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# National Identity and Conflict Perception: Azerbaijani Diaspora Students' Views on Russia's War in Ukraine<sup>1</sup> ©

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### **Abstract**

Russian aggression toward Ukraine has been extensively analysed by political leaders and scholars. However, the perceptions of students toward this ongoing conflict have been overlooked. This study investigates how Azerbaijani students enrolled in Turkish universities perceive the war within the context of historical trajectories, national identity, and social belonging. Based on first-hand data, collected from 884 Azerbaijani students through structured questionnaires, the paper addresses two key questions: To what extent do Azerbaijani students, who share similar historical trajectories and social identities with Ukrainians due to their common Soviet past, align in their views on Russia's aggression toward Ukraine? How do Azerbaijani students, despite their ethnic ties to Türkiye, interpret Russia's aggression in light of Türkiye's cautious diplomatic stance toward Putin's policies? The findings reveal that students' perceptions are shaped by several factors. Those with strong attachment to Türkiye (72%) predominantly view Russia as the primary aggressor, diverging from Türkiye's official Russia policy. Students with a strong

Azerbaijani national identity (65%) tend to express support for Ukraine. A notable gender disparity also emerges: female students (70%) emphasize the humanitarian consequences of the war more than their male counterparts. These results demonstrate how diaspora communities interpret international conflicts through multiple lenses—including integration into host societies, media consumption, and gender socialization—rather than through purely geopolitical calculations. The study aligns with scholarship on transnational identity formation and contributes to understanding how diaspora populations navigate political judgments during global crises. It also offers insights for policymakers engaging with diaspora communities in times of international conflict.

**Keywords:** Russia-Ukraine War, Diaspora Perceptions, Identity Politics, CHAID Analysis, International Political Sociology.

JEL Codes: D72, F51, J15, H56, Z13

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#### 1. Introduction

The war between Russia and Ukraine represents far more than a conflict between two states; it illuminates the structural transformation of the international system, the politics of identity, and the impacts of historical memory on international relations. Russia's military intervention in Ukraine on February 24, 2022, generated significant global repercussions and prompted renewed debates about fundamental norms including international law, principles of sovereignty, and conceptions of regional security. Understanding this conflict needs thought not only of power balances and interest calculations but also of identities shaped complete historical processes and collective memory. Relations between Ukraine and Russia have been formed within a historical context spreading from the Kievan Rus' principality through the Russian Empire and Soviet Union to the present. This historical trajectory has intensely prejudiced the identity construction of both societies and placed the groundwork for contemporary conflict.

The international political sociology perspective does not base states' foreign policy behaviours exclusively on rational interest calculations; it claims that elements such as identities, historical narratives, and social structures also effect foreign policy decision-making processes (Say, 2014). Within this framework, Russia's intervention in Ukraine can be clarified not only through security concerns but also through historical aspirations concerning the protection and expansion of Russian identity.

This study purposes analyze both the historical and identity-based background and the dynamics of the current war within the framework of international political sociology. Moreover, by examining Azerbaijani students' insights of the Russia-Ukraine war in Türkiye, it tries to understand the attitudes of diaspora communities concerning international crises. Field research conducted on Azerbaijani students and the applied Chi-square automatic interaction detection (CHAID) analysis reveal how war perception is shaped by social factors such as identity, belonging, and media influence.

The purpose of the study is to demonstrate how conflicts in international relations gain meaning not only through the power struggles of states but also through social identities, historical memory, and normative structures, and in this context, to discuss the role of identity and belonging factors in diaspora individuals' perceptions of war within the framework of international political sociology.

In this context, our research focuses on the following key questions: To what extent do Azerbaijani students, who share comparable historical trajectories and social identities with Ukrainians as a result of their shared Soviet heritage, exhibit alignment in their perceptions of Russia's aggression toward Ukraine? How do Azerbaijani students whom share

ethnic and cultural affiliations with Türkiye based on identity, reconcile their interpretations of Russia's aggression and evaluate Türkiye's measured diplomatic approach toward Putin's policies?

These research questions guide our investigation into Azerbaijani students' perceptions of the Russia-Ukraine war, helping us understand how diaspora communities interpret international conflicts through the lenses of identity, belonging, and geopolitical awareness.

## 2. Historical Background

The historical roots of Russia-Ukraine relations can be traced back to the 9th-century Kievan Rus' polity, which served as a religious, cultural, and political center for Eastern Slavic peoples. In Russian historiography, Kiev is often portrayed as the cradle of Russian civilization, while in Ukrainian national narratives, it represents the foundational pillar of Ukrainian identity. This contested historical memory continues to influence both countries' identity construction and geopolitical aspirations (Dotsenko, 2017).

Throughout the 17th century, significant portions of Ukrainian territory fell under the dominion of the Russian Empire, leading to long-standing processes of political domination, cultural suppression, and linguistic Russification. During the Soviet era, although Ukraine was granted nominal autonomy as one of the founding republics, it remained under Moscow's centralized control. Events such as the Holodomor, forced collectivization, and cultural repression left enduring scars on Ukraine's social fabric, fostering deep-rooted distrust toward Russia (Plokhy, 2017). Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine emerged as an independent state. However, Moscow perceived Ukraine's westward orientation, particularly its rapprochement with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union, as a strategic threat. Energy infrastructure projects such as TANAP and the broader diversification of energy routes were seen by Russia as direct challenges to its regional influence (Keskin, 2016: Aras & Kandemir, 2023).

Thus, the Russia-Ukraine relationship is shaped not only by contemporary strategic concerns but also by a deeply ingrained historical and identity-based rivalry. These dynamics reflect broader patterns of post-Soviet space conflicts, where sovereignty, historical legitimacy, and identity are inextricably linked (Tsygankov, 2019).

One of the historical timelines, deeply framed to Ukraine-Russia relations was Near Abroad Doctrine in 1990s and it's aftershock influence. Declared by President Boris Yeltsin in 1993, the "Near Abroad" Doctrine formalized Russia's strategic interest in maintaining political, economic, and cultural influence over the former Soviet republics (Canar, 2012).

Subsequent developments, particularly under the leadership of Primakov, consolidated this approach into a broader regional hegemony strategy aimed at counterbalancing Western influence (Akarslan, 1994).

The doctrine frames post-Soviet spaces as integral to Russia's security perimeter, legitimizing interventionist policies under the guise of protecting ethnic Russians abroad a narrative evident in Russia's actions in Crimea and Donbas. Events such as the 2004 Orange Revolution and the 2014 Euromaidan protests, which signalled Ukraine's pivot toward the West, were perceived by Moscow as existential threats, leading to aggressive foreign policy manoeuvres justified through historical and ethnic claims (Tanriverdi, 2019).

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia articulated a strategic vision of its "near abroad". In this framework, historical, cultural, and linguistic ties with former Soviet republics, including Ukraine, were invoked to legitimize political and military interventions (Alptekin, 2022).

The Russian Federation has consistently portrayed itself as the protector of ethnic Russians and Russophone populations abroad, translating identity politics into foreign policy strategies. The annexation of Crimea and the support for separatists in Donbas demonstrate how identity narratives reinforce Russia's domineering behaviour (Mankoff, 2022).

