The *LSE Undergraduate Political Review* is an online platform that aims to encourage and facilitate an engagement in high level political research. We showcase the work of undergraduate students from universities around the world, in part offering undergraduates the opportunity to have their research published in an academic journal. The LSE UPR invites the application to politics of a range of disciplinary perspectives, both within and without the social sciences, both empirical and theoretical.

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# Preface

In 2015, Jack Winterton, a Government Department undergraduate proposed the shockingly novel idea that undergraduate students were not only interested in pursuing independent research projects, but could also coalesce into a group with its own unique identity. So was born the LSE Undergraduate Political Review (UPR), Jack's brainchild. He sought to create a new presence in the LSE Government Department and single-handedly, Jack generated interest among a group of like-minded students. Their initial projects were research-oriented blogs for the newly created UPR website and a methods course for political science undergraduates. With an established website and twitter account, Jack, as Editor-in-Chief, handed the formative UPR over to Joshua Manby and his team of enthusiastic undergraduate researchers. In its second year, the UPR hosted its first academic conference, thus helping to grow and embed the UPR into the culture of the Government Department. Hannah Bailey then took over as the third Editor-in-Chief of the UPR, and further expanded its activities to include two independent teams of students (a year later, doubled to four teams) each pursuing its own dissertation-length research project. These evolved into academic papers, which the teams then presented formerly at national and European academic conferences. The UPR also published its first journal, complete with articles representing undergraduate research internationally. In its fourth year, with Karina Moxon, the UPR added a new activity—an international essay competition for aspiring Sixth Form students. It also continued all the previous array of research activities, including its second journal, again with excellent international undergraduate research.

That brings us to summer 2019, and the present journal. As you will see, the current volume showcases the best of undergraduate research in politics, with papers from Princeton University, Durham University, Kings College London, and of course, the London School of Economics and Political Science. One could hardly hope for a better array of important topics, ranging from the effect of refugees on voting behaviour, the effects of China's aid and influence in Sub-Saharan Africa, a political theory perspective on Catalan Independence, Putin's rhetoric as a leadership tool, the fragility of the nation-state in the Middle East, and Sweden's lessons for the Trump administration in dealing with migrants.

The LSE UPR is now an established and thriving group within our Government Department. The dedication of UPR members to excellent research is evident in all their activities. This is a group of students who have navigated not only the logistical challenges of university committees and inevitable bureaucracy, but have also managed to create a unique culture among undergraduate students who are passionate about research. The LSE UPR has matured into an "institution" (in the best sense of the word!) within our department and within the LSE. Over its four short years, the many dozens of students who have dedicated their time, their intelligence and their diligence to growing the UPR have demonstrated that Jack's original idea could be the catalyst for a larger research presence among LSE students. Students are often attracted to the LSE because of its world-leading academic research. The LSE has long excelled in offering new insights and innovative methods for understanding our political world. The LSE UPR is now a firmly established part of this research culture.

To students and professionals, I urge you to engage with the UPR in its many research activities. And to the incoming Editor-in-Chief, Adam Hudson and the UPR Team for 2019-20, I wish you all the success and I look forward to seeing the UPR evolve and grow further.

Cheryl Schonhardt-Bailey
*Professor, and Head of Government Department*

# Contents

# The dynamics of issue salience and voting: did the refugee crisis affect turnout in European national elections?

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## Abstract

The European refugee crisis caused an unprecedented rise in the salience of refugees and immigration policy across European countries, with the issue of refugees and immigration suddenly dominating all facets of political life. This paper investigates the effect of this phenomenon on political behaviour, particularly citizens' decision to vote in national elections across Europe. It proposes that the refugee crisis raised the salience of immigration policy and made it a dominant policy issue in elections, which reduced indifference-based abstention. This resulted in an increase in overall turnout in European national elections held following the onset of the refugee crisis. To confirm this proposal, this paper employs two empirical tests. First, it investigates whether a positive correlation exists between changes in turnout and perceived immigration policy salience. Following this, a more rigorous empirical test is performed on individual-level data from the European Social Survey in five countries, investigating the relationship between changes in voting habits and attitudes towards refugees and immigration. The results of the two test confirm the hypothesis that the refugee crisis impacted electoral turnout through reducing indifference based abstention. However, it must also be emphasised that this effect appears to be conditional upon the thematization of the issue, meaning the extent to which refugee and immigration policies actually structured electoral competition. While this conclusion clearly contributes to the understanding of issue-based electoral participation decisions and provides additional proof of the significant effect of policies on turnout levels, future studies employing more rigorous statistical methods, expanded dataset including more countries, and individual-level panel data would significantly further our understanding of the effects of changes in policy salience on political participation dynamics.

**Keywords:** electoral turnout, indifference-based abstention, issue salience, political participation, refugee crisis, political behaviour

## Introduction

The refugee crisis generated an unprecedented increase in citizens' perceptions of the importance of refugees and immigration issues across European countries. As voters grew increasingly concerned, refugee and immigration policy discussions became a predominant feature of electoral campaigns, potentially enabling the strong emotion-based reactions

evoked by the immigration issue to translate into political action (Brader et al., 2008: 959). As an illustration of this process, the increased turnout and support for the ruling party Fidesz in the Hungarian elections of April 2018 are generally attributed to immense propaganda campaign of government-controlled media centred around refugees and immigration issues, which raised feeling of insecurity and anxiety in a massive portion of the electorate (Santora, 2018). This example demonstrates how crucial it is to understand the consequences of such an unprecedentedly large and rapid increase in issue salience for the central indicator of political engagement, turnout.

The unprecedented increase in the salience of refugees and immigration issues arguably affected voter turnout through changing indifference-based abstention dynamics. The immense rise in citizens' concern with immigration issue following the onset of the refugee crisis in 2015 is shown by the scale of changes in perceived issue salience across European Union countries. In May 2014, 15 per cent of EU citizens believed immigration to be among the two most important issues facing their country, and only 2 per cent mentioned terrorism, an issue closely associated with the refugee crisis (Eurobarometer, 2014). In May 2016, the EU averages were 28 per cent and 15 per cent respectively, indicating that in the ranking of 13 issues, immigration rose from 4$^{th}$ to 2$^{nd}$, while terrorism from 13$^{th}$ to 4$^{th}$ (Eurobarometer, 2014; Eurobarometer, 2016). This suggests a very substantial fall in indifference towards the immigration issue, as the increase in the number of immigrants, and elite and media cues interacted to increase pro- and anti-immigration sentiments (Dunaway et al., 2010: 359; Gabel, Scheve, 2007: 1013; McCombs, Shaw, 1972: 176). As a result, refugee and immigration policy came to be a core issue in public debate, and therefore in elections across Europe.

The central hypothesis of this study is therefore that with the fall in indifference towards immigration resulting from the refugee crisis, indifference-based abstention decreased as well, generating higher aggregate turnout. Based on rational choice theory's account of issues' influence on citizens' probability of voting, this paper argues that by raising the perceived issue salience of refugee and immigration policy and structuring party competition, the European refugee crisis increased the likelihood of individuals with strong policy preferences in immigration deciding to vote, and thus aggregate turnout.

This paper contributes to the understanding of the dynamics of issue-based participation, a largely neglected field of analysis. By employing a novel empirical method to measure the effects of issue salience increase for individuals' decision to vote, it provides additional insights. Furthermore, due to its comparative analysis of European countries' election dynamics, it contributes to our understanding of cross-country differences.

## Literature review

Aggregate turnout in national elections indicates citizens' willingness to participate in the political decision-making process of a country. Harder and Krosnick identify three classes of

determinants of turnout: ability to vote, motivation to vote, and difficulty of acquiring the required information and casting the ballot (Harder, Krosnick, 2008: 525). These categories incorporate sociodemographic, attitudinal and institutional factors (Wolfinger, Rosenstone, 1980: 1, 62; Blais, Carty, 1990: 167). Among these one often neglected and not well-understood determinant of individuals' decision to vote is the effect of the issues featured in election campaigns, which this paper investigates (Adams et al., 2006: 66). To do this, this section reviews the existing literature on firstly, issue voting; secondly, the theoretical framework for analysis of issue-based participation choice; and lastly, the previous empirical studies on issue-based participation.

## The role of issues in deciding vote choice

Issue-based participation and vote choice are strongly connected, as voters' decision in elections can be conceived of as a sequential process of two stages: firstly, the decision on the most preferred candidate, and secondly, the decision on whether to vote or abstain (Riker, Ordeshook, 1973: 308). Since RePass's influential piece on the existence of issue voting (RePass, 1971: 400), the consensus emerged that issue voting occurs infrequently and its influence on candidate choice varies across elections (Campbell at al., 1960: 187). Issue-voting is more likely in times of economic and social turmoil (Nie et al., 1976: 156-93), and when the dominant issues in election campaigns are so called easy issues, as distinguished by Carmines and Stimson (1980). While hard-issue voting requires a sophisticated analysis incorporating conscious calculations of the costs and benefits of alternative policies, easy-issue voting occurs when a certain issue evokes gut responses from citizens (Carmines, Stimson, 1980: 78). Easy issues tend to be symbolic rather than pragmatic, concerned more with policy ends than means, and have long been on governments' policy agendas, even if their increase in salience was recent (Carmines, Stimson, 1980: 80-81). Therefore, all citizens engage in easy-issue voting, irrespective of voter sophistication or education levels (Carmines, Stimson, 1980: 88).

Issue voting is also more likely to occur when the salience of an issue area increases drastically, as exemplified by policy voting on the Vietnam war in the 1968 U.S. presidential election and on the Iraq war in the 2004 election, even if low candidate competition and candidate convergence on the issues reduced this effect (Page, Brody, 1972: 993-994; Verba, Brody, 1970; Gelpi et al., 2007: 171). This suggests that issue voting is likely to have occurred on immigration policy following the onset of the crisis, and thus could have potentially influenced on turnout as well.

## Rational choice theory and issue-based abstention

The theoretical framework that supports the proposition that issue salience influences individuals' decision to vote is rooted in in rational choice theory. Downs (1957) conceived of voting as a rational act whereby individuals are motivated to influence the outcome of an election, which the post-election policies form part of. They therefore vote for the candidate whose policies are closest to their preferences (Downs, 1957: 146). Downs's central paradox of voting originates from the recognition that due to the perceived near-improbability of their

vote deciding the outcome of the election, it is rational for voters to abstain as the opportunity cost of voting exceeds the negligible potential benefit (Downs, 1957: 146-7). Riker and Ordeshook (1968) aim to circumvent this paradox by developing their calculus of voting. This suggests that the choice to vote (R) depends on the voter's utility if their preferred candidate is elected (B), the perceived probability of their vote being decisive (P), the opportunity cost of voting (C), and the D-term, which is introduced to measure the voter's utility from voting that is unrelated to the outcome (D), so that $R = PB + D - C$ (Riker and Ordeshook, 1968: 25, 28). Voting has investment and consumption benefits, the former connected to the outcome of the election and denoted by term B, the latter representing the satisfaction derived from the act of voting, and denoted by the D-term (Blais, 2000: 4).

In the rational choice framework, two different motives for abstention exist, which are both partially policy-based: indifference and alienation (Brody, Page, 1973: 2-3). Alienation-based abstention relates to the expressive benefits of voting contained in the D-term, and occurs when the voter's perceived distance from their most preferred candidate in policy preferences is so far that they see no benefit of voting (Brody, Page, 1973: 3). Indifference-based abstention on the other hand relates to the term B, and occurs when individuals perceive little difference in the attractiveness of candidates as the candidates' policy positions are exceedingly close (Brody, Page, 1973: 2). Both abstention motives relate to the core issues in election campaigns, which are therefore crucial determinants of the decision to vote.

## Empirical studies on issue-based abstention

Empirical studies universally find that perceptions of issue salience are significant determinants of abstention. Yet, these studies are surprisingly scarce, and inconclusive on the different effects of indifference and alienation and their exact determinants (Adams et al., 2006: 66).

The first such empirical study (Zipp, 1985) measured voter indifference and alienation by the policy distance between voters and candidates. Using 1968-80 U.S. presidential election data, Zipp performed multivariate logistic regression with controls for sociodemographic and attitudinal variables, and found that policy-specific indifference and alienation were significant determinants of participation choice, with indifference having a more substantive effect (Zipp, 1985: 52-53, 59). Plane and Gershtenson (2004) arrive at similar conclusions based on U.S. midterm data, but find alienation-based abstention stronger (Plane, Gershtenson, 2004: 88-89). Katz (2007) finds the effect of indifference-based abstention more substantial in Brazil's 2002 presidential election (Katz, 2007: 21-22).

Adams, Down, and Merril (2006) inquire into the different effect of alienation and indifference, and provide further evidence by applying a unified model of turnout and vote choice to 1980-88 U.S. presidential election data, and performing computer simulations to model hypothetical scenarios (Adams et al., 2006: 65). After finding significant effects for both indifference and alienation, they compute the expected indifference, alienation and aggregate turnout for four hypothetical scenarios, from convergence to extreme polarisation

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of candidates' policy positions (Adams et al., 2006: 74, 80-81). They find that both indifference and alienation depress turnout, but while the former is induced by convergence, the latter is evoked through polarisation (Adams et al., 2006: 81-82).

Most notably for this paper's purpose, Thurner and Eymann's (2000) find that in the 1990 German election the only statistically significant issue area affecting abstention was immigration (Thurner, Eymann, 2000: 72). Using a unified spatial model and measuring alienation and indifference with policy distances, they estimate the salience of the four prominent issue areas: German unification, immigration policy, nuclear energy, and abortion (Thurner, Eymann, 2000: 55-58, 67). Surprisingly, they find that only indifference towards immigration had statistically significant effect on participation choice (Thurner, Eymann, 2000: 69-70), which could be explained by the large-scale Turkish immigration and integration issues at the time (Martin, 1991: 21-22). The finding that only indifference towards immigration increased the probability of abstention significantly reinforces the validity of this paper's problem identification, and is highly promising.

This study contributes to this empirical literature, and further the understanding of issue-driven electoral participation dynamics, an area where empirical studies remain surprisingly scarce. Furthermore, using a new empirical method of examining changes in turnout and issue salience, it also seeks to contribute to the understanding of the consequences of an unprecedented increase in salience of an issue area for political participation. Finally, as the European refugee crisis possesses the rare characteristic that its salience rose in similar magnitudes simultaneously in numerous countries, insightful cross-country comparisons are also possible.

## Theoretical framework

This study proposes that the European refugee crisis reduced indifference-based abstention in European national elections during the crisis. As the perceived salience of refugee and immigration issues rose, individuals developed strong policy preferences. The future governments' policies implemented to deal with the refugee crisis became a primary concern of citizens and a prominent issue in election campaigns, with candidates representing often very different policy agendas, which further reduced indifference. Due to the strong concern of the electorate and the vast differences in possible policy outcomes, citizens' issue-based indifference to the election outcome dropped, and seldom-voters also became motivated to participate. While those few who remained indifferent towards immigration issue may have become more likely to abstain due to the strong one-issue focus of some campaigns, they could still base their participation choice on other issues or non-issue factors, and thus this effect was not sufficiently strong to counteract the fall in indifference-based abstention. Therefore, higher aggregate turnout resulted.

This paper adopts a spatial model of voting based on Downsian rational choice theory (1957) and Riker and Ordeshook's (1973) calculus of voting. According to this model, individuals

decide whether to vote or not through a rational evaluation of its benefits and costs. Voters' expected utility from voting depends on how much difference they believe the possible outcomes of the election would make to them (Brody, Page, 1973: 2). If they perceive the alternative refugees and immigration policy outcomes as yielding significantly different utility levels, they are less likely to abstain due to indifference.

For refugees and immigration issue salience to reduce indifference-based abstention, two criteria must be satisfied: firstly, the refugees and immigration policy implemented after the election must feature in citizens' evaluation of the costs and benefits of voting; secondly, the candidates' policy proposals must yield citizens very different expected utility levels. This study argues that both criteria are satisfied.

Concerning the first, there are three reasons: the issue salience of immigration for citizens; the thematization of the issue by parties; and the easy-issue nature of the problem itself. As demonstrated by results from the Eurobarometer surveys, immigration suddenly became a primary issue concern for a large segment of the electorate in European countries following the onset of the refugee crisis. As the issues citizens are concerned about structure election campaigns (Petrocik et al., 2003: 599), refugees and immigration policy became a key issue on which candidates proposed different policy alternatives, enabling perceptions of issue salience to translate into policy concerns. This effect was amplified by the irreversibility and far-reaching long-term consequences of the refugees and immigration policy decisions. The fact that the refugees and immigration policies adopted after the election to manage the crisis could drastically and permanently transform the society, economy, and political landscape of the country magnified the importance of influencing the outcome through voting. This effect was further aided by the easy-issue characteristics of immigration. It displays the easy-issue characteristics Carmines and Stimson (1980) identify: it evokes emotional reactions, 'gut responses' from voters, it is symbolic not pragmatic, and concerned with policy ends, not means (i.e. not the specifics of how border control should be strengthened to impede illegal border crossing by refugees, but the fact that it should be). Therefore, even those citizens who do not typically base their participation choice on hard issues such as macroeconomic or social policy became more likely to consider this one issue when deciding whether to vote.

The second criterion that candidates proposed vastly different policies was also satisfied, as due to the divisiveness of the immigration issue and lack of society-wide consensus on the basic governing principles of policy-making, candidates assumed easily identifiable and polarised positions, which generated strong electoral competition. As Page and Brody showed regarding the Vietnam war issue, under low electoral competition issue-driven electoral behaviour occurs less (Page, Brody, 1972: 993-994). However, for the refugee crisis the contrary was the case. Owing to the highly polarised public opinion, candidates assumed positions that spanned the whole scale from extremely generous to extremely restrictive refugee policy. Consequently, it increasingly mattered for citizens whose policy proposals get implemented, and the likelihood of abstention due to indifference fell.

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# Research Design

Two empirical tests are developed to assess the proposition outlined above. The first test verifies the existence of a link between perceptions of immigration issue salience and aggregate election turnout across countries. The second test analyses the dynamics of turnout change within countries, seeking to confirm that the propensity to vote rose among citizens not indifferent towards refugees and immigration policy.

## The first empirical test

The dataset is comprised of European Union countries which held national elections during the European refugee crisis. The span of the European refugee crisis is identified based on monthly number of asylum applicants to EU countries. In June 2015, the number of asylum applicants to EU countries rose drastically from 73,040 to 95,945, and averaged at 126,009 monthly applicants until September 2016, when it fell below 100,000 (Eurostat, Asylum applicants). Therefore, the period of the refugee crisis is identified as between June 1st 2015 and September 1st 2016.

The dependent variable is changes in turnout from the national election directly preceding the onset of the refugee crisis to the one during the refugee crisis, with data obtained from the IFES Election Guide. In all countries the two elections compared are of the same type (i.e. presidential or legislative), and in Austria's two-round presidential elections turnout statistics from the 2nd round are included. The independent variable is citizens' perceptions of their country's affectedness by the refugee crisis, as measured by the changes in citizens' perceptions of the immigration issue's salience. Data is from the Eurobarometer 81 and 85 surveys from May 2014 and May 2016, in which respondents answered the question '*What do you think are the two most important issues facing [our country] at the moment*?'. This measure can be utilised as self-reporting is an adequate measure of issue salience in the study of mass political behaviour (Epstein, Segal, 2000: 66-67). Changes in perceptions of salience are calculated from the difference in the proportion of citizens mentioning immigration. The relationship between the independent and dependent variables is visualised with a scatter plot with trendline. Analysing changes in the variables instead of their levels enables the exclusion of the effect of various country-specific factors, assuming they have not changed drastically in the given period in the examined countries. While other determinants of turnout could confound the result and causality is far from proven, if a positive aggregate-level relationship is visible, deeper individual-level analysis is justified.

## The second empirical test

The second empirical test is performed to establish whether non-indifference towards refugee policy was an individual-level determinant of decision to vote in elections. Data is available from the European Social Survey Round 7 and 8, for which surveying occurred close before and after the onset of the refugee crisis[1]. Of the 14 EU countries in both ESS datasets,

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[1] For ESS7 between 01.09.2014-31.12.2014, for ESS8 between 01.09.2016-31.12.2016.

analysis is restricted to five - Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Poland and the United Kingdom -, as only these held national elections between the start of data collection for ESS8, and the start of the European refugee crisis on 1st June 2015.

The dependent variable is the response to the question '*Some people don't vote nowadays for one reason or another. Did you vote in the last [country] national election in [month/year]*?'. The independent variable is the response on a five-level Likert scale to the proposition '*The government should be generous in judging people's applications for refugee status*.' The response '*Neither agree nor disagree*' indicates indifference or uncertainty regarding one's position, which both suggest that refugees and immigration policy preferences did not feature in the respondent's decision to vote. *'Agree strongly'* and '*Agree*', and *'Disagree strongly'* and '*Disagre*e' are aggregated to denote pro-immigration and anti-immigration policy preferences. Changes in turnout are compared between these three groups in each country. The results are explored with descriptive statistics and visualised. Stronger relationship is expected in countries with more drastic immigration issue salience increase, as given by the independent variable of the first test.

The primary possible impediment to observing the expected relationship is if other issues gained in prominence as well between the two elections in some countries. These would impact the issue focus of campaigns, and obscure the effect of the refugee crisis. Such possibilities are explored qualitatively. Furthermore, the statistical analysis is restricted for two reasons. Firstly, as consecutive ESS survey rounds do not survey the same respondents, whether individuals' participation choice changed after the onset of the crisis cannot be tested. Secondly, logistic regression on ESS8 data to determine whether indifference to refugee policy significantly increased individuals' likelihood of voting during the crisis is beyond the scope of this study for two reasons. Firstly, it would necessitate a wide range of controls with extensive information on individual countries' electoral systems, and social and political landscapes. Moreover, candidates and voters would have to be placed on policy preference scales on the primary policy focuses in each individual election. Therefore, this analysis is restricted to descriptive statistics, and alternative explanations are explored qualitatively.

## Empirical Analysis

### Results of the first empirical test

Changes in turnout and in the percentage of population perceiving immigration as one of the two most important issues facing their country is presented in Table I (detailed data is disclosed in Appendix A). In all countries except the UK immigration issue salience increased and in some more than an additional 25 per cent of the population began to perceive immigration as a salient issue. The slight fall in the UK is attributable to the fact that immigration was already a highly salient issue before the crisis due to high immigration rates from within and outside the EU (Eurostat, Population). In 2014, immigration salience was highest of the 15 countries in the UK with 41 per cent, and still second highest in 2016 with

38 per cent. For completeness, the same analysis was performed with monthly per capita asylum applicants as independent variable, which highlights the divergence in the reality and perceptions of how affected a country was by the refugee crisis (Appendix B).

*Table I: Changes in perceptions of immigration issue salience and turnout in 15 EU countries directly before and during the European refugee crisis*

| Country | Changes in citizens' perception of issue salience of immigration, 05.2014-05.2016 | Change in turnout |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Austria | 26% | 19.2% |
| Croatia | 5% | 11.2% |
| Cyprus | 6% | -12.0% |
| Denmark | 37% | -1.9% |
| Estonia | 25% | 0.7% |
| Finland | 17% | 3.3% |
| Greece | 14% | 1.4% |
| Ireland | 0% | -3.3% |
| Poland | 9% | 2.0% |
| Portugal | 1% | -2.2% |
| Slovakia | 15% | 0.7% |
| Spain | 4% | 4.3% |
| United Kingdom | -3% | 0.7% |

The scatterplot of the results shows that changes in citizens' perception of immigration issue salience and aggregate turnout are positively correlated. Cyprus was removed as an outlier, which is justified as in its 2016 national election abstention reached record levels due to disillusionment with the country's 2013 financial meltdown, and immigration did not feature in campaigns (Deloy, 2016a; Kambas, 2016). Results including Cyprus are disclosed in Appendix C. Despite the extreme result, Austria remains in the sample as refugees and immigration policy was the most prominent issue in its 2016 presidential election (Deloy, 2016b). While dispersion of the cases is relatively high, the scatterplot's positive trendline is promising for the validity of the paper's proposition.

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*Figure I: Change in turnout and in immigration issue salience in elections directly before and during the European refugee crisis in 15 EU member states*
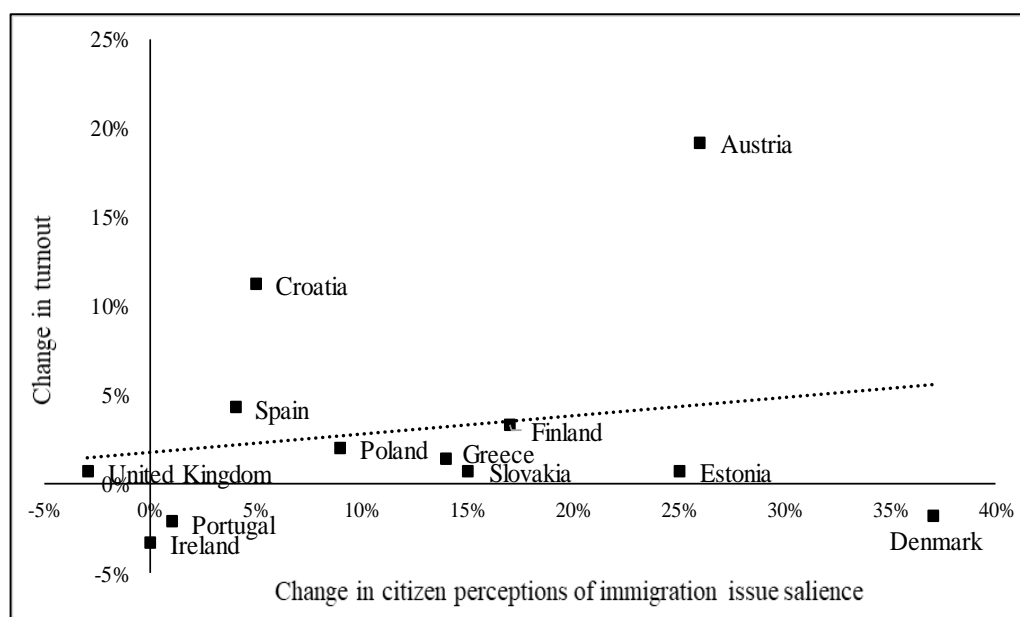


## Results of the second empirical test

Table II presents the calculated changes in turnout per country for all three groups of respondents divided based on attitudes towards refugee policy. As Figure II shows (see next page), the expectation of higher increases in turnout among those non-indifferent towards refugee policy can be observed in Poland and the UK (more detailed data disclosed in Appendix D).

*Table II: Changes in turnout in groups of citizens based on attitudes towards refugees and immigration policy for five EU member states*

|  | Estonia | Finland | Ireland | Poland | United Kingdom |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Change in 'Voted' responses among 'Agree' and 'Agree strongly'** | 3.7% | -1.8% | -0.6% | 6.0% | 6.8% |
| **Change in 'Voted' responses among 'Neither agree nor disagree'** | 5.4% | 4.0% | 3.2% | 2.9% | 2.1% |
| **Change in 'Voted' responses among 'Disagree' or 'Disagree strongly'** | -2.6% | 1.1% | 0.6% | 14.0% | 10.3% |
| **Overall change 'Voted' responses** | 1.9% | 0.5% | 0.4% | 5.1% | 6.7% |

While these results are contrary to expectations of stronger relationships in countries with a greater rise in the salience of the immigration issue, qualitative evidence on the issue focuses

of the five countries' campaigns in the elections during the refugee crisis explains observed patterns. While in the UK and Poland, refugees and immigration policy featured strongly in campaigns, the Estonia, Finland and Ireland other issues dominated. In Estonia, campaigns were focused on policy responses to security threats engendered by the Russian annexation of Crimea (Sikk, 2016: 100). In Finland, political debate centred around the economy, social and health services, and security policy (Raunio, 2015), while in Ireland economic issues took central stage (McDonald, 2016). In the UK, immigration, the NHS and the EU were the pivotal campaign issues (YouGov, 2015; Wilkinson, 2015). However, it is worth noting that in the UK immigration from EU countries was also an important issue concern of the electorate, which was unconnected to the refugee crisis (Blinder, 2016). This could have contributed to the fall in indifference towards refugee and immigration policy, indicating that the results may not be exclusively due to the refugee crisis. In Poland, political debate was indeed focused on the refugee crisis and immigration, with these issues becoming extremely central in public attention (Cienski, 2015). Poland's example is therefore a strong confirmation of this paper's hypothesis. These results strongly suggest a causal relationship between the rise in immigration issue salience generated by the European refugee crisis and fall in indifference-based abstention.

*Figure II: Changes in turnout in groups of citizens based on attitudes towards refugees and immigration policy for five EU member states*
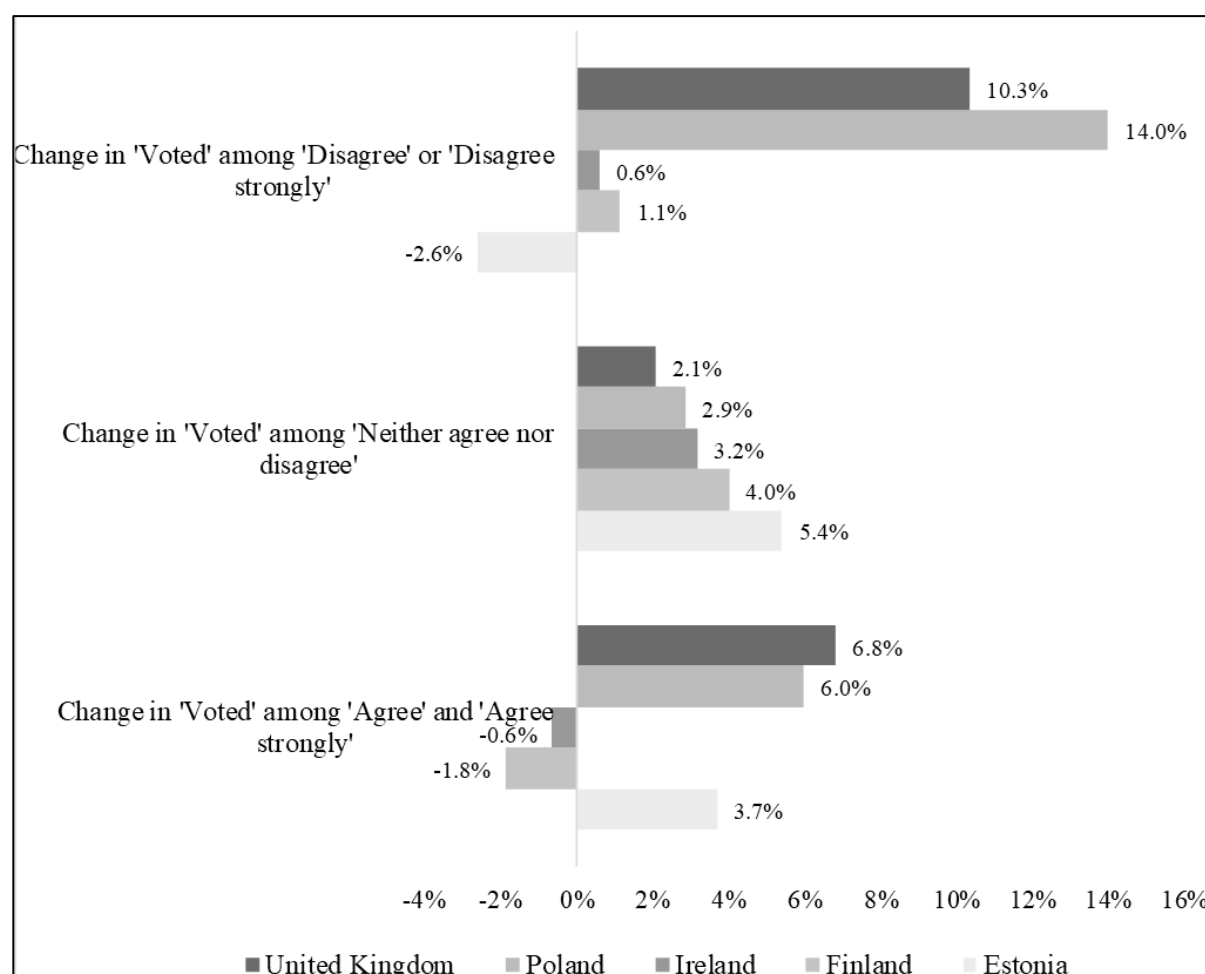
## Robustness of results

Finally, alternative explanations of the observed patterns are refuted to gain final proof of causality. Firstly, the increase in citizens' perceptions of immigration issue salience is directly attributable to the refugee crisis, as no other major EU-wide event occurred that could have caused similar shifts in public attitude. While migration within the EU could have strengthened anti-immigration attitudes in Western European countries, there was no substantial increase in within-EU labour movements between 2014 and 2016 (Eurostat, Population), and the Eurobarometer shows no clear differences in immigration issue salience perceptions between countries with positive and negative net within-EU migration flows (Table I).

Secondly, the increased issue salience of refugee and immigration policy reduced indifference-based abstention, increasing aggregate turnout. The second empirical test proves that turnout rose most among those non-indifferent towards immigration in countries where refugees and immigration policy were key policy issues of the elections. Past theoretical and empirical literature outlined previously rejects the existence of intervening variables between fall in indifference and increase in likelihood of voting. A confounding variable that jointly reduced indifference towards refugees and immigration policy and increased the likelihood of voting among those not indifferent towards these policy areas could have been the rise in popularity of far-right parties (Tartar, 2017). It could be argued that turnout increased as previously alienated voters finally felt that a party represented their interests and decided to vote, while other voters who did not support far-right parties turned out to impede their success. According to this argument, the fall in indifference towards refugees and immigration policy was also the result of the rise of far-right parties, and not the key driver of increased turnout. However, as recent empirical research suggests, it is predominantly the rise of anti-immigration policy preferences that increases the popularity of far-right parties. While these parties can further strengthen anti-immigration attitudes in the population, this effect works predominantly in the opposite direction (Podobnik et al., 2017: 1). Therefore, this alternative explanation is also refuted.

# Conclusion

While the spatial voting literature has long ago developed the theoretical framework for analysing policy-based abstention, empirical studies have remained scarce. By considering the effect of the rise in salience of a particular issue - that of immigration - this paper contributes to closing this gap.

The empirical analysis did confirm the initial hypothesis that the refugee crisis raised aggregate turnout through reducing indifference-based abstention. However, this effect was not universally true for all elections during the refugee crisis, and crucially depended on a further criterion, namely whether refugees and immigration policy was a key policy focus of election campaigns on which candidates assumed highly divergent positions. Out of the five countries examined more closely, this condition was clearly fulfilled only in the case of

Poland and the UK, where the expected relationship was clearly observable (even if the UK results should be interpreted cautiously). In Estonia, Finland and Ireland other policies took central stage in election campaigns, which clearly explains why the expected relationship was not observable. Therefore, the major finding of the paper confirms the hypothesis that the refugee crisis had the capacity to reduce indifference-based abstention. However, this effect appears to be conditional upon the thematization of the issue, meaning the extent to which refugee and immigration policies actually structured electoral competition.

While this conclusion clearly contributes to the understanding of issue-based electoral participation decisions and provides further proof of the significant effect of policies on turnout levels, the empirical analysis was restricted, and there remains substantial room for progress. Concerning statistical methods, multivariate logistic regression controlling for other determinants of participation choice would enable considerably more robust findings. Modelling voter's decision as a sequential process of candidate and participation choice could also add further robustness, and enable more precise approximation of issue-based effects. Survey data tracking the same respondents in consecutive surveying rounds would allow the testing of whether voters who ceased to be indifferent towards refugees and immigration policy indeed became more likely to vote. Individual-level data for all 15 EU countries that held national elections during the refugee crisis would have also been more insightful. Furthermore, more extensive analysis of the Polish and UK national elections and the precise ways in which the refugee policy salience affected individuals' decision to vote could provide further valuable insights.

