

# Decision Processes Contributing to Support and Willingness to Forward Links on the Ukraine War

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**Abstract.** We investigated whether religiosity, political partisanship activism on the Ukraine-Russia conflict, decision making style, and time taken to complete an online Questionnaire predict willingness to forward the online Questionnaire to others. The Questionnaire study was conducted May - September 2024 on Qualtrics with an online sample of N=204. The online Questionnaire measured political support for Ukraine, Russia, or neither in the Ukraine-Russia War, decision making style on the Melbourne Decision Making Questionnaire (MDMQ), political activism, religiosity, and willingness to forward the Questionnaire. We found more support for Ukraine (73.5%) than for Russia (3.9%), than for neither side (22.5%). Religiosity was a factor in willingness to forward the Questionnaire. There was a tendency for religious participants to be more willing to forward the Questionnaire. A 2x2 MANOVA found that politically active participants were more willing to forward the Questionnaire and religious participants with a less vigilant decisional style were more willing to forward the Questionnaire. We measured time taken to complete the online Questionnaire. Participants neutral in the Ukraine-Russia conflict and who spent more time on the Questionnaire were more willing to forward the Questionnaire. The findings suggest people who are less vigilant, have stronger political viewpoints, and take more time completing Questionnaires, are more likely to spread information and accordingly might pose greater security risks in organisations.

**Keywords.** Decisional Style, Email, Conflict, Support, Forwarding

## 1. Introduction

The Russo-Ukrainian conflict started in 2014 [1] and continued and escalated from 2022 [2]. As support for Ukraine may have consequences [2] it is important to consider factors that may influence such support [3].

A requirement to make a decision of support or forward a message [4], can be a source of conflict [5]. Poor decisions can have serious political repercussions [6] and create security problems [7]. Indeed, the processes underlying decisions can be documented [6], and the information the decision maker accessed can be tracked [8,9].

Janis and Mann's [5] conflict model of decision making suggests that it is important to engage in a vigilant decision-making style that involves a rational consideration of the

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balance of evidence before making a decision. However suboptimal outcomes may arise due to: procrastination and faulty time management [10]; inadequate resourcing leading to panic [11]; or pessimism and buckpassing that prevents people from properly canvassing the options [12]. Mann et al [13] developed a self-report instrument - the Melbourne Decision Making Questionnaire - to assess people's typical decision-making styles (i.e. Vigilance, Procrastination, Buckpassing, Hypervigilance).

In the online environment it is quite feasible to go beyond self-report to monitor actual behaviours. Vigilance scores have been linked to the quality of outcomes such as university grades [9,14]. Whereas the Hypervigilance subscale has been associated with increased levels of posting on Discussion boards [14]. Procrastination scores also may predict the posting [15] and reading [16] of emails. Such self-report inventories can offer insights into the motivations underpinning email use, and provide a "best guess" as to what someone might be doing when unmonitored or off-line.

The decision to choose and support a side in the Ukraine conflict potentially flags that a user has specific interests [17] and belongs to a specific group (homophily) [18]. This information can be used for marketing purposes [17] and customise further consumer recommendations [18].

Two factors that might encourage people to forward links were political activism and pacifism [4]. The concurrent Gaza war elicited considerable protest [19], which in part appears to have reflected a groundswell of comment against the dominant political narrative [20]. As such, one might expect that political activism might create a greater willingness to forward the link to our questionnaire. It was expected that a greater engagement in political activism would enhance responses to our survey.

By contrast, religion tends to have a role for people coping with the prospect of mortality [21]. In particular, religions may encourage pacifism [22,23]. Hence, subscribing to religious beliefs may also influence orientation towards the Ukraine war and encourage people to forward the link to our survey.

The present study considered whether political activism, religious beliefs and decisional style would predict preferences in the Ukraine conflict and a willingness to forward the questionnaire.

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Participants*

Of the 210 individuals completing the questionnaire, there were 109 Males, 77 Females, and 19 describing themselves as Other. Participants were 29.61 years old (SD=10.13) and had 16.58 years of education (SD=3.51). The majority subscribed to no religion (58.6%) while smaller proportions described themselves as Christian (23.3%), Buddhist (2.4%), Jewish (4.3%), Hindu (1.4%), Muslim (1.0%), Sikh (0.5%) or Other (8.6%). All procedures were approved by the institutional ethics committee.

### *2.2. Materials*

The questionnaire was hosted online on Qualtrics. Qualtrics recorded the total time participants spent answering the questionnaire. Participants were asked for demographic

details followed by the Melbourne Decision Making Questionnaire (MDMQ) [13]. Participants were also asked about their involvement in political activism.

