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Refugee Acceptance and Military Engagement:
A Comparative Analysis of Responses to the
Wars in Syria and Ukraine

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Political Science Departmental Honors Thesis

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Summary of Paper and Findings.....	4
I. Case Selection Rationale	7
II. Literature Review	7
III. Background of the Syrian and Ukrainian Wars	11
The Syrian Civil War (2011 – Present)	11
Russia-Ukraine War (2014 – Present).....	14
IV. History of Immigration	18
V. Military Engagement Tendencies	27
VI. Hypotheses and Arguments	31
VII. Operationalization of Variables	33
VIII. Data Sources	35
IX. Research Methodology	35
X. Findings.....	40
A Continuation of Historical Tendencies	40
Zelensky’s Symbolic Power	43
The Symbol of Terrorism	45
The Impact of Cultural Affinity on Refugee Acceptance.....	50
An Inverse Relationship Between Refugee Acceptance and Military Engagement	54
The Left-Right Belief System	62
XI. Strategic Narratives	71
The U.S.....	71
Germany	78
The U.K.....	82
XII. Significance and Implications	87
Refugee Populations.....	87
Conflict-Prone Countries.....	87
Responding Countries	88
XIII. Research Limitations and Areas of Future Research	90
XIV. Conclusion.....	90
Works Cited.....	92

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Introduction

In 2015, the U.S. and Europe received more than 1.3 million new asylum claims. In the context of unrest and civil war in Syria, civilians fled their homes in search of refuge. The recent massive earthquakes in northern Syria and Turkey have only worsened the humanitarian crisis as it impacted a region where many refugees were staying, collapsing housing structures built with outdated techniques. Since 2022, the refugee crisis has been exacerbated by the war in Ukraine. More than 8 million Ukrainians have left their homes since the outbreak of war, eclipsing the amount of asylum seekers from all other conflict-driven countries, and more than 4 million are seeking refuge in Europe. The U.S. and Europe have opened their arms to Ukrainian refugees and pledged their steadfast support behind Zelensky just short of direct military intervention. In contrast, Syrian refugees face discrimination and protests for their immigration into the U.S. and Europe. Simultaneously, while the U.S. and Europe have engaged in military action in Syria directly via troop deployment, they are hesitant to support Ukraine militarily in the same way. There seems to be a puzzle here, whereby the U.S. and Europe provide strong military aid yet discriminate support against the exact same populations they provide aid to. It is precisely this active military presence in Syria and distaste for Syrian refugees versus the absence of military action in Ukraine and warm welcome to Ukrainian refugees that raises the question of why international support differs for Syria and Ukraine.

Summary of Paper and Findings

This paper argues that the public responses from the U.S. and Europe towards the wars in Syria and Ukraine are a continuation of their unique histories and cultural biases rather than a deviation from their past. Their corresponding policy responses, either refugee acceptance or military engagement, are part of each responding governments' strategic narrative that seeks to maintain and increase popular support.

The first section offers the rationale for why the five countries (i.e., Syria, Ukraine, the U.S., Germany, and the U.K.) were chosen for analysis. The second section reviews the literature of strategic narratives, the nature of belief systems, the cultural argument of why refugee populations are treated differently, and reasons behind differing responses towards intrastate and interstate wars. These are important ideas and frameworks for understanding the differing responses.

The third section begins the analysis of our puzzle by looking into the background of the two wars and determining key differences between them that may be the source of distinct international responses. We find that whether there is a legitimate reason or symbol behind the cause of the wars in the sending country is important because it impacts the way the domestic and international public thinks about the war. Symbolically, Zelensky was more powerful than the uncoordinated Syrian rebels, which made it more likely for the U.S. and European publics to support Ukraine rather than Syria. Moreover, whether the conflict is a civil war or an interstate war affects the international perception as well. However, the mode of support Syria and Ukraine receive is constrained by each responding country's respective history vis-à-vis refugee acceptance and military engagement, hence leading to distinct policies from the three responding countries.

Hence, the fourth and fifth sections analyze these constraints via a brief history of immigration and military engagement of the three responding countries (the U.S., Germany, and the U.K.) and investigate how their present responses fit within that overarching history. These three countries each have unique immigration histories and are at different stages of attitudes towards immigrants. The U.S. and the U.K. are experiencing a rise in ethnocentric anxieties while Germany has embraced multiculturalism. Altogether though, an overarching theme emerges and agrees with a large body of literature that cultural affinity is a strong determinant of whether refugees from a sending country will be welcomed into a receiving country. In other words, the more culturally similar a sending country is to a receiving country, the more likely that their refugees will be accepted by the receiving country. Hence, we show that one reason why Ukrainian refugees were more welcome than Syrian refugees is that they are culturally more similar to the three responding countries.

The three responding countries also have distinct histories with regard to military engagement. While the U.S. has been historically active in military engagements abroad as a claim to its great power status, Germany has been anti-militaristic since the end of World War II and more of a civilian power, and the U.K. has held on to its narrative as a leader in world affairs, albeit with a much smaller military than the U.S. Each country's tendencies are displayed in both wars in Syria and Ukraine, and we show how it is precisely the maintenance of these

tendencies that drive but also constrain the three responding countries to the strategic narratives they create.

The sixth through ninth sections go over the hypotheses, variables, data sources, and research methodology used. The findings are presented in the tenth section, categorized into a continuation of historical tendencies, Zelensky's symbolic power, the symbol of terrorism, the impact of cultural affinity on refugee acceptance, an inverse relationship between refugee acceptance and military engagement, and the left-right belief system.

The findings lead into the overarching strategic narrative that each responding country crafts around the two policy responses. The narratives are dependent on the domestic understandings of the two wars, each responding country's history of refugee acceptance and military engagement, and the structure of political beliefs around the two policies.

We see that when the use of military engagement is not a feasible policy option, the government is inclined to accept more refugees, and vice versa. Hence, there exists an inverse relationship that reflects the delicate balance between the two foreign policies. Moreover, policy choices are in line with public opinion on both issues in all three responding countries. Given that the opinion of political elites is highly structured, this correlation between policy and public opinion implies that public opinion is an indicator of the structured belief system that policymakers follow when making their policy choices vis-à-vis refugee acceptance and military engagement. Thus, one explanation for the relationship between these two seemingly unrelated policies is that they are part of a larger left-right belief system.

In the final section, this paper concludes with the significance of these findings. We highlight the implications for three sets of actors: refugee populations, conflict-prone countries that seek international support, and the responding countries themselves. Then, research limitations are noted, and areas of future research are offered for ponderance.

I. Case Selection Rationale

This paper focuses on the wars in Syria and Ukraine because both are ongoing military conflicts that have led to a mass exodus of refugees and have been highly salient international issues. However, they have received very different responses from the international public, and we seek to understand the reasons behind this. The three responding countries selected for analysis are the U.S., Germany, and the U.K. The U.S. was chosen for its capacity for large military interventions in foreign countries, and thus, is an example of how a responding country balances refugee acceptance and troop deployment as its form of military engagement. Germany and the U.K. are selected because they are both major political powers in Europe but have acted very differently in response to the war in Syria. Germany stands out for its uniquely generous Syrian refugee policy, setting itself apart from other European countries. In contrast, the U.K. stands out for its extremely limited refugee policy and lack of acceptance towards refugees, as reflected by the 2016 Brexit vote. Moreover, while Germany has been hesitant to send any military support, the U.K. has been relatively more hawkish by joining U.S. military operations. Overall, these three responding countries were chosen because their actions have a profound impact on the ongoing wars. This research study provides insight on how they might respond to other international conflicts, now or in the future.

II. Literature Review

Strategic narratives are “a means for political actors to construct a shared meaning of the past, present, and future of international politics to shape the behavior of domestic and international actors [...] a tool for political actors to extend their influence, manage expectations, and change the discursive environment in which they operate [...] narratives about both states and the system itself, both about who we are and what kind of order we want” (Miskimmon, O’Loughlin, and Roselle, 2013, p. 2). However, these narratives also have their constraints and political actors cannot create one “out of nothing, off the cuff” (p. 8). They are limited by “prevailing domestic and international understandings and expectations of that state, readings of its history, and evaluations of its reputation” (p.8). As the events unfold within these constraints, political actors craft a narrative that supports their agenda and makes them more favorable to the public. Indeed, the policy responses of the U.S., Germany, and the U.K. are all in line with public opinion in their country and constrained by their country’s history, cultural

biases, and political ideology with respect to both refugee acceptance and military engagement policies in Syria and Ukraine.

Historical constraints are given by previous immigration and refugee intake trends while cultural biases and political ideology are shown by public opinion attitudes towards refugees and military engagement. This paper argues that cultural biases persistent throughout each country's immigration history drive public attitudes in favor of Ukrainian refugees and against Syrian refugees. This sides with a large body of literature that differing attitudes towards refugees are due to the difference in culture, religion, and language. Regarding religion, Bansak, et al. (2016) found that "Muslim asylum seekers are about 11 percentage points less likely to be accepted than otherwise similar Christian asylum seekers." Moreover, they found that "Christian asylum seekers are only slightly preferred over agnostic asylum seekers," suggesting that what exists is not a pro-Christian bias, but rather, a strong anti-Muslim bias. This coincides with the U.S., Germany, and the U.K. being predominantly Christian. Moreover, after 9/11, the Western countries saw a rise in Islamophobia and a persistent feeling of otherness towards Muslims (Sunar, 2017). Hainmueller and Hiscox (2010) emphasize cultural and sociotropic factors, arguing that anti-immigration sentiment stems from feelings that these foreigners will undermine the national identity. Thus, given that Syria is a Muslim country while Ukraine is a Christian country, Syrian refugees are seen as culturally inferior to the three responding countries and having the potential to undermine their national identity.

Moreover, because intrastate and interstate wars are perceived differently by the publics, the Syrian and Ukrainian wars have different international understandings, leading to different policy options chosen at the outset. According to Shirkey (2017), "interstate wars caused by commitment problems are in fact more likely to attract military intervention" whereas intrastate wars are less likely to receive the same attention because "the commitment problems in question would be internal to the state experiencing the civil war and thus less likely to threaten regional or global." This implies that the Syrian civil war should attract less attention for military engagement because the conflict is internal while the Ukrainian war attracts far more attention for military engagement because it is an interstate war. Interestingly, what currently holds is the opposite, mainly because the war in Syria became strategically framed around the war on terror, stoking Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiment and mobilizing the public to lean towards

military engagement in Syria (“Statement by the President on ISIL,” 2014). This in turn fueled distrust towards Syrian refugees. Meanwhile, in Ukraine, the threat of a nuclear war with Russia deters any direct military engagement even if there is strong support for Ukraine (Faulconbridge and Light, 2023). To explain this phenomenon of more military engagement in Syria than Ukraine, we show that the U.S., Germany, and the U.K. all acted in their own self-interest and crafted strategic narratives to justify their policy responses, especially if they ran counter to expectations.

Then, this paper turns to the policies chosen strategically by politicians in the context of the constraints described above. It focuses on refugee acceptance and military engagement policies and proposes that when one is not feasible, the other will be emphasized more to signal action and increase popular support for the government. In other words, the responding countries weigh these two policy options against each other. The connection between these two seemingly unrelated policies can be attributed to the presence of a structured belief system. According to Converse (1964), public opinion of the *masses* is unstable and highly unstructured. Poole and Rosenthal (2007) went on to argue that the opinion of *political elites* is highly structured. They show that elected politicians in the U.S. Congress vote consistently based on ideological positions, hence giving rise to a connection between two policies not because they are inherently connected but because they are encompassed by the same ideological position.

At first glance, Converse’s argument implies that even if there is an inverse relationship between refugee acceptance and military engagement in public opinion, it is merely a coincidence, and one should not look too much into it. However, given how the phenomenon holds in both public opinion responses and policy choices taken by each responding country, this connects with Poole and Rosenthal’s argument and implies that policymakers are acting within a structured belief system. Therefore, we argue that on these two policy stances, public opinion is structured, in contrast to Converse’s original argument. Since policy choices closely follow, the opinion of political elites is structured as well, as Poole and Rosenthal argued. This is not to say that all individual voters have the same sense of structure in their voting behavior. We agree with Converse that individual voters are indeed random and unpredictable. However, given how strong the inverse relationship between the two policies is within and across the responding

countries, we argue that aggregate public opinion can be an indicator of the structured belief system that policymakers are aware of and follow when making their policy choices.

Thus, an explanation for the inverse relationship between these two policies is that pro-refugee acceptance and anti-military engagement are part of the same ideological platform, and vice versa. Indeed, this relationship should hold. According to Lee (2022), Republicans will tend to be more supportive of military campaigns even when casualties rise while Democrats would be less supportive of military intervention when casualties rise. Furthermore, Hammer and Kafura (2019) argue that Republicans and Democrats are in “different worlds” in terms of immigration policy. Republicans tend to be anti-immigrant and an ever-increasing portion of Republicans consider immigration a rising threat, while we have the opposite for Democrats. We generalize these existing findings for U.S. political parties to the respective conservative and liberal parties in Germany and the U.K.

Understanding why the public responds the way it does to different refugee populations is important because “high-profile public policies often respond markedly to public opinion” (Bansak, et al., 2016). Thus, we analyze public attitudes in the context of responses to the Syrian and Ukrainian wars by using public opinion data across political parties in the three responding countries and over time. We confirm that policy responses reflect public attitudes and that there exists an inverse relationship between attitudes towards refugee acceptance and military engagement. This paper ultimately argues that this ideological structure is manipulated by political actors to craft their strategic narratives. The dual policy stances regarding refugee acceptance and military engagement are shaped by domestic public opinion and biases sustained over the years, but the way the political actors emulate these biases and frame their policies all serve the purpose of fitting in with their overarching strategic narratives.

III. Background of the Syrian and Ukrainian Wars

The Syrian Civil War (2011 – Present)

The Syrian civil war was part of the Arab Spring that first started in Tunisia, when Mohamed Bouazizi self-immolated on December 17, 2010, in protest of the oppressive authoritarian regime (“Arab Spring”). This act sparked protests all over the Middle East, and although Tunisia saw its protesters successfully overthrow its unjust government quickly and peacefully, other Arab nations like Syria were not as fortunate. To understand how the Syrian civil war came to involve the U.S. and Europe in this prolonged conflict, we need to understand the actors and their interests.

The war started with the Syrian people protesting injustice in society because of an authoritarian government. Religious injustice was a leading factor. Although the country was Muslim, it was divided between the Shia and Sunni sects of the Muslim religion. The government under President Bashaar Al Assad was Alawi, a part of the Shia sect, yet they only constituted 13% of the Syrian population. Moreover, the Alawis dominated the upper ranks of the country’s military and are the backbone of forces fighting to support the Assad regime (Oweis, 2011). Meanwhile, the Sunni Muslim sect majority is given less favorable positions and hold a lower societal status as compared to the Shias. Hence, the Sunnis rebelled against the Shia regime, believing they could seek justice like the rebels did in Tunisia.

Two dominant Middle East actors soon entered the picture, namely Saudi Arabia who is Sunni and backs the rebels, and Iran who is Shia and backs the Assad regime. While the rebels welcomed the outside support, Saudi Arabia and Iran used the sectarian divide to further their own ambitions and often against each other, which meant it did not necessarily benefit the rebels (Laub, 2023).

The U.S., Germany, and the U.K. enter this picture with their relationships to Saudi Arabia, which has much to do with oil. Saudi Arabia “alone holds a quarter of the world’s known oil reserves” (Telhami, 2002). Given these alliances, when the civil war began with protests in 2011, the rebels expected that the international community would respond as they did in Libya. Namely, NATO backed a military campaign with the Libyan rebels against the Gaddafi regime and violently overthrew the government in 2011. Hence, throughout the Syrian war, especially at its start, what motivated the rebel groups to continue their acts of defiance was a belief that the

United States and NATO would act as they did in Libya and help them overthrow the Assad regime (Phillips, 2020, p. 171).

While there were moments when it seemed as if the U.S. and NATO would finally act, the support the rebels needed to overthrow the regime never came. After Obama's 2012 red line statement about U.S. military intervention in Syria should Assad use chemical weapons and hence commit a crime against humanity, there was a continued expectation that the U.S. would act. Yet, in 2013, when the use of the chemical weapon sarin on opposition-controlled territory killed hundreds of civilians, many children, the U.S. remained hesitant to send support. Obama specifically requested Congressional approval for the strike, even though it was not necessary (Phillips, 2020, p. 180). This implies Obama was unsure of using military force and how the American public would receive his actions. Thus, he spread the responsibility of starting U.S. military engagement abroad with Congress. Ultimately, military strikes were called off when the U.S. followed Russia's plan for Syrian disarmament of chemical weapons. Thus, despite the rebel groups' belief that the U.S. would send support as they did in Libya, it soon became clear that the U.S. did not find the rebels a strong enough alternative to the Assad regime, and hence, greatly limited the amount of support they received. As one U.S. official put it, "It's sad that Syrians are dying, but as long as it stays within Syria I don't see how that impacts upon the US national security" (p. 171).

Then, in 2015, the war in Syria became framed around the war on ISIS and terror. This was a turning point because the war now did have national security impacts on the U.S. and Europe. Hence, this time Obama did not hesitate to authorize troops on the ground in Syria, making it clear the purpose was to fight terrorists. After more than four years of waiting for U.S. and European military action, the Syrian rebels finally received it, yet the purpose had been diluted because the attack was not against the Assad regime. This war on terror continued until 2019, when Trump declared ISIS to be defeated and began withdrawing troops. However, it should be noted that the civil war remains ongoing, albeit in a stalemate, and the U.S. still has troops in the region (Ward et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, for the simultaneous refugee crisis, it was not widely publicized as such until 2015, as if the world suddenly realized it had a serious humanitarian crisis at hand. At the time, as more of a symbolic rather than a substantive action, Obama announced the U.S. would accept

up to 10,000 Syrian refugees. Although this number is dwarfed by the 500,000 refugees Germany pledged to accept, the announcement was criticized by both ends of the political spectrum. Aid groups called Obama's action a token one given the size of the American economy and population, while Republicans warned that Obama was letting in potential terrorists (Harris et al., 2015). Meanwhile, Trump's campaign for the 2016 U.S. presidential election used the platform of instating a Muslim ban and he cited the Syrian refugee population as a "Trojan horse" (Kopan, 2015). In Europe, Germany saw Merkel's generous refugee policy while the U.K. was domestically embroiled in a referendum to leave the EU due to the uncontrollable EU immigration influx. The sensational Leave EU campaign only augmented the refugee crisis by sharing pictures of Syrian refugees trying to get to Europe, stoking latent ethnocentric feelings of the British (Sobolewska and Ford, 2020, p. 227).

It should be noted that U.S. and European intervention in Syria is not necessarily welcome by the Syrian people. Although the rebels knew they needed international backing to succeed, they lacked an alternative to Assad that the U.S. and Europe could align with. However, "Assad and the U.S. government were widely hated in ISIS-held territory whatever people's view of the Caliphate" (Phillips, 2020, p. 209). In other words, whether the U.S. came or not, the people simply wanted peace.

Today, little attention is being paid to the war in Syria. While Germany's integration of millions of Syrian refugees is a relevant topic because of its existing impact on the German people, the U.S. and the U.K. have mostly been quiet about the still ongoing war and refugee crisis since Trump declared the war on terror over in 2019 with the fall of ISIS. With Biden currently as president, the current refugee policy is relatively more open than it was during Trump's Muslim ban era. Moreover, with no prominent figure in office like Trump using his anti-Muslim refugee rhetoric, the media has found little reason to sensationalize the refugee issue. Meanwhile, the U.K. has seen immigration go from the number one issue during the EU referendum to a not so important issue ("The Most Important Issues Facing the Country").

However, the recent massive earthquakes on the border of Syria and Turkey has brought public attention to the humanitarian and refugee crisis in the region again, but there appears to be little else motivating international action to resolve the conflict. Strikingly, Biden did not mention anything about the crisis in his state of the union address just a day after the earthquake

(Zurcher, 2023). This is not a new phenomenon but rather a current reflection of the low priority the situation in Syria is to the U.S.

Russia-Ukraine War (2014 – Present)

The war in Ukraine started with the annexation of Crimea in 2014. To understand how the conflict escalated to the outright Russian invasion in 2022, one must understand NATO expansion and what Ukraine represents to Russia and the West.

NATO, or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, consists of the U.S., Canada, and 28 European countries. It was founded in 1949 as a direct counter to the USSR during the onset of the Cold War, with the stated goal to “guarantee the freedom and security of its members through political and military means” (“What is NATO?”). Moreover, as Ismay, NATO’s first secretary general put it, the alliance was formed to “keep the Soviet Union out, the Americans in, and the Germans down” (Russell, 2023). Hence, since its inception, it was set up against Russia and its allies. After the Cold War ended and the USSR dissolved, post-Soviet space became a contentious issue. This space encompassed newly formed states, including Ukraine, which stands out in particular because of the long border it shares with Russia. Thus, it is not surprising that after Zelensky stated his intent of having Ukraine join NATO on the eve of the Russian invasion, Putin stated that “If Ukraine were to join NATO, it would serve as a direct threat to the security of Russia” (Glucroft, 2022).

This situation is not without precedent. Georgia, another nation in the post-Soviet space, is a good example of what happens when a post-Soviet state tries to join NATO. In 2008, Georgia announced its intentions to join the EU and NATO. As described by Stent (2014), then-President Saakashvili had been warned by Bush and Secretary of State Rice that the U.S. would not come to Georgia’s aid should Russia attack, yet he still allowed Russia to provoke him which led to the Russia-Georgia war, and Georgia quickly lost. Russia showed what it was capable of and willing to do should any post-Soviet state try to join the western sphere of influence. In 2010, “Russia’s military doctrine named NATO the number one external danger to Russia, whereas NATO’s new strategic concept talked about the desire for further cooperation and a strong partnership with Russia” (Stent, 2014, p. 240). Clearly, the current war in Ukraine is Russia’s response to Ukraine joining NATO given that Russia has historically considered NATO expansion an existential threat.

The stakes are higher in Ukraine than it was in Georgia though. From Russia's perspective, "Ukraine's population was ten times larger than Georgia's, 80 percent of Russia's gas exports to Europe pass through Ukraine, the Black Sea Fleet is headquartered in Crimea, which is on Ukrainian territory, and roughly one-sixth of the country's population is ethnically Russian" (Stent, 2014, p. 110) As for the U.S., relations with Ukraine are not just political, there is also an "effective Ukrainian-American diaspora, and Ukraine is the third largest recipient of U.S. aid after Israel and Egypt" (p. 111). From this standpoint, U.S.-Ukraine relations are historically tied together and the massive support for Ukraine stems from the personal ties that people have built up since the dissolution of the USSR. This diaspora also gives Ukrainians a symbol that others can rally around, and Zelensky became the bearer of that symbol. Thus, from the start of the crisis, the U.S. public had a side they aligned with and maintained steadfast support for.

Resultingly, Zelensky's surprise visit to the U.S. Congress in December 2022 is not just an effort on Zelensky's part to gain the public's support. The U.S. government also seeks to reflect the popular domestic support for Ukraine and justify future support through the words of the Ukrainian president himself. Similarly, Biden's visit to Ukraine was also a gesture to sustain favorable attitudes towards Ukraine, legitimize Ukraine's side, and earn himself public support.

Germany and the U.K. are similar in their responses to the Ukraine crisis because of their shared interests in Ukraine and their complicated relationship with Russia. We see that Germany was willing to cut ties with Russia in some crucial ways after the invasion. The Nord Stream was a pipeline that would transport Russian gas directly to Germany, thus bypassing Ukraine and Poland and allowing ease of transport for Russian gas. Although the project would have improved German-Russian relations and lowered costs for both, Germany ultimately pulled out in 2022 and the pipeline was never completed due to sanctions and international pressure (Marsh and Chambers, 2022). This was inevitable because the West knew that such pipeline would only boost access to Russian oil and increase the relevance of Russia. Handing Russia such a leverage was not an option, especially after they invaded Ukraine. Thus, this instance shows how although Europe is dependent on Russia in many ways, they were still willing to sanction and cancel valuable partnerships with Russia in order to support Ukraine.

There also exists a strong Ukrainian diaspora in western Europe after the Cold War, and hence, the avid support for Ukraine in Germany and the U.K. Moreover, just like the U.S., the U.K. welcomed Zelensky to speak before the Parliament, hence showcasing U.K. support for Ukraine on behalf of the domestic public (Wheeler, 2023).

Despite the avid public support for Ukraine and various political actors who have jumped on this as an opportunity to gain domestic support, direct military engagement is not an option due to the fear of escalating the conflict into a nuclear war with Russia (Faulsonbridge, 2022). Hence, all three responding countries have been deterred from troop deployment. However, recent actions have shown that although troop deployment and direct military intervention is not a feasible option, other types of indirect military support still showcase action. On January 25, 2023, Germany confirmed it would send Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine and train Ukraine troops how to use them on German soil (Schmitz, et al., 2023). This was a significant move for Germany because since the end of World War II, it has limited its military operations. However, with public support for Ukraine and pressure from allies on the rise, Germany's action shows just how much it can be influenced by popular opinion to activate its military even if it is out of line with its previous foreign policy trajectory.

As for the simultaneous refugee crisis, all three responding countries have opened their arms to Ukrainian refugees. As of March 2023, over a year after the war began, the U.S. has admitted over 271,000 Ukrainian refugees (Ainsley, 2023). Meanwhile, Germany has admitted over a million Ukrainian refugees, and the U.K. has admitted over 160,000 Ukrainian refugees (UNHCR).

Key Differences Between the Two Wars as a Basis for Differing Responses

After an overview of the two wars, some key differences stand out. Observing the key differences in the two wars is important because they serve as a basis for how international attention is given to these wars and how the world views the issues at hand, regardless of historical or cultural biases. The first difference is obvious. Syria is engulfed in a civil war while Ukraine was invaded by a foreign nation. As mentioned in the literature review, interstate wars tend to draw more military intervention than civil wars because the problem in question for a civil war tends to resonate from within the country, and hence, there is less effect on the rest of the world. However, we see that the opposite holds in the cases of Syria and Ukraine, since there

is military intervention in Syria but lack of it in Ukraine. We already know why this holds though, since the war in Syria was framed into the war on terror and became linked with terrorism, which has a huge effect on the international community and hence, the problem no longer exists solely within Syria. Meanwhile, the fear of a nuclear war deters the international community from militarily intervening on behalf of Ukraine against Russia. Although these constraints alter expected military engagement policies, the underlying magnitude of support remains the same as what is proposed in the literature. In other words, there is indeed more attention being paid to Ukraine over Syria because of what type of wars they are. It is just that their unique situations create these policy constraints, and the responding countries must form their policy responses in a way that strategically boosts their political platform.

Military intervention aside though, the fact that they are two different types of war is key to how the rest of the world perceives the conflict. Because Ukraine is a clear victim of a foreign invasion, Zelensky has the platform to emerge as a charismatic leader of a victimized country for the world to rally around. Moreover, he has excelled in legitimizing Ukraine's sovereignty, hence making it even more clear to the world that they are being attacked in a most unjust manner. In contrast, Syria began as an uprising against an authoritarian regime, and although the rebel group initially gained momentum, they never gained the support they truly needed – namely, for the U.S. and Europe to militarily intervene and overthrow the Assad regime. As a result, while Zelensky is invited to the U.S. Congress and the U.K. Parliament as a key representation of the Ukrainian people, the Syrian rebels lack such figure to represent them.

