

Shaping Historical Views and Political Outlooks:
Comparing Russia and Ukraine

Félix Krawatzek, ZOiS Berlin (felix.krawatzek@zois-berlin.de)
George Soroka, Harvard (soroka@fas.harvard.edu)

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Over the course of the last two-plus decades, contentious historical interpretations have proven to be a potent political tool in post-communist Europe.¹ Political elites in the former Soviet and Warsaw Pact states take the contemporary relevance of history seriously, regardless of whether they utilize it in didactic or instrumental ways. Recall, for example, the outrage that resulted from Russian President Vladimir Putin's statement in December 2019 that Poland bore a healthy dose of responsibility for the outbreak of World War II.² Moreover, competing views regarding the past have increasingly come to be enshrined legislatively, giving rise to a panoply of oftentimes conflicting mnemonic laws and resolutions across the region.³

The above observation has generated a fascinating and rapidly developing scholarly literature on the politics of the past. Much of the extant work, however, is elite-centric and conspicuously focused on supply-side dynamics, as well as how these developments affect the work of NGOs or scholars. While there are justifiable theoretical as well as pragmatic reasons for this, such an approach nonetheless promotes a certain myopia. Two significant lacunae result: on the one hand, we are left with an incomplete understanding of the role that mass-based appeals and demand-side forces play in actuating the politicization of the past-in-the-present; on the other hand, we do not yet fully comprehend how effective elite-led efforts are at actually altering societal attitudes. This article focuses on the latter of these puzzles.

To what degree are elites able to affect what the public considers to be an appropriate historical statement? What influence do "authoritative" utterances exert on peoples' views of the past, and does it matter if this interlocutor is a co-national or a foreigner? Moreover, does knowledge of the existence of legislation stipulating how the past is to be publicly remembered affect peoples' reactions? We examine Russia and Ukraine in addressing these questions, two countries that have in recent years witnessed the implementation of a growing number of political initiatives designed to shape collective memory at the national level.

Motivation

Notwithstanding the omnipresence and profound importance of societal norms, we know surprisingly little about how they originate and come to be adopted (or rejected).⁴ All manner of institutions engage in creating or attempting to create norms; but while we may accept written

¹ See, for example, Anton Weiss-Wendt and Nani Adler, *The Future of the Soviet Past: The Politics of History in Putin's Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021); Félix Krawatzek and George Soroka, "Circulation, Conditions, Claims: Examining the Politics of Historical Memory in Eastern Europe," *East European Politics and Societies*, online March 25, 2021, doi.org/10.1177/0888325420969786; Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik, eds., *Twenty Years after Communism: The Politics of Memory and Commemoration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); and Alexei Miller and Masha Lipman, eds., *The Convolutions of Historical Politics* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2012).

² Sergey Radchenko, "Vladimir Putin Wants to Rewrite the History of World War II," *Foreign Policy*, 21 January 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/01/21/vladimir-putin-wants-to-rewrite-the-history-of-world-war-ii/>. Demonstrating the intertwined nature of memory politics in the post-communist region, Putin appears to have been responding to a European Parliament resolution adopted on September 19—it was championed by, among others, Polish representatives aligned with the European Conservatives and Reformists [ECR] Group—that assigned co-responsibility to Germany and the USSR for the start of World War II. (The finalized resolution is available here: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2019-0021_EN.html. For the names of the politicians who brought the motion, see: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2019-0097_EN.html.)

³ George Soroka and Félix Krawatzek, "Nationalism, Democracy, and Memory Laws," *Journal of Democracy* 30.2 (April 2019): 157-171; Nikolay Kaposov, *Memory Laws, Memory Wars: The Politics of the Past in Europe and Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Uladzislau Belavusau and Aleksandra Gliszczynska-Grabias, eds., *Law and Memory: Towards Legal Governance of History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁴ This is despite the considerable scholarly interest exhibited in the topic across multiple disciplines for many years. See, for example: Christoph Möllers, *The Possibility of Norms: Social Practice Beyond Morals and Causes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020); Antje Wiener, *Contestation and Constitution of Norms in Global International Relations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Lisbeth Segerlund, *Making Corporate Social Responsibility a Global Concern: Norm Construction in a Globalizing World* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Richard H. McAdams, "The Origin, Development, and Regulation of Norms," *Michigan Law Review* 96.2 (November 1997): 338-433; Daniel C. Feldman, "The Development and Enforcement of Group Norms," *The Academy of Management Review* 9.1 (January 1984): 47-53.

laws, religious edicts, and even familial conventions as prescriptions to be dutifully followed, we tend to not give much thought to their development. Concurrently, it is notoriously difficult for any institution that seeks to inculcate new norms to assess whether its efforts, particularly in the short-term, are genuinely impacting the behaviors and attitudes of the people who are exposed to them. To what degree, and under what conditions, is an individual more or less likely to agree with a prescribed norm?

One way of justifying the imposition of a norm is to claim that it should be recognized because of the legitimacy of the institution responsible for promulgating it. A child, for instance, might follow his parents' rules because there is a relationship of trust between the son and his father. Similarly, a Christian might follow the norms commanded by her church, because she grants moral authority to this body. But in the case of the family, the child is born into this norm-creating context and, at least to a certain age, is unable to really question it. Likewise, in the case of the believer, adhering to religious norms is presumably the result of a conscientious and deliberately chosen engagement with the relevant institution. Contrariwise, it is a very different matter for a state to introduce norms, especially if these do not reflect an already widely shared view regarding the topic at hand.

Establishing new norms and altering previous ones—effectively changing what a population takes to be appropriate and desirable—presupposes the potential to build-up societal cohesion as well as political support for the government or regime, which makes the issue of how, and to what extent, a state can shape citizens' beliefs and conduct critical to evaluate. The burgeoning of memory laws, or officially sanctioned restrictions on how the past may be publicly depicted and discussed, over the last two decades in post-communist Europe represents a striking example of political attempts to engineer norms. But despite their widespread adoption, we still lack insight into the circumstances under which these laws produce their desired outcomes. Consequently, our goal is to contribute to the literature on norm formation and dissemination by examining the success of elite-led attempts to alter societal norms of remembering in Russia and Ukraine. In other words, we wish to ascertain when memory laws matter.

Methodological Contextualization and Research Design

The majority of scholarship that deals with the politics of the past is qualitative in nature. This is not necessarily problematic; indeed, qualitative methods like causal-process observation may be the most appropriate tools through which to carefully analyze the stepwise unfolding of complex diachronic processes.⁵ However, while qualitative studies frequently prove useful for teasing out underlying mechanisms and mediating factors, they are largely limited to gauging the directionality (rather than the precise magnitude) of changes in the variable(s) of interest. Therefore, given that we are interested in measuring the efficacy of specific governmental interventions regarding how the past is recalled on societal attitudes, we chose to employ nationally representative online survey instruments (n=2000) and to analyze the data quantitatively.

These surveys, administered in the beginning of 2021 across Germany, Russia, and Ukraine (the German results are not considered herein), tested mass attitudes toward historical figures through continuous and categorical response options and assessed the efficacy of elite interventions (i.e., the ratification of prescriptive memory laws) designed to control how the past could be publicly

⁵ David Collier, Henry E. Brady, and Jason Seawright, "Sources of Leverage in Causal Inference: Toward an Alternative View of Methodology," in David Collier and Henry E. Brady, eds., *Rethinking Social Inquiry: Diverse Tools, Shared Standards*, pp. 161-99 (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010 [2nd ed.]). Nonetheless, qualitative studies are frequently approached in a less-than-systematic manner, leading to conclusions that are largely impressionistic (we acknowledge this may also result from an interpretivist rather than positivist epistemological orientation on the part of the researcher, but political scientists who fall into the former camp are few and far between).

acknowledged. This thematic focus, in conjunction with the deployment of a series of nested vignette experiments, renders the research project, to the best of our knowledge, unique.

