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# The Cultural Politics of Eurovision: A Case Study of Ukraine's Invasion in 2014 Against Their Eurovision Win in 2016

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## **ABSTRACT**

Politics is officially banned from Eurovision, and songs that are too political can be prevented from being performed. However, the complete separation of culture and politics is impossible, and cultural performances often carry both indirect and explicit political messages. Eurovision is no exception. Eurovision as a cultural performance is political in nature and in the national responses it generates. This paper will examine the ways that European nations use Eurovision as a cultural platform from which to mediate inter-national and social politics. It will be composed of both a review of existing studies done on Eurovision voting patterns and voting blocs as well as qualitative, descriptive examples. While many Europeans tacitly or explicitly understand Eurovision as a political platform, this article offers specific data analysis and an in-depth case study offering evidence that this is the case.

## **KEYWORDS**

Eurovision, Ukraine, eastern Europe, Eurovision voting blocs, Ukraine invasion, Crimea, Russia

The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) was formed on 12 February 1950 by joining together 23 different broadcasting organizations. The original members were Germany, Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland. In 1955, Marcel Bezençon, a Frenchman working for the EBU, came up with the idea for a European song contest, inspired by the Italian Festival di Sanremo while at a meeting in Monaco. The Eurovision Song Contest has been broadcast every year since 1956, and as of 2008 has 43 participating countries (“The Story,” 2017).

Eurovision has closely tracked and expanded along with European integration. It was formed only three years after the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community, and has been the producer of many of Europe’s more famous cultural icons, such as ABBA, Julio Iglesias, and Riverdance. The first Eurovision contest was held in Lugano, Switzerland, the headquarters of the EBU. In a well-known opinion piece on Eurovision, published in the *New Yorker*, Anthony Lane wrote that Eurovision was “a melodic antidote to the blood-soaked, strictly non-singing calamity that had ended a decade before” (Lane, 2010). Despite the fact that Eurovision is often mocked as nothing more than cultural kitsch, it is one of the few events that truly unites Europe as a cultural medium: in 2016, 204 million people saw at least one of the three shows (“Facts and Figures,” 2017). For comparison, the 2016 Rio Olympics had a viewership of 27.5 million (NBC Sports Group, 2016). Its development has been historically tied to cultural, economic, political, social and technological change (Vuletic, 2017). Because of its creation in a post-war, newly integrating continent, Eurovision has been created with the political context in mind. Without the history of war, the desire for cultural unification would not have been as strong. Eurovision, though not directly political in its creation, has always existed with a political consciousness that has been more or less apparent throughout the years.

While most Europeans generally understand that Eurovision is at least partly political, little research has been done to systematically examine the ways that political events overlap with Eurovision’s performances and voting. This paper attempts to fill that gap. The first section reviews the much-discussed presence of voting blocs within Eurovision and how that impacts the outcome of the competition. The second section touches on the cultural and political messages sent by singing in English versus other European languages. The third section, which is also the bulk of the paper, analyses Ukraine’s win of Eurovision in 2016. First, the political nature of the song and political reactions to Ukraine’s win are explored. Second, votes are broken down between the three top prospects for the 2016 win, Ukraine, Russia, and Australia. Third, votes for Russia and Ukraine are compared to the official state reactions to Russia’s 2014 invasion of Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, and finds a correlation between state reactions and Eurovision votes.

### **VOTING BLOCS IN EUROVISION**

Critics of Eurovision consistently complain that Eurovision is all political because countries only vote for their political allies. When Sir Terry Wogan resigned in 2008 from providing commentary on the BBC’s broadcast of Eurovision, he stated that “The voting used to be about the songs. Now it’s about national prejudices” (“Is the Eurovision Song Contest a stitch-up?” 2014). Two major studies have been done to examine the presence of voting blocs within Eurovision: one independently by Derek Gatherer and another by University College London (UCL). Broadly, the results have shown that countries do tend to vote in blocs, but these are based on positive and not negative bias. In other words, countries are likely to support their friends and allies, but are not likely to practice discrimination against another country in particular.