The major finding of the paper allows for a not particularly encouraging interpretation concerning the imperfections of democracy. While it does reaffirm the existence of issue-based motivation to vote, seemingly it is the easy-issue characteristics of refugees and immigration policy, evoking emotion-based 'gut responses', that motivates individuals to vote, rather than conscious, informed opinion formation and analysis of different policy alternatives. This finding is particularly worrisome concerning refugees and immigration policy, since future integrative policies necessitate citizen support that rests on the sound foundations of citizen opinions formed via meaningful and informed political engagement. It is a major responsibility of politicians to engage citizens meaningfully, enhancing the quality of political debates and discussions rather than feeding fear and prejudice.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Dataset for first empirical test

*Table AI: Turnout data for the 15 EU countries*

| Country | Election directly preceding the start of the refugee crisis | | | Election during the refugee crisis | | | Turnout change (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Date | Type | Turnout | Date | Type | Turnout | |

| | | | (%) | | | (%) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Austria** | 25.04.2010 | president | 53.57 | 22.05.2016 | president | 72.75 | 19.18 |
| **Croatia** | 04.12.2011 | legislative | 54.32 | 08.11.2015 | legislative | 65.51 | 11.19 |
| **Cyprus** | 22.05.2011 | legislative | 78.7 | 22.05.2016 | legislative | 66.74 | -11.96 |
| **Denmark** | 15.09.2011 | legislative | 87.74 | 18.06.2015 | legislative | 85.89 | -1.85 |
| **Estonia** | 06.03.2011 | legislative | 63.53 | 01.03.2015 | legislative | 64.23 | 0.7 |
| **Finland** | 17.04.2011 | legislative | 67.32 | 19.04.2015 | legislative | 70.64 | 3.32 |
| **Greece** | 17.06.2012 | legislative | 62.49 | 25.01.2015 | legislative | 63.87 | 1.38 |
| **Ireland** | 25.02.2011 | legislative | 69.9 | 26.02.2016 | legislative | 66.6 | -3.3 |
| **Poland** | 09.10.2011 | legislative | 48.92 | 25.10.2015 | legislative | 50.92 | 2 |
| **Portugal** | 05.06.2011 | Legislative | 58.03 | 04.10.2015 | legislative | 55.86 | -2.17 |
| **Slovakia** | 10.03.2012 | legislative | 59.11 | 05.03.2016 | legislative | 59.82 | 0.71 |
| **Spain** | 20.11.2011 | legislative | 68.94 | 20.12.2015 | legislative | 73.2 | 4.26 |
| **United Kingdom** | 06.05.2010 | legislative | 65.44 | 07.05.2015 | legislative | 66.12 | 0.68 |

*Table AII: Data on immigration issue salience for the 15 EU countries*

| Country | % of population mentioning immigration as one of the two most important issues facing their country (%) | | Change in % of population (%) | Place of immigration issue in issue importance ranking | | Change in ranking |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2014** | **2016** | | **2014** | **2016** | |
| **Austria** | 15 | 41 | 26 | 7 | 1 | 6 |
| **Croatia** | 1 | 6 | 5 | 10 | 8 | 2 |
| **Cyprus** | 3 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 3 |
| **Denmark** | 20 | 57 | 37 | 6 | 1 | 5 |
| **Estonia** | 5 | 30 | 25 | 10 | 1 | 9 |
| **Finland** | 6 | 23 | 17 | 9 | 5 | 4 |
| **Greece** | 6 | 20 | 14 | 8 | 4 | 4 |
| **Ireland** | 7 | 7 | 0 | 9 | 8 | 1 |
| **Poland** | 7 | 16 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 1 |
| **Portugal** | 2 | 3 | 1 | 10 | 9 | 1 |
| **Slovakia** | 2 | 17 | 15 | 11 | 4 | 7 |
| **Spain** | 5 | 9 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 4 |
| **United Kingdom** | 41 | 38 | -3 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

## Appendix B: Results of the first empirical test using monthly per capita number of asylum applicants as independent variable
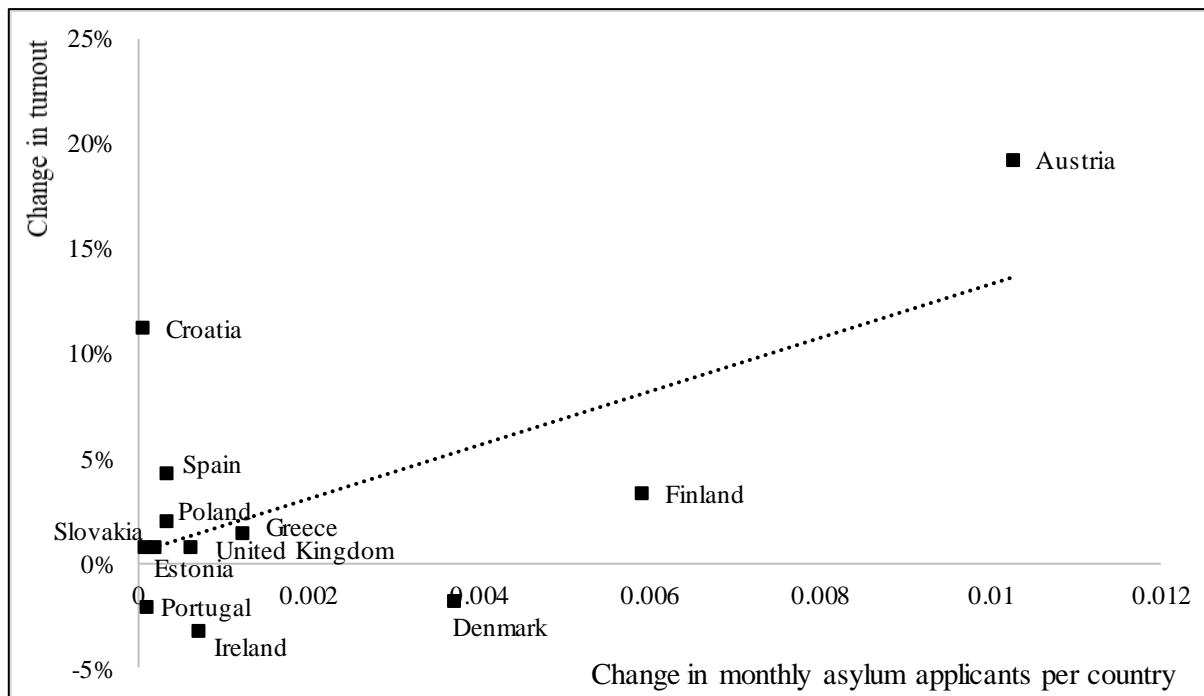
*Table AIII: Results of the first empirical test with monthly per capita number of asylum applicants as independent variable*

| Country | Per capita asylum applicants between 01.06.2015 – 0.109.2016 | Change in turnout (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **Austria** | 0.01027 | 19.18 |
| **Croatia** | 0.0000497 | 11.19 |
| **Cyprus** | 0.00267 | -11.96 |
| **Denmark** | 0.0037 | -1.85 |
| **Estonia** | 0.000175 | 0.7 |
| **Finland** | 0.00591 | 3.32 |
| **Greece** | 0.00122 | 1.38 |
| **Ireland** | 0.0007 | -3.3 |
| **Poland** | 0.000321 | 2 |
| **Portugal** | 0.0000863 | -2.17 |
| **Slovakia** | 0.0000609 | 0.71 |
| **Spain** | 0.000318 | 4.26 |
| **United Kingdom** | 0.000619 | 0.68 |

*Figure AI: Results of the first empirical test with monthly per capita number of asylum applicants as independent variable*
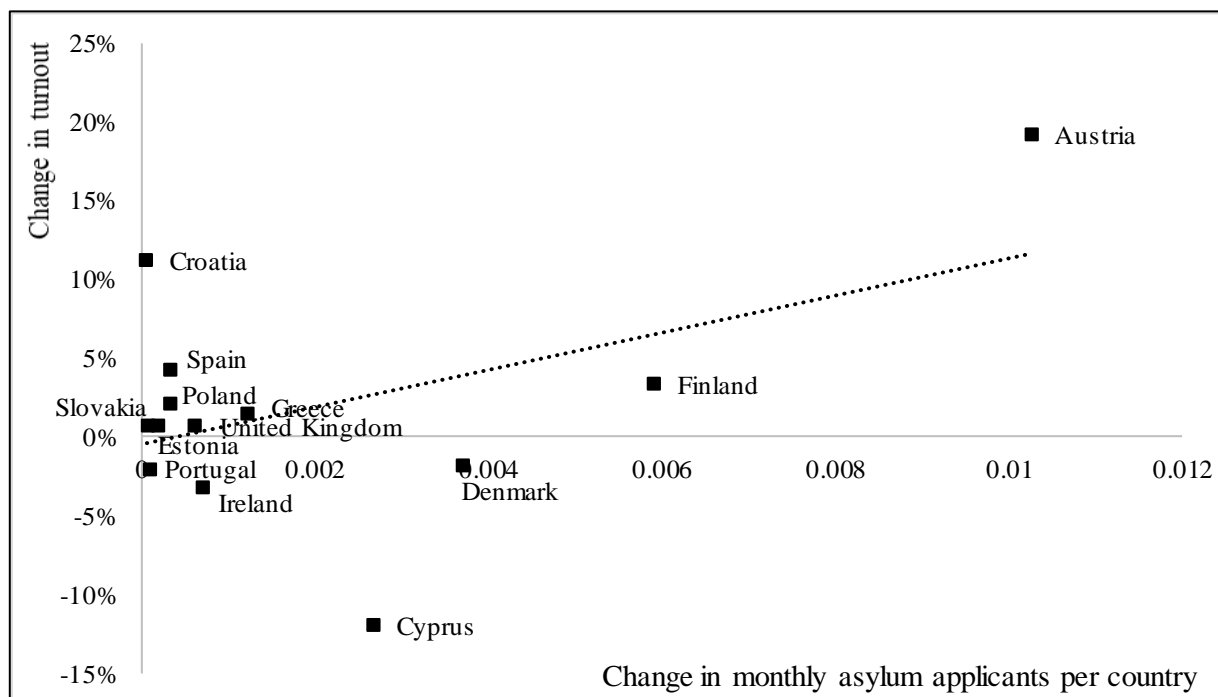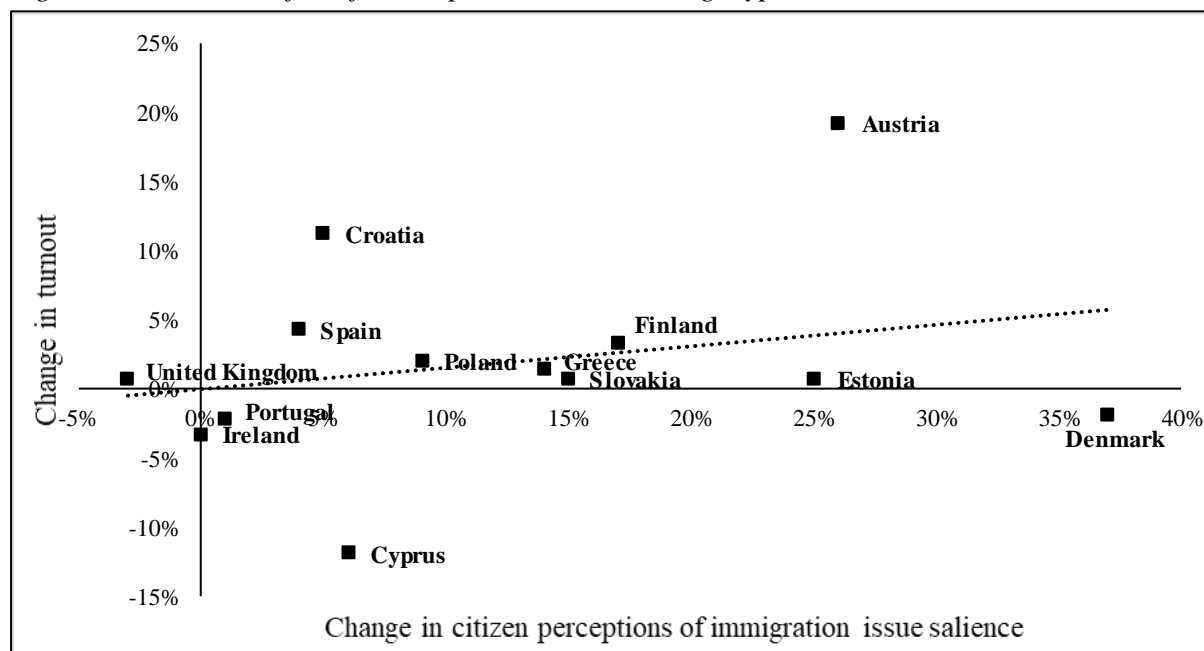
*Figure AII: Results of the first empirical test with monthly per capita number of asylum applicants as independent variable without Cyprus, an outlier*



## Appendix C: Results of the first empirical test when outlier is included

*Figure AIII: Results of the first empirical test including Cyprus*



## Appendix D: Dataset for the second empirical test

*Table AIV: Dataset for the second empirical test, Estonia*

| | Proportion of respondents | | Change in proportion of respondents |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ESS7 | ESS8 | |
| 'Voted' among 'Agree' and 'Agree strongly' | 63.5% | 67.2% | 3.7% |
| 'Voted' among 'Neither agree nor disagree' | 65.9% | 71.3% | 5.4% |
| 'Voted' among 'Disagree' or 'Disagree strongly' | 75.6% | 73.0% | -2.6% |
| 'Voted' | 70.2% | 72.1% | 1.9% |

*Table AV: Dataset for the second empirical test, Finland*

| | Proportion of respondents | | Change in proportion of respondents |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ESS7 | ESS8 | |
| 'Voted' among 'Agree' and 'Agree strongly' | 84.7% | 82.8% | -1.8% |
| 'Voted' among 'Neither agree nor disagree' | 82.6% | 86.6% | 4.0% |
| 'Voted' among 'Disagree' or 'Disagree strongly' | 80.0% | 81.1% | 1.1% |
| 'Voted' | 83.0% | 83.5% | 0.5% |

*Table AVI: Dataset for the second empirical test, Ireland*

| | Proportion of respondents | | Change in proportion of respondents |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ESS7 | ESS8 | |
| 'Voted' among 'Agree' and 'Agree strongly' | 75.0% | 74.4% | -0.6% |
| 'Voted' among 'Neither agree nor disagree' | 74.1% | 77.3% | 3.2% |
| 'Voted' among 'Disagree' or 'Disagree strongly' | 79.3% | 79.8% | 0.6% |
| 'Voted' | 75.7% | 76.1% | 0.4% |

*Table AVII: Dataset for the second empirical test, Poland*

| | Proportion of respondents | | Change in proportion of respondents |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ESS7 | ESS8 | |
| 'Voted' among 'Agree' and 'Agree strongly' | 71.3% | 77.3% | 6.0% |
| 'Voted' among 'Neither agree nor disagree' | 68.6% | 71.5% | 2.9% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 'Voted' among 'Disagree' or 'Disagree strongly' | 59.8% | 73.8% | 14.0% |
| 'Voted' | 69.6% | 74.7% | 5.1% |

*Table AVIII: Dataset for the second empirical test, United Kingdom*

| | Proportion of respondents | | Change in proportion of respondents |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ESS7 | ESS8 | |
| 'Voted' among 'Agree' and 'Agree strongly' | 73.1% | 80.0% | 6.8% |
| 'Voted' among 'Neither agree nor disagree' | 69.4% | 71.5% | 2.1% |
| 'Voted' among 'Disagree' or 'Disagree strongly' | 68.8% | 79.1% | 10.3% |
| 'Voted' | 70.9% | 77.6% | 6.7% |

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# Where does the dragon's gift go? Subnational distribution of China's aid to Sub-Saharan Africa from 2007 to 2012

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## Abstract

As the largest emerging donor, China has seen its bilateral aid increasing at a staggering rate, particularly to Sub-Saharan Africa. Nevertheless, due to a lack of transparency and nonconformity to Western reporting practices, relatively little is known about the motivations, principles and modalities of Chinese aid. This paper makes use of geocoded datasets recently made available by AidData to investigate the subnational distribution of Chinese aid, examining China's economic interests and poverty in recipient countries as potential determinants of aid received by subnational regions. World Bank aid is used as a benchmark for comparison. While my analysis fails to find a correlation between economic interests and aid, it shows Chinese aid to be consistently less pro-poor than World Bank aid and inadvertently finds a strong tendency for Chinese aid to go into capital cities; both findings support the request-based nature of Chinese aid.

## Table of Abbreviations

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **CRBC** | China Road and Bridge Corporation | **MPI** | Multidimensional Poverty Index |
| **DAC** | Development Assistance Committee | **NDRC** | National Development and Reform Commission |
| **DHS** | Demographic and Health Survey | **ODA** | Official Development Assistance |
| **FDI** | Foreign Direct Investment | **OOF** | Other Official Flows |
| **FOCAC** | Forum on China-Africa Cooperation | **SIDCA** | State International Development Cooperation Agency |
| **GADM** | Database of Global Administrative Areas | **SOE** | State-owned Enterprise |
| **MFA (China)** | Ministry of Foreign Affairs | **UCDP** | Uppsala Conflict Data Program |

**MOFCOM**     Ministry of Commerce
**(China)**

> 'Adhering to equality and mutual benefit, stressing substantial results, and keeping pace with the times without imposing any political conditions on recipient countries, China's foreign aid has emerged as a model with its own characteristics.'
>
> **State Council**, 2011

> 'What they want to help you with, is what you have identified as your need. With Britain, America, they identify your needs.'
>
> **Alhaji Momodu Koroma**
> Former Foreign Minister of Sierra Leone, 2009

# Introduction

Since the turn of the century, the international community has witnessed the rise of emerging donors, often dubbed as "a silent revolution in development assistance" (Woods 2008, p. 1205). The People's Republic of China, the leading donor among this group, increased its aid by a staggering 30% per annum between 2004 and 2009, nearly half of which went to countries on the African continent[1] (State Council 2011).

Sub-Saharan Africa is a region of particular interest for China. The country is already the largest trading partner of the region and its foreign direct investment (FDI) in Africa is rapidly rising. Assistance to Africa, which is the continent with the greatest number of developing countries by far, is of strategic interest to China's core foreign policy of 'South-South Cooperation'. Unlike the West, who has largely perceived the region as 'hopeless', China sees it as a land of opportunities (AfDB et al. 2011). The establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000 bears testament to this sentiment.

Baffling observers and scholars, however, Chinese aid remains shrouded in considerable secrecy. Only two official white papers on foreign aid have been published to date and with vague and insufficiently disaggregated information. Further complicating the issue, as the Chinese government does not keep data on their aid projects as required by guidelines of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), it is difficult to fit them into the DAC's categories. What is referred to as 'aid' in this paper conforms to DAC's definition of Official Development Assistance (ODA), "government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries" (OECD 2018), which includes grants, loans with at least 25% grant element, and technical assistance. Chinese ODA-like projects include 'turn-key' infrastructure construction, technical assistance, training programmes, medical assistance, humanitarian aid, in-kind donations and debt relief (State Council 2014). On the other hand, much of what is described as 'Chinese aid' in the media instead falls under the DAC's category of 'Other Official Flows' (OOF), which primarily consists of

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[1] China does not adopt the convention of grouping North Africa under MENA, thus, Africa here refers to the entire continent. In this paper, however, unless otherwise stated, I use 'Africa' to refer to Sub-Saharan Africa.

export credits and support for private investment (Brautigam 2009). There is a consensus in the literature that China's ODA is much smaller than its OOF.

Fortunately, by tracking and triangulating media reports, AidData has managed to compile a geocoded dataset of Chinese projects in Africa and coded each project's resemblance to ODA or OOF (Strange et al. 2017). In this paper, I make use of the dataset in order to investigate the subnational distribution of Chinese aid. Understanding where aid goes is vital for helping us understand not only the motivations but also the principles and modalities of Chinese aid. This is of broader significance to the international community as observers see the rise of Chinese aid as presenting a new orthodoxy in the political economy of development (Mullins et al. 2010).

Given the limited availability of geocoded data for bilateral OECD donors, I compare the subnational distribution of Chinese aid to that of the World Bank. Despite an asymmetry in institutional design, the World Bank's largely independent bureaucracy (Barnett & Finnemore 2004) and rigorous economic analysis (Jenkins 1997) entails that aid decisions are made largely need-based and minimally affected by indivual state interest. It is thus serves as a useful benchmark.

Using a sample of 186 subnational regions in 19 countries within Sub-Saharan Africa with data on geolocatable aid commitment between 2007 and 2012, I examine two potential determinants of Chinese aid distribution: first, economic interest and, secondly, poverty in recipient countries. While my analysis fails to find a correlation between economic interests and aid, it shows Chinese aid to be consistently less pro-poor than World Bank aid and inadvertently finds a strong tendency for Chinese aid to go into capital cities; both these findings support the request-based nature of Chinese aid.

## Literature Review

While China's increased engagement in Africa since the early 2000s has attracted considerable media interest, scholarly attention lagged behind at least until the end of the last decade. Deborah Brautigam's 2009 book '*The Dragon's Gift*' constitutes the first comprehensive account of China's external assistance on the continent and a systematic attempt at debunking myths perpetuated by mainstream media outlets. Since then, a growing body of literature has emerged which examines different aspects of Chinese aid, utilising case studies, interviews and archival work. Some scholars (Tan-Mullins et al. 2010; Hackenesch 2011; Cabria 2013; Cheng & Taylor 2017; etc.) focus on the motives and modalities of Chinese aid, comparing it to that of Western donors. Others (Corkin 2011; Varrall 2016; Zhang & Smith 2017) have looked more specifically into the domestic actors and agendas involved in the decision-making process of Chinese aid disbursement. This first body of literature informs the hypotheses on motivations for Chinese aid distribution, which I construct in the next section.

Choosing another angle, several papers have analysed the geographical distribution of Chinese aid on the national level. Looking at Chinese ODA disbursed from 2000 to 2006, Dreher & Fuchs (2015) find China to favour countries with lower GDP per capita, which seems to suggest that Chinese aid is to some extent need-based; yet, an alternative explanation may be that political favour can be extracted more easily from poorer countries. They also discover Chinese ODA to be largely independent of recipient countries' resource endowment but linked to export interests and geopolitical considerations such as the recognition of Taiwan. In another paper using a different dataset, Dreher et al. (2018) find that Chinese ODA is largely guided by diplomatic interests and not correlated to bilateral trade and recipient countries' resource endowment. In sum, national-level quantitative analyses have not been entirely conclusive on the determinants of Chinese aid distribution.

More recently, after geocoded datasets were made available by AidData, scholars have attempted to analyse determinants of aid distribution on the subnational level. Briggs (2017) concludes that aid from the World Bank and the African Development Bank (AfDB) do not correlate with a region's share of the poorest quintile of the country's population and instead disproportionately flows to regions with more rich people. Desai & Greenhill (2017), in focusing on Nigeria, contradict Briggs and state that the regional distribution of World Bank aid per capita is indeed positively correlated with the level of poverty in the region. Aside from poverty, several scholars have also looked at electoral incentives and ethnicity (Jablonski 2014; Masaki 2018) as determinants of subnational aid allocation. Partly due to data quality issues, most of these papers are either solely focused on the World Bank or restricted to a single country. The only research on the subnational distribution of Chinese aid is from Dreher et al. (2006). They find that the birth regions of political leaders receive substantially more Chinese ODA than other regions and that this is not the case for World Bank aid. However, since their paper is only concerned with aid *capture*, there is still no research to date examining economic self-interest or poverty as determinants of Chinese aid at the subnational level.

This paper tries to bridge the gap between the two bodies of quantitative literature. While the subnational analysis does not allow us to investigate politico-strategic motivations for aid like the recognition of Taiwan or votes in the UN, my research marks an important foray into a relatively understudied area: the cross-country study of determinants of subnational Chinese aid distribution.

## Theory & Hypotheses

### Economic interests

Many scholars argue that China employs bilateral aid as a strategic means to the furthering of its own economic interests. Brautigam (2009) described Chinese external assistance as tools of an activist 'developmental state'. She notes that China's aid decisions are influenced by its own experience of receiving Japanese aid during the 1980s when loans were largely used to build transport infrastructure facilitating raw material exports to Japan. Given the rising

demand for raw material inputs that accompanied China's rapid economic expansion, energy security has become a core component of Beijing's foreign policy agenda (Alden & Alves 2009) and bilateral aid belongs to their foreign policy toolkit. This seems to be verified by China's use of 'The Angola Model', a funding arrangement where recipient countries use oil and other commodities as collateral to secure low-interest infrastructure loans (Corkin 2011). Large credit lines have been granted in exchange for oil supplies, mining development and exploration rights (Alden & Alves 2009).

Aside from natural resource acquisition, aid is also used to benefit Chinese firms. While DAC donors have reduced so-called 'tied aid', the provision of aid on the condition that it be used to procure goods and services from the donor country, China still heavily practices it; the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) manages the tender processes for large infrastructure projects and often only firms on the 'list of approved companies' are allowed to bid. Concessional loans often bypass beneficiary countries' accounts and are given directly to contracted Chinese companies (Cabria 2013). In addition to its relation with trade, aid is also interwoven with FDI: the 'Grand Economic Strategy' introduced by the Chinese government in 1995 sets out the goal of combining aid and other forms of economic cooperation to assist Chinese enterprises in opening up the markets of recipient countries (Cheng & Taylor 2017). This seems to have intensified under the 'Going Out' policy: formally introduced in 2001, the strategy promotes overseas investment and relocation of mature industries, providing financial incentives to large state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and private national champions like Huawei (Gu et al. 2016); external assistance could be part of the toolkit. For instance, aid to Angola has been characterised as a "narrow elite business dialogue" (Mullins et al. 2010, p.870), where aid is bundled up with investments from SOEs like the China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC). Beyond infrastructure construction, this also seems to be the case for aid in the agriculture sector. Chinese firms receive grants to build and operate agricultural technology demonstration centres for a number of years, after which the centres are expected to be self-sustaining (Brautigam 2009). In Mozambique, the establishment of the demonstration centre has encouraged many agricultural companies to seek investment opportunities there (Xu et al. 2016). Similarly, in Ghana, China's interest-free loan to build landing sites for fishing communities has improved access rights for Chinese fishing companies exploring off-shore processing opportunities (Mullins et al. 2010).

The dominance of economic interest is reflected in China's domestic institutional set-up. MOFCOM has been the primary agency in charge of aid (Breslin 2013; Varrall 2016); additionally, since 1995, a new system of concessional aid loans has been offered through the Export-Import (Exim) Bank to complement grants and interest-free loans and plays an increasingly significant role in the provision of Chinese aid (Brautigam 2009). Given the role played by actors with primarily commercial mandates, one would expect aid decisions to be predominantly driven by economic interests.

Lastly, it is noteworthy that China itself does not shy away from admitting the role self-interest plays in foreign aid; rather, the idea of 'mutual benefit' is emphasised by state media to distinguish Chinese assistance from paternalistic Western aid. 'The Eight Principles for

Economic Aid and Technical Assistance to Other Countries', announced in 1964 in the context of the Non-Aligned Movement and frequently referred to even today, clearly states that Chinese aid is based on the principle of 'equality and mutual benefit' and that the Chinese government never regards aid as "a kind of unilateral alms" (Government of China, 1964). In sum, lines are often blurred between aid, South-South cooperation, and investment. From the above, I infer my first hypothesis on the subnational distribution structure of Chinese aid in Sub-Saharan Africa:

> **Hypothesis 1**: Chinese aid is more likely to go into regions with more natural resources and greater presence of Chinese business interests.

## Poverty

Due to the absence of such aims to begin with, Chinese aid is not expected to be targeted at poor people. Unlike with DAC donors, there is no explicit mention of any poverty-reduction agenda in China's official policy. This has to do with China's own development experience, which was driven by manufacturing and infrastructure construction and often criticised as a blind pursuit of GDP growth over social and environmental concerns. The absence of a pro-poor mandate is reflected in Chinese sectoral aid focus on infrastructure and energy, which stands in contrast to traditional donors' preferences for projects on social and civil society issues.[2]

Some may note, however, that due to interactions with the international aid community, the Chinese government has increasingly devoted attention to poverty reduction, seen in the announcement of intentions to prioritise 'cooperation areas concerning people's well-being' (FOCAC 2009) following the 2009 FOCAC Conference. Nonetheless, it is still dubious to what extent the verbal commitment has translated into poverty-sensitive aid allocation in reality, partly due to a relative lack of rigour in project approval and appraisal. Staff in MOFCOM's Department of Foreign Aid are often career bureaucrats who lack specialist knowledge or expertise in development (Varrall 2016; Brautigam 2009). Chinese officials largely deal only with the President's office, unlike traditional donors who prefer to deal with ministries instead (AfDB et al. 2011). There is thus limited input from line ministries in the decision-making process, which often entails an absence of rigorous cost-benefit analysis or feasibility studies. Moreover, by operating outside the DAC, China does not undergo regular peer reviews and thus does not need to conform to the DAC standards of aid effectiveness.

In addition to the absence of a lack of rigour in aid appraisal, Chinese aid is also likely to be less pro-poor because of the request-based nature of its aid system. Officials in China's Ministry of Commerce emphasize during interviews that "the initiatives generally come from the recipient side" (Dreher et al. 2016, p. 8). Large-scale loans are typically negotiated on a case-by-case basis at the highest political level (Hackenesch 2011), instead of being based

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[2] This paper is only concerned with the allocation pattern of Chinese aid in relation to poverty. My discussion does not attempt to suggest that social sector projects are 'better'; many have noted the need for external finance to be used for productive purposes in the interest of Africa's long-term development.

upon the assessment of local needs. A request-based system is also consistent with the long-standing foreign policy principle of non-interference. China's anti-imperialist discourse has made it reluctant to assess development needs and devise strategies on behalf of other countries. The 2014 White Paper on Foreign Aid states that "*China adheres to the principles of not imposing any political conditions, not interfering in the internal affairs of the recipient countries and fully respecting their right to independently choosing their own paths and models of development*" (State Council 2014). While recipient governments can arguably use Chinese aid to alleviate poverty, given the poor governance quality in Sub-Saharan Africa in general, the scenario is unlikely; this is especially so given that, unlike with some DAC donors, Chinese aid is independent of institutional quality (Dreher & Fuchs 2015; Brautigam 2009).

In contrast, the World Bank clearly states that its mission is to end extreme poverty and promote shared prosperity. At least on paper, its aid allocation highly prioritises poverty reduction, especially after responds to criticisms of the dogmatic Structural Adjustment Programmes in the 80s and 90s and the commitment to the 2005 Paris Agreement on Aid Effectiveness, which promises better monitoring and a result-oriented approach to development aid (OECD, 2005). On top of its principle commitment, the World Bank's rigorous project approval process, which sets the standards for the international development community, makes its aid allocation likely to be poverty-sensitive in practice as well.

Thus, I infer my second hypothesis:

> **Hypothesis 2**: Chinese aid has a weaker correlation with poverty in a region compared to World Bank aid. Rather, it has a comparatively higher tendency to go into rich regions.[3]

## Data

In my analysis, I use two of AidData's geocoded datasets: the *Chinese Official Finance to Africa dataset, 2000-2012* (Version 1.1.1) and the *World Bank Geocoded Research Release* (Version 1.4.2). [4] For Chinese official finance, AidData classifies each project's flow class into 'ODA-like', 'OOF-like' or 'Vague' based on the degree of concessionality and level of state involvement; I only use data on all projects coded as 'ODA-like'. Categorising Chinese flows based on Western standards of concessionality may not be ideal, as critics have pointed out that Chinese interest rates can be higher than DAC countries' because it is the only willing financier for certain types of projects with different risk parameters (Camba 2017). Nonetheless, given scant official reporting and for the purpose of my comparative analysis, the datasets are useful and sufficiently reliable.

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[3] Empirically, if aid is not poverty-sensitive, it could go into richer regions due to project feasibility concerns (e.g. better pre-existing infrastructure in richer regions).
[4] The World Bank dataset includes projects from both the IBRD and IDA lending lines.

While data on Chinese and World Bank aid projects is available for 2000-2012, I only look at the period 2007-2012. For one, this is arguably a distinct phase of Chinese engagement in Africa. In late 2006, the first FOCAC summit was held, following which plans were announced to double aid effort to Africa in three years' time (Dreher & Fuchs 2015) and the China-Africa Development Fund was established. Furthermore, restricting the time period allows me to make use of Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) datasets in constructing my independent variables on wealth since only a limited number of surveys were conducted prior to the 2000s.

My sample is limited to all Sub-Saharan African countries where at least one Chinese and one World Bank project[5] in the given time period is geolocatable with a precision level at ADM1[6] regions or higher. It is further narrowed to countries for which a DHS survey was conducted between 2002 and 2007, making sure that data on wealth was measured not long before the period of interest. Notably few surveys were conducted in 2007 and thus not strictly antecedent to the period 2007-2012. Nonetheless, this arguably does not introduce reverse causality bias since aid projects are highly unlikely to change wealth distribution in the short term; I include them to receive a larger and more reliable sample.

The limitations outlined above leave us with 186 subnational regions in 19 Sub-Saharan countries. My sample of countries covers all sub-regions of Sub-Saharan Africa and includes countries with diverse area and population sizes. It also includes former colonies of France, Britain, Portugal, Germany and Belgium. Moreover, the countries have varying levels of resource endowment as well as varying levels of trade and investment links with China. However, it should be pointed out that the main factor limiting the size of my sample, availability of DHS dataset, is not random; the surveys are only carried out at the request of the countries. Be that as it may, this is not conceivably related to my variables of interests. In sum, the sample is largely representative of Sub-Saharan countries, with minimal selection bias.

Project data across 2007-2012 are merged into a cross-sectional dataset. The final dataset contains 351 Chinese projects (around 2 per subnational region on average) and 3605 World Bank projects.[7] A breakdown by country is shown in Figure I below.[8]

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[5] Unless otherwise specified, 'projects' in this paper refers to unique subprojects, the unit of information used by AidData. These are technically only parts of larger projects if the project goes into two or more regions.
[6] ADM1 stands for First-order administrative division.
[7] Nation-wide projects (e.g. debt cancellation) or projects with no location information are excluded. Around 60% of all Chinese ODA projects and 90% of all World Bank projects are geolocatable to a subnational region.
[8] See Appendix A for more detailed metadata

*Figure I. Sample of Sub-Saharan African countries and number of geolocatable aid projects, China and the World Bank (2007-2012)*



no. of Chinese projects

2          76

no. of WB projects

26          845
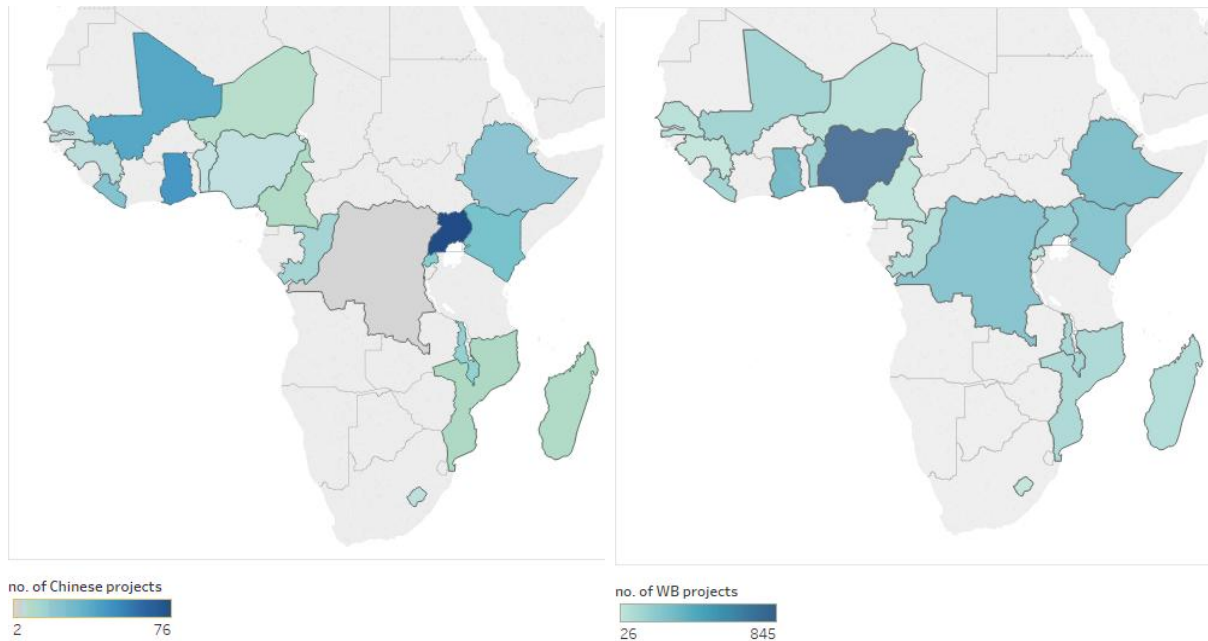
# Methodology

My dependent variables, Chinese and World Bank aid per region, are operationalised in three ways. The first is a region's share of the country's total number of aid projects, essentially weighing all projects equally in value and significance. Problematically, given AidData's media-based method of data collection, the first measure will not be entirely accurate, as small projects may escape media attention and thus be omitted from the dataset. The second measure is a region's share of the total monetary value of aid the country receives, thus assigning weight to projects based on their financial value. Compared to the first measure, it also renders possible measurement error caused by project omission negligible. Nonetheless, it is not necessarily more accurate than the first measure; since social sector projects usually have much smaller monetary value than large infrastructural projects, this measure might only be able to tell us the distribution of aid in certain sectors. As financial information is only available for the larger projects which the geolocated subprojects are typically part of (for instance, only the overall cost is available for a railway that extends into several regions), I adopt the common practice in the literature to assume that the monetary value is evenly distributed across all subprojects. As the first two measures are constructed in relative terms, they yield results between 0 and 1. Lastly, the third measure takes the natural logarithm of the absolute monetary value of aid a region receives[9]. For consistency, all financial values are deflated to the base year of 2009.

One impediment is that for 22% of the Chinese projects financial information is missing. Dreher et al. (2016), who were involved in coding the dataset, note that most of the missing

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[9] If a region receives 0 USD in aid, I replace the value with 1 to enable log transformation.

values should correspond to small projects that did not attract much public attention. My inspection of project descriptions also shows that a large proportion of these projects involve in-kind donations (e.g. a few buses, computers), small medical teams and one-off training, which are likely to cost a relatively small amount. I thus set the missing values to 0. For a robustness check, I use an alternative method and replace missing values with an average value of other projects in the same sector. Since financial value is missing on all ODA projects in Madagascar, I drop it from the sample when I use the second and third operationalisation to measure Chinese aid (leaving us with 18 countries and 180 subnational regions).

All the data I use is on aid commitment, which is more readily available than that on actual disbursement. This increases the risk of overcounting as projects are often cancelled or scaled back (Strange et al. 2013). Yet, since this paper is primarily interested in aid motivations, principles and modalities, this is not a substantial limitation.

Figures IIa and IIb show aid per subnational region (adopting the second operationalisation). The fewer and smaller dark-coloured areas in Figure IIa almost always correspond with the location of national capitals which indicates that Chinese aid is more concentrated on and more likely to go into capital cities, which, geographically, are much smaller in size than other regions.

