Colonial Legacies, Party Machines and Enduring Regional Voting Patterns

In Ukrainian National Elections

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Abstract: The paper combines field interviews, historical process-tracing, and a spatial discontinuity analysis of the 2010 Ukrainian Presidential elections and the 2012 Parliamentary elections to explain why contemporary voters cleave along one stretch of a former imperial boundary in Ukraine. Formerly Ottoman acquisitions of the Russian Empire faced direct rule, education, urbanization, and Russification in the late 18th and 19th Centuries, creating a distinctive pro-Russian regional culture that supplies the base of support for the Party of Regions. Areas annexed from Poland in the 18th Century were subject to indirect rule through the Polish nobility, which led to less peasant education and more limited cultural ties to Russia. Analyzing a 60-km wide band of polling districts along the former frontier between Polish and Ottoman territories in Ukraine, we find substantially greater support for the pro-Russian presidential candidate Viktor Yanukovich and his Party of Regions in polling districts on the Ottoman side of the former frontier. The results suggest that pre-Communist imperial legacies have a significant effect on contemporary voting patterns.
Voting patterns in many central European countries have taken on a decidedly regional character in the decades following the collapse of Communism. The most recent Ukrainian Presidential Elections repeated a regional voting pattern in Ukrainian politics that is now quite consistent and familiar. The southern and eastern provinces of the country\(^1\) consistently vote for the same candidate or party. And they do so by large and nearly universal majorities across every polling district within the region. The formerly Austrian territories of Ivano-Frankivsk, Ternopil, and Lviv consistently vote for the rival candidate in extraordinarily high percentages, and they consistently carry with them the remainder of the country, with the exception of Zakarpatska, Chernivtsy, and Kirovohrad (where the vote is often mixed). Again in 2012, regional voting dominated all other patterns in Ukrainian elections.

Ukraine is not unique in this regard. Similar divides exist in Poland and Romania going back to some of the earliest post-Communist elections. Moreover, as the electoral systems continue to mature, the regional voting patterns appear to be solidifying rather than diminishing in significance and predictive power. It is not an exaggeration to say when it comes to predicting electoral outcomes in these three countries, the most important piece of information to know about a voter is not where they work, how much they earn, or how old they are, but in which region of the country they reside.

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\(^1\) The oblasts of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson, Zaporizhia, Crimea, Mykolaev, and Odessa.
More important, these electoral regions do not reflect an arbitrary geography. In all three cases, the boundaries of the regional voting blocs fall along the old and defunct boundaries of the empires out of which these countries were constructed. The correlation between imperial boundaries and contemporary voting is so close, in fact, that the best predictor of which party would win an electoral district in the 2007 legislative elections or the recent 2010 Presidential Election in Poland was whether that district fell within the Prussian partition prior to 1918. The same has been true for most recent Romanian elections, which have been dominated by a distinction between formerly Habsburg and formerly Ottoman (Moldavia, Walachia, Dobrogea) sections of the country. Although Ukraine’s imperial legacies are more varied and complex than any other country in Eurasia, all of its Presidential and Parliamentary elections since 2002 exhibit a clear electoral divide that appears to follow loosely the areas of historic Polish settlement and control. These remarkable imperial “footprints” on the contemporary electoral map of Europe beg a fundamental question: Why do 18th and 19th Century Imperial boundaries provide such a powerful predictor of voting behavior in the 21st Century in the largest countries in Central Europe?

To provide a partial answer to this question, this paper focuses on the results of the 2010 Presidential elections and the 2012 Parliamentary elections in Ukraine, a country where the regional voting patterns have gained a great deal of attention and one which offers a richer patchwork of imperial legacies than any other country in Europe. To better isolate the effects of a possible imperial legacy, I focus on election results within an approximately 60-km wide band of territory straddling
the old border that distinguished the Ottoman Empire from the Polish Commonwealth when the Russian Empire annexed the territories at the end of the 18th Century. My hope is that a detailed analysis of imperial legacies and contemporary voting patterns in this region will illuminate the processes and mechanisms behind the deep imperial footprint on contemporary elections that we find in Ukraine and elsewhere.

My initial findings suggest that two factors play an important role in determining the imperial voting pattern: regional political culture and the orientation and strength of the provincial party machine. To be more precise, I argue that the different strategies that the Russian Empire employed in the incorporation of formerly Polish and formerly Ottoman territories led to significant differences in the regional political culture, orientation, and dominant identification of these two incorporated areas—in particular their attitudes toward Russian culture. In the New Russia (Novorossija) province, comprising areas acquired from the Ottoman Empire, the strategy of the Tsarist Empire was to colonize the new territory rapidly and to impose direct rule. In these areas, a new and largely martial Russian nobility was created, the schools were in Russian and were widespread by the beginning of the 20th Century, and serfdom was uncommon. As a result, the mobilized and freer peasantry had a greater attachment to and identification with Russia and Russian culture—regardless of their ethnic origins. In contrast, the Russian Empire pursued a strategy of indirect rule with limited central influence in the areas annexed from Poland at the end of the 18th Century. In these areas, the Polish nobility remained in place, preserved its power and privilege, and resisted
the education of the peasantry and worked to block cultural developments that would lead to greater association with Russia. These areas became less Russian in identification, a process that was enhanced by Ukrainianizing Soviet nationalities policies in the 1920s and 1930s.

