

Belief in Conspiracy and Disinformation in Post-Maidan Ukraine

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INTRODUCTION

A conspiracy theory “is a style of interpretative heuristics that explains events by reference to the machinations of powerful actors who conceal their role to dupe regular people” (Toal and O’Loughlin 2018). Conspiracy theories are often dismissed in the political science literature and there lacks research into the extent to which individuals believe in conspiracy theories and about the determinants and mechanisms behind said belief among individuals. This reality becomes problematic when one considers how conspiratorial beliefs can affect public opinion and political behaviour and outcomes. History has shown that there are instances whereby public opinion unifies under a conspiratorial narrative that is subsequently challenged by the state in an effort to reduce belief rates. For example, the belief that the United States (US) government was involved in the assassination of John F. Kennedy (JFK) became so widespread in American society that Congress agreed on declassifying many documents concerning the affair in hopes of countering the conspiracy (Knight 2003). Some conspiracy theories are believed by widespread blocks of society because they are advanced by governments themselves in disinformation campaigns, for instance, Soviet era “active measures” — foreign policy disinformation tools and means of political warfare — have been updated by the Putin regime for today’s digitally interconnected global information space (Abrams 2016). Some conspiracy theories are finally proven to be true (e.g., Watergate, incidents of corporate corruption), although throughout history the majority that people have believed are false (Pipes 1999).

The subsequent discussion will attempt to identify predictors of conspiratorial belief in Ukraine using public opinion survey data. The analysis will involve questions regarding the crash of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 (MH17) on 17 July 2014 in the conflict zone in Ukraine, the assassination of Boris Nemtsov outside of the Kremlin in Moscow on

February 27 2015, and blame attribution toward the cause of the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine. A discussion on disinformation in the post-Soviet space and conspiracy theories in general will help choose which belief or sets of beliefs towards each respective issue are conspiratorial. Subsequently, a literature review regarding the issues in question, in addition to the discussion on conspiracy theories in general will inform my choice of predictors for individual outcomes in the statistical analyses. Finally, the results of the analysis will be displayed and discussed upon.

BACKGROUND ON UKRAINE, THE CONFLICT, FLIGHT MH17, AND THE ASSASSINATION OF BORIS NEMTSOV

The Conflict in Eastern Ukraine

Ukraine represents a case of a stalled insurgent conflict where the insurgents are supported by an external actor that has also committed acts of aggression against the state. Following the protests and riots of the Euromaidan in Kyiv which culminated with the ousting of the then-President, Victor Yanukovych, Russia invaded Crimea in southeastern Ukraine beginning on February 27, 2014. The invasion was shortly followed by a referendum on independence on March 16 and annexation by Russia on March 18. Shortly after the annexation, insurgent Russian-separatist militia forces seized government buildings and territory in the east of the country in the region referred to as the Donbas. The separatists declared independence and consolidated control in parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts in the spring of 2014, receiving support from Russia. A Ukrainian counter-offensive was heavily waged in the summer of 2014 until a Russian offensive halted the Ukrainian governments attempt to re-establish control over the Donbas. An

OSCE-brokered peace and ceasefire agreement in February 2015 between Ukraine, the insurgents, and Russia, was frequently violated. A stable line of conflict has held between the government forces and insurgents since 2015.

There is no sign of resolution in the near future and the costs of the conflict in eastern Ukraine remain high. It is estimated that 12,000 people have died and over a million have become internally displaced persons. Many residents of the Donbas are forced to cross the conflict line in order to receive government services. We still see potential for the conflict with Russia to erupt into something greater, as exemplified by the Kerch Strait incident in November 2018. The Russian navy seized 24 Ukrainian military personnel who were in international waters. The Ukrainian then-President, Petro Poroshenko, declared martial law in parts of eastern and southern Ukraine, the first such declaration since the start of the conflict in 2014.

There is no clear cause of the conflict, however, it is clear that Russia is protecting its interests in Ukraine through its participation. Mulford (2016) presents the roles of a variety of non-state actors in the Russo -Ukrainian War, arguing that the pro-Russian separatist militias are not under Putin's direct control and that if it were up to him to end the war it would be largely impossible to "put the lid back on the chaotic situation" (p. 102). In fact, many right-wing groups are angry with Putin for not carrying out the *Novorossiya* (Новороссия or *New Russia*) project and providing greater support for the war effort.

The data allow us to analyze conspiratorial beliefs among Ukrainian residents regarding blame attribution toward the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Three possible answers to a question asking who is most to blame for the outbreak of the conflict implicate the Russian government and state they are most to blame. These serve as conspiracy theories, because they implicate a powerful coalition — the Russian government — although some of these theories may be proven correct. In contrast to the other theories that will be analyzed,

which implicate the West and Ukraine and are potentially more likely to be believed by Russians, these theories exclusively implicate Russia, and are thus probably less likely to be believed by Russians.

Flight MH17

On July 17th, 2014, four months into the war in Ukraine, flight MH17 was shot down over eastern Ukraine, killing all 298 passengers and crew members on board, including 194 Dutch (Dutch Safety Board 2015, p. 27). Days earlier, on 14 July, rebels shot down a Ukrainian Air Force An-26, and on 16 July, a Ukrainian Su-25M1 (Toal and O’Loughlin 2018, p. 882). Rival explanations began to circulate on social media and among media outlets in the hours following the crash. Western media outlets claimed that the plane was shot down by pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine, whereas the Russian government, on the other hand, claimed that the Ukrainian military had brought down MH17.

In 2015, the Dutch Safety Board issued its final report on the cause of the crash, concluding that the plane had been shot by a BUK surface-to-air system (Dutch Safety Board 2015). In September 2016, a Dutch-led joint investigation team (JIT) — which included authorities from Australia, Belgium, Malaysia, the Netherlands, and Ukraine — presented their results which had been based on forensic analyses, audio interceptions, and over 100 interviews with eyewitnesses and informants. The JIT found that the missile was shot from an area controlled by pro-Russian separatist rebels, that the BUK system had been transported from the Russian Federation to Ukraine, and finally, that it had been returned to Russia following the downing of MH17 (Joint Investigation Team (JIT) 2016a). In an update, the JIT subsequently linked the missile system to Russia’s 53rd anti-aircraft missile brigade based in Kursk in the Russian Federation (Joint Investigation Team (JIT)

2016b). The Russian government maintains that no BUK ever crossed into Ukraine and claims that the findings of the JIT are “biased and politically motivated” (Oliphant and Boztas 2016).

In an analysis of the effects of television viewing on beliefs about the MH17 downing, Toal and O’Loughlin (2018) present the contrasting blame attribution storylines offered by Russia’s *Perviy Kanal* (Первый Канал or First Channel) and Ukraine’s *Inter* (Интер).¹ The Russian government controls the board of directors of *Perviy Kanal* and the station is widely seen as a vehicle for the Kremlin’s communications agenda. *Inter* presents a Ukrainian perspective, although it is often accused of pursuing a pro-Russia agenda by Ukrainian activists. Reports by *Perviy Kanal* implicated the Ukrainian government, projecting capacity and intent onto it through a series of strategies utilizing conspiratorial narratives and steered the blame away from Russia and the Donbas militants (p. 892). *Inter*, on the other hand, denounced what it claimed was Russian propaganda and lies and aired reports accusing both the Russian Federation and separatist rebels in eastern Ukraine (p. 893-94).

The data offer us the chance to test what kind of people believe in different blame attribution storylines, disinformation, and conspiracy theories. Considering the findings of the JIT, a belief that the Ukrainian government shot down flight MH17 is highly conspiratorial. The survey offers respondents the option to say that MH17 crashed due to a mechanical failure, which represents a choice to take a neutral position vis-à-vis Russia and Ukraine. Although counter to the findings of the JIT, this belief does not necessarily represent a conspiratorial one, given it does not implicate any “powerful actors.”

¹See Toal and O’Loughlin (2018) for a detailed version of the divergent media coverage and blame attribution of the MH17 downing between Russian and Ukrainian media sources.

The Assassination of Boris Nemtsov

On the evening of February 27th, 2015, Boris Nemtsov, a Kremlin critic and non-systemic opposition leader, was shot dead while walking outside the Kremlin building with his girlfriend. Nemtsov was supposed to lead an anti-war rally against Russia's actions in Ukraine a few days later and had been preparing a report that would challenge Putin's claim that there were no Russian troops in Ukraine at the time (Mulford 2016). The official announcement of the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation concluded that it was an assassination. The Committee then opened up a separate case to search for those who ordered the hit and those who carried it out. The Nemtsov family's lawyer, Vadim Prokhorov, and activist, Anastasia Sergeeva, argue that the official government investigation showed attempts to bury links to Ramzan Kadyrov, the leader of the Chechen Republic, and the Kremlin, and to only prosecute the assassins rather than also prosecuting the conspirators (Prokhorov and Sergeeva 2016, p. 32).

The preliminary picture of the crime presented by the Investigative Committee in March 2015 accused six suspects from the Chechen republic, five of which were detained, and one of which supposedly blew himself up with a grenade or, as Prokhorov claims, was either possibly killed by Special Forces officers. Two of the suspects, Zaur Dadaev and Beslan Shavanov were officers in the "North" battalion. Officially, the battalion is part of the internal army of the ministry of internal affairs, but in reality they act as private troops for Ramzan Kadyrov. The initial explanation of the motives behind the assassination announced by authorities claimed that Nemtsov was killed as revenge for his "active support of the *Charlie Hebdo* campaign" (p. 33). Prokhorov and Sergeeva (2016) argue that it is absurd to think the assassins, namely Zaur Dadaev, who was accused of firing the shots which killed Nemtsov, suddenly decided to kill Nemtsov as revenge. Moreover, this

version of events was only used by the official investigation until it became clear that it was untenable.

Claiming the investigation was a farce, Prokhorov and Sergeeva (2016, p. 33) argue that the assassins were linked to Ramzan Kadyrov via the Chechen clan system and “that the assassination could not have been prepared without a direct order from and coordination with the leader of Chechnya and his inner circle” (p. 34). Official investigators and the courts still refuse to interrogate Kadyrov and his inner circle despite requests from the Nemtsov family and their legal council. Prokhorov and Sergeeva (2016) additionally present a series of facts linking Putin right-hand man, Victor Zolotov, to Ramzan Kadyrov, and argue he is one of the only people with the capacity to plan the assassination, given his unique access to the monitoring system and disposition of officers and soldiers surrounding the Kremlin.

Prokhorov and Sergeeva (2016) claim that the motives for the assassination are probably to scare and deter the elite and the opposition from initiating any attempts at political change. This line of reasoning is supported by events that occurred on the same day whereby several regional opposition leaders were attacked and beaten. They also present another story of the assassination as Putin seeking revenge for harsh comments made by Nemtsov to Ukrainian journalists about the Russian President in the spring of 2014. Indeed, Gioe, Goodman, and Frey (2019) support this picture, arguing for political assassination under Putin as political theatre and a strategic messaging tool. Prokhorov and Sergeeva (2016) additionally cite a willingness among the regime to “spoil communication inside the democratic opposition movement and halt the coalition building processes” and an “atmosphere of hate and intolerance towards political opponents” among Putin, Kadyrov, and pro-Kremlin journalists which “has increased the possibility and acceptability of violence and terror as a method of political struggle” (p. 37).

The lack of any internationally accepted conclusion from the Russian justice system limits our ability to determine which beliefs are conspiratorial. We can, however, say that a belief that Nemtsov was killed in retaliation for comments on Islamist attacks is a belief in Russian government disinformation. To a certain degree, the beliefs presented in Prokhorov and Sergeeva's report are conspiracies, given they accuse the government, however, there is an abundance of evidence that supports these conspiratorial claims and they may finally be proven true one day. The data allow us to analyze beliefs in an additional narrative not yet presented, that Nemtsov was killed to create a negative image of Putin. This is a highly conspiratorial belief, given it implicates the opposition to the Kremlin (i.e. the Russian opposition, Ukraine, and Western governments) and that there is a large amount of evidence presented by the Nemtsov legal team which shows otherwise.

THEORY

Why do People Believe in Conspiracy Theories?

Erlich and Garner (2019) identify myriad theories explaining belief in what is untrue and failure to update beliefs in the presence of new (correct) information. They group these theories into the categories of “strictly rational, environmental-structural, cognitive, social-psychological, psychological, and emotional explanations” (p. 5). The strictly rational theory argues that information search is costly and that holding some false beliefs may be costless for some individuals. In other words, it does not matter whether one believes JFK was killed by a lone gunman or as part of a vast government conspiracy. The environmental-structural perspective maintains that conspiratorial beliefs flourish when institutions that provide credible or expert information, such as the news media,

may be lacking or discredited. Additionally, the absence of civil liberties and freedom of expression reinforces belief in the untrue due to a hampered marketplace of ideas.

Several cognitive biases could help explain false beliefs, including cognitive dissonance (avoiding the possible costs of admitting that a held belief is wrong), information cascade effects (individuals who see others holding false beliefs will adopt it even if they believe in the truth to a certain extent), the true belief being too complex for some to process accurately, cognitive availability (ease of belief), and belief in sources an individual deems prestigious. The social-psychological theory argues that individuals may claim to believe in something they know is not true if enough of their peers state said belief. Psychological explanations focus on people's psychological predispositions to conspiratorial thinking in general. Finally, the theory of emotion states that people under certain emotional states may seek information and adopt beliefs that validate or explain their emotional responses (Erlich and Garner 2019, p. 6).

The Correlates and Predictors of Conspiratorial Beliefs

The ubiquity, sheer number, and variety of existent conspiracy theories make generalization and identification of a specific and singular system of predictors a challenge. Moreover, different predictors may be substantively important and statistically significant in different contexts and for different types of conspiracies. In the case of Ukraine, where the conspiracy theories we are analyzing are often depicted in national-ethnic terms, ethnic identity can be an important predictor. The first systematic empirical study of the prevalence of belief in conspiracy theories and its psychological and sociological correlates comes from Goertzel (1994), who conducted a multivariate analysis on a small sample ($n = 348$) and found that belief in conspiracy theories was predicted by "anomia" and mistrust, as well as minority

status. Anomia was operationalized as a composite measure testing respondents agreement with the idea that “the situation of the average person is getting worse, that it is hardly fair to bring a child into today’s world, and that most public officials are not interested in the average man” (Goertzel 1994, p. 736). Mistrust gauged the extent to which respondents trusted family, neighbours, and the police. Additional findings supporting the role of anomia suggest that the social structures which shape citizens’ feelings of powerlessness increase conspiratorial belief (Abalakina-Paap et al. 1999; Imhoff and Bruder 2014). Additionally, research by Crocker et al. (1999) and Davis, Wetherell, and Henry (2018) substantiate the finding that in the American context, stigmatized minority groups are more likely to believe in conspiracy theories.

