

# The Geopolitics of Repressions

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# Outline

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Motivation

Literature Review

Theoretical Expectations

Historical Background

Data

Methodology

Results

Conclusion

## Soviet Union, 1920s - inclusion of minorities

- Individuals from ethnic minorities promoted to leadership positions
- The languages and culture of minorities supported (Martin, 2001)

## Soviet Union, 1930s - repression

- Mass arrests and deportations targeted at ethnic minorities
- Over 240,000 people executed just in the NKVD's National Campaigns of 1937-1938 alone (Martin, 1998, p. 855)

# Motivation

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- What caused this sharp reversal in Soviet policy towards its minorities?
- Why states sometimes choose to accommodate or assimilate its ethnic minorities but repress them in other cases?

## Literature Review

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- Role of institutions (Davenport, 2007) and economic shocks (Blaydes, 2018)
- Cultural distance, legibility of an ethnic group (Blaydes, 2018)
- States with many ethnic groups more likely to repress demands for autonomy due to precedent setting (Evera, 1994; Toft, 2005; Walter, 2009)

## Theoretical Expectations

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- Mylonas (2013) and Butt (2017) highlight importance of geopolitical factors
- If a minority has ethnic ties to an external power which is
  - an **ally** to the host state, repression is **less** likely since that could jeopardize the alliance
  - an **enemy**, repression is **more** likely because the minority is viewed as a potential ‘fifth column’

# Historical Background

- We test these hypotheses on the case of German minority in the USSR

## Main phases in Soviet-German relations

- Neutrality (1921-1933)
- Hostilities (1933-1939)
- Non-aggression pact (1939-1941)
- War (1941-1945)
- Post-war period (after 1945)

## Data

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- Data on Soviet repressions come from database of Russian NGO Memorial
- More than 2 million records of individual arrests by the Soviet secret police mostly from archival sources
- 38 ethnic groups, years from 1921 to 1960
- Large fraction of observations with missing ethnicity and date of arrest
  - Imputation of ethnicity based on names using Naive Bayes classifier [▶ more](#)
  - Imputation of date of arrest based on date of trial [▶ more](#)

# Difference-in-differences

- Dynamic difference-in-differences model with ethnicity and year fixed effects
- Identifying assumption - parallel trends
  - $\beta_k$  for  $k < 1933$  can help assess its plausibility

$$\log(1 + y_{it}) = \sum_{k=1922}^{1960} \beta_k \text{German}_i \cdot \text{Year}_t^k + \lambda_t + a_i + \text{Relations}_{it} + u_{it}$$

# Synthetic Control Method

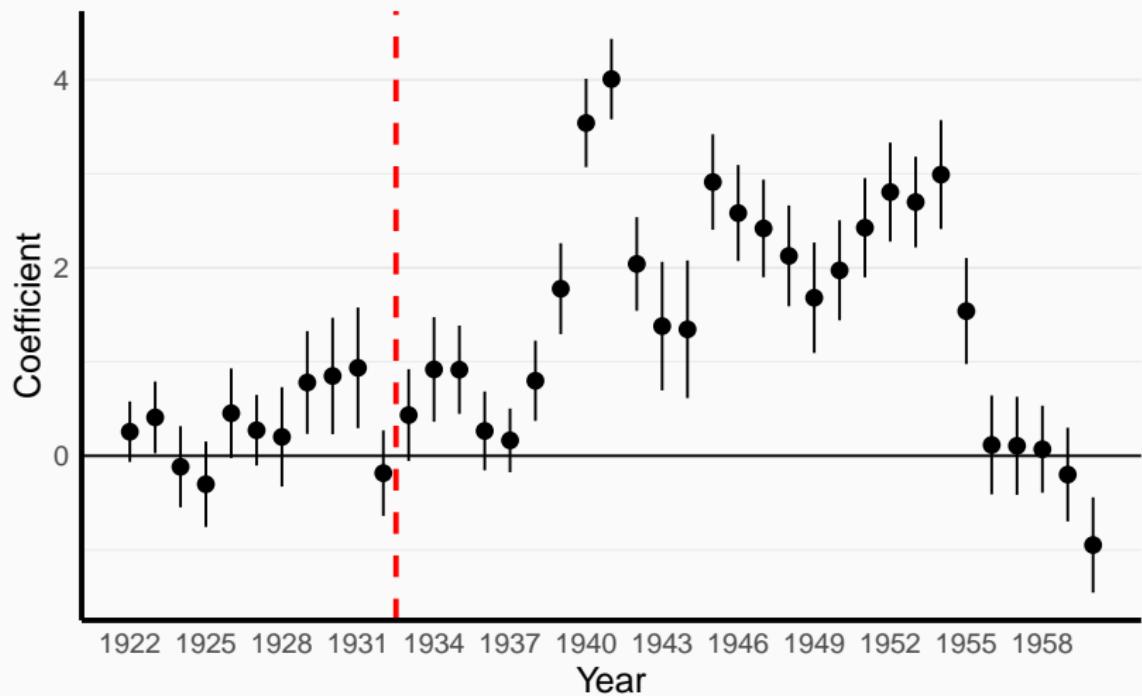
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- Synthetic version of the treated unit is constructed as a convex combination of the control units based on matching of pre-treatment outcomes and other covariates
- The treatment effect is estimated as a difference between the actual values and the synthetic control
- Significance is assessed with placebo tests (applying the same procedure to control units)

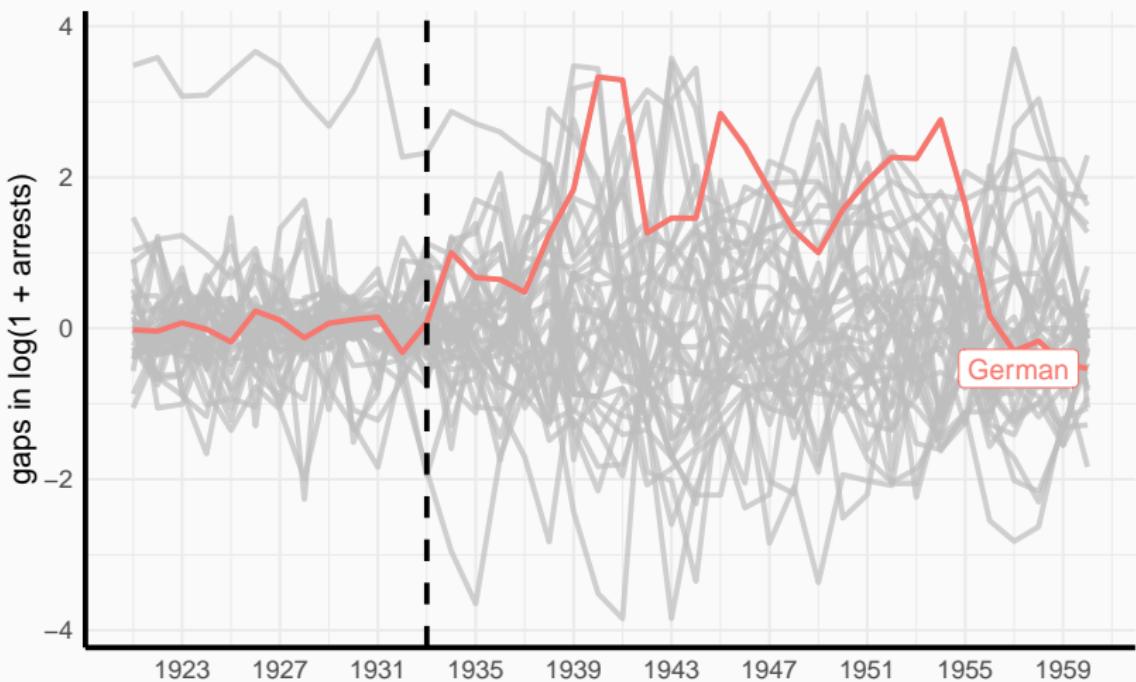
## Results

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# Difference-in-differences



# Synthetic Control Method



# Difference-in-differences - Robustness Checks

- Only ethnic groups without independent state [▶ here](#)
- Only rehabilitated individuals [▶ here](#)
- Only arrests from 250 km border frontier [▶ here](#)
- Only arrests outside 250 km border frontier [▶ here](#)
- Ethnicity-specific time trends [▶ here](#)
- Different ethnicity imputation adjustments (none, parsimonious, full matrix) [▶ here](#)
- Stata standard errors [▶ here](#)
- Different base years
  - The whole pre-treatment period (1921-1932) omitted [▶ here](#)
  - Years 1921-1926 omitted [▶ here](#)

# Synthetic Control - Robustness Checks

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- Mean of the outcome used as a predictor (instead of all pre-treatment outcomes) [▶ here](#)
- Only ethnic groups without independent state [▶ here](#)
- Only rehabilitated individuals [▶ here](#)
- Only arrests from 250 km border frontier [▶ here](#)
- Only arrests outside 250 km border frontier [▶ here](#)

# Conclusion

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- Large and significant increase in repressions with war
- Strong persistence of the effect of war (nearly 10 years)
  - Difficult to explain only by geopolitical concerns of the state
  - Consistent with desire for collective punishment of Germans for war

## References i

-  Blaydes, Lisa (2018) *State of Repression: Iraq under Saddam Hussein*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
-  Butt, Ahsan I. (2017) *Secession and Security: Explaining State Strategy against Separatists*, 1 edition, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
-  Davenport, Christian (2007) *State Repression and the Domestic Democratic Peace*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
-  Evera, Stephen Van (1994) 'Hypotheses on Nationalism and War', *International Security* 18 (4), pp. 5–39.