I contend that when there is genuine electoral competition and parties choose to raise the salience of cultural issues, as was the case in the 2010 Presidential elections and 2012 Parliamentary elections in Ukraine, these distinctive regional cultures then shape the character of the party organizations that can succeed in the region. Issues that pertain to Ukraine’s political and cultural relations with Russia (NATO, EU membership, language policy) have been salient in contemporary Ukrainian politics for the past decade or more—and particularly during national elections. Pro-Russian candidates developed stronger party organizations in the provinces of New Russia and more Ukrainian- and pro-Western parties have developed machines in the formerly Polish imperial territories. These regional machines—through their superior organization and vote-buying resources—are then able to secure the vote of those voters with much weaker cultural orientations or partisan preferences. The result is that the party organizations extend and harden the majorities for the dominant party within an imperial region, sharpening the regional electoral divide over time and leading to a stronger “imperial footprint” in the electoral results. This interaction between regional political cultures, issue salience, and party organizations appears to be the link between the 19th Century boundaries and contemporary voting patterns.
The paper proceeds in three sections. Section I describes the method behind the paper and clarifies the logic of the spatial discontinuity research design. Section II describes the relevant differences in Russian imperial incorporation strategies in this area of the Russian empire and traces out the processes and mechanisms linking the 220 year-old imperial boundary to the development of different regional cultures evident in contemporary Ukraine. Section III then presents the findings showing the effect of the imperial boundary on voting behavior in the 2010 Ukrainian Presidential elections and 2012 Parliamentary elections and shows how oblast-level party machines enhance and harden these regional cultural cleavages to produce a substantially stronger regional effect. Section IV concludes with a discussion of our understanding of potential causal pathways through which processes in the fairly distant past can be conceived as causes of contemporary events.

I. Spatial Discontinuities in Imperial Treatment

This paper takes advantage of historically contingent spatial discontinuities to determine the effects of imperial legacies on voting behavior. The logic of the design is similar to that of natural experiments and can be considered a subset of a broader category of discontinuity designs. Rather than examine all Ukrainian electoral districts I focus on a more homogeneous regional subset of those polling

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districts that fall within a narrow band on opposite sides of a former imperial boundary. Because all of the districts are in close proximity to one another and share the same geographic and natural environment, and because of the general commonalities in political institutions, social structure, and economic organization generated by 70 years of Soviet Communism, the presumption is that we can more confidently identify the effect of an imperial legacy with this narrower subset of the data. If the districts on either side of the previous border share relevant attributes other than those directly attributable to the imperial treatment, then any differences seen in the districts on either side of the border should thereby more closely reflect the effects of the imperial legacy. Because imperial legacies are spatially discontinuous variables—they have clear and known edges—a comparison of groups on either side of a former imperial boundary approximates the assignment of similar groups randomly into treatment and control and allows us to identify the imperial effect.

The empirical strategy first calls for identifying an area where the population is quite homogeneous by contemporary measures, but which is divided by an historical imperial boundary that has long since ceased to demarcate any political or administrative differences. For this purpose I have chosen a stretch of territory along the Kodyma river in Southwestern Ukraine (see Figure 1). Today the Kodyma runs through the northern part of Odessa province (oblast), but in the 18th Century, the Kodyma served as the dividing line between the Ottoman Empire and the Polish Commonwealth, approximately between the border town of Balta (Polish Jozefgrod, briefly Russian Elensk) and Olviopol (Polish Bohopol, Ottoman Golta, today's
The Kodyma is essentially a small, sandy stream in mid-summer and not a major geographic impediment. The slight rise to the south of it might afford some strategic advantage, but only marginally so. It does not differentiate soil regions, climates, or transportation networks and it is not significantly different from the rivers to the north (the Savran) or to the South. In short, the border between the two empires was not initially selected on the basis of local physical or demographic attributes that might confound our analysis. The river appears to have been chosen arbitrarily as a dividing line between the Polish and Ottoman territories, possibly because it runs almost exactly from West to East and thus serves as a convenient North-South border.

Figure 1:
The Study Area
(shaded, with the Kodyma river shown in red)

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3 Note that in the 18th Century, the Ottoman Empire, Polish Commonwealth, and the Russian Empire each maintained their own border towns in the same general location for the purposes of border protection and trade. Hence "Balta" was the name of the town that fell on the Ottoman side of the frontier, whereas Jozefgrod was the Polish fortification on the opposite side of the Kodyma river. It was only after the Russian empire annexed the Polish and Ottoman territories (and in the case of Pervomaisk, only after the Bolshevik revolution) that the towns were incorporated into a single political unit under a common name.
Both the Polish and Ottoman territories that were separated by this border were acquired by the Russian Empire at approximately the same time in the last decade of the 18th Century. The Russian Empire annexed the Polish territory north
of the Kodyma in the Polish partition of 1793 and acquired the territory to the south of the Kodyma at the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish war in 1792 and the dissolution of the Crimean Khanate. In the North, the Polish province of Bratslav became the Russian governorship of Podolia (capital in Kamenets) at the beginning of the 19th Century. In the South, a new governorship of Novorossija (New Russia) was initially established and then divided in 1802 into the governorships of Kherson, Ekaterinoslav, and Tavrida. The areas to the south of the Kodyma under analysis here fell entirely within the Kherson governorship.

II. Strategies of Imperial Incorporation and the Sources of Regional Culture

The border between the Polish Commonwealth and the Ottoman empire demarcated significant differences in how the Russian Empire governed its newly-acquired territories. Put in the simplest terms, the Empire pursued a strategy of rapid colonization and *direct* rule in the areas acquired from the Ottoman Empire and a strategy of incorporation and *indirect* rule in areas that were acquired from Poland. These differences had a long-term impact on the development of the regional cultures in these two areas.

