

The VICS Test: Does Operational Code Analysis Falter for The Populist Right?

by

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ABSTRACT

Operational code analysis (OCA) is a common method of content analysis within the foreign policy analysis (FPA) literature used to determine the “operational code” of state leaders and, by extension, the foreign policy behaviors of their respective state. It has been tried and tested many times before, on many different world leaders from many different time periods, to predict what the foreign policy behavior of a state/organization might be based on the philosophical and instrumental beliefs of their leader about the political universe. This paper, however, questions if there might be types of politicians that OCA, conducted using the automated Verbs In Context System (VICS), has problems delivering accurate results for. More specifically, I have theoretical reasons for thinking that populist leaders, who engage in a populist style of communication, confound VICS’ analysis primarily because the simplistic speaking style of populists obscures an underlying context (and by extension meaning) to that leader’s words. Because the computer cannot understand this underlying context and takes the meaning of the words said at face value, it fails to code the speeches of populists accurately and thus makes inaccurate predictions about that leader’s foreign policy. To test this theory, I conduct the content analysis on speeches made by three individuals: Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, and Narendra Modi, before and after they became the executives of their respective countries, and compared them to a “norming “ group representing the average world leader. The results generally support my hypotheses but with a few caveats. For the cases of Trump and Johnson, VICS found them to be a lot more cooperative than what I would expect, but it was also able to track changes in their operational code - as they transition into the role of chief executive – in the expected direction. The opposite was

the case for Modi's operational code. All-in-all, I provide suggestive evidence that OCA using VICS has trouble providing valid results for populist leaders.

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INTRODUCTION

The mid-2010s have distinguished themselves as an era characterized by the rise of populism. The 2016 U.S. presidential election was unprecedented in a multitude of ways, not least of which because political outsider and businessman Donald J. Trump defeated the widely favored candidate, Hillary Clinton, in the electoral college and ascended to the Presidency of the United States. Also, in 2016, the British people, spurred on by right-wing populist rhetoric, narrowly voted to leave the European Union. This set off a cascade of events that eventually led to the rise of Boris Johnson as the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. And before all this, Narendra Modi, leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (a right-wing Hindu nationalist party in India), successfully won an election against the predominant Indian National Congress to become Prime Minister of India. These populists, and many more in Poland, Hungary, Bolivia, Venezuela, etc. have risen to power in this decade. These series of events naturally beg questions such as “how might the foreign policy of populists manifest itself and how could we predict it?” It is for that general purpose that operational code analysis (OCA) was created by Nathan Leites (1951), advanced by Alexander George (1969) and operationalized in such a way that the content analysis could be automated by a computer by Walker, Schafer, and Young (1998), allowing for greater cost-efficiency.

OCA has frequently been applied to analyze, predict, and compare the foreign policy of world leaders in the past (see Özdamar 2017; Özdamar & Canbolat 2018; Kai & Feng 2013; Crichlow 1998; Walker 1977; Dyson 2009; Walker, Schafer, & Young 1999; Walker, Schafer, & Young 1998; Renshon 2008; and Feng 2005 as examples). However, I have reason to believe that OCA conducted through VICS suffers from bias when

analyzing populist candidates. This is because the literature on populism and the populist style of communication (Jagers & Walgrave 2007; Canovan 1999; Di Tella 1997; Mudde 2004; Weyland 2001; Taguieff 1995) generally agrees that populist rhetoric is articulated in a simplistic and straightforward way, yet it is teeming with lots of underlying meaning. The automated system that I use to conduct OCA, the Verbs In Context System (VICS), is oblivious to this underlying meaning and takes the phrases spoken at face value. By taking the words spoken at face value, the system incorrectly codes phrases as implying that the speaker is more cooperative/conflictual than they actually are. Thus, the system produces biased results that would lead to inaccurate predictions about a populist leader's foreign policy.

To see if this is really the case, I have chosen to analyze the operational code of the three presidents and prime ministers mentioned above: Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, and Narendra Modi. These three politicians are all executives of geopolitically and economically important nations and are all considered to be right-wing populists. I collect speech materials from each of these candidates totaling 189,309 words and 6154 attributions, collectively. After obtaining the results I will discuss them in the context of what we have observed them do during their tenure in office, as a test of face validity, to see if VICS' predictions line up with reality.

This paper will proceed as follows. The next section will review the literature on OCA using VICS, explain how it works, and then discuss the literature on populism as a form of discourse or communication. From that review, I derive theories for why a populist discourse or form of communication may cause an unintended bias within VICS that leads to results that seem inaccurate *prima facie*. The subsequent section will

describe the materials (how and why the speeches were collected) and the methodology I use to conduct the analysis. Afterward, I will describe the results of the analysis to see if they match what we would expect given what we know about these leaders' time in office and then discuss them in comparison to the "norming" group – a group representing the average world leader. Finally, I will end by reviewing the substantive results of the paper, thinking about possible limitations in the analysis and how to address them, and lastly, what future research questions arise from the findings of this paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY

To the uninitiated, the most important questions we must begin with is “what is OCA and VICS?” The term “Operational Code” was first introduced to the foreign policy analysis (FPA) literature by Leites’ influential work “The Operational Code of The Politburo” (1951). To Leites, “operational code” referred to the doctrine of political tactics and strategy used by the Bolsheviks at the time; however, it would be Alexander George (1969) that would later expand on this idea and formulate the basic ideas and concepts implied by the term. He reconceptualized the term “operational code” as answers to a set of questions about the philosophical and instrumental beliefs of the political universe. Those questions are:

PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS

- P-1. What is the “essential” nature of political life? Is the political universe one of harmony or conflict? What is the fundamental character of one’s political opponents?
- P-2. What are the prospects for the eventual realization of one’s fundamental political values and aspirations? Can one be optimistic, or must one be pessimistic on this score, and in what respects the one and/or the other?
- P-3. Is the political future predictable? In what sense and to what extent?
- P-4. How much “control” or “mastery” can one have over historical development? What is one’s role in “moving” and “shaping” history in the desired direction?
- P-5. What is the role of “chance” in human affairs and in historical development?

INSTRUMENTAL QUESTIONS

- I-1. What is the best approach for selecting goals or objectives for political action?
- I-2. How are the goals of action pursued most effectively?

I-3. How are the risks of political action calculated, controlled, and accepted?

I-4. What is the best “timing” of action to advance one’s interests?

I-5. What is the utility and role of different means for advancing one’s interests?

The largest breakthrough (and the one most relevant for my purposes here) came from the work of Walker, Schafer, and Young (1998) that operationalized those beliefs (i.e. the answers to those questions) in a rigorous mathematical method that made it easier for computers to perform the analysis, as opposed to having to hand code it. The fundamental assumption of this methodology is that it is possible to determine the psychological characteristics of leaders or groups based on their verbal behavior (Schafer & Walker 2006). This assumption is not unreasonable as speech is the main way humans express their thoughts, feelings, and in the case of politicians, their policy prescriptions. As a result, the indices they construct to operationalize each of the 10 beliefs outlined above work in tandem with VICS to automatically analyze speech content and code it according to the transitive verbs expressed in the text (Schafer & Walker 2006). Their indices also allowed for the idea that beliefs didn’t have to be mutually reinforcing or even internally coherent; an important detail reflecting empirical reality.

“But how *exactly* does it work?” you may ask. Though the unit of observation here is the leader’s speech, the unit of observation VICS records is the “utterance”- a phrase within the speech that contains a subject and a verb. VICS finds these phrases and follows these steps: First, it identifies the verb or verb-phrase in the “utterance” and labels it cooperative (positive) or conflictual (negative). Second, it determines if the action is a word or deed; “Deeds are actions that have been done. Words are promises or threats of future action or symbolic declarations of support or opposition” (Schafer &

Walker 2006). Third, it then determines the specific type of verb it is and codes it accordingly, an appeal/oppose statement (+/- 1), a promise/threat (+/-2), or a reward/punishment (+/-3). Finally, it identifies the subject of the verb as either “self” or “other” by looking at the self-pronouns (if any) in the statement, if words like “we, I, us” etc. are present in the utterance its coded “self”, otherwise it is coded as “other”.

Here is a small example showing how it would work with the statement “Iran is taking over Iraq” (taken from Trump’s Presidential announcement speech, June 16, 2015).

1. The verb-phrase “taking over” is labeled as a conflictual (negative) act
2. The verb-phrase is further identified as an action
3. It is then labeled “punishment” and coded as “-3”
4. Finally, the subject is “Iran”, so it is coded as “other”

Overall then this phrase would be coded “Other punishment (-3)”. The indices created by Walker, Schafer, and Young then use these coded attributions as inputs to quantitatively measure the answers (beliefs) to the 10 questions shown above.

The way these indices are operationalized is, as I will explain further below, of great importance to my theory of why I suspect VICS might become biased when measuring the operational code of populists. As a result, it is crucial that I demonstrate exactly how the “answers” to those philosophical and instrumental questions are derived. The first philosophical belief in the nature of the political universe (P-1) is calculated as:

$$(P - 1) = (\% \text{ positive other attributions}) - (\% \text{ negative other attributions})$$

with a possible range from -1 (perfectly conflictual) to +1 (perfectly cooperative).

The second philosophical belief in the ability to realize political values (P-2) is calculated as:

$$(P - 2) = \frac{\sum OA_i}{n}$$

where “ OA_i ” is the intensity of other-attribution “ i ” (from reward [+3] to punish [-3]), and “ n ” is the total number of other-attributions. The mean is then divided by 3 to obtain a possible range of -1 (perfectly pessimistic) to +1 (perfectly optimistic).

The third is the philosophical belief in the predictability of the political future (P-3) which is measured as:

$$(P - 3) = 1 - \left(\frac{K(100^2 - \sum \%OAK^2)}{100^2(k - 1)} \right)$$

where “ K ” is the number of other-attribution categories, “ $\%OAK$ ” is the percent in each other-attribution category. This measure has a range of .00 (lowest predictability) to 1.00 (highest predictability).

The fourth is philosophical belief in control over historical events (P-4), measured as:

$$(P - 4) = (\textit{self attributions}) / (\textit{self attributions} + \textit{other attributions})$$

It ranges from .00 (other locus of control) to 1.00 (self-locus of control).