Additionally, Sunstein and Vermeule (2009) attribute conspiracy theory belief to the information environment, arguing that some individuals believe in conspiracy theories because of a “crippled epistemology” due to limited information sources. Conspiratorial beliefs, by this reasoning, are more common when civil rights and civil liberties are absent because these environments are more information-poor (p. 204). There does exist evidence supporting caution about correlations between level of information or sense of anomia and belief in conspiracy theories. Nyhan and Zeitzoff (2018) showed that some conspiratorial beliefs were strongly positively correlated with knowledge of political events and that there was no relationship found between disempowerment (anomia) and believing in conspiracy theories.

Individuals have especially believed in conspiracy theories in “impactful societal crisis situations” like wars, rapid social change and natural disasters (McCauley and Jacques 1979; Van Prooijen and Douglas 2017; 2018, p. 898). Accordingly, conspiracy beliefs tend to flourish among members of groups involved in mutual conflict (Pipes 1999). This is especially relevant in the case of post-Maidan and civil war Ukraine. In relation to this

finding, others have found conspiracy beliefs to be empirically associated with populism (Castanho Silva, Vegetti, and Littvay 2017) and political extremism (Van Prooijen, Krouwel, and Pollet 2015). Other correlates and predictors that have been found in the literature include religiosity, which is associated with higher likelihood (Knight 2003; Oliver and Wood 2014), and education, with higher levels associated with decreased beliefs (Douglas et al. 2016; J.-W. Van Prooijen 2017).

Some scholars have argued for a *conspiracy mindset* as a predisposition to believe in conspiracy theories that varies between individuals (Imhoff and Bruder 2014). This is substantiated by findings that the single best predictor of belief in a conspiracy theory is belief in a different conspiracy theory (Goertzel 1994; Swami et al. 2011). Additionally, even mutually incompatible conspiracy theories have been found to be positively correlated (e.g., Princess Diana was murdered and Princess Diana staged her own death) (Wood, Douglas, and Sutton 2012). Despite the differences in conspiracy theories, subjective beliefs in them in general are rooted in the same underlying psychology (Van Prooijen and Douglas 2018). Along a similar line of reasoning, Van Prooijen and Van Vugt (2018) argue that conspiratorial belief is either an evolutionary by-product of homo sapien's large neo-cortex and nuanced pattern recognition abilities or is an evolved (adaptive) tool to overcome the imminent ancestral danger of coalitional violence (i.e. violence committed by actual conspirators causing intergroup conflict and reproductive loss).

On that note, and of particular relevance to the case of Ukraine, Van Prooijen and Douglas (2018, p. 902) argue that the social origins of conspiracy belief are rooted in intergroup conflict. Beliefs qualify as conspiracies only when they are related to assumptions about a hostile and threatening outgroup coalition. Although feelings of paranoia have been found to be correlated with conspiracy beliefs, scholars differentiate between the two, arguing paranoia is self-relevant and pertains only to perceived hostility

against an individual, whereas conspiracy theories are “intergroup beliefs that assume a powerful or hostile outgroup is conspiring against a perceiver’s ingroup” (Imhoff and Lamberty 2018; J. W. Van Prooijen 2014; Van Prooijen and Douglas 2018, p. 902). Accordingly, scholars identify two motivations relevant to conspiratorial thinking, the first being to uphold a strong ingroup identity and the second to protect against a coalition suspected to be hostile. Essentially, people worry about possible conspiracies when they feel strongly connected with the prospective victims of those conspiracies (the ingroup) or when an outgroup has some threatening quality (e.g. power) or negative stereotypes that reinforce suspicions. In the US, for instance, Republicans often believe conspiracies involving Democrats harming Republicans and the vise versa is also common. Supporting this idea, in the Indonesian context, Mashuri and Zaduqisti (2013) revealed that Muslim identifiers were more likely than individuals with non-salient religion-based identity to believe in the conspiracy theory that Western countries were accountable for instigating terrorism, but only when the West was described as being a threatening outgroup to Muslims.

Chayinska and Minescu (2018) examine conspiratorial beliefs in Ukraine involving the annexation of Crimea. Specifically, on a small sample ($n = 315$), they test whether supporters of the Euromaidan movement are more likely to believe in the conspiracy theory that the Ukrainian government was nefariously involved in the annexation of Crimea and whether this belief is also moderated by perceived government corruption. Additionally, they test whether belief in this conspiracy is used to justify the collective behaviour (protest) of an individual’s ingroup. This way of coding individuals essentially divides the population into an ingroup of those who support resistance to Russia and an outgroup of those who do not. They found that those ideologically charged social identities predicted conspiracy beliefs because “they allowed identifiers to extrapolate the idea that there was

a powerful and evil outgroup engaged in nefarious acts against the ingroup” (Chayinska and Minescu 2018, p. 995). They show counterintuitive evidence for perceived corruption as a mediator because lower levels were associated with higher levels of beliefs, arguing that the perception of authorities as powerful and corrupt constrains beliefs in conspiracy theories that justify ingroup collective behaviour. They also forward the explanation that that the changing legal status of the protests might have caused Euromaidan supporters to rethink their answers that would incriminate the government.

Examining Kyrgyzstan, Radnitz (2016) sees a potential in conspiracy theories as being coalition-building and as a source of political legitimization. Turning the assumption that political leaders resort to conspiratorial rhetoric when they hold power and are afraid of losing it on its head, he shows that political elites deploy conspiracy theories as a glue which can hold coalitions together in situations when political power is dispersed.

Predicting Beliefs about Flight MH17. Toal and O’Loughlin (2018) survey various post-Soviet locations (Southeastern Ukraine, Abkhazia, Transnistria, Crimea, and South Ossetia) in December 2014 in an attempt to identify the determinants and mechanisms behind myriad beliefs revolving flight MH17. They focus mainly on the effects of Ukraine and Russia’s respective “televisual infosphere[s]” (p. 911). Ending up with a substantial sample ($n = 4833$) the authors control for a wide array of covariates. Socio-demographic controls include self-defined nationality as Russian or Ukrainian since these two groups were most directly involved in the discussions revolving MH17 and a measure of educational status because education should be related to interest in and information about the event. They additionally control for age, arguing that older individuals who lived in Soviet times have experienced economic difficulty in the post-Soviet period. They also control for gender, citing Smith (1984), who found that men take stronger stands on positions regarding

conflict and perceived external aggression. Lastly, they include a measure of income.

Predictors measuring political and ideological orientations include one variable measuring interest in international politics and another variable indicating an individual's self-placement on 10-point left-right ideological scale. They additionally include self-identified ethnic group attachment (on a scale from 'very proud' to 'not at all proud'). Since Vladimir Putin is the face of Russian foreign policy, the authors also add an indicator of support for Putin. Lastly, they consider an indicator of patriotic belief, asking respondents if they are "willing to put armed resistance" to any Russian troops entering Ukraine.

A third set of variable revolve around post-Soviet material circumstances. Respondents are meant to answer the questions: "was the end of the Soviet Union a right or wrong step?" and "will you live better in two years time?" to measure disposition to current territorial arrangements and economic optimism. They also ask respondents if "it does not matter in which country [they] live as long as [they] have a good salary and pension" to evaluate material interests against territorial arrangements.

Their main independent variables revolve around the divergent explanations of the crash given by the Ukrainian and Russian media. They identify respondents "who watch more than 20 hours of television per week, those who trust television news[,] those for whom television is their main information source [and] those who watch television from Russia broadcasters" (Toal and O'Loughlin 2018, p. 902). They use an interactive term of Ukrainians and 'trust television news' to identify Ukrainians who would be most likely to accept the Poroshenko government's explanation of events. Lastly, they add a dummy variable for residence in southeastern Ukraine to identify respondents who do not live in the Russian infosphere.

They find that individuals attributed more blame to Ukraine if they trusted Putin and less blame if they lived in southeastern Ukraine. They additionally find smaller negative

effects on blaming Ukraine for 20 hour television view time and for Ukrainians who trust TV, and small positive effects for those who would oppose an invader force and for those (non-Ukrainians) who trust TV news. Residents in southeastern Ukraine and those who believed the breakup of the Soviet Union was correct were more likely to blame the separatist militants. On the other hand, those who trust TV news, who watch Russian television stations, and who are ‘very proud’ of their nationality were less likely to attribute blame of the crash to the rebels in Ukraine. Those who self-identified nationally as Ukrainian were more likely to blame Russia with residence in southeastern Ukraine having a smaller effect. On the other hand, those who trust Putin were much less likely to blame Russia. Individuals who trust TV news, those who watch Russian TV stations, and those who say they are not interested in politics were also all less likely to attribute blame to Russia. Taking these findings in unison, the authors conclude that perceptions are guided by the televisual infosphere in which individuals reside, and that people tend to follow the narratives of the political leadership they trust.

In a network analysis of Twitter users, Golovchenko, Hartmann, and Adler-Nissen (2018) finds that citizens were not only purveyors of government messages and disinformation, but on the other hand, generated the most popular content about the MH17 crash among Twitter users. They conclude by arguing that citizens are curators of both disinformation and counter-disinformation, even in a context saturated by state-sponsored information and state-controlled media (p. 978). The internet can thus be as good a source for disinformation — curated by individual users within another user’s social media information bubble — than television is a source for disinformation that is advanced by state-sponsored media within an individual’s televisual infosphere.

DATA AND RESEARCH DESIGN

I draw from eight rounds of nationally representative survey data in Ukraine. The survey includes Ukrainian controlled territories in Luhansk and Donetsk. The surveys were designed by the National Democratic Institute of International Affairs (NDI) and the fieldwork was carried out by the Kyiv Institution for International Sociology. Each wave represents a separate cross-sectional sample. The first of these surveys was conducted in May 2015 and the most recent in July 2018.² Each wave has roughly 6000 respondents and employed a multi-stage cluster sampling design where the primary sampling unity (PSU) is voting precinct. Each survey was stratified at the oblast-settlement type level.³ After stratification, a sample of voting precincts proportional to their population size was drawn. Households were then selected via a random walk method and individuals were selected via a Kish grid.

Conspiracy Questions

Flight MH17. In rounds 1, 4, 6, and 8 of the survey, respondents were asked the following question: “In July 2014, Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 crashed over Donetsk. In your opinion, what is the most likely reason for this?” Disregarding non-response and “don’t knows”, in the first three waves, possible answers included “Mechanical Failure,” “Ukrainian Forces,” “Separatist Rebels,” or “Other.” However, in wave 8, respondents were also given the option to attribute blame to Russia. Figure 1 displays the proportion of respondents

²Although the ethnic identity question appears on all survey waves, The questions we are concerned with were not asked in every wave.

³In different waves of the surveys there were different over-samples of the strata. In addition, some of the strata differ slightly from wave to wave.

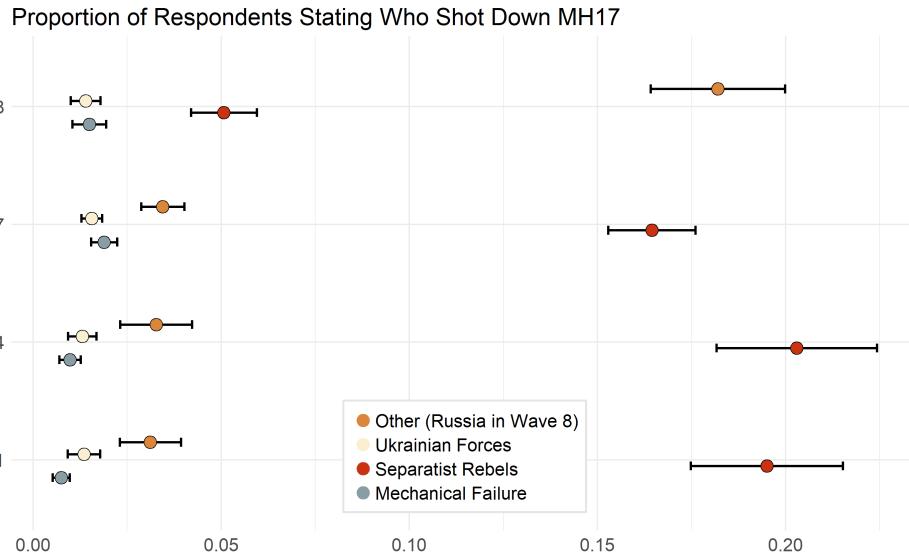


Figure 1. Proportion of respondents attributing blame for the crash of MH17. Respondents were able to choose “Russia” in wave 8 only. The choice “Russia” was pooled with “Other” in wave 8 due to issues with ambiguous coding. Interestingly, when offered this choice, respondents supplanted it over “Separatist Rebels.” Wave 1 is excluded due to missing survey weights.

attributing blame to each option. In earlier waves, most respondents blame separatist rebels - a non-conspiratorial belief. However, a portion of respondents blame Ukrainian forces which I consider a conspiracy theory. Lastly, when offered the option to blame Russia, respondents chose to attribute responsibility to the crash more often to Russia than to separatist rebels. Due to the broad wording of the question, we cannot be sure whether respondents blame Russia for supporting the rebels which shot down the plane or attribute the action of shooting down the plane itself to Russia.

Boris Nemtov’s Assassination. In wave 1, respondents were asked the following question: “If you had to guess, why would you say that Boris Nemstov was killed?” Possible answers included “Because of his overall opposition to the Russian government,” “Because he

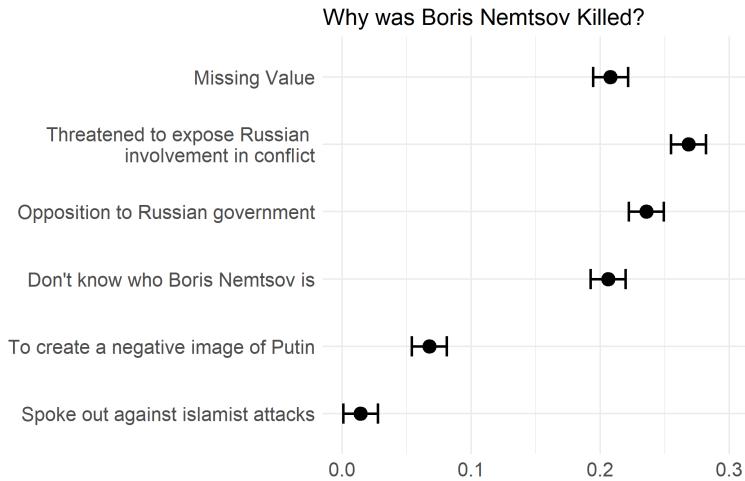


Figure 2. Proportion of respondents agreeing with statements answering the question: ‘If you had to guess, why would you say that Boris Nemtsov was killed?’ Respondents could only choose one answer.

threatened to expose Russian involvement in the Ukrainian conflict,” “Because he spoke out against Islamist attacks in Paris,” ”To create a negative image of Putin/the Russian government,” and ”I don’t know who Boris Nemtsov is.” The most conspiratorial of these answers would be ”To create a negative image of Putin” because it tells a story that implicates the West and Ukraine in the killing of Nemtsov as a means to foment dissent against Putin. Belief in the statement, ”Because he spoke out against Islamist attacks,” is less conspiratorial, but nevertheless represents a belief in Russian government disinformation, given it was the initial explanation given by the Investigation Committee of Nemtsov’s death.

