

Impartiality, friendship-networks and voting behavior: Evidence from voting patterns in the Eurovision Song Contest[☆]

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ABSTRACT

What is the extent to which a country's political institutions impact aggregate voting behavior in a comparative perspective? More specifically, are citizens in some countries more inclined vote on the basis of 'quality' or 'merit' over 'friendship' or 'loyalty', and if so, why? This paper seeks to address how the extent to which a country's political institutions are impartial (treats all citizens equally, free from corruption, strong rule of law) impact aggregate citizen behavior. When political institutions are more (less) impartial, success in society is more often on the basis of merit (patrimonial ties). This test cases is voting in the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) from 1975 to 2012 among pairs and blocs of 'voting friends'. The theory elucidates that given that certain pairs or blocs exhibit systematic voting bias for one another over time, the bias will be considerably less among impartial states than those with highly partial institutions. Using several measures of 'friendship', I find strong empirical evidence for this claim, even when controlling for myriad alternative factors and taking into account various voting regimes. The analysis gives us new insights on how political institutions condition aggregate citizen behavior in general and that although there is much bias in ESC voting, not all bias is equal among friend-countries.

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1. Introduction

The effect of a country's political institutions and political culture on behavior of its citizens has interested scholars for decades (Banfield, 1958; Almond and Verba, 1963). This study builds on the literature that examines the extent to which low-corrupt, impartial political institutions in a country impact social trust and ultimately civic behavior (Putnam, 1993; Rothstein and Teorell, 2008). A key consequence resulting from impartial political institutions is, among other things, the norm of 'meritocracy' – that the best should 'rise to the top' and achievement should be based on talent and hard work, and not simply political or family contacts. Conversely, in a country with a low degree of impartiality, systems of patronage usually arises, leading to the norm of 'favoritism', whereby family and/or political ties trump merit in awarding employment or public contracts. Although the theoretical consequences of the degree of impartiality in a political system have been advanced quite thoroughly in recent years (see Rothstein and Stolle, 2008; Rothstein and Teorell, 2008 for example), empirical evidence across countries and time is less ubiquitous. The purpose of this study is to test some

of these propositions on the voting behavior of countries in the Eurovision Song Contest (ESC).

As Europe in general and the ESC specifically have integrated further eastward, a greater proportion of the participants are semi to non-democracies with low impartiality. Although always controversial, the ESC results have been accused of ramped voting bias in recent years, with longtime BBC TV commentator Terry Wogan, noting that the competition was "no longer a song contest". Many skeptics claim that these 'friendship networks' are skewing the final results away from more deserving champions – implying that the norms of favoritism trump those of meritocracy. The ESC thus offers a highly salient institutionalized test case to examine the extent to which countries with highly partial institutions tend to vote 'favoritism over quality' more systematically.

Empirical research on Eurovision voting has largely corroborated much of the speculation that friendship networks matter. This is often captured by measures such as geography, culture, a common language or history in that even when controlling for characteristics of a country's song, 'friendship', broadly defined, plays a significant role in influencing the points given from one country to another. Most countries in fact show some degree of favoritism (voting bias) for other countries in their ESC voting patterns over time and the presence of bloc or friend voting, which has grown evermore present in the last 15 years, has in fact been shown empirically to have altered the outcome of the final results on several occasions (Gatherer, 2006).

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But the research question that this study addresses is a novel one in this sub-field of investigation – namely, are all ‘friendships-networks’ equal? According to the extensive literature studying the impact of a country’s political institutions and political culture on behavior of the citizens, the answer should be ‘no’. Thus, the key question here is – is the extent to which a country votes ‘quality over loyalty’ conditioned by the impartiality of said country’s political system?

In an extreme example, on the one hand we see that some countries’ friends are loyal no matter what the song quality of the recipient. Belarus’s 2010 final song had only six points until the final voting country, Georgia, awarded its fellow ex-Soviet country a full ‘douze points’, moving past the UK for next to last place overall. Yet in another case between a commonly pointed out pair that tends to vote for one another ‘no matter what’, (Sweden and Denmark), we find that Denmark’s 23rd place song out of 26 got ‘null points’ from Sweden. These latter two brief examples thus imply that ‘not all friendships work alike.’

This study contributes to our understanding of first, how certain country norms, as captured by political institutions, affect aggregate citizen behaviors in general and second, our understanding of voting patterns in the ESC. First, I offer a new hypothesis about ESC voting that builds on the theories and empirical findings of past literature. That many countries favor ‘friends’ over ‘quality’ has been empirically established, and whether the reason is culture, geography, politics or diaspora, many countries have been shown to systematically ‘friend-vote’. Yet the extent to which countries do so varies significantly, both across friend groups and countries dyads. Building on recent empirical literature that suggests that the political-culture context of a country influences individual decision-making in the aggregate (Fisman and Miguel, 2007; Miguel et al., 2010), the key argument is that the extent to which country alliances (‘friend-countries’) impact voting bias is a function of ‘impartiality’. Impartiality is a norm that stresses meritocracy (e.g. that the ‘best performer should win’) over favoritism, where countries that have political institutions that are more partial (and more favoritism and corruption, e.g. see Evans and Evans, 2000) are more likely to favor friend countries to a lesser extent and vote on the basis of quality. Second, after collecting data on all ESC finals, I test this notion with data from 1975 to 2012, an extension over the previous ESC literature by nine years.¹ I find strong empirical evidence that one, systematic bloc voting exists and has in fact become stronger over time in most cases. Two, the extent to which a country is impartial plays a key role in how ‘loyal’ they are to neighboring and/or ‘friend’ countries. The results are highly robust to numerous alternative model specifications.

2. The song contest: history, rules and voting procedure

Beginning in Lugano, Switzerland in 1956, the Eurovision Song Contest is one of the longest running television programs in history and is one of – if not the most – watched non-sporting events world-wide.² It has millions of fans worldwide and fame and fortune are at stake for winning countries, songwriters and performers. For winning countries themselves, especially smaller ones, much

is invested in winning – for example, the Economist writes of Azerbaijan’s victory in 2011 and hosting the ESC in 2012, “Eurovision, the biggest thing in Azerbaijan since it became independent in 1991”

All countries that are members of the European Broadcast Union can participate, which includes countries that are not typically thought of as ‘European’, such as Israel and Morocco. Each participating country sends one original song entry annually that is no longer than three minutes in length, with each country deciding independently the means by which their song is selected.³ Throughout the years, there have been many rule changes to the contest, for example, it was obligatory that countries sang in their official language from 1966 to 1972 and then again from 1978 to 1998. With respect to voting rules, since 1975, all countries participating have used a normalized ‘preference voting procedure’ that is to say awarding their favorite 10 songs between 1 and 12 points, with the song with the most aggregated points being award that year’s winner.⁴ All participating country’s votes are weighted equally (regardless of population). In 1997, five countries (Switzerland, Germany, UK, Sweden and Austria) tested ‘televoting’ in their countries for the first time, breaking up the decision-making monopoly held by expert juries for each country since the onset of the competition. In 1998, all others followed suit and allowed live televoting to determine the allocation of their points. With bloc/friend voting having become more widely discussed as impacting the outcome – in particular after 2008 when Russia and Ukraine finished 1st and 2nd respectively – each country’s professional jury was reinstated so as to off-set potential biases in each country’s voting electorate. Since that year, 50% of the vote for each country comes from live televoting (or sms voting) and the other 50% comes from a select expert country jury made up of music professionals, which are combined and presented by each country’s representative.

Since 2004, to accommodate the rising number of participants, the ESC has implemented qualifying ‘semifinal rounds’ in the days leading up to the final. From 2005 to 2007 there was one semifinal and from 2008 onward there have been two semifinal rounds. Based on the same voting rules as the final, the highest placed countries go on to the ESC final, while the others are sent home. All ESC participants aside from the so called ‘big 5’ (Germany, UK, France, Spain and Italy) along with the previous year’s winner, must qualify through the semi-final round. Thus not all song entries in each year are allowed to participate in the final contest.

3. Explaining voting in the Eurovision Song Contest: a review of the literature

A fairly extensive amount of empirical studies have been published on voting in the ESC in the past 10–15 years. In some studies, scholars seek to identify if certain song characteristics were systematically linked with success. For example, Flores and Ginsburgh (1996) and Bruine de Bruin (2005) show that the order of a song’s performance is systematically positively linked with greater vote totals – that songs which perform early on tend to get fewer votes than those which perform later on in the evening. Haan et al. (2005) with data from 1975 to 1997, test in addition to the order of a song,

¹ I wish to thank Victor Ginsburgh and Aboul Noury for sending me their ESC data from 1975 to 2003, after which I have updated the data myself until 2012 at <http://eschome.net/>.

² TV ratings estimates world-wide in the past several years have been between 100 and 600 million. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurovision_Song_Contest#cite_note-FennEtAl-52. With hundreds of millions of viewers around the world, is the third most watched repeated international event world-wide after only the FIFA World cup and Olympic Games: <http://www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=eurovisionso>.

³ This procedure can be simply through a one evening, radio/televised broadcast that sends an ‘expert jury’ selection of a song (without viewer input), to a single evening where several songs are presented and viewers vote (for example, Spain and Denmark), to a longer, multi-evening selection process whereby viewers’ voting significantly impacts the outcomes, such as Romania (until 2010), Serbia (until 2009), Norway, Portugal, or most famously, ‘Melodifestivalen’ in Sweden.

⁴ The countries award points in the following way: 1–7 for their 10th to 4th favorite songs respectively and 8, 10 and 12 (‘douze points’) for their favorite three songs. There are no ‘9’ or ‘11’ points given.

whether a song was sung by a male, female, group or duo, which language the song was sung in and whether or not the song was performed by the host country, finding evidence that songs that perform later in the evening and female solo artists that sing in English tended to receive more votes on average.