The presence of a Ukrainian diaspora and the lack of a Syrian diaspora in the U.S. and Europe also plays a role in the differing responses to refugees. The Ukrainian diaspora in both the U.S. and Europe represents the ties Ukraine has with the rest of the world. Thus, in terms of accepting Ukrainian refugees, the process is relatively straightforward because there already exists a Ukrainian network abroad. In contrast, Syrian refugees face anti-Muslim rhetoric and Islamophobic attitudes, which have been persistent since 9/11. Moreover, because the Syrian war has become a war on terror, this makes the act of supporting refugees seem more ill than good due to the fear of a potential terrorists being overlooked during the refugee admission process. This added layer of obstacles deters political actors from openly accepting Syrian refugees due to fear of their agenda backfiring and diminishing their political reputation.

Because of this avid support for Ukraine but inability to send troops and fight the war with Ukraine, the responding countries signal their support via the refugee front, whether it is to show Ukraine they are there for them, to show their domestic public they are acting, or to send a message to Russia that they stand on Ukraine's side. On the other hand, in Syria, military strikes have been conducted at the whim of politicians like Trump who are looking to check a box off their agenda. Simultaneously, refugees have been left as a side issue political actors may speak about when they find it strategically useful. But actions speak louder than words. Clearly, the urgency of the rebels fighting against injustice in Syria is not represented in the agendas of international actors that the rebels so look to for support.

The two wars do have some similarities. They are both geopolitical battlegrounds and represent something larger than their nation's conflict. However, geopolitical importance can swing public opinion towards the people's favor or against it. Ukraine's geopolitical importance hinges on it maintaining its sovereignty against Russia because the West seeks eastward expansion to contain Russia. This benefits Ukraine because internationally, it is recognized as legitimate, and all the support it receives goes to ensure it maintains its sovereignty. On the other hand, in Syria, the rebel groups' goal of overthrowing the Assad regime is undermined by their inability to create a unified symbol for the world to rally around. Thus, Syria is also important geopolitically, but the international actors involved are more concerned about whether they are getting their political needs met. Few are tracking whether the rebel groups are successful or whether the Syrian people are able to live in peace.

IV. History of Immigration

To understand attitudes towards different refugee populations today, one must understand the broader immigration context in each responding country. This section details where the Syrian and Ukrainian refugees fit within the overarching immigration history. This is key to understanding the strategic narrative that each responding country crafts because political actors will consider the immigration context and public sentiment to determine the feasibility and success of their policies.

The U.S.

Roots of U.S. Immigration. To paint the picture of U.S. immigration over time in simply white and non-white races based on modern-day tensions would be quite a mistake. U.S. immigration

roots began with the first British colonists in the fifteenth century (Baxter and Nowrasteh, 2021). At the time, white European countries encouraged their citizens to migrate to the U.S. and expand their settlements while also trying to limit naturalization. Naturalization in the colonies for citizenship was economically important because only citizens were able to own property. Thus, citizenship was tied to one's economic prospects and was highly sought after. This also meant that it could be kept away from some who desired it but did not have the means to obtain citizenship. Hence, even at the beginning of U.S. immigration history, groups of people were discriminated against and seen as "other." The definition of "other" would evolve over time, as U.S. citizens would continuously push back against waves of immigrants and refugees, each time finding the incoming population distasteful in one way or another.

Religious Discrimination. In the 1740s, citizenship meant passing a religious test and professing their Christian faith, hence discriminating against any colonist who was non-Christian (Baxter and Nowrasteh, 2021). This marks a period of immigration contingent on a religious basis. However, religious discrimination was second to the pressing need for more residents in the U.S. The Naturalization Act of 1790 extended citizenship to free white persons of good character who had resided in the US for two years and took an oath of allegiance. Notably, this implies biases against indentured servants, non-whites, and slaves.

Socioeconomic Discrimination. Entering the nineteenth century, the 1819 economic depression raised the concern that Britain would ship its poor to the U.S., stoking anti-immigration sentiment again, showing yet another persistent US immigration trend: a need for immigrants yet a distaste for the poor (Baxter and Nowrasteh, 2021).

Discrimination Amongst Whites. The Irish Potato famine of 1845 and the European political revolutions of 1848 gave rise to new immigrants from Germany, Ireland, and France. Although all were white, nativist political parties made up of English and Scottish immigrants from the first wave emerged and drew lines based on the different cultures and religions (Baxter and Nowrasteh, 2021).

Racial Discrimination. After the Civil War, the Naturalization Act of 1870 granted naturalization rights to "aliens being free white persons, and to aliens of African nativity and to persons of African descent" (Baxter and Nowrasteh, 2021). Once again, the preference for white citizens was written clearly in history, and only under the shadow of the Civil War were African

Americans finally given some rights. Meanwhile, Chinese immigrants, as non-whites, were prohibited birthright citizenship. In response to growing anti-Chinese sentiment, the Page Act of 1875 restricted Chinese immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 explicitly banned immigrants from China, revealing the upfront nature of discriminatory immigration practices in the U.S. Chinese immigrants were seen as an “Oriental invasion” and a “menace to our civilization.” Later in the 20th century, eugenics studies were used to further the argument that some races were inferior to the Aryan white race, leading to outright discrimination towards Jews, Asians, and Africans, and with World War I, added discrimination towards Germans.

Refugee Policy. Beginning with WWII, refugee policy in the U.S. became more defined. After the horrors of the Holocaust were uncovered, shame drove public opinion to lean towards openness towards refugees (Baxter and Nowrasteh, 2021). The 1951 UN Refugee Convention and 1967 UN refugee protocol goal is the principle of non-refoulement. According to this principle, “a refugee should not be returned to a country where he or she faces serious threats to his or her life or freedom” (UNHCR). The U.S. joined in on this goal, although the manner in which they enacted it fluctuated based on which administrations were in power and what the political climate was at the time. The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 and the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 were passed to help facilitate the post-war immigration of refugees. Interestingly, the refugee policy was also part of the U.S. geopolitical strategy during the Cold War to combat the Soviet Union’s humanitarian prestige at the international level (Newland, 1995). The 1980 Refugee Act raised refugee limits, created a new category for asylum seekers, and vested in the president, in consultation with Congress, the power to determine the number of future refugees admitted annually (Baxter and Nowrasteh, 2021).

9/11 attacks, USA Patriot Act, and Anti-Muslim Sentiment. After 9/11, the USA Patriot Act was passed to strengthen national security. Along with it came the provision of deporting aliens in connection with terrorist activity. “The statute expanded the range of aliens who could be excluded or deported from the United States on terrorism-related grounds, while reducing the procedural protections available to them” (Sinnar, 2003). While Sinnar argues that this violated the rights of non-citizens, due to the large-scale violence exhibited by 9/11, this concern has been superseded by anti-Muslim bias, a fear of terrorism, and increased emphasis on national security.

Countering Islamophobia. Notably though, despite the U.S. having identified more than 160 Muslim-American terrorist suspects in the decade since 9/11, this is just a small portion of the thousands of acts of violence that occur annually in the U.S. (Gallup, 2011). Also, Muslim-American communities actively prevent radicalization through public and private denunciations of terrorism and violence, self-policing, community building, political engagement, and identity politics (Schanzer, et al., 2010). One form of backlash against Muslim-Americans expressed itself as social pressure, including hate crimes and widespread suspicion by other Americans. Hate crimes against Muslims rose from 28 in 2000 to 481 recorded incidents in 2001, and current levels remain about five times higher than prior to 9/11.

To summarize U.S. immigration history, the definition of “other” in American society evolved over time. From the religious divide between Catholic and Protestant European immigrants in the 1700s to backlash against poor immigrants during the 1819 economic recession to outright exclusion of Jews, Asians, and Africans based on eugenics claims in the early 1900s to immigration acts in the 1950s to preserve the social and cultural balance of the U.S. with pro-white policies, to modern day suspicion of Muslims, the U.S. clearly had and continues to have preferences for and against various immigrant populations. For this paper, we keep in mind two significant trends that stand out today: the U.S. remains pro-white immigration and since 9/11, anti-Muslim sentiment and Islamophobia persist.

Germany

Despite Germany’s extreme openness to Syrian refugees in 2015, this was only on the institutional and policy level. Germany did not acknowledge itself as an immigrant country until 2005 when it passed its first immigration law (Kaya, 2017, p. 58). Previous non-ethnic German immigrants were considered temporary foreign labor and not seen as key pieces of society that would be integrated in the future. Underlying racist behavior and attitudes towards these guest workers were persistent throughout the years, and when high-skilled labor from other European countries immigrated, their Europeaness served as visual evidence of their sameness as opposed to the unwanted diversity of the guest workers, hence further marginalizing them. Thus, although policy at the institutional level towards Syrian refugees was extremely welcoming, it is quite the contrary to previous attitudes towards foreigners just two decades ago.

Preference for Ethnic Germans. When World War II ended, Germany had to work on rebuilding its single German nationhood. There was an attempt to legally include expellees, ethnic Germans, and refugees from the GDR (East Germany) in the postwar era. The German Federal Expellee Law of 1953 defines as expellees all German nationals and ethnic Germans having a primary residence outside postwar Germany and who lost their residences in the course of World War II-related fight or flight expulsions. The Federation of Expellees even pursued a strategy of victimization that reflected the self-understanding of the German expellees – the purpose was to stress the crime against ethnic Germans as a counterargument to possible demands for reparations by the Allied powers. However, The Shoah (Holocaust) TV mini-series gave the public a comparison of Jewish and ethnic German suffering, and made the Expellees claims pale in comparison (Wessel, 2017, p. 20). Thus, from the beginning, the immigration flow to and from Germany was used for political purposes.

Foreigners in Germany. As for the more than eight million UNDPs in Germany, out of a European total of 11 million, they included six million foreign civilian workers, two million prisoners of war, and 700,000 surviving concentration and extermination camp prisoners (Holian, 2017, p. 33). Most DPs quickly returned home after the war, but large numbers of displaced Eastern Europeans, principally from Poland, the Baltic countries, and the USSR, were unwilling or unable to return home. With the passage of the 1951 Homeless Foreigners Law, displaced persons officially became a West German responsibility. While they received the same civil, social and economic rights, they had no political rights, path to citizenship, or financial assistance that German refugees received. Hence, a distinction between German and foreigner was established. This persistence until the 2005 immigration law that finally acknowledged that immigration is a central feature of German society differs from the U.S. immigration history because the U.S. takes a more racial approach to immigrants, with white immigrants largely considered an in-group no matter their country of origin while Germany maintained German ethnicity as the basis for citizenship, hence elevating German refugees and ethnic German immigrants over any foreigner.

Guest Workers. In the 1950s, the German economic miracle also served as a crucial catalyst for bringing millions of visible foreigners back (Chin, 2017, p. 210). However, these guest workers were not to become permanent additions to German society, but to provide labor for a limited

period and then to leave. This was in line with German immigration policy of only recognizing ethnic Germans as permanent, and all other foreigners as replaceable parts of society. Chancellor Kohl even developed a scheme to support a broad return migration of so-called guest-workers, giving in to the idea that these non-German workers were not permanent parts of society and did not have to be treated as such (Wilhem, 2017, p. 2). This upheld the idea that immigrants were not an addition to German culture, but rather, a passing instance of diversity. Overarching the immigration of displaced persons is the feeling that they were foreigners and hence, mere outsiders with no claims on Germany.

Hungarian Revolution of 1956. One notable event is the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Germans held demonstrations in support of the Hungarians and against Soviet communism, leading the government to accept 3,000 from the almost 200,000 Hungarians in Austrian refugee camps. As Poutrus notes, “The rather symbolic nature of this decision...nonetheless directed public awareness away from events in Hungary and toward the fate of the refugees themselves” (Poutrus, 2017, p. 89). This is a significant piece of analysis because implies the recognition that refugee acceptance is a comparable method of response to wars, next to military engagement. The sensational media, sentimental and emotionally stirring stories – no doubt the same in the current Ukrainian war along with Zelensky as a prominent symbol of the Ukrainian war – are all key elements that prompted an open refugee policy from the government, and hence also shows how public opinion drives public policy.

1973 Economic Crisis. Another significant event, the 1973 economic crisis led to the end of labor recruitment process of guest workers and stoked the persistent fear of being overrun by foreigners. The majority of the public at the time supported exclusion of non-Germans. In the following years, and into the 1980s, immigrants from Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal increasingly gained rights due to their countries’ memberships in the European Economic Community (Kaya, 2017, p. 63). In contrast, Turkish guest workers became the Turkish issue, expertly exploited by politicians with arguments citing cultural and integration issues. Public backing to send foreigners back was 39% in 1978 and shot up to 68% in 1982 (p. 63).

In response to such harsh anti-immigrant sentiment, the government introduced non-integration policy in order to structurally exclude these immigrants from society. In 1982, Chancellor Kohl announced he wanted to get rid of half of the Turkish residents in Germany

(Lankheit, 2017, p. 182). Given that Turkish residents represented the largest group of foreigners in Germany, this seemed to be a method to reduce unemployment during an economic recession. Notably, the Turkish guest workers are particularly singled out because their Islamic tradition was seen as a major obstacle to integration (p. 182).

Not an Immigration Country. Between 1992 and 1993, nearly 2 million Germans participated in candlelight vigils to condemn racism and demand public action against racial violence. Yet, leaders like Merkel rejected the idea that Germany had become a country of immigration or a multicultural society (Chin, 2017, p. 215). This is a significant part of history that foreshadows public acceptance of immigrants and multiculturalism that the government would soon align itself with.

Jus Soli. Advancements in immigration law finally began in 2000 with jus soli, the principle that those born in Germany, irrespective of their ethnic or family background, could claim German citizenship (Kaya, 2017, p. 65).

9/11 and Islamophobia. Then, just as in the U.S., after 9/11, Germany saw a rise in anti-Muslim sentiment and Islamophobia, hence transforming the image of “violent Turkish youth” to “violent Muslim males,” exacerbating the feeling of otherness towards Turkish guest workers (Kaya, 2017, p. 66). Differences based on religion and culture continue to be the central argument for justifying discrimination of non-Christians in German society (p. 66). In short, after 9/11, the association of terrorism with Muslims only worsened the discrimination they faced. While the original “Turkish Question” had been about guest workers, it was now about potential Islamic terrorists. This sentiment will persist and continues to affect how other incoming Muslim migrants are treated.

An Immigration Country. Then, in 2005, Germany’s first immigration law was passed, creating a legal framework for future immigration and, more importantly, acknowledging that immigration was a central feature of German society (Wilhelm, 2017, p. 4).

EU immigration. Starting in 2013, Germany saw a new generation of EU internal guest workers. Attitudes towards them were significantly more welcome and open. They gave an “of us” feeling and there was a sameness based on their European background (Kaya, 2017, p. 72). Resultingly, and in stark contrast to the Turkish guest workers, these young and highly skilled new guest

workers were given a place in society. Simultaneously, poverty migration from the country of Roma was much less welcome and the Roma immigrants were seen as a threat.

The Syrian Refugee Crisis. In 2015, due to the refugee crisis from the Arab Spring, the system of blocking asylum seekers at the borders of the EU broke down and it became a large-scale humanitarian crisis, amplified by media reports. The public reaction was reminiscent of previous responses: racist, xenophobic, and violent (Poutrus, 2017, p. 97). However, there was also “a readiness of citizens and initiative groups to help and executive branch ready to take actions” (p. 97). In 2015, Merkel declared the policy of Willkommenskultur, or a culture of welcoming refugees. The declaration seemed to motivate the entire country from “passivity to activity” (Hamann and Karakayali, 2016). However, it is unclear whether this level of openness to refugees and willingness to help was initiated by the government or whether the German public had progressed as a whole to become more multicultural.

This paper argues that it was the public becoming more receptive to immigrants and recognition that foreigners would need to be integrated into society that allowed the government to acknowledge Germany as an immigrant nation in 2005 and later for Merkel to open up the borders to Syrian refugees in 2015. Had public opinion not been this strong, Merkel likely would not have chosen the same level of openness. Thus, what we investigate is the question of how far this change in policy at the legal-institutional level was merely a project of elites without any support from among the population – or whether Germany’s transformation transcends policy and is reflected in the attitudes of the public.

The U.K

Post-WWII Immigration from the Commonwealth. Post-World War II migrants to the U.K. were mostly Commonwealth and Irish citizens who possessed full political rights when they arrived (Sobolewska and Ford, 2020, p. 32). This is significantly different from Germany’s denial of rights to non-ethnic German migrants after World War II. However, despite the seemingly liberal British Nationality Act of 1948, facilitating mass migration was not a goal or even an expected effort. Rather, the aim was to cement Britain’s political status at the heart of an open and integrated Commonwealth of former imperial status (p. 89). In other words, the aim was not to welcome the colored migrants but rather to maintain close relations with white colonial settler societies. However, given the context of just finishing a world war against a racist

dictatorship, the U.K. could not add a color bar to its immigration law, and hence, it was left open to the entire Commonwealth (p.89).

Public Anti-immigrant Sentiment. From the outset, the public did not welcome the Commonwealth migrants and racially discriminated against them. The majority of the citizenry felt little attachment to the greater Commonwealth empire because their sense of national identity was narrower than the elites who more directly reaped the benefits of immigration (Sobolewska and Ford, 2020, p. 97). Hence, despite the acceptance of non-White migrants from India and Pakistan, the public sentiment at the time was not as welcoming as the policy might suggest.

EU Membership and Uncontrolled Immigration. Because latent but persistent ethnocentric anxieties were always present in the minds of the U.K. public, the New Labor government's decision to not apply transitional immigration controls on citizens from the poorer EU member states in 2004 might have been a good foreign policy in terms of showing the U.K's commitment to the European project, but domestically it forged a link between EU membership and uncontrolled immigration (Sobolewska and Ford, 2020, p. 123). After this open immigration decision, public concerns about immigration rose, with 71% of the public naming immigration as the most important issue in 2015 (see Figure 36). Rising migration levels activated latent anti-immigrant sentiments concentrated among identity conservative voters. Thus, hostility to immigrants did not become more widespread, but it did become more politically influential because anti-immigrant voters became more vocal (p.149). This was not a surge in xenophobia but rather just the uncovering of latent biases. It then slowly became salient to voters that they could either accept uncontrolled immigration as the price of EU membership or seek to fundamentally redraw Britain's relationship with Europe in order to achieve immigration control. Voters now linked the Conservatives' inability to control immigration with Britain's membership in the EU, marking that EU free movement rights as the reason for ineffective immigration control (p.174).

The Rise of UKIP. Given how anti-immigration sentiment was exacerbated throughout the 2000s, the immigration-related policy shift in 2014 that ended temporary controls on migration from two newest and poorest EU members: Romania, Bulgaria gave right-wing parties like UKIP a platform to campaign on (Sobolewska and Ford, 2020, p. 186). In particular, UKIP

framed the migrants as impoverished and criminal, furthering distaste towards immigration and EU membership (p. 187). UKIP strategically amplified the immigration problem during a time when migrants were culturally different and poor.

Anti-Muslim Sentiment. Muslim communities and Muslim migrants are the main target of most of the European radical right parties. They are portrayed as unwilling to assimilate, culturally inferior, and a source of Islamist extremism (Sobolewska and Ford, 2020, p. 342).

V. Military Engagement Tendencies

This section goes through a brief background of military engagement from the U.S., Germany, and the U.K. This provides a context of their military capabilities, their prior military engagement reasonings, and how their militaries are currently being used in the context of the two wars. Knowing this background is critical to understanding their strategic narratives.

The U.S.

Military Powerhouse. The U.S. became a military powerhouse during WWI and WWII, and it is currently the largest and strongest military in the world. Although it prides itself on protecting other nations, spreading democracy, and maintaining peace abroad, its use of the military in recent memory is more nuanced. Military intervention has been determined by the preferences of the incumbent administrations, which may contradict one another due to differences in beliefs.

Obama. When Obama began his term in 2008, his military agenda included the withdrawal of troops from Iraq and decreasing the number of troops abroad. This ran counter to the previous Bush administration who had started the war in Iraq after 9/11. Hence, in 2011, he ended the combat mission in Iraq (Compton, 2011). But when the Arab Spring began, launching the Middle East into turmoil, Obama was faced with the decision of using troops again, in part due to the U.S. alliance with Saudi Arabia. Notably, after he made his “red line” statement that the U.S. would militarily intervene in Syria should chemical weapons be used, he failed to follow-through. It was only during the height of the refugee crisis in 2015 and with the rise of ISIS and Islamic extremists in Syria that he authorized the use of troops in Syria. Meanwhile, with the outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2014, starting with Russia’s annexation of Crimea, Obama and the rest of the world has been limited in ways to defend Ukraine militarily due to the threat of a

nuclear war with Russia. Sanctions have been imposed on Russia, though these sanctions did not prevent Russia from invading Ukraine in 2022.

Trump. In many ways, Trump played his military engagement cards as a way to showcase his anti-Obama agenda. Although he continued the war on terror and ISIS in Syria, he also made a point to strike the Assad regime's suspected chemical weapons facilities when it became known that chemical weapons had been used again in 2018 (Crowley and Restuccia, 2018). Then, in 2019, Trump declared that ISIS had been defeated and announced that troops would be withdrawn from Northern Syria, to the surprise of allies on the ground and to his military advisor (Cohen, 2019).

Biden. Soon after Biden assumed his presidency in 2021, he announced a full U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan by the end of the 9/11 anniversary of that year (Cronk, 2021). This move is indicative of his policy stance on military intervention in the Middle East. Similar to Obama, and fitting with the Democratic platform, he would prefer bringing troops home over keeping or sending them abroad. The deadline of 9/11/2021 is also a symbolic gesture to tie his policy to the war on terror, and hence, justification for this policy would be that the war on terror, in Afghanistan at least, is over. Meanwhile in Syria, despite the previous administration's announcement that ISIS had been defeated and that troops were to return home, there remains 900 troops stationed in Syria, keeping the region in check and preventing ISIS from rising again (Ward, Seligman, Ukenye, 2022). As for the war in Ukraine, since 2022, Biden has been an avid supporter of their cause, allowing Zelensky to speak before the U.S. Congress and even visiting Ukraine himself. According to the White House fact sheet on how the U.S. has supported Ukraine in the past year, security assistance comes first, detailing the arms and tanks that the U.S. has sent to Ukraine. Despite this magnitude of support, nuclear deterrence has prevented direct intervention via troop deployment to Ukraine (Faulconbrige and Light, 2022). However, Biden has deployed troops to peaceful countries in Europe, likely signaling determination and resolve, yet also not putting troops in harm's way or escalating the conflict (Jakes, 2023).

The military actions taken by these three U.S. presidents will be analyzed in conjunction with their refugee policies and corresponding public opinion data, ultimately showing how each action they took fit in with their strategic narrative that would politically benefit them first and foremost.

Germany

The German military was once part of the strongest in the world. With the end of World War II though came a period of reflection and a desire to correct past wrongs. Since then, the German military, also known as the Bundeswehr, has limited its operations to peacekeeping missions. It is also limited in financial spending, leaving it behind other major power militaries. However, Germany's behavior in supporting military interventions has been a puzzle to many. As Martinson (2012) proposes, "There may in fact be a 'method behind the madness,' or an as yet unrevealed pattern to explain German behavior." Martinson argues that although historical-cultural considerations do permeate the decision-making process of using the military, the decisions are strategic and rooted in realist and institutionalist decision-making processes. In other words, German leaders think strategically and realistically consider what is in the best interest for their nation, knowing that other nations are similarly self-interested. Moreover, institutionalism argues that "when the very existence of the state is at stake [...] leaders can rely on institutions to foster the kinds of more efficient action that lead to such gains." Martinson shows that strategic considerations exceed the culture of antimilitarism that appears to dictate German decision-making, arguing for Germany's strategic decision-making process rooted in realistic calculations and institutional factors like NATO which will contribute to decisions that balance the costs and benefits of Germany.

Turning to Germany's current military responses to the wars in Syria and Ukraine, we see that Germany has remained hesitant to send ground troops to Syria, despite pressure from the U.S. to send troops since 2019 (Knight, 2019). As for the Ukrainian war, similar to the U.S., Germany is constrained by nuclear deterrence. However, recently, Germany has agreed to donate its coveted Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine (Schmitz, et al., 2023). This is a significant move because it goes against Germany's principle of antimilitarism since the end of World War II, which could signal that underlying sentiments and strategic calculations are changing with regard to German military engagement.

This paper adds to the existing literature by suggesting that one "unrevealed pattern" is the relationship between refugee acceptance and military engagement. German policy with regard to Syria and Ukraine is a result of strategic planning around these two policy options.

The U.K.

The British Navy was once the strongest military in the world, allowing it to establish an empire that far exceeded the size of the nation itself. Today, the empire is small in size but still considered a strong military power (Zakheim, 2023). Given the regression of its military against other countries like the U.S., Russia, and China, it maintains its presence on the world stage by staying engaged militarily when it is in their best interest strategically. Often, the U.K. aligns itself with the U.S. in joint military operations. Resultingly, the actions the U.K. has taken in Syria and Ukraine closely matches that of the U.S., namely, sending troops into Syria in the war against terror and standing by Ukraine and sending military support just short of troop deployment.

Historically, the U.K.'s actions can be considered “covert”, or “the interference in the affairs of another state or non-state actor in a detectable but plausibly deniable manner” (Cormac, 2016). From liberating Albania in the 1940s, to influencing the first wave of regime change in the Middle East in the 1950s, to supporting rebels in the Yemen civil war and meddling in the Indonesian war in the 1960s, the British were actively involved in the affairs of other nations. There was less intervention in the 1970s, as the government paid more attention to domestic concerns like in Northern Ireland, but the U.K. continued to be involved abroad in places like Oman. Under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s, action increased with operations supporting the Afghan Mujahedeen against the Soviets. Then in the 2000s, the so-called war on terror justified further use of military intervention, with public support. Since 2010, the U.K. has intervened in the Libyan civil war, supported operations to disrupt the Iranian nuclear program, and remains active in the Middle East. In short, since World War II, the U.K. has acted in conjunction with the U.S., and is much more active than Germany in terms of military intervention and sending troops. Although the U.K. military is much smaller in personnel numbers than the U.S. military, it continues to make its presence felt around the world, whether it is in the war against terror or in humanitarian or peacekeeping missions.

The U.K.'s response to the civil war in Libya in 2011 gives a good picture of what its interests are for modern day military intervention. According to Colley (2015), “the government claimed it was simultaneously going to war to [...] reduce the threat of terrorism [...] protect Libyan civilians [...] safeguard the economy [...] minimize immigration [...] protect against

organized crime [...] remove a tyrant [...] uphold international law [...] demonstrate global leadership [...] support its allies [...] spread freedom and democracy [...] and because it was morally right to do so.” However, because of the unconcise way the intervention was presented, public support for the war effort is undermined. Hence, Colley argues that in order for a strategic narrative to be successful, the U.K. should give clearer justifications for military intervention. This paper will analyze how refugee acceptance and military engagement policies were used to craft their strategic narrative.

VI. Hypotheses and Arguments

Hypothesis 1

The public opinion and policy responses of the U.S., Germany, and the U.K. fit in with their overarching history of immigration and military engagement.

- (a) The U.S. has reached a point in history of closedness to Muslim and non-White foreigners, and it is far more likely to use military engagement than Germany and the U.K. due to its large military capacity.
- (b) Germany has reached a point in history of openness to refugees with Merkel’s generous refugee policy, and it is far less likely to use military engagement than the U.S. and the U.K. due to its antimilitaristic tendency post-World War II.
- (c) The U.K. has reached a point in history of closedness to refugees with political campaigns stoking ethnocentric anxieties, and it is far more likely to use military engagement than Germany due to its tendency of joining U.S. military operations.

I expect that these historical tendencies will be reflected in the corresponding public opinion attitudes of each country, and policy will follow public opinion choices.

The next two hypotheses investigate whether the public in each responding country had a preference for supporting Ukraine over Syria based on their understanding of the wars and inherent cultural biases.