Recent scholarship on Russian identity politics has gradually highlighted the notion of "civilizational sovereignty" in post-Soviet Russian foreign policy discourse (Dysart, 2021). This concept asserts Russia's accurate to define and defend its own normative and cultural space alongside perceived Western encroachment, delivering ideological justification for interventions in neighbouring states. The civilizational framing of the Ukrainian conflict by Russian officials alters what might otherwise be seen as territorial aggression into a defensive action defensive a distinctive Eurasian cultural scope (Tsygankov, 2012). Furthermore, scholars have recognised a shift in Russian strategic communication from chiefly ethnic-based justifications for intervention to more complex legitimation strategies that appeal international legal principles, albeit selectively understood (Hopf.

c-based justifications for intervention to more complex legitimation strategies that appeal international legal principles, albeit selectively understood (Hopf, 1999). This developing broad approach represents a erudite attempt to contest Western normative hegemony while forward-moving Russian strategic interests a dynamic that confuses how external observers, comprising diaspora communities, interpret Russia's actions in Ukraine (Tsitkilov, 2024).

# 3. Theoretical Framework: Identity Politics and Social Memory

Ukraine's post-independence nation-building efforts centered on redefining its identity in contrast

to Russia. Policies promoting the Ukrainian language, revising history curricula, and integrating into European institutions represented deliberate efforts to construct a distinct Ukrainian national consciousness (Kuzio, 2022). These identity politics initiatives further exacerbated tensions with Russia, whose narrative continued to position Ukraine within a shared "Russian world."

More broadly, post-Soviet space has witnessed a resurgence of identity-based conflicts, with national identity serving as a critical axis of international relations. In this context, the Russia-Ukraine conflict exemplifies the entanglement of historical memory, identity construction, and strategic contestation (Huseynov, 2022).

Azerbaijani collective memory holds deep-seated grievances toward Russian interventions, particularly following events like the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict (Canar, 2012). Historical distrust toward Russian influence continues to inform the diaspora's perceptions of contemporary crises. Given the overwhelming scholarship, agreeing fear, anger, belonging, and justice in shaping conflict perceptions among diaspora communities (Hutchison & Bleiker, 2017). This paper timely contributes with mainstream literature with a nuance contribution of Azerbaijani-students perspective. Filling the gap from an emotional framework which shape identity interpreting on Russia-Ukraine war has yet to be unearthed.

Rather than treating emotions as simply individual psychological states, this paper also conceptualizes emotions as socially constructed, culturally mediated, and politically consequential phenomena that circulate through communities and inform collective responses to international events. For Azerbaijani students in Türkiye, shared emotional responses to the Russia-Ukraine conflict -such as indignation, sympathy, or anxiety- become important vectors for constructing political meaning.

Furthermore, recent work on "traumatic memory" in post-Soviet societies demonstrates how historical experiences of violence and domination create enduring emotional templates that influence contemporary political judgments. For many Azerbaijanis, memories of Soviet repression and post-Soviet Russian military intervention create emotionally charged interpretive frames through which the Ukrainian situation is inevitably viewed, fostering empathetic identification with Ukrainian resistance against perceived Russian aggression (Huseynov, 2022).

Identity politics is being treated by many orthodox literatures, from realist to constructivist. Going beyond mere theoretical discussion, however, international political sociology (IPS) offers a comprehensive lens to examine how social structures, identities, and normative frameworks intersect with international conflict dynamics (Huysmans & Nogueira, 2016). It tests realist and rationalist expectations by accen-

ting the constitutive role of social factors -counting memory, emotion, and collective identity- in shaping state behaviour and public perceptions (Rumelili, 2020). It also highlights not only material factors such as power and security but also the central role of identities, collective memory, and social structures in shaping state behaviour. Rather than viewing wars and crises as purely rational power struggles, IPS highlights how identity constructions and historical narratives are constitutive forces within international conflicts (Acharya, 2022).

From this perspective, the Russia-Ukraine conflict is not just a strategic rivalry but a struggle over identity, historical legitimacy, and normative structures. This theoretical lens allows a innate exploration of how diaspora communities, such as Azerbaijani students in Türkiye, interpret global crises concluded complex emotional and identity-based frameworks. Recent developments in IPS scholarship have progressively highlighted the role of everyday practices and affective dimensions in international politics. This "practice turn" in international relations scholarship focuses how routinized behaviours and emotional attachments constitute legitimate forms of political agency that influence conflict interpretations (Lechner & Frost, 2018). For diaspora communities like Azerbaijani students in Türkiye, everyday practices of media consumption, social networking, and cultural performance become fundamental sites where geopolitical understandings are adapted and disputed.

Furthermore, IPS scholarship has progressively documented the significance of temporality in defining political identities and conflict perceptions. Historical narratives about past injustices, victories, or cooperation between nations are not humbly remembered but vigorously reconstructed through present interpretative frames. This temporal dimension is predominantly relevant for understanding how Azerbaijani students' perceptions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict are distracted across both inherited historical memories of Soviet domination and contemporary experiences of Türkiye's geopolitical positioning (Aras, 2023). Then, exploring Azerbaijani students' views across the lens of international political sociology accepts for a wealthier understanding of how historical narratives, identity attachments, emotional dynamics, and media ecologies bond to guidance diaspora interpretations of global conflicts.

# 4. Media, Norm and Beyond Diaspora Perception

Media platforms, both traditional and digital, have occurred as central arenas for determining perceptions of the Russia-Ukraine war. Russia has sought to propagate its narratives through state-controlled media and disinformation campaigns, while Ukraine

has leveraged social media to highlight its victimization and resistance. Within diaspora communities, media consumption patterns critically influence conflict perceptions. Individuals who rely on international, diverse media outlets tend to develop more critical, multifaceted interpretations, while those exposed primarily to state-sponsored narratives are more susceptible to unilateral perspectives (Hutchison & Bleiker, 2017; Aras, 2024).

Media outreach targets certain groups to garner utmost support. Among these groups, diaspora place a great potential to be navigated. Given the fact that conflict in traditional sense is no longer materialised on field, nor had been among soldiers, alternative media courses are treated key leverage to deepened and expansion of respective idea and policy. Diasporas are increasingly recognized as important actors in international politics, capable of influencing both homeland and host country political discourses (Koinova, 2017). Maintaining emotional and cultural attachments to their countries of origin while integrating into new socio-political environments, diasporic individuals navigate multiple identities (Brubaker, 1996).

For Azerbaijani students in Türkiye, both the historical ties to Azerbaijan and the socio-political context of Türkiye shape their interpretations of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Diasporic identity may amplify sensitivity to sovereignty violations and foreign interventions, especially when collective historical experiences of conflict and domination are salient.

Contemporary diaspora studies have increasingly moved beyond essentialist notions of diasporic identity toward more fluid, contextual understandings of transnational belongin. Rather than viewing diaspora identities as fixed attachments to ancestral homelands, scholars now emphasize how diaspora identifications are strategically mobilized in response to specific political events (Roy, 2008). This perspective helps explain why Azerbaijani students' responses to the Russia-Ukraine conflict may vary depending on the salience of particular identity frames activated by media narratives, peer interactions, or policy developments. Such results become progressively complex when historical trajectories and common-fate dynamics are studied, as revealed by the Ukraine-Azerbaijan commemorative discourse on post-Soviet influence.

