 2007 elections, while regions with older voters and more industrial employment voted more in favour of the Party of Regions. Birch (2000), using individual level (rather than region-level) data for the period 1989-1998, confirmed the link between electoral behaviour and ethnicity, language and region, but she also found that more educated Ukrainians tend to vote more for anti-left parties, while, from 1994, older voters tend to vote more for leftist parties. As far as turnout is concerned, Birch (1998) finds that older rural people were more likely to vote, while higher educated people were less likely to vote in the 1994 parliamentary elections. As Birch noticed, the latter finding is surprising since the literature on turnout typically finds turnout to be positively related to education.

About half (50.4%) of our sample lives in Sloviansk, 78.3% declare to have Ukrainian nationality, 35.3% spoke both the Russian and Ukrainian language in the family. Males represent 43.3% of the sample and the average age is 46.5 years. In terms of education, 43.2% have secondary and 20.7% have higher education. More than half (54.8%) worked at least from time to time before the conflict and 28.9% indicate they are not religious.

While both the available variables and the size of the dataset make this survey well suited to analyze the questions at hand, several features that can affect our analysis need to be highlighted.

First, as is standard in this literature (Lyll et al., 2013, Voors et al., 2012, Bellows and Miguel, 2009) we rely on self-reported violence data for our individual level regressions. One objection against using self-reported data on damage is that wartime harm might be too sensitive to report truthfully or might get coloured over time. Given the survey used here was conducted soon after the period of violence in these two cities, recall bias should be minor in our data. In addition, given that the vast majority of the respondents in our sample indicated being affected by violence in some way rather than refused to answer, suggests that respondents were at least not reluctant to talk about it.

Second, as is also standard in the literature, our sample is not a random sample of the pre-conflict population of the cities as a sizeable part of the population left the city and had not returned (yet) at the time of the survey. While we do not have information about those that did not return, the survey does include a question that allows us to distinguish between people who stayed during the fighting and those who (temporarily) fled, allowing us to analyze the decision to flee. In our sample, we have 64% of respondents who stayed in the affected cities throughout the conflict, 23% who fled after the fighting started and 13% who fled before the fighting started. Further investigation shows that there are clear demographic differences between those who fled and those who stayed. Those who fled are in general younger (41.5 years old for those who fled after and 37.9 years old for those who fled before fighting started, compared to the overall average of 46.5), better educated (32.0% and 30.1% have higher education correspondingly, compared to 20.7% for the overall average). They are more likely to have lived in Sloviansk (74.6% for those who fled after and 73.5% for those who fled before fighting started), less likely to speak both languages (28.9% and 22.1% correspondingly) and more religious (17.8% and 15.0% report being not religious correspondingly). Those who fled after fighting started are more likely to suffer property damage (21.8%). Those who left before any fighting started are less likely to suffer physical damage (5.3%) or experience other inconveniences (47.8%), which is logical. Given these

differences, we present results for the two samples, one including returned refugees and another without returned refugees.

Third, as we are unlikely to control for all possible omitted variables, we would need to assume that damage was suffered randomly, to get unbiased estimates of violence (if violence was random then it is unlikely to be correlated with omitted variables). While the “indiscriminate shelling” mentioned above suggests violence had a sizeable random component, there are also some indications of non-random elements. For example, the leader of the separatists in Sloviansk, Vyacheslav Ponomarev, allegedly asked local residents to report suspicious people “especially speaking in Ukrainian” (UNIAN, 2014). Hence, Ukrainian-speaking people might have been more likely to be targeted by separatist forces. In addition there are reports of Roma being targeted (Romea, 2014). Finally, in an interview, Igor Strelkov, the separatist military commander in Sloviansk, indicated that his group chose Sloviansk as they were looking for a mid-sized city where they could expect popular support (Free Press, 2014). In the next section we analyze this issue more formally.