In 2005, Derek Gatherer published a study of the alliances between countries as

evidenced by Eurovision voting. Using statistical modeling to simulate Eurovision voting, he found a complex evolution of voting blocs over time. A variety of small, two- or three country blocs traded votes from the 1970s into the 1990s. From 2001–2005, larger multi-country voting blocs took shape. Gatherer cleverly named the alliances he found: the only countries left in pairs were “The Partial Benelux” of Belgium and the Netherlands and the “Pyrenean Axis” of Spain and Andorra. The partnerships sounding the Balkan countries became the “Balkan Bloc”: centered on Croatia, Macedonia, and Serbia and Montenegro, the group also included Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey, Albania, Greece, Romania, and Cyprus. The other large group was the “Viking Empire”: Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Finally, the “Warsaw Pact” voting bloc consisted of Poland, Ukraine, and Russia (Gatherer, 2006).

The study shows that there is significant evidence of collusive voting around blocs, and that these blocs are capable of influencing the outcome of the contest. Most of these blocs are made up of conglomerates of collusive partnerships, and less of cohesive groups (Gatherer, 2006). Two main explanations of collusive voting are: first, regional culture and taste; second, a chance for countries to express their political and cultural views of others. In 2003, when the UK garnered nul points, it was blamed on “post-Iraq backlash.” The early collusion between the Netherlands and Israel was seen as having its roots in the historical links between the Jewish Diaspora and the Low Countries (Gatherer, 2006).

In 2014, another study was done of voting patterns by the University College of London. As this study is more recent, it is more likely to explain or be pertinent to the results that are being seen today. Contrary to what the media would have most people believe, the study found no evidence of prejudicial or discriminatory voting. Instead, UCL found a series of cultural, geographical, and historical loyalties between countries. They find four distinct geographical groupings: the Former Yugoslavia, the Former Soviet bloc, Scandinavia, and the rest of Europe. There are moderate to substantial positive biases, which could be explained by strong cultural similarities (commonality in language, history, and to some extent geographical proximity and migration patterns). Greece and Cyprus do systematically vote for each other, and Greece also gives a lot of votes to Albania (“Statistical analysis unveils,” 2014). Migration and immigration are also shown to have an impact on Eurovision. Dr Gianluca Baio, Professor at UCL in Statistical Science and a lead researcher on this project, said:

Migration seems to be an interesting explanation for some of the patterns that we see in the data. For example, Turkey seems to be scored highly by German voters, possibly due to the large number of Turkish people who have migrated to Germany, and potentially tele-vote from there. But our analysis found no convincing evidence of negative bias or discrimination against anyone – no country really has any enemies. (“Statistical analysis unveils,” 2014)

This strongly reiterates the point that countries do not use Eurovision voting to punish countries they dislike, but rather to reward the ones they do.

The conclusion that Eurovision voting reveals alliances, rather than prejudices, could be useful for anyone wishing to greater understand inter- and intra-European solidarity. Eurovision voting tends to fall along the lines of those countries that seem to have similar values and identity, and this could be one (admittedly rather informal) tool for tracking how alliances shift over time.

### **SINGING IN ENGLISH**

Another consistent observation from both quantitative and qualitative descriptions of Eurovision is that performers that sing in their own language are consistently scored lower than contestants singing in English (Statistical analysis unveils the hidden patterns in Eurovision voting 2014). It was the rule from 1966-1972 that you had to sing in the language of the country you represented; that was reinstated in 1977 for another twenty years. Countries that don't sing in English have difficulty gaining popularity outside their own country and are at a disadvantage. As one commentator said, "The Greek guys? Good song, but it's in Greek. Will they play that on the radio in France?" (Lane, 2010).

Of all the songs that have reached the finals, 263 have been in English and 150 have been in French (Lane, 2010). Those are the only two languages in the triple digits. On this subject, Lane stated: "On the other hand, when you sing in English, you may be blasting through the language barrier to reach a wider audience, but are you not abasing yourself before the Anglo-American cultural hegemony that the competition is clearly designed to rebuff?" (2010). Navigating the different messages sent by singing in either English or a native language is a simultaneously cultural and political action. What language business, or song, or legislation is conducted in has ramifications for European Union (EU) policy, the relative importance and political power of each nation, and the methods of EU integration or dis-integration.