For the Azerbaijani diaspora, Russia's intervention in Ukraine is apparent chiefly through the lenses of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and international law violations. Ukraine's struggle for independence resonates with the diaspora's own historical experiences of contesting foreign domination. Thus, the perception of the Russia-Ukraine conflict among Azerbaijani students is not merely a reflection of strategic calculations but also a normative stance shaped by identity, collective memory, emotional experiences,

and international political norms. Rather than assuming universal consensus around liberal international norms, this approach recognizes that different actors interpret and apply these principles in contextually specific ways (Mankoff, 2022).

Based on our findings, we propose a revised theoretical model of diaspora conflict perception that integrates elements from international political sociology, transnational identity theory, and media studies. This, "Layered Transnational Perception Model" conceptualizes diaspora conflict interpretations as emerging from the interaction of four hierarchical factors identified in our CHAID analysis:

- Primary Layer Host Country Integration: As demonstrated by the primary split in our decision tree, the degree of affective attachment to the host country establishes the foundational interpretive frame, particularly regarding assignment of responsibility in conflicts.
- Secondary Layer Identity Mobilization: Within the context established by host country belonging, homeland identity attachments function as selective perceptual filters that highlight aspects of conflicts resonating with collective historical experiences.
- Tertiary Layer Information Environment: Media consumption patterns modify existing perceptual frames by introducing competing narratives, particularly among those with diverse media exposure.
- Quaternary Layer Embodied Subject Positions: Gender and other embodied subject positions introduce distinctive emotional and normative orientations that influence which aspects of conflicts are prioritized.

This layered model advances international political sociology theory by demonstrating how multiple social factors interact in hierarchical rather than merely additive ways to produce coherent interpretive frameworks. Unlike existing models that treat identity, media, and demographic factors as parallel influences, our model highlights their nested, conditional relationships, offering a more sophisticated understanding of how diaspora communities interpret international conflicts.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1. Research Design

This study implements a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional research design intended at exploratory Azerbaijani university students' insights of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. A cross-sectional approach is applicable for seizing the characteristics of a specific population at a particular point in time without using independent variables, so safeguarding objectivity and minimizing researcher bias (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018).

Given the categorical nature of both independent and dependent variables, the Chi-squared Automatic Interaction Detector (CHAID) algorithm was selected as the principal analytical tool. CHAID is mostly applicable in discovery hierarchical relationships and segmenting categorical data hooked on homogeneous subgroups Previous applications of CHAID in social science research authorize its robustness in analysing complex, multidimensional attitudinal datasets (Hark Söylemez, 2024).

The research design shadows a systematic tactic that documents for the exploration of associations between demographic variables (age, gender, academic faculty, duration of residence), identity factors (strength of Azerbaijani identity, sense of belonging to Türkiye), information sources (media consumption patterns), and attitudinal procedures (perceptions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict). This design allows both descriptive and inferential analyses that contribute to the theoretical understanding of diaspora perceptions during international crises.

### 5.2. Rationale for Using CHAID Analysis

The selection of CHAID was focused by its methodological advantages completed traditional parametric techniques. Dissimilar linear models, CHAID executes minimal assumptions regarding data distribution and permits multiway splits, developing model interpretability and suppleness (Kayri & Boysan, 2007).

Each split within the CHAID algorithm is indomitable over chi-squared tests of independence, substantiating that the most statistically substantial division is prioritized. This facilitates the identification of nuanced patterns and interactions that might otherwise stay mysterious in conventional analyses (Şeker et al., 2023).

CHAID's decision tree structure proposals sizable rewards for this particular research context. First, it carries an spontaneous visual representation of complex interactions between predictor variables, making results accessible to both academic and policy audiences. Second, its custodies non-linear and conditional relationships between variables, which is imperative when observing the multifaceted nature of conflict perceptions. Third, it alters missing data proficiently without requiring imputation methods that might introduce bias. Fourth, it can grip both continuous and categorical predictors without transformation, preservative the original measurement properties of the variables collected (Şata & Elkonca, 2020).

These methodological forces make CHAID mostly suitable for untangling the complex interplay between diaspora identity, belonging, media consumption, and geopolitical perceptions. The algorithm's capacity to notice interaction effects and conditional associations accepts a smoother understanding of

how demographic and attitudinal predictors combine to shape students' clarifications of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

## 5.3. Data Collection and Sample

Data were collected via a structured online questionnaire controlled to Azerbaijani students presently living in Türkiye. The rationale for selecting Azerbaijani students as the focal group stems from their shared historical trajectories and sociopolitical identities with Ukrainians, imbedded in their common Soviet past. This common background supporters their perspectives on Russia's aggression for Ukraine, mostly when viewed through a Turkish-based lens. Besides, this study subsidises a exclusive dimension to diaspora research by examining Azerbaijani diaspora perceptions regarding third countries a distinguishing aspect that sets it apart from existing literature.

The final sample contained of 884 respondents, after applying quality control trials to confirm data integrity. Participants were enlisted across university networks, diaspora associations, and social media platforms aiming Azerbaijani student communities.

The questionnaire comprised demographic variables (age, gender, academic faculty, duration of residence in Türkiye and the current city) and attitudinal matters related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. A five-point Likert scale ("Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree") was employed to measure attitudinal dimensions.

The sampling strategy engaged a combination of probability and non-probability techniques. Initially, stratified random sampling was used based on university enrolment records to confirm comparative depiction across different regions of Türkiye. This was complemented by snowball sampling techniques to reach students not willingly accessible finished institutional channels. To alleviate potential biases in the non-probability component, post-stratification weights were calculated and applied during data analysis to align the sample characteristics with the known demographic parameters of the Azerbaijani student population in Türkiye (Yiğit & Gülbiten, 2017).

The questionnaire experienced severe development and validation procedures, comprising expert review (n=5) for content validity, cognitive interviews (n=12) to assess item comprehension, and a pilot test (n=40) to assess reliability and response patterns. These procedures followed in refinements to item wording, response options, and questionnaire flow. The final instrument validated strong psychometric properties, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.78 to 0.92 across the primary attitudinal scales, directing good to excellent internal consistency.

## 5.4. Data Preparation and Preprocessing

Prior to analysis, a severe data preprocessing process was commenced. Primarily, categorical variables were statistically encoded based on standardized coding schemes espoused in recent CHAID studies. After that, Likert scale responses were mapped consequently, which was followed by missing values, instituting less than 5% of the dataset, were controlled throughout listwise deletion to maintain statistical validity. Continuous variables (e.g., age) were discretized into evocative categories suitable for CHAID analysis (Kurulgan, 2024). Finally, outliers were preserved following the 1.5 IQR rule to minimize undue influence on model splits.

The pre-processing phase also comprised data quality assessment procedures to identify and address potential response biases. Explicitly, response patterns were inspected for acquiescence bias (consistent agreement regardless of item content), straight-lining (identical responses across items), and social desirability bias (systematic tendency toward socially acceptable responses). Cases exhibiting clear evidence of non-differentiated or varying responding (n=27) were excluded from the analysis to reservation data integrity. Also, duplicate submissions identified throughout IP address and timestamp analysis were removed (n=9), confirming each respondent was represented only once in the final dataset.

Variable transformations were applied selectively to enhance the CHAID algorithm's performance. Precisely, identity and belonging measures were recoded from their original five-point scales into three-level ordinal categories (low, moderate, high) based on the distribution of responses and theoretical considerations observing threshold effects. This recoding strategy heightened interpretability although conserving the essential variance in these critical predictor variables (Kayri & Boysan, 2007).