Hypothesis 2

If there is a legitimate reason or symbol behind the political actors in the conflict country, the domestic public of the responding country will be more likely to support those political actors.

- (a) Zelensky is a stronger symbol than the Syrian rebels.
- (b) The threat of terrorism is a stronger symbol than the Syrian rebels.

Because the symbol of Zelensky was more powerful than the uncoordinated Syrian rebels, this made it more likely for the U.S. and European publics to support Ukraine over Syria.

Hypothesis 3

The greater the cultural affinity between a conflict/sending country and a responding/receiving country, the more likely that their refugees will be accepted by the responding/receiving country.

This implies cultural affinity is a strong determinant of whether refugees from a sending country will be welcomed into a receiving country. Hence, this made it more likely for the U.S., German, and U.K. publics to support Ukrainian refugees over Syrian refugees.

Once the public preference for supporting Ukraine over Syria has been established, the latter two hypotheses test the inverse relationship between the two foreign policies: refugee acceptance and military engagement, taking into account that the magnitude of support for Ukraine is greater than that for Syria.

Hypothesis 4

There exists an inverse relationship between public attitudes towards refugee acceptance and military engagement policies.

- (a) The less militarily engaged a responding (receiving) country is in the conflict (sending) country, the more favorable public opinion is towards refugees.
- (b) The more militarily engaged a responding (receiving) country is in the conflict (sending) country, the less favorable public opinion is towards refugees.

Hypothesis 5

There exists an inverse relationship between refugee acceptance policies and military engagement policies.

(a) The less militarily engaged a responding (receiving) country is in the conflict (sending) country, the greater the number of refugees that a receiving country will pledge to accept.

(b) The more militarily engaged a responding (receiving) country is in the conflict (sending) country, the fewer the number of refugees that a receiving country will pledge to accept.

In other words, when the use of military engagement is not a feasible policy option, the resulting action for the government is to accept more refugees, and vice versa. This depicts an inverse relationship that reflects the delicate balance between the two foreign policies. This also confirms that responding countries act in line with domestic public opinion on both issues, because these two issues are part of a larger structured belief system. This implies political actors must take into account the effect of war on refugee numbers, how the public responds to the refugee numbers, and how that factors into their strategic response to the wars.

VII. Operationalization of Variables

This project seeks to understand how the level of public support differs for refugee acceptance and military engagement in the Syrian and Ukrainian wars, and how that translates into public policy from the U.S., Germany, and the U.K.

For testing the *strength of symbols* behind political actors in a conflict country that affects public support internationally, the symbols used will be the Syrian rebels, the threat of terrorism, and Zelensky. The strength will be measured by the level of support each symbol gets from the public of the receiving country (i.e., favorability of attitudes towards supporting the symbol in question).

Cultural affinity will be measured using the Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map score. The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map is a scatterplot of countries based on cultural scores (WVS Database). The scores were determined by political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel through their research on the World Values Survey and European Values

Survey. The score is two-dimensional, with survival versus self-expression values on the x-axis and traditional values versus secular-rational values on the y-axis. On the x-axis, as a country moves from left to right, or from survival to more self-expression, this represents an increase in democratic values and a shift to a post-industrial society. On the y-axis, as a country moves from bottom to top, or from traditional values to more secular-rational values, this represents a movement away from religious and superstitious beliefs and towards science and rational thinking. Altogether, as a country moves from the origin in a diagonal line towards the top right of the map, it is said that the country is becoming more modern. To calculate the cultural affinity, or cultural closeness of two countries, we take the distance between their respective points on the map. The smaller the distance between the two countries, the more culturally similar they are, and hence the greater the cultural affinity. We use the 1996 map to measure cultural distance between the responding countries and Kosovo, the 2014 map to measure cultural distance between the responding countries and Syria, and the 2022 map to measure cultural distance between the responding countries and Afghanistan and Ukraine. The years are chosen in this way to better measure cultural affinity between countries during the approximate year of maximum conflict in the country at war.

Level of refugee acceptance will be measured by two variables. On the *public opinion level*, level of refugee acceptance will be measured by *public opinion survey responses* regarding refugee acceptance from each conflict/sending country. On the *policy level*, refugee acceptance will be measured by the actual number of refugees *pledged* to be accepted by each receiving country from each sending country. We use the number of refugees pledged to be accepted rather than the actual number of refugees accepted because the actual number of refugees fluctuate with changes to refugee flow and other factors like processing time to accept a refugee. Asylum seekers are not refugees by name in a receiving country until they are admitted officially, which causes inconsistency in the pledged number and actual acceptance numbers. Hence, on the policy level, the most direct measure of the level of refugee acceptance would be the number of refugees policymakers pledge to accept. Although it will likely be different when the policy is enacted, those factors are mostly out of the policymaker's control. Thus, what the policymakers pledge is a reflection of what they deem to be a strategically suitable response at that point in time.

Level of military engagement will also be measured by two variables to distinguish between public opinion and policy action. For *public opinion*, level of military engagement will be measured by the level of *public support* in the receiving country for troop deployment. For *policy action*, level of military engagement will be measured by whether *troops were deployed or not*.

VIII. Data Sources

For public opinion survey data that measures the level of refugee acceptance and military engagement in the U.S., Germany, and the U.K., I use data from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research for the U.S., the Forschungsgruppe Wahlen (Institute for Election Research) “Politbarometer” for Germany, and YouGov survey data for the U.K. For actual number of refugees pledged to be accepted by each receiving country from each sending country, I use refugee caps and quotas announced by each responding country’s government.

For level of military engagement data, on the public opinion side, I use the same public opinion survey data sources. On the policy action side, I use military engagement policies announced by each responding country’s government. I also use public announcements of troop deployment by each responding country’s government for their strategic portrayal of level of military engagement.

Culture will be measured by the Inglehart-Welzel culture score.

IX. Research Methodology

The hypotheses will be tested as follows on all three of the responding countries. The results are then analyzed to construct the strategic narratives of the U.S., Germany, and the U.K. around refugee acceptance and military engagement.

Hypothesis 1

The public opinion and policy responses of the U.S., Germany, and the U.K. fit in with their overarching history of immigration and military engagement.

To test Hypothesis 1, I lay out the historical immigration and military engagement policies of the responding countries along with the current public opinion and policy responses from each country. I expect that these historical tendencies will be reflected in the corresponding

public opinion attitudes of each country, and policy choices will follow public opinion. This will show how their responses are continuations rather than deviations from the past.

- (a) The U.S. has been historically closed to refugees, and it is far more likely to use military engagement than Germany and the U.K. due to its large military capacity. Hence, the expectation is that public opinion will be unfavorable towards refugee acceptance and more favorable towards military engagement, and current policy choices will reflect that.
- (b) Germany has reached a point in history of openness to refugees with Merkel's generous refugee policy, and it is far less likely to use military engagement than the U.S. and the U.K. due to its antimilitaristic tendency post-World War II. Hence, the expectation is that public opinion will be relatively favorable towards refugee acceptance and unfavorable towards military engagement, and current policy choices will reflect that.
- (c) The U.K. has reached a point in history of closedness to refugees with political campaigns stoking ethnocentric anxieties, and it is far more likely to use military engagement than Germany and join U.S. military operations. Hence, the expectation is that public opinion will be unfavorable towards refugee acceptance and favorable towards military engagement, and current policy choices will reflect that.

Hypothesis 2

If there is a legitimate reason or symbol behind the political actors in the conflict country, the domestic public of the responding country will be more likely to support those political actors.

To test Hypothesis 2, I investigate whether Zelensky and the threat of terrorism are stronger symbols than the Syrian rebels. To compare the strength of the symbol of Zelensky versus the symbol of the Syrian rebels, I look at public opinion survey data related to support for Zelensky, fighting against terrorism, and support for the Syrian rebels against the Assad regime. For all three responding countries, I expect that responses will be more favorable towards supporting Zelensky because of the way he has been able to present himself as a symbol of Ukraine. Moreover, I expect that the responses towards fighting terrorism in Syria will be more favorable than responses towards supporting the Syrian rebels against the Assad regime because terrorism affects the national security interests of each responding country directly while the fight against the Assad regime does not hold the same weight. Hence, the Syrian rebels' fight does not have the same level of urgency as the fight against terrorism, and they also do not have

a unified symbol for the world to rally around as Zelensky does, which has led to the failure of the Syrian rebels to garner support for their cause.

Moreover, I further investigate how the support for Zelensky has been maintained throughout the war. I track public opinion attitudes towards supporting Ukraine over time and mark the instances where Zelensky was given mass media attention, like after a speech in a foreign country or after a foreign leader visits Ukraine. I expect that support increases after these instances of mass media attention. This implies Zelensky himself serves as a symbol for justifying why Ukraine is worth defending, and public opinion directly determines policy from there. In other words, political actors in the U.S., Germany, and the U.K. know there is support for Ukraine, so it serves them well to support Ukraine. Hence, they maintain the support for Ukraine through Zelensky himself and allow him to justify why the world should support Ukraine. This ends up benefitting the responding countries immensely because it gives them a platform where they will always be on the favorable side.

Hypothesis 3

The greater the cultural affinity between a conflict/sending country and a responding/receiving country, the more likely that those refugees will be accepted by the responding/receiving country.

This implies cultural affinity is a strong determinant of whether refugees from a conflict/sending country will be welcomed into a responding/receiving country. Hence, this made it more likely for the U.S., German, and U.K publics to support Ukrainian refugees over Syrian refugees. Cultural affinity is calculated by the distance between the sending and receiving country on the Inglehart-Welzel cultural map during the year of maximum conflict in the sending country.

To test Hypothesis 3, I will compare the public attitudes towards refugees of different countries during times of war. Based on the availability of data, the countries during times of refugee crisis included for analysis, in addition to Ukraine (2022) and Syria (2016), are Kosovo (1999) and Afghanistan (2022). We use the 1996 version of the culture map for estimating cultural affinity for Kosovo (1999) and the 2014 version of the map for estimating cultural affinity for Syria (2016). I expect that if the refugees are of different cultural background and have a lower cultural affinity from the receiving country during their year of crisis, they will

receive less favorable attitudes. In contrast, if the refugees are of similar cultural background and have a greater cultural affinity to the receiving country during their year of crisis, I expect the reverse to occur, and they will receive more favorable attitudes. This will show that on a public opinion level, Ukrainians are viewed more favorably than Syrians because they are culturally closer to the U.S., Germany, and the U.K.

Hypothesis 4

There exists an inverse relationship between public attitudes towards refugee acceptance and military engagement policies.

To test Hypothesis 4, I investigate how the level of military engagement in a conflict country affects public attitudes towards accepting refugees from that country. I expect that if military engagement is not feasible (e.g., troop deployment to Ukraine is not feasible due to nuclear deterrence), then public opinion of the responding/receiving country will be very favorable towards accepting refugees from that country. In contrast, if military engagement is feasible (e.g. troop deployment to Syria was supported after it became framed into the war on terror), then public opinion of the responding/receiving country will be less favorable towards accepting refugees from that country. I will also show how public attitudes towards accepting refugees fluctuates with events over time. This will factor in external events that affect public attitudes and the level of support for different refugee populations.

For Syria, external events include the 2013 chemical weapons attack in Syria, after the Syrian war turned into the war on terror in 2014, the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, and after Trump declared ISIS to be defeated in 2019. For Ukraine, external events include when Zelensky made speeches to the U.S. Congress and the U.K. Parliament, and when foreign leaders visit Ukraine.

Then, because policy often follows public opinion (i.e., public opinion preference translates directly into policy because political actors strategize around what will bring them the most support, acting out of line with popular opinion would equate to political suicide), we test the final hypothesis that shows this inverse relationship on the policy-level:

Hypothesis 5

There exists an inverse relationship between refugee acceptance policies and military engagement policies.

To test Hypothesis 5, I investigate how the level of military engagement in a conflict country affects the number of refugees each responding country pledges to accept in policy. I expect that if military engagement is not feasible, the resulting action for the receiving country government is to accept more refugees from the conflict/sending country because some type of policy action must be taken to signal government response to a conflict. In contrast, if military engagement is feasible, then the receiving country government will be less likely to accept the refugees from the conflict/sending country because policy action has already been taken on the military front.

If there is indeed a direct correlation between public opinion and policy, then this shows politicians strategize how to act internationally based on what will bring them the most public support. Their actions and policies all work together to craft a strategic narrative. Otherwise, acting out of line with popular opinion would equate to political suicide.

X. Findings

A Continuation of Historical Tendencies

After laying out the historical immigration and military engagement policies of the U.S., Germany, and the U.K. along with the current public opinion and policy responses from each responding country (see Figure 1), we see that each responding country's historical tendencies are reflected in the corresponding public opinion attitudes of their country, and policy choices match public opinion. Hence, despite all being major democratic powers, their differing responses to the two wars can be seen as a symptom of domestic politics. Political actors strategize policies that will bring them the most support, and hence, we see that the policies enacted directly follow public opinion at the time.

Interestingly, although public opinion and policy responses are in line with each other and logically fit in with *historical trends* leading to the present tendencies, the responses are still a deviation from most of history. For the U.S., where people have long championed multiculturalism and its immigrant history, the unfavorable attitude towards Syrian refugees signals persistent discrimination against non-White refugee populations. The same holds for the U.K., where the mass influx of non-White immigrants after the dissolution of the Commonwealth post-World War II was supposed to represent a multicultural and accepting nation. In present-day U.K., ethnocentric anxieties were mobilized, and immigration became the most importance issue in the U.K at the height of the Syrian refugee crisis. Meanwhile, the welcoming response towards Ukrainian refugees shows the preference for White refugees.

As for Germany, it was only quite recently that Germany declared itself to be an immigrant country and accepting of multiculturalism in contrast to its history of discrimination against foreign guest workers. Yet, the German public has displayed confidence in their ability to handle the refugee crisis and generally hold favorable attitudes towards accepting Syrian refugees. Hence, although Figure 1 shows how the responses of the three countries makes sense in the context of recent historical developments – whether it is the 2001 terrorist attacks that stoked anti-Muslim sentiments in the U.S., the 2005 German government's declaration that it is an immigrant and multicultural nation, or the 2004 U.K. rise in ethnocentric anxieties to curb immigration – it should be noted that current attitudes and policies are quite the deviation from the broader historical background even if it matches the historical trajectory to the present.

Still, while the policy choices of Germany and the U.K. may seem like a deviation from the overarching history, namely Germany becoming more accepting of foreigners and the U.K. rejecting foreign immigration, this is a continuation of an ongoing change already in motion. The German public had already shifted their attitude towards foreigners and multiculturalism. Moreover, ethnocentric anxieties in the U.K. had long been latent and it was really the political entrepreneurs like the UKIP party and the Leave EU campaign that activated and capitalized on these anxieties.

The fact that the U.S. and the U.K. have stronger military capabilities than Germany highlights the inverse relationship between refugee acceptance and military engagement. Thus, this provides some reasoning for why Germany would have such a stark difference in terms of policy. While the U.S. and the U.K.'s military capabilities allow them to engage militarily in Syria, Germany highlights its contributions on the refugee front by accepting a large amount of Syrian refugees.

Altogether, this goes to show how although the U.S., Germany, and the U.K. have responded differently to the two wars and from one another despite being a united force on various issues, their policy responses have been chosen in a way that is a direct reflection of public opinion. Moreover, as will be explained in further detail in the Strategic Narratives section, an inverse relationship arises between the two policy options of refugee acceptance and military engagement because a responding country's contribution on the refugee acceptance front, like Germany, allows it to pursue lighter military engagement policies. Meanwhile, the U.S. and the U.K., constrained by the low level of support for refugee acceptance, must strategically choose policies that the public can accept, like military engagement.

Figure 1: Historical Trends, Public Opinion, and Policy Choices Regarding Refugee Acceptance and Military Engagement for the U.S., Germany, and the U.K.

	Refugee Acceptance						Military Engagement		
	Historical Trend	Public Opinion	Policy Choice	Historical Trend	Public Opinion	Policy Choice			
	U.S.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti-Muslim sentiment since 9/11 terrorist attacks - Discrimination against non-White immigrants 	<p>Syria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unfavorable attitudes towards Syrian refugees <p>Ukraine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extremely favorable attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees 	<p>Syria:</p> <p>2015: Obama pledges to accept 10,000 refugees and more in future years</p> <p>2017: Trump instates Muslim ban at start of presidency</p> <p>2021: Biden reverses Muslim ban at start of presidency</p> <p>2023: Biden does not mention the major earthquakes in Syria in his State of the Union address</p> <p>Ukraine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biden states the U.S. will accept around 100,000 Ukrainian refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - World's largest military power - Often the leader of military operations overseas - Military is the most well-funded in the world 	<p>Syria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitudes are favorable towards military engagement and for troop deployment when the war became framed as the war on terror <p>Ukraine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitudes are unfavorable towards troop deployment, although support remains favorable for financial aid and sending arms and tanks 	<p>Syria:</p> <p>2013: Obama does not deploy troops in response to chemical weapons usage</p> <p>2014: Obama launches airstrikes against ISIS</p> <p>2015: Obama deploys 50 special operations troops</p> <p>2017: Trump launches airstrikes against Assad regime for chemical weapons attack, sends 400 additional troops into Syria to fight against ISIS</p> <p>2018: The U.S. leads joint airstrikes with the U.K. and France</p> <p>2019: Trump declares ISIS has been defeated and withdraws troops</p> <p>2023: Biden says 900 regular troops to remain in Syria, airstrikes launched by the Pentagon in response to ISIS bombing that killed a U.S. contractor and wounded five U.S. soldiers in March 2023</p> <p>Ukraine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Due to nuclear deterrence, troop deployment is not a feasible policy option - The U.S. has been supporting Ukraine through financial means and by sending arms and tanks 		
Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Post-World War II, anti-foreigner sentiment and against multiculturalism until 2005, when the government declared that Germany was in fact an immigrant and multicultural nation 	<p>Syria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Favorable attitudes toward Syrian refugees and display confidence in their ability to handle the refugee crisis - Generally in favor of Merkel's refugee policy <p>Ukraine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extremely favorable attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees 	<p>Syria:</p> <p>2015: Merkel announces generous refugee policy with "Wir schaffen das" or "We can do this," pledges to accept more than 500,000 Syrian refugees</p> <p>Ukraine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chancellor Scholz states "the refugees are welcome here" - Germany appears willing to accept an unlimited number of Ukrainian refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Antimilitaristic since the end of World War II - Military is not well-funded 	<p>Syria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unfavorable attitude towards any type of military engagement, although support increases when the war becomes framed as the war on terror <p>Ukraine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitudes are unfavorable towards any type of military engagement, although support for sending arms and tanks has somewhat increased 	<p>Syria:</p> <p>2015: Deploy 1,200 German forces to assist the international coalition against ISIS by providing "protection, reconnaissance, and logistics" but no ground troops for combat; also will not participate in airstrikes</p> <p>2018: Does not join U.S.-led joint airstrikes</p> <p>2019: German government rejects U.S. request for troop deployment to Syria</p> <p>2022: Ends military operations in Syria</p> <p>Ukraine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Germany has been reluctant to be involved militarily, but under international pressure agreed to send Leopard II tanks 			
U.K.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Post-World War II, generous immigration policy for Commonwealth residents, and welcoming policies for foreigners to immigrate to the U.K. - In 2004, the link between EU membership and uncontrolled immigration was formed and anti-foreigner sentiment increased 	<p>Syria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unfavorable attitudes towards Syrian refugees <p>Ukraine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Extremely favorable attitudes towards Ukrainian refugees 	<p>Syria:</p> <p>2015: Pledge to accept 20,000 refugees over five years</p> <p>2016: Leaves the EU, symbolically closing itself off to refugees</p> <p>Ukraine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Then-Prime Minister Johnson pledges to accept over 200,000 Ukrainian refugees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Often joins U.S. military operations - Military is well-funded 	<p>Syria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Favorable attitudes towards military engagement, especially after the war became framed as the war on terror <p>Ukraine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitudes are unfavorable towards troop deployment, although support remains favorable for financial aid and sending arms and tanks 	<p>Syria:</p> <p>2015: Launches offensive in Syria with airstrikes against ISIS</p> <p>2016: U.K. troops deployed to support rebels in fight against ISIS</p> <p>2018: Joins the U.S. and France in joint airstrikes</p> <p>2019: U.K. government accepts U.S. request for troop deployment to Syria</p> <p>2023: U.K. troops remain in Syria</p> <p>Ukraine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Due to nuclear deterrence, troop deployment is not a feasible policy option - The U.K. has been supporting Ukraine through financial means and by sending arms and tanks 			

Zelensky’s Symbolic Power

As displayed in Figure 1, Ukraine received much more favorable public support than Syria, and that translated into favorable policy choices. One reason is that Zelensky has established himself as a symbol of Ukraine to rally support around. Figure 2 shows when leaders from the U.S., Germany, and the U.K. visit Ukraine and met with Zelensky. Moreover, the table shows when Zelensky personally visit the U.S. and the U.K. to speak before their respective congresses.

While all of these foreign leader visits serve the ultimate purpose of rallying support for Ukraine, underlying intentions can also be seen. Given the strong public support for Ukraine, political actors know their display of support for Ukraine will also boost domestic support for them – that is, if supporters of their political platform hold a favorable opinion towards Ukraine. Recently, conservatives in the U.S. have begun to criticize Biden’s generous policy towards Ukraine, effectively carving out the stance of being anti-

Figure 2: Foreign Leader State Visits Between the U.S., Germany, the U.K. and Ukraine	
February 2022	- Russia launches invasion of Ukraine
April 2022	- Then U.K. Prime Minister Johnson visits Ukraine
May 2022	- U.S. Speaker Pelosi visits Ukraine
June 2022	- German Prime Minister Scholz visits Ukraine - Then U.K. Prime Minister Johnson visits Ukraine
August 2022	- Then U.K. Prime Minister Johnson visits Ukraine
November 2022	- New U.K. Prime Minister Sunak visits Ukraine
December 2022	- Ukraine President Zelensky visits the U.S. and speaks before Congress
January 2023	- Former U.K. Prime Minister Johnson visits Ukraine
February 2023	- Ukraine President Zelensky visits the U.K. and speaks before Parliament - U.S. President Biden visits Ukraine

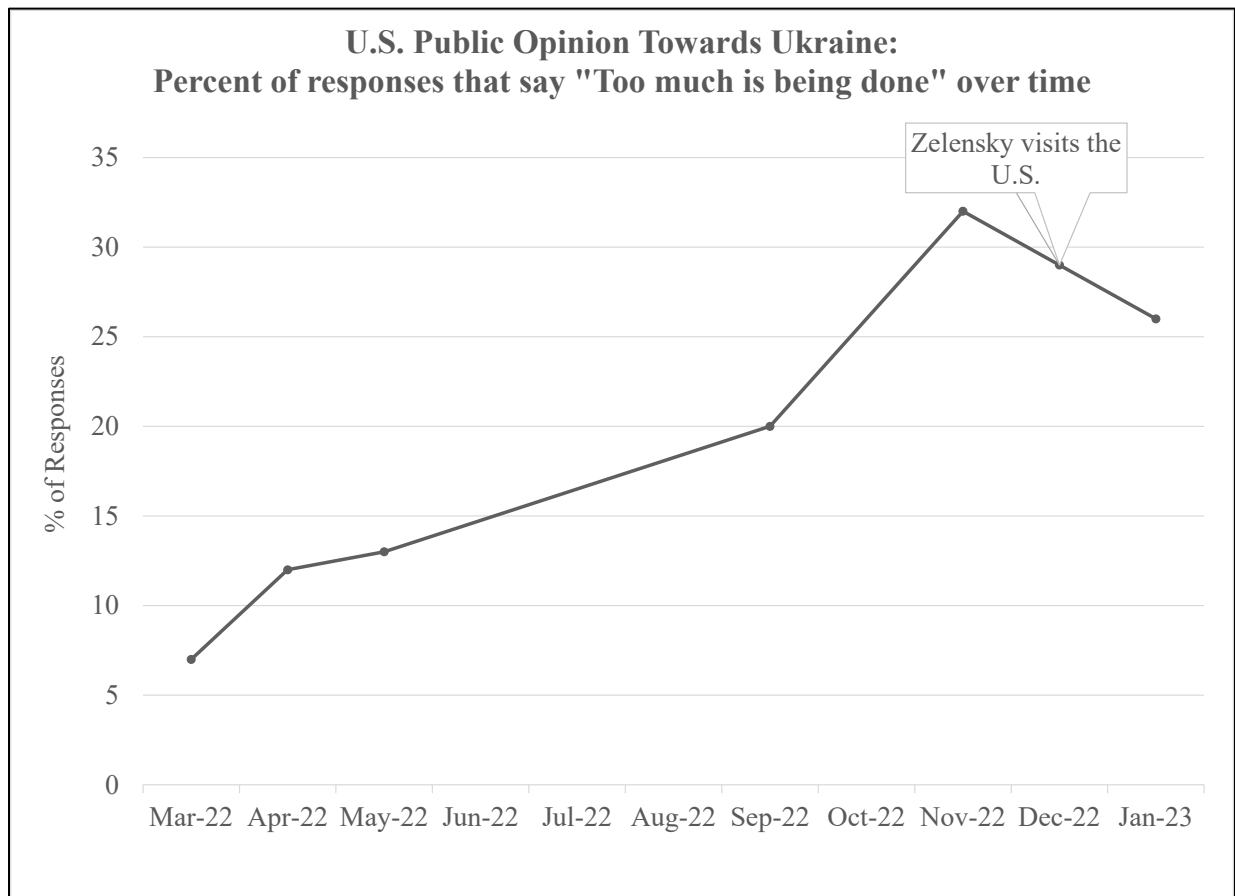
Ukraine in the conservative realm (Dunn, 2023). Clearly, this is something that the Syrian rebels have not been able to do. The world does not have a symbol to rally around in Syria, and hence, their cause is not as amplified as Ukraine’s.

Visits between Zelensky and other foreign leaders affect public support for Ukraine. This makes sense as this was the intention of the visits in the first place. However, what is not so transparent is that through this, political actors seek to boost public favor for themselves. Since supporting Ukraine is the stance a majority of the public in all three responding countries agrees

with, by visiting Ukraine or allowing Zelensky to speak before Congress, political actors are also boosting favorability for their political platforms.

As shown in Figure 3, since March 2022, a growing portion of the U.S. public believes that too much is being done to support Ukraine. However, after Zelensky’s visit to the U.S. and speech before Congress in December 2022, the portion of the U.S. public with this sentiment has decreased. Although a myriad of different reasons may have contributed to this, the fact that this change in sentiment coincides with Zelensky’s public appearance in the U.S. implies that the symbol of Zelensky has a tangible effect on public support towards Ukraine.