## References ii

-  Martin, Terry (1998) 'The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing', *The Journal of Modern History* 70 (4), pp. 813–861, DOI: 10.1086/235168.
-  Martin, Terry (2001) *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.
-  Mylonas, Harris (2013) *The Politics of Nation-Building: Making Co-Nationals, Refugees, and Minorities*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

-  Toft, Monica Duffy (2005) *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
-  Walter, Barbara F. (2009) *Reputation and Civil War: Why Separatist Conflicts Are So Violent*, 1 edition, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

# Additional Analyses

- Map of German population in the USSR [▶ here](#)
- No imputation of date of arrest [▶ DiD](#) [▶ SCM](#)
- Considering only western border areas
  - Only arrests from western border areas [▶ DiD](#) [▶ SCM](#)
  - Arrests from western border areas excluded [▶ DiD](#) [▶ SCM](#)

# Replication

The R scripts and the LaTeX source codes of the thesis manuscript are available at:

[https://github.com/martin-kosiik/  
Geopolitics-of-Repressions](https://github.com/martin-kosiik/Geopolitics-of-Repressions)

The Beamer source code for this presentation itself are available at:

[https://github.com/martin-kosiik/  
presentation-geopolitics-of-repressions](https://github.com/martin-kosiik/presentation-geopolitics-of-repressions)

# Ethnicity imputation

- Let  $\mathbf{x} = (x_1, x_2, x_3)$  be person's first, last, and patronymic names
- Assuming conditional independence, we can express probability that a person has ethnicity  $E_k$  given his names as:

$$p(E_k | \mathbf{x}) = \frac{p(E_k) p(\mathbf{x} | E_k)}{p(\mathbf{x})}$$

- Naive Bayes classifier chooses ethnicity with the highest posterior probability as its prediction

# Ethnicity Imputation Adjustments

- The accuracy of model's predictions differs substantially by ethnicity
- To address this, we apply adjustments to the predictions
  - Parsimonious:

$$P_{it} = \alpha_i R_{it} + (N_t - R_{it}) \cdot (1 - \beta_i)$$

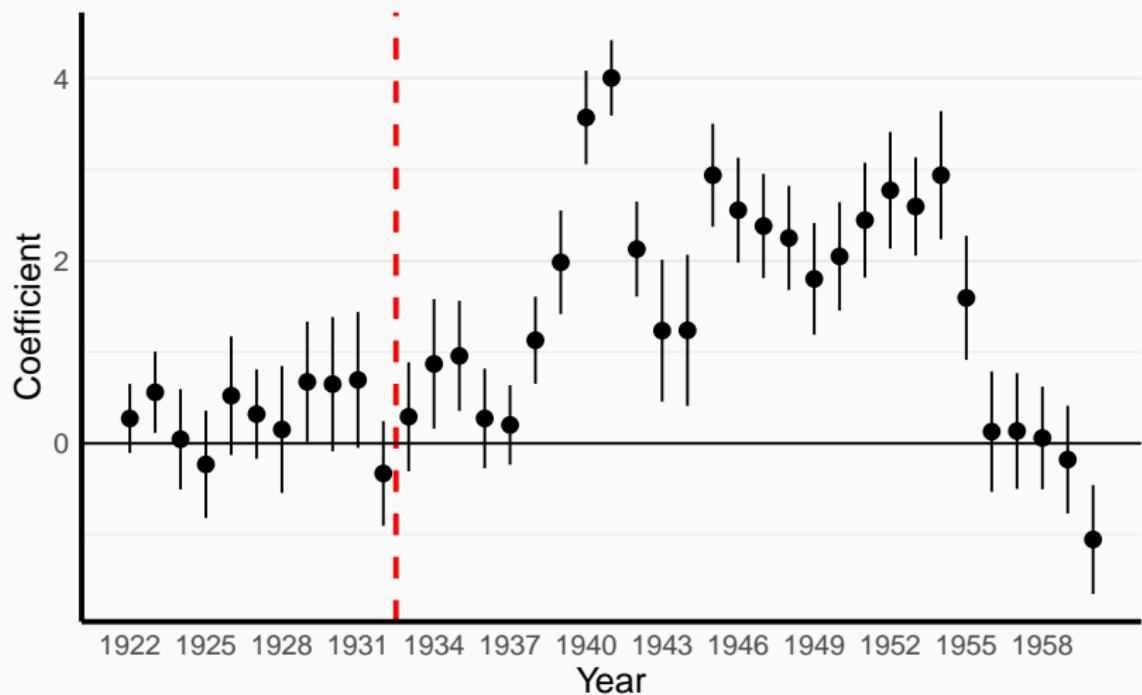
- Full (confusion) matrix:

$$P_{it} = \sum_{j=1}^K b_{ij} R_{jt} \quad i = 1, \dots, K$$

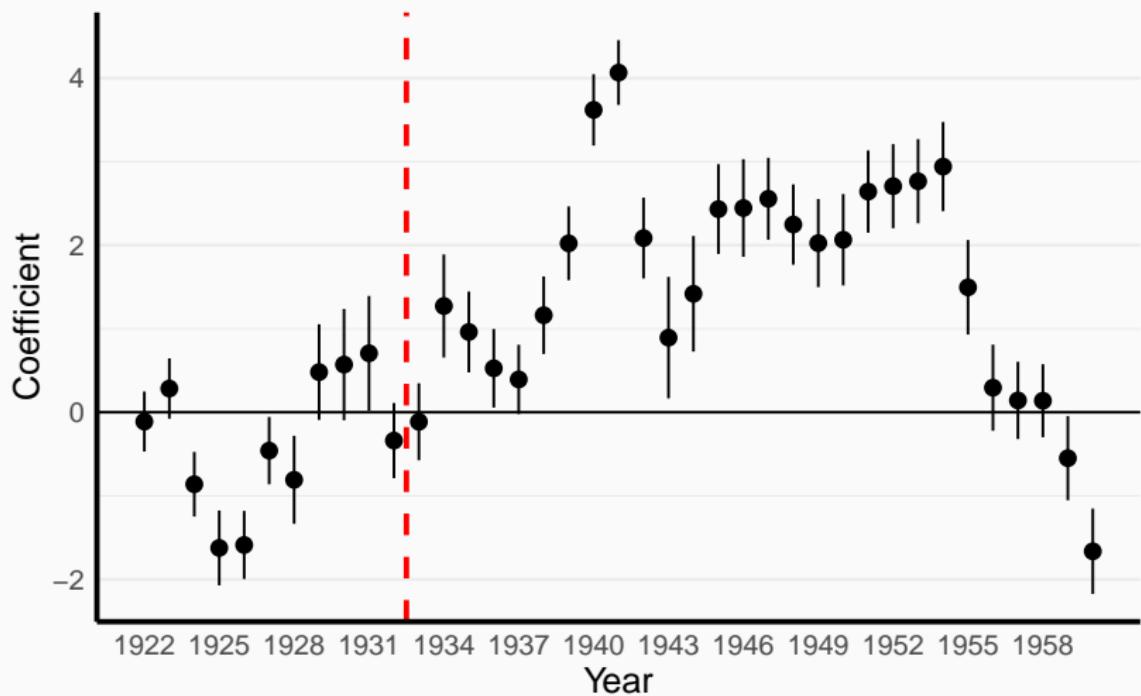
# Imputing Missing Date of Arrest

- Date of arrest is missing for 1 650 912 observations
  - For 903 49 of them, date of trial is available - we use it for imputation
- We model number of days between date of arrest and trial ( $y$ ) in two-stages:
  1. Logit to predict whether  $y = 0$  (arrest and trial happening on the same day)
  2. Log-linear regression on the subset of the data for which  $y > 0$