The Start of the Conflict. In wave 1 alone, respondents were asked a set of binary response statements forcing agreement or disagreement regarding reasons behind the start of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Interviewers offered this prompt: “Do you believe any of the

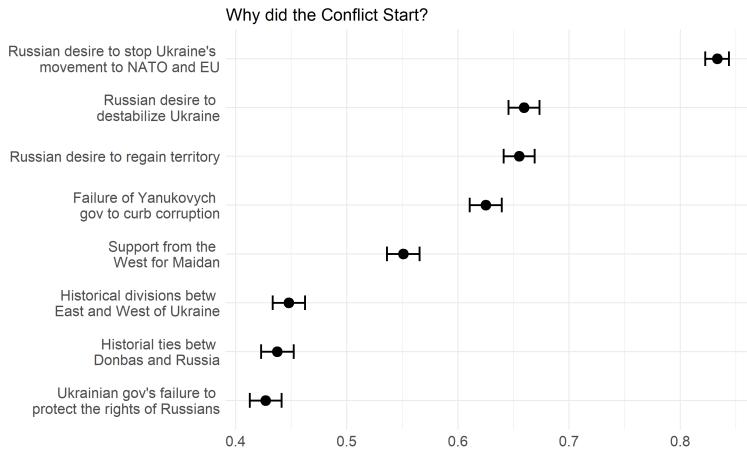


Figure 3. Proportion of respondents agreeing with statements answering the question: “Do you believe any of the following explain why the conflict started?” Respondents were allowed to agree with multiple statements.

following explain why the conflict started?” Subsequent statements were then worded as follows: “Failure of the government in Kyiv to protect the rights of Russian speakers,” “Historical divisions between the East and West of Ukraine,” “Support from the West for the protesters on the Maidan,” “Historical ties between Donbas and Russia,”, and “Failure of the Yanukovych government to curb corruption.” Three conspiratorial statements were read: “Desire on the part of Russia to regain control of territory lost since the collapse of the Soviet Union,” “Desire on the part of Russia to destabilize the new Ukrainian government,” and “Desire on the part of Russia to stop Ukraine moving towards NATO and EU membership.” We are not interested in why people believe the conflict started, but only if they believe in conspiratorial narratives. These blame narratives only implicate the Russian government, meaning Russian ethnics should be less likely to believe in them than self-identified ethnic Ukrainians.

Measuring Distance from Conflict

To control for any relationship between geography and conspiratorial beliefs, several fine-tune measures were constructed. Firstly, the geographic location of each PSU is taken and then I associate each individual survey respondent to the log distance between the PSU and the nearest point (Haversine distance) on the Crimean border, current Donbas line of control, and the nearest EU member state. Fixed effects for five regions (Kyiv City, West, Center-North, South, and East) are included so that the distance coefficients capture within regional variation in the closeness to the three aforementioned zones.⁴ People closer to the EU may potentially be more likely to believe Western and Ukrainian narratives, whereas people closer to the Donbas and Crimea should be more likely to believe Russian narratives. We may also theorize that people living closer to the Donbas will be more likely to believe the truth about the crash of MH17 because of their proximity to the location where the event occurred.

Measuring Ethnicity

Scholars of Ukraine have used different techniques to examine the fluidity of ethnic identity as well as the components an ethnic identity is made up of. Drawing on relational theory, Onuch and Hale (2018) argue there are four dimensions of ethnicity and that each are important in unique ways in Ukraine, namely individual “language preference” (the language that one chooses to speak if communication partners were indifferent), “language embeddedness” (the language one uses under the influence of social environments in

⁴Table X in the appendix displays the construction of the regional codes. Oblasts that make up each region are listed under the region name.

which one is embedded), “ethnolinguistic identity” (native language or mother tongue), and “nationality” (a forced-choice indicator measuring self-declared nationality). They urge for the inclusion of each of these measures as control variables when attempting to isolate and precisely interpret a posited causal effect of ethnicity on a given outcome.

Building off Toal and O’Loughlin (2018), who control for Russian nationality, Ukrainian nationality, and pride in one’s nationality in their examination of MH17 blame attribution, I control for more fine-tune measures of ethnic identity, however, I cannot control for self-identified ethnic group attachment or pride. While the survey restricts our use of all four of these types of ethnic controls, we can account for three related dimensions which the survey data offers; language preference, language embeddedness, and ethnolonguistic identity. In each round of survey data collection, interviewers offer the following prompt, “Many people identify with one or more ethnic groups. Please state the ethnic groups or groups that you identify with.” Individuals are allowed to choose as many answers as they desire from eight pre-coded options: Russian, Ukrainian, Tatar, Bulgarian, Polish, Moldovan, Belorussian, and Jewish. Respondents are also able to choose an “Other” ethnic group (either alone or in addition to other identities) or to specify that “I don’t think of myself in those terms.”⁵ The survey’s **Ethnicity** question is related to “ethnolinguistic identity” from Onuch and Hale (2018). I code it four ways: (1) monoethnically Russian, (2) monoethnically Ukrainian, (3) bi-ethnic Russian and Ukrainian and (4) all other ethnicities or possible combinations of ethnicities. The statistical models also control for **Home Language** (whether an individual states the language(s) they speak at home

⁵The approach used here is similar to Kulyk (2018). They allow respondents to choose identifying as ethnic Russian, ethnic Ukrainian, or both. Previous approaches such as Barrington and Herron (2004), and even as recent as Toal and O’Loughlin (2018), use a binary variable of “Ukrainian”, “Russian”, or “Other” ethnicity.

is/are Ukrainian, Russian, both, or other) which is related to “language embeddedness” and **Convenient Language** (preferred language of conversation being Ukrainian, Russian, or both/other) as proxied by whether the respondent speaks to the interviewer strongly in Ukrainian, strongly in Russian, or a third, ambiguous category that could mean the respondent was mixing languages or had a weak grasp of both/either Russian or Ukrainian. This last control is related to “language preference”.

As in Toal and O’Loughlin (2018), we should expect self-identified ethnic Russians to be more likely to believe in the Russian narrative and Ukrainians the Ukrainian narrative. Bi-ethnic people, which Toal and O’Loughlin (2018) do not control for, should be somewhere in the middle. Secondly, as in Goertzel (1994), we would expect minorities, in this case Russians, to be more likely to believe in conspiracy theories given the stigma associated with Russian nationalism in post-Maidan Ukraine. Since the conspiracies being tested are the same as the Russian narrative, we cannot differentiate between the mechanism at play. More specifically, we cannot know if they believe the theory because they trust their co-ethnic political leadership or because they are a stigmatized minority.

Measuring Anomia, Information Spheres, and Religiosity

Anomia. The data offer us three measures of anomia that can be regressed on each question. Firstly, one of the predictors measures a respondent’s belief in the state of Ukrainian democracy. Respondents were asked, “Do you think the level of democracy in Ukraine is getting worse, staying the same, improving?” in all waves of the survey except waves 5 and 7 (**DEMLEVEL**). They could then answer that democracy was “Worse,” “Better,” or “Improving.” Secondly, one of the predictors measures a respondent’s opinion about what political actors are willing to listen to them. In all waves except waves 5 and 7, respondents

are asked “In your opinion are any of the following interested in hearing your opinions?” and they are read a list of political actors one by one as follows: President, national government, member of Parliament, governor, mayor, local councilor, and political party. I created an additive index using these variables, with missing values and “No” counting as zero and “Yes” counting as one with a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.8 (**HEARINDEX**). Lastly, a third predictor measures a respondent’s expectation for the lives of the next generation of Ukrainian citizens. In all waves except wave 5 interviewers ask “Overall, do you expect the next generation to be [worse than yours, the same as yours, or better off than yours] (**LSNEXTGN**)? Some additional measures were constructed for MH17 in later waves. **LSCONTNT** measures contentedness with situation in life at the moment and **LSIMPRVE** measures ability to improve one’s situation in life. For all five of these measures, lower values are associated with higher levels of anomia.

Info Spheres and Info Source Types. The data offer us several ways of operationalizing how respondents get their information and where they get it from. In waves 1 and 2 of the survey, respondents are asked what their first and second choice information-sources are. Possible options are Ukrainian, Russian, or Western television, Ukrainian, Russian, or Western radio, Ukrainian, Russian, or Western internet, friends and family, newspaper, and other. Following Toal and O’Loughlin (2018), whose main independent variables involve television viewing and television viewing interacted with ethnicity, I group Ukrainian media sources together, Russian media together, Western media together, and keep the rest as is. This results in six binary variables (**Ukrainian Media**, **Russian Media**, **Western Media**, **Friends**, **Newspaper**, **Other**).

The survey also asks respondents how often they access the internet for news in all waves except for wave 7 (1 = everyday, 6 = never). Lastly, in wave 7, respondents were

asked if their first choice for news was national TV, social media, the internet, or something else. These four binary operators were included for regression for the MH17 question in wave 7.

Other Demographic Controls and Religiosity

I also control for other typical demographic covariates in the models: sex (Female = 1), age, and level of education. The models also include time fixed effects by controlling for the wave of the survey (where it applies). Religiosity was coded as a binary variable.

Empirical Strategy

Conflict Outbreak Hypotheses & Assumptions. We should expect Ukrainians to believe in the conspiratorial theories about the conflict, given they implicate the Russian government. Information source should also have the same effect (Ukrainian media viewers should be more likely than Russian media viewers to espouse these beliefs). Lastly, we should expect higher levels of anomia to be associated with higher likelihood of holding a conspiratorial belief on the conflict start.

MH17 Hypotheses & Assumptions. Given the findings of Toal and O'Loughlin (2018), we should expect self-identified ethnic identity to have an effect on belief in different blame attribution narratives. Ethnic Russians may trust the Russian political leadership more and ethnic Ukrainians may trust the Ukrainian leadership more. Ethnic Russians should thus be more likely to believe in conspiratorial narratives, given that the Russian narrative opposes the conclusions of the Dutch Safety Board and the JIT. We should also expect these effects to be mirrored in individual's sources of information. If they consume Russian media, they should believe the Russian narrative, and if they consume Ukrainian

media, they should believe the Ukrainian narrative. As to the effects of media type (TV, social media, or internet), I cannot make any theoretically supported assumptions. Lastly, higher levels of anomia should result in higher likelihood of believing it was the Ukrainian military at fault.

Boris Nemtsov Assassination Hypotheses & Assumptions. We should expect Russians to be more likely to hold the conspiratorial belief about the Nemtsov assassination, given it exonerates the Russian regime and implicates the regime's opponents. Information source matters should work in the same direction. Lastly, higher levels of anomia should be associated with higher likelihood of stating Nemtsov was killed to create a negative image of the Putin regime.

Modelling and Simulating. I ran multinomial logistic regression models on the MH17 and Boris Nemtsov assassination questions and logistic regression models on each of the Conflict Start questions. In generating predictions associated with theoretically relevant values of some parameters of interest, I assign the observed modal values to all binary controls except for region, and the true population mean for age, education, logged distance to the Donbas, logged distance to Crimea, and logged distance to the EU. I estimate the effect of changing the ethnicity variable for a counterfactual respondent, who is a woman who speaks Ukrainian at home, spoke to the interviewer in Russian, is 47 years old, has technical school education, is Orthodox, lives in Kyiv city, and took the survey in wave 1 for the Nemtsov and the Conflict Start models and 4 for the MH17 models. When estimating the effect of changing respondents' home language, ethnicity is set as Ukrainian. The mean distance to the Donbas is 368 km, the mean distance to Crimea is 370 km, and the mean distance to an EU country is 370 km. In generating predictions for different values of distance to Crimea or the conflict, I set the region to the East.

RESULTS

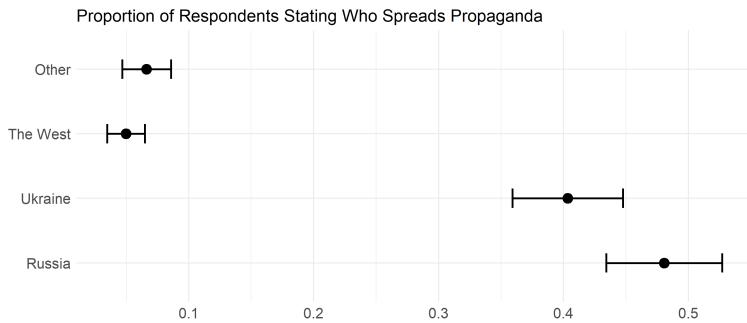


Figure 4. Proportion of respondents in Wave 8 answering the question: “who is most responsible for spreading propaganda or disinformation in Ukraine?” Most respondents believe it is Russia, but a large amount (40%) believe it is Ukraine. Respondents could only choose one option.

People living in Ukraine displayed generally high levels of suspicion towards the influence of propaganda in Ukraine. 83.5% of respondents believed propaganda (from any source) was being spread in Ukraine in Wave 8 and 70.9% of respondents believed that Russian propaganda, specifically, was being spread in Ukraine in Wave 7. Figure 4 displays the proportion of respondents stating who they thought was most responsible for spreading propaganda or disinformation in Ukraine in Wave 8. Interestingly, although most respondents believed it was Russia that was most responsible, a significant number of people attributed most blame to Ukraine. At the time, Ukrainians displayed a large amount of distrust for their government.

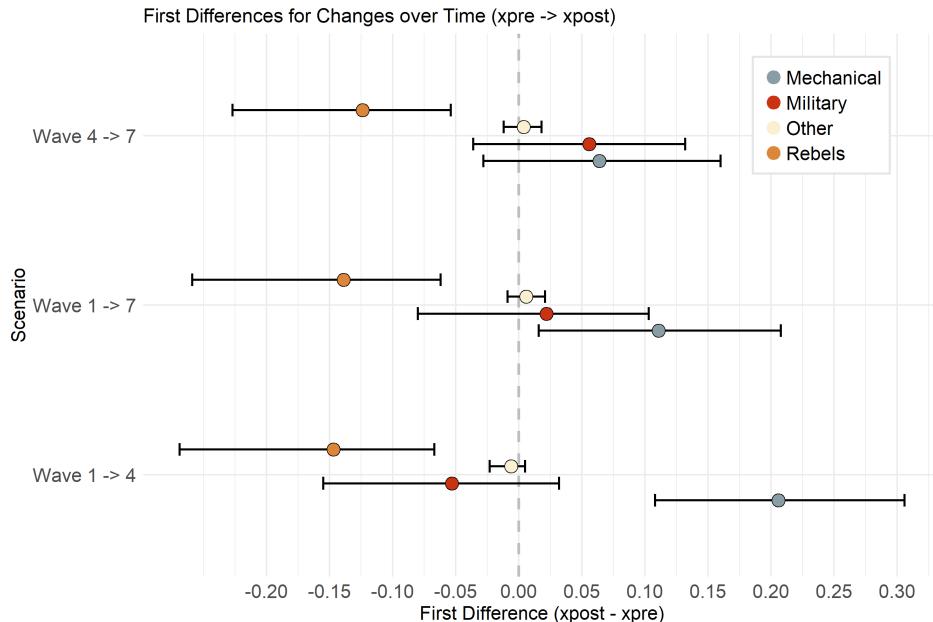
Time

Figure 5. Differences are simulated from an underlying multinomial logistic regression model (Model Wave 1, 4 & 7) for a hypothetical individual where the only varying parameter is a measure of time. Points to the left of the zero line represent higher likelihood for xpre and points to the right of the line represent higher likelihood for xpost.

