

# Cultural Legacies: Persistence and Transmission

Leonid Peisakhin

## 1 Introduction

The armed conflict in Ukraine, both a civil and interstate war, was threatening to reignite at the time of this volume going to press. This conflict marked the lowest point in relations between Russia and the West since the Soviet collapse in 1991 and, for a time, was poised to transform into a major ground war in Europe. At the heart of the conflict, and of violent regime change that preceded military hostilities and ousted Ukraine's president Viktor Yanukovich from office, lay a fundamental disagreement among the residents of Ukraine over their country's political, economic, and cultural trajectory. In mid-2013, before violent anti-government protests engulfed Ukraine, 42 % of Ukrainians favored closer relations with Europe, while 31 % believed that their country would be better off in Russia-led Customs Union.<sup>1</sup> This division over Ukraine's civilizational choice was starkly regional: western regions favored the European Union, while the east and south preferred a future with Russia. Likewise, Western Ukrainians were the ones who fueled and sustained the Maidan protest movement of 2013–2014 in its early days. Today, Ukraine finds itself split geographically along what until 1917/1918 used to be the border between the Austrian Empire and Russian Empire. Similar divisions that map onto substantial contemporary differences in voting behavior are found elsewhere in Eastern and Central Europe, notably in Poland, Romania, and the Balkans where the historical

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<sup>1</sup>Public opinion data reported by Razumkov Center in April 2013: <http://www.uceps.org/eng/socpolls.php>.

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identity-forming institutions of Prussia, Austria, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire have all left their mark. In this chapter, I demonstrate that legacies of imperial rule persist into the present in the form of political attitudes and behavior. I also explore the mechanisms behind such persistence.

That historical institutions leave a lasting institutional legacy is largely uncontroversial. This insight is at the core of historical institutionalism. Thus, we know that societies that had historically high levels of economic inequality are highly unequal today (Engerman and Sokoloff 1997), that those colonies that had been denied most advanced democratic institutions because they were inhospitable to European settlers are especially undemocratic and underdeveloped (Acemoglu et al. 2001; Easterly and Levine 2003), and that colonial patterns of labor coercion and landholding have shaped contemporary levels of inequality and development (Banerjee and Iyer 2005). In all of these instances, colonial-era institutions have persisted into the present via path dependence. What happens then when historical institutions are swept away as a result of a revolution, economic crisis, or some other major rapture of the kind that appear to characterize the development of the modern state?

There is an emerging consensus in political science and economics that historical institutions leave lasting cultural legacies and therefore influence attitudes and behavior in ways other than path-dependent persistence of formal institutions. Darden and Grzymala-Busse (2006) have demonstrated that imperial-era schooling explains much of the variation in resistance to Soviet rule in Eastern Europe, and Darden (*in press*) developed this argument further in a study of the micro-foundations of resistance in different Austrian provinces within Western Ukraine. Wittenberg (2006) has shown that pre-Communist political preferences can survive the institutional upheaval brought about by Communist rule, whereas Alesina and Fuchs-Schuendeln (2007) and Pop-Eleches and Tucker (*in press*) have argued that Communist-era attitudes have survived into the post-Communist period. In an argument that takes in a longer sweep of history, Nunn and Wantchekon (2011) have sought to demonstrate that the long-defunct institution of slavery has left a lasting mark on trust levels in areas where slavers had been active historically. This fledgling literature suggests that material interests and path-dependent institutions are not the only causes of variation in contemporary political and economic attitudes and behaviors. Cultural legacy explanations ought to be considered seriously alongside more conventional explanations for variation in political and economic outcomes.

My work contributes to the literature on cultural legacies of historical institutions. Two biggest impediments to rigorous scholarship in this area are the difficulty of credibly connecting distant historical causes to contemporary outcomes and the complexity of tracing transmission mechanisms behind persistent attitudes and behaviors. In this chapter I try to tackle both of these problems by drawing on a natural experiment of history. In a rather haphazard process that resulted in partition of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in the late eighteenth century, a homogenous population of Ukrainians became as-if-randomly divided between the Austrian Empire and Russian Empire; this population then came together under

Soviet rule in 1939. In a representative survey of individuals residing within 15 miles (25 km) either side of the defunct Austrian–Russian imperial border, I find that those who live in former Russian settlements are by 21–28 percentage points more likely to favor closer relations with Russia and support an interpretation of recent Ukrainian history that is more favorable toward Russia. This cleavage also translates into sizeable differences in voting behavior. I then draw on a survey of elderly respondents to demonstrate how families embedded in tightly knit like-minded communities on the formerly Austrian side of the border transmitted anti-Russian attitudes and how schools on the formerly Russian side were pivotal to transmission of pro-Russian attitudes. I find that families fail at transmission if attitudes and political behaviors that they attempt to instill in offspring are contrary to dominant community views. In addition, I demonstrate how state institutions like schools can be coopted by local elites and, as a result, rendered ineffectual at publicizing state-sponsored ideology.

