Re-examining “Is It Right to Fight? Evidence from Russia and Ukraine”

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Abstract

Purpose: The study aims to reassess the acceptability of war under certain conditions among individuals from Russia and Ukraine, based on data from the World Values Survey (WVS) 2011, to correct inaccuracies in the initial analysis and provide a more precise understanding of the factors influencing the justification of war.

Data: World Values Survey (WVS) 2011

Method: We estimate the regressions (logistic regression) using two different but related questions as the dependent variables.

Result: The original study reported 1,622 observations for Russian respondents, but after excluding missing values, the actual number of observations is 1,140.

Keyword: logistic regression, missing value, slope at mean, World Value Survey

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Introduction

In a recent study published on the acceptability of war under certain conditions among individuals from Russia and Ukraine, data from the World Values Survey (WVS) 2011 was utilized to explore how various socio-economic, political, and individual characteristics influence the justification of war. This analysis was conducted before the onset of military confrontations between the two countries, which began with the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation in 2014. The study concluded that overall acceptance of war was relatively low in both nations, with factors such as gender and level of happiness significantly reducing the justification for war. It also found higher support among respondents interested in politics and those who are married.

The researchers employed logistic regressions to identify conditions producing different results between the countries, highlighting distinctions based on religiosity, country aims, employment status, confidence in the government, concerns about possible war, and political orientation.

However, upon re-examining the data, critical discrepancies were identified. The previous study reported observations of 1,622 individuals from Russia. After excluding missing values, the actual number of observations stands corrected at 1,140. This significant difference calls into question the validity of the initial findings and necessitates a thorough re-analysis to ensure accurate conclusions.

In this article, we present a reassessment of the data to address these inaccuracies, aiming to provide a more precise understanding of the factors influencing the acceptability of war among Russians and Ukrainians during the specified period.

The Problem and the Solution of the previous research

Correctness of missing value: The previous study on war acceptability in Russia and Ukraine incorrectly reported 1,622Russian observations, but after excluding missing values, there are 1,140.

Method for excepting missing value: Re-examine the database of Russian observations for excepting missing value, and implement similar analyze method with Ukrainian, which already mentioned in the article called logistic regression method to demonstrate correct result.

Data

Dependent variables

The World Value Survey (2011) collected responses from Russians and Ukrainians on the statement: "Under some conditions, war is necessary to obtain justice." Respondents were coded as 1 if they agreed and 0 if they disagreed. Those who didn't answer or responded "do not know" were excluded (Code: V187).

Independent variables

Age group (6 cohorts): This indicator categorizes respondents into six age groups from 15-24 to 65+(Code: V242).

Education: we define a dummy variable which equals 1 for respondents with university-level education (bachelor's or higher), and 0 otherwise (Code: 248).

Importance of religion: Using a WVS question, we define a dummy variable as 1 if respondents say religion is "very important" or "rather important" in their lives, and 0 otherwise (Code: V9).

Happiness: Using a WVS question asking respondents to indicate their degree of happiness. A dummy variable is defined as 1 for those who are "very" or "quite" happy, and 0 otherwise (Code: V10).

Marital status: We define a dummy variable as 1 for respondents who are married or cohabiting, and 0 for those who are separated, divorced, widowed, or single (Code: V57).

Preferences for the country: Respondents indicate their opinion on a country's priorities, choosing from high economic growth, strong military forces, democracy, or environmental protection. We define a dummy variable for each response. We expect a negative association between selecting economic growth, democracy, or environmental protection and acceptance of war (Code: V60).

Interest in politics: A WVS question asks respondents to select their level of interest in political issues, from "very interested" to "not at all interested." We designate a dummy variable as 1 for those who are very or somewhat interested, and 0 otherwise (Code: V84).

Political Ideology: Political attitudes are measured by a WVS question asking respondents to place their views on a scale from 1 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right). We define three dummy variables: left (1 if 1-4, 0 otherwise), center (1 if 5-6 or "don't know"), and right (1 if 7-10) (Code: V95).

Employment status: We define a dummy variable as 1 for respondents with a full-time job, part-time job, or self-employment. The remaining categories are aggregated under "without employment status," for which we also generate a dummy variable (Code: V229).

Gender: this is a dummy variable which is 1 for female, and 0 otherwise

(Code: V240).

Worrying about war: this is a dummy variable that has the value 1 if the respondent worries about a war involving his or her country, and 0 otherwise (Code: V183).

Confidence in the government: this dummy variable takes the value 1 if the respondent has confidence in the government, and 0 otherwise (Code: V115).

Methods

First, the data was analyzed using the logistic regression method on the slope at means with Gretl. It is important to highlight that the author of the previous research also employed the logistic regression method on the slope of the means. This methodological similarity partly explains why the results show some degree of contrast.