4. Analysis

4.1 Is violence random?

Before analyzing the effect of experiencing violence on social and political outcomes, we first study how random violence was in Kramatorsk and Sloviansk. For this purpose, in Table 2, we estimate whether 4 types of experience (unaffected, property damage, physical damage, other inconveniences) relate to our exogenous variables¹².

[Table 2 about here]

Regressing violence indicators on the control variables we find that most coefficients are insignificant and evidence of non-randomness is limited¹³. For example, we find that reported physical damage is lower for those with higher education, and that age is significant in some specifications. We also find evidence that the experience of violence was different in Kramatorsk and Sloviansk, however, given the different intensity of fighting in these two places, this is not surprising¹⁴. To account for possible non-randomness of violence coming from observables we will include these exogenous covariates in all regressions that follow. More generally, however, what matters for the unbiasedness of our regression estimates is whether violence is random after controlling for the factors we control for, something we cannot really test.

We now return to the main question, how violence affected political participation, knowledge and views of our respondents. We first focus on the effect of violence on participation in the parliamentary elections of October 2014, a good month before the survey.

¹² We present results both for a sample including those who at some point fled the cities and a sample excluding these “returned refugees”. The Online Appendix I also presents results with bootstrapped standard errors. In general, our results are robust across these different specifications.

¹³ Since the dependent variables in our regressions are dummy variables, we use probit regressions and report average marginal effects throughout this paper.

¹⁴ Given the different context in these two cities, we also report regression that allows the impact of damage to differ by city in the Online Appendix II. Overall, the main conclusions of this paper are robust to running city level regressions though one specification shows a positive significant effect of physical damage on turnout in Sloviansk, and a negative significant effect in Kramatorsk.

4.2 Political participation and knowledge after violence

As discussed in the background section, several studies have already considered the effects of victimization on political participation (Bellows and Miguel, 2009, Di Luca and Verpoorten, 2015, Grosjean, 2014). Like previous studies, we measure exposure to violence by including a measure (in our case a dummy variable) that captures physical damage – whether close relatives or friends were injured or killed. Unlike previous studies, however, our data set allows us to estimate also the impact of property damage and of other inconveniences caused by the violence.

When asked whether they voted in the 26 October 2014 parliamentary elections, about 54% of respondents indicated they voted, 46% that they didn't vote¹⁵. We use a probit regression to analyze this difference in choice, using the demographic variables as control variables. As main variable of interest, we first use a dummy that is 1 if respondents suffered any damage (90.6% of respondents were affected by some type of violence), and then split up damage into property damage, physical damage and inconveniences.

Columns 1 and 2 in Table 3 show no significant difference between those respondents who indicated they suffered any kind of damage and those who did not suffer at all. Splitting the damage variable into three different categories based on severity (property and physical damage or inconvenience – columns 3 and 4) shows that those suffering physical damage were less likely to turn out for the parliamentary elections while other kinds of damage are not significantly related to turnout. The negative link between violence and turnout for the two Ukrainian cities is different from the positive link found for Sierra Leona (Bellows and Miguel, 2009) and the absence of relation between violence and turnout found for Uganda (Di Luca and Verpoorten, 2015)¹⁶. This highlights the dangers of extrapolating findings from one context to another.

The probability of voting is also higher for respondents declaring to be of Ukrainian nationality and for older respondents, which confirms Birch's (1998) findings on turnout in the 1994 election. In contrast to Birch (1998), we find that people with secondary and higher education are more likely to turn out, which is consistent with findings for many other countries (see for example, Nevitte et al., 2009).

[Table 3 about here]

If respondents indicated they did not vote, they were asked why they did not vote (multiple answers were allowed). About 23.4% of those who did not vote said they did not vote "for objective reasons"¹⁷. About 9.1% were afraid to participate¹⁸, and about 67.8% thought the elections were irrelevant¹⁹.

¹⁵ This is much higher than the official turnout statistics that show about 30% turnout in Kramatorsk and Sloviansk. This is not surprising, however, given that a significant part of the population fled and did not return by the time of the elections. These internally displaced people were on the voting registers but unlikely to vote in the place they fled to. The actual distribution of votes over parties, however, is fairly similar to the distribution of votes across parties in the sample. See Appendix II for details.