This chapter is a brief summary of a much larger project, originally a doctoral dissertation and now a book manuscript. It is impossible to fit all the important information into what is a very limited space. This chapter opens with a discussion of hypotheses that I propose to test and a brief description of the natural experiment of history that gave rise to my research design. I then present results from two different surveys: a 2007 representative survey that explores variation in political attitudes and behaviors in settlements situated to either side of the defunct imperial border and a 2012 survey of elderly respondents designed to explore transmission mechanisms. I conclude with a brief discussion of the significance of these findings. There is much more to this project than what I could fit in this chapter; the reader is invited to consult my other work for more substantive detail and context.

## 2 Theory

At the root of my argument is the idea that certain types of political attitudes and behaviors—those that define one’s group or community—are highly durable and are capable of persistence even in adverse institutional environments. This idea is far from uncontroversial. The dominant view in political science (e.g., Zaller 1992) is that political attitudes are easily malleable, and even the most independent-minded and stubborn individuals alter their views regularly under the barrage of conflicting information, countervailing moral messages, and changing material incentives. Contrary to that established view is the argument that some sets of attitudes—partisan and religious identities, self-placement on a liberal-conservative ideological continuum—are highly stable and often persist across generations within the same family (Hyman 1959; Jennings and Niemi 1974; Zuckerman et al. 2007; Bengtson et al. 2009). Existing observational work on persistence of political attitudes is subject to one obvious and deadly criticism: namely, that authors in this tradition are unable to fully control for similarities in environmental factors between parents and offspring. Thus, it is argued that what transpires on the surface as transmission

of dominant political attitudes across generations is in fact independent response of family members to highly similar material and moral circumstances. The quasi-experimental nature of this project, which approximates random assignment of individuals to different treatments, allows me to get around this difficulty by keeping variation in background material conditions to a minimum. I am therefore able to advance the following hypothesis:

H1: If residents of settlements situated on different sides of the long-defunct Austrian-Russian imperial border exhibit different attitudes and behaviors today, then that must be evidence that such attitudes and behaviors can persist across multiple generations.

In much observational research on persistence of political attitudes and behavior, while offspring are shown to be somewhat similar to their parents, younger and older generations are almost never identical (Niemi and Hepburn 1995). This disparity between younger and older respondents gives further credence to the idea that what creates similarities in attitudes across generations is not persistence of norms of behavior or attitudes rooted in group identity but similarities in material conditions across generations. Therefore, a strong test of the persistence hypothesis would seek to establish that attitudes and behaviors are identical across different generations. This gives rise to the following hypothesis:

H2: If younger and older respondents are identical in their attitudes and behavior, then there is strong support for the persistence hypothesis.

Our knowledge about the processes by which transmission of political attitudes and behavior takes place is far from complete. For one, there are no existing empirical studies on this issue in the scholarship on the legacy of imperial and colonial rule. The literature that does exist on transmission of political and religious identities (Westholm and Niemi 1992; Jennings et al. 2009) suggests that families are crucial to these processes. This proposition makes especially good sense in a postcolonial context where most preceding formal institutions had been swept away and a sense of continuity with the previous period can, presumably, be maintained only informally within families and local communities. Therefore, drawing on the literature on political socialization, I am able to formulate the following hypothesis:

H3: If there is evidence of persistence of historically rooted political identities, then families likely play an important role in the transmission process.

Just as families struggle to maintain and transmit locally dominant and historically rooted political attitudes, state-sponsored schools in the postcolonial period will seek to destroy historical political identities and replace them with more contemporary state-sponsored political identities. Thus, in settings where historical political identities conflict with contemporary state-sponsored ones, the family and the school will struggle against one another for control over the hearts and minds of the young. This theoretical proposition gives rise to the fourth and final hypothesis, which is focused on the role of schools in the transmission process:

H4: If there is evidence of persistence and transmission of contemporary state-sponsored political identities, then state schools likely play an important role in that process.

### 3 Natural Experiment of History

An ideal test of a cultural legacies theory must control for variation on all variables other than conditions that originally gave rise to differences in culture. This is important because arguments seeking to demonstrate cultural differences are frequently subject to omitted variable bias (Almond and Verba 1963; Putnam 1993). My work draws on a natural experiment of history that keeps constant variation on most factors that are not directly relevant to formation and persistence of political attitudes and behavior. Experiments are premised on the idea of random assignment of individuals to treatment and control or to different treatments. Natural experiments are historical occurrences, where the scholar observes aftereffects of a supposed random assignment without ever exercising direct control over the assignment process itself. Thus, natural experiments are by necessity quasi-experimental; whether the scientific definition of an experiment is met is a product of how closely exposure to historical treatments approximates true random assignment (Dunning 2012).