### 5.5. CHAID Analysis Procedure

The CHAID analysis was applied using the Python programming language within the Google Colab ecosystem, confirming computational transparency, efficacy, and reproducibility (McKinney, 2017). Data preprocessing and influence were conducted with pandas. Statistical testing relied on scipy. Stats, specifically the chi2\_eventuality function for determining optimal splits (Virtanen et al., 2020). Recursive division was manually coded, given the absence of ready-to-use CHAID libraries in Python (Zhao & Hastie, 2019). Visualization of decision trees was achieved using matplotlib and seaborn libraries (Hunter, 2007).

Model parameters were as follows: Split Criterion: Entropy (information gain); best splitter strategy; maximum tree depth: 5; Minimum samples per

node: 30; Random state: 42 (for reproducibility).

The final decision tree structure was authenticated using 10-fold cross-validation, confirming that the model's performance was not sample-specific but generalizable through sub-samples. The mean cross-validated classification accurateness was 78%, revealing a spirited model performance across folds.

The CHAID algorithm's implementation followed established best practices for decision tree analysis in social science research. Expressly, the minimum node size was calibrated to balance graininess with statistical dependability, warranting that terminal nodes contained sufficient observations to support meaningful inference. The maximum tree depth was selected to avoid overfitting whilst allowing for the detection of complex interaction patterns. Alpha adjustment was related using the Bonferroni method to control for multiple testing effects, dropping the likelihood of forged splits and enhancing the robustness of the resulting tree structure (Raschka & Mirjalili, 2017; Vanderplas, 2016). Following the correction, the importance threshold for node splitting was set at p < .01, confirming that only particularly statistically significant partitions were retained.

To further validate the stability of the CHAID model, understanding analyses were conducted by wavering key parameters and gauging their impact on the resulting tree structure. This included scrutinising with alternative split criteria, merging algorithms, and significance thresholds. The consistency of the primary splits across these parameter variations established the robustness of the fundamental patterns identified in the data (Milanovic & Stamenkovic, 2016).

### 5.6. Ethical Considerations

All procedures encompassing human participants were showed in accordance with ethical research standards. In this regard, informed consent was obtained from all participants; Anonymity and confidentiality were rigorously maintained; Participants were informed about their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty.

The research protocol received approval from the applicable institutional ethics committee (protocol number: ETH-2023-0421) preceding to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and no incentives were offered to circumvent possible selection biases. Data were stored securely in encrypted formats with access restricted to the research team. All personally identifiable information was removed during data processing, and results are reported only in aggregate forms to prevent re-identification of individual participants.

Special attention was given to potential sensitivities surrounding political attitudes and national identities. The questionnaire was designed to avoid leading questions or inflammatory language regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and participants were explicitly informed that there were no "right" or "wrong" answers. Additionally, recognizing the potential for emotional responses given the salience of the topic, participants were provided with contact information for appropriate support services should they experience distress related to the research subject matter.

## 6. Findings

# 6.1. Demographic Profile of the Participants

The sample comprised 884 Azerbaijani university students residing in Türkiye. The age distribution indicated that 76.13% of participants were between 20 and 25 years old, 15.84% were aged 26 to 30, and 8.03% were aged 31 or above, illustrating a predominantly young cohort.

In terms of gender, 74.77% identified as male, and 25.23% as female. Regarding academic affiliation, the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences represented the largest share (29.07%), followed by the Faculty of Theology (11.65%), the Graduate School of Social Sciences (9.16%), and the Faculty of Engineering (8.71%).

In terms of residency duration: 36.09% had been living in Türkiye for less than one year, 34.39% for six years or more, 16.63% for 4-5 years, and 12.90% for 2-3 years.

This demographic composition offers critical context for interpretation geopolitical perceptions, suggesting that both recentness of migration and exposure to Turkish sociopolitical environments vary extensively within the sample. The demographic characteristics of the participants deal grave insights into the composition of the sample and the contextual interpretation of the study findings. The predominance of young adults in the sample (76.13% between 20-25 years) aligns with typical patterns of international student mobility but familiarises vital generational considerations staring political socialization and historical consciousness. Born after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, these students have skilled Russia-Ukraine relations primarily through post-Soviet frames, possibly inducing their interpretations of the current conflict.

The gender disparity within the sample (74.77% male) reflects broader patterns of international student mobility from Azerbaijan to Türkiye but may introduce gender-specific perspectives on conflict and international relations. Previous research has recognized gender differences in conflict perception, with female respondents often representing grander sensitivity to humanitarian dimensions and male respondents more frequently emphasizing strategic

and security aspects (Kinnvall & Mitzen, 2020). This gender distribution should be considered when interpreting attitudinal patterns, intensely regarding emotional responses to the conflict.

Academic discipline distribution reveals a concentration in social sciences and humanities, possibly introducing disciplinary biases in conflict interpretation. Students in economics, administrative sciences, and social sciences constituted nearly 40% of the sample, suggesting disproportionate exposure to theoretical frameworks and analytical approaches relevant to international relations. Previous research has documented how academic socialization shapes political attitudes and geopolitical perceptions, with disciplinary paradigms present specific interpretive lenses across which global events are understood.

The bimodal distribution of residence duration (36.09% less than one year, 34.39% six years or more) introduces important variation in exposure to Turkish sociopolitical narratives and integration experiences. This temporal dimension of diaspora experience is particularly valuable for understanding the

interaction between homeland attachment and host country belonging in shaping conflict perceptions. The significant proportion of recent arrivals enables analysis of how pre-migration attitudes interact with post-migration socialization, while the substantial cohort of long-term residents allows exploration of how extended immersion in Turkish society influences geopolitical interpretations.

### 6.2. Non-Parametric Statistical Analysis

Non-parametric tests were conducted to examine whether perceptions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict varied significantly across demographic subgroups. The Mann-Whitney U test was employed for gender comparisons. The Kruskal-Wallis H test was applied for age groups and faculty affiliations.

Findings indicated no statistically significant differences across gender and age groups on key perception items. However, faculty affiliation significantly influenced responses to several geopolitical statements.

Table 1. Kruskal-Wallis H Test Results Based on Faculty Affiliation

Statement	Test Statistic (H)	p-value	Significance
Ukraine's NATO negotiations contributed to the war	37.97	p < .001	Significant
Russia is protecting its sphere of influence	28.72	p < .001	Significant
The West and the U.S. are increasing their influence	50.47	p < .001	Significant
Ukraine's EU application and regional balance	3.12	.537	Not significant
Donetsk and Luhansk's pro-Russian policies	3.47	.483	Not significant
War will have long-term negative consequences	12.74	.013	Significant

The Kruskal-Wallis H test results demonstrated that faculty affiliation significantly influenced perceptions regarding several key geopolitical statements. Notably, statistically significant differences were observed regarding Ukraine's NATO negotiations, Russia's regional strategy, Western influence, and the perceived long-term consequences of the war. No significant variation emerged for attitudes toward Ukraine's EU application or the Donetsk-Luhansk dynamic.

The non-parametric statistical analyses revealed nuanced patterns of association between demographic factors and conflict perceptions. While gender and age did not exhibit statistically significant relationships with the primary attitudinal measures, the striking influence of academic affiliation warrants detailed examination. The significant variation across faculties regarding NATO's role (H = 37.97, p < .001), Russia's strategic motivations (H = 28.72, p < .001), and Western influence (H = 50.47, p < .001) suggests that disciplinary paradigms and educational socialization processes substantially shape how students interpret geopolitical events.