### **UKRAINE CASE STUDY: REACTIONS TO AND ANALYSIS OF UKRAINE'S WIN IN EUROVISION 2016**

Ukraine's win in 2016 is an ideal scenario to explore the themes above and the ways Eurovision can and does function as a simultaneously cultural and political event. Ukraine won Eurovision with Susana Jamaladinova's song "1944," which describes the suffering of the Crimean Tatar people in 1944 when they were deported to central Asia by Stalin. The song opens with the lyrics "When strangers are coming, they come to your house, they kill you all and say 'We're not guilty'." Despite the ban on political songs, "1944" was allowed on the basis of being historical and not political in nature (Associated Press, 2016). Jamala's performance was unlike most other contestants'. It was not upbeat European; instead, it had elements of traditional Crimean folk music and a significant portion of the song is in Crimean (Gessen, 2016). Singing in a blend of English and Crimean Tatar mediated the balance between allowing the song to be understandable enough to a wider audience that it could gain popularity while still incorporating nationalist elements and partial cultural autonomy.

#### ***Crimea's history and reactions to Ukraine's win.***

The Crimean Tatars are native to the Crimean peninsula. They have a long history of persecution under Russian rule, and in 1944 they were deported from Crimea. The pretext for their deportation was giving aid to the Nazis during the German occupation. Several other ethnic groups were also deported at this time, but the Crimean Tatars were the only group prevented from returning to their homes at the end of the Stalinist terror. In 1989, many of them returned to the Crimean peninsula to establish cultural, democratically-elected self-rule. This system was ended when Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 (Gessen, 2016).

Despite the historical events at the foundation of the song, "1944" had direct contemporary relevance after Russia's annexation of Crimea. Highlighting past injustices between Russia and the Crimean Tatars immediately brought to mind the current political situation between Ukraine and Russia. The fact that a Crimean woman was singing on behalf of Ukraine and not Russia was an important political statement in the first place.

Second, as a representative of Ukraine, it was a way to bring to mind the ways that Russia's foreign policy toward Ukraine has been consistently aggressive throughout history, adding weight to their continuing invasion of the Donbass.

Ukraine's win had political weight in Europe, as evidenced by Russia's immediate negative response. After Jamala's win, Russian star Sergey Lazarev insisted on Russian state news that the jury had purposefully lowered his score from what it should have been. Another Russian pop star who joined Lazarev in Stockholm claimed that someone had "worked the jury over" (Gessen 2016). Russian state news produced twenty stories over the next day to explain and analyze the win. One stated that the Crimean Tatars were furious that their history of persecution was being cheapened by performance in a pop song. Another asked the inevitable question: "How will it be possible to hold Eurovision in a country that has a hole in its budget, a war in the east, and regular disturbances in its capital?" (Gessen, 2016).

The leader of the Crimean Tatar parliament, the Mejlis, was also featured on Russian state news entering the Eurovision venue in Stockholm the day after the competition. Russian state news gave only three details: the name of the Mejlis leader, Mustafa Dzhemilev, that a search warrant is out for him in Russia, and that the parliament is "recognized by no one" (Gessen, 2016). This is only partially true. Dzhemilev is in exile because he was turned back by Russian border guards while trying to return home to Crimea. An arrest warrant was issued by a court in Russian-occupied Crimea and the Crimean chief prosecutor stated that Dzhemilev had violated three articles of the Russian penal code. Dzhemilev spent fifteen years in prison in the Soviet era for advocating the return of the Tatars to Crimea. He has been elected to the Ukrainian parliament five times since the fall of the Soviet Union. Russian state news implied he was the one to convince the jury to vote for Jamala (Gessen, 2016).

### ***Who voted for whom? Russia, Ukraine, and neutral Australia.***

Eurovision voting is more complicated than a simple majority, as it is split between both a jury and a popular vote. The jury vote can be taken as a proxy for the official government position, because the jury is seen as speaking for the country. The popular vote is the voice of the people living in that country, including immigrants. In the popular vote, the Russian contestant Lazarev won; the juries selected the contestant from Australia. When they were tallied together, however, Ukraine's Jamala turned out to be the winner. Looking at votes from TV audiences alone, Ukraine put Russia first and Russia voted for Ukraine only second to Armenia (Gessen, 2016).