¹⁶ Blattman (2009), however, finds that former combatants (abductees) in Uganda are more likely to vote than the general population.

¹⁷ The exact formulation of the question was: "I don't live at the place of registration, was busy on the day of elections etc."

To focus on what leads voters to lose trust in the electoral process, we next create a dummy for those who did not vote because they deem elections irrelevant. Not participating in the elections because one thinks elections are irrelevant is a clear sign of distrust in the political institutions of the country. We find in column 5 of Table 3 that physical damage goes together with an increase in the probability of becoming a discouraged voter by 10.6 percentage points. However, the coefficient is positive but no longer significant when we exclude those who fled the city from the sample²⁰ (column 6).

In addition to the question on whether or not respondents participated in the elections, we also have a question that captures the respondents' political knowledge. Political knowledge is another proxy for the extent to which people believe in the importance of the political process. Bellows and Miguel (2009) found some limited evidence of a positive association between victimization and knowledge of local political figures in Sierra Leone.

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked whether they know who was elected in their single member district.²¹ Sixty-one percent of the respondents indicate they know who was elected. We find (columns 7 and 8, Table 3) that those suffering inconveniences are more likely to know their representative, but those suffering physical or property damage are less likely to know who was elected in their single member district. This finding stresses the importance of estimating the impact of different degrees of victimization separately. One possible explanation for this differential impact is that those suffering minor damages are more likely to appeal to local politicians to solve these (relatively) minor issues, while those suffering more serious damage might not believe politicians can help them with their personal problems.

4.3 Political views after victimization

So far we have focused on the relationship between violence and political participation or knowledge. Next, we explore how different forms of violence affected political choice and the political views of respondents. As mentioned in the literature review above, the link between violence and political views has been studied by Kibris (2011) for Turkey, by Berrebi and Klor (2008) and Getmansky and Zeitzof (2014) for Israel and by Lyall et al. (2013) for Afghanistan.

In Ukraine, the institutional implications of political choice are huge since the different sides in the conflict (and the political parties that are close to the different sides of the conflict) are proposing very different world views, with one side favouring the pro-market Western institutions, and the other side favouring the more government-oriented Russian model.

¹⁸ The exact formulation of the question was: "It could be dangerous at the polling stations (provocations, sabotage etc.); I was afraid of revenge from supporters of 'DPR'".

¹⁹ The exact formulation of the question was: "I didn't see any parties and candidates worth voting for; these elections determined nothing here, they wouldn't change our lives, I think that elections to Verkhovna Rada have no relation to Donbas at all."

²⁰ For those who fled the city after the violence started, there is a strong positive relation between suffering physical damage and considering elections irrelevant.

²¹ In Ukraine half of the MPs are elected based on proportional nationwide list voting, and the other half are elected based on a majority vote in local districts.

In the survey in Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, those who voted were also asked whom they voted for. We create a dummy for Western oriented parties (People's Front, Poroshenko Block, Self-Help, Motherland, Radical party and Freedom), with Russia-oriented parties (Communist party, Opposition block, party of Tihipko) as base category. Of the 396 respondents in our final sample who named the party they voted for, 52.5% indicated they voted for a pro-Russia party, while 47.5% voted for a pro-Western oriented party. Others either did not vote, didn't remember whom they voted for or didn't want to say whom they voted for. Table 4 (columns 1 and 2) gives the marginal effects after a probit regression of voting for Western-oriented parties on the violence variables. Interestingly, we find that property damage goes together with a higher probability of supporting pro-Western parties. Other forms of damage are not related to voter choice. Consistent with the literature (for example, Katchanovski, 2006, Clem and Craumer, 2008, Birch, 2000), we further find that self-declared Ukrainian nationality goes together with a higher likelihood of voting pro-Western, while being older, on the other hand, goes together with a higher likelihood of voting pro-Russian²².