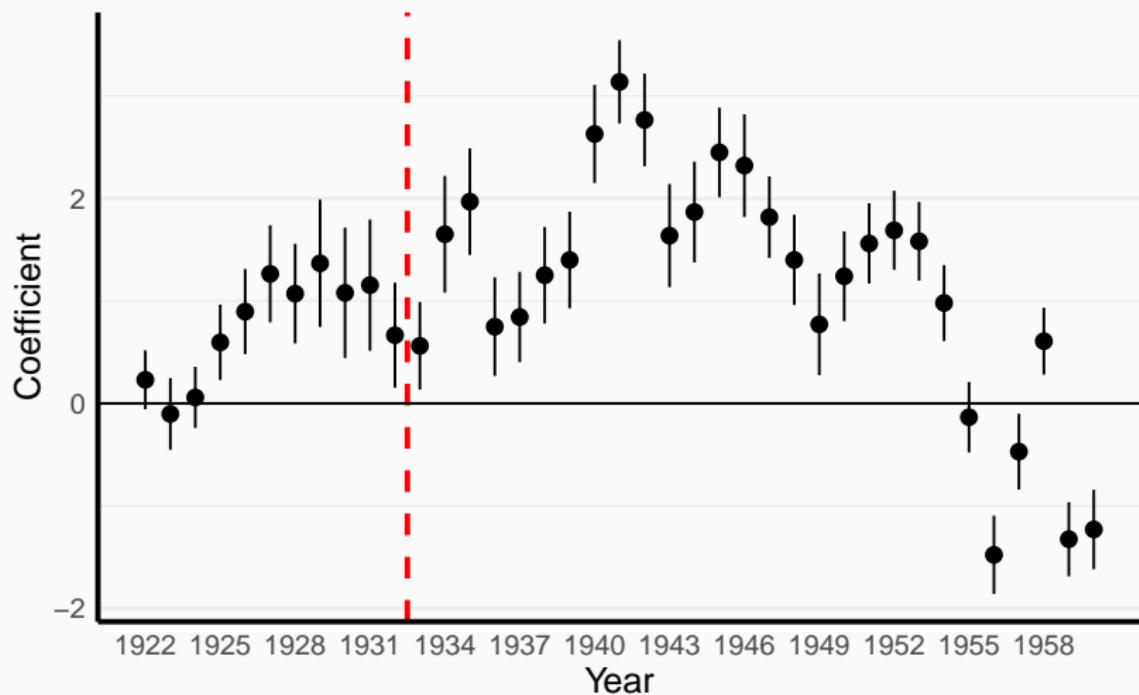
## DiD - Only Ethnicities without Independent State