Ukraine's televote for Russia was a particularly interesting choice. Ukraine has participated in Eurovision since 2003, and between 2003 and 2012, Russia was scored in Ukraine's top three slots every year except 2005, when Eurovision took place only months after the Orange Revolution. In 2013 and 2014, Ukraine scored Russia 7th, awarding it only 4 points, and they did not participate in 2015. The 2016 competition was the first year that televoting and the judges' votes were separated. Previously, the televotes and the judges' votes were combined to provide the final points awarded to each country. For the first time ever, in 2016 the judges awarded Russia no points (Eurovision 2016 Results: Voting & Points, 2016). Though it cannot be proven, Ukraine's voting history tracks closely with its relationship to Russia. In the most recent years, when tensions between the nations have been high, judges have awarded Russia lower points.

The situation becomes more interesting when the overall votes for Ukraine's win

are examined. The situation, in short, is that Australia<sup>1</sup> won the jury vote, and Russia won the televote, but Ukraine came in second in both, and therefore won overall.

Australia won the jury vote with 320 points from a smattering of Western and Southern European countries.<sup>2</sup> This outstripped Ukraine by far, which won only 211 votes by jury<sup>3</sup> (Eurovision 2016 Results: Voting & Points, 2016). The jury vote was highly mismatched to the popular vote, although Ukraine didn't win the popular vote either. Russia won the popular vote with 361 points. Here, Ukraine was not far behind and came second with 323 televotes<sup>4</sup> (Eurovision 2016 Results: Voting & Points, 2016).

Three main observations can be made after this explanation of voting practices. First is that Ukraine's win in Eurovision was not the result of all Europe banding together to show support for a nation under attack. Though there was general support for Ukraine's overtly political Crimean song, it was neither straightforward nor outright. In the jury vote, almost half of the participating countries (18 of 42) gave either 10 or 12 points to Australia (Eurovision 2016 Results: Voting & Points, 2016). As Russia was the obvious popular choice, Australia has been interpreted by many as a neutral, non-European option to entirely sidestep the choice between supporting either Ukraine or Russia (Sasse, 2016). Two countries awarded no points to Ukraine, Russia, or Australia. For comparison, fourteen countries gave Ukraine either 10 or 12 points in jury votes. Support for Ukraine was somewhat broader in televoting, where Ukraine was awarded 10 or 12 points by 18 countries—precisely equal to Australia in the jury vote (Eurovision 2016 Results: Voting & Points, 2016).

Second, Western European countries, in another act of sidestepping, mostly voted for other large Western European countries. France and Norway gave twelve points to Italy; Italy gave twelve points to Spain; Ireland and Iceland gave twelve points to Belgium. The UK and Germany were outliers, giving twelve points to Georgia and Israel, respectively (Eurovision 2016 Results: Voting & Points, 2016). This falls in line with Western Europe's general voting bloc patterns while also reflecting their political unwillingness to engage with Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Third, support for Russia was weak in the jury vote but strong in the popular vote. Only four country juries gave Russia 12 points, and none gave it 10 points. This can be compared with the 19 countries that awarded Russia 10 or 12 points through televoting, greater than either Ukraine or Australia gained (Eurovision 2016 Results: Voting & Points, 2016). Despite the official unwillingness to endorse Russia, popular favor does not

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1 Australia first participated in Eurovision in 2015 as a supposedly one-time special participant. However, they have since competed in both the 2016 and 2017 competitions. They are not the only "conventionally" non-European country to participate: Israel has competed regularly since 1976, and Morocco has also participated. The European Broadcasting Union has not yet decided on whether Australia will be allowed to participate long-term (Denham 2016).

2 Australia was given 12 point votes from Albania, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Hungary, Lithuania, Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland, and was given 10 points from Bosnia & Herzegovina, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Israel, Moldova, Norway, and Poland.

3 Ukraine received 12 points from Bosnia & Herzegovina, Denmark, Macedonia, Georgia, Israel, Latvia, Moldova, Poland, San Marino, Serbia, and Slovenia. They received 10 points from Azerbaijan, Italy, and the United Kingdom.