[Table 4 about here]

Other studies have focused on political views rather than political choice (Hazlett, 2013, Lacina, 2014, Beber, Roessler and Scacco, 2012). Some of the questions in the questionnaire allow us to do this too. A number of questions in the survey deal with the future of Donbas, the region which includes the two cities studied here. Seventy-four percent of respondents say that Donbas should remain part of Ukraine on the same conditions as before, or with more independence from Kyiv (the alternatives being Donbas (DPR and LPR) becoming independent or part of the Russian Federation, or "difficult to say"). Columns 3 and 4 in Table 4 shows that experiencing property and/or physical damage reduces support for Donbas remaining part of Ukraine by about 22 percentage points and about 12.0 percentage points correspondingly²³.

There are also two questions in the survey about the need for the Ukrainian government to compromise with (i) Russia and (ii) the leadership of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics to bring peace to the lands. The answers to these questions are highly correlated so we report here on the results for compromise with Russia (the results for compromise with DPR/LPR are very similar). 73.9% support any or some compromise with Russia (the alternatives are "difficult to say" and peace can only be obtained through force). Table 4 (columns 5 and 6) shows that property damage reduces support for compromise (and hence increases support for a military solution) by about 15 (full sample) to 30 (sample without returning refugees) percentage points.²⁴ People from Sloviansk and older respondents are, on the other hand, more likely to be in favour of compromise with Russia.

Summarizing the above, we find that property damage increases support for Western-oriented parties, but reduces support of a compromise with Russia as a solution to the conflict but also reduces support

²² As an alternative to party choice, we also explored how violence relates to support for joining the EU (with as alternative joining the Customs Union or neither the EU or the Customs Union). None of the violence variables was found to significantly relate to the answer to this question, however.

²³ Results remain robust if we exclude respondents for whom it is difficult to say and leave as alternatives only "Donbas (DPR and LPR) should become an independent state" and "Donbas should become a part of the Russian Federation".

²⁴ Results remain robust if we exclude respondents for whom it is difficult to say with base category being "Peace in Donbas can be established only due to position of force".

for keeping Donbas part of Ukraine²⁵. This last finding is surprising as Western-oriented parties are typically supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine. One, admittedly tentative explanation, is that those suffering from property damage are more likely to be ready to solve the conflict by just letting go of the areas controlled by the DPR/LPR (for which no compromise with Russia/DPR/LPR is needed) while being also ready for war to protect their own area.

5. Conclusions

In the paper we investigate how exposure to violent conflict affects political views, knowledge and participation using survey data from two of the cities, Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, most affected by the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. These cities were first controlled by pro-Russian militants for a few months, then experienced brutal fighting and finally were overtaken by the Ukrainian army.

Our analysis adds to the existing literature on the impact of victimization. First of all, we present one of the first formal investigations on the political consequences of the civil conflict in Ukraine.

Second, unlike previous studies which use measures of violence focused on physical damage, we distinguish between physical violence, property damage and everyday inconveniences, providing a more complete description of victimization. Such a distinction plays an important role in our findings because different degrees of victimization have different, sometimes opposing, effects on the variables of interest. In particular, physical damage is associated with a lower turnout probability and a lower chance of knowing one's local representatives. Property damage, on the other hand, increases support for pro-Western parties and reduces interest in compromising with Russia or keeping Donbas in Ukraine.

Finally, we show that war remains a brutal reality with harsh political consequences and the optimism of increased political participation and knowledge found in previous studies does not necessarily carry over to the case of Ukraine. Our study, thus, provides a note of caution against generalizing findings across conflicts.

²⁵ Restricting the sample to those for whom we know which party they voted for does not change this conclusion.

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Figure 1

Map of 26.10.2014 (Parliamentary election date)



This map, produced by the Ukrainian authorities, shows the area occupied by the separatist forces, at the day of the elections. It also shows the area earlier occupied by separatist forces which includes Sloviansk and Kramatorsk.