Evidenced in Figure 1, in the generally decreasing proportion of respondents stating they believed it was separatist rebels to blame over time, there was a tendency, over time, to believe less in a narrative that was according to the conclusions of the JIT. The JIT released their report accusing separatist rebels in September 2016. Wave 1 was done in December 2015, wave 4 in May 2016, wave 7 in July 2017, and wave 8 in July 2018. The release of the JIT's report cannot explain the slight uptick between the proportion for wave 1 and wave 4 because it was released after wave 4 was conducted. And even after the report

was released the proportion drastically falls in wave 7 and wave 8. These findings are supported by the regression models. Figure 5 displays first differences for increases in time. The point for rebels is consistently negative and statistically significant, meaning that people were more likely to believe it was the rebels earlier in time.

Despite this, when controlling for covariates, people in wave 1 were more likely to believe it was the Ukrainian military at fault than people in wave 4, although the upper confidence interval for the estimate crosses the zero line. This finding does not hold for the other time comparisons, and in fact, the point for the comparison of wave 4 and 7 is fairly large and positive, although not statistically significant. Due to these mixed findings on our most important indicator of conspiracy belief revolving MH17, it is difficult to say how time had an effect on belief in a conspiracy theory tied to MH17.

Figure 1 and Figure 5 prove that people displayed an increasing belief that the crash was due to a mechanical failure as time passed. Although counter to the findings of the JIT, this does not really represent a conspiracy theory. As argued in Toal and O'Loughlin (2018), believing that it was an accident represents a willingness to remain neutral vis-a-vis Russia, Ukraine, and the separatists. As time passed, more people chose a neutral option.

Demographics

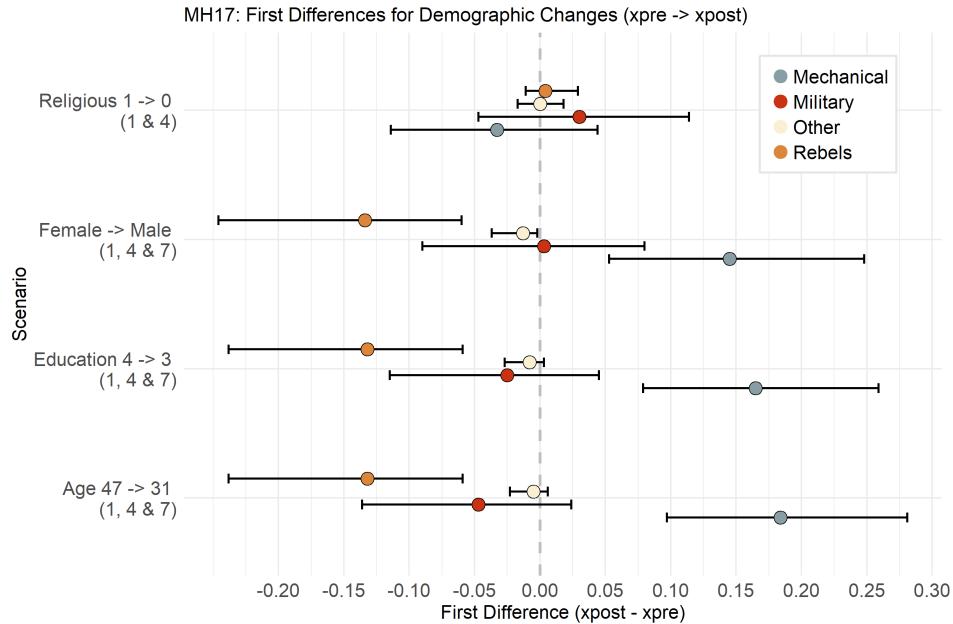


Figure 6. Differences are simulated from underlying multinomial logistic regression models for a hypothetical individual where the only varying parameter is the variable of interest presented on the left axis. Models are specified in parentheses by showing what waves were used and can be found in the Appendix. Points to the left of the zero line represent higher likelihood for xpre and points to the right of the line represent higher likelihood for xpost.

Figure 6, Figure 7, and Figure 8 present first differences for demographic parameters (Sex, Age, Education, and Religiosity) for each outcome. For MH17, Figure 6 shows that women, more educated people, and older people were more likely to believe it was the rebels, whereas men, the less educated, and younger people were more likely to believe it was a mechanical failure. The red point, for blaming the Ukrainian military, crosses the zero line for each of these variables, however it is negative for education and age, which would mean that older people and more educated people may have been more

likely to believe it was the military. Our findings on education for MH17 do not support J.-W. Van Prooijen (2017), which argued that higher levels of education predict decreased belief in conspiracy. Our estimates for MH17 for religiosity also does not support that of the literature. All of them are not statistically significant. They suggest that religious people were more likely to believe it was a mechanical failure and that non-religious people were more likely to believe it was the Ukrainian military.

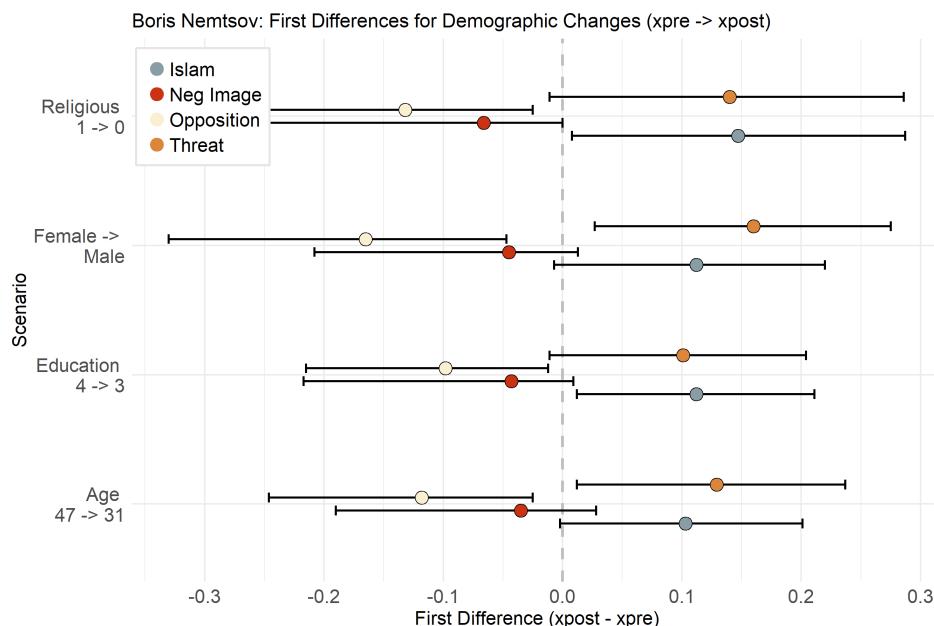


Figure 7. Differences are simulated from an underlying multinomial logistic regression model found in the Appendix for a hypothetical individual where the only varying parameter is the variable of interest presented on the left axis. Points to the left of the zero line represent higher likelihood for xpre and points to the right of the line represent higher likelihood for xpost.

Of the outcomes for the Nemtsov model, the belief that he was killed to create a negative image of the Putin regime is by far the most conspiratorial. Represented by the red point in Figure 7, the estimates for this outcome consistently fall below the zero line,

meaning that religious people, women, higher educated people, and older people were more likely to state this belief. The confidence intervals cross or touch the zero line in each case. Despite this, our findings on religiosity do support the literature for this outcome. The findings for education, on the other hand, are counter to the literature.

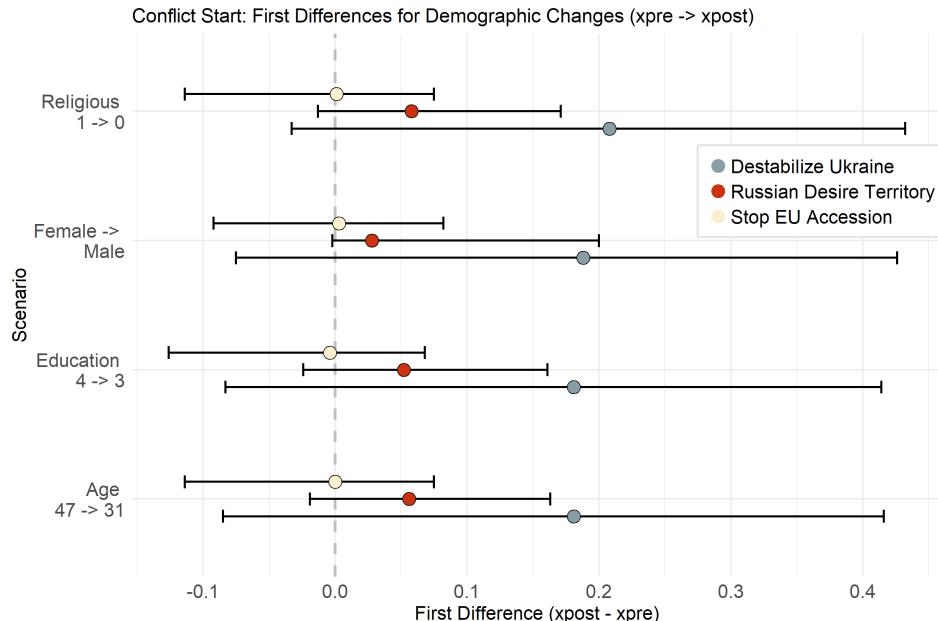


Figure 8. Differences are simulated from underlying logistic regression models found in the Appendix for a hypothetical individual where the only varying parameter is the variable of interest presented on the left axis. Only the conspiratorial outcomes are displayed. Points to the left of the zero line represent higher likelihood for x_{pre} and points to the right of the line represent higher likelihood for x_{post} .

Figure 8 displays point estimates for first differences for demographics based on logistic models regressed on the Conflict Start outcomes. All of the outcomes displayed here are conspiratorial because they implicate the Russian government, even though these beliefs may be empirically valid. On average, we can say with very low certainty that non

religious people, men, less educated people, and younger people are more likely to believe in these theories of the conflict start. Our religiosity estimate now counters the literature, whereas our education estimate supports the literature. Overall, findings regarding the effect of demographics are very mixed and have low certainty. One out of three models supports the literature on religiosity and one out of three models supports the literature on education, each with significant uncertainty.

Ethnic Identity

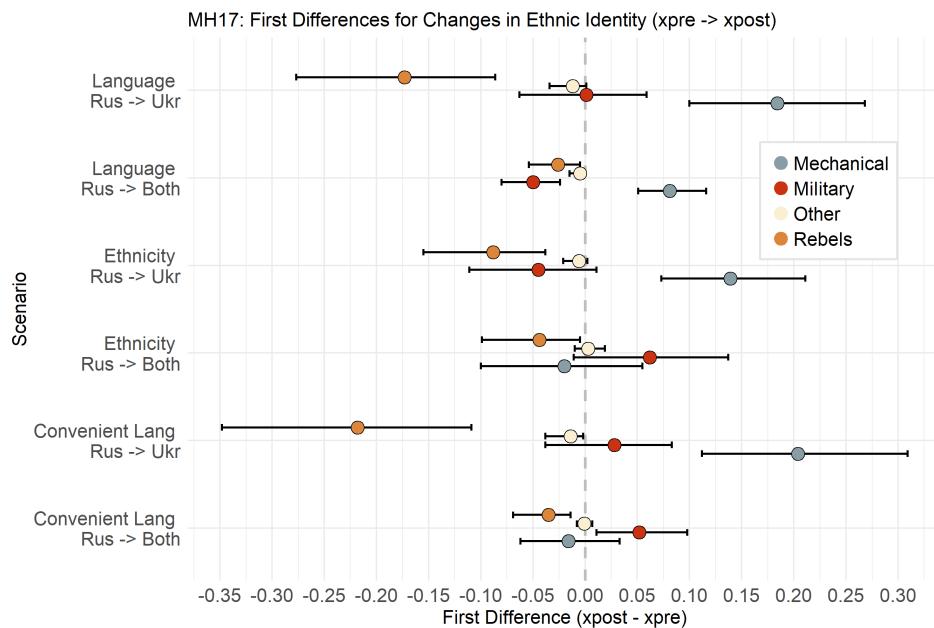


Figure 9. Differences are simulated from an underlying multinomial logistic regression model (Model Wave 1, 4 & 7) for a hypothetical individual where the only varying parameter is a measure of ethnic identity. Points to the left of the zero line represent higher likelihood for xpre and points to the right of the line represent higher likelihood for xpost.

Because these blame attribution theories are ethnically salient, it is crucial to control for different measures of ethnicity. It is also in itself interesting to see how different measures of ethnicity will effect peoples beliefs on these questions. Figure 9, Figure 10, and Figure 11 display the point estimates for differences in ethnicity, home language, and language(s) used in the interview for each outcome. The plots present both differences between each parameter set at Russian and Ukrainian and differences between each parameter set at Russian and Both.

Counterintuitively, in Figure 9 for each parameter for both scenarios, the orange points for blaming the rebels are consistently negative and statistically significant, meaning Russians were more likely to believe it was the separatist rebels. Given the surveys were conducted in Ukraine, these ethnic Russians or people who speak Russian may be displaying a strong allegiance to the Ukrainian state. On the other hand, people who spoke Russian at home were more likely to believe it was the Ukrainian military than respondents who spoke both languages at home. Moreover, the point estimate for this finding is statistically significant. Additionally, people who self-identified as ethnically Russian were more likely to believe it was the Ukrainian military than Ukrainian identifiers. The estimate, however, is not statistically significant. This finding does not hold for the rest of scenarios. Surprisingly, people whose convenient language was neither only Russian nor only Ukrainian were more likely to believe it was the Ukrainian military than people who spoke Russian in the interview (Convenient Lang Rus -> Both).