*Formerly Ottoman Territories: Direct Rule*

For the territories acquired from the Ottoman empire, the goal of the Russian government was to populate them as rapidly as possible, to cultivate the land for the purpose of creating a tax base and to sustain sizable military settlements in a critical
borderland of the Empire. There was no pre-existing nobility to draw upon and the areas were thinly populated.

To attract settlement, the Russian empire pursued a colonization strategy focused on easy access to land, rapid upward mobility, and direct rule (in many regions—martial law). Unlike other areas of the Russian empire where landholding rights were reserved for the nobility, in the territories annexed from the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate, settlers of virtually any background were offered hereditary private property.⁴ According to the principles outlined by Catherine the Great, the goal for the new territories was:

To divide the Lands amongst the Families which had none, and to enable them to cultivate and improve them. This Division ought to be made without Loss of Time, as soon as ever one Man can be found who would undertake it on those Terms, that not a Moment might be lost before the Work is begun.⁵

To increase the incentives to occupy and improve the territory, settlers were offered tax exemptions for periods of 6, 8, or 16 years depending on an assessment of how difficult the land was to cultivate. Estates of any size up to 3888 acres (48 parcels)

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were granted without payment to people of any rank (zvanie). To retain the land, the new owner needed only to settle one household per parcel.6

Nearly 75% of the new settlement region was designated to support military settlers, who would reside in specific districts and be organized into regiments.7 Indicative of the remarkable potential for upward mobility the new settlement areas offered, military rank was a function of how many settlers one could recruit to reside on an the territory. A military rank of major was to be granted to anyone who recruited 300 military settlers or 600 ordinary agricultural settlers for their estates. In the fervent desire for settlers, imperial decrees established amnesties for fugitives, deserters, and rebellious Cossacks—those guilty of any crime other than murder—if they would only return to settle in these new areas of the Russian empire.8

The goal was to settle, develop, and militarize the southern frontier as rapidly as possible, and as a result of this distinctive strategy of colonization, serfdom was relatively absent from the territories acquired from the Ottoman empire between 1770 and 1796.9 In sharp contrast to the rest of European Russia, in 1784 only 2.7% of the rural population were privately-owned serfs and the area was dominated by “state peasants,” of whom 80% were organized into military

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7 According to the decree (ukaz) of March 22, 1764, which set the policy for the occupation and settlement of the new territories, an area of settlement was to be divided into 70 districts. These, in turn, were to be divided into 700 parcels of land of 60.2 or 81 acres. Of the 70 districts, 52 were reserved for military settlers. Duran, “Colonization Policy,” page 26-27.
9 Note that this was true also for the Tiraspol uezd (future Transdniester), which was part of Kherson gubernia, but not for the rest of northern Bessarabia (in so-called Russian Moldavia), which was still dominated by Moldovan boyars. For a map of the territory see page 38 of E. I. Druzhinina, Iuzhnaia Ukraina v 1800-1825 [Southern Ukraine from 1800-1825] (Moscow: Nauka, 1970). For the population data on Tiraspol uezd see Druzhinina, pages 86-87.
settlements. With no prior nobility, social rank was acquired with relative ease and a new Russian elite was established in short order and closely associated with military service and the agricultural production needed to sustain it.

Culturally, these territories became considerably more Russian in orientation. In part this was due to the fact that the inhabitants were culturally distinct. The formerly Ottoman territories were colonized by immigrants, although many of these immigrants were Ukrainian-speakers (fleeing serfs, resettled Cossacks) moving southward. Throughout the 19th Century, with the spread of urbanization and schooling, Russian culture and language came to predominate. The language of the cities was Russian, as was the language and the content of the schools. Moreover, as is common in areas of diverse settlement (Germans, Moldovans, Jews, and Serbs were encouraged to settle in these areas in an effort to populate them quickly), which may have led to the use of Russian as a lingua franca. Druzhinina also notes that many of the early settlers were drawn from other parts of the empire and that the region was quite distinctive in its openness to private property, new economic models and education. Later arrivals assimilated to the culture of the existing residents. As a result, these were some of the most educated provinces in the Russian empire by 1910 and thus the population was

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10 Duran, "Colonization Policy," page 35. Druzhinina provides figures from 1801 showing that out of a total population of 488,965 of Novorossiskaia Gubernia, 451,812 were small agricultural producers. Of these, 151,573 were in military settlements. Only 28,166 were serfs. (Druzhinina, Iuzhnaia Ukraina, Table 1, page 70-71). The reduced number of military settlements were due, in part, to the fact that the Bug Cossacks and the Odessa Greek division were released from service in the 1790s. Both returned to service by 1819.
11 An enormous gymnasium and teacher training college was constructed in Ananiv and served these areas of northern Kherson.
12 Druzhinina, Iuzhnaia Ukraina, p. 69.
more directly exposed to and attached to Russian high culture than others in the Western borderlands of the empire.

*The Polish Right Bank: Indirect rule.*

In the areas that the Russian empire acquired from the partitions of Poland, there was a well-established system of serfdom in place and an extremely powerful Polish landowning class with a coherent sense of corporate identity, the *szlachta.* These areas west of the Dnieper and North of the Kodyma river had in some cases been under the control of the Polish nobility for centuries. Leading up to the partition, the Russian empire had supported these Polish nobles in their struggles with the Polish monarchy, had negotiated separate treaties with them, and initially did nothing to challenge their status when they were incorporated into the Russian empire. The Polish landowners in the newly-acquired territories were given the same rights as Russian nobles within the Russian empire, and were given de facto control over their regions. The language of administration in these regions remained Polish.\(^\text{13}\) The Polish nobility retained control over the schools, the textbooks and curriculum remained as they were before the partition, and education was extended only to their own gentry.\(^\text{14}\) In summary, the empire kept the previous social order intact and ruled indirectly, entirely through the Polish nobility.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{13}\) Aleksei Miller, *The Ukrainian Question*, page 143.