4 Russia was given 12 points by Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Moldova, Serbia, and Ukraine. It was awarded 10 points by televote by Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Malta, Montenegro, San Marino, and Slovenia. Ukraine was awarded 12 points by the Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and San Marino. It was awarded 10 votes by Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, and Russia.

seem to have been affected by Russia's frozen conflict within Ukraine. Support for Russia came from Central and Eastern Europe; the only Western or Scandinavian country to select Russia first or second in televoting was Germany. Ukraine, at least, gained televotes from France, Italy, and Austria.

### ***Matching up state reactions and Eurovision votes: 2014 vs 2016.***

Though examining the political motivations for Ukraine's performance and the political reactions to the event are useful, this does not provide enough evidence to conclude that countries' Eurovision votes align with their politics off-stage. To examine if this is the case, this section compares countries' reactions to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014 to their voting in Eurovision 2016, to see if there is a relationship between the two. Indeed, there is evidence of a correlation between the reaction to Russia's invasion in 2014 and the voting patterns of the politically-charged 2016 Eurovision contest.

The countries whose juries awarded Russia 12 points are Azerbaijan, Belarus, Cyprus, and Greece. Azerbaijan's official stance on Russia's invasion of Crimea has been to keep silent. The news in Azerbaijan covered the situation in Ukraine extensively and relatively bias-free, for or against Russia's invasion. Top officials in Azerbaijan have offered no comment on the situation. A high-ranking Foreign Ministry official said that it would prefer to stay silent and not lose something by speaking out. "It is such a crisis that you cannot avoid taking sides when making a statement," the official said. "The decision is to keep silent" (Owen, Girgoryan, & Abbasov, 2014). On March 4, 2014, some of the members of the Azerbaijani parliament attempted to open debate on the subject of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Parliament Speaker Ogtay Asadov quickly ended the debate, saying, "Russia and Ukraine are two kindred nations and will solve problems by themselves" (Owen et al., 2014). There was not a lot of support in the Azerbaijani administration for the Ukrainian leaders that took charge in Kyiv. Azerbaijan's ambassador to Ukraine made a low-profile statement expressing support on March 3, 2014 for Ukraine's territorial integrity in reference to Crimea. Azerbaijan is currently attempting to regain control of Karabakh, a region under Armenian control (Owen et al., 2014).

On February 27, 2014, Belarus' Foreign Minister Vladimir Makey stressed the importance of preserving the territorial integrity, independence, and sovereignty of Ukraine. He also emphasized the importance of the partnership between Ukraine and Belarus (Foreign Ministry of Belarus, 2014). Then on March 19, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement which contradicted the former statement from the Foreign Minister. The statement describes Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine as "brotherly states intertwined by the common history that goes back centuries" (Foreign Ministry of Belarus, 2014) and expresses concern that politicians outside of these countries try to decide what is best for Slavic peoples. The statement expresses that Belarus is "against one-sided, biased interpretation" (Foreign Ministry of Belarus, 2014) of the situation in Ukraine. Overall, the tone of the statement was relatively sympathetic to Russia, while not denying the complications for Ukraine.

On March 23, 2014, the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, answered questions from the media and addressed the situation in Ukraine. He first expressed disgust and pain at the events in Ukraine, though it was unclear if he was referring to Russia's invasion, the change in government, or both. He expressed clearly that he did not approve of any kind of overthrow of "legitimate government" ("President of the Republic," 2014) and expressed only mixed support for the new politicians and leaders in power. President Lukashenko linked the politicians in power in Ukraine with the UNA-UNSO, the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, and the massacre at Khatyn, and then referred to the Ukrainian



Insurgent Army as subhumans. He did express support for the “good people, professionals, and businessmen” (“President of the Republic,” 2014) in the new Ukrainian government. His statement on Crimea was highly sympathetic to Russia’s invasion. He said:

As for Crimea, I do not like it when the integrity and independence of a country are broken. However, who masterminded this situation? Many say that Russia could not wait to grab Crimea and annex it and so on. You are politicians, you should not have given the reason to let it happen. When Russia saw these persecutions of Russians or rather all Slavonic people, when Crimea faced this threat (Crimea once belonged to Russia, however, this is not the point) Russia had to interfere, as there are 1.5 million Russians there and about two million who could not accept the developments in Ukraine. No one can say that Russia took to the arms and people went there and grabbed Crimea. The current government gave the reason for it to happen. (“President of the Republic,” 2014)

Despite the caveat at the beginning, the President of Belarus essentially endorsed Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. His response is overall more sympathetic to Russian aggression than to a violation of international law or Ukrainian sovereignty.