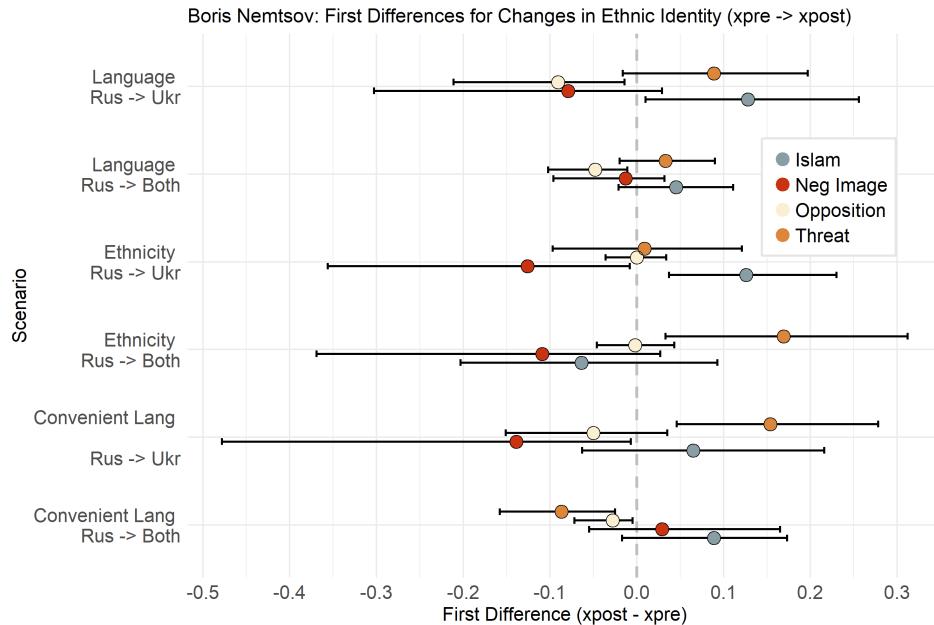


Figure 10. Differences are simulated from an underlying multinomial logistic regression model found in the Appendix for a hypothetical individual where the only varying parameter is a measure of ethnic identity. Points to the left of the zero line represent higher likelihood for xpre and points to the right of the line represent higher likelihood for xpost.

Figure 10 displays estimates for ethnic identity changes for the Nemtsov models. The red points which represent a belief that Boris Nemtsov was killed as part of a plot to create a negative image of the Putin regime is the most conspiratorial, but it is also relatively ethnically salient given it exonerates the Russian regime. The red points are consistently negative, meaning Russians were more likely to believe in this conspiracy theory than their comparison. Moreover, two of the estimates, for convenient language from Russian to Ukrainian and for ethnicity from Russian to Ukrainian, are statistically significant and can be differentiated from zero. There is substantial evidence indicating Russians are more likely to believe in this conspiracy theory than Ukrainians are, but it is not surprising

given how ethnically salient the belief is.

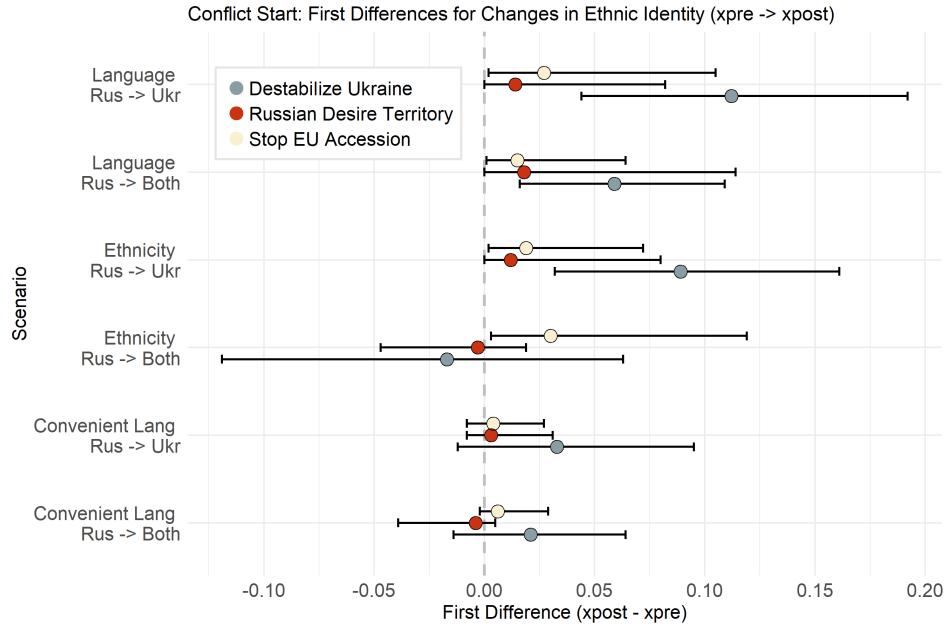


Figure 11. Differences are simulated from underlying logistic regression models found in the Appendix for a hypothetical individual where the only varying parameter is a measure of ethnic identity. Only the conspiratorial outcomes are displayed. Points to the left of the zero line represent higher likelihood for xpre and points to the right of the line represent higher likelihood for xpost.

Figure 11 presents estimates for changes in measures of ethnic identity for the Conflict Start models. The estimates consistently fall to the right of the zero line for language, and for changes in ethnicity from Russian to Ukrainian, meaning that bilinguals and unilingual Ukrainians and ethnic Ukrainians are more likely to believe in these theories of the conflict start than their Russian ethnic and unilingual counterparts. This is an intuitive finding, given these theories are also ethnically charged by attributing blame to Russia. The difference between setting ethnicity to Russian and ethnicity to both is not consistently positive nor statistically significant. This finding also makes sense, given that we should

expect bi-ethnics to fall somewhere in between Ukrainian ethnics and Russian ethnics. Convenient language has less of a clear effect, showing a positive but not statistically significant difference when moving from Russian to Ukrainian, a mixed or null effect when moving from Russian to both.

Anomia

Since the MH17 question was asked in multiple waves, we have more measures of anomia to test than for the subsequent questions. Figure 12 presents point estimates for differences in changes in measures of anomia for the MH17 models. Point estimates for the same parameter for different models are used as robustness checks, however they can also be indicators of variation over time. The point estimates represent the the difference for increases in feelings of anomia, with points to the left of the zero line showing that people with neutral levels of anomia display said belief, and points to the right of the zero line showing that people with high levels of anomia display said belief. At first glance, findings look quite mixed, indicating no general trend.

Surprisingly, the point estimates for blaming the Ukrainian military for LSNEXTGN are both to the left of the zero line, meaning that people with lower anomia are more likely to believe in it, which runs counter to the literature. At the same time, however, people stating a belief in a mechanical failure display higher levels of anomia, and people stating a belief in the rebels display lower levels of anomia. These same trends are supported by the point estimates for DEMLEVEL in wave 8. On the other hand, the point estimates for DEMLEVEL in waves 1 and 4 are flipped, meaning they support the literature. The confidence interval for blaming the military for DEMLEVEL in waves 1 and 4, however, crosses the zero line. The rest of the parameters (LSIMPRVE, LSCONTNT,

and HEARINDEX) have minute, mixed, or null effects.

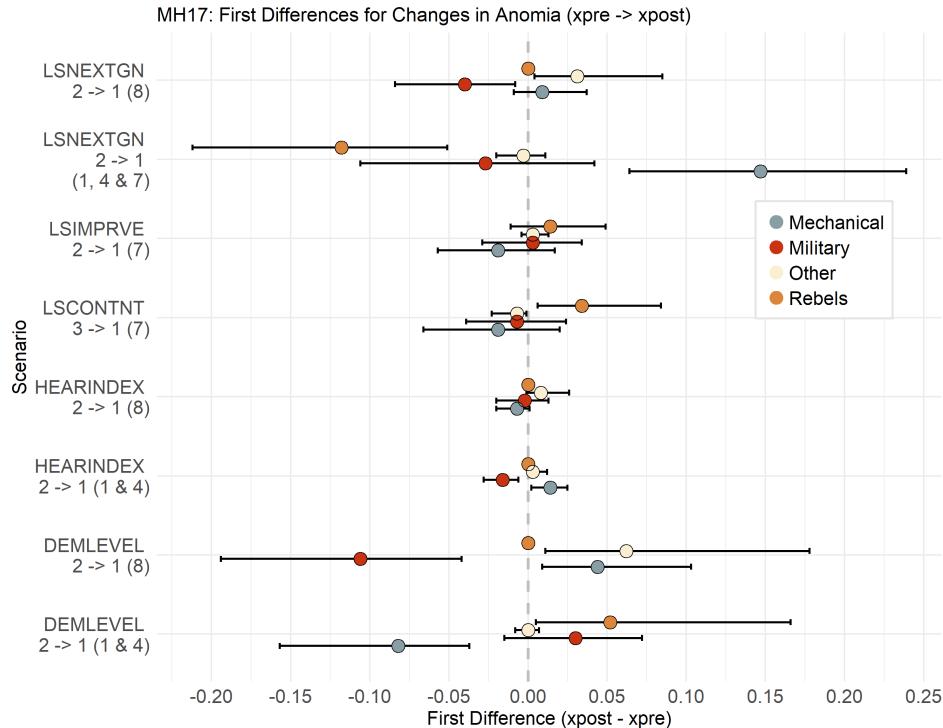


Figure 12. Differences are simulated from underlying multinomial logistic regression models for a hypothetical individual where the only varying parameter is a measure of anomia. Models are specified in parentheses by showing what waves were used and can be found in the Appendix. The same variables are presented for different waves as both robustness checks and indicators of variation over time. Points to the left of the zero line represent higher likelihood for xpre and points to the right of the line represent higher likelihood for xpost.

Since the Nemtsov and Conflict Start questions were only asked in wave 1, we only have three measures of anomia to test. Figure 13 shows point estimates for changes in anomia for the Nemtsov outcomes. The only indication we have of a measure having an effect on conspiracy belief is the red point for DEMLEVEL, which is slightly on the right side of the zero line, meaning that people with higher levels of anomia were

more likely to display said belief. Again, however, there is high uncertainty, given that the lower confidence band overlaps the zero line. Generally, but with uncertainty, people with high levels of anomia displayed the belief that Nemtsov was assassinated in retaliation for comments made about Islamist attacks. A neutral option vis-a-vis Russia and Ukraine, this belief resembles the belief that MH17 was downed due to a mechanical failure. It seems like people with higher levels of anomia in Ukraine are more likely to believe in disinformation that is neutral in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict.

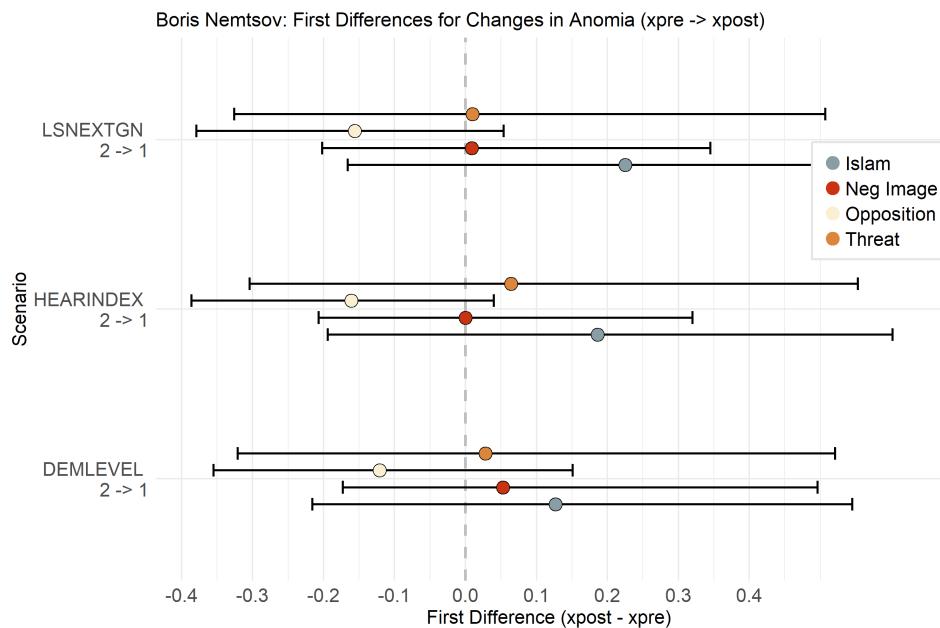


Figure 13. Differences are simulated from an underlying multinomial logistic regression model found in the Appendix for a hypothetical individual where the only varying parameter is a measure of anomia. Points to the left of the zero line represent higher likelihood for x_{pre} and points to the right of the line represent higher likelihood for x_{post} .

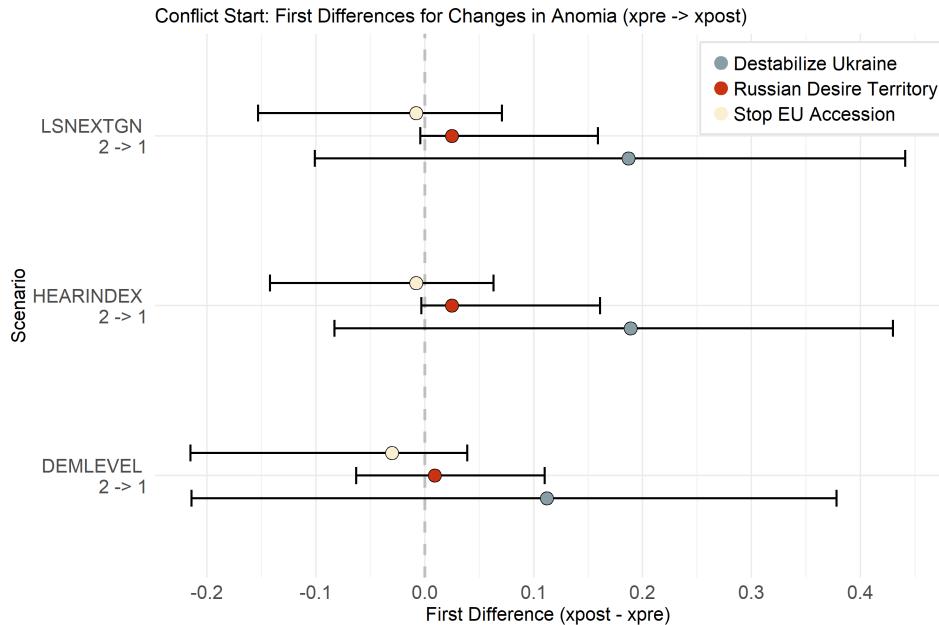


Figure 14. Differences are simulated from underlying logistic regression models found in the Appendix for a hypothetical individual where the only varying parameter is a measure of anomia. Only the conspiratorial outcomes are displayed. Points to the left of the zero line represent higher likelihood for x_{pre} and points to the right of the line represent higher likelihood for x_{post} .

