

The Shadow of Communism in American Politics: Evidence from the US Congress*

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Abstract

This paper investigates the transnational political agency of Eastern European diasporas. It specifically examines how the Polish diaspora in the United States (Polonia) shaped American political development during the Cold War. We conceptualise the Polonia as a carrier of political events from the home country, whose latent anti-communist preferences are strategically addressed by politicians. Based on a novel dataset of U.S. Congressional speeches, newspaper media salience, and roll call votes from the 93rd to 101st Congresses, we analyze legislative behavior by employing a two-way fixed effects empirical framework. We find that during exogenous foreign policy shocks that raised Polish salience, such as the rise of Solidarity and the 1980s, Members of Congress representing high Polonia districts significantly intensified pro-Polish floor discourse and conservative voting behavior. Furthermore, we provide tentative evidence that this ideological realignment yielded observable electoral rewards. We propose an electoral equilibrium where the historical trauma of communism works as a mobilization catalyst by redefining the nexus between international shocks, diaspora agency, and domestic political polarization.

Keywords: Voting Behavior; Immigration; Cold War; Political Polarization; Text Analysis; East European Diasporas

JEL Codes: D72, J15, N42, Z13, F50

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“There is a spirit of Solidarity abroad in the world today that no physical force can crush. It crosses national boundaries and enters into the hearts of men and women everywhere. In factories, farms and schools, in cities and towns around the globe, we the people of the Free World stand as one with our Polish brothers and sisters. Their cause is ours.”

— Ronald Reagan, January 20, 1982.

1 Introduction

When a political crisis breaks out in a country, its effects rarely stay within the borders of that country. Diaspora communities can then serve as transmission mechanisms that carry such crisis events into their host countries. There, diaspora communities can influence political agendas and shape the political behavior of legislators. Prominent examples where diasporas have acted as geopolitical transmission channels that shaped their country of residence include Irish Americans impacting the Home Rule movements, Jewish Americans playing an important role in founding Israel, Iranian Americans opposing the Iranian Regime, and Cuban exiles supporting the Cuban Embargo (Kustra & James, 2025; Platte, 2021). Thus, in economic research, diasporas and migrant communities have long been recognized as important channels that facilitate trade, foreign direct investment, and the national and cross-border transmission of political and social norms (Batista et al., 2019; Burchardi et al., 2019; Rapoport, 2019). Yet we know surprisingly little about the relationship between diasporas and the political behavior of legislators and the underlying mechanisms behind it.

The aim of this paper is to understand the relationship between political and economic shocks in Poland and political behavior in the United States through the lens of the Polish American diaspora (Polonia) during the Cold War. We focus on the 93rd to 101st Congresses (1973–1991). This period is particularly well-suited to identifying the political effects of the Polonia, because it encompasses a sequence of sharp, exogenous geopolitical shocks, such as the rise of Solidarity and the declaration of martial law. These shocks generated large, exogenous variation in the salience of Poland in American public life. While being politically divided between Democratic and Republican alignment, the Polonia was notably united on the “Polish question” (Gurnack & Cook, 2021; Pienkos, 2021). This implied strong opposition to Soviet domination and a preference for a hawkish foreign policy that cut across party lines. As a result, the Polonia became a politically legible constituency with well-defined and publicly known preferences (Ubriaco, 2006). These preferences, in combination with sharp exogenous salience shocks, create ideal conditions for studying the effects of foreign shocks on legislative behavior. In this paper, we ask the following guiding research questions: when Poland becomes salient in American media, do members of Congress representing districts with larger Polonia populations respond politically, and, if so, how? These questions are motivated by the political economy literature, which demonstrates that ethnic and skill composition of legislators’ constituency systematically influences their voting behavior on globalization and

migration policies (Conconi et al., 2020; Facchini & Steinhardt, 2011; Mayda et al., 2022).

To answer the research questions, we construct a novel data set that combines individual roll-call votes, congressional floor speeches, a media salience index constructed from monthly newspaper mention counts of Poland, and district-level self-stated Polish ancestry shares from the 1980 Census. To structure the empirical analysis, we develop a simple model of political activation and legislative supply that allows us to derive testable predictions. In this model, legislators optimally increase their political effort towards the Polonia as a function of rising Polish-ancestry shares in the constituency and salience around Poland. Then, the model identifies three mechanisms that could drive this relationship: electoral pressure, constituency pressure, and identity-based transmission. We then test this relationship empirically by employing an identification strategy that uses the temporal variation of Poland-related salience. This salience is driven by external geopolitical shocks that are arguably exogenous to United States politics. We then interact this salience with cross-sectional variation in the presence of Polonia across congressional districts. We use two-way fixed effects that absorb all time-invariant legislator and district characteristics, as well as common national shocks, in each month. The identifying variation arises from whether the same legislator behaves differently in months with high versus low salience, and whether this varies with the size of the Polonia in their district.

The findings of this paper provide evidence that when Poland receives greater media attention (high-salience months), legislators in the United States who represent congressional districts with larger Polonia communities respond by changing their floor speeches and roll-call voting behavior. In terms of speeches, we find that legislators from high-Polonia districts significantly increase mentions of Poland during periods of high salience. An event study exploits the sharp and discontinuous rise in salience that followed the imposition of martial law in December 1981 and reveals a notable, albeit short-lived, response. Regarding voting, a one-standard-deviation increase in the share of Polish ancestry is associated with a 1.32 percentage point increase in the likelihood that a legislator will cast a conservative vote during periods of high salience. By comparing the same legislator across high- and low-salience periods, we identify a within-legislator effect. The effect is present for salience in the month of the political action and the month before, but not in the following month. This pattern rules out anticipation effects and reverse causality. We further conduct a heterogeneity analysis and show that the effect is concentrated among votes on *Foreign and Defense Policy* and *Civil Liberties*, while we find no effect for *Government Management* and *Social Welfare*. These findings align with the anti-communist and hawkish preferences of the Polonia and suggest that the response is issue-specific rather than a general shift towards conservative voting. Additionally, we find no significant differences in behavior between Democratic and Republican legislators. This finding likely reflects the cross-partisan anti-communist preferences of the Polonia. Finally, we present tentative evidence suggesting that legislators who vote more conservatively during periods of high *Poland salience* receive a higher vote share in subsequent elections. This finding suggests that politically responsive behavior towards diaspora communities may be electorally rewarding.

To ensure the robustness of our findings, we conduct a wide array of robustness tests and

sensitivity analyses. Most importantly, we run multiple placebo tests to exclude alternative interpretations of the results. First, we use placebo ancestry tests. Here, we expand the baseline regressions and include interactions between *Poland salience* and alternative diaspora groups. These regressions produce non-significant coefficients for all placebos, while the coefficient for the Polonia interaction remains stable in size and statistically significant. Second, we conduct placebo salience tests. In these, we replace the salience of Poland with that of other countries, world events, and sports events. Those tests all yield non-significant null results. Furthermore, we demonstrate that the coefficients remain stable when alternative fixed effects are included, such as state-by-Congress, party-by-Congress, birth cohort-by-Congress, and roll-call fixed effects. Moreover, we run jackknife-style regressions, excluding each Congress in turn, and confirm that no single Congress drives the results. In addition, we show that the results are consistent across probit and logit specifications, alternative measures of Polonia presence and conservative voting, alternative salience sources and operationalizations including weekly salience, and different restrictions on the vote sample. Finally, we report that the effects are not driven by Polish American members of Congress.

To understand the potential mechanisms through which the salience of Poland translates into legislative responsiveness, we will discuss the three channels of the proposed model in the paper.

The first channel concerns how and if electoral incentives drive the results. If responsiveness to salience is primarily driven by reelection concerns and the ambition to maximize one’s vote share, the effect is expected to be stronger for legislators facing competitive elections, in marginal districts, or in the run-up to upcoming elections. In these cases, constituency signaling should bear the biggest returns. We test for these three cases and find no consistent evidence for this channel. This suggests that the responsiveness is not primarily electorally motivated.

The second channel concerns the mechanism of constituency pressure and organizational mobilization. This channel works by exerting pressure on legislators through letter-writing, demonstrations, or lobbying by diaspora organizations. Communities with denser institutional infrastructure should be better positioned to translate salience shocks into coordinated political pressure. Direct tests of this channel are limited by the high collinearity between organizational density and the raw Polonia population share. Districts with more Polish Americans tend to have more Polish institutions, making it difficult to separately identify the organizational margin. We demonstrate this by showing the presence and density of Polish Parishes.

The third channel concerns identity-based familiarity with Poland, the Polonia, or the “Polish Question”. Having ethnic ties to Poland, being raised in a Polish neighborhood, or being familiar with Polish issues through the legislators’ constituency might lower costs and give a stronger intrinsic incentive to engage with the issue. We exclude this potential channel as the main driver of our results, since our specification, which includes legislator fixed effects, captures within-legislator changes in behavior. This specification accounts for time-invariant legislative characteristics, such as ethnic Polish ancestry or greater Polonia exposure, at the place of birth. We conclude that identity is unlikely to be a driving mechanism behind the reported results.

An interpretation in which the effect is a vote-maximizing behavior would predict that legis-

lators representing larger Polonia should reflect its preferences, independent of salience. Since our results, however, show that the effect is salience-dependent, we interpret the findings as indicating that salience activates latent constituent preferences that legislators respond to, regardless of their personal identity or electoral pressure. This is more consistent with an activation account in which constituency pressures become behaviorally relevant only when made salient.

In this paper, we provide direct evidence of an activation mechanism at the legislative level in the United States. We show that latent diaspora-linked ideological predispositions can translate into observable legislative behavior when specific and relevant topic salience rises. We thereby document, for the first time, a salience-triggered transmission from diaspora constituencies to legislative behavior within a unified framework. This paper specifically speaks to three strands of literature. First, we address the literature on cultural transmission and latent ideology (Cantoni et al., 2019; Dentler et al., 2021; Fouka & Tabellini, 2025; Ochsner & Roesel, 2024). While this literature predominantly provides evidence of the activation of latent preferences at the voter level, we extend this idea to the legislative level by showing that legislators can respond to that activation through measurable behavioral channels. Second, we contribute to the literature on the determinants of legislative behavior (Conconi et al., 2020; Crespin et al., 2013; Elliott et al., 2023; Facchini & Steinhardt, 2011; Levitt, 1996; Tabellini, 2020). This literature shows that constituency composition can shape legislator behavior in diverse ways. We add a dynamic dimension by showing that both the composition of the constituency and its temporal relevance matter. Third, we speak to the literature on the influence of diasporas and foreign policy (Haney & Vanderbush, 1999; Kustra & James, 2025; Prasad & Savatic, 2023). To this literature, we provide a micro-level legislative mechanism through which diasporas influence policy outcomes. We do not only show that diaspora presence predicts foreign policy outcomes, but that salience can trigger this development. Finally, we contribute to the recent literature on geoeconomics and geopolitics by following Mohr and Trebesch (2025)’s call for research on the Cold War era.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a literature overview. Section 3 provides historical background on the history, settlement patterns, organizational infrastructure, and political alignment during the Cold War of the Polonia. Section 4 develops a theoretical model of diaspora activation and political supply and derives testable implications. Section 5 presents the data and the empirical methodology. Section 6 presents the main results, discusses robustness checks and placebo tests, and the mechanisms. Section 7 concludes.

2 Literature Review

Historically and contemporarily, migration is among the most politically charged topics, reshaping elections and public debates. Research into this topic was dominated by a focus on the native majority — how they react to migration and how they vote (Alesina & Tabellini, 2024; Card et al., 2012; Mayda et al., 2022). Often, immigrants and their descendants have appeared as triggers of backlash that produced political reactions, rather than as political actors themselves.

This literature review focuses on the opposite perspective. It organizes the most relevant research around three main themes. First, immigrants bring preferences from their home country, shaped by the immigration experience or exposure to circumstances at home. These preferences can persist for generations but also lie dormant until activated by the right political circumstances. Second, immigrant communities start to organize collectively and form lobby and pressure groups. Those reduce the costs of coordination and leverage the often-existing institutional infrastructure to influence domestic and foreign affairs. Third, ethnic identity and immigration history can directly shape the behavior of political actors themselves.

These three bodies of literature complement the vast literature on native political reactions and offer a more complete and complex picture of how migration influences politics in the short and long term. While natives often react to immigration, immigrants can be a force that dynamically influences the spheres of political decision-making.

2.1 Immigrants as Voters

When immigrants leave a country and move to a new one, they often bring not only their human capital but also political and historical experiences from their country of origin. Giuliano and Tabellini (2024) suggests that places in the United States that received more historical migrants from the early welfare states in Europe persistently show higher support for redistribution. This provides evidence that preferences travel with migrants and can persist over generations.

Fouka and Tabellini (2025) synthesize existing theories into a framework of cultural transmission. They distinguish between direct inheritance of partisan identity and the indirect transmission of more fundamental “primitive beliefs”, such as attitudes towards authority. These beliefs can be consequential in forming modern political preferences, even when individuals are far removed from the original historical context that gave rise to them. Immigrants can then also transmit ideological and political preferences to their descendants (Wals, 2013). Here, political preferences are particularly shaped by early socialization experiences within immigrant households (Moriconi et al., 2025). Preferences can form in the origin country, travel with migrants, and be intergenerationally transmitted, shaping political and economic preferences and producing long-lasting effects on voting behavior.

Cultural persistence, however, does not imply constant political materialization. Instead, ideological traits can be latent until activated by political supply or salience. The historical sieges of Vienna, e.g., generated a local collective memory that was activated by recent political campaigns once they incited xenophobia (Ochsner & Roesel, 2024). Similarly, the salience of Holocaust-related debates during the 2001 Polish election activated historic and latent anti-Semitic attitudes (Charnysh & Finkel, 2017). Dentler et al. (2021) provide a clean example of this logic within the United States. Historically isolationist German-American communities exhibited higher support for Donald Trump, but only after he adopted explicit isolationist rhetoric. The persistence of preferences does not imply constant expression; it may require external developments to be activated.

The persistence and activation of preferences can be shaped by contextual factors. Fouka et al.

(2022) further demonstrate that discrimination against European immigrant groups decreased with the arrival of African Americans as internal migrants. They suggest that the type of group that becomes most salient, the “outgroup”, can have a greater impact on political reaction, even if it is not necessarily an immigrant group. The immigrant group itself is not the only factor shaping preferences and activation, but the broader identity landscape in which they operate.

The capacity and willingness of immigrants to participate in elections are often conditioned by their group environment and organizational structures. Political participation among refugees can, e.g., increase when individuals settle near already politically active peer networks (Becker & Fetzer, 2016). Andersson et al. (2022) further show that ethnic concentration in immigrant enclaves does not automatically drive participation but depends on resources and the existing political integration of the co-ethnic network. The successful political participation of immigrants is influenced by the organizational environment that migrants encounter. This point becomes even more visible when communities move from individual voting to organized collective action.

2.2 Immigrants as Organized Pressure Groups

This section moves the focus from individual political behavior and preferences to collective organized influence. This influence can be exerted on domestic development, but also has international effects.

The political mobilization and activation of immigrant groups can depend on their local organizational capacities and structures. Ethnic Catholic churches in the United States strengthened within-group ties by increasing residential clustering and in-group marriages (Abramitzky et al., 2025). Churches provided strong institutional foundations by supplying education, welfare, and social networks that could sustain ethnic identity over longer periods. Communities of Polish immigrants in the United States were centered around churches, making them effective tools in sustaining national and religious identity. Italian immigrants in the United States similarly centered around religious institutions, resulting in slower social assimilation (Gagliarducci & Tabellini, 2025). Ethnic churches can increase the salience of the associated group and reinforce stereotypes.

The political influence of ethnic communities and diasporas can ultimately influence international relationships and foreign policies. One important driver of this can be the influence of diasporas on economic and political engagement with their countries of origin (Rapoport, 2019). Higher ancestry in a country can reduce information frictions and increase U.S. firms’ foreign direct investment in that country (Burchardi et al., 2019). Thereby, diasporas can facilitate international economic and political cooperation. Exposure to a foreign ancestry can lead to more generous behavior towards the ancestral country of that ancestry, reduce prejudice, and increase contact and knowledge about that ancestry (Bursztyn et al., 2024). Such relationships can then be observed for a long time after migrants arrive.

Organized diasporas can also directly influence foreign policy outcomes. A canonical example is the influence of Cuban Americans on the foreign Policy of the United States. Haney and Vanderbush (1999) argues that Cuban Americans, through their organized interest group, not only influenced

foreign policy but also had a role as a “co-executor of policy”. More generally, an increase in the share of an immigrant group in the United States’ electorate increases the probability of military or humanitarian intervention by the United States in crises in which their country of origin is involved (Kustra & James, 2025). This supports the view that diasporas and their groups can directly influence foreign policy through domestic political channels.

Diasporas can further be mobilized by salient events in their countries of origin. This mobilization can go beyond the organization of public events, such as demonstrations, and be more systematic and long-lasting. Thereby, conflict and repression can often serve as catalysts for the formation of diaspora interest groups (Prasad & Savatic, 2023). The size of a diaspora group can further be a good predictor of the amount of emergency aid flows in cases of crises in the country of origin (Platte, 2021). Organized diaspora groups not only exist statically but respond to events dynamically.

The direction of influence can also be reversed — immigrants and diasporas can influence their country of origin. Migration can, for example, create social remittances and transfer political norms across borders (Barsbai et al., 2017). One thematically related study by Ottinger and Rosenberger (2023) shows that exposure to institutions and democracy in the United States among French combatants increases support for the French Revolution. Diaspora can often also indirectly impact politics in their country of origin by influencing turnout and candidate choice through contacts and networks (O’Mahony, 2013; Whitaker & Wellman, 2024). When it comes to “social remittances”, i.e., the transfer of democratic norms and information back to the country of origin, peer networks can be as effective as family links (Batista et al., 2019). Diaspora groups can bring preferences to their host country and thereby shape politics, but also vice versa. Identity can travel through diasporas in both directions and influence political institutions, making diasporas particularly important transnational political mechanisms.