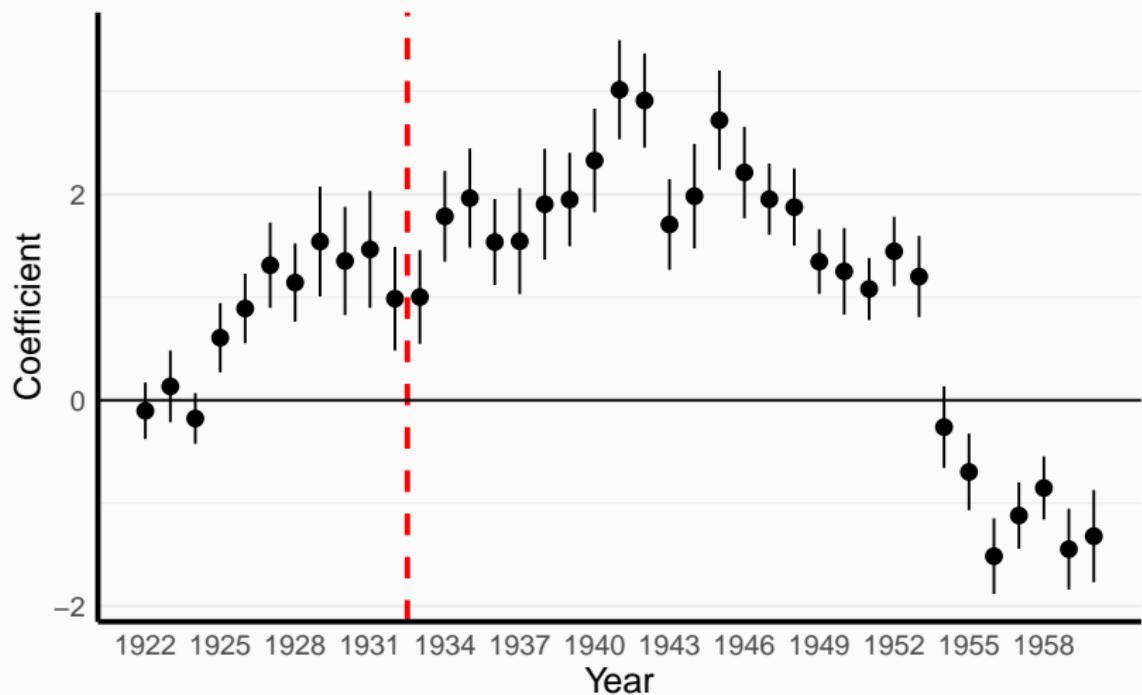
## DiD - Only Rehabilitated Individuals



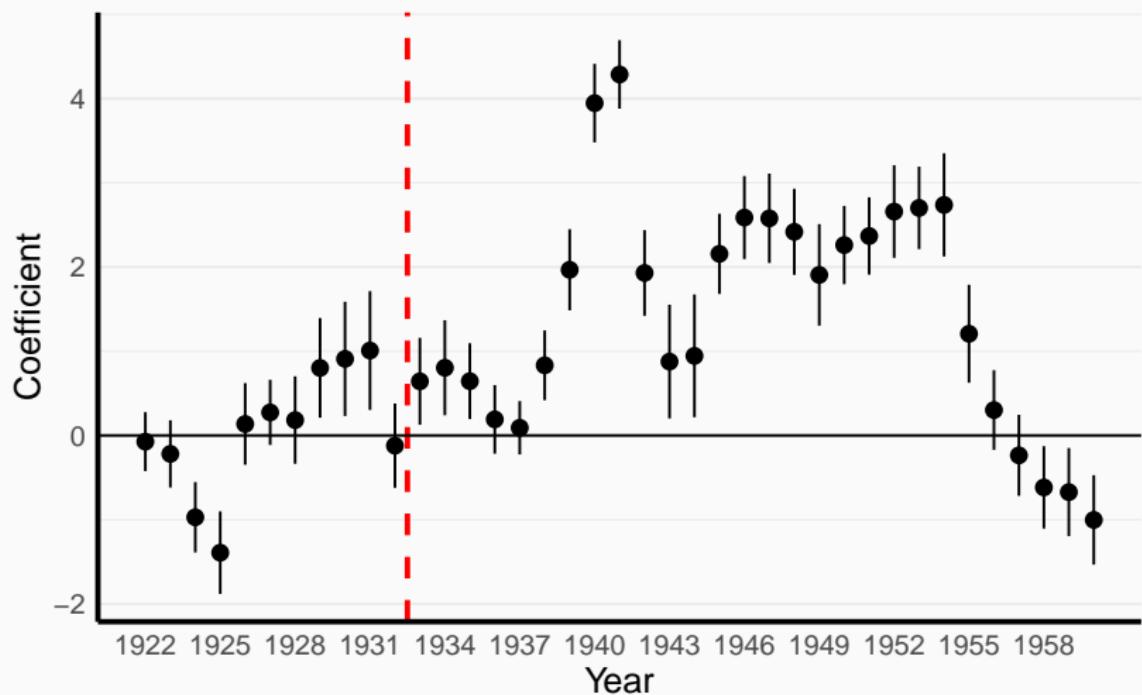
## DiD - Only arrests from Border Areas



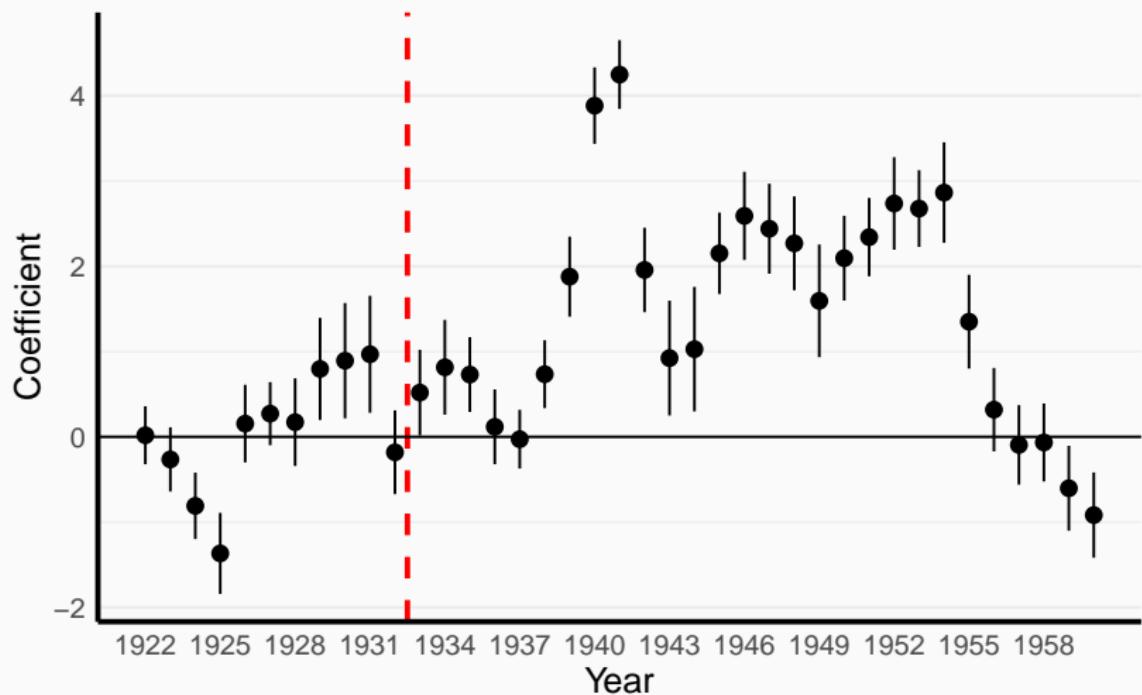
## DiD - Only arrests from Western Border Areas



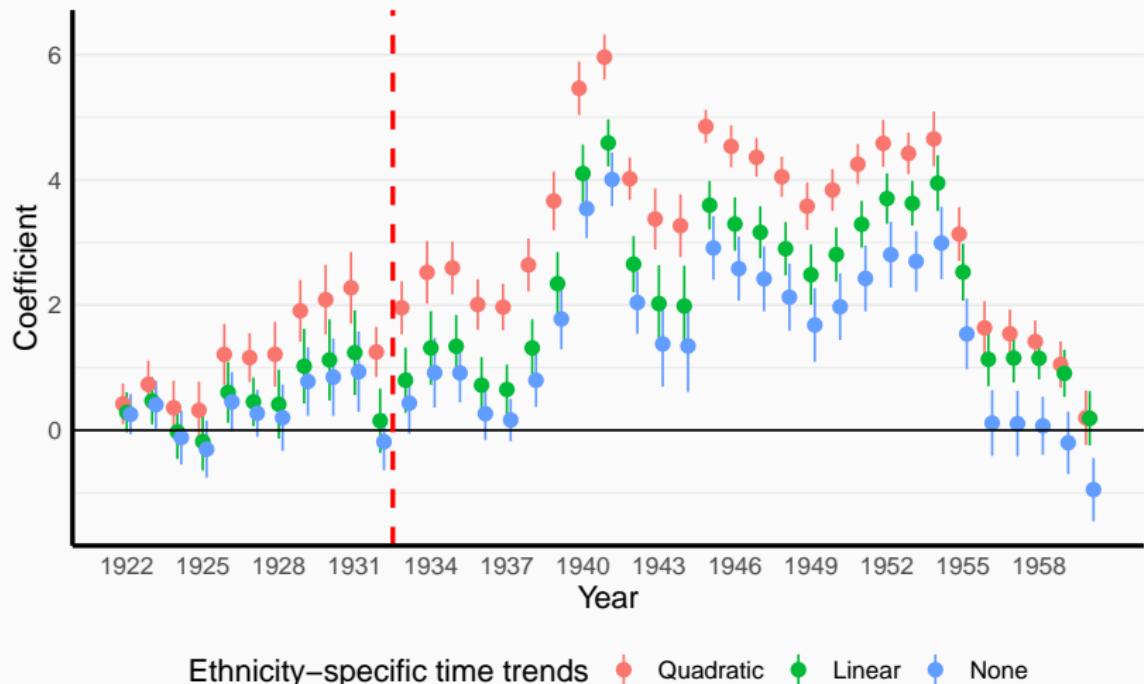
# DiD - Arrests from Border Areas Excluded



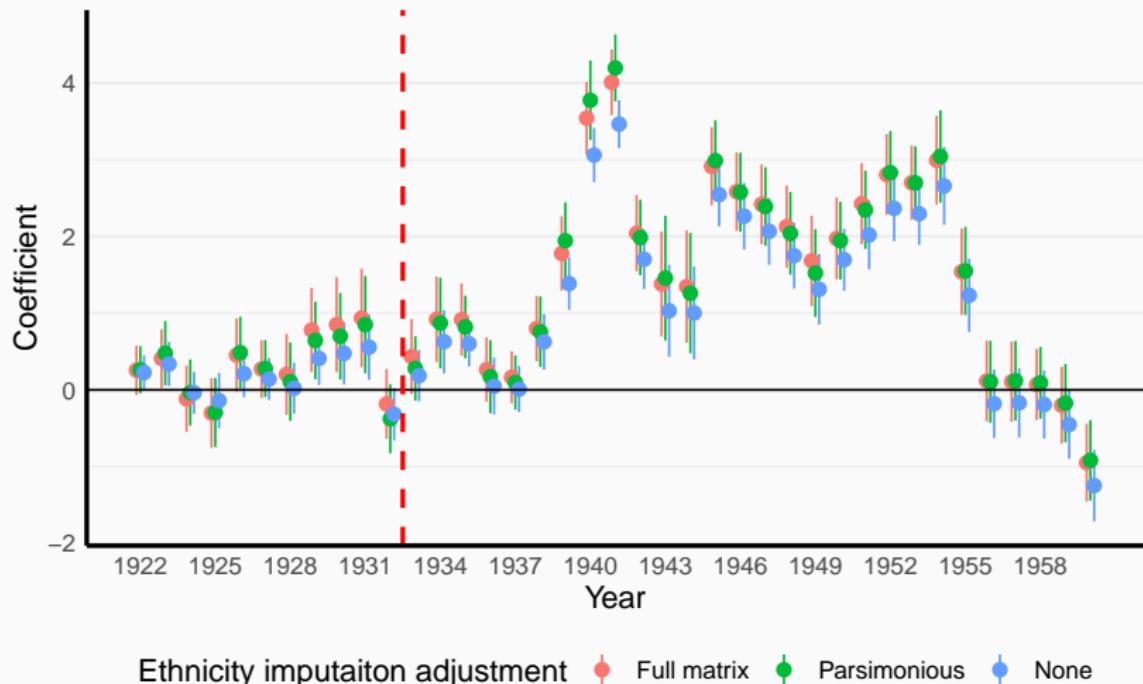
# DiD - Arrests from Western Border Areas Excluded