Other studies, beginning with Yair (1995) and Yair and Maman (1996), focus on the characteristics of the voting countries themselves, most of which come to similar empirical conclusions – that systematic levels of bloc voting in the song contest's final have occurred and that this phenomenon has been increasing since the late 1990s. Ginsburgh and Noury (2008) test whether several 'cultural factors', such as language similarity or the extent to which two countries are 'individualistic' or 'masculine' lead to countries voting for one another. They also test the idea of 'vote trading' – that country 'x' might be accounting the number of points that country 'z' awarded it in the previous year and reciprocating in the current year, generating a cycle of voting bias. They show that from 1975 to 2003, when accounting for 'song quality', this premise does not bear out empirically, citing that song quality and language and cultural similarities are most likely to draw points from one country to another. Clerides and Stengos (2006) extend previous research by including several untested economic and political factors using dyadic data from 1981 to 2005. They find that along with certain song traits (English, female soloist and host country), that the total level of trade between two countries is a significant factor in ESC voting, even when accounting for contiguity, language and common religion. Spierdijk and Vellekoop (2009) use a fixed effects analysis with data from 1975 to 2003 and shift the dependent variable from 'voting' or 'ranking' to 'bias' from one country to another. They find that even when controlling for culture and language, that geography plays a key role in explaining positive bias from one country to another – countries favor their neighbors suggesting that geographic political bloc voting is strong.

Some studies seek to show empirically the voting blocs themselves, mostly through the help of statistical techniques such as social network analysis. Dekker (2007) puts forth a 'friendship network' throughout Europe, pointing to several significant voting blocs, such as Nordic, Baltic, Eastern/ex. Soviet, Western and East Mediterranean (Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Turkey and Malta). Fenn et al. (2005) utilize several statistic techniques including cluster analysis of voting portfolios, social network analysis and common link analysis to elucidate significant cluster groupings. In contrast to some of the previous literature, the authors of this study play down the role of geography, citing that their research "supports the theory that voting cliques exist, although the evidence suggests that they are not based simply on geographical closeness" (Fenn et al., 2005: 596), finding that from 1992 to 2003 pairing such as Croatia and Malta and Russia and Slovenia significantly close, while voting patterns between neighbors like Germany and Austria, and Spain and Portugal to be insignificant. In a study with a greater time range, Gatherer (2006) uses simulation techniques via Monte Carlo methods and finds that reciprocal bloc voting patterns (two or more countries that engage in collusive voting for one another) are dynamic over time. For example, while from 1975 to 1980 Gatherer (2006) identifies only one significant voting bloc (the UK and France dyad), bloc voting has become much more prevalent over time and from 2001 to 2005 there were five significant blocs – the 'Partial Benelux' (Netherlands and Belgium), 'Balkan bloc' (ex. Yugoslavia, Albania, Romania, Turkey, Cyprus and Greece), the 'Warsaw Pact' (Poland, Russia and Ukraine) and the 'Viking Empire' (Nordic and Baltic states), which implies that a strong majority of European states participated in collusive, bloc voting during this time. This implies that bloc-voting has increased as the ESC participation has expanded eastward in recent years.

Another strand of ESC voting studies point to 'diaspora voting', whereby "large numbers of migrants in a country results in a return flow of Eurovision points to their original countries, started to dominate the voting patterns of many western European countries" (Kavanagh, 2010). Looking at voting-receiving patterns in pairs of countries like Estonia to Russia, Ireland to Latvia, or Germany to Turkey, one immediately would jump to this logical conclusion that Diasporas play a critical role in the voting patterns of certain ESC participants. Although much antidotal attention has been paid to this particular explanation, no systematic ESC-wide investigation has been underdone to test the empirical validity of this claim aside from looking at the voting for one or a few countries (Kavanagh, 2010) or how specific diasporas (e.g. Turkish diaspora) impact the voting of a select group of countries (Gatherer, 2006).

Finally, some research has explored the *motivations* behind 'friend voting', or bias in the ESC. First, scholars have simply asserted that it is a matter of musical taste – countries with a similar history, located in the same geographic area appreciate the same music (Yair, 1995). Some speak of distinct 'Balkan' or 'Nordic' music, yet as Gatherer (2006) argues, bloc-voting was much weaker before 1995, and thus 'taste' can most likely not account for the more recent trends in bias. Second, ESC votes can be an expression of political preferences of one country toward another (either positive or negative). For example, Israel has given Germany '0' points since 1989 (with the exception of 12-points for 'Reise Nach Jerusalem' in 1999), Turkey and Cyprus exchange very few points despite geographical proximity and cultural ties, and Terry Wogan's explains why the UK has done so poorly in recent years, as a "post-Iraq backlash". Third, some have asserted that collusion or 'friend voting' is based out of sheer self-interest. Countries knowingly give certain others in hopes that their points will be reciprocated. Doosje and Haslam (2005) and Fenn et al. (2005) have found that 'mutual back-scratching' is a significant factor, building on the Greece–Cyprus relationship as an example.

However, the literature has ignored several aspects of ESC voting. First that not all countries in collusive pairs (e.g. Greece and Cyprus, UK and Ireland) or voting blocs (e.g. the Balkan or Nordic Blocs) are equally biased toward one another – yet collusive voting or bias among pairs or groups of states is often looked at as a homogenous occurrence within such groups. Second, most studies have not looked past the year 2003, the last year before the semifinals were introduced. Third, this analysis controls for a commonly put forth assumption explicitly – namely, that diaspora voting matters, and that the effect is greatest as a function of the public's impact on the allocation of their country's vote. This study attempts to further our understanding of Eurovision voting regarding these three holes in the literature.

4. When do friends not vote for friends? Theory and hypothesis

The starting point in this theory is that all states tend to bias their vote toward certain other states, and that, in many cases (although not all), some of this positive bias is reciprocated (e.g. see Fig. 2). Whether this is for reasons of geography, shared culture or language, diaspora or simply a recognition of shared music tastes is difficult to parse out because we do not have 'exit polling' from voters and thus do not know individual motivations as to why people vote the way that they do. Yet if we simply assume that all of these aforementioned factors play a role in why certain countries systematically favor others or even each other, then what explains variation in the extent to which countries bias one another via point allocation? Put another way, *are some states in 'friend-networks' more prone to voting 'song quality' over friendship*, and if so, why?

Coming back to longtime BBC ESC expert commentator Terry Wogan, a recent quote captures the essence of the theory presented here: “The UK are the straightest voters, they don’t vote for their neighbors, they vote for what they think is the best song, but this isn’t reciprocated.”⁵ Essentially what he is arguing is that a critical mass of voters in *certain countries* (in this case the UK) is more likely to vote ‘quality over friendship’ relative to other states who are inclined to vote for friend-countries irrespective of song quality (even though Wogan is wrong about the UK, its most favored country is in fact Ireland).

In this section, I build on the recent literature that discusses ‘quality of government’, as understood by a particular feature, ‘impartiality’, as defined by Rothstein and Teorell (2008). The argument offered here is that the extent to which a country’s political institutions are ‘impartial’ is critical. An impartial government (e.g. one with high ‘quality of government’) is one that treats all individuals within its territorial jurisdiction in an impartial manner, regardless of race, ethnicity, family/political ties or social standing. Strongly connected with impartial institution is the emphasis on *meritocracy* – that talent and performance should outweigh connections. A ‘partial’ public sector on the other hand, reflects a society that tends to favor certain groups of people over other, which can be for political, ethnic, family ties, linguistic reasons, etc. Moreover, I assume that public institutions represent ‘how things get done’ in a society, and that these societies with lesser levels of impartiality, tend to be more corrupt on average, as clientalism and favoritism go hand in hand with a lack of impartiality (Rothstein and Teorell, 2008). Societies that are more grounded in ‘partiality’ are ones where favoritism and patrimonialism are commonplace. On the other hand, meritocracy and talent tend to be rewarded more than patrimonialism in societies that have more impartial political institutions. Thus when impartiality is not the common ‘way things get done’ in a society, certain individuals have built-in advantages over other individuals.

This in turn impacts the ‘social’ or ‘generalized trust’ in a society, which has been documented as low in countries or sub-national regions with partial political institutions and higher in countries or areas with low-corrupt, impartial institutions (Banfield, 1958; Rothstein and Stolle, 2008; Tabellini, 2010). Social trust leads people, on average, to believe that ‘others will do the right thing’. In the context of something like a competition or a job search, one would expect that in setting of high trust that people would believe that judges or future employers would be making honest decisions on the basis of merit. In low-trust settings however, people would tend to believe that a job applicant for example was given favor via personal or political connections, and did not necessarily ‘deserve’ that which they were awarded. In the context of ESC voting, this relates quite simply – people (average voters or even expert judges) in countries with highly impartial institutions will be more prone to trust that others will vote on merit, and consequently, they will behave as such, while in highly partial institutional settings, people will generally not trust that voters in other countries will be ‘voting on the merit’, so they will more often vote based on favoritism over song quality.

While admittedly problematic due to the fact that in this case the claim is untestable at the micro-level, the theory here assumes that macro structures (impartiality of public institutions) can help explain a critical mass of individual behavior (voting in the Eurovision Song Contest). While not without their critics, there are ample studies from the field of political behavior and sociology to suggest that one, political institutions reflect a certain ‘culture’ of the citizens that they represents and two, the relationship is

reciprocal, political institutions in turn impact on aggregate individual behavior (see Elkins and Simeon, 1979; March and Olsen, 1984; Inglehart, 1997; Putnam, 1993; Guiso et al., 2008). For example, Almond and Verba’s work suggests that the political organization and institutional design of a country reflect the political culture of the country itself (Almond and Verba, 1963). In recent empirical studies, Fisman and Miguel (2010) show that norms of corruption and rule of law from a United Nations diplomat’s home country is systematically linked with accumulating a higher degree of unpaid parking tickets while serving in New York City. Miguel et al. (2010) show a robust empirical relationship between civil conflict in a football (soccer) player’s home country and his level of violence on the pitch. Finally, there is empirical evidence in several studies that clientalism and corruption are empirically linked with ethnic bloc-voting in elections (Zappala, 1998).