My work explores how the division of a homogenous Ukrainian population between the Austrian Empire and Russian Empire for almost 150 years has affected political attitudes and behavior in the regions that were subject to divergent imperial treatments. The area that is today Western Ukraine came to be divided between Austria and Russia in 1772–1793. The partition occurred as part of a broader dismemberment of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, medieval Europe’s largest state by landmass, between Europe’s dominant powers of the late eighteenth century—the Kingdom of Prussia, Austrian Empire, and Russian Empire. Prior to the partitions, the swathe of territory under study had been part of Poland and Lithuania since the mid-1300s. This area was predominantly agricultural and populated largely by ethnic Ukrainians, with substantial Polish and Jewish minorities in towns. From the perspective of a Ukrainian peasant, the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth was a premodern state; local government was firmly in the hands of landowners, and institutions of the central government were distant and irrelevant. Modernity erupted on this pastoral scene with the arrival of empires. For one-and-a-half centuries that followed, imperial authorities tried to fashion a conscious political subject out of a backward Ukrainian peasant. Collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917 and of Austria in 1918 ushered in the chaos of the interwar period and the horror of the Second World War. Then, in 1944, the population that had been one prior to 1772 was reunited once again, this time under the auspices of the Soviet Union. Soviet authorities zealously destroyed all vestiges of imperial institutions and introduced new systems of property rights and class relations. What I seek to show, though, is that some political attitudes and behaviors—specifically, those central to pre-Soviet group identities—survived and flourished through the Soviet period and into the present.

The process by which the area under study (Fig. 1) came to be divided between the Austrian Empire and Russian Empire was as close as conceivable to random in the domain of interstate politics. Historians concur that post-partition borders did not



**Fig. 1** Russian–Austrian imperial borderlands, late eighteenth–early twentieth century

correspond to any preexisting historical, ethnic, religious, or economic boundaries (Wandycz 1974; Lukowski 1999). In fact, the Austrian–Russian border was drawn up with such little regard for conditions on the ground that a segment of the frontier was drawn along a river (Podgorze) that existed only in the mind of the mapmaker. When Austrian troops arrived on the scene in search of the phantasm river, they kept moving eastward until they found an actual river (Zbruch), which then became the de facto Austrian–Russian border. As a result, a stretch of Russian territory 150 miles long and 50 miles wide found itself under Austrian control.

Assignment of individuals to Austrian and Russian zones appears to satisfy the randomness criterion. The treatment that produced persistent cultural effects took the form of state-sponsored identity construction projects aimed at instilling loyalty in the Ukrainian population. The two empires faced identical security threats in their borderlands: internal risk of secessionism from local Polish elites and external threat emanating from an aggressive and expansionist regional hegemon on the other side of the border. Loyalty of ethnic Ukrainians, the majority population in this area, became a crucial security issue. It was a matter of utmost importance, therefore, to ensure that this population was positively predisposed toward its imperial overlord. The Austrian Empire and Russian Empire went about that task in diametrically different ways, in large degree due to differences in state capacity. Where Vienna strove to create an active independentist national Ukrainian movement as a counterweight to Polish and Russian encroachment, St. Petersburg chose instead to isolate ethnic Ukrainians from all institutional influences (for fear that these institutions would be captured locally by secessionist Poles) in the hope that bonds of common religion would bind Ukrainians (Little Russians, as they

were known in the Russian Empire) to their Greater Russian brethren. Ukrainians of the Austrian Empire were therefore subject to the full onslaught of modernity—state-sponsored churches and schools, periodicals, and political parties—already in the mid-nineteenth century. By contrast, those same institutions did not arrive into Russian Ukraine until the interwar period (Wandycz 1974; Magosci 1996).

As a result, by the turn of the twentieth century, Ukrainians of the Austrian Empire were demanding autonomous status for their region. When the Austrian Empire collapsed in 1918, its Ukrainian subjects were quick to seize on the opportunity to proclaim an independent Western Ukrainian Republic. The Ukrainian nationalist movement lived on in the former Austrian borderlands even as the Western Ukrainian Republic fell to advancing Polish troops. Ukrainian nationalists organized an effective boycott of the 1922 Polish general election followed by a campaign of violence against Polish officials. When the Soviet threat arrived at the partition of Poland in 1939, Ukrainian nationalists for a time sided with Nazis in the hope that Nazi Germany would tolerate independent Ukraine (Magosci 1996). When Soviets finally prevailed over Nazi Germany in 1944, Ukrainian nationalists continued to fight a covert war against Soviet authorities in former Austrian borderlands for another 7 years. In short, by 1900 self-recognition as an independent national and political group and desire for statehood became an integral part of group identity for Ukrainian residents of Austrian borderlands.