\(^{15}\) Moon, “Inventory Reform,” page 655.
After the first Polish uprising in 1830-31, the Russian imperial government formally changed its approach to the Polish nobility in the Western borderlands. According to Moon:

Following the revolt of 1830-31 the Russian authorities tried to address the 'Polish' and 'peasant' questions simultaneously. They wanted to reduce the power and influence of the unreliable Polish nobility, and to gain the support of the Lithuanian, Belorussian and Ukrainian peasantry, lest they be won over to the Polish national cause. The social and political situation in the western provinces, in particular the disaffection among the Polish nobility, gave Nicholas I and his advisers the opportunity to introduce the type of regulatory reform of serfdom they were contemplating for the empire as a whole. They did not need to worry about alienating the nobility since most Poles were already disaffected. 16

But the Russian imperial government made little headway in uprooting or supplanting the szlachta's dominance in the region. Decrees were signed which were to transfer Polish landholdings to the state as punishment for the rebellion, but for the most part these were never broadly implemented. 17 Through bribery and informal means, the Polish nobles preserved both their landholdings and their

16 Moon, "Inventory Reform," page 655.
17 Moon, “Inventory Reform,” page 655.
local political dominance. The later efforts of the Russian empire to try to mobilize 
the peasants and lower classes to supplant the Polish nobility\textsuperscript{18} were stymied by the 
success of the \textit{szlachta} in blocking the progress of education and social mobilization 
that were so advanced in the New Russian territories and also extending to other 
parts of the empire.\textsuperscript{19} The spread of the \textit{zemstvos} (local peasant self-governance 
institutions) to the Southwestern (Polish) region was achieved only in 1911. And 
since the \textit{zemstvos} were providing for the largest share of the education expenses 
for peasant schools, spending on primary education per capita was three times 
lower in those areas of the Empire where no \textit{zemstvos} were in place.\textsuperscript{20} According to 
Miller, “the assimilation potential of the poor, scattered Russian gentry, with a 
weakly developed corporate spirit, could hardly outweigh the dominance of the age-
old Polish \textit{szlachta}, united by the common cause of resistance to those measures of 
the imperial government that violated the property rights of the Polish 
landowners.”\textsuperscript{21} Peasants in the Polish areas were simply not Russified to nearly the 
same extent.

Moreover, towards the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century the imperial government 
came to be more concerned about the dangers of politicized peasants than its 
disloyal Polish nobility, so even these efforts to mobilize and Russify the peasantry 
to counterbalance Polish influence were abandoned. Strikingly, out of a total of 720

\textsuperscript{18} To some extent the \textit{szlachta} responded in kind, however, fostering the publication of books in 
Ukrainian and cultivating a distinctive Ukrainian identity before such efforts were cut short by the 
\textit{Valuev} circular (censoring Ukrainian books and preventing their use in schools) and the Ems \textit{Ukaz} 
(banning the publication of Ukrainian literature). See Miller, \textit{The Ukrainian Question},
\textsuperscript{19} N. Hans, “Polish schools in Russia 1772-1831,” \textit{Slavonic and East European Review}, Vol. 38, No. 91 
(June 1960), pages 404-405.
\textsuperscript{20} Miller, \textit{The Ukrainian Question}, page 149. Eklof, \textit{Russian Peasant Schools}, p. 89, 94.
\textsuperscript{21} Miller, \textit{The Ukrainian Question}, page 140.
thousand service estates in European Russia, Poles constituted 48%. In summary, the Russian empire initially ruled through the Polish nobility, and Polish nobles continued to use their entrenched power to block efforts to educate, to Russify, and to mobilize their serfs out from under them. As a result, literacy rates were considerably lower in formerly Polish territory and the attachments to Russian identity and culture were relatively weak in the Southwestern Region (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Provinces with Literacy Above 50% in 1917
In Areas With Predominantly Russian Schools
(1939 oblast boundaries)

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22 Miller, *The Ukrainian Question*, page 143.
To sum up, the contrast in colonization strategies and the resultant cultural differences between Novorossija and the Southwestern region could not be starker. In Novorossija we see colonization and direct rule, with the establishment of predominantly military settlement, high upward mobility, and a newly-created Russian elite that fosters a common Russian culture through schools, urbanization and commerce. In the areas of the Russian empire acquired at the same time from Poland, we see a strategy of indirect rule relying on the existing Polish nobility. The landed aristocracy in these areas was able to preserve its dominance and to successfully block Russian imperial efforts to centralize the state and build direct links to the peasantry through education. The population inhabiting the previously Polish imperial lands had limited education, limited attachment to broader Russian culture, and remained largely Ukrainian in its language.23

The causal pathway linking the border to distinctive imperial treatments and the resultant cultural differences is shown in Figure 3 below.

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23 The particular configuration of the triadic relationship between the monarchy, the nobility, and the peasantry appears to have had a significant impact on subsequent national identity among the peasantry. In areas of European Russia where there was a non-Russian nobility—Germans in the Baltic and Poles in the Western borderlands—the nobility blocked Russification of the peasantry. In areas where the nobility was Russian Orthodox—regardless of whether these were newly-created elites as in Novorossija or more established nobility on the Left Bank of the Dnieper river—Russification of the peasantry proceeded with considerably less resistance. On the Northwest territories see Weeks 2001, Thaden (ed.) 1981.
Figure 3
Russian Colonization Strategies and Regional Political Culture

How Consistent and Durable is the Treatment?