The fifth is philosophical belief in the role of chance (P-5) this one is simply calculated as

$$(P - 5) = 1 - [(P - 3) * (P - 4)]$$

This will scale from .00 (low utility) to 1.00 (high utility)

Then we shift to the first instrumental belief, the strategic approach to achieving goals (I-1), calculated as:

$$(I - 1) = (\% \textit{Positive Self Attributions}) - (\% \textit{Negative Self attributions})$$

It ranges from -1 (perfectly conflictual) to +1 (perfectly cooperative).

The second instrumental belief, the tactical approach to achieving political goals, is calculated as:

$$(I - 2) = \frac{\sum SA_i}{n}$$

Where " SA_i " is the intensity of self-attribution " i " (from self-punish [-3] to self-reward [+3]) and " n " is the total number of self-attributions. It ranges from -1 (perfectly conflictual tactics) +1 (perfectly cooperative tactics).

The third instrumental belief, risk orientation (I-3), is measured as:

$$(I - 3) = 1 - \left(\frac{K(100^2 - \sum \%SAK^2)}{100^2(k-1)} \right)$$

for self-attributions, where " K " is the number of self-attribution categories, " $\%SAK$ " is the percent in each self-attribution category. This measure ranges from .00 (Perfectly risk averse) to 1.00 (Perfectly risk acceptant).

The fourth instrumental belief, the propensity to shift tactics is split into two measures: the propensity to shift between cooperation and conflict (I-4a) and the propensity to shift between words and deeds (I-4b). They are measured as:

$$(I - 4a) = 1 - |(\%positive\ self\ attributions) - (\%negative\ self\ attribution)|$$

$$(I - 4b) = 1 - |(\%words) - (\%deeds)|.$$

Both range from .00 (no shift propensity) to 1.00 (perfect shift propensity)

Lastly, we have the fifth instrumental belief, utility of means, calculated as:

$$(I - 5) = \% \text{ for each self attribution category}$$

And ranges from .00 (lowest utility) to 1.00 (highest utility).

The coding of "utterances" in a politician's speech are the inputs to these equations and, as a result, inaccurate coding will lead to invalid results. This naturally,

calls to question why a populist style of rhetoric and communication might lead to an inaccurate coding of speeches? In short, the literature on populism agrees that populism, and by extension populist rhetoric, contains certain characteristics that I believe cause bias in the automated content analysis of VICS. In the next subsection, I'll explain in greater detail what exactly those characteristics are and why they challenge VICS' ability to deliver valid results.

WHY THE CHALLENGE?

To begin describing why and how a populist leader presents a challenge to VICS I must first establish exactly what is meant by a populist style of rhetoric and communication. The literature on populism has had varying definitions on what exactly populism is: a “thin-centered” ideology (Mudde 544, 2004), a form of political organization (Di Tella 1997), or a special style of communication (Canovan 1999; Weyland 2001; and Jagers & Walgrave 2007). But regardless, even those who do not define it as a style of communication admit that “While charismatic leadership and direct communication between the leader and ‘the people’ are common among populists, these features *facilitate* rather than define populism.” (Mudde 545 2004; emphasis in original). Thus, whether one thinks of it as a style of communication or not, scholars generally agree that populists will make use of their particular style of rhetoric precisely because its mass appeal strengthens their movement.

So, what are the characteristics of this style? Scholars universally agree that populist rhetoric centers itself around appeals to “the people” (Di Tella 1997; Mudde 2004; Weyland 2001; Taguieff 1995). That being said, what they mean by “the people ” can vary wildly according to the type of populist; for example, when left wing populists in Latin America speak of “the people”, they often mean the poor and marginalized and this includes racial and ethnic minorities. By contrast, the right-wing populism (also called national populism) commonly found in Europe implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, defines “the people ” as the dominant native ethnic group, and thus calls for discriminatory policies to benefit the dominant natives at the expense of minorities and non-natives (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2013; Taguieff 1995).

Additionally, populist rhetoric also emphasizes some “elitist” threat that the leader is trying to protect “the people” from. Like before, the definition of “elites” can vary from only wealthy economic and political elites, to even including some clearly non-elite populations (such as illegal immigrants) but with the emphasis that these non-elites are actually somehow agents or pawns of “the elites”. Thus, through their populist rhetoric, the populist leader creates a Manichean worldview wherein a “righteous people” are under siege from a “corrupt elite” (Mudde 2004). Consequently, the populist leader must present him/herself as having a “supernatural capacity to represent and lead the people, rescue them from adversity, and usher in progress.” (Weyland 13 2001)

On top of that, populist rhetoric revels in the art of simplicity:

“Populist appeals to the people are characteristically couched in a style that is ‘democratic’ in the sense of being aimed at ordinary people. Capitalizing on popular distrust of politicians’ evasiveness and bureaucratic jargon, they pride themselves on simplicity and directness...Populists love transparency and distrust mystification: they denounce backroom deals, shady compromises, complicated procedures, secret treaties, and technicalities that only experts can understand. Populists claim that all this complexity is a self-serving racket perpetuated by professional politicians, and that the solutions to the problems ordinary people care about are essentially simple.” (Canovan 5-6, 1999)

This combination of these characteristics means populist rhetoric manifests itself in a short and simplistic speaking style, yet these simple words are teeming with underlying meaning and purpose. The problem with VICS is that it only analyzes the meaning of words at face value, utterly oblivious to the underlying context that gives those words the meaning and intent of the populist. The following quote from Donald Trump’s speech in Lynchburg, VA (January 18, 2016) demonstrates what I mean:

“We have got to get them to fund it. We have got to get them to put up the money. We’re going to get them -- don’t forget, without us, they wouldn’t be there very long. We protect them. And with the military -- by the way, we’re protecting

countries that are behemoths. We're protecting countries that are so rich, so powerful, so incredible -- South Korea. We protect South Korea. I have many friends -- I have deals, I have buildings in South Korea. But we're protecting South Korea. We have 28,000 soldiers on the line, between the maniac and South Korea. We're protecting them. They pay us peanuts. We protect Germany. We protect Japan. We protect countries that nobody even knows about. We protect Saudi Arabia. Before the oil price down, Saudi Arabia was making \$1 billion a day. We protect them. They pay us, like, practically nothing compared to the cost."

Every time Trump says, "We protect ____", VICS codes that as "self-reward (+3)" or when he says, "They pay us peanuts" it is coded as "other reward (+3)".

Essentially the computer interprets these statements as positive (cooperative) statements even though from our human understanding of context we know these are meant to be negative statements, with his overarching argument being that we should either get more money from them to protect them or stop protecting them at all. As a result, I would expect that cooperative (positive) statements would be disproportionately coded by VICS and indices that use these attributions as inputs (P-1, P-2, P-4, I-1, I-2, I-5) would likely be biased in a positive direction.

Similar results can be found in the speeches of Boris Johnson, even though he speaks in a more refined and coherent manner. Take this example from a speech he made promoting the Vote Leave campaign on May 09, 2016:

"We began decades ago to query the anti-democratic absurdities of the EU. Then we began to campaign for reform, and were excited in 2013 by the Prime Minister's Bloomberg speech; and then quietly despaired as no reform was forthcoming. And then thanks to the referendum given to this country by David Cameron we find that a door has magically opened in our lives. We can see the sunlit meadows beyond. I believe we would be mad not to take this once in a lifetime chance to walk through that door because the truth is it is not we who have changed. It is the EU that has changed out of all recognition; and to keep insisting that the EU is about economics is like saying the Italian Mafia is interested in olive oil and real estate. It is true, but profoundly uninformative about the real aims of that organization."

If we were to conduct the analysis on this passage alone the results (shown in table 1) would look nonsensical. Out of the 14 codings registered in this passage 11 are positive, and this results in an I-1, I-2, and P-1, of 1, 0.56, and 0.45, respectively; indicating that Johnson absolutely prefers a cooperative strategy to foreign policy, has a strong preference for cooperative tactics and generally believes the world is a cooperative place. This result flies in the face of the message in that passage, and it has to do with the fact that VICS is blind to the underlying messaging. This is clearly exemplified if we look at the last two sentences. VICS codes the utterance “the EU is about economics” and “the Italian Mafia is interested in olive oil and real estate,” as (positive/cooperative) appeals to an “other”, despite the fact that Johnson is literally comparing the EU to a criminal organization.

From the mathematical construction of the indices, we can see that an excessive or disproportionate amount of positive coding would have a direct effect on some of them. (P-1) and (I-1) both take the percent of positive attributions and subtract the percent of negative attributions (for other-attributions and self-attributions, respectively), as a result we can tell that a disproportionate amount of positive coding will push these metrics in a positive direction. Likewise, (P-2) and (I-2) suffer from a similar problem since they are essentially just averages for the intensity of other-attributions and self-attributions respectively; thus, the disproportionately greater amount of positive coding by VICS should unduly bias this metric in a positive direction. (I-5) would definitely see a bias as it is simply the percent of self-attributions in his speech for each category (Reward, promise, appeal, oppose, threaten, and punish) so a disproportionate amount of positive coding will mean positive self-attributions will be overrepresented when

compared to negative attributions. Lastly, I would expect (I-4a), to have an upward bias too. This is because I assume that right wing populist leaders with nationalist tendencies would be less cooperative than the average world leader, but if VICS is accidentally coding more positive attributions, then the overall result will display a large variance in the leader's use of positive and negative attributions. This increased oscillation between positive and negative words will increase (I-4a) precisely because it measures the shift propensity (the index of qualitative variation) of cooperation vs. conflict. The remaining indices I would not expect any biases either because they don't measure positive vs negative attributions [(P-4) and (I-4b)] ; or because their mathematical construction makes it difficult to estimate the direction of the bias due to the equal or greater influence that non-positive attributions would have on the output [(P-3), (P-5), and (I-3)].