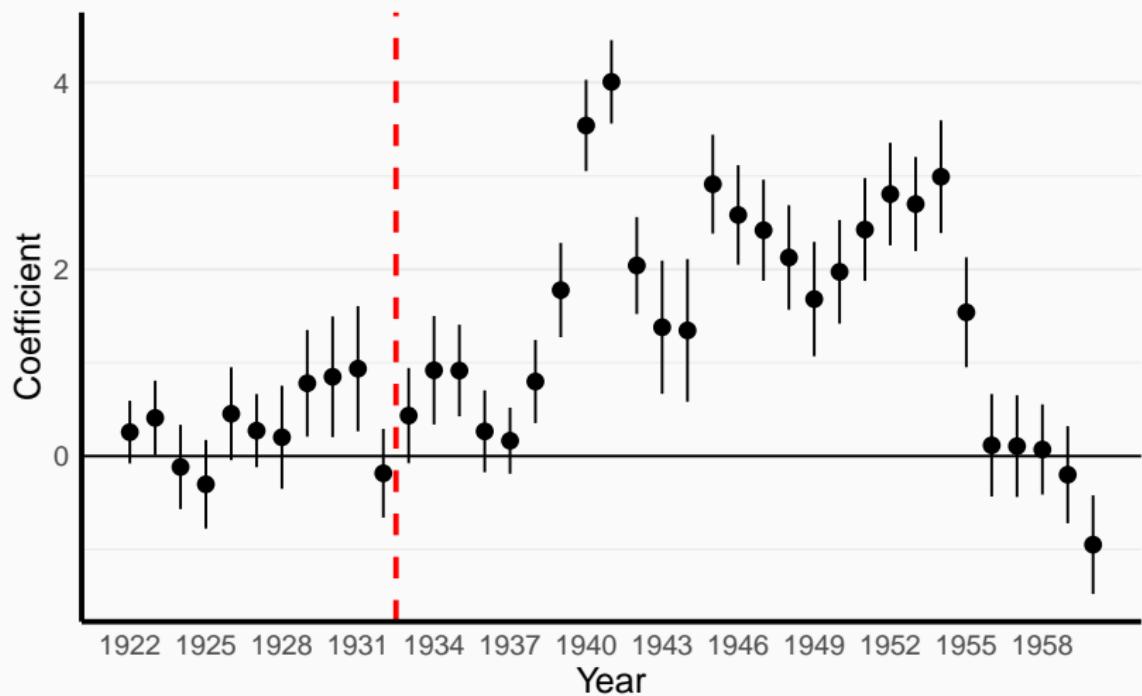
# DiD - Ethnicity-specific time trends



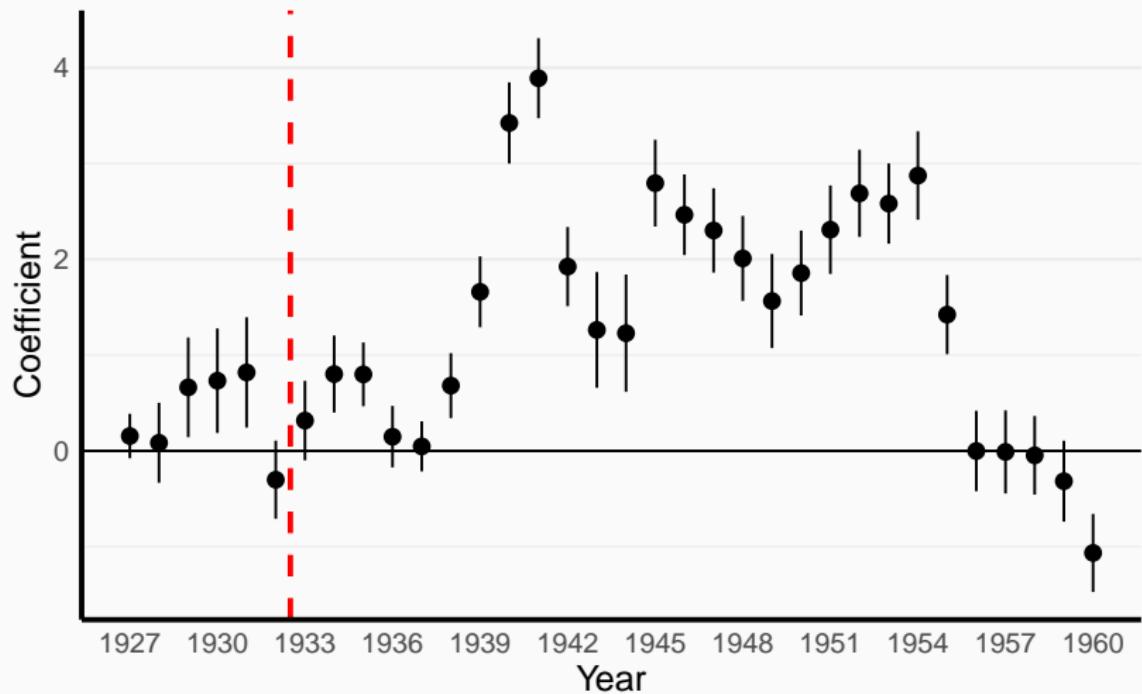
# DiD - Different Ethnicity Imputation Adjustments