In 1900, Ukrainians of Russian borderlands were just beginning to discover modern institutions. Elected local assemblies and schooling came to Ukrainian territories in the Russian Empire only starting in 1911 (Weeks 2008). And even then, the use of Ukrainian vernacular in schools and in print had been explicitly outlawed in 1875. No surprise then that in the first-ever elections in the Russian Empire, in 1905, no political party in Ukraine even proposed special status for Ukraine (Magosci 1996). When Soviet authorities became established in the former Russian imperial territories in Ukraine in the 1920s, they simply took over the Russian imperial policy of what effectively amounted to forced Russification. This time, though, the state came equipped with the full institutional machinery necessary for identity construction: literacy schools for adults alongside a comprehensive education system for youth, printing presses and railroads, collective farms, and Communist party cells. Under the guise of nominal advancement of the Ukrainian language and folklore, the Bolshevik state promoted pro-Russian and pro-Communist attitudes (Martin 2001). As a result, the independentist streak never took root among Ukrainians residing in former Russian borderlands. This population had been socialized into pro-Russian and pro-Soviet attitudes.

The nature and substance of historical identity-building processes in Ukrainian borderlands gives rise to the expectation that Ukrainians residing to either side of the defunct imperial border today must differ in their attitudes toward Ukrainian statehood and, most importantly, toward Russia, an obvious external aggressor. That is precisely what I will seek to establish in the section that follows. As an aside, it bears highlighting that whatever treatment effects I find, these will likely be underestimated. In the interest of space and simplicity, I skipped over the fact that imperial borderlands are made up of several different regions: Galicia and

Bukovina on the Austrian side and Podolia and Volhynia on the Russian. In the interwar period the formerly Russian region of Volhynia fell under Polish control. During that time in a policy known as the Volhynia Experiment, the Polish state made efforts to instill an anti-Russian independentist identity among the Ukrainian residents of Volhynia (Snyder 2005). The presence of that interwar anti-Russian policy in interwar Volhynia drives down the overall pro-Russian effect of identity-building policies in former Russian territories.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 *Measurement Strategy*

In order to measure contemporary differences between populations residing to either side of the defunct Austrian–Russian imperial border, I surveyed individuals who live in settlements that are situated within 15 miles/25 km of the historical border. I focus on such a narrow band of settlements in order to be able to precisely estimate the effect of imperial legacies while controlling for variation on other factors that might cause differences in political attitudes and behavior (structure of the economy, design of local institutions, etc.). Given that the survey zone is rural and agricultural along the whole of its breadth and width and that local institutions do not vary because Ukraine is a unitary state with a standardized system of local government across all provinces, I am confident that background conditions are held constant. The further one moves away from the historical border, the greater the regional differences between populations. At Ukraine’s extremes, westernmost provinces bordering on Poland are completely different from easternmost regions that abut on Russia. But that is hardly surprising given that ethnic Russians reside mostly in Eastern Ukraine and that that is where the country’s heavy industry is concentrated. In other words, a regional comparison is not a useful analytical strategy for disentangling the effect of historical institutions, because too many alternative variables compete with the historical explanation. By contrast, controlled micro comparison is a much more promising analytical strategy, even if it inevitably raises concerns related to external validity of the findings.

All in all, 1,675 respondents were surveyed in 232 villages and 15 small towns in the spring and summer of 2009: using the population-proportionate-to-size (PPS) method, I randomly picked 121 and 126 settlements on the Austrian and Russian sides, respectively, to be included in the sample. The sample that I analyze is therefore representative of the population that resides in the immediate vicinity of the defunct imperial border. The second set of analyses that explores transmission dynamics draws on a follow-up survey conducted in 2012 among 813 respondents over 70 years of age in 81 settlements. The follow-up survey therefore is based on a representative sample of older people who reside in the former imperial borderlands. The reason that I limited the sample to older people in that instance



is because for identity transmission analyses it was especially important to explore how individuals resisted early and particularly intense Soviet efforts at dismantling preceding historical identities and replacing them with the new Communist political identity.

4.2 Balance Tests

My research design is premised on the assumption that individuals who reside to either side of the defunct imperial border are indistinguishable from one another but for the fact that their ancestors had lived under different empires. Balance tests reported in Table 1 bear out this assumption. On basic demographic covariates like education, income, and ethnicity—all of these are standard explanatory variables in research on attitudes and behavior—the populations of former Austrian and Russian borderlands are statistically identical. This lends credence to my research strategy and suggests that any existing differences in political attitudes and behavior must be due to factors other than standard explanations for variance in attitudes. Older respondents residing to either side of the defunct imperial frontier are also statistically indistinguishable from one another on standard demographic covariates. I do not present balance tests for older respondents in this instance to save space.