Figure 3

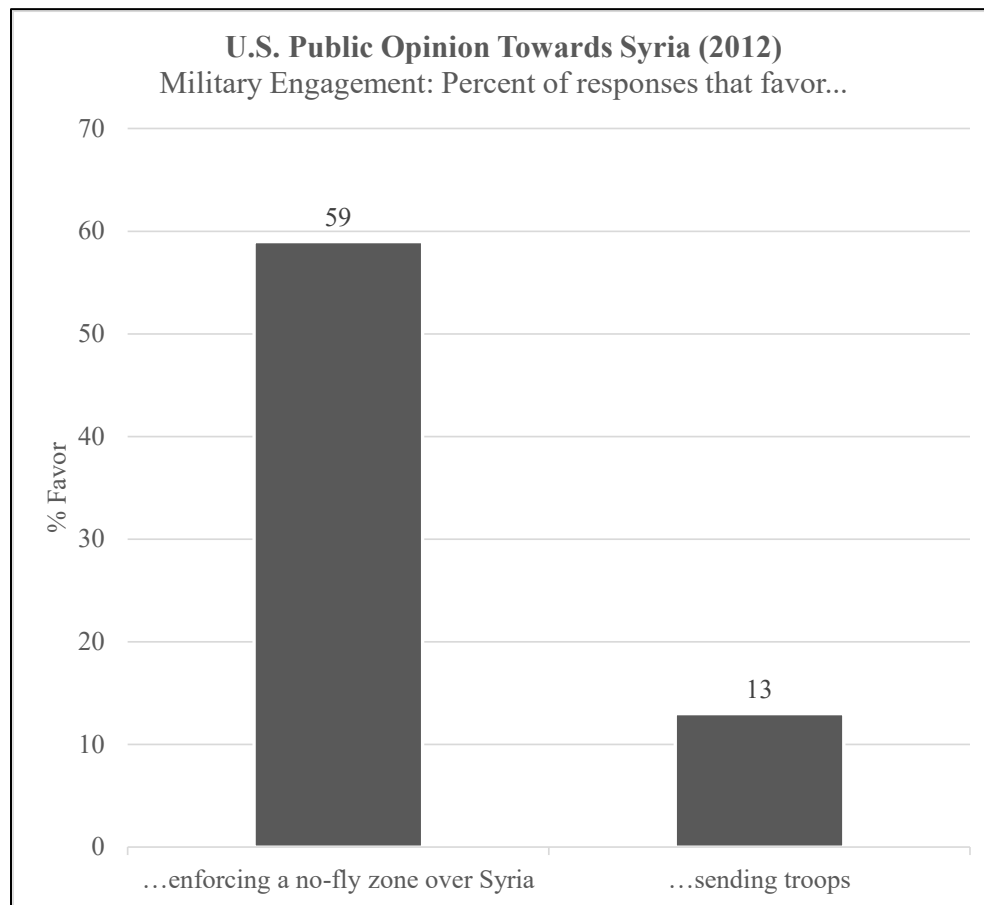


Sources (data): Pew Research Center, Public Policy Institute of California, and Marquette Law School survey data from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research archive (2022, 2023)

The Symbol of Terrorism

The previous section shows how the symbol of Zelensky allowed Ukraine to maintain its valuable support from the three responding countries. The rebel groups in Syria are not as fortunate. The initial lack of public support for the rebels gave political actors in the three responding countries little reason to boost support for the rebels. This is not to overlook the strategic interests of the U.S. in Syria and the greater Middle East region, as there are indeed many (see section on Syrian Civil War). The point is that given how much domestic public opinion affects policy choices, the rebel groups' fight against the Assad regime had little public support and hence political actors did not give them the platform to justify their cause and need for support.

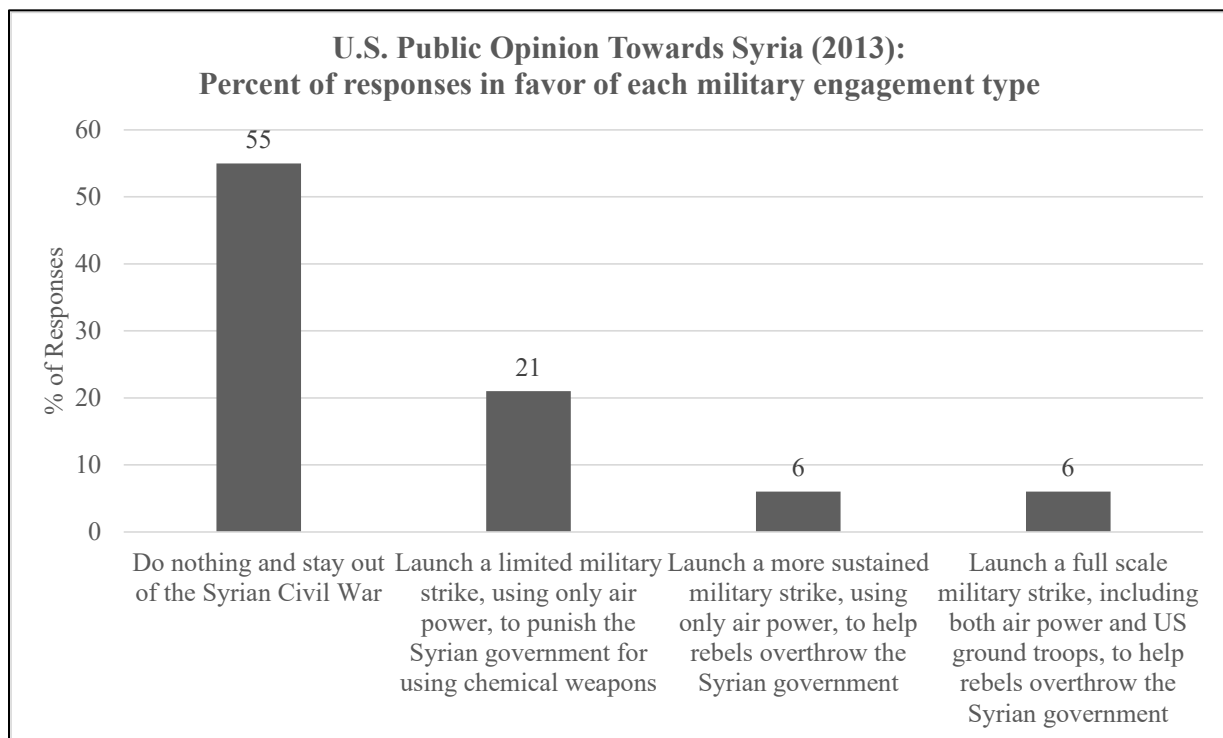
Figure 4



Sources (data): Program on International Policy Attitudes survey data from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research archive (2012)

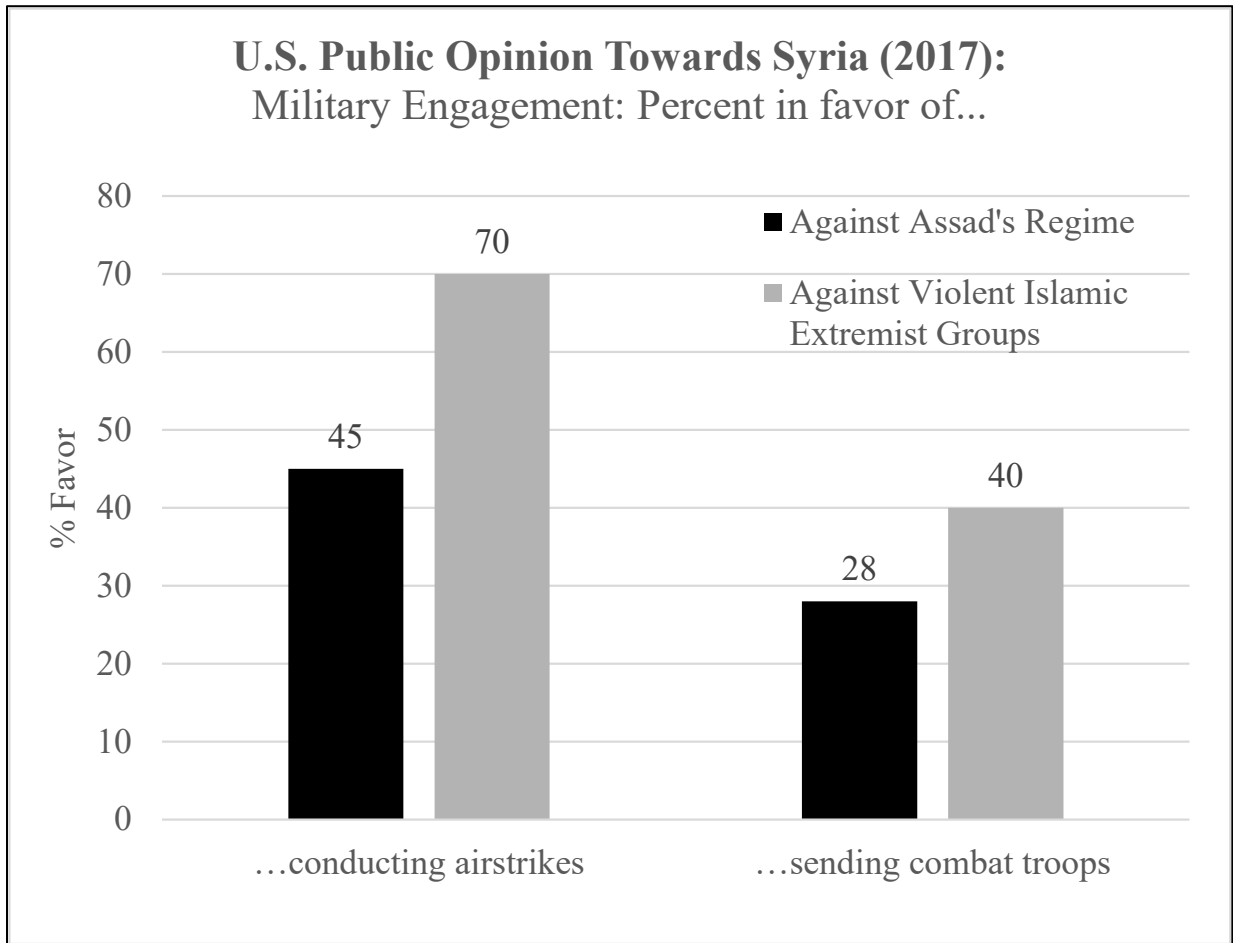
However, 2014 was a turning point in the war when the terrorist group ISIS declared a caliphate in Syria and Iraq. Suddenly, the domestic public in all three responding countries were jolted into favoring military action in Syria because this foreign civil war now had domestic security impacts. For the U.S., as shown in Figure 4 above, only 13% of the public support sending troops into Syria in 2012. Moreover, Figure 5 shows how even after chemical weapons were used, only 6% of the U.S. public was in favor of sending troops, showing the low priority of defeating the Assad regime. However, in 2017, as shown in Figure 6, 45% support sending combat troops into Syria to fight against violent Islamic extremist groups. Moreover, there is significantly more support for military engagement against violent Islamic extremist groups than against Assad’s regime, which shows how the symbol of the war that was mobilizing support for military engagement had been shifted towards fighting terrorist groups like ISIS.

Figure 5



Source (data): National Journal/United Technologies polling data from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research archive (2013)

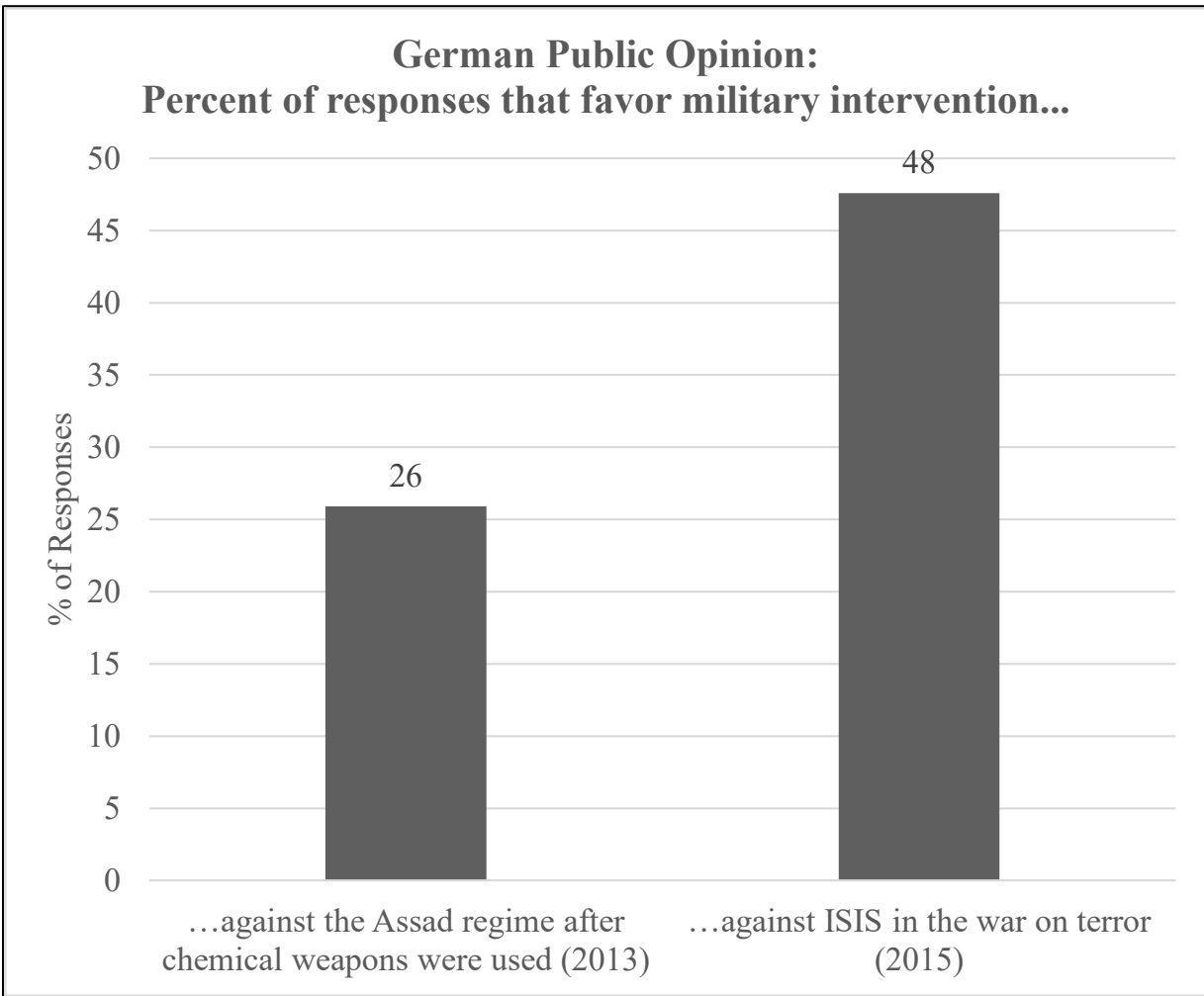
Figure 6



Source (data): The Chicago Council on Global Affairs data from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research archive (2017)

Similarly, in Germany, the public finds it far more favorable to use military intervention against ISIS in the war on terror in 2015 rather than against the Assad regime in 2013, even after chemical weapons were used (see Figure 7 below). This implies more than a change in the German public's opinion towards military engagement in Syria and recognition of the security threat in ISIS. It shows that the interests of the Syrian people are not necessarily at the heart of German intervention in Syria since chemical weapons usage was not a strong justification for military engagement.

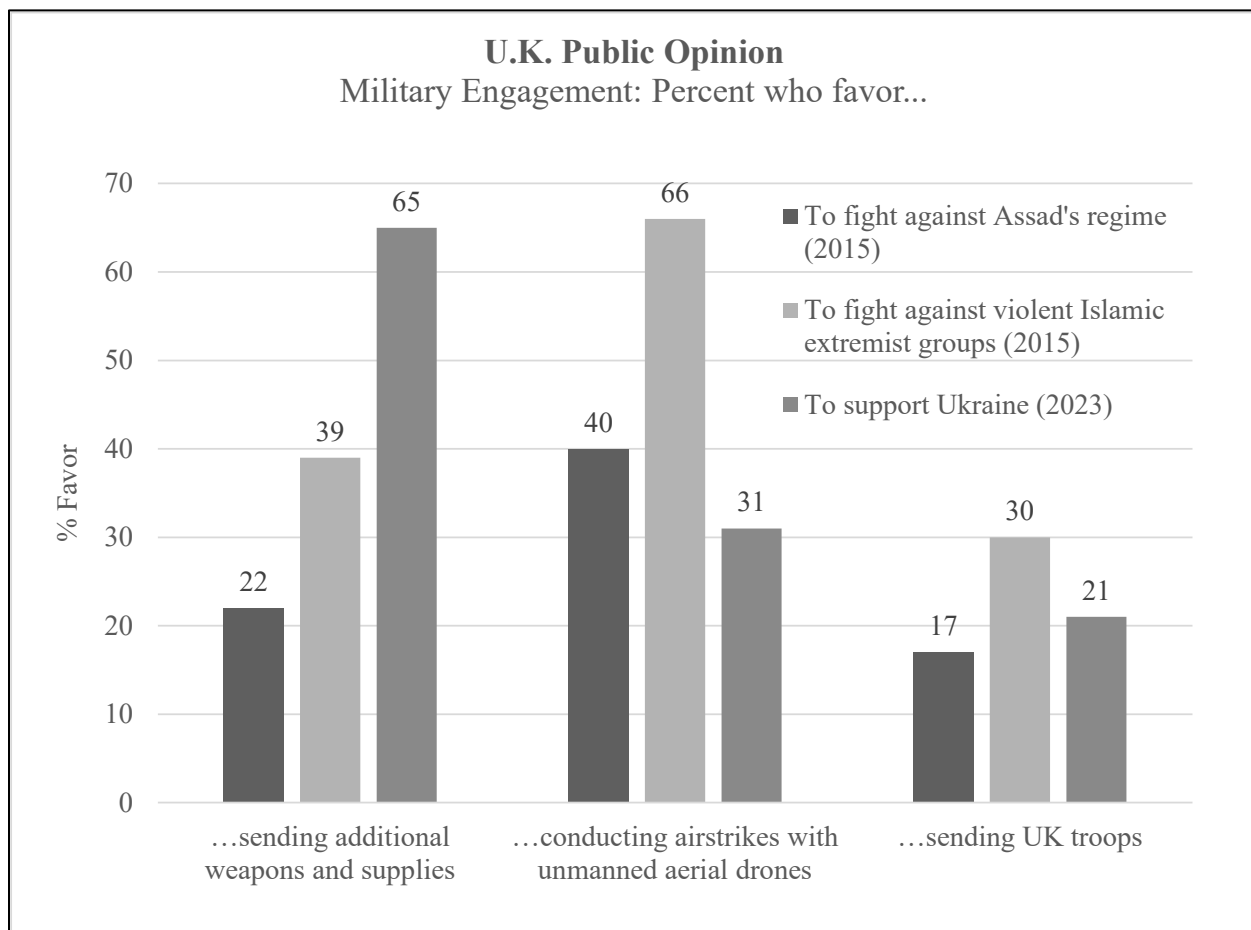
Figure 7



Sources (data): Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Politbarometer data from the GESIS Data Archive (2013, 2015)

We see the same pattern in the U.K. In Figure 8, we see that in terms of justification for sending troops, there is most favorable support when the reason is to fight against violent Islamic extremist groups. Although this is true, there is still a stronger preference for conducting airstrikes over sending troops regardless of the justification, which shows how sending troops is a last resort in terms of military engagement. Also notable is that sending additional weapons and supplies has the highest level of favorability (65%) to support Ukraine, which accurately reflects the fear of escalating the war into a nuclear world war.

Figure 8

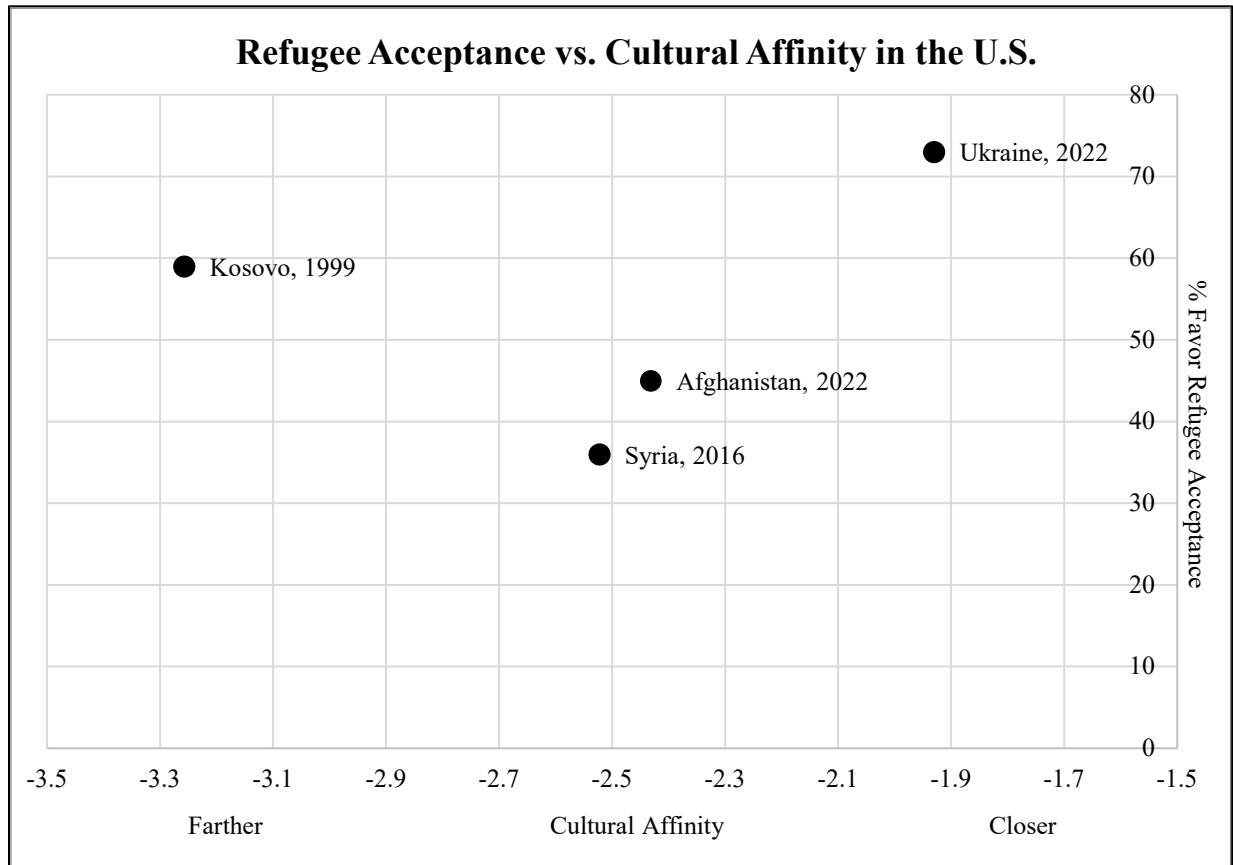


Sources (data): Yougov (2015, 2023)

The Impact of Cultural Affinity on Refugee Acceptance

We find that cultural affinity has a positive correlation with refugee acceptance. The greater the cultural affinity between a conflict/sending country and a responding/receiving country, the more likely that those refugees will be accepted by the responding/receiving country.

Figure 9

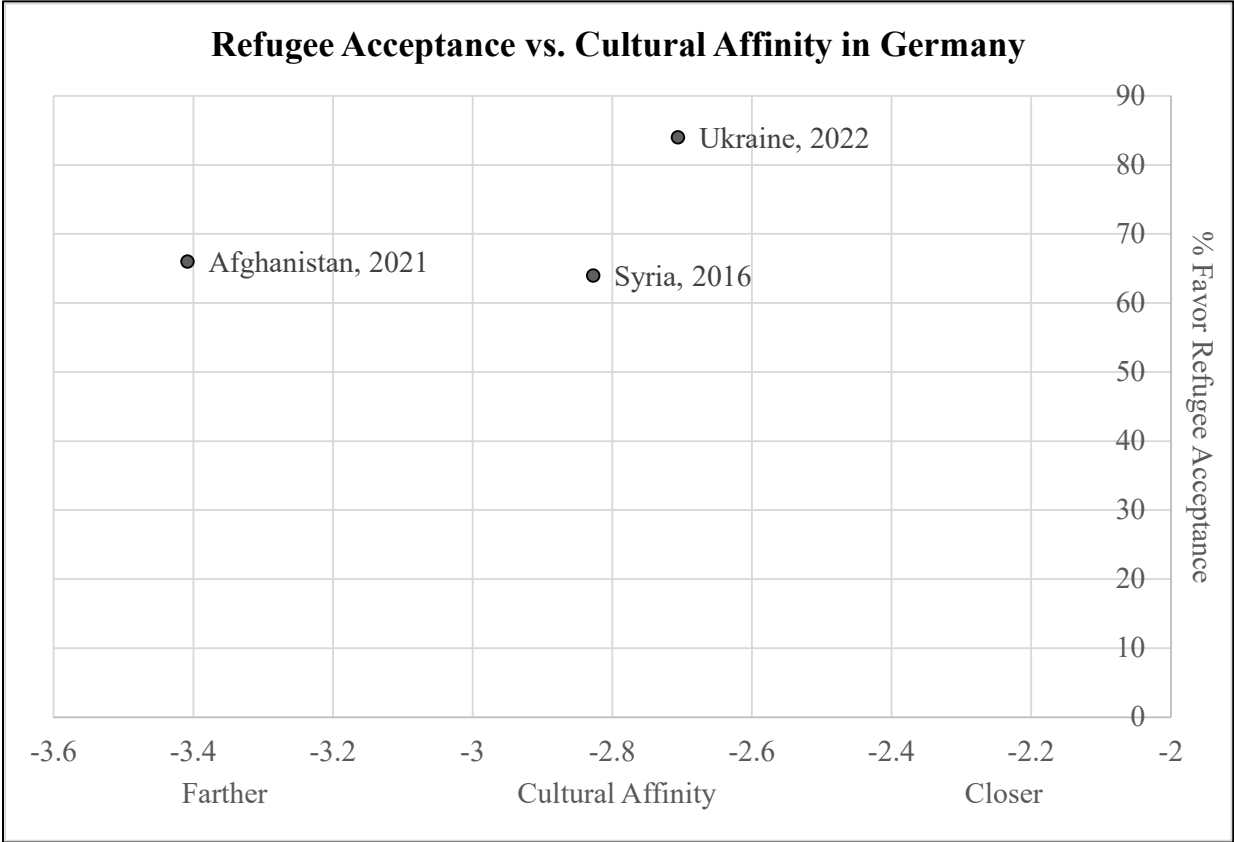


Sources (data): The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map (1996, 2014, 2022) culture scores were used to obtain the level of cultural affinity between the responding and sending countries; Chicago Council on Global Affairs, CBS News, PRRI survey data from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research archives (1999, 2016, 2022) were used to determine % favor refugee acceptance

As seen in Figure 9, the culturally closer a sending country is to the U.S., the more favorable U.S. public attitudes are towards their refugees. Indeed, Ukraine is culturally the closest to the U.S. and 73% of the U.S. public favors accepting Ukrainian refugees. In comparison, less than 50% of the public favors accepting refugees from Syria and Afghanistan, which are culturally farther from the U.S. Notably, we see that Kosovo, a predominantly Muslim country and culturally farthest from the U.S., has 59% of the public in favor of accepting

Kosovan refugees. This case may seem like an outlier at first, but we note that the Kosovan refugee crisis was in 1999, which was prior to the 9/11 terrorist attacks that ingrained in the public’s mind the link between Muslims and terrorism. Hence, this case suggests that if Muslims and terrorism were not so closely linked in the public’s mind, there should be more favorable attitudes towards accepting Syrian and Afghanistan refugees.