Function of the slope at means

$$y=\alpha+\beta x_i+u_i$$

$$\Rightarrow \quad \frac{dy_i}{dx_i}=\beta$$

$$P_r[y_i=1|x]=F(\alpha+\beta x_i)$$

$$\Rightarrow \quad \frac{dP_r[y_i=1|x]}{dx_i}=\beta F'(\alpha+\beta x_i)$$

$$\frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n}\beta_x F'(\alpha+\beta x_i)\neq\beta_x F'(\alpha+\beta\bar{x})$$

Results

Author findings reveal that a higher importance of religion is associated with lower acceptance of war in both countries. Nonetheless, this negative association is only statistically and substantially significant in the Russian sample. Specifically, a unit change in the importance of religion variable (transitioning from no or low importance of religion to high importance in daily life) correlates with a 7.3 percentage point (pp) decrease in the probability of acceptance of war in the Russian sample, all else being equal (ceteris paribus).

Moreover, according to the analysis of response frequencies from the selected questions, the occurrences of references to Russia and Ukraine were examined.

However, the missing values from the Russian observations have influenced these results, potentially affecting their accuracy and robustness. The absence of complete data may lead to biased estimates or reduced statistical power, impacting the reliability of the findings for the Russian sample.

Frequencies of response of the selected questions

Ideology	Russia (Previous) Frequency	Russia (Main) Frequency
Left	343	343
Center	1543	730
Right	400	400
Missing-Value	214	1027
Total	**2500**	**2500**

Table1: Results of Russia from previous and main research, Logit, Average marginal effects

Variable	Previous	Previous(t)	Main	Main(t)
Age 25-34	-0.019	(-0.461)	-0.038	(-0.730)
Age 35-44	0.018	(0.398)	-0.007	(0.122)
Age 45-54	-0.048	(-1.140)	-0.031	(-0.590)
Age 55-64	0.011	(0.259)	0.018	(0.326)
Age 65 plus	-0.042	(-0.913)	-0.017	(-0.273)
University education	0.003	(0.115)	0.006	(0.191)
Religion important	-0.073	(-3.238)	-0.042	(-1.470)
Happiness	-0.055	(-2.082)	-0.086	(-2.440)
Married	0.046	(1.951)	0.083	(2.770)
Choice democracy	-0.094	(-2.223)	-0.078	(-1.581)
Choice high growth	-0.078	(-2.209)	-0.095	(-2.090)
Choice environment	-0.026	(-0.414)	-0.023	(-0.300)
Interested in politics	0.053	(2.306)	0.038	(1.310)
Ideology: left	0.074	(2.539)	0.080	(2.240)
Ideology: right	0.023	(0.820)	0.021	(0.630)
Unemployed	-0.064	(-2.223)	-0.102	(-2.820)
Female	-0.085	(-3.773)	-0.109	(-3.760)
Worries: war	-0.024	(-1.009)	-0.055	(-1.710)
Confidence: government	-0.044	(-2.025)	-0.032	(-1.140)
Observations	**1622**		**1140**	

0.10,**0.05,0.01.t statistics are in parentheses and based on robust standard errors.**

Table2: Results of Ukraine from previous and main research, Logit, Average marginal effects

Variable	Previous	Previous(t)	Main	Main(t)
Age 25-34	0.032	(0.988)	-0.034	(0.950)
Age 35-44	0.022	(0.659)	0.025	(0.650)
Age 45-54	0.019	(0.602)	0.021	(0.550)
Age 55-64	0.023	(0.729)	0.025	(0.706)
Age 65 plus	0.023	(0.729)	0.022	(0.620)
University education	-0.012	(-0.653)	-0.012	(-0.660)
Religion important	-0.001	(-0.073)	-0.001	(-0.080)
Happiness	-0.049	(-2.800)	-0.050	(2.751)
Married	0.044	(2.362)	0.040	(2.380)
Choice democracy	-0.057	(-1.156)	-0.044	(-1.240)
Choice high growth	-0.025	(-0.546)	-0.024	(-0.60)
Choice environment	0.011	(0.201)	-0.011	(0.215)
Interested in politics	0.031	(1.753)	0.030	(1.80)
Ideology: left	-0.027	(-1.124)	-0.022	(-1.10)
Ideology: right	0.032	(1.638)	0.032	(1.650)
Unemployed	0.019	(0.974)	0.017	(0.960)
Female	-0.029	(-1.694)	-0.027	(-1.750)
Worries: war	-0.029	(-1.694)	-0.058	(-3.30)
Confidence: government	-0.006	(-0.323)	-0.005	(-0.320)
Observations	**1366**		**1366**	

0.10,**0.05,0.01.t statistics are in parentheses and based on robust standard errors.**

Conclusion

In conclusion, our study re-analyzes the previous research on the acceptability of war among individuals from Russia and Ukraine to address critical discrepancies in the initial data. The original analysis incorrectly reported 1622 observations for Russian respondents, while the correct number, after excluding missing values, is 1,140. This significant difference necessitated a thorough reassessment. Utilizing logistic regression methods, we have generated new results that offer a more accurate understanding of the factors influencing the justification of war in both countries. Our findings provide a clearer and more reliable picture of the socio-economic and political dynamics at play, thereby contributing valuable insights to the discourse on public opinion towards war.

References

Mohammad Reza Farzanegan* and Sven Fischer.2022. “Is It Right to Fight? Evidence from Russia and Ukraine.” DE GRUYTER. Peace Econ. Peace Sci. Pub. Pol. 2022; 28(4): 287–303.