

You Traitor!

Collaboration, Perceived Betrayal, and Political Tolerance in Ukraine

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Abstract

When democracies face existential threats, do citizens uphold the political rights of compatriots who collaborate with the enemy? Using a conjoint experiment with 2,035 Ukrainian citizens during active hostilities, we show how political tolerance hinges on perceived betrayal of the nation. Ideologically motivated collaboration and actions endangering the nation (like passing intelligence to the enemy) elicit severe intolerance, while coerced, survival-based, or administrative actions receive more lenient judgment. At the same time, redemption proves challenging. Concrete efforts like volunteering or reporting enemy war crimes modestly increase tolerance but rarely offset hostility. Worse, symbolic gestures like public apologies backfire, reducing tolerance below the level of legal cooperation. These findings underscore two insights: first, perceived national betrayal emerges as a key moral judgment structuring political intolerance; and second, redemption hinges on substantive contributions to national survival. Together, these insights carry important implications for democratic resilience, conflict resolution, and, eventually, post-conflict reconciliation.

Political rights and liberties are the bedrock of democracies, ensuring individual freedoms and the proper functioning of democratic institutions (Easton 1975; Lipset 1959; Weingast 1997). Yet, these rights often face erosion during crises, particularly in wartime, where actions ranging from the suspension of elections and political bans to the use of intimidation or torture by armed groups signal a democratic decline (Acemoglu et al. 2022; Freedom House 2024). When war places democracies under strain, sustained public commitment to democratic norms becomes essential. In its absence, societies risk spiraling into retributive cycles—including public shaming or revenge killings—that further weaken democratic structures (Horowitz 2001; Kao and Revkin 2023). In contrast, continued public support for democratic principles can help democracies get through crises (Claassen 2020). Hence, understanding citizens’ willingness to curtail compatriots’ rights and freedoms during wartime is vital, as such attitudes both reflect and potentially accelerate democratic backsliding.

In this article, we examine political tolerance toward enemy collaborators,¹ focusing on the extent to which citizens are willing to uphold the rights of their fellow compatriots (including the right to vote, hold office, and retain citizenship) when those compatriots are perceived as having collaborated with the enemy. We theorize that perceived betrayal of the nation² or,

¹ Following Kao and Revkin (2023, 358), we define a collaborator as “someone who supports an armed group, whether voluntarily or under coercion” and interpret support broadly, ranging from proactive actions (e.g., taking up arms) to presumed support (e.g., staying in enemy territory). Moreover, we define “the enemy” in this study as the opposing side(s) in a civil war or a foreign aggressor in an interstate dispute.

² By “nation” we refer not to particular regimes, elites, or institutions, but to a civic community of citizens unified by shared territory, identity, political principles, and/or a system of governance (Kulyk 2023; Polese and Wylegala 2008). As such, our conception of loyalty differs from an authoritarian notion of absolute or unconditional allegiance to a ruling regime.

conversely, loyalty towards the nation underpins wartime political tolerance: citizens will be more tolerant towards compatriots they perceive as loyal, and both collaborative actions during and restorative efforts after violence shape perceived loyalty. Specifically, more severe and voluntary acts of collaboration typically lead to harsher repercussions, including desires to revoke citizenship and political rights, as such actions breed perceptions of betrayal toward the nation. Conversely, restorative efforts may signal a renewed loyalty to the nation, thereby fostering political tolerance.

We test our theory through a conjoint experiment conducted in war-torn Ukraine. Political tolerance is vital to post-conflict reconciliation and has therefore been studied primarily in post-conflict cases (e.g., Kao, Fabbe, and Petersen 2026; Kijewski and Rapp 2019; Rapp, Kijewski, and Freitag 2019; Gibson and Gouws 2002; Shamir and Sagiv-Schifter 2006; Shamir and Sullivan 1983; Samii 2013). Yet understanding its dynamics during ongoing conflict is equally important. Citizens' willingness to extend political rights to individuals accused of collaboration can shape conflict dynamics, influence prospects for reconciliation, and inform policy responses long before violence ends. Additionally, existing research has focused largely on civil wars, where the perceived enemy is internal (e.g., Gibson and Gouws 2002; Hutchison 2014; Kijewski and Rapp 2019; Rapp, Kijewski, and Freitag 2019; Shamir and Sagiv-Schifter 2006). Far less is known about how citizens evaluate compatriots accused of collaborating with a foreign aggressor. Such cases raise distinct questions about the boundaries of political membership and whether individuals perceived as disloyal to the nation remain legitimate members of the political community deserving of the rights of citizenship. Ukraine provides a particularly valuable setting for studying these dynamics. At the time of data collection, control over some communities shifted repeatedly between Russian and Ukrainian forces (Yaffa 2023). As a result, questions about how citizens should judge alleged collaborators were not

hypothetical but deeply salient in public and political life. At the same time, our theoretical framework extends beyond Ukraine. It speaks to other contexts in which citizens evaluate the political membership of fellow citizens whose commitment to the nation is disputed, including settings of occupation, insurgency, and post-conflict reintegration.

Our findings confirm that more consequential and voluntary collaboration with the enemy significantly reduces political tolerance. Notably, the strongest effects emerged from those attribute levels most closely tied to betrayal of the nation: passing information to enemy forces (which directly compromises national security), followed by joining the Russian police and other acts that signal active support for the occupying regime rather than mere passive presence. Moreover, collaboration driven by ideological alignment with the enemy is judged substantially more harshly than coerced or survival-based collaboration, underscoring that perceived loyalty to the enemy—rather than merely collaborating—shapes citizens' tolerance judgments. Equally important, our results also reveal steep barriers to redemption. While restorative actions can increase tolerance, the effects are modest compared to the harmful effects of collaboration actions and motivations. In addition, only two of four tested mechanisms (volunteering and providing intelligence) modestly increased tolerance relative to Ukraine's default approach of legal investigation and punishment, while patriotic expressions and public apologies reduced tolerance below this baseline. These findings underscore that perceived betrayal fuels exclusionary attitudes, and that symbolic gestures may not only fail to mitigate hostility but may even deepen intolerance. At the same time, political tolerance during wartime is neither unconditional nor indiscriminate. Even in politically and emotionally charged cases, citizens distinguish between different forms of collaboration, motivation, and restoration when evaluating who remains deserving of political rights.

Violence and Political Tolerance

Political tolerance, or the willingness of citizens to extend basic political rights and liberties to individuals with whom one disagrees or whom one dislikes (Hutchison 2014; Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1982), marks the foundation of peaceful democracies. It includes elements such as allowing all individuals in society the right to vote, demonstrate, and hold political office (Stouffer 1955; Gibson and Bingham 1982). By being closely tied to principles of freedom of speech, association, and equal protection, it allows for the peaceful exchange of ideas and contributes to social cohesion. In contrast, a lack of political tolerance may result in discrimination, censorship, or even persecution of certain individuals or groups. Hence, even though issues like citizenship status and voting rights are legally determined, public opinion on who belongs and has rights matters for the functioning of democratic societies and consolidation of peaceful coexistence. As a result, a substantial body of literature has studied the determinants of political tolerance. While much of this work has been conducted in consolidated, peaceful democracies (e.g., Bjånesøy, Ivarsflaten, and Berntzen 2023; Dalton 2019; Duch and Gibson 1992; Gibson and Duch 1991; Krishnarajan 2023; M. B. Petersen et al. 2011) and particularly the United States (e.g., Chong, Citrin, and Levy 2024; Crawford and Pilanski 2014; J. T. Davis and Perry 2021; Kuklinski et al. 1991; Sullivan et al. 1981; Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1979, 1982), several authors have also focused on the formation of political tolerance during and, particularly, in the aftermath of conflict and war (e.g., D. W. Davis and Silver 2004; Gibson and Gouws 2002; Hutchison 2014; Hutchison and Gibler 2007; Kijewski and Rapp 2019; Rapp, Kijewski, and Freitag 2019; Shamir and Sagiv-Schifter 2006; Wang and Chang 2006; Samii 2013).

The latter strand of research has shown how political tolerance is vulnerable in conflict-prone societies. For example, Wang and Chang (2006) illustrate that perceived threats from Beijing

reduce political tolerance among Taiwanese citizens, whereas Shamir and Sagiv-Schifter (2006) show that perceptions of threat to national identity and security prompt Israeli Jews to withhold political rights from Palestinians. Similarly, Hutchinson (2014) finds that internal violence-related threats lead individuals across 32 countries to deny basic civil liberties to perceived enemies. Finally, in post-war Sri Lanka, Rapp and colleagues (2019) unravel some of the psychological mechanisms explaining the negative impact of war experiences on Tamil respondents' willingness to grant basic civil liberties to Sinhalese individuals (although see Kijewski and Rapp 2019 for more nuance). Collectively, these studies significantly enhance our understanding of how political violence stifles political tolerance.