As a robustness test of VICS I also want to evaluate its ability to evaluate the operational code of populists when they occupy different roles and observe if the results match expectations. Previous research has shown us that a change in the *role* of the individual has the capacity to change their operational code (Feng 2009; Renshon 2008; Cuhadar 2017). On top of that, previous research has also shown that populist foreign policy is quite pragmatic, guided by both the goals and capabilities of the populist in power (Sagarzazu & Thies 2019; Plagemann & Destradi 2019). Given that the top executive in any country is under more international scrutiny (that is, the international audience becomes more salient relative to the domestic audience) than other political leaders in the country, this means that a populist leader's operational code should change after they become the top executive, to reflect the change in audience salience, but that the direction of the change depends on the populist's goals.

Table 1

Analysis of Short Passage by Boris Johnson on May 09, 2016

word count	151
self-punish	0
self-threaten	0
self-oppose	0
self-appeal	2
self-promise	0
self-reward	1
other punish	0
other threaten	0
other oppose	3
other appeal	5
other promise	0
other reward	3
I-1	1
I-2	0.5556
P-1	0.4545
P-2	0.3333

All three leaders have interests that require certain levels of cooperativeness vs. conflictualness and looking at those interests can inform us of the expected change in operational code. For Boris Johnson, whose main goal is to negotiate an acceptable Brexit deal with the EU, we would expect an increase in his cooperativeness – and thus an increase in (I-1), (I-2), (I-5), and (P-1) – to prevent a breakdown of negotiations (a “no-deal” Brexit) and the economic instability that would naturally come with it. Donald Trump’s goals are more numerous and sometimes run counter in terms of cooperation which makes it harder to determine how the indices would change. On the one hand, his cooperativeness might decrease since his goal of reducing the trade deficit would incentivize the use of “beggar thy neighbor” policies like tariffs; on the other hand, goals he doesn’t want to (or can’t) unilaterally pursue will require an increase in his cooperativeness; goals like the renegotiation NAFTA, getting Mexico to pay for a border wall, or fighting ISIS. Overall, then it’s difficult to say how his operational code will change so I take the null stance of observing no change. In sharp contrast, Modi’s cooperativeness should increase after becoming PM due to the goals of his neo-liberal agenda. Modi’s desire to liberalize trade with other countries will require greater cooperativeness to assure success in negotiations.

In short, the rhetorical simplicity of populist speech, combined with the deeper connotations within it, lead to VICS’ inability to code a populist’s speech accurately and cause biased results. From the snippets of evidence presented in this section *I hypothesize that the indices (P-1), (P-2), (I-1), (I-2), and (I-5) should be biased in a positive (cooperative) direction, inducing us to believe that a populist will be as much, if not more, cooperative than the average world leader. Additionally, I hypothesize that (I-4a)*

will also be biased in a positive direction such that it is higher than that of the average world leader. Lastly, due to the effects of role change, I hypothesize that Johnson's (I-1), (I-2), (I-5), (P-1) and (P-2) indices will increase after he becomes PM. The same indices for Trump should have no significant change after he becomes President, and for Modi they should increase significantly after he becomes PM. In the next section I will explain why Trump, Johnson, and Modi were selected as my test subjects for the analysis, how the materials for them were selected and how exactly I'll be performing my analysis.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

To test my hypothesis, I quasi-randomly gathered 41 speeches from all three individuals - 11 from Johnson, 16 from Trump, 14 from Modi. To assure a decent spread of verbal materials that included materials from both before and after they were executives, I obtained a list of speeches from before and after their ascension to the chief executive role and randomly selected speeches from within those lists. As luck would have it, both Donald Trump and Narendra Modi have online databases dedicated to transcribing their rally and official speeches, debates, press conferences and all other sorts of verbal material. Thus, I source most of their speeches from their respective databases, using outside sources when the transcriptions in the database had omissions or errors. Boris Johnson's speeches were mostly sourced from the UK's official government website, which keeps tracks of official speeches made by state agents. However, due to it only containing official government speeches, and due to Johnson's relatively shorter tenure as a chief executive I could not find an adequate sample of speeches from only this source. As a result, more outside sources were used for Johnson than for Trump or Modi (A full documentation of the speeches used can be found in the appendix, alongside their sources which are also listed in the references section).

All the speeches were selected in accordance with guidelines stating that each speech should contain more than 1500 words and 10-15 codable verbs so as to prevent disproportionate influence from very short speeches that may be too case-sensitive to be valid (Schafer and Walker 2006; Renshon 2009). All these speeches have the subject speaking about some foreign policy topic, and are mostly made up of campaign rally speeches, public statements and a few interviews (descriptions of speeches are in the

appendix). Renshon (2009) informs us that all three of these speech types can provide valid results. An important question regarding the validity of test results when coding translated texts arises (this is particularly relevant for Modi), which is debated in the literature. Numerous analyses have been done on leaders whose native language is not English (Özdamar 2017; Özdamar & Canbolat 2018; Kai & Feng 2013; Crichlow 1998; Feng 2005), and they have produced reasonable results suggesting that translated texts should not cause major issues for valid inference. However, a most recent forum on non-English coding schemes for OCA describes the possible errors that google translated texts could create for VICS (Brummer et al. 2020), but with the important caveat that the errors don't seem to systematically bias results in either a positive or negative direction. Additionally, some of the tests they ran to quantify the differences between human translated and google translated texts found that the differences in the indices did not surpass two standard deviations, which would denote statistically significant differences (and one couldn't find differences greater than one standard deviation). As a result, I proceed with the Modi analysis but will take the results with a bit more caution.

All three leaders were chosen as test subjects because they are conventionally considered to be populists. Trump and Modi are rated as at least “somewhat populist” by Team Populism’s global Populism Database (Hawkins et al. 2019); Boris Johnson was not included in the database, but considering his predecessor, Theresa May, was also labeled as “somewhat populist” by the database, and considering that Johnson is widely considered to have been more of a populist than May, we could safely assume that Johnson would also be labeled as “somewhat populist” (at the very least). Additionally, each of these leaders are considered to be right-wing populists with nationalist

tendencies; Trump explicitly labeled himself a “nationalist” during a political rally in Houston Texas (Le Miere 2018). Johnson explicitly denied the label saying: “I’m not a nationalist if by that you mean I’m a xenophobe or someone who deprecates other countries and cultures – absolutely not, far from it, I’m called Boris.” (Grafton-Green & Clifton 2019). However, considering his main political messages center around the idea of “restoring” the sovereignty of the U.K. from the EU and restricting immigration, combined with that rather unconvincing argument for why he’s not a nationalist, suggests otherwise. Modi’s nationalist leanings are a bit more obvious: he is a member (and leader in India’s lower house) of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) - a political party espousing Hindu nationalist positions - and of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) - A Hindu nationalist paramilitary volunteer organization. This similarity in nationalist ideology implies that they should all act in more conflictual manners with regard to their foreign policy (although Modi may be slightly less so considering his economically *neoliberal* stances).

Given that nationalists prioritize the power, objectives, and wellbeing of their nations above all others we can assume that they should behave in a less cooperative manner (more conflictual) than an “average” world leader, with regard to their foreign policy, and would thus display significantly negative values to the measures of conflict vs. cooperation in their operational code (P-1, P-2, I-1, I-2, and I-5). As a result, If VICS does code populist speech in a positively biased manner then we should expect to see more positive values for these individuals. It would be much more difficult to discern if a bias exists with VICS if we chose non-nationalist leaders since it would be harder to

determine if their positive values on conflict vs. cooperation are inflated or actually what we would expect them to be.

To represent the “average” world leader I obtained a “norming” group dataset (Walker, Schafer, & Young 2005) from Dr. Mark Schafer. This dataset is the average operational codes of 168 world politicians and is useful to see how many standard deviations away these three populist leaders are from the “average” world leader.

Additionally, this selection of nationalist leaders also allows us to use one of the indices, (I-4a) as a secondary test of this theory. Since I expect leaders with nationalist tendencies to be less cooperative than “normal” leaders, and because I expect VICS to code a disproportionate amount of positive (cooperative) attributions for these populists, then the aggregate effect should be to increase the oscillation between cooperation and conflict present in the leader’s speeches. This will increase the (I-4a) metric such that it is as high if not higher than that of the norming group. I also compare the scores of these individuals to the events that have occurred throughout their tenure as executives as a “face validity” test of the results.

Finally, previous studies using OCA (and other leadership analysis) have brought to attention the effect of an individual’s *role* on their operational code (Feng 2009; Renshon 2008; Cuhadar 2017), which has the capacity to affect some of the indices of interest: (P-1), (P-2) and (I-1). To control for the possible effects of role I then divide my sample of speeches into speeches gathered before and after these leaders became the head executives of their respective states. I then re-run the analysis and compare these 3 leaders before they were executives, and after, to see if there were any significant changes in their operational code as a result of their role change. To quickly reiterate my

expectations regarding the operational code of these three populists relative to the “average” world politician:

H1) I expect that, due to VICS' biased coding, the indices (P-1), (P-2), (I-1), (I-2), and (I-5) will be biased in a positive (cooperative) direction, meaning that $\mu_{ij} \geq \mu_{\text{WORLD}}$.

(I.e. the (P-1), (P-2), (I-1), (I-2), and (I-5) indices scores for each leader will be as high if not higher than the average world leader score)

H2) I expect that, due to VICS' biased coding, the (I-4a) index will be biased in a positive manner (high shift propensity), such that $\mu_{(1-4a)j} \geq \mu_{(1-4a)\text{WORLD}}$

(I.e. the (I-4a) index score for each leader will be as high if not higher than the average world leader score).

H3) I expect that, as we see these populist transition into their chief executive role, Boris Johnson should increase his cooperativeness (I.e. the (P-1), (P-2), (I-1), (I-2), and (I-5) indices will increase), Donald Trump should not experience much, if any, change in his cooperativeness (I.e. the (P-1), (P-2), (I-1), (I-2), and (I-5) indices will not substantively change); and Narendra Modi should see an increase in his cooperativeness.

It is important to note that the confirmation of these hypotheses do not serve as definitive proof of the bias, but they are suggestive evidence of its existence, and the modestly of the results should be recognized. The creation of a norming group of non-populist nationalists may help test the core assumption that nationalist populists would be significantly less cooperative than average leaders and thus make these conclusions more definitive.