One obvious concern with this research design, given that it covers such a broad span of time, has to do with population mobility. If people who reside in these settlements today are different from the population that had been settled in the imperial borderlands historically, then it would be difficult to trace persistence of local historical identities. Potential concerns about population transfers across the former imperial border are further exacerbated in this instance because the two world wars wreaked havoc on Ukraine and, more simply, because I study settlements that are located within such easy proximity of one another that, presumably,

Table 1 Balance test

	Austrian area	Russian area	Magnitude of differences
Self-identify as Ukrainian (%)	0.94 (0.01)	0.94 (0.01)	0.00
Income <sup>a</sup> (five-point scale)	2.80 (0.03)	2.79 (0.03)	0.01
Education (years)	6.44 (0.09)	6.27 (0.09)	0.17
Age (years)	50 (0.64)	49 (0.64)	0.50
Reside in villages (%)	0.76 (0.01)	0.70 (0.02)	0.06**
<i>Depth of local roots</i>			
Reside in settlement of birth (%)	0.60 (0.02)	0.60 (0.02)	0.00
Family roots in province for over 100 years (%)	0.65 (0.02)	0.76 (0.02)	0.11**
N	830	845	1,675

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

<sup>a</sup>Income is measured on a five-point scale where 1 is the lowest level and 5 the highest

population exchanges between them should be common. To address these concerns I examine two measures of population stability toward the bottom of Table 1. Data indicate that the two populations are highly stable and, more importantly, have deep historical roots in their respective regions. Sixty percent of respondents in both areas were born in the settlement where they currently reside. Over 65 % can trace their family’s roots at least 100 years back in a province on the “correct” side of the defunct imperial border. Former Austrian settlements experienced more population movement than the Russian simply because that is where Ukrainians being transferred from Poland were settled at the conclusion of World War II. More anecdotally, the defunct imperial border is still very much alive in the mental geography of local residents. For instance, over the course of fieldwork, I learnt that first intermarriages across the former imperial frontier did not take place until the 1980s. Today, even teenagers can pinpoint the exact location of the former imperial boundary, even though no material markers have delineated that line for almost 100 years.

4.3 Results

I have hypothesized that those Ukrainians who reside in former Austrian settlements are likely to be more hostile toward Russia than their immediate neighbors who live in former Russian territory. This hypothesized difference is due to the fact that Ukrainians in the Austrian Empire developed a distinctive political identity already in the late nineteenth century and would therefore be more resistant to perceived colonial encroachment by any power, including Russia. To test for this difference I turn to a survey question that asked respondents to state whether they perceive Ukraine’s future to lie with Russia and the Russia-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States, a regional bloc that brings together former Soviet countries.

The key difference between Austrian and Russian historical strata is reported in Table 2. Although the dependent variable is binary, here I use a linear probability model (LPM), equivalent to ordinary least squares, for simplicity of interpretation; direction and magnitude of effects are consistent across binary specification and LPM estimations. Because the samples were unbalanced on proportion of village residents and strength of local roots, I include these two variables as controls

Table 2 Explaining attitudes toward Russia

Former Austrian territory	−0.29** (0.04)
Village resident	−0.05 (0.06)
Family roots in province over 100 years	−0.11** (0.03)
Constant	0.64** (0.06)
N	1,444
R <sup>2</sup>	0.09

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

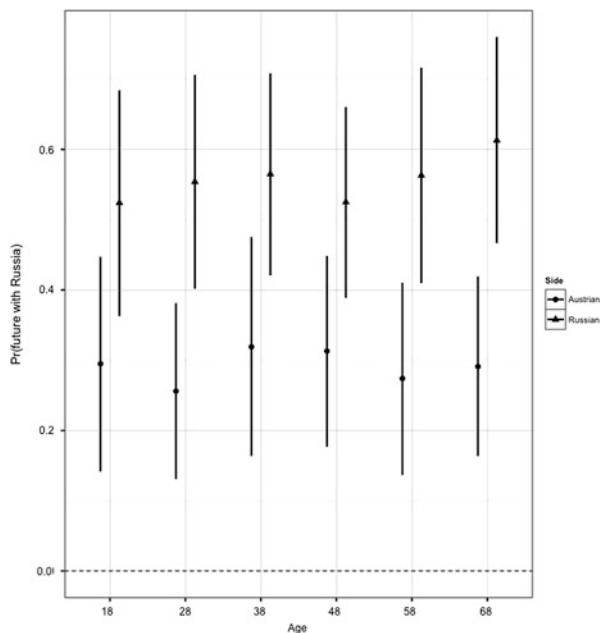
alongside the key independent variable, which is a binary variable that takes on the value of “1” for residents of formerly Austrian settlements. Support for pro-Russian orientation among town dwellers with no historical connection to the region is the constant. Those respondents who reside in former Austrian territory are 29 percentage points less likely to support pro-Russian orientation than their immediate neighbors in former Russian settlements. This is a very substantial effect given that this is the magnitude of differences between two populations that reside only within 30 miles of one another and that have been living under the same set of political and educational institutions for 70 years. Notably, on the Russian side of the defunct border, the majority favors closer relations with Russia. On the Austrian side, barely a quarter of the population takes this view. In addition, it would seem that those with deeper local roots are more opposed to Russia, as is evidence by the fact that the variable measuring local rootedness is sizeable and statistically significant. Those who are more rooted are consistently more anti-Russian for the reason that many relative newcomers to the region are from Eastern Ukraine where pro-Russian attitudes are generally stronger than in the west.