Our study furthers research on violence and tolerance along at least two lines. Theoretically, we shy away from more commonly used predictors of political (in)tolerance, particularly objective threat and threat perceptions, and instead suggest *perceived betrayal of the nation* as another, often overlooked, determinant of political tolerance in times of conflict. Specifically, we argue that past collaborative actions as well as future-oriented restorative efforts may translate into political tolerance by influencing to what extent citizens perceive others have betrayed their nation. By doing so, we align with recent research that assigns agency to combatants (Godefroidt and Langer 2023) and views fighting groups as complex entities, where individuals assume diverse roles (Kao and Revkin 2023). Empirically, our case study also significantly differs from prior work. That is, we focus on an ongoing interstate war instead of a terminated civil war. In what follows, we first delve deeper into the theory before elucidating the case selection.

Political Tolerance and the Role of Perceived Betrayal

Unlike earlier research on (post-)war forgiveness and revenge, our study focuses on political tolerance: a judgment about whether individuals should retain their membership in the political community and the rights that come with it. These judgments are inherently tied to questions about what society expects from its citizens. In both democratic theory and constitutional practice, citizenship is understood as a reciprocal relationship (or ‘social contract’) between the state and its people, with both sides bound by mutual rights and obligations (e.g., *On Citizenship of Ukraine* 2001, Art. 1; “Naturalization Oath of Allegiance to the United States of America” 2020; Dagger and Lefkowitz 2014). Citizens entrust the state to protect their lives, liberty, and property and to guarantee fundamental rights (Rawls 1971; Locke 1967; Rousseau 2018). In return, they are expected to uphold certain civic duties, obligations, and virtues that sustain collective life, including loyalty and respect for the rule of law (Galston 1991: 221-4, cited in Kymlicka and Norman 2000; Besley 2020, 2021).

We translate this macro-level theory to the micro-level by arguing that citizens internalize the logic of the social contract and apply it in everyday moral judgment of their fellow citizens. Specifically, they expect one another to act as loyal members of the nation and punish those who violate these expectations. When someone collaborates with the enemy during wartime, they are perceived as having betrayed the nation and, in doing so, forfeited their claim to the rights associated with membership in this political community. Conversely, actions that signal renewed commitment to the community can help restore loyalty and foster renewed political tolerance. In this way, perceived betrayal functions as a psychological bridge linking features of collaboration and redemption to political (in)tolerance. Figure 1 summarizes the theoretical framework; the following sections elaborate its central components.

Figure 1 about here

Collaborative Severity and Volition

Previous work on retributive justice shows that people's sense of justice depends heavily on *what* people did and *why* they did it. Past behavior and underlying motivations respectively convey information about the severity and volition involved in these actions. First, the *severity* of past wrongdoings strongly correlates with desires for revenge and retribution (Boydell and Grindstaff 1974; Feather 2002; Gibson and Gouws 1999; Godefroidt and Langer 2023; Kao and Revkin 2023; M. B. Petersen 2015). Building on this work, we define the severity of collaboration by the consequences or costs of one's actions. At one extreme, civilians may actively participate in violence and atrocities, causing serious harm to individuals and property.³ At the other extreme, civilians might be seen as collaborators simply for staying in enemy territory, in which case harm is rather minimal. Between these extremes, civilians can advance military aims by sharing information, sheltering combatants, or supplying essential resources. They can also sustain governance in occupied territories by supporting administrative tasks such as tax collection or maintenance (Arjona 2016; R. D. Petersen 2001; Stewart 2018). We argue that as collaboration harms the state's military success and, thus, survival more, citizens feel a deeper sense of betrayal. As a result, they seek to impose punishments, including the withdrawal of civil rights and liberties. This leads to hypothesis 1:

H1: Citizens are more likely to withdraw civil rights from collaborators as the severity of their collaboration increases.

³ In our case, Ukrainians cannot join the Russian army but rather Russian paramilitary groups and the Russian-controlled police, which are also seen as a source of violence (Yaffa 2023).

Besides severity, the degree of *volition* (i.e., whether individuals acted freely or under coercion) also matters, as the public tends to be more forgiving toward those seen as having little control over their decisions (Godefroidt and Langer 2023; Kao, Fabbe, and Petersen 2026; Kao and Revkin 2023). In post-ISIS Mosul, for example, perceptions of volition were strongly correlated with support for punishment (Kao and Revkin 2023). A follow-up experiment confirmed this: Iraqi citizens were more supportive of punishment when informed that an individual had voluntarily aided ISIS, compared to when the same actions were described as coerced (Kao, Fabbe, and Petersen 2026). These findings illustrate that choice plays a central role in how wartime behavior is evaluated, shaping judgments of responsibility and agency.

Building on this insight, we argue that volition also influences perceptions of loyalty and betrayal: voluntary collaboration, especially when driven by intrinsic ideological alignment with an enemy, is seen as a clear act of disloyalty, whereas coerced behavior does not carry the same condemnation because agency is constrained. Yet, this simple dichotomy is insufficient. When the state fails to fulfill one of its most fundamental obligations (i.e., protecting citizens from violence and harm), the reciprocal foundation of citizenship erodes, and expectations of loyalty decline accordingly. Under such circumstances, many civilians collaborate simply to survive. Survival-based collaboration occupies an ambiguous position between coercion and ideological commitment. On the one hand, citizens may view such behavior sympathetically because it reflects efforts to secure basic needs under conditions of extreme insecurity. On the other hand, survival-driven collaboration still implies a degree of agency and may be interpreted as placing personal welfare above collective obligations to the nation. As a result, individuals motivated by survival are likely to face greater condemnation than those who were

coerced, but less than those who collaborated out of ideological affinity with the enemy. This leads to our second set of hypotheses:

H2a: Compared to a no-information condition, citizens are more likely to withdraw civil rights from individuals who were *intrinsically* motivated to collaborate.

H2b: Compared to a no-information condition, citizens are less likely to withdraw civil rights to individuals who were *coerced* to collaborate.

H2c: Compared to a no-information condition, citizens are somewhat more likely to withdraw civil rights from individuals who collaborated to *survive*; however, this likelihood will be lower than for those who were intrinsically motivated and higher than for those who were coerced.

Restorative Efforts

A key question in the reconciliation literature is whether signals of redemption can effectively counterbalance past transgressions and reduce blame against those suspected of collaboration. Research shows that people are generally more forgiving when others sincerely regret their harmful behavior. This holds true for both personal disputes (Fehr, Gelfand, and Nag 2010) and intergroup conflicts (Godefroidt and Langer 2023). In the latter case, contributing positively to the community, for instance by assisting the military and police, appears particularly beneficial (Godefroidt and Langer 2023; but see Kao, Fabbe, and Petersen 2026 for null results). Other actions believed to promote reconciliation (over and above legal cooperation and punishment) include disavowals, apologies, and participation in rehabilitation or reintegration programs (Agneman, Strömbom, and Rettberg 2025; Gelot and Khadka 2025).

These actions enhance reconciliation by reducing threat perceptions (Godefroidt and Langer 2023; Kao, Fabbe, and Petersen 2026; Burnette et al. 2012; Gelot and Khadka 2025) and signaling future value (Burnette et al. 2012; Kao, Fabbe, and Petersen 2026). Again, we suggest another reason why these acts may foster political tolerance: restorative acts might equally restore a sense of civic loyalty, thereby increasing political tolerance. Following this logic, efforts that boost patriotism and confirm allegiance to the nation, as well as those that strengthen the nation's position in the ongoing war, are hypothesized to produce the strongest effect on restoring loyalty. Still, we also examine how more common ways of signaling redemption, like public apologies, influence political tolerance. This brings us to hypothesis 3:

H3: Citizens are more likely to grant civil rights to collaborators who engage in restorative actions, especially those that demonstrate patriotism and strengthen the nation's war effort.

Social Identities

In short, we propose that individuals are judged based on how their wartime behavior either upholds or violates the reciprocal social-contract obligations of citizenship, which include loyalty to the political community and helping it survive. Yet, as theories of intergroup bias and social role expectations suggest, citizens also evaluate others through identity-based lenses (Tajfel and Turner 1979). We add that these identity cues translate into perceptions of (dis)loyalty. For instance, collaborators' ethnic self-identification with the enemy can be interpreted as a signal of disloyalty as individuals persist in identifying with the external aggressor while national survival is at stake (Barrington 2021; Kulyk 2023), resulting in

decreased political tolerance.⁴ Second, gender and age can further influence perceptions of responsibility for loyalty violations. Society symbolically associates men with leadership and protection, so people may impose harsher penalties on men for collaborating with the enemy, whereas people interpret women's actions through complex moral and emotional scripts that can either mitigate or intensify blame (Zulver 2022; Gentry and Sjoberg 2015). Age similarly conveys expectations of civic maturity and agency, shaping how people judge someone's capacity to uphold or betray the social contract. Consequently, we pre-registered secondary hypotheses regarding ethnic self-identification, gender, and age alongside the primary hypotheses outlined above. We provide more details on the pre-registration in pages 2-5 of the Supplementary Information (SI).