While it is far beyond the scope of this paper to address the causal direction of these factors (e.g. whether institutions effect individuals or individuals mores strongly impact their political institutions), it is assumed based on this research that aggregate citizen behavior and the strength of political institutions are indeed strongly inter-related. Thus if political institutions in a country are a representation of a society’s ‘values’ and this in turn impacts the behavior of individuals in the aggregate, than such societies built on the notion of impartiality are thus more likely to accept merit over contacts, and that the ‘best song should win’, even if it is outside their culture or ‘friend’ group – compared with more partial/patrimonial societies. This is not to say that *all* individuals vote for ‘friends over quality’ in countries with less impartial institutions, or that *all* individuals in highly impartial societies vote only on the basis of quality, but that a *critical mass* of voters will play by the ‘rules of the game’ as they understand it, and simply votes for friends and/or neighboring countries. Thus the following hypothesis is tested here:

H1. The more impartial a country is, the more likely it will collectively vote ‘quality over friendship’ when the quality of said song is outside of their friend network.

5. Operationalization of concepts

5.1. Quality and bias in the ESC

Any discussion about ‘favoritism’ of ‘friend voting’ implies that there is systematic bias in certain countries voting patterns. Since many past studies have been interesting in this concept, measuring ‘bias’ is commonplace in the literature on Eurovision voting (see Ginsburgh and Noury, 2008; Spierdijk and Vellekoop, 2009 for example). Bias from country C_i to C_j is of course not simply awarding a high number of points, because C_j ’s song could have also receive high points from a large proportion of other countries, implying that the quality of C_j ’s song is high in the minds of the general voting public. ‘Quality’ here is defined as the average aggregate number of points from all other country juries to song C_j in year ‘t’, or:

$$\text{Quality } C_{jt} = \frac{1}{p-2} \sum_{p \neq i,j} C_{ijt} \quad (1)$$

where the quality of C_j ’s song in year ‘t’ for from country C_i is its vote total (minus points from country C_i) multiplied by the total number of voting participants ‘p’ (minus country C_j because countries cannot vote for themselves, and minus C_j ’s points, because we are interested in its vote relative to all others).⁶ The equation

⁵ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2009/may/15/terry-wogan-eurovision-song-contest>.

⁶ The concept of ‘quality’ in regard to music is admittedly difficult to capture, and thus it is empirically measured in a ‘democratic sense’ in this literature. Just as a

Table 1
Top 10 most bias dyads pre and post televoting.

1975–1997			1998–2012			
	Voter	Receiver	Bias	Voter	Receiver	Bias
1	Malta	Slovakia	9.5 ^a	Romania	Moldova	9.6
2	Cyprus	Greece	9.1	Macedonia	Albania	9.4
3	Greece	Cyprus	7.1	Moldova	Romania	9.2
4	Turkey	Bosnia & Herz	6.7	Greece	Cyprus	9.0
5	Croatia	Malta	5.6	Azerbaijan	Turkey	8.5
6	Slovenia	Russia	5.1	Serbia	Macedonia	8.5
7	Estonia	France	4.6	France	Portugal	8.2
8	Netherlands	Russia	4.5	Turkey	Azerbaijan	8.0
9	Finland	Italy	3.6	Italy	Romania	7.9 ^a
10	Poland	Hungary	3.5	Lithuania	Georgia	7.8

Note: Taken as the average bias from the giving to receiving country since 1998.

^a Pair contains only 2 observations, all others contain 3 or more.

also implies that each receiving country's quality can vary slightly depending on the point giver.

When measuring 'bias', we mean this to imply that we are interested in country C_i 's points to C_j relative to all other countries.⁷ The measure employed here is taken from Spierdijk and Vellekoop (2009) and is defined as:

$$\text{Bias } C_{ijt} = \text{Vote } C_{ijt} - \text{'Quality'} C_{jt} \quad (2)$$

For example, despite being in the same 'friend group', Denmark's 'douze points' for Norway in 2009 represents only a small positive bias as Norway's point record-breaking song was awarded approximately 9.5 points per country on average, much different from Georgia's 12 points to Belarus in 2010, which had received less than 0.2 points per country. Where the bias of country C_i to C_j in year ' t ' is its relative points compared with song C_i 's over 'quality' in year ' t '. Positive numbers for 'bias' in year ' t ' thus imply that country C_i over-valued C_j 's song relative to all other voting participants, while negative numbers imply that they under-voted said song in year ' t '.

Table 1 gives a brief illustration of the ten most biased dyads in two periods. The list on the left shows the long-term voting biases in the expert jury voting, while the second list demonstrates biases during televoting from 1998 onward. Greece and Cyprus stand out in both periods as having noteworthy levels of mutual positive bias, while we see countries like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Malta and Russia favored by Turkey, Croatia and Slovenia respectively during expert jury voting. After 1998 and televoting, along with inclusion of many more eastern European participants, we see the levels of bias among the top ten dyads to be noticeably higher. We now see that Moldova and Romania, along with Turkey and Azerbaijan have joined Greece and Cyprus among the ranks of the most mutually biased voting pairs. Not surprisingly, Serbia favors Macedonia by 8.5 points, while Macedonia favors neighboring Albania by 9.4 points on average during this time period. Interestingly, we see very few western countries considered to have strongly impartial institutions on this list, such as Sweden and Norway, Denmark an Iceland or Switzerland and Germany; we find that the list is comprised of mostly low-impartial, low-trust countries in the European context.

5.2. Friendship-networks

As noted in the review of the literature, several voting blocs have been identified throughout the song contest's history. In this analysis, it is not of central concern *whether or not* certain cultural, historical or geographic factors lead to voting biases that is of interest here, but *which* pairs/groups of countries can we identify as 'partner' or 'friend' countries over time. In identifying voting blocs, there are generally two ways scholars have done so systematically. The first and most common is to look at pairwise voting between two countries and with some type of statistical analysis, test whether there are non-stochastic, systematic collusive voting patterns. In some cases, scholars find significant vote collusion among single pairs alone (e.g. Greece and Cyprus) in other cases, multiple pairs have been found to vote for one another in more or less concentrated, geographic areas (Balkan countries, Nordic countries, ex-Soviet countries for example). Gatherer (2006) analysis for example uses such techniques.

A second way of identifying 'friend networks' in the literature is to look not only how two countries vote for one another, but how they vote for all other countries, that is to say to compare two country's entire voting portfolios over time to elucidate patterns of like-mindedness. Using cluster analysis, Fenn et al. (2005) employ this tactic to identify blocs of countries with common voting preferences, cultural affinities and music tastes. A key advantage of this method is that one avoids possible misleading dyadic results that could be driven by an engaged diaspora in one single country. For example, Germany, like Azerbaijan, Bulgaria and Armenia tend to have a strong, positive 'Turkish bias' in their voting, yet Germany's entire voting portfolio (aside from the Turkish vote) looks quite dissimilar from these other three countries, thus we would not group Germany with Bulgaria or Armenia. An additional advantage is of course that when explaining voting bias among countries, using exclusively the first method is somewhat tautological – that is to say explaining pairwise bias with pairwise bias. In this analysis, I follow Fenn et al. (2005) and employ a cluster analysis of voting portfolios for two periods – 1975–1997 and 1998–2012. I separate the years for three reasons. One is of course the advent of televoting in 1998 and potential differences in preferences from the expert juries compared with the average, voting electorate. Second is that Gatherer (2006) has shown that voting blocs are albeit slow-moving, but dynamic and in order to capture possible changes over time, it is helpful to separate these two time periods.⁸ Third is to capture the differences in voting patterns as many new countries – such as Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Moldova – enter the ESC for the first time, potentially altering the patterns of voting for many countries.

I begin by generating a data series that takes the average points given by all countries, to each country that has participated in a final at least three times for each time period. Then, a cluster analysis is performed using Ward's linkage and squared Euclidean distancing.⁹ From here, a cluster tree can be produced for each time period. Fig. 1 shows the cluster tree dendrogram for 1998–2012.

Pairwise scores that approach zero imply that states tend to vote more similarly. We find that Sweden and Norway have the closest voting portfolios during this time period, followed by Greece and Cyprus, Moldova and Romania, Netherlands and Belgium, Slovenia

popular song on the radio with the most sales/downloads is considered to have of a sort of high quality due to its popularity, so too is a song measured as having 'quality' in this study – thus as more voters believe it to be worthy of points, the higher the quality.

⁷ An alternative measure could be to use a measure of eigenvector centrality. However, due to the exclusive use in the empirical field of ESC voting of measure of Bias in Eq. (2) (or some close variation of this measurement) I elect to define bias as such for purposes of direct comparability with previous work.

⁸ In his analysis, he shows how blocs change every 5th or 6th year. In this study, I try to avoid arbitrary cut-off years and confine the two time periods to approximately 15 years each and find that the patterns of bias are stable within the two time blocs.

⁹ For robustness, I also check groupings using average linkage and non-squared Euclidean distancing, however, Ward's linkage and squared Euclidean distancing is thought to produce the most meaningful and least biased results (Lance and Williams, 1967).