Individual respondents ranged from 18 to 65 years of age, lived in communities of more than 20,000 inhabitants, and were selected according to a quota sample meant to ensure they were representative of the underlying population in terms of gender, age, and place of residence (bearing the above-noted parameters in mind). We partnered with an established survey firm (R-Research, based in Oxford) that has extensive experience working in the post-Soviet region and with which one of us (Krawatzek) has collaborated extensively on prior projects. Respondents were drawn from actively managed consumer panels, which featured controls designed to verify their reported income, place of residence, and other relevant socio-economic data.

Before launching into an analysis of our findings, it is worth touching upon the advantages and disadvantages of online surveys. Initially, we had planned to conduct this as an in-person survey in Russia only, but the advent of covid-19 made switching to an online version the only feasible and ethical option. Doing so provided certain benefits, including a greater flexibility with regard to survey design (e.g., permitting us to systematically split respondents into different types of treatment groups), the convenience of real-time access to survey results to examine whether certain questions were not being understood (i.e., a high proportion of “don’t know” responses), and the elimination of interviewer-induced biases. At the same time, we are well aware that online survey instruments may increase respondents’ propensity to answer questions unthoughtfully (or even fraudulently), truncate the representativeness of the sample by segregating out those without reliable internet access or those uncomfortable navigating newer technologies (typically the elderly), and remove the ability of respondents to ask clarifying questions.

This article draws on the vignette experiments we conducted as part of the Russian and Ukrainian iterations of the survey. Their aim was to understand whether respondents’ views concerning the appropriateness of a statement about history was predicated on the identity of the person making it and/or whether it was contingent on priming with the information that there exists a memory law prohibiting the assertion in question. In both Russia and Ukraine, the basic structure of the experimental design for vignette 1 was as follows:

		Person Making Statement	
		National	Foreigner
Law	Specified	Treatment 1	Treatment 3
	Not specified	Control	Treatment 2

Russian respondents in the control group were asked to read the following text:

Before her in December 2018, Russian Human Rights activist Lyudmila Alekseeva underlined once again in an interview that the Russian nation must not continue to venerate a distorted exclusively heroic image of the Red Army’s contribution to the Great Patriotic War. Instead, the country also needed to come to terms with the fact that some soldiers committed unnecessary violence against the civilian population and that the Soviet regime was oppressive and committed violence against its own population.

Under the treatment conditions the previously specified text was modified; in T1 it included reference to a law that would make her statement illegal:⁶

⁶ This 2014 statute (formally known as the “Law Against the Rehabilitation of Nazism,” it is also commonly referred to as the “Yarovaya Law” after Irina Yarovaya, a Russian legislator who was instrumental in its adoption) introduced article 354.1 into the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, making it illegal to dispute the findings of the Nuremberg tribunal (which crucially did not consider Allied war crimes) and to “spread intentionally false information about the Soviet Union’s activities during World War II.” Likewise prohibited, under penalty of up to

Before her death in December 2018, Russian Human Rights activist Lyudmila Alekseeva underlined once again in an interview that the Russian nation must not continue to venerate a distorted exclusively heroic image of the Red Army's contribution to the Great Patriotic War. Instead, the country also needed to come to terms with the fact that some soldiers committed unnecessary violence against the civilian population and that the Soviet regime was oppressive and committed violence against its own population. Her call directly violates a Russian 2014 Memory Law ("Yarovaya Law"), passed to protect the dignity of the Russian nation.

In T2 and T3, meanwhile, the authoritative figure was also changed; here, instead of Alekseeva, we cite the British historian Antony Beevor, who has likewise urged Russians to adopt a more self-critical engagement with the past. In T2 we take the control condition and only change the figure's name, whereas in T3 we also add mention of the law (as in T1).

The same basic design was applied to the case of Ukraine. The control condition in the Ukrainian case reads as follows:

The Ukrainian historian Heorhii Kasianov has criticized Ukrainian politicians who want to make it illegal to publically criticise the groups that fought for national independence in the twentieth century such as the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA). He argues that such legislation represents only the views of one political group, although there is no public consensus on these issues.

Meanwhile, in T1 we added "his position directly contradicts Ukraine's 2015 "decommunization" laws, which made such criticism illegal."⁷ Meanwhile, in the "foreigner" treatment (T2 and T3) we referenced the "Swedish-American historian Per Anders Rudling" who has been actively involved in researching this topic. (Comparable to the Russian example above, the relevant memory law is only mentioned alongside Rudling's name in T3.)

Next, respondents were asked several questions related to their own perceptions concerning the historical episodes under consideration. First, they were queried as to whether they thought it was appropriate for the person named in the vignette to bring their perspective into the debate. Second, they were asked whether they themselves agreed with the opinion of the person in the vignette. Finally, we inquired whether respondents thought it made a difference if a public or a private person stated this perspective. For the first two questions, respondents indicated their level of agreement or disagreement on a four-point scale (ranging from "yes, fully" agree to "no, never" agree).

five years imprisonment or a fine of half-million ruble fine), is "spreading information on military and memorial commemorative dates related to Russia's defense that is clearly disrespectful of society" and public activities that "desecrate symbols of Russia's [sic] military glory." (Ivan Kurilla, "The Implications of Russia's Law against the 'Rehabilitation of Nazism,'" *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo* No. 331 [August 2014]; https://www.ponarseurasia.org/wp-content/uploads/attachments/Pepm331_Kurilla_August2014_0.pdf.)

⁷ Oxana Shevel, "Decommunization in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine: Law and Practice," *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo* No. 411 (January 2016); <https://www.ponarseurasia.org/decommunization-in-post-euromaidan-ukraine-law-and-practice/>. While there were four "decommunization" laws passed in 2015, Law 2538-1 ("On the Legal Status and Honoring the Memory of Fighters for Ukraine's Independence in the Twentieth Century") was the most problematic, as it included a statute designating all paramilitary groups and organizations that fought for Ukraine's independence in the twentieth century, among them the UPA (implicated in the mass murder of Polish and Jewish civilians during World War II), as national freedom fighters and prohibited the public denigration of their veterans (<https://old.uinp.gov.ua/laws/law-ukraine-legal-status-and-hon-oring-memory-fighters-ukraines-independence-twentieth-century?q=laws/law-ukraine-legal-status-and-honoring-memory-fighters-ukraines-independence-twentieth-century>).

It is worth mentioning in the Russian example how challenging it was to identify a recognizable Russian who made such a statement. Given how serious an intervention into free speech the 2014 memory law has proven, uttering such a statement in public potentially has far-reaching legal and financial implications. We therefore needed to ensure that we would not harm the person associated with the statement. Nonetheless, we could not pick just any random person, as this might give respondents the sense that the survey was not serious. We therefore selected Alekseeva, who passed away in 2018 and was well-known for her critical stance towards Soviet history. Beevor, on the other hand, has published similar statements in books that have been translated into Russian, so his views were already widely disseminated.

In the Ukrainian case, academics who made such statements also need to be selected with care. We contacted the two colleagues that were identified to have made such statements beforehand and received their permission to use their names. Although the actual risks in the Ukrainian case are less drastic, it was still important to ensure we were not misrepresenting the views of working scholars while at the same time providing respondents with a realistic scenario.

The second series of vignettes, meanwhile, investigated what punishments were appropriate to impose when an elite-instigated historical norm was breached in three hypothetical scenarios.⁸

In the Russian survey, version one reads as follows:

There have been cases in our country when Russians were condemned for speaking about our history. Imagine that a court sentenced a Russian to **2 years** in prison for **quoting an article on its VKontakte page** that says that some Russian politicians accuse Ukrainian nationalists of collaborating with the Nazis on the eve of World War II, although the Soviet Union also collaborated with Hitler's Germany during the same time. The court found that this article contained deliberately false information about the causes of World War II and contradicted the statements of the Nuremberg Tribunal. The Russian was convicted of "rehabilitating Nazism."