Empirical Background: Political Tolerance in War-torn Ukraine

Case Selection

We explore the dynamics of political tolerance towards enemy collaborators in an ongoing interstate war: Ukraine. Understanding the drivers of political (in)tolerance during war is essential for developing policies that address immediate security and military challenges while simultaneously laying the groundwork for conflict resolution, reconciliation, and long-term stability. Ukraine is a particularly consequential case for these questions because, at the time of our study (and writing), there was no formal settlement, the legitimacy of state authority in occupied regions was contested, national survival was still at stake, and accusations of collaboration were unfolding in real time.

⁴ Please note that we manipulate collaborators' ethnic self-identification, which has stronger political connotations than "pure" ethnocultural markers (see also Footnote 14). The distinction between ethnic self-identification and ethnicity is an avenue for future research.

This context is further complicated by the fact that the war in Ukraine constitutes not only an ongoing, but also an interstate war. Interstate wars raise distinct questions about sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the legal status of civilians living under occupation. How these civilians are treated is important for upholding international laws and human rights (Teitel 2000). Yet we know remarkably little about how citizens of an attacked nation perceive internal dissent and collaboration with a foreign enemy. In civil wars, the enemy is an internal rival, whereas in interstate wars, the threat comes from an external source. Such conflicts, particularly territorial disputes, heighten emotional attachments to both the contested land (Justwan and Fisher 2021; Tir 2010) and the nation itself (Gibler, Hutchison, and Miller 2012). In Ukraine, the sense of national belonging—already strengthened after Euromaidan—surged even further following the 2022 full-scale Russian invasion (Arel 2018; Kulyk and Hale 2026), with the share of citizens expressing very strong identification as Ukrainian (i.e., selecting 10 on a 10-point scale) rising from 49% in August 2021 to 84% in August 2022 (Ratings Group 2022). These heightened national sentiments can serve as a unifying force, strengthening national cohesion and resilience against the external enemy (Bauer et al. 2016; Kulyk 2018; Pop-Eleches and Robertson 2018).⁵ However, they may also intensify hostility toward fellow citizens perceived as betraying the nation. As a result, shifts in political intolerance may be more pronounced during interstate territorial wars than in other conflict contexts.

⁵ Surging national identification, however, did not translate into uncritical support for all Ukrainian institutions and leaders. Ongoing protests against corruption, for instance, illustrate that this surge reflects a strengthened civic identity under conditions of existential threat rather than obedience to the regime. Hence, our conceptualization of “nation” as a civic community (see Footnote 2) is empirically grounded in the Ukrainian case.

At the same time, we believe the underlying dynamics we identify, particularly the role of perceived betrayal in shaping political tolerance, are not unique to the Ukrainian case. Similar public judgments may arise in other conflicts marked by internal divisions and contested national loyalty, including secessionist struggles (e.g., Catalonia, Kashmir), post-occupation transitions (e.g., Iraq, Afghanistan), and counterinsurgency contexts (e.g., the FARC in Colombia, the LTTE in Sri Lanka, or the IRA in Northern Ireland). Specifically, we expect our argument to travel to cases where substantial portions of the population remain loyal to the national community while others support rival actors. Even more so, wherever political communities confront external threats, surging secessionist sentiment, or uncertainty over who belongs to the civic “we,” perceived betrayal may weigh more heavily than instrumental threat perceptions. In such contexts, collaboration constitutes a moral transgression—one that challenges the boundaries and obligations of political membership.

Conflict and Collaboration in Ukraine

The war in Ukraine began in 2014 with Russia’s annexation of Crimea, following Ukraine’s Euromaidan protests and the ousting of pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich (Shveda and Park 2016). Around the same time, Russia-backed separatists also seized control of parts of Donetsk and Luhansk, and the war stagnated in a prolonged, low intensity conflict in eastern Ukraine. In 2015, the Minsk II agreements, brokered by France and Germany, attempted to de-escalate the conflict by calling for a ceasefire, withdrawal of heavy weapons, prisoner exchanges, and constitutional reforms that would grant special status to the separatist regions in exchange for their reintegration into Ukraine. However, Russia continued covert military and financial support for the separatists, along with offering Russian passports to residents of neighboring states to reframe them as Russian and justify intervention (Hurak and D’Anieri 2022, 124). Ukraine resisted political concessions that could entrench Russian influence, and

the agreements failed to bring lasting peace (Allan 2020; Åtland 2020; D’Anieri 2023; UN Peacemaker 2015). On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, quickly seizing large portions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia. In September 2022, Russia organized militarized referendums and formally annexed these territories, marking a major escalation. However, beginning in fall 2022 and continuing through our fieldwork period, Ukrainian forces launched a series of counteroffensives, steadily reclaiming occupied territory. This progress fueled widespread public optimism about Ukraine’s military prospects at the time of our survey (IRI 2023).

The occupied territories have experienced varying levels of collaboration with Russian forces, ranging from passive compliance to active support (Glinski 2023; McBride 2023; Mirovalev 2022). For example, thousands of local officials and bureaucrats remained in their posts, facilitating a smooth administrative transition under Russian occupation, while others directly aided Russian military efforts by providing intelligence on Ukrainian troop movements, weapons caches, and minefields. Recognizing the challenges posed by collaboration, Ukraine introduced new legislation in 2022 to define and penalize such acts (McBride 2023). These laws criminalized public denial of Russian aggression, (voluntary) participation in occupation administrations, economic cooperation with Russian authorities, and involvement in illegitimate elections, among other things. At the time of our fieldwork, over 2,800 cases were pending against alleged collaborators, with penalties ranging from job restrictions to up to 15 years in prison (Zubova 2024). At the same time, an estimated 3.7 million people had fled Eastern Ukraine for other regions within the country (International Organization for Migration (IOM) 2023). In this context, simply remaining in occupied territories could be interpreted as passive support for the occupiers (Dettmer 2023). Finally, we should note that, as in other

conflicts, many instances of collaboration were coerced through threats, imprisonment, and torture (Mirovalev 2022), further underscoring the complexities of collaboration.

Data and Method

Sample

Between April and May 2023, we conducted an online survey in non-occupied parts of Ukraine. Our study protocol adheres to the APSA's *Principles and Guidance on Human Subject Research* and was approved by Pompeu Fabra University's Institutional Committee for the Ethical Review of Projects (CIREF #273). An important feature of our study is its focus on sensitive political issues during an ongoing war. As detailed in pages 6-11 of the SI, we implemented a range of safeguards to ensure ethical integrity. These included qualitative and quantitative piloting of the survey instrument, carefully designed informed consent and debriefing procedures (including providing contact information for local support services to address potential impacts of participation) to minimize risks for respondents during data collection, and a thorough data management plan.

Participants were recruited by IPSOS from their extensive online panel of over 400,000 members. The survey could be taken in the Ukrainian or Russian language, and respondents received a small compensation for their participation (APSA Principle #4). To enhance the external validity of our findings, we employed quota sampling and ensured the sample was nationally representative in terms of age, gender, and region of living. After applying list-wise deletion for missing outcome data, the effective sample size consisted of 2,035 Ukrainian residents aged 18 to 79 ($M=41.47$; $SD=12.19$), with slightly more than half being female (53%). To ensure the safety of both participants and the research team (APSA Principle #7), the study was conducted exclusively in government-controlled areas. As a result, the sample

does not include individuals who fled Ukraine or currently live in Russian-occupied territories. It does, however, include 22% self-identified internally displaced persons (IDPs), a proportion notably higher than the International Organization for Migration’s May 2023 estimate of 12% (International Organization for Migration (IOM) 2023). Despite these constraints, the sample remains broadly representative of the Ukrainian adult population that has lived through 15 months of war, particularly with respect to age, gender, region of residence, and urbanization (see SI Table C.1).

Experimental Design

To evaluate our theoretical claims, we designed a rating-based conjoint experiment. Conjoint experiments are a well-established method for identifying the causal effect of various treatment components (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014). By disaggregating variables that might otherwise be correlated, they offer several advantages compared to observational survey questions or unifactorial vignette experiments, including a greater reduction in social desirability bias (Horiuchi, Markovich, and Yamamoto 2022), less measurement error (Denney and Green 2021; Wimmer et al. 2025), and a closer alignment with real-world behavior (Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Yamamoto 2015). Experiments are also increasingly recognized as an effective tool for gathering sensitive information during war (Rickard et al. 2025).