*Figure IIa. Subnational Regions' Share of Amount of Chinese Aid (2007-2012)[10]*



% Chinese ODA amt

0.000    1.000

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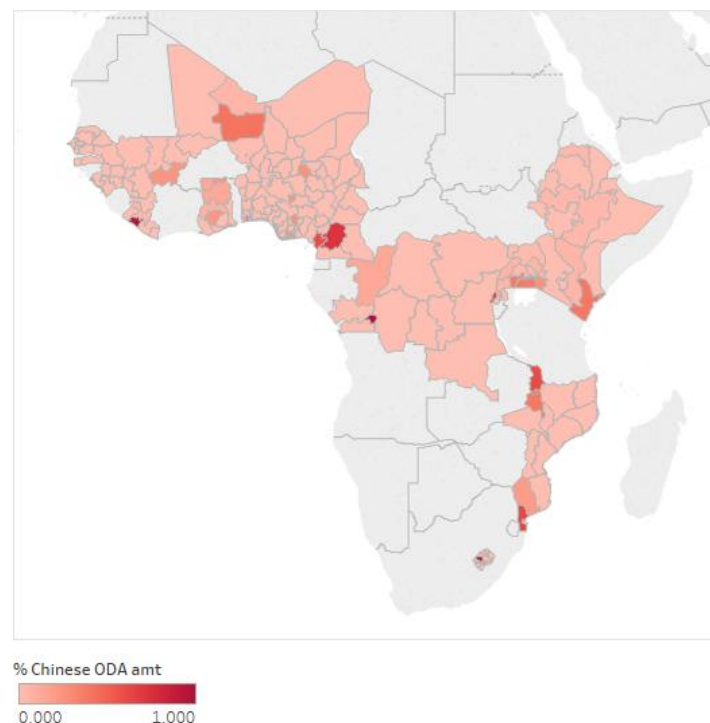
[10] Madagascar is excluded from the map, as explained above

*Figure IIb. Subnational Regions' Share of Amount of World Bank Aid (2007-2012)*



% WB aid amt

0.0000          0.6120
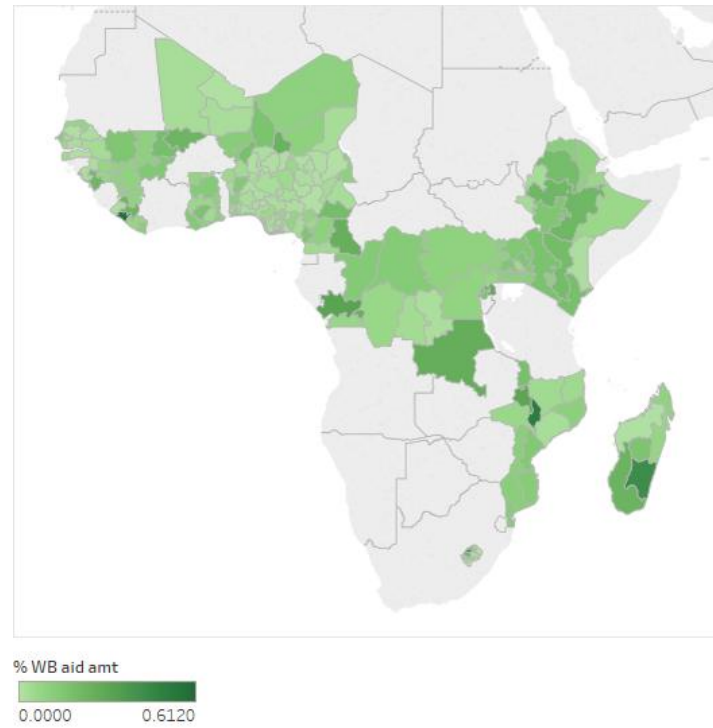
Using the three ways of operationalisation, I estimate two sets of regressions using ordinary least squares (OLS):

$$\%Aid_{ic} = \beta_1\%Petrol_{ic} + \beta_2\%OOF_{ic} + \beta_3\%Poorest_{ic} + \beta_4\%Richest_{ic} + \varphi X_{ic} + \gamma_c + \varepsilon_{it}$$
(1)

$$Ln(Aid)_{ic} = \beta_1 Ln(Petrol)_{ic} + \beta_2 Ln(OOF)_{ic} + \beta_3 Ln(\%Poorest)_{ic} + \beta_4 Ln(\%Richest)_{ic} + \varphi X_{ic} + \gamma_c + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (2)$$

In Equation 1, $\%Aid_{ic}$ is aid that goes into region $i$ as a proportion of the total amount received by country $c$ between 2007 and 2012; it thus relates to the first and second way of operationalisation. To test Hypothesis 1, $\%Aid_{ic}$ is expressed here as a function of $\%Petrol_{ic}$ and $\%OOF_{ic}$, i.e. region $i$'s share of the total amount of petroleum and Chinese OOF of country $c$. I use Lujala et al.'s (2007) dataset on global onshore oil and gas fields to construct the variable $\%Petrol_{ic}$, an operationalisation of natural resources. Using AidData's geo framework, which offers binary data on pixels overlapping with oil and gas fields[11], I derive a measure of the number of 'petrol-producing' pixels in a region. Given the high resolution used in the geo framework (0.01 decimal degree), this measure offers a satisfactory approximation of a region's share of its country's petroleum. $\%OOF_{ic}$ is used as a proxy for the level of Chinese business interests in the region. It might be noted that OOF may not be an entirely accurate proxy; allocation decisions are necessarily also affected by other factors other than business interest, such as project feasibility. Nonetheless, it is still useful since

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[11] For a detailed discussion of the rasterization methodology, see Goodman, BenYishay & Runfola (2016).

readily available whereas Chinese trade and FDI figures cannot be disaggregated sub-nationally. While market size and amount of surplus labour could be potential predictors of Chinese FDI (Fu 2012), there is no available subnational data for these predictors either. Moreover, given its nature and the allocation procedure, OOF is likely to be a sufficiently accurate proxy of Chinese business interests. The bulk of China's OOF is export buyers' credits, offered mostly at commercial rates. OOF projects are almost entirely oriented towards commercial interests, with firms taking the initiative in requesting funding from the government (Brautigam 2009). The confidence in the proxy is also increased as Dreher et al. (2016)'s national-level analysis has consistently found OOF flows to be significantly correlated with bilateral trade ties. To construct the variable, I aggregate data on all OOF projects between 2002 and 2006.

To test Hypothesis 2, $\%Aid_{ic}$ is also expressed as a function of $\%Poorest_{ic}$ and $\%Richest_{ic}$, region $i$'s share of the poorest and richest quintile of country $c$'s total population. To construct the variables, I replicate Briggs' method of manipulating household survey results of the DHS. As the DHS uses a cross-nationally consistent methodology to group survey respondents into a wealth quintile relative to their country's population, recalculating the figures yields an estimate of the proportion of each wealth quintile in each region[12]. Briggs' measure looks at underlying wealth distribution rather than average wealth; it is thus preferable to common measures like night-time light intensity. Figure IIIa and IIIb show maps of each region's share of the poorest and richest population quintiles. $\varphi X_{ic}$ in Equation 1 is a vector of control variables.

*Figure IIIa. Subnational Regions' Share of the Poorest Population Quintile*



_____
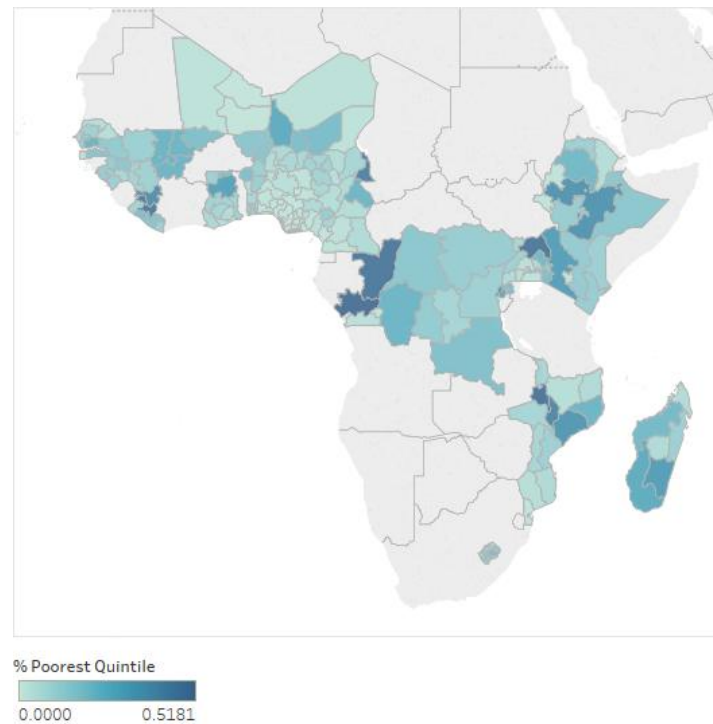
[12] For a detailed discussion of the recalculation steps, see Briggs (2017).

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*Figure IIIb. Subnational regions' share of the richest population quintile[13]*
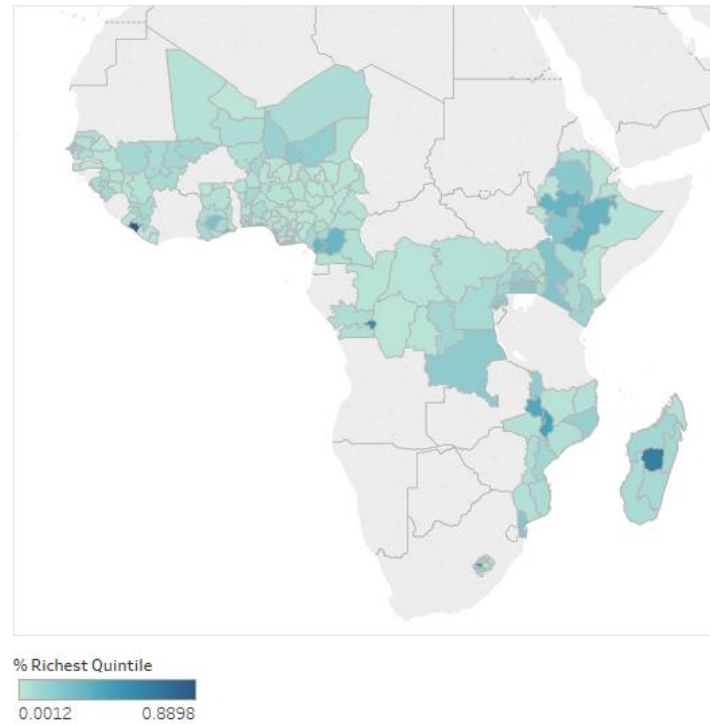


I include a dummy variable $Capital_{ic}$, as capital cities are likely to have a richer population and may also receive more aid.[14] A region is coded as 1 if it contains the country's capital, and 0 otherwise.[15]

$\%Area_{ic}$, a region's share of the country's geographical size, is also controlled for. Larger regions logically are likely to contain more natural resources, and aid may be directed to larger regions, for instance, due to a greater need for network infrastructure. The variable *Area* is calculated from shapefiles of subnational boundaries from the Database of Global Administrative Areas (GADM).

$\%Conflict\ death_{ic}$ is a proxy for a region's relative conflict intensity, another potential confounding variable. Conflict can affect my independent variables on wealth, and donors may divert aid away from violent regions for security reasons. Conversely, donors might also commit more aid to violent areas in response to local needs and concerns (Bezerra & Braithwaite 2016). Using the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's (UCDP) dataset, I calculate each region's total number of fatalities resulting from conflict events between 2002 and 2006.

Given Dreher et al.'s (2016) finding that Chinese aid is more likely to go into political leaders' birthplaces, I also include a control variable $Leaders'\ Birthregion_{ic}$, which is likely to be correlated with my independent variables on wealth; Hodler & Raschky (2014)

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[13] The fewer and smaller dark blue areas in Figure IIIb shows that the richest quintiles are highly concentrated and more likely to reside in capitals.
[14] These instincts are supported by bivariate scatterplots in Appendix B.
[15] For Benin, the official capital is Oueme, yet the seat of government is in Cotonou. I follow AidData's practice, coding Cotonou as 1 and Oueme as 0.

find subnational regions to have more intense night-time light when being the birth region of the incumbent political leader. I replicate and update Dreher et al.'s data to construct a list of birthplaces of African leaders in power between 2007 and 2012. I code a region as 1 if it appears on the list and 0 otherwise, creating a dummy variable. Similar to leaders' birthplace, co-ethnicity is another way through which domestic distributive politics may be a source of endogeneity. Yet given the insufficient granularity of my data, I am unable to control for ethnicity. Nonetheless, since the literature on ethnic favouritism is inconclusive (Kramon & Posner 2013) and Dreher et al. (2016) did not find a significant correlation between co-ethnicity and aid (in the same paper discussing leaders' birthplace), we can be somewhat confident that my results will not be significantly affected.

Since I am working with a cross-sectional dataset, all independent and control variables are either time-invariant (e.g. area, capital, natural resources) or measured before 2007 to prevent reverse causality bias.

Turning to Equation 2, $Ln(Aid)_{ic}$ is the natural log of absolute values of aid received by region $i$ of country $c$ between 2007 and 2012, corresponding to the third operationalisation. Unlike in Equation 1, all my independent and control variables, except the binary ones, are operationalised as absolute rather than relative values, consistent with the dependent variables.[16] Given that $\%Poorest_{ic}$ and $\%Richest_{ic}$ are highly positively skewed, I take the natural log of these proportions as well.[17]
In both equations, I include the country fixed effect $\gamma_c$, to remove variance across countries. Although most of the variables in Equation 1 are already expressed in relative terms (share of national total), country fixed effects are still needed because dummy variables are present in my controls.

Noticeably, unobserved heterogeneity is a potential source of endogeneity in my model. This could be factors relating to project feasibility, for instance, level of pre-existing infrastructure or the topography of a region. There could also be a historical path dependency in aid distribution. Alpino & Hammersmark (2017) found the location of Christian missions, which often included health and education facilities, to be a reliable predictor for present-day spatial allocation of both World Bank and Chinese aid; since Chinese aid is unlikely to be influenced by Christian or Western biases, the correlation is likely to be explained by path dependency. Similar to Alpino & Hammersmark's methodology, I minimize the influence of unobserved confounders by using the World Bank as a benchmark and focusing on the peculiarities of Chinese aid.[18]

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[16] For the variables $Petrol_{ic}$ and $Conflict\ Death_{ic}$, I set the proportion to 0 if there is no petroleum or conflict death in the entire country.

[17] This is consistent with Briggs (2017), who logs transforms percentages as well. If the figure is 0, I replace the value with 0.000001 to enable log transformation.

[18] Assuming that project feasibility is evaluated by China and the World Bank in similar ways and ignoring certain factors that might only affect World Bank projects (e.g. environmental and social concerns).

Table I presents the summary statistics at the level of subnational regions. On average, each region received 47.8m USD of Chinese ODA and 79.8m of World Bank aid. Chinese aid seems to be more concentrated, given the larger standard deviation seen in all three ways of operationalisation.[19]

**Table I**
**Summary statistics**

|  | Obs. | Mean | Std. Dev. | Min. | Max. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dependent Variables** | | | | | |
| % Chinese ODA (no. of projects) | 186 | 0.102 | 0.192 | 0 | 1 |
| % Chinese ODA (value) | 180 | 0.100 | 0.229 | 0 | 1 |
| Chinese ODA (USD) | 180 | 47.8m | 169.3m | 0 | 1,095m |
| % World Bank aid (no. of projects) | 186 | 0.102 | 0.099 | 0 | 0.604 |
| % World Bank aid (value) | 186 | 0.102 | 0.106 | 0 | 0.612 |
| World Bank aid (USD) | 186 | 79.8m | 114.6m | 0 | 767.1m |
| **Independent Variables** | | | | | |
| % petrol | 186 | 0.048 | 0.182 | 0 | 1 |
| Petrol | 186 | 468 | 1,563 | 0 | 12,784 |
| % Chinese OOF (no. of projects) | 186 | 0.102 | 0.214 | 0 | 1 |
| % Chinese OOF (value) | 186 | 0.102 | 0.259 | 0 | 1 |
| Chinese OFF (USD) | 186 | 55.6m | 167.6m | 0 | 1,144m |
| % poorest | 186 | 0.102 | 0.112 | 0 | 0.518 |
| % richest | 186 | 0.102 | 0.147 | 0.001 | 0.890 |
| **Control Variables** | | | | | |
| % area | 186 | 0.102 | 0.105 | 0.0001 | 0.684 |
| Area | 186 | 48,506 | 79,335 | 33.75 | 536,790 |
| % conflict death | 186 | 0.081 | 0.199 | 0 | 1 |
| Conflict death | 186 | 176 | 878 | 0 | 9,773 |
| Capital | 186 | 0.102 | 0.304 | 0 | 1 |
| Leaders' birth-region | 186 | 0.172 | 0.378 | 0 | 1 |

# Results

The regression results from Equation 1 are shown in Table II. Columns 1 and 2 correspond to the first way of operationalisation, Columns 3 and 4 correspond to the second.

**Table II**
**The effect of economic interest and poverty on aid allocation (relative value)**

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[19] An alternative explanation may be that it is because there are 10 times more World Bank than Chinese projects in my dataset.

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|  | (1) % ODA projects | (2) % World Bank projects | (3) % ODA value | (4) % World Bank value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| % petrol | 0.000 | 0.060 | -0.034 | 0.041 |
|  | (0.049) | (0.048) | (0.041) | (0.035) |
| % OOF projects | 0.052 | 0.057 |  |  |
|  | (0.100) | (0.053) |  |  |
| % OOF value |  |  | -0.076 | -0.036 |
|  |  |  | (0.068) | (0.031) |
| % poorest | -0.060 | 0.331*** | -0.211 | 0.201*** |
|  | (0.096) | (0.068) | (0.139) | (0.063) |
| % richest | 0.555*** | 0.370*** | 0.818*** | 0.574*** |
|  | (0.150) | (0.090) | (0.193) | (0.090) |
| % area | 0.078 | 0.024 | 0.025 | 0.008 |
|  | (0.114) | (0.053) | (0.133) | (0.060) |
| % conflict death | 0.034 | -0.008 | 0.118 | -0.002 |
|  | (0.037) | (0.022) | (0.081) | (0.021) |
| Capital | 0.231** | -0.081*** | 0.246** | -0.078*** |
|  | (0.094) | (0.031) | (0.118) | (0.027) |
| Leaders' birth-region | -0.044 | 0.008 | -0.030 | -0.005 |
|  | (0.027) | (0.012) | (0.025) | (0.015) |
| Country FE | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| No. of countries | 19 | 19 | 18 | 19 |
| No. of regions | 186 | 186 | 180 | 186 |
| Adjusted R^2 | 0.56 | 0.53 | 0.55 | 0.53 |

Notes: robust standard errors (in parenthesis) clustered on countries. *** (**,*): significant at 1% (5%, 10%) level.

Most strikingly, for both Chinese and World Bank aid, there is a highly significant positive correlation between a region's share of the richest population quintile and its share of aid received. As the results are consistent across different models, we can be confident that when we operationalise aid in terms of both the number of projects and their financial value, the effect will not be driven by larger infrastructure or industry projects alone. The correlation is significant in substantive terms as well. If a region's share of the richest quintile increased from 0.1% to 89% (the minimum and maximum in our dataset), all else being equal, its share of the financial value of Chinese ODA would increase by almost 73% on average (e.g. from 1% to 74%), while its share of the financial value of World Bank aid would increase by about 51% (e.g. from 1% to 52%). In other words, rich regions are likely to receive the bulk of both Chinese and World Bank aid that flows into the country. Still, the much larger coefficients in Columns 1 and 3, compared to Columns 2 and 4, suggest that Chinese ODA may have a stronger bias towards wealthier regions.

While there is a positive correlation between a region's share of the poorest population quintile and its share of World Bank aid, there is no significant correlation when it comes to Chinese ODA. This evidence supports Hypothesis 2, suggesting Chinese aid is less pro-poor than World Bank aid. It is also noteworthy that for the World Bank, the coefficient on $\%Poorest_{ic}$ is smaller than that on $\%Richest_{ic}$, especially in Column 4. This suggests a stronger bias towards richer regions than towards those with a poorer population and that projects in poorer regions are typically smaller.

With regards to other independent variables $\%Petrol_{ic}$ and $\%OOF_{ic}$, neither of the effects turns out to be significant at conventional levels. This suggests that Chinese ODA is not correlated with economic interests. Hypothesis 1 is rejected.

Turning to the control variables, there is no significant correlation except for the variable $Capital_{ic}$. Interestingly, the coefficients are positive in Column 1 and 3, but negative in Columns 2 and 4. In other words, while Chinese ODA is highly likely to go into the subnational region containing the country's capital, World Bank aid is more likely (albeit slightly) to be diverted away from it. Simply by virtue of housing the capital city, a region receives on average 23.1% of the total number of Chinese ODA projects and 24.6% of the financial value of Chinese ODA in their country.

The absence of a significant correlation between aid and leaders' birth region is consistent with Briggs' (2017) results, but it contradicts Dreher et al.'s (2016) findings. This could be because Dreher et al. use a panel dataset, while Briggs and I look at cross-sectional data, which makes our result less sensitive to the time-variant effect of leaders' incumbency.

The regression results from Equation 2 are shown in Table III.

**Table III**
**The effect of economic interest and poverty on aid allocation (absolute value)**

|  | (5) | (6) |
|---|---|---|
|  | **In(ODA value)** | **In(World Bank value)** |
| In(petrol) | -0.129 | 0.007 |
|  | (0.195) | (0.029) |
| In(OOF value) | -0.003 | 0.002 |
|  | (0.063) | (0.012) |
| In(% poorest) | -0.233 | 0.034 |
|  | (0.283) | (0.042) |
| In(% richest) | 1.400*** | 0.650*** |
|  | (0.421) | (0.151) |
| In(area) | -0.185 | 0.066 |
|  | (0.482) | (0.084) |
| In(conflict death) | 0.114 | 0.027 |
|  | (0.217) | (0.030) |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Capital | 5.461** | -0.112 |
| | (2.358) | (0.477) |
| Leaders' birth-region | -0.735 | 0.166 |
| | (0.992) | (0.258) |
| Country FE | Yes | Yes |
| No. of countries | 18 | 19 |
| No. of regions | 180 | 186 |
| Adjusted R^2 | 0.61 | 0.52 |

Notes: robust standard errors (in parenthesis) clustered on countries. *** (**,*): significant at the 1% (5%, 10%) level.

The result for Chinese ODA remains consistent when we operationalise the variables using absolute values. All else being equal, the region which shares 89% of the richest quintile, compared to one which shares 0.1% (the maximum and minimum in our dataset), received 13,463 times more Chinese ODA in terms of financial value. On average, the amount of Chinese ODA a capital receives is 235 times that of a non-capital.

For World Bank aid, however, the correlation between $Aid_{ic}$ and $\%Poorest_{ic}$ or $Capital_{ic}$ disappears using the alternative model. $\%Richest_{ic}$ remains highly significant, and alone accounts for half of the variation in the dependent variable. All else being equal, the region that shares 89% of the richest quintile, compared to one that shares 0.1%, received 83 times more World Bank aid in terms of financial value; yet, the effect is much less drastic in substantive terms compared to Chinese ODA.

Analysing the allocation of aid by the World Bank and AfDB, Briggs (2017) operationalises his variables in the same three ways I do. While he also finds a significant correlation between aid and a region's share of the richest quintile across all models, he addinitionally finds poverty to be significant only at 10% confidence level, when aid per region is measured as the share of number of projects.[20] Briggs also found aid to be positively correlated with the confounding variable $Area$, which contradicts my results as well. This might be explained by a difference in the samples used, different time periods of interest or a different operationalisation of some of our variables.

## Robustness Checks

All the results above hold across a variety of robustness checks, including variable transformations, dataset trimming and modelling choice changes.[21]

I run the regression again, replacing some of the continuous variables with a dummy. I try replacing $Conflict\ Death_{ic}$ with a binary measure. The variable $Petrol_{ic}$ is replaced by a binary measure indicating whether a region overlaps with any oil and gas fields. To account

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[20] This holds even when Briggs disaggregates the analysis for the World Bank and AfDB.
[21] The results are reported in Appendix C.

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for natural resources other than petroleum, I further check my results with an alternative binary measure that indicates whether a region contains petroleum, gemstones, diamonds or gold deposits, using datasets from Lujala (2009), Gilmore et al. (2005) and Balestri & Maggioni (2014). All of the adjustments above, made in isolation or together, do not change my results significantly. Replacing the missing projects' financial values with an average value instead of 0 also gives me similar results.

I also tried running the regression using a trimmed sample, dropping all countries that have fewer than five subnational regions or five geolocatable aid projects. This cuts six countries from the analysis. My core results remain consistent with the trimmed sample. Furthermore, I run 19 additional regressions with each country dropped sequentially at a time from the dataset; results remain consistent, showing that my findings are not driven by any individual country.

Given that for Equation 1 my dependent variables are bounded between 0 and 1, I use a random effects Tobit model that takes into account the censoring. Except that the effect of $Capital_{ic}$ is weakened across all columns, the results remain consistent.

Since my unit of analysis is the subnational region, countries with more regions will contribute more to the analysis. Hence, I use an alternative model with all observations weighted such that each country contributes equally to the result. Even though some variables initially found to be insignificant turn out to be significant at conventional levels in this model, this is not systematic across the three ways of operationalisation. Meanwhile, my core results still hold.

## Discussion

My results, showing no significant correlation between Chinese ODA and natural resources or business interests, are consistent with Dreher et al.'s (2018) quantitative analysis of Chinese ODA allocation on the national level. One might thus be tempted to conclude that China is an altruistic donor. However, this would contradict the qualitative literature based on which I formulated Hypothesis 1. To resolve this tension, I suggest that the statistical results might be the result of fragmentation in the decision-making process for Chinese aid. Scholars have pointed out that a significant source of conflict in Chinese aid stems from the competition between MOFCOM and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), where the former act on commercial interests and the latter prioritises long-term diplomatic ties (Varrall 2016). While MOFCOM is the primary agency in charge, the MFA has advisory capacities and Chinese ambassadors can influence aid decisions in various ways. Zhang & Smith (2017) suggest that the MFA may play a bigger role than commonly believed in the literature; FOCAC, for instance, is housed within the MFA. Further complicating the picture, Chinese aid is not always under the control of the central government. The 'One Province, One Country' model has been applied to areas like medical and agricultural aid; each Chinese province is responsible for allocating aid to one recipient country respectively; for instance,

Hubei distributes aid to Mozambique and Anhui to Zimbabwe (Gu et al. 2016). This allows local political and commercial motivations to enter the decision-making process. The fragmentation is likely to be exacerbated by the vagueness of policy directives from the top leadership, which allows actors to adopt their own interpretations based on their respective agendas (Varrall 2016); the only official guideline remains one formulated before the reform era and consists only of broad principles. The level of fragmentation and incoherence can best be demonstrated by the government's most recent attempt at structural overhaul; a new agency, the State International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDCA), was set up in March 2018, supposedly for better coordination (Reuters 2018). In sum, this fragmentation potentially explains the absence of an economic interest correlation observed in my regression results.

On the other hand, it could also be the case that the literature has focused excessively on China's economic motives. Scholars like Brautigam, examining the history of Chinese aid since independence, often point to a shift in the reform era, when aid starts to be given on for economic rather than ideological reasons. Some also see the aid reform of 1995 as a distinct turning point, after which market-oriented principles were introduced. While these observations are valid, they might downplay the continuity in Chinese aid and depict only part of the picture. The only official guideline on external assistance to date was formulated by then-premier Zhou En Lai and it is still being referred to in the two official white papers on foreign aid published in 2011 and 2014. To justify commercially failing projects, state media today still cite Mao's quote that "African brothers carted China into the UN" ("*feizhou xiongdi tai women jinle lianheguo*"), referring to support from a bloc of African countries that enabled the People's Republic to replace Taiwan as a UN member state in the 1970s; the emphasis on historical solidarity in the official discourse suggests that political and geostrategic reasons have not been completely overshadowed by commercial imperatives. This might be particularly true as the idea of 'soft power' has been increasingly discussed in China's policy circle since the early 2000s (Shambaugh 2013). The undue emphasis on economic interest in the literature could also have been compounded by some degree of confusion between ODA and OOF; while most scholars are aware of the caveat, given insufficient information to make the distinction, they tend to discuss Chinese official finance in general and thus overstate the linkage between aid and economic motives.

Turning to Hypothesis 2, my results consistently show that Chinese ODA disproportionately goes into richer regions and that it is not correlated with poverty. As discussed earlier, it might be pointed out that wealth is correlated with unobserved variables relating to project feasibility like pre-existing infrastructure and topography. Nonetheless, using World Bank aid as a benchmark, which is shown to be positively correlated with a region's share of the poorest quintile in all except one model, one can confidently conclude that Chinese ODA is less pro-poor in a systematic manner. The confidence in this conclusion is further reinforced by the much larger coefficient (almost twice the size) on $\%Richest_{ic}$ for Chinese ODA compared to the World Bank's. Critics may suggest that this could be due to a systematic measurement error in the case of Chinese ODA; given AidData's media-based data collection method, it might be the case that instead of receiving less aid, poorer regions simply enjoy

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less extensive media coverage, which could lead to an underestimation of aid received by those regions. Nevertheless, the size of the difference observed between Chinese and World Bank aid is unlikely to be accounted for by such a measurement error alone. Moreover, researchers at AidData note that it is mostly the small projects that go unreported (Strange et al. 2017); since my results do not significantly differ when I operationalise aid as the number of projects or financial value, one can be confident that the measurement error causes only minimal bias. As such, one can safely conclude that the data provides strong support for the confirmation of Hypothesis 2.

The both substantively and statistically significant correlation found between Chinese aid and political capital, in stark contrast to the World Bank's, is unexpected and can be partially explained by data quality issues with the Chinese dataset. In some instances, when loans and in-kind donations (typically medicine and crops) are handed over to a ministry located in the capital, without further information available, AidData simply codes the location of the project as the capital city. However, an inspection of project descriptions shows that the data quality issue is only present in a small proportion of projects coded as such. A more important reason for the correlation is the nature of a considerable proportion of Chinese projects; many aid projects involve the construction of government buildings and equipment donations to ministries. This is consistent with the depiction of a request-based aid system in the literature. Tull (2006) notes that while Western donors are more preoccupied with development outcomes that benefit the civil society, Chinese aid tends to favour the recipient country's government directly. This has made Chinese aid popular among African governments (AfDB et al. 2011), which suits China's diplomatic objectives. Moreover, a considerable share of Chinese aid also involves 'image projects' like stadiums and convention centres, typically constructed in the capital. This most likely converges with African leaders' preferences, and also with the Chinese objective of generating a favourable public opinion towards China, again confirming the request-based and less pro-poor nature of Chinese aid.

Caution must be taken with regards to the external validity of my results. While one might be tempted to infer that Chinese aid is worse in terms of distributive consequences, given my focus on initial commitment rather than disbursement or implementation, it would not be prudent to make a snap judgement. 'Leakages' of aid due to corruption and diversion are well-researched in the literature. There is a consensus that the World Bank has failed to effectively reduce poverty in Africa, despite promises of reform and a heavy emphasis on human development (Woods 2006; Waever 2008). Boone (1996) found DAC aid to increase the size of government but not benefit the poor as measured by human development indicators. Moreover, while aid from traditional donors largely is not request-based in nature, this has not prevented recipient governments from usurping funds for their own purposes; Jablonski (2014) and Masaki (2018), looking at the case of Kenya and Zambia, respectively, found consistent electoral and ethnic biases. In short, conclusions on the actual distributive outcome cannot be extrapolated from this paper.

Furthermore, my research only targets Chinese aid to Sub-Saharan Africa during 2007-2012. Chinese aid practices in Africa are changing rapidly in response to criticism from the international community (Tan-Mullins et al. 2010). While absent in the 2011 white paper, the phrase 'poverty reduction' was mentioned in the 2014 white paper. Despite a deep-seated reluctance to coordinate with traditional donors, China has shown increasing signs of engagement, most notably secondments of MOFCOM officials to international organisations, and discussions of aid quality in the China-DAC Study Group (Varrall 2016). This trend suggests that China's aid allocation could have become more pro-poor in recent years. Meanwhile, contrary to observers' speculations, China appointed Wang Xiaotao, the former Deputy Director of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), to head SIDCA (Cornish & Ravelo 2018); as Wang has neither a MOFCOM nor MFA background, this may be a sign of the central government's determination to reduce bureaucratic competition. As the NDRC is the agency in charge of domestic macroeconomic management, and Wang has extensive experience from overseeing infrastructure projects under the Belt and Road Initiative, reduced fragmentation could mean that economic interests may figure more prominently in future aid decisions.

Since I compare Chinese aid to multilateral aid[22], one cannot extrapolate from this paper whether Chinese aid is less pro-poor or prioritises economic interests more than other bilateral donors. Indeed, big DAC donors like France and the US are found to provide aid largely out of political and economic self-interest (Berthelemy 2006). Nonetheless, the World Bank's pattern is likely to be similar to the Nordic donors within DAC, whose aid decisions are often channelled through multilateral institutions and not affected by politico-strategic factors (Alesina & Dollars 2000; Berthelemy 2006); as such, my research could give a hint at how China differs from certain traditional bilateral donors.

On the impact Chinese aid has had on the international community, scholars have noted that DAC donors experience competitive pressure from the rise in Chinese aid (Woods 2008; Corkin 2011; Hackenesch 2011). This could lead to traditional donors converging to 'the Chinese way' both as a result of declining negotiation power vis-a-vis recipient countries and as an attempt to retain geopolitical influence. The World Bank delivers loans with fewer conditions to countries also assisted by China (Hernandez 2016). Kilama (2016)'s quantitative analysis shows that not only do DAC donors increase the quantity of bilateral aid in response to Chinese pressure, but they have also made changes in aid modality to strategically important countries. On one hand, they have increased the share of programmatic aid, giving recipient governments more control. On the other, they also seem to substitute social sector aid for that in economic infrastructure. These changes in aid modality and sector are potentially alarming in light of Winters & Martinez (2015)'s finding; looking at bilateral aid between 2004 and 2010, they found better-governed countries to receive more programmatic and infrastructure aid (as a proportion of total aid received) from DAC donors, because both types of aid are more susceptible to governance problems. In other words,

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[22] Assuming that World Bank's modality and procedures are representative of other multilateral institutions, given its huge influence in the development community.

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competitive pressure from China may decrease DAC donors' discretion over governance issues and lead to a race to the bottom in terms of aid quality.

## Conclusions

Using the World Bank as a benchmark, my analysis at the subnational level has shown that Chinese aid in Sub-Saharan Africa is not correlated with economic self-interested in that it does not favour regions with more natural resources or Chinese business interest present. This shows the complexity of actors and motivations involved in Chinese aid planning; the existing literature's tendency to depict Chinese aid solely as tools of a developmental state is too simplistic. Meanwhile, my analysis provides strong evidence that Chinese aid is less pro-poor compared to that of the World Bank. While the regression analysis alone is unable to verify the causal mechanisms, I theorised based on existing literature (absence of a poverty-reduction mandate, weak project appraisal process, request-based aid system) and am supported by the strong tendency found for Chinese aid to go into capital cities. I have also shown that the results are not driven by factors like a region's geographical size, conflict intensity, or political leaders favouring their birthplace.

The analysis my paper offers on the principle and modality of Chinese aid has greater implications. The less pro-poor allocation of Chinese aid points to the tension between the promise of greater 'country ownership' in the 2005 Paris Agreement and the delivery of more equitable development outcome; there exists a fine line between giving local actors more voice in agenda-setting and aligning aid with the preferences of political elites. The AfDB's stakeholder survey shows that China is perceived as a more effective development partner by African leaders as it targets government priority sectors like manufacturing and construction (AfDB et al. 2011). Yet, at the same time, the highly-centralised nature of 'country ownership' in the context of Chinese aid has largely translated into attention to the needs of the government rather than the needs of the people. The implication is not just limited to a philosophical challenge to thinking in the Western development community, but also applies in practical terms, as traditional donors have experienced competitive pressure from the increase in Chinese aid which could lead to them to turn to similar aid practices.

A request-based system also implies a greater importance of the agency of African regimes, which is often neglected in discussions of development aid. In examining the geopolitical and economic interest of both DAC and emerging donors, Africans are often tacitly side-lined and assumed to be bystanders in the 'scramble' for its resources, markets and political alignment. Rather, African actors' negotiation and oversight is often crucial in shaping their engagement with China and subsequently the development outcomes (Gu, et al, 2015; Mullins, et al. 2010). In policy terms, this shows the importance of governance and institution-building in recipient countries. In academic terms, it could be worthwhile for future researches to comparatively examine the role of recipient governments' incentives in the allocation of aid from different donors. While my research included leaders' birth region as a control variable, I have been unable to investigate the effect of either co-ethnicity or electoral incentives,

especially as the wide variation in electoral systems and elite incentives inhibits a cross-country study. With more resources at disposal, future researches could do so by conducting in-depth country case studies, and possibly also go beyond aid commitment and relate differences in modalities to actual development outcomes.

Future research could benefit from better data on aid allocation. The accuracy of my results would be improved if a larger proportion of Chinese projects had enough details to be geolocatable to ADM1 regions. Moreover, were there more updated geocoded data on Chinese and World Bank aid, my results could have been triangulated using alternative measures of poverty. For instance, using Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative's Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) datasets, one can calculate the proportion of a region's proportion in multidimensional poverty, a cross-nationally meaningful measure compared to wealth quintile; this has not been possible in my study as MPI data is not available prior to 2015. Besides data availability, better reporting practices would also facilitate comparative analyses, ensuring that data on aid indeed belongs to ODA. While it is unrealistic to expect China to join the DAC regime in the near future, some degree of standardisation is still possible given existing institutions for mutual learning like the China-DAC study group.