There are three areas of concern with the use of this imperial border in a quasi-experimental design. First, it is not clear that the old imperial frontier defines the boundaries of the imperial treatment, since I have not been able to determine how heavily the border region was populated. Maps from the final years of the Polish Commonwealth show the density of roads and settlements growing thinner as one approaches the border region, and as Khodorkovsky has shown in his discussion of Russia’s frontiers in Asia, frontiers could be quite porous. Settlement appears to have concentrated further to the north (the capital of the Polish province was Bratslav, which falls outside of the area of study to the North) and the primary transportation routes run to the cities of Jozefgrod (part of today’s Balta, in Odessa oblast) and Bohopol (part of today’s Pervomaisk, in Mikolaev oblast).24 This

24 The primary Polish military and trading road, the Kuczanski Szlak, passed just to the West of Balta. See W. Faden, “A Map of the Kingdom of Poland and Grand Dutchy [sic] of Lithuania including Samogitia and Curland, Divided according to their dismemberment with the Kingdom of Prussia.” (London: W. Faden, Geographer to the King, 1799). (Note that this map has rather significant inaccuracies in many respects and therefore may not be reliable.)
appears to have remained true during the Russian Empire, as maps of Podolia Guberniya as late as 1900 continue to show the southern reaches of the province to be more thinly populated. It may be the case that the areas closes to the old frontier did not receive as strong an imperial treatment on the Polish side. It is almost certain that the imperial treatment was not homogenous. In this way, measurement at the frontier would be expected to underestimate the imperial effect on the formerly-Polish side, since we can assume the border region received a weaker treatment.

Second, there is no way to reliably estimate the fidelity of the treatment and control groups since there was some movement across the border. This concern is ameliorated somewhat by the fact that mobility was somewhat limited both in the Russian empire and in the Soviet Union, but 220 years is a long time and certainly intermingling and resettlement across the boundary took place. Peasants from the countryside moved into the towns across the course of the 20th century, and sometimes this meant moving across the former imperial frontier. Military settlement continued in the area, which was home to several intercontinental ballistic missile silos during the Cold War. We would expect mobility and migration


26 The story of Balta itself illustrates this problem. The fortified town on the Polish side of the Kodyma was called Jozefgrod and was a private holding, along with all of the territory between the Savran and the Kodyma, of the Polish Count Liubomirski. When the Russian Empire annexed this territory, the military actually purchased Jozefgrod from Liubomirski and renamed the town Elensk. In 1797, by order of Emperor Pavel I, the formerly Ottoman town of Balta (opposite Jozefgrod on the other side of the Kodyma) was absorbed into Elensk and the whole town, now straddling the Kodyma, was named Balta and incorporated into the Podolian guberniya. As a result, we have an area where the Polish nobility was displaced, but within the Podolian guberniya. This means that for Balta, at least, the former imperial border does not demarcate the boundary of the treatment. Bogdan Sushins’kij, Balta: Misto, Osviachene Vichnistiu, istorichni ese. (Odessa: Druk, 2005), pages 94-97.
to diminish evidence of the imperial effect in the areas closest to the former frontier, since the edges would “blur” over time.

Third, unlike the ideal discontinuity design or randomized field experiment, the analysis of the treatment is “retrospective” rather than “prospective,” since the assignment of districts into the two distinct groups took place in the 18th century. The attributes of the two populations are only subsequently homogenized by a set of common historical experiences that do not eradicate the persistent cultural effect of the treatment that is of interest to us. As such, the design is predicated on the idea that the homogenizing experience of Communism combined with contemporary physical proximity standardized many of the underlying conditions that are not directly affected by the “treatment variable”, the imperial legacy. It must be noted, however, that all of the control variables can only be measured post-treatment in this case and their current homogeneity is taken as an assumption for now to be followed up with more careful measurement. In this respect, the design is rather atypical.

Although atypical, a strong case can be made that in this case the assumption is reasonable precisely because Soviet Communism was such an atypically significant historical intervention. The Soviet legacy indeed eradicated differences in all respects except for the culture, which makes the assumption of homogeneity reasonable in this case. Soviet Communism certainly standardized many of the societal features that might have influenced the vote in 2010. In terms of political institutions, settlements on both sides of the Kodyma experienced the same Soviet establishment of single-party rule and the same formal governing institutions.
Agriculture on both sides of the Kodyma was collectivized in the 1930s and privatized and de-collectivized in precisely the same fashion in the 1990s. Both sides of the river had some industrial factories, which were largely non-operative or greatly scaled back by the time elections were held in 2010. At the time of the elections, villages on either side of the Kodyma river were similar to one another in size and layout. Because both sides of the river were in the same oblast (Odessa), they experienced the same oblast-level influences. Within Odessa oblast, the populations were exposed to the same radio and television broadcasts. They shared the same legacy as parts of the Soviet Union and they were not permitted to express many of their differences in the Soviet period. In this way, none of the partisan-reinforcing tendencies reported by Converse, for example, could be expected to operate. In essence, I rely on the standardizing template of Soviet Communism to provide exogenous post-treatment homogeneity in a broad range of potentially relevant causal factors so that we might better identify the effects of the persisting regional cultural differences that stem from the different pre-communist colonial legacies.