RESULTS

Beginning with the aggregate results (table 2) for each individual populist, my VICS analysis draws the following inferences about them:

Boris Johnson

Boris Johnson's operational code indicates an individual that would use a primarily cooperative strategy to achieve his goals ($I-1=0.36$) and would use slightly less cooperative tactics ($I-2=0.16$) overall. However, given his handling of Brexit (the foreign policy issue that defined him both before and after he became PM), this result seems very counterintuitive. Boris has repeatedly made moves to risk - or assure (depending on one's point of view) - a "no-deal" Brexit. One example includes his prorogation of parliament, which risked the outcome of a "no-deal" Brexit (definitely the least cooperative outcome reasonably possible at the time). This resulted in his actions being found unconstitutional by the UK's highest court and caused Parliament to pass the "Benn act", to prevent a no-deal Brexit without parliament's consent. Another instance was his statement that he'd "rather be dead in a ditch" (Rankin 2019) than to extend the Brexit deadline past October 31st, despite the Benn act, mentioned above, legally requiring him to ask for an extension. The analysis also indicates that he is mostly risk averse ($I-3=0.11$). Again, this result is rather suspect given the actions taken by him and his administration that have risked the collapse of Brexit negotiations and a no-deal Brexit. This includes not only the prorogation of parliament, but also the Johnson's administration's repeated proposals of a deal that removes - without replacing - the Irish backstop, a detail the EU would never accept; negotiations all but collapsed over this issue until the UK finally agreed to some concessions over northern Ireland (a replacement for the backstop).

Table 2

OCA Results of Johnson, Trump, Modi, and Norming Group

Indices	Boris Johnson	Donald Trump	Narendra Modi	World leader Average ^a
I-1	0.355	0.319	0.764	0.346 (0.336)
I-2	0.161	0.118	0.393	0.139 (0.228)
I-3	0.110	0.120	0.297	0.272 (0.143)
I-4a	0.910	0.898	0.852	0.599 (0.267)
I-4b	0.716	0.715	0.942	0.492 (0.304)
I-5 punish	0.093	0.140	0.047	0.123 (0.188)
I-5 threaten	0.077	0.056	0.009	0.038 (0.085)
I-5 oppose	0.153	0.144	0.062	0.166 (0.137)
I-5 appeal	0.435	0.442	0.593	0.463 (0.150)
I-5 promise	0.093	0.063	0.059	0.065 (0.073)
I-5 reward	0.149	0.155	0.230	0.145 (0.145)
P-1	0.337	0.252	0.294	0.273 (0.280)
P-2	0.160	0.054	0.130	0.123 (0.219)
P-3	0.106	0.136	0.096	0.125 (0.057)
P-4	0.254	0.320	0.193	0.207 (0.114)
P-5	0.973	0.957	0.981	0.974 (0.021)

a. Standard Deviation in Parentheses

Continuing, the analysis suggests he has an extremely high propensity to shift between cooperation and conflict (I-4a=0.91); likewise, he displays a high propensity to shift between words and actions as well (I-4b=0.72). This does seem plausible given his capacity to seal a deal despite his antagonism early in the negotiation process (and even before he was PM), but it could also be the effect of the hypothesized problems with VICS. When it comes to his utility of means (I-5), Johnson seems to prefer using appeals the most (0.44), followed by opposition statements (0.15) and rewards (0.15). The high utility of appeals seems suspect, especially considering his long-standing disdain for the EU (refer to his quote in the literature review where he compares the EU to organized crime).

When it comes to his philosophical beliefs, Johnson sees the political universe as somewhat cooperative (P-1=0.34) but is only mildly optimistic about the realization of his goals (P-2= 0.16). The former result is very peculiar especially considering the repeated emphasis in his speeches that international institutions, and particularly the EU, are overtaking the UK's sovereignty and undermining its economy, freedom, and democracy. This is made clear in one of his speeches during the 2016 referendum encouraging others to vote "Leave":

"It is we in the Leave Camp – not they – who stand in the tradition of the liberal cosmopolitan European enlightenment – not just of Locke and Wilkes, but of Rousseau and Voltaire; and though they are many, and though they are well-funded, and though we know that they can call on unlimited taxpayer funds for their leaflets, it is we few, we happy few who have the inestimable advantage of believing strongly in our cause, and that we will be vindicated by history; and we will win for exactly the same reason that the Greeks beat the Persians at Marathon – because they are fighting for an outdated absolutist ideology, and we are fighting for freedom. That is the choice on June 23. It is between taking back

control of our money – or giving a further £100bn to Brussels before the next election. Between deciding who we want to come here to live and work – or letting the EU decide. Between a dynamic liberal cosmopolitan open global free-trading prosperous Britain, or a Britain where we remain subject to a undemocratic system devised in the 1950s that is now actively responsible for low growth and in some cases economic despair. Between believing in the possibility of hope and change in Europe – or accepting that we have no choice but to knuckle under. It is a choice between getting dragged ever further into a federal superstate, or taking a stand now. Vote Leave on June 23, and take back control of our democracy.” (Johnson 2016)

The latter result we would expect to be lower precisely because of Johnson’s view that the institution he must negotiate with, the EU, is a malevolent organization. He views the universe as very unpredictable ($P-3=0.11$), with a mild level of personal control over historical development ($P-4=0.25$) and considering his influential role in passing and leading the Brexit effort this latter result makes sense. That being said, he still ascribes a very high role for chance ($P-5=0.97$). Already I can see that some of these results oppose what would be expected, given the real-world events and actions observed in the last couple of years.

Donald Trump

Donald Trump’s preference for strategy is only slightly less cooperative than Boris’ ($I-1=0.32$) and his preferences for tactics are characterized by low cooperativeness ($I-2=0.12$). These two results seem a little strange given what we’ve observed from the Trump Presidency thus far; he has slapped tariffs on enemies and allies alike, insulted several other world leaders ranging from Canada’s Prime minister, Justin Trudeau, to North Korea’s current dictator, Kim Jung-Un . The analysis also indicates that he is very risk averse ($I-3=0.12$), a result that stands at stark odds with the reality of a president that started a trade war with China, America’s largest trade partner, in an effort to improve the

US's balance of trade; Ordered, and successfully executed, the assassination of Iran's Major-General Qassem Soleimani, supposedly to "stop a war" (Chaflant 2020), and escalated tensions with the totalitarian leader of North Korea by threatening him over Twitter (just to name a few examples). His propensity to shift between cooperation and conflict is very high ($I-4a=0.90$), as is his propensity to shift between words and deeds ($I-4b=0.72$). This result makes a little more sense considering Trump's tendency to turn himself around on policy grounds; the Twitter fight with Kim Jung-Un, followed by Trump holding a diplomatic summit with him, is an excellent example of this as well. This could also be the result of the bias I predict in my hypothesis; I will later show how this score compares to the average world leader score. When it comes to his utility of means ($I-5$), appeals seem to be his most preferred means to use (0.59), followed by rewards (.29) and opposition statements (0.14). This result once again seems strange for the reasons previously stated and could be the result of the disproportionate coding I hypothesized.

The analysis also indicates that he has a somewhat cooperative view of the political universe ($P-1=0.25$), though a barely optimistic prospect for accomplishing his goals ($P-2=0.05$). Once again this characterization of Trump seems a little suspect considering conflictual actions we've seen taken against friends and foes alike, actions ranging from unilaterally leaving international agreements such as Paris accords or the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (The Iran Nuclear Deal), and his frequent rhetoric that paints other countries as predators that have taken advantage of the US (particularly on trade). The political future is not very predictable for him ($P-3=0.14$), but he does seem to believe he has a moderate ability to control historical development ($P-4=0.32$).

The latter result does make some sense considering his frequent spells of unilateral action that were taken with little negotiation or even consultation of other relevant actors; the abrupt withdrawal of U.S. troops from northern Syria, leading to the Turkish invasion of Syria, comes to mind. He still prescribes a large role for chance in the development of events ($P-5=0.96$). As with Johnson, we see some of the results - especially those related to levels of cooperativeness – fly in the face of what we would expect given Trump’s actions since 2016; though other indices do give reasonable results.

Narendra Modi

Modi’s analysis tells us that he greatly prefers the use of a cooperative strategy to accomplish goals ($I-1=0.76$) and does use generally cooperative tactics to meet said goals ($I-2=0.39$). These results align a lot more closely with what we’ve seen Modi do as Indian PM. Modi took the time, after his inauguration, to visit several of India’s neighboring countries in accordance with his “neighborhood first policy”, with the goal of improving diplomatic relations. It also aligns well with his neo-liberal economic policy that has emphasized trade openness and economic cooperation among nations. Modi takes pride in this last point when he said that:

“Our rapid economic growth is also very distinct in Asia. We have never tried to gain in trade at the expense of our partners. We do not follow “beggar thy neighbour” macro-economic policies. We have never undervalued our exchange rate. We add to world and Asian demand by running current account deficits. We are therefore good Asian and good global economic citizens, and a source of demand to our trading partners. Madame Lagarde, you have referred to India as the “bright spot” in the global economy. I view this as a great privilege and, at the same time, a major responsibility.” (Modi 2016)

On top of that, it seems he is a lot less risk averse/ more risk acceptant ($I-3=0.30$) than the previous two leaders discussed above. Once again this makes sense considering his

economically neo-liberal ideology, To ensure continued economic growth through free market and trade liberalization, he must naturally assume the risk of taking control of the economy out of his own hands and becoming economically dependent on other countries. This is the opposite trade strategy taken by Trump and Johnson, who have chosen to insulate their economies more from the global economy. However, unlike Trump and Johnson, he also hasn't taken any drastic political actions that could potentially upset both the domestic economy and the international markets, just as neoliberalism prescribes. Like the last two leaders he has a very high (though not as high) propensity to shift between cooperation and conflict ($I-4a=0.85$) and between words and actions ($I-4b=0.94$). The former result might seem peculiar considering his generally cooperative strategy but when one also considers his statements about India's neighbors before he became PM, we can see why the variance might be high. In a speech on November 20, 2011, while he was still governor of Gujarat, he combined as scathing criticism of the incumbent national government with accusations of other nations imprisoning Indian citizens:

“After the formation of Manmohan Singh's Government in Delhi, some 4500 of my fishermen brothers are trapped by Pakistanis and are dragged in their jails to rot. Just a day before yesterday, they took away twenty two boats, many were pushed behind the bars and my officers gave me this news. Though my Sadbhavna Mission Was going on, I wrote a reprimand letter to the Prime Minister. What is this going on? They are hijacking our persons thrice in a week? And you just met the Prime Minister of Pakistan and patted his back and said that this Prime Minister is the messenger of peace. The Prime minister of Pakistan is the messenger of peace! My fishermen brothers, you just tell, they took away your son, husband or your brother, are they messengers of peace, Brother? Speak loudly so that Manmohan Singhji can hear... Certifying just anybody! I visited China recently, Gujarati boys are jailed there, so I had an eye to eye talk with them and you? Patting the back and saying messenger of peace, messenger of peace! And here on one side you were patting their back and they took away my twenty boats.”