2.3 (Ethnic) Identity of Politicians

The third sphere of immigrant influence on political behavior runs through legislators’ identities and backgrounds. A large literature is organized around the question of what determines legislator behavior. One of the most consequential aspects of this legislator’s behavior is probably voting in parliament. Multiple factors can influence a legislator’s voting decision: personal views and background, the political preferences of their constituency, the position of their political party, and the economic interest in getting re-elected (Feigenbaum et al., 2025). Separating these individual forces can be an empirical challenge, as personal ideology can correlate with party affiliation, and electoral incentives can overlap with the responsiveness of the constituency.

A particularly important factor in determining political behavior is the individual background of legislators. Levitt (1996) provides evidence that personal ideology can outweigh constituency and party effects for United States senators. In addition to personal ideology, individual background and family history can be important determinants. Having an immigration history in the family can strongly influence how a legislator debates immigration and votes on migration laws (Feigen-

baum et al., 2025). This logic can also be extended to other important individual background experiences: Experiencing an economic recession at a young age can influence how a legislator votes on redistribution (Carreri & Teso, 2023). Further, shocks that affect the constituency of a legislator can operate through a similar channel. Elliott et al. (2023) provide evidence that climate-related disasters in the representing region of a legislator can affect their voting on environmental legislation.

While personal background shapes behavior directly, the structural environment in which legislators operate can be a further important factor. The skill composition of the constituency, e.g., can predict voting decisions on immigration (Facchini & Steinhardt, 2011). Legislators from unskilled-labor-abundant districts are more likely to support restrictive policies, with automation reinforcing this divide. On the other hand, legislators from districts exposed to manual-biased technological change are more likely to take restrictive positions on immigration. The rising competition between native and low-skilled immigrant workers can be an important driver of this relationship (Brey, 2024).

Additionally, the affiliated political party can be an important determinant of behavior. Republican senators, for example, systematically represent their White constituents better, while Democrats represent minority constituents better (Markarian et al., 2025). This asymmetry cannot be explained by the ideology of a legislator alone, but rather by party influence.

Ethnic identity can be strategically activated by legislators. For example, legislators can amplify ethnic salience to mobilize voters during high-stakes periods (Alesina & Tabellini, 2024). At the same time, political elites can leverage media-driven racial and ethnic narratives and frames to gain an advantage in closely contested races (Testa & Williams, 2026). This can amplify polarization by reinforcing in-group solidarity while marginalizing out-groups (Levi et al., 2025).

Additionally, the constituency or party pressure can emerge when triggered by salience or strategically activated by electoral incentives and election pressure. Legislators become, e.g., more protectionist when re-elections are approaching (Conconi et al., 2014).

Finally, immigration can have a substantial role in determining which legislators get elected. Tabellini (2020) provides evidence that during the Age of Mass Migration, cities with more culturally distant immigrants elected more conservative legislators and cut redistribution even when immigration fueled an increase in native employment. Similar effects have been observed after trade shocks caused by Chinese competition (Autor et al., 2020). These shocks created an ideological shift along racial lines, eroding moderate representation and shifting majority-white districts toward conservatives.

The whole literature has demonstrated how complex the topic of migration is. While the native population can respond to migration, migrants can exert substantive political influence, either through direct voting or through organized pressure. At the same time, immigration can shape the ethnic and cultural identity of legislators and influence legislative behavior through multiple channels: personal experiences, structural constituency pressure, and elite manipulation. Those dimensions often interact and reinforce each other. As a result, they can be particularly activated

during periods of heightened salience.

3 Historical Background

3.1 Polish Migration to the United States

The expression “Za Chlebem” (“For Bread”) is a famous proverb that stands for the historical search of Poles for work and economic opportunity in the United States.¹ Historically, the United States has been an important destination for Polish migrants. At the same time, Polish immigrants have left a substantial imprint on American society. Notably, Polish-American diplomat Joseph Lichten remarked that “one of the most important ethnic components of this society are Americans of Polish descent.” (Wytrwal, 1961).

Since the defining work of Haiman (1939), Polish migration to the United States before World War II has been classified into three main phases: First, pioneer or colonial Polish immigration (1608-1776), second, political Polish immigration (1776-1870), and third, economic Polish immigration (1870-1929). Most recently, a fourth wave of migration followed, marked by the post-World War II migration and the socialist era.

The first phase, pioneer migration, involved soldiers, cartographers, clergy, explorers, and skilled craftsmen. Historical records show that Poles contributed to vital industries in the Jamestown colony as early as 1608 (Wytrwal, 1961).² These individuals often founded factories, distilleries, and other businesses (McCook, 2011). In 1619, Polish workers in the Jamestown colony famously went on strike to demand political representation, considered to be the first recorded labor strike in America (Seidner, 1976). The success of the early Polish pioneers led to brief consideration of establishing their own Polish colonies in the New World. However, due to political developments in Poland during the 18th century, those ambitions were quickly abandoned (Wytrwal, 1961).

The second phase, political migration, was driven by significant upheavals in Poland. These included the Partitions of Poland in the 18th century, the Napoleonic Wars, and the Polish uprisings in the 19th century. Unlike the earlier wave, this one primarily consisted of nobles, high-ranking soldiers, poets, musicians, and educators who were fleeing political persecution in Poland. Two figures from this period became particularly famous, even outside of the Polish community: Tadeusz Kościuszko and Kazimierz Pułaski. Their contributions to the American Revolution created a legacy known to the general public in the United States.³ Although these political migrants became prominent figures within the Polish diaspora, most of them assimilated quickly into broader society (Kruszka, 1993). Many first settled in major cities such as New York, Albany, Philadelphia, and Boston before dispersing across the country. Most of them quickly became integrated into the American society (Brożek, 1985). By the time of the Civil War in the 1860s, approximately 30,000 Poles were living in the United States. The settlement of Panna Maria in Texas was home to

¹Polish author Henryk Sienkiewicz famously featured the expression in his eponymous novel (Sienkiewicz, 1880).

²Although legends suggest that John of Kolno, a fabled Polish navigator at the service of the king of Denmark, reached America as early as 1476 (Tazbir, 1992).

³For instance, General Pulaski Memorial Day is being celebrated annually on October 11 in the United States.

one of the earliest Polish settlements and became a cultural and religious center for early Polish life. Although important culturally and politically, migration remained an individual phenomenon. There are three main reasons for the absence of large-scale Polish migration during the earlier phases (Haiman, 1939; Wytrwal, 1961). First, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth did not require colonial expansion to mitigate overpopulation. Second, during the height of European colonialism, Poland was fighting multiple wars and lacked the resources for colonial ambitions. Third, Poland offered exceptional political and religious freedoms that were rare in most of Europe at the time.

Things began to change around 1850, when the first smaller waves of Polish peasants arrived in the United States. Early Polish settlements were often organized around churches, and religious leaders played an important role in establishing these communities (Kruszka, 1993). Polish peasants were now driven by economic hardship and the promise of better opportunities abroad (“For Bread”). At the same time, political factors were also important forces. The three partitioning powers kept Polish territories underdeveloped and largely excluded Poles from education, political autonomy, and higher-level professions (Haiman, 1939). When the “Age of Mass Migration” from Europe to the United States began (Eriksson & Ward, 2022), Poles arrived later than many other nationalities. This can be explained by the geographical isolation of the Polish territories, limited education, and a lack of information about America (Caro, 1914).

There was significant heterogeneity in migration patterns and push factors across the Polish partitions. In the Prussian part, political factors, such as Bismarck’s Kulturkampf, led to large Polish emigration. Many Poles from those regions, however, migrated to the industrializing Regions of Germany (“Ruhrpolen”). In the Russian partition, political repression, religious persecution, and poor economic conditions caused over 740,000 Poles to immigrate to the United States (Wytrwal, 1961). In Austrian-ruled Galicia, one of the poorest regions of Europe, mass emigration resulted from both economic hardship and political instability (Davies, 1982).⁴

The last significant wave of Polish migration occurred after World War II. Directly after the war, those migrants were often “displaced persons” and political refugees who fled the communist regime. Additionally, another significant wave of political refugees arrived in the 1970s and 1980s due to the Solidarity movement and the imposition of martial law (Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann & Pula, 2023). This period also divided the Polonia into a *new* and *old* faction. The *new* Polonia consisted of post-1945 migrants who were often strident anti-communists and were active in Eastern European lobbying groups. In contrast, earlier migrants often initially held socialist or social-democratic views, associated with the labor movement. Therefore, the *new* Polonia often looked down on what they viewed as “polka-dancing, beer-swilling, bowling-ball-heaving Polish Americans” (Jackson, 2004).

In Figure 1, we provide descriptive evidence on Polish immigration to the United States between 1950 and 2000. Panel a) of the figure shows the number of Polish-born individuals in each decennial census. While we observe more than 750 individuals born in Poland in 1950, this number declines

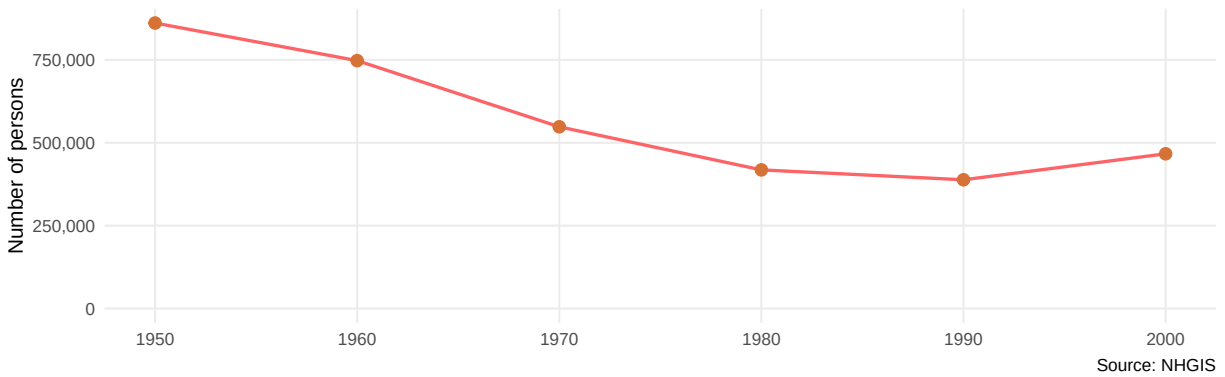
⁴Galician poverty became so notorious that it entered the Polish lexicon as “Bieda Galicyjska” (“Galician poverty”) and “Golicja i Głodomeria” (“Nakedness and Hunger”) (De Berg, 2010).

Figure 1: Polish-born Population and Immigration to the United States, 1950–2000

The Polish-born Community in the United States

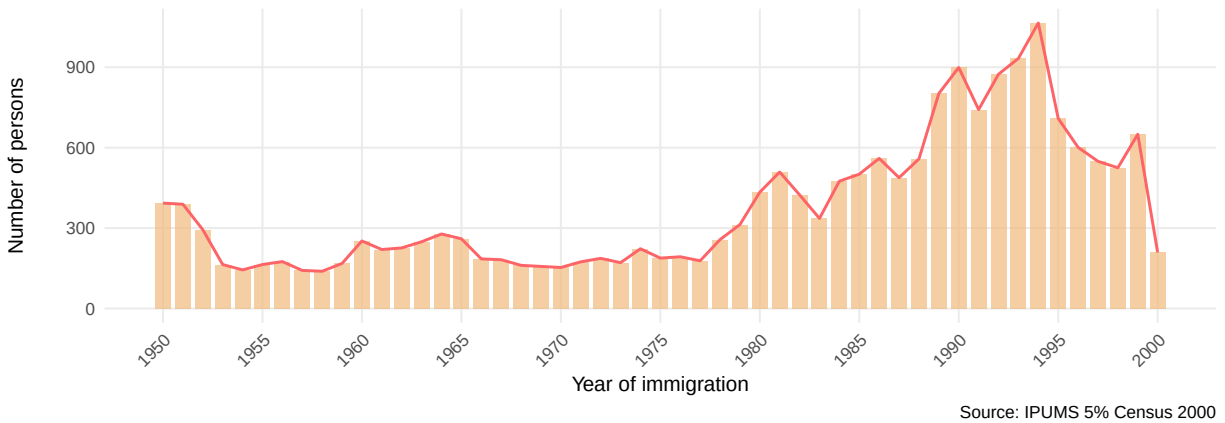
a) Polish-born Population in the US

Decennial Census, 1950–2000



b) Year of Arrival of Polish-born Immigrants

Still residing in the US in 2000



Note: Panel (a) shows the number of Polish-born residents in the United States from decennial censuses, 1950–2000 (NHGIS). Panel (b) shows the year of arrival of Polish-born immigrants enumerated in the 2000 Census (IPUMS 5% sample), restricted to those arriving 1950–2000.

steadily until 1980, then remains stable, and even increases again between 1990 and 2000. To better understand fine-grained temporal variation in immigration, we use the 5% sample of the IMPUMS 2000 census and restrict it to individuals born in Poland. In panel b), we plot the year of arrival of Polish immigrants to the US. In general, we observe a relatively constant level of individuals arriving until the 1970s. Starting around 1977, during the Solidarity crisis in Poland, we observe a constant increase. We observe a spike around 1981, the time of the declaration of martial law in Poland. This coincides with evidence discussed in Wojdon (2018). In the 1980s, around 250,000 Poles emigrated to the United States, while only a small group were refugees (approximately 34,000) and even fewer were actual Solidarity activists (approximately 3,000).

3.2 The Organization of Polonia

Upon arriving in the United States, Polish immigrants often began establishing communities with their own cultural and religious infrastructure. They established, e.g., Polish-American newspapers to serve the community, with more than 40 in operation by 1900 (Obidinski, 1977). By 1889, the Polish population in the U.S. had grown to over 800,000 with 132 Polish churches, 126 priests, and 122 parish schools (Kruszka, 1993). In many cities, those Polish churches became central institutions for preserving Polish culture and for organizing the community. The famous, often visually distinctive, “Polish cathedral style” became a monumental public symbol of the Polish community and Polish identity (Wojdon, 2022).

By the early 20th century, many Polish immigrants had become well-assimilated into wider American society. As early as 1927, Carpenter and Katz (1927) observed that many Poles had adopted English, American customs and traditions, and that Polish surnames were often Anglicized or totally abandoned (Carpenter & Katz, 1927; Lyra, 1966). Despite their outward assimilation, however, many Polish Americans retained a strong sense of Polish ethnic identity, still evident today in Polish neighborhoods, festivals, cultural and social clubs, and cuisine (Jackson, 2004).

Polish-American communities often organized themselves through social, religious, and political institutions. The most prominent of these is the Polish parish Gurnack and Cook (2021), Kruszka (1993), and Pienkos (1991). Polish immigrants used those to recreate their home villages within American cities Jackson (2004). Another foundation of Polish communities is societies and clubs. Those emerged to promote Polish nationalism and provide mutual aid within the community. Additionally, the Polonia established nationwide operating political lobbying organizations. While many still exist today, the most historically significant was the Polish American Congress (PAC), founded in 1944. Formed to advocate for a free and independent Poland during and after the war, the PAC became a powerful Polish voice in Washington during the Cold War era Pienkos (1991) and Ubriaco (2006).

The diaspora, described as an “imagined community”, is held together by common identity, shared language, and traditions like folk music, such as the Polka Jackson (2004). A survey by Radzilowski and Stecula (2010) showed that members of the Polonia express a strong commitment to Poland and the preservation of Polish culture, advocating for its inclusion in American culture

and identity. Furthermore, a significant portion of Polonia members are active in cultural and social organizations.

3.3 The Polish-American Vote

Members of the Polonia have transitioned from being a traditional blue-collar Democratic stronghold to a more socioeconomically diverse and conservative voting bloc. This transition was driven by upward mobility, suburbanization, and a shift in foreign policy concerns.

The majority of Polish immigrants who arrived at the turn of the 20th century were poor and unskilled peasants. Most immigrants at that time settled in northeastern urban centers and began working in industry-heavy professions (Gurnack & Cook, 2021). Chicago, Detroit, and Buffalo became important centers of the Polonia. Their social and economic situation made them strong supporters of the New Deal coalition at that time (Pienkos, 2021). Their loyalty to Franklin D. Roosevelt was strengthened by his pro-labor policies and social welfare programs (Gurnack & Cook, 2021; Pienkos, 2021). Although many Poles were resentful because of the “Western betrayal at Yalta”, the feeling of abandonment of Eastern Europe to Soviet domination, large parts of the Polonia continued sympathies with the Democrats after World War II. The hardline anti-communist rhetoric of the Truman Doctrine, however, started to move many members towards the Republicans (Ubriaco, 2006).

By the 1960s and 1970s, many members of Polonia experienced upward social mobility and moved to suburban areas (Pienkos, 2021). This process weakened the influence of traditional Polish communities and parishes. During this time, many Poles turned away from the Democrats due to frustration over the Vietnam War and division on cultural issues such as abortion and civil rights policies. These issues were perceived as threats to the cultural and religious identity of Polonia (Gurnack & Cook, 2021; Pienkos, 2021).

The “Polish vote”, referring to the general political alignment of the Polonia, was often mobilized by events in and around Poland (Pienkos, 2021). Pienkos (2021) argues that a “Polish vote” in presidential elections exists but only when Poland becomes a salient issue and when elections are contested. For example, in 1944, Franklin D. Roosevelt feared losing this voting bloc after the “betrayal at Yalta”. In 1960, John F. Kennedy appealed specifically to the Catholicism and economic concerns of the Polonia. Later, Gerald Ford angered many Polish-American voters by publicly claiming that there was “no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe”, contributing to his loss to Jimmy Carter (Gurnack & Cook, 2021; Pienkos, 2021). Ronald Reagan sought the support of the Polonia by emphasizing traditional values and taking a confrontational, hawkish stance against the Soviet Union during the Solidarity Crisis (Jackson, 2004; Ubriaco, 2006). The Polonia experienced a significant conservative shift during this period, particularly in foreign and cultural policy.