Following Jason Wittenberg’s pioneering work on the persistence of political party loyalties in Hungary, we might expect local church institutions to play a particularly important role in preserving pre-Communist traditions. Yet church institutions on both sides of the border were decimated during the early years of the Bolshevik regime. Moreover, because there were sharp restrictions on church

27 Converse 1968.
attendance, with very few exceptions the churches in the region were decommissioned and converted to other functions or, more commonly, were physically destroyed. The large Franciscan monastery in Chechelnik (Vinnitsa oblast), for example, was converted into a gymnasium and then into an automotive repair shop under Communism. Villages on both sides of the border rebuilt new churches following the Communist collapse, but there was no institutional continuity of Church institutions in this part of Ukraine in the way that there was in Hungary or in other areas of Central Europe.

Moreover, the cultural effects of the initial “treatment” would be expected to survive communism. Prior research has shown that differences in national loyalties and other pre-Communist cultural legacies of the type we are discussing here persisted, preserved within families and local communities, despite the experience of Communism and the Soviet state’s success in eradicating them from public life.29 In this respect we might think of the Soviet Communist experience as a powerful sieve in which all public, institutional, and socio-economic features of a society were all caught up, radically transformed, and standardized, but certain private cultural attributes slipped through and were preserved relatively unaltered through the more subtle socializing influences of home and family.

III. Regional Cultures, Political Parties and the 2010 and 2012 Ukrainian Elections

What is the link between these cultural legacies and support for candidates in the 2010 elections? As in previous elections, issues surrounding the place of

Russian culture in Ukrainian life played a central role in the campaign and in differentiating the candidates. The Party of Regions, headed by Viktor Yanukovich, was initially founded on a platform supporting the use of Russian language and of preserving ties to Russian culture. Yulia Timoshenko was not an anti-Russian candidate by any means, but she was associated with the Orange coalition and with a government that continued to pursue Ukrainianization of public life. In interviews conducted in the summer of 2009 prior to the elections, respondents clearly associated Timoshenko with the Orange coalition that came to power following the elections of 2004 and, in Odessa oblast, she was associated with policies like the mandate to dub foreign films into Ukrainian and other divisive cultural policies. In short, cultural issues were salient in the 2010 Presidential elections and again in the 2012 elections, just as they were in the 1994 Presidential elections, the 2002 Parliamentary elections, the 2004 Presidential elections, and the 2006 Parliamentary elections.

In part, cultural issues continue to be salient because the development of the main rival parties, the BYuT (Batkivschina) and POR, took place in a context in which these issues were continued to be the primary means for differentiating the two main political blocs. The differences in the stated economic policies of the two blocs cannot be easily discerned, the continued competition between the parties maintains the salience of the cultural cleavage as a way that they are able to mobilize support. While it is clearly the case that there are different business factions associated with each party and with each presidential candidate, in order to preserve the political power needed to maintain their economic holdings these
business factions need to win elections. Which party or candidate wins in a given polling district appears to be a function of the cultural inclinations of the voter (which is determined by the imperial legacy) and which party is dominant in the oblast (which is also determined by the imperial legacy and the boundary lines of the oblasts).

If this model is capturing an essential feature of Ukrainian elections, then polling districts south of the Kodyma should be more culturally Russophile and inclined to support the candidacy of Viktor Yanukovich and his Party of Regions and polling districts to the North of the Kodyma should be more inclined, *ceteris paribus*, to support the candidacy of Yulia Timoshenko and the Batikivschina (Fatherland) party. The results in favor of this imperial effect are quite positive. Despite the long period of time since the initial (pre-Communist) treatment and the potential for cross-contamination of populations across the initial boundary between Polish and Ottoman territories, we find that the difference in political support in the two formerly imperial territories in substantial. The results are shown below in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Turnout</th>
<th>Yanukovich</th>
<th>Timoshenko</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Polish Territories</strong></td>
<td>69.4%</td>
<td>31.2%</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Russia</strong></td>
<td>62.4%</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1**
Imperial Legacies and Electoral Results in the 2010 Elections
(within a 60km band including northern Odessa and southern Vinnitsa oblasts)
As shown in the table, within this approximately 60km wide strip along the Kodyma river, and dividing the population into the two categories of formerly Polish territories and the formerly-Ottoman areas that became the province of Novorossija, we see a strong association between imperial legacy and voting behavior. In the formerly-Polish areas, Timoshenko beats Yanukovich 2-1. The results are reversed for the areas that were once part of New Russia.

Upon closer observation, it is clear that the strength of these results stems in part from differences in the oblasts into which these districts fall. South of the Kodyma, all of the polling districts fall in Odessa oblast. Immediately north of the Kodyma and up to the Savran river, the districts also fall within Odessa oblast, but this is a fairly narrow strip of land containing only 51 polling districts. The remaining districts north of the Kodyma fall in Vinnitsa oblast, which is dominated by BYuT/Batkivschina.

To eliminate the possibility of oblast-level rather than purely imperial effects, it is useful to control for oblast-level effects by comparing the results for different imperial territories only within Odessa oblast, i.e. the 51 polling districts north of the Kodyma to the 45 closest districts to the South of the Kodyma. The Kodyma in this case also partially splits two raions (Balta and Liubashiv), so even local governance is held constant to a certain extent. In many cases these districts are walking distance apart, with towns occupying opposite sides of the river. Barring any effects of the imperial legacy, we would expect no difference in the electoral behavior of these two groups.
Yet even here we find a significant effect. Both the median and the mean percentage of the vote for Yanukovich in districts within Odessa oblast that are South of the Kodyma river are approximately 10 percentage points higher than those North of the Kodyma.