The MDMQ was utilised to assess the participants' natural decision-making processes. The MDMQ is a validated 22-item self-report inventory developed to measure tendencies to use four major coping patterns in decision-making in situations of decisional-conflict. The MDMQ also contains a measure of decisional self-esteem. For the MDMQ in the present sample, Cronbach's alphas were: Decisional Self-esteem .73; Vigilance .66; Buck-passing .84; Procrastination .83; Hypervigilance .78.

Participants were then asked about their engagement in political activism (e.g. petitions, demonstrations, meetings, discussions, letters). Responses were coded on a 3 point Likert scale as Yes, Sometimes or No. Responses were summed to produce an Activism scale ranging from 3 to 18. The Activism scale had a Cronbach's alpha of .78.

Penultimate questions asked participants who they supported in Gaza and Ukraine conflicts, and given an opportunity to provide reasons for their support. At the end of the questionnaire participants were told that:

“we would like to get as many respondents as possible into this Study. Can you assist? Would you be prepared to forward this questionnaire to some of your friends?”

Links and QR codes were provided at the end of the questionnaire for this purpose.

### 3. Results

Participants were grouped as religious or not religious. There was a relationship between Religiosity and Support for the Ukrainian conflict ( $\chi^2=15.666$ , 2df,  $N=204$ ,  $p<.001$ ). As may be seen in Table 1, few participants were supportive of Russia in this conflict and religious participants tended to be pacifists.

**Table 1.** Cross-tabulations of Religious affiliation with support for protagonists in the Ukraine war, and the willingness to forward the survey to others.

	Approve/Supporting				Willing to Forward?		
	Russia	Ukraine	Neither	Total	Yes	No	Total
Non-religious	2	101	18	121	34	81	115
Religious	6	49	28	83	34	48	82
Total	8	150	46	204	68	129	197

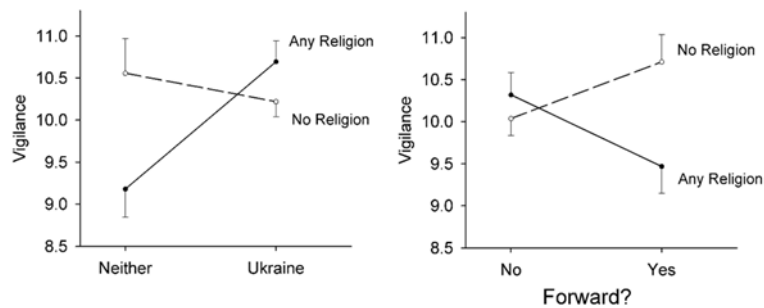
Due to their smaller numbers, participants supporting Russia were excluded from MDMQ analysis. Participants' responses to the MDMQ were analysed using a 2x2 Support (Ukraine, Neither) by Religiosity (None, Any Religion) Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA).

Although the main Multivariate effect of Support for Ukraine or Neither was not significant ( $V=.04$ ,  $F(6,181)=1.270$ ,  $p=.273$ ,  $\eta^2=.04$ ), there was a significant main Multivariate effect of Religiosity ( $V=.073$ ,  $F(6,181)=2.367$ ,  $p=.032$ ,  $\eta^2=.07$ ). The significant univariate main effect of Religiosity for Hypervigilance ( $F(1,186)=6.296$ ,  $p=.013$ ,  $\eta^2=.03$ ) indicated that Religious participants ( $M=4.804$ ,  $SE=0.33$ ) were more

Hypervigilant than Non-religious participants ( $M=3.569$ ,  $SE=0.361$ ), implying a role of religion in “terror-management”.

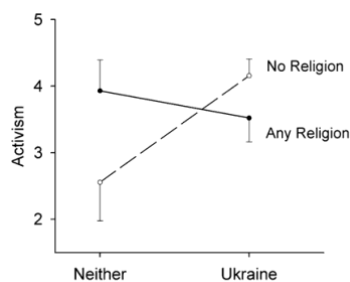
However there was also a significant Support by Religiosity interaction ( $V=.12$ ,  $F(6,181)=4.273$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $\eta^2=.12$ ). The interaction was due to the significant univariate differences in Vigilance ( $F(1,186)=8.907$ ,  $p=.003$ ,  $\eta^2=.05$ ) (see Figure 1) and Activism ( $F(1,186)=5.396$ ,  $p=.021$ ,  $\eta^2=.03$ ) (see Figure 2).

Religious participants that supported Ukraine were more vigilant than those that supported Neither in this conflict. Some religious people are pacifists and are less likely to support Ukraine in this war, but this seems to reflect a lack of Vigilance and careful consideration on their part.



**Figure 1.** Vigilance, support and willingness to forward.

The interaction involving Activism may be seen in Figure 2. Non-religious participants that supported Ukraine were more likely to be politically active than those that supported neither side in this conflict. It seems that non-religious types that were supporting neither side in this conflict were just less politically active.