Figure 10

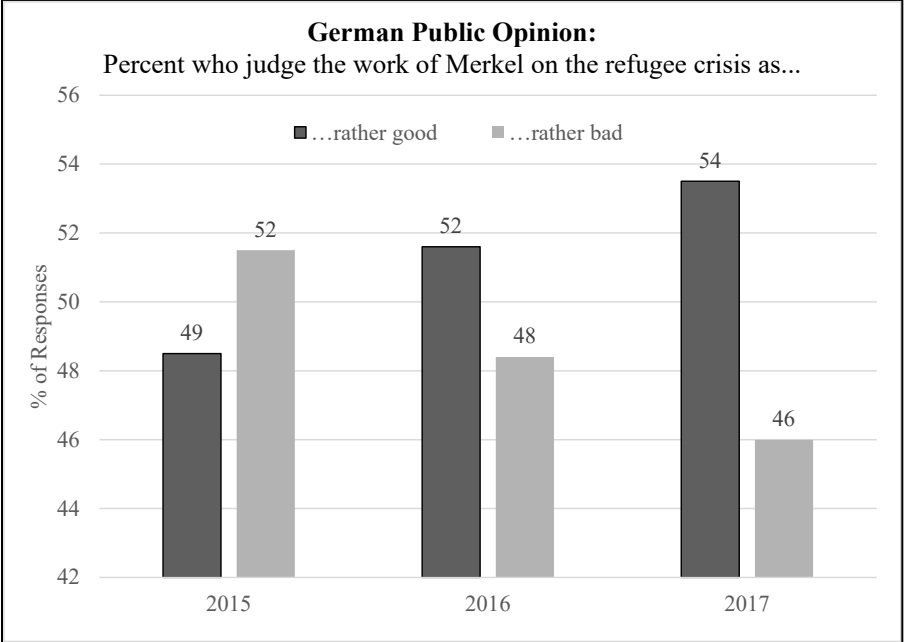


Sources (data): The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map (1996, 2014, 2022); Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Politbarometer data from the GESIS Data Archive, (2016, 2021, 2022)

Similarly, in Germany, we see that there is also a strong preference for Ukrainian refugees. As displayed in Figure 10, 84% of the German public favors accepting Ukrainian refugees, exceeding the level of support for refugees from Syria (64%) and Afghanistan (66%). However, we should also note that, as expected based on our argument that Germany’s response is a continuation of its historical trend, Germany holds generally favorable attitudes towards the Syrian refugees as compared to the U.S. and the U.K. This is because Germany has embraced its

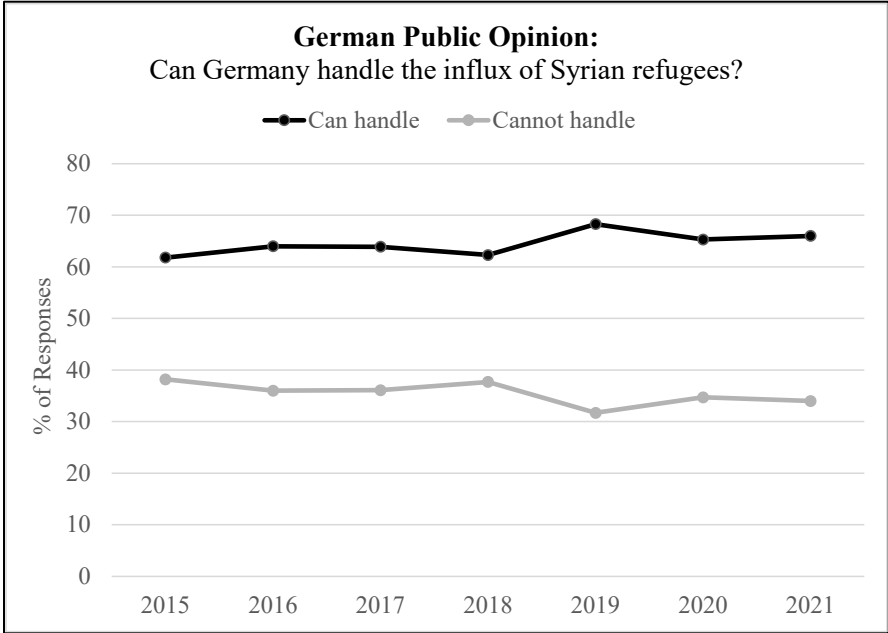
multicultural and immigrant nation status and the public remains largely in favor of Merkel’s refugee policy (see Figure 11).

Figure 11



Sources (data): Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Politbarometer survey data from the GESIS Data Archive (2015-2017)

Figure 12

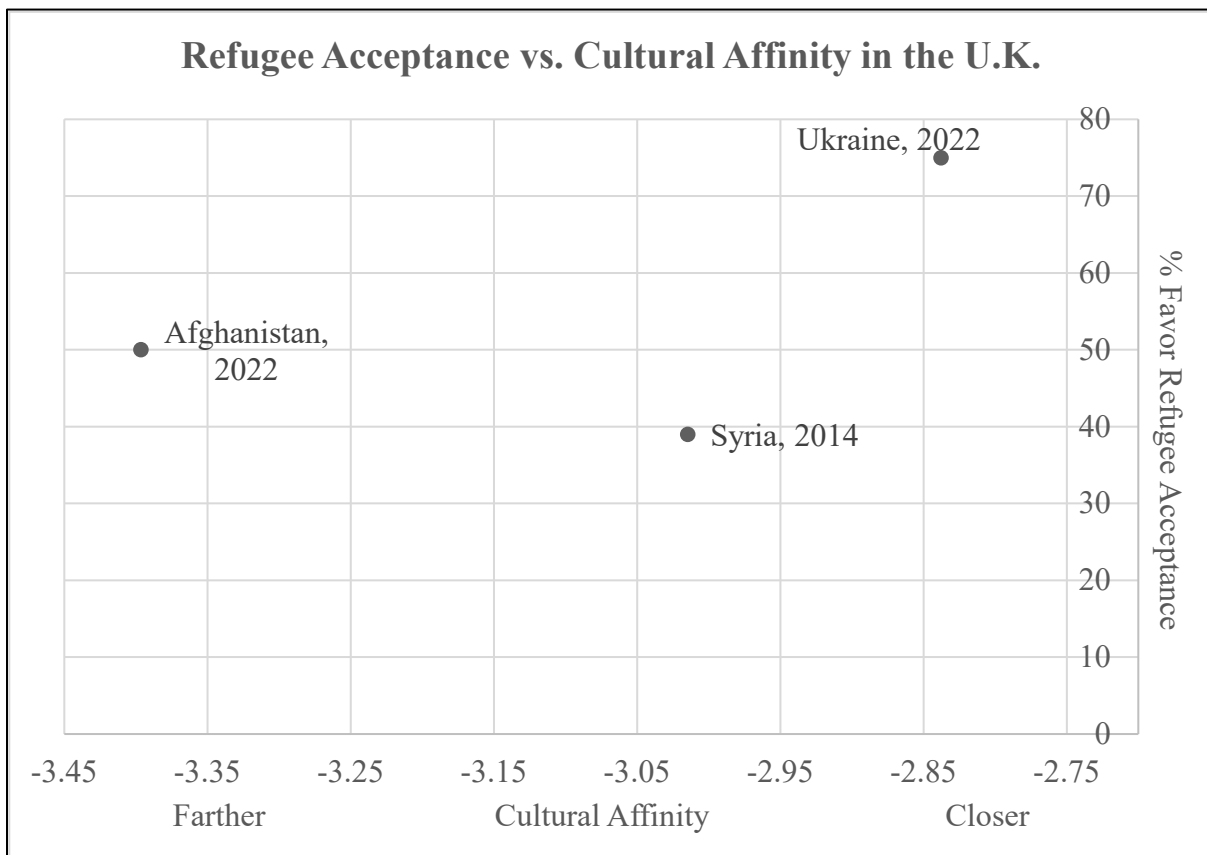


Sources (data): Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Politbarometer survey data from GESIS Data Archive (2015-2021)

Moreover, as seen in Figure 12 above, a consistent majority of the German public displays confidence in their ability to handle the Syrian refugee crisis, which further shows their positive sentiment towards accepting foreigners.

As shown in Figure 13, we see the same trend in the U.K. 75% of the U.K. public supports Ukrainian refugees as compared to the 39% that support Syrian refugees and 50% that support Afghanistan refugees. Hence, it indeed appears that cultural affinity affects the level of public support refugee populations receive.

Figure 13



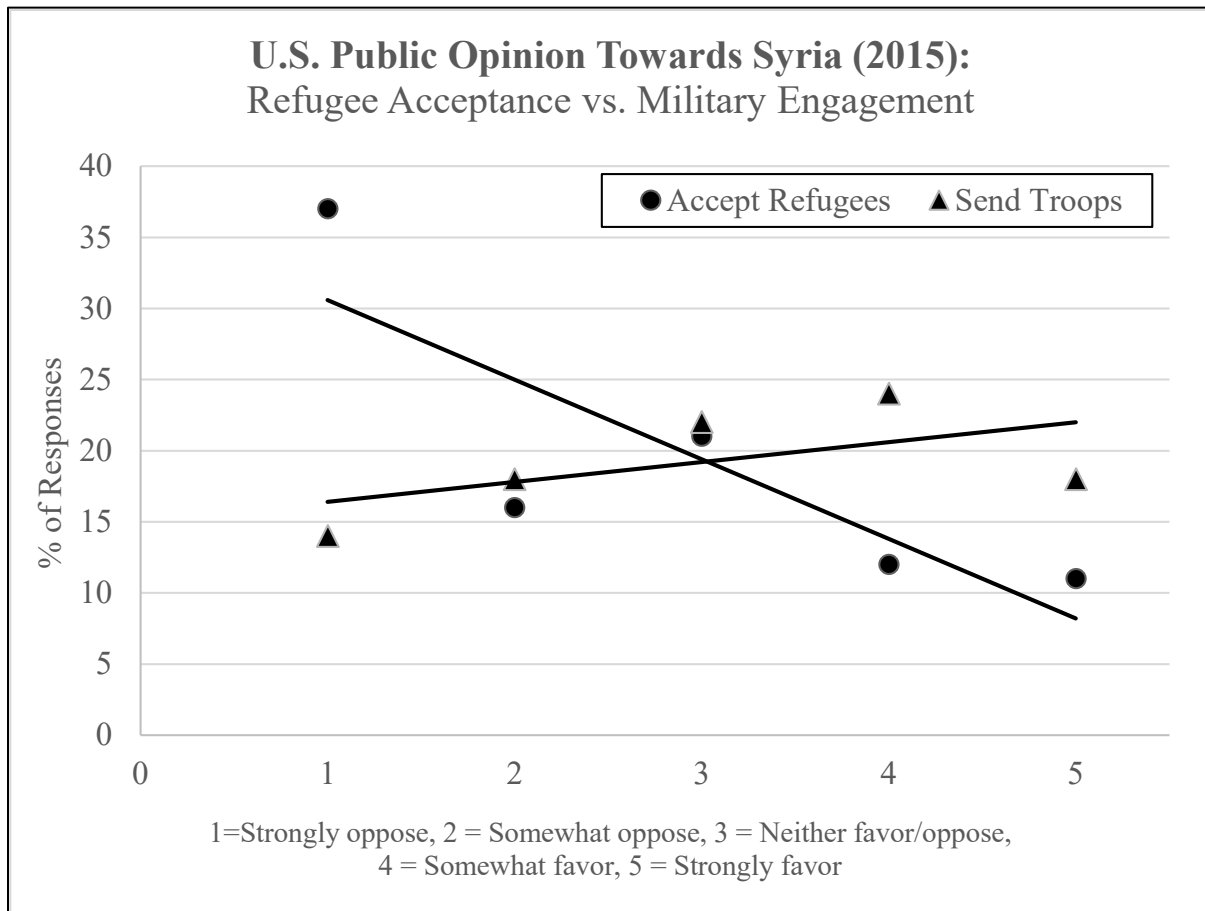
Sources (data): The Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural Map (1996, 2014, 2022), Yougov (2022)

An Inverse Relationship Between Refugee Acceptance and Military Engagement

We find that there exists an inverse relationship between public attitudes towards refugee acceptance and military engagement policies.

As seen in Figure 14, regarding the Syrian war, the U.S. public holds more favorable attitudes towards sending troops and less favorable attitudes towards accepting refugees. This makes sense if we consider the context of the Syrian war being framed as the war on terror. An increasing portion of the U.S. public would favor sending troops because of the security threat that terrorists pose, while simultaneously closing themselves off to refugees due to the fear of overlooking terrorists during the refugee admissions process.

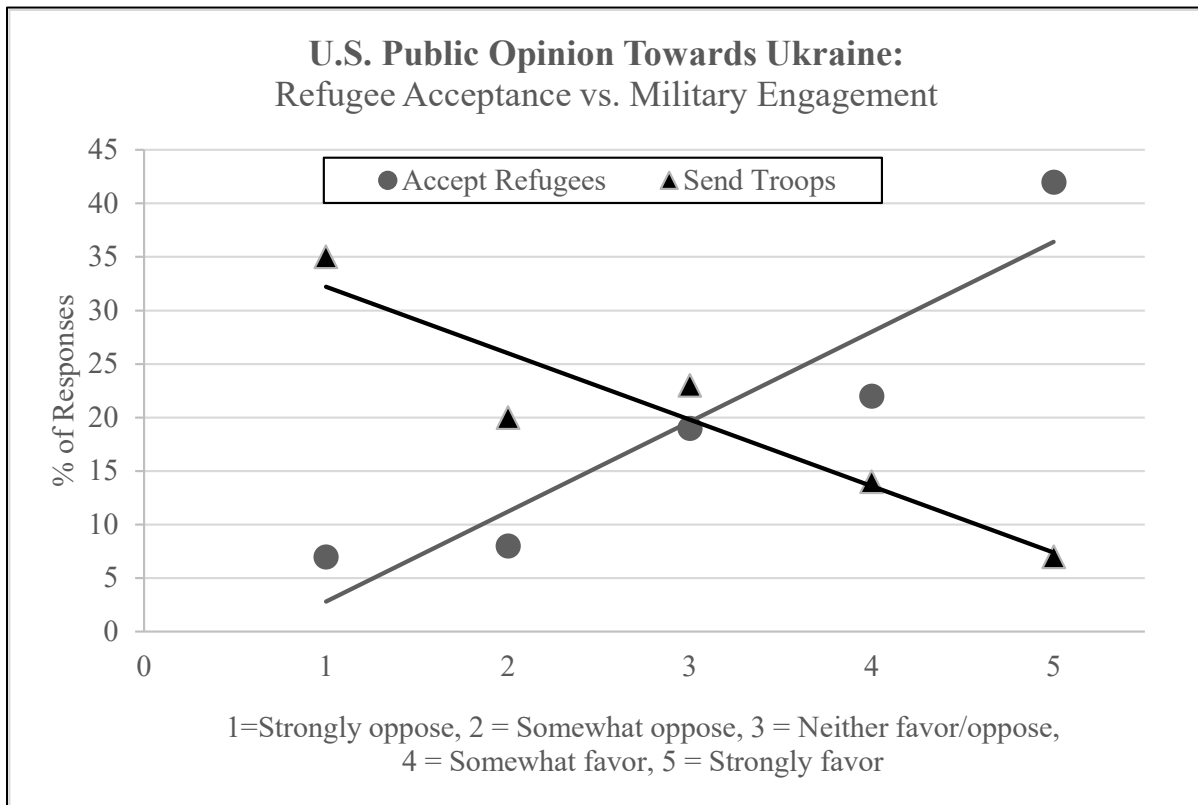
Figure 14



Sources (data): Associated Press polling data from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research (2015)

Meanwhile, when we look at Figure 15, the inverse holds true with regard to the Ukrainian war, where the U.S. public holds more favorable attitudes towards accepting refugees and less favorable attitudes towards sending troops. This makes sense because of the impact of cultural affinity on refugee acceptance. As mentioned in the previous section, Ukrainian refugees receive the most favorable attitudes from the U.S. because of how close they are culturally. The less favorable attitudes towards sending troops can be attributed to nuclear deterrence.

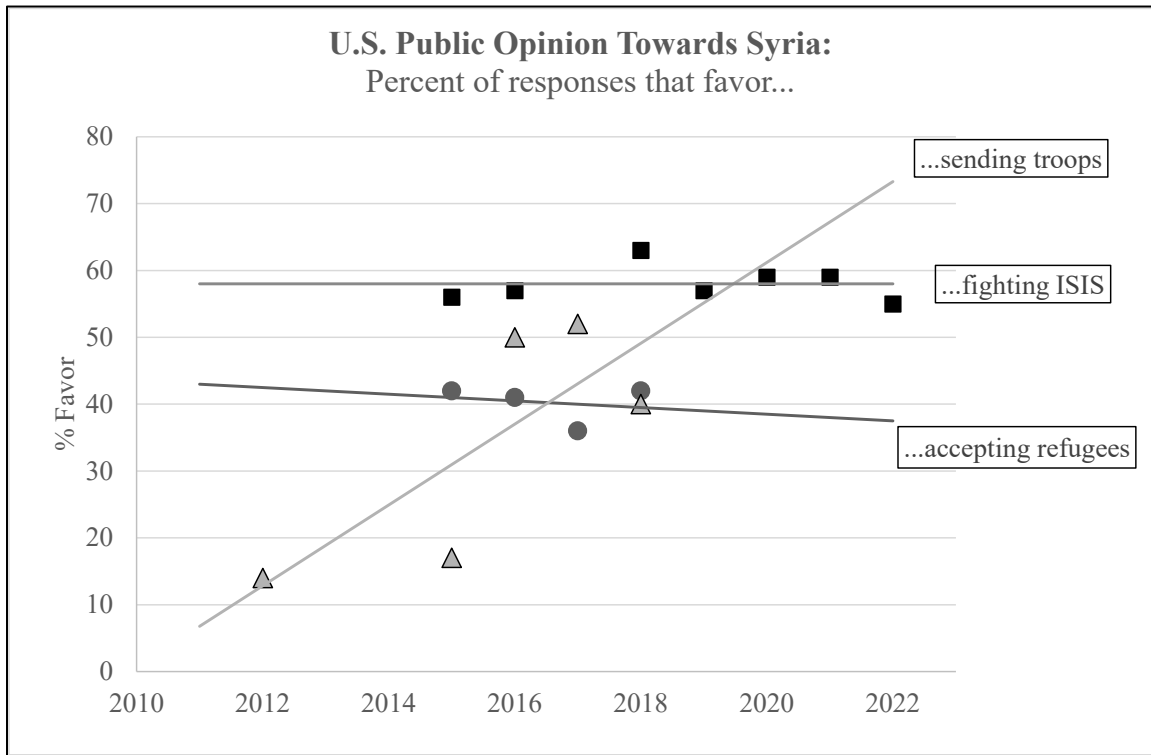
Figure 15



Sources (data): Associated Press data from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research (2022)

Then, when we look at U.S. public opinion over time, we see that there is a consistent favorability towards fighting ISIS over accepting refugees. Meanwhile, it was after 2014, the rise of ISIS and growing awareness of terrorists in Syria, that led to a rise in favorability towards sending troops. Although the inverse relationship between the two policies is not obvious, when we compare the U.S. with Germany in Figure 18, a pattern emerges. Whereas the U.S. sees consistent favorability towards military engagement over refugee acceptance, Germany experiences the opposite.

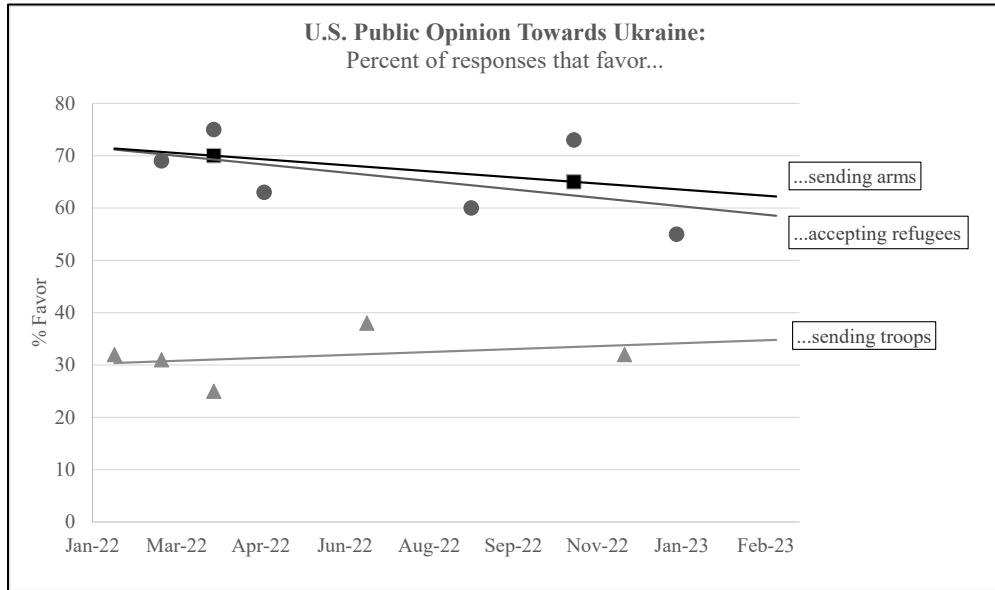
Figure 16



Source (data): Roper Center for Public Opinion Research (2012-2022)

Furthermore, U.S. attitudes towards Ukraine and Syria are different. Favorability towards Ukrainian refugees is consistently above 50% while favorability towards troop deployment is consistently below 40%. We note that there is also strong favorability towards sending arms, which implies the outpouring of U.S. public support for Ukraine, which can be attributed to the symbolic power of Zelensky.

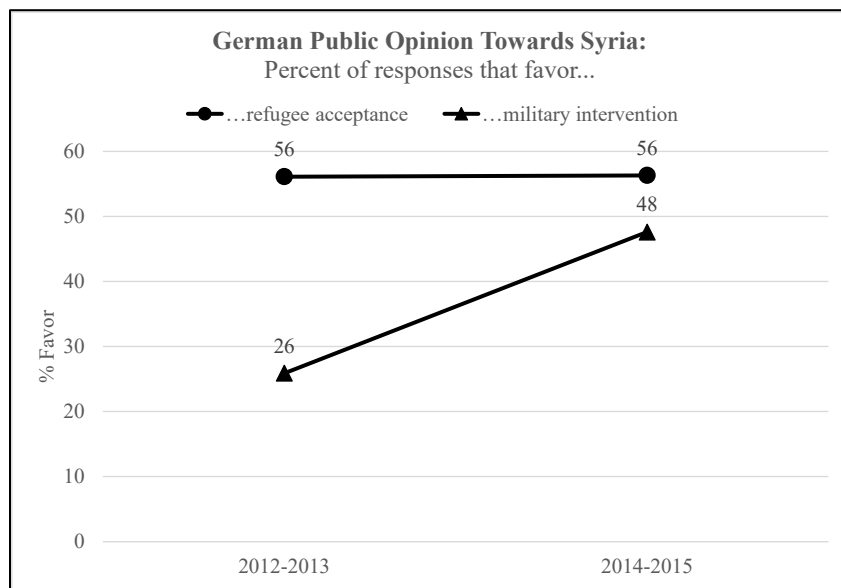
Figure 17



Source (data): Roper Center for Public Opinion Research (2022, 2023)

Looking at Figure 18, we see that a consistent majority of the German public supports accepting Syrian refugees. Although there is a noticeable increase in favorability towards military engagement from 2012 to 2015, which we attribute to the framing of the Syrian war around the fight against terrorism, we see that favorability towards refugee acceptance exceeds military engagement.

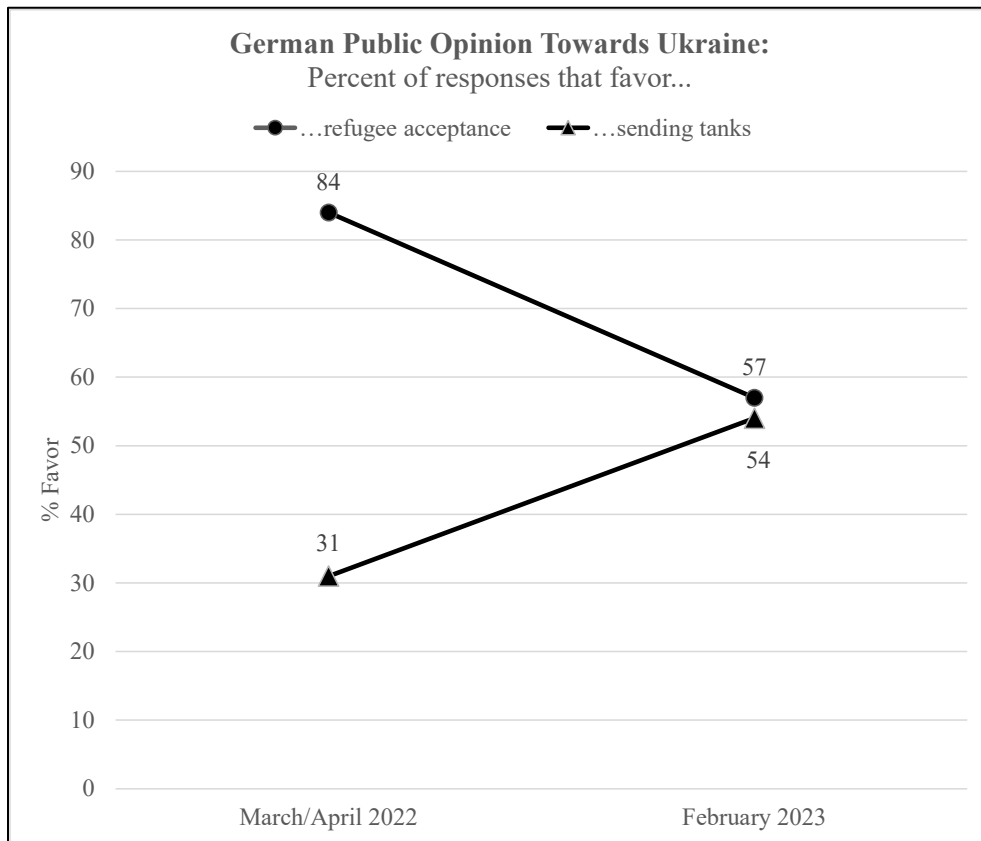
Figure 18



Sources (data): Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Politbarometer survey data from GESIS Data Archive (2012-2015)

Interestingly, as shown in Figure 19, the portion of the German public that favors accepting Ukrainian refugees has decreased from 84% at the start of the war to 57% one year later. Simultaneously, favorability has increased for military engagement at the level of sending tanks, from 31% to 54%. Troop deployment is ruled out as a feasible military engagement policy due to nuclear deterrence. This reflects Germany’s changing attitudes towards military engagement with the Ukrainian war being on European land and potentially spreading across Europe and forcing the German public to recognize its weak military capability.