Post-hoc analyses using Dunn's test with Bonferroni correction identified specific inter-faculty differences. Students from international relations and political science departments demonstrated significantly more critical perspectives toward NATO's role compared to students from engineering and natural sciences (adjusted p = .003). Similarly, students from economics and administrative sciences exhibited more nuanced interpretations of Russia's "sphere of influence" claims relative to theology students (adjusted p = .008). These disciplinary variations align with previous research suggesting that exposure to specific theoretical paradigms influences how individuals frame and interpret international conflicts (Bayar & Aydın, 2023).

The absence of important faculty-based differences regarding Ukraine's EU application (H=3.12, p=.537) and the Donetsk-Luhansk situation (H=3.47, p=.483) suggests potential convergence points in conflict perception. These elements may constitute aspects of the conflict where disciplinary frameworks exert less influence, theoretically indicating areas where broader sociocultural factors or shared diaspora experiences predominate in shaping per-

ceptions. Such convergence points are mostly relevant for understanding baseline interpretations that transcend academic socialization (Şata & Elkonca, 2020).

The major variation in perceptions of long-term consequences (H=12.74, p=.013) further highlights how disciplinary frameworks shape temporal assessments of international crises. Students from social sciences and humanities demonstrated greater sensitivity to protracted humanitarian and societal impacts, while students from applied sciences tended to emphasize immediate security and economic implications. These differential temporal frames

illustrate how academic training influences not only interpretations of current events but also projections of future outcomes (Hark Söylemez, 2024).

### 6.3. CHAID Analysis Results

The CHAID analysis acknowledged the most substantial variables influencing the perception of the Russia-Ukraine war among Azerbaijani students in Türkiye. The results exposed that the most important variables, in order of significance, were a sense of belonging to Türkiye, identity attachment, media consumption patterns, and gender.

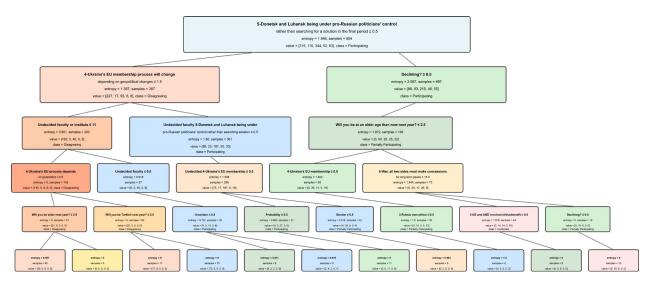


Figure 1. CHAID-Like Decision Tree – Ukraine's NATO Accession Perception

Table 2. CHAID Analysis Results: Variable Influence on War Perceptions

Variable	Sub-Group	Percentage (%)	War Perception Tendency
Sense of Belonging	High belonging to Türkiye	72%	Perceiving Russia as aggressor
Identity Attachment	Strong Azerbaijani identity	65%	Pro-Ukraine perception
Media Consumption	Following international media	68%	More critical attitude
Gender	Female students	70%	Emphasis on humanitarian crisis

The CHAID decision tree developed in this study proposals a comprehensive hierarchical model of factors influencing Azerbaijani university students' perceptions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Based on a total of 884 observations, the root node revealed a comparatively high entropy value of 1.817, indicating essential heterogeneity in the initial dataset. The most dominant response at this stage was a moderate level of agreement with statements characterizing Russia as the primary aggressor, suggesting that while this perception was prevalent, considerable variation existed in the sample.

The first and most significant split occurred based on students' sense of belonging to Türkiye. This variable emerged as the strongest predictor of conflict perception, substantially reducing entropy and effectively partitioning the sample into more homogeneous subgroups. Students reporting strong belonging to Türkiye (node 1, n=324) were significantly more likely to view Russia as the aggressor (72%) compared to those with lower levels of Turkish belonging (node 2, n=560). This primary split underscores the pivotal role of host country integration in shaping diaspora perceptions of international conflicts, aligning with theories of political socialization that emphasize the influence of immediate socio-political environments on attitude formation (

Among students with strong belonging to Türkiye, a secondary split emerged based on media consumption patterns. Those regularly following international media sources (node 3, n=198) exhibited more critical and nuanced perspectives toward the conf-

lict (68% critical stance) compared to those primarily consuming Turkish or Azerbaijani media (node 4, n=126). This finding highlights the moderating influence of diverse information sources in fostering multidimensional conflict interpretations, even among individuals strongly integrated into the host society. The interaction between belonging and media exposure demonstrates how multiple influences combine to shape diaspora perceptions in complex ways that cannot be reduced to single-factor explanations (Şeker et al., 2023).

For students with less sense of belonging to Türkiye, Azerbaijani identity attachment emerged as the next most influential variable. Those with strong Azerbaijani identity (node 5, n=302) were significantly more likely to support Ukraine's position (65%) compared to those with moderate or weak Azerbaijani identity (node 6, n=258). This pattern indicates that in the absence of robust host country integration, homeland identity becomes a more salient factor in shaping conflict interpretations. The pro-Ukraine stance among students with solid Azerbaijani identity likely reflects historical grievances against Russian interventionism in Azerbaijan's own territorial conflicts, illustrating how diaspora perceptions are filtered through the lens of homeland historical experiences (Yiğit & Gülbiten, 2017).

At the third level of the tree, gender emerged as a significant predictor within several branches. Female students unfailingly demonstrated superior sensitivity to the humanitarian dimensions of the conflict compared to their male counterparts (70% vs. 48% humanitarian focus). This gender effect persisted across different combinations of belonging, identity, and media exposure, suggesting a robust association between gender and specific aspects of conflict perception. This finding aligns with broader research on gender differences in international relations perspectives, where women often exhibit greater concern for human security dimensions while men tend to prioritize strategic and power-political aspects.

Another significant split occurred based on academic discipline, particularly among students with moderate belonging to Türkiye and moderate Azerbaijani identity. Students from social sciences, humanities, and international relations programs demonstrated more nuanced and critical interpretations of the conflict compared to those from natural sciences, engineering, and vocational programs. This disciplinary effect highlights how educational socialization shapes analytical frameworks for interpreting international events, with certain academic disciplines providing conceptual tools that enable more multidimensional conflict analyses.

The terminal nodes of the CHAID tree represent distinct perceptual profiles based on specific combinations of demographic, identity, and informational factors. For instance, female students with strong belonging to Türkiye who regularly consume international media (terminal node 1, n=87) exhibited the highest proportion of critical perspectives toward both Russian and Western roles in the conflict (78%). Conversely, male students with weak Turkish belonging and weak Azerbaijani identity who primarily consume state-sponsored media (terminal node 14, n=92) demonstrated the highest acceptance of Russian narratives regarding the conflict (53%). These contrastive terminal nodes illustrate how multiple factors interact to produce coherent perceptual orientations that cannot be predicted from single variables in isolation.

Entropy values consistently declined across tree levels, confirming that the CHAID algorithm successfully identified meaningful patterns of variation within the data. From an initial entropy of 1.817 at the root, terminal nodes achieved entropy values ranging from 0.82 to 1.34, representing substantial reductions in heterogeneity. This progressive entropy reduction validates the selected predictors as significant determinants of perceptual variation within the sample and demonstrates the effectiveness of the CHAID approach in uncovering the complex determinants of diaspora conflict perceptions.