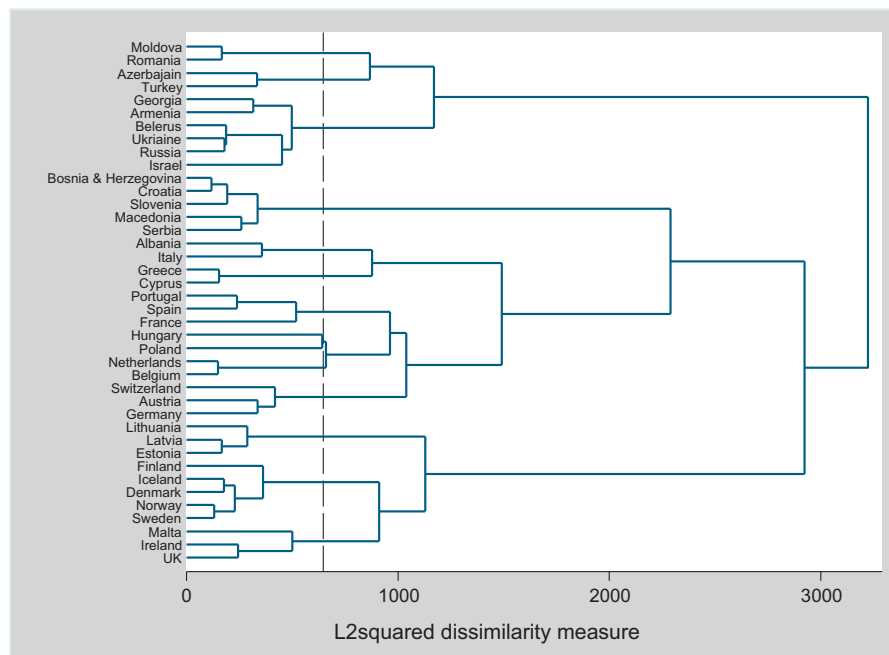


Fig. 1. Cluster tree of overall voting patterns in ESC final: 1998–2012.

and Croatia, Denmark and Iceland and the trio of Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. Using the lowest cut-off point possible for establishing cluster groups (represented by the vertical dashed line) so as to include all countries in a group, we see the following patterns for the time period of 1998–2012.

Most all of these groups are quite intuitive to any observer of the ESC in the past several years and are quite consistent with past literature. For example, we find that the three Baltic States, the Nordic countries, ex. Yugoslavian states, five post-Soviet states, and South West Mediterranean countries have very similar voting preferences during this time period and constitute rather strong statistical cluster groupings. On the other hand, certain pairs make up their own group, such as Moldova and Romania, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey and Azerbaijan, and Italy and Albania. Using the same approach for the previous time period of 1975–1997, the following groups are found in Table 2.

Again, while not all countries that competed after 1998 are present, we find that some of the blocs (Nordic, central/Western Europe, several post-socialist, Eastern countries) are fairly stable. Notice that states like Finland, Portugal, Switzerland, Israel and Monaco displayed voting patterns during this time that were quite unique so that they did not significantly cluster as strongly with other countries, thus they are not included in any group in the robust checks.

We test the level of dyadic (positive) bias in countries within each of these groups during the two time periods and their relative level of bias over time. The results show that all groups (with the exception of group 8 in the first time period) display strong dyadic bias and such bias is significant from year to year.¹⁰ For an additional robustness check, the friend dyad is operationalized using the pairwise-bias method for the two time periods discussed above. Fig. 2 shows the results for the period of televoting using this alternative method. Here while we see that all regions of Europe have pairs/blocs of countries that display voting bias, it would certainly

appear that lesser-democratic countries with more partial political institutions have systematically higher levels of pairwise bias, as shown by the thicker line connecting the country-nodes.

5.3. Data: the key variables

$Vote_{Cijt}$ is used in this study as the dependent variable in the model, controlling for $Quality_{Cijt}$ on the right-hand side of the model. The variable ranges from 0 to 12. An alternative would be to simply use a first-order spatial model with $Bias_{Cijt}$ as the dependent variable, which has its advantages because it is a continuous (rather than categorical) variable and does not contain censored data (as $Vote_{Cijt}$ does for values 9 and 11 and stops at 12). However, using $Vote_{Cijt}$ allows us to test the strength of $Quality_{Cijt}$ relative to the hypothesis (friendship \times impartiality). Moreover, it allows for random effects regression that produces clearer results regarding how ‘off’ a country ‘i’s vote for country ‘j’ is relative to the model predictions from the hypothesis.¹¹

The key independent variables are twofold. First is whether a dyad is a ‘friend-dyad’ or not (‘1’ if yes, ‘0’ if no) as defined by the statistical significance of their overall voting portfolios ($Friend\ Dyad_{Cijt}$) and checked for robustness with the pairwise-voting method (e.g. if a dyad displays mutual bias over time or not). Thus for example, any dyad including two countries in the same friend group (e.g. Serbia and Croatia, Finland and Sweden or Russia and Ukraine) would be coded as ‘1’, while dyads containing two countries not in the same friend group (for example Russia and UK, or Portugal and Denmark) are ‘0’. Since not all countries compete every year, a pragmatic approach is taken in the coding of this variable in that country ‘i’ and ‘j’ are ‘friends’ are coded for two periods of time – pre and post 1998 – a cut-off year chosen for is significance in the change in the voting rules.¹²

¹⁰ See Appendix 3 for regression results of positive bias by bloc for both aggregated year and each year since 1998 and stability of the friendship blocs in the aggregate during this time.

¹¹ I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer at Social Networks for this suggestion.

¹² A test of the stability of the friend dyad groups in each time period was conducted, showing the groups to be remarkably stable over time. The results can be found in Appendix 1.

Table 2

Friend groups via voting portfolio patterns (method 1) in two time periods.

Time period 1. 1975–1997						
G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	G6	G7
Bos. & Herz. Turkey	Sweden Denmark Norway Iceland Finland ^a	Russia Slovenia	UK Ireland LUX ^a Belgium ^a Switzerland ^a	Israel Yugoslavia	Estonia Poland Hungary	Cyprus Greece
G8	G9	G10				
Germany ^a France ^a Netherlands ^a Austria ^a	Croatia Malta Portugal	Italy Spain Monaco ^a				
Time period 2. 1998–2012						
G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	G6	G7
Romania Moldova	Greece Cyprus	Turkey Azerbaijan	Ukraine Georgia Russia Belarus Armenia Israel	Italy Albania	Serbia ^b Slovenia Croatia Bos. & Herz. Macedonia	Spain Portugal France ^a
G8	G9	G10	G11	G12	G13	
Germany Switzerland Austria	Latvia Lithuania Estonia	Sweden Denmark Iceland Norway Finland	UK Ireland Malta ^a	Netherlands Belgium	Poland ^a Hungary ^a	

^a Implies a weaker cluster linkage relative to other pairings and is removed from any group in checks of robustness.^b Was Serbia and Montenegro prior to 2007.

Second is the impartiality of the vote giver (*Impartiality* C_{ijt}). Impartiality is an abstract concept and thus difficult to measure, as many countries have 'de facto' laws that protect all groups, yet in practice much patronism exists. With no perfect indicator to capture impartiality, and no two data sources measuring our concept in exactly the same way, the selection of the data is based on the following criteria: (1) The time frame of availability and country coverage, (2) the precision, internal consistency

and reliability with which the researchers that provide the data can define and measure the desired concept, and (3) how accepted the measures are in the contemporary academic literature, and the frequency of publication in top journals. On these three criteria, impartiality is measured using a common measure for 'quality of government' from the *International Country Risk Guide (ICRG)*, which combines three aspects of public sector practices: the extent to which 'corruption' is prevalent, strength of the 'rule of law', and

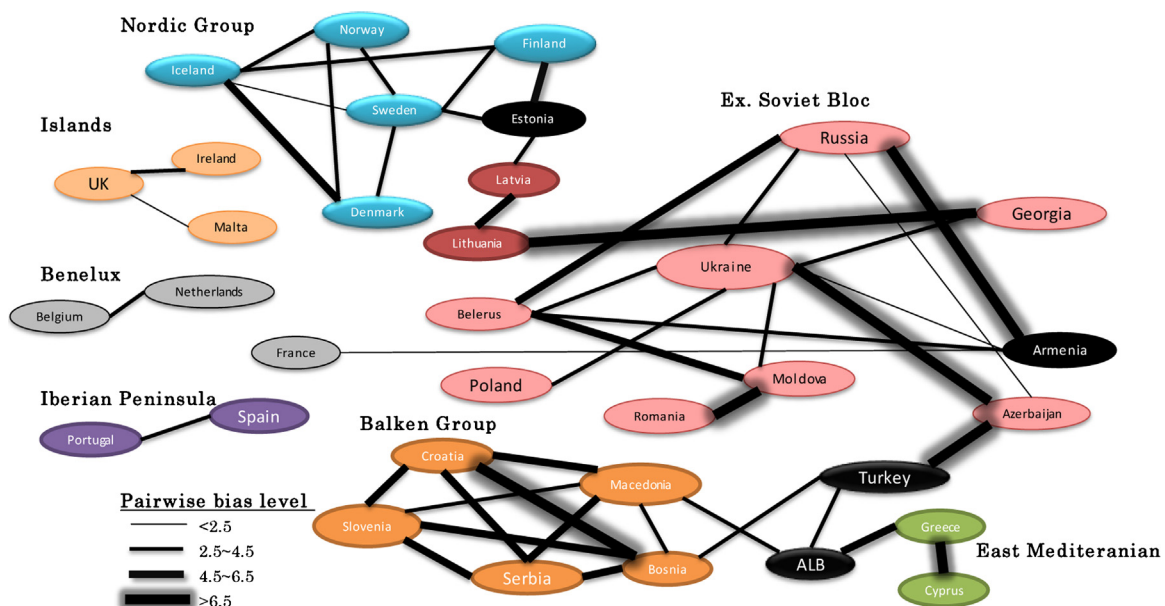


Fig. 2. Alternative Friend Groups (method 2): 1998–2012. Note: All pairwise bias has at least 3 observations per dyad and is significant at the 95% level of confidence or above.

the level of ‘government effectiveness’ in the public sector. Compared with other measures, such as the World Bank Governance Indicators, or Transparency International’s ‘Corruption Perceptions Index’ which are only available starting in the mid-1990s, the ICRG extends back to 1983 for many of the countries in Europe. The variable has been used as a proxy for impartiality or ‘Quality of Government’ in publications in top political science and economics journals (Charron and Lapuente, 2010).¹³

An interaction term is then constructed between these two to most aptly test the hypothesis ($\text{Friend } C_{ijt} \times \text{Impartiality } C_{ijt}$). *Friend Dyad* C_{ijt} is expected to be positive (implying positive from one friend to another), while the interaction term should be negative and significant, implying that the level of bias between two friend countries diminishes significantly as *Impartiality* C_{it} increases.