Tables

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the final sample of 861 respondents

Main explanatory variables	Mean	Std. Dev.
Property Damage	13.2%	33.9%
Physical Damage	18.8%	39.1%
Other Inconveniences	89.1%	31.2%
Unaffected	9.4%	24.2%
Other covariates		
Lives in Sloviansk	50.4%	50.0%
Ukrainian Nationality	78.3%	41.3%
Both Languages Spoken	35.3%	47.8%
Male	43.3%	49.6%
Age	46.465	17.086
Secondary Education	43.2%	49.6%
Higher Education	20.7%	40.5%
Works At Least Sometimes	54.8%	49.8%
Not Religious	28.9%	45.4%
Fled after fighting started	22.9%	42.0%
Fled before fighting started	13.1%	33.8%

Table 2. Is violence random? Marginal effects from probit regressions of violence types

	Unaffected (full sample)	Unaffected (no refugees)	Property Damage (full sample)	Property Damage (no refugees)	Physical Damage (full sample)	Physical Damage (no refugees)	Other Inconvenienc es (full sample)	Other Inconvenienc es (no refugees)
Lives in Sloviansk	0.152***	0.014	0.204***	0.150***	-0.149***	-0.155***	-0.143***	0.001
	(0.024)	(0.012)	(0.025)	-0.026	-0.026	(0.039)	(0.023)	(0.016)
Ukrainian Nationality	0.037	-0.012	0.031	0.025	-0.024	-0.063	-0.032	0.022
	(0.025)	(0.016)	(0.030)	(0.037)	(0.033)	(0.046)	(0.027)	(0.020)
Both Languages Spoken	-0.026	0.018	0.035	0.043	-0.042	0.009	0.022	-0.023
	(0.023)	(0.014)	(0.026)	-0.029	-0.031	-0.041	-0.025	(0.018)
Male	-0.032	-0.001	0.009	0.022	-0.011	0.004	0.023	0.003
	(0.020)	(0.012)	(0.023)	(0.026)	(0.028)	(0.037)	(0.022)	(0.016)
Age	-0.003***	-0.001	0.001	0.000	0.001	0.001	0.002*	-0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Secondary Education	0.019	0.014	-0.017	-0.033	-0.043	-0.077**	-0.007	-0.008
	(0.023)	(0.013)	(0.025)	(0.027)	(0.029)	(0.038)	(0.025)	(0.016)
Higher Education	0.026	-0.001	-0.037	-0.081*	-0.131***	-0.222***	-0.018	-0.001
	(0.026)	(0.020)	(0.032)	(0.044)	(0.039)	(0.060)	(0.028)	(0.023)
Works At Least Sometimes	-0.006	-0.008	-0.021	0.011	0.050	0.087	0.020	0.010
	(0.025)	(0.020)	(0.033)	(0.049)	(0.039)	(0.059)	(0.027)	(0.024)
Not Religious	0.030	0.022	-0.009	0.045	0.001	0.009	0.006	-0.001
	(0.042)	(0.026)	(0.048)	(0.062)	(0.056)	(0.079)	(0.045)	(0.031)
Pseudo-R ²	0.165	0.083	0.126	0.144	0.065	0.070	0.108	0.029
# observations	861	551	861	551	861	551	861	551

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. Respondents who left the city before or after fight started are excluded in columns labeled 'no refugees'.

* $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 3. Victimization, voter turnout and political knowledge