Figure 19



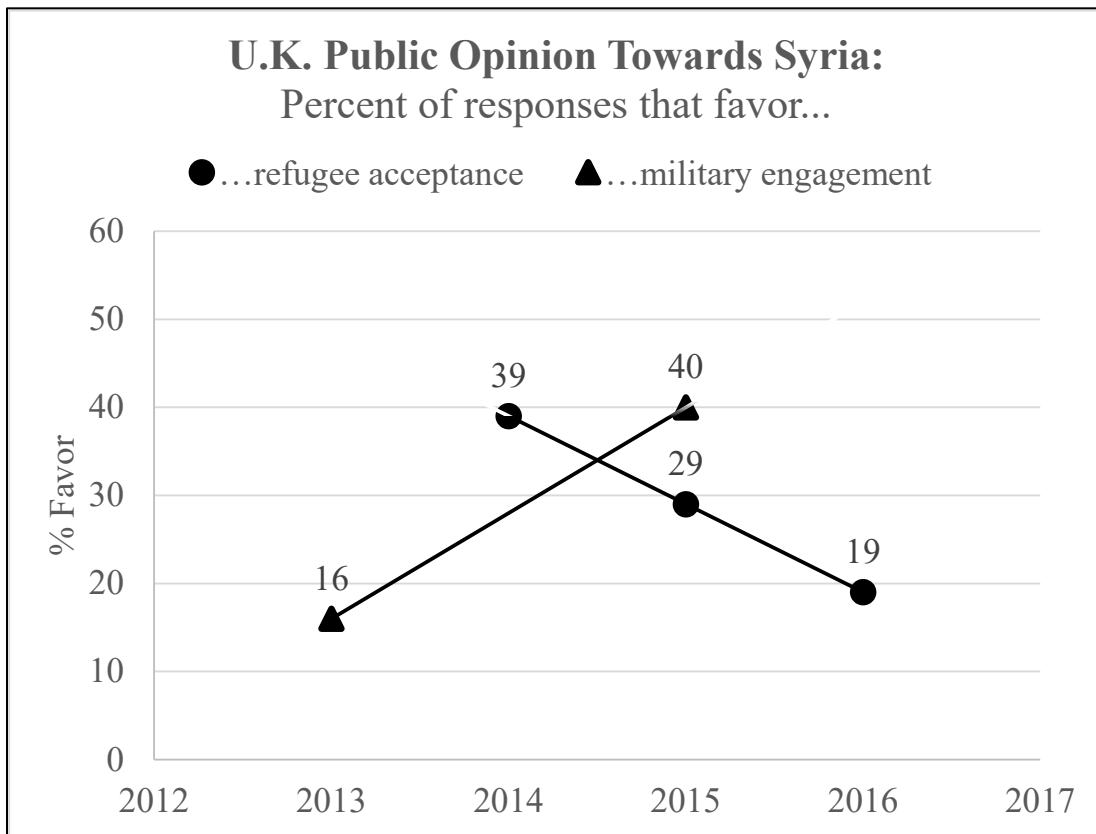
Source (data): Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Politbarometer survey data from the GESIS Data Archive (2022-2023)

Hence, through this analysis of public opinion across the U.S. and Germany, we see how there is an inverse relationship between the two policies. When refugee acceptance is not favorable, military engagement will be more favorable, as seen in the U.S towards Syria. In contrast, when refugee acceptance is favorable, military engagement will be less favorable, as seen in Germany. Moreover, as shown in German public opinion towards Ukraine, decreasing

favorability towards refugee acceptance is matched with increasing favorability towards military engagement. When we add our analysis of the U.K. public opinion, this correlation still holds.

As seen in Figure 20, the U.K. public becomes increasingly favorable towards military action in Syria. As mentioned previously, this increase in favorability can be attributed to the rise of ISIS and the recognition that terrorist groups abroad pose a national security concern. Meanwhile, accepting Syrian refugees becomes even more unfavorable, from around 39% favorability to 19% favorability. This again shows how when refugee acceptance becomes less favorable, military engagement becomes more favorable.

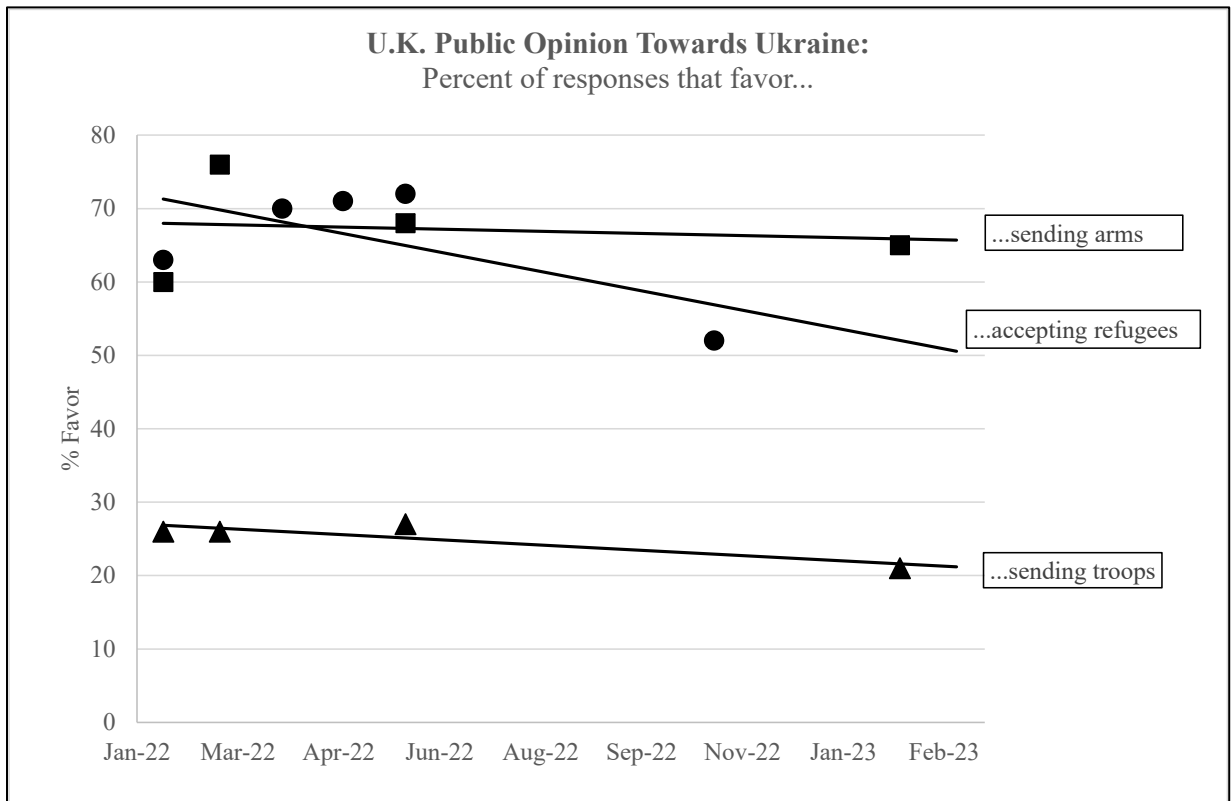
Figure 20



Source (data): Yougov (2013-2016)

Moreover, as shown in Figure 17, 19, and 21, we see that all three responding countries are going through a similar change regarding attitudes towards Ukraine. There is decreasing favorability for Ukrainian refugees and increasing favorability for military engagement policies, especially sending arms. Troop deployment remains the last resort, with less than 40% favorability in the U.S. and less than 30% favorability in the U.K.

Figure 21



Source (data): Yougov (2022-2023)

When we look into the corresponding policy actions taken, we see that policy closely follows public opinion, as shown in Figure 22. Hence, there indeed exists an inverse relationship between refugee acceptance policies and military engagement policies. Regarding Syria, the U.S. and U.K.’s limited refugee policies (detailed in Figure 1) are balanced with their high levels of military engagement while Germany’s generous refugee policy is balanced with a low level of military engagement. Meanwhile, regarding Ukraine, all three responding countries exhibit high levels of refugee acceptance and low levels of military engagement.

Figure 22

	Policy Actions Regarding Syria		Policy Actions Regarding Ukraine	
	Refugee Acceptance	Military Engagement	Refugee Acceptance	Military Engagement
U.S.	LOW level of acceptance	HIGH level of engagement	HIGH level of acceptance	LOW level of engagement
Germany	HIGH level of acceptance	LOW level of engagement	HIGH level of acceptance	LOW level of engagement
U.K.	LOW level of acceptance	HIGH level of engagement	HIGH level of acceptance	LOW level of engagement

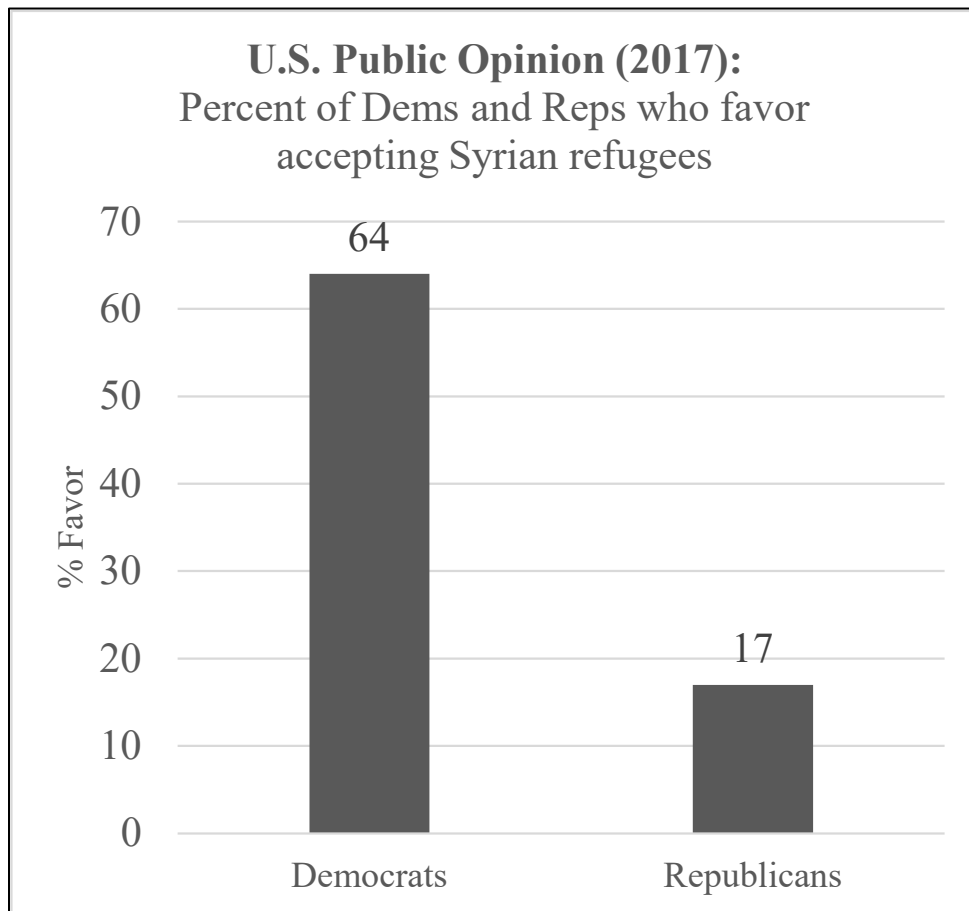
*exact policy details in Figure 1

The Left-Right Belief System

Given how strong the inverse relationship between the two polices is within and across the responding countries, we propose one reason for this phenomenon: public opinion is an indicator of the structured belief system that policymakers follow when making their policy choices. To show this, we compare the public attitudes towards refugee acceptance and military engagement across the left- and right-wing political parties.

Looking at Figure 23, for the U.S., we see that 64% of Democratic voters and 17% of Republican voters favor accepting Syrian refugees. This shows that Democratic supporters, as part of the dominant left-wing party, are more likely than Republican supporters, as part of the dominant right-wing party, to favor refugee acceptance, regardless of the racial and cultural makeup of the refugee population.

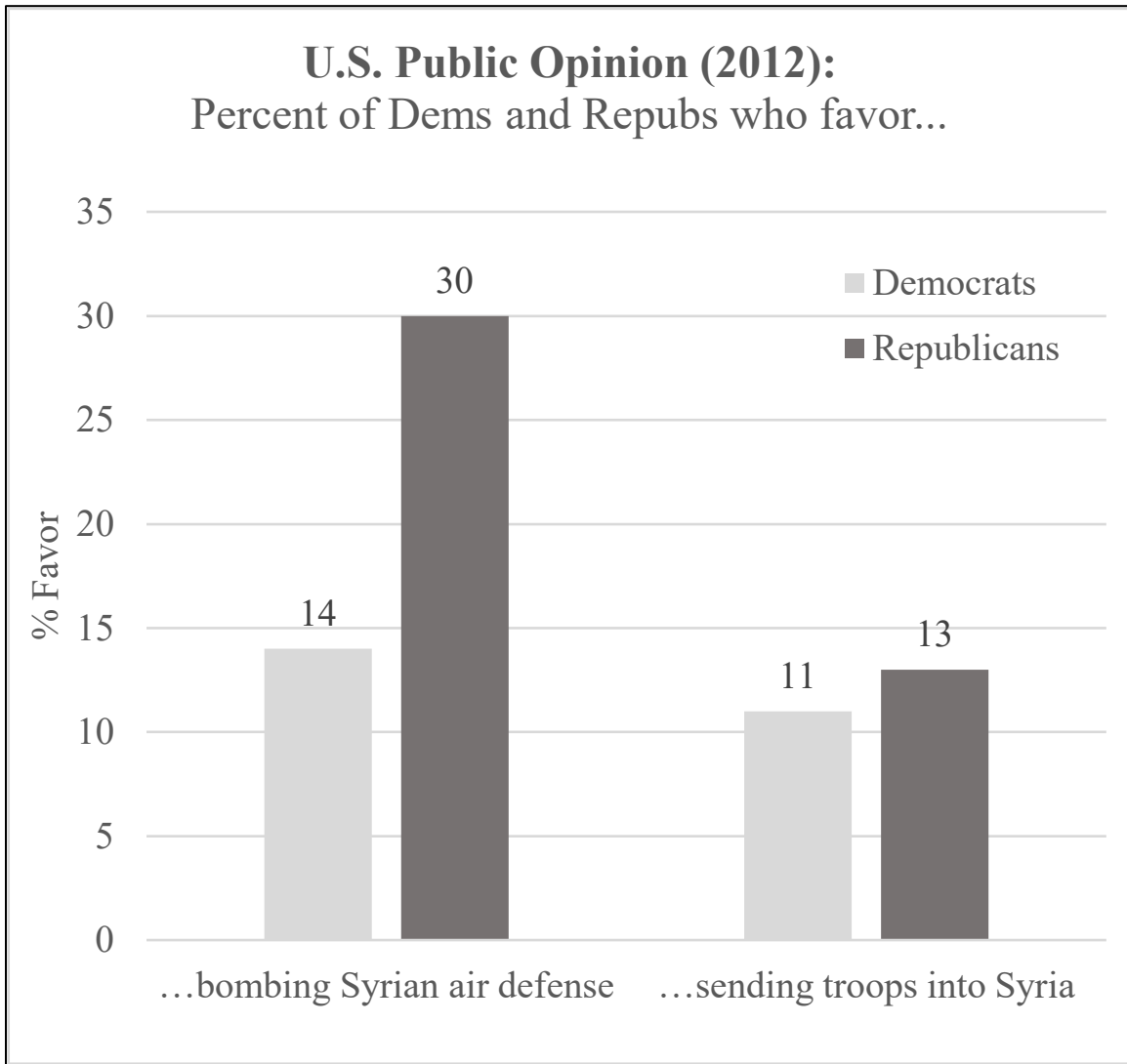
Figure 23



Source (data): The Chicago Council on Global Affairs survey data from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research archive (2017)

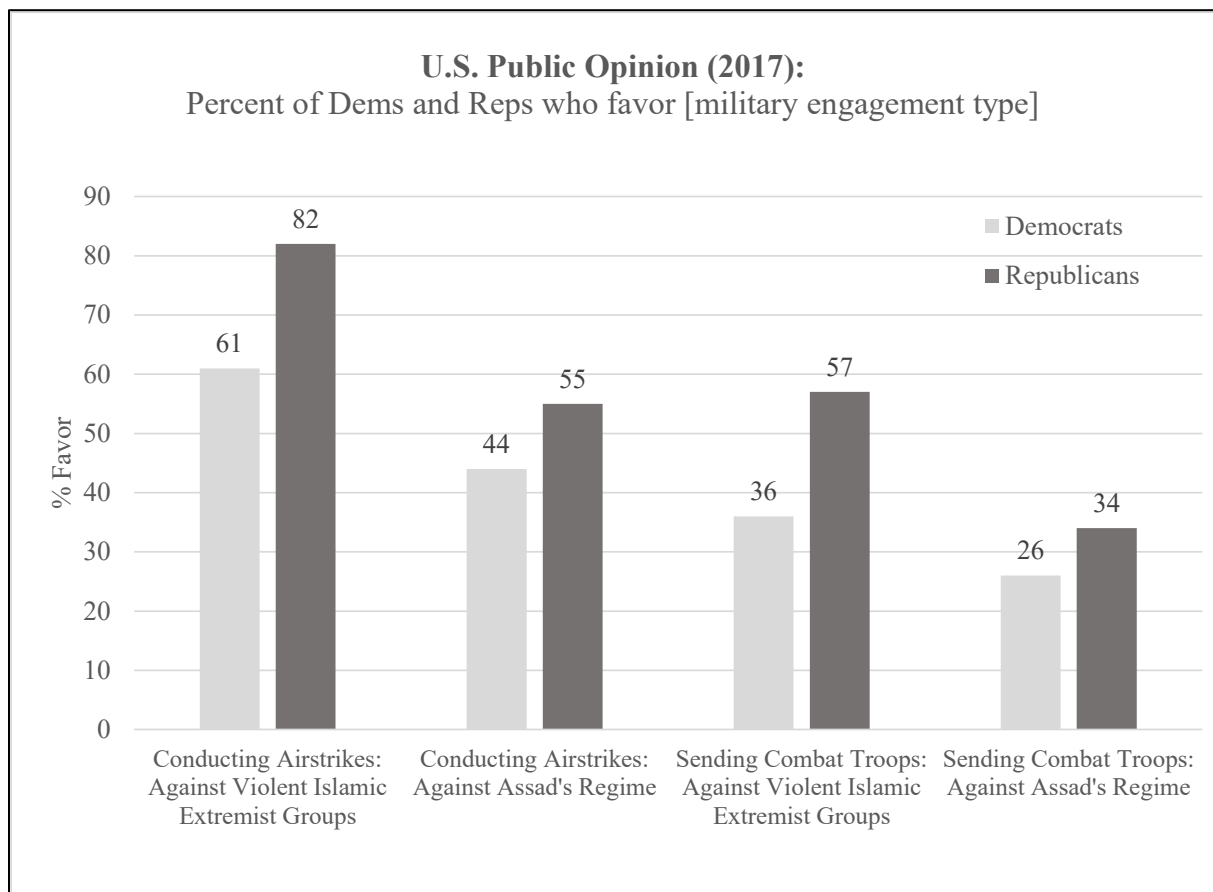
In Figure 24 and 25, we also see that Republicans are generally more hawkish than Democrats and there is consistently a greater portion of Republicans that favor any type of military engagement, whether it was in 2012 during Obama’s presidency or in 2017 during Trump’s presidency.

Figure 24



Source (data): The Chicago Council on Global Affairs survey data from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research archive (2012)

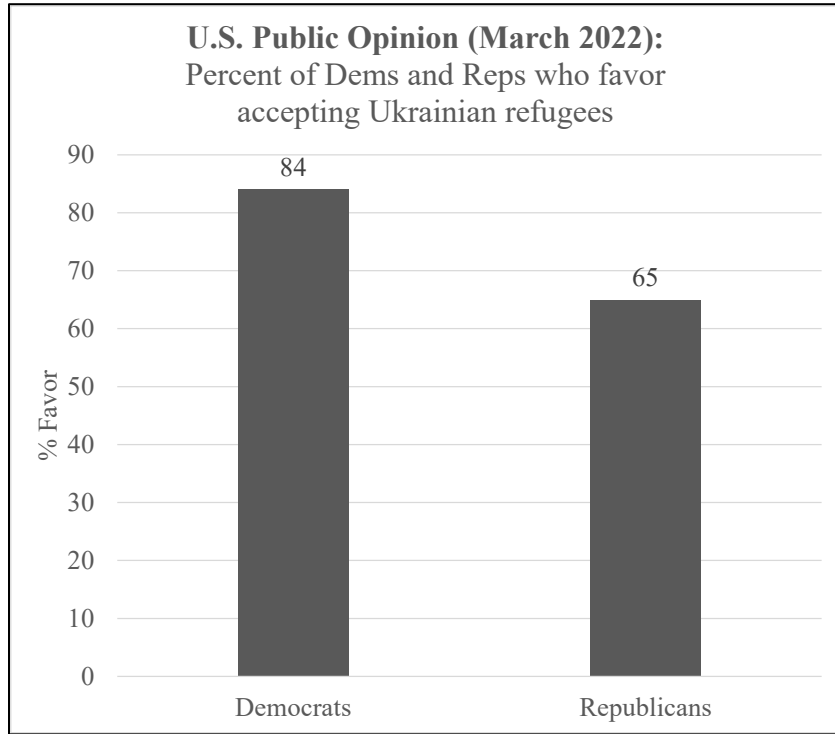
Figure 25



Source (data): The Chicago Council on Global Affairs survey data from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research archive (2017)

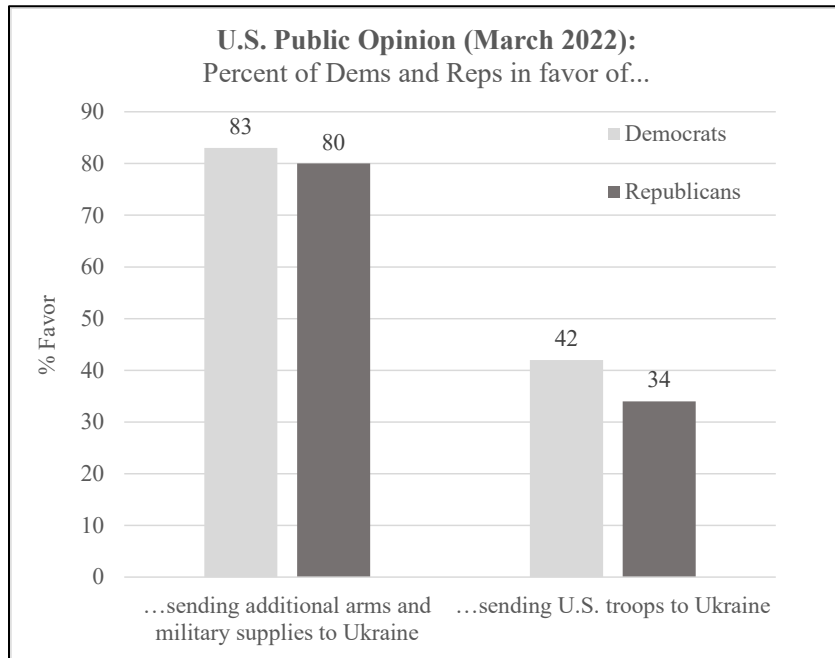
As for U.S. attitudes towards Ukraine, we see in Figure 26 that 84% of Democratic voters and 65% of Republican voters favor accepting Ukrainian refugees into the U.S. This again goes to show the Democratic stance of being open to refugees regardless of their background. Interestingly, we also see in Figure 27 that Democratic voters are more likely than Republican voters to support any type of military engagement. This is initially surprising because it was expected that Republicans would be more hawkish than Democrats in all scenarios. However, this implies that support for Ukraine has become a politicized partisan issue. Democrats under the leadership of Biden hold highly favorable attitudes towards supporting Ukraine while Republican leadership, with their anti-Democratic agenda, have taken the opposing stance and steer their platform accordingly. We note that the percentage of support for sending arms in Figure 27 is about twice the percentage of support for sending troops across party lines, the result of nuclear deterrence.

Figure 26



Source (data): The Chicago Council on Global Affairs survey data from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research archive (2022)

Figure 27



Source (data): The Chicago Council on Global Affairs survey data from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research archive (2022)

Hence, in producing the strategic narrative of the U.S., a key feature is that each U.S. president acted according to this left-right belief system, and hence, the policy actions taken not only reflect the overall U.S. public attitude, but also lean towards the preference of the dominant political party.

Left- and right-wing politics in the U.S. is different from what occurs in Germany because while the left is generally associated with liberal policies and the right is generally associated with conservative policies, what constitutes liberal and conservative may be different in the U.S. and Germany. Moreover, these definitions change over time as well. For instance, Merkel's generous refugee policy in 2015 was representative of the Christian Democratic Party (CDU), a center-right-wing party. The CDU is historically a conservative party but this is clearly a liberal stance towards refugee acceptance. Similarly, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and Green Party are historically left-wing and liberal, yet their current pro-military stance vis-à-vis NATO membership is in line with conservative ideology. Hence, while there exists a left-right political spectrum, the belief system is much less apparent. However, we can still see that German political parties have structured stances towards refugee acceptance and military engagement, just less predictable along the left-right spectrum.

As shown in Figure 28, there are many different stances on what Germany should do regarding refugee acceptance and military engagement in terms of NATO membership. While the figure depicts the existence of such structured political stances, the fact that German political parties on different parts of the left-right spectrum may make similar policy choices strays from a structured belief system. The Left Party and the Alternative for Germany (AfD) party are at opposing ends of the political spectrum, yet they are the only ones who are against military engagement vis-à-vis NATO.

Figure 28

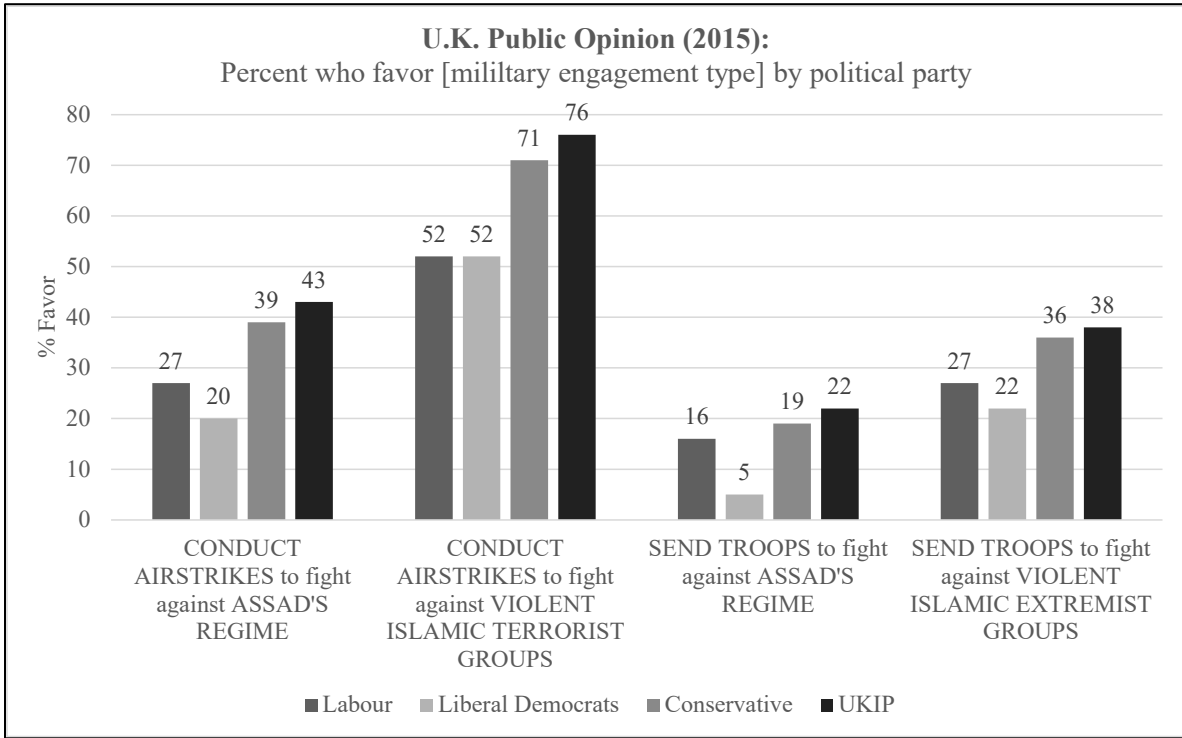
German Political Parties: Refugee Acceptance and Military Engagement Policy Preferences		
Political Party	Refugee Acceptance	Military Engagement
Left party	No upper limit	Against NATO and all Bundeswehr missions abroad, calls for dissolution of NATO
Social Democratic Party (SPD)	No upper limit	Support NATO conditioned on peacekeeping, prevention, and management
Greens	No upper limit	Support NATO conditioned on it being a collective defense mechanism
Free Democratic Party	No upper limit	Support NATO, increase defense spending
Christian Democratic Union (CDU)	No upper limit	Support NATO
Christian Social Union (CSU)	Limit of 200,000 new asylum seekers per year	Support NATO
Alternative for Germany (AfD)	"Zero immigration" policy	Against NATO

Source (information): Bierbach (2017); Sanders and Martin (2017)

Due to the lack of available German public opinion data that distinguishes between political party affiliation, we restrict this analysis to the dominant refugee and military engagement policies of the dominant parties in Germany.