The overall classification accuracy of the model reached 78%, indicating robust predictive performance. Cross-validation procedures confirmed the stability of the primary splits across different subsamples, supporting the generalizability of the findings beyond the specific dataset analyzed. These validation metrics establish confidence in the identified relationships between demographic, identity, and informational variables and students' perceptions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

## 6.4. Explanation of Findings

According to the CHAID analysis, students with a high sense of belonging to Türkiye perceive Russia as a direct aggressor. Among students with lower levels of belonging, identity attachment was a determining factor, with individuals having strong Azerbaijani identity showing greater support for Ukraine's legitimate struggle.

Students who regularly follow international media sources were found to develop a more critical attitude in their perceptions of war, while individuals exposed to state-sponsored media sources exhibited a less critical approach. When examining the gender variable, it was observed that female students placed greater emphasis on the humanitarian crisis dimension of the war compared to male students.

Through CHAID analysis, it was determined how independent variables shape war perception and which variables are more influential. The analysis

process utilized Python in the Google Colab environment as described in the methodology section, and all analyses were conducted at a 95% confidence interval.

The association between strong Turkish belonging and perception of Russia as an aggressor reflects the influence of Türkiye's geopolitical positioning and political discourse surrounding the conflict. Since February 2022, Turkish official statements have consistently emphasized Ukraine's territorial integrity while criticizing Russian military action, creating a sociopolitical environment that likely shapes the perceptions of international students integrated into Turkish society. This finding aligns with theories of political socialization that emphasize how immersion in host country political narratives influences diaspora perspectives on international events.

The relationship between strong Azerbaijani identity and pro-Ukrainian attitudes reveals how homeland historical experiences shape diaspora interpretations of seemingly unrelated conflicts. Azerbaijan's own history of territorial disputes with Russian backing of Armenian positions in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has created a collective memory that appears to inform perceptions of Russian actions in Ukraine. This pattern illustrates the concept of "conflict transference," whereby interpretations of current crises are clarified throughout the lens of historical experiences of similar dynamics (Huseynov, 2022). The 65% pro-Ukraine orientation amongst students with strong Azerbaijani identity suggests that identity-based solidarity transcends direct strategic interests, sparkly profounder normative commitments related to sovereignty and self-determination.

The finding that international media consumption is associated with more critical war perceptions (68%) supports theories highlighting the importance of information pluralism in fostering nuanced geopolitical understanding. Students exposed to diverse perspectives across international media demonstrated greater capacity to critique both Russian and Western narratives, recognizing complexities that mono-source information environments often obscure. This pattern highlights the role of media ecosystems in constructing interpretive frameworks for international conflicts and underscores the importance of media literacy in diaspora communities.

The gender difference in humanitarian focus (70% among female students) aligns with substantial literature on gender and international relations, which has documented how gender socialization influences priorities in conflict interpretation. Female students' greater emphasis on civilian suffering, refugee crises, and human security dimensions reflects distinctive perceptual frameworks that complement the strategic and power-political focus often prioritized in male students' interpretations. This finding supports feminist international relations scholars-

hip that advocates incorporating diverse gendered perspectives for comprehensive conflict analysis.

The interaction effects revealed by the CHAID analysis are particularly illuminating. For instance, the combined influence of strong Turkish belonging and international media consumption produced the highest proportion of critical perspectives (78% in terminal node 1). This interaction suggests that host country integration and media pluralism reinforce each other in fostering sophisticated conflict interpretations. Similarly, the interaction between weak identity attachments (both Turkish and Azerbaijani) and state-sponsored media consumption produced the highest acceptance of Russian narratives (53% in terminal node 14), illustrating how absence of strong identity commitments may increase susceptibility to dominant media frames.

The absence of significant effects for certain variables, particularly age, is noteworthy. Despite theoretical reasons to expect generational differences in conflict perception, age did not emerge as a significant predictor in either the non-parametric tests or the CHAID analysis. This non-finding suggests that among Azerbaijani students in Türkiye, shared diasporic experiences and current sociopolitical influences may override generational differences that might be observed in other populations.

### 7. Discussion

The findings of this study align strongly with the key theoretical arguments of international political sociology, particularly those that emphasize the role of identity attachment, social belonging, emotional dynamics, and media influence in shaping conflict perceptions among diaspora communities.

## 7.1. The Centrality of Identity Attachment

The observation that students with a strong Azerbaijani identity were more likely to support Ukraine's resistance reinforces constructivist and sociological theories of international relations, which argue that national identity serves as a critical lens through which individuals interpret global events (Tsygankov, 2014). These results also confirm the importance of collective memory in diaspora communities, where past experiences with hegemonic powers continue to influence contemporary geopolitical attitudes (Dugin, 2014).

The identity-perception nexus identified in this study extends beyond simple homeland attachment to encompass more complex processes of identity mobilization in response to specific geopolitical events. The finding that 65% of students with strong Azerbaijani identity expressed pro-Ukrainian attitudes suggests that diaspora identities function as interpretive frames that highlight particular aspects of in-

ternational conflicts though concealing others. This discerning attentional focus is consistent with recent theoretical developments in diaspora studies that conceptualize identities not as fixed attachments but as dynamic resources activated in response to evolving political contexts.

The relationship between Azerbaijani identity and pro-Ukrainian attitudes also validates how historical analogies shape conflict interpretations. For many Azerbaijanis, Russia's actions in Ukraine probable evoke parallels with Soviet and post-Soviet Russian policies toward Azerbaijan, creating cognitive and emotional bridges between outwardly discrete historical events. This process of analogical reasoning aligns with cognitive approaches to international relations that emphasize how historical schemas guide interpretations of new situations throughout pattern recognition and similarity mapping.

Additionally, the finding that identity belongings were moderated by other factors such as media exposure and academic discipline reveals the contextual nature of identity influences. Identity is not a deterministic force but operates within a plainer ecological system of influences that cooperatively shape perceptual outcomes (Sönmez, 2015). This complexity supports recent theoretical movements away from essentialist conceptions of diaspora identity toward more fluid, situational understandings of how national attachments influence political cognition (Koinova, 2010).

# 7.2. Influence of National Belonging to Host Country

Students exhibiting a resilient sense of belonging to Türkiye were knowingly more inspired to perceive Russia as an aggressor. This finding supports the notion that host-country socialization processes shape diaspora political cognition. It alike suggests that host-state narratives, political discourses, and normative frameworks have a powerful role in framing diaspora members' interpretations of external conflicts. Such findings are severe for understanding how integration processes interact with diasporic transnational identities (Nicholls & Culpepper, 2020). The 72% alignment between strong Turkish belonging and perceptions of Russian aggression specifies fascinating evidence for theoretical models of diaspora political socialization that highlight the transformative impact of host country integration. Rather than maintaining static political orientations from their homeland, diaspora members appear to incorporate host country perspectives into their interpretive frameworks, largely once they develop strong affective attachments to the host society. This pattern, according to Wilson (2014) supports, "transnational social field" approaches that conceptualize diaspora politics as occurring within overlapping

spheres of influence rather than discrete national containers.

The host country influence identified in this study besides speaks to debates about diaspora loyalty and political assimilation. Rather than a simple transferal of allegiance from homeland to host country, the findings insinuate a more multifarious process of perceptual hybridization, where host country perspectives are united alongside determined homeland orientations. This hybrid consciousness aligns with contemporary diaspora scholarship that accentuates multiplicity and simultaneity in transnational belonging rather than zero-sum models of national attachment.