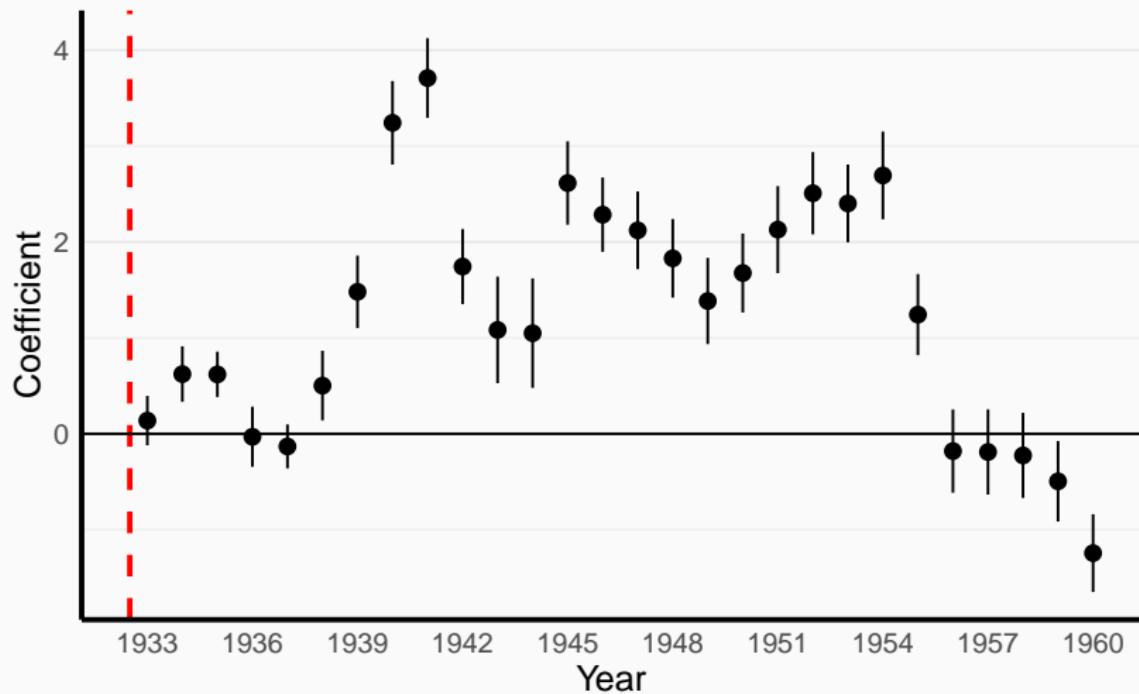
## DiD - Stata Standard Errors



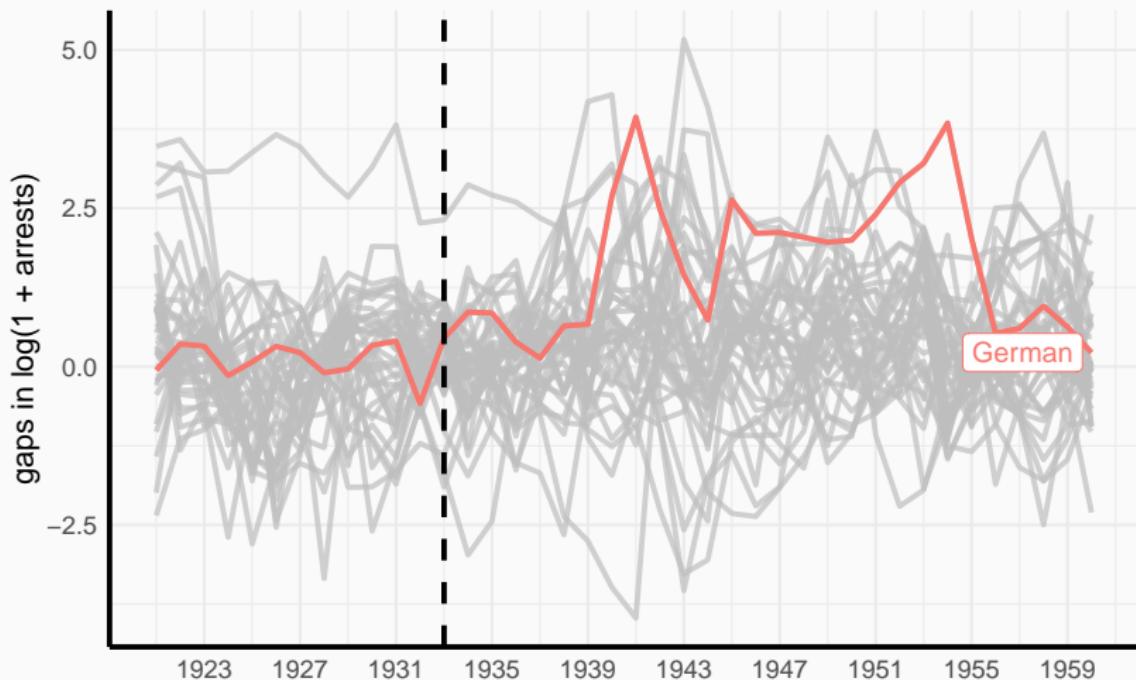
# DiD - From 1927



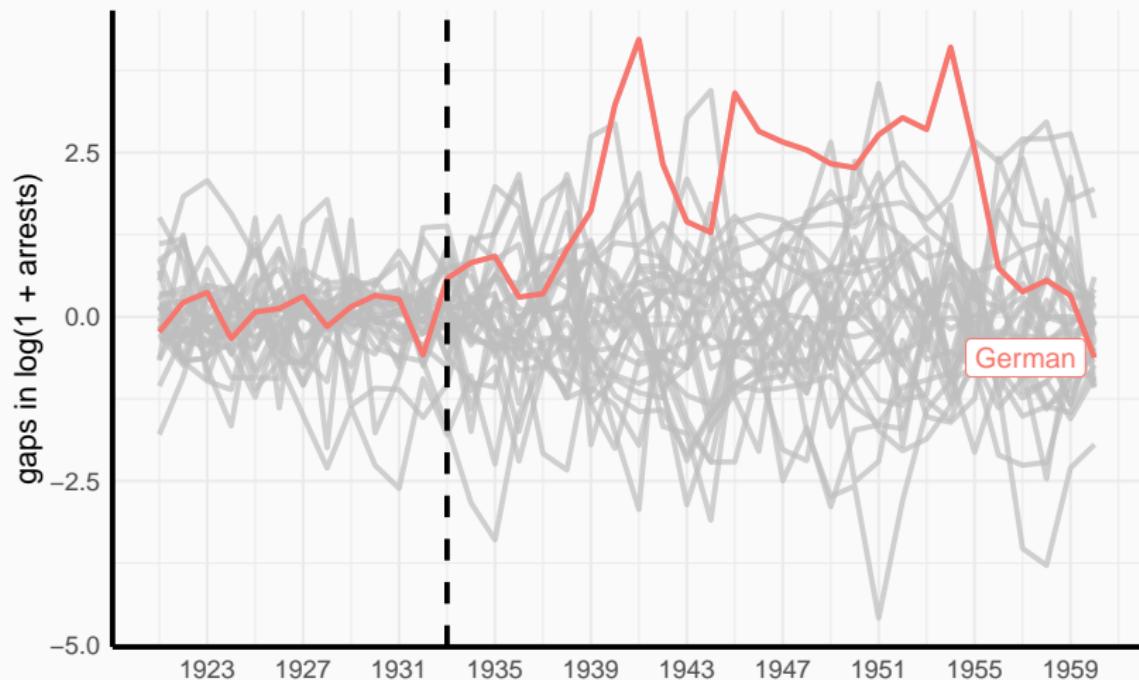
# DiD - From 1933



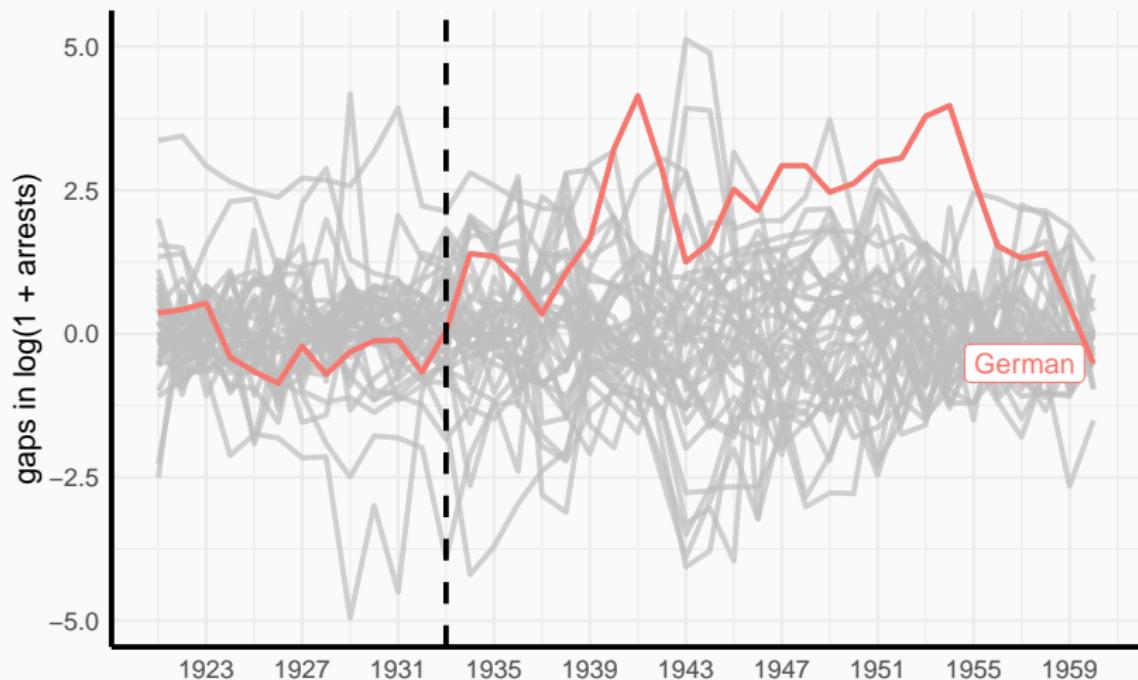
# SCM - Mean of the Outcome as a Predictor



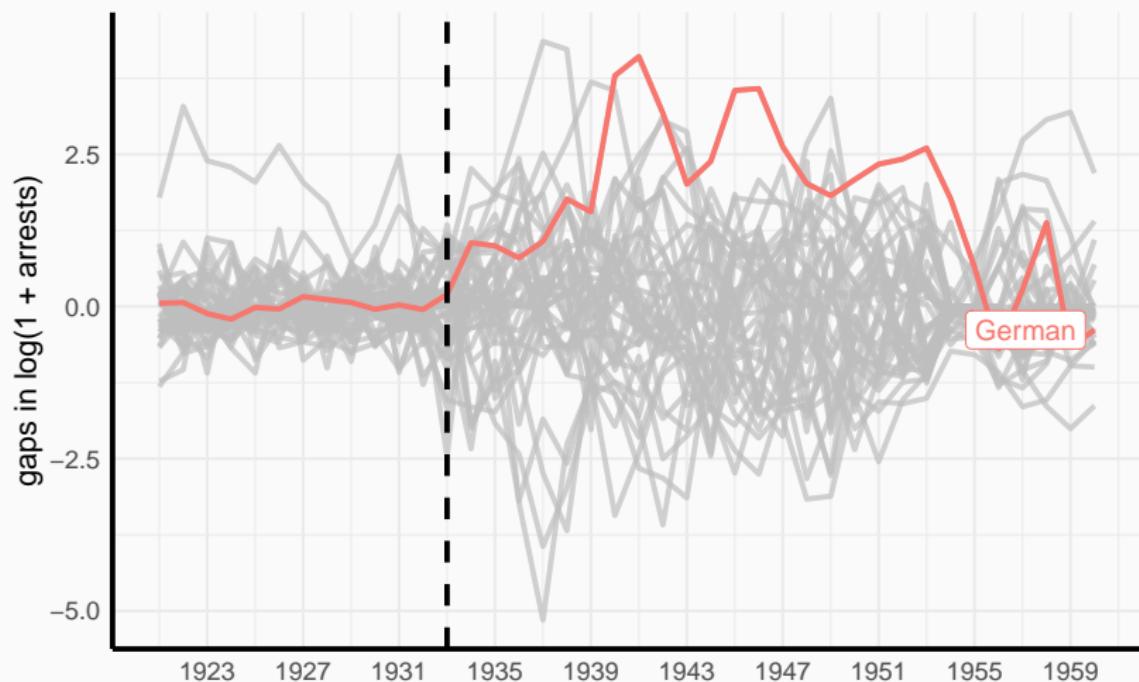
# SCM - Only Ethnicities without Independent State