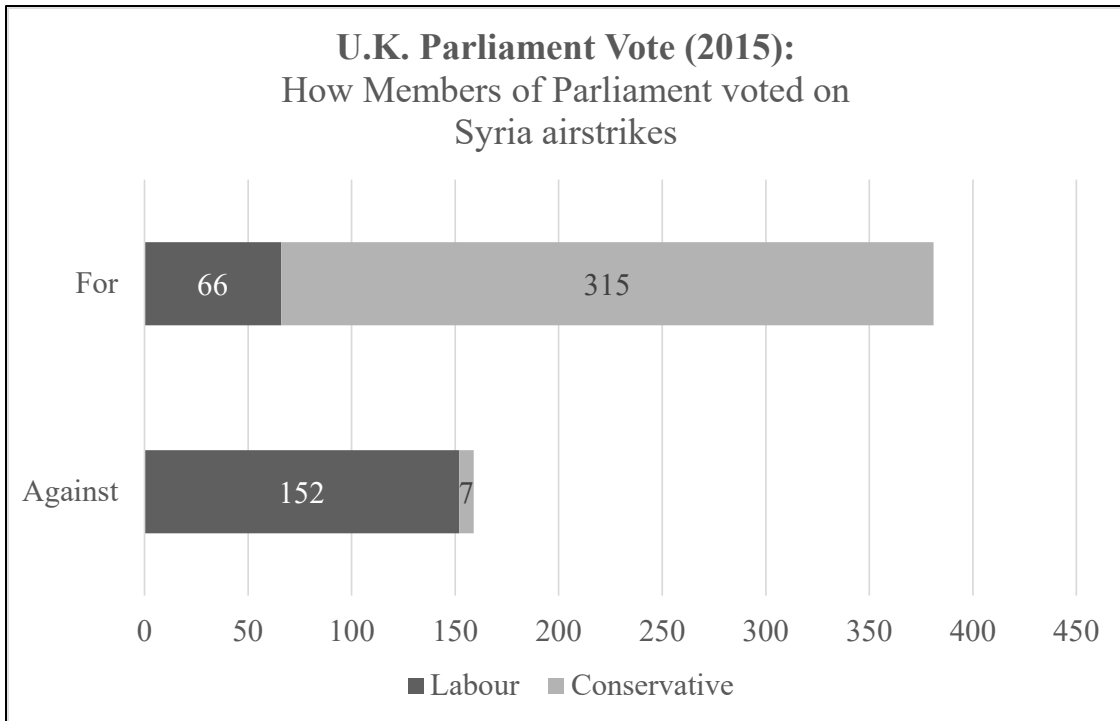
Finally, in the U.K., we see from Figure 29 that Labour party voters (center-left-wing) are less likely than Conservative and UKIP party voters (right-wing) to favor any type of military engagement in Syria. This matches with corresponding policy actions from politicians in each party. As shown in Figure 30, when members of the U.K. Parliament (MPs) voted, more than 97% of the Conservative MPs and only 30% of Labour MPs voted in favor of airstrikes in Syria. Hence, this scenario precisely shows how U.K. public opinion is an indicator of a left-right belief system, and policymakers make choices that follow this system.

Figure 29



Source (data): Yougov (2015)

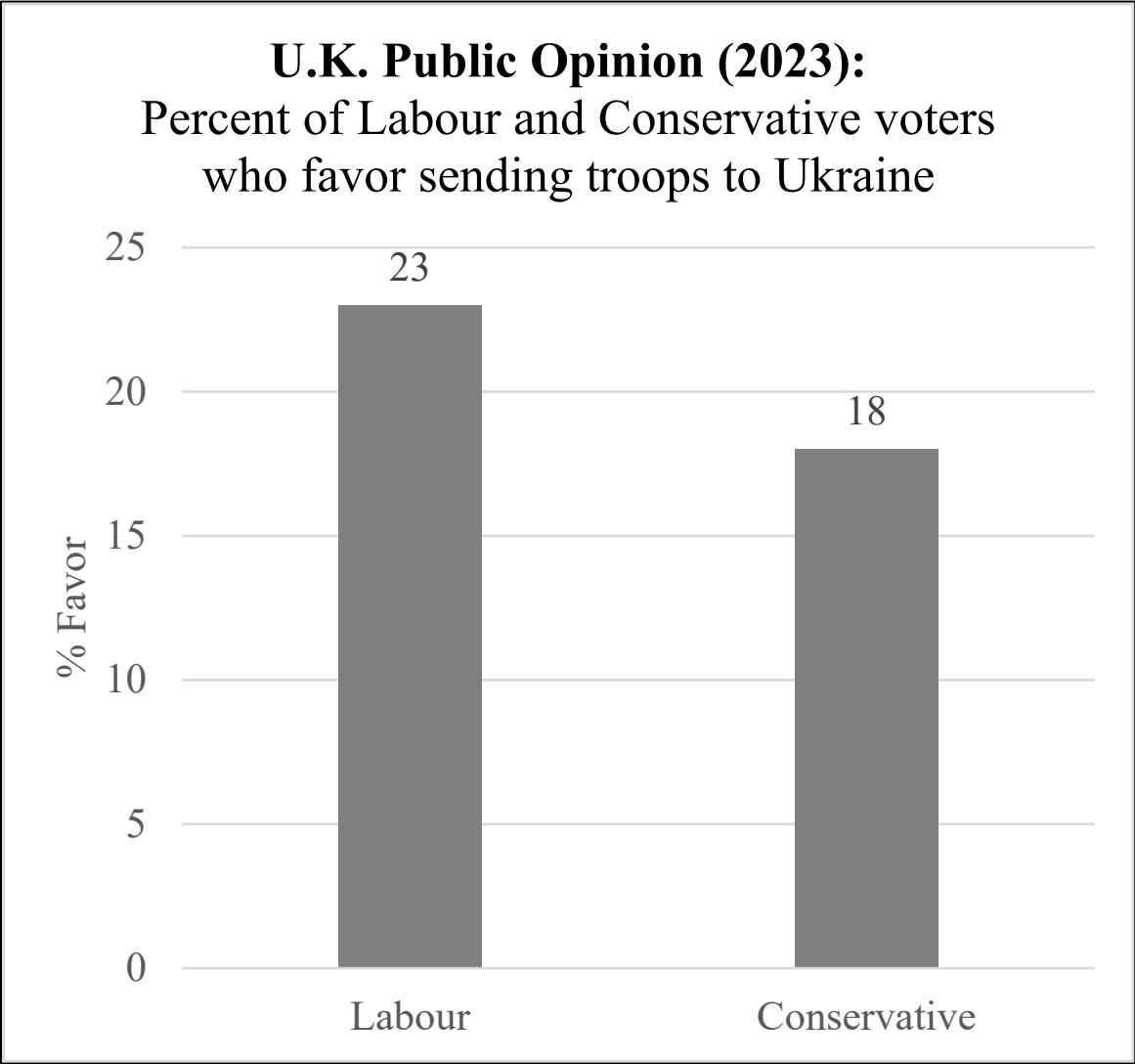
Figure 30



Source (table): The Guardian (2015)

Turning to the Ukrainian war, we see in Figure 31 that Labour party voters are more likely than Conservatives to support troop deployment. Just like in the U.S., it appears that left-wing parties, like the Democratic party in the U.S. and the Labour party in the U.K., have sided with strong support for Ukraine. Meanwhile, right-wing parties like the Republican party in the U.S. and the Conservative party in the U.K. have made it their stance to be anti-Ukraine and hence, even though they generally prefer more hawkish military engagement policies, this is not their stance vis-à-vis Ukraine.

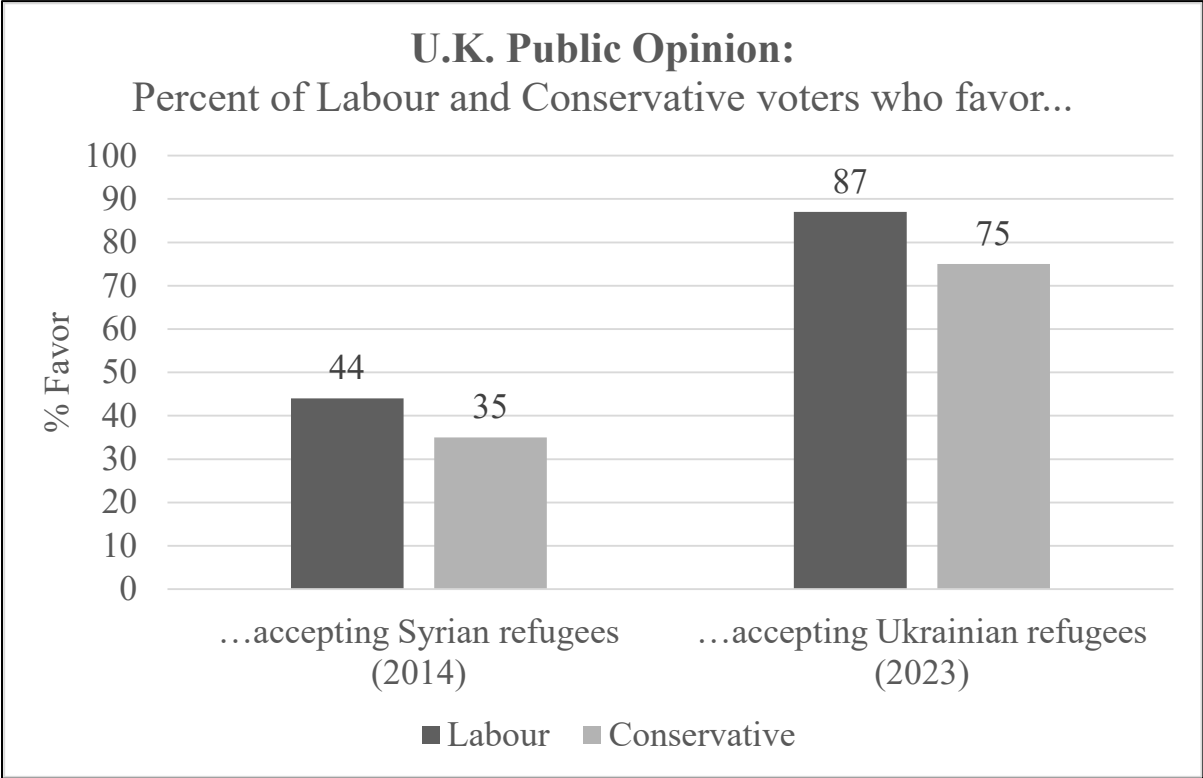
Figure 31



Source (data): Yougov (2023)

Finally, when we look at attitudes towards refugee acceptance, Labour party voters consistently hold more favorable attitudes towards refugee acceptance than their Conservative counterparts, no matter the origin of the refugees.

Figure 32



Source (data): Yougov (2014, 2023)

Therefore, public opinion responses towards refugee acceptance and military engagement appear to be part of a larger left-right belief system, and they provide a basis for policymakers to structure their actions precisely because policy choices reflect public opinion. Moreover, our above analysis shows that this phenomenon holds across countries.

XI. Strategic Narratives

Using the findings of the previous sections, we now craft the strategic narratives of the U.S., Germany, and the U.K. For each responding country, we compare the public attitudes and policy actions taken regarding refugee acceptance and military engagement during the years of the ongoing wars. Ultimately, we find that political actors look at public support to determine what to do internationally, and hence, policy actions tend to follow public opinion. However, because these three responding countries experience different histories and have various types of political actors at the helm, their policy actions differ from one another. Interestingly, the inverse relationship between refugee acceptance and military engagement appears to hold in all cases.

The U.S.

The strategic narrative of the U.S. around refugee acceptance and military engagement is best traced along the political platforms of the Obama, Trump and Biden administrations. The policy that each president enacts is in line with the platform they campaigned on and what their supporters favor. In other words, each president does what will bring them the most support, which is in line with the dominant beliefs of their political party.

The Syrian Civil War began in 2011, during Obama's presidency, and as shown in Figure 16, the public sentiment towards sending troops at the start of the war was unfavorable, with less than 20% in favor of sending troops. At the time, the purpose behind the war was to support the Syrian rebels in their fight against the Assad regime. Although the U.S. sympathized the Syrian rebels, it was hard to form a link between the rebels' cause and any pressing national threat to the U.S. that would make it necessary to send troops. Hence, despite the Syrian rebels' belief that the U.S. and NATO forces would support them as they had supported the Libyan rebels, the U.S. public simply didn't have the willingness or interest in the rebels' cause to intervene on their behalf. We see that reflected in policy since the U.S. remained out of the war initially.

Then, in 2012, Obama made his infamous "red-line" statement that implied he would intervene militarily against the Assad regime if chemical weapons were used. Although an "ill-considered rhetorical statement" (Kessler, 2013), the sentiment in 2012 was indeed favorable towards military engagement like putting in place a no-fly zone over Syria (59%), though not for troop deployment (12%) (see Figure 4). Moreover, in 2013, 21% favored a military strike with the goal of punishing the Assad regime for the use of chemical weapons while only 6% favored

military strikes with the goal of overthrowing the Syrian government (see Figure 5). Thus, Obama did have some reason to make this statement given that the public does respond more favorably to a military strike in the context of chemical weapons. However, even knowing chemical weapons were used, 55% were against any type of military action in Syria (see Figure 5), implying a low level of support for any type of military engagement in Syria. Hence, although the use of chemical weapons had some potential to justify military engagement in Syria, this was not the sentiment of the majority.

As the tale goes, when a chemical weapons attack did occur in 2013, Obama blinked, and he decided to share the responsibility of military engagement with Congress. Ultimately, military engagement was not used against the Assad regime in 2013. This makes sense strategically, as any direct intervention in the war risks escalating to troop deployment, which Obama knew just from a glimpse of public opinion that he did not have the support for. Only 6% would be in favor of military engagement at the level of sending troops (see Figure 5). Moreover, Democrats are far less likely to support troop deployment, and this was the political platform Obama ran on (see Figure 24 and 25).

It should be noted that as righteous as it is to punish those who commit crimes against humanity, Obama's interests in the region exceed just humanitarian concerns. In a way, Obama was using the humanitarian concern to test the public's attitude towards military engagement in Syria, which would serve other goals like supporting the rebels in alignment with Middle East allies like Saudi Arabia, who the U.S. has economic ties with vis-à-vis the oil market. Another point to add here, which just goes to show the sheer strategy that was involved, is that Obama chose to emphasize the humanitarian concern involved because Democrats are more likely to support troop deployment when humanitarian concerns are involved. Ultimately, Obama saw support was not strong enough, and rather than entering another war in the Middle East when he had campaigned on ending such wars, he chose to end the conflict diplomatically.

Then, in 2015, the Syrian refugee crisis hit the media circuits simultaneously with the rise of ISIS in Syria. This was a turning point, and Obama acted to balance the two fronts of refugee acceptance and military engagement. On one hand, he pledged to accept 10,000 refugees in 2015 and more in 2016. This policy was more performative than substantive though, as there were over a million refugees fleeing Syria at the time. Despite the Republican backlash, his policy of

accepting Syrian refugees was more of a symbol and a gesture of openness to refugees that aligns with the Democratic platform. On the other hand, he authorized troops on the ground in Syria to fight ISIS. There was no red line or blinking this time because public support was strongly in favor of military intervention in Syria when the justification was to fight against violent extremist groups like ISIS (see Figure 6). This can be attributed to the link between national security and combatting terrorism, formed since the 9/11 attacks. Hence, in 2015, when Obama authorized the use of troops in Syria, the public sentiment was favorable for this policy action because there was now an actual threat to the U.S. public that justified the use of troops.

This reveals the power that a symbol of a war has on public support for military engagement. If the Syrian Civil War continued to be around the discontent of the rebels against Assad, Obama most likely would not have sent troops. Looking at Figure 16, it is obvious that there is a majority in favor of fighting against ISIS starting in 2015, which coincides with a time of actual military intervention in Syria.

Notably, although Obama sent troops to the Syrian Civil War as a war on terror, the interests of the rebels who started the civil war to fight for justice against the Assad regime are not accounted for. Obama displayed low levels of refugee acceptance and high levels of military engagement in Syria only when he found a justifiable reason and favorable public support to do so in the context of the war on terror.

Turning to the 2016 U.S. presidential election, the Trump campaign strategically used their anti-Muslim platform and the Syrian refugee crisis as a way to discredit Obama and blame him for accepting terrorists, when in reality the chances of this was extremely low. All in all, the campaign sought to discredit every policy action Obama took. Hence, it makes sense that soon after Trump was elected, his agenda was often based on anti-Obama policies. One of his first acts as president was to instate a Muslim travel ban, which essentially banned Syrian refugees. Notably though, while a counter to Obama's decision to send troops to Syria to fight ISIS would be to simply withdraw them, Trump had plenty of other considerations to make, like the strong Republican backing of a war on terror in Syria (see Figure 25). Hence, Trump continued the war on terror in Syria despite this being in line with an Obama era policy.

In 2017, when Trump received the opportunity to remind the public of the time Obama blinked, he jumped at it (Robertson, 2017). He publicly said,

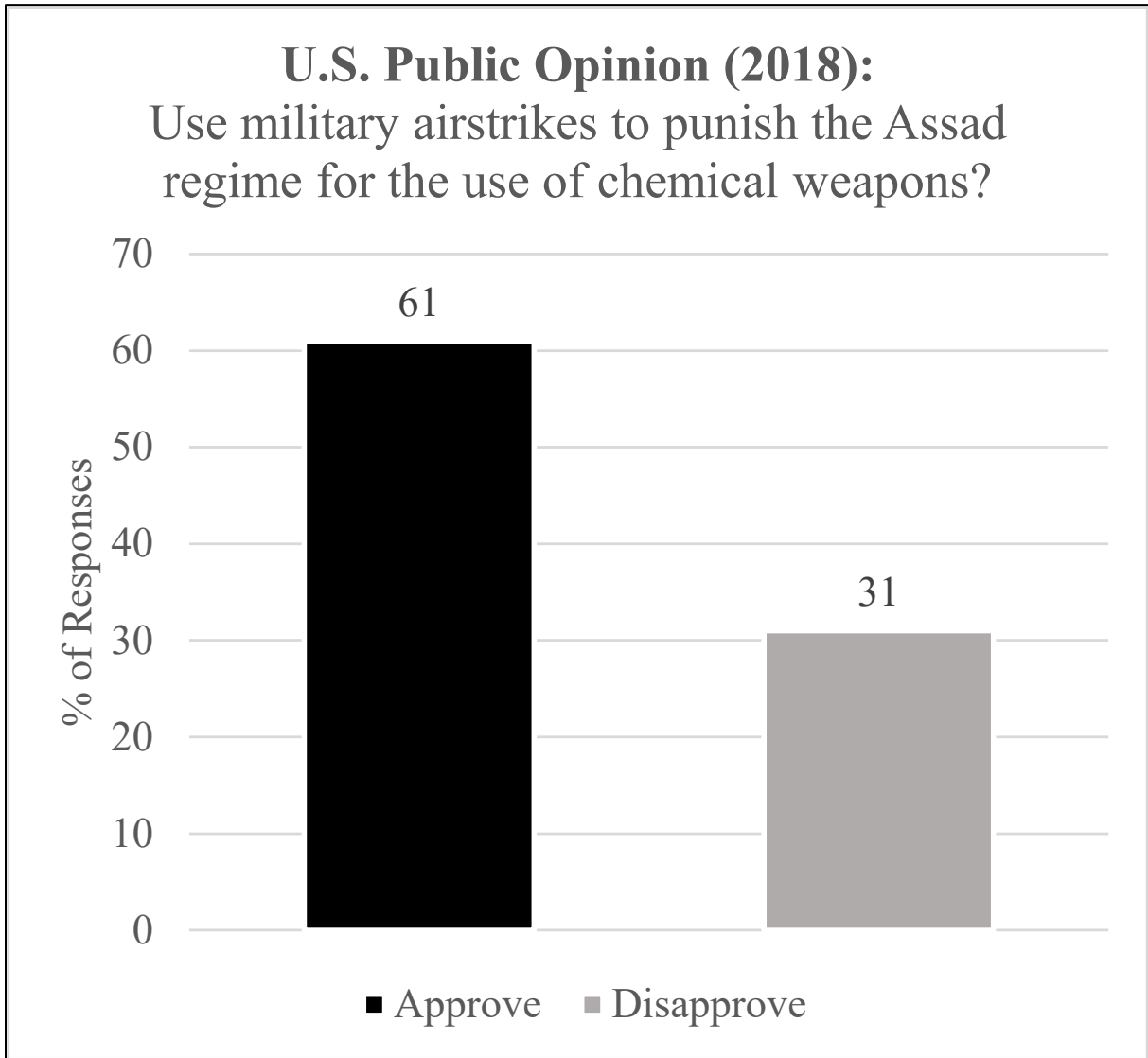
“I think the Obama administration had a great opportunity to solve this crisis a long time ago when he said the red line in the sand. And when he didn't cross that line after making the threat, I think that set us back a long ways, not only in Syria, but in many other parts of the world, because it was a blank threat. I think it was something that was not one of our better days as a country.” (Trump, 2017)

As reported by Vox, this directly contradicts what Trump tweeted in 2013 (Beauchamp, 2017):

“AGAIN, TO OUR VERY FOOLISH LEADER, DO NOT ATTACK SYRIA - IF YOU DO MANY VERY BAD THINGS WILL HAPPEN & FROM THAT FIGHT THE U.S. GETS NOTHING!” (Trump, 2013)

Trump made a point to send airstrikes against the Assad regime when chemical weapons were found to be used again. Just by emphasizing that he was enacting a policy counter to Obama, he was abiding by his anti-Obama agenda that he knows his supporters revel in. Moreover, as seen in Figure 33 below, public sentiment was in his favor, with 61% in favor of airstrikes against Assad, thus allowing him to act the way he did.

Figure 33



Source: Anderson Robbins Research and Shaw & Co. Research data from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research (2018)

Then, in 2019, Trump’s declaration that ISIS had been defeated and that troops would be withdrawn can be seen in the context of Trump trying to announce a successful military campaign under his presidency, right as the 2020 presidential election campaign was starting. Clearly, the policy actions Trump took were counter to Obama, so one can wonder how two consecutive administrations can enact such different policies in the span of four years. Yet, their policies were in line with public opinion, and both presidents leaned heavily towards their

political party platforms. Thus, the responses of the U.S. can be seen as a part of a larger strategic narrative of the political actors who seek to maintain popular support.

Finally, we turn to the Biden administration. One of the first pieces of legislation he passed was to end the Muslim ban, hence reversing the ban on Syrian refugees. While it did little to increase the number of Syrian refugees coming into the U.S., it was a symbolic move to signal Biden's openness to refugees, counter to Trump policy and in line with the Democratic platform. Also notable was that soon after Biden assumed his presidency, he announced the troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. This move is indicative of his policy stance on military intervention in the Middle East. Similar to Obama, and fitting with the Democratic platform, he would prefer bringing troops home over keeping or sending them abroad. The deadline of 9/11/2021 is also a symbolic gesture to tie his policy to the war on terror, and hence, justification for this policy would be that the war on terror, in Afghanistan at least, is over. We note that troops remain in Syria to this day.

As for the war in Ukraine, since 2022, Biden has been an avid supporter of their cause, allowing Zelensky to speak before the U.S. Congress and even visiting Ukraine himself. As shown in Figure 17, near the start of the war in March 2022, there is a strong favorability towards accepting Ukrainian refugees (69%) and low favorability towards sending troops (31%), with good reason though since the public is also aware of the threat of a nuclear war against Russia. Interestingly, there is a strong favorability for sending arms (70%), which is comparable to the level of support for Ukrainian refugees. This stands out because it shows how level of support for military engagement in Ukraine to help in the fight against Russia is present, especially with the symbol of Zelensky to rally around, and it is only nuclear deterrence preventing stronger military intervention from being used.

All of this is reflected in Biden's policy. Biden has launched a United for Ukrainians campaign and pledged to accept 100,000 Ukrainian refugees, ten times more than the amount of Syrian refugees Obama once pledged to accept. Meanwhile, Biden has also been active in talking to EU leaders like Germany in sending tanks to Ukraine, reflecting the high level of support for sending arms to Ukraine. However, military engagement in Ukraine has its limits due to nuclear deterrence, so policy enacted falls just short of direct military intervention and troop deployment.

Also, as shown in Figure 3, an increasing portion of the public is starting to think too much is being done to support Ukraine. Notably, this portion dips in January 2023, which comes after Zelensky's speech to the U.S. Congress. This shows how the figure of Zelensky is a key symbol of Ukraine's cause and how he is able to steer public opinion towards a more favorable direction when support wanes. Furthermore, political actors in the U.S., whether that is Biden or a member of Congress, recognize that support for Ukraine is decreasing and hence will use tactics accordingly to boost support for themselves. In Biden's State of the Union address in 2023, he mentioned the war in Ukraine and how the U.S. must maintain support in the fight against Russia, but nothing about the catastrophic earthquakes in Syria and Turkey just the previous day that exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the region. This is a reflection of how low of a priority the situation in Syria is to the U.S.

Recently, there has also been an increase in Republican policymakers who are criticizing the support Biden has given to Ukraine. This makes sense as public opinion shows how Republicans respond much less favorably to Ukrainian refugees than Democrats do (see Figure 26). Moreover, McCarthy, the new Republican Speaker of the House, has rejected an offer from Zelensky to visit Ukraine, signaling not only a challenge to Zelensky, but also to Biden's visit to Ukraine just a few weeks prior (Olson, 2023). This is significant because it is a huge setback for Biden's campaign to maintain support for Ukraine, and this will likely be a key political issue as the 2024 presidential election nears. However, this goes to show even more just how much policy actions are linked with public opinion, and how political actors act in line with the platform that will bring them the most support.

There may even be an incentive on some political actors' part to maintain support for the war effort so that they will have a platform where they will consistently be on the favorable side. For instance, Biden knows Zelensky is a key symbol of the war that the public favors and Ukrainian refugees are overwhelmingly favored by the public. Moreover, because of nuclear deterrence, troop deployment is not a feasible option, so Biden does not consider this policy. In addition, sending arms is feasible and Biden can display his influence on other countries to follow U.S.'s lead. Altogether, this appears to be a war that Biden can consistently remain on the side that the public favors. With this perspective, one may begin to see why the war in Ukraine has been so favored by democratic leaders who are looking to increase public support.

After analyzing the U.S. responses to both wars, it can be seen how underlying interests of political actors in the U.S. supersedes the interests of regional actors in the warring countries. Thus, for regional actors to set the agenda, they need to capture the interests of those they need the support from. In other words, the Syrian rebels need to find a way to make their side as symbolic as Zelensky, while Zelensky needs to ensure the support and attention he is getting will translate into tangible support for him to win the war against Russia, before that attention is lost.

Germany

Germany's strategic narrative around refugee acceptance and military engagement can be analyzed in the context of the country's changing history and cultural attitudes towards the two policies. Hence, although Germany's policies differ from the U.S., it is most definitely strategically acting in its own self-interest as well.