	Voted (full sample)	Voted (no refugees)	Voted (full sample)	Voted (no refugees)	Discouraged voter (full sample)	Discourag ed voter (no refugees)	Knows representati ve (full sample)	Knows representati ve (no refugees)
Any damage	0.013 (0.057)	0.056 (0.162)						
Property Damage			-0.007 (0.050)	-0.034 (0.068)	0.014 (0.047)	0.054 (0.064)	-0.147*** (0.048)	-0.178*** (0.064)
Physical Damage			-0.140*** (0.042)	-0.125*** (0.048)	0.104*** (0.039)	0.051 (0.045)	-0.199*** (0.040)	-0.134*** (0.044)
Other Inconveniences			0.030 (0.053)	0.085 (0.123)	-0.009 (0.049)	-0.072 (0.113)	0.222*** (0.049)	0.315*** (0.111)
Lives in Sloviansk	-0.009 (0.034)	0.073* (0.041)	-0.026 (0.036)	0.057 (0.044)	0.007 (0.034)	-0.019 (0.042)	0.074** (0.035)	0.193*** (0.042)
Ukrainian Nationality	0.255*** (0.039)	0.316*** (0.048)	0.252*** (0.039)	0.308*** (0.048)	-0.234*** (0.035)	-0.267*** (0.042)	0.158*** (0.039)	0.228*** (0.046)
Both Languages Spoken	-0.002 (0.037)	-0.059 (0.045)	-0.006 (0.037)	-0.054 (0.044)	-0.053 (0.036)	-0.040 (0.043)	0.039 (0.037)	0.004 (0.043)
Male	-0.055 (0.034)	-0.029 (0.041)	-0.056* (0.033)	-0.027 (0.041)	0.058* (0.032)	0.031 (0.039)	-0.016 (0.033)	-0.016 (0.039)
Age	0.008*** (0.001)	0.005*** (0.002)	0.008*** (0.001)	0.005*** (0.002)	-0.003** (0.001)	-0.002 (0.002)	0.003* (0.001)	0.000 (0.002)
Secondary Education	0.117*** (0.037)	0.156*** (0.042)	0.109*** (0.036)	0.146*** (0.042)	-0.048 (0.035)	-0.092** (0.040)	0.200*** (0.034)	0.194*** (0.038)
Higher Education	0.113** (0.045)	0.122** (0.058)	0.096** (0.045)	0.097* (0.058)	-0.059 (0.042)	-0.083 (0.055)	0.195*** (0.043)	0.241*** (0.056)
Works At Least Sometimes	0.065 (0.045)	-0.033 (0.063)	0.070 (0.045)	-0.024 (0.062)	-0.054 (0.042)	-0.080 (0.057)	0.020 (0.044)	-0.042 (0.062)
Not Religious	0.050	0.062	0.048	0.064	-0.097	-0.185**	-0.020	-0.036

	(0.069)	(0.087)	(0.068)	(0.086)	(0.065)	(0.080)	(0.068)	(0.083)
Pseudo-R ²	0.103	0.125	0.113	0.137	0.089	0.116	0.109	0.174
Observations	861	551	861	551	861	551	861	551

*Notes: Marginal effects after probit regressions. Standard errors in parentheses. * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01*

Respondents who left the city before or after fight started are excluded in columns labeled 'no refugees'.

Table 4: Victimization, Voter choice and Voter views

	Voted for pro-Western party (full sample)	Voted for pro-Western party (no refugees)	Donbas should stay in Ukraine (full sample)	Donbas should stay in Ukraine (no refugees)	Compromise with Russia (full sample)	Compromise with Russia (no refugees)
Property Damage	0.178**	0.221**	-0.215***	-0.216***	-0.153***	-0.294***
	(0.075)	(0.098)	(0.040)	(0.058)	(0.045)	(0.061)
Physical Damage	0.039	0.112	-0.124***	-0.112***	-0.019	0.034
	(0.065)	(0.077)	(0.034)	(0.042)	(0.037)	(0.046)
Other Inconveniences	-0.114	.	-0.003	0.073	0.035	-0.172
	(0.075)	.	(0.049)	(0.106)	(0.050)	(0.128)
Lives in Sloviansk	-0.168***	-0.255***	0.112***	0.119***	0.233***	0.300***
	(0.051)	(0.056)	(0.032)	(0.042)	(0.032)	(0.042)
Ukrainian Nationality	0.155**	0.158*	0.115***	0.173***	-0.015	0.022
	(0.074)	(0.096)	(0.034)	(0.044)	(0.039)	(0.051)
Both Languages Spoken	-0.001	-0.045	0.097***	0.092**	-0.055	-0.052
	(0.051)	(0.060)	(0.033)	(0.042)	(0.033)	(0.043)
Male	0.032	-0.018	-0.019	-0.050	-0.010	0.027
	(0.049)	(0.058)	(0.029)	(0.038)	(0.031)	(0.040)
Age	-0.009***	-0.009***	0.000	-0.001	0.004***	0.007***
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)
Secondary Education	-0.042	-0.005	0.138***	0.142***	0.058*	0.043
	(0.055)	(0.063)	(0.031)	(0.038)	(0.033)	(0.042)
Higher Education	0.062	0.100	0.126***	0.143***	0.042	0.027
	(0.069)	(0.090)	(0.039)	(0.055)	(0.041)	(0.057)
Works At Least Sometimes	-0.062	0.064	-0.024	0.073	-0.046	-0.016
	(0.079)	(0.108)	(0.040)	(0.057)	(0.042)	(0.059)