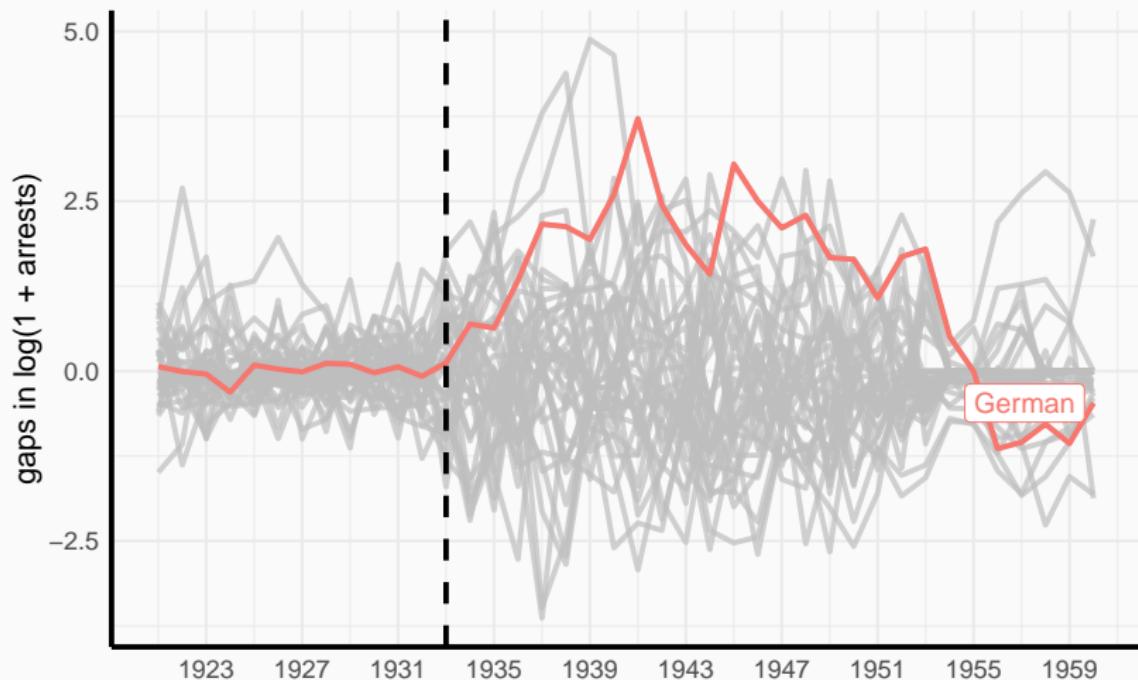
# SCM - Only Rehabilitated Individuals



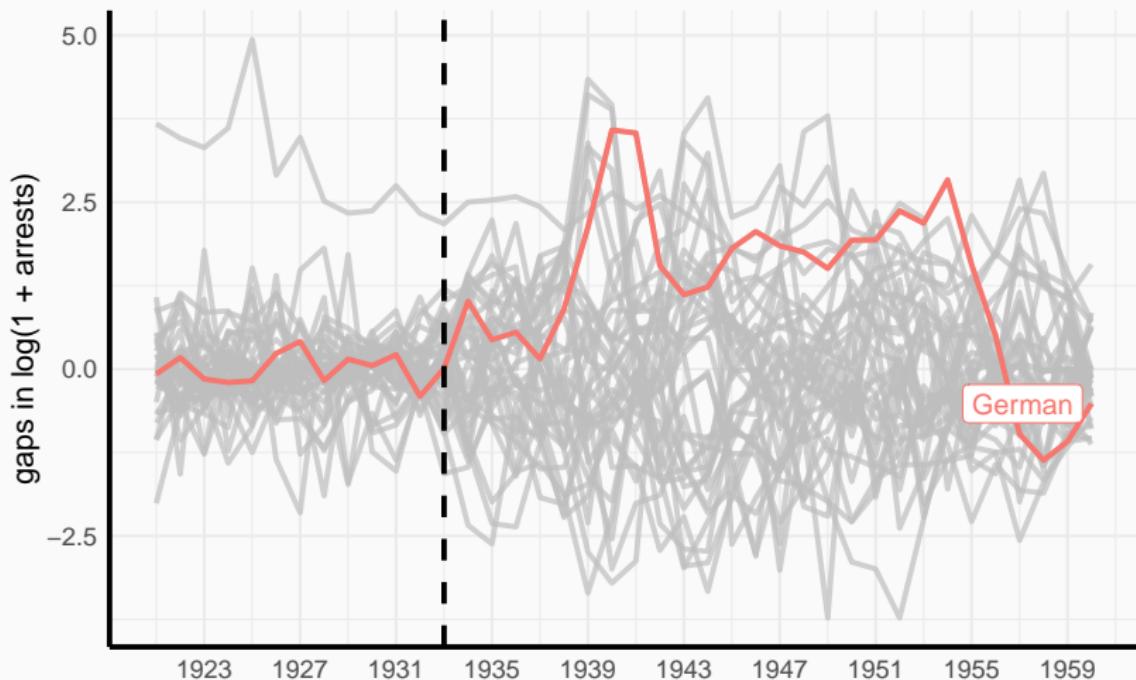
# SCM - Only Arrests from Border Areas



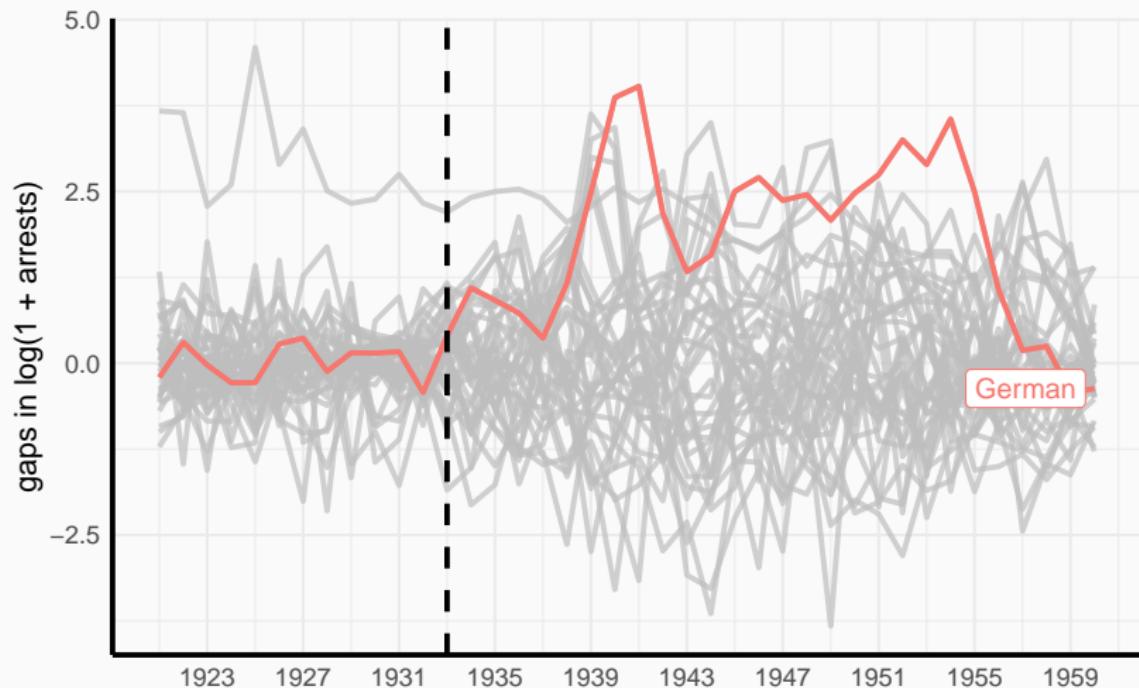
# SCM - Only Arrests from Western Border Areas