Following a brief introduction, respondents were asked to evaluate the case of a “Ukrainian citizen living in a liberated city in a previously occupied eastern part of the country.” To minimize deception (APSA Principle #6), we introduced the collaborators as imaginary. While this decision may reduce external validity, it aligns with prior conjoint experiments in conflict settings (Godefroidt and Langer 2023; Kao and Revkin 2023), and recent evidence suggests that using hypothetical scenarios does not significantly alter results (Brutger et al. 2023). The

profiles varied on six characteristics (see Table 1). First, we varied the gender,⁶ age, and self-identification of the collaborators. Second, we manipulated the severity of collaboration (H1), motivation behind collaboration (H2), and act of restoration (H3). As outlined in the theory section, collaboration acts were selected to reflect increasing degrees of involvement in Russia’s occupation; motivations span ideological, survival-based, and coerced forms; and restorative efforts range from symbolic speech to concrete actions, with or without an explicit patriotic component, while Ukraine’s default approach of legal proceedings serves as the baseline.⁷ All attribute levels reflect plausible real-world variation, grounded in media reporting on collaboration in Ukraine (Yaffa 2023; Mirovalev 2022; Glinski 2023; Zhurzhenko 2023), Ukraine’s newly adopted laws on collaboration (Fremer 2022), and prior research (e.g., McBride 2023; Kao and Revkin 2023; Godefroidt and Langer 2023). Profiles were generated using uniform randomization without replacement and without profile restrictions to simplify estimation and interpretation (SI Figure D.1), as recommended by Hainmeuller et al. (2014) and Leeper et al. (2020). The order of the attributes was fixed to preserve a coherent narrative structure (see Figure 2), and recent evidence shows no systematic order effects in conjoint experiments (Dill, Howlett, and Müller-Crepon 2024; Rudolph, Freitag, and Thurner 2024). Each respondent evaluated five profiles, and responses to one task did not influence responses to subsequent tasks (SI Figure D.2). In total, respondents evaluated 10,175 profiles, which

⁶ There have been reports of female collaborators in occupied territory, such as of women supplying information on military installations or troop movements (McBride 2023; Walker 2024; Yaffa 2023).

⁷ While prosecution and imprisonment are the most common responses to collaboration in Ukraine, we use the phrasing “cooperates with legal procedures and accepts punishment” instead of “is sentenced to imprisonment” to (a) maintain a consistent emphasis on the collaborator’s agency across restorative actions, enabling clearer comparisons, and (b) avoid implying imprisonment for actions that may not warrant such punishment (e.g., staying to survive).

serve as our unit of analysis. This sample size provides sufficient power to detect small-to-medium effects (SI page 2).

Table 1 about here

Figure 2 about here

Measurements

After each experiment, respondents answered a battery of questions. Our dependent variable is citizens' level of political tolerance towards the person described in the vignette. The political tolerance measure used in this study includes opinions about citizenship status ("*This person should be stripped of Ukrainian citizenship*"), high-level political rights ("*This person should be allowed to hold an official government position in Ukraine*"), and low-level rights ("*This person should be allowed to vote in the next Ukrainian elections*"). Each statement was rated on a 5-point Likert scale from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (5). The three items form a reliable measure of political tolerance ($\alpha = [0.80-0.84]$ for the five experiments). We constructed a scale by averaging the scores of the three items, after reverse coding the item on citizenship. Higher mean scores indicate greater political tolerance. To explore the role of betrayal-based judgments, respondents rated the statement "*This person has betrayed Ukraine*"⁸ on the same 5-point Likert scale.⁹

⁸ After piloting and field consultations with local experts, we chose "betrayed Ukraine" rather than "betrayed the Ukrainian nation-state" to capture the national-civic dimension of loyalty to the national community central to our theory, as "nation-state" has a more ethnic resonance in Ukraine.

⁹ The full survey instrument in Ukrainian and Russian, as well as an English translation, can be found in the Replication Folder (/documentation/).

One notable aspect of our political tolerance measure is its inclusion of an item on citizenship, which distinguishes it from prior studies that have focused on high- and low-level political rights (e.g., Freitag and Rapp 2013; Gibson 1992, 2013; Gibson and Bingham 1982; Kijewski and Rapp 2019; Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1982). Citizenship is not just a legal issue; it embodies membership into a political community. When citizens express a desire to revoke someone's citizenship, it reflects profound distrust in that person and reveals the extent to which this institutionalized concept is contested during crises. Moreover, the revocation of citizenship has historically been used as a punitive measure, from denationalization policies following World War II to recent actions against individuals linked to terrorism (Lavi 2010). As Russian weaponized citizenship as a tool of war through a strategy of "passport colonialism, citizenship in Ukraine is not simply a legal status but also a marker of loyalty and national belonging (Barrington 2021). Understanding public attitudes toward citizenship is therefore crucial for addressing challenges related to national unity and the resilience of democratic institutions.

Estimation

To test our hypotheses, we regress political tolerance scores on the experimental attributes using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression, with standard errors clustered at the respondent level to account for repeated measures:

$$Tolerance_{ij} = \alpha + \beta_1 \cdot Severity_{ij} + \beta_2 \cdot Motivation_{ij} + \beta_3 \cdot Restoration_{ij} + \beta_4 \cdot ethnicity_{ij} + \beta_5 \cdot gender_{ij} + \beta_6 \cdot age_{ij} + \varepsilon_{ij},$$

where i indexes respondents and j indexes profiles evaluated by each respondent. Each experimental attribute is modeled as a set of dummy variables, with baseline levels specified

in Table 1. The key parameter of interest is the Average Marginal Component Effect (AMCE), which quantifies the average effect of changing a specific attribute level on political tolerance, compared to the baseline level, averaged over the joint distribution of the other attributes (Hainmueller, Hopkins, and Yamamoto 2014). When comparing effect sizes across attributes, however, we use Marginal Means (MMs), which indicate the mean political tolerance score for a collaborator with a certain attribute level, averaged over the joint distribution of the other attributes. MMs, while a descriptive and not a causal quantity, are more appropriate for comparing scores across attributes (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020).

Findings

Descriptive Statistics

As an initial step, we examine the distribution of responses to the outcome items, as shown in Figure 3. The data reveal a clear reluctance among respondents to extend political rights to individuals perceived as collaborators, with overall political tolerance being low across all 10,175 evaluated profiles ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.02$ on the 1–5 scale). Specifically, only 24% of profiles were granted the right to vote ($M = 2.43$, $SD = 1.24$), and a mere 11% were permitted to hold public office ($M = 1.97$, $SD = 1.07$). Opinions on revoking citizenship were more evenly divided ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.22$), although more than 35% of respondents still supported stripping collaborators of Ukrainian citizenship.

Figure 3 about here

Experimental Results

Next, we evaluate our core hypotheses on how collaborators' actions and motivations influence political tolerance toward collaborators. Figures 4-6 display the Average Marginal Component

Effects (AMCEs) with 95% confidence intervals, illustrating the effect of seeing a given attribute level, relative to the baseline, on the political tolerance scale [1-5]. In general, the AMCEs offer robust evidence in support of our hypotheses, demonstrating that political tolerance is malleable and shaped by individuals' actions and motivations. Item-by-item analyses are consistent with the patterns reported below (SI pages 18-20).

For the severity of collaboration, the baseline is set to “staying in occupied territory,” leading us to expect negative AMCEs for more severe acts. Figure 4 provides strong support for H1: citizens exhibit significantly less tolerance for individuals who engaged in more consequential forms of collaboration than merely remaining under occupation, including passing information to the Russians (-1.32, 95% CI [-1.37, -1.27]), joining the local police (-1.16, 95% CI [-1.21, -1.11]), accepting promotions within the occupation administration (-1.06, 95% CI [-1.11, -1.01]), or continuing to work for the municipality under a Russian-appointed boss (-1.00, 95% CI [-1.05, -0.95]). Passing information to enemy forces is thus the most strongly condemned action.¹⁰ Similarly, continuing one's old job is not uniformly condemned; it is judged much more harshly when that job is political in nature and therefore more directly¹¹ supports the

¹⁰ When “passing information” is used as the baseline, it is indeed condemned significantly more strongly than any other form of collaboration (SI Figure E.1). This deviates from our expectations, as we pre-registered “joining the local police” to be the most condemned action. Two explanations are possible. First, as in Godefroidt and Langer (2023), information-sharing may hold greater weight in shaping public opinion during conflict. Second, respondents may not strongly associate the local police with violence or direct harm against Ukrainians. More explicitly violent forms of collaboration (e.g., “joining a paramilitary group”) might have elicited stronger negative reactions, though we cannot test this here.

¹¹ One could argue that continuing to run a grocery store under occupation economically benefits the occupied forces. However, this contribution is not political and its implication for the nation are less clear-cut compared to working for the occupation administration.

occupying forces. Together, these empirical patterns align with our theoretical claim: actions that most clearly threaten the state's military success and survival also most powerfully signal disloyalty to the nation and are therefore met with the lowest levels of political tolerance.

Figure 4 about here

For motivations, our baseline is set to the condition where no information about the collaborator's motivation is provided. We hypothesized that coerced collaboration should yield positive AMCEs, while ideological and survival-based reasons should produce negative AMCEs. Our results partially support hypotheses H2a-c. Compared to the baseline, tolerance increases when the forced nature of collaboration is explicitly stated (0.53, 95% CI [0.47, 0.58]) and decreases when the collaboration is driven by pro-Russian sympathies (-0.31, 95% CI [-0.36, -0.26]). However, contrary to our expectations, collaboration motivated by survival needs also leads to increased tolerance (0.32, 95% CI [0.26, 0.37]). This suggests that, first, in the absence of information about the motivation behind collaboration, citizens might be more likely to assume that individuals collaborated voluntarily rather than under coercion (see also Kao and Revkin 2023), and second, when the state can no longer guarantee people's safety, survival-based collaboration may foster some sense of understanding among the public.¹²

Figure 5 about here

¹² We find evidence of interactions between actions and motivations. In particular, when individuals merely continued running their grocery store, respondents grant little additional leniency for claims of coercion or survival, whereas the decrease in tolerance is substantially stronger when this same behavior is attributed to pro-Russian sympathies (SI pages 21-27).