# Appendices

**Appendix A.** Sample of Countries & Metadata

| Country | No. of subnational regions | DHS Survey Year | No. of geolocatable Chinese projects | No. of geolocatable World Bank projects |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Benin** | 12 | 2006 | 3 | 187 |
| **Cameroon** | 10 | 2004 | 10 | 49 |
| **Congo (Brazzaville)** | 4 | 2005 | 14 | 97 |
| **DR Congo** | 9 | 2007 | 2 | 286 |
| **Ethiopia** | 11 | 2005 | 21 | 326 |
| **Ghana** | 10 | 2003 | 45 | 350 |
| **Guinea** | 8 | 2005 | 6 | 26 |
| **Kenya** | 8 | 2003 | 28 | 283 |
| **Lesotho** | 10 | 2004 | 5 | 32 |
| **Liberia** | 5 | 2007 | 24 | 164 |
| **Madagascar** | 6 | 2003 | 10 | 97 |
| **Malawi** | 3 | 2004 | 19 | 145 |
| **Mali** | 9 | 2006 | 39 | 167 |
| **Mozambique** | 11 | 2003 | 11 | 122 |
| **Niger** | 8 | 2006 | 7 | 70 |
| **Nigeria** | 37 | 2003 | 4 | 845 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Rwanda** | 5 | 2007-8 | 23 | 64 |
| **Senegal** | 11 | 2005 | 4 | 69 |
| **Uganda** | 9 | 2006 | 76 | 226 |

**Appendix B.** Bivariate scatterplots supporting footnote 14

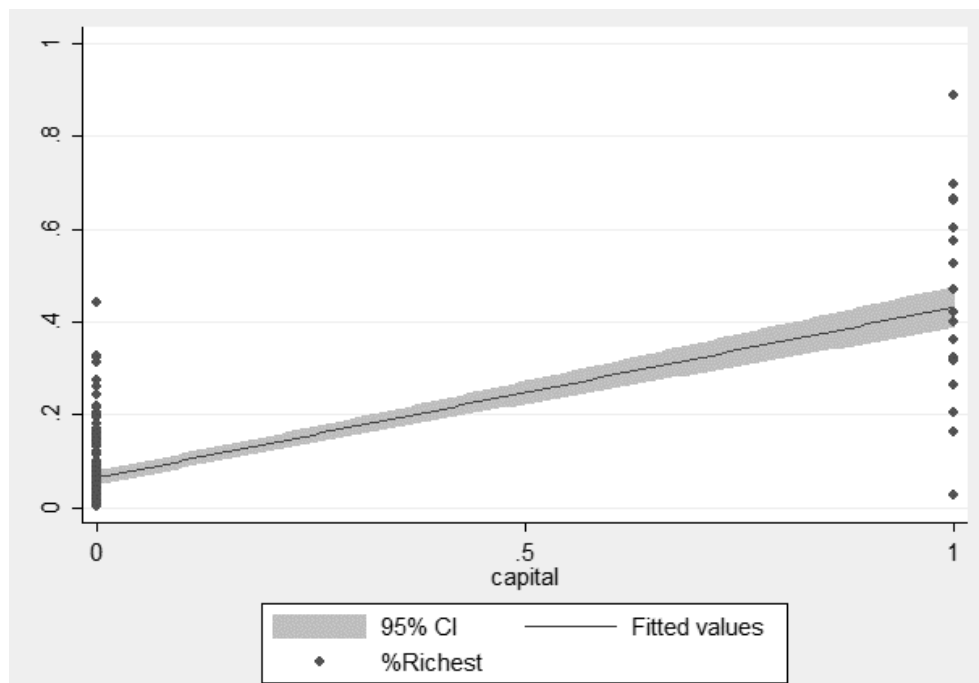Figure BI. Bivariate scatterplot of % Richest against Capital



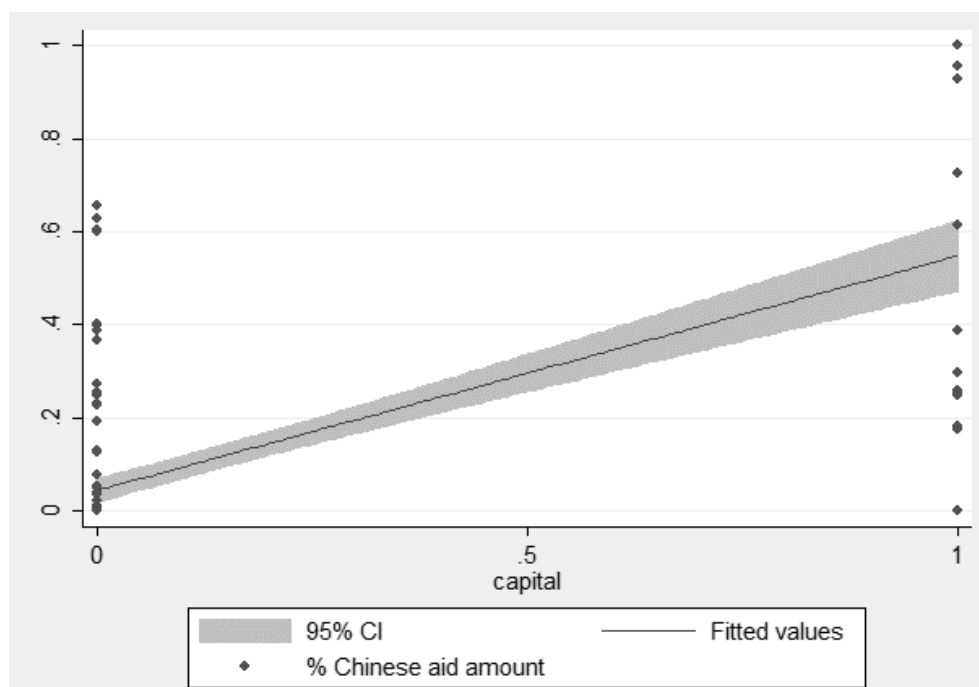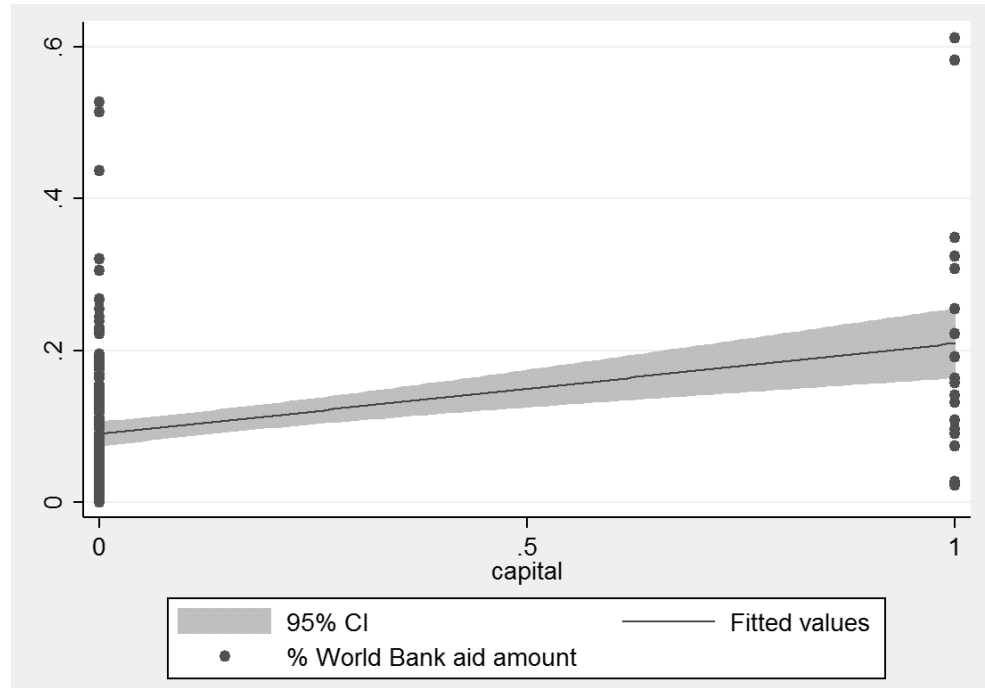Figure BIIa. Bivariate scatterplot of % Chinese ODA value against Capital



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Figure BIIb.
Bivariate
scatterplot of
% World Bank
aid value
against Capital



## Appendix C. Results of Robustness Checks

Table CIa: Main Analysis (relative value) with trimmed sample

| | (1) % ODA projects | (2) % World Bank projects | (3) % ODA value | (4) % World Bank value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| % petrol | 0.018 | -0.031 | -0.068 | -0.006 |
| | (0.059) | (0.026) | (0.053) | (0.038) |
| % OOF projects | -0.089 | 0.008 | | |
| | (0.080) | (0.031) | | |
| % OOF value | | | -0.176** | -0.038 |
| | | | (0.083) | (0.032) |
| % poorest | 0.077 | 0.209*** | -0.133 | 0.166** |
| | (0.097) | (0.057) | (0.136) | (0.075) |
| % richest | 0.267* | 0.551*** | 0.705*** | 0.559*** |
| | (0.152) | (0.081) | (0.238) | (0.094) |
| % area | 0.024 | -0.063 | -0.144 | -0.008 |
| | (0.124) | (0.051) | (0.143) | (0.078) |
| % conflict death | 0.066 | -0.004 | 0.197* | -0.003 |
| | (0.045) | (0.019) | (0.107) | (0.028) |
| Capital | 0.372*** | -0.157*** | 0.328** | -0.116*** |
| | (0.121) | (0.034) | (0.160) | (0.034) |
| Leaders' birth-region | -0.025 | -0.003 | -0.020 | -0.005 |
| | (0.033) | (0.015) | (0.040) | (0.018) |
| Country FE | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| No. of | 13 | 13 | 12 | 13 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| countries | | | | |
| No. of regions | 110 | 110 | 104 | 110 |
| Adjusted R^2 | 0.53 | 0.45 | 0.55 | 0.30 |

Standard errors (in parenthesis) clustered on countries.***(**,*): significant at the 1% (5%, 10%) level.


Table CIb: Main Analysis (absolute value) with trimmed sample

| | (5) | (6) |
|---|---|---|
| | **In(ODA value)** | **In(World Bank value)** |
| In(petrol) | -0.197 | -0.065 |
| | (0.297) | (0.049) |
| In(OOF value) | -0.012 | -0.001 |
| | (0.073) | (0.020) |
| In(% poorest) | -0.127 | 0.035 |
| | (0.364) | (0.081) |
| In(% richest) | 1.958*** | 0.878*** |
| | (0.704) | (0.295) |
| In(area) | -0.063 | 0.017 |
| | (0.603) | (0.121) |
| In(conflict death) | 0.302 | 0.045 |
| | (0.367) | (0.059) |
| Capital | 5.841* | -0.813 |
| | (3.484) | (1.166) |
| Leaders' birth-region | -1.561 | 0.126 |
| | (1.425) | (0.365) |
| Country FE | Yes | Yes |
| No. of countries | 12 | 13 |
| No. of regions | 104 | 110 |
| Adjusted R^2 | 0.62 | 0.49 |

Standard errors (in parenthesis) clustered on countries.***(**,*): significant at the 1% (5%, 10%) level.


Table CII: Tobit Models

| | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **% ODA projects** | **% World Bank projects** | **% ODA value** | **% World Bank value** |
| % petrol | -0.045 | 0.058 | -0.299** | 0.041 |
| | (0.094) | (0.050) | (0.149) | (0.031) |
| % OOF projects | 0.050 | 0.058 | | |
| | (0.174) | (0.065) | | |
| % OOF value | | | -0.191 | -0.034 |
| | | | (0.162) | (0.029) |
| % poorest | 0.035 | 0.369*** | -0.200 | 0.243*** |

|  | (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | (0.205) | (0.083) | (0.270) | (0.082) |
| % richest | 0.976*** | 0.422*** | 1.566*** | 0.632*** |
|  | (0.267) | (0.111) | (0.427) | (0.075) |
| % area | 0.321* | 0.088 | 0.269 | 0.081 |
|  | (0.191) | (0.054) | (0.270) | (0.070) |
| % conflict death | 0.056 | -0.008 | 0.175 | -0.002 |
|  | (0.065) | (0.019) | (0.139) | (0.019) |
| Capital | 0.255* | -0.084** | 0.288 | -0.081*** |
|  | (0.152) | (0.039) | (0.195) | (0.028) |
| Leaders' birth-region | -0.092 | 0.006 | -0.071 | -0.006 |
|  | (0.064) | (0.012) | (0.067) | (0.014) |
| Random effects | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| No. of countries | 19 | 19 | 18 | 19 |
| No. of regions | 186 | 186 | 180 | 186 |

Standard errors (in parenthesis) clustered on countries. ***(**,*): significant at the 1% (5%, 10%) level.

Table CIIIa: Models with unit of analysis weighted (relative value)

|  | (1) % ODA projects | (2) % World Bank projects | (3) % ODA value | (4) % World Bank value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| % petrol | -0.016 | 0.083* | -0.032 | 0.057 |
|  | (0.053) | (0.049) | (0.053) | (0.037) |
| % OOF projects | -0.010 | 0.116** |  |  |
|  | (0.090) | (0.055) |  |  |
| % OOF value |  |  | -0.087 | -0.025 |
|  |  |  | (0.068) | (0.030) |
| % poorest | -0.122 | 0.366*** | -0.342 | 0.258*** |
|  | (0.121) | (0.065) | (0.214) | (0.068) |
| % richest | 0.504*** | 0.361*** | 0.725*** | 0.623*** |
|  | (0.135) | (0.094) | (0.206) | (0.083) |
| % area | 0.181 | 0.032 | 0.159 | -0.021 |
|  | (0.136) | (0.057) | (0.175) | (0.066) |
| % conflict death | 0.048 | -0.008 | 0.173 | -0.004 |
|  | (0.043) | (0.027) | (0.111) | (0.027) |
| Capital | 0.252*** | -0.111*** | 0.248** | -0.115*** |
|  | (0.088) | (0.033) | (0.117) | (0.027) |
| Leaders' birth-region | -0.055* | 0.014 | -0.039 | -0.009 |
|  | (0.032) | (0.015) | (0.035) | (0.017) |
| Random effects | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| No. of countries | 19 | 19 | 18 | 19 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| No. of regions | 186 | 186 | 180 | 186 |
| Adjusted R^2 | 0.58 | 0.62 | 0.55 | 0.59 |

Standard errors (in parenthesis) clustered on countries.***(**,*): significant at the 1% (5%, 10%) level.

Table CIIIb: Models with unit of analysis weighted (absolute value)

| | (5) | (6) |
|---|---|---|
| | **In(ODA value)** | **In(World Bank value)** |
| In(petrol) | -0.334 | -0.021 |
| | (0.208) | (0.036) |
| In(OOF value) | -0.028 | 0.005 |
| | (0.063) | (0.012) |
| In(% poorest) | -0.519** | 0.027 |
| | (0.258) | (0.041) |
| In(% richest) | 1.586*** | 0.683*** |
| | (0.467) | (0.161) |
| In(area) | 0.182 | 0.094 |
| | (0.539) | (0.084) |
| In(conflict death) | 0.005 | 0.009 |
| | (0.261) | (0.034) |
| Capital | 4.116** | -0.309 |
| | (1.896) | (0.387) |
| Leaders' birth-region | -0.865 | 0.123 |
| | (1.303) | (0.237) |
| Country FE | Yes | Yes |
| No. of countries | 18 | 19 |
| No. of regions | 180 | 186 |
| Adjusted R^2 | 0.64 | 0.52 |

Standard errors (in parenthesis) clustered on countries.***(**,*): significant at the 1% (5%, 10%) level.

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# Trump-Effekten: Sweden's Integration of Iranian Migrants as a Model for the USA

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## Abstract

The far-right Sweden Democrats are gaining traction ahead of the September 2018 elections in Sweden, as an increase in hate crimes has paralleled an increase in xenophobic rhetoric and politics. Sweden has accepted refugees and immigrants for several decades – a trajectory similar to what the United States is experiencing. Given an increasingly recognized "Trump effect" internationally, from New Zealand to the United Kingdom, other societies' lessons learned are particularly salient today. This paper uses Iranian migrants, the second largest non-European migrant community in Sweden, as a case study of immigration and integration practices for the USA. As both liberal, multicultural countries with histories of immigration and similar political climates, this paper contends that Sweden provides a model of bilateral integration, so that xenophobia does not trump a humanitarian commitment.

The paper offers a self-designed set of markers of integration by which to evaluate migrants' degree of integration, including employment and education. Twenty-nine semi-structured interviews, coupled with quantitative data, media, and academic literature, were used to inform an evaluation of integration and current practices. Structural racism is manifest in Sweden's economic integration through employment and housing. This research presents an opportunity for the USA, among other liberal nations, to learn from other societies facing similar challenges but utilizing different approaches.

**Keywords***: immigration, Sweden, Iran, Trump, integration, xenophobia

## Introduction

Sweden lies at a critical political juncture. As a country with a long humanitarian history, it is now facing the rising wave of the populist right. Over the last few months, far-right political groups have gained traction in Sweden. The anti-immigrant Sweden Democrats have grown in popular support ahead of elections in September 2018, and fears continue to grow around violent extremism and immigration in the aftermath of a terrorist attack in Stockholm in April 2017 by a rejected Uzbek asylum seeker. So much so, in fact, that one conservative political party is pushing to renegotiate the Geneva Convention, so that Sweden is no longer obligated to fulfil any refugee quotas, as currently a signatory of the UN Refugee Convention.

Sweden boasts a long history of welcoming immigrants and refugees, extending back to the 1960s. Sweden has been named the world's best country to be an immigrant, and has accepted the highest number of asylum-seekers per capita among European countries (U.S. News & World Report 2017). However, as Rouzbeh Parsi, a leading EU scholar and Iranian immigrant to Sweden, pointed out, Sweden is not ideologically a country of immigrants like the USA (Interviewee A 2017). Academic Hassan Hosseini-Kaladjahi, an Iranian refugee, echoed that sentiment, pointing to the USA's history of different groups living with each other, while Sweden has no such history or experience; it is a much more homogeneous society. Unlike most other Western countries, Sweden came about its heterogeneity only in the late 1970s (Interviewee B 2017; Hosseini-Kaladjahi 1997: 77). Despite these differences, Sweden offers a successful model of bilateral integration, based on approaches to education, labor, housing, and cultural integration for refugees and migrants, and has appealed to migrants for decades.[i]

As Swedish historian Carl Marklund contested, Sweden is seen as a 'positive model for liberal Americans and progressives abroad' (Karlidag and Branchereau 2017). These historical differences do not preclude the potential for one country to learn from the practices of another. Further, this paper's methods help highlight and amplify immigrants' voices in ways that American public policy previously has neglected, through interviews that contextualize quantitative data and literature. Above all, Sweden's political climate, particularly in urban areas, is uncannily analogous to that of Trump's America, rendering Sweden a compelling point of comparison. This article first explores challenges Sweden has faced in dealing with accepting and integrating immigrants and presents a history of Iranian migration to Sweden. Second, the methodology of this investigation is examined. Third, a background on Swedish migration policies is provided. Next, I delve into some factors that affect integration and markers by which the migrant population's degree of integration can be measured. Ultimately, I draw from lessons learned to offer policy recommendations for the United States.

## Challenges

Sweden now faces global challenges and threats, many of the same ones the USA faces. For instance, there is the pervasive concern and faulty narrative of immigrants taking jobs from native citizens. Even more notably, many Swedes believe there to be a growing association between crime and immigration. The terror attack in central Stockholm in April 2017 intensified fears, the perpetrator an immigrant whose request for asylum had been rejected by the Swedish Migration Agency the year prior (Anderson 2017). A Pew Research Center study from 2016 shows that 46 per cent of Swedes believe that 'refugees in our country are more to blame for crime than other groups' (Wike, Stokes and Simmons 2016). This association, in turn, stems from a surge in crime in Sweden (Interpeace 2015). However, there only exists a tenuous connection between crime and immigration, bolstered by proliferation of an alleged migrant crime crisis in Sweden. In fact, the majority of people suspected of committing crimes in Sweden had two Swedish-born parents and were born in Sweden; none the less,

people from foreign backgrounds are 2.5 times more likely to be accused than people born in Sweden (Government Offices of Sweden 2018).

Often the precursor to violent crime, migrant-instigated sexual violence has also been widely reported. Fear and hostility towards immigrants increased with the rise of 'Sweden's rape problem' – as popularly termed by right-wing American media (Charen 2017). From January to October 2017, there were 2875 reports of threats against staff of the Swedish migration board, including sexual assault, rape, harassment, and threats to set fire to their offices (Noack 2017). Though some refugees have committed sexual assault in Sweden, including the Facebook Live assault of a Swedish woman by two Afghans and a non-native Swedish citizen, the right-wing's vilification of immigrants does not paint an accurate picture (Noack 2017).

Naturally, these reports of crime have engendered xenophobia, contributing to support for the neo-Nazi Sweden Democrats – a shift all too familiar for the USA. This party had only 3 per cent support in 2010; ratings shot up to almost 20 per cent in November 2015, after the surge in people granted asylum status. It stood at 18.4 per cent in June, then 14.8 per cent in November 2017 (Charen 2017). Concurrently, the sharp increase in Islamophobic, xenophobic, and racist crimes has mirrored the increase in xenophobic rhetoric and politics, much like the USA. According to the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, there has been more than a 20 per cent increase in crimes with an identified xenophobic or racist motive from 2011 to 2015. More specifically, there has been at least a 40 per cent increase in 'agitation against a population group' – minority or immigrant community – from 2011 to 2015, with a 30 per cent increase from 2014 to 2015 (refer to AI and AII). These numbers are likely underestimates, since not all hate crimes are reported to the police or identified by the police as having a racist motivation.

## The Iranian community in Sweden

Iranians constitute the second largest non-Western community in Sweden after Iraqis, as one per cent of the overall population, now numbering at more than 74,000 individuals (Williams 2017; Charen 2017; refer to AIII and AIV). In fact, Iranians feel more discriminated against than other immigrant groups in Sweden (Emami 2012: 126). Stockholm is home to the largest population of Iranian expatriates. Moreover, Iranians comprise one of the most successful – and most highly educated – immigrant groups (Interviewee D 2017). This, in turn, makes integration uniquely complicated for the Iranian population, since a higher level of education can make social adjustment and finding employment naturally more difficult, since foreign credentials are often disqualified and immigrants are often overqualified for the jobs offered to them (Interviewee C 2017). And as a young Iranian-American who is fluent in Farsi, I have the unique ability to gain the trust of Iranian migrants and refugees. Thus, to gain perspective on Swedish policies as a whole, I will focus on the Iranian-Swedish community as a lens.

## Methodology

I conducted 29 semi-structured interviews with Iranian immigrants and refugees in Sweden, from diverse academic backgrounds, ideologies, careers, and motivations for migration. These interviews provide a more current window into life in Sweden for migrants than what existing literature can provide. Interviews were not recorded to encourage subjects to speak freely about their experiences, which often included personally identifiable, sensitive, traumatic information. These voices have historically been excluded from decision-making and help build upon existing literature. Research that deals comprehensively and solely with one immigrant population, specifically in Sweden, is sparse, particularly which focuses on specific aspects of integration and daily life. *The Iranian Community in Sweden*, compiled and edited by mainly Iranian academics, is 'a first step to countering this shortcoming' (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 17). I hope this paper is a second, further and updated step in filling this gap, since most of the research dealing with the Iranian community in Sweden comes from the 1990s or early 2000s. Further, much of the literature is from an exclusively male perspective, excluding female voices and experiences. To supplement my ethnographic research, I collected data from studies done by Iranian and Swedish academics, often directly under the auspices of the Swedish government, as well as government documents and demographic statistics.

Measuring integration has traditionally been a question of methodology, but this paper goes beyond past reductive approaches. Admittedly there is no consensus; there is no definitive way to measure the success or degree of integration. Scholar Hassan Hosseini-Kaladjahi provides three broad categories for integration: economic, cultural, and social, but researcher Ali Hajighasemi in *The Iranian Community in Sweden* points out how economic and social integration focus disproportionately on tangible factors, such as employment, income, and housing. The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), on the other hand, offers eight larger policy areas based off a study of 38 countries. Drawing from these examples and my own ethnographic research, I constructed my own parameters for measuring integration for a more nuanced look; these include education, employment, marital status, nationality of significant other, language spoken with children, nationality of colleagues, participation in '*förening*' (voluntary Swedish associations), political activity, and voting behavior. For the sake of this paper, I will focus on two – education and employment – which my research offers as the most telling and comprehensive markers.

## Swedish migration law & policy

Sweden boasted an incredibly 'generous' immigration and refugee policy prior to 1989, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and increasing demand on Sweden by refugees and asylum seekers (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 10; Hajighasemi 2012: 65; Interviewee E 2017). As a welfare state, Sweden provides extensive social assistance. Any person living in Sweden – regardless of national origin, age, or employment status – is eligible for assistance, as per the Swedish Social Welfare Act, under which recent immigrants and refugees are also entitled to

certain benefits within 'introduction assistance' (Hammarstadt 2009: 86). Even so, these benefits remain contingent upon contracts on integration with the local municipalities, which are funded in turn by the central government (Gustafsson 2011: 4-5). The Social Welfare Act ensures the right to emergency support from municipalities, as per the amended Law on the Reception of Asylum Seekers (FARR 2016: 10). Individuals with refugee protection are granted a three-year temporary permit, with the right of family reunification, commonly known as chain migration in the USA. For immigrants, too, the Swedish government has provided generous financial support, even long after they have initially settled in the country (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 40). One example is the accessibility of state loans for re-education. Up until 2017, Iranian immigrants came to Sweden to study for free in the universities; higher education for both EU and non-EU students was fully subsidized (Interviewees B and F, 2017). However, today it is only fully subsidized for EU students.

The process to attaining Swedish citizenship is not complicated, at least compared to the USA. First, the applicant is granted permanent residency, before attaining citizenship. It generally takes five years – the minimum period of residence required – and does not require mastery of the Swedish language (Migrationsverket 2016). This period of residence must be continuous, a caveat that often results in a prolonged process of attaining citizenship for some immigrants, as it did for one Iranian researcher, who points to an almost ten-year process before he was granted citizenship (Interviewee F 2017). The resident must also intend to remain in Sweden (FARR 2016: 65). Information is remarkably accessible online via the Swedish Migration Agency, available in six languages including English, Arabic, and most notably, Persian (Migrationsverket 2014). Granted, experiences with the process are variable and unpredictable. One former Iranian political refugee stayed at a refugee camp with her family for four months, until then being resettled in a small town by the respective municipality (Interviewee E 2017). But another former political refugee, an Iranian Kurd, stayed in a refugee camp in Sweden for almost two-and-a-half years, after having stayed in a camp in Russia for six months (Interviewee G 2017).

Dual citizenship is recognized by Sweden, even with Iran, in contrast to both the USA and Iran, the former which does not look favorably upon citizenship with Iran, as a listed state sponsor of terrorism, the latter which does not recognize dual citizenship in any capacity. The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Stockholm, none the less, works closely with Sweden – and Iranians living in Sweden on personal and legal affairs (Mohajer 2017). Accommodating dual citizenship allows for a greater inclination toward integration due to an ability to retain one's own heritage; not recognizing dual identity only serves to alienate and shut people out.

The burden of integration has been largely left to individual municipalities (Interviewee B and H 2017). Still, the Swedish Migration Board expressed a willingness to break the law in order to compel municipalities that had previously refused to provide housing to asylum seekers to do their share. Asylum seekers have found housing through housing providers across Sweden, by way of the Swedish Public Procurement Act (Radio Sweden 2014). Often churches work with 20 different municipalities in resettling refugees (Interviewee H 2017).

# Sample markers of integration

In this section, I evaluate the different factors that affect the integration of Iranian migrants, as well as the degree to which they have been successfully – or unsuccessfully – integrated. I focus on two markers in particular, education and employment, as across the literature and my research I have found these to be among the most comprehensive and telling signs and measures of professional and social integration.

## Education

All individuals in Sweden have the right to education (FARR 2016: 49-50, 71). Both Swedes and Iranians highly value education. Iranians are among the most highly educated immigrants, which has implications for integration. In 2008, 26 per cent of Iranian-born men had completed post-secondary education, higher than that of the rate for Swedish-born men and MENA-born men (Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 24-25). A higher degree of education can make integration harder at first, as many have to adapt to new lives and often new beginnings, either without documentation of their awards and diplomas from Iran or simply degrees and repertoire that are discounted in Swedish society. Many first-generation Iranian immigrants have had to go through a 'process of re-education' to adjust to the Swedish labor market (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 11). Some employers discredit the quality of immigrants' education, or do not accept foreign credentials at all (Behtoui 2006: 3; Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 28). One Iranian refugee was at the top of her class in university in Tehran, having won an award for her thesis in theater; however, in Stockholm, that did not amount to much, and she struggled to assert legitimacy and gain credibility within the artistic community (Interviewee I 2017). Some fields, like engineering or medicine, have international renown and legitimacy, allowing migrants to adapt to a new labor market with minimal retraining. Other fields, like languages or literature, can have a more 'local character' and preclude migrants from adapting as easily to the needs of the new labor market (Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 28). Another political refugee had to retake exams in Stockholm, since he was unable to bring – or retrieve – documentation of his diplomas from Iran. Deterred by this setback, he resigned himself to managing his taxi business (Interviewee J 2017).

Of course, education can be a tool to mobility. Generally, the more qualified one is, the more educated, the greater opportunity for mobility exists – a notion affirmed by the Swedish government (Williams 2017; Government Offices of Sweden 2018). After all, for years, Iranian immigrants came to Sweden to study for free in the universities; higher education was fully subsidized by the Swedish government. Education can have a tangible impact on integration into society. As one former refugee reflected, he himself feels fully integrated and accepted in Swedish society. He has had a highly successful career in law and academia, with support from his colleagues, and as a result of the education he has received in Sweden, a large part of which was completed by way of a PhD (Interviewee B 2017). Another Iranian immigrant, who came to Iran explicitly to continue his education, echoed that sentiment, speaking to how his education in Sweden has allowed him to integrate and interact freely

particularly with his colleagues (Interviewee F 2017). Thus, education is inextricably linked to employment, which I discuss next.

## Labor market

Overall, Sweden boasts low unemployment rates. However, such is not the case for newly arrived asylum claimants, refugees, and immigrants due to a variety of obstacles, including inadequate or nonexistent language skills, difficulty in validating diplomas and credentials, and a dearth of unskilled job opportunities (FARR 2016: 70). According to a survey conducted in 2015 on the Swedish labor market, specifically in regard to foreign-born persons with higher education degrees, only about one per cent of Swedish-born persons were unemployed, compared to around 10 per cent of foreign-born persons (Statistics Sweden 2016: 37). Iranian-born persons in Sweden illustrate this disparity; despite their high level of education, they experience an unemployment rate far below that of native Swedes (Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 25). Among those who are employed, 68.5 per cent of Iranians are overqualified (twice that of Swedes), and 22.2 per cent are concentrated in unattractive positions, such as cleaning and washing dishes (almost twice that of Swedes) (Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 31).

Additionally, they report very low income levels, again far below that for Swedes, though higher than that of most other MENA immigrants (Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 25-26). Research points to a positive correlation between the income of immigrants and the number of years spent in the new host society (Drive and Lundh 2008: 332). Beyond this independent variable – time spent in the host society – there exist many barriers to entering the labor market; migrants do not enter the host country's labor market as easily as the host population does (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 25). Entrance, and the generally differential benefits migrants receive, is contingent upon attitudes of the host country toward the arrival of migrants and the occupational backgrounds of the newcomer population, which serve as their reference points. As such, labor market integration of immigrants and refugees has become a major issue for both the migrant population and host society. The past socioeconomic status of Iranians in their country of origin shapes their adaptation to and integration into the host society (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 18). Many Iranian refugees and migrants experience firsthand a sharp learning curve while adjusting to a new, lower standard of living. One political refugee had to take on a role as a caretaker for the sick and elderly, working in squalid conditions to make ends meet and support her son's education in Sweden, after beginning an eminent theatre career in Iran but having to start all over (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 25; Interviewee I 2017).

The Swedish labor market also exhibits structural discrimination by barring minorities from high positions, with the most pronounced ethnic segregation in academia (Interviewee K 2017). One language professor, a former Iranian political refugee, spoke candidly about the 'subtle racism' she has seen in academia; there are no department heads of Iranian descent in Sweden (Interviewee L 2017). One Iranian immigrant, who came not as a political refugee but rather as a migrant seeking to continue his higher education, noted this 'indirect'

structural racism, even with his qualifications through extensive university studies. Still, he personally reconciled with how his national origin could impede his advancement or promotion (Interviewee E 2017). For many others, though, structural racism is much more tangible. Research from the Stockholm University Linnaeus Center for Integration Studies (SULCI) points to how immigrants who changed their last names from their native, 'foreign' names to 'Swedish conform names,' or more 'Swedish-sounding' or 'neutral' names, showed more favorable employment prospects and higher earnings (Arai and Skogman Thoursie 2006: 1-39). Changing one's surname can decrease the potential of encountering 'disadvantageous treatment' in initial contact with the employer or customer, and can increase the probability of landing a job interview and thus attaining the opportunity to actually present their credentials to an employer. In fact, researchers yielded an earnings disparity of around 26 per cent after changing to a Swedish conform surname, most notably after abandoning the original name 'Mohammed,' of different spellings, in favor of Anglo-Saxon names (Arai and Skogman Thoursie 2006: 3-4). The Swedish Name Law allows for individuals to change their name at a fee; the Swedish Patent and Registration Office (PRV), which oversees name changes, offers a catalog of 'Swedish-sounding' surnames available for applicants, but notably 'prevents foreign-sounding new names.' Thus, applicants are confined to names that are 'easily adaptable within the Swedish linguistic context' (Arai and Skogman Thoursie 2006: 10-11).

This sense of 'subtle racism" within Sweden's assimilating practices, specifically in regard to employment, is further manifested in Iranian immigrants' experiences seeking job counseling at the Swedish Job Centres. Counselors have advised Iranian immigrants to not seek particular professions, as they discouraged one female lawyer from pursuing law because 'who would hire a foreign lawyer: a woman, a female foreign lawyer that doesn't speak perfect Swedish?' Similarly, 'who would hire a foreign doctor?' (Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 32-33). Counselors reaffirmed many of these prejudices.

Cognitive biases, as manifested in prejudicial employment practices, often stem from larger cultural judgments and misconceptions in regard to immigrants with greater 'cultural distance from the culture of "the West"' (Behtoui 2006: 9). These particular immigrant communities are often perceived to come from 'culture[s] of poverty,' bringing 'dysfunctional cultural values that impede social mobility' (Behtoui 2006: 9). Further, Iranians, among other non-native, non-Western populations, are not afforded the same opportunities as native Swedes for being promoted, attaining tenure, and moving into more permanent jobs and positions as professors (Interviewee G 2017). One Iranian refugee, now an associate professor at the University of Gävle, has remained in her associate position for years. She recounted how she felt discrimination as a university student in Sweden, and now as a professor. She would not be selected for positions for which she applied at Uppsala University (1995-2009) and she was conscious of her identity as the only foreigner in her workplace (Interviewee B 2017). Quantitative research supports the prevalence of discrimination against Iranians in this regard, using income as an illustrative indicator of discrimination; however, it is impossible to definitively conclude a positive correlation between discrimination and cultural distance of Iranians as an ethnic minority from the Swedish population (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 66-67).

The disparity in opportunity is due in large part to native Swedes having their own networks, which engender greater trust and support, giving them a foot in the labor market. As such, this form of social capital often carries more weight than any educational achievements or credentials may, at least for immigrants. A person from a 'disadvantaged racial/ethnic group may mobilize her/his social network by reaching out to relatives, friends, or acquaintances in her/his personal or professional networks' (Behtoui 2006: 19). However, when immigrants use these group ties to informally seek employment, they more often than not obtain lower wages than they otherwise would through more formal networks, and a lower starting salary can have long-term impacts for employment prospects (Neergaard and Behtoui 2010: 763-64). Immigrants do not generally have the luxury of access to such formal networks in the host society, making it much more difficult not only to be promoted, but also to secure employment and access valuable resources in the first place, such as connections and introductions to employers (Interviewee G 2017). These resources are instrumental in the accumulation of social capital, which in turn increases job prospects (Behtoui 2006: 23, 28).

Social capital is synonymous with power, and the individual's gender and ethnicity can affect the accessibility of capital Neergaard and Behtoui 2010: 762). Access to these networks – and thus resources – ultimately can dictate whether an immigrant will be able to secure a job. Thus, education and employment remain contingent upon social capital. Even if an individual has the educational credentials that qualify them for a 'high-status job,' but lack the appropriate contacts via said networks, they 'cannot obtain a full return from one's education' (Behtoui 2006: 24). According to a 2015 survey, only half of foreign-born persons obtained jobs that matched their educational qualifications, while eight out of ten Swedish-born persons secured employment that matched their qualifications (Statistics Sweden 2016). This disparity points to how higher education is not always sufficient for employment, at least for immigrants. Naturally, immigrants might participate in their own networks by virtue of their shared background, culture, or national origin to seek out employment, but these 'segregated social networks of disadvantaged minority groups reflect unequal treatment of individuals due to their "race" or "ethnicity" in relationships among individuals in everyday life' (Behtoui 2006: 2). Immigrants are shut out of the networks needed to gain entry into labor market.

Supporters of segmented labor market theory would argue that immigrants, regardless, do not typically find jobs in the top tiers (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 23). As a result of the racialization of the labor market, ethnic labor is degraded and devalued. Then, sometimes an 'ethnic enclave labor market' forms outside the mainstream economy (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 23). In other words, ethnic labor is often disproportionately concentrated in one area, often valued less than native labor would be. I offer Kista, Stockholm as one such example to illustrate this phenomenon. Kista is known to have a remarkably large concentration of Iranian immigrants, but also a disproportionately large number of Middle-Easterners, Arabs, South Asians, and women wearing hijab and niqab, as compared to the number of native Swedes. Kista Galleria, the largest mall in Stockholm, also features a disproportionate number of ethnic food places in one centralized location, the majority of which offer halal

food. Compared to places around the rest of the city, the food is also incredibly cheap, in a city known for its high-priced standard of living.

One way Iranian migrants have circumvented these barriers is through self-employment (Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 34). One political refugee now owns his own taxi business, allowing for more flexible hours and thus greater political participation; many of his friends, former political refugees as well, have followed suit (Interviewee J 2017). Another Iranian, who came to Sweden initially for his studies, now owns three Iranian restaurants, including the locally known Shahrzad and Tehran Grill (Interviewee M 2017). Some own Persian groceries, such as Kista Grocer, among other small businesses. Others have their own law firms and media stations (Interviewee H 2017). There exist a wide variety of local Iranian businesses in Sweden. Thus, some did not find hopeful prospects in the labor market; others did not find the prospects they sought or expected, and so they turned to self-employment (Hosseini-Kaladjahi and Kelly 2012: 34-35).

When they do not find or are unable to secure the prospects they want in the Swedish labor market, many Iranians have left Sweden for a third country after completing their education – or sometimes re-education – in the country. Iranian immigrants who moved to Sweden to continue their studies plan to seek professorships and fellowships in other countries, such as the U.K. (Interviewees A, C, and F 2017). Migrant workers not only have greater difficulty entering the labor market, but they are not always met with the same welcoming attitude or material benefits as members of the host population, compelling some to seek prospects elsewhere (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 25).

Additionally, the lack of a universal minimum wage can further hurt immigrants. The minimum wage is set by and within each sector or industry, through collective bargaining initiated by the respective trade unions, to which nearly all Swedish citizens belong. However, Swedish unions do not tend to prioritize immigrants and their needs (Mulinari and Neergaard 2005: 61). There are often pronounced divisions between immigrant and native workers, fostered by a language barrier and even a sense of 'exclusionary nationhood,' or simply a sense of superiority as a result of national origin (Mulinari and Neergaard 2005: 65). While these wages are generally high – higher than many other countries, not having a universal minimum wage has hampered labor market integration of refugees, due to the heterogeneous effects on refugees seeking employment in different sectors and the role discrimination can often play (Skedinger and Lundborg 2014: 1-24). After all, employers help make the hiring and wage setting decisions, and their attitudes towards immigrants and refugees can incur integration problems. Per Lundborg and Per Skedinger (2014: 1-29), through the Swedish Institute for Social Research, studied Swedish labor market integration of refugees and how the Swedish labor market has often impeded not only the employment, but also the integration of many refugees. The minimum wage is also a binding restriction, particularly for refugees in low-skilled jobs Lundborg and Skedinger's research (2014: 10) points to a positive correlation between refugees employed in low-skilled positions and refugees employed at minimum wage. All in all, employment is considered a privilege, not a right, and work is limited to the unskilled sector, since migrants generally lack language

requirements and certified skills. Around 30 per cent of foreign-born persons surveyed had jobs that did not require higher education, while only six per cent of Swedish-born persons had such unskilled jobs (Statistics Sweden 2016: 37). However, beginning January 1, 2017, the Swedish Migration Agency no longer distributed work opportunities to claimants, cutting back on state-level assistance (FARR 2016: 48). Still, there have been efforts by the Swedish government to create more low-wage jobs to meet rising demands (Library of Congress). Securing housing would entail similar difficulties, if it were not for any government assistance.