Respondents were given a choice of agreeing with the punishment, stating that the punishment should have been even more severe, or stating that no punishment should have been applied at all; "don't know" and "refused" were also response options. The second and third variants of the vignette, meanwhile, read as follows:

RU Version 2:

There have been cases in our country when Russians were condemned for speaking about our history. Imagine that a court sentenced a Russian language teacher to **2 years** in prison for **quoting an article in a lecture in front of students**, which states that some Russian politicians accuse Ukrainian nationalists of collaborating with the Nazis on the eve of World War II, although the Soviet Union also collaborated with Hitler's Germany during the same time. The court found that this article contained deliberately false information about the causes of World War II and contradicted the statements of the Nuremberg Tribunal. The teacher was convicted of "rehabilitating Nazism."

RU Version 3:

There have been cases in our country when Russians were condemned for speaking about our history. Imagine that a court sentenced a Russian to **2 years** in prison for **a bar dispute, during which he quoted an article** that says some Russian politicians accuse

⁸ These comments could reasonably be construed as violating the 2014 Law Against the Rehabilitation of Nazism. More recently, in January 2021 Putin instructed legislators in the Duma to draft legislation that explicitly prohibits the conflation of Soviet and Nazi actions during World War II (<http://kremlin.ru/acts/assignments/orders/64925>).

Ukrainian nationalists of collaborating with the Nazis on the eve of World War II, although the Soviet Union also collaborated with Hitler's Germany during the same time. The court found that this article contained deliberately false information about the causes of World War II and contradicted the statements of the Nuremberg Tribunal. Russian was convicted of "rehabilitation of Nazism."

A similar model was followed in the corresponding Ukrainian vignettes, which likewise featured three hypothetical scenarios and employed the same response categories as were utilized in the Russian survey.

UA Version 1:

In our country, there were cases when Ukrainians were condemned for what they said about our history. Imagine that a court sentenced a Ukrainian to **2 years** in prison for posting photos and other materials with symbols of the communist regime (for example, hammer and sickle) and positive comments about the Soviet era on **Facebook**. This man was convicted of "creation, dissemination of communist, Nazi symbols and propaganda of communist and national socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes."

UA Version 2:

In our country, there were cases when Ukrainians were condemned for what they said about our history. Imagine that a court sentenced a Ukrainian teacher to **2 years** in prison for showing photographs and other materials with symbols of the communist regime (for example, a hammer and sickle) and positive comments about the Soviet era in front of **students in a classroom at school**. This teacher was convicted of "the creation, dissemination of communist, Nazi symbols and propaganda of communist and national socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes."

UA Version 3:

In our country, there were cases when Ukrainians were condemned for what they said about our history. Imagine a court sentenced a Ukrainian to **2 years** in prison for **arguing with friends in a bar** and showing them photographs and other materials with symbols of the communist regime (for example, the hammer and sickle) and positive comments about the Soviet era. This man was convicted of "creation, dissemination of communist, Nazi symbols and propaganda of communist and national socialist (Nazi) totalitarian regimes."

For all of the above vignettes, the group assigned was based on previously established quotas that reflected the sample. Therefore, the groups are balanced in terms of gender, age, and geography, so as to ensure there is no systematic bias in who was presented with the vignette variants.

Variables and Hypotheses:

Aside from the treatment variables (co-national/foreigner and mentioning of the memory law or not for vignette 1; social media, teacher in classroom, or bar with friends for vignette 2), we consider a number of variables related to socio-economic status, political stances, and historical viewpoints in evaluating responses to the above vignettes (see appendix).

Specifically, our model for both sets of regressions accounts for age, gender, education level, wealth, and the economic sector in which the respondent is employed, if applicable. Additionally, model one controls for whether a respondent resides in Moscow or St. Petersburg, while model two controls more generally for the size of the respondent's place of residence. Likewise, we assess the influence of such variables as interest in politics, trust in the state, and trust in online media when it comes to accepting state-imposed norms and prohibitions on certain depictions of the past. For trust in state institutions we combined several institutions consisting of the Armed

Forces, the Police, the judiciary system, the president and the parliament to get at an overall identification with the state, rather than assessing merely the effect of individual institutions. We also included variables capturing broader historical attitudes of respondents, namely their views on Stalin and their evaluations of the broader Soviet legacy. In the Ukrainian sample we also included a variable to code for the language in which respondents took the survey (i.e., Ukrainian or Russian).

For the first vignette, we hypothesized that foreign figures who broached government-imposed norms concerning the past would be less well received than co-nationals who did the same in both Russia and Ukraine. We also expected that mentioning the relevant law would decrease the number of respondents who agreed with the authoritative figure’s position on history. We also hypothesized that those who generally hold affirmative view on the Soviet past are less likely to accept criticism in the Russian case, where the inverse holds for the Ukrainian case.

Regarding the second vignette, we hypothesized that the schoolteacher scenario would cause the greatest opprobrium, followed by the social media post. In contrast, we expected that the private discussion in a bar would produce the fewest calls for censure.

Descriptive Findings: Russia

Vignette 1

Do you think it is appropriate for [...] to bring this perspective into the debate?		Person	
		Alekseeva	Beevor
Law	Specified	2.22	2.08
	Not specified	2.30	2.00

Do you agree with [...] yourself that it is necessary to critically engage with one’s own history?		Person	
		Alekseeva	Beevor
Law	Specified	2.28	2.28
	Not specified	2.38	2.18

In the above table we report the mean values on a scale ranging from 0 to 4. A higher value indicates that respondents in that group tend to agree more with the question.

A first look at the different responses to our two questions illustrates that respondents in Russia reacted strongly to the nationality of the person making the statement when asked whether they thought it is appropriate to bring this perspective into the debate. On average, if the speaker was a foreign academic, respondents were more likely to state that they did not think the perspective should be introduced into the debate. If the existence of the law was specified, in the case of the foreign academic, people on average thought that the statement was more appropriate, going against our expectation, whereas they were less likely to think the statement was appropriate, in line without expectation. However, the effect of the law is small compared to that of the kind of speaker.

When asked whether they themselves think that it is appropriate to critically engage with one’s own history, there was no difference for the type of speakers that people were exposed to when the 2014 law was specified.

Vignette 2

<i>Appropriate punishment?</i>		<i>Social media</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>With friends</i>
Yes	1	40.4%	27.1%	25.1%
No, the punishment should be even more severe	2	7%	5.8%	6.4%
No, he shouldn’t have been punished at all	3	52.5%	67.1%	68.4%

As regards the appropriateness of our hypothetical punishment scenarios, which specified two years of imprisonment for the alleged infraction, majorities in all three vignettes did not think the “transgressor” should have been punished at all, while a small minority replied in all three cases that the punishment should have been even more severe.

Interestingly, the context in which the infraction occurred mattered a great deal; respondents were much more likely to want to punish someone who posted the controversial quote from the article on social media than a teacher who cited it in class or the person who cited it in a dispute that took place in a bar. This suggests respondents are thinking about the scope of dissemination of controversial statements when assessing whether or not (and how) to punish violations of the law. Private interactions and the educational setting are realms that are associated with greater freedom of expression, whereas the public online sphere is seen as one that ought to be more closely monitored.