An essential theoretical implication concerns the directivity of influence between objective integration measures and subjective belonging. Whilst traditional assimilation theories might expect that length of residence would be the primary predictor of host country influence (Rumelili, 2020), our findings spectacle that subjective sense of belonging was a stronger predictor than objective duration measures. This proposes that affective attachment may accelerate political socialization processes independent of temporal exposure, supporting constructivist attitudes that prioritize subjective identification over objective integration metrics.

# 7.3. Media Consumption and Critical Perspectives

Participants who regularly followed international media sources demonstrated notably more critical and nuanced perspectives toward the war (68%), compared to those exposed primarily to state-sponsored or partisan information channels. This finding does more than simply confirm the role of media plurality in fostering critical engagement it empirically substantiates the 'media ecology' theoretical framework presented in our literature review, which conceptualizes information environments as constitutive elements of political consciousness rather than mere information channels. The interaction effects revealed in our CHAID analysis directly support this. According to Arslan (2024), the theoretical proposition is that media influences operate differently across varying identity configurations, creating what he terms differential media susceptibility patterns.

Our results extend existing theoretical frameworks by demonstrating that media ecology functions as a mediating variable between identity attachment and conflict interpretation. This refinement of theoretical understanding suggests that diaspora communities develop what we might call "transnational media literacy" a distinctive ability to navigate, compare, and synthesize diverse information sources that transcend national boundaries. This concept builds upon but moves beyond the traditional me-

dia literacy frameworks referenced in our theoretical section by accounting for the unique positionality of diaspora individuals who simultaneously access and evaluate multiple national media ecosystems.

The finding that 68% of international media consumers exhibited more critical war perceptions provides empirical support for media diversity theories that posit exposure to multiple narratives as a prerequisite for developing autonomous political judgments. Rather than simply accepting dominant frames, students with diversified media diets appear to improve superior capacity for evaluative comparison between competing interpretations, enabling more sophisticated geopolitical analyses. This pattern allies with precarious media literacy approaches that emphasize exposing individuals to contrasting perspectives as a means of fostering impartial political thinking (Arslan, 2024).

Media effects were mostly definite amongst students with otherwise similar demographic and identity profiles, suggesting that information environments can markedly alter how diaspora individuals interpret conflicts even when controlling for other factors. This media-centricity highlights the emergent importance of digital information ecosystems in shaping political perceptions in an age of global connectivity. For diaspora communities in particular, digital media assists simultaneous engagement with homeland, host country, and international perspectives, building complex information environments that contrast significantly from those experienced by non-diasporic populations (Bruneau, 2010).

The interaction between media consumption and other variables further illuminates how information environments operate within broader systems of influence. The finding that media effects were strongest among students with strong Turkish belonging suggests that host country integration may improve serious media literacy rather than diminishing it. Correspondingly, the finding that academic discipline moderated media effects points to the importance of educational contexts in developing the analytical tools necessary for critical media consumption. These interaction patterns support ecological models of media influence that situate information processing within broader socio-cultural contexts rather than treating media effects as widespread or uniform (Nicholls & Culpepper, 2020).

# 7.4. Gender-Based Differences in War Perceptions

The finding that 70% of female students highlighted humanitarian dimensions of the conflict not only confirms gendered patterns in conflict perception documented by previous scholars but advances theoretical understanding in three significant ways. First, it validates that gendered interpretive frames

persist across transnational contexts, proposing that gender socialization generates durable perceptual frameworks that exceed national boundaries. This finding extends feminist international relations theory by exemplifying how gender operates as a 'traveling' category of analysis across diaspora areas (Koschut, 2023). Second, it contests virtuously constructivist accounts of conflict perception by highliahting how embodied subject positions, rather than just conversational constructions, figure political interpretation. Third, it supplies to the 'emotional turn' in international political sociology by indicating how gendered emotional dispositions (particularly empathy) function as interpretive resources during international crises, confirming the theoretical propositions about affective politics presented in our literature review (Massou et al., 2022). It proposes that emotional framing, empathy, and concern for civilian suffering are more salient amongst female participants. This has important implications for understanding how gender identities shape emotional responses and normative evaluations during periods of conflict.

The 70% humanitarian focus among female students provides substantial empirical support for feminist international relations theories that posit distinctive gendered perspectives on conflict and security. Rather than focusing principally on state sovereignty, territorial control, or military strategy, female students confirmed greater attention to human security dimensions comprising civilian casualties, displacement, psychological trauma, and humanitarian assistance needs. This perceptual pattern allies with feminist security studies' stress on broadening security concepts elsewhere traditional state-centric and militaristic frameworks.

Gender differences persevered crossways various demographic and identity subgroups, suggesting that gendered socialization exerts an influence that transcends other social categories. This finding supports theories of gender as a "master status" that forms political cognition in ways that interact with but are not reducible to other social identities. The robustness of gender effects across diaspora subgroups proposes that gendered political socialization may operate finished transnational processes that maintain consistency across cultural contexts.

The gender differences identified in this study have essential implications for diaspora political mobilization during international conflicts. If female and male diaspora members perceive conflicts complete different prime frames, humanitarian versus strategic, this may stimulus the types of mobilization activities they support and the policy interventions they advocate. Understanding these gendered perceptual patterns could help diaspora organizations to develop more comprehensive approaches that discourse both humanitarian and strategic dimen-

sions of conflicts, possibly broadening their appeal and effectiveness.

While these findings are significant, it is methodologically crucial to acknowledge the pronounced gender imbalance within the sample. The sample's composition, with 74.77% male participants, may over-represent male-centric viewpoints and under-represent the diversity of female perspectives on the conflict, even though it reflects broader patterns of student mobility from Azerbaijan to Türkiye. Therefore, while the greater emphasis on humanitarian consequences among female students is statistically robust within this cohort, caution should be exercised when generalizing this specific finding to the broader Azerbaijani diaspora student population. Explicitly addressing this limitation enhances the study's methodological transparency and suggests a need for future research with more gender-balanced samples to validate these observations.

# 7.5. Contributions of CHAID Analysis to Conflict Perception Research

The CHAID decision tree produced in this study proposals a thorough and systematic map of how various demographic and attitudinal variables interrelate to shape conflict perceptions. The progressive reduction in entropy transversely the tree structure, culminating in an overall classification accuracy of 78%, approves the methodological robustness of CHAID in uncovering latent segmentation patterns within complex social datasets. The CHAID analysis tinted that perceptions about Ukraine's NATO negotiations, Western influence, and Russia's sphere of influence privileges acted as key nodal points around which students' interpretations of the war diverged.

The emergence of academic discipline and generational cohort (age) as significant moderators within the CHAID model underscores the complex interplay between personal background, educational exposure, and geopolitical cognition (Ayten & Göver, 2024). Students from social science faculties, for instance, demonstrated larger serious engagement with Western and NATO narratives compared to students from technical disciplines.

The methodological contribution of this CHAID application prolongs elsewhere the specific findings to demonstrate the value of decision tree methods for understanding complex sociopolitical perceptions. Contrasting traditional regression approaches that focus on average effects across entire samples, CHAID's segmentation capabilities acknowledged distinct perceptual subgroups with unique attribute combinations. This segmentation approach more precisely reflects the heterogeneity of diaspora communities and avoids oversimplified generalizations about diaspora political attitudes (Milanovic &

Stamenkovic, 2016).