Finally, for restoration, we set the baseline to “legal cooperation and accepting punishment,” anticipating positive AMCEs for actions that boost patriotism and bolster the nation’s position in the war. Additionally, we explore the effects of public apologies and volunteering. As expected, not all restorative efforts are received equally. In line with H3, providing intelligence on enemy war crimes elicits higher political tolerance than legal cooperation alone (0.16, 95% CI [0.10, 0.22]), while expressions of patriotism—surprisingly—reduce tolerance (-0.09, 95% CI [-0.15, -0.03]). Volunteering also improves tolerance (0.09, 95% CI [0.03, 0.15]), whereas public apologies prove less effective than cooperating with legal proceedings (-0.09, 95% CI [-0.15, -0.03]). Taken together, these results suggest that actions tend to foster more tolerance than words,¹³ yet the difference between legal cooperation and providing information underscores that not all efforts are valued equally. Indeed, achieving a meaningful shift in political tolerance requires efforts that make tangible and consequential contributions to Ukraine’s survival.

Figure 6 about here

How do these effect sizes compare to one another and to those for demographic attributes? To address this question, Figure 7 presents the marginal means (MMs). Comparing AMCEs across different attributes can be misleading because AMCEs depend on the chosen reference category for each attribute. For instance, although AMCEs appear larger for actions than motivations—

¹³ Interaction effects show that restorative actions appear slightly more effective when collaboration stemmed from pro-Russian sympathies or involved relatively low-consequence behavior, whereas the most consequential forms of collaboration remain especially difficult to redeem. By contrast, patriotic expressions tend to be dismissed as “cheap talk” when the underlying behavior was more serious than merely staying, and apologies appear to undermine claims of coercion (SI pages 21-27).

suggesting that the *what* matters more than the *why*—changing the reference category for motivations from “no information” to “pro-Russian sympathies” raises the AMCE for “coercion” from 0.53 to 0.84 and for “survival” from 0.32 to 0.63. By contrast, MMs average the predicted outcomes across all levels of other attributes, offering an unbiased comparison (Leeper, Hobolt, and Tilley 2020).

Figure 7 reveals some substantively important patterns. First, political tolerance during war is low. The only attribute level yielding a mean tolerance score above the midpoint of the 1–5 scale is *remaining in occupied territory* (MM = 3.36), and even this behavior fails to exceed the midpoint when attributed to ideological alignment (SI Figures E.13 and E.14). All other forms of wartime conduct also fall below the midpoint, indicating a general reluctance to extend political rights to individuals associated with enemy collaboration. Second, political intolerance seems structured by perceived betrayal and enemy allegiance rather than by harm alone. The lowest tolerance scores are elicited by actions and motivations that signal either direct harm to the nation or loyalty to the occupying force: collaborating out of pro-Russian sympathies (MM = 2.01), passing information to the Russians (MM = 2.04), and joining the occupation police (MM = 2.20). Third, the results underscore the limits—rather than the promise—of redemption during wartime. None of the restorative efforts succeeds in raising tolerance above the midpoint of the scale. Even the most effective redemptive act (i.e., providing intelligence on enemy war crimes; MM = 2.60) falls short of political acceptance, as does the default response of legal cooperation and accepting punishment (MM = 2.44). These findings indicate that, under conditions of ongoing conflict, forward-looking restorative behavior is often insufficient to overcome retrospective moral judgments about wartime conduct.

Finally, Figure 7 also tests our secondary hypotheses. Age and gender have virtually no effect on tolerance. The only identity-based attribute with a meaningful effect is ethnic self-identification with Russia, which lowers tolerance ($MM = 2.30$; $AMCE = -0.18$, 95% CI $[-0.21, -0.15]$).¹⁴ Nevertheless, collaborators' actions and motivations continue to overshadow all identity attributes, as well as restorative efforts, in shaping political tolerance.

Figure 7 about here

Table 2 about here

The Role of Perceived Betrayal

As a final step, we examine perceived betrayal—an underexplored moral judgment that may explain why different forms of collaboration and redemption elicit varying levels of political

¹⁴ We believe this finding reflects perceptions of national betrayal rather than mere ethnic bias. Importantly, we manipulated collaborators' self-identification rather than their objective ethnic background, using the wording “*вважає себе етнічним українцем/етнічною українкою*” (“identifies as ethnically Ukrainian”) and “*вважає себе етнічним росіянином/етнічною росіянкою*” (“identifies as ethnically Russian”). Recent research suggests that, in contemporary Ukraine, self-identification as ethnically Russian is often interpreted as a political stance associated with alignment with Russia and rejection of Ukrainian nation-building, rather than as a purely ethnocultural marker (Kulyk and Hale 2026). This interpretation is consistent with evidence that many individuals who previously identified as Russian re-identified as Ukrainian after the 2014 annexation of Crimea, and especially after the 2022 full-scale invasion (Kulyk and Hale 2026). Notably, this interpretation was also anticipated during survey pretesting. One Ukrainian survey expert, for instance, remarked that respondents might perceive the phrase “*identifies as ethnically Russian*” “not as [a statement of] nationality or ethnicity, but as sympathy for Russia” (feedback on questionnaire wording, April 27, 2023). How these results change when more objective ethnocultural markers are manipulated is an avenue for future research.

tolerance. Whereas the policy-specific tolerance items (granting citizenship, voting, holding office) capture forward-looking evaluations about political inclusion, perceived betrayal is a retrospective assessment of core social-contract violations during occupation. Because assessments of past conduct plausibly precede judgments about future political rights, we consider betrayal a related but distinct evaluative response that may help explain the observed treatment effects on political tolerance. However, since we measured betrayal and tolerance within the same post-treatment battery, and because additional identification assumptions are unmet in our design (SI pages 4-5), we do not estimate a formal mediation model. Instead, we use two empirical diagnostics to explore whether the data behave in ways consistent with the theorized mechanism. We did not pre-register these analyses and, therefore, interpret them as suggestive associations rather than evidence of a causal pathway.

First, we assess whether the randomized attributes influence perceived betrayal in ways consistent with our expectations. To do so, we estimate OLS regressions with betrayal as the dependent variable and the experimental attributes as predictors, using the same AMCE specification as in the main analysis. Table 2 shows that experimental attributes heightening perceptions of betrayal (Model 1) also cause lower tolerance (Model 2): more severe collaboration, voluntary motivations, and symbolic restorative efforts all increase perceived betrayal while decreasing tolerance. This parallel pattern does not by itself establish a mechanism, but it is consistent with a theoretical view in which moral judgments of past behavior and political tolerance draw on similar information about wartime behavior.

Second, we examine whether betrayal perceptions help explain variation in political tolerance by estimating multivariate OLS models that sequentially introduce betrayal perceptions and respondent covariates. The results (also in Table 2) show that both betrayal perceptions and the

experimental manipulations exert independent effects on tolerance (Model 3).¹⁵ All else equal, a one-point increase in perceived betrayal (on a 5-point scale) corresponds to a 0.59-point decrease in tolerance (SE = 0.012), roughly 15% of the scale's range. This result remains remarkably stable when including covariates (Model 4). Moreover, a one-point shift in betrayal perceptions has an effect four to eight times larger than standard socio-demographic predictors such as respondents' gender, language use, or victimization, and more than twice as large as respondents' self-identification as Russian. Together, these patterns provide diagnostic evidence for the role we posit for perceived betrayal: a retrospective moral assessment that structures forward-looking preferences about whether an individual should retain their political rights.

Conclusion

In the early months of Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, reports emerged of Ukrainian citizens accused of aiding occupying forces—some allegedly out of fear, others for material gain, and still others out of ideological alignment. While some of these individuals later sought to atone for their actions, offering intelligence to Ukrainian authorities or publicly renouncing their collaboration, public reactions remained divided (Dettmer 2023; Glinski 2023; McBride 2023). Were these acts of redemption enough to restore their standing in society, or was their betrayal irreversible?

¹⁵ Because perceived betrayal is post-treatment, conditioning on it could introduce post-treatment bias. We therefore do not interpret this analysis causally but see it as a diagnostic assessment of whether betrayal perceptions systematically structure tolerance judgments over and above the randomized attributes.

Focusing on political tolerance, we theorize that citizens' willingness to extend or withhold political rights from enemy collaborators is, to a large extent, shaped by *perceived betrayal of the nation*. Our findings confirm that actions that most directly threaten the nation's survival, such as passing information to enemy forces and joining the occupation police, elicit the harshest condemnation. Similarly, ideologically motivated collaboration driven by pro-Russian sympathies reduces tolerance far more than coerced or survival-based collaboration. At the same time, our results also reveal a sobering reality about the limits of redemption. Of the four restorative efforts we tested, only two (i.e., volunteering for Ukraine and providing intelligence on enemy war crimes) modestly increased tolerance, while public apologies and patriotic expressions backfired. More critically, severe collaboration reduces tolerance by over one full point on our 1-5 scale, while even the most effective redemptive mechanism (intelligence provision) offsets only about one-eighth of this punitive effect. Also, even after meaningful restorative efforts, the majority of respondents continue to favor stripping collaborators of fundamental political rights. Hence, betrayal, once perceived, is difficult to undo.