On average, people stating higher levels of anomia were more likely to believe in conspiratorial narratives revolving the start of the conflict, however, there is a caveat in that there is low certainty. The red point for Russian desire for territory is the most certain, but it also slightly overlaps the zero line for LSNEXTGN and HEARINDEX. Overall, increases in anomia result in both positive and negative coefficients, meaning we have mixed findings that are difficult to interpret.

Information Sources and Access

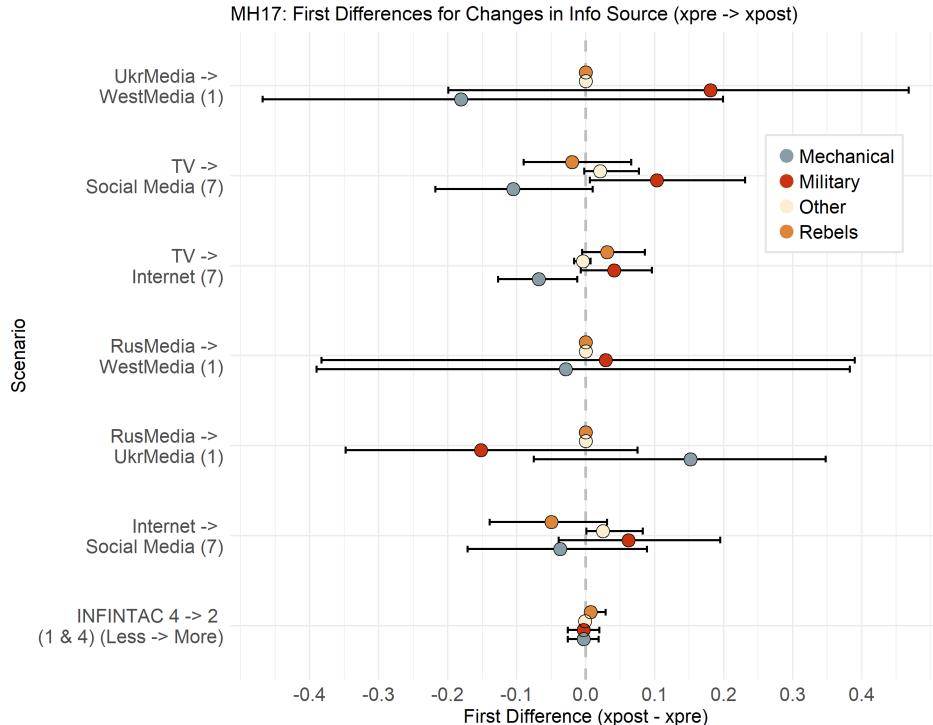


Figure 15. Differences are simulated from underlying multinomial logistic regression models for a hypothetical individual where the only varying parameter is a measure of information source or access. Models are specified in parentheses by showing what waves were used and can be found in the Appendix. Points to the left of the zero line represent higher likelihood for x_{pre} and points to the right of the line represent higher likelihood for x_{post} .

Since the MH17 question was asked in several waves we have additional measures of information source. In addition to responses about what infosphere people mainly derive their information from (Russian, Ukrainian, or Western) and how often they interact with the internet to access information (INFINTAC), point estimates from responses to questions in wave 7 indicate whether there is a link between media type (TV, internet, or

social media) and conspiracy beliefs.

The red point estimate for the difference when moving from Russian media to Ukrainian media for believing in blaming the Ukrainian military, is negative, but with confidence intervals that overlap the zero line, meaning we can say with uncertainty that people who are in the Russian infosphere are more likely to believe that the Ukrainian military shot down MH17. There is no evident difference when moving from Russian to Western Media, but when moving from Ukrainian to Western media, we can see that people in the Western infosphere are more likely to believe the Ukrainian military is to blame than people in the Ukrainian infosphere. This estimate has very high uncertainty though. People in the Ukrainian infosphere, on the other hand, are more likely to believe it was a mechanical failure than respondents in both the Western and Russian infospheres. These points also have very low certainty though.

The findings on media type can be analyzed with greater certainty. When moving from TV to social media, the point estimate for belief in the military shooting down MH17 is positive statistically significant, meaning people who get their information mainly from social media were more likely to believe in this narrative than TV viewers. The same pattern is seen when moving from TV to internet. People who derive their news from the internet are more likely than their TV counterparts to believe the Ukrainian military is to blame.

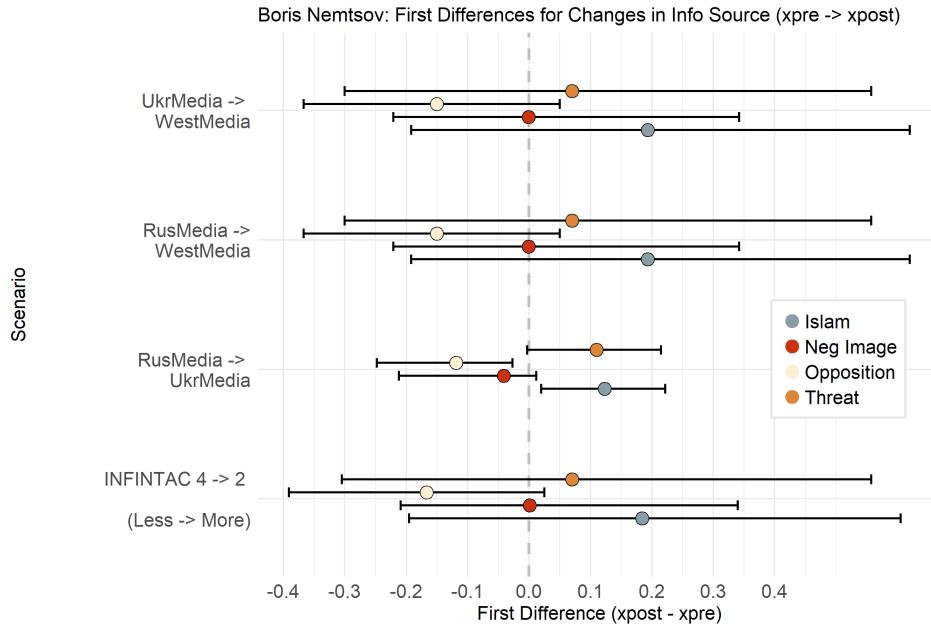


Figure 16. Differences are simulated from an underlying multinomial logistic regression model found in the Appendix for a hypothetical individual where the only varying parameter is a measure of information source or access. Points to the left of the zero line represent higher likelihood for x_{pre} and points to the right of the line represent higher likelihood for x_{post} .

Figure 16 displays first differences for changes in news source and internet interaction frequency for the Nemtsov question. When moving from Russian to Ukrainian media, the red point for belief that he was assassinated to create a negative image of the Putin regime is negative, but has an upper confidence band that overlaps zero. Being part of the Russian infosphere may have a small positive effect on believing in this conspiracy theory. On the other hand, people who derive their news from the Ukrainian infosphere are more likely to believe he was killed in retaliation for comments on Islamist attacks. Ukrainians infosphere members were more likely than their Russian counterparts to state a neutral belief that did not implicate either Russia, Ukraine, or the West for both the MH17

and Nemtsov questions (the neutral beliefs being the “Mechanical Failure” and “Islamist” outcomes). Intuitively, Ukrainian infosphere members are also more likely to believe he was killed because he threatened to expose Russian involvement in the Ukrainian conflict.

The rest of the first differences estimates for the conspiratorial belief (Neg Image) show that there is no effect for the parameter changes presented in those scenarios. The point estimates for INFINTAC indicate that realistic changes in the frequency at which one accesses the internet for information has no effect on conspiracy belief given that the certainty is so low.

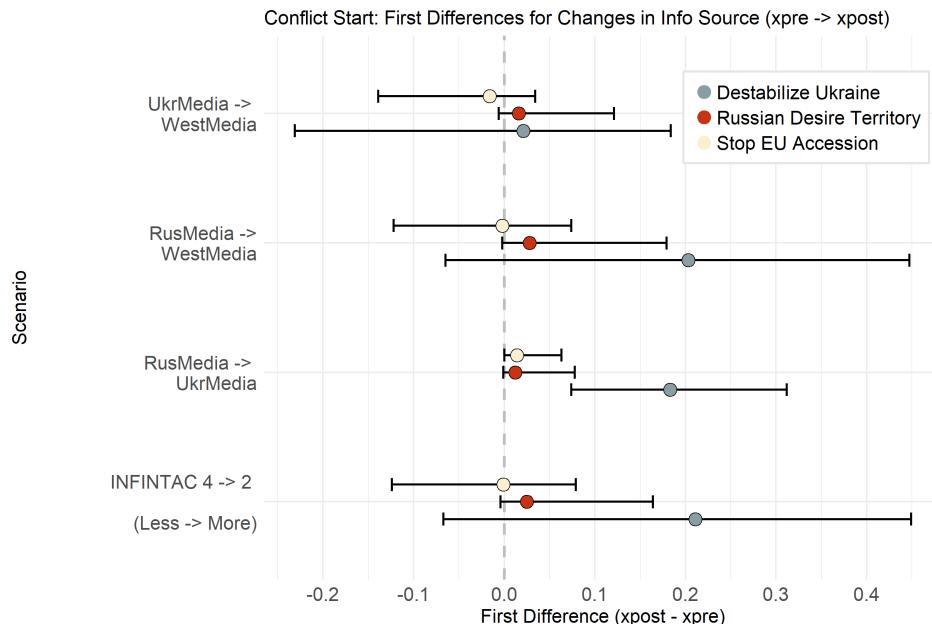


Figure 17. Differences are simulated from underlying logistic regression models found in the Appendix for a hypothetical individual where the only varying parameter is a measure of information source or access. Only the conspiratorial outcomes are displayed. Points to the left of the zero line represent higher likelihood for xpre and points to the right of the line represent higher likelihood for xpost.

Figure 17 presents the results from changes in infosphere and internet access for the conflict start questions. Ukrainian infosphere members are much more likely than Russian infosphere members to believe in all of these narratives. The point estimate for belief in a Russian wish to destabilize Ukraine is substantially large and statistically significant.

A similar pattern is visible for the first differences between Russian media and western media. Changes from Ukrainian media to Western media have little to no effect. Lastly, people accessed the internet more often were more likely to state conspiratorial beliefs about the conflict start than were people who accessed the internet less often. The confidence bands overlap zero for each estimate for INFINTAC though.

CONCLUSION

The simulations on the effect of time on the MH17 question resulted in mixed findings. Interestingly, people were more likely to believe it was the separatist rebels at fault earlier in time, but they were also more likely to believe it was the Ukrainian military at fault in wave 1 than in wave 4. Our findings regarding the effect of changes in demographic parameters are very mixed and have low certainty. One out of three models supports the literature on religiosity and one out of three models supports the literature on education.

Although there was mixed findings for the effect of ethnicity on the MH17 questions, a couple estimates pointed to Russians being more likely to believe it was the Ukrainian military. The findings were less mixed for the Nemtsov question. Russians were more likely to believe he was killed to create a negative image of the Putin regime. Finally, Ukrainians were more likely than Russians to believe narratives about the conflict start that implicated Russia.

For the MH17 question, anomia generally had no effect on conspiratorial beliefs,

and where it did have an effect, it was opposite what the literature would lead one to believe. Interestingly, the estimates for the neutral option (Mechanical Failure) lead us to believe that people with higher levels of anomia chose to state a belief that implicated neither group. This same finding was repeated in the Nemtsov simulations, with anomia additionally having no effect on conspiratorial beliefs. For the conflict start, the estimates were according to the literature. Higher levels of anomia were associated with higher likelihood of blaming Russia for the conflict start.

Media type mattered for belief in conspiracies about MH17. Internet and social media users were more likely to espouse the belief that the Ukrainian military was at fault than were TV watchers. Compared to internet users, social media users were more likely to believe in the conspiracy too. As for infosphere, Russian infosphere members were more likely to believe in the narrative that blamed the Ukrainian military than Ukrainian infosphere members. Internet interaction frequency had no effect on the MH17 question. As for believing Nemtsov was killed to create a negative image of Putin, Russian infosphere members were more likely to believe it than Ukrainian infosphere members, and internet interaction frequency again had no effect. Lastly, Ukrainian infosphere members were more likely to believe in the conflict start narratives that blamed Russia, and those who accessed the internet more frequently were more likely to believe them too.

Findings were overall very uncertain. A replication of this analysis could re-estimate standard errors using survey weights. Additionally, one index could have been created using all the measures of anomia so as to better measure anomia as a whole, instead of including several interrelated measures of anomia in one model.

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Appendix

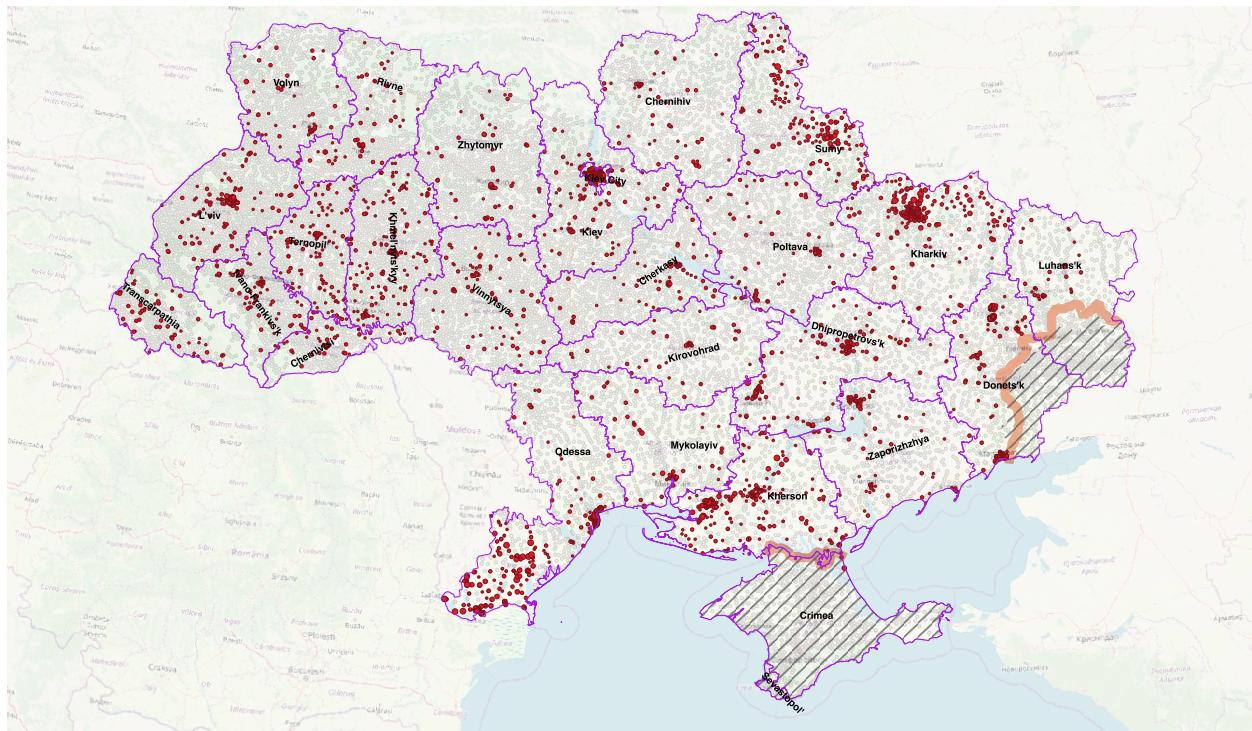
*Survey Design and Descriptive Statistics*TABLE 1 *Descriptives of Survey Waves (Means of raw data rather than true population means)*