Descriptive Findings: Ukraine

Vignette 1

Do you think it is appropriate for [...] to bring this perspective into the debate?		Person					
		<i>Kasianov</i>			<i>Rudling</i>		
Law	Specified	2.67	2.55	2.77	2.67	2.54	2.76
	Not specified	2.71	2.63	2.78	2.63	2.50	2.74
			UA ⁹	RU		UA	RU

Do you agree with [...] yourself that it is necessary to critically engage with one’s own history?		Person					
		<i>Kasianov</i>			<i>Rudling</i>		
Law	Specified	2.74	2.68	2.79	2.76	2.69	2.81
	Not specified	2.70	2.70	2.69	2.72	2.65	2.78
			UA	RU		UA	RU

In the previous example, a public figure criticised the way Ukraine deals with its history. If the statement came from a private person, should he or she be allowed to make such a statement?		Person	
		<i>Kasianov</i>	<i>Rudling</i>
Law	Specified	0.68	0.64
	Not specified	0.64	0.63

Given the continuing relevance and politicization of the linguistic divide between Ukrainian and Russian in Ukraine, we analyzed the full sample controlling for the language of convenience that respondents chose to complete the survey in.

On the question of whether this controversial perspective regarding the UPA should be brought into the debate, there was not much variation in the concatenated sample for Kasianov being the source of the statement and the law being specified or not; the same held true for Rudling being the source of the controversial statement. Similarly, specifying or not specifying the existence of the law does not produce much variation. However, when we assess the sample broken out by language group, we see that Russian speakers in Ukraine are more likely to agree it is appropriate to bring this perspective into the debate, regardless of whether the figure doing so is a Ukrainian or foreigner. However, we should probably not read any sort of normative commitment to free speech into this finding, as the UPA-critical nature of the vignette aligns with the predominant Russian narrative (with which we would expect Russian speakers to align with more often than Ukrainian speakers on the basis of past research) that the UPA was a fascist and criminal force in World War II. (Note that the UA survey takers reacted strongly to the law in the first vignette.)

⁹ Refers to the language in which the survey was taken.

We see a similar result for the second question of whether it is necessary to critically engage with the past; while a greater overall proportion of respondents in Ukraine feel that it is necessary to engage with the past than is the case with respondents in Russia, in the Ukrainian context slightly more Russian speakers (especially when the law is specified) reply in the affirmative. This is in keeping with what we would predict knowing the mnemonic divides that exist in Ukraine and how they map onto language usage.

Vignette 2

<i>Appropriate punishment?</i>		<i>Social media</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>With friends</i>
Yes	1	18.1%	17.5%	17.6%
No, the punishment should be even more severe	2	3.7%	3.6%	3.9%
No, he shouldn't have been punished at all	3	78.1%	78.9%	78.4%

When it comes to punishing the display of communist symbols and making salutary remarks about the Soviet period, overwhelming majorities do not believe that the alleged violator should be punished. Of particular note is that this trend is remarkably consistent across all three of the specified scenarios. The results are striking if we compare them with the largely similar question that respondents in Russia were given where in particular the diffusion of historical information on social media was seen as something that was to be punished.

Discussion:

In the first Russian survey result regression (see appendix for the full regression tables), we find no statistically significant effect for mentions of the 2014 law. However, there is a robust effect when the interlocutor is a foreigner as opposed to a Russian (Figure 1).

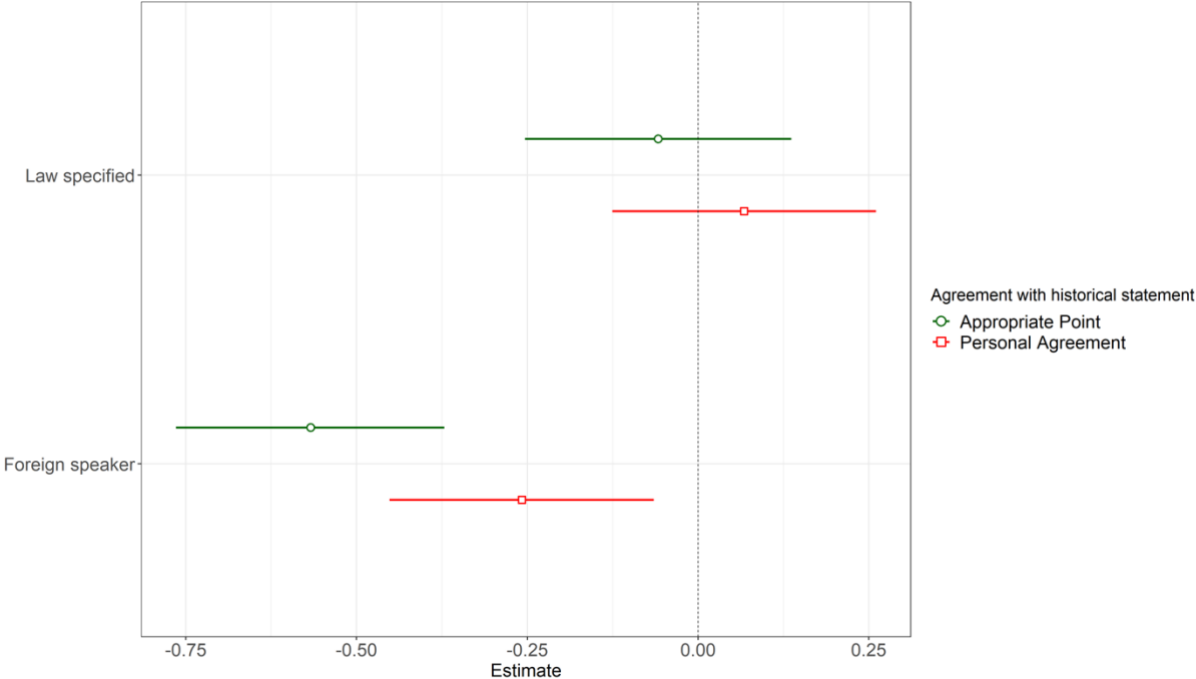


Figure 1: Russia Dependent Variable: Agreement with Historical Statement

Other variables matter as well; for example, young people are more likely to report that the statement problematizing the Red Army’s legacy was appropriate, implying tolerance for dissenting views may be at least somewhat age dependent, although no effect could be identified for the second question asking about their own personal agreement. There is also a gender effect evinced, with women more likely to believe that the initial vignette statement was appropriate. Surprisingly, we did not record clear statistically significant effects for either the economic sector

that respondents were employed nor their education status or wealth level. This is a finding that demands further scrutiny. Respondents living in Moscow or St. Petersburg were also more likely to express an agreement with the more critical historical statement.