In 2015, Merkel announced the policy of "Willkommenskultur", or culture of welcome towards foreigners, especially refugees. Germany went on to accept and resettle over a million Syrian refugees in the next few years. This is incredible if one considers the fact that up until 2005, Germany had been marginally inclusive towards foreigners and rejected multiculturalism. Only a decade prior to Merkel's generous refugee policy in 2005 did Germany declare itself an immigrant nation. A dive into public opinion data reveals that although Merkel's policy appears out of line with its historical immigration practices, the policy is in line with German public opinion. When we look at Figure 18, the German public exhibits behavior that sets itself apart from the West, with a majority (56%) in favor of accepting Syrian refugees consistently from 2012 to 2015, the height of the Syrian refugee crisis. Moreover, it can also be seen how the German public finds it far more favorable to accept refugees than to intervene militarily in Syria. The upward trend of support for military intervention in Syria should be noted though, as this represents the increase in support for military intervention when the war became framed around the fight against terrorism.

Hence, the German public indeed holds favorable attitudes towards Syrian refugees, and it was precisely this public acceptance that enabled Merkel to act seemingly out of line with Germany's historical anti-foreigner sentiment and ride this new wave of acceptance of multiculturalism. Moreover, Germany reaps other benefits from taking in Syrian refugees, like

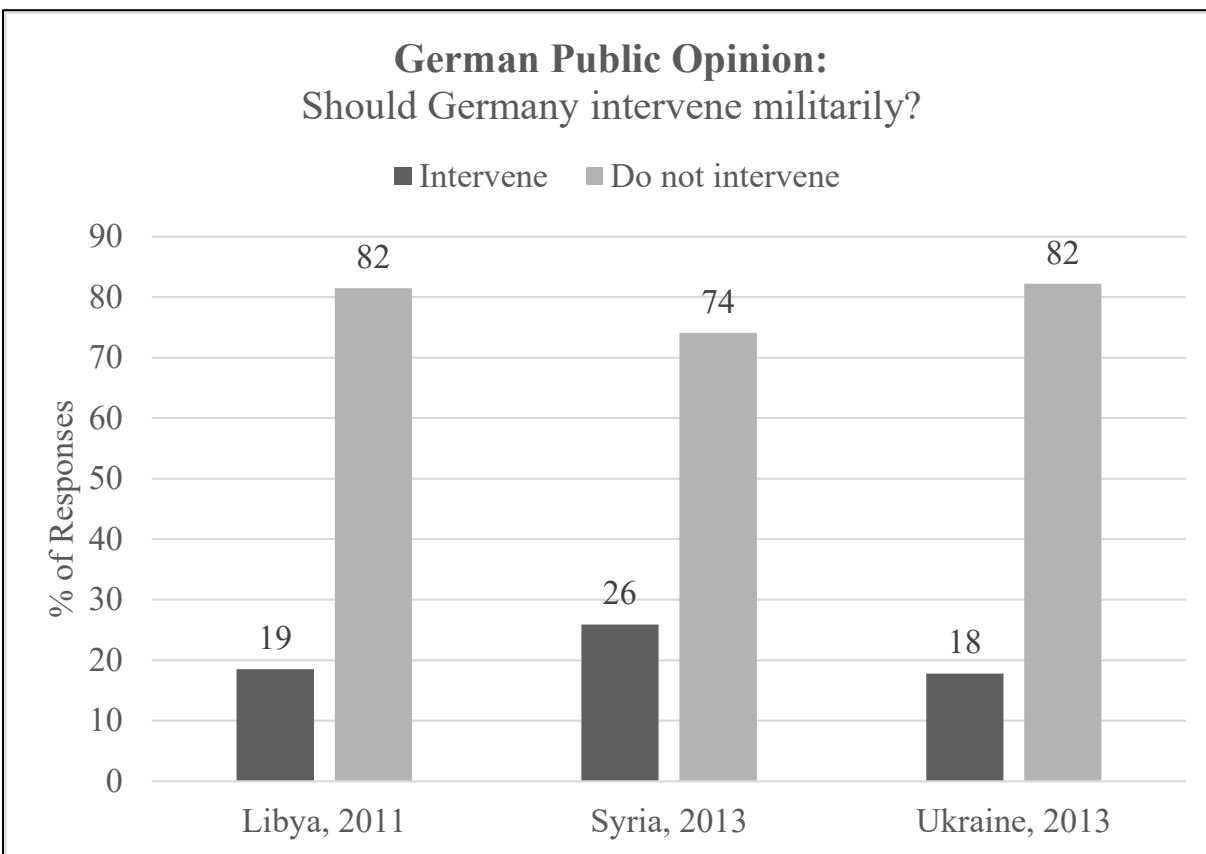
filling the need for labor in the context of an aging population and shrinking labor force (Bellon and Copley, 2015).

Observing the public's attitude toward Merkel's refugee policy further reveals that the move she made, although unprecedented, was not without public backing. As seen in Figure 11, from 2015-17, an increasing portion of the public judge Merkel's refugee policy as rather good. This shows that Merkel does have public backing for her policy, and it was relatively well-received by the public after it came into effect.

Furthermore, a majority of the German public displays confidence in their ability to handle the influx of Syrian refugees. As seen in Figure 12, the portion of Germans who responded that Germany can handle the influx of Syrian refugees exceeded the doubters by more than 20% consistently from 2015 to 2021. This implies that the public support for Merkel's policy stems from the inherent belief that their country is up for the challenge of accepting such a large number of refugees.

As for military engagement in Syria, Germany has not deployed troops to Syria. Although different from U.S. policy, this is a continuation of Germany's anti-militaristic tendency since the end of World War II. As shown in Figure 34, whether it was Libya in 2011, Syria in 2013, or Ukraine in 2013, German public opinion leaned heavily towards non-military intervention policies.

Figure 34



Source (data): Forschungsgruppe Wahlen Politbarometer survey data from the GESIS Data Archive (2011, 2013)

However, as shown in Figure 7, it can be observed that just like in the U.S., the public finds the war on terror a more justified reason than fighting against the Assad regime after chemical weapons were used. This further shows how the causes of the Syrian civil war that began with protests against injustice have now been overshadowed by geopolitical interests of international actors who seek to fulfill their own agendas.

As for Germany's attitude toward Ukraine, we see a decreasing favorability for Ukrainian refugees, although a solid majority consistently supports them (see Figure 19). Meanwhile, there is an increasing favorability towards sending tanks to Ukraine, which is significant because this implies Germany may be changing its anti-militaristic attitude. Notably, these attitudes change together, which implies a link between the two policies.

The public's level of openness to Ukrainian refugees is expected and well-reflected in the data, and policy follows accordingly. Chancellor Scholz's announcement that "the refugees are welcome here" suggests Germany is willing to accept an unlimited number of Ukrainian refugees (DW, 2022). Given how open Germany was to Syrian refugees, it is not at all surprising how it is even more open to Ukrainian refugees since Ukrainians are culturally closer and are non-Muslim, both of which Germany prefers. Hence, the link between policy and public opinion is quite straightforward with regard to Ukrainian refugees.

When we turn to military engagement in Ukraine though, we see that as the war rages on, the public has become more militaristic and preference for sending tanks has gone up by 20% (see Figure 19). Note that we only analyze German military engagement in the context of sending tanks rather than sending troops, because sending troops has been ruled out as a feasible policy option in Ukraine given nuclear deterrence and Germany's anti-militaristic tendency in the first place. This strong support for sending tanks hints at the fact that the current Ukraine war has opened the conversation in Germany for becoming a more militaristic state, though this could also be an underlying trend that already exists, and the government is using the war to justify its need for greater military capabilities. In other words, the public's avid support for Ukraine and sending military aid may even fit into the government's strategic goals, like allowing the government to use the war in Ukraine as a reason for building up the military. There has also been talk of increasing the German military's budget (Sheahan and Marsh, 2022). This may reflect Germany's growing realization, accelerated by the war in Ukraine, that a strong military is needed to defend against future national security threats just like foreign labor is needed to sustain the country amidst an aging population. Hence, these two policies of high refugee acceptance and increasing military engagement may appear to be deviations from the past but are actually reflections of public opinion that has already been changing over the years. What is most interesting is that Germany's policies regarding both refugee acceptance and military engagement are the reverse of the U.S. and the U.K., implying there is a connection between these two policies. Political actors will emphasize one over the other when it fits in with their strategic narrative, whether that is because military engagement is limited by nuclear deterrence or refugee acceptance is favored and accepted by the public and beneficial politically and economically.

In summary, Germany's policy responses are strategically crafted around public preferences. As much as Germany's refugee policy deviates from its past anti-foreigner attitudes, the public has shown favorable attitudes towards the Syrian refugees, allowing the German government to follow-through with their generous policy while maintaining public support. Simultaneously, Germany's lack of military might is overcome with its contribution on the refugee front, hence distinguishing itself from the U.S. and the U.K. Hence, although Germany's response to Syria is an anomaly in the West, especially where anti-Muslim sentiment and Islamophobia persist, its generous refugee policy not only reveals that policy aligns with public opinion, but also just how far Germany as a whole has moved towards becoming a welcoming immigrant and multicultural nation.

The U.K.

The policy actions of the U.K. are similar to those of the U.S. rather than Germany. However, whereas the U.S. strategic narrative fluctuates with the actions of Obama, Trump, and Biden, the U.K. strategic narrative is based on political actors who manipulate the latent feelings and sentiments accumulated by the U.K. public throughout the years. Although Germany is similarly going through a transition in terms of foreign policy stances, the U.K. ends up with a reverse set of policies. However, their policies still line up with public opinion, which goes to show how Germany and the U.K. are experiencing very different public sentiments that are leading to a divergent set of policies. More importantly, given that these two European countries would come to such different policy conclusions reveals just how much political actors look to public opinion to make their policy decisions.

Although the U.K. generously offered its Commonwealth citizens full political rights from the day they arrived post-World War II, paving the way for the rise of multiculturalism in the U.K., the aim was really to cement Britain's political status at the heart of an open and integrated Commonwealth of former imperial status. In other words, the aim was not to welcome non-White migrants but rather to maintain close relations with white colonial settler societies, namely Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. This display of openness in policy was not felt throughout the public. Hence, despite the acceptance of colored migrants from India and Pakistan due to the nationality act and the path to permanent citizenship, the public sentiment at the time was not as welcoming as the policy might display.

Fast forward to 2004, a turning point for the U.K. in that ethnocentric anxieties suddenly found a source of discontentment – namely EU membership because it allowed uncontrolled immigration. Notably, this coincided with Germany’s declaration that it was an immigrant country in 2005, after a history of arguing for the preservation of its German culture and ethnicity. Eventually, the issue of unregulated immigration from the EU became a platform political entrepreneurs jumped on and utilized to gain support.

In 2015, during the height of the Syrian refugee crisis, it was right-wing political parties like UKIP and the Leave EU campaign that centralized ethnocentric anxieties. They claimed that continued EU membership would embroil the U.K. in the European refugee crisis, and that the arrival of criminal or extremist elements among the refugee population would threaten British security. The infamous poster of Syrian refugees massing on the Slovenian border sent the message that continued EU membership would leave Britain open to a tidal wave of refugee migration (see Figure 35).

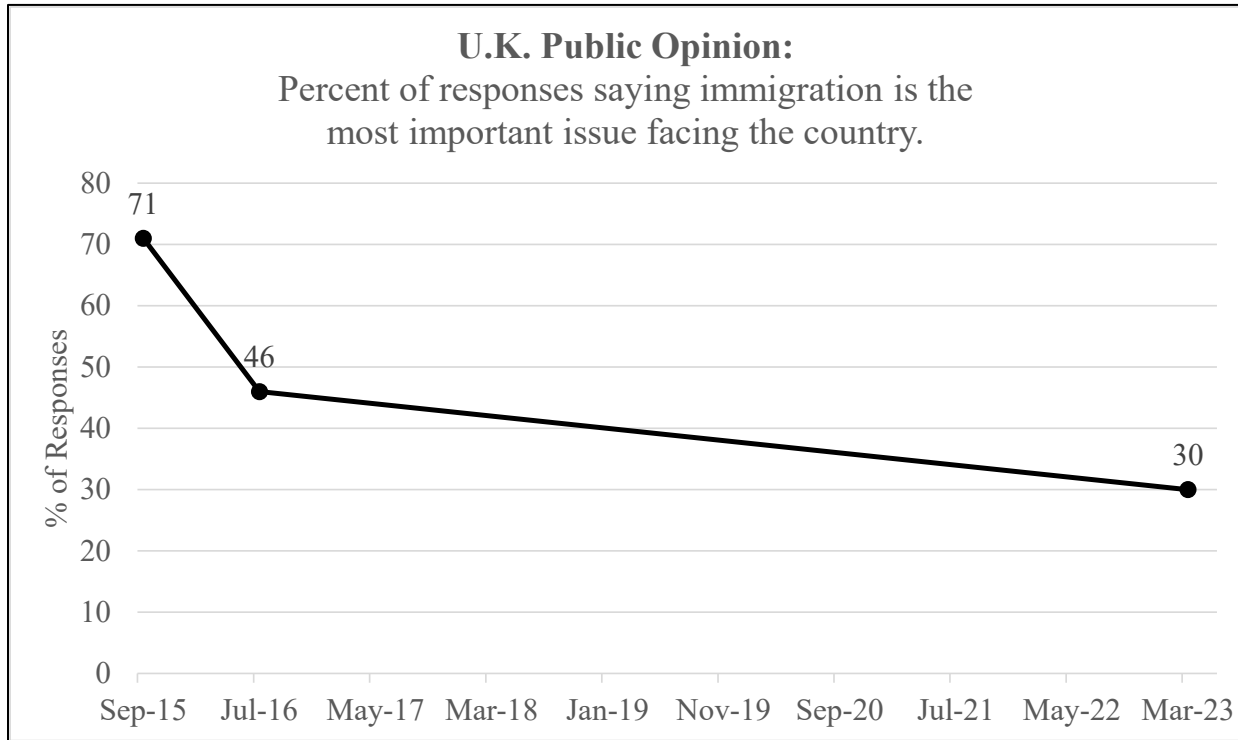
Figure 35



Source: “Breaking Point: The EU has failed us all” UKIP Leave EU campaign poster (2016)

Given this negative publicity surrounding Syrian refugees, 71% of the public viewed immigration as the most important issue facing the country in September 2015 (see Figure 36).

Figure 36



Source (data): Yougov (2015-2023)

Ironically, it must be noted that U.K. policy at the time would not have allowed this type of mass immigration of Syrian refugees that the Leave EU campaign described. Policy at the time allowed only 20,000 Syrian refugees over five years, which is equivalent to a cap of 4,000 refugees per year. However, political actors like the Leave EU campaign purposefully activated latent ethnocentric anxieties through their anti-refugee platform in order to gain support.

Hence, when we consider the Brexit vote in 2016, “it was not the economy, stupid” (Sobolewska and Ford, 2020, p. 232). It was identity politics, history, and strategic political tactics using misinformation that overwhelmed basic logic. While the latent potential for identity conflicts can build up in similar ways in different countries, its political expression can and will diverge depending on their history and the choices made by their politicians. In the U.K.’s case, right-wing political actors made the choice to use identity politics to their advantage.

To drive home the point that the public anti-refugee sentiment was a result of political entrepreneurs who were using the refugee crisis to stir ethnocentric anxieties, we see in Figure 36 above how once the Brexit vote was over and campaigns around uncontrolled immigration faded, only 46% of the public viewed immigration as the most important issue facing the country in July 2016, falling even lower to 30% in March 2023. Clearly, UKIP and the Leave EU campaign were right to use immigration as a platform to run on, and when the entire campaign was over, immigration was no longer a salient issue fed to the public. Hence, whereas Germany ultimately opened its door to Syrian refugees in 2015 with a sustainable level of public support, the U.K. saw itself completely shut its doors in a most aggressive manner with the vote to leave the EU.

In terms of military engagement in Syria, the U.K. has aligned itself with the U.S., similarly deploying troops to Syria and framing it as a war on terror. This further creates suspicion around the Syrian refugees, hence justifying the lack of refugee acceptance. Simultaneously, the act of deploying troops signals sufficient government action in response to the Syrian Civil War. This relationship between refugee acceptance and military engagement is well-reflected in public opinion. When we look at Figure 20, we see that as the Syrian War went on, support for military action increases, especially after the war was framed around the war on terror, while favorability towards Syrian refugees decreases from unfavorable (40%) in 2014 to extremely unfavorable (19%) in 2016. This makes sense in the context of the fear of terrorists gaining entry through the refugee admissions process and the 2016 Leave EU campaign that heightened ethnocentric anxieties. We see that just like in the U.S. and Germany, after the Syrian civil war became framed about the fight against terrorism, support for military action increases (see Figure 8).

Turning to the Ukrainian war in 2022, we see how there is a high level of favorability towards Ukrainian refugees and low favorability towards troop deployment (see Figure 21). However, there is a consistent favorable attitude towards sending arms to Ukraine, which goes to show how although favorability towards troop deployment is not strong due to nuclear deterrence, there is still a strong desire to aid Ukraine militarily in other ways.

Policy actions closely followed public opinion, with then Prime Minister Johnson pledging that more than 200,000 Ukrainians would be welcomed in the U.K., and the U.K. establishing a Homes for Ukraine scheme. This is more than ten times the number of Syrian

refugees the U.K. had prepared to receive in 2015, which goes to show how in forming their strategic narrative, political actors are able to amplify parts of public opinion if it is favorable to do so. In the case of Syria, anti-refugee sentiment was amplified for the purpose of gaining support for the Leave EU campaign, and the rise of ISIS and the war on terror was amplified to justify troop deployment.

The strategy around Ukraine is more nuanced. On one hand, political actors such as current Prime Minister Sunak and the U.K. Parliament support Ukraine because their policy actions seek to match public opinion. On the other hand, the feasible policies for the government, namely accepting refugees and sending arms but refraining from troop deployment, are extremely popular, and more importantly, doable. Thus, one should recognize that if the political actors support Ukraine, they will always be on the favorable side. Hence, in a way, the war in Ukraine provides the perfect backdrop for the U.K. (as well as the U.S. and Germany) to show their support very publicly for Zelensky while not damaging their public favorability. The significance of Zelensky speaking in front of the U.K. Parliament suddenly has more meaning than purely supporting Ukraine. The U.K. government and political actors may strategically utilize Zelensky and his own words to maintain support for a platform in which they will be on the favorable side of. By showing the public they are acting in line with their beliefs, they in turn bring themselves support.

This is a double-edged sword for Zelensky, who should be aware that although the world has aligned itself with Ukraine, his troops are still quite lonely on the battlefield, and more should be done to end war in Ukraine. Moreover, given the tradeoff between refugee acceptance and military engagement, Zelensky should realize that because Ukrainian refugees are so welcome abroad there is less urgency to support Ukraine militarily. Performative actions are for the world stage, which may be far from what is needed in reality.

XII. Significance and Implications

There are different implications for many stakeholders, from the refugee populations who suffer from war to the countries who seek international support to the responding countries themselves who create strategic narratives in order to gain domestic support for their political agendas.

Refugee Populations

Refugee acceptance is humanitarian aid. Differential treatment of refugees from distinct sending countries reveals underlying biases. Pinpointing these biases allows us to combat the issue of differential treatment more effectively and improve humanitarian aid methods. In other words, understanding what makes certain refugee populations to be accepted more can allow us to uncover the inherent biases the U.S. and Europe hold. Combatting these biases and presenting the heart of the refugee crisis as a humanitarian crisis may allow equitable distribution of aid to be displayed in concrete actions rather than just ideals. In the cases of Syria and Ukraine, it is clear that cultural factors, namely anti-Muslim sentiment and Islamophobia, led to the preference for Ukrainian refugees over Syrian refugees. As shown in public opinion polls, people often associate Muslims with terrorism, and this needs to be changed.

Change does not necessarily mean it needs to be on paper. It is clear at this point how public opinion is factored into the strategic narratives of politicians. Since public opinion stems from the thoughts and beliefs of individuals, change should also come from those thoughts and beliefs. The recently released movie, “The Swimmers,” tells the true story of Syrian refugees who escaped the war and went on to compete at the 2016 Rio Olympics (Syed, 2022). It is significant because Syrian refugees are depicted as human beings with dreams and lives, just like everyone else. More mainstream media should follow this example to depict Syrian refugees as a population no longer defined as Muslim terrorists. Humanitarian aid will reach the refugees who need it most and in an equitable manner only when the thoughts and beliefs of the public change.

Conflict-Prone Countries

Given that international responses stem from domestic public attitudes, conflict-prone countries seeking international support should move towards strategies that will earn them favorable public opinion abroad. They can learn from both the successful rallying of support for

Ukraine through the symbol of Zelensky and the failure of the Syrian rebels to do so. They must learn how to fit themselves into the strategic narratives of the U.S. and Europe in a way that serves their best interest.

Taiwan, whose situation with China draws many parallels to the Ukraine-Russia conflict, needs to present itself as culturally close to the U.S. and legitimize itself as an independent nation to maintain the support of the U.S. public, and resultingly, U.S. foreign policy. Meanwhile, the ongoing civil war in the Central African Republic draws parallels to the Syrian Civil War. Their rebels similarly lack a symbol for the international public to rally around. To break out of their civil war, the rebel groups must show that they are worthy of international support, whether it is through appeals to the extreme humanitarian crisis or by providing a strong alternative to the existing government.

However, we also note that rallying too much support may not yield the desired result if the responding countries are using the war as a platform for their own interests that supersede the interests of the country at war. We see that because support for Ukraine is so favorable, political actors have made it a platform to run their campaigns on. This risks prolonging the war if political actors find it strategically useful, though not morally so, to have a war abroad where they can always remain on the favorable side of in the public's view. Hence, conflict-prone countries should be wary that international support may not be entirely positive if the interests of foreign nations take advantage of their plight rather than help them solve it.

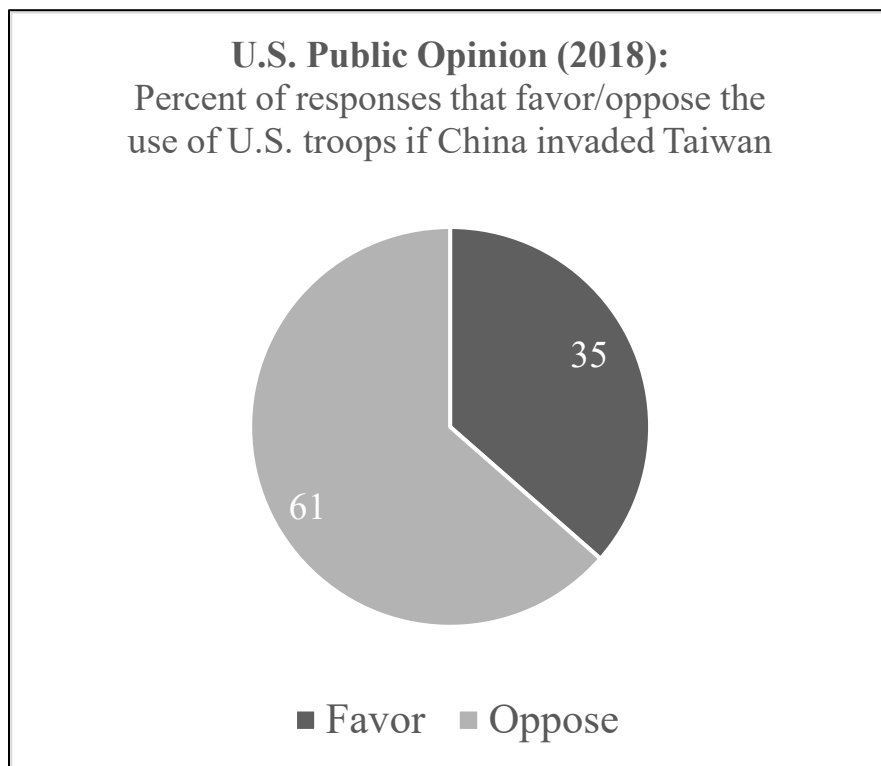
Responding Countries

As for responding countries like the U.S., Germany, and the U.K., we see how policy actions are constrained by public opinion, implying that for each government to garner support for their policies, they must craft strategic narratives that the public can believe in. However, as the previous point mentions, the responding countries must refrain from letting their strategic goals dilute their moral obligation to aid other countries and bring peace rather than prolong the conflict.

Consider a U.S. response to a potential China-Taiwan war. The U.S. government knows that to engage militarily, it needs an agreeable reason. Obama initially did not send troops to Syria when the reason was to overthrow Assad, whom the public did not find justifiable to attack. Recently, President Biden stated that the U.S. will intervene militarily to defend Taiwan

(Brunnstrom and Hunnicut, 2022). However, public opinion data show that almost twice as many people disfavor than favor a U.S. military intervention in a China-Taiwan conflict (see Figure 37). Given that public opinion and policy align with each other in the cases of Ukraine and Syria, the U.S. clearly needs to make it justifiable to the public if it decides to intervene in Taiwan. We see this strategic narrative forming already. Pelosi’s 2022 visit to Taiwan signaled who the U.S. government sides with in order to promote support for Taiwan. Moreover, the current talk over Tsai Ing-Wen’s planned visit to the U.S. is another strategic move that Taiwan is adding to the narrative. As NPR discusses, this gives Taiwan more diplomatic weight (Feng, 2023). Thus, we may see further provocations in the future because the US government knows that if it wants to engage militarily, it needs to increase public support. Hence, the U.S. will act accordingly to achieve that goal in order to avoid future actions that near political suicide. This is part of creating its strategic narrative and ensuring their actions will have the necessary support.

Figure 37



Source (data): The Chicago Council on Global Affairs survey data from the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research (2018)

XIII. Research Limitations and Areas of Future Research

We focus on the most salient policy decisions made by each government of the three responding countries rather than actions taken by other domestic actors like asylee/refugee processing centers or the military. Although all actions have a significant impact on the outcome of the policy decisions, what is enacted by these bureaucratic departments does not necessarily fit the policy intent perfectly. Because we seek to show the impact of domestic support on international issues, and foreign policy decisions follow public opinion, we disregard actions taken by other domestic actors.

We also suggest that an inverse relationship may exist between the two policy choices of refugee acceptance and military engagement, with the reasons being that these two policies are connected via a larger left-right belief system and when one of the policy options is not feasible, the other policy option is exercised to signal action. We do not prove a direct relationship though. More studies should be done to see if this inverse relationship exists in responses to wars in general, not just towards the wars in Syria and Ukraine.

Another note to make is that this paper focuses on three democratic countries where political actors who make the policy decisions are dependent on public support to remain in office. Hence, this paper assumes that political actors craft strategic narratives for the ultimate goal of increasing public support for themselves and their platform. More research should be done to investigate whether this inverse relationship is exhibited in the responses of non-democratic countries.

XIV. Conclusion

To conclude, this paper finds that the public responses from the U.S. and Europe towards the wars in Syria and Ukraine are a continuation of their unique histories and cultural biases rather than a deviation from their past. Their corresponding policy responses are part of each responding governments' strategic narrative that seeks to maintain and increase popular support. Moreover, there exists an inverse relationship reflecting the delicate balance between these two foreign policies, which can be attributed to a structured belief system that policymakers follow when making their policy choices based on public opinion. These findings are significant because they hold different implications for many stakeholders, from the refugee populations who suffer from war, to the countries who seek international support, to the responding countries

themselves who create strategic narratives in seeking domestic support for their political agendas. Our findings from the Ukrainian and Syrian wars can be potentially used to predict what might occur in a potential China-Taiwan conflict. Recently, Biden has stated that the U.S. will intervene militarily to defend Taiwan. However, recent public opinion data show that almost twice as many people disfavor than favor a U.S. military intervention in a China-Taiwan conflict. Given that public opinion and policy aligned with each other in the cases of Ukraine and Syria, one can ponder whether public opinion will influence policy or vice versa in the case of China and Taiwan.

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