5.4. Control variables

Other salient factors that have been highlighted in the literature include characteristics of the songs themselves in a given year. First, I account for the language a song is sung in. When a song is sung in a more widely spoken language (English, French) then its meaning has the advantage of being understood by a wider public.¹⁴ Dummy variables are constructed for whether a song is sung in English (English C_{jt}), French (French C_{jt} or another language other than English or French (Other Language C_{jt})).¹⁵ Next, the performer(s) is accounted for using four dummy variables. Past research has shown that soloists tend to win more often than groups, and that females tend to get more votes on average than male performers. Thus whether a song in any given year is performed by a group, a duet, a solo male or solo female is controlled for. A third factor is whether a country is a host country or not, implying that it was the previous year’s winner. It has been argued that countries tend to systematically reward the host countries with higher points, thus I include a dummy variable for this (Host Country C_{jt}). Furthermore, many commentators and scholars alike have looked at the order in which a song is performed, and argued that a later number is more advantageous than an earlier one. For example, the a strong majority of the past winners all went late in the draw, with Sweden going 17th out of 25, Azerbaijan going 19th out of 26, Germany going 22nd out of 25 and Norway going 20th out of 25. In fact no winning song has performed in the top 10 of the night’s order since Turkey in 2003. Thus the order that a country’s song performs is controlled for (Song Order C_{jt}). Other variables in the model control dyadic level factors that could explain levels of pairwise bias. First, several studies have pointed to geography as a key factor of voting, with neighboring states in particular tending to trade votes at higher levels, *ceteris paribus* I thus control for whether a pair of states in a dyad share a border or not (Contiguity C_{ij}). Next, a shared language between two countries has been demonstrated in the literature as salient. Greece and Cyprus share a common language, which could mean that they can watch

each other’s television, are familiar with each other’s musical performers, and can understand when songs are sung in the official native language. I control for dyadic language similarity (Language C_{ij}) as equaling ‘1’ when two countries share any officially recognized language. Thus the Switzerland–France, Finland–Sweden and Russia–Ukraine dyads for example are ‘1’, despite Switzerland’s, Finland’s and Ukraine’s majority languages being German, Finnish and Ukrainian respectively. In addition, I check for ‘political vote trading’. For example, Ginsburgh and Noury (2006) test whether the amount of points from country ‘j’ to country ‘i’ effect the number of points awarded from country ‘i’ to ‘j’, thus I control for this using a lagged variable for country j’s vote to country ‘i’ (Lag Vote C_{ijt-1}). I take the lagged vote to avoid having the Vote C_{ji} on both sides of the equation as well as to test the recent memory of states that were awarded points by other participants in the previous year so as to see if there is any immediate reciprocity. However, as not all countries compete every year, this significantly reduces the number of observations, it is thus only included in a limited amount of regressions.

Finally, I test whether minority groups from ESC countries residing in other ESC countries effect the vote of the host country (*Diaspora* C_{ji}). We assume that minorities that come from other ESC countries would exhibit the strongest ‘diaspora effect’ by voting for their homeland via their host-country. Since no empirical paper on ESC voting has explicitly tested this for all countries, this study makes a pioneering effort in attempt to operationalize this variable and include it as a control variable. The best available and most comprehensive measure across countries and time for this is number of ESC-country foreign residents, which is taken from Eurostat from 1998 to 2011. Since data is relatively sparse in several cases (yet noticeably ‘sticky’ over time), the average is taken during this time period and applied to 2012 as well. For countries outside the EU, we employ the latest nation-wide census to extract significant minority groups. Ideally, we would take the percentages of each group in each country, yet because different measures are used (foreign residents in most cases, language or ethnic minorities in others), a parsimonious strategy is taken – namely, the largest five ESC minority groups for each country are taken, and then coded inversely 1–5.¹⁶ It is expected that the larger the minority, the greater the impact on voting. The results are found in Appendix 1, along with all data sources. Admittedly, operationalizing this can be problematic. Problems of course stem from the fact that countries do censuses in different years and some (e.g. France for example) do not ask about ethnic background of residents. Others only ask about mother-tongue language to get at the level of diversity in a country. Thus in any multi-country, diachronic dataset, slightly different measures must be amalgamated to test this hypothesis, meaning results must be treated somewhat cautiously. However, based on available data, we can proxy the strength of *Diaspora* C_{ji} by accounting for the size of each ESC participant’s minority groups that come from other ESC participant countries.¹⁷ The data would suggest that, at least on an antidotal level, during the televoting era, we observe that some countries (Russia, Ukraine and Turkey) have seemed to benefit from having wide-spread significant diasporas throughout Europe, while others (UK and Poland) have not. Conversely, countries with few or no significant minority groups in other ESC states like Estonia and Latvia (which have both won ESC since 2000), or Iceland or Malta, have done better on average since 1998 than countries with wide-spread minorities throughout

¹³ For some counties – Georgia, Macedonia and Moldova, ICRG data is unavailable. Since the missing data is non-random, mean-substitution or simple imputation is inappropriate. In order to keep these observations, I elect to use the method of ‘hot deck imputation’, whereby these three cases are compared with the most similar ESC countries for measures of impartiality in other data (in this case the ‘World Governance Indicators’, (‘WGI’), Kaufmann et al., 2009). In this case the most similar countries were Croatia, Albania and Azerbaijan respectively, thus the ICRG scores for the missing cases were imputed from these three.

¹⁴ This could help explain why Ireland and UK won so often during the period in which participating countries were obliged to sing in their official language.

¹⁵ In the case where both are used, such as Iceland entry in 2010, titled ‘je ne sais pas’, or Sweden’s ‘La Voix’ in 2009, which had a French refrain but all other text is sung in English, the song is coded in the language for which the majority of the text is written.

¹⁶ For example, in the case of Germany or Austria – in which Turks represent the largest minority group – the voter–receiver dyads of Germany–Turkey and Austria–Turkey respectively would be ‘5’, while the second (fifth) largest groups are coded ‘4’ (‘1’) for *Diaspora* C_{ji} .

¹⁷ A full list of the sources and each country’s top 5 groups is listed in Appendix 2.

Europe, such as Poland, UK or even Germany. Moreover, while the largest Diasporas in some countries (e.g. Turks in Germany) tend to lead to high points from the host country to the minority group's home country, others do not. For example, while the Polish minority constitutes the largest ESC minority groups in Iceland, and Iceland has awarded Poland only three total points in all finals since 1998.

Other variables included in the model control for changing patterns in the contest over time. First is simply a *year count*, which begins at '1' in the year 1975 and finishes in 2012 to test whether bias is greater over time overall. Second is the number of voting participants, which has increased significantly since the Eastern and Central European states have entered the contest.

6. Sample and methods

The sample employed here ranges from 1975 to 2012 and includes all countries that have participated in the ESC final at least twice. The focus is thus on the vote in the final and not the semi-finals, and therefore countries like Montenegro (post-split with Serbia) or San Marino that have never been voted into a final are excluded because there is not opportunity for pairwise voting bias. The total number of countries in the analysis is 46, with the maximum number of vote-recipient countries being 26 in any given year. In terms of vote-giving countries, I take all countries votes that have made it to a final in any year, irrespective of whether they managed to make it in a certain year or not, so as to include as much data as possible on reciprocal, pairwise voting over time.¹⁸

The dependent variable is *Vote*_{*C_{ijt}*} and therefore the unit of analysis is the dyad-year. The dyad-year as level of analysis is an advantage over the monotonic country-year level because it allows for controlling past votes from country 'B' to country 'A' while estimating country 'A' current vote on country 'B' among other dyadic factors. Since the range (from 0 to 12) is categorical and censored at the top (a country cannot give another country 9 or 11 points), a Tobit model is used in addition to pooled-OLS to control for this censoring near the upper limit. Moreover, the robustness of the estimates is checked by using a random effects Tobit model, allowing for the intercepts to vary across dyads. Controlling for the potential problems of heteroskedasticity across years, Huber-White robust standard errors are employed. To check for additional robustness, standard errors clustering on the dyad as well as the voting country are used for robustness checks.

The analysis uses unbalanced panel data and I attempt to remedy several problems commonly associated with time series data. In several models, a lagged dependent variable is included to account for past trends of bias from country 'i' to country 'j'. However, this estimation is not preferred because we ideally want to compare the effects of the beta coefficients across dyads, not only within them over time. Moreover, several checks for robustness are included in the results section to test the sensitivity of years, voting rule changes and measurement of the concepts.

The model estimated is therefore: $\text{Vote}_{ijt} = \beta_1(\text{Friends}_{ijt}) + \beta_2(\text{impartiality}_{it}) + \beta_3(\text{Friends}_{ijt} \times \text{impartiality}_{it}) + \beta_4(\text{Quality}_{jt}) + \text{controls} + \text{error}$

7. Results

Table 3 shows the tests of the hypothesis. The first six models use pooled OLS, while models 7–10 employ a Tobit regression. Model 1 tests the hypothesis for all available years (1975–2012). The model

sheds light on several interesting aspects of ESC voting. First, the quality of the song matters to a great extent, even when friendship, contiguity and other factors are considered in the model. The models show consistently that, on average, for each point given to country 'j' by all other countries on average (e.g. *Quality*_{*C_{jt}*}), country 'i' will follow suit with about 0.9 points. Second, and pertaining more specifically to the hypothesis, we find that when looking at the individual constituent variables, that a Friend Dyad *C_{ijt}* exhibits a significantly higher vote than a non-friend dyad when controlling for *Quality*_{*C_{ijt}*}, which is evidence of systematic voting bias across all friend dyads. The coefficient for *Impartiality*_{*C_{it}*} however, which can be interpreted when Friend Dyad *C_{ijt}* is equal to '0', does not have a significant, independent effect on voting patterns independent of song quality. Most interestingly, the interaction term demonstrates that the voting bias resulting from being a friend dyad is significantly offset by the impartiality of country 'i'. While all friend dyads systematically display voting bias during the time period in question, impartial ones do so to a lesser degree than partial ones.