These findings have theoretical, empirical, and policy implications. Theoretically, we build on and extend research on political tolerance by integrating insights from studies on post-war reconciliation, citizenship, and national identity into the political tolerance literature. Existing work has primarily linked political intolerance to perceptions of personal or group-based threat (e.g., Gibson 2006; Hutchison 2014), but our study highlights an alternative, yet often overlooked, mechanism: perceived betrayal of the nation. This betrayal framework provides a valuable lens for understanding exclusionary attitudes in conflict settings and suggests that intolerance is not merely a function of security concerns but also of violated expectations regarding national loyalty.

Empirically, our findings deepen understanding of political tolerance in ongoing wars—an area rarely explored in existing work. Unlike post-war settings, where reconciliation mechanisms are often introduced after a formal settlement, the conflict we studied remained unresolved at the time of writing, meaning that any effort to reintegrate former collaborators must occur alongside continued hostilities. This wartime context may amplify perceptions of betrayal and diminish the impact of mitigating factors like coercion or restorative efforts, compared to post-conflict settings where forgiveness is institutionally encouraged. At the same time, since attitudes formed during war often persist into the post-war period (Balcells 2012; Rapp, Kijewski, and Freitag 2019), addressing political intolerance from the onset is essential for preventing cycles of retribution and fostering long-term stability. The Ukrainian case, with its shifting frontlines and (politicized) accusations of collaboration, underscores the urgency of these dynamics.

Beyond its academic contributions, this study offers several policy insights. Most importantly, our findings suggest that citizens do not evaluate alleged collaborators indiscriminately. Instead, they make nuanced distinctions based on the nature of individuals' wartime conduct, the motivations underlying their actions, and their behavior after liberation. This implies that reconciliation efforts may benefit from transparent processes that provide credible information about what individuals did, the constraints under which they acted, and any subsequent efforts to support the national community. This may foster more differentiated forms of accountability, rather than encouraging blanket judgments that treat all alleged collaborators as equally blameworthy.

At the same time, information alone is unlikely to be sufficient. Efforts to reintegrate perceived collaborators should also create opportunities for tangible restorative actions that visibly

reaffirm loyalty to the nation. While such actions do not fully offset the substantial penalties associated with collaboration, they nonetheless shape public evaluations in meaningful ways. In particular, concrete contributions that support the national cause (such as volunteering and, especially, providing intelligence) consistently increase public acceptance relative to symbolic gestures or legal cooperation alone, suggesting that citizens place greater weight on concrete actions than on words. However, our design does not allow us to assess whether serving specific criminal sentences (e.g., the different prison terms faced by more than 10,000 alleged collaborators in Ukraine) is itself perceived as a form of redemption. Understanding how different forms and severities of punishment affect reconciliation prospects therefore remains an important avenue for future transitional justice research.

Several other limitations also warrant further acknowledgment. First, our analyses provide diagnostic evidence consistent with betrayal as a key mechanism: the experimental attributes most clearly linked to perceived betrayal also reduce tolerance the most, and second, betrayal perceptions are strongly correlated with tolerance judgments. However, because perceptions of betrayal were measured post-treatment rather than experimentally manipulated, these patterns should be interpreted cautiously as illustrating mechanisms consistent with our theory rather than establishing causal pathways. Future research with designs that allow for stronger causal inference about mediation would strengthen our understanding of this mechanism. Second, future research should examine the generalizability of these findings across different conflict settings. While Ukraine presents a compelling case due to its interstate nature and ongoing territorial occupation, similar dynamics may emerge in civil conflicts, insurgencies, and secessionist struggles. Feelings of betrayal and perceptions of disloyalty are not limited to interstate wars; as long as a significant portion of the population identifies with the nation, we expect our theory to hold. Finally, future research could extend this work by examining a

broader scope of collaboration motivations and other characteristics (e.g., ethnocultural markers instead of ethnic self-identification) as well as the extent to which individual-level characteristics (e.g., respondents' ethnicity/self-identification, strength of national identity, political trust) and contextual conditions (e.g., violence intensity, timing within the conflict) moderate the relationship between actions, motivations, restorative efforts, and political tolerance.¹⁶

In sum, this study shows that while targeted restorative efforts can modestly increase political tolerance during wartime, their effects are sharply constrained by moral judgments about past conduct. Actions and motivations that signal enemy loyalty or national betrayal exert far stronger effects on intolerance than restorative behavior can offset. By highlighting perceived betrayal as a central micro-foundation of political (in)tolerance in conflict settings, our findings offer a more nuanced account of how societies navigate tensions between justice, national sentiment, and reconciliation under conditions of ongoing war. As conflicts continue to shape political landscapes worldwide, understanding how such moral judgments structure political tolerance remains critical for sustaining national cohesion and democratic resilience.

¹⁶ While we measured several respondent characteristics, we did not pre-register treatment-effect heterogeneity analyses based on these variables. Given the large number of potential subgroup comparisons, such analyses would necessarily be exploratory and may raise concerns about multiple testing. Furthermore, subgroup analyses are often substantially underpowered, particularly when subgroup sizes are uneven (Coppock, Leeper, and Mullinix 2018). In our case, several characteristics of interest (e.g., respondents' ethnic self-identification) are highly unbalanced, reducing statistical power and limiting the interpretability of subgroup estimates.

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Figures

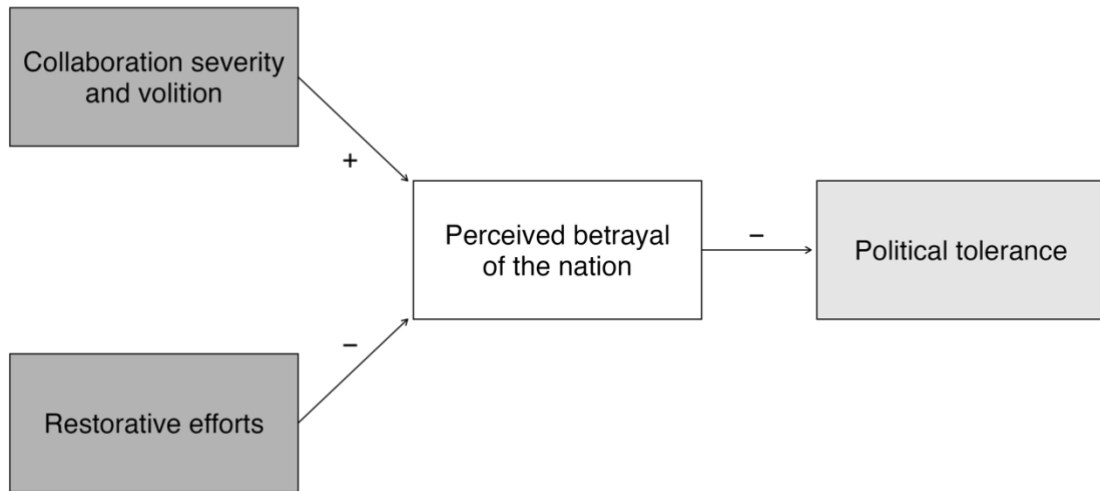


FIGURE 1 Theoretical Framework. *Notes:* The figure summarizes the proposed theoretical framework linking collaboration characteristics and restorative efforts to political tolerance through perceived betrayal.

(A) Example in English (Translation only)

Ipsos

0%

70%

 100%

v.1

In what follows, you will be given a short description of an **IMAGINARY** Ukrainian citizen living in a liberated city in a previously occupied eastern part of the country. After you have carefully read the description, we ask you to rate this person on several criteria.

You will read five such hypothetical descriptions, with each description presented on a separate screen and below each description a list of questions. The questions are always the same.

We realize that the questions might be difficult and potentially sensitive, but we want to emphasize again that your answers will be recorded anonymously and used only for research purposes. So, you can speak freely, and it is also important for the quality of the data that you do so.

Next

(B) Example in Ukrainian

Ipsos

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v.1

Далі Вам буде надано короткий опис **УЯВНОГО** громадянина України, який проживає у звільненому місті в раніше окупованій східній частині країни. Після того, як ви уважно прочитаете опис, ми просимо вас оцінити цю людину за кількома критеріями.

Ви прочитаєте п'ять таких гіпотетичних описів, кожен з яких представлений на окремому екрані, а під кожним описом - список запитань. Питання завжди однакові.

Ми розуміємо, що питання можуть бути складними та потенційно чутливими, але ми хочемо ще раз наголосити, що Ваші відповіді будуть фіксуватися анонімно та використовуватимуться лише в дослідницьких цілях. Таким чином, Ви можете говорити вільно, і це також важливо для якості даних, які Ви також надаєте.