This quote reveals two important things. First, that the role of the individual could plausibly affect how cooperative vs. conflictual their rhetoric is, and as a result could affect their operational code -this possibility will be analyzed below. Second, that the populist pattern of repeating simple statements with deeper meanings (that are unrecognizable to the computer) is evident in non-English texts as well. Here Modi repeats phrases like “patted his back” and “messenger of peace”, not because he actually believes the Pakistani PM to be a messenger of peace or that he deserves pats on the back, but as statements of incredulity. It’s obvious to us, from the context of that passage, that Modi is abhorring the actions of Manmohan Singh and repeating those phrases for dramatic effect; but the computer cannot see the context and instead will label phrases like “the Prime minister of Pakistan is the messenger of peace!” as appeals to a foreign power. Moving on, his utility of means index (I-5) tells us that he also prefers appeals (0.59) as his favorite means to achieve his ends, followed by rewards (0.23), and in a distant third, opposition statements (0.06).

VICS also informs us that he has a somewhat cooperative view of the political universe (P-1=0.30), more than Trump but less than Boris. This same pattern holds for his (low) optimism on the feasibility of realizing his political goals (P-2=0.13). Considering Modi’s neoliberal leanings this seems strange. If anything, he should have a more cooperative view, and be more optimistic, than either of them. To Modi the universe seems very unpredictable (P-3=0.10) and it is a universe where he has little control over the development of historical events (P-4=0.19). Lastly, like Trump and Johnson, he ascribes a very high role to chance (P-5=0.98). Here the results for Modi are

a bit more sensible given what we could expect from a man with a more economically neo-liberal ideology.

As a whole, the results derived from VICS' analysis seem more questionable than valid on the face of it, especially when we look back on the actions some of these leaders have taken while in office. As a more direct test of my first hypotheses, I now turn to a comparison of these leaders' scores with the world average scores.

Comparing to the “Average” World Leader

With the overall operational code of these three leaders established, and the face validity of the results evaluated, I now move on to comparing their operational codes to that of the “norming” group. To facilitate comparisons, I have used the mean and standard deviations for the indices in the norming group dataset to create Z-scores for everyone's scores. The indices that are of particular interest here are (P-1), (P-2), (I-1), (I-2), (I-5), and (I-4a) but the z-scores for all the indices are presented in chart form in figure 1.

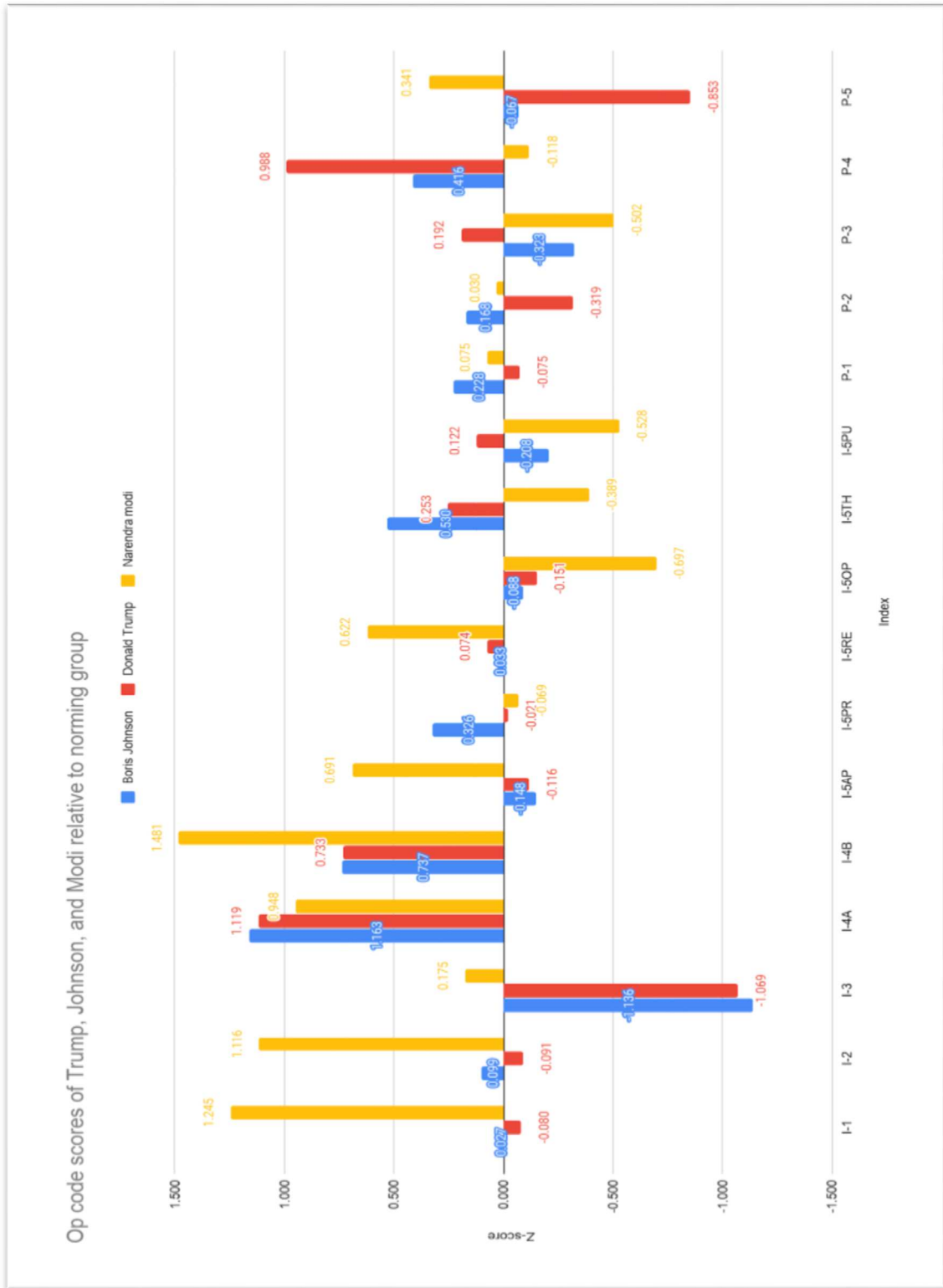


Fig. 1. Chart of Index Z-scores For Johnson, Trump, and Modi

Beginning with the strategic approach index (I-1), we see that both Johnson and Trump are evaluated as being very similar to the average world leader, being 0.027 and 0.080 standard deviations above and below from the mean, respectively. On the other hand, Modi is a lot more cooperative (1.245 standard deviations above the mean) than the average leader. The tactical approach index displays a similar pattern with Johnson and Trump near the mean (0.099 and -0.091, respectively), and Modi being substantially more cooperative than the average leader (1.116).

Looking at the utility of means index (I-5) for Johnson, Trump and Modi we see that Modi primarily prefers appeals (0.691) in comparison to the average world leader, while Johnson (-0.148), and Trump (-0.116) prefer them relatively less. Interestingly enough, Johnson makes use of comparatively more promises (0.326) than the average leader while Trump (-0.021) and Modi (-0.069) derive marginally less utility. When it comes to rewards, Johnson (0.033) and Trump (0.074) make marginally more use of this means that the average leader, while Modi makes substantively more use of it (0.622). Surprisingly, the results suggest that all these populists derive less utility from opposition statements than the average leader, with Johnson and Trump using them slightly less (-0.088 and -0.151, respectively), and Modi using them moderately less (-0.697). When it comes to threats, both Johnson and Trump make relatively more use of them than the average leader (0.530 and 0.253, respectively), while Modi makes relatively less use of them (-0.389). Finally, we see that Boris (-0.208) derives less utility from punishment in comparison to the world average and Modi (-0.528) doesn't derive much utility from punishment. By comparison, Trump gets somewhat more utility from punishment than the average leader (0.122).

Lastly, when we look at these leader's philosophical beliefs, we see that the belief in the nature of the political universe (P-1) for Boris (0.228) and Modi (0.075) are evaluated as being slightly more cooperative than the average world leader. By contrast, Trump (-0.075) is evaluated as being slightly more conflictual than the average world leader. When it comes to their optimism vs. pessimism of accomplishing their political goals, I find that it is Trump (0.168) and Modi (0.030) that are just barely more optimistic than the average leader about accomplishing their goals; however, Johnson is much more pessimistic (-0.319).

The important thing to note here is that since none of these values rise below two standard deviations from the mean (world leader score), then they would all fail to reach statistical significance at the standard levels of confidence (0.1, 0.05, and 0.01). As a result, for all these metrics we cannot reject the null hypothesis that these right-wing populist leaders are any different than the average leader with regard to their foreign policy. This supports my first hypothesis (*H1*) that if VICS does have some coding bias, as a result of a populist form of rhetoric, that causes it to incorrectly code a disproportionate amount of positive attributions, then the operational code scores of Trump, Johnson, and Modi for the (P-1), (P-2), (I-1), (I-2), and (I-5) indices will be as high if not higher than the world "average". The same logic applies for my second hypothesis (*H2*), which stated that the (I-4a) index will be biased in a positive manner (high shift propensity), due to the increased variance in cooperative vs conflictual attributions from the bias, such that the (I-4a) index score for each leader will be as high if not higher than the world "average". Since the (I-4a) index score for all three leaders was not more than two standard deviations below the mean we must conclude that the

null hypothesis cannot be rejected and that the shift propensity of cooperation vs conflict for these populists and the average leader are not significantly different. Thus, *H2* is supported.