## Policy recommendations

These recommendations open a larger debate of assimilation versus adaptation, as strategies and mechanisms for integration. How we approach immigration and integration politically today – specifically in the United States – can be perceived as not only assimilatory and nationalistic, but oppressive at times, though arguably many American citizens and policymakers may see the status quo as attempts to promote and facilitate social mobility and cultural assimilation. With that, I will frame policy recommendations around the postulation that integration must be considered a reciprocal process – between both the native population and the newly-arrived immigrant population. Additionally, migrants are human capital, individuals who contribute economically, socially, culturally, and politically. As Michael Williams (2017) points out in a personal interview, there exists a "basic reception policy," characterized by a widespread awareness of what it means to be an asylum seeker or refugee. Such is not the case in the United States; most American adults do not know why refugees had to leave their home countries, or can tell the difference between immigrants, stateless persons, and refugees (Goldberg 2011). As such, I offer some policy recommendations on how to strengthen and improve integration policies in the United States:

1.  The Swedish government has sanctioned and sponsored investigations into their own immigration and integration policies. Masoud Kamali and Mehrdad Darvishpour are two such scholars tasked by the government with looking into different facets of the process and non-Western migrant communities now living in Sweden. Hassan Hosseini-Kaladjahi was sponsored by the Swedish Multicultural Centre to conduct research around migration and integration. Admittedly, it will take a few years to monitor and evaluate the effects of this research. The U.S. government should more comprehensively research what needs are met by the public and private sector, to work toward filling gaps and meeting needs.
    a.  The U.S. government should partner with bigger organizations to tap into their mobilization power and networks (Emami 95). State governments can provide grants to voluntary organizations that work closely with immigrants, as Sweden does, which would facilitate greater engagement of immigrants with these associations (Emami 105, 110).

2. The host population's reception to integration is inevitably affected by how they perceive the newcomer population's country of origin, specifically at the time of immigration (Hosseini-Kaladjahi, Kelly 29). This was the case during the Islamic Revolution and hostage crisis, again post-9/11, and continues today with contemporary sources of political tension such as the Trump administration's "Muslim ban," growing Islamophobia, recent terrorist attacks, and political relations between the U.S. and Iran in light of the nuclear deal and U.S. hostages. These negative perceptions can, in turn, lead to the exploitation of an ethnic, national, or racial category to construct a singular identity – a prescribed collective identity (Behtoui 13). Admittedly, this problem is not unique to Iranians. To present as fair an opportunity to integrate for new immigrants, the U.S. State Department should engage more in cultural diplomacy, specifically through the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, to combat misinformation and encourage peaceful cultural understanding and exchange. If we accept the premise that there are societies with "cultural distance" from the United States, Iran being one of them, as many scholars have pointed out, then responsibility falls on the U.S. to help bridge that gap due to its position and power in the world today, particularly for Middle Eastern countries such as Iran, which are governed more around vilifying politics and rhetoric and less around the real narratives of the Iranian people.

3. The United States should encourage naturalization, while supporting individuals keeping their dual citizenship, including Iranian citizenship, as Sweden does. In this way, immigrants can participate more fully in the American polity and civic society, while holding onto their cultures and being able to visit their families. Further, this pathway safeguards both the individual and group and community rights of immigrants. Both the United States and Sweden – as advanced liberal democracies have exhibited a particular "indifference…to the ethnic group's cultural identities and/or group loyalties" and thus have manifested an "ethnocentric nationalism," by only heeding individual rights (Hajighasemi 68).
    a. Another mechanism for cultural integration is reexamining language and education policies by providing language classes, not just for immigrants to learn English (e.g., ESL), but also for the children of immigrants to learn their mother tongue, even if a language apart from English, following Sweden's enrichment model (Lindberg 2007). Research suggests that learning one's mother tongue is often a prerequisite for learning the language of instruction – English, in this case (Bingöl 2013). This can help increase the comfort level of newly arrived immigrants, both parents and their children, as they adjust to a foreign society, making them feel more at home and thus more amenable to learn how to integrate into American society. Potentially, Americans might be inclined towards learning their mother tongues as well, in an effort to encourage bilateral integration. After all, multilingualism is not characteristically the norm in the United States, and more specifically, immigrant multilingualism is natural and should – and can be – accommodated in society and education. We see such educational

accommodation in Dearborn, Michigan, where I co-led a service trip to and learned, for example, Gardner Elementary School hires Arabic-speaking staff to accommodate the needs of the refugee children attending their school. Additionally, they offer an after-school English as a Second Language (ESL) program for refugee parents, designed for those who may not have known any English upon immigrating to the United States.

4. Crime and criminal justice should not be coopted or exploited to create fear and antagonism towards migrants and refugees. This is, in effect, fearmongering, and in the current context of the #MeToo movement, the potential for what occurred in Sweden in regard to the influx of sexual assault incidents to occur in the U.S. is high. In turn, this could further perpetuate the current narrative around terrorism and Islam. Responsibility lies with not only the government and political leaders in recognizing the prevalence of sexual violence and the need for legislation, but also with the media. Numbers themselves do not stoke xenophobia or Islamophobia; the perpetuation of particular narratives does.

5. The United States should instate education and skills assessments and trainings, similar to those recently introduced by Sweden, into the labor market, to facilitate integration overall. This would help quell fears that immigrants are often poor fits for the U.S. labor market and economy.

6. Asylum seekers should be guaranteed public legal counsel in immigration court. The U.S. Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), with the Department of Justice, does not guarantee legal counsel for individuals seeking asylum in court, even if they cannot obtain their own legal counsel (American Immigration Council).

7. The United States should strive towards joining (or creating) a common asylum system and procedure, as the EU has done since 1999 (Ammirati). On one level, this entails courts and lawmakers operating on the same page in regard to immigration policies and their enforcement; on another, this entails learning from and operating in conjunction with other countries, such as Canada and even EU members.

8. The U.S. government should establish a sponsorship program more widely, to allow more time to find more permanent accommodations and facilitate integration for refugees.

9. The U.S. government should provide special accommodations to people with "special reception needs," to meet the specific needs of certain groups of asylum seekers and refugees, including single mothers and unaccompanied minors, LGBTQ+ individuals, people with disabilities, and traumatized persons. Currently, only requests from persons with disabilities for accommodation will be processed (USCIS).

10. The U.S. government should grant the right to family reunification and change the language of "chain migration" to family reunification to reflect its reality. Language directly impacts policymaking, as we can see in differences between modern political discourse around immigration – and legal precedent – in the United States versus Sweden.

## Conclusion

While rates of immigration to Sweden are projected to slow down, there will continue to be steady flows of people out of the Middle East into Sweden and other similar countries, especially as higher education becomes more commonly pursued and family reunification continues (Statistics Sweden 2017). In the bigger picture, too, migration will continue to be a potent force, both an undeniable agent and product of globalization. We see the flow of people, or ethnoscapes, and the flow of ideologies, or ideoscapes (Hosseini-Kaladjahi 2012: 9). We see the globalization of cultures, as processes of acculturation transcend borders, as Swedes celebrate Iranian cultural holidays and as Iranians get involved in Swedish politics, or as Americans acclaim Iranian films and Iranians get involved in American politics.

That is what makes this research critical; a liberal, multicultural country of immigrants, such as the U.S., will continue to struggle with the challenges of integrating migrants, including legal and undocumented immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Evaluating the success of Sweden's integration of the Iranian community – a population markedly different from the native society in terms of culture, faith, ethnicity, and background – can inform how we approach not only the Iranian-American community, but largely our Arab and Middle-Eastern communities. These are some of the most heavily stigmatized communities worldwide, in the current political climate in the Trump era.

Thus, what makes this integration research particularly relevant is the danger of social isolation of immigrants, as opposed to integration. Integration, as a constructive, bilateral means of inclusion, can prevent radicalization, or even aid in de-radicalization. Scholar Tashina Alavi (2014) points out how successful, positive integration can lead to better well-being, shared unity and inclusivity, less crime, and even economic benefits; after all, the government would be spending less on immigration and integration policies. On the other hand, she points to a number of consequences from failed integration attempts: increased segregation, the social and economic marginalization of communities, and even violence (Alavi 2014: 3). Admittedly, 'successful' integration is not necessarily 'positive' integration; in order for integration to be successful and positive, it must be a reciprocal process, with efforts on behalf of both parties, the host population and the immigrant population, to integrate.

That sort of reciprocity runs across both areas of integration outlined in this paper: education and the labor market. To evaluate Swedish policy more specifically, in terms of education and employment, the Swedish government can do more to make fairer and equalize the

playing field for immigrants and native Swedes alike. Higher education will likely attract fewer smart, motivated Iranians since it is no longer completely subsidized, and more steps can be taken to give credence to educational qualifications from the country of origin, an issue that is even more salient for refugees and asylum seekers who fled without documentation. However, the labor market is the poorest marker of integration for Iranian-Swedes; a number of challenges exist to not only accessing greater opportunities, promotions, and incomes in the market, but also simply entering the market in the first place. In the same vein, an important distinction must be made between non-discrimination policies and those that explicitly safeguard and promote anti-discrimination; a lack of such policies can make it incredibly dangerous for immigrants simply because of a surname, considering the modern political climate.

Who exactly should benefit from special protections under the law, and who bears this responsibility? This question pervades a larger public debate, both political and ideological, that likely sees no resolution in the foreseeable future, in Sweden or in the U.S. However, it is imperative that we reexamine the intent and efficacy of U.S. immigration and integration policies to offer protections to vulnerable persons while promoting the inclusion, social mobility, and self-sufficiency of immigrants, because another global refugee crisis – this time, as a result of climate change – might be on the horizon.

But it is difficult to measure the efficacy of immigration policy in the U.S. when there is no one way – or rather, no ideal way – to measure integration. The Swedish government offers statistics on participation in the Swedish labor market to point out successful integration, at a rate of 68 per cent. They highlight how the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) both indicate that Sweden comes out ahead in terms of integration policy (Government Offices of Sweden 2018). But, as aforementioned, the numbers do not tell the full story. Further, this paper has broadened the question to one that affects all of Europe; these patterns within Sweden mirror similar trends across other European countries, such as France, Germany, the U.K., and worldwide. The March 2019 terrorist attack at the Christchurch mosque in New Zealand, in which a white nationalist murdered 50-plus Muslims and fostered ideology similar to that of the Trump administration, sparked widespread discussion about his motivations and the origins of his ideology. Even such a strong liberal tradition as that of New Zealand is ostensibly not immune to anti-immigrant sentiments, and shows just how far the "Trump effect" can infiltrate. Current events starkly point to the urgency of such research to more effectively address immigration, in ways that does not inflict a human cost, by political leaders in power.

Where do we go from here? We have to answer a few fundamental questions around what integration means in the United States for both immigrants and the host society, what the future of U.S.-Iran relations looks like and thus the future of Iranian Americans, and what the role of a group like the National Iranian American Council (NIAC) should be in ensuring the interests of this community are represented. These answers require further research, specifically from and about other countries that face the exact same challenges and share

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similar interests but might offer different approaches. Ultimately, the United States can learn from Sweden's approaches to integrate its immigrant communities more successfully and positively.

# Appendices

## AI: Number of reported crimes with an identified xenophobic and/or racist motive 2011-2015

| Type of offense | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | Change 2014-2015 | Change 2011-2015 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unlawful threat/non-sexual molestation | 1,650 | 1,646 | 1702 | 1,847 | 1,972 | 7% | 20% |
| Criminal damage/graffiti | 296 | 374 | 327 | 390 | 703 | 80% | 138% |
| Agitation against a population group | 396 | 419 | 410 | 430 | 552 | 28% | 39% |
| Total number | 3,936 | 3,979 | 3,999 | 4,314 | 4,765 | 10% | 21% |

## AII: Number of reported crimes with an identified Islamophobic motive 2009-2015

| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | Change 2009 to 2015 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reports | 194 | 272 | 278 | 306 | 327 | 492 | 558 | 187% |

**AIII: Persons who were born in Iran and now live in Sweden, 2000-2017**
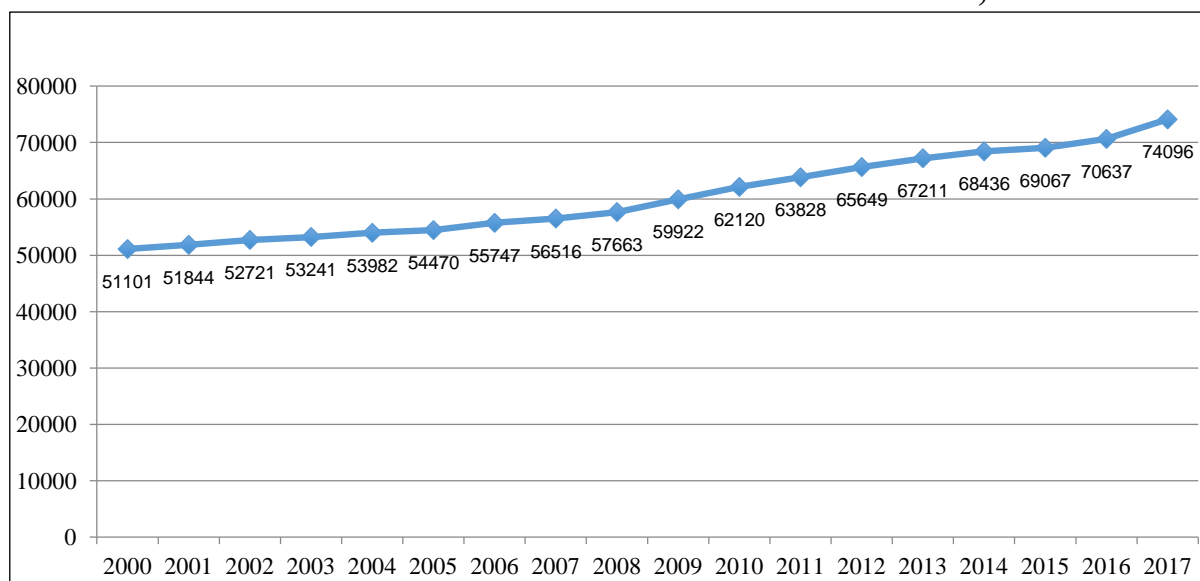


**AIV: The total population of Sweden, 2000-2017**
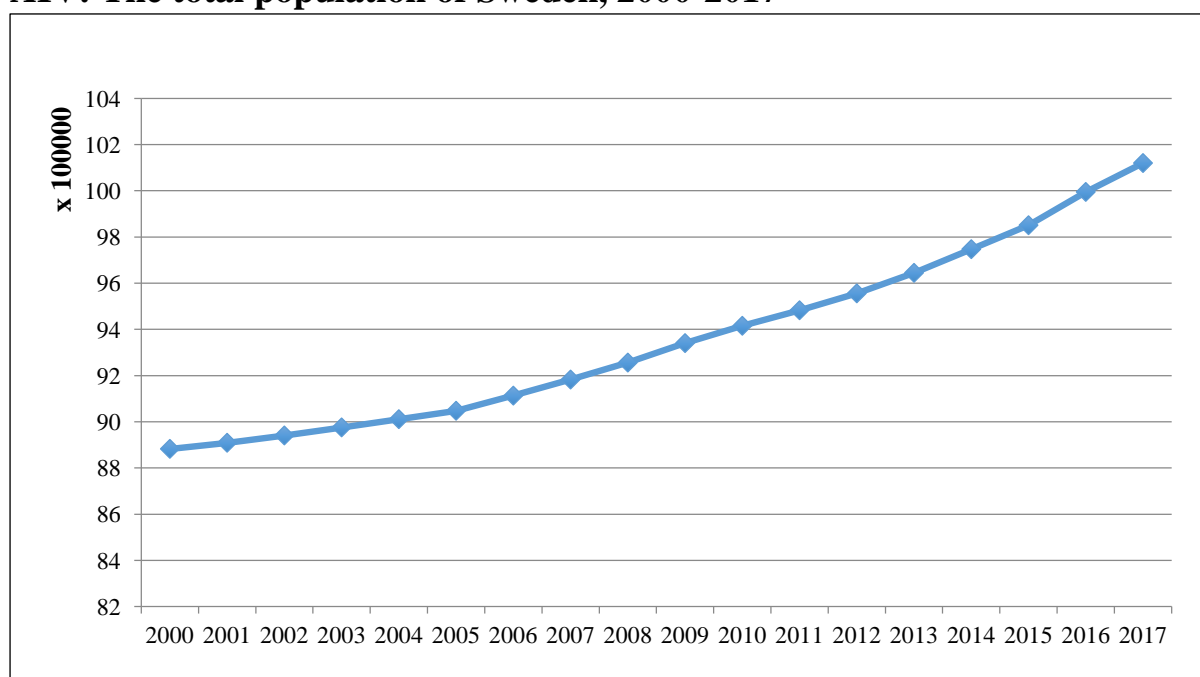


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**Interviewee G**. 26 June 2017.

**Interviewee H**. 21 June 2017.

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# "The Citizen and The Space": Fragility of the Middle Eastern Nation-State

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## Abstract

For about a hundred years, the states of the Middle East have been struggling with coming to terms with their national identity. Throughout the 20th century, these states have shed blood, formed unsuccessful unions and tried out different leaders and political ideologies, yet not much progress has been made regarding this mission. Is it because there are some unknown external forces that wish to partition and rule the Middle East for their benefit (as some demagogues would agree) or is this fragility distinctive of how the Middle Eastern nation-state was inorganically formed and how the imposed identity of the people inherently clashed with their actual identities that relied on an opposing form of loyalty? This essay will argue for the latter. It will claim that the fragility of the Arab Middle Eastern nation-state stems from the underdeveloped forces of internal and external sovereignty which form the backbone of national imagination. After explicating the anthropological theoretical background of the argument, this essay will then proceed to compare the cases of Turkey, Iraq and Syria in how they struggled with these two modernising forces in their formative years.

**Keywords**: Nationalism, Nation-state, Middle East, Turkey, Iraq, Syria

## 1. Introduction

For about a hundred years, the states of the Middle East have been struggling with coming to terms with their national identity. Throughout the 20th century, these states have shed blood, formed unsuccessful unions and tried out different leaders and political ideologies, yet not much progress has been made regarding this mission. Is it because there are some unknown external forces that wish to partition and rule the Middle East for their benefit (as some demagogues would agree) or is this fragility distinctive of how the Middle Eastern nation-state was inorganically formed and how the imposed identity of the people inherently clashed with their actual identities that relied on an opposing form of loyalty? This essay will argue for the latter. It will claim that the fragility of the Arab Middle Eastern nation-state stems from the underdeveloped forces of internal and external sovereignty which form the backbone of national imagination. After explicating the anthropological theoretical background of the argument, this essay will then proceed to compare the cases of Turkey,

Iraq and Syria in how they struggled with these two modernising forces in their formative years.

## 2. The citizen and the space

In order to critically assess the relative durability of modern Middle Eastern nation-states in the 20th century, we first need to comprehend and contextualise what the term "modern nation-state" connotes, and within which socio-political context it comes to being. Nations – upon which nation states were built – cannot be considered as continuations of primordial structures that can be taken for granted and considered to have always existed. Instead, in order for that assumption of continuity to be constructed, there have to be the necessary conditions and the socio-historical foundation for "imagining" (Anderson, 1983)the nation.

Although some modern nation states are still relatively contingent on the memories and glories of pre-modern ethnic identities and communities, most nation states, specifically those born in the midst of the mandate system, rely on institutionalised modes of identity-making for the legitimacy and the imagination of their so-called nationalism. In its essence, the nation is "a sociocultural artefact that creates an ethnolinguistic community, imagining itself to be homogeneous" (Tibi, 1990, p.13)) by the invention of tradition, commonality and fraternity. Therefore, for a nation to be considered durable or successful, this sense of common purpose and fraternity should be cultivated in such a manner that does not allow significant clashes of loyalty and confusion over the definition of the said nation.

The main prerequisite for the nation-state can be argued to be an emotionally-fuelled understanding of "sovereignty". According to Bassam Tibi, "the underlying concept of the nation-state is sovereignty, which not only presupposes the capability of the central power to establish itself over the entire territory but also requires established citizenship and corresponding national identity and loyalty." (Tibi, 1990, p.147) In regards to this assessment, we can assert that the idea of the nation-state boils down to a dual arrangement of "external sovereignty" – which realises itself in the idea of territoriality and spatiality, and of "internal sovereignty"- which is maintained through the idea of citizenship buttressed by feelings and imaginations of commonality and fraternity-. This essay will add a further point to Tibi's assessment and argue that a simplistic imposition of these two tenets of nationalism would not suffice as long as there is a significant lack of emotional connection in their imagination. "There is a distinction between objective markers of identity and a consciousness of that identity." (Cole & Kandiyoti, 2002, p.190) For the nation-state to be externally and internally sovereign, its imagining of the nation must be supported by the emotional bonds of fraternity and spatiality of its subjects which would transform the empty institutions of the state to a fully-fledged imagined polity.

### 2a. In Consideration of Space
The idea of the space as an emotional component of nationalism plays a vital role in constructing the identities of the "self" and the "other". Personal identities can be constructed

and maintained around how does an individual relates itself to a particular spatial configuration and build emotional and group ties around the imagination of that space. This affect is achieved by projecting the imagined fraternity of the subjects onto an objective physical space where the constructed community and its exteriority can be visualised. In the words of Akhil Gupta, national identity-making relies on cultivating "a naturalised association between identity and space." (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, p.7) Without a constant, naturalised, and institutionally and structurally established nexus of space and identity, forming a strong nationalism would be nearly impossible. "Nationalism is the subjective counterpart of the nation, a space of interiority in which the nation is conceived of as an aspect of the self, as well as an ideology wherein the nation is given a cobbled-together history, a distinctive cultural heritage, and a commonality of interest that all stop at the borders of the nation-state." (Cole &. Kandiyoti, 2002, p.190)

Such as in the cases of England and Australia, the criteria of common language, common ancestry, and common history are not sufficient enough to provide the basis for a unitary understanding of nation and nation-state. Despite sharing a language, a common ethnicity and even a shared past of heroisms and suffering (ex: the Gallipoli War), these two countries do not share a sense of imagined fraternity and commonality. They constitute different nations and are part of separate nation-states. This spatial disconnection between the countries is one of the ways in which a modern sense of nationalism cannot be born between the two. The integrity and the constancy of the territory form the backbone of the imaginations of a nation. One must not neglect the "importance of attaching causes to places and the ubiquity of place-making in collective political mobilization." (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992, p.13) Creation of the border and its manifestation in the emotional imaginations of the civil society is, therefore, the first prerequisite for a successful and durable nationalism.

## 2b. In Consideration of Citizenship

The second condition of a sustainable nationalism was identified as the idea of "internal sovereignty" by Bassam Tibi. "A basic component of this internal sovereignty is the idea of citizenship, which presupposes transforming tribal and, in general, prenational ties into a national identity and loyalty." (Tibi, 1990, p.127) This sense of common loyalty and fraternity with the rest of a given community creates conditions for social functions that are required from a well-oiled nation-state such as industry, mobilisation and participation in the political process. "The modern nation is made up of citizens with an affective and imaginative commitment to identity with co-citizens." (Cole &. Kandiyoti, 2002, p.190) A distinction should be made that this concept of commonality is not synonymous with strict homogeneity. A successful nation-state making and diversity is not mutually exclusive. A perfect example of this phenomenon would be the example of Belgium; a nation-state comprised of different groups speaking different languages, yet can manage to sustain an idea of the nation and more importantly, an idea of co-citizenship. Heterogeneity in the structural make-up does not necessarily pose a stumbling block towards achieving identity-based homogeneity. Instead, constructing an emotional connection with one's compatriots and

establishing the identity of "citizen" as the exclusive form of loyalty is adequate for the forming of an "internal sovereignty" in the nation-state.

With regards to these two criteria established for the durability of a modern understanding of the nation and the nation-state, this essay will now proceed to compare and contrast the examples of Turkey, Iraq and Syria in their respective applications of these prerequisites.

# 3. The case of Turkey as successful nation-making

"Turkey is never included among those states that observers often refer to as "artificial", like Iraq, Syria or Jordan, which were forged in the aftermath of World War 1." (Cook, 9 January 2016) Despite its deep vulnerabilities and structural problems of its own, The Republic of Turkey, until at least late 1970s, could be considered as a relatively more durable and successful example of nation-state making compared to other Middle Eastern states striving to form a nationality. As the official and spiritual successor of the Ottoman Empire, Turkey had a clear-cut high culture to base its identity on and as a nation formed through an independence war, rather than exogenously imposed through the mandate system, it had the chance to form the necessary emotional connection between the space and the people. Regardless of the many problems that the country had with its Kurdish minorities and its often violent and racist methods of identity-construction, it can nevertheless be asserted that its conception of the nation was more in line with the definition given by Tibi; a nationalism with a clear understanding of its internal and external sovereignty and a people with an emotional bond with its territory and its co-citizens.

## 3a. Once Upon a Time in Anatolia

Anatolia had always played a significant part in the imagining of the Turkish nation. It was a political space that belonged to the Turks for almost a thousand years; it was almost lost to the enemy forces, and was taken back through a bloody independence war. In the post-WW1 period, "the real threat of losing Anatolia, the centre of the Empire, in 1918 when the Allied and Greek forces invaded it following World War I, presented an urgent need for the redefinition of both the geographic borders and raison d'etre of the state." (Saatci, 2002, p.553) A naturalised association of the Anatolian political space and the developing Turkish people, and the potential of losing this political space became the catalyst for the nation-making function.

In this discourse of "protection", the emotional connection that is necessary for the successful internalization of political space is constructed via reference to the acts of suffering, and of "taking back the homeland". This narrative of sacrifice and heroism for the reclamation of the homeland has become the main force behind the imagination of the Turkish nation, and is still a powerful rhetoric for the Turkish statesmen to employ for political mobilization. Atatürk's famous remark "sovereignty is not given, it is taken" (Ataturk, Quotes.net, 2017), in its construction of sovereignty (in this case external sovereignty) as a merit is emblematic of this nation-making function. Collective imagination of these past sufferings is frequently

invoked to create the aforementioned emotional connection to Anatolia and the sense of duty towards protecting the political space; and it is a central feature of what made Turkey, in its formative years, a relatively more coherent nation.

## 3b. "How Happy Is the One Who Says I'm A Turk"

Considering its history of structural multiculturalism and multilingualism, the successful creation of the "Turkish state" and "Turkey" as the loci of loyalty for a majority of the country was a commendable feat. Early in the 1900s, the Turanian movement and the rule of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in the Ottoman Empire have started to distinguish the ethnically-defined character of the new Turkish nation. In order to prevent any potential clashes of loyalty and identity, a project of break-away from the Pan-Islamist and Ottomanist ideologies was initiated. "We Ottomans belong to a race sufficiently intelligent and practical to understand that the pursuit of the Pan-Islamic designs of the visionaries would be contrary to our dearest interests." (Knight, 1909, p.64) The Turanian literary and political movement in Turkey "stirred the Turks for a national regeneration on 'pure Turkish' lines based on the natural affinities of all Turkish-speaking peoples." (Zeine, 1981, p.77) Rejecting the overlapping identities prevalent in the Ottoman Empire, this new Turkish ideology set the path for the construction of a clear-cut understanding of Turkish citizenship.

Rather than embracing the traditional multicultural structure of the Ottoman Empire, the Kemalist regime, following the influence of the Young Turks' ideology, through actions such as the population exchange between the Greeks and the Turks and the assimilation of groups such as the Circassians, the Lazs, Kurds and the Alevis  strived to transform the heterogeneous Ottoman Empire into an ethnically-defined homogeneous nation-state. This project was partially successful. For instance, in the contemporary Alevi tradition, Atatürk (who was complicit in the execution of thousands of Alevis in the 1930s) plays as important a role as Ali ibn Ali Talib as a figure of loyalty. "Alongside the image of Ali, Alevi participants often wave Turkish flags and display photographs of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the leader of the nationalist forces under the early republican regime and its paradigmatic icon. The display of these images reverberates with a sense of loyalty to the statist project  of secular nationalism." (Tambar,  2014, p.4) Similarly, "the Circassians have also been comprehensively assimilated within Turkey." (Armstrong, 7 May 2015) Barring the on-going problems with the Kurdish secessionist groups, it can be asserted that a comprehensive understanding of Turkish citizenship and of loyalty to the nation was already in place in the post-Ottoman Turkey. Through Ataturk's discourse of "how happy is the one who says i'm a Turk", the high culture of the Turkish nation was successfully disseminated to the marginal cultures of the once-Ottoman subjects and is now the foundation of the emotional bond of co-citizenship. It has become a heterogeneous country imagining itself to be homogeneous.

Ergo, one can observe that the Turkish nation of the 20th century was more or less compatible with what Tibi described as conditions for a modern nation-state. With the role of Anatolia in the political imagination of the Turks, the project of disassociation from Pan-Islamism and Ottomanism in the CUP era, and the impact of Kemalist assimilation policies and its

discourse of a "so-called" all-inclusive nationalism, the Turkish nation firmly established the emotional linkage of space and citizenship in the collective imaginations of its people.

# 4. The cases of Syria and Iraq and the fragility of Middle Eastern nation-making

Although by now an academic cliché, the sheer impact of the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 and the subsequent mandate rules of England and France in Iraq and Syria respectively should not be disregarded in how they are complicit for most of the region's troubles with identity and nationalism. Nation-building in the region, rather than an organic process with a unifying story of "heroism", was "the consequence of 'mandated nationhood' imposed on a colonially dominated Syria and Iraq." (Budeiri, 1997, p.194) The exogenous imposition of national identity and the consequent insincerity of loyalty hindered the development of a national imagination corresponding to the standards proposed by Bassam Tibi. Instead, what transpired in Iraq and Syria can be aptly summarised as "simultaneity of the non-simultaneous" (Bloch, 1993, p.317); a term first used by German sociologist Ernst Bloch. Syria and Iraq of the 20$^{th}$ century were faced with the modernising forces of national institutions and colonialism but were still comprised of a people and a political tradition stuck in the emotional arrangements of loyalty from a century earlier. The persistency of the Ottoman Arab world, and its fragile replacement for an unwilling people became the source of the region's problems. Insincere territorial arrangements that did not resonate with the people emotionally, and overlapping and clashing identities of peoples ruled by ideologically confused leaders were to leave the "nations" of Iraq and Syria with an on-going state of fragility.

## 4a. "Given, Not Taken"

Dissimilar to the nation-building in India and Turkey, the external sovereignty of Iraq and Syria were "given, not taken". Furthermore, the giving of the political space was not subject to considerations of loyalty and identity, but rather arranged with political interests of the colonial forces in mind. Therefore, it wouldn't be surprising to find out that an emotional connection between the space and the people was not constructed successfully. Paraphrasing Abbas Kelidar, "the political lexicon of the Arab East was clearly unable to produce an equivalent notion to the European concept of "state" with its dual associations of territory and sovereignty." (Kelidar, 1993, p.317)

Territoriality and regional borders, in the Ottoman times, were not of much significance. "Though the empire was sub-divided into provinces, the names, borders, dimensions and every other possible variable kept changing over time and though the Ottomans were fully aware of the terms "Iraq" and "Syria", none ever matched the borders of a province." (Gerber, 2004, pp.264-265) The provincial arrangements of the people were essentially of no meaning, and consequently, an emotional linkage to the space was practically non-existent. This legacy of non-territoriality (or trans-territoriality), when faced with an imperial imposition of strict borders, logically, backlashed. "Rulers were imposed on territorially

demarcated populations as was the institutional framework by which they were to be governed. The source of public law was not popular sovereignty. Power and authority emanated from and belonged to the mandatory powers, namely Britain and France." (Kelidar, 1993, p.321)

At the turn of the 20th century, the Ottoman Vilayets and later Iraqi provinces of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul were the main referents of loyalty for the Iraqi people. These were "more or less self-sufficient communities ruled by their own forces, authorities and hierarchies" (Zubaida, 2002, p.205). When the new state of Iraq was set up in 1920 out of these three provinces, therefore, they failed in forming a uniform political identity. "The local allegiances and political aspirations that existed in these provinces did not disappear with the lines drawn in Cairo." (Simon, 1997, p.90) "They feared the domination of one by the others and their rivalry was manifested in the adoption of provincial candidates for the kingship of Iraq under the British mandatory." (Kelidar, 1993, p.323) This fragmented nature of the Iraqi spatial arrangement naturally led to confusion over loyalties of the people and crippled the chances for a genuine emotional connection between the space and the people.

In the French mandated Syria, a similar crisis of the space was afoot. Under the French Mandate, Syria was divided into four states; Damascus, Aleppo, Alawites and Jabal Druze. "The truncation of Syria by the French mandatory administration has left a deep impact on its political consciousness. The memory of its territorial diminution provided the grounds for bitterness and the impetus for change in the status quo." (Kelidar, 1993, p.327) Identical to the Iraqi experience, the partition of the national territory by the colonial powers left the nation in a perplexed state of clashing identities. The semi-independent status of these provinces eventually prompted rivalry and an overlap of identities between the centralised nation and the divided sub-territories. This confusion was exacerbated by the irredentist sentiments of the Syrian and Iraqi leaders whose cries for Pan-Arabism added another dimension to the complex multi-territorial loyalty arrangements of the region. By expanding the territory, these nations thought they could circumvent the identity questions posed by the partitioned state. However, this plan proved to be unsuccessful as well. "While the Syrians may be discontented with the territorial delimitation of their country, the size of the state has proved too large for any particular community to dominate it to the total exclusion of the others." (Kelidar, 1993, pp.327-328)

Ergo, in regard to imaginations of external sovereignty in Iraq and Syria, one can observe that the lack of emotional connection between the space and the people arose out of a confusion over the definition of the borders and its manifestation in the people's imagination. As the people of Iraq and Syria did not have a historical connection to the colonially-imposed borders due to the non-territorial structural arrangement of the Ottoman Empire, and as the new rulers of the states rather than providing a unitary and constant understanding of territoriality, delivered a divided and constantly-shifting understanding of political space that were negatively effected by their irredentist or unionist projects, the first prerequisite of Bassam Tibi's conditions for nation-state formation can not be said to be fully implemented.

## 4b. A "Tribe" Called Quest

The understanding of citizenship in Syria and Iraq, akin to their territorial imaginations, was problematic due to the simultaneous existence of subnational and supranational loci of loyalty. The tribal history of the Arab Middle East on one hand and the universalist "Ummah" tradition on the other, the necessary socio-historical conditions for a focused identity-making on the national-level were barely there in the first place. With regards to this, Bassam Tibi employs the concept of simultaneity of the non-simultaneous "for conceptualizing the parallel existence of two social and political patterns with their social origins in crucially different historical periods: the old tribes and the modern nation-state." (Tibi, 1990, p.127) The co-existence of these two referents of loyalty has become the source of the Middle Eastern nation-state crisis.

"For different Iraqi groups, at the turn of the 20th century, there were a number of overlapping theoretical and actual entities in terms which they could imagine their inclusion." (Zubaida, 2002, p.205) Besides the Sunni head of the state, the Shi'I Iraq was divided into the ulama class, urban merchants and tribesmen each with a different political agenda and with overlapping spheres of influence. "The tribes of the south, mostly Shi'I, were organised in loose confederations headed by shaykhs who led these self-governing units that interacted with other tribes over control of trade routes and land." (Simon, 1997, p.91) These self-governing units, in defiance of the centralised government's wish for a unified loyalty, maintained their role as economic and administrative bases for many Iraqis, and subsequently their function as a referent of loyalty in the country with their traditional kinship ties trumping over the artificially-imposed fraternity of the nation-state. In the words of C.J. Edmonds in his report to the British Office in 1931; "The government was inevitably in the hands of a limited oligarchy composed of essentially Sunni townsmen representing only a small minority of country. It was easy for any agitator to play upon the religious, racial or personal prejudices of anyone who is not an Arab, a Muslim or is a Muslim but not a Sunni." (Edmonds, 1931) The state mechanism, in the modern nation-state, has a responsibility to create a unified identity of "citizenship" for the imagination of its "internal sovereignty". According to Elie Kedourie, "the nation state is distinguished by one crucial factor, namely that of popular sovereignty which serves as the source of all political authority in a specific territory where the totality of the citizens constitutes the sovereign people." (Kedourie, 1987, pp.1-9) When the state fails to become the source of popular sovereignty and simultaneously coexists with an ancient form of polity acting as a clashing locus of loyalty, a nationalist conception of "internal sovereignty" naturally becomes a problematic issue.

Similarly, in Syria, efforts of establishing an ethnically-defined Arab nation-state faced a tremendous amount of resistance from the persisting tribal structures of Alawites. In the formative days of the Syrian nation-state, Alawites were subdivided into four main tribes; Matawira, Haddadin, Khayyatin and Kalbiyya. When the kinsmen of Matawira advanced to the ruling elite and started recruiting exclusively their tribesmen, a disconnection between the elite and the people occurred. (Tibi, 1990, p.139) In this crisis of legitimacy, tribes emerged as the primary referent of identity. According to Bassam Tibi, autonomy was the major trait

of the tribal structure "which explains why tribes stood in opposition to the state as a central monopoliser of power and why they resisted being subdued by it." (Tibi, 1990, p.140) When the state turned into a mechanism exclusively favouring the Matawira tribe, the people's loyalties logically followed their respective tribes. Consequently, the state-imposed nationalism did not resonate with the people and tribal kinship became a more powerful source of loyalty than the imagined identity of "citizen." State's failure to disseminate a high culture led to the restoration of an old form of loyalty, that of tribalism. In this sense, corresponding to Ernst Bloch's theory, a simultaneity of the non-simultaneous occurred.

Then, compared to Turkish nationalism's successful assimilation of various loci of loyalty, we observe in Iraq and Syria, in their formative years, a simultaneity of multiple structures belonging to separate historical eras. The persistence of tribal structures in becoming people's primary source of identity, exacerbated by the failed assimilation policies of the state leaders (whose loyalties lied elsewhere) resulted in an inadequate adoption of the Tibian understanding of "internal sovereignty." A focused and inclusive concept of the "citizen" supported by emotional kinship ties, unfortunately, did not transpire.

## Conclusion

The fragility of the Iraqi and Syrian nationalisms in the 20th century stem from a distinct failure to adopt the two necessary conditions for a successful nationalism; a naturalised association of the people and the national space, and a focused sense of commonality and loyalty. In countries such as Turkey, the socio-historical foundation of the nation (such as the emotional and historical ties with the Anatolian space) and state policies adopted by the nationalist elite (disassociation from Pan-Islamism and assimilation of ethnic minorities) produced the conditions for a relatively favourable imagination of a nation. The Iraqi-Syrian nation-state making, on the other hand, encountered two distinctive impediments for their national imagination. First, the underdeveloped emotional ties with the political space which was exogenously imposed on these nations by the mandate powers precluded a naturalised association of the people and the national space. Secondly, the persistence of tribal loyalty arrangements in the region, combined with the favouritism of the state institutions, resulted in overlapping and clashing loci of loyalty travelling back and forth between the state and the tribe. In consideration of this inadequacy in implementing the aforementioned prerequisites for imagining a nation, perhaps one should ask; will the idea of the nation-state ever be applicable in the Arab Middle East?

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# A Social Contractarian Perspective on the Catalan Demand for Independence

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## Abstract

The Social Contract addresses the legitimacy of the authority of the state over individuals: *'It purports to define the terms on which that society is to be governed: the people have made a contract with their ruler which determines their relations with him'* (J. W. Gough 1936).

Accordingly, the Constitution of a State acts as '*a body of fundamental principles or established precedents according to which a state or other organisation is acknowledged to be governed*' (Oxford Dictionary 2017). The legal manifestation of the contract, as a body of laws, defines the basic rights of citizens, alongside the powers of different entities of the state.

After the death of dictator Francisco Franco in 1975, the promulgation of the Spanish Constitution in 1978 marked the culmination of the transition to liberal democracy. In 2017, Catalonia held an illegal referendum on independence, demanding secession, while Section 2 of the Spanish Constitution stipulates that '*the Constitution is based on the indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation, the common and indivisible homeland of all Spaniards'*. Under what conditions, if any, can Catalonia legitimately demand secession?

This paper uses the complexity and diversity of conceptualisations of the Social Contract by three foundational Social Contract authors: Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, to examine justifications for secession in the case of Catalonia. The application of the underlying philosophical principles on Catalonia provides a unique insight in this regard.

**Keywords**: Social Contract, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Catalonia, Spain

## Introduction

Social Contractarianism posits that a state derives its legitimacy to rule over its citizens through a theoretical contract, in which individuals transfer rights and privileges in return for benefits from the sovereign. The theory is intimately bound up with the development of the

nation state and democracy more generally, with modern constitutions acting as the political manifestation of the theoretical contract.

In Spain's case, after the death of dictator Francisco Franco in 1975, the promulgation of the Spanish Constitution in 1978 marked the culmination of the transition to liberal democracy. The most meaningful modern challenge to this contract came in 2017 through the Catalonian referendum on independence. The result clearly demanded secession, whilst Section 2 of the Spanish Constitution stipulates that '*the Constitution is based on the indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation, the common and indivisible homeland of all Spaniards*'.

This paper analyses the ongoing Catalan demand for independence from Spain from a Social Contractarian perspective, using Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, as representatives of three important strands within the tradition. Each thinker has different understandings of how such a contract is made, and why the rulers resulting from the contract can be legitimate. Rousseau is the more democratic of the trio, with Hobbes and Locke representing the statist beginnings of Social Contractarianism.

The deserving fame and importance of the Leviathan stems not only from its bleak depiction of the natural human condition, but Hobbes's faith in the ability of both reason and fear to construct a mutually beneficial civic society. Indeed, he was the first to formulate the concepts and define the ongoing language of the Social Contract tradition, not least the sharp distinction between the 'state of nature' and 'civil society'. Therefore, no understanding of the Social Contract tradition can be complete without a serious reading of Hobbes's writings.

The inclusion of John Locke in this study can be justified on two accounts. Firstly, Locke takes the Hobbesian Social Contractarian framework and applies it to a strict system of rights, attempting to justify the state from within the liberal paradigm. Consequently, he can be seen, and has continually been taught as, the natural progression from Hobbes for the tradition. Whereas Hobbes' continual prioritisation of stability can strike the modern reader as counterintuitive and even unjustifiable, Locke's reinterpretation and increased respect for mankind leads him to more palatable and relevant conclusions today. Secondly, Locke is a crucial theorist in understanding the manifestation of the Social Contract tradition in liberal democracies across the world. Although most famously seen as the 'theorist of America' and being embodied most faithfully in the New World, Locke's rights to life, liberty and property have seen to have been protected across the democratic world, not least in Spain.

No examination of modern democracy could be complete without an analysis of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Social Contract. Emphasising the conditions under which democratic deliberation would be possible, and with a heavy emphasis on civic unity, Rousseau seeks to understand the conditions under which a truly democratic and stable Social Contract could exist. Although it seems clear that the modern Spanish state falls closer to a Lockean legitimisation than a Rousseauian one, the ideals of Rousseau's General Will, coupled with his more optimistic reading of the human condition, is crucial in understanding the modern democratic state.

# I. A Hobbesian Perspective

'Hobbesian perspective' refers to the conceptualisation of the Social Contract by Thomas Hobbes in Political Theory, rather than a Hobbesian, or Realist, approach in International Relations Theory.

## A. A Natural State of Civil War

Thomas Hobbes' conceptualisation of human nature in Part I of the Leviathan, 'Of Man', is highly influential when viewing requirements of governance in the political community. The state of nature is characterised by anarchy, where an absence of political order and law leads to humans having the 'right to all things' (Hobbes 1651, XIII.13), including the right to self-preservation. Consequently, the state of nature is driven by competing desires for security, resulting in a state of 'war of all against all' (Hobbes 1651, Chapter XIV) - *bellum omnium contra omnes*. Hobbes' perception of human existence is developed in both De Cive (1642), and the Leviathan (1651):

'*I demonstrate, in the first place, that the state of men without civil society (which state we may properly call the state of nature) is nothing else but a mere war of all against all; and in that war all men have equal right unto all things.*' (Hobbes 1642, Preface)

'*In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain, and consequently no culture of the earth, no navigation nor the use of commodities that may be imported by sea, no commodious building, no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force, no knowledge of the face of the earth, no account of time, no arts, no letters, no society, and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.*' (Hobbes 1651, XIII)

Hobbes does not define war as a situation of fighting between men, namely a battle, but rather as an absence of the guarantee that humans will not attempt to kill one another, resulting in uncertainty and fear.

In Chapter XIV of the Leviathan, Hobbes further defines the natural laws:

'*The right of nature, which writers commonly call jus naturale, is the liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature; that is to say, of his own life; and consequently, of doing any thing, which in his own judgement, and reason, he shall conceive to be the aptest means thereunto.*' (Hobbes 1651, Chapter XIV).

Thus, by liberty, Hobbes understands the 'absence of external impediments' (Hobbes 1651, Chapter XIV). The state of nature, which is a state of absolute liberty, is essentially a state of civil war, where only an absolute sovereign and an undivided government could circumvent the inevitable brutish life.

First of all, the context of the writing of the Leviathan, the 1642 - 1651 English Civil War, guides the interpretation towards the analysis of the situation of the 1936 - 1939 Spanish Civil War. The Spanish Civil War would precisely reinforce the legitimacy of the absolute sovereign, an undivided government that could circumvent the natural state of civil war. Consequently, the author of the Leviathan would also have justified the dictatorship of Franco, as a necessary exit from the 'war of all against all', and guarantee of stability, peace and security. Hobbes would have had little interest for the internal divisions between the Nationalists and the Republicans, the fact that Barcelona was a main hub of the resistance and anarcho-syndicalism, nor the distinct vernacular and identity of Catalonia. The crucial element is the departure from the 'nasty, short and brutish' (Hobbes 1651, XIII) state of nature, exemplified in the Civil War. The actions by the Spanish Government, which involved sending the *Guardia Civil* to Catalonia to prevent voting in the illegal independence referendum on October 1st 2017, the triggering of Article 155 and the dissolution of the Catalan Parliament, would be justified by Hobbes as a series of acts that prevent instability and a reversion to a state of anarchy.

## B. The Erection of the Commonwealth

As a result, in Part II of the Leviathan 'Of Commonwealth', in order to avoid the state of nature, a number of actions must occur. Men enter a contract with each other to establish a political community and strive to erect a commonwealth. Individuals agree to submit to the authority of the sovereign, the Leviathan, in exchange for protection. They surrender their natural 'right to all things' for positive legal rights, as established by the Leviathan. The Contract is defined as the 'mutual transferring of right' (Hobbes 1651, Chapter XIV).

*'The final cause, end, or design of men (who naturally love liberty, and dominion over others) in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves, in which we see them live in Commonwealths, is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby; that is to say, of getting themselves out from that miserable condition of war which is necessarily consequent, as hath been shown, to the natural passions of men when there is no visible power to keep them in awe, and tie them by fear of punishment to the performance of their covenants, and observation of those laws of nature set down in the fourteenth and fifteenth chapters.'* (Hobbes 1651, XVII)

The commonwealth is established when all individuals say '*I authorise and give up my right of governing myself to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition; that thou give up, thy right to him, and authorise all his actions in like manner.*' (Hobbes 1651, XVII). Sovereignty may be attained in two ways; a Commonwealth by acquisition, '*one, by natural force: as when a man maketh his children to submit themselves, and their children, to his government, as being able to destroy them if they refuse; or by war subdueth his enemies to his will, giving them their lives on that condition.*' (Hobbes 1651, XVII), or a Commonwealth by Institution, '*when men agree amongst themselves to submit to some man, or assembly of men, voluntarily, on confidence to be protected by him against all others.*' (Hobbes 1651,

XVII). Here, we focus on the latter. In the political Commonwealth, or Commonwealth by Institution, the sovereign bears twelve rights (Hobbes 1651, XVIII):

1. A new covenant, a return to the state of nature, or transfer of sovereignty cannot be made without the sovereign's permission (Hobbes 1651, XVIII).

2. The sovereign cannot breach the covenant, and none of the subjects can forfeit, or be freed from subjection (Hobbes 1651, XVIII).

3. Sovereignty results from the declaration by the majority; the minority has voluntarily entered the congregation and must follow his covenant, otherwise it acts unjustly (Hobbes 1651, XVIII).

4. The Leviathan cannot be accused of injustice, because every subject is the author of the judgements and actions of the sovereign by institution (Hobbes 1651, XVIII).

5. The Sovereign cannot be punished by his subjects or be put to death justly (Hobbes 1651, XVIII).

6. The Sovereign has the '*power to be judge, or constitute all judges of opinions and doctrines, as a thing necessary to peace; thereby to prevent discord and civil war*' (Hobbes 1651, XVIII).

7. The Sovereign holds the power to prescribe property rules (Hobbes 1651, XVIII).

8. The Sovereign holds '*the right of judicature; that is to say, of hearing and deciding all controversies which may arise concerning law, either civil or natural, or concerning fact*' (Hobbes 1651, XVIII).

9. The Sovereign holds '*the right of making war and peace with other nations and Commonwealths; that is to say, of judging when it is for the public good, and how great forces are to be assembled, armed, and paid for that end, and to levy money upon the subjects to defray the expenses thereof*' (Hobbes 1651, XVIII).

10. The Sovereign bears the right of '*the choosing of all counsellors, ministers, magistrates, and officers, both in peace and war*' (Hobbes 1651, XVIII).

11. The Sovereign holds '*the power of rewarding with riches or honour; and of punishing with corporal or pecuniary punishment, or with ignominy, every subject according to the law he hath formerly made*' (Hobbes 1651, XVIII).

12. The Sovereign bears the rights '*give titles of honour, and to appoint what order of place and dignity each man shall hold, and what signs of respect in public or private meetings they shall give to one another*' (Hobbes 1651, XVIII).

## C. Conditions for Secession

The provisions for secession are limited. According to (1.), a new covenant or transfer sovereignty can be lawfully made only with the approval of the sovereign. All other cases do not allow a return to the state of nature, a withdrawal from the covenant, or the transfer of sovereignty: (2) The sovereign may not breach the covenant. Independence can therefore not be declared on the grounds of a breach of the covenant on the part of the ruler. (3) The minority, because it has voluntarily entered into the congregation, must follow the covenant; it cannot unilaterally withdraw. (4) The sovereign cannot injure its subjects or be unjust. Secession can therefore not be declared on the ground of injury or injustice. (5) The sovereign cannot be punished by its subjects. Subjects may not withdraw from the covenant as a means of punishment. (6) (8) The sovereign has the power to constitute the rules, but also to judge controversies. Independence may not be declared as a result of dissatisfaction of certain rules or controversies.

Furthermore, in Chapter XIV, Hobbes adds that '*Men are freed of their covenant two ways; by performing; or by forgiven. For performance, is the natural end of obligation and forgiveness, the restitution of liberty; as being a retransferring of that right, in which the obligation consisted*' (Hobbes 1651, Chapter XIV). Again, this refers to the sole case where withdrawal from the Social Contract or transfer of sovereignty can be justified: only with the approval of the sovereign.

Civil Laws, as opposed to Natural Laws, bind individuals together in a political community, under the Social Contract. Nonetheless, Hobbes agrees that all laws need interpretation: '*the interpretation of the law of nature, is the sentence of the judge constituted by the sovereign authority, to hear and determine such controversies, as depend thereon*' (Hobbes 1651, Chapter XXVI). Hobbes also defines the third law of nature, as '*that men perform their covenants made: without which, covenants are in vain, and but empty words*' (Hobbes 1651, Chapter XIV). Consequently, '*to break it is unjust: and the definition of injustice, is no other than the not performance of covenant*' (Hobbes 1651, Chapter XIV).

## D. Performance of the Spanish Covenant

It can be argued that the performance of the covenant is essentially to respect the Spanish Constitution. However, with regards to the transition to democracy and the current Constitution, Hobbes would have dedicated little attention to the context of the signing of the Constitution. Hobbes supports two types of sovereign power: by acquisition, or natural force, and by institution, or agreement (Hobbes 1651, XVII). Therefore, whether through coercion or consensual means, the entrance into the Social Contract and application of the Spanish Constitution to Catalonia is not invalidated by the circumstances under which the Constitution itself was signed and ratified.

In addition, the rejection of the autonomy statute in the Constitutional Court in Madrid in 2006 would have minimal impact on the right to secession. Once again, the Sovereign has the '*power to be judge, or constitute all judges of opinions and doctrines*' (Hobbes 1651, XVIII).

The Constitution and the Constitutional Court, as the materialisation of the Social Contract and sovereign power, are supreme.

Furthermore, the holding of the referendum on independence on October 1st 2017 along with the unilateral declaration of independence on October 27th by the Catalan Parliament would not have been accepted by Hobbes, because an attempt to exit the Social Contract necessitates the authorisation of the sovereign. The suspension of the referendum by the Constitutional Court of Spain after the declaration of a breach of the 1978 Spanish Constitution is therefore considered a non-performance of the covenant on the part of Catalonia.

As outlined in this section, a Hobbesian perspective allows little room for manoeuvre to justify secession. The author of the Leviathan justifies authoritarian regimes due to the state of nature being portrayed as a state of permanent civil war. Furthermore, the sovereign can never perform an injustice on his people, and an exit from the covenant can only be allowed with the authorisation of the Leviathan. This implies that Catalonia can only declare independence from Spain through an amendment to the 1978 Spanish Constitution, which acts as the 'written' Social Contract. The Hobbesian perspective on secession needs to be supplemented by other Social Contract theories, due to the overemphasis it places on the powerful Leviathan that bears the right to 'everything'.

## II. A Lockean Perspective

### A. The Inalienable Rights of the Individual

Unlike Hobbes, John Locke is a traditional liberal theorist. His starting point for his political theory is that each individual, stemming from natural law, has inalienable rights to life, health, liberty and possessions. These were the rights that became central to the enactment of liberalism through the inalienable rights of man, as set out in the US Constitution.

*"Man being born, as has been proved, with a Title to perfect Freedom, and an uncontrouled enjoyment of all the Rights and Privileges of the Law of Nature, equally with any other Man, or Number of Men in the World, hath by Nature a Power, not only to preserve his Property, that is, his Life, Liberty and Estate, against the Injuries and Attempts of other Men; but to judge of, and punish the breaches of that Law in others, as he is persuaded the Offence deserves, even with Death it self, in Crimes where the heinousness of the Fact, in his Opinion, requires it."* (Locke 1998; 323-324)

The protection and promotion of these rights form the basis of Locke's critique of Robert Filmer's defence of the 'divine right of kings' (Locke 1998, p.142). Through these arguments, Locke makes the negative case against monarchy and authoritarianism more broadly. As well as men having natural rights, they begin life as naturally equal to one another. The natural equality of men, again central to the American concept of citizenship, is consistent with Locke's empiricism; insisting that the minds of all men are born a blank slate.

Therefore, owing to this equality, no one person has any divine right or natural right to become ruler. As expressed in the First Treatise:

*"There cannot be any Multitude of Men whatsoever, either great or small..but that in the same Multitude there is one man amongst them, that in Nature hath a Right to be King of all the rest."* (First Treatise, Paragraph 104, quote from Boucher and Kelly, 2017; 234)

So important is the idea of maintaining the right to liberty for Locke, that to live under a monarch or authoritarian is worse, or comparably bad to living in the state of nature:

*"It cannot be supposed that they should intend, had they a power so to do, to give any one, or more, an absolute Arbitrary Power over their Persons and Estates, and put a force into the Magistrates hand to execute his unlimited Will arbitrary upon them: this were to put themselves in a worse condition than the state of Nature, wherein they had a Liberty to defend their Right against the Injuries of others, and were upon equal terms of force to maintain it, whether invaded by a single Man, or many in Combination."* (Locke 1998; 359)

*"These 'inconveniences' - which include attempts at enslavement, unpredictable aggression, and a social atmosphere of miserable uncertainty - are no solved, he says, by subjecting all but one person in society to the rule of law."* (Boucher and Kelly 2017; 234)

It is immediately clear then that Locke views the state of nature in a different way to Hobbes. He details his understanding of humans pre-civil society in Chapter II of Book II of the *Two Treatises*, crucially emphasising the distinction that Hobbes neglects between the state of nature and the state of war. Although the key characteristics remain the same, Hobbes emphasises the role of fear in making men leave the state of nature, whereas Locke gives a more optimistic perspective on the potential for mankind under civil society. In particular it is only under a common arbitrator in civil society that men can be sure of the safety of their property:

*"The Supream Power cannot take from any Man any part of his Property without his own consent. For the preservation of Property being the end of Government, and that for which Men enter into Society, it necessarily supposes and requires, that the People should have Property, without which they must be suppos'd to lose that by entering into society, which was the end for which they entered into it, too gross an absurdity for any man to own."* (Locke 1998; 360)

In understanding the differences between Locke and Hobbes' view on individual rights and the state of nature, one can begin to understand why Locke is seen as more liberal than Hobbes, and why he also defends the right to revolution. They both agree that the state of nature is a bad condition because one cannot protect themselves, and that giving up the individual executive power of the law of nature to the sovereign is beneficial. However, crucially for Locke, the individual maintains their liberty in civil society, whereas safety under the Leviathan takes paramount importance for Hobbes.

## B. The Creation of the Social Contract

Given this, Locke captures the sentiments of voluntarism by arguing for a democratic Social Contract. In order to avoid the sacrifice of the individual natural right of liberty, the individual must consent to the sovereign. When read literally, Locke makes the simple distinction between passive and active consent, where passive consent is a suitable form of consent in the case where an individual is unable to continue to give their consent to a government. His generally accepted understanding of active consent and controversial formulation of tacit consent is as follows:

*"Nobody doubts but an express Consent, of any Man, entering into any Society, makes him a perfect Member of that Society, a Subject of that Government."* (Locke 1998; 347)

*"Every Man, that hath any Possession, or Enjoyment, of any part of the Dominions of any Government, doth thereby give this tacit Consent, and is as far forth obliged to Obedience to the Laws of that Government, during such Enjoyment, as any one under it; whether this his Possession be of Land, to him Heirs for ever, or a Lodging only for a Week; or whether it be barely travelling freely on the Highway; and in Effect, it reaches as far as the very being of any one within the Territories of that Government."* (Locke 1988; 348, Pitkin 1965; 995)

There has been considerable debate surrounding this formulation, with Pitkin illustrating that Locke is not reliant on individual consent to the sovereign. She argues instead that Locke is implicitly arguing that a government is legitimate if it is a government that a rational person would sacrifice their executive power of the law of nature for.

*"Your obligation to obey depends on the character of the government - whether it is acting within the bounds of the (only possible) contract. If it is, and you are in its territory, you must obey. If it is not, then no amount of personal consent from you, no matter how explicit, can create a political obligation to obey it…As long as a government's actions are within the bounds of what such a contract hypothetically would have provided, would have had to provide, those living within its territory must obey."* (Pitkin 1965; 996)

## C. The Dissolution of the Social Contract

Regardless of whether Locke should be viewed as a hypothetical consent theorist or a traditional consent theorist, it is indubitable that Locke's commitment to consent derives from his commitment to the inalienable natural rights of individuals. These rights further entail a right to revolution, which Locke describes the necessary and sufficient conditions for:

*"Whence it is plain, that shaking off a Power, which Force, and not Right hath set over any one, though it hath the name of Rebellion, yet is no Offence before God, but is that, which he allows and countenances, though even Promises and Covenants, when obtain'd by force, have intervened."* (Locke 1998, p. 396)

Whilst Hobbes argues for the near-absolute authority of the sovereign, Locke perceived government legitimacy as the result of the citizen's delegation to the government of their right of self-preservation, as a necessary measure with which to achieve security, granting the state "*the monopoly on the legitimated use of physical force*" (Weber, 1919). If the government fails to secure the human's natural right to security and self-preservation, citizens can withdraw from their duty to obey.

This commitment stems from his commitment to natural rights and a differing understanding of the state of nature than Hobbes:

*"He that will with any clearness speak of the Dissolution of Government, ought, in the first place to distinguish between the Dissolution of the Society, and the Dissolution of the Government."* (Locke 1998; 406)

With this understood however, we begin to read apparent difficulties in distinguishing the right of secession to the right of revolution:

*"The usual, and almost only way whereby this Union is dissolved, is the Inroad of Foreign Office making a Conquest upon them.*" (Locke 1998; 406)

## D. A Lockean Defence of the Unity of Spain

For Locke, the key consideration in determining whether the Spanish Social Contract can justly disregard secession claims is whether the contract is just. If it is, then the circumstances before and after the contract are unimportant, because a perfectly rational individual would sign the constitution *a priori*. It is therefore the task of this section to assess whether the Spanish Constitution protects the 'life, liberty and property' of the Catalan people. Although this may be seen as an oversimplification of what Locke argued for, and inclusions should be made for more restrictive demands such as equality, it is a reasonable reading of Locke to say that the confirmation or denial of the just nature of a constitution is dependent on whether it maintains these basic rights. If the constitution maintains these rights but seems intuitively unjust in other ways (although one could question the plausibility of this), it would seem the constitution would move into what Rawlsian deems a 'nearly just' society. Although what constitutes a 'nearly just' society, particularly in the civil disobedience literature, has been severely contested. If a constitution protects the rights to 'life, liberty and property' it is plausible that it can create a hypothetical consent test, and that legal change can be achieved through civil disobedience or the mainstream political process.

The easiest of these to move past is the right to life. Although recent images of Spanish police brutality have shocked outsiders who perceived such acts as undemocratic, it would be an unsubstantiated claim to argue that the Spanish government had continually infringed upon the Catalan people's right to life. Of course, no constitution would directly include clauses that would compromise its citizens' right to life, but it could justify such oppression through ideology enshrined in the constitution. The stronger claim for this is that not only is there

nothing within the Spanish Constitution to suggest a direct repression of its citizens' right to life, but there can be no (reasonable) ideological justification of such oppression given the democratic nature of the guiding ideology.

Moreover, the right to property is clearly marked out in the constitution. Although a strong libertarian might argue that it impinges on these rights through taxation, not only is the right to property enshrined in the constitution, but it is a necessity for a market economy.

Part 2, Section 33:

*"The right to private property and inheritance is recognised."*

Part 2, Section 38

*"Free enterprise is recognised within the framework of a market economy. The public authorities guarantee and protect its exercise and the safeguarding of productivity in accordance with the demands of the general economy and, as the case may be, of economic planning."*

The more interesting question is whether the liberty of the Catalan people has been impacted in any way. The definition of basic liberties in the Spanish Constitution is vague, appealing to 'international treaties and agreements', although broadly supporting basic human rights. Within this, it is fair to see that rights to 'life, liberty and property' are enshrined:

Part 1, Section 10

*"Provisions relating to the fundamental rights and liberties recognised by the Constitution shall be construed in conformity with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international treaties and agreements thereon ratified by Spain."*

As such, the picture of a regular democratic constitution can be pieced together gradually, as would be supported by Locke. In order to further understand the ideals of the Spanish Constitution, one can read from the Preamble of the Spanish Constitution:

*"The Spanish Nation, desiring to establish justice, liberty, and security, and to promote the wellbeing of all its members, in the exercise of its sovereignty, proclaims its will to:*

*Guarantee democratic coexistence within the Constitution and the laws, in accordance with a fair economic and social order.*
*Consolidate a State of Law which ensures the rule of law as the expression of the popular will.*

*Protect all Spaniards and peoples of Spain in the exercise of human rights, of their culture and traditions, languages and institutions.*

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*Promote the progress of culture and of the economy to ensure a dignified quality of life for all.*

*Establish an advanced democratic society, and Cooperate in the strengthening of peaceful relations and effective cooperation among all the peoples of the earth.*

*Therefore, the Cortes pass and the Spanish people ratifies the following."*

In the first sections, the traditional safeguards are met, including democratic and legal rights. These would make it near-impossible for any doubter of the Spanish Constitution democratic credibility.

Section 1, Article 1:

*"Spain is hereby established as a social and democratic State, subject to the rule of law, which advocates freedom, justice, equality and political pluralism as highest values of its legal system."*

Section 1, Article 9:

*"Citizens and public authorities are bound by the Constitution and all other legal provisions.*

*It is the responsibility of the public authorities to promote conditions ensuring that freedom and equality of individuals and of the groups to which they belong are real and effective, to remove the obstacles preventing or hindering their full enjoyment, and to facilitate the participation of all citizens in political, economic, cultural and social life.*

*The Constitution guarantees the principle of legality, the hierarchy of legal provisions, the publicity of legal statutes, the non-retroactivity of punitive provisions that are not favourable to or restrictive of individual rights, the certainty that the rule of law shall prevail, the accountability of public authorities, and the prohibition of arbitrary action of public authorities."*

Part 1, Section 10:

*"The dignity of the person, the inviolable rights which are inherent, the free development of the personality, the respect for the law and for the rights of others are the foundation of political order and social peace."*

Part 1, Section 15:

*"Everyone has the right to life and to physical and moral integrity, and under no circumstances may be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading punishment or*

*treatment. Death penalty is hereby abolished, except as provided for by military criminal law in times of war."*

In sum, Locke's position is that as long as the state guarantees the natural rights of individuals to 'life, liberty, and property', and it would, hypothetically, be rational for citizens to agree to the contract, it is a legitimate authority from which one cannot secede. It is only when the raison d'être for the state is altered that a region could legitimately make a claim for the dissolution of the sovereign - on the grounds that the citizen's natural rights are no longer being protected. In Spain, an assessment of the Spanish Constitution suggests this not to be the case. Although, as with every democracy, the Spanish state has its shortcomings, it is apparent that the fundamental liberties of Spanish citizens are being protected. His support for statehood is conditional on his belief of the inalienable rights of the individual. The sovereign state and the constitution are therefore instrumentally valuable in protecting rights.

# III. A Rousseauian Perspective

## A. The Creation of the Republic

According to Rousseau, the sovereign represents the common good of the community, and sovereignty stems from the General Will of the people (Rousseau 1993). Ideally, the Social Contract should be formed between a people which:

*"already bound by some unity of origin, interest, or convention, has never yet felt the real yoke of law; one that has neither customs nor superstitions deeply ingrained, one which stands in no fear of being overwhelmed by sudden invasion; one which, without entering into its neighbours' quarrels, can resist each of them singlehanded, or get the help of one to repel another; one in which every member may be known by every other, and there is no need to lay on any man burdens too heavy for a man to bear; one which can do without other peoples, and without which all others can do; one which is neither rich nor poor, but self-sufficient; and, lastly, one which unites the consistency of an ancient people with the docility of a new one. Legislation is made difficult less by what it is necessary to build up than by what has to be destroyed; and what makes success so rare is the impossibility of finding natural simplicity together with social requirements. All these conditions are indeed rarely found united, and therefore few States have good constitutions."* (Rousseau 1993; 223-224)

Consequently, not all states can adopt good legislation. The state must be neither too small, nor too big. If too small, it is too weak in comparison to other states. If too large, it is too administratively heavy. Rousseau also puts emphasis on the need for homogeneity within the community, which enables determination of the General Will between people who are *"already bound by some unity of origin, interest, or convention"*. The ideal state is also republican - not set in opposition to monarchy, but rather to despotic forms of governance.

The Spanish Republic clearly does not correspond to the ideal State envisaged by Rousseau by virtue of being highly yet unevenly populated, capitalist (hence excessively but not

uniformly wealthy), dependent on other states, multinational and multicultural – constituted by peoples with different "*customs and superstitions deeply ingrained*". Hence, Rousseau would argue that the Social Contract established between the peoples of Spain is unstable and more prone to degenerate, which is eventually the natural end of every State. It follows that the independence movements that have undermined the Spanish unity are a result of the precarious foundations that the Spanish state was built upon. Nonetheless, the quality of the Spanish State as a Parliamentary Monarchy does not inhibit legitimacy, as it remains republican in the Rousseauian sense, embodying legitimacy in the '*état de droit*'. So, the question is, once the Social Contract is established, can Catalan secessionism have any ground in Rousseau's political theory?

## B. The Nullification of the Social Contract

The first ground on which independence could be demanded and achieved is through a nullification of the Social Contract over the claim that the Catalan people's ascription and subscription to the terms of the contract is illegitimate. Indeed, if the contract is to be deemed null, then all the parties in relation to which the contract is invalid re-acquire their natural liberties; they are free to form another State. In order to assess the legitimacy of the Spanish Social Contract, the origins of Catalan consent need to be examined in greater depth.

During the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the county of Barcelona, which "*had reached a higher degree of civilization than Aragon*" (Prescott, 1838; 35), came to prominence as a flourishing maritime power, whose predominance in the Tyrrhenian Sea challenged that of the most well-established Italian maritime Republics (Prescott, 1838; 36). Thus, the union of Catalonia with the Crown of Aragon in the 12<sup>th</sup> century was more of a "*partnership among equals*", in essence a "*Commonwealth*", rather than an annexation (Prescott, 1838; 30). Indeed, Catalonia, Valencia and Aragon united under one dynastic kingdom but retained their independence through self-administration. The county of Barcelona was granted the most privileges and independence because of its superior economic power and its historically liberal institutions. In general, Catalans retained their culture – the Catalan language emerged prominently during the following centuries as the idiom of poetry and songs (Prescott, 1838; 38) – customs and institutions. Indeed, during a period of crisis within the commonwealth, Catalan's ground-breaking and extraordinary doctrines emerged declaring "*that the Aragonese monarchs, far from being absolute, might be lawfully deposed for an infringement of the liberties of the nation*" (Prescott, 1838; 65). Thus, when the tensions de-escalated, both parties concluded negotiations with a stipulation "*that Barcelona should retain all its ancient privileges and rights of jurisdiction, and, with some exceptions, its large territorial possessions*" (Prescott, 1838; 65). Similarly, when the marriage between Ferdinand and Isabella in 1469 consecrated the union between the Crown of Aragon and the Crown of Castile, thus establishing the Spanish monarchy, the King of Spain "*solemnly swore to respect the constitution and laws of Catalonia*" (Prescott, 1838; 67)

From the historical excursus two conclusions are evincible: a) although Catalonia retained its privileges, territorial possession, jurisdiction, laws and constitution despite the partnerships

with Aragona and, in turn, Castilla, the Catalan nations gradually lost their independence as the government solidified and centralized its authority; b) the Catalan people did not ever, at any point in time, give consent to the assimilation into other Crowns through plebiscites or referenda. According to Rousseau, the Catalan subscription to the contract should be revoked insofar as the institution of a Social Contract relies on unanimous consent of a people to abdicate their natural rights and state in favour of the civil rights and state. Clearly, with Catalonia not being a Republic at the time, they did not have the right to dispose of the freedom of its citizens since only "*conventions form the basis of all legitimate authority among men*". In fact, quite intuitively, "*in order to legitimise an arbitrary government, [...] people should be in a position to accept or reject it*" (Rousseau 1993; 186), and only if the government is consented by the people would its acts be legitimate.

A move to more recent history to encounter a form of consent from Catalonia is necessary. As argued in the Hobbesian and Lockean perspective, the Constitution of a State, acting as the written contract and the body of laws under which the state is governed, is fundamental to understand the Social Contract. The Spanish Constitution from which the modern Spanish state became a legal entity thus requires close attention. In 1978, the Spanish Constitution was enacted through a constitutional referendum. In Catalonia, the turnout was of 67.91 percent; 95.15 percent voted in favour of the adoption of the Constitution and 4.85 percent against. This element provides evidence of some form of consent from Catalonia to be legally bound to the Spanish state. This includes the agreement to Section 2 that stipulates that "*the Constitution is based on the indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation, the common and indivisible homeland of all Spaniards*".

However, as argued in the previous sections, Hobbes pays little attention to the conditions under which consent is given. Whether coercion occurred or not is irrelevant. In addition, Locke focuses on the content on the Contract and whether it safeguards the individual's natural rights. Instead, Rousseau emphasises the importance of the General Will for legitimacy.

## C. Understanding the General Will

In order to allow any kind of meditation over the legitimacy that the Catalan independence could have within Rousseau's Social Contract, the complexity of the General Will must be understood. The General Will works both as a moral will, which is a perpetuating will, and as a procedural mechanism, with a constitutive association as its genesis. The General Will is a perpetual and active moral will, while at the same time it performs a procedural mechanism in the relationship sovereign-government. The General Will is a moral will insofar as it is morally infallible. What the General Will dictates is principally good. In this way, the General Will works as the rational principle of the state to the extent to which they become free through civil freedom, the General Will is the moral will that 'forces to be free'. The majority rules as the General Will because legislation happens through reason and away from personal interests and factions, this means through the General Will and not just through the will of all:

*"There is often a great deal of difference between the will of all and the general will: the latter takes account only of the common interest; the former takes account of private interest, and is only a sum of particular wills."* (Rousseau 1993; 203).

The General Will is more complex than merely the sum of particular individual wills, thus challenging the validity of a referendum as the embodiment of the General Will. Rousseau argues that in a suffrage, the closer the result is to unanimity, the closer it is to the General Will. Large divisions, instead, are the symbol of the decline of the State. However, having some degree of opposition during the instauration of the Social Contract does not invalidate it, but rather indicates that some individuals have not understood, or are confused, about the General Will, the good of the whole. Therefore, after the suffrage, all citizens consent to the same laws, even those they have not voted for. The minority effectively loses to the majority, because it holds the wrong beliefs, and the minority's will was not morally good. The referendum asks whether the law is to conform to the General Will, not whether the individual is in favour or against a law. The constitutional referendum in 1978 shows that the result in Catalonia was close to unanimity, while the turnout remains far from suggesting an overall popular consent. The General Will was therefore to establish Spanish unity for the good of the whole.

In addition, the only way the General Will can stay General is, in a similar manner to Kant's morality, only legislating on what is general. The General Will is general *in abstracto*:

"*Thus, just as a particular will cannot represent the general will, the general will in turn changes its nature if it has a particular object, and being general cannot pronounce either upon man or upon a fact*" (Rousseau 1993; 206).

If the General Will would legislate over a particular fact it would inevitably legislate through a particular interest, given that the object or person over which it is legislating it is inevitably part of itself. This leads to the imposition of private interest over the common interest, and of factions over the General Will. A faction is, for Rousseau, a partial association which distorts the General Will by making it the sum of the wills of partial associations:

"*But when intrigues arise, and partial associations are formed at the expense of the greater one, the will of each of these associations become general in relation to its members and particular in relation to the State. You may then say that there is no longer as many voters as there are men, but only as there are associations*" (Rousseau 1993; 203).

The factions, as soon as they divide the sovereign, do not respond to the General Will but to private will and private interests. And it is in the particular and not in the general where private interest prevails, because the general will can never pronounce upon what is particular. At this point, Albert Camus claims that:

*"From the moment that laws fail to make harmony reign, or when the unity which should be created by adherence to principles is destroyed, who is to blame? Factions. Who compose the factions? Those who deny by their very actions the necessity of unity. Factions divide the sovereign; therefore they are blasphemous and criminal. They, and they alone, must be combated."* (Camus, 1951)

Factions divide the sovereign and mute the General Will. Therefore:

*"There is no general will concerning a particular object. For this particular object is either within the State or outside the State. If it is outside the State, a will that is foreign to it cannot be general with respect to it. And if this object is within the State, it is part of it. Then a relation is formed between the whole and its part which makes them into two separate beings, one of which is the part, the other the whole minus the same part. But the whole minus a part is not the whole; and so long as this relation persists there is no more whole, but two unequal parts. Whence it follows that the will of one part is never general either with respect to the other part."* (Rousseau 1993; 211)

Nevertheless, as said before, while the General Will cannot rule on the particular issue of independence of Catalonia, it could provide the grounds *in abstracto* for the government (understood in Rousseauian terms as that which executes legislation at the particular level) to rule in the specific case of Catalan independence. The General Will could revoke the articles in the constitution that dictate the unity of the Spanish Republic and legislate on whether to allow independence claims to be ruled over by the government according to certain criteria. This is in the power of the Sovereign.

*"I'm assuming here something that I think I have shown, namely that there is in the state no fundamental law that can't be revoked. Even the social compact itself can be revoked: if all the citizens came together for the agreed purpose of breaking the compact, there's no doubt that this would very legitimately break it. Grotius even thinks that each man can renounce his membership of his own state, and recover his natural liberty and his goods on leaving the country. It would be absurd if all the citizens in assembly couldn't do something that each can do by himself."* (Rousseau 1993; 273)

The plausibility of the reform and legislation on the abstract level for the independence, so as to allow Catalan independence on the particular level, is debatable; does the nature of the Contract and, hence, of the General Will allow a legislation *in abstracto* that performs the alienation of a part of the Sovereign without committing self-annihilation?

## D. Legislation in Abstracto and Self-Annihilation

On the one hand, it could be argued that while the General Will cannot rule on the particular issue of the independence of Catalonia, it could provide the grounds *in abstracto* for the government to rule in the specific case of Catalan independence – the heart could direct the brain to act according to certain general principles. The General Will could revoke the

articles in the Constitution that dictate the unity of the Spanish Republic and legislate on allowing independence claims to be ruled over by the government according to certain criteria. This is in the power of the Sovereign as:

*"there is in the state no fundamental law that can't be revoked. Even the social compact itself can be revoked: if all the citizens came together for the agreed purpose of breaking the compact, there's no doubt that this would very legitimately break it."* (Rousseau 1993; 273)

Furthermore, the Sovereign cannot bind itself, by nature, to a rule that it cannot break. This means that the Constitution can always be changed to be made stronger and ensure the longevity of the State in accordance with the General Will. Hence, the Spanish Constitution could be changed because public deliberation cannot impose on itself rules that it cannot break, and should change, if the General Will sees it necessary for the survival of the State. As explained above, the executive power should not be able to do anything against Specifically, the principle of unity enshrined in the Constitution could easily be abrogated, and should not actually have been there in the first place as it is a limit to the absolute power of the Sovereign.

However, with the principle of unity revoked, can the General Will possibly direct itself to self-annihilation? In other words, can the Sovereign rule against itself and its nature? As Rousseau puts it:

"*the body politic or Sovereign, drawing its being solely form the sanctity of the contract, can never incur an obligation - Even towards another - for anything that infringes that primitive act, such as alienating some part of itself or submitting itself to another Sovereign. Violating the act whereby it exists would mean annihilating itself."* (Rousseau 1993; 194)

The Sovereign cannot incur into an obligation that annihilates itself, thus the General Will cannot legislate over its own dissolution, because it would be using as a legitimating principle that which it will be eradicating. It follows that Catalonia has no right to proclaim independence. Furthermore, the limitation is not merely limited to utter secession and should indeed be expanded to the Catalan special status:

*"every authentic act of the general will, binds or favours all the citizens equally; so that the Sovereign recognises only the body of the nation, and draws no distinctions between those of whom it is made up."* (Rousseau 1993; 207)

If we take this passage literally, we are confronted with Rousseau's "totalitarianism". A Social Contract rests on the utter equality of its citizens (an argument could be made for equity – drawing on examples such as quotas) and therefore cannot entail any disparity of treatment over its parties (in fact it can only rule on general matters on which a common interest can be reached) because i) it would mark its self-annihilation and ii) because the structural inequalities enclosed in the contract could not possibly be accepted by sane individuals. However, this line of reasoning would directly lead us to consider the fallacy of

the Spanish Constitution which does ensure special status to Catalonia. Indeed, the Spanish nation should be the only nation within the State and there should not be any special treatment to minorities simply because they should not have been there in the first place (recall the concepts of homogeneity of the State). Furthermore, Rousseau preaches the reduction of the "*gross inequalities that currently exist to a minimum*" as to "*avoid dependency by one region upon another within the state*" (Boucher and Kelly 2003; 250) – while natural inequality is impossible to prevent and should persist, we should abolish those inequalities based on birth (i.e. special status, as far as regions are concerned). Hence, the Sovereign should not merely deny any demand for independence but even strengthen its centrality and annul the special rights that Catalonia might have enjoyed hitherto. The totalitarian reading of Rousseau lends itself with the actual agenda of Franco's totalitarian regime, which aimed at destroying other national identities in order to forge and strengthen a single and unitary Spanish nation. However, with the fall of Franco, fomented by decades of oppression, the recrudescence of nationalism in Catalonia and the Basque Country augmented independent agendas, which were only appeased by compromises in the Constitution.

However, this totalitarian reading of Rousseau, which impedes independence and special status, collapses to the awesome powers the General Will is bestowed with. As we have seen, the General Will, by nature, only legislates what is good for the State. Hence, alienating a part of themselves would not be self-annihilation, just as it is not self-annihilation if a person abandons the State, and, just as it is legitimate for public deliberation to dissolve the whole compact. Therefore, the legislating *in abstracto* circa the conditions for independence is not to be seen as self-annihilation, but as moral precepts according to which the government should direct its particular executive power.

On the other hand, in spite of the fact that a constitutional reform seems *a priori* reasonable, a problem arises which makes the constitutional reform illegitimate in principle. The Sovereign cannot incur into an obligation that annihilates itself. The General Will cannot legislate over its own dissolution, because it would be using as a legitimating principle that which it will be eradicating. The argument runs similar to that used by J.S Mill against voluntary slavery: "*But by selling himself for a slave, be abdicates his liberty; he foregoes any future use of it beyond that single act. He therefore defeats, in his own case, the very purpose which is the justification of allowing him to dispose of himself. He is no longer free.*" (Mill 1859; 94)

The sovereign cannot, ergo, rule some legislation which would destroy that sovereignty, meaning, it cannot rule anything that it cannot itself revert:

"*It is consequently against the nature of the body politic for the sovereign to impose on itself a law which it cannot infringe [..] there neither is nor can be any kind of basic law binding on the body of the people—not even the Social Contract itself.*" (Rousseau 1993; 193)

The sovereign cannot then legislate anything that would render its sovereign power insufficient to abide by that same law. It cannot use the sanctity of the contract as the

legitimate basis of a legislation that would subdue or destroy the sovereignty because that which is nothing, produces nothing:

*"But the body politic or Sovereign, drawing its being solely form the sanctity of the contract, can never incur an obligation - Even towards another - for anything that infringes that primitive act, such as alienating some part of itself or submitting itself to another Sovereign. Violating the act whereby it exists would mean annihilating itself, and that which is nothing produces nothing."* (Rousseau 1993; 194)

The only way that the sovereign can *"impose on itself a law that it can't infringe"* is by imposing a law on itself that eradicates its sovereignty - this is a tautology. Therefore, a prohibition of any kind in the positive law is not a case of a law which the sovereign cannot infringe: the fact the that the sovereign has not reverted that law is just a contingent fact and not a nomological one. Hence, Article 2 of the Spanish Constitution regarding the unity of Spain cannot be further away from being an imposition which the sovereign cannot infringe, because it is in itself the only thing that the pact cannot infringe - unity. It could be said that, in Rousseauian terms, the second article expressed in positive law is superfluous and redundant given that it is a corollary to the Pact. Nonetheless, far from being an imposition made by the sovereign to its subjects, it is an imposition given by its own nature which is equivalent to saying *"it is against the nature of the body politic for the sovereign to impose on itself a law that it can't infringe"*.

Thus, the only law that cannot be infringed by the sovereign is that which destroys its sovereign power; this is its capacity to infringe every law except the law which states that he cannot incur on itself a law which he himself cannot infringe. In simpler terms, once the Sovereign legislates the allowance of independence or subdues itself to another sovereign, it loses the capacity to revert that legislation, because its legislation is no longer binding for the alienated part, or for the ruling Sovereign to which is now subdued. Therefore, the unity of the sovereign cannot be infringed upon by the legislation of the sovereign because, once the dissolution of the unity has been legislated, the sovereign will not be able to infringe that dissolution. Any interpretation of the passage leads to a language paradox: saying that the Sovereign cannot incur into an obligation that he cannot infringe, is in itself an obligation for the Sovereign, so the Sovereign should not be even bounded by this obligation. *Ergo,* he *should* be able to incur into an obligation that he himself cannot infringe, losing its sovereignty. This is the omnipotence paradox. The Sovereign to exist must be able to infringe its own legislation and be able to revert it, but this is in itself something that he cannot revert or infringe, so the Sovereign should lose its capacity to infringe previous legislation so as to be absolutely able to infringe previous legislation. Equivalently, in the omnipotence paradox, God has to be able to build a rock that he himself cannot lift, leading to contradiction. This reading of Rousseau's passage is paradoxical.

Furthermore, it could be argued that *"because the sovereign is made out of nothing but its constituent individuals, it doesn't and can't have any interest contrary to theirs"* (Rousseau 1993; 194). Hence, given this and the fact that even the contract can be reversed, if the will of

everyone is to allow any regional independence *in abstracto*, then, the sovereign should rule in that way, given that the interest of the sovereign cannot be anything else than the interest of its constituent parts.

This argument suffers from a main fallacy, which is that it fails to recognize the contradictory claims in the will of the people in such a case. If the will of everyone (not the General Will) is that the sovereign rules the allowing of independence, then this will is contradictory. The only resolutions are, then, unity or the abolition of the contract. Yet, the abolition of the contract cannot be done through the legitimising power of the General Will, but through the individual right of every single individual. The abolition of the contract cannot have the compulsory force of the General Will, it is just the unanimous and simultaneous usage of the individual right to leave the contract, as Grotius suggests:

"*Grotius even thinks that each man can renounce his membership of his own state, and recover his natural liberty and his goods on leaving the country. It would be absurd if all the citizens in assembly couldn't do something that each can do by himself.*" (Rousseau 1993; 273)

The legitimacy is then not in the compulsory legislation of the General Will, but in the individual (not compulsory, meaning that it is enough for one person not to leave the contract for the contract to exist, and by leave it is meant geographical displacement) use of the right to leave the country. The argument is difficult to fully sustain due to the legal nature of the contemporary borders of the states. Nonetheless, the European Single Market, which allows the free movement of people, could sustain Rousseau's solution to some degree – but these considerations go beyond the scope of our analysis.

To conclude this section, it is clear from Rousseau's text, that a referendum on the particular issue of Catalan independence goes against the abstract nature of the General Will and is therefore impossible. Legislation *in abstracto* would be needed, in that case, for the Government to rule at the particular level – i.e. at the Catalan level. Nevertheless, it has been shown that the possibility of ruling *in abstracto* regarding independence and alienation is obscure in Rousseau's literature. The quasi-paradoxical nature of Rousseau's argument does not seem to point at a clear path for the reader's interpretation and leaves enough space for opposite conclusions. Even though there is a possibility for the Sovereign to rule *in abstracto*, the possibility of regional independence could be contested and argued. The only clear solution to independence in Rousseau's Social Contract is the dissolution of the contract. This dissolution is possible through the right preserved by individuals to leave the territory and, hence, the contract, meaning a unanimous rule to dissolve the contract. If this right can be exercised individually it can be also exercised simultaneously by everyone, breaking the contract and allowing the possibility for new Social Contracts to be formed. The plausibility of this solution in contemporary geopolitics seems, at least, dubious, but this evaluation goes beyond the ambitions of the paper.

# Conclusion

To conclude, this paper examines some grounds for a legitimate Catalan demand for independence from the perspective of political theory. It uses the writings of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, to provide insight on the nature, *raison d'être*, and legitimacy of the Social Contract, exemplified in the Constitution.

According to Hobbes, in order to escape from the natural state of civil war, the people give up their natural rights to all things in exchange for security and stability in the political community under the Leviathan. In the covenant, the sovereign retains absolute power, and it is always righteous. Hobbes' notion that consent cannot be annulled and retreated without the consent of the sovereign, renders Catalan independence only legitimate through constitutional amendment. This solution is in line with the legal aspects of legitimate secession from Spain supported by legal advisers, because of the content of the Spanish Constitution. Nonetheless, Hobbes' support for this solution, even for territory attained by acquisition, remains problematic.

Instead, Locke argues that individuals delegate the protection of their natural rights to 'life, liberty and property' to the government in order to optimise the achievement of security and self-preservation. However, citizens retain the right to withdraw their consent whenever their natural rights of life, liberty and property are violated. Thus, the legitimacy for the Catalan demand for independence rests solely on whether the Spanish Social Contract – the Constitution – is just, insofar as it does not threaten the natural rights of the citizens.

Lastly, the Catalan demand for independence finds a glimpse of legitimacy in Rousseau with the right that individuals retain to leave the contract. This right was recognised individually to every man by both Grotius and Rousseau. If a right can be exercised individually, then it can also be used by every individual simultaneously producing, in that case, the elimination of the original contract. Other roads to the ruling of Catalan independence are more troublesome. If the annulation of the contract (and the ruling of independence, which are equivalent) can be performed by the legislation *in abstracto* of the Sovereign, interpretations of Rousseau diverge. One interpretation considers that there is nothing that the Sovereign cannot rule over, including its own dissolution, while another interpretation would suggest that there is nothing the Sovereign cannot rule, except that ruling which he cannot later revert. This renders independence impossible through the legislation of the Sovereign, as it means the loss of sovereignty over that newly independent territory and, therefore, of the possibility to revert that independence through a new law. From a Rousseauian perspective there seems to be only two clear answers for Catalan Independence: either the Social Contract is nullified historically because it has never enjoyed legitimacy, meaning that there is no Spanish Sovereign and, hence, no restriction for the establishment of a Catalan contract, or, if the Contract is said to exist, it must be destroyed through the exercise of the individual right to leave the Contract. However, Sovereign legislation over independence is still open to contention and debate.

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The three Social Contract theorists analysed thus provide three insights on the debate of Catalan secessionism. The validity of the Spanish Constitution as a guarantor of the natural rights to life, liberty and property, from a Lockean perspective, does not legitimise independence. Locke's argument indicates a preference for Spanish unity. Then, Rousseau's solution, the simultaneous use of each individual's right to leave the contract highlights the fact that Catalan independence would mean the destruction of the Spanish state. Lastly, Hobbes is insightful with regards to the requirement of a constitutional amendment, also reiterated by legal advisers, for legitimacy. The declaration of independence cannot be pronounced unilaterally, due to the legally binding nature of the Social Contract.

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# Father and Followers: Putin's Rhetoric as an Evolutionary-Psychological Leadership Tool

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## Abstract

Vladimir Putin has been at the helm of the Russian state since 2000, with much of the post-2008 period in Russia being characterised by poor economic performance. At the same time, many issues concerning regional development and public service provision have gone unaddressed. Yet, despite all these problems—which polls suggest do not go unnoticed by the Russian people—the popularity of the most powerful man in government has not slipped far from all-time highs. This paper suggests an evolutionary psychological explanation for Putin's resilient popularity and examines it through the question of whether the thematic content of Putin's rhetoric matches theoretical expectations stemming from evolutionary psychology. Using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods to analyse a corpus of annual addresses by Vladimir Putin, it suggests that the thematic content of Putin's rhetoric is consistent with what a cultural reinterpretation of Hamilton's rule from evolutionary psychology predicts is particularly potent with followers. Specifically, his rhetoric creates bonds of relatedness within a defined group and focuses on benefits affecting members of that group—exactly what a cultural Hamilton's rule view of human social behaviour would suggest. The paper then links this explanation to Putin's approval ratings by looking at how this thematic content varies over time. In doing so, the paper represents a step towards an evolutionary psychological view of leadership appeal in modern political communities.

*'No doubt there will be more recognition of the dependence of many political phenomena on the relatively sudden emergence of 'civilization' from the largely anonymous sea of tribal or folk societies… man had operated in small bands or tribes for at least half a million years and that he has had a relatively short time in which to master the civilization that is his own invention.'*

**Harold Laswell**, The Future of the Comparative Method, 1968

## I. Introduction

 2018 marks the start of Vladimir Putin's fourth presidential term. Ever since the global recession and the advent of Western sanctions over Russia's activities in Ukraine, Russia has been experiencing economic difficulty (Movchan, 2017). The price of oil, Russia's major export, crashed in 2014, dragging with it the nation's currency and, subsequently, raising inflation. When one combines this with the last decade's economic contraction and the persistence of numerous social-policy problems, one starts appreciating that the situation in

the country is far from socio-economically ideal (Hille, 2018). According to public opinion surveys (Levada Centre, 2018), this fact is not strange to the Russian public: economic and political optimism fell each year from 2012-2015, and perceptions of material wellbeing fell annually between 2014-2017. Citizens also reported decreasing quality of healthcare provision each year since 2005.

Yet, amongst this negativity, Putin's personal ratings remain stable at 80%. Having been at Russia's helm since 2000, Putin is widely acknowledged as a powerful leader who retains primary influence over all major areas of Russian policy (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018). When it comes to giving credit for Russia's successes, an overwhelming majority assigns it to none other than Putin. Meanwhile, the broader government seems to suffer the blame for persistent problems, with the number of citizens supporting the current ministerial Government's resignation having risen every year since 2012. The question that needs to be answered, therefore, is why citizens report increasing dissatisfaction with their lives and the broader government, yet appraisals of the country's leader remain high.

This paper aims to partially solve this puzzle by exploring the psychological basis of the support for Putin. It takes the support for him as given and suggests an evolutionary psychological (EP) explanation for it. Specifically, this paper posits that Putin's rhetoric may trigger psychological mechanisms in subjects that have evolved over millions of years. To define what makes political leaders popular, this paper develops a model based on a re-interpretation of Hamilton's rule (1964) to include cultural relatedness and Haslam, Reicher, and Platow's 'New Psychology of Leadership' (NPL) (2011).

To test this model, the paper asks whether the thematic content of Putin's rhetoric is consistent with the model's theoretical predictions. It does so by analysing annual addresses by Putin since 2012, focusing on identifying change around junctures when Putin's ratings spiked. This question represents the first of many that need to be asked to discern whether EP can really shed light on modern political leadership.

The importance of this task is manifold. Firstly, it enables us to comprehend assertions that Putin's popularity derives from the Kremlin's control over the media (Enkilopov et al, 2010). After all, the media is just the means of transmission, and it remains necessary to explain why what is being transmitted is effective.

Secondly, locating the root of Putin's support in general psychological theories is important if one wants to avoid the argument that it stems from a fixation with authoritarianism somehow endemic to East-Slavic culture; it is this argument that makes drawing parallels between Putin's case and the support for past Communist and Tsarist leaders so very common. Interpreting Putin's popularity through an EP lens will aid understanding of what Putin and his followers share with others throughout history, thereby illuminating other cases of leader popularity.

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As such, the paper's ultimate hope is that the results of such psychological discussions will prove generalisable and offer interpretations for other instances of deviations from economic voting, such as recent anti-globalisation votes in the UK and the US. If psychological evolution has indeed led to people thinking in a certain way, then voter choice across historical contexts may be influenced by similar thought processes originating from humanity's earliest days.

The paper first reviews the literature on Putin's popularity, political leadership, and evolutionary political psychology, before developing a Hamiltonian-NPL model and relating it to Putin. This model steers the two-pronged textual analysis that follows. Quantitative text analysis thematically and dynamically decomposes Putin's rhetoric in the years 2012-2018, with these themes subsequently being contextualised and linked to our theoretical framework using discourse analysis. Together these approaches reveal whether Putin's rhetoric matches the Hamiltonian-NPL model's predictions of an appealing political leader, thereby shedding light on the relevance of EP to political popularity.

## I.I Literature Review

This paper rests on several literatures, including the political science literature on Putin and the psychological and EP literature relating to politics and leadership.

Due to the track record of authoritarian states, it is crucial to evaluate the trustworthiness of public opinion data. Frye et al (2017) use list experiments to demonstrate that Putin's high approval ratings are almost certainly genuine, whilst Volkov (2015) discusses how viewing trends in approval and other Levada measures over Putin's entire tenure suggests these ratings are not fabricated or the result of intimidation. Ratings of other senior government officials also tend to experience sharp falls, showing that the public does not hesitate to judge harshly (Bershidsky, 2017). Colton and Hale (2017) corroborate this, demonstrating that Putin's support is broad-based and cannot be explained by fraud, oil prices, or coercion. All this indicates that there exists a real issue for this paper to grapple with.

As has been alluded, the growth of the Russian economy meaning presidential popularity up until this decade may well have been an instance of 'the economy, stupid' (Treisman, 2011). During 2011, however, Putin's approval ratings dipped from 80% and stabilised at 60%, even though public economic perceptions remained constant. This was possibly because sections of the public ceased giving Putin the benefit of the doubt over persistent problems (Triesman, 2014). However, following 2014, the ratings shot up from around 60% and stabilised at 80%[23], despite the economy deteriorating and most these problems not having been solved. Hence, the question of what buttresses Putin's support as he enters his third decade as leader arises.

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[23] *Figure 3* p.21.

Robertson and Greene (2017) argue that Putin's support results from popular appeal, in an argument that resembles Hannah Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism (1951), which viewed totalitarianism as created by the masses themselves. Rather than attributing Putin's popularity solely to top-down authoritarian influences, Robertson and Greene identify the Russian citizen as a participant of regime renewal in Russia, telling a story of 'co-construction' in which state and society willingly interact to enshrine the regime.

An illustration of Putin's popularity would be incomplete without discussing his media images. Gessen (2012) describes the process through which the Russian regime monopolised the media, with other studies emphasizing that positive press in state media has contributed to Putin's 'personality cult' and 'celebrity status' (Goscillo, 2013). Mikhailova (2013), for instance, notes Putin's frequent media appearances with children as an attempt to portray Putin as a 'fatherly figure'.

The classical literature on authority offers a starting point to understanding the above acceptance. Weber (2004/1919) presents a typology of authority suggesting that followers accept rulers if the latter convey charismatic, traditional, or legal authority. The charismatic view suggests leaders are followed because they are 'believed in': leaders' strength of personality in public appearances develops a 'personal devotion' and 'trust in the heroism, or other leadership qualities of an individual'. Traditional authority, on the other hand, originates from custom, whilst legal authority stems from constitutional rules. Without discounting traditional and legal authority, this paper seeks to elucidate the mechanisms behind charismatic authority.

To this end, Michels (1999/1911) argues that the masses are 'delighted' to succumb to leaders considered able to look past competing interests and 'look after (peoples') affairs', pointing out that the masses' gratitude often results in 'adoration' and 'perpetual' leadership, this being potentially applicable to Putin given his tenure's length. Burns (1979) separates these two approaches into two leadership types: 'transformational' leaders who charismatically create new leader-follower relationships, and 'transactional' leaders who are followed because they perform a service. This paper does not view Burns' two typologies as mutually exclusive: in fact, it suggests that charisma may emerge through the communication of 'transactional' benefit.

The case of Putin's popularity has attracted diverse explanations. Some of the psychological literature cites an intrinsic 'Slavic authoritarianism' that has made autocratic figures venerated and desired in Russia across historical periods (Korneeva, 2011). However, such approaches are problematic due to a lack of generalisability and because of their vulnerability at junctures when historically authoritarian societies democratise.

Newer psychological interpretations have been based on personality. Greene and Robertson (2017) explain political sentiment in Russia today by using the 'Big Five' personality traits from Goldberg (1983), namely, openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. One of their findings is that citizens' 'agreeableness' plays a large role in

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predicting regime support: the fear of disrupting societal consensus that is associated with this trait results in the resilience of traditional values and leaders.

It is this 'agreeableness' trait that brings us to EP as a promising explanatory model. This is because 'agreeableness' could be an evolutionary result of the success of cohesive groups (Boyd and Richerson, 1985). A corollary of the success of cohesive groups is a recognition by members that cohesive communities are beneficial, implying that leaders communicating notions of unity would fall on favourable ears. Furthermore, 'agreeable' people who fear detachment from the community will rally behind a leader perceived as beneficial for the group's interests (Spisak et al, 2015). Thus, exploitation of intrinsic traits may help leaders gain followers—a view that can be traced to Machiavelli (2003/1532).

Graham Wallas (1929) was among the first to attack political science as only studying 'the thing done' and not those 'doing it', pointing to evolutionary biology as a way forward. EP has been establishing itself in politics since de Waal's observations of political behaviour in chimpanzees (1982). Schubert (1989) and Blanc et al (2014) discuss how insights from evolution relate to politics, arguing that some of the work in this direction represents a naturalistic paradigm shift.  Petersen (2016) summarises the current state of the art, noting its fundamental insight that people make socio-political decisions using primeval rules revolving around the overarching aim of gene propagation (Dawkins, 1989). This principle of kin-selection can lead to ethnocentrism and other forms of in-group/out-group tension (van de Berghe, 1987) that politicians exploit. Another EP insight are evolved cognitive biases such as loss-aversion, which makes fear-evoking political rhetoric particularly effective (Arceneaux, 2012).

Yet another result is that people may have evolved to prefer strong leaders at the expense of personal freedoms (Sidanius and Gurzban, 2003). This is particularly the case in groups that experience frequent inter-group conflict (van Vugt, 2007)—a criterion most certainly applicable to Russia considering the many wars it has waged throughout history. Strength is something leaders convey through appearance—which may explain Putin's shirtless videos (RT, 2017)—as well as actions and words (van Vugt, 2006). Shestopal (2012) notes strength as a key component of Putin's public appraisals.

EP leadership models can point us to what rhetorical content would be appealing.  Boehm (1999), for instance, writes that in hunter-gatherer societies leaders emerge temporarily as figures perceived to possess decisiveness and competence: a focus on issue resolution would thus help gain popularity.

Van Vugt and Rooby (2014; 2008) note that leadership selection tends to be bottom-up, with hunter-gatherers disliking despots. This would predict that popular leaders possess humility and aim to convey to people that it is the latter who have the power of choice.

Finally, kin selection, a concept going back to Darwin whereby natural selection rewarded species where relatives helped each other survive, predicts that leaders will emphasize the

interests of a defined in-group. The concept is simply expressed in Hamilton's rule of social behaviour (1964), which argues that the promotion of in-group interests underpins many social species' behaviours. Scholars have recently started emphasising its relevance to the evolution of political institutions and cultures, with group-relatedness being extended beyond genetic relatedness to include cultural relatedness (Birch, 2017). Section I.II offers an application that can be tested through looking at verbal communication.

## I.II. Theoretical Model

This paper theorises that since people have evolved to follow Hamilton's rule of social behaviour, leaders gain popularity if their selection as leaders is seen by followers to maximize this rule. The simplest version of Hamilton's rule is the following:

$$rB > C$$

in which $r$ is the coefficient of relatedness to the agent following this rule of another individual (or group), $B$ is the evolutionary (survival/reproduction/comfort) benefit of an agent's action to that related individual (or group), and $C$ is the cost of the action to the agent. If this inequality holds, the agent's decision will be seen by the agent to benefit those within the agent's kinship group, with this benefit increasing in proportion to perceived relatedness. Importantly in the context of modern political societies, this paper sees $r$ as encompassing both genetic and perceived cultural relatedness.

When it comes to selecting leaders, agents will select leaders they judge to be most beneficial to their groups' interests. To attract support, leaders may therefore define a kinship group to raise the relatedness co-efficient $r$ and behave/speak in ways seen to promote group interests $B$. Voting for someone like Putin may well incur costs on voters, but they will still do so if the perceived benefits to their community are large enough.

The relevance of this Hamiltonian logic to leadership appeal can be seen in Haslam, Reicher and Platow's (2011) 'New Psychology of Leadership' (NPL). The main principle of NPL is that effective leadership derives from the leader's ability to 'embody and promote a psychology that they *share* with others.' NPL therefore helps us look at which aspects of Putin's rhetoric are consistent with this paper's assumptions regarding what citizens find appealing.

Elements of NPL help us describe what sort of leader the cultural Hamilton rule would encourage individuals to follow:

    a) *Successful leaders champion in-group interests*. Leaders become appealing when they are working for the collective interest of the group they are appealing to. In Hamiltonian terms, this benefits the survival of the group, raising *rB*.

b) *Appealing leaders construct identity.* This suggests that popular leaders actively create narratives placing their audience into groups. Such strategies attempt to artificially increase *r*—something that social structures and modes of communication absent from the ancestral environment made possible through an evolutionary 'mismatch' (cultural evolution overtaking biological evolution) (van Vugt et al, 2008).

Hamilton's rule thus describes voter logic; NPL, meanwhile, describes appealing leaders. This paper refers to these theories' sum as the 'Hamiltonian-NPL' model, which describes how leaders act upon follower logic to increase their popularity. The insights of the combined Hamiltonian-NPL model inform our theoretical expectations regarding Putin's rhetoric. To raise *r*, one would expect Putin to talk about nationhood, patriotism, and historical instances when people united to overcome a difficulty (e.g. successful wars). Identity-building through talking about culture could serve the same purpose: such themes reinforce notions of a culturally and historically related 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983). Raising *r* could also be attempted from the other direction: for example, Putin may focus on defining the 'other', i.e. an external community like the 'West', or an antagonist on the global scene. This would be consistent with the view that 'otherisation' tightens and encloses in-group bonds (Taylor, 2009).

To raise perceived *B*, one would expect Putin to acknowledge the problems Russians face. This could be done through themes centred around the economy, social development, security, and grand strategy, as these issues either directly contribute to citizen welfare or raise the perceived status of one's community through feelings like pride.

These expectations can be falsified in many ways. On a quantitative level, this paper's hypothesis that *rB*-raising rhetoric is linked to popularity would predict that such rhetoric rises when popularity rises (i.e. would have risen after 2014). Whilst both rising simultaneously would not prove causation, one falling when the other rises would falsify our predictions. Additionally, themes that directly attempt to raise *r* and *B* forming only a quantitatively small part of the thematic content of Putin's speeches would weaken our model's importance. On a qualitative level, this paper's claims regarding the Hamiltonian implications of certain quotes can be questioned.

## II. Methodology

This paper evaluates the merits of the Hamiltonian-NPL model through considering whether Putin's communication with Russia's citizens is consistent with the model's predictions regarding rhetorical content.

## II.I. Corpus Selection

To do this, the paper analyses a set of addresses from Putin's last presidential term (2012-2018). The selected addresses are of different types but share common features: all are annual, all shown by state television, all addressed to citizens, and all widely viewed.[24] This set includes Putin's annual addresses to the Federal Assembly, in which Putin discusses the state of the nation; Putin's 9th May addresses opening the annual military parade commemorating Russia's victory in the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945), a focal point of Russian national identity (Torbakov, 2011); Putin's annual New Year's Eve addresses, uttered in the last minutes of each year; and transcripts of the annual Direct Line teleconference, in which Putin responds to selected citizens' questions on topics ranging from the economy to Putin's personal habits.[25] The questions that end up being aired to Putin are pre-selected from millions of submissions by the Kremlin's press-service.

*Table 1:* **Characteristics of Each Address Type**

| Category of Address | Tag | Average length (minutes/words) |
|---|---|---|
| *Federal Assembly addresses* | FA | 79 minutes/8,105 words |
| *Victory Day parade opening* | VD | 7 minutes/501 words |
| *New Year's Eve addresses* | NY | 3 minutes/ 330 words |
| *Direct Line teleconference* | DL | 245 minutes/16,979 words |

This makes for a total of 23 analysed speeches, in which Putin uttered circa 140,000 words. Both the original Russian and English-translated versions (official translations from the Kremlin website) were analysed as separate corpora. The English-language results are the ones discussed in the main text because of issues to do with how the respective languages are processed by the software, which are discussed below.[26]

The reasons for this sampling are numerous. Firstly, the speeches are particularly well-viewed, suggesting they are a primary means of Putin's communication with his subjects. Secondly, the fact that they are annual makes it possible to conduct dynamic analysis, which is important for understanding the post-Crimea popularity spike. Thirdly, their varied nature means that using them collectively will enhance the sample's representativeness.

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[24] DL2017 was watched live by over 6 million viewers across 3 state TV channels and received over 2 million questions for Putin (Focht, 2017).
[25] See Appendices A and B.
[26] See Appendix D.

## II.II. Research Design

Understanding rhetoric is complicated. When it comes to its overall psychological potency, its content is just one important component: for a fuller view, one must look at the content's meaning within the context of the audience's socio-political experiences. This paper therefore utilises a mixed-method approach: quantitative to discern content, and qualitative to interpret this content's potency thematically and contextually. Thus, the paper espouses Grimmer's and Stewart's (2013) second principle of quantitative text analysis, stating that computerised methods 'only augment humans, and do not replace them.' An illustrative rationale in our corpus stems from the disproportional influence the shorter speeches may have on collective perception—something a purely quantitative method would obscure.

First, the paper utilised the *Thematic Analysis of Elementary Contexts* function of T-Lab 2017, a quantitative text analysis package, to identify thematic clusters within Putin's rhetoric. Before inputting the corpus into T-Lab, all text not uttered by Putin was manually removed from the transcripts, which is particularly important with the Direct Line addresses due to their 'Q&A' format. The individual transcripts were then tagged by year and type.

To pre-process texts, T-Lab automatically lemmatizes them (retains the base form of words, as their endings may vary) and removes stop words ('empty' words that do not convey specific and/or significant content on their own). The researcher then selects a unit of analysis (the elementary context unit (ECU)). Here, the choice was made to use 'chunks': word sequences less than 400 characters interrupted by full stop and carriage return. This was deemed the best unit of analysis among the smaller sentence and the larger paragraph units, due to this paper's corpus including both short and long texts. T-Lab then creates a matrix of these ECUs and commonly occurring words, populated by the presence/absence values of these words. This is subsequently normalised to be workable, with rows scaled to unit length (Euclidean norm).

For the Russian analysis, the list of stop-words and multi-words in the T-Lab dictionary had to be extensively manually updated following the initial run. This suggests that T-Lab's dictionary for pre-processing Russian is less well maintained, meaning the automatic results contain frequent words that bear little thematic meaning, affecting the output's informativeness. Once T-Lab's dictionary was supplemented, however, the results of the analysis revealed the two language versions to be thematically alike. Seeing as unassisted reading of both versions reveals the English to be a direct translation, these thematically similar results demonstrate the software's reliability when it comes to clustering. Nevertheless, the relatively incomplete stop-word list and inefficient lemmatization[27] (seen when related words appear several times) in Russian suggests that, for the time-being, T-Lab is better equipped to deal with English texts.

T-Lab then conducted the clustering process unsupervised by applying the bisecting K-means algorithm. Intuitively, this algorithm places the ECUs into different groups (clusters) by their

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[27] See *Table 3* p.14.

mathematical (cosine-coefficient) similarity. The maximum number of possible clusters was initially selected to be 10, to be adjusted upwards only if 10 clusters were produced after the first analysis. If fewer than 10 were produced, the researcher would need to decide which partition of the ones produced makes most analytical sense.

Once the software produces these clusters, it is up to the researcher to assign thematic values. To enable this, T-Lab produces a list of commonly-occurring words in each cluster ranked by chi-squared value, which the researcher then interprets by evaluating meanings and possible connections between them. However, this process is subjective and inevitably influenced by researcher expectations. To reduce interpretive bias, this paper independently uses two people for this: its author and a person from an unrelated field to Russian politics (pharmacology). The proportional weighting of these thematic clusters was then computed for each year to enable analysis over time in relation to approval ratings.

Making sense of these thematic clusters requires viewing them within their historical context, and so the quantitative methods were supplemented with qualitative analysis based on the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA). As an approach seeing 'discourse as a form of social practice creating a situation, social identities, and relationships between people' (Klymenko, 2015), DHA is uniquely suitable to understanding how Putin's rhetoric raises $r$ and $B$. The original transcripts were used for this, thereby reducing the paper's reliance on the T-Lab algorithm.

To consider these contextual mechanisms, the paper explores how each identified theme falls into historically-embedded discourses. It then looks at how these discourses relate to issues of group identity and collective interest, thereby linking them to Hamiltonian calculus.

# III. Results and Discussion

## III.I. Theme Identification

To shed light on the corpus, *Tables 2* and *3* below show the overall statistics of the English and Russian-language corpuses respectively after initial T-Lab processing. The much higher unique word/lemma ratio and the larger proportion of unique words remaining out of total wordcount in the Russian corpus demonstrate T-Lab's potentially reduced ability to process Russian.

*Table 2:* **Overall Corpus Statistics After Analysis (English)**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Total word count** | 163,935 |
| **Unique words** | 9,500 |
| **Lemmas** | 7,253 |
| **Lemmatisation ratio** | 1.31 |
| **Number of documents** | 23 |
| **Total contexts (ECUs) after segmentation** | 3,441 |

| | |
|---|---|
| **ECUs classified into clusters** | 3,297 |
| **Percentage of text classified** | 95.84% |

*Table 3:* **Overall Corpus Statistics After Analysis (Russian)**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Total word count** | 138,507 |
| **Unique words** | 19,980 |
| **Lemmas** | 19,886 |
| **Lemmatisation ratio** | 1.00 |
| **Number of documents** | 23 |
| **Total contexts (ECUs) after segmentation** | 3,324 |
| **ECUs classified into clusters** | 3,243 |
| **Percentage of text classified** | 97.59% |

The results of the clustering analysis itself and the qualitative assessment of the clusters' thematic content are shown in *Table 4* below. As mentioned, the maximum number of clusters T-Lab could find was set at 10. The actual analysis yielded nine possible partitions. Upon trying every possible one, seven partitions were selected as subsequent partitions failed to yield sufficiently thematically distinct clusters. It is worth mentioning that T-Lab looks for general categorisation that can cover the entire corpus, and as such will not necessarily output every partition existing at document level. Excess reliance on T-Lab therefore risks omission.

*Table 4*: **T-Lab Thematic Clusters**

| Cluster (weight in overall corpus. n = 3,441) | Thematic Labels | Top 16 Characteristic Words (Lemmas) by Chi-Squared Values |
|---|---|---|
| **1** (15.44%) | Law and government (*Second interpreter*: government/internal affairs) | government; agency; federal; law; ask; regional; enforcement; authority; money; ministry; fund; budget; office; prosecutor; region; tax |
| **2** (9.77%) | Foreign policy (*Second interpreter*: international relations/politics) | Ukraine; political; relation; election; partner; agreement; country; union; respect; integration; Ukrainian; dialogue; neighbour; United_States; party; sign |
| **3** (12.91%) | Economy (*Second interpreter*: finance/economy) | percent; rate; increase; sector; growth; industry; inflation; economy; agricultural; GDP; agriculture; export; grow; average; figure |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **4** (19.39%) | War and patriotism (*Second interpreter*: patriotism/nationalism) | war; victory; happy; fight; patriotic; army; love; veteran; great; wish; soldier; arm; enemy; hero; officer; nazism |
| **5** (12.38%) | Science and education (*Second interpreter*: education) | education; research; child; university; student; professional; train; school; centre; programme; project; work; young; need; science; medical |
| **6** (14.80%) | Economic policies (*Second interpreter*: internal financial policy) | problem; price; raise; exchange_rate; bank; billion; situation; central; loan; pension; resolve; issue; oil; rubles; cost; try |
| **7** (11.16%) | Defence and nationhood (*Second interpreter*: war) | missile; Russia; weapon; world; nuclear; strategic; global; defence; challenge; international; century; treaty; unity; country; common; nation |
| **Sum: 95.84%** | | |

T-Lab automatically calculates the percentage of classified ECUs falling into each cluster. However, since this paper is interested in the weight of each theme in the entire corpus, the weightings were manually recalculated as a percentage of all ECUs, classified or unclassified. They can be seen in the first column. Since the thematic labels were assigned by the researcher, readers can judge them by observing the list of characteristic words in the third column. At this point, it is worth noting that 'war and patriotism', a theme directly linked to this paper's theoretical expectations, emerges as particularly prevalent in the corpus, covering 19.39% of ECUs.

Having identified the themes, an analysis of how the various speech types in the corpus differed was performed, with *Figure 1* and *Table 5* showing the results.

*Figure 1:* **Individual Theme by Speech Type**
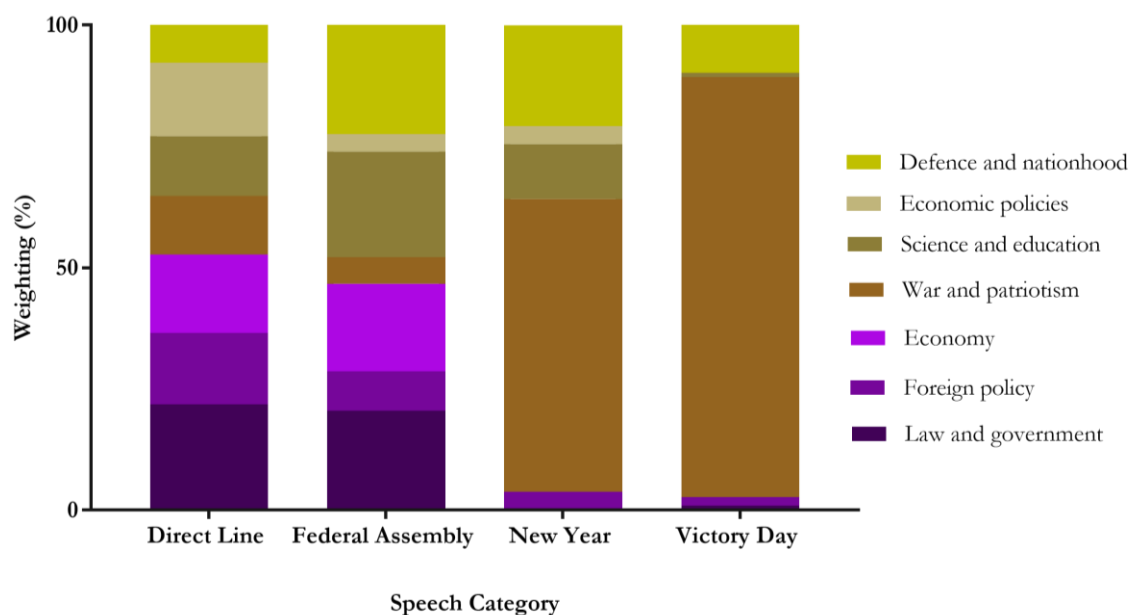
*Table 5:* **Individual Theme by Speech Type**

|  | **DL** | **FA** | **NY** | **VD** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Law and government* | 21.78% | 20.46% | 0% | 0.89% |
| *Foreign policy* | 14.7% | 8.15% | 3.77% | 1.79% |
| *Economy* | 16.22% | 18.09% | 0% | 0% |
| *War and patriotism* | 12.07% | 5.46% | 60.38% | 86.61% |
| *Science and education* | 12.34% | 21.76% | 11.32% | 0.89% |
| *Economic policies* | 15.17% | 3.67% | 3.77% | 0% |
| *Defence and nationhood* | 7.72% | 22.41% | 20.75% | 9.82% |

As expected from the category descriptions in Section II.I, VD proved to be almost exclusively dominated by 'war and patriotism.' FA and DL, meanwhile, were the most balanced categories, which was expected due to their objectives of holistically covering the issues facing Russia. In this sense, *Figure 1/Table 5* serve as a 'sanity check' of the T-Lab analysis. However, these results offer interesting insights of their own: NY is, similarly to VD, also dominated by 'war and patriotism.' Whilst this link between a military parade speech and a non-militaristic New Year's greeting is jarring at first and possibly exposes a pitfall of computer-generated partitions, it may suggest that these addresses, through sharing a thematic dimension, serve a similar identity-building (*r*-raising) purpose.

## III.II. Dynamic Analysis

The next step of the quantitative analysis was to see how these themes varied over time, shown in Figure 2 and Table 6. When considering these results, it should be noted that FA was the only speech category present in 2018, as Putin and his press team opted to move it forward from its regular December 2017 date to March 2018— just weeks before the Presidential election. Hence, the sharp shifts occurring between 2017 and 2018 represent the thematic focus of just one speech, albeit a particularly important one given its pre-electoral role.

*Table 6:* **Individual Theme Weighting by Year**

| Category | Law and government | Foreign policy | Economy | War and patriotism | Science and education | Economic policies | Defence and nationhood |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2012 | 20.48% | 9.24% | 12.85% | 13.25% | 20.48% | 4.42% | 19.28% |
| 2013 | 25.98% | 8.1% | 14.94% | 12.85% | 17.6% | 9.5% | 11.03% |
| 2014 | 17.45% | 21.95% | 10.88% | 12.76% | 12.01% | 9.76% | 15.2% |
| 2015 | 20.5% | 12.77% | 19.42% | 15.83% | 10.07% | 13.13% | 8.27% |
| 2016 | 23.08% | 11.89% | 18.53% | 9.79% | 15.03% | 11.71% | 9.97% |
| 2017 | 18.09% | 10.55% | 15.58% | 17.59% | 16.58% | 14.07% | 7.54% |
| 2018 | 6.96% | 1.83% | 21.25% | 6.96% | 21.98% | 3.3% | 37.3% |

*Figure 2:* **Individual Theme Weighting by Year**
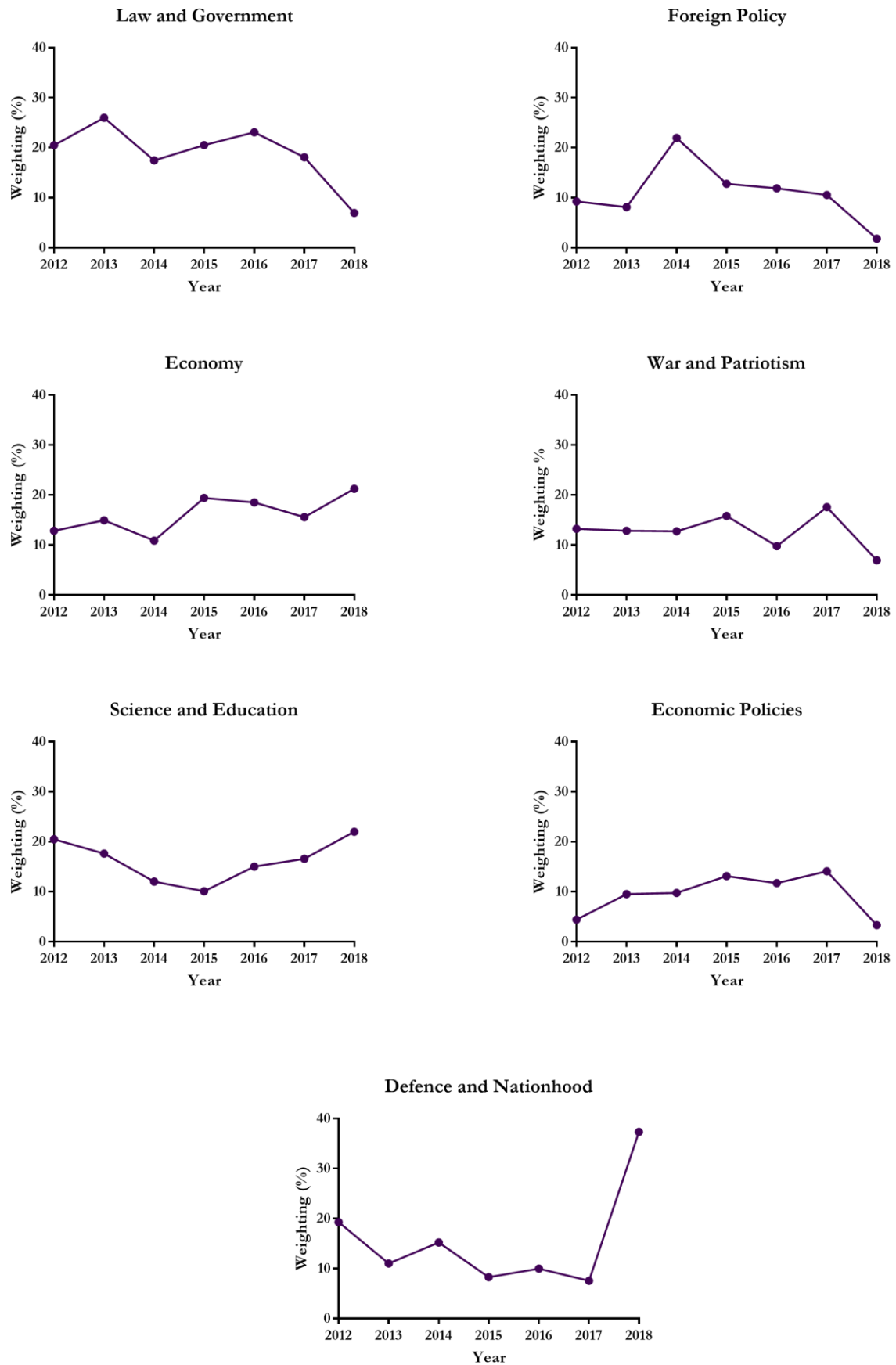
The first thing to look for is evidence of sharp changes between 2013 and 2014—the year Putin's popularity spiked as seen in *Figure* 3 below. *Table 6* provides evidence that 'foreign policy', rose from 8.1% in 2013 to 21.95% in 2014, albeit gradually falling back to 10.55% by 2017. The other noteworthy rise from 2013 to 2014 is in 'defence and nationhood', which went from 11.03% to 15.2%, subsequently falling below its initial levels.  The fact that both these factors rose sharply in the exact year that experienced a popularity spike before diminishing, suggests that they may play a role in affecting change in popularity—as these themes rose so did popularity, and as they reverted popularity stabilised at the new higher level. Putin could be seen to have used them to 'prove' his credentials as a champion of Russian interests, without needing to do so again until 2018. It is noteworthy that in 2018, the electoral year in which Putin recorded his largest-ever victory with 77% of the vote, he chose to sharply increase his focus on one of these two themes. 'Defence and nationhood' demonstrated a 30% rise, with Putin spending 40 minutes of the 2-hour FA2018 address showcasing Russia's defence programme.

*Figure 3:* **Vladimir Putin's Approval Ratings**
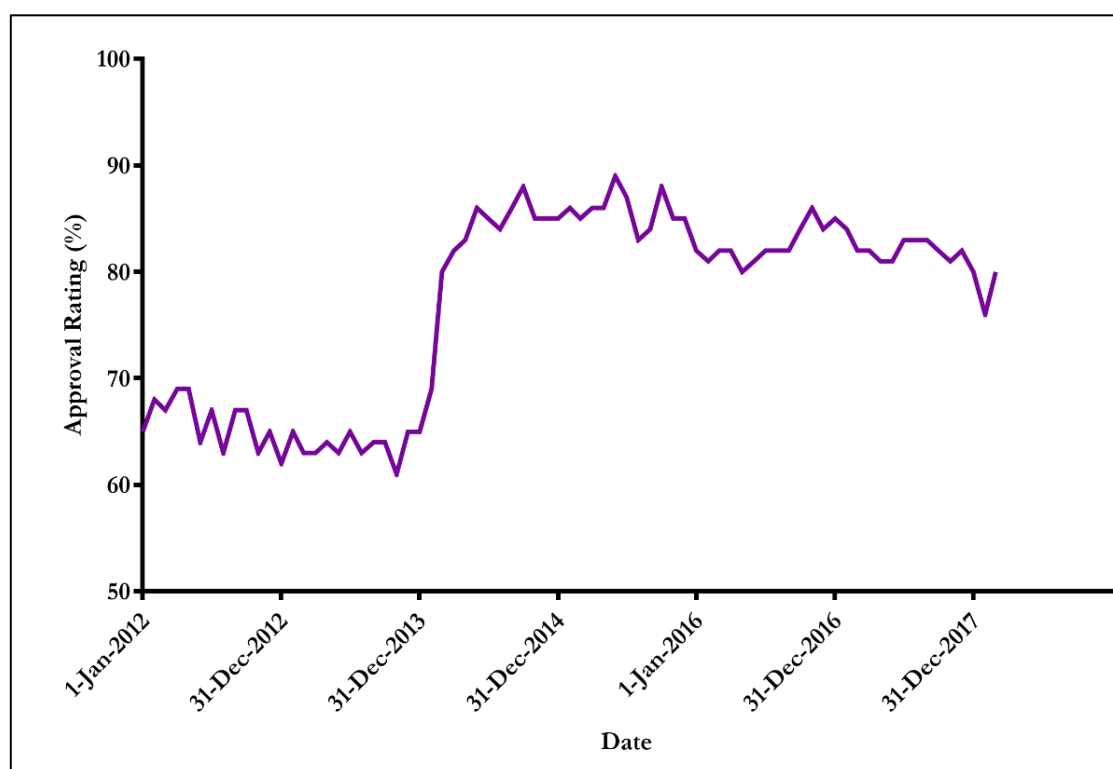


DataSource: Levada Centre, https://www.levada.ru/en/ratings/  accessed 24/04/2018

As with any other statistical inference, association does not imply causation: the 2014 spike in popularity may have been caused by any number of factors other than confrontational/nationalist rhetoric, including more successful policies and an improving economy. However, it has already been noted that 2014 was a year when the economy suffered particularly heavy blows, and there were no major policy shifts apart from the Kremlin's response to the Maidan Revolution in Ukraine and the Central Bank's decision to let the rouble float with painful inflationary repercussions (which Putin implicitly supported

in FA2014). Putin's response to Ukraine through annexing Crimea is likely to have played a major role in raising ratings; for this move to be linked to Putin, however, communication becomes important. Finally, Levada's sampling methodology, which ensures that each adult citizen in Russia has equal chances of being polled, makes the possibility that the spike was caused by a systematic change in the survey respondents unlikely, especially since the ratings stabilised rather than reverting (as they would have had in the event of a one-off sampling issue). Thus, the link between rhetorical content and popularity gains credence.

## III.III. Themes as '*rB*'-raising Discourses

Building on the above analysis, this section briefly contextualises each theme as discourses that build identity and/or appeal to people's individual and collective interests.

## Law and Government

Levada Centre (2018) reports around 80% citizens feeling that corruption has either fully or significantly penetrated the Russian authorities. Addressing this is a large part of Putin's discourse on law. In DL2013, Putin suggests that 'if we get information that there is reason to suspect a state official, even of the highest rank, in breaking the law, it is instantly forwarded to law enforcement agencies for investigation.' Later, Putin voices a citizen's suggestion of executing 'at least 350 major crooks' to let 'officials at various levels of government know what the public mood is like.' In DL2017, Putin directly asks the governor of Stavropol to answer about the whereabouts of federal funding for families affected by flooding. Through both remarks, Putin disassociates himself from the corruption that has become too widespread to ignore—in FA2012 he cites 'poor government efficiency and corruption are major problems that everyone can see'—thereby positioning himself as an ally of the people against a corrupt gubernatorial class.

The fact that Putin acts on such stances in practice lends them credibility: in 2017 alone, Putin fired 15 governors, in what some analysts portray as a pre-electoral move (Zubarevich, 2017). Whatever the true motivations, through rhetorically portraying regional officials as the people's enemy and subsequently confronting them, Putin is acting in accordance to NPL's prescription of championing in-group interests.

Not all the rhetoric on law can be directly linked to popularity, however. Much of it is clarifying the legislative processes behind other issues, and as such does not have its own Hamiltonian potency.

## Foreign Policy

Putin's recent popularity upsurge has often been linked to the taking of Crimea and the re-establishment of Russia as a great geopolitical power in the eyes of its citizens (Lloyd, 2018). His rhetoric contains much evidence along these lines and seeks to champion Russia as a major player in the international arena. In DL 2014, he speaks of Russia 'having the right to

express our opinion' over Ukraine. In FA2018, Putin addresses the issue of Russia's international voice directly when, presenting the *Kinzhal* nuclear warhead as a response to the 'the threats posed by the US global missile defence system', he says about NATO members to a standing ovation: 'nobody really wanted to talk to us…and nobody wanted to listen to us (in 2004). So listen now.'

Whilst standing firm against Western powers, Putin nevertheless seeks to position Russia as a global power. In FA2016, Putin speaks of the importance of 'equal and mutually beneficial' relations with the US because of the two nations' 'shared responsibility to ensure international security and stability.' In FA2018, Putin says Russia 'protects our interests and respects the interests of other countries…we observe international law and believe in the inviolable central role of the UN.' In doing so, Putin counter-acts claims that Russia is an aggressor-state, portraying his leadership as fair and firm in the international stage, and communicates to his audience that they remain part of a community that is as important in the world as the USSR was in its heyday, and deserving to be a global power on its own terms. It is this 'global-shaper role' Putin takes on when spearheading the 'globally competitive integration group' (FA2018) that is the Eurasian Economic Union—a Central Asia-centred common market alternative to the EU based on 'equality and mutual respect' (FA2014).

In talking about Ukraine and Crimea, Putin emphasises Russia's role in supporting 'brotherly republics of the former Soviet Union' (FA2014), citing the $25 billion investment in Ukraine. He talks about how 'closely related' Russia has always been to Ukraine (DL2014) and the biological 'ethnic' bonds between Russia and Crimea as justifications for Russia's involvement. Putin thereby legitimises foreign policy endeavours by the quasi-biological relatedness Russia shares with its neighbours, in a rhetorical move that has direct *rB* implications.

That said, this discourse gains most of its Hamiltonian potency when linked to 'defence and nationhood', discussed below.

## Economy

Much of Putin's support since 2000 stemmed from him being seen as a prudent economic manager (Colton and Hale, 2009). The economy still features strongly in Putin's rhetoric and becomes more prevalent in times of economic hardship—it rose from 10.88% in 2014 to 19.42% in 2015, when post-Crimea sanctions, the oil crash, and rate tightening combined to cripple growth (*Figure 2*).

Putin tends to take a realistic view of hardship, pointing out problems when these occur, as in his discussion of drastic home energy prices in DL2016, where he cited specific price-rises across gas, heating, and electricity.

Putin fills his discussions on any economic issue with specific figures. His tendency to identify and enumerate problems portrays him as a leader aware of the issues his followers

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face, and competent enough to deal with them—an effect strengthened by him rarely consulting his notes even when, as in the DL conferences, the issues he discusses are both technical and range across many policy areas. As such, his economic discourse directly paints him as someone able to raise *B*.

## War and Patriotism

This discourse is perhaps most directly linked to identity creation. Putin centres much of it around the Great Patriotic War and creates bonds among his listeners by saying that 'across our huge country…no family was spared by the war.' He calls the USSR's victory over Nazi Germany 'great', singling out the Russian/Soviet nation as 'the nation that routed Nazism' (VD2013). He ties Russia's current mission to this victory when he speaks of Russia's responsibility to give future generations 'stability and peace on the planet' and 'pass onto them the grave heroic truth and memory of the Great Patriotic War' (VD2017).

In doing so, he links this discourse to that on foreign policy and defence and infuses Russian identity with pride through painting it as the force that saved 'humanity from Nazism' (VD2014). This link becomes clear when Putin calls the victory 'a symbol of the sacred relationship between Russia and its people…it is in this unity and loyalty to the Fatherland that our strength, confidence and dignity lie.'

Such *r*-raising patriotism permeates even the seemingly apolitical NY addresses, which attests to their central role:

> 'our personal plans are inseparable from Russia, from our heartfelt, noble feelings toward our Fatherland. Its development and further advancement of its thousand-year-long history is fully dependent on our joint efforts and energy, our unity and responsibility, our aspiration to do as much good as possible' (NY2012).

In NY addresses, Putin speaks to almost every family in Russia as they gather at home to celebrate the New Year—the thematic prevalence of patriotism in such an intimate setting attests to its centrality in Putin's communicative strategy.

## Science and Education

Putin's science and education discourse focuses on state effort to develop the nation's scientific prowess, aiming to increase productivity, improve healthcare provision, enhance military capabilities, and give citizens modern, attractive opportunities.

FA2013 refers to the creation of 'a network of centres capable of providing medical assistance at the most advance level', whilst FA2015 talks about 'the need for our own technology for the production, storage and processing of agricultural produce.' The 2013 appeal to medicine harbours back to citizens' concern over public healthcare, whilst the 2015 emphasis on agriculture comes at a time when the Kremlin embarked on a policy of import-substitution, as imported goods became increasingly expensive in rouble terms due to the

currency's depreciation. By tying science in to pertinent problems faced by citizens, this discourse raises perceived $B$.

Putin's scientific discourse has an added identity-building dimension. The rhetoric is often framed in competitive terms, in a possible effort to create a sense of national pride and aspiration. FA2018 refers to the 'need to take our research to a new level' for Russia to 'become one of the world's leading countries in terms of the capability and performance of its research infrastructure.' In a sense, such rhetoric harbours back to Soviet-era ideological discourses of science being a beacon of socialist success (Josephson, 1992). Indeed, the view of the USSR as a scientific nation became enshrined in the minds of older generations, and Putin's rhetoric may strive to create a sense of continuity with past achievements, thereby appealing to $r$. DL2016 directly corroborates this interpretation, as Putin talks about how Soviet-era research centres are used by 'young and promising creative research teams working in breakthrough areas of modern science.'

Finally, the emphasis on the young, whilst creating a sense of dynamism associated with Putin's agenda, also appeals to concerns over citizens' perceived prospects in Russia. In FA2018, Putin promises to 'support talented teachers' by 'building an open and modern system' and proposes 'creating the most convenient and attractive conditions for talented young people from other countries.' Thus, Russia would not just be a good place to live and work—to attract foreign talent, it would need to be among the best globally. The overarching aim is to 'turn our young people's education drive into a powerful force for our country's development' (FA2013). Thus, the push towards science and education appeals both to interest ($B$) and creates common goals ($rB$).

## Economic Policies

This is a broad theme encompassing Putin's strategy for improving people's lives. One important dimension are demographics, Russia being afflicted by sluggish population growth and low life expectancy. In FA2012, Putin cites the risk of Russia's working population reducing by half, arguing for the need for 'more of us' for 'Russia to be a strong and sovereign nation.' In FA2014, Putin talks about Russia's defiance of United Nations forecasts by registering a population that was 8 million more than expected and registering 'natural population growth' when the UN was forecasting shrinking. By emphasising the natural, Putin is creating imagery of virility in the Russian nation that refuses to be constrained by international forecasts. This appeal to life as a constituent of nationhood resonates with direct evolutionary benefit.

The other distinguishing aspect of Putin's economic policy discourse covers infrastructure and jobs. The issue of regional road construction propped up almost every year in this paper's sample: even in FA2018, Putin spoke of the need to 'almost double the spending on road construction' and demands regional heads to 'constantly focus attention on roads.' Whilst saying that the situation is 'completely unacceptable with local roads', Putin notes that federal roads, over which the Kremlin has competencies, have been 'overhauled.' This is

another instance of Putin allying himself with the people against governors over a visible problem.

Such rhetoric also achieves the 'Eye of Sauron' effect (Schwartzbaum, 2017), whereby problems are only solved when Putin directs his gaze at them. Through his 4-hour DL 'town halls', Putin conveys his concern with knowing about and resolving people's problems. Characteristically, discussing the regional government not having implemented a legal consumer utility price-limit, Putin says he would like 'to draw the attention of the relevant government agency to this fact,' 'and hopes this will be done shortly' (DL2014). This grants him the quasi-paternal role of carer for citizens' needs.

The discourse on jobs is aspirational: in DL2013, Putin speaks about creating 25 million high-tech jobs to set the economy onto an 'innovative development track'; in FA2015, Putin calls changing the structure of the economy and creating 'modern jobs' the only way to improve living standards, further specifying in DL2017 that a digital economy is 'the number-one goal.' The development discourse is thus linked to that on science, and positions Putin as a forward-looking leader, dispelling impressions that his rule is stagnating after 20 years.

## Defence and Nationhood

We have already seen that Putin motivates much of his foreign policy through interest championing amidst external wrongdoers. As the US withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2000, Putin paints the US as a violator of 'the cornerstone of the international security system' (FA2018). Through portraying Russia's defence programme as the result of a 'heroic' effort of 'thousands of our experts' and 'young professionals' to protect the country by developing 'cutting-edge' technology that 'no other country has developed', Putin portrays the effort he champions as a nation-wide achievement.

Thus, military capabilities do more than *B*-raising protection—they also help mould identity through empowering Russia to have a global stewardship role. In FA2014, Putin promises to 'protect the diversity of the world' and 'actively promote business and humanitarian relations' even as some countries 'attempt to create a new iron curtain.' Far from merely being a protector of global stability, 'the wealth of Russian culture' makes Russia 'among the nations that not only create their own cultural agenda, but also influence the entire global civilisation.' (FA2012).

It is unsurprising Putin focused his latest electoral efforts around this discourse. Military security becomes a pre-requisite for the achievement of all other policy goals, suggesting that achievement in this domain may lead citizens to forgive lags in the economic/developmental domain; being ahead in the arms race, meanwhile, establishes Russia as a true global power, thereby creating a resilient identity based on pride that outshines the socio-economic costs of living in Putin's Russia.

# IV. Conclusions

On 7 May 2000, his inaugural day as Russian President, Vladimir Putin informed citizens of his 'sacred duty to unify the people of Russia, to rally citizens around clear aims and tasks, and to remember every day and every minute that we have one Motherland, one People, and one future.' This paper's analysis reveals that such identity-building and focus on practical issues permeates Putin's discourse across thematic domains all the way to 2018. Diverse themes like science, economic development, and foreign policy are all connected by being framed in a discourse unifying Russians as working towards ambitious, globally significant goals that both improve people's lives and make them proud. As the *Internationale* anthem inspiring the 1917 Russian Revolution suggested, 'We have been nought, we shall be all!' At the helm of this effort is Putin; in rallying behind him, citizens acknowledge that Putin can solve Russia's current problems but has opted for a 'long-term agenda that must be independent of election cycles and the prevailing situation' (FA2015).

This paper has argued that such discursive approaches make Putin's rhetoric particularly attractive because they target the three elements of the Hamiltonian-NPL model ($rB>C$), which some scholars suggest underpin social behaviour. Identity-building creates bonds between citizens, making them care about more than just their personal economic wellbeing. Emphases on Russia's interests champion the collective benefit of this strongly-bonded group. Mentions of Russia's long-term ambitions nationally and globally persuade followers that the long-run benefits of Putin's agenda outweigh the socio-economic problems people have been experiencing during his tenure.

The discursive trends that this paper has observed demonstrate that such interpretations have explanatory power: particularly evolutionarily potent discourses spike alongside popularity and are relied upon in electoral years. Additionally, the fact that most discourses identified here possess Hamiltonian potency may explain why Putin's approval ratings have remained stably high, even as people's lives become harder and broader government approval falls. Observing whether similar patterns occur in different historical contexts and testing this paper's model using other types of data—including experimental findings and survey appraisals of $r$ and $B$—can pave the way for viewing modern political societies as behaviourally connected to humanity's evolutionary past.

This paper's analysis of Putin's rhetoric nevertheless requires an additional explanatory link: talk is cheap, and what is said must nevertheless be believed. Putin has been at the helm of the Russian state for 18 years with many problems still being unresolved—the question of how he has retained a critical level of trust therefore becomes particularly important. His actions over Ukraine are a likely explanation, but evolutionary psychology may again offer insights: having led Russia over a long period spanning the early stages of Russia's development as an independent state, Putin has become viewed by many as the nation's father—something other leadership contenders cannot match. Trust in one's parents may be particularly strong for evolutionary reasons, as it enhances the functioning of families. When

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such emotions percolate to politics, however, the accountability implications become profound.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: List of Analysed Speeches (English)

| Address | Word Count | Length (minutes) | Date of Address | Link |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| FA2018 | 13,322 | 117 | 01 March 2018 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957 |
| FA2016 | 9,685 | 69 | 01 December 2016 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53379 |
| FA2015 | 7,571 | 65 | 03 December 2015 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50864 |
| FA2014 | 8,541 | 73 | 04 December 2014 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47173 |
| FA2013 | 9,749 | 70 | 12 December 2013 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19825 |
| FA2012 | 11,278 | 82 | 12 December 2012 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17118 |
| VD2017 | 801 | 8 | 09 May 2017 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54467 |
| VD2016 | 641 | 9 | 09 May 2016 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51888 |
| VD2015 | 985 | 11 | 09 May 2015 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/49438 |
| VD2014 | 472 | 5 | 09 May 2014 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20989 |
| VD2013 | 450 | 4 | 09 May 2013 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/18092 |
| VD2012 | 420 | 6 | 09 May 2012 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/15272 |
| DL2017 | 18,435 | 238 | 15 July 2017 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54790 |
| DL2016 | 18,235 | 220 | 14 April 2016 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51716 |
| DL2015 | 18,452 | 237 | 16 April 2015 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/49261 |
| DL2014 | 17,670 | 236 | 17 April 2014 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20796 |
| DL2013 | 24,758 | 293 | 25 April 2013 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17976 |

| Address | Word Count | Length (minutes) | Date of Address | Link |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *NY2017* | 407 | 4 | 31 December 2017 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56591 |
| *NY2016* | 349 | 3 | 31 December 2016 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53683 |
| *NY2015* | 411 | 3 | 31 December 2015 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51128 |
| *NY2014* | 395 | 3 | 31 December 2014 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47446 |
| *NY2013* | 572 | 4 | 31 December 2013 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20022 |
| *NY2012* | 336 | 3 | 31 December 2012 | http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17260 |

## Appendix B: List of Analysed Speeches (Russian)

| Address | Word Count | Length (minutes) | Date of Address | Link |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *FA2018* | 11,428 | 117 | 01 March 2018 | http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56957/work |
| *FA2016* | 7,323 | 69 | 01 December 2016 | http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/53379/work |
| *FA2015* | 6,107 | 65 | 03 December 2015 | http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50864/work |
| *FA2014* | 7,028 | 73 | 04 December 2014 | http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47173/work |
| *FA2013* | 7,578 | 70 | 12 December 2013 | http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19825/work |
| *FA2012* | 9,164 | 82 | 12 December 2012 | http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/17118/work |
| *VD2017* | 605 | 8 | 09 May 2017 | http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54467/ |
| *VD2016* | 500 | 9 | 09 May 2016 | http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/51888/ |
| *VD2015* | 732 | 11 | 09 May 2015 | http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/49438 |
| *VD2014* | 346 | 5 | 09 May 2014 | http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20989 |
| *VD2013* | 357 | 4 | 09 May 2013 | http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/18089 |
| *VD2012* | 467 | 6 | 09 May 2012 | http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/15271 |
| *DL2017* | 16,149 | 238 | 15 July 2017 | http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/54790/work |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| *DL2016* | 15,367 | 220 | 14 April 2016 | |
| | | | | |
| *DL2015* | 16,029 | 237 | 16 April 2015 | |
| | | | | |
| *DL2014* | 16,383 | 236 | 17 April 2014 | |
| | | | | |
| *DL2013* | 20,966 | 293 | 25 April 2013 | |
| | | | | |
| *NY2017* | 313 | 4 | 31 December 2017 | |
| | | | | |
| *NY2016* | 285 | 3 | 31 December 2016 | |
| | | | | |
| *NY2015* | 320 | 3 | 31 December 2015 | |
| | | | | |
| *NY2014* | 320 | 3 | 31 December 2014 | |
| | | | | |
| *NY2013* | 463 | 4 | 31 December 2013 | |
| | | | | |
| *NY2012* | 277 | 3 | 31 December 2012 | |

## Appendix C: T-Lab Spatial Mapping of Clusters and Characteristic Lemmas (English)



N. 92 CHARACTERISTIC LEMMAS
X = Fact. 1 (27.57%) ; Y = Fact. 2 (19.07%)

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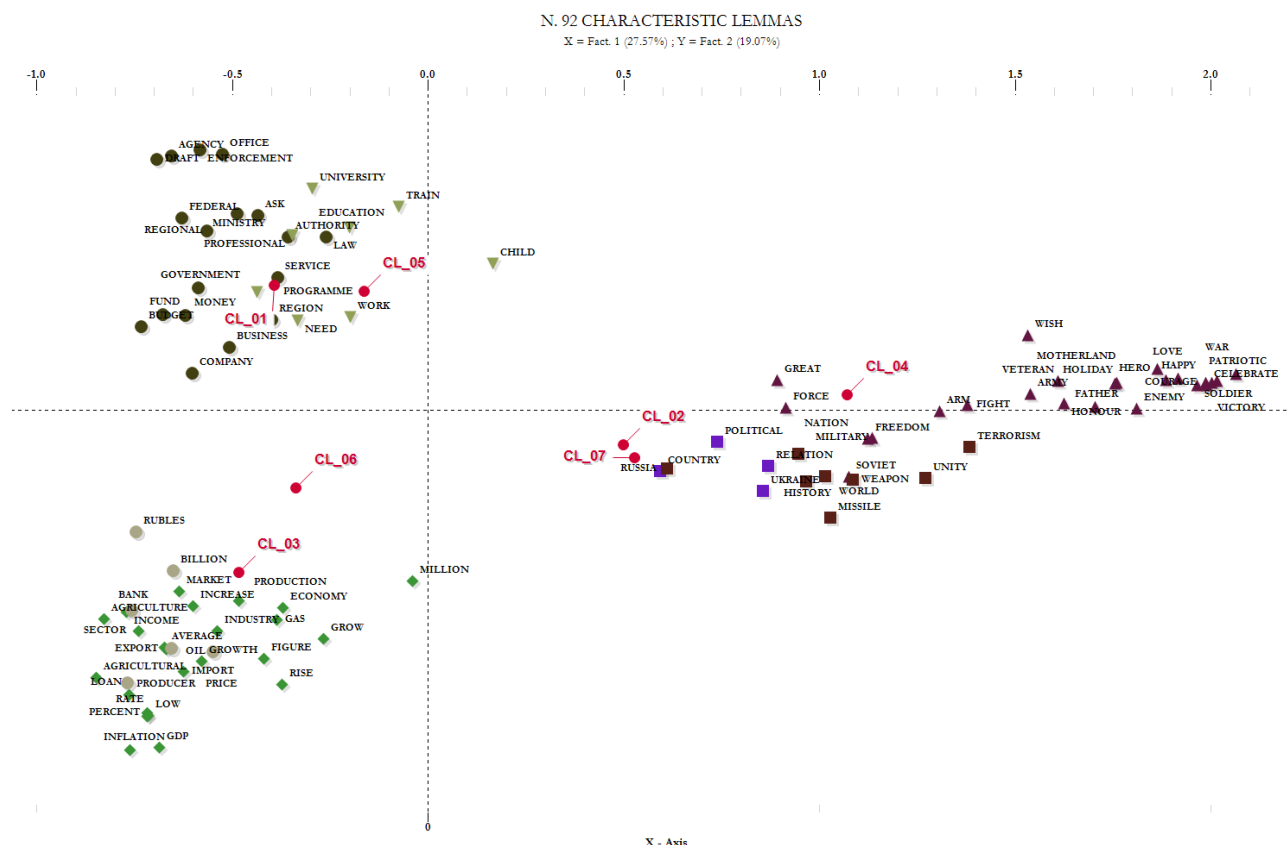
| Cluster (weight in overall corpus. n = 3,324) | Thematic Labels | Characteristic Words by Chi-squared Values |
|---|---|---|
| **1** (23.29%) | Economic development | Страны [country]; возможности [opportunities]; развития [development]; экономики [economy]; ведущие [leading]; производства [production]; передовые [cutting-edge]; комплекса [system]; нового [new]; ВУЗы [higher education]; промышленного [industrial]; число [number]; принципиально [principal]; таких [such]; промышленности [industry]; сармат [*sarmat* (missile)]; отраслей [fields]; высокотехнологичных [high-tech] |
| **2** (15.19%) | Economy | Миллиардов [billions]; рублей [roubles]; процента [percent]; долларов [dollar]; по-моему [in my opinion]; поддержки [support]; чем [than]; бюджета [budget]; миллиарда [billion]; капитал [capital; где-то [somewhere]; рост [growth]; федерального [federal]; цен [price]; плюс [plus]; й []; предусмотрено [provided for]; триллиона [trillion]; инфляция [inflation]; деньги [money] |
| **3** (13.55%) | Labour and industry | Федерации [federation]; российской [Russian]; согласен [agree]; работы [work]; повторяю [repeat]; скажем [say]; решение [decision]; заработной [pay]; решения [decision]; деятельности [activity]; хозяйства [livelihood]; работа [work]; считаю [consider]; честно [fair]; достаточно [sufficient]; сельского [agriculture]; другую [other]; людям [people]; платы [pay] |
| **4** (10.44%) | War and defence | Сил [power]; победы [victory]; великой [great]; стран [countries]; точки [point]; отечественной [patriotic]; зрения [opinion]; стратегического [strategic]; днем [day]; вооруженных [armed]; x [h] ; главным [main]; работать [work]; рождаемости [birth rate]; самых [most]; поздравляю [congratulate]; наших [our]; поколение [generation]; оружия [weapon] |
| **5** (9.00%) | Law and government | Внимание [attention]; проблемы [problems]; деньги [money]; правительство [government]; власти [authorities]; первое [first]; денег [money]; сразу [immediately]; органов [agencies]; все-таки [nevertheless]; правоохранительных [judicial]; особое [particular]; федеральных [federal]; стороны [sides]; обратили [turned]; проблему [problem]; проблема [problem]; решена [solved]; где-то [somewhere] |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **6** (13.94%) | Common goals and bonds | России [of Russia]; наших [our]; граждане [citizens]; граждан [citizens']; интересы [interests]; отношения [relations]; друг [friend]; добрые [good]; жизни [life]; слава [glory]; друга [friend]; безопасность [safety]; товарищи [comrades]; поздравить [congratulate]; новый [new]; понимание [understanding]; слова [words]; добьемся [achieve together] |
| **7** (12.10%) | Nationhood | нашей [our]; Россия [Russia]; народа [of people]; народ [people]; истории [history]; нашего [our]; мир [world]; стране [country]; страны [country]; русский [Russian]; международной [international]; памятью [memory]; семье [family]; своим [our]; войны [war]; общество [society]; страной [country]; каждой [every]; общей [common] |
| **Sum: 97.59%** | | |

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