Table 2
Median Vote Share for Candidates in the 2010 Ukrainian Presidential Elections (second round) within Odessa Oblast, comparing across the 51 polling districts north of the Kodyma to the 45 nearest districts to the South (narrow band)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South of the Kodyma (New Russia)</th>
<th>TURNOUT</th>
<th>Yanukovich</th>
<th>Timoshenko</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63.9%</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North of the Kodyma (Polish)</td>
<td>69.4%</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The effect is certainly not as strong as when we include the polling districts in Vinnitsa oblast, and Yanukovich wins in both districts. Yet the difference is still substantial and Yanukovich actually lost these districts North of the Kodyma in the third round of the 2004 Presidential elections.

2012 Parliamentary Elections

A comparison of the same districts in the 2012 Parliamentary elections shows a similar difference in voting patterns to the north and south of the imperial boundary, even within the narrower band. The 2012 elections, because they were parliamentary elections, also allow vary the institutional framework of the elections. Whereas in the final round of the Presidential elections voters were presented with a simple choice between two candidates, in the Parliamentary elections voters could choose between a broad range of parties in the closed-list proportional
representation system by which half of the deputies were selected. The nation-wide party vote provides a good measure of party preference independent of the electorate’s views of any given candidate and is also in principle less influenced by more local concerns because they were voting for national party lists.

Because voters had multiple parties to choose from rather than an exclusive choice between two candidates, I use the share of the vote garnered by the Party of Regions at each polling station as a basis for comparison. Of the 288 polling stations falling within the 60k band along the Kodyma river, 110 were to the north of the Kodyma (the formerly Polish side) and 178 were to the south (the formerly Ottoman side). As shown in Table 3, the average POR vote share in the districts to the North of the Kodyma was 30.1%, as opposed to 55.1% in the districts to the South. This difference (24 percentage points) is quite large and substantively significant for the outcome of the elections, even if it is not as large as the difference measured within the same band in the presidential elections of 2010 (35 percentage points), perhaps because support also went to other parties (such as the Communists). The POR was the leading party in 50 out of 110 polling stations in the formerly Polish areas (45%) and the leading party in 162 out of 178 of the polling stations in the formerly Ottoman areas (91%).

Table 3
Comparison across former imperial boundary of share of POR vote in the country-wide party list voting in the 2012 Ukrainian Parliamentary Elections (60k band)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average vote for POR</th>
<th>Number of Polling stations</th>
<th>Polling stations in which POR was the leading party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South of the Kodyma</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>162 (91%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To better control for potential oblast-level effects, such as the oblast-level party machines discussed below, we can look at the distribution of the votes within districts that straddle the imperial boundary but fall entirely inside a given oblast. Table 4 shows the results within electoral district 137, in Odessa oblast, and electoral district 132, in Mykolaev oblast. In polling stations north of the imperial boundary in district 137, the POR gained an average of 42.9% of the vote, as opposed to 57.6% in districts to the south of the imperial boundary. The difference in this election is 15%, quite close to the difference we found in the Presidential elections of 2010 (12%) within the same band.

Table 3
Comparison across former imperial boundary of share of POR vote in the country-wide party list voting in the 2012 Ukrainian Parliamentary Elections (within electoral districts 137 and 132)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electoral District 137</th>
<th>South of the Kodyma (New Russia)</th>
<th>North of the Kodyma (Polish)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average vote for POR</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Polling stations</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polling stations in which POR was the leading party</td>
<td>107 (97.3%)</td>
<td>38 (80.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Electoral District 132</th>
<th>South of the Kodyma (New Russia)</th>
<th>North of the Kodyma (Polish)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average vote for POR</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Polling stations</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polling stations in which POR was the leading party</td>
<td>12 (50%)</td>
<td>3 (10.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The upper northwest corner of Mykolaev oblast (Krivoozersky and Vradievsky raions) also straddles the Kodyma river and falls within a single electoral district (#132). There are fewer polling stations in this area (52) than in Odessa oblast, but they are quite close together spatially, making for a tight band across the imperial boundary. Comparing results across polling stations on either side of the imperial boundary within this district yields a difference of 8% in the average POR vote share, which meant that the POR was the leading party in 50% of the polling stations south of the Kodyma and a mere 10.7% of the polling stations to the North.

Party Machines and the Oblast effect

These findings are particularly striking given the close proximity of these districts, our anticipation that the treatment effects might be somewhat weaker right along the former imperial boundary, and, particularly, given the importance of oblast-level factors on the vote. The strength of oblast level effects is clear. In the past decade, both the Party of Regions and BYuT/Batkivschina have developed extensive party organizations at the oblast level. With few exceptions, one candidate not only wins the oblast as a whole, but in every single electoral district (and the vast majority of polling stations) within the oblast. Why might this be the case?

Field interviews that I conducted just prior to the 2010 elections with voters, party strategists and agitators revealed that each of the parties had a hierarchically-organized campaign structure, centered in the regional capital, and linked through a
chain of command to at least one activist (agitator) in every single poling district. At this lowest level, the agitator was responsible for delivering voters to the polls, for distributing materials and persuading voters to support the candidate, and, if necessary, vote-buying (with prices ranging from approximately 4 USD to 10 USD depending on the area, age and profession of the voter). Because the strength and resources of the party organization is concentrated at the oblast level, it meant that the most powerful organization at the oblast level was typically better able to mobilize voters in all districts throughout the oblast. Agitators with the dominant party received higher salaries, had more resources available to them, and the parties were better able to recruit the most talented cadres to work on their behalf. In many ways, the strength of the party organization lay more in its power to draw the most respected local authorities into the ranks of the party than in mobilizing voters to the polls or in buying votes. This was certainly the case for POR in Odessa oblast and for BYuT in Vinnitsa oblast. It would be very surprising if differences in the party organizations alone account for the enormous oblast-level differences, but this is certainly part of the explanation.