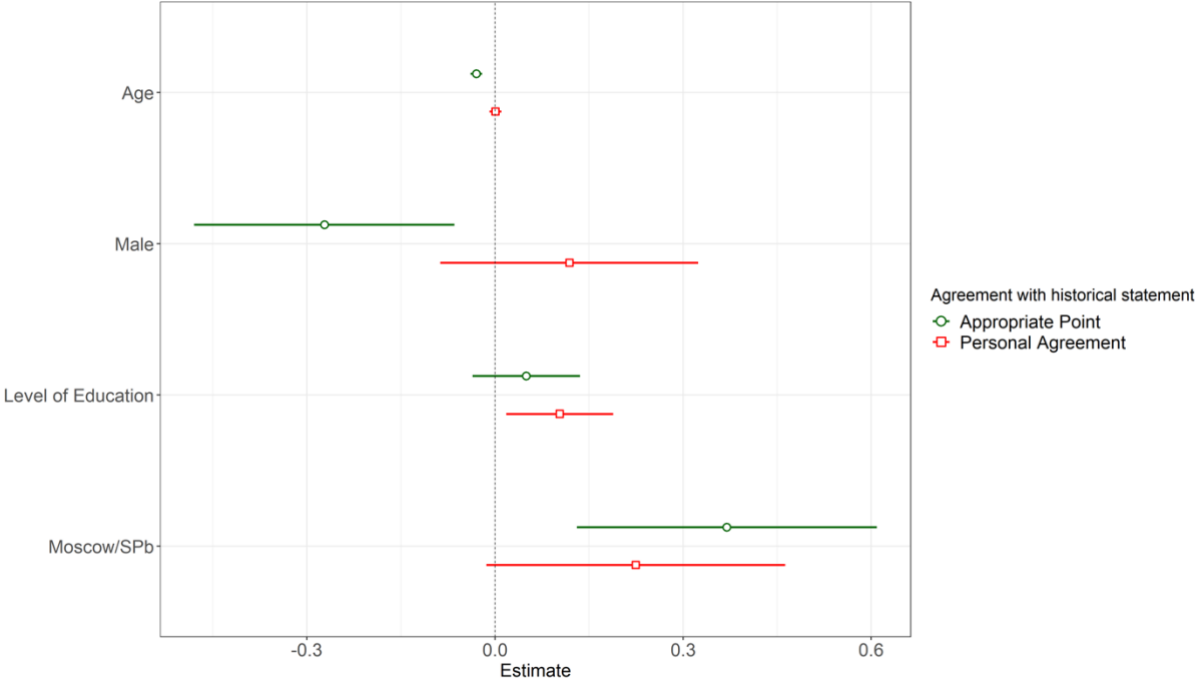


Figure 2: Russia Dependent Variable: Agreement with Historical Statement

Turning to political variables, there was a very significant effect exhibited for trust in state institutions; predictably, the more trust respondents exhibit towards a whole array of state institutions, the less likely they were to countenance narratives that transgress the official line concerning history. The same logic held for the trust exhibited towards the online media, with those seeking information online being more likely to agree with critical statements. Conversely, respondents who report being more interested in politics are more likely to support the right to question the historical narrative.

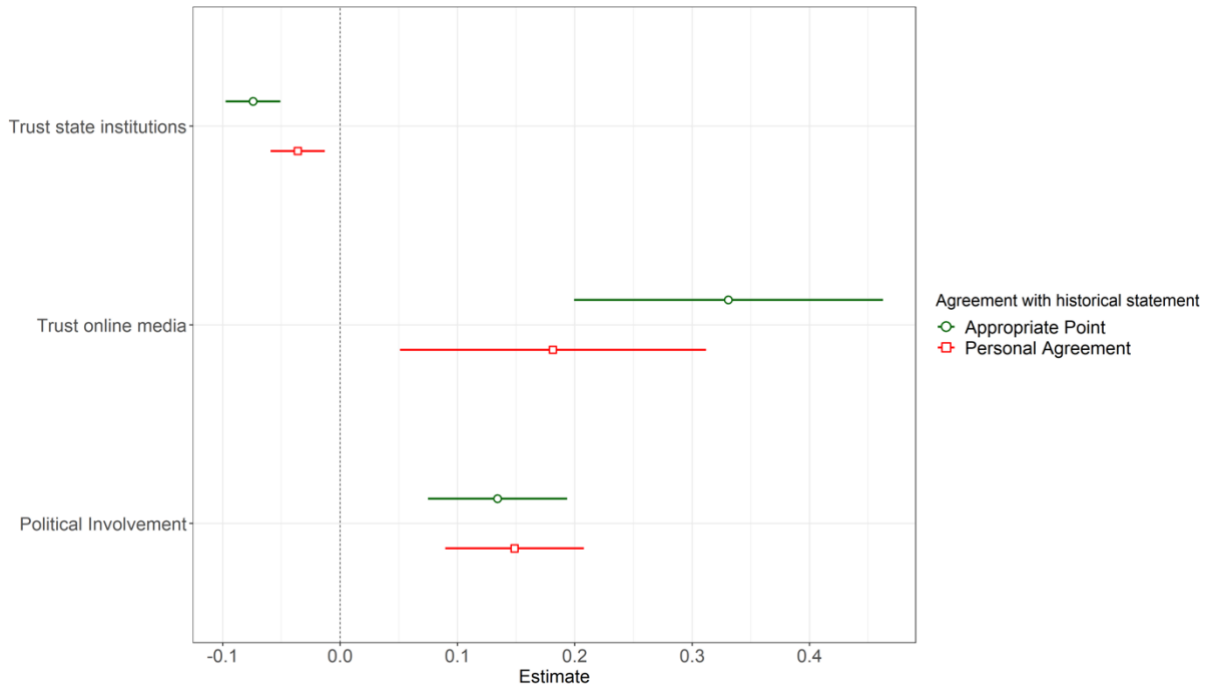


Figure 3: Russia Dependent Variable: Agreement with Historical Statement

Last, we considered various historical variables. Respondents who hold very negative views on the legacy of Stalinism and the USSR more generally, are also more likely to agree with the more critical historical statements. Very positive views on the Soviet era, however, only mattered for the first question about the appropriateness of the other speaker. Finally, more historical interest also went along with a higher likelihood to agree with the critical statement.

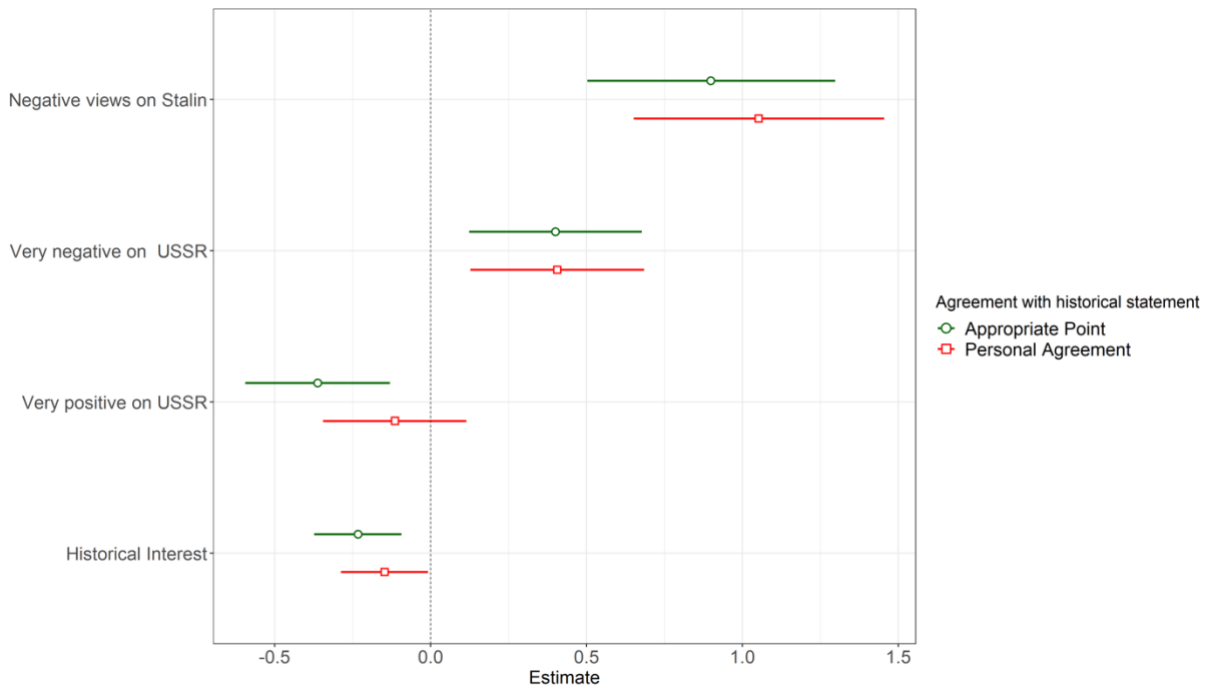


Figure 4: Russia Dependent Variable: Agreement with Historical Statement

Concerning the multinomial regression relative to the second experiment and the different kinds of violations of a historical norm, the results indicate that the respondents consider that the person should not have been punished at all compared to the distribution on the same information via social media. This confirms that the descriptive results above have statistical

significance in that particular case. Older people are also more likely to agree with punishments across all three types of violation. Likewise, those that report trusting the state are more inclined to claim that all the hypothetical punishments were appropriate, and that the punishment should have been even more severe. Meanwhile, those who fall into the anti-Stalin camp exhibit the reverse tendencies, whereas even those with relativist or unclear views on Stalin do not differ from those who believe Stalin was a wise leader and affirm of the punishments.