No official statements or reactions to the annexation of Crimea by Russia can be found for the governments of Cyprus or Greece.

Responses by those that voted for Russia are in direct contrast to the responses from the countries that gave 12 points to Ukraine, which are the Bosnia & Herzegovina, Denmark, Macedonia, Georgia, Israel, Latvia, Moldova, Poland, San Marino, Serbia, and Slovenia. In a press conference, the BH Foreign Minister Zlatko Lagumdžija emphasized Ukraine’s right to define their future independently, and called on the international community to immediately act to prevent an escalation of conflict in Ukraine. He, on behalf of the nation, urged the UN to take action to protect Ukraine’s territorial sovereignty (SRNA, 2014).

Denmark’s Foreign Minister Martin Lidegaard made a statement on 2 March that Russia had “invaded Ukraine” and discussed the numbers of Russian troops stationed in Crimea and the Black Sea. He said that despite the claim of protecting Russian minorities in Ukraine, annexing and invading are wholly unacceptable ways of doing that. Minister Lidegaard made clear that he was working with other diplomats in the EU to prepare a statement which would make clear that Russia’s violation of Ukraine’s territorial sovereignty was totally unacceptable and they condemned it in every way possible, while also keeping the possibility of negotiating with Russia (Lidegaard: Russia has invaded Ukrainem, 2014).

The President of Georgia responded formally to the situation in Ukraine. Having similarly experienced Russian military aggression and invasion, Georgia is particularly sensitive to the Ukraine crisis and Russia’s annexation of Crimea. Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili stated that Russia’s actions toward Ukraine is an act of aggression against their territorial sovereignty. He particularly condemned the distribution of Russian passports, the reinforcing of Russian military infrastructure, and the explanation that it was for the protection of Russian minorities in Ukraine. The President then said, “Solving of fate, future and territorial integrity of the states through pressure and forceful interference from other state is inadmissible. We call on the international community not to allow new conflict in Europe and to use all the available means in order to avert possible aggression and to preserve sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine” (“Georgia Condemns,” 2014). He encouraged the United States, the EU, and “the entire democratic world” to not allow what happened in Georgia to happen to Ukraine. He made clear the political leaders of

Georgia would “spare no effort” in supporting Ukraine’s people and security. President Margvelashvili’s statements were then repeated again on Georgian news by Georgian First Deputy Foreign Minister Davit Zalkaliani (“Georgia Condemns,” 2014).

Israel kept general silence on the Ukraine crisis until 5 March, when it stated that it hoped for a peaceful, diplomatic resolution to the crisis that would not involve the loss of human life. The Jewish Agency also stated that it would send aid to the Jews living in Ukraine. Jewish Agency Chief Natan Sharansky said the organization would also strengthen Jewish institutions in Eastern Europe and would launch a fundraiser to increase their security (Times of Israel Staff and AFP, 2014).

Latvia released a joint statement by the President of Latvia, Speaker Saeima, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister on the Ukraine crisis. It began, “Latvia strongly stands for the territorial integrity of Ukraine and is of the opinion that any measures aimed at splitting Ukrainian society and questioning the territorial integrity of the country must be condemned in the strongest terms possible” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, 2014). It condemned Russia’s use of military forces in Ukraine as a “gross violation of international law” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, 2014) and described Russia’s legal decisions as a “hypocritical attempt” to disguise with legality an illegal and unjustified use of military force. The statement warned that Russia’s actions undermined the bases for the international security system and reminded the international community of the treaties in place that were supposed to protect Ukraine’s territorial sovereignty. The statement urged the UN, the OSCE, the Council of Europe, and others to “act without delay” and to discuss Ukraine’s situation at NATO’s Foreign Affairs Council. The statement ended, “In our hearts and minds we are together with the Ukrainian people!” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia, 2014). “The Crimea scenario resembles the occupation of the Baltic states by the USSR in 1940,” Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics said on his Twitter account. “History repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce” (Seputyte & Eglitis, 2014).