Not Religious	-0.005	0.185	0.011	0.148*	-0.116*	-0.130
	(0.104)	(0.137)	(0.060)	(0.078)	(0.062)	(0.083)
Pseudo-R ²	0.116	0.145	0.121	0.143	0.080	0.112
Observations	396	269	861	551	861	551

*Notes: Marginal effects after probit regressions. Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$
 Respondents who left the city before or after fight started are excluded in columns labeled 'no refugees'.*

Appendix I

The Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation survey interviewed together with sociological service of Razumkov Centre 510 respondents in Sloviansk and interviewed together with Ukrainian Sociological Service 500 respondents in Kramatorsk aged 18 years and older. The margin of error is estimated to be no more than 4.4%.

In order to validate our sample we compare basic demographic characteristics with the most recent 2001 census. Although the census is 14 years old, our sample means are always within 5% points. The only exception is nationality where the difference is driven by our study design focusing on Ukrainian and Russian nationalities. However, no other nationality represented more than 1% of population in Sloviansk and Kramatorsk in 2001 census.

Table A1. Validating the final sample of 861 respondents to 2001 survey

	Sloviansk		Kramatorsk	
	2001 census	Sample in the paper	2001 census	Sample in the paper
Gender				
Male	44.10%	44.26%	44.80%	42.40%
Female	55.90%	55.74%	55.20%	57.60%
Age groups (adults)*				
18 - 29	22.70%	18.89%	22.50%	23.42%
30 - 54	44.20%	45.98%	45.30%	45.20%
> 54	33.10%	35.13%	32.20%	31.38%
Nationality**				
Ukrainian	73.10%	78.11%	70.20%	78.45%
Russian	23.60%	21.89%	26.90%	21.55%
Other	3.30%	0%	2.90%	0%

*Notes: *Age shares from census are re-computed using adults only because survey does not include respondents younger than 18 y.o. It is assumed that 18-19 y.o. constitute 2/5 in 15-19 y.o. category.*

***Other nationalities were dropped from the sample to obtain clear comparisons.*

Appendix II

Official voter turnout (number voted divided by number of registered voters) was 27.6% in Sloviansk and 34.2% in Kramatorsk..

Table A2 presents the division of voters across parties in the sample and actual results. Overall, there is a good match between reported and actual voting with a few exceptions which are not surprising given the small number of voters for some parties in the sample.

Table A2. Validating reported voting to actual results

Party name	Actual		Sample	
	N	%	N	%
Radical party	3916	5.45%	22	5.56%
Opposition bloc	26727	37.22%	156	39.39%
People's front	5591	7.79%	48	12.12%
Self-Help	4143	5.77%	21	5.30%
Freedom	1363	1.90%	4	1.01%
Communist party	9740	13.56%	33	8.33%
Poroshenko bloc	13894	19.35%	71	17.93%
Party of Tihipko	5105	7.11%	19	4.80%
Motherland	1333	1.86%	22	5.56%
Total	71812		396	

Notes: Only parties that could be identified as pro-Russian or pro-Western are included in the calculations of shares