Meanwhile, in the Ukrainian case we do not witness any significant effects for either the mention of the law or the identity of the interlocutor.

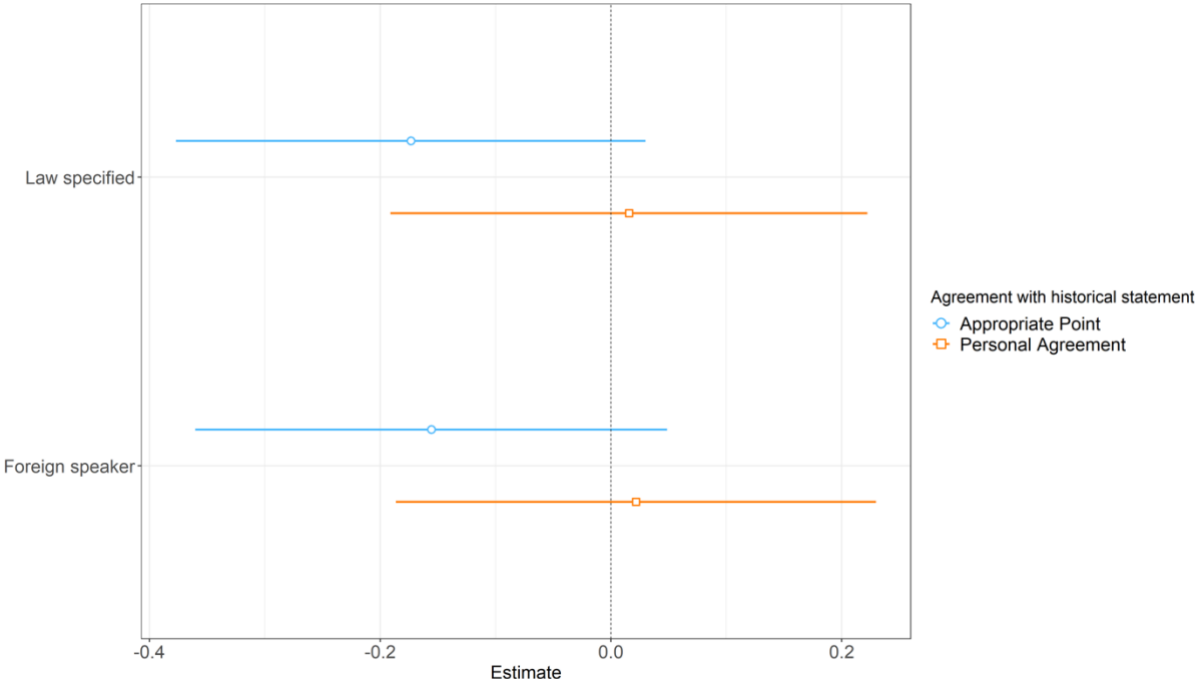


Figure 5: Ukraine Dependent Variable: Agreement with Historical Statement

However, the language the survey was completed in proved to be important, with Russian speakers more likely to agree with all three questions (however, this should not be taken to imply a more pluralist worldview; it is far more likely that this is capturing responses antithetical to the more Ukrainian nationalist rhetoric on history that has dominated since 2014). In other words, when asked about a more critical take on Ukrainian history, Russian-speakers are more likely to think that historical criticism is appropriate. Level of education correlates positively with affirmative views on the appropriateness of the vignettes and men being slightly more critical than women.

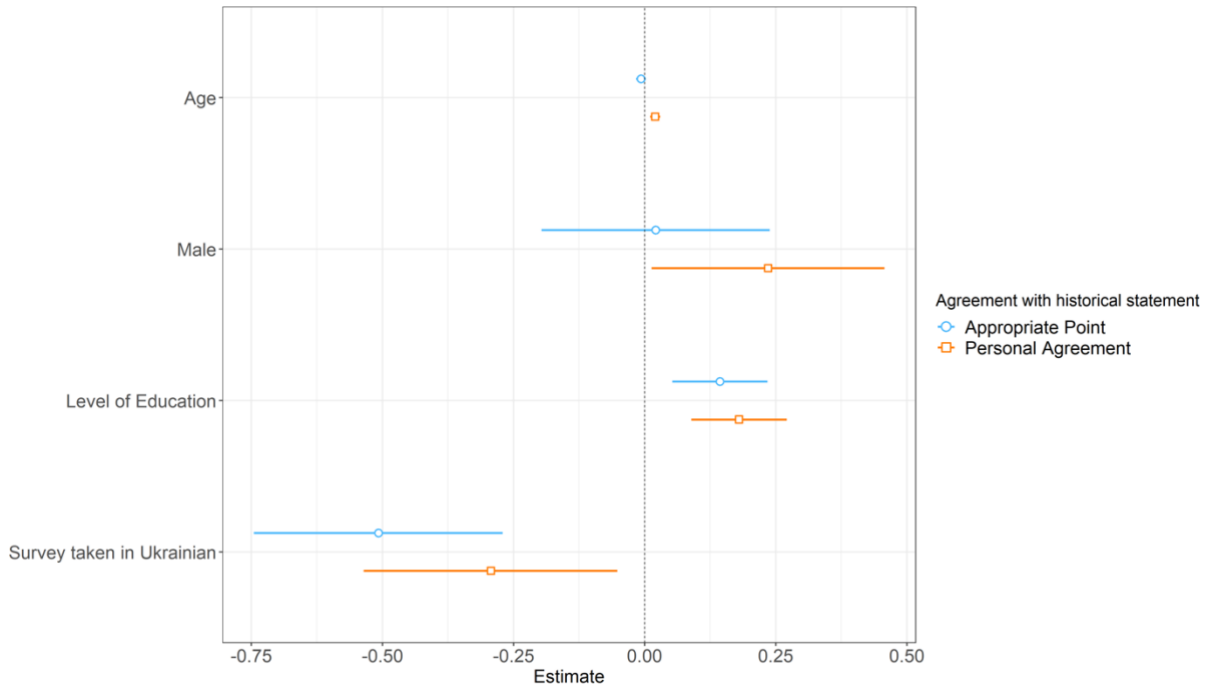


Figure 6: Ukraine Dependent Variable: Agreement with Historical Statement

Similarly, level of education and degree of interest in and involvement with politics correlates positively with affirmative views on the appropriateness of the vignettes, while trust in the online media is negatively correlated with personal attitudes towards the statement in question for both Ukrainian as well as Russian speakers. Counterintuitively, trust in the state and views on Stalin (as well as the wider Soviet legacy) do not seem to matter much, the only exception being respondents who hold very positive views on the USSR (and who are therefore also more likely to express agreement with the critical statement on Ukrainian history). Clearly, this finding demands further investigation.