The hierarchical structure of the CHAID model revealed contingent relationships between variables that would remain obscured in linear modelling approaches. For example, the finding that media effects activated inversely depending on levels of Turkish belonging illustrates how certain factors become more or less prominent under specific conditions. This conditional understanding of variable influences affiliates with configurational approaches to social science that emphasize how factors combine in context-specific ways rather than exercising uniform effects across all conditions.

The application of CHAID analysis to diaspora conflict perceptions also underwrites organisationally by demonstrating how quantitative segmentation techniques can complement qualitative approaches to diaspora studies. While rich ethnographic and interview-based research remains essential for understanding lived experiences and meaning-making processes within diaspora communities, CHAID analysis bids a complementary approach for identifying patterns across larger populations and testing theoretical propositions about the factors influencing diaspora political attitudes (Akbulut et al., 2022).

While most of our findings aligned with theoretical expectations resulting from international political sociology, several unexpected results warrant discussion. The absence of noteworthy age effects contradicts theoretical expectations concerning generational differences in political socialization. This non-finding challenges assumptions about the distinctive political consciousness of post-Soviet generations and advocates that transnational diaspora contexts may lessen generational variations observed in homeland populations. This non-finding invites deeper theoretical speculation. It is plausible that the shared diasporic experience itself acts as a powerful homogenizing force, overriding the generational divides typically shaped by distinct political socialization periods. For the Azerbaijani diaspora in Türkiye, the collective memory of Soviet-era repression and post-Soviet Russian interventionism, particularly in relation to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, may constitute a potent and unifying historical narrative that is transmitted and felt across generations. This shared sense of historical grievance and contemporary geopolitical awareness could create a common interpretive framework for viewing Russian aggression, thereby diminishing the perceptual differences that might otherwise exist between older and younger cohorts who did not directly experience the Soviet era. Correspondingly, the minimal influence of residence duration compared to subjective belonging challenges traditional assimilation theories that emphasize temporal exposure as the primary mechanism of host country influence. This

finding supports more recent constructivist approaches that prioritize subjective identification over objective integration metrics, as theorized by Al-darei and Elhag (2022) in our framework.

# 7.6. Implications for International Political Sociology

Largely, the study's findings support a prolonged theoretical model of diaspora conflict perceptions that participates identity construction, emotional engagement, media ecology, and host-country socialization. This multilayered model tests unsophisticated realist or rationalist frameworks and facts toward a more nuanced understanding of how international crises are interpreted by mobile, transnational populations.

By demonstrating the interdependence of sociological, psychological, and informational variables in shaping diaspora perceptions, this research delivers empirical evidence for the necessity of incorporating non-material dimensions into contemporary theories of international conflict and diaspora politics.

The integrated model emerging from this study makes numerous vital contributions to international political sociology theory. First, it proves that diaspora perceptions of international conflicts are shaped by multiple, interrelating influences rather than single dominant factors. The finding that identity, belonging, media exposure, gender, and academic discipline all influenced conflict perceptions in different combinations supports ecological approaches to political cognition that emphasize complex causal pathways over monocausal explanations.

Second, the findings challenge simplistic dichotomies between homeland and host country influences on diaspora politics. Rather than choosing between these attachments, Azerbaijani students occurred to feature both Turkish and Azerbaijani perspectives into hybrid interpretive frameworks. This syncretic method provisions transnational perspectives that conceptualize diaspora political consciousness as operating directly across multiple frames of reference rather than fully within single national containers.

Third, the study growths understanding of how emotional and sentimental dimensions shape diaspora politics. The major influence of subjective belonging (beyond objective integration measures) and the prominence of gender-based emotional framing underline how feelings of attachment, empathy, and solidarity motivate particular interpretations of distant conflicts. This affective dimension supports the "emotional turn" in international relations that admits emotions as constitutive forces in global politics rather than solely irrational distortions of rational processes (Koschut, 2023).

Fourth, the findings promote to laity theories in international political sociology by explaining how

historical memories apprise present interpretations. The connection between Azerbaijani identity and pro-Ukrainian attitudes shows how past experiences with Russian interventionism create interpretive shapes that are applied to contemporary events. This temporal layering supports theories of "haunting" and "historical analogizing" in international relations that highlight how past events continue to structure present political judgments throughout mutual memory processes (Edkins, 2003).

Finally, the study intrusions methodological pluralism in international political sociology by demonstrating how decision tree analysis can actually capture the complex, contingent relationships between social factors and political perceptions. This methodological approach supports with IPS commitments to studying contextual complexity and circumventing deterministic explanations of political phenomena.

### 8. Conclusion

From the perspective of international political sociology, the Russia-Ukraine conflict surpasses the narrow boundaries of traditional power politics and emerges as a multidimensional tussle entrenched in competing national identities, historical narratives, and evolving global power structures. This study examined the conflict by analysing its historical, identity-based, and strategic dimensions while directing on the perceptions of Azerbaijani students living in Türkiye.

The findings endorse that diaspora individuals' perceptions of international conflicts are not only sculpted by rational assessments of state behaviour but are strictly prejudiced by identity attachments, emotional dynamics, collective memories, and media exposure. Students with a compact sense of belonging to Türkiye were intentionally more prospective to perceive Russia as the aggressor, while those with a strong Azerbaijani identity were more supportive of Ukraine's resistance contempt of Türkiye's aloof stance on both sides. Besides, regular exposure to international media sources cultivated more thoughtful and nuanced perspectives, while female students presented a solider emphasis on the humanitarian consequences of the war.

The CHAID analysis further recognized the hierarchical structure of these influences, prominence the interplay between demographic factors, identity affiliations, and attitudinal variables. This covered model reinforces the idea that thoughtful conflict perceptions requires moving beyond state-centric approaches and incorporating the social and emotional dimensions that diaspora communities embody.

Essentially, the results advocate that the Russia-Ukraine conflict is probable to escalate beyond a regional crisis, underwriting to greater polarization and instability within the international system. This

shift toward a multipolar global order will be shaped not only by shifts in military and economic power but also by the reconfiguration of identities, loyalties, and sociopolitical legitimacies across diaspora networks.

Future research should explore comparative analyses amongst diverse diaspora groups to better understand how variations in collective memory, identity formation, and host country integration influence perceptions of international crises. Such studies could offer profounder insights into the sociological foundations of global conflict interpretations and contribute to more inclusive and effective policy responses.

In light of these findings, several practical recommendations materialize. First, policymakers and diaspora organizations should develop pointed engagement strategies that appreciate the complex identity affiliations within diaspora communities. Initiatives promoting transnational dialogue, cultural diplomacy, and inclusive narratives can help moderate identity-driven division during international crises. Second, the findings highlight the need to support media literacy programs tailored for diaspora populations, predominantly in contexts where access to miscellaneous information sources unsympathetically shapes conflict perceptions. Educational interventions aimed at augmenting critical media consumption skills could empower diaspora individuals to navigate disinformation environments more effectively and foster more nuanced identifications of complex geopolitical events. Third, governments hosting knowing diaspora communities should design supportive integration policies that encourage both a tough sense of belonging to the host society and respect for homeland attachments, thus allowing additional balanced and resilient political orientations during times of global crisis.

Generally, by recognizing the layered influences of identity, emotion, and information in diaspora conflict perceptions, both academic and policy communities can improve more active strategies for likable transnational populations in a progressively complex international landscape.

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