**Figure 2.** Activism, support and religion.

The willingness for such support during this conflict to convert to meaningful action was examined by asking whether participants would forward the questionnaire to others. There was a tendency for religious participants to be more willing to forward the questionnaire ( $\chi^2=2.998$ , 1df,  $n=197$ ,  $p=.083$ ) (see Table 1).

Participants’ MDMQ scores were analysed using a 2x2 Willingness (Not-forward, Forward) by Religiosity (No-religion, Religious) MANOVA. For this analysis participants supporting Russia were included.

The main multivariate effects of Willingness ( $V=.087$ ,  $F(6,180)=2.864$ ,  $p=.011$ ,  $\eta^2=.09$ ) was significant. Univariate tests indicate those that were willing to forward the questionnaire ( $M=4.90$ ,  $SE=0.31$ ) were significantly ( $F(1,185)=16.270$ ,  $p=.011$ ,  $\eta^2=.08$ ) more politically active than those not willing to forward ( $M=3.35$ ,  $SE=0.23$ ).

Although the main effect of Religiosity ( $V=.033$ ,  $F(6,180)=1.011$ ,  $p=.42$ ,  $\eta^2=.03$ ) was not significant, there was a significant interaction between Religiosity and Willingness to forward the questionnaire ( $V=.068$ ,  $F(6,180)=2.205$ ,  $p=.045$ ,  $\eta^2=.07$ ). Univariate tests indicated there were significant differences in Vigilance ( $F(1,185)=7.241$ ,  $p=.008$ ,  $\eta^2=.04$ ) (see Figure 1). Those religious types that were prepared to forward the questionnaire were less Vigilant.

The time spent completing the questionnaire was analysed. As times were positively skewed, they were Log+1 transformed. Although significance tests were performed on transformed data, the raw scores (mean times in minutes) are reported for interpretability. Participants that were willing to forward the questionnaire ( $M=66.67$ min,  $SE=60.81$ ) spent significantly longer ( $F(1,188)=4.174$ ,  $p=.042$ ,  $\eta^2=.02$ ) on the questionnaire than participants that were not forwarders ( $M=37.62$ min,  $SE=46.57$ ).

Participants that supported Neither side in this conflict ( $M=66.80$ min,  $SE=60.81$ ) spent significantly ( $F(1,188)=2.205$ ,  $p=.012$ ,  $\eta^2=.03$ ) longer on the questionnaire than participants that did not support Ukraine ( $M=37.51$ min,  $SE=38.91$ ).

People clearly were prepared to forward the survey, and the time spent online indicated that this may have happened. However, the rate with which people responding to the first generation survey, forwarded the second generation survey link was negligible (1%), and was therefore not analysed.

#### 4. Discussion

Three themes emerged in our data: religious pacifism, apathy and political activism. Religious individuals tended to be hypervigilant and not supportive of either side of the Ukraine conflict. However, an online pacifist stance seemed to be associated with reduced Vigilance and more time spent on the questionnaire. In addition, people that supported neither side were less politically active. Whereas questionnaire forwarders were more politically active and spent more time on the survey.

Religions have been found to play a role in Terror Management [21], and pacifism [22,23]. The present study found religious participants had higher levels of Hypervigilance indicating predispositions towards panic and anxiety [24]. Higher proportions of religious participants (33.7%) supported Neither side than non-religious participants (15%). Higher proportions (41.5%) of religious participants were forwarders than the non-religious participants (29.6%). However, the pacifist tendency to forward and support neither side of the Ukraine conflict was associated with lower Vigilance scores. The higher Hypervigilance and lower Vigilance scores suggest that some people would act without thinking of consequences and forward online links.

In contrast, non-religious respondents were more likely to support Ukraine (83.3%). Such tendencies may reflect the composition of our sample. Other researchers have suggested that militancy and belief in a Divine Power can be greater in specific cultural groups [25].

Questionnaire forwarders reported more political activism and spent more time completing the questionnaire. The greater amount of time could have reflected the time spent providing reasons for their support, or time spent forwarding the initial survey link.

The present data indicate that forwarders were more “engaged” with questionnaire and that politically active populations are more likely to forward links, and that this could be a concern when using an organisation’s email account [26].

In response to a survey assessing support for recent conflicts, non-religious participants supported Ukraine, whereas religious participants tended to be pacifists and supported neither Russia nor Ukraine. As religious participants seemed to be hypervigilant and less considered in their decision-making they potentially pose a security risk. Politically active participants were also more willing to forward the questionnaire. Such methodology has the potential to identify groups with similar interests, but inducements may be necessary to produce usable response rates.

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