Models 2 and 3 check the results before and after 1998 – a year that represents a significant change in the voting rules (from exclusively expert juries to exclusively televoting). The results from model 1 remain robust, yet interestingly the conditional impact of *Impartiality*_{*C_{it}*} on reducing friend dyad bias is stronger prior to 1998, when expert juries had a monopoly over each country's vote. In model 4, the effect of *Diaspora*_{*C_{ji}*} is controlled for, and not surprisingly to most ESC viewers, the effect is positive and significant, implying that all things being equal, the presence of a sizable diaspora from country 'j' living in country 'i' results in a significantly greater vote from country 'i' to 'j'. Model 5 tests whether the effects of voting in time 't' can be distinguished or partially explained via country 'i's voting patterns in the previous year. The results show that for every point from country 'i' to 'j' in the previous year, results in 0.17 points in the current year, *ceteris paribus*. Moreover, model 6 tests whether there is any 'vote trading' whether past giving from country 'j' to 'i' impacts the vote from country 'i' to 'j' currently. The effects are significant, yet each point from country 'j' to 'i' in the past year is expect to result in 0.06 points, all things being equal.

In models 7 and 8, the results from 5 and 6 are re-run using pooled Tobit estimation to account for the fact that the dependent variable is right-censored. In models 9 and 10, a random effects Tobit estimation is used to allow for random dyadic differences in voting patterns over time and the extent to which the voting patterns of country 'i' to 'j' in a given year distinguish themselves from the average model predictions. The results in all four cases are qualitatively indistinguishable from the results using pooled OLS estimation. Friend dyads exhibit systematic voting bias, yet do so to a lesser extent as the greater the impartiality of country 'i's political institutions. In checking the significance of the random effects components, models 9 and 10 indicate that the panel-level variance components (*Sigma* and *Rho*) are significant, demonstrating that the effects of the panel-level variances are significant. For example, the rho statistic indicates that the panel-level variance comprises 12% and 14% of the model variance in models 9 and 10 respectively.

Fig. 3 shows a visual of the marginal effect of 'friend voting' as conditioned by impartiality over a range of song quality. Four lines are shown, each representing the model predictions for the dependent variable from country 'i' to 'j' over a range of *Quality*_{*C_{jt}*}; from '0' to two standard deviations over the mean. The bottom two lines in Fig. 3 predict the vote from country 'i' to 'j' between non-friend dyads at high and low levels of impartiality. As indicated by the insignificant coefficient for *Impartiality*_{*C_{it}*}, we find these two lines to be indistinguishable, and see that for non-friends, the average vote predication from 'i' is at or just below the quality of country 'j's song. The two above lines represent the predicted

¹⁸ For example, while Finland's 2012 song was eliminated after the semi-final, Finland was still allowed to vote in the final, and thus their points are counted in the analysis here. However, in models where I test 'political voting', countries are dropped from the years in which they are absent from the final.

Table 3

The impact of friend dyads and impartiality on ESC voting patterns.

	OLS						Pooled Tobit		Random Effects Tobit	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Key independent variables										
Quality C_{jt}	0.90*** (0.12)	0.87*** (0.02)	0.89*** (0.02)	0.89*** (0.03)	0.88*** (0.01)	0.89*** (0.02)	0.87*** (0.01)	0.87*** (0.01)	0.89*** (0.01)	0.87*** (0.01)
Friend Dyad C_{ijt}	8.30*** (0.40)	8.29*** (1.42)	6.59*** (0.42)	5.28*** (0.44)	6.53*** (0.47)	7.48*** (0.52)	6.86*** (0.44)	7.87*** (0.49)	7.27*** (0.54)	7.85*** (0.57)
Impartiality C_{it}	0.22 (0.14)	−0.03 (0.24)	0.30 (0.21)	0.10 (0.15)	0.02 (0.14)	0.22 (0.17)	0.01 (0.15)	0.20 (0.15)	−0.06 (0.19)	0.04 (0.20)
Friend C_{ijt} × Impartiality C_{it}	−6.61*** (0.48)	−7.29*** (1.51)	−3.85*** (0.54)	−2.87*** (0.56)	−5.27*** (0.55)	−6.31*** (0.59)	−5.87*** (0.52)	−6.78*** (0.55)	−6.08*** (0.65)	−6.61*** (0.67)
Song Traits										
English	0.08* (0.05)	0.17 (0.13)	0.04 (0.06)	0.07 (0.05)	−0.06 (0.06)	0.07 (0.06)	−0.06 (0.06)	0.07 (0.06)	−0.01 (0.05)	0.06 (0.07)
French	−0.17** (0.08)	−0.05 (0.13)	−0.19* (0.11)	0.04 (0.11)	−0.03 (0.10)	0.01 (0.11)	0.01 (0.10)	0.01 (0.10)	0.003 (0.12)	0.06 (0.10)
Song Order	0.004 (0.003)	0.003 (0.006)	0.004 (0.004)	0.001 (0.003)	0.005 (0.003)	0.001 (0.003)	0.005 (0.004)	0.001 (0.004)	0.004 (0.004)	0.001 (0.004)
Host Country	0.07 (0.12)	0.08 (0.21)	0.05 (0.16)	−0.03 (0.15)	−0.67*** (0.14)	0.09 (0.13)	−0.65*** (0.12)	0.09 (0.12)	−0.38*** (0.12)	0.04 (0.10)
Duet	0.06 (0.08)	0.13 (0.14)	0.11 (0.11)	0.14 (0.11)	0.10 (0.10)	0.11 (0.10)	0.08 (0.10)	0.10 (0.10)	0.05 (0.09)	0.06 (0.09)
Group	0.005 (0.07)	0.06 (0.11)	−0.04 (0.08)	−0.06 (0.08)	−0.11 (0.08)	−0.07 (0.07)	−0.09 (0.07)	−0.06 (0.08)	−0.08 (0.08)	−0.04 (0.08)
Female	0.05 (0.06)	0.07 (0.09)	0.04 (0.07)	0.06 (0.06)	0.02 (0.06)	0.05 (0.07)	0.03 (0.06)	0.04 (0.06)	0.03 (0.06)	0.05 (0.07)
Dyadic factors										
Contiguity C_{ij}	0.804** (0.12)	0.13 (0.18)	1.28*** (0.15)	0.34*** (0.15)	0.23* (0.13)	0.29** (0.13)	0.26** (0.11)	0.31** (0.12)	0.41** (0.17)	0.48*** (0.17)
Language C_{ij}	0.62*** (0.19)	0.35 (0.27)	1.05*** (0.26)	0.16 (0.27)	0.02 (0.22)	0.12 (0.23)	0.06 (0.22)	0.16 (0.23)	0.07 (0.26)	0.18 (0.27)
Diaspora C_{ji}				0.66*** (0.04)	0.36*** (0.03)	0.40*** (0.03)	0.35*** (0.03)	0.39*** (0.02)	0.42*** (0.04)	0.44*** (0.04)
Lag Vote C_{ijt-1}					0.17*** (0.01)		0.17*** (0.01)		0.09*** (0.01)	
Lag Vote C_{jit-1}						0.06*** (0.008)		0.05*** (0.007)		0.03*** (0.007)
No. Participants	−0.004 (0.003)	−0.005 (0.02)	−0.002 (0.004)	−0.004** (0.003)	−0.003 (0.003)	−0.003 (0.003)	−0.002 (0.003)	−0.002 (0.004)	0.0001 (0.003)	−0.001 (0.004)
Constant	−0.19 (0.16)	0.22 (0.53)	−0.40** (0.19)	−0.31 (0.20)	−0.47** (0.19)	−0.28 (0.20)	−0.46** (0.18)	−0.37* (0.20)	−0.27** (0.18)	−0.18 (0.23)
Years	1975–2012	1975–1997	1998–2012	1998–2012	1975–2012	1975–2012	1975–2012	1975–2012	1975–2012	1975–2012
Observations	16,686	6442	10,402	10,424	12,355	11,322	12,355	11,322	12,355	11,322
R^2 ,/Pseudo R^2 .	0.33	0.29	0.38	0.41	0.38	0.35	0.09	0.08		
$\Pr > F/\Pr > \chi^2$	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Sigma (s.e.)							2.79(0.02)	2.83(0.02)	0.98(0.04)	1.04(0.04)
Sigma.e (s.e.)									2.63(0.02)	2.64(0.02)
Rho (s.e.)									0.12(0.01)	0.14(0.01)

Note: Models 1–6 report coefficients from pooled OLS regression with Huber White robust standard errors. Models 1–6 we re-run with standard errors clustering on first the dyad and then the country, with results being negligible from those shown above.

* $p < .10$.** $p < .05$.*** $p < .01$.

vote of from country 'i' to 'j' when Friend Dyad C_{ijt} equals '1', at low and high levels of impartiality respectively. In both cases, the predicted line for $\text{Vote } C_{ijt}$ is significantly over the quality of country 'j's song, indicating voting bias. However, this distance is much greater when impartiality of the voting country is low; even when the song quality is '0' (no votes from any other country), country 'j' is predicted to receive almost 5 points from its highly partial friend-country 'i', while a highly impartial country 'i' is expected to give its friend country only 1.3 points on average. The model also shows that as the recipient's song quality increases, both highly impartial and partial friend dyads will merge closer to the predictions of non-friend dyads, yet highly impartial countries do so much more significantly. For example, given Quality C_{jt} is two standard deviations over the mean (about 6.8), a highly partial friend is expect to add about four more points to 'j's total while highly impartial one will award approximately just under one point over 'j's quality on average.