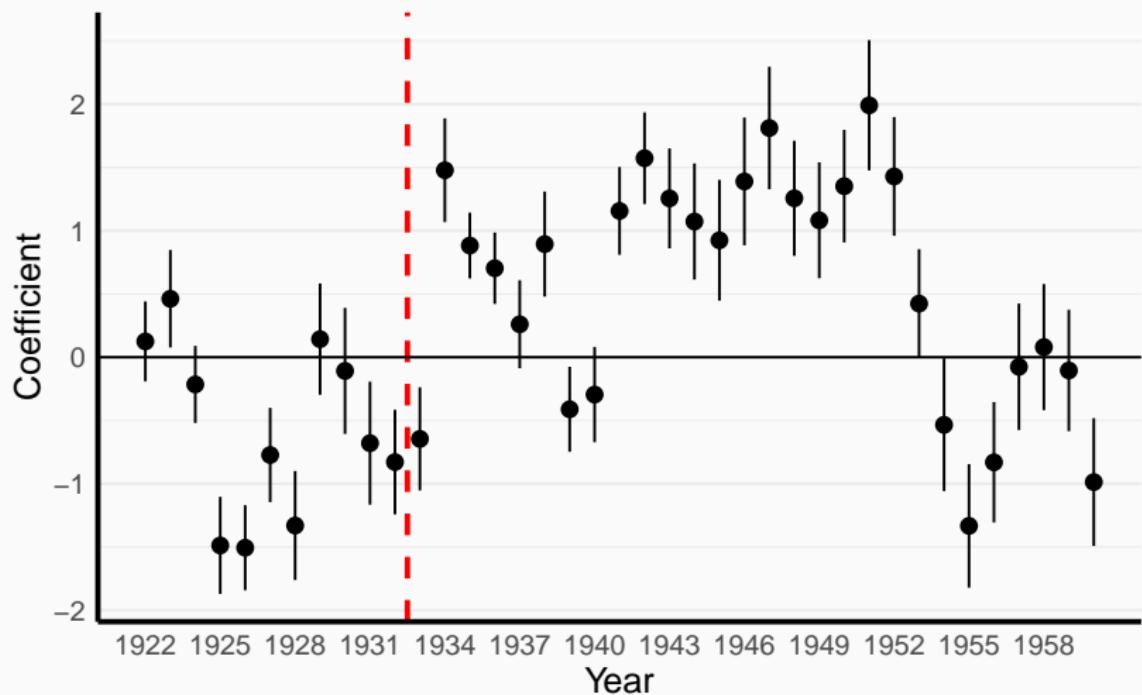
# SCM - Arrests from Border Areas Excluded



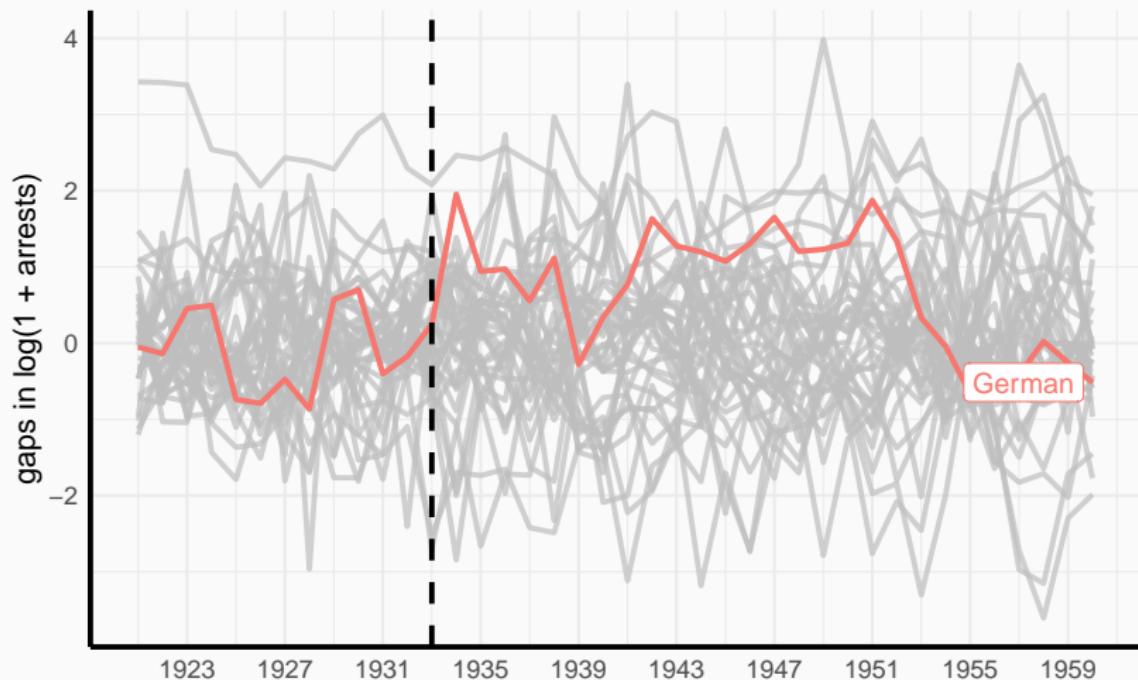
# SCM - Arrests from Western Border Areas Excluded



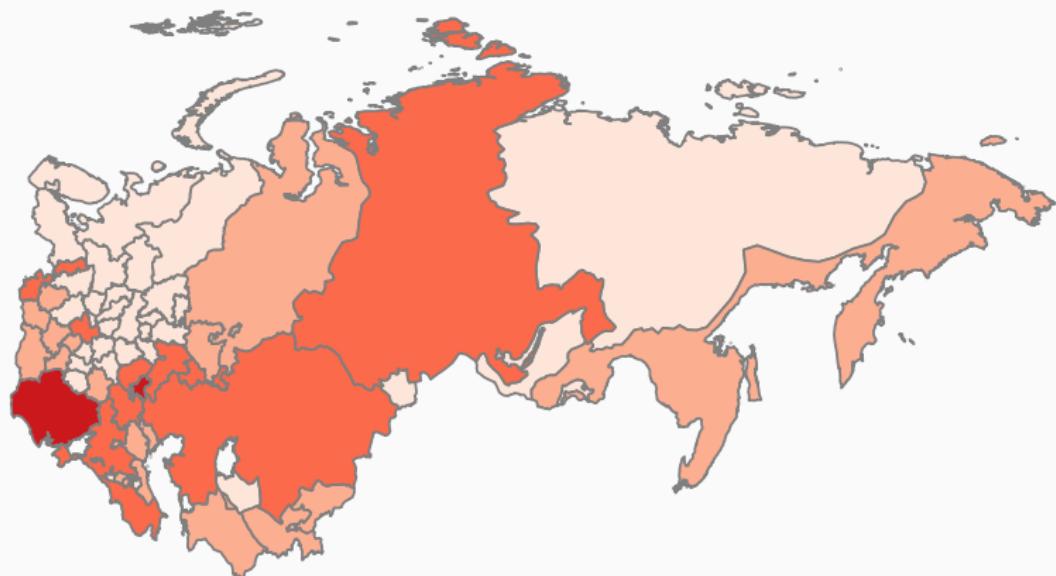
# DiD - No Imputations of Arrest Date



# SCM - No Imputations of Arrest Date



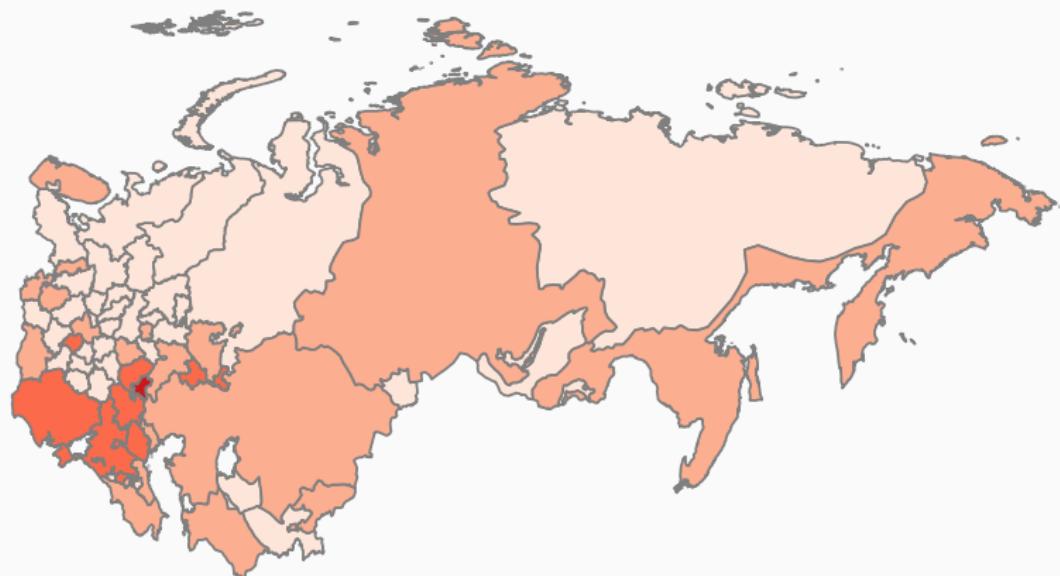
# Map of German population in the USSR



Number of Germans

0 to 1000	1001 to 10,000	10,001 to 100,000	100,001 to 400,000
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# Map of German population in the USSR



Share of Germans  
(in percent)

0 to 0.1	0.1 to 1	1 to 10	10 to 70
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