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30 The resources available for vote-buying were simply too small to be able to account for the sizable oblast-level differences in voting. According to interviews with one POR agitator speaking about the 2004 elections, each agitator responsible for a polling district (village) was given 1200 hryvnia (at the time, approximately $300) for the campaign. This was to cover their personal salary as well as the resources to be allocated to purchase the support of voters. Votes cost approximately 40 hryvnia. With such limited funds, the agitators were unable to buy a substantial enough portion of the electorate to account for the differences across oblasts.

31 I am not speaking here of the use of so-called “administrative resources” to influence the election outcomes, i.e. the use of the apparatus of the state administration to campaign and apply pressure on behalf of a candidate or party. The use of administrative resources has declined considerably in Ukrainian elections following the elections of 2004.

32 Nor does the boundary between Vinnitsa oblast and Odessa oblast does not demarcate a sharp linguistic boundary. While it is true that there are more Russians in the raions on the Odessa side of the Odessa Vinnitsa border (approximately 5-6% of those raions, as opposed to 1-3% on the
Yet party strength at the oblast level cannot be easily separated from the regional cultures and the imperial legacy. The initial strength of the party organizations at the oblast level was itself likely a function of the consistency of the Party platform with the general cultural orientation of the majority of voters in that oblast. Given that regional oligarchs wish to be associated with the winning party, and the winning party is the one whose appeals already resonate with voters (hence requiring fewer vote-buying resources), these trends lead to strong pressures towards the dominance of one party at the oblast level. One can see this in the electoral results. There are very few oblasts where one party or candidate does not win all of the electoral districts within an oblast, and in which one party/candidate does not win by a large margin. The initial cultural orientation of the population appears to have determined which party would be dominant in a given province, but this has meant that the party machines subsequently have additional resources and can extend and expand their dominance.

VI. Conclusions and Implications

How best to interpret these findings? The data suggest a strong link between Russian imperial policies, contemporary cultural differences, and patterns of voting in Ukraine. Voting largely cleaves along former imperial lines. Even when we only examine polling districts within Odessa oblast, there are substantial and significant differences between the results of districts depending on whether they fell within Vinnitsa side), these minor differences are so dwarfed by the differences in voting behavior that they are unlikely to account for much of it, if any at all.
the territory that was once called “New Russia” and the formerly Polish areas of the Russian empire. But why?

I have suggested one possible process that might be driving this effect, i.e. that the regional electoral cleavage reflects a cultural cleavage, and that this cultural cleavage can ultimately be traced to different strategies of incorporation initially pursued by the Russian empire in the 18th Century and carried through the development of these regions in the 19th and early 20th Centuries. North of the Kodyma, the local nobility empowered by indirect rule was more interested in creating impediments to peasant power and peasant education. As a result, peasants in areas where the Polish szlachta retained local power were more likely to be educated only after the Bolshevik revolution, during a period of “nativization” that would imbue them with Ukrainian rather than Russian culture. The opposite was true in the formerly Ottoman areas, where a new Russian elite was created following the annexation, one that fostered rapid development in education, urbanization, and the spread of Russian culture and loyalties. In this way, the specific mechanism that I have suggested linking the imperial past with the electoral present draws on my previous research linking schooling with the development of regional cultures, and which suggests that such cultural differences are preserved

33 Yuri Slezkine, “The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism,” Slavic Review 53, 2 (Summer 1994), 414-452. Terry Martin, Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). Provincial officials interviewed along the study area mentioned that Party communications within Vinnitsa oblast, for example, were always in Ukrainian whereas they were typically in Russian in Odessa oblast. Terry Martin’s work also suggests that there was resistance to korenizatsia and the forced use of Ukrainian met considerable resistance in the more developed southern and urban parts of the Ukrainian SSR. I suspect that further research would bear out the argument that regional cultural differences persisted under Communism, and that a strong attachment to Russian identity and culture persisted in the areas of New Russia even under Communism.
despite the many changes that take place under Soviet rule. The argument about imperial legacies presented here just deepens that causal chain to show the colonial origins of differences in how peasants were educated.

The explanation that I have provided here is consistent with the available data, but it certainly does not exclude the possibility of alternative processes and accounts. Precisely what is generating the imperial effect, however, demands further research. Given the spatial discontinuity research design employed here, we cannot know which imperial experiences might be driving the contemporary differences (only that the imperial legacy—taken as a whole—appears to have a significant effect).

There were many differences between the (formerly Polish) Podolian governorship and the “New Russian” province of Kherson within the Russian empire. The latter was populated almost entirely by migrants. Even as late as the 1897 census approximately half of the population of the province had not been born in the province. Its nobility was Russian and the territory had, for the most part, never known serfdom. This is contrast to the Polish-dominated, less urbanized, less educated, and deeply enserfed population of Podolia. Given the complexity of the differences between these two imperial provinces, we have difficulty identifying precisely which imperial “treatment” might be driving the effect. Further research is needed to determine whether other mechanisms might be at work, and also to determine whether there were similar mechanisms at work in other areas of Ukraine (Poltava oblast, for example).
Nonetheless, the findings presented here are useful in directing our attention to the imperial and largely cultural sources of the contemporary electoral variation. They suggest that empires leave cultural footprints that have significant implications for explaining contemporary voting in ways unanticipated in most models of electoral behavior, and which significantly impact both the domestic political cleavages and international relations of the countries in question.