Another detail we must acknowledge is Modi's particularly high cooperativeness in comparison to the other two populists. Because Modi follows a significantly less isolationist economic ideology than Trump or Boris it makes sense that VICS would evaluate him as having a very high (I-1) and (I-2) score but this creates a problem for us. It becomes difficult to know if those high scores are because Modi really is that cooperative, because of the predicted bias in VICS, because of the coding errors foreign translation can cause (Brummer et al. 2020), or a combination of these reasons. Since he doesn't follow the usual nationalist pattern of pushing the nation more in the direction of autarky, then my assumption that a nationalist should naturally be less cooperative than the "average" world leader would not apply to Modi; implying that he may not have been a good subject for testing whether VICS produces positively biased results for populists.

That being said, the speeches collected from Modi also suggest a sharp change in his cooperativeness vs. conflictualness after he became Prime Minister. This idea is reinforced by his actions such as inviting the Prime Minister of Pakistan to his inauguration, despite his vicious criticisms of Pakistan in the past (see Modi 2016 quote above). To test if these results remain robust when we take role into account – also a direct test of hypothesis 3 (*H3*) - I split the sample of speeches for each leader into two groups: before and after they became the head executive for their country, and compare them once again to the "average" world leader. A table with all their "pre" and "post" scores is shown below (table 3).

Table 3

OCA Results of Johnson, Trump, and Modi Before and After Becoming Chief Executive

Subject	World Avg.	World Std. Dev.	Pre-PM Johnson	PM Johnson	Pre-President Trump	President Trump	Pre-PM Modi	PM Modi
I-1	0.346	0.336	0.256	0.462	0.297	0.352	0.799	0.714
I-2	0.139	0.228	0.090	0.238	0.093	0.157	0.425	0.348
I-3	0.272	0.143	0.099	0.131	0.129	0.108	0.308	0.284
I-4A	0.599	0.267	0.938	0.875	0.904	0.889	0.844	0.864
I-4B	0.492	0.304	0.751	0.673	0.689	0.753	0.927	0.963
I-5AP	0.463	0.188	0.419	0.454	0.456	0.420	0.598	0.586
I-5PR	0.065	0.085	0.054	0.134	0.056	0.075	0.063	0.053
I-5RE	0.145	0.137	0.155	0.143	0.138	0.181	0.238	0.218
I-5OP	0.166	0.150	0.147	0.160	0.143	0.145	0.063	0.060
I-5TH	0.038	0.073	0.101	0.050	0.067	0.041	0.011	0.008
I-5PU	0.123	0.145	0.124	0.059	0.142	0.139	0.026	0.075
P-1	0.273	0.280	0.281	0.408	0.251	0.254	0.213	0.407
P-2	0.123	0.219	0.105	0.230	0.050	0.059	0.065	0.220
P-3	0.125	0.057	0.119	0.097	0.139	0.132	0.092	0.109
P-4	0.207	0.114	0.211	0.255	0.277	0.272	0.190	0.177
P-5	0.974	0.021	0.975	0.975	0.962	0.964	0.983	0.981

Comparing Pre and Post Executive Role

Starting with Boris Johnson (figure 2), whether pre- or post-PM, none of the scores are significantly different from the world average. That being said we do see some interesting substantive changes. His tactics and strategies indices, (I-1) and (I-2), both increase by over half a standard deviation, from 0.256 to 0.462 and from 0.090 to 0.238, respectively. This tells us that becoming the prime minister seemed to have made Johnson a lot more cooperative. He is going from being less cooperative, to more cooperative than the world average. This result makes sense to me considering Johnson would have to pull back his more divisive and conflictual rhetoric if he wanted to accomplish any deal with the EU. His propensity to shift between cooperation and conflict (I-4a) slightly decreases from 0.938 to 0.875. This makes sense considering he had to become more cooperative overall (thus reducing the variability this index measures) to achieve a Brexit deal with the EU, but clearly his propensity to shift is a lot higher (over 1SD above the mean in both cases) than the world average. When it came to his utility of means (I-5) we also get results we should expect. His preference for appeals, rewards, and opposition statements don't change much, but his use of promises rise drastically from generally being underused compared to the average leader (0.054) to being used a lot more than the mean (0.134). By contrast, he reduces his use of threats (from 0.101 to 0.050) and punishments (from 0.124 to 0.059) by about 50%.

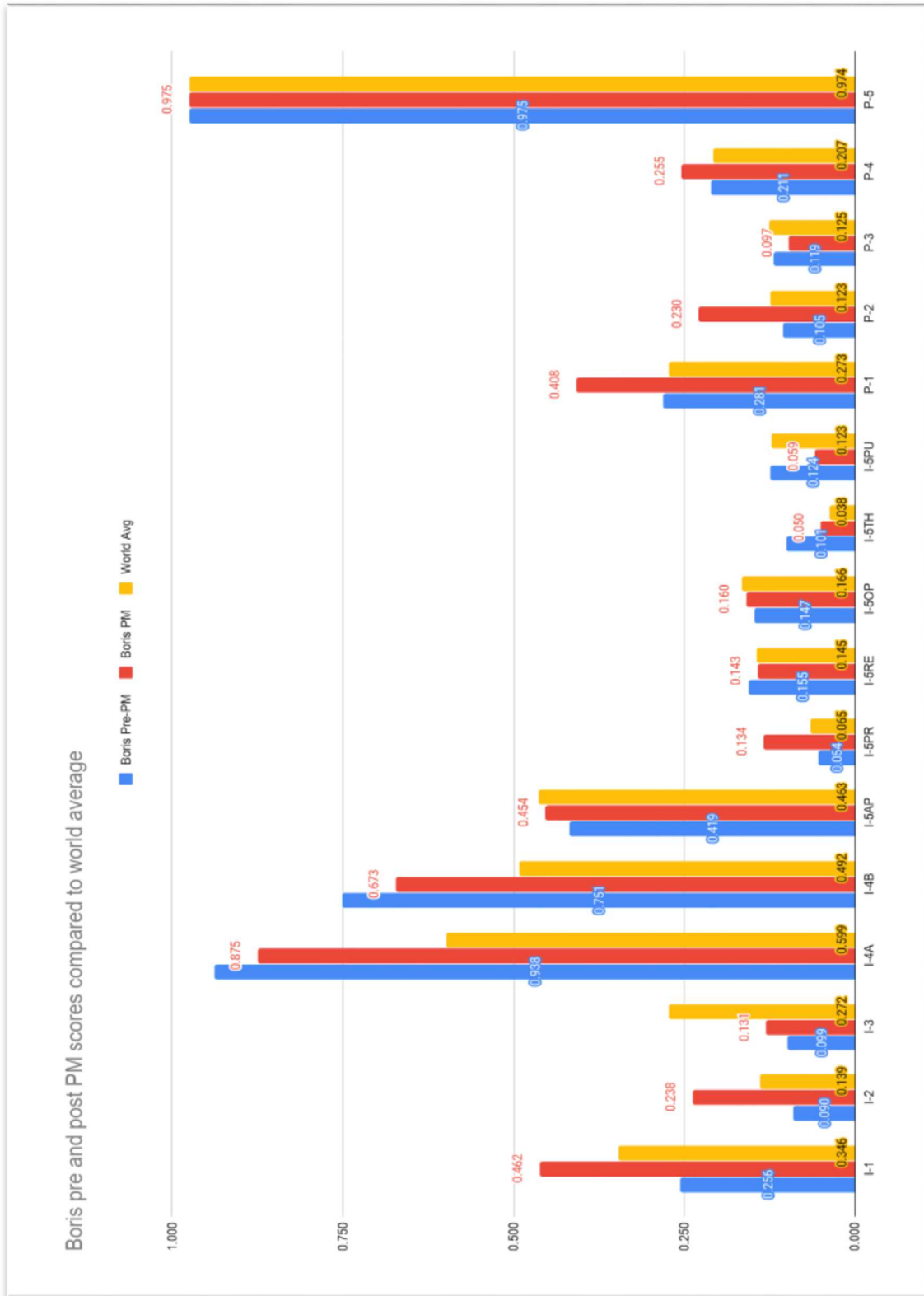


Fig. 2. Norming Group and Johnson's OCA Scores Before and After PM Role

The analysis also indicates that he believes the political universe becomes a lot more cooperative (P-1 rises from 0.281 to 0.408) as he transitions to becoming PM, and that his optimism about achieving his goals grows (P-2 goes from 0.105 to 0.230). These changes, once again, seem sensible considering he's focusing not just on achieving a favorable Brexit deal with the EU, but also necessarily focused on creating new trade deals with the EU, and other countries, after the UK separates entirely. Likewise, with Johnson now the man in charge of Brexit proceedings and negotiations, it makes sense to think that he has a lot more control over the most important issue the UK has been dealing with since 2016. His (P-3) index decreases slightly, indicating he views the world as a little more unpredictable while his (P-4) index increases slightly to indicate he feels he has more control over historical development. His (P-5) scores experience little to no change. Overall, though Boris' VICS scores, in comparison to the world average, seem irrational, the change in scores that occur as he ascends to be PM supports *H3* and suggests that VICS remains reliable at measuring changes in operational code through time, despite the predicted positive bias.

Now looking at Donald Trump (figure 3) we see similar patterns. He becomes more cooperative (I-1 rises from 0.297 to 0.352 and I-2 rises from 0.093 to 0.157) once he assumes the presidency and must begin representing the nation on the international stage. However, he becomes slightly more pessimistic about his capacity for accomplishing his goals (I-3 falls from 0.129 to 0.108). This makes perfect sense in light of his exclusive Reuters interview with Stephan Adler, where he admits that "This [the presidency] is more work than in my previous life. I thought it would be easier." (2017) The realization of the difficulties of being president should naturally dampen his

optimism. His shift propensities, (I-4a) and (I-4b), change very little, with the former decreasing by 0.015 and the latter increasing by 0.064. This suggest that little has changed regarding his use of cooperation vs conflict and words vs deeds, a conclusion backed up by the miniscule changes in his utility of means index (I-5). His use of appeals, opposition statements, and punishments change little, if at all. The most substantial changes observed are a 25% increase in the use of rewards, from 0.138 to 0.181, a 33% increase in promises, from 0.056 to 0.075, and a 39% decrease in threats, from 0.067 to 0.041; however, given the small magnitude of these changes, they could hardly be called substantive.