In 1990, the Polish-American community consisted of approximately 9 million Polish Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 1993). While nowadays a majority still identifies with the Democratic Party, nearly 44% identify as conservative (Radzilowski & Stecula, 2010). In many modern swing states, Polish Americans are crucial swing voters. In 1990, the Polish-American community consisted of

approximately 9 million Polish Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, [1993](#)). While nowadays a majority still identifies with the Democratic Party, nearly 44% identify as conservative (Radzilowski & Stecula, [2010](#)). In many modern swing states, Polish Americans are crucial swing voters. Prominently, in September 2024, presidential candidate Kamala Harris addressed the 800,000-strong Polish American community in Pennsylvania. She warned that a Trump presidency would put the national security of Poland at risk (Karatnycky, [2024](#)). At that moment, Polish Americans were treated as an important geopolitical constituency. Their historical experiences and ties to their homeland served as a driving force in US electoral politics, echoing appeals and strategies from the Cold War era.

3.4 The Solidarity Shock in Poland

After World War II, the Polish People’s Republic was established as a communist state under close oversight of Moscow. The country quickly adopted the Soviet model of economic and political development. From the beginning, Poland experienced political tensions. The era was marked by political repression and recurring protests. Economic imbalances in the 1970s led to systemic economic crises. Living and working conditions worsened. Trust in the system and the party eroded further. These developments were accompanied by the rise of opposition networks such as the Workers’ Defense Committee (KOR) and Solidarity, an independent trade union. In 1978, anti-communist Polish bishop Karol Wojtyła was elected pope and took the name John Paul II. This strengthened the morale of the Polish opposition. It reinforced Catholicism, the Church, and the Pope as important cultural and political forces within the communist opposition.

A critical turning point was the strikes at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdańsk in August 1980. These strikes ultimately led to the legalization of an independent trade union under the Gdańsk Agreements on August 31, 1980, which in turn led to the establishment of Solidarity with Lech Wałęsa as its leader. As a result, Solidarity quickly became a mass social movement, reaching up to 10 million members. This was an unprecedented development in the Soviet bloc (Blejwas, [1996](#)). The tension between Solidarity and the authorities culminated on December 13, when Wojciech Jaruzelski, de facto leader of Poland, declared martial law, dissolved Solidarity, and arrested its leaders. The declaration was unanticipated and left many in Poland and abroad shocked. It revealed the limitations of reforms under state socialism and forced Solidarity into the underground (Blejwas, [1996](#)). The imposition of martial law created uncertainty about whether peaceful reforms would ever continue and left many scared of further repression and the possibility of a Soviet intervention.

Solidarity challenged the fundamental basis of communist authority. In the West, the movement was portrayed as a challenge to authoritarian rule and symbolized a potential reversal of the post-World War II order. The strong condemnation of martial law by the United States highlighted the important position of Poland in the discourse of the Cold War (Ubriaco, [2006](#)). Solidarity and martial law further united the Polish-American community and ensured support from its extensive institutional network (Pienkos, [2021](#)). Demonstrations in major U.S. cities, humanitarian aid campaigns, public advocacy by prominent Polish-Americans, and most notably, the Nobel Peace

Prize of Lech Wałęsa in 1983 increase the visibility and salience of Solidarity and Poland in the United States and the World (Ubriaco, 2006).

In Chicago, demonstrators threw red paint at the Polish consulate, burned a Soviet flag, and carried a coffin covered with a Polish flag. Polish protestors used slogans such as “Reagan, don’t sell out the brave Polish nation at another Yalta” (Jaroszyńska-Kirchmann & Pula, 2023). The Polonia mobilized its networks with extraordinary efficiency. The Polish American Congress (PAC) Charitable Foundation delivered nearly \$170 million worth of goods to Poland (Pienkos, 1991).

Politicians in the United States quickly recognized the political potential of the crises. On January 20, 1982, Ronald Reagan designated January 30 as “Solidarity Day”. Reagan called the movement a battle of “real workers in a so-called workers’ state” and linked it to the American tradition of self-determination (Reagan, 1982). The “Solidarity shock” shifted U.S. foreign policy toward a more confrontational, hawkish stance. This was supported by the realization that the Polish-American vote could be the deciding factor in swing states (Ubriaco, 2006).

4 A Model of Activation and Political Supply

In this chapter, we present a basic model of salience and diaspora driven activation and political supply of legislators. Figure 2 visualized the most important components of the model.

Consider legislator j representing district i in period t . Let $P_i \in [0, 1]$ denote the share of residents of Polish ancestry in district i , and let $Z_t \geq 0$ denote Poland-issue salience at time t . We interpret Z_t as the salience of Poland in U.S. politics, driven by external events, international crises, or media attention. District-level activation is then given by

$$A_{it} = P_i Z_t. \tag{1}$$

The central idea is that Polonia constitutes a latent constituency whose political relevance rises with Poland-issue salience. Legislators respond by supplying issue-specific political effort. Let $a_{jt} \geq 0$ denote legislator j ’s political supply toward the Polish issue, encompassing agenda attention, symbolic responsiveness, coalition support, and willingness to align with diaspora-linked preferences in legislative behavior.

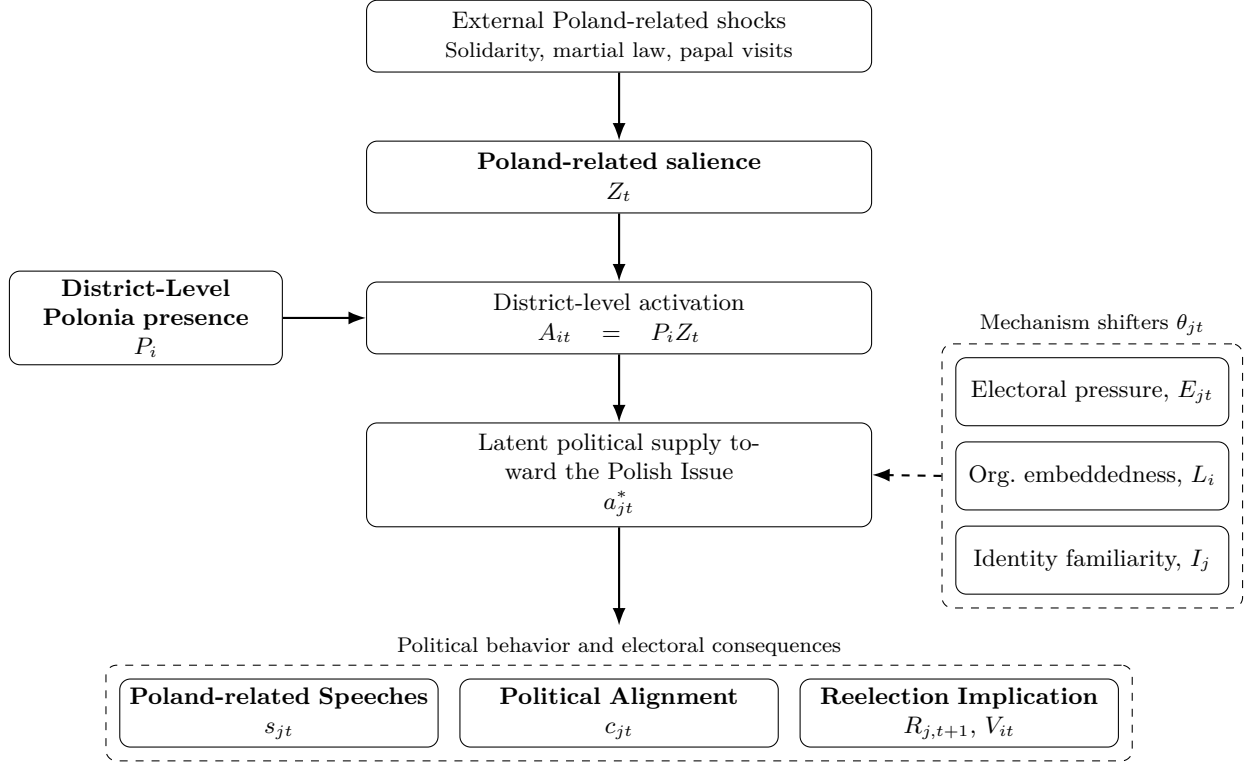
4.1 Mechanism-adjusted returns

Rather than modeling each mechanism as a separate choice margin, let the return to political supply be summarized by

$$\theta_{jt} = \theta_0 + \theta_1 E_{jt} + \theta_2 L_i + \theta_3 I_j, \tag{2}$$

where E_{jt} captures electoral pressure, L_i measures the time-invariant organizational embeddedness of Polonia in district i , and I_j denotes legislator j ’s time-invariant identity-based familiarity with the Polish question. Thus, θ_{jt} summarizes three mechanisms that raise the return to political supply: reelection incentives, constituency embeddedness and lobbying capacity, and identity transmission.

Figure 2: **Activation, Political Supply, and Electoral Consequences**



Note: External Poland-related shocks generate variation in Poland-related salience, Z_t . Salience interacts with district-level Polonia presence, P_i , to produce district-level activation, $A_{it} = P_i Z_t$. Activation increases legislators' latent political supply toward the Polish issue, a_{jt}^* , with responsiveness shaped by electoral pressure, organizational embeddedness, and identity-based familiarity. The latent supply choice is observed through Poland-related speeches and conservative voting alignment, with electoral implications for reelection probability and Republican vote share.

Although L_i and I_j are time-invariant and would be absorbed by district or legislator fixed effects in reduced-form specifications, they remain useful in the model as sources of heterogeneity in legislators' responsiveness to Poland-issue salience.

4.2 The legislator's problem

The legislator chooses political supply a_{jt} to maximize

$$U_{jt}(a_{jt}) = \theta_{jt} A_{it} a_{jt} - \frac{\kappa}{2} a_{jt}^2 - \frac{\chi}{2} (a_{jt} - \bar{a}_{pt})^2, \quad (3)$$

where $\kappa > 0$ is the convex cost of issue-specific effort, $\chi \geq 0$ measures the cost of deviating from the party benchmark, and $\bar{a}_{pt}$ is the party-specific benchmark of issue alignment in period t . We treat the party benchmark $\bar{a}_{pt}$ as exogenous to district-level Polonia activation. This assumption abstracts from feedback effects between *Poland salience* and party platforms or leadership positions. The model therefore isolates the responsiveness of individual legislators to activated constituency demand, conditional on the party benchmark.

The linear functional form is chosen for tractability and to generate transparent comparative

statics. Substantively, however, the relationship between salience and legislative responsiveness may exhibit nonlinearities. Very low levels of salience may fail to activate latent constituency preferences, while very high levels may generate saturation once legislators have already signaled responsiveness to the activated constituency. The model abstracts from these threshold and saturation effects and should be interpreted as capturing the local average response over the empirically observed range of salience.

The first-order condition for an interior optimum is

$$\theta_{jt}A_{it} - \kappa a_{jt} - \chi(a_{jt} - \bar{a}_{pt}) = 0. \quad (4)$$

Lemma 1 (Optimal political supply) *The legislator's optimal political supply is*

$$a_{jt}^* = \frac{\theta_{jt}A_{it} + \chi\bar{a}_{pt}}{\kappa + \chi} = \frac{\theta_{jt}P_iZ_t + \chi\bar{a}_{pt}}{\kappa + \chi}. \quad (5)$$

Hence,

$$\frac{\partial a_{jt}^*}{\partial (P_iZ_t)} = \frac{\theta_{jt}}{\kappa + \chi} > 0. \quad (6)$$

Moreover, the effect of Poland-issue salience is stronger when reelection pressure, Polonia-linked organizational embeddedness, and identity-based familiarity are higher.

Proof. The first-order condition is

$$\theta_{jt}A_{it} - \kappa a_{jt} - \chi(a_{jt} - \bar{a}_{pt}) = 0.$$

Rearranging yields

$$(\kappa + \chi)a_{jt} = \theta_{jt}A_{it} + \chi\bar{a}_{pt},$$

so

$$a_{jt}^* = \frac{\theta_{jt}A_{it} + \chi\bar{a}_{pt}}{\kappa + \chi}.$$

Substituting $A_{it} = P_iZ_t$ gives (5). Differentiating with respect to P_iZ_t gives

$$\frac{\partial a_{jt}^*}{\partial (P_iZ_t)} = \frac{\theta_{jt}}{\kappa + \chi} > 0,$$

since $\theta_{jt} > 0$ and $\kappa + \chi > 0$. ■

The response to Poland-issue salience is also heterogeneous across legislators and districts. Since

$$\frac{\partial a_{jt}^*}{\partial (P_iZ_t)} = \frac{\theta_{jt}}{\kappa + \chi}, \quad (7)$$

differentiating with respect to the mechanism shifters yields

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial E_{jt}} \left(\frac{\partial a_{jt}^*}{\partial (P_iZ_t)} \right) = \frac{\theta_1}{\kappa + \chi}, \quad \frac{\partial}{\partial L_i} \left(\frac{\partial a_{jt}^*}{\partial (P_iZ_t)} \right) = \frac{\theta_2}{\kappa + \chi}, \quad \frac{\partial}{\partial I_j} \left(\frac{\partial a_{jt}^*}{\partial (P_iZ_t)} \right) = \frac{\theta_3}{\kappa + \chi}. \quad (8)$$

Equation (6) can be interpreted as the level of legislator responsiveness to Polonia activation. It shows how much legislator j 's political supply changes when activation in district i increases. Equation (8), by contrast, describes how the mechanism shifters affect this responsiveness. Electoral pressure, organizational embeddedness, and identity-based familiarity therefore operate by increasing the slope of the legislator's response to Polonia activation, rather than as separate direct effects on political supply.

4.3 Observed behavioral outcomes

The model does not propose a hierarchy between speeches and roll-call votes. Both are treated as observable manifestations of the same latent variable. Speeches capture agenda attention and symbolic responsiveness, while roll-call behavior captures ideological alignment in legislative decisions. We are, therefore, agnostic as to whether activation should be stronger in speeches or votes. The model only predicts that both responses should move in the same direction when Poland-related salience rises.

First, let the Poland-related congressional speech intensity be

$$s_{jt} = \alpha_j + \delta_t + \phi a_{jt}^* + \eta_{jt}, \quad \phi > 0, \quad (9)$$

where s_{jt} captures the intensity of Poland-related floor speech by legislator j in period t , α_j captures legislator-specific effects, δ_t absorbs common period shocks, and η_{jt} is an idiosyncratic disturbance term.

Replacing optimal political supply in the speech equation yields

$$s_{jt} = \alpha_j + \delta_t + \frac{\phi}{\kappa + \chi} (\theta_{jt} P_i Z_t + \chi \bar{a}_{pt}) + \eta_{jt}, \quad (10)$$

so that

$$\frac{\partial s_{jt}}{\partial (P_i Z_t)} = \frac{\phi \theta_{jt}}{\kappa + \chi} > 0. \quad (11)$$

Second, let the legislator's conservative vote ranking be

$$c_{jt} = \mu_j + \tau_t + \lambda a_{jt}^* + \varepsilon_{jt}, \quad \lambda > 0, \quad (12)$$

where c_{jt} is legislator j 's conservative voting rank in period t , measured from roll-call behavior; μ_j and τ_t denote legislator and period effects; λ maps latent political supply into observed ideological alignment; and ε_{jt} is an idiosyncratic error term.

Using optimal political supply, the conservative-ranking equation becomes

$$c_{jt} = \mu_j + \tau_t + \frac{\lambda}{\kappa + \chi} (\theta_{jt} P_i Z_t + \chi \bar{a}_{pt}) + \varepsilon_{jt}, \quad (13)$$

which implies

$$\frac{\partial c_{jt}}{\partial(P_i Z_t)} = \frac{\lambda \theta_{jt}}{\kappa + \chi} > 0. \quad (14)$$

Thus, when Poland becomes more salient, legislators from districts with larger Polish diaspora populations move upward in conservative vote rankings.

Proposition 1 (Legislative responses to activation) *When Poland becomes more salient, legislators from districts with higher Polonia density speak more about Poland and move upward in conservative vote rankings:*

$$\frac{\partial s_{jt}}{\partial(P_i Z_t)} > 0, \quad \frac{\partial c_{jt}}{\partial(P_i Z_t)} > 0. \quad (15)$$

Proof. Replacing optimal political supply in the speech equation yields

$$s_{jt} = \alpha_j + \delta_t + \frac{\phi}{\kappa + \chi} (\theta_{jt} P_i Z_t + \chi \bar{a}_{pt}) + \eta_{jt},$$

so

$$\frac{\partial s_{jt}}{\partial(P_i Z_t)} = \frac{\phi \theta_{jt}}{\kappa + \chi} > 0$$

because $\phi > 0$. Likewise, replacing optimal political supply in the conservative-ranking equation yields

$$c_{jt} = \mu_j + \tau_t + \frac{\lambda}{\kappa + \chi} (\theta_{jt} P_i Z_t + \chi \bar{a}_{pt}) + \varepsilon_{jt},$$

so

$$\frac{\partial c_{jt}}{\partial(P_i Z_t)} = \frac{\lambda \theta_{jt}}{\kappa + \chi} > 0$$

because $\lambda > 0$. This proves (15). ■

4.4 Electoral implications

Reelection enters the framework as an electoral implication of activation-induced responsiveness rather than as the primary objective of the legislator. Suppose that, when the Polish issue becomes activated, voters place greater weight on the ideological alignment of an incumbent with that issue.

The model assumes that activation of the relevant Polonia-linked preference has weakly positive electoral returns for legislators who align with that preference. It abstracts from possible backfire effects, whereby such responsiveness could alienate voters with different preferences. The electoral implication is therefore conditional on the activated constituency being electorally significant relative to the broader district electorate.

Let the reelection probability of an incumbent be

$$R_{j,t+1} = \Lambda(\Gamma_j + \rho A_{it} c_{jt}), \quad \rho > 0, \quad (16)$$

where Γ_j captures baseline incumbent strength, ρ measures the electoral sensitivity of reelection prospects to activation-weighted ideological alignment, $A_{it} = P_i Z_t$ denotes district-level activation,

c_{jt} is the incumbent's conservative vote ranking, and $\Lambda(x) = \frac{e^x}{1+e^x}$ is the logistic cdf. Then

$$\frac{\partial R_{j,t+1}}{\partial c_{jt}} = \rho A_{it} \Lambda(\Gamma_j + \rho A_{it} c_{jt}) [1 - \Lambda(\Gamma_j + \rho A_{it} c_{jt})] > 0 \quad \text{for } A_{it} > 0. \quad (17)$$

Thus, conditional on activation, stronger conservative alignment improves reelection prospects.

At the district level, the same activation mechanism can be extended to the Republican vote share. Let

$$V_{it} = \beta_i + \gamma_t + \omega_1 A_{it} + \omega_2 A_{it} \bar{c}_{it} + u_{it}, \quad (18)$$

where V_{it} is Republican vote share in district i , β_i and γ_t are district and period effects, $\bar{c}_{it}$ denotes average conservative alignment in the district, ω_1 measures the direct contribution of district-level activation to Republican vote share, ω_2 captures the extent to which activation is amplified through conservative ideological alignment in the district, and u_{it} is an error term. Using $A_{it} = P_i Z_t$, this becomes

$$V_{it} = \beta_i + \gamma_t + \omega_1 P_i Z_t + \omega_2 P_i Z_t \bar{c}_{it} + u_{it}. \quad (19)$$

Hence,

$$\frac{\partial V_{it}}{\partial (P_i Z_t)} = \omega_1 + \omega_2 \bar{c}_{it}, \quad (20)$$

which is positive if $\omega_1, \omega_2 > 0$.

Proposition 2 (Electoral rewards of activation) *If voters place greater electoral weight on ideological responsiveness when the Polish issue is activated, then activation-induced increases in conservative ranking improve incumbent reelection prospects:*

$$\frac{\partial R_{j,t+1}}{\partial c_{jt}} > 0 \quad \text{for } A_{it} > 0, \quad \frac{\partial R_{j,t+1}}{\partial (P_i Z_t)} > 0. \quad (21)$$

At the aggregate level, the same activation mechanism raises Republican vote share in districts with higher Polonia density:

$$\frac{\partial V_{it}}{\partial (P_i Z_t)} > 0. \quad (22)$$

Proof. From the reelection equation,

$$R_{j,t+1} = \Lambda(\Gamma_j + \rho A_{it} c_{jt}),$$

we obtain

$$\frac{\partial R_{j,t+1}}{\partial c_{jt}} = \rho A_{it} \Lambda(\Gamma_j + \rho A_{it} c_{jt}) [1 - \Lambda(\Gamma_j + \rho A_{it} c_{jt})] > 0 \quad \text{for } A_{it} > 0.$$

By Proposition 1,

$$\frac{\partial c_{jt}}{\partial (P_i Z_t)} > 0.$$

Applying the chain rule gives

$$\frac{\partial R_{j,t+1}}{\partial (P_i Z_t)} > 0.$$

For district-level Republican vote share, equation (20) gives

$$\frac{\partial V_{it}}{\partial (P_i Z_t)} = \omega_1 + \omega_2 \bar{c}_{it} > 0$$

whenever $\omega_1, \omega_2 > 0$. This proves (21) and (22). ■

4.5 Testable Implications

The model generates several testable implications, as visualized in Figure 2. First, legislators representing districts with a higher share of Polish ancestry are more likely to increase the intensity of Poland-related floor speeches during windows of high Poland-related media salience. Second, legislators representing districts with a higher share of Polish ancestry are more likely to shift toward more conservative roll call voting behavior during windows of high Poland-related media salience. Third, the effect of Poland-related media salience is higher on foreign policy-, defense- and human rights-related roll call votes rather than on those focusing on domestic economic management. Fourth, legislators who are responsive to the latent preferences of their respective constituencies increase their reelection probability and their district vote share. Finally, while the voting behavior of legislators is theoretically shaped by electoral pressure, organizational density, and identity, the use of legislator fixed effects indicates that the main driver of the response is latent constituent preferences rather than time-invariant characteristics of the legislators themselves.

5 Empirical Analysis

5.1 Data

In this section, we introduce and describe the relevant variables used in this paper. For details on all datasets and sources used throughout this paper, see Section .1 in the appendix. We provide descriptive statistics for all important variables in Table A1.

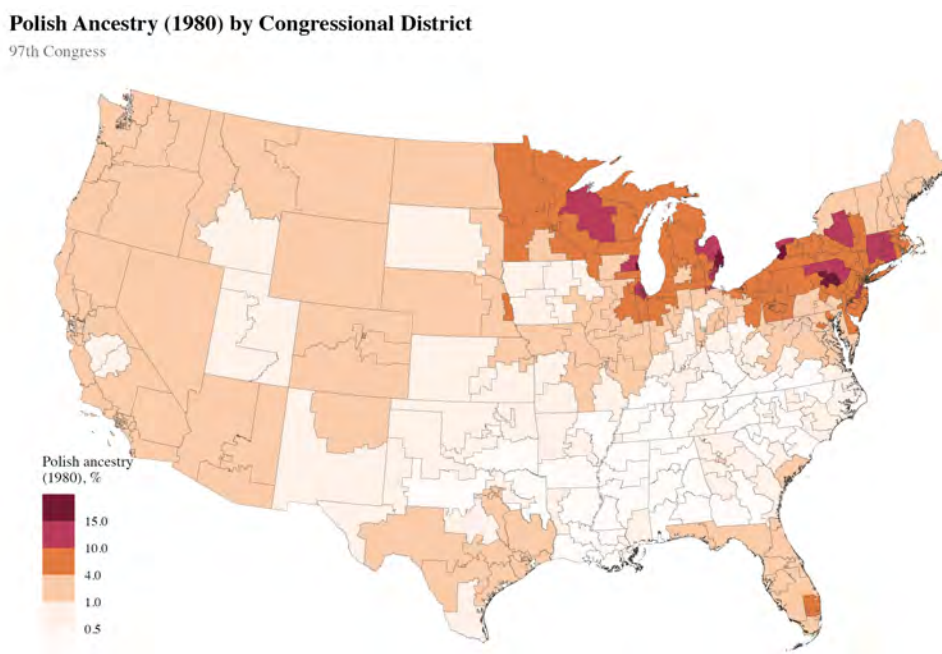
5.1.1 Administrative Data

We identify Polonia using two distinct measures. First, we use the share of the population reporting Polish ancestry, utilizing the 1980 American Community Survey. For the main measure, we use the multiple ancestry table, which counts individuals who reported Polish as either their first or second ancestry. Alternatively, we use the single-ancestry measure, which is available for more countries. Both measures are retrieved from NHGIS. We follow the procedure of Ferrara, Testa, and Zhou (2024) to crosswalk 1980 county-level information to 1970 county boundaries. We then crosswalk to congressional districts of the 93rd-97th Congresses using 1970 county boundaries, and to the 98th-101st Congresses using 1980 county boundaries.

Figure 3 shows the share of Polish ancestry by congressional district in the 97th Congress. Polish ancestry in 1980 was heavily concentrated in the industrial Midwest and the Northeast. In 1980, the 5 states with the biggest Polish populations were New York, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and New Jersey. The Great Lake region shows a continuous belt of high-polish ancestry, from Chicago through Detroit, Cleveland, and Buffalo. Outside this core region, there exist pockets of Polonia in Minnesota, Nebraska, Florida, and Texas (likely the area around the oldest Polish settlement in the United States, Panna Maria).

Figure A1 shows this by counties. Figure A4 presents a correlation matrix of different ancestry groups at the congressional district level. Second, we use the share of the population born in Poland from the 1970 and 1980 censuses, crosswalked accordingly, and also retrieved from NHGIS. Figure A3 shows the distribution of the Polish-born population share by congressional district. Figure A2 shows this by counties. Figure A5 presents a correlation matrix with other foreign-born population shares.

Figure 3: Share of Polish Ancestry: Congressional Districts 97th Congress



Note: The map shows the share of the population reporting Polish ancestry in the 1980 Census (multiple ancestry measure) by congressional district, for the 97th Congress (1981–1983). District boundaries are drawn from the 97th Congress shapefiles. State boundaries are overlaid in black. The Polish ancestry share is constructed from NHGIS STF3 table DG1 at the county level and crosswalked to congressional districts following the methodology of Ferrara, Testa, and Zhou (2024). Hawaii and Alaska are excluded.

5.1.2 Speeches

Gentzkow et al. (2018) provide parsed full-text speeches and detailed metadata from the U.S. Congressional Record (bound and daily editions). After importing and cleaning the raw text files, we restrict the sample to the 93rd to the 101st Congress (1973-1991) and to speeches of at least 20 words to exclude brief mentions, interruptions, and procedural interjections without substantive content. We then tag each speech with keyword dummies indicating whether it contains words related to Poland, the Cold War, or placebo topics. Finally, we merge speaker metadata with congressional district demographics and link each speech to the media salience measures corresponding to its date. The final dataset contains 602,252 speeches with a mean word count of 255 words. Overall, 0.41% of all speeches contained the word *Poland*. For comparison, 0.96% contained the word *Germany*, 0.9% oil price-related key words, 1.2% *Israel*, and 4.2% *Soviet*. In Figure A6, we show the distribution of the share of speeches mentioning Poland relative to the total number of speeches and the Poland newspaper salience.

5.1.3 Roll Calls

We combine congressional roll-call voting data from the 93rd to the 101st Congresses (1973 to 1991) with district-level demographic characteristics and time-varying measures of Poland-related salience, as described in the next subsection.

We build a database combining member ideology, congressional votes (roll calls), and member votes from Voteview. This dataset contains legislator IDs, states, districts, Congress number, party affiliation, name, chamber, and birth year. We then use this data to calculate the main outcome of interest: a conservative or hawkish vote indicator. For this, we use the NOMINATE score from Voteview to identify the three most conservative members in each Congress. NOMINATE assumes that members maintain a static ideological position throughout their careers. For the 97th Congress, for example, these are Lawrence Patton McDonald (D), Ronald Ernest Paul (R), and Daniel Bever Crane (R). We calculate a conservative majority direction if at least two of the three anchors voted the same way on a bill, and use it to indicate whether a given legislator voted conservatively on that bill. Table A6 shows the conservative anchor validation for each congress. In the 97th Congress, the three most conservative members have an average NOMINATE score of 0.83, while the most liberal member, Mervyn Dymally, scores -0.69 . At least two anchors voted on 96% of all roll calls, and all three agreed on 76.3% of those. By comparison, Mervyn Dymally voted opposite to the conservative anchor majority in 63.4% of cases. Additionally, we construct a complementary liberal or dovish vote outcome variable using foreign policy ideal-point scores, following Jeong (2018). We take the bottom decile of Jeong scores per congress and define the dovish direction on each roll call as whichever way the majority of those members voted. The advantage of foreign policy-based scores is that they correctly place anti-interventionist libertarians who may score high on the general conservative scale but behave differently when rated on foreign policy votes specifically.

We follow a common approach and focus only on final passage votes in our main empirical

specifications. The link between constituency preferences and legislative outcomes is clearer for final passage votes, as voting on amendments is often more strategic and less reflective of constituency interests (Brey, 2024; Conconi et al., 2014; Facchini & Steinhardt, 2011). We identify final passage votes using the PIPC Roll Call Dataset provided by Jason et al. (2026). Additionally, since we use roll-call fixed effects in our main specifications, we restrict the sample to contested votes. We define contested votes as roll calls in which the minority side accounts for at least 10% of recorded votes, following Jason et al. (2026). This restriction is to avoid perfect collinearity in unanimous votes. We further use the Clausen codes to divide votes into five substantive categories: government management, foreign and defense policy, social welfare, civil liberties, and agriculture. We plot the distribution of total roll calls and by category over time in Figure A7.

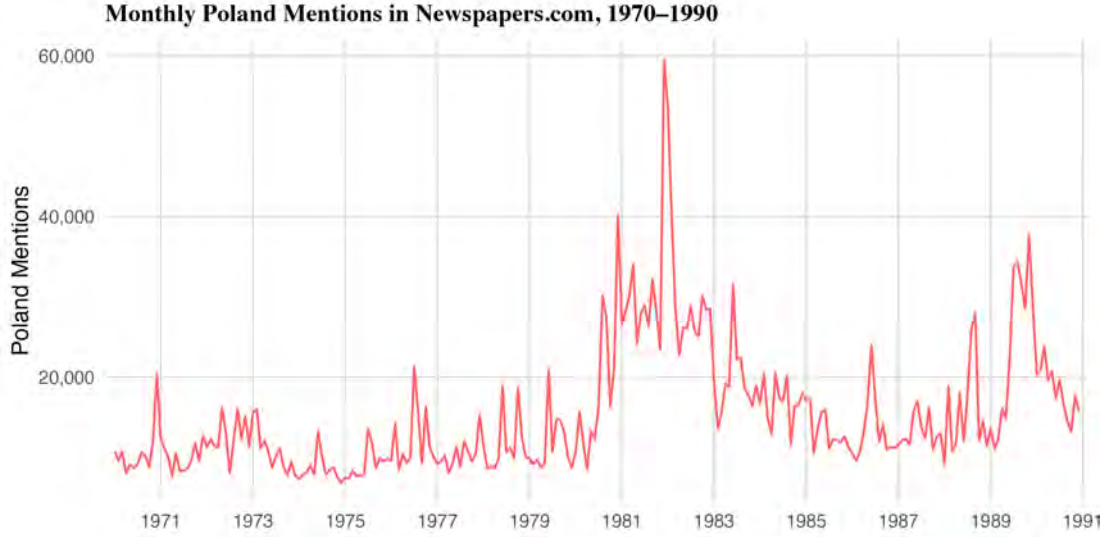
5.1.4 Salience

We use several indicators of newspaper coverage to measure public salience in the United States. For our main measure, we count monthly keyword mentions in newspaper articles from 1970 to 1990, sourced from Newspapers.com. Figure 4 shows these mentions of Poland. In the 1970s, Poland received a relatively constant level of Salience in US media. While salience remained relatively constant, certain events produced significant spikes. Those spikes reflect, for example, the December 1970 protests in Poland, the June 1976 protests, the election of Pope John Paul II in October 1978, and the first visit to Poland in June 1979. Coverage of Poland began to increase sharply during the Solidarity crisis in 1981, reaching up to 60,000 monthly mentions after the martial law declaration in December 1981. While declining afterward, salience still shows recurring spikes, for example, around the 1983 Nobel Peace Prize for Lech Wałęsa or the second papal visit to Poland. The fall of communism and the Round Table agreement in Poland are again reflected in higher salience around 1990.

We then use these monthly counts to calculate a global monthly mean for the 1970s and 1980s, which defines high-salience months, as shown in Figure A8. We also calculate the mean number of Poland mentions per congress to identify high-salience months within each congress, shown in Figure A9. We construct lead and lag measures by giving each month the salience value of the prior or following month. For votes cast in month t , the contemporaneous measure captures salience in that month, the lag $(t - 1)$ reflects the prior month, and the lead $(t + 1)$ the following month. A null effect at $t + 1$ serves as a time placebo, as legislators should be able to react to salience that has not yet occurred. This helps to rule out reverse causality and anticipation effects.

As an alternative, we use the ProQuest library, which gives access to daily and monthly mentions from four major U.S. newspapers: The New York Times, the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, and the Wall Street Journal. The ProQuest and Newspapers.com collections are highly correlated, with a correlation coefficient of 0.953. Using ProQuest, we collected daily mentions of Poland from 1970 to 1990 and aggregated them by week. We also collected placebo measures with the following categories: A) Cold War salience (Soviet Union, Communism, Socialism, and the Cold War); B) Alternative countries (Ireland, a Scandinavia composite [Norway, Denmark,

Figure 4: Poland Salience: Raw Measure



Note: The figure shows the absolute monthly count of newspaper articles mentioning *Poland* across all newspapers indexed on Newspapers.com, from January 1970 to December 1990.

Sweden], Germany, and Italy); C) Other world events (the Pope, oil prices, and Israel); D) Dates of major sports events as binary monthly dummies (Super Bowl, Olympics, NBA Finals, FIFA World Cup). Figure A12 shows these placebo salience categories. Salience is shown using z-scores. Panels A, B, and C also display *Poland salience* for comparison.

5.2 Empirical Framework

5.2.1 Speech Analysis

We start our analysis of legislators' behavior by examining whether legislators from districts with higher Polish ancestry respond more strongly to increases in Poland-related public salience by speaking more about Poland in the House. For this, we run the following baseline specification:

$$\text{PolandTopic}_{ist} = \beta (\text{PolishShare}_i \times \text{PolandSalience}_t) + \alpha_t + \mu_i + \varepsilon_{ist}. \quad (23)$$

The dependent variable, PolandTopic_{ist} , is a binary indicator equal to one if legislator i 's speech s in month t contains Poland-related keywords, and zero otherwise. PolishShare_i measures the share of Polish ancestry in the congressional district of legislator i . PolandSalience_t is a monthly measure of U.S. newspaper mentions of Poland-related terms in the month in which a speech was held. The model includes month-year fixed effects (α_t), which absorb all characteristics specific to a given month, and legislator fixed effects (μ_i), which control for time-invariant member traits such as ideology, party affiliation, and congressional district characteristics. Since PolishShare_i is

constant within a legislator⁵, it is absorbed by μ_i ; similarly, PolandSaliency $_t$ is constant within a month and absorbed by α_t . We cluster standard errors by month and legislator.

We also include a second specification to assess the dynamics of this relationship and test for anticipation effects or persistence. For this purpose, we calculate lags and leads in salience and estimate the following specification:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{PolandTopic}_{ist} = & \beta_{t+1} (\text{PolishShare}_i \times \text{PolandSaliency}_{t+1}) \\ & + \beta_{t=0} (\text{PolishShare}_i \times \text{PolandSaliency}_t) \\ & + \beta_{t-1} (\text{PolishShare}_i \times \text{PolandSaliency}_{t-1}) \\ & + \alpha_t + \mu_i + \varepsilon_{ist}. \end{aligned} \tag{24}$$

Here $\beta_{t=0}$ remains the contemporaneous effect of interest. β_{t+1} tests whether current speech content reacts to salience in the future. This serves as a placebo test, since legislators should normally not be able to anticipate future salience. β_{t-1} tests whether the salience in the month prior to the vote shapes voting behavior, capturing potential persistence or delayed responses.

Unless stated otherwise, we use the scaled share of the population with any stated Polish ancestry as a measure of Polonia, and the global above-mean salience months as a measure of *Poland salience*.

5.2.2 Roll Call Vote Analysis

To examine whether legislators from districts with higher Polish ancestry respond more strongly to increases in Poland-related public salience, we follow a similar methodological approach as in Feigenbaum et al. (2025) or Elliott et al. (2023) and we estimate the following specification at the legislator and bill level:

$$\text{ConservativeVote}_{irt} = \beta (\text{PolishShare}_i \times \text{PolandSaliency}_t) + \alpha_t + \mu_i + \varepsilon_{irt}. \tag{25}$$

The dependent variable, $\text{ConservativeVote}_{irt}$, is a binary indicator equal to one if legislator i 's vote on roll call r in month t matches the conservative anchors, and zero otherwise. PolishShare_i measures the share of Polish ancestry in the congressional district of legislator i . PolandSaliency_t is a monthly measure of U.S. newspaper mentions of Poland-related terms in the month in which a roll call was held. The model includes month-year fixed effects (α_t), which absorb month-specific and time-trend effects, and legislator fixed effects (μ_i), which control for time-invariant member traits such as ideology, party affiliation, and congressional district characteristics. Since PolishShare_i is constant within legislators, it is fully absorbed by μ_i ; similarly, PolandSaliency_t is constant within a month and absorbed by α_t . We cluster standard errors by month-year and legislator.

⁵Technically, the share of Polonia in a congressional district can change across congresses due to changing district borders and gerrymandering. When tested empirically, however, redistricting-induced variation in the Polonia share within legislators is negligible. The estimated coefficients are nearly identical with and without the main effect of Polonia share. We therefore keep our main specification as described.

Therefore, identification comes from within-legislator changes over time. This involves comparing how the voting behavior of a legislator varies across months with different levels of Polish salience. Additionally, it determines whether this responsiveness is stronger for legislators representing constituencies with larger Polish ancestry populations.

To assess the dynamics of this relationship and test for anticipation effects or persistence, we estimate a leads-and-lags specification:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{ConservativeVote}_{irt} = & \beta_{t+1} (\text{PolishShare}_i \times \text{PolandSalience}_{t+1}) \\ & + \beta_{t=0} (\text{PolishShare}_i \times \text{PolandSalience}_t) \\ & + \beta_{t-1} (\text{PolishShare}_i \times \text{PolandSalience}_{t-1}) \\ & + \alpha_t + \mu_i + \varepsilon_{irt}. \end{aligned} \tag{26}$$

Here $\beta_{t=0}$ remains the contemporaneous effect of interest. β_{t+1} tests whether current voting responds to future salience. β_{t-1} tests whether the salience in the month prior to the vote shapes voting behavior, capturing potential persistence or delayed responses.

Unless stated otherwise, we restrict votes to final passage and contested votes, as defined earlier, in all specifications, use the scaled share of the population with any Polish ancestry as a measure of Polonia, and the global above-mean salience months as a measure of *Poland salience*.

6 Results

6.1 Congressional Speech Analysis

We present initial results from a simple OLS regression in Table 1. The outcome is a dummy variable indicating whether a speech mentions Poland. In columns (1) to (4), we consecutively add covariates, and in column (5), we report the baseline specification as presented in equation 23. The results show that both the share of Polish ancestry in the district of a legislator and the media salience of Poland are positively associated with the probability that a speech mentions Poland. Column (5) shows that when including two-way fixed effects, the interaction term remains positive and statistically significant. In Table 2, we extend the analysis by demonstrating that the interaction term is robust to alternative measures of ancestry and salience. In Table 3 we present the results of the lead-lag specification as described in equation 24. The results are consistent with the baseline: the contemporaneous coefficient $t = 0$ is positive and statistically significant across all specifications, while the lagged coefficient $t = -1$ is significant only in some specifications. The placebo lead coefficient is not significant in any specification, consistent with the absence of anticipation effects.

Then, we use the baseline specification to run three types of placebo tests: (i) placebo ancestry shares, (ii) placebo salience series, and (iii) placebo speech outcome variables. We begin by extending the baseline with *PlaceboAncestry* $\times$ *PolandSalience* interactions alongside the main *Polonia* $\times$ *PolandSalience* interactions in Table A2. Across all seven placebo ancestries, the Poland

Table 1: Polonia, Salience, and Poland Speeches

	Poland Topic				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Constant	0.0042*** (0.0005)	0.0022*** (0.0003)	0.0022*** (0.0003)	-0.0162*** (0.0021)	
Polonia share	0.0023*** (0.0005)	0.0023*** (0.0005)	0.0013*** (0.0003)	0.0012*** (0.0003)	0.0009 (0.0048)
Poland salience		0.0048*** (0.0009)	0.0048*** (0.0009)	0.0045*** (0.0009)	
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience			0.0023*** (0.0007)	0.0023*** (0.0007)	0.0019*** (0.0006)
Male				-0.0003 (0.0010)	
Republican				0.0002 (0.0006)	
Log speech length				0.0039*** (0.0004)	
# Legislator	—	—	—	—	994
# Month-Year	—	—	—	—	202
Observations	548,063	548,063	548,063	548,063	548,063
R ²	0.00127	0.00263	0.00294	0.00775	0.02020
Within R ²					0.00018
Legislator fixed effects					✓
Month-Year fixed effects					✓

Notes: The outcome variable Poland is a binary indicator equal to one if a congressional floor speech mentions Poland. Polonia share is the congressional district-level share of residents reporting any Polish ancestry (1980 Census), standardized to mean zero and unit standard deviation. High salience is a dummy equal to one if monthly Poland mentions on Newspapers.com exceed the full-period mean. Column (1) regresses the Poland speech indicator on Polonia share alone. Column (2) adds the salience dummy. Column (3) adds the interaction between Polonia share and salience. Column (4) further controls for speaker gender, party, and log speech length. Column (5) replaces the controls with legislator and month fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and month level are reported in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. Sample: House speeches of republican and democratic voting legislators in the 93-101 Congress with at least 20 words.

Table 2: Polonia, Salience, and Poland Speeches (Variation in Salience and Polonia Measures)

	Poland Topic			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience	0.0019*** (0.0006)	0.0017*** (0.0005)	0.0012* (0.0006)	0.0011** (0.0004)
# Legislator	994	994	992	992
# Month-Year	202	202	202	202
Observations	548,063	548,063	546,407	546,407
R ²	0.02020	0.02046	0.02012	0.02022
Within R ²	0.00017	0.00044	6.69×10^{-5}	0.00017
Ancestry measure	Self-reported	Self-reported	Foreign-born	Foreign-born
Salience measure	Global dummy	Raw counts/10k	Global dummy	Raw counts/10k
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Poland is a binary indicator equal to one if a speech mentions Poland. Columns (1) and (2) use the self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census, standardized); columns (3) and (4) use the foreign-born share (standardized). Odd columns interact the ancestry measure with a global high-salience dummy; even columns use continuous monthly mention counts scaled to 10,000. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and month level are reported in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. Sample: House speeches of republican and democratic voting legislators in the 93-101 Congress with at least 20 words.

interaction remains consistently positive and statistically significant, while none of the placebo ancestry interactions produce relevant or statistically significant coefficients. Next, we replace *PolandSalience* with alternative salience series and present the results in Table A3. Again, no interaction coefficients between placebo salience and Polonia yield significant or relevant coefficients. Finally, in Table A4 we re-estimate the baseline model replacing the Poland speech dummy with alternative topic flags, and find no consistent or significant patterns across any of the placebo outcomes.

Table 3: Polonia, Salience, and Poland Speeches (Lead and Lag Model)

	Poland Topic					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience (t)	0.0014*** (0.0005)	0.0015*** (0.0005)	0.0008 (0.0005)	0.0009* (0.0005)	0.0011** (0.0004)	0.0008 (0.0005)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience ($t - 1$)	0.0009** (0.0004)	0.0005 (0.0006)	0.0008 (0.0006)	0.0005 (0.0004)	0.0001 (0.0005)	0.0005 (0.0004)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience ($t + 1$)	-0.0001 (0.0005)	0.0000 (0.0005)	0.0000 (0.0005)	-0.0001 (0.0004)	-0.0001 (0.0004)	-0.0001 (0.0004)
# Legislator	994	994	994	992	992	992
# Month-Year	202	202	190	202	202	190
Observations	548,063	548,063	529,619	546,407	546,407	528,071
R ²	0.02023	0.02047	0.02040	0.02013	0.02022	0.02039
Within R ²	0.00020	0.00045	7.83×10^{-5}	7.58×10^{-5}	0.00017	4.41×10^{-5}
Ancestry measure	Self-reported	Self-reported	Self-reported	Foreign-born	Foreign-born	Foreign-born
Salience measure	Global dummy	Raw counts/10k	Within-congress	Global dummy	Raw counts/10k	Within-congress
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Poland is a binary indicator equal to one if a speech mentions Poland. Each specification includes interactions with salience in $t = 0$, $t = -1$, and $t = 1$, with $t = 0$ being the month in which a speech was held. Columns (1)-(3) use the self-reported multiple ancestry share; columns (4)-(6) use the foreign-born share (standardized). Salience is operationalized as a global high-salience dummy in columns (1) and (4), continuous monthly mention counts scaled to 10,000 in columns (2) and (5), and a within-congress high-salience dummy in columns (3) and (6). Standard errors clustered at the legislator and month level are reported in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Sample: House speeches of republican and democratic voting legislators in the 93-101 Congress with at least 20 words.

We proceed by examining a specific case of a sharp, exogenous spike in media salience around Poland: the declaration of martial law on December 13, 1981. Figure A11 panel (a) shows monthly salience around the event. The figure confirms relatively stable salience levels in the months prior to the declaration, with no anticipatory movements. Salience peaked in December 1981 and subsequently declined, reaching a stable level by around March 1982. We define high-Polish-ancestry districts as those with a z-score for Polish ancestry share ≥ 1 . We then estimate an event study using Poland speech mentions as the outcome, with legislator and month fixed effects. The results, presented in panel (b) of Figure A11, show that legislators from high Polish-ancestry districts dramatically increased Poland-related floor speeches following the martial law shock, consistent with the baseline results. However, interpreting this event study requires caution. The martial law declaration on December 13, 1981, coincided with the congressional winter recess, resulting in substantially fewer floor speeches in January 1982. An alternative quasi-experimental design exploiting the discontinuous rise in salience around the Gdańsk shipyard strike of August 14, 1980, faces a similar limitation, as the House was in summer recess at the time of the strike.

6.2 Roll Call Analysis

In Table 4, we present the build-up setup for the main results, where we continuously introduce the individual variables, including controls, leading up to our baseline specification in column (5). Subsequently, Table 5 presents the baseline results based on equation 25, with variations of ancestry and salience measures, thereby demonstrating the stability of the coefficients. This analysis covers 988/986 legislators and 1,713 roll calls in 193 month-years, yielding 722,334/718,882 observations. Across all four specifications, the coefficient for the interaction term is positive and statistically significant. Specifically, a legislator representing a district with Polish ancestry one standard deviation higher is 1.32 percentage points more likely to vote conservatively on a given roll call, but only during months when Poland is prominently covered in the press.

Table 4: Polonia, Salience, and Conservative Voting

	Conservative Vote				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Polonia share	-0.0604*** (0.0080)	-0.0605*** (0.0080)	-0.0654*** (0.0083)	-0.0195*** (0.0036)	-0.0295 (0.0352)
Poland salience		-0.0120 (0.0104)	-0.0119 (0.0104)	-0.0293*** (0.0095)	
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience			0.0133*** (0.0047)	0.0175*** (0.0034)	0.0133*** (0.0031)
Republican				-0.1195*** (0.0161)	
Ideology score				0.7559*** (0.0253)	
# Legislator	—	—	—	—	988
# Month-Year	—	—	—	—	193
Observations	722,334	722,334	722,334	722,334	722,334
R ²	0.01578	0.01592	0.01610	0.19534	0.23828
Within R ²					0.00021
Legislator fixed effects					✓
Month-Year fixed effects					✓

Notes: The outcome variable Conservative Vote is a binary indicator equal to one if a legislator voted like the conservative anchor majority. Polonia share is the congressional district-level share of residents reporting any Polish ancestry (1980 Census), standardized to mean zero and unit standard deviation. High salience is a dummy equal to one if monthly Poland mentions on Newspapers.com exceed the full-period mean. Column (1) regresses the conservative vote indicator on Polonia share alone. Column (2) adds the salience dummy. Column (3) adds the interaction between Polonia share and salience. Column (4) further controls for speaker ideology and political party. Column (5) replaces the controls with legislator and month fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and month level are reported in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Sample: All final passage roll call votes that were not near unanimous in the House of Representatives during the 93rd-101st Congress.

We extend the analysis by introducing lag and lead terms, as described in equation 26. Table 6 presents the results for two ancestry measures and all three salience measures. A clear pattern emerges: while salience at $t = 0$ is significant in some specifications, the coefficient at $t = -1$ is consistently positive and highly statistically significant across all six specifications.

Using Clausen codes, we conduct a heterogeneity analysis by major content groups of votes. Table 7 shows the results for different subsamples. The contemporaneous effect ($t = 0$) is primarily

Table 5: Polonia, Salience, and Conservative Voting

	Conservative Vote			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience	0.0132*** (0.0031)	0.0071*** (0.0023)	0.0160*** (0.0036)	0.0084*** (0.0025)
# Legislator	988	988	986	986
# Month-Year	193	193	193	193
Observations	722,334	722,334	718,882	718,882
R ²	0.23827	0.23823	0.23904	0.23899
Within R ²	0.00020	0.00015	0.00028	0.00023
Ancestry measure	Self-reported	Self-reported	Foreign-born	Foreign-born
Salience measure	Global dummy	Raw counts/10k	Global dummy	Raw counts/10k
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Conservative Vote is a binary indicator equal to one if a legislator voted like the conservative anchor majority. Columns (1) and (2) use the self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census); columns (3) and (4) use the foreign-born share (1970 and 1980 Census). Odd columns interact the ancestry measure with a global high-salience dummy; even columns use continuous monthly mention counts scaled to 10,000. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and roll call level are reported in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. Sample: All final passage roll call votes that were not near unanimous in the House of Representatives during the 93rd-101st Congress.

driven by the *Foreign and Defense Policy* subsample, while the lagged effect ($t = -1$) is most pronounced in *Civil Liberties*. No meaningful or significant effects are observed for *Government Management* or *Social Welfare*.

Table 6: Polonia, Salience, and Conservative Voting (Lead and Lag Model)

	Conservative Vote					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience (t)	0.0106*** (0.0037)	0.0009 (0.0033)	0.0051* (0.0030)	0.0120*** (0.0042)	0.0014 (0.0040)	0.0039 (0.0035)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience ($t - 1$)	0.0080** (0.0033)	0.0126*** (0.0033)	0.0077*** (0.0029)	0.0092** (0.0038)	0.0116*** (0.0039)	0.0069** (0.0033)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience ($t + 1$)	-0.0030 (0.0033)	-0.0024 (0.0025)	-0.0061** (0.0031)	-0.0015 (0.0037)	-0.0008 (0.0029)	-0.0039 (0.0034)
# Legislator	988	988	988	986	986	986
# Month-Year	193	193	185	193	193	185
Observations	722,334	722,334	697,142	718,882	718,882	693,863
R ²	0.23831	0.23838	0.23812	0.23909	0.23912	0.23877
Within R ²	0.00026	0.00034	0.00013	0.00035	0.00040	8.53×10^{-5}
Ancestry measure	Self-reported	Self-reported	Self-reported	Foreign-born	Foreign-born	Foreign-born
Salience measure	Global dummy	Raw counts/10k	Within-congress	Global dummy	Raw counts/10k	Within-congress
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Conservative Vote is a binary indicator equal to one if a legislator voted like the conservative anchor majority. Columns (1)–(3) use the self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census); columns (4)–(6) use the foreign-born share (1970 and 1980 Census). Each specification includes the interaction at t , $t - 1$ and $t + 1$, with t being the month where the roll call is being held. Columns (1) and (4) interact the ancestry measure with a global high-salience dummy; columns (2) and (5) use continuous monthly mention counts per 10,000; columns (3) and (6) use a within-congress high-salience dummy. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and roll call level are reported in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. Sample: All final passage roll call votes that were not near unanimous in the House of Representatives during the 93rd–101st Congress.

For our last main results, we introduce party affiliation as a third interaction term in Table A7. Both interactions remain statistically significant, with the triple interaction coefficient being higher for Republican members of Congress in column (2). In columns (3) and (4), we run the regressions separately on Republican and Democrat subsets and confirm both effects are positive and statistically significant, with the effect in the Republican subset being slightly larger.

Table 7: Polonia, Salience, and Conservative Voting (Topic Heterogeneity: Clausen Classification)

	Conservative Vote				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Polonia $\times$ Salience (t)	0.0106*** (0.0037)	0.0072 (0.0047)	0.0220*** (0.0081)	0.0103 (0.0088)	0.0128 (0.0151)
Polonia $\times$ Salience ($t - 1$)	0.0080** (0.0033)	0.0061 (0.0043)	0.0035 (0.0071)	0.0085 (0.0084)	0.0314** (0.0122)
Polonia $\times$ Salience ($t + 1$)	-0.0030 (0.0033)	0.0013 (0.0041)	-0.0004 (0.0071)	-0.0073 (0.0076)	0.0110 (0.0159)
# Legislator	988	988	987	988	975
# Month-Year	193	175	137	123	55
Observations	722,334	409,776	129,123	94,047	27,027
R ²	0.23831	0.25578	0.28413	0.44912	0.39720
Within R ²	0.00026	0.00018	0.00060	0.00036	0.00286
Vote topic	All votes	Government Mgmt.	Foreign & Defense	Social Welfare	Civil Liberties
Coding system	—	Clausen	Clausen	Clausen	Clausen
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Conservative Vote is a binary indicator equal to one if a legislator voted like the conservative anchor majority. All specifications use the self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census) interacted with a global high-salience dummy, and include the interaction at t , $t - 1$, and $t + 1$, with t being the month the roll call is held, and legislator and month-year fixed effects. Column (1) is the baseline across all vote topics. Columns (2)–(5) restrict the sample to votes classified under each Clausen policy category: government management, foreign and defense policy, social welfare, and civil liberties. Clausen codes provide complete coverage across all congresses in the sample. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and roll call level are reported in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Sample: All final passage roll call votes that were not near unanimous in the House of Representatives during the 93rd–101st Congress.

6.3 Robustness Checks

We apply a series of robustness tests to test for the sensitivity of the results from the roll call analysis. We begin by imposing different restrictions on the vote sample in Table A8: column (1) presents results with no restrictions; column (2) restricts the sample to final passage votes only; column (3) further limits the sample to contested votes; column (4) uses a donut version of contested votes, excluding the partisan middle; and column (5) includes only votes divided by the partisan middle.

In Table A11 we apply different, more restrictive, sets of fixed effects. Column (1) presents the baseline regression without fixed effects, in which the coefficient on the Polonia share is statistically significant and negative, indicating that legislators from high-Polonia districts, on average, vote less conservatively. The interaction effect at $t = 0$ remains significant. Subsequently, in the following columns, we introduce additional fixed effects: column (2) adds legislator fixed effects; column (3) includes roll call fixed effects; column (4) interacts state with Congress fixed effects; column (5) interacts party with Congress fixed effects; and column (6) interacts birth cohorts (legislators’ birth years) with Congress fixed effects. We confirm that the main interaction coefficients remain stable in magnitude and significance throughout all specifications.

We further test the stability of the main lead-lag coefficients using different measures of *Poland salience* in Table A5. In addition to the already presented variation in salience definition from newspapers.com in columns (1) to (3), we incorporate monthly *Poland salience* measures from

ProQuest in column (4). The results confirm a similar pattern with this alternative source. In column (5), we additionally use weekly salience measures from ProQuest. The results confirm a positive and significant coefficient in week $t - 3$. These weekly results are further visualized in Figure A10. The analysis reveals that no lead coefficient is significant or relevant, and the effect is primarily concentrated within a two-week window prior to a given vote.

We then conduct two sets of placebo tests. First, we interact the share of Polonia with the salience of alternative scenarios, including other countries, sports, and world events, as shown in Figure A12. Table A12 reports the results of the standard lead-lag specification, extending with interaction coefficients for $Polonia \times PlaceboSalience$. The main coefficient for $Polonia \times PolandSalience$ remains largely unchanged, while placebo interactions are mostly insignificant. Second, Table A13 introduces interactions between Polonia salience and placebo ancestry groups. Again, the coefficient for $Polonia \times PolandSalience$ remains stable across specifications.

Further, we assess robustness using an alternative measure of conservative voting behavior. Drawing on foreign policy ideal point scores from Jeong (2018), we construct a complementary “Dovish” vote outcome variable, which ranks legislators based on their hawkish or dovish positions in foreign policy rather than a general liberal-conservative spectrum. Table A14 presents the results: the coefficient for $Polonia \times PolandSalience$ is associated with reduced dovish or liberal voting behavior, aligning with our previous findings. The results for the lead-lag models are presented in Table A15 and confirm the previous results. In table A20, we conduct a subset analysis where we exclude votes with a party unity or conservative coalition, following the definition of Jason et al. (2026), and exclude southern states. The coefficients remain stable throughout. To ensure that the results are not driven by small groups of legislators, we conduct a bootstrap coefficient stability exercise where we re-run the baseline regression and drop 20 random legislators per congress, i.e., 180 legislators per iteration. We plot the distribution of coefficients after 500 iterations in Figure A14, and show that the iterated coefficients are very close to the coefficient of the full sample.

In Table A9, we extend the baseline OLS specification and include probit and logit models to ensure that the results are not sensitive to the choice of functional form. We confirm a similar direction and significance throughout all different models. To confirm that no single Congress drives the results, we rerun the regressions while iteratively excluding one Congress at a time in Table A10. The results confirm that they are stable throughout.

Finally, we use Wikipedia articles of members of Congress to identify publicly known legislators with Polish heritage. For the years under consideration, we only identify 18 legislators. Even though the regressions are limited by the number of Polish-American legislators, we run separate regressions in Table A19. Most importantly, the coefficient remains unchanged when excluding the Polish-American congressperson in column (3). The interpretation of the regressions using only Polish-American legislators in column (2) should be considered with a grain of salt because of the low number of legislators. The smaller size of the coefficient and the absence of significance, however, make sense from the perspective that Polish-American legislators should know the Polonia better and vote accordingly, with or without public salience around Poland.

6.4 Mechanisms

In this paper, we establish several results on the relationship among the salience of Poland, the presence of the Polish diaspora, and the political behavior of MCs. First, during periods of high *Poland salience*, MCs from districts with large Polish-American populations allocate more speech time to Poland on the congressional floor. Second, during periods of high *Poland salience*, MCs from districts with a large Polish-American population tend to vote more conservatively on legislation. Third, this effect is mostly concentrated in votes on foreign and defense policy and civil liberties. Fourth, there is no relevant behavioral difference between Democrats and Republicans in this relationship. Finally, there is a roughly 1-month delay in the effect.

We propose three mechanisms that could explain this relationship: electoral incentives (M1), constituency pressure (M2), and information and identity transmission (M3). Figure 2 presents a visualization of the proposed relationship and the mechanisms.

Our finding that MCs representing districts with a higher share of constituencies of Polish descent were more likely to vote conservatively on bills during months when Polish issues were salient is identified off of variation within the same legislator across votes and within the same bill across legislators due to fixed effects. Therefore, the design rules out personal characteristics as a potential mechanism, as it controls for stable factors such as personal ideology, ethnic background, party affiliation, and general position on immigration and foreign policy.

We therefore hypothesize that two mechanisms are likely at work in this situation. First, electoral incentives: When Poland becomes salient, members of Congress (MCs) from high-Polonia districts respond because the likelihood that their vote affects their reelection changes. Second, constituency pressure: During periods of high salience, legislators may interact more with their constituents through letters, calls, or organized lobbying. In response, legislators may change and adapt their political behavior. While the second mechanism is similar to electoral incentive mechanisms, it focuses on information transmission rather than anticipating vote shares. Both mechanisms, however, are driven by the constituency.

An additional information and identity channel might operate as follows: MCs from high-Polonia districts may have become more familiar with the Polish question through interactions with their constituents, organizations, and networks. This exposure may have influenced the legislators' knowledge and sense of solidarity with that group. When salience spikes, MCs not only perceive electoral pressure but also understand the significance of the issue. Although this is a legislator-level mechanism, it differs from the personal-views channel described in Feigenbaum et al. (2025) because it is a socialized version of that channel. In this version, the congressional district produces personal engagement rather than individual background.

6.4.1 Electoral Incentives

According to the proposed M1 mechanism, the interaction effect of Polish presence and salience should be stronger for legislators facing stronger electoral pressure. To test this mechanism, we combine legislator roll-call-level data with legislator-congressional-level election results. Data on

legislator-level elections from 1920 to 1974 comes from Zhang (2025), and data from 1976 to 2024 comes from MIT Election Data And Science Lab (2017). For each Congress, the previous election results of each legislator are therefore available.

Table 8: Electoral Mechanism Test (Subsampling by Electoral Environment)

	Conservative Vote						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience	0.0132*** (0.0031)	0.0124*** (0.0030)	0.0100* (0.0059)	0.0141*** (0.0033)	0.0081** (0.0040)	0.0144*** (0.0047)	0.0124*** (0.0039)
# Legislator	988	974	229	819	656	981	980
# Month-Year	193	193	193	193	193	100	93
Observations	722,334	648,549	70,900	506,421	213,028	339,627	382,707
R ²	0.23827	0.24172	0.22450	0.24320	0.23693	0.25311	0.22819
Within R ²	0.00020	0.00017	0.00010	0.00023	5.63×10^{-5}	0.00020	0.00019
Election contested	-	Yes	No	-	-	-	-
Competitive election	-	-	-	No	Yes	-	-
Election session	-	-	-	-	-	No	Yes
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Conservative Vote is a binary indicator equal to one if a legislator voted like the conservative anchor majority. All specifications use the self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census) interacted with a global high-salience dummy, and include legislator and month-year fixed effects. Column (1) is the baseline full sample. Columns (2) and (3) split the sample by whether the legislator faced a contested or uncontested election. Columns (4) and (5) split by whether the election was competitive (vote share $< 60\%$). Columns (6) and (7) split by whether the congressional session coincides with an election year. If the electoral mechanism were operative, the activation effect should be concentrated among legislators under greater electoral pressure — i.e. contested elections, competitive races, and election-year sessions. The absence of such concentration constitutes evidence against the electoral incentives channel. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and roll call level are reported in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Sample: All final passage roll call votes that were not near unanimous in the House of Representatives during the 93rd–101st Congress.

We then calculate three metrics for reelection pressure. First, we create a dummy variable for uncontested elections. We set this dummy equal to one if a legislator received $\geq 99\%$ of the previous votes, indicating that the legislator was the only candidate in the previous election. Second, we categorize contested elections (those with less than 99% of the vote) as either competitive or uncompetitive. The competitive-election dummy is set equal to one if a legislator received fewer than 60% of the vote in the last election. Figure A15 shows the distribution of winning vote shares. Finally, we create a dummy variable equal to one if a vote occurred in the second year of Congress. Given the upcoming elections, we would expect higher incentives for election campaigning and strategic behavior that year.

In Table 8, we test for the different measures of reelection pressure. Columns (2) and (3) restrict separately to contested and uncontested elections, columns (4) and (5) to competitive and non-competitive elections, and columns (6) and (7) to election vs non-election sessions. While small differences in magnitude and significance exist, no clear systematic pattern emerges that suggests a reelection pressure is motivating differences in responsive behavior.

Further, in Table A16 we provide the results including the contested vs. uncontested elections separation, in Table A17 we subset to only contested elections and include the competitive election vs non competitive election separation, and in Table A18 we separate by the first and second year of a congress, with election year being the second. Across all three tables, the baseline *Polonia* $\times$ *PolishSalience* effect remains stable in magnitude and statistically significant in the

full sample and in both subsamples. The triple difference-in-differences specifications in column 5 of each table include lower-order terms and test for significant differences in activation effects between groups. The regressions consistently yield small, statistically insignificant triple-interaction coefficients.

Therefore, we conclude that there is little or no evidence that electoral pressure increases the activation effect. This finding suggests that the main mechanism likely operates through channels other than reelection incentives.

6.4.2 Constituency Pressure

In the next step, we discuss the potential channel of constituency pressure and lobbying. Polish Americans organized their community life around neighborhood parishes and ethnic Catholic churches to a greater degree than other immigrant groups Abramitzky et al. (2025). These Polish churches offered religious services as well as community services, including parochial schools, welfare services, cultural organizations, and sports leagues. Historically, this made them the primary organizational infrastructure of the Polish diaspora. We follow Abramitzky et al. (2025) and use the Official Catholic Directory for 1980 to identify ethnic Polish Catholic churches and assign them to congressional districts.⁶ The main idea is that districts with denser Polish parish infrastructure have a more organizationally capable Polonia constituency, better positioned to transmit political pressure to their legislators during periods of elevated *Poland salience*. In total, we identified 380 Polish Catholic churches in 1980.

We construct a measure of Polish Catholic parish density from the 1980 Official Catholic Directory and assign parishes to congressional districts via spatial join. The distribution of churches is displayed in Figure A16. While districts with a higher parish density tend to exhibit weaker activation responses, this pattern does not hold when the sample is restricted to the common support of the ancestry distribution. This suggests that the result reflects the near-collinearity between organizational density and constituency size, rather than an independent organizational channel. Figure A17 shows the distribution of Polish ancestry shares for districts with and without a Polish parish. Districts with a parish are concentrated at higher levels of Polish ancestry, while districts without cluster near zero. Therefore, parish presence seems unable to display relevant heterogeneity within districts with high Polish ancestry. Consequently, we cannot identify the L_i mechanism separately and present the parish data as descriptive evidence of the institutional infrastructure of the Polonia.

6.5 Returns to Solidarity

We provided evidence that legislators from high-Poland districts respond to high-*Poland salience* by increasing Poland-related floor discourse in Congress and adopting more conservative voting

⁶Ethnic churches can be identified by the ethnic specialization mentioned in brackets after the name of a church. The famous St. Stanislaus Kostka church in Chicago is noted, among other things, as follows: St. Stanislaus Kostka (Polish), (...), 1351 W. Evergreen Ave., 60622.

behavior. We also discussed potential mechanisms behind this reaction. In this final section, we attempt to provide the first tentative evidence of political returns to this behavior.

To perform this exercise, we first collapse the legislator-roll-call data into a legislator-Congress panel in which every observation is a legislator i in Congress c .

Table 9: Voting Premium and Polish Ancestry Share (Cross-Sectional Evidence)

	Voting premium		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Constant	0.0055*** (0.0018)		
Polonia share	0.0079*** (0.0020)	0.0074*** (0.0020)	0.0022 (0.0032)
# Congress	—	8	8
# State	—	—	44
Observations	1,648	1,648	1,648
R ²	0.01028	0.17778	0.20968
Within R ²		0.01079	0.00036
Congress fixed effects		✓	✓
State fixed effects			✓

Notes: The outcome variable Voting Premium is the within-legislator difference in the conservative vote share between high-salience and low-salience months, computed on final passage contested votes within each legislator-congress cell. All specifications regress the voting premium on the standardized self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census). Column (1) is a bivariate baseline with no fixed effects; column (2) adds congress fixed effects; column (3) adds congress and state fixed effects. The sample excludes legislators facing uncontested subsequent elections and those with no valid votes. Standard errors clustered at the legislator level are reported in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. Sample: House of Representatives, 93rd–101st Congress.

Then, for each legislator-Congress pair, we construct a Voting premium that measures the difference in voting rates between months with high and low *Poland salience* within a Congress. We define the premium as follows:

$$\text{Voting Premium}_{ic} = \mathbb{E}[v_{icr} \mid S_{tc} = 1] - \mathbb{E}[v_{icr} \mid S_{tc} = 0], \quad (27)$$

Here, $v_{icr} \in \{0, 1\}$ is a conservative vote indicator for legislator i on final-passage contested roll calls r in Congress c . $S_{tc} = 1$ if *Poland salience* was elevated in month t or the preceding month within Congress c , and zero otherwise. A positive value indicates that, within the same Congress, the legislator voted more conservatively in high-salience months than in low-salience months. A value of zero means there is no systematic difference in voting behavior between high- and low-salience periods. We only include legislators who cast at least one valid vote and faced contested elections in a given Congress.

Table 9 reports cross-sectional evidence that the share of Polonia in a district is associated with a higher *VotingPremium*. This means the previously within-legislator differences also translate into cross-sectional relationships. Table 10 then provides the correlation between the voting premium of a legislator i in Congress c and the vote share in the subsequent elections for Congress $c + 1$. Legislator-Congress level election result data comes from Zhang (2025) and MIT Election Data

Table 10: Electoral Returns to Voting Premium

	Next election vote share		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Constant	0.6778*** (0.0040)		
Voting premium	0.0695* (0.0368)	0.0667* (0.0403)	0.0561 (0.0386)
# Congress	–	8	8
# State	–	–	44
Observations	1,648	1,648	1,648
R ²	0.00235	0.01267	0.10990
Within R ²		0.00182	0.00136
Congress fixed effects		✓	✓
State fixed effects			✓

Notes: The outcome variable is the legislator’s vote share in the next election. The key regressor, Voting Premium, is the within-legislator difference in the conservative vote share between high-salience and low-salience months, computed on final passage contested votes within each legislator-congress cell. Column (1) is a bivariate baseline with no fixed effects; column (2) adds congress fixed effects; column (3) adds congress and state fixed effects. The sample excludes legislators facing uncontested subsequent elections and those with no valid votes. Standard errors clustered at the legislator level are reported in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. Sample: House of Representatives, 93rd–101st Congress.

And Science Lab (2017).

In the baseline regression, we report a positive and statistically significant coefficient. When we include Congress and state fixed effects, the significance reduces. However, the coefficient remains positive and of similar magnitude. Although we acknowledge the limitations of this approach, these results still provide meaningful evidence suggestive of an electoral return. Candidates who react to high *Poland salience* by voting more conservatively are rewarded with increased vote shares in subsequent elections.

7 Conclusion

In this paper, we asked what influence the diaspora of a country can have on the political economy of its country of residence. To study this, we looked at the Cold War period and the Polish community in the United States. Our core argument is that in times of increased salience around Poland, legislators representing districts with higher Polonia share exhibit stronger reactions.

Those legislators react by giving Poland-related topics more floor time in speeches in Congress and by adjusting to the known preferences of the Polonia by voting more conservatively, particularly in matters of foreign policy and civil rights. We further find that these results are independent of party affiliation, are not driven by specific congresses or Polish-American members of Congress, and are not dependent on the model specification or definitions of Polonia or Salience. We conduct various tests with placebo ancestries, placebo saliences, and also placebo outcomes. We further discuss potential mechanisms and show that electoral incentives and personal exposure to the Polonia are unlikely mechanisms behind the effect. We argue that diaspora pressure and lobbying

can likely drive the results. Finally, we provide tentative evidence that this shift in behavior can bring electoral rewards.

We contribute to the literature in three main ways. First, we extend the idea of latent preferences at the voter level to the legislative level by showing that legislators can respond to salience and activation of preferences through measurable behavioral channels. Second, we add to the literature on determinants of legislative behavior by introducing a time-varying dimension and showing that, in addition to the composition of the constituency, its temporal relevance also matters. Finally, we show not only that diasporas can influence foreign policy outcomes, but also that the salience of relevant topics can trigger this development.

Those results can have two further, broader implications. First, they show that geopolitical shocks can function as exogenous activations of constituency pressure. Diaspora communities may constitute geopolitical transmission channels. Second, the results provide insight into how representation works dynamically by suggesting that the constituency can be exogenously activated. In the era of increasing recurring geopolitical shocks and wars, this channel of geopolitical transfer can regain relevance for understanding how events abroad can shape legislative behavior at home.

The research presented here uses exogenous salience shocks and the presence of the Polonia to examine within-legislator changes in political behavior. While having empirically excluded potential mechanisms, we have also argued that legislative pressure or lobbying are likely channels behind the observed effect. One direction for future research could be to examine the dimensions of these mechanisms by identifying time variation in legislative pressure through, e.g., Polish-related letter writing to legislators, Poland-related demonstrations across different districts, and local newspaper exposure. A second direction for future research would be to extend this network to other Central and Eastern European diasporas or global communist ones, in order to include additional time-specific salience shocks and to extend the analysis to the whole Cold War period. This is the full “shadow of communism” in the United States. While this comes with additional empirical challenges, such as the exogeneity of salience, unclear preferences of diasporas, and the measurement of diasporas across the whole period of the Cold War, it would present an opportunity to better understand the extent to which US Cold War policies were driven by diasporas of “captive nations”.

This paper has shown that the initially mentioned example of presidential candidate Kamala Harris addressing the Polish-American community in Pennsylvania in 2024 was no accident but a structurally predictable political move that applies not only to presidential candidates but also to legislators in general.

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Appendix

.1 Dataset Descriptions

- **Legislator Election Results.** Data on legislator-level elections from 1920 to 1974 comes from Zhang (2025), and data from 1976 to 2024 comes from MIT Election Data And Science Lab (2017). Both datasets provide the same information on constituency (district) returns for elections to the U.S. House of Representatives. The datasets contain information that allows us to identify legislator-congress pairs and calculate the vote share of the winning candidates.
- **Roll Call Classification.** We use the PIPC Roll Call Dataset (Jason et al., 2026) to identify final votes, and to define whether a vote was indicative of party unity, a conservative coalition, or near-unanimity. We also use the issue categories to define different thematic voting categories.
- **County and Congressional District Crosswalks.** The crosswalk provided in Ferrara, Testa, and Zhou (2024) enables historical county-level data to be converted into congressional district-level data. This is achieved by allocating each county’s values to the districts it overlaps, using population- or area-based weights. This makes it possible to construct historical characteristics of congressional districts even when the original data are only available at the county level.
- **Shapefiles.** The 97th Congress shapefile comes from Lewis, DeVine, et al. (2026) and the 1980s counties shapefile comes from Manson et al. (2026). Both shapefiles have been used to visualize the spatial distribution of the Polonia.
- **County Level Election Outcomes.** Election data for the period of interest is available from Inter-University Consortium For Political And Social Research (2013). The dataset contains county-level returns for elections to the offices of president, United States senator, representative, and governor for the period 1950-1990.
- **Congressional Speeches.** Gentzkow et al. (2018) provide parsed full-text speeches and detailed metadata from the U.S. Congressional Record (bound and daily editions), enabling analysis of speaker- and party-level language patterns, including bigram counts and procedural language, with documentation of parsing accuracy and match rates.
- **Roll Call Data.** Data on roll-call votes and the ideology of members of the House comes from Lewis, Poole, et al. (2026). The database provides information on members’ ideology, congressional votes, and their categorization, members’ votes, and congressional party affiliation.
- **Salience Measures.** The monthly salience data is based on newspaper mentions collected from newspapers.com, as described in Ferrara, Ha, and Walsh (2024). While Ferrara, Ha,

and Walsh (2024) use not only time-based variation, but also spatial variation, this is unfortunately no longer possible since the ability to scrape records has been massively restricted and must now be done manually.

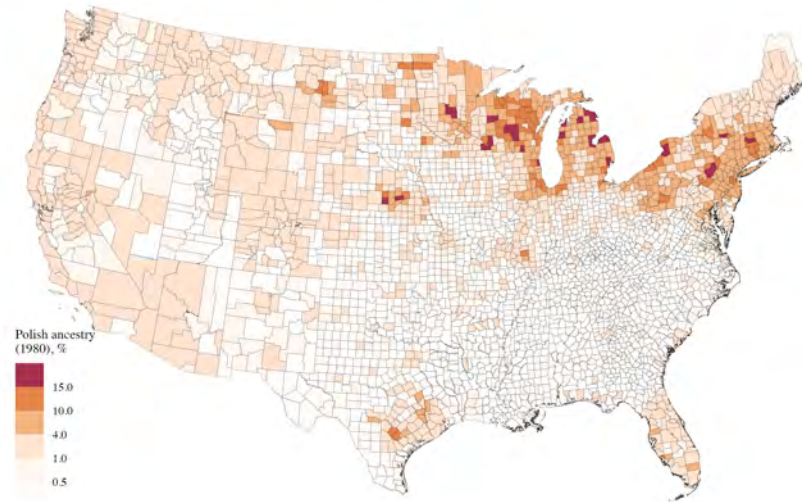
- **County Level Ancestry Data.** County-level ancestry data is available from Manson et al. (2026) and is based on the US Census of 1970, 1980, and 1990.
- **Polish Parishes.** Data on Polish parishes comes from digitized versions of the 1980 Official Catholic Directory (*The Official Catholic Directory for the Year of Our Lord 1980*, 1980). We identify ethnic Polish parishes by searching the document for all churches with 'Polish' written behind them. This approach follows Abramitzky et al. (2025).
- **Polish-American Politicians.** We identify publicly known Polish-American politicians for the 1970s and 1980s using the Wikipedia category page for American politicians of Polish descent. We then manually cross-reference the names to our dataset. We identify the following politicians as having a publicly known Polish-American background: Bonior, David Edward; Borski, Robert Anthony, Jr.; Dingell, John David, Jr.; Durenberger, David Ferdinand; Fary, John G.; Helstoski, Henry; Kanjorski, Paul E.; Kaptur, Marcia Carolyn (Marcy); Kleczka, Gerald Daniel; Kluczynski, John Carl; Koch, Edward Irving; Lipinski, William Oliver; Mikulski, Barbara Ann; Murkowski, Frank Hughes; Nedzi, Lucien Norbert; Nowak, Henry James; Rostenkowski, Daniel David; Sikorski, Gerald Edward; Synar, Michael Lynn; and Zablocki, Clement John.

.2 Figures

Figure A1: Polish Ancestry Share: 1980 Counties

Polish Ancestry (1980) by County

Any stated Polish ancestry

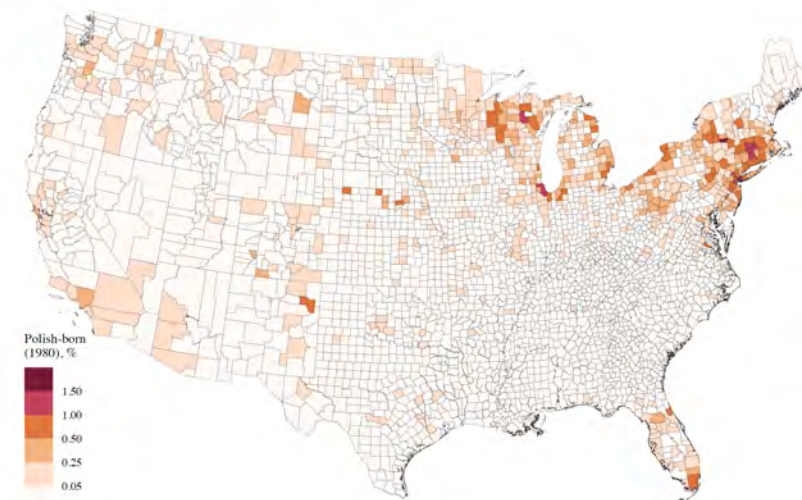


Note: The map shows the share of the population reporting Polish ancestry in the 1980 Census (multiple ancestry measure) by county. The Polish ancestry share is constructed as the sum of single and multiple ancestry respondents reporting Polish ancestry (NHGIS STF3 tables DG0 and DG1) divided by the total county population. County boundaries are drawn from the 1980 NHGIS county shapefiles.

Figure A2: Polish-Born Population Share: 1980 Counties

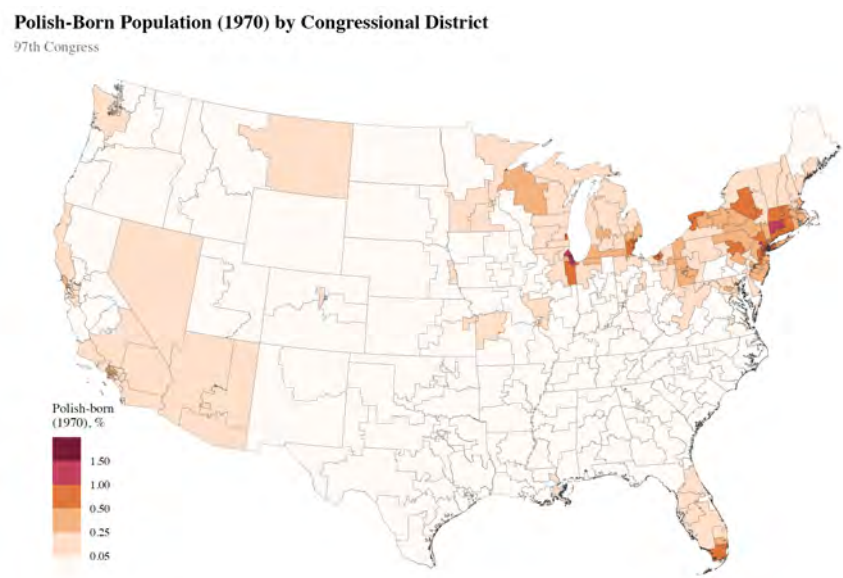
Polish-Born Population (1970) by County

Single ancestry: born in Poland



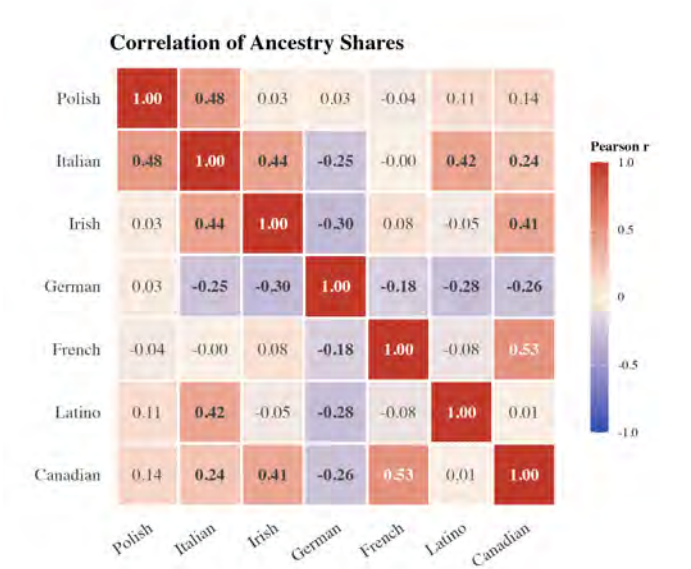
Note: The map shows the share of the population born in Poland in the 1970 Census by county. The Polish-born share is constructed as the number of foreign-born residents reporting Poland as their country of birth (NHGIS NT22 table, variable C1Z043) divided by the total county population. County boundaries are drawn from the 1970 NHGIS county shapefiles.

Figure A3: Polish-Born Population Share: Congressional Districts 97th Congress



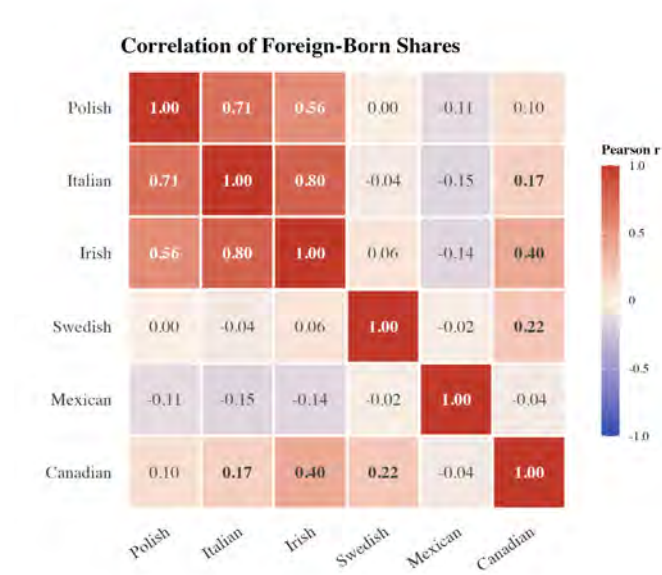
Note: The map shows the share of the population born in Poland in the 1980 Census by congressional district, for the 97th Congress (1981–1983). District boundaries are drawn from the 97th Congress shapefiles, with state boundaries overlaid. The foreign-born share is constructed from NHGIS table NTPA17 at the county level and crosswalked to congressional districts following the methodology of Ferrara, Testa, and Zhou (2024).

Figure A4: Correlation Plot of Ancestry



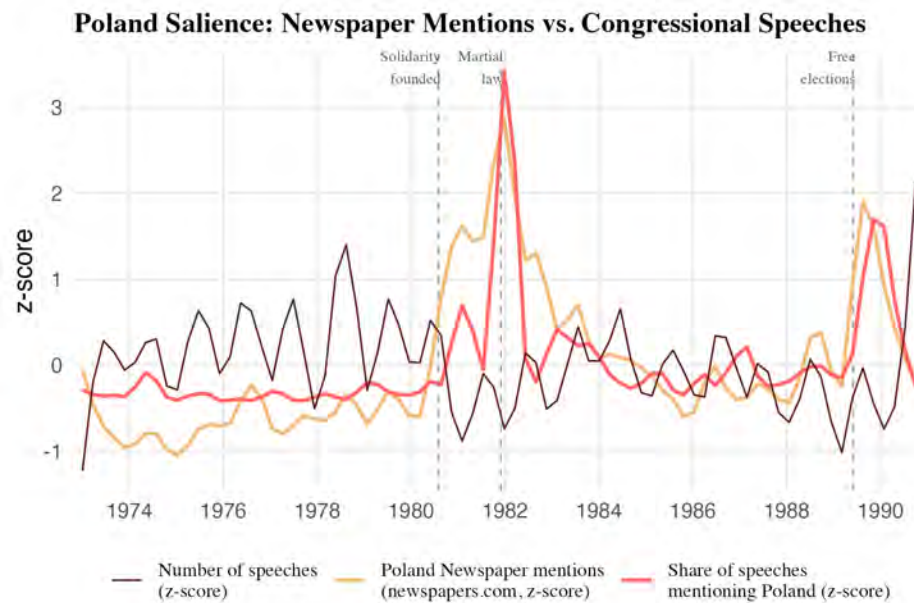
Note: The figure shows pairwise Pearson correlation coefficients between the shares of foreign-born population by country of birth at the congressional district level, computed from the 1970 Census (NHGIS table NT22).

Figure A5: Correlation Plot of Foreign Born Population



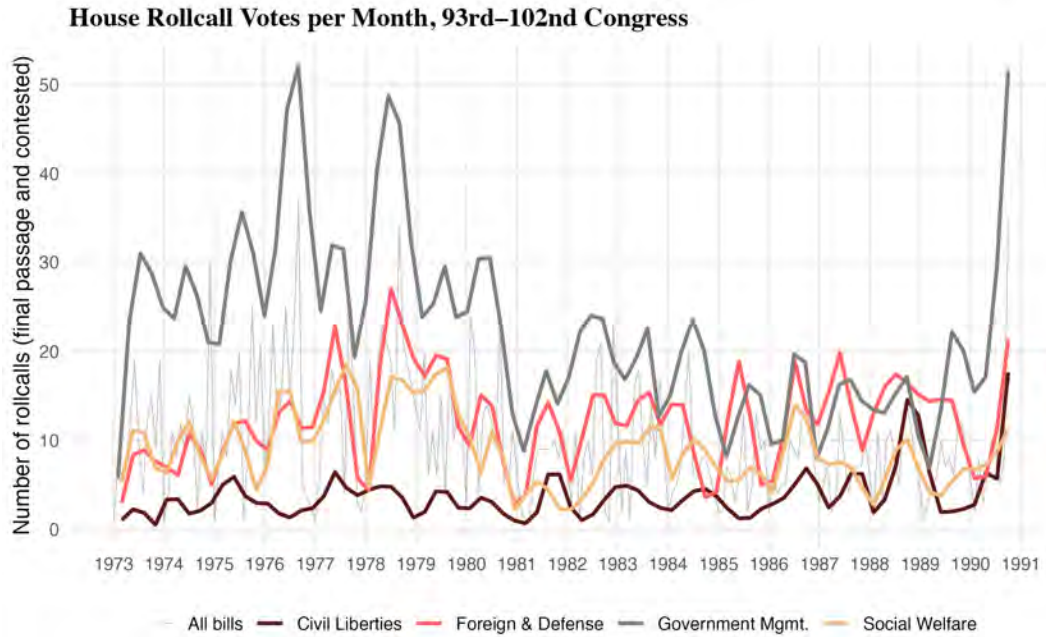
Note: The figure shows pairwise Pearson correlation coefficients between the shares of population reporting European ancestry at the congressional district level, computed from the 1980 Census (NHGIS STF3).

Figure A6: Distribution of Speeches



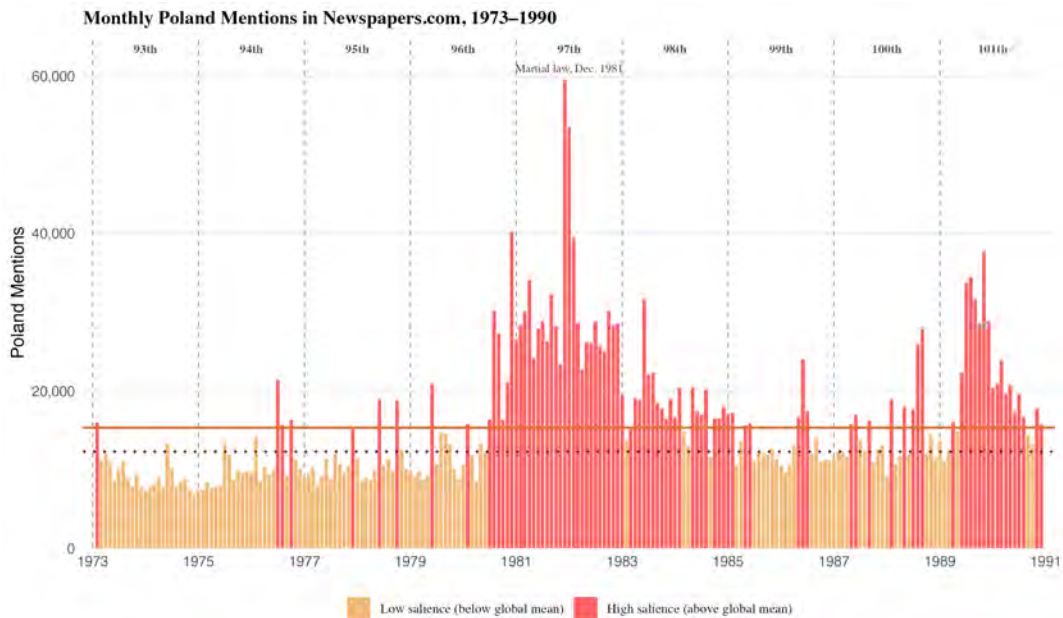
Note: The figure plots three smoothed monthly time series from 1973 to 1991, all standardized as z-scores for comparability. The *newspaper mentions* series (red) is constructed from monthly keyword counts of *Poland* across all newspapers on Newspapers.com. The *share of speeches* series (blue) is the monthly percentage of congressional floor speeches in the Congressional Record that mention Poland. The *number of speeches series* (green) captures total congressional speech activity. All series are smoothed using a LOESS estimator with a bandwidth of 0.08.

Figure A7: Distribution of Roll Calls



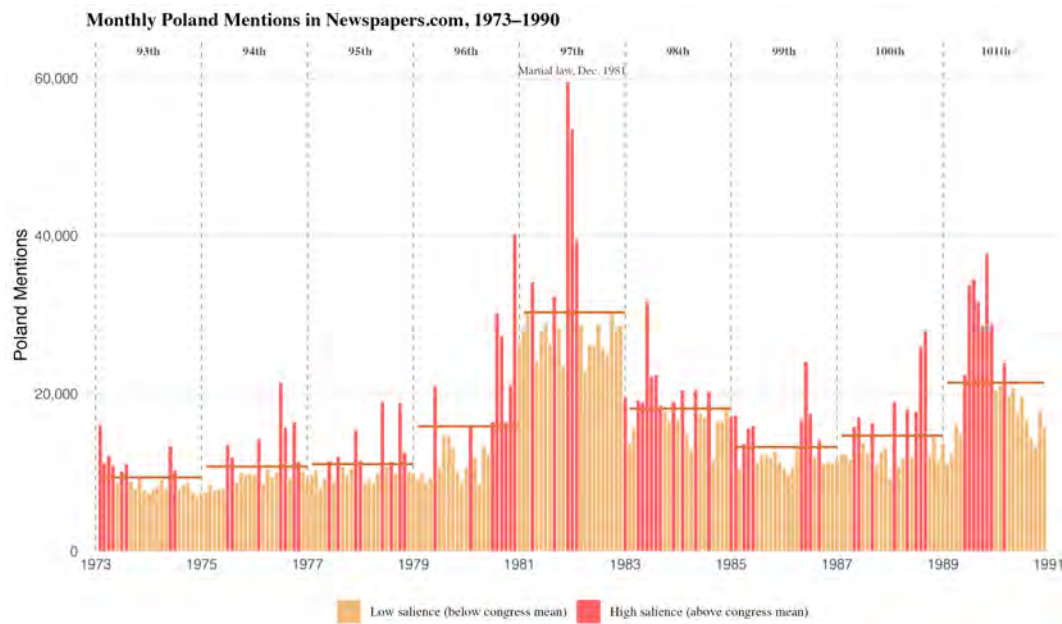
Note: The figure shows the monthly number of House roll call votes from the 93rd to the 101st Congress (1973–1991), restricted to final passage and contested votes. The grey line shows the total number of roll calls per month. Colored smoothed lines show the LOESS-estimated trend (bandwidth of 0.08) for each Clausen policy category: foreign and defense policy, government management, social welfare, and civil liberties.

Figure A8: Poland Salience: Global Mean



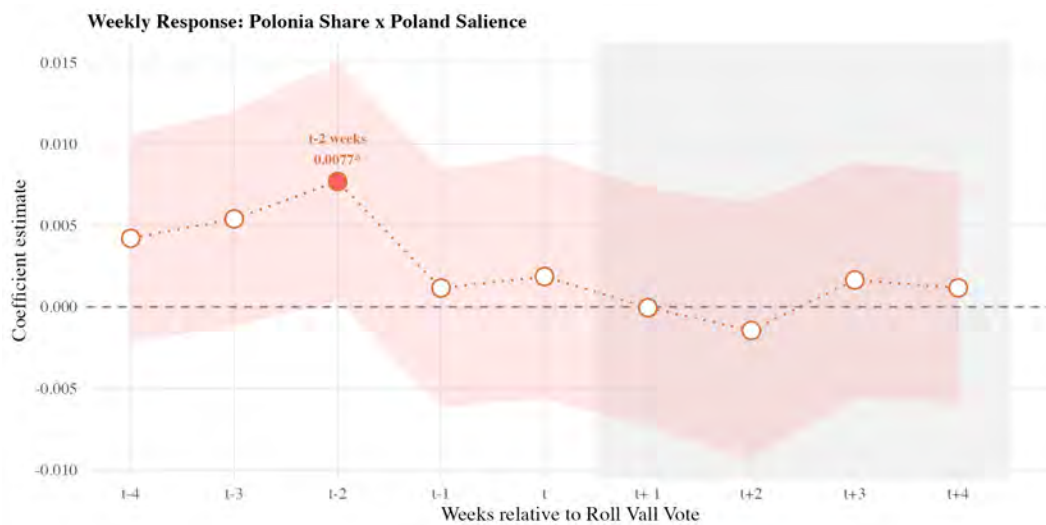
Note: The figure shows monthly counts of newspaper articles mentioning *Poland* across all newspapers indexed on Newspapers.com, from January 1973 to December 1990, with bars coloured by the global high-salience dummy. A month is classified as high salience (dark) if its mention count exceeds the global period mean across all months from 1970 to 1990 (solid horizontal line); low-salience months (light) fall below this threshold. The dotted horizontal line indicates the global period median. Alternating shading denotes congressional terms, with congress numbers indicated at the top.

Figure A9: Poland Salience: Within-Congress Mean



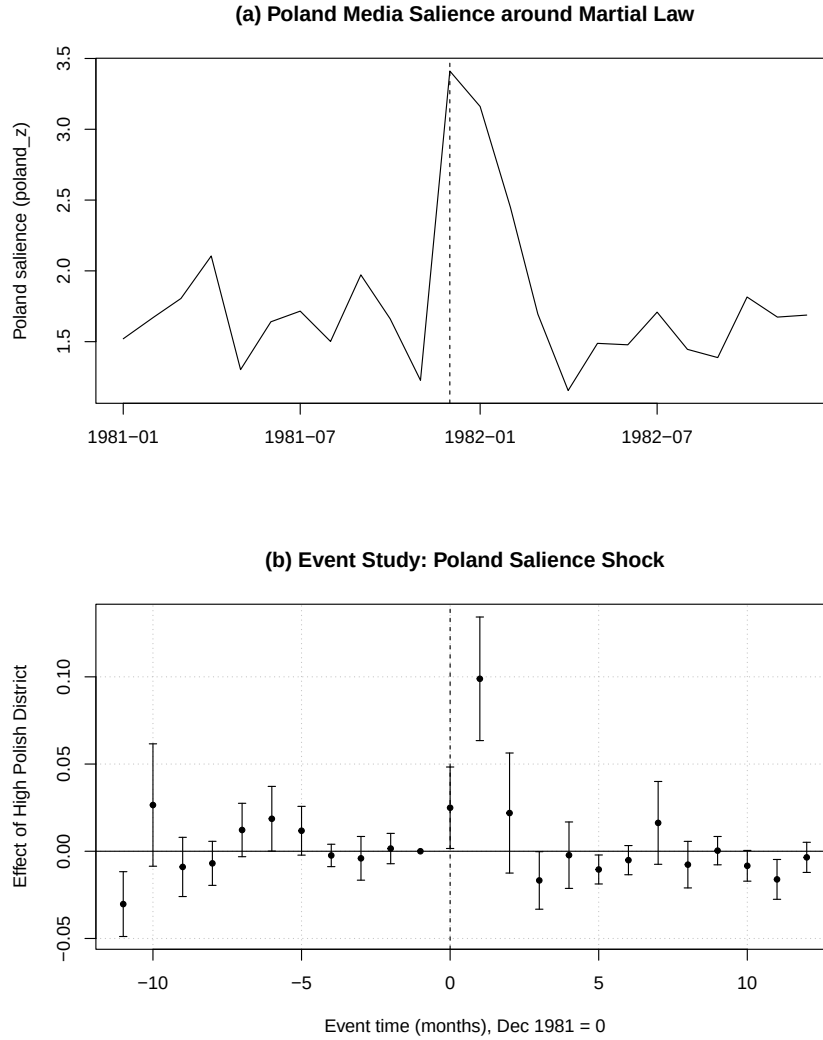
Note: The figure shows monthly counts of newspaper articles mentioning *Poland* across all newspapers indexed on Newspapers.com, from January 1973 to December 1990, with bars coloured by the within-congress high-salience dummy. A month is classified as high salience (dark) if its mention count exceeds the mean for that congressional term; low-salience months (light) fall below the congress-specific mean. The horizontal line segments show the within-congress mean for each term separately.

Figure A10: Weekly Poland Salience and Distance to Roll-Call Vote



Note: The figure plots coefficients from a single regression of conservative vote indicator on the interaction of standardized Polish ancestry share with weekly *Poland salience* dummies at leads and lags, estimated on final passage contested House votes from the 93rd-101st Congress with legislator and roll call fixed effects and two-way clustered standard errors. A week is classified as high salience if its ProQuest daily mention count of *Poland*, aggregated to the week, exceeds the sample mean. Filled points indicate estimates significant at the 10% level; the shaded ribbon shows 90% confidence intervals. The shaded grey region on the right-hand side covers the lead weeks.

Figure A11: Event Study: Speeches about Poland around the Declaration of Martial Law



Note: The figure presents a two-panel event study centered on the declaration of martial law in Poland on December 13, 1981, estimated on congressional floor speeches from the 97th Congress. Panel (a) shows the monthly Poland media salience series (z-scored newspaper mention counts) around the event window, with the vertical dashed line marking December 1981. Panel (b) plots coefficients from a two-way fixed effects regression of a binary indicator for whether a speech mentions *Poland* on the interaction of relative event month with a high Polish district dummy, defined as districts with a standardized Polish ancestry share of at least one standard deviation above the mean, with speaker and month fixed effects and two-way clustered standard errors. The reference period is the month prior to martial law ($t = -1$).

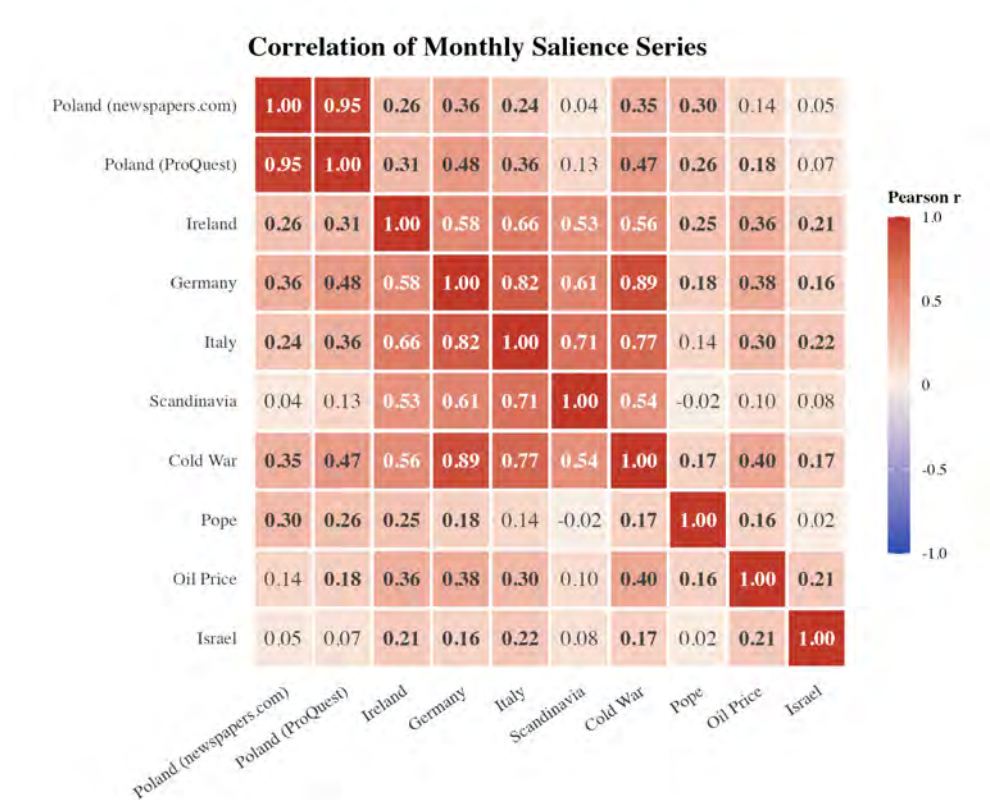
Figure A12: Placebo Salience Measures

Poland Salience vs. Placebo Measures, 1973–1990



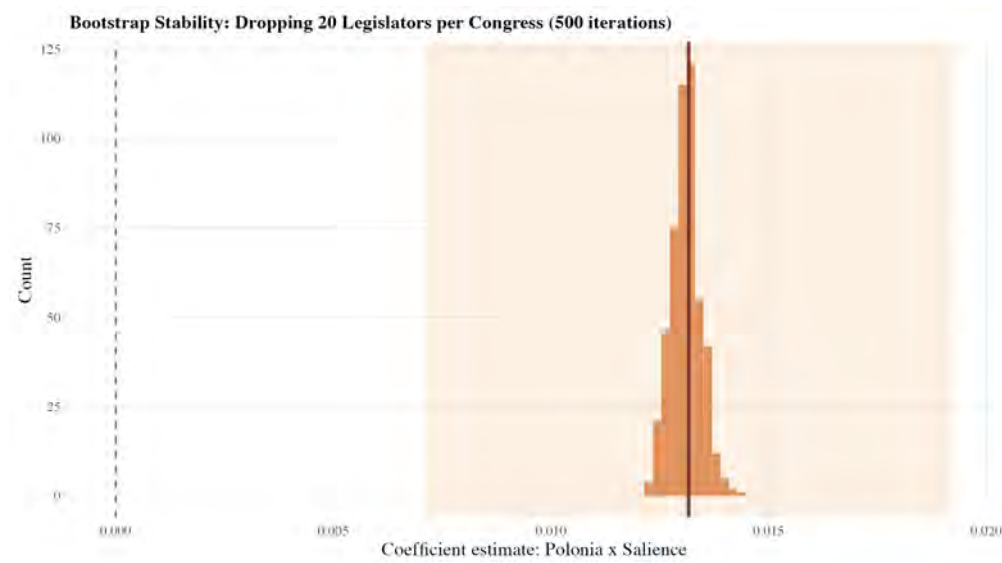
Note: The figure compares monthly *Poland salience* against four categories of placebo measures from January 1970 to December 1990, all standardized as z-scores for comparability. *Poland salience* (red) is constructed from monthly ProQuest mention counts across four major US newspapers (*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Wall Street Journal*). Panel A compares *Poland salience* against a Cold War composite index summing monthly mentions of *Soviet Union*, *Communism*, *Socialism*, and *Cold War*. Panel B compares Poland against salience for four placebo country groups: Ireland, Germany, Italy, and a Scandinavian composite (Norway, Denmark, and Sweden). Panel C compares Poland against other major world events: the Pope, oil price shocks, and Israel. Panel D shows the timing of major US sporting events as binary monthly indicators. Dashed vertical lines in Panels A–C mark key historical events.

Figure A13: Correlation Plot of Poland and Placebo Salience Measures



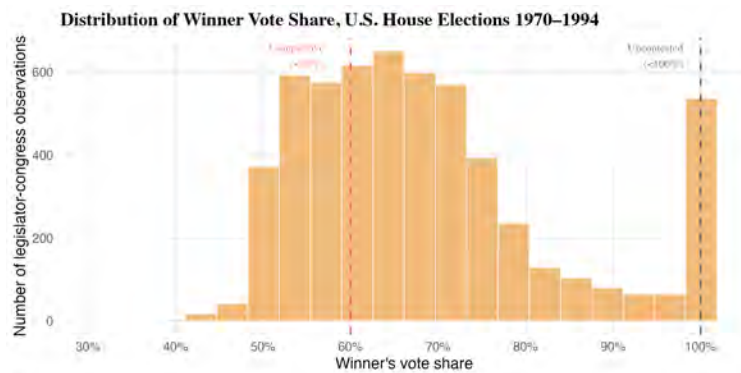
Note: Pearson correlation coefficients between monthly salience series, 1970–1990. *Poland salience* is measured as monthly newspaper mentions from newspapers.com and ProQuest, respectively, with a placebo series including mentions of other countries, a Cold War composite, and other salient topics. If not indicated otherwise, the salience measures are based on ProQuest.

Figure A14: Bootstrap Coefficient Stability: Dropping Legislators



Note: Each bar represents the estimated coefficients on Polonia Share x *Poland salience* from a bootstrap iteration in which