Продовжити

(C) Example in Russian

Ipsos

0%

70%

 100%

v.1

Далее Вам будет дано краткое описание **ВЫМЫШЛЕННОГО** гражданина Украины, проживающего в освобожденном городе в ранее оккупированной восточной части страны. После того, как вы внимательно прочитаете описание, мы просим вас оценить этого человека по нескольким критериям.

Вы прочитаете пять таких гипотетических описаний, каждое из которых представлено на отдельном экране, а под каждым описанием - список вопросов. Вопросы всегда одинаковые.

Мы понимаем, что вопросы могут быть сложными и потенциально чувствительными, но мы хотим еще раз подчеркнуть, что ваши ответы будут фиксироваться анонимно и будут использоваться только в исследовательских целях. Таким образом, вы можете говорить свободно, и это также важно для качества данных, которые Вы также предоставляете.

Продолжить

Ipsos

0%

74%

 100%

v.1

Особа 1: Жінка, громадянка України, 40 років

Коли почалася війна і багато хто виїхав, вона отримала підвищення в російській окупаційній адміністрації.

Вона зробила це, щоб вижити і прогнати свою сім'ю.

Тепер, коли місто звільнено, вона виражає свій патріотизм до України, публічно виступаючи проти війни та Росії.

Ipsos

0%

74%

 100%

v.1

Человек 1: Женщина, гражданка Украины, 40 лет

Когда началась война и многие уехали, она получила повышение в российской оккупационной администрации.

Она сделала это, чтобы выжить и прокормить свою семью.

Теперь, когда город освобожден, она выражает свой патриотизм по отношению к Украине, публично выступая против войны и России.

FIGURE 2 Example of the Experiment. *Notes:* The screenshots show the experimental instructions and an example profile in (A) English, (B) Ukrainian, and (C) Russian. Respondents completed the experiment in Ukrainian or Russian; English is shown for translation purposes only.

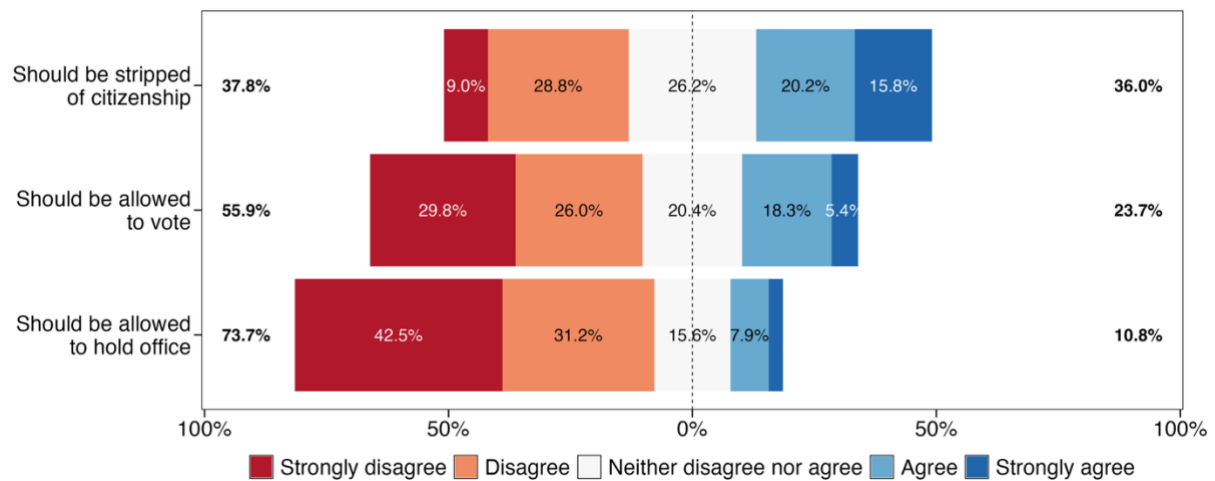


FIGURE 3 Distribution of Citizen Judgments on Collaborator Civil Rights. *Notes:* The figure presents the distribution of responses to the three political tolerance items across all 10,175 evaluated collaborator profiles. Percentages inside the bars indicate the share of respondents selecting each response category on the 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree.” Bold percentages at the far left and right of each bar indicate the combined shares of disagreement and agreement responses, respectively, while neutral responses are centered around the dotted midpoint line. Small percentages (<3%) are suppressed for readability.



FIGURE 4 Effects of Collaboration Acts on Political Tolerance. *Notes:* Plotted points and estimates are Average Marginal Component Effects. Bars denote 95% confidence intervals (two-tailed). Standard errors are clustered by the respondent and reported between brackets.

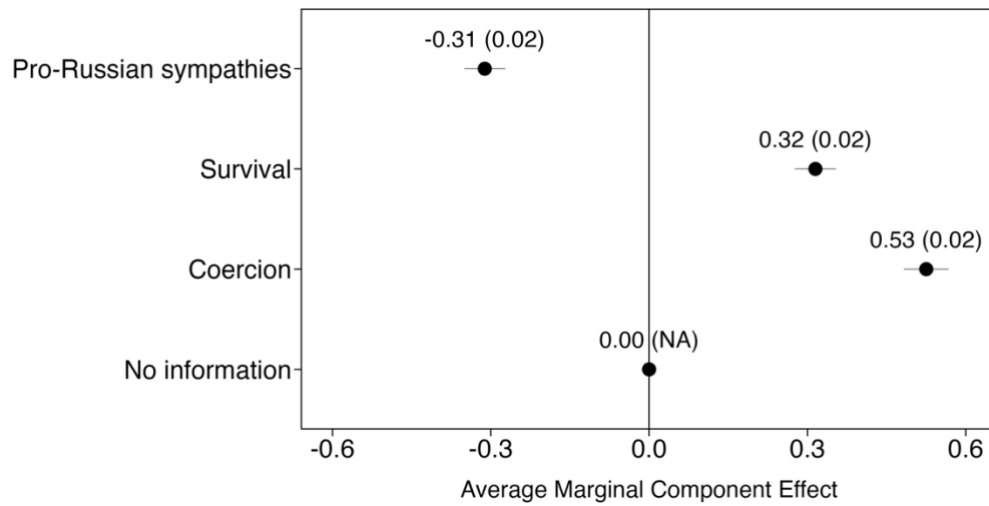


FIGURE 5 Effects of Motivations on Political Tolerance. *Notes:* Plotted points and estimates are Average Marginal Component Effects. Bars denote 95% confidence intervals (two-tailed). Standard errors are clustered by the respondent and reported between brackets.

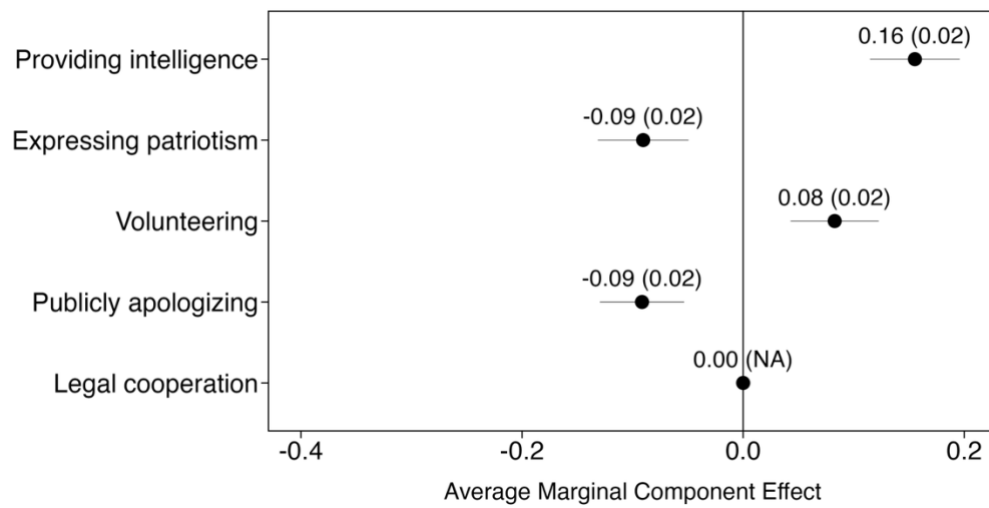


FIGURE 6 Effects of Restorative Efforts on Political Tolerance. *Notes:* Plotted points and estimates are Average Marginal Component Effects. Bars denote 95% confidence intervals (two-tailed). Standard errors are clustered by the respondent and reported between brackets.