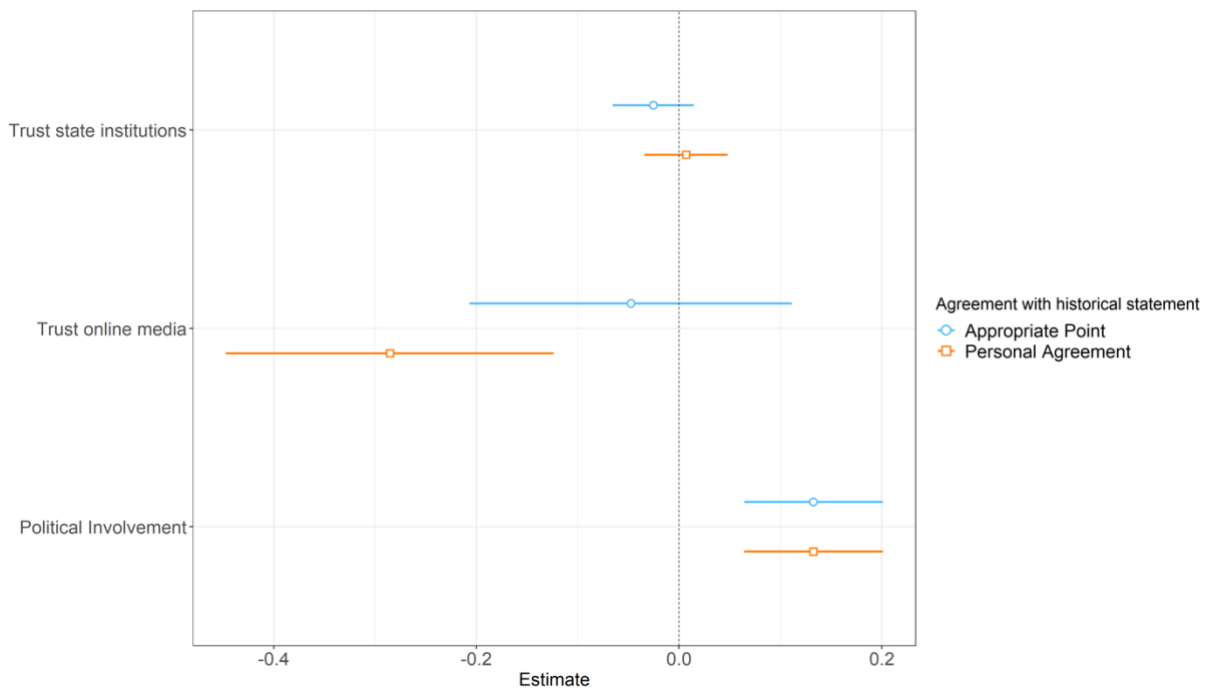


Figure 7: Ukraine Dependent Variable: Agreement with Historical Statement

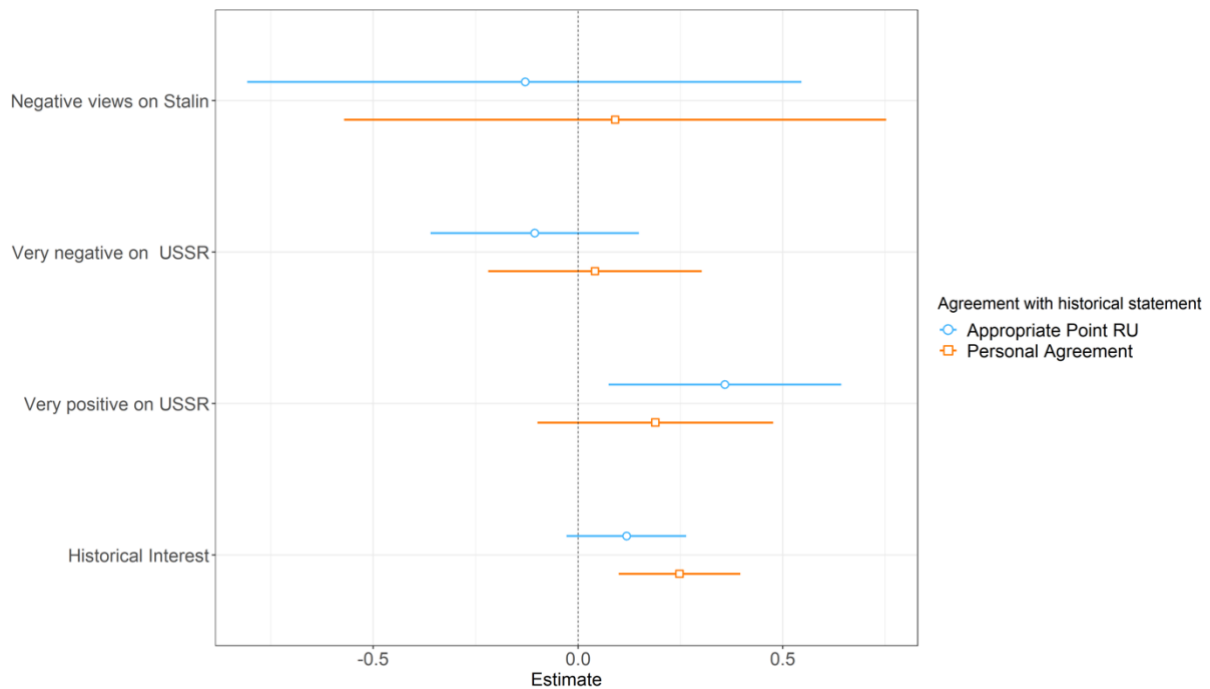


Figure 8: Ukraine Dependent Variable: Agreement with Historical Statement

Finally, regarding the second regression for the Ukrainian case, we observe a gendered effect, with more males favoring a punitive response than females. A strong reaction is also evinced for Ukrainian speakers employed in the non-governmental sector, who support a more severe response. Those Ukrainian speakers who are anti-Stalin or unclear in their historical orientation also assume a significantly more polarized response consistent with supporting a pro-Ukrainian narrative of the sort reflected by the 2015 laws. Evaluations of the effects of the wider Soviet legacy also produce statistically significant results.

Conclusion:

While the surveys we conducted will be subjected to further in-depth analysis, the preliminary findings presented above are intriguing. At a minimum, they suggest that the reception accorded to new historical orientations promulgated by political elites is mixed and dependent on a number of contextualizing factors. Legislating a particular interpretation of the past does not mean that it will be widely accepted. Rather, what seems to matter is how well attempts at creating new norms conform to pre-existing societal divisions concerning the perceived validity of the contemporary state, as well as of the historical narrative that it seeks to institutionalize; these two interpretations are no doubt meaningfully intertwined. If this finding holds up to scrutiny, it will suggest that the uncritical elite-centric supply-side narrative of mnemonic politics will need to be meaningfully nuanced to account for a more sophisticated “citizen consumer” of historical discourses.

Nonetheless, taken in tandem, these surveys also reinforce many findings of previous researchers, which bolsters their criterion validity. Consequently, we find that factors such as holding negative views of Stalin or the Soviet period generally correlate to a more pluralistic orientation regarding how the past should be depicted. Similarly, in the Ukrainian case we see that linguistic differences play a prominent role in assessing how a controversial but clearly more pro-nationalist narrative is assessed. What is unexpected is the generally weak, inconclusive or absent effect of employment sector, wealth and education in both countries surveyed. This is a phenomenon that will require further analysis and study.

Appendix

Russia Vignette Experiment 1

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	G1_1AllGroups <i>ordered logistic</i> Appropriate Statement (1)	G1_2AllGroups <i>ordered logistic</i> Personal Agreement (2)	G1_3AllGroups <i>Logistic</i> Public Private Person (3)
G1Law	-0.058 (0.099)	0.067 (0.098)	-0.148 (0.114)
G1Person	-0.567*** (0.100)	-0.258** (0.099)	-0.424*** (0.114)
A1Age	-0.030*** (0.005)	0.001 (0.005)	-0.015** (0.005)
A2GenderMale	-0.272* (0.106)	0.118 (0.105)	0.225 (0.121)
A12SectorEconomyStateNonProductive	0.082 (0.211)	0.196 (0.207)	-0.028 (0.249)
A12SectorEconomyStateManufacturing	-0.056 (0.214)	-0.042 (0.212)	0.169 (0.248)
A12SectorEconomyPrivate	0.042 (0.181)	0.237 (0.178)	0.255 (0.210)
A12SectorEconomyPrivateEntrepreneur	0.218 (0.221)	0.538* (0.220)	0.353 (0.255)
A12SectorEconomyNGO	0.144 (0.331)	0.332 (0.335)	0.103 (0.372)
A18Education	0.050 (0.044)	0.103* (0.043)	0.091 (0.049)
AWealth	-0.006 (0.023)	0.004 (0.023)	0.010 (0.026)
HPolitics	0.134*** (0.030)	0.148*** (0.030)	0.141*** (0.034)
A3Capital	0.370** (0.122)	0.224 (0.122)	0.407** (0.139)
A10Children	-0.152 (0.110)	-0.128 (0.109)	-0.179 (0.125)
B7RUTrustState	-0.074*** (0.012)	-0.036** (0.012)	-0.050*** (0.013)
B7RU_r3TrustOnlineMedia	0.331*** (0.067)	0.181** (0.067)	0.133 (0.075)
D11Relativist	0.175 (0.180)	0.369* (0.180)	0.500* (0.211)
D11AntiStalin	0.899***	1.052***	1.062***