Macedonia’s Foreign Ministry released a statement expressing concern about the growing violence in Ukraine. It urged the international community to take all actions necessary to end the violence, ease tensions and establish a dialogue with all parties involved (Republic of Macedonia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014).

Moldova’s President released a response expressing concern and urging nations to observe Ukraine’s territorial sovereignty and independence. He described Russia’s actions as an violation of international law and principles and called for the urgent use of all “international mechanisms” to resolve the situation rapidly and diplomatically (Presidency of the Republic of Moldova, 2014).

Poland had an extremely strong reaction to Russia’s annexation of Crimea. On 1 March, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs released the following statement:

In the context of recent developments in Crimea Poland strongly appeals for respecting Ukraine’s territorial integrity, and observing international law, including fundamental principles of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Any decisions that will be taken in the coming days, including of military nature, could have irreparable consequences for the international order. We call for stopping provocative movements of troops on the Crimean Peninsula. We urge states-signatories to the Budapest Memorandum of December 1994, which gives Ukraine security assurances, to respect and fulfil their commitments. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland, 2014)

The Prime Minister of Poland also stated that Europe's dependence on Russian gas should be lessened in order to give Russia less power over Europe and prevent "potential aggressive steps by Russia in the future" ("Germany's dependence," 2014).

San Marino made no official response to the Ukraine crisis.

Serbia stated in November that it would like to reiterate support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine, and emphasized that only through discussion and diplomacy would a solution be reached that was in line with international treaties and law (Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2014).

Slovenia's Prime Minister Alenka Bratušek made a statement encouraging all efforts possible to ensure there is no armed conflict in Ukraine. Slovenia took an active role as mediator between Russia and Ukraine in the process ("Bratuškova," 2014).

There is a clear correlation between the response by each country to the Ukraine crisis in 2014 and the way each of these countries voted in Eurovision 2016. Those countries which awarded Russia top points in Eurovision also had responses to the Ukraine crisis that were much more sympathetic to Russia, or did not respond at all. The countries which voted for Ukraine, with the exception of San Marino, had consistently strongly negative responses to Russia's invasion. Many of the countries which gave twelve points to Ukraine were countries with a history of Soviet aggression and influence themselves, including Georgia, Latvia, Poland, and Moldova. Several Balkan states also gave twelve jury points to Ukraine, and Russia's history of interest in the Balkans is long-standing and well documented. Multiple of these countries also expressed a desire for the international community to act in the Ukraine crisis. While it is not possible to say how much a country's jury voting was directly a result of a country's politics, it's clear that Eurovision voting at the very least reflects the political realities between countries.

At the most, Eurovision voting is a direct response to a political situation. The song sung by Jamala was political enough in content to provoke, to some degree, a necessary consciousness of the politics between Russia and Ukraine, and Russia and Europe, on the part of the juries in the ways they assigned their votes. And this consciousness is clearly reflected in voting patterns.

## CONCLUSION

After its beginning as a cultural and quasi-political event, Eurovision has developed over time to incorporate voting blocs that reflect political friendships. In the most recent Eurovision contest, the political events and relationships in Europe were clearly mirrored in the voting patterns of different European countries. There were clear divides between voting patterns of Western and Eastern Europe, as well as between the popular vote and the more clearly political jury vote. The Ukraine crisis was clearly in the minds of all participants after Jamala's song about the deportation of the Crimean Tatars, and voting patterns followed the same lines as political reactions did after the 2014 Ukraine crisis. Though it has not always been so explicit, the 2016 Eurovision Song Contest was clearly a political as well as cultural event.

Though its politics are generally understood by most Europeans, Eurovision's patterns should be given greater attention, as they reflect the attitudes and values of European countries. Though there is plenty of evidence to look at in addition to a singing contest, Eurovision is an opportunity for those studying European alliances to see generally where countries' priorities lie. It provides a yearly snapshot of how European countries are interacting with each other: who they want to be close with, who they leave alone. It reflects migration patterns, cultural patterns, political patterns. Through all the camp, for those who pay close attention, Eurovision can become a tool to better understand Europeans'

allegiances.

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