Hi All,

Below I answer some questions and concerns in Agus and Herbert’s emails.

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Dear Haohan,

This is very helpful, thanks! I have a couple of questions.

1- How is the distance measure calculated? I think this should be calculated in the most straightforward way, even at the expense of reasonability, and then we can fix the weird cases (like the cases of Ceuta and Melilla in iii) below).

I use the Correlates of Wars dataset (<http://www.correlatesofwar.org/>). I don’t use this kind of data in my own research, but after consulting some colleagues, my understanding is that this measure is the standard for IR research. Feel free to suggest alternative measures.

Operationally, I use the dataset’s R package “cshapes”.

The distance can be defined in two ways: (1) The shortest distance between a pair of countries; (2) the distance between capitals of a pair of countries. I use (1) the shortest distance, after talking to Herbert.

i) For some contiguous countries, there is a distance measure different from 0. For instance, why Italy and France has a value for distance? The distance is very close to 0, but I think that makes it worse because, in the weighted calculations, Italy will have an almost 0 weight for France, and vice-versa. Similarly with Poland and Germany, or Germany and Denmark, etc.

Yes, it is not intuitive to me why the Italy-France distance has a extremely-close-to-zero distance (6.75285e-12). What I know is this dataset takes shape file of the world map each year and calculate distances. It could be a result of how the shape files appears (maybe the edge of the two countries are not strictly the same). It could be a result of the algorithm.

As you probably find, there are a few other cases that have the same problem. **I update the 0-contiguity by setting the distance as 0.000001km, instead of 0km. This reduces the number of countries without neighbours by 4**.

Again, I trust this data source. But feel free to suggest a better one.

That´s a big issue. The following cases are a bit trickier.

ii) Another example, the distance between Morocco and Spain is 22, but the Strait of Gibraltar is less than 15 km, I think.

iii) Moreover, Ceuta and Melilla, both part of Spain, share a border with Morocco.

iv) A similar case is Australia (which has 0 neighbors in the data), but if you count the smaller islands, the distance to Papua Nueva Guinea is 5 km.

2- Because of the issues with distance, some countries that should not drop from the sample with 0 thresholds, do. Denmark is a clear case, I believe. Or maybevthey do not show up with the 0 thresholds for other reasons?

I speculate that these are all problem of spatial calculation of “distance” because the world is round and different projection systems are used for this kind of calculation. I have very shallow understanding on the mathematics in this kind of calculation and have not examined how people calculate it. This is only my guess.

3- We could consider killing intercontinental neighbors to address cases like US and Russia, or Spain and NorthAfrica (although we may not want to do this one in particular)

I am sharing a github repo of my code and original data. Hope it helps to clarify how the measures are created.

Thanks a lot!

Agus

Dear Agustin, Haohan and Dan,

Let me add one consideration prompted by the conversation Haohan and I had a couple of days ago:

* The instrument for country x’s level of party organizational centralization depends on ALL of the surrounding countries/parties within the specified km range. So, the larger the range, the more countries’ party-level a5 variables are covered.
* I thought (and I still think this would be better) ***that only the two closest countries*** would qualify to supply the a5 instruments. So if a country has two contiguous neighbors already, widening the range of surveillance will not change its instrument’s score, as the two closest will always be the two closest.

This is doable. The updated data file include the measure calculated in this way.

* We need the “relaxed” distance criterion exclusively for the countries that have no close neighbors.

Some of the “neighbors” in the cases without many direct borders clearly make no sense. Russia’s parties are certainly no instrument for Canada’s, and we can identify similar mismatches between Anglo-Saxon settler democracies and former colonies in the South Pacific, or between East Asian countries. We may have to exclude these cases or “recode” them with some pretty good justification. Fortunately, this problem may affect less than 10% of our cases.

I think some manual adjustment will be necessary and justifiable. But again, as we communicated, some theoretical foundation is necessary for the creation and adjustment of this instrument. Why a parties’ organizational capacity of a country can be instrumented by its neighbor at the first place? Does distance affect the strength of influence

Best,

Herbert

Hello all,

Looking at the "X" closest countries is a very good idea.

Also, that makes even more important to get the neighboring countries correctly specified (which they are not, right?). And the same for the distance measures, when/if needed.

So I end up setting the extremely small values 10^-12 to zeros. The new results are attached.

Best,

Agus

Dear Agus, Dan, and Haohan,

I think the critical question is that we go country-by-country through the geographically closest pairs of neighboring countries and ***decide which ones to rule out***.

* Canada: the US as close neighbor is plausible, but not Russia; what’s next? Beyond 1,000km reach: Mexico? Iceland (not in dataset)? Ireland?
* The US: Canada is plausible as close neighbor, but not Mexico … and is there another “close” alternative? …the geographically next closest ones are Jamaica and the Dominican Republic (not to mention Cuba, because it’s not a democracy and not in our dataset) … these also don’t sound quite plausible;
* On the other hand, it’s easy with places like the Netherlands: Belgium & Germany.
* But what about Finland? …the closest are Sweden and Russia by contiguity, and by distance of capital probably Sweden and Estonia? … but not Norway or Denmark!
* Georgia: would be Armenia and Turkey … are we ok with that?
* Portugal: Spain and Morocco … but not France;
* Israel: Lebanon and Egypt; ? and vice versa, Israel in Lebanon’s and Egypt’s neighbor set?
* Mongolia: Russia and South Korea?
* Thailand: Malaysia and Bangladesh;
* Greece: Albania and Macedonia;

There are quite a few rather implausible pairings…

Best,

Herbert

I can wait a bit to see what you find reasonable for the distance measures, before we work on this.