	(0.202)	(0.205)	(0.235)
D11Unclear	0.514*	0.758**	0.790**
	(0.256)	(0.257)	(0.297)
B10PosMixedNeutralVeryNegative	0.400**	0.406**	0.206
	(0.141)	(0.142)	(0.159)
B10PosMixedNeutralNegative	-0.949	-0.986*	-0.794
	(0.492)	(0.488)	(0.606)
B10PosMixedNeutralPositive	0.465	0.962*	1.841**
	(0.441)	(0.451)	(0.660)
B10PosMixedNeutralVeryPositive	-0.362**	-0.115	-0.191
	(0.118)	(0.117)	(0.135)
C2HistoricalInterest	-0.233**	-0.148*	-0.042
	(0.071)	(0.071)	(0.082)
Constant			-1.679**
			(0.634)
Observations	1,462	1,462	1,462
Log Likelihood			-906.263
Akaike Inf. Crit.			1,862.525

Note:

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

Russia Vignette Experiment Type of Violation

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	G1_1AllGroups	G1_2AllGroups	G1_3AllGroups
	<i>ordered</i>	<i>ordered</i>	<i>logistic</i>
	<i>logistic</i>	<i>logistic</i>	<i>logistic</i>
	Punishment		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
G1Law	-0.058 (0.099)	0.067 (0.098)	-0.148 (0.114)
G1Person	0.567*** (0.100)	0.258** (0.099)	0.424*** (0.114)
A1Age	-0.030*** (0.005)	0.001 (0.005)	-0.015** (0.005)
A2GenderMale	-0.272* (0.106)	0.118 (0.105)	0.225 (0.121)
A12SectorEconomyStateNonProductive	0.082 (0.211)	0.196 (0.207)	-0.028 (0.249)
A12SectorEconomyStateManufacturing	-0.056 (0.214)	-0.042 (0.212)	0.169 (0.248)
A12SectorEconomyPrivate	0.042 (0.181)	0.237 (0.178)	0.255 (0.210)
A12SectorEconomyPrivateEntrepreneur	0.218 (0.221)	0.538* (0.220)	0.353 (0.255)
A12SectorEconomyNGO	0.144 (0.331)	0.332 (0.335)	0.103 (0.372)
A18Education	0.050 (0.044)	0.103* (0.043)	0.091 (0.049)
AWealth	-0.006 (0.023)	0.004 (0.023)	0.010 (0.026)
HPolitics	0.134*** (0.030)	0.148*** (0.030)	0.141*** (0.034)
A3Capital	0.370** (0.122)	0.224 (0.122)	0.407** (0.139)
A10Children	-0.152 (0.110)	-0.128 (0.109)	-0.179 (0.125)
B7RUTrustState	-0.074*** (0.012)	-0.036** (0.012)	-0.050*** (0.013)
B7RU_r3TrustOnlineMedia	0.331*** (0.067)	0.181** (0.067)	0.133 (0.075)
D11Relativist	0.176 (0.180)	0.369* (0.180)	0.500* (0.211)
D11AntiStalin	0.899*** (0.202)	1.052*** (0.205)	1.062*** (0.235)
D11Unclear	0.514* (0.202)	0.758** (0.205)	0.790** (0.235)

	(0.256)	(0.257)	(0.297)
B10PosMixedNeutralVeryNegative	0.400**	0.406**	0.206
	(0.141)	(0.142)	(0.159)
B10PosMixedNeutralNegative	-0.949	-0.986*	-0.794
	(0.492)	(0.488)	(0.606)
B10PosMixedNeutralPositive	0.465	0.962*	1.841**
	(0.441)	(0.451)	(0.660)
B10PosMixedNeutralVeryPositive	-0.362**	-0.115	-0.191
	(0.118)	(0.117)	(0.135)
C2HistoricalInterest	-0.233**	-0.148*	-0.042
	(0.071)	(0.071)	(0.082)
Constant			-2.103***
			(0.632)

Observations	1,462	1,462	1,462
Log Likelihood			-906.263
Akaike Inf. Crit.			1,862.525

Note:

* p ** p *** p < 0.001

Ukraine Vignette Experiment

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	G1_1AllGroups <i>ordered</i> <i>logistic</i> Appropriate Statement (1)	G1_2AllGroups <i>ordered</i> <i>logistic</i> Personal Agreement (2)	G1_3AllGroups <i>Logistic</i> Public Private Person (3)
G1Law	-0.173 (0.104)	0.016 (0.105)	0.008 (0.120)
G1Person	-0.156 (0.104)	0.022 (0.106)	-0.343** (0.121)
SurveyUkrainian	-0.507*** (0.121)	-0.293* (0.123)	-0.154 (0.139)
A1Age	-0.007 (0.005)	0.020*** (0.005)	0.003 (0.006)
A2GenderMale	0.021 (0.111)	0.235* (0.113)	0.087 (0.129)
A12SectorEconomyStateNonProductive	0.039 (0.211)	0.255 (0.215)	-0.004 (0.245)
A12SectorEconomyStateManufacturing	-0.115 (0.227)	-0.018 (0.234)	-0.043 (0.262)
A12SectorEconomyPrivate	-0.191 (0.187)	0.232 (0.191)	0.095 (0.215)
A12SectorEconomyPrivateEntrepreneur	-0.084 (0.222)	-0.048 (0.223)	0.011 (0.256)
A12SectorEconomyNGO	-0.507 (0.335)	0.052 (0.333)	-0.338 (0.368)
A18Education	0.143** (0.046)	0.180*** (0.046)	0.037 (0.052)
AWealth	0.014 (0.024)	0.024 (0.024)	0.023 (0.027)
HPolitics	0.132*** (0.035)	0.132*** (0.035)	0.123** (0.039)
A3CitySize	-0.030 (0.036)	-0.003 (0.036)	0.027 (0.042)
B7UATrustState	-0.026 (0.020)	0.007 (0.021)	0.032 (0.023)
B7UA_r3TrustOnlineMedia	-0.048 (0.081)	-0.285*** (0.083)	-0.331*** (0.094)
D11Relativist	0.268 (0.346)	0.316 (0.340)	0.346 (0.366)
D11AntiStalin	-0.129 (0.345)	0.091 (0.337)	0.477 (0.362)

D11Unclear	-0.266 (0.375)	-0.080 (0.372)	0.040 (0.400)
B10PosMixedNeutralNegative	-0.737 (0.414)	-0.462 (0.415)	0.005 (0.444)
B10PosMixedNeutralPositive	-0.149 (0.542)	-0.626 (0.584)	-0.233 (0.654)
B10PosMixedNeutralVeryNegative	-0.106 (0.130)	0.041 (0.133)	-0.082 (0.152)
B10PosMixedNeutralVeryPositive	0.359* (0.145)	0.189 (0.147)	0.232 (0.168)
C2HistoricalInterest	0.118 (0.075)	0.248** (0.076)	0.136 (0.084)
Constant			-1.365* (0.691)

Observations	1,304	1,304	1,304
Log Likelihood			-807.695
Akaike Inf. Crit.			1,665.389

Note: * p<0.05 ** p<0.01 *** p<0.001