While I only report evidence from a single survey question here—the primary question that concerns attitudes toward Russia—across a whole array of related measures, the population of former Austrian settlements is consistently more anti-Russian. The anti-Russian effect persists in the assessment of recent Soviet past and also translates into differences in voting behavior. In the 2007 parliamentary election, respondents in former Austrian areas were more likely to vote for Our Ukraine. That political party was then led by the winner of the Orange Revolution Viktor Yushchenko. In the 2012 parliamentary election, formerly Austrian settlements were more likely to support the nationalist Svoboda party. Svoboda came to play a key organizational role in the Euromaidan protests of 2013/2014.

It is clear that Ukrainians residing to either side of the defunct Austrian–Russian imperial border hold different political identities and that these identities are consistent with historical treatments that the two populations were subject to. Yet, for this variation to serve as evidence of divergent historical legacies, I would need to demonstrate that differences in attitudes and behavior are consistent across age cohorts. Absence of such consistency might mean that differences are being driven by the elderly who had direct exposure to original treatments. If only the elderly are responsible for all the variation on the dependent variable, then that would mean that historical treatments had no lasting influence on populations under study and therefore did not produce something amounting to a historical legacy.

To explore the variation in attitudes toward Russia across age cohorts, I divided the survey population into six age cohorts. Cohorts aggregate individuals at 10-year intervals; the first cohort begins at 18, and the last ends at 77. On average, there are 130 individuals in every cohort. I then ran a probit regression to predict the likelihood of thinking of Russia in positive light (same dependent variable as in Table 2); that analysis includes the key historical independent variable (Austrian

**Fig. 2** Marginal effect of age on the likelihood of support for Russia



or Russian borderland) alongside all six age cohorts and standard controls.<sup>2</sup> To explore how attitudes toward Russia vary by age and location I plotted marginal effects of age within each borderland with controls set to their means. Results are presented in Fig. 2. Attitudes toward Russia are completely stable across all age groups and are consistently different on either side of the defunct border. Those who live in former Austrian settlements are consistently anti-Russian irrespective of age, whereas respondents in former Russian settlements are consistently more pro-Russian. None of the differences across cohorts are statistically significant within each borderland, and all differences between cohorts are statistically significant when former Austrian territory is compared to former Russian territory. In other words, the strength of anti-Russian attitudes does not diminish overtime in former Austrian settlements; the legacy of an independentist political identity lives on. Likewise, former Russian territories remain consistently pro-Russian.

An obvious question to ask then is how political attitudes and behavior are transmitted across generations. This is an especially important question in the context of Ukraine given that the Soviet state made a concerted effort to erase all previous political identities in an attempt to forge the Soviet man. Mechanisms of attitude transmissions are a notoriously difficult subject (e.g., Jennings et al. 2009), and here my findings are perforce tentative. An additional difficulty arises from the fact that my evidence on transmission of attitudes and behavior comes from a

<sup>2</sup>Results not reported in the interest of space and available on request from the author.

survey of a single generation of respondents, who were asked to recall information about their parents and think back to formative childhood events. Faced with logistic limitations I chose to focus on respondents over 70, who had directly experienced early Sovietization. While this strategy yields interesting information about pivotal historical events, it also introduces a great deal of measurement error into my analyses, simply because respondents were not always able to recall information correctly.

In terms of its institutional landscape, the Ukrainian village is quite a straightforward place. Families are the basic building blocks of village social life; in the domain of formal institutions, there are schools, churches, and occasionally community economic institutions or cells of political parties. One or several of these structures must perforce be responsible for transmission of political identities. Given that the Soviet Union was a single-party state with collective property ownership and that both the party and the collective farm were obviously hostile to pre-Soviet political identities, it is safe to conclude that political parties and economic institutions could not have ensured transmission of pre-Soviet political attitudes. In this chapter, I focus on families and schools and leave the complicated role that churches played in attitude transmission to a book-length treatment of this project. The first thing to note is that families were different on opposite sides of the defunct imperial frontier. As can be seen in Table 3, respondents’ parents were considerably more pro-Soviet in former Russian settlements. Parents are vital to children’s political socialization (Jennings and Niemi 1968), and it is clear that parents transmitted predominantly anti-Russian political values in former Austrian settlements and predominantly pro-Russian values in former Russian settlements. In addition, the structure of authority was also different on opposite sides of the border. Children raised in the former Austrian area were 21 percentage points more likely to look up to their relatives as role models. On the formerly Russian side, children were 20 percentage points more likely to follow the example of their teachers. In other words, the school was a much more important institution of political socialization in former Russian areas.