Trump's philosophical beliefs show little to no change as well. The results suggest he views the world as marginally less cooperative (P-1 decreases from 0.142 to 0.139) and is marginally more optimistic (P-2 rises from 0.050 to 0.059). Likewise, his views on the predictability of the political universe (P-3), his personal control over historical development (P-4), and the role of chance (P-5), only change by -0.007, 0.005, and -0.002 respectively. On the whole, the little change observed in Trump's operational code matches a president that has been as (un)cooperative and (un)predictable on foreign policy as he was as a candidate. Just as few people expected him propose policies like the construction of a massive border wall with Mexico or the prohibition of immigration by Muslims into the country; even fewer expected him to suddenly hold a summit with Kim Jung-Un after sparing with him on Twitter or suddenly withdrawing troops from Northern Syria. Thus, it seems reasonable to say his role change had little to no effect on his operational code and conclude that Trump's portion of *H3* was supported.

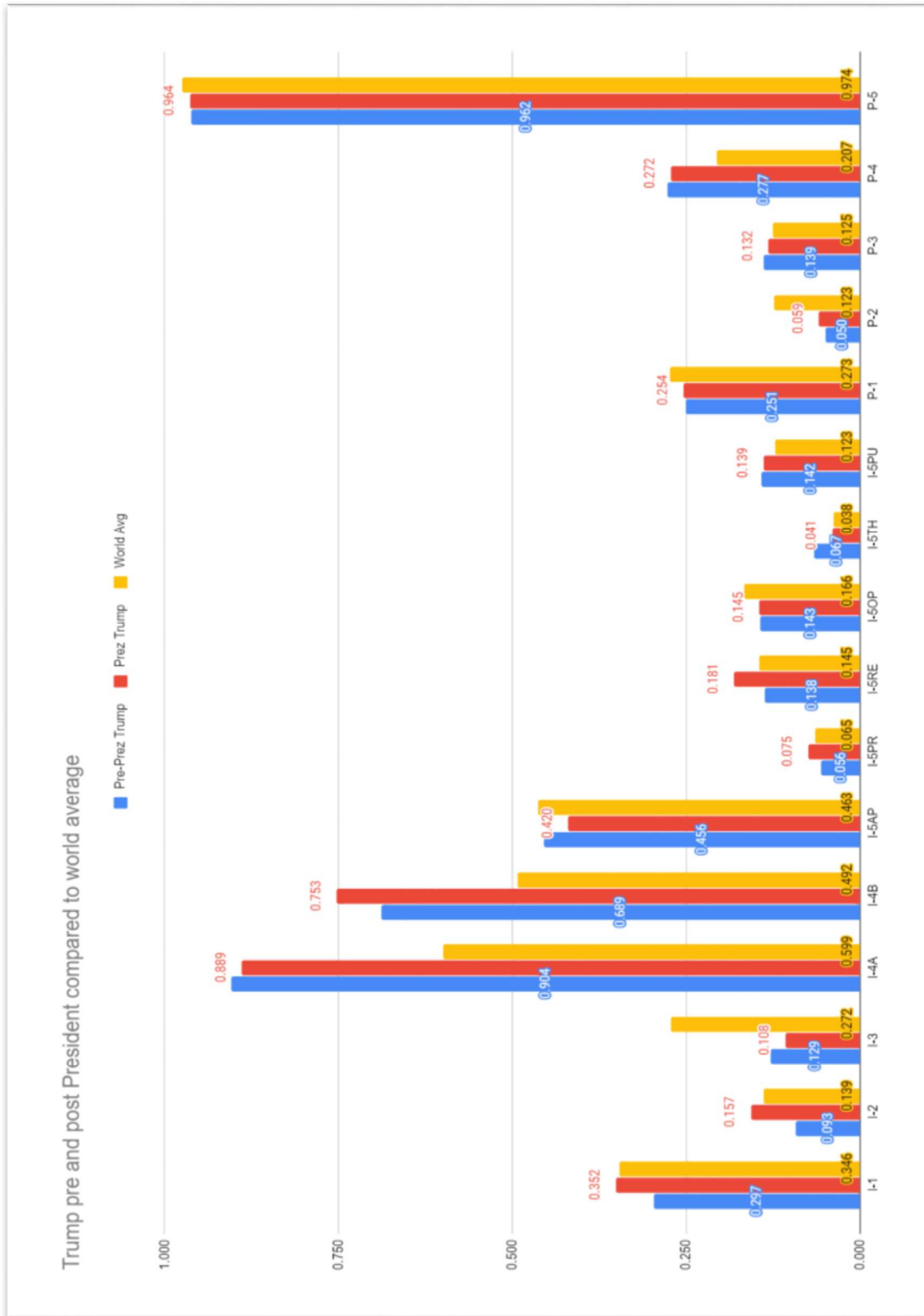


Fig. 3. Norming Group and Trump’s OCA Scores Before and After President Role

Finally, we look at Narendra Modi's operational code before and after he was India's PM (figure 4), but unlike the previous two cases, Modi's scores change in unexpected directions. To begin with, VICS suggests that his strategy and tactics (I-2) become less cooperative, not more (I-1 drops 11% from 0.799 to 0.714 and I-2 drops 18% from 0.425 to 0.348). He also becomes slightly more risk averse (I-3 goes from 0.308 to 0.284). These results fly in the face of reality, which has seen Modi enact policies such as the "Act East Policy", the "Neighbourhood First policy" (during which he invited the leaders of all Southeast Asian nations, even the PM of India's long time enemy Pakistan, to his inauguration), "Project Mausam", and "Para-diplomacy" as well. All these massive diplomatic endeavors seek to not just improve relations and open trade with India's immediate neighbors, but also all of Asia, Indian ocean nations, and even the rest of the world; and most importantly, these actions by PM Modi contrast greatly with the words of Governor (of Gujarat) Modi who lambasted the Indian Government for their weakness in the face of purported Pakistani and Sri Lankan aggression:

"If we, Gujarat or Tamil Nadu, Kerala or Karnataka, if our fishermen brothers on the beach are to be protected, to protect them, to give fishermen the right to earn their livelihood, then our first responsibility becomes [the] weak government sitting in Delhi, removal of [the] weak government! Friends, Pakistan lifts fishermen from Gujarat in such a large quantity, keeps them in jails for six months, one year and tortures so much and now that tradition has started in Sri Lanka" (Modi September 26, 2013).

Moving on with Modi's shift propensities, (I-4a) and (I-4b), we register very little change with both increasing by no more than 0.036. When it comes to his utility of means (I-5) his preferences show no significant changes other than a whopping 188% increase in the utility of punishments - though the magnitude of the change isn't as large (from 0.026 to 0.075) - and marginal decreases in the use of appeals, promises and rewards. These are

the strangest results yet as we should expect Modi to increase his use of cooperative means to facilitate the diplomatic expansion he's clearly aiming for. This result does not fit neatly with *H3* which would expect an increase in Modi's cooperativeness, not a decrease, as he transitions from governor to PM. That said, VICS still shows him to be more cooperative/less conflictual than the average world leader, which we would expect from someone with a neo-liberal economic ideology. This could simply be a result of the fact that Modi is not a nationalist in the same way that Trump and Johnson are (at least not economically), the result of the sample of speeches selected, errors in text translation that cause miscoding, or some other problem I am not aware of. Further research may be warranted here.

Finally turning to his philosophical beliefs, we see that his belief in the cooperativeness of the political universe (P-1) almost doubles (from 0.213 to 0.407), and his optimism (P-2) practically triples - from 0.065 to 0.220. These results are strange, however, when we consider that VICS also told us that his tactics and strategy became less cooperative, not more. Why would VICS predict him to behave less cooperatively when his view of the political universe becomes greatly more cooperative and his optimism in achieving foreign policy goals also rises drastically? This is another peculiar result not explained by my theory and suggests that there may be more at play here that we are not aware of. Other than that, his other beliefs (P-3, P-4, and P-5) remain remarkably constant.