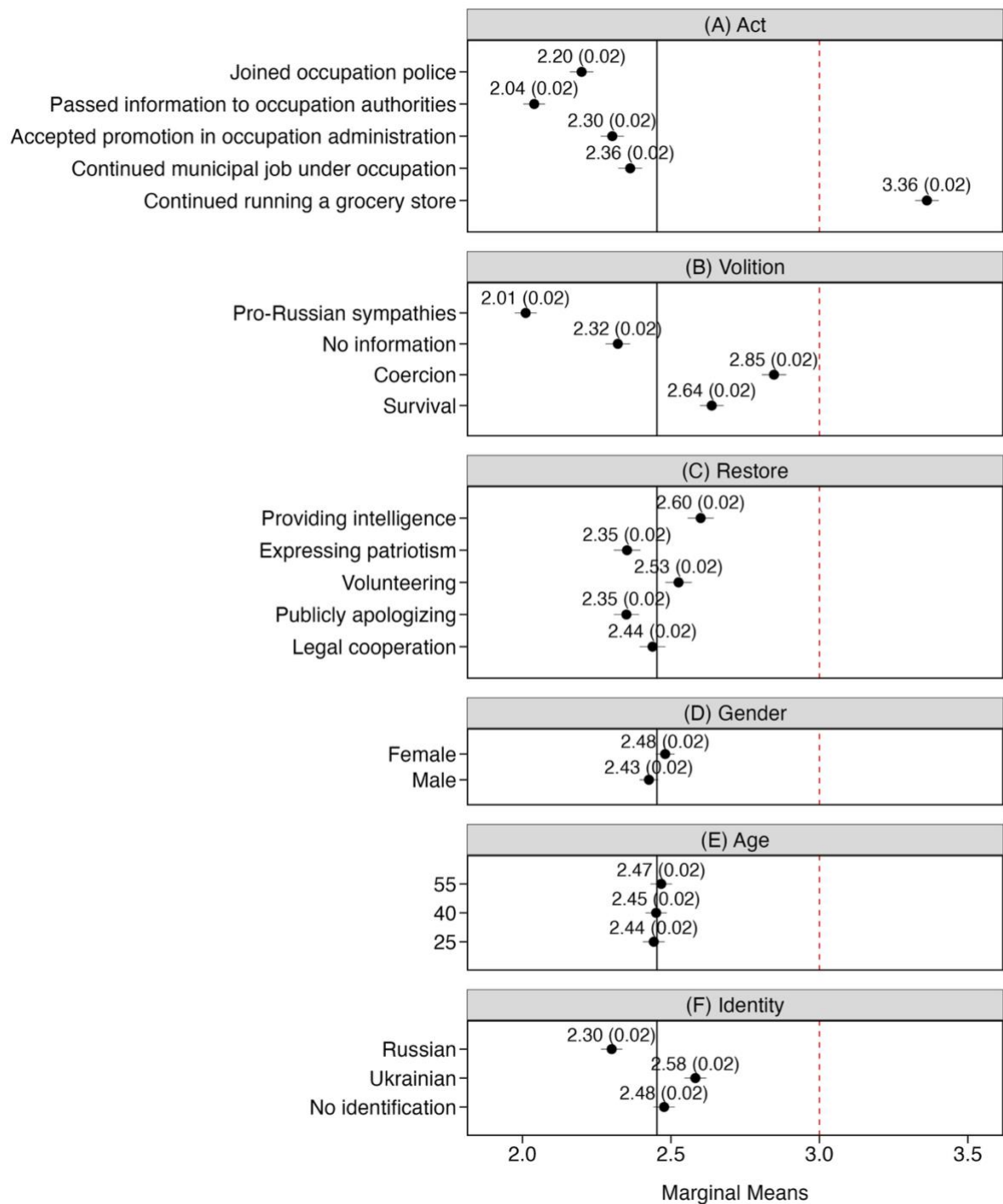


FIGURE 7 Marginal Means for the Full Experiment. *Notes:* Plotted points and estimates are marginal means. Bars denote 95% confidence intervals (two-tailed). Standard errors are clustered by the respondent and reported between brackets. The dashed red line indicates the midpoint (3.0) on the 1–5 political tolerance scale. The solid black line represents the grand mean political tolerance score calculated across all 10,175 profile evaluations.

Tables

TABLE 1 Conjoint Experimental Design.

Attribute	Level
1. Gender	(1) Male citizen of Ukraine (<i>baseline</i>) (2) Female citizen of Ukraine
2. Age	(1) 25 (<i>baseline</i>) (2) 40 (3) 55
3. Self-identification	(1) [no information] (<i>baseline</i>) (2) who identifies as ethnically Ukrainian (3) who identifies as ethnically Russian
4. Collaboration act	When war broke out ... (1) ..., [he/she] took no action to help the Russian authorities. [He/She] remained in occupied territory and continued to run [his/her] grocery store, as before the war. (<i>baseline</i>) (2) ..., having been a municipal employee before the war, [he/she] went back to work for Russian-appointed bosses. (3) ..., and many left, [he/she] accepted a promotion as an official within the Russian occupation administration. (4) ..., [he/she] passed important information to the occupation authorities that advanced the Russian offensive. (5) ..., [he/she] joined the local police of the Russian occupation authorities.

5. Motivation	(1) [no information] (<i>baseline</i>) (2) [He/She] did so out of pro-Russian sympathies. (3) [He/She] did so to survive and feed [his/her] family. (4) [He/She] was forcibly coerced into doing so.
6. Restorative effort	Now that the city is liberated, ... (1) ... [he/she] cooperates in all legal proceedings and accepts any punishment that may arise as a result. (<i>baseline</i>) (2) ..., [he/she] has publicly apologized for any harm or suffering caused by [his/her] actions. (3) ..., [he/she] volunteers to rebuild the city and provide assistance to those in need. (4) ..., [he/she] expresses [his/her] patriotism for Ukraine by publicly speaking out against the war and Russia. (5) ..., [he/she] is providing important information to the Ukrainian authorities about Russian war crimes committed in the city.

Notes: Attributes and levels used in the conjoint experiment. Baseline levels are indicated in parentheses. Bracketed text denotes information omitted from the profile or gender-specific wording.

TABLE 2 Determinants of Perceived Betrayal and Political Tolerance.

	Outcome variable			
	Betrayal	Tolerance	Tolerance	Tolerance
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Collaboration act (baseline=stayed and continued running grocery store)				
Continued municipal job	1.263*** (0.027)	-1.001*** (0.022)	-0.258*** (0.022)	-0.277*** (0.022)
Accepted promotion	1.333*** (0.027)	-1.059*** (0.023)	-0.275*** (0.022)	-0.294*** (0.022)
Passed information	1.709*** (0.027)	-1.323*** (0.023)	-0.318*** (0.026)	-0.342*** (0.026)
Joined occupation police	1.440*** (0.028)	-1.163*** (0.023)	-0.316*** (0.024)	-0.337*** (0.024)
Motivation (baseline=no information)				
Coerced	-0.650*** (0.026)	0.525*** (0.022)	0.143*** (0.017)	0.155*** (0.017)
Survival	-0.380*** (0.023)	0.315*** (0.020)	0.092*** (0.015)	0.099*** (0.015)
Pro-Russian sympathies	0.350*** (0.023)	-0.311*** (0.020)	-0.105*** (0.016)	-0.108*** (0.016)
Restorative effort (baseline=legal cooperation and acceptance of punishment)				
Apologizing	0.099*** (0.026)	-0.091*** (0.019)	-0.033* (0.015)	-0.035* (0.015)

	Outcome variable			
	Betrayal	Tolerance	Tolerance	Tolerance
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Volunteering	-0.087*** (0.025)	0.083*** (0.020)	0.032* (0.016)	0.033* (0.015)
Expressing patriotism	0.070** (0.025)	-0.090*** (0.021)	-0.049** (0.016)	-0.050** (0.016)
Providing intelligence	-0.139*** (0.026)	0.155*** (0.021)	0.074*** (0.016)	0.076*** (0.016)
Gender (baseline=male)				
Female	-0.064*** (0.016)	0.052*** (0.014)	0.015 (0.010)	0.015 (0.010)
Age (baseline=25 years old)				
40 years old	0.020 (0.020)	0.009 (0.017)	0.021 (0.013)	0.023 (0.013)
55 years old	-0.013 (0.021)	0.028 (0.017)	0.020 (0.013)	0.019 (0.01)
Self-identification (baseline=no information)				
Identifies as ethnically Ukrainian	-0.108*** (0.020)	0.105*** (0.017)	0.042** (0.013)	0.043*** (0.013)
Identifies as ethnically Russian	0.130*** (0.021)	-0.180*** (0.017)	-0.103*** (0.013)	-0.105*** (0.013)
Measured variables				

	Outcome variable			
	Betrayal	Tolerance	Tolerance	Tolerance
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Perceived betrayal			-0.588*** (0.012)	-0.573*** (0.012)
Respondent answers survey in Russian				0.133*** (0.039)
Respondent identifies as Russian				0.251*** (0.046)
Respondent is female				-0.071*** (0.020)
Respondent age				-0.003** (0.001)
Respondent voted for Zelensky				-0.001 (0.019)
Respondent is victim of the war				-0.020 (0.019)
<i>Intercept</i>	2.503*** (0.034)	3.206*** (0.030)	4.678*** (0.038)	4.768*** (0.054)

Notes: OLS estimates with respondent-clustered standard errors between brackets. Model 1 reports the effects of the experimental treatments on perceived betrayal. Models 2–4 report their effects on political tolerance; Models 3–4 additionally include perceived betrayal and respondent covariates as predictors. All coefficients are unstandardized.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.