Wave	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Ethnicity							
Ukrainian	0.78	0.72	0.76	0.83	0.76	0.84	0.82
Russian	0.10	0.11	0.07	0.04	0.07	0.05	0.07
Both	0.04	0.06	0.09	0.07	0.08	0.05	0.06
Other	0.08	0.11	0.08	0.05	0.09	0.06	0.05
Home Language							
Ukrainian	0.33	0.29	0.36	0.49	0.35	0.50	0.37
Russian	0.41	0.49	0.41	0.31	0.41	0.31	0.46
Both	0.23	0.19	0.20	0.20	0.20	0.18	0.17
Other	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.04	0.02	0.01
Convenient Language							
Ukrainian	0.31	0.28	0.34	0.49	0.34	0.52	0.36
Russian	0.58	0.67	0.55	0.42	0.54	0.37	0.54
Ambiguous	0.12	0.05	0.11	0.10	0.12	0.12	0.09
Distance to							
Donbas	485.96	486.21	556.04	543.29	513.84	542.60	526.24
Crimea	423.58	423.66	457.00	473.86	449.19	474.20	459.30
Demographics							
Female	0.63	0.65	0.63	0.64	0.66	0.62	0.65
Age	51.38	50.74	51.45	52.46	52.58	51.79	52.31
Education	3.91	3.95	3.82	3.71	3.84	3.80	3.99

TABLE 2 Sample size per wave per oblast

Oblast Wave	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
City of Kyiv	600	607	603	596	180	601	430	600	4217
Center/North									
Sumy oblast	351	362	362	363	80	363	180	60	2121
Kirovohrad oblast	51	51	51	51	60	51	150	54	519
Kyiv oblast	98	99	98	98	130	98	300	96	1017
Vinnytsia oblast	83	83	83	83	110	83	250	84	859
Poltava oblast	78	78	79	78	100	78	230	78	799
Cherkasy oblast	67	67	67	67	92	67	202	66	695
Chernivtsi oblast	45	45	45	45	60	45	140	48	473
Chernihiv oblast	56	58	56	56	70	56	170	54	576
West									
Rivne oblast	56	56	56	56	70	56	170	54	574
Volyn oblast	51	51	51	51	70	51	150	54	529
Dnipropetrovsk oblast	173	173	173	173	231	174	521	174	1792
Zakarpattia oblast	62	62	62	62	81	62	190	60	641
Zaporizhzhia oblast	97	97	97	97	130	97	290	96	1001
Ivano-Frankivsk oblast	70	69	69	69	90	69	210	72	718
Lviv oblast	127	690	683	690	170	690	380	690	4120
Khmelnytskyi oblast	68	68	68	600	90	600	200	66	1760
Ternopil oblast	55	55	55	55	70	55	160	600	1105
East									
Donetsk oblast	657	664	664	84	110	671	250	672	3772
Zhytomyr oblast	65	68	64	65	80	65	190	66	663
Luhans'k oblast	33	33	33	33	40	33	99	36	340
Kharkiv oblast	968	953	952	958	190	953	440	672	6086
South									
Kherson oblast	600	600	600	603	70	602	170	600	3845
Mykolaiv oblast	60	60	60	60	80	57	180	60	617
Odesa oblast	1276	1247	1247	1249	152	1249	350	672	7442
Total	5847	6396	6378	6342	2606	6926	6002	5784	46281

Figure 18. Each gray dot is a polling station where there has never been a sample drawn. Each red dot is a polling station where there has been a sample drawn.



Regression Models

Codebook

Dependent Variables

- MH17 - Reason for Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 crash
 - 1. Mechanical Failure
 - 2. It was shot down by the people fighting on the side of the D/LPR
 - 3. It was shot down by Ukrainian forces
 - 4. Other (Russia in Wave 8)
- BORIS - If you had to guess, why would you say Boris Nemtsov was killed?
 - 1. Who? - Who is Boris Nemtsov
 - 2. Neg Image - To create a negative image of the Putin Regime
 - 3. Islam - Spoke out against Islamist attacks in Paris
 - 4. Threat - He threatened to expose Russian involvement in the conflict
 - 5. Opposition - His general opposition to the Putin regime
- Conflict Start - Who do you most blame for the outbreak of the conflict in the East of Ukraine since February 2014?
 - 1. CSYANUCORR - Failure of Yanukovych gov to curb corruption
 - 2. CSUKRGOV - Ukrainian government's failure to protect the rights of Russian speakers
 - 3. CSHISDIV - Historical divisions between East/West Ukraine

4. CSWESTSUP - Western support for Maidan protestors
5. CSDONBRUS - Historical ties between Donbas and Russia
6. CSRUSS - Russian desire to regain control of lost territory since collapse of USSR
7. CSDESTBLZ - Russian desire to destabilize the Ukrainian government
8. CSSTPEU - Russian desire to stop Ukraine from moving towards NATO/EU membership

Independent Variables

- RSPEDUC - Education
 1. Did not finish high school
 2. High school
 3. Technical school
 4. Bachelor's degree
 5. Any degree after bachelor's degree
- LSNEXTGN - Overall, do you expect the next generation to be . . . ?
 1. Worse off than yours
 2. About the same as yours
 3. Better off than yours
- HEARINDEX
 - Index ranging from 0 to 7, with higher values indicating a respondent believes more politicians would listen to them.

- DEMLEVEL - Do you think the level of democracy in Ukraine is getting worse, staying the same, improving?
 1. Deteriorating
 2. Staying the same
 3. Improving
- LSIMPRVE - To what extent, if at all, do you feel you are able to improve your situation in life?
 1. I feel powerless to do anything to improve my situation
 2. I may be somewhat able to improve my situation in life
 3. I have many opportunities to improve my situation in life
- LSCONTNT - To what extent do you feel content about your situation in life at the moment?
 1. Very discontented
 2. Somewhat discontented
 3. Neither contented nor discontented
 4. Somewhat contented
 5. Very contented
- INFINTAC - How often do you access the internet for news?
 1. Every day
 2. Several times a week

3. Once a week
4. A few times a month
5. Once a month
6. Never

TABLE 3 Multinomial Logit Models for MH17 Crash Blame Attribution

Model: Outcome:	Waves 1, 4 & 7			Waves 1 & 4		
	Rebels	Military	Other	Rebels	Military	Other
Only_Ukr	0.439* (0.174)	-0.593* (0.193)	0.014 (0.229)	0.577* (0.208)	-0.315 (0.239)	-0.092 (0.276)
Rus_Ukr	-0.118 (0.222)	-0.418 (0.253)	0.178 (0.282)	-0.220 (0.269)	-0.613 (0.322)	0.182 (0.339)
All_Other	-0.280 (0.227)	-0.899* (0.268)	-0.709* (0.308)	-0.425 (0.277)	-0.803* (0.336)	-0.868* (0.382)
Lang_Ukrainian	0.278 (0.157)	-0.247 (0.223)	0.433* (0.196)	0.249 (0.213)	-0.274 (0.289)	0.544* (0.264)
Lang_Both	0.321* (0.121)	-0.054 (0.154)	-0.197 (0.165)	0.329* (0.162)	-0.006 (0.206)	-0.067 (0.220)
Lang_Other	-0.064 (0.404)	0.0001 (0.468)	0.458 (0.498)	0.0003 (0.506)	0.261 (0.581)	-1.205 (1.125)
convlang_Ukr	0.113 (0.155)	-0.924* (0.228)	0.230 (0.196)	0.566* (0.234)	-0.270 (0.327)	0.817* (0.285)
convlang_Both	0.007 (0.144)	-0.687* (0.204)	0.291 (0.183)	-0.078 (0.196)	-0.565* (0.275)	0.369 (0.248)
log(db_dist)	0.389* (0.059)	0.094 (0.069)	0.401* (0.086)	0.259* (0.079)	0.076 (0.094)	0.236* (0.117)
log(cr_dist)	-0.065 (0.089)	-0.338* (0.112)	-0.243* (0.107)	-0.269* (0.126)	-0.602* (0.154)	-0.610* (0.146)
log(eu_dist)	-0.140 (0.083)	-0.074 (0.101)	-0.226* (0.094)	-0.434* (0.140)	-0.329* (0.154)	-0.483* (0.155)
Female	-0.271* (0.089)	-0.218 (0.116)	-0.391* (0.107)	-0.164 (0.124)	-0.069 (0.158)	-0.098 (0.154)
RSPAGE	0.008* (0.003)	0.008* (0.003)	0.020* (0.003)	0.011* (0.004)	0.016* (0.005)	0.018* (0.005)
RSPEEDUC	0.019 (0.032)	0.018 (0.042)	0.060 (0.039)	-0.024 (0.049)	-0.099 (0.062)	0.010 (0.061)
data_wave_4	-0.007 (0.115)	-0.181 (0.147)	-0.241 (0.143)	-0.021 (0.126)	-0.164 (0.161)	-0.237 (0.156)
data_wave_7	-0.592* (0.114)	-0.337* (0.147)	-0.378* (0.139)			
Center_North	0.689* (0.238)	0.636* (0.323)	1.365* (0.251)	0.595 (0.482)	-0.598 (0.870)	1.712* (0.500)
Kyiv_city	0.645 (0.429)	1.082* (0.551)	1.652* (0.442)	0.843 (1.026)	0.779 (1.440)	2.587* (1.037)
South	-0.754* (0.137)	0.215 (0.177)	-1.110* (0.178)	-0.457* (0.194)	0.409 (0.247)	-0.455 (0.244)
West	-0.489* (0.115)	-0.447* (0.151)	-0.477* (0.145)	-0.211 (0.163)	0.053 (0.215)	0.043 (0.212)
INFINTAC				-0.018 (0.035)	-0.122* (0.044)	-0.014 (0.043)
LSNEXTGN	0.247* (0.054)	-0.246* (0.071)	0.281* (0.066)	0.258* (0.080)	-0.004 (0.101)	0.361* (0.101)
HEARINDEX				0.080* (0.037)	0.108* (0.046)	0.161* (0.043)
DEMLEVEL				0.113 (0.089)	-1.004* (0.125)	-0.124 (0.109)
Religious				0.005 (0.220)	-0.147 (0.269)	-0.140 (0.286)
Observations	8965	8965	8965	5287	5287	5287
Akaike Inf. Crit.	14,104.93	14,104.93	14,104.93	7,699.16	7,699.16	7,699.16

Note: Constant omitted to save space. *p<0.05

TABLE 4 Multinomial Logit Models for MH17 Crash Blame Attribution (cont.)

Model:		Wave 1		Wave 8		
Outcome:	Rebels	Military	Other	Rebels	Military	Russia
Only_Ukr	0.763* (0.292)	0.164 (0.348)	0.393 (0.374)	-0.316 (0.394)	-1.234* (0.411)	-0.411 (0.364)
Rus_Ukr	0.424 (0.519)	0.583 (0.583)	1.361* (0.581)	-0.337 (0.532)	-0.422 (0.544)	-0.636 (0.497)
All_Other	-0.563 (0.388)	-0.621 (0.468)	-0.575 (0.511)	0.678 (0.605)	0.025 (0.677)	0.308 (0.574)
Lang_Ukrainian	0.818* (0.397)	0.562 (0.476)	0.753 (0.455)	1.265* (0.428)	0.872 (0.527)	0.694 (0.400)
Lang_Both	-0.463 (0.240)	-0.589* (0.299)	-1.120* (0.320)	0.336 (0.276)	0.121 (0.333)	0.469 (0.256)
Lang_Other	-0.707 (0.658)	-0.255 (0.739)	-13.902* (0.00001)	8.882* (0.534)	8.676* (0.763)	9.465* (0.491)
convlang_Ukr	0.288 (0.371)	-0.564 (0.507)	0.568 (0.445)	-1.366* (0.425)	-2.146* (0.580)	0.149 (0.384)
convlang_Both	0.261 (0.313)	-0.270 (0.404)	0.408 (0.382)	-0.340 (0.356)	-0.638 (0.477)	0.037 (0.326)
log(db_dist)	0.415* (0.116)	0.264 (0.136)	0.254 (0.151)	-0.009 (0.158)	-0.158 (0.178)	0.139 (0.150)
log(cr_dist)	-0.286 (0.253)	-0.740* (0.283)	-0.582* (0.282)	-0.044 (0.149)	0.216 (0.193)	0.267 (0.142)
log(eu_dist)	-0.685* (0.279)	-0.683* (0.289)	-0.736* (0.291)	0.044 (0.205)	-0.063 (0.263)	-0.065 (0.189)
Female	-0.105 (0.205)	0.007 (0.249)	-0.171 (0.243)	-0.341 (0.196)	-0.495* (0.241)	-0.502* (0.182)
RSPAGE	0.018* (0.007)	0.027* (0.008)	0.030* (0.008)	0.008 (0.007)	0.024* (0.008)	0.013* (0.006)
RSPEEDUC	-0.107 (0.093)	-0.092 (0.112)	-0.135 (0.109)	0.015 (0.066)	0.0005 (0.083)	0.133* (0.061)
Center_North	-0.808 (0.827)	-1.480 (1.337)	0.479 (0.871)	0.809* (0.357)	-0.454 (0.574)	-0.074 (0.330)
Kyiv_city	11.147* (0.198)	-6.512* (0.000)	13.194* (0.198)	-1.526 (1.038)	-14.108* (0.00000)	0.080 (0.763)
South	-1.610* (0.374)	-0.384 (0.442)	-0.646 (0.442)	0.084 (0.326)	-0.367 (0.411)	-0.182 (0.304)
West	-1.138* (0.297)	-0.474 (0.367)	0.053 (0.351)	-0.527* (0.244)	-0.710* (0.291)	-0.323 (0.224)
INFINTAC	-0.059 (0.057)	-0.178* (0.069)	-0.056 (0.068)	0.008 (0.052)	-0.029 (0.064)	-0.008 (0.048)
RusMedia	-0.481 (0.547)	1.380* (0.543)	0.254 (0.683)			
WestMedia	-1.243 (1.171)	-0.938 (1.539)	-0.339 (1.279)			
Newspaper	0.272 (1.147)	0.537 (1.226)	-15.775* (0.00000)			
FrndFam	-0.947* (0.388)	-0.887 (0.544)	-0.844 (0.548)			
InfOther	13.525* (0.522)	14.709* (0.650)	15.857* (0.486)			
DEMLEVEL	0.098 (0.144)	-1.110* (0.198)	-0.202 (0.169)	0.485* (0.154)	-0.180 (0.209)	0.977* (0.143)
HEARINDEX	0.136* (0.067)	0.036 (0.082)	0.228* (0.074)	-0.122* (0.052)	-0.279* (0.077)	-0.079 (0.047)
LSNEXTGN	0.184 (0.123)	-0.043 (0.149)	0.300* (0.150)	0.204 (0.125)	-0.175 (0.161)	0.318* (0.115)
Religious	-0.733 (0.425)	-0.864 (0.477)	-0.929 (0.489)	0.008 (0.282)	0.412 (0.348)	0.203 (0.261)
Observations	2237	2237	2237	2815	2815	2815
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,286.717	3,286.717	3,286.717	4,474.889	4,474.889	4,474.889

Note: Constant omitted to save space. *p<0.05

TABLE 5 Multinomial Logit Models for MH17 Crash Blame Attribution (cont.)