Table 4 reports further robustness checks of the results, including alternative measures of Friend Dyad C_{ijt} and separating the results by time. As noted previously, the time periods are relevant for two key reasons – one, the voting rules change dramatically two times during this time period – 1998 and 2009. Two, many new states enter the ESC for the first time after 1998 – such as Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Macedonia and Armenia; all of which are significantly less impartial and democratic than the more Western ESC countries. All models in Table 4 replicate model 9 in Table 2, using the random effects Tobit estimation including all control variables.¹⁹ We find that the results largely corroborate the findings

¹⁹ A lagged dependent variable is used in models 1 and 4 in Table 3, yet because not all countries compete in the final every year (and there were many new entrants in the later years for which their initial year would be simply dropped) the lagged dependent variable results in a significant reduction of observations – at time by

Table 4

Further robustness checks: alternative friend group measures and various voting rules.

	Friend Group Method 2 (1998–2012)				Alternative Friend Group Method 1			
	1. All years	2. Jury Vote only	3. Televote only	4. hybrid vote	5. All years	6. Jury Vote only	7. Televote only	8. hybrid vote
Friend Dyad C_{ijt}	5.89*** (0.49)	7.47*** (1.32)	4.89*** (0.59)	6.26*** (0.70)	6.95*** (0.000)	7.01*** (1.36)	5.59*** (0.68)	7.14*** (0.80)
Impartiality C_i	0.19 (0.18)	0.11 (0.28)	0.16 (0.23)	0.48 (0.38)	−0.02 (0.18)	−0.02 (0.29)	−0.04 (0.23)	0.34 (0.30)
Friend C_{ijt} * Impartiality C_i	−2.46*** (0.66)	−4.36** (1.51)	−0.96 (0.81)	−2.57** (1.01)	−4.73*** (0.73)	−4.87*** (1.54)	−2.68*** (0.88)	−4.24*** (1.08)
Pr. > χ^2	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Sigma.u(s.e.)	0.89(0.03)	0.90(0.05)	1.23(0.04)	1.38(0.06)	0.94(0.04)	0.95(0.05)	1.30(0.04)	1.47(0.06)
Sigma.e(s.e.)	2.62(0.02)	2.86(0.03)	2.27(0.02)	2.32(0.04)	2.63(0.02)	2.87(0.03)	2.27(0.02)	2.31(0.04)
Rho (s.e.)	0.10(0.019)	0.09(0.01)	0.22(0.01)	0.26(0.02)	0.11(0.02)	0.10(0.01)	0.25(0.01)	0.29(0.02)
Observations	12,362	6442	7073	3360	12,362	6442	7073	3360

Note: All models run with random effects Tobit estimation, with standard errors in parentheses. All models include all 'song traits' variables along with dyadic factors such as contiguity, language, and system time factors such as the number of participants and a year count (not shown). 'Alternative friend group method' removes the states that have weaker voting portfolio linkages according to Table 1 (see ^a). Models 1 and 5 include a lagged dependent variable, other models where time periods are split do not include a lagged dependent variable in order to maximize observations.

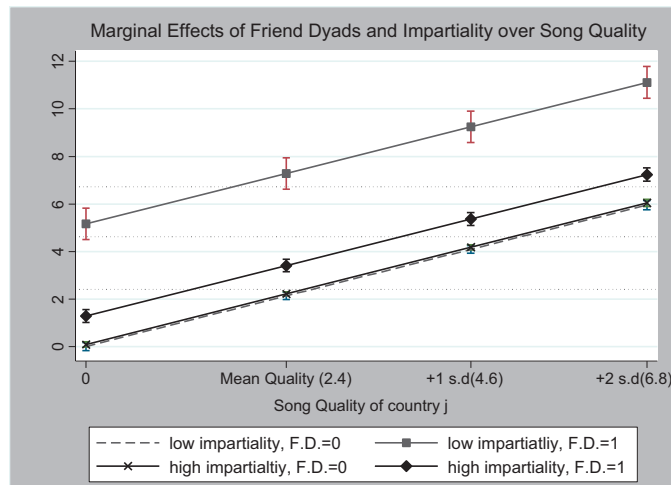
* $p < .10$.** $p < .05$.*** $p < .01$.

Fig. 3. Marginal effect of friend voting on bias conditioned by impartiality. Note: Estimates from Table 3, model 9. Marginal effects were obtained using the 'margins' command in STATA post-regression. Brackets at various levels of song quality represent a 95% confidence interval around each estimate.

in Table 3, yet some estimates appear to be somewhat dependent on the time period and method used to construct the friend dyad. We see that in models 1 and 4 (all years) both of the alternative constructions of Friend Dyad C_{ijt} produce similar results to Table 2. Moreover, the results hold (that impartiality significantly offsets the bias resulting from friend dyads) for the time period prior to the televoting era (pre 1998) as well as during the hybrid system from 2009 to 2012 in models 4 and 8. In model 3, we find that the coefficients remain in the expected direction, yet the interaction is insignificant when operationalizing Friend Dyad C_{ijt} using the pairwise bias method (however, model 7 shows robust evidence of the results). One explanation for this could be that the expert juries are the main drivers of the original results – that they are particularly prone to voting for quality in impartial countries, while in the partial countries, the expert juries are more inclined to favor friend-countries. Another explanation could be that the general voting

public in the Western ESC countries in particular observed the initial voting bias patters from the new ESC contestants in the Eastern countries and reciprocated – responding with more bloc voting for several years after 1998. This effect however has waned over time, as there is a significant interaction in models 4 and 8.

Interestingly along these lines, the effect of $Diaspora C_{jt}$ is highly contingent on the voting system. We find that in all models, it is indistinguishable from zero during expert jury voting while most influential during the period where televoting constitutes 100% of the vote and reduced somewhat in the years of hybrid voting.^{20,21}

8. Discussion

That voting bias is present among countries with a similar history, language, geography or simply just musical taste, is no surprise to even the most casual observer of the ESC. The ESC has been described as "...marked by camp performances and politically biased voting"²² and as a contest that "...not even Robbie Williams could win for us, it's too political"²² after the UK's second to last finish in 2012. The evidence suggests that this is only partially true. While it is difficult to pin down the source per se (whether culture, political, language, geography or simply musical taste) further support is offered here for the fact that voting bias in the ESC between friends does in fact occur, although not all countries engage in the same level of said bias. The evidence provided in this analysis suggests that the ESC is a network of countries playing by markedly different rules. This has become even more pronounced as a greater proportion of the participants have considerably weaker democratic and less impartial political institutions than the majority of states prior to 1990s.

²⁰ Moreover, this result is not simply driven by a select few countries. In testing regressions on each individual point-giving country during this time, the results reveal that 44 of the 45 countries in the analysis show a significant coefficient for the 'diaspora' variable, when controlling for song traits. Hungary is the only country with no diaspora effect while the strongest effect is found in Switzerland, Greece and Croatia respectively.

²¹ Further robust checks – for example excluding each friendship bloc one by one, and tested additional cultural variables, such as 'individualism' and 'masculinity' from Geert Hofstede's data, and the results remain highly robust. For more on these results, please contact the corresponding author.

²² Quote from BBC TV commentator, Phillip Schofield: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2150923/Eurovision-2012-Viewers-tell-BBC-time-pull-amid-claims-political-voting.html>.

more than 50% when estimating the results in models 5 and 8. Therefore, it is not included in the models with limited times periods in order maximize the observations.

Building on several empirical studies that have elucidated basic features of voting and/or voting bias in the ESC, such as song characteristics, contiguity, language similarities, or past voting behavior, this study has added a new degree of understanding and nuance about ‘friends voting for friends’. I argued that the extent to which countries within bloc voting groups or dyads bias one another varies depending on the level of impartiality in the voter giver’s political system. Countries with a greater degree of impartiality have a stronger tendency toward norms of meritocracy, and will tend – despite engaging in *some* systematic bias to preferred countries – to give more points to a song of ‘quality’ outside their pair/bloc as compared with vote givers with less impartial institutions, which due to norms of favoritism and patronage, will favor friends irrespective of quality. The empirical results, which constitute the most comprehensive study on voting in the ESC final to date, lend strong support to the hypothesis that friend group bias is significantly conditioned by impartiality. The results are highly robust to song traits, dyadic factors, Diasporas, time periods, model estimations and alternative measures of ‘friend dyads’.

These results of this study imply several noteworthy points. First, that impartial states will have more variation in their voting portfolios over time (as long as we assume that ‘quality’ does not come from a fixed group of countries), while partial states will have more static portfolios. This certainly means that the quality of a song in a bloc of impartial countries (or somewhat impartial states without strong ‘friends’) will need to cross a higher bar, and thus, such states will have a much more difficult time in winning the ESC. For countries like the Netherlands, UK and Belgium for example, this would seem to be their fate. Others, such as those in the post-soviet or Balkan blocs, can rely on ‘automatic’ points from friends while collecting the points from more impartial states, implying certainly that the demand for quality within these groups is not as high for a victory. In addition, the voting rules have (possibly) had an effect on the level of voting bias – the juries in impartial countries would appear to be even more ‘meritocratic’ than their respective general publics, while the effect of diasporas on voting is completely contingent on the voting rules. Diasporas had no effect on the vote prior to televoting and their impact has been reduced due to hybrid 50/50 voting since 2009. However, only certain Diasporas (Turkish, Ukrainian, and Romanian) seem to have a significant

impact on their host country’s vote while others (Polish and British for example) do not. This is an interesting finding worthy of future research.

Finally, as Almond and Verba (1963) have argued, a country’s political institutions in a democratic society represent a reflection of how certain things ‘get done’. The Eurovision Song Contest offers us an international test case for this premise and in this case; a network of states with a wide range of political institutions and societal norms all voting on the same songs, simultaneously each year. We find that the political institutions in a country are highly linked with the expected aggregated behavior of voters – impartial institutions are strongly linked with meritocracy, while partial ones are linked with favoritism and patronage. Voters in countries that have less impartial institutions are more conditioned to see people in power favor patrimonial ties over merit. Furthermore, a country’s institutions are linked with the level of social trust in a society. Social trust, which is lower in countries with weak and partial institutions, may also serve as a mechanism here – that voters in some countries simply do not ‘trust’ that voters in other countries will ‘play by the rules’ and vote on the merits of the song itself, thus they simply end up voting for favored countries in the end. Therefore, it would appear that the voters across Europe are playing by very different sets of rules and expectations depending on the level of impartial in their country’s political system.