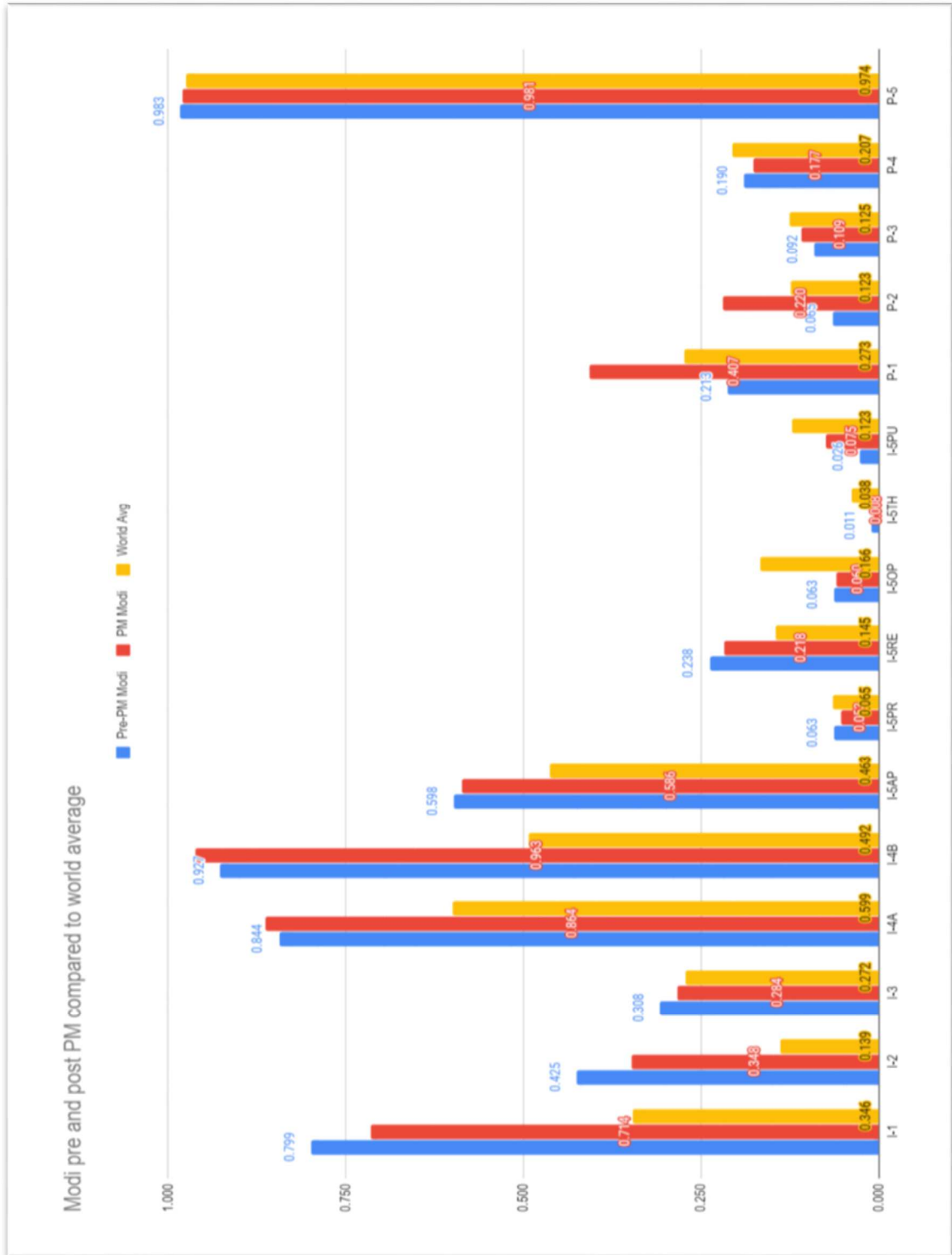


Fig. 4. Norming Group and Modi's OCA Scores Before and After PM Role

The overarching result for $H3$ was that it was supported in the case of Boris Johnson and Donald Trump, but not supported for Narendra Modi.

CONCLUSION

All in all, the aim of this thesis was to test the validity of OCA when tested on right-wing populists with nationalist tendencies. The literature on populism and populist rhetoric suggests that populist speech is simple in form, but complex in tone and meaning. I predicted that this simple rhetorical style embedded with deeper underlying meaning presents a problem for OCA conducted using the Verbs in Context System precisely because the computer can only code phrases at face-value and is oblivious to the populist's underlying message. This problem with its coding, I hypothesized, would create a systematic bias within VICS that would make a populist seem a lot more cooperative (less conflictual) than they actually are. I tested this hypothesis by selecting three right wing populists with nationalist tendencies - Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, and Narendra Modi - and coding a sample of speeches from each of them through VICS with Profiler Plus. Later, I split the samples for everyone into two, one for before they became the top executive and one after, as a further robustness test for VICS. To compare the results, I also obtain a "norming" group sample (N=168) representing the operational code of the "average" world leader.

The results of my analysis should not be taken to be definitive proof of a systematic bias within VICS, but rather as suggestive evidence that VICS really does have difficulty providing valid results for populist leaders, evidence that also revealed some fascinating details. First, is that VICS' results demonstrated the least face validity when evaluating the operational code of Donald Trump and Boris Johnson, two leaders that are very similar in terms of both their social and economic ideology, but did a

decently good job of showing the expected changes to an individual's operational code when their role changed to that of their country's head executive.

Modi's results presented a little more of a challenge to my hypothesis because his differing economic ideology broke one of my basic assumptions about the behavior of right-wing nationalists. As a result, it is hard to tell if the results presented accurately display his high cooperativeness, or if the bias I predicted is pushing them to be much more positive than they actually are. I split my sample speeches into pre-executive and post-executive samples as another test of VICS, and while it did not clarify an answer to the original question it did reveal some evidence for another, previously unpredicted, source of bias. Modi - who was also socially right wing, but economically neo-liberal unlike the other two - had VICS scores that accurately reflected his cooperativeness in comparison to the average world leader, but showed strange and irrational changes in his operational code as he transitioned from Governor of Gujarat to PM of India. The overall conclusion, however, was that my hypotheses were generally supported.

It is clear from the evidence at hand that VICS does struggle with accurately coding the operational code of populists, but the exact reason why seems to only be partially explained by my theory. Additionally, the direction of the bias seems to change depending on the characteristics of the populist, such as differences in economic ideology. All this means that further tests of VICS with populist verbal material is merited. Future tests could find ways of solidifying the assumption of nationalist (un)cooperativeness. One way to do this might be to create a "nationalist norming group", that is, finding the average operational code of leaders that are nationalist, but not populist. No such norming group currently exists but, sampling the speeches of fascist

leaders might suffice to create such a norming group since they would clearly be nationalists, but their ideological elitism and disdain for democracy would disqualify them from the label of populist. Likewise, this test could be repeated with a different sample of populists, with varying ideological characteristics, to see if this pattern holds and/or derive alternative theories for the incoherent results seen here. Finally, given that some of the results seen here can't be neatly explained by my theory it might be fruitful to repeat this test with a different, or simply larger, sample of speeches to rule out the possibility of a simple bad sample.

As populism continues to be a growing force in the political world it remains a fruitful endeavor to try and predict what populist leaders may do on the international stage. With that in mind, it is equally valuable to make sure our instruments for measuring and predicting the foreign policy of leaders are as valid and reliable as possible. Finding flaws in our tools and working to improve them does no disservice to the discipline, and indeed only makes it stronger.

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APPENDIX A
SPEECHES USED

Johnson

Sources in the database/news cited section

1. Boris Johnson: The liberal cosmopolitan case to Vote Leave - May 09, 2016 (5328 words)
2. Uniting for a Great Brexit: Foreign Secretary's speech - February 14, 2018 (4918 words)
3. Boris Johnson's Tory fringe speech - October 2, 2018 (3798 words)
4. Boris Johnson launches conservative leadership campaign speech - June 12, 2019 (2245 words)
5. Sophy Ridge's interview with Boris Johnson - July 2, 2019 (2456 words)
6. Boris Johnson's first speech as Prime Minister - July 24, 2019 (1691 words)
7. Boris Johnson's first speech to parliament as UK Prime Minister - July 25, 2019 (2196 words)
8. Boris Johnson interview from Luxembourg with BBC's Laura Kuenssberg - September 16, 2019 (2213 words)
9. The transcript of Boris Johnson's remarks at the UN General Assembly - September 25, 2019 (2114 words)
10. Boris Johnson's conference interview with ITV News - October 1, 2019 (1514 words)
11. Boris Johnson's Tory conference speech - October 2, 2019 (4163 words)

Trump

Unless otherwise stated all speech transcripts were obtained from Frischling (2019)

1. Donald Trump's Presidential Announcement Speech - June 16, 2015 (6352 words)
 - a. Obtained from TIME staff (2015)
2. Donald Trump in Mobile, AL - August 21, 2015 (8389 words)
3. Donald Trump in Los Angeles, CA - September 15, 2015 (1999 words)
4. Donald Trump's Detroit speech - Monday 8 August 2016 (3687 words)
 - a. Obtained from Buncombe (2019)
5. Donald Trump in Washington, DC - December 3, 2015 (6070 words)
6. Donald Trump in Washington, DC - September 25, 2015 (4069 words)
7. Donald Trump in Oklahoma City, OK - September 25, 2015 (7815 words)
8. Donald Trump in Lynchburg, VA - January 18, 2016 (8682 words)
9. Donald Trump at the AIPAC Conference in Washington DC - March 21, 2016 (2344 words)
10. Donald Trump in Pittsburgh, PA - April 13, 2016 (7823 words)
11. Donald Trump Delivers a Foreign Policy Speech at the Mayflower Hotel - April 27, 2016 (4666 words)
12. President Donald J. Trump's Inaugural Address - January 20, 2017 (1445 Words)
 - a. Obtained from Trump (2017)
13. Donald Trump Addresses the National Governors Association Meeting - February 27, 2017 (3561 words)
14. Donald Trump Addresses the Arab Islamic American Summit - May 21, 2017 (3397 words)
15. Donald Trump Delivers a Speech at the 2019 CPAC Convention in Maryland - March 2, 2019 (15970 words)

16. Donald Trump Holds a Political Rally in Battle Creek, Michigan - December 18, 2019 (18646 words)

Modi

Unless otherwise stated all speech transcripts were obtained from Modi (2020)

1. Shri Narendra Modi addressing the Interactive session with European Business Group - March 18, 2011 (2442 words)
2. Shri Narendra Modi's speech at the Business Meet in Chengdu, China. - November 12, 2011 (1618 words)
3. Shri Narendra Modi's Speech during Sadbhavna Mission Fast at Bapu's Birthplace, Porbandar - November 20, 2011 (6175 words)
4. Shri Modi's speech at Nava Bharat Yuva Bheri, Hyderabad - August 11, 2013 (3761 words)
5. Shri Narendra Modi's speech on 67th Independence Day Celebrations at Bhuj - August 15, 2013 (4457 words)
6. Full Text of Shri Narendra Modi's speech at Ex- Servicemen's Rally, Rewari - September 15, 2013 (5611 words)
7. Text of Shri Narendra Modi's speech at Trichy, Tamilnadu - September 26, 2013 (5829 words)
8. Text of PM's speech at Red Fort - August 15, 2014 (7315 words)
9. Text of Address by Prime Minister at the Tsinghua University, Beijing - May 15, 2015 (2451 words)
10. My dream is of a transformed India alongside an advanced Asia: PM Narendra Modi - March 12, 2016 (2204 words)
11. Terrorism is the biggest threat to humanity: PM Narendra Modi during Mann Ki Baat - November 26, 2017 (3531 words)
12. Wrong policies and strategies of Congress destroyed the nation: PM - October 19, 2019 (3942 words)
13. India is a supporter of peace, but the country will not hesitate to take any steps required for national security: PM - January 28, 2019 (2189 words)
14. Building on ancient ties for new prosperity - November 02, 2019 (1556 words)