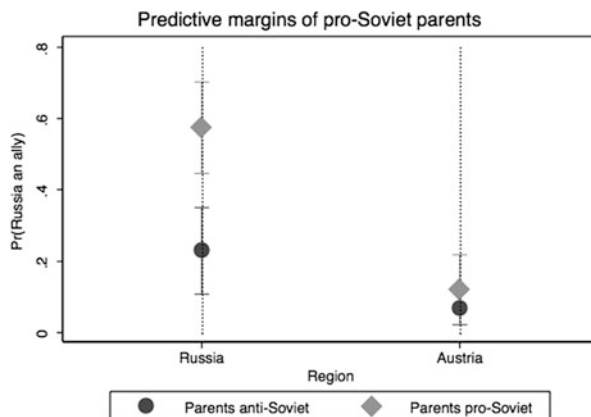
How well do the competing transmission mechanisms perform in a regression framework? To answer this question I ran a probit regression to predict the likelihood that a respondent will think of Russia as Ukraine’s ally—a related dependent variable to one presented in preceding paragraphs. The regression

**Table 3** Differences in transmission mechanisms

	Austrian area	Russian area	Magnitude of differences
Parents liked the Soviet regime	0.22	0.53	0.31**
Relative was a role model in childhood	0.67	0.46	0.21**
Teacher was a role model in childhood	0.10	0.30	0.20**
N	410	402	

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

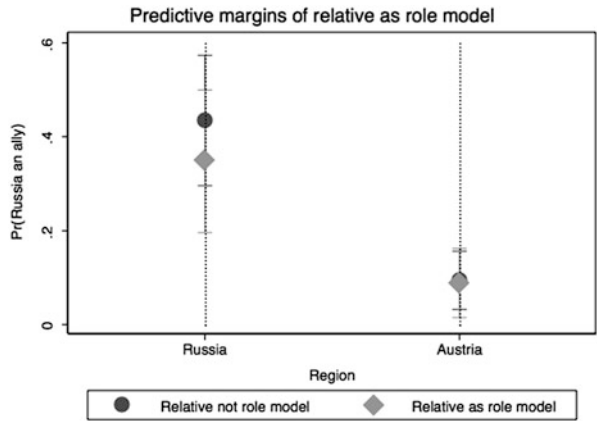
**Fig. 3** Predictive margins of pro-Soviet parents



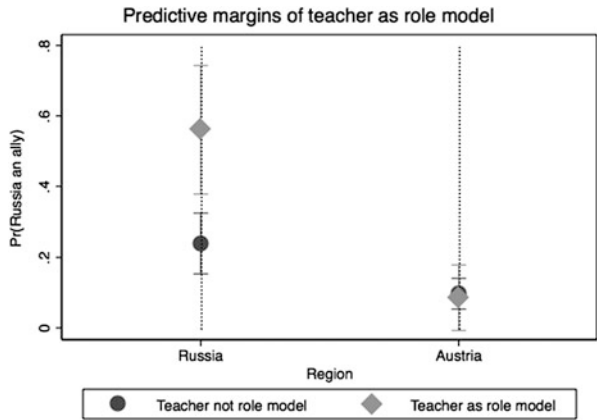
includes a binary variable for imperial borderland and three mechanism variables described in Table 3 alongside standard controls. For ease of interpretation I report the results in the form of marginal effects graphs, where I examine how a respondent's attitude toward Russia changes depending on whether the relevant transmission mechanism was active or not. Whiskers denote 95 % confidence intervals that tell us whether the coefficient is statistically different from zero. Figure 3 demonstrates that parents were important to attitude transmission: those respondents whose parents were pro-Soviet (gray rhomboid) are more likely to think positively of Russia today when compared to respondents whose parents were anti-Soviet (black circle). Differences between these two groups are statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$  in both historical border regions; however, the magnitude of the difference is much greater in former Russian settlements (34 percentage points) than in former Austrian villages (5 percentage points). It seems that in former Austrian borderlands something is dampening the influence of pro-Soviet parents. In the next section, I will hypothesize that that something is the effect of dominant anti-Russian community norms. All in all though, this set of results provides proof for the proposition that families play a crucial role in the transmission of historical political identities.

The next two sets of findings—on the role of relatives and teachers in identity transmission (Figs. 4 and 5 respectively)—ought to be considered side by side. In the Austrian region, respondents are likely to adopt equally anti-Russian attitudes irrespective of whether they held up relatives or teachers as role models in childhood. That those who did not look up to relatives are not more pro-Russian today is consistent with the idea that dominant communal norms in former Austrian settlements are so anti-Russian that individuals conform to the norm irrespective of their relatives' views. As to the role of teachers in the Austrian area, it seems that Soviet schooling did not succeed in instilling pro-Russian attitudes in students there. In contrast, Soviet schooling was obviously successful in disseminating and preserving pro-Russian attitudes in former Russian settlements. On the Russian side, there was no baseline resistance to the Soviet message and there local residents

**Fig. 4** Predictive margins of relative as role model



**Fig. 5** Predictive margins of teacher as role model



were already predisposed toward it. Those respondents on the Russian side who report looking up to teachers are 33 percentage points more likely to think of Russia as an ally than their peers who did not consider a teacher to be their role model. The family could not keep up with the school in the perpetuation of pro-Russian attitudes in former Russian settlements. That is why those respondents who held up relatives and not teachers as role models are 8 percentage points less likely to think of Russia as an ally (this difference is statistically significant at  $p < 0.01$ ). In short, while families were important to the preservation of dominant political attitudes on both sides of the defunct border—anti-Russian on the Austrian side and pro-Russian on the Russian—local communities and schools appear to have operated differently on the opposite sides of the border. Specifically, in former Austrian settlements, historical community-level independentist, and therefore by necessity anti-Soviet and anti-Russian, political identities appear to have rendered null the effect of Soviet schooling and even pro-Soviet parenting.