Appendix 1: Country Abbreviations (from Fig. 3.

UK (United Kingdom), IRL (Ireland), MT (Malta), BE (Belgium), NL (Netherlands), PT (Portugal), ES (Spain), NO (Norway), DK (Denmark), SE (Sweden), IL (Iceland), FI (Finland), EE (Estonia), LT (Latvia), LI (Lithuania), GEO (Georgia), RUS (Russia), BLR (Belarus), UKR (Ukraine), PL (Poland), AZB (Azerbaijan), ARM (Armenia), FR (France), CYP (Cyprus), GR (Greece), ALB (Albania), TRK (Turkey), B&H (Bosnia & Herz.) CRO (Croatia), SER (Serbia), MAC (Macedonia), SLO (Slovenia).

Appendix 2.

Sources for Minority Diasporas:

Most EU countries have data from Eurostat (resident country of origin), others use national census data and 3rd party sources.

Russia: <http://www.perepis-2010.ru/results.of.the.census/result-december-2011.ppt> (ethnicity)
 Ukraine: Population census 2001: Population by nationality (language)
 Serbia: <http://webzrs.stat.gov.rs/axd/Zip/VJN3.pdf> (ethnic groups)
 Romania: <http://recensamant.referinte.transindex.ro/?pg=8> (language and ethnicity)
 Poland: http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbr/gus/LUD_raport.z.wynikow.NSP2011.pdf (ethnicity)
 Georgia: <http://www.geostat.ge/index.php?action=0&lang=eng> (ethnicity)
 Albania: <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/al.html> (ethnic)
 Armenia: <http://docs.armstat.am/census/pdfs/51.pdf> (ethnic)
 Azerbaijan: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_Azerbaijan (ethnicity)
 Belarus: <http://belstat.gov.by/homep/ru/perepic/p5.php> (ethnicity)
 Bosnia & Herzegovina: census, Zavod za statistiku Bosne i Hercegovine – Bilten no.234, Sarajevo (ethnicity)
 Croatia: <http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv/censuses/Census2001/Popis/H01.02.02/H01.02.02.html> (ethnicity)
 Macedonia: <http://www.stat.gov.mk/PXWeb2007bazi/Database/Censuses/databasetree.asp> (ethnicity & language)
 Latvia: <http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/statistikas-temas/population-census-2011-key-indicators-33613.html> (ethnicity)
 Lithuania: <http://demoscope.ru/weekly/ssp/sng.nac.89.php> (ethnicity)
 Estonia: <http://www.stat.ee/34278> (ethnicity)
 Cyprus: <http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics> (ethnicity)
 Israel: <http://www.joshuaproject.net/countries.php?rog3=IS> (ethnicity)
 Turkey: <http://www.joshuaproject.net/countries.php> (ethnicity)

Distribution of significant minority groups in ESC countries.

Host country	Largest minority groups (that have participated in ESC)				
	1	2	3	4	5
Albania	Greeks	Serbs	Macedonians	Bulgarians	Jewish
Armenia	Russians	Ukrainians	Greeks	Jewish	Georgians
Austria	Turks	Germans	Bosnians	Croatians	Polish
Azerbaijan	Aremnians	Russians	Turks	Ukrainians	Georgians
Belarus	Russians	Polish	Ukrainians	Jewish	Armenians
Belgium	Italians	French	Dutch	Turks	Spanish
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Serbs	Croats	Albanians	Ukrainians	Macedonians
Croatia	Serbs	Bosnians	Italians	Hungarians	Albanians
Cyprus	Greeks	Turks	British	Romanian	Bulgarians
Denmark	Turks	Bosnians	Germans	Norwegens	British
Estonia	Russians	Ukrainians	Belarusians	Finnish	Latvians
Finland	Russians	Estonians	Swedes	British	Germans
France	Portuguese	Turks	Italians	Spanish	British
Georgia	Azerbaijani	Armenians	Russians	Greeks	Ukrainians
Germany	Turks	Italians	Polish	Croats	Austrians
Greece	Albanians	Bulgarians	Russians	Cypriots	Romanians
Hungary	Romanians	Ukraine	Germans	Serbians	Polish
Iceland	Polish	Danish	Germans	Lithuanian	British
Ireland	British	Polish	Lithuanian	Latvian	Germans
Israel	Russians	Romanians	Polish	Spanish	Germans
Italy	Romanians	Albanians	Ukrainians	Polish	Macedonians
Latvia	Russians	Belarusian	Ukrainians	Polish	Lithuanians
Lithuania	Polish	Russians	Belarusians	Ukrainians	Germans
Macedonia	Albanians	Turksih	Serbs	Bosnians	Croats
Malta	British	Serbs	Italians	Germans	Bulgarians
Netherlands	Turks	Germans	British	Belgians	Polish
Norway	Swedes	Danish	Polish	Germans	British
Poland	Germans	Belarusian	Ukrainians	Russians	Lithuanians
Portugal	Ukraine	British	Spanish	Romanians	Germans
Romania	Hungarians	Ukrainians	Germans	Russians	Turks
Russia	Ukraine	Armenians	Azerbaijanis	Belarusians	Germans
Serbia	Hungarians	Bosnians	Croats	Albanians	Romanians
Slovenia	Bosnians	Serbs	Croats	Macedonians	Italians
Spain	Romanians	British	Germans	Italians	Portuguese
Sweden	Finish	Norwegens	Danish	Polish	Bosnians
Switzerland	Italians	Portuguese	Germans	Serbs	Turks
Turkey	Azerbaijanis	Georgians	Bosnians	Albanians	British
UK	Irish	Polish	Italians	French	Germans
Ukraine	Russians	Hungarians	Romanians	Bulgarians	Belarusians

Note: Sources listed in Appendix 1. Countries included have participated in the ESC final at least twice. Where 'Jewish' is listed, we code this for Israel. Variable is coded inversely so that the top groups is '5'.

Appendix 3: Test of bias by group bloc:.

Test of within-group bias by friend dyads and groups: averaged over time periods.

1975–1997 groups			1998–2012 groups		
Friend dyad group	Beta	p-Value	Friend dyad group	Beta	p-Value
G1 (TRK, B&H)	4.66***	0.000	G1 (RO, MLD)	9.34***	0.000
G2 (Nordic)	1.97***	0.000	G2 (GR & CY)	8.20***	0.000
G3 (RUS & SLO)	5.35**	0.020	G3 (AZB & TRK)	8.23***	0.000
G4 (UK, IRL, MLT & Lux)	0.41***	0.010	G4 (ex. Soviet, ISR)	4.43***	0.000
G5 (ISR & YUG)	1.67**	0.050	G5 (IT & ALB)	6.99**	0.000
G6 (EST, POL, HU)	2.07***	0.000	G6 (Ex. Yugo)	5.68***	0.000
G7 (GR & CY)	7.88***	0.000	G7 (ES, PT, FR)	3.09***	0.000
G8 (GER, FR, AT, NL)	0.18	0.420	G8 (GER, CH, AT)	2.44***	0.000
G9 (CRO & MLT)	5.41***	0.000	G9 (Baltic)	4.25***	0.000
G10 (IT & ES)	2.43***	0.000	G10 (Nordic)	3.55***	0.000
			G11 (UK, IRL & MLT)	3.05***	0.000
			G12 (BEL & NL) G13 (PL & HU)	5.35*** 1.78**	

Note: OLS regression with Huber White robust standard errors each model run without a constant so as to include all groups. See Table 2 for countries in each group.

* $p < 0.10$.

** $p < 0.05$.

*** $p < 0.01$.

Stability of bias by group over time and average total bias: by year-1998–2012.

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Ave.Total
G1								5.6***	9.7***	9.9***	–	10.9***	8.7***	10.2***	10.3***	9.3***
G2	11.5***	–	–	–	10.0***	11.7***	6.1***	8.6***	8.7***	8.8***	6.9***	9.3***	10.1***	9.4***	10.7***	8.2***
G3	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	9.0***	7.5***	8.1***	6.9***	9.0***	8.2***
G4	–	–	–	–	–	6.4***	5.4***	5.0***	5.6***	3.5***	3.7***	3.3***	4.6***	6.5***	6.2***	4.5***
G5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	7.7***	7.0***
G6	4.1***	5.9***	8.2***	6.0***	2.2**	2.1**	5.3***	6.1***	7.0***	5.7***	6.5***	7.2***	6.9***	8.0***	6.6***	5.7***
G7	2.6*	1.7	–0.3*	4.1**	4.2**	2.3	4.8***	2.6*	–0.3**	2.8*	3.9***	2.7*	4.3***	7.6***	3.1	3.1***
G8	4.4	2.0**	3.2**	–	2.3**	–1.7*	3.6	–0.7	2.7	5.9	–	–	–	4.8***	1.4	2.4***
G9	–	–0.9	6.2***	3.9***	4.4***	1.1	–	7.2***	4.7***	6.7***	6.7***	5.5***	–	3.3*	3.5***	4.3***
G10	3.7**	3.8***	2.6**	1.2**	2.0*	2.9***	2.6**	5.8***	3.9**	7.8***	5.7***	2.9**	2.7***	4.9***	2.7***	3.6***
G11	3.1***	1.7	2.5*	1.0	3.6**	2.7*	2.6*	5.5***	2.8*	4.6*	3.8	5.4***	2.4*	5.8***	2.4*	3.1***
G12	5.6**	8.9***	3.2	–	–	5.1**	5.4***	–	–	–	–	–	2.3	–	–	5.4***
G13	0.5	–	–	–	–	–0.01	–	7.6***	–	–1.1*	–0.35	–	–	1.3*	–	1.8**

Note: Amount of vote-observations for year-group dummy variables vary by year due to certain countries not qualifying or choosing to be in the final. OLS estimates with standard errors from robust, Huber–White standard errors.

* $p < .10$.

** $p < .05$.

*** $p < .01$.

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