Model:	Wave 7		
Outcome:	Rebels	Military	Other
Only_Ukr	-0.388 (0.462)	-1.333* (0.498)	-0.472 (0.546)
Rus_Ukr	-0.674 (0.523)	-0.634 (0.572)	-0.547 (0.633)
All_Other	-0.790 (0.548)	-1.601* (0.630)	-1.456* (0.686)
Lang_Ukrainian	0.541 (0.278)	-0.340 (0.408)	0.607 (0.344)
Lang_Both	0.465* (0.215)	-0.015 (0.285)	-0.130 (0.291)
Lang_Other	-0.439 (0.743)	-0.849 (1.067)	0.442 (0.833)
convlang_Ukr	-0.300 (0.265)	-1.119* (0.383)	-0.346 (0.334)
convlang_Both	0.0004 (0.237)	-0.914* (0.351)	0.114 (0.307)
log(db_dist)	0.462* (0.120)	0.290 (0.148)	0.506* (0.162)
log(cr_dist)	0.379* (0.156)	0.166 (0.216)	0.543* (0.209)
log(eu_dist)	0.290* (0.131)	0.502* (0.228)	0.196 (0.148)
Female	-0.435* (0.145)	-0.394 (0.204)	-0.709* (0.170)
RSPAGE	0.007 (0.005)	0.010 (0.007)	0.027* (0.006)
RSPEEDUC	0.069 (0.051)	0.138 (0.072)	0.121* (0.060)
Center_North	0.569 (0.302)	0.709 (0.421)	0.841* (0.320)
Kyiv_city	0.514 (0.540)	1.101 (0.671)	0.890 (0.564)
outh	-1.267* (0.233)	-0.691* (0.332)	-1.972* (0.326)
West	-0.761* (0.206)	-1.116* (0.277)	-0.994* (0.251)
LSNEXTGN	0.155 (0.085)	-0.535* (0.130)	0.115 (0.101)
LSCONTNT	-0.136* (0.068)	-0.352* (0.102)	-0.124 (0.080)
LSIMPRVE	0.130 (0.131)	-0.047 (0.191)	0.085 (0.158)
TV_source	-0.639 (0.619)	-1.790* (0.704)	-1.478* (0.645)
INT_source	-0.566 (0.642)	-1.304 (0.737)	-1.098 (0.678)
SOC_source	-1.383* (0.693)	-2.788* (0.923)	-1.608* (0.751)
Constant	-3.946* (1.713)	-1.078 (2.464)	-6.254* (2.080)
Observations	3016	3016	3016
Akaike Inf. Crit.	5,199.938	5,199.938	5,199.938

Note: *p<0.05

TABLE 6 Multinomial Logit Model for Boris Nemtsov Assassination Theories

Outcome:	Neg Image	Islam	Threat	Opposition
Only_Ukr	-0.291 (0.233)	-0.991* (0.384)	0.329 (0.180)	0.026 (0.193)
Rus_Ukr	0.205 (0.335)	-0.878 (0.682)	-0.181 (0.298)	0.457 (0.283)
All_Other	-0.183 (0.308)	-0.228 (0.471)	-0.182 (0.246)	-0.216 (0.262)
data_Lang_Ukrainian	-0.032 (0.326)	1.055* (0.507)	0.801* (0.209)	1.083* (0.215)
data_Lang_Both	-0.055 (0.210)	0.131 (0.371)	0.450* (0.140)	0.481* (0.150)
data_Lang_Other	-0.271 (0.490)	-0.494 (0.849)	-0.439 (0.464)	-0.310 (0.517)
data_convlang_1	0.137 (0.320)	-1.320 (0.771)	-0.586* (0.214)	-0.250 (0.218)
data_convlang_3	0.293 (0.277)	0.744 (0.442)	0.632* (0.182)	0.147 (0.199)
log(db_dist)	0.182* (0.086)	-0.020 (0.154)	0.201* (0.058)	0.108 (0.063)
log(cr_dist)	-0.206 (0.137)	-0.139 (0.271)	0.464* (0.100)	0.159 (0.104)
log(eu_dist)	-0.146 (0.116)	-0.118 (0.205)	-0.242* (0.086)	-0.299* (0.089)
Female	-0.636* (0.157)	-0.237 (0.298)	-0.386* (0.114)	-0.531* (0.119)
RSPAGE	0.012* (0.005)	-0.007 (0.010)	0.003 (0.004)	-0.002 (0.004)
RSPEDUC	0.189* (0.069)	0.233 (0.129)	0.210* (0.049)	0.205* (0.052)
data_region_Center_North	-0.069 (0.484)	-4.567* (0.012)	-0.601* (0.305)	-0.556 (0.316)
data_region_Kyiv_city	-0.629 (1.156)	1.791 (1.296)	0.109 (0.577)	0.446 (0.580)
data_region_South	-0.153 (0.246)	0.336 (0.516)	-1.345* (0.175)	-0.990* (0.187)
data_region_West	-0.513* (0.228)	-0.256 (0.463)	-1.362* (0.153)	-0.649* (0.160)
INFINTAC	-0.151* (0.044)	-0.056 (0.083)	-0.032 (0.032)	-0.046 (0.033)
RusMedia	0.475 (0.324)	0.246 (0.533)	-0.040 (0.284)	-0.602 (0.358)
WestMedia	-4.757* (0.013)	1.089 (1.326)	0.690 (0.963)	-0.314 (1.275)
Newspaper	0.336 (0.641)	-4.399* (0.002)	-0.640 (0.592)	0.401 (0.515)
FrndFam	0.245 (0.372)	-0.285 (0.762)	0.139 (0.266)	-0.275 (0.310)
InfOther	-0.065 (0.819)	-4.532* (0.003)	-2.316* (1.137)	-0.918 (0.705)
DEMLEVEL	0.175 (0.120)	-0.234 (0.241)	0.610* (0.080)	0.586* (0.084)
LSNEXTGN	-0.230* (0.094)	-0.059 (0.170)	-0.020 (0.067)	0.286* (0.072)
HEARINDEX	0.025 (0.046)	0.155* (0.076)	0.057 (0.031)	0.078* (0.032)
Religious	0.433 (0.307)	1.061 (0.739)	-0.191 (0.196)	-0.211 (0.207)
Constant	-0.170 (1.332)	-1.147 (2.485)	-2.979* (0.956)	-1.031 (1.003)
Observations	2961	2961	2961	2961
Akaike Inf. Crit.	7,359.053	7,359.053	7,359.053	7,359.053

Note:

*p<0.05

TABLE 7 Logit Models for Conflict Start Blame Attribution

Outcome:	YANUCOR	UKRGOV	HISTDIV	WESTSUP	DONBRUS	RUSSIA	DESTABLZ	STOPEU
Only_Ukr	0.148 (0.141)	-0.220 (0.141)	-0.065 (0.135)	0.261 (0.147)	0.152 (0.136)	0.378* (0.140)	0.561* (0.143)	0.540* (0.156)
Rus_Ukr	0.110 (0.228)	0.317 (0.217)	-0.027 (0.218)	0.723* (0.240)	0.399 (0.219)	-0.030 (0.232)	-0.074 (0.239)	1.101* (0.290)
All_Other	-0.408* (0.185)	-0.312 (0.193)	-0.127 (0.185)	0.236 (0.202)	-0.030 (0.185)	0.474* (0.194)	0.201 (0.193)	0.461* (0.223)
Lang_Ukrainian	-0.029 (0.160)	-0.450* (0.155)	-0.160 (0.149)	-0.173 (0.156)	0.106 (0.147)	0.446* (0.166)	0.662* (0.174)	0.715* (0.215)
Lang_Both	0.348* (0.116)	0.139 (0.107)	0.122 (0.105)	0.328* (0.112)	0.443* (0.104)	0.573* (0.117)	0.322* (0.117)	0.372* (0.145)
Lang_Other	-0.297 (0.319)	0.292 (0.322)	-0.381 (0.327)	0.504 (0.386)	0.097 (0.319)	-0.895* (0.330)	-0.549 (0.341)	0.332 (0.393)
data_convlang_1	-0.990* (0.169)	-0.134 (0.164)	-0.333* (0.158)	-0.615* (0.164)	-0.123 (0.155)	0.102 (0.181)	0.260 (0.188)	0.106 (0.239)
data_convlang_3	-0.037 (0.143)	0.208 (0.130)	-0.073 (0.127)	-0.492* (0.135)	-0.075 (0.126)	-0.129 (0.145)	0.168 (0.145)	0.219 (0.188)
log(db_dist)	0.027 (0.046)	-0.413* (0.049)	-0.256* (0.045)	-0.319* (0.052)	-0.133* (0.043)	0.063 (0.047)	-0.074 (0.049)	-0.042 (0.059)
log(cr_dist)	0.461* (0.073)	0.096 (0.072)	0.358* (0.071)	-0.009 (0.072)	0.189* (0.068)	0.331* (0.080)	0.456* (0.079)	0.469* (0.098)
log(eu_dist)	0.110* (0.056)	-0.122* (0.054)	-0.018 (0.053)	0.065 (0.056)	0.029 (0.051)	-0.014 (0.062)	0.058 (0.061)	-0.084 (0.082)
Center_North	0.832* (0.207)	-0.166 (0.215)	-0.530* (0.197)	0.655* (0.207)	0.148 (0.180)	-0.172 (0.278)	-0.067 (0.283)	-0.147 (0.432)
Kyiv_city	0.834* (0.335)	-0.413 (0.373)	0.460 (0.297)	-0.502 (0.417)	0.230 (0.295)	0.903 (0.619)	-0.298 (0.444)	0.857 (1.038)
South	0.027 (0.136)	0.594* (0.125)	-0.112 (0.123)	0.773* (0.129)	-0.389* (0.121)	-0.941* (0.142)	-0.458* (0.142)	-0.454* (0.191)
West	-0.746* (0.111)	-0.326* (0.109)	-0.306* (0.104)	0.003 (0.111)	-0.602* (0.102)	-1.122* (0.123)	-0.829* (0.123)	-1.173* (0.158)

TABLE 8 Logit Models for Conflict Start Blame Attribution (cont.)

Outcome:	YANUCOR	UKRGOV	HISTDIV	WESTSUP	DONBRUS	RUSSIA	DESTABLZ	STOPEU
Female	-0.055 (0.089)	-0.080 (0.086)	0.205* (0.083)	0.090 (0.088)	0.091 (0.081)	-0.080 (0.093)	0.021 (0.094)	-0.154 (0.116)
RSPAGE	0.010* (0.003)	-0.00002 (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)	0.008* (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	-0.003 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	-0.005 (0.004)
RSPEDUC	-0.101* (0.039)	-0.053 (0.037)	0.040 (0.036)	-0.022 (0.038)	0.022 (0.035)	0.045 (0.041)	0.054 (0.041)	0.031 (0.049)
INFINTAC	0.003 (0.025)	0.021 (0.024)	0.024 (0.023)	0.007 (0.025)	0.032 (0.023)	0.053* (0.026)	-0.018 (0.026)	-0.015 (0.032)
RusMedia	-0.453* (0.210)	0.310 (0.224)	0.600* (0.221)	0.078 (0.225)	0.435* (0.214)	-0.345 (0.219)	-0.996* (0.236)	-0.417 (0.228)
WestMedia	-1.284 (0.787)	-0.893 (0.751)	0.719 (0.664)	1.792* (0.862)	1.081 (0.746)	0.878 (0.738)	0.399 (0.882)	-0.226 (0.833)
Newspaper	-0.135 (0.398)	0.134 (0.422)	-0.681 (0.431)	-0.411 (0.422)	0.245 (0.419)	-0.202 (0.446)	0.122 (0.473)	-0.292 (0.498)
FrndFam	0.212 (0.232)	-0.029 (0.226)	0.550* (0.219)	0.295 (0.244)	0.391 (0.215)	-0.331 (0.232)	-0.603* (0.238)	-0.449 (0.245)
InfOther	0.663 (0.553)	-0.030 (0.476)	0.121 (0.453)	0.022 (0.484)	-0.080 (0.488)	-0.287 (0.487)	0.037 (0.536)	-0.526 (0.527)
DEMLEVEL	0.260* (0.063)	-0.219* (0.061)	-0.087 (0.059)	-0.575* (0.062)	0.053 (0.058)	0.806* (0.069)	0.655* (0.069)	0.602* (0.090)
LSNEXTGN	-0.012 (0.055)	-0.370* (0.053)	-0.122* (0.051)	-0.289* (0.055)	-0.005 (0.051)	0.085 (0.056)	0.168* (0.057)	0.138* (0.068)
HEARINDEX	0.137* (0.025)	-0.048* (0.023)	-0.028 (0.021)	-0.013 (0.023)	-0.006 (0.021)	0.039 (0.026)	0.083* (0.027)	0.163* (0.037)
Religious	0.277 (0.147)	-0.061 (0.144)	-0.107 (0.139)	-0.140 (0.149)	-0.219 (0.138)	-0.130 (0.153)	-0.224 (0.156)	-0.100 (0.188)
Constant	-3.619* (0.686)	3.955* (0.667)	-0.511 (0.645)	2.684* (0.679)	-1.010 (0.627)	-3.047* (0.735)	-3.732* (0.727)	-1.422 (0.932)
Observations	2,821	2,971	2,925	2,911	2,894	2,912	2,902	3,030
Akaike Inf. Crit.	3,432.873	3,617.640	3,839.221	3,468.890	3,922.792	3,165.031	3,114.948	2,333.865

Note: *p<0.05