## 5 Discussion

### 5.1 *Summary of Findings*

There is persuasive evidence that historical institutions that had originally created divergent political identities on different sides of the Austrian–Russian imperial border succeeded in leaving lasting cultural legacies that have survived into the present. Historical identity-forming institutions are long gone, but political attitudes and behaviors that they created persist. Hypothesis 1 has been proven correct. Settlements situated to either side of the historical Austrian–Russian imperial border—a dividing line that lost its meaning almost a century ago—are very different when it comes to attitudes toward Russia, even though they are identical on basic demographic and economic characteristics. The cultural legacy of historical political identities remains strong. Political attitudes among the young and the old are identical within each former imperial area. This provides supporting evidence for hypothesis 2, which set out to test the strength and continuing relevance of cultural legacies. In short, Ukrainians living on either side of a long-defunct imperial border continue to interpret some crucial aspects of their political world as if though that border was still active. And all this despite the fact that one of the most ruthless and efficient totalitarian regimes the world has known made a concerted effort to eradicate and replace all preceding political identities.

How did historically rooted political attitudes and behavior survive into the present in the face of state-sponsored efforts to eradicate them? For one, the family played a vital role in transmission of independentist political attitudes on the Austrian side. By contrast, in former Russian settlements, the Soviet schooling system nurtured and disseminated pro-Russian attitudes. However, it bears noting that parents who held pro-Soviet attitudes in formerly Austrian villages were not able to instill pro-Soviet attitudes in their offspring. Likewise, Soviet schools appear to have had no effect on children in the historical Austrian area, even though schools were highly effective in former Russian settlements. These two findings indicate that families and schools are not the only structures that matter in the transmission process. Communities within which families are embedded are likely also important. If communities are homogenous and tightly knit, then presumably they can override the influence of deviant families or external institutions, like Soviet schools. This is an issue that I cannot explore empirically here given the constraints of my survey data and is something that deserves considerable further attention. However, community-level effects do provide major correctives to my hypotheses 3 and 4 on the exclusive importance of families and schools to the transmission process.



## 5.2 *Implications and External Validity*

These findings suggest a major corrective to the way we study political attitudes and behavior. Evidence from Western Ukraine indicates that material incentives and institutional rules are not the only factors that shape the way in which citizens interact with the political world. Political identities that are rooted deeply in the past can be another powerful force that affects political behavior. In the context of Ukraine, it was the residents of Western Ukraine—carriers of a particular brand of independentist anti-Russian identity—who played a pivotal role in the early days of the anti-Yanukovych Euromaidan protests. These protests eventually resulted in regime change in Ukraine and sparked a conflict with Russia. Ghosts of empires long gone are continuing to influence contemporary political outcomes via cultural legacies.

It might be tempting to dismiss these findings as a historical curiosity and something unique to the Ukrainian context. That would be a mistake. In the fledgling literature on historical legacies, evidence is slowly building that the phenomenon that I describe here is rather common in both colonial and other contexts. To mention but a few studies in context far removed from Ukraine, Nunn and Wantchekon (2011) show that areas that had been particularly badly affected by slave trade exhibit lower levels of generalized trust and higher levels of underdevelopment in the present. Acharya et al. (2014) demonstrate how segments of the US South where plantation agriculture was especially dominant still today harbor persistent anti-Black attitudes. Alesina and Fuchs-Schuendeln (2007) show how variation in attitudes toward the welfare state in Germany are accounted for by the legacy of Communism in eastern Germany, whereas Grosfeld et al. (2013) argue that persistent anti-market attitudes in parts of Eastern Europe are best explained as a legacy of the Holocaust. In other words, there is already substantial evidence from various parts of the world in support of the cultural legacies hypothesis, and it is continuing to mount. Much more work is needed to explore the conditions under which cultural legacies arise and the processes by which they are transmitted and eventually fade away.

## 6 Conclusion

Leveraging a natural experiment of history that for a time divided a homogenous population of ethnic Ukrainians between two empires, I have demonstrated how historically rooted political attitudes and behavior can persist into the present when transmitted by families that are embedded within homogenous communities. Such persistence amounts to what I term cultural legacy of historical institutions. Cultural legacies are not alternative explanations designed to account for all variation in political and economic behavior. Rather, cultural legacies are complimentary to standard models focusing on material incentives and institutional rules.

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