

Abstracts

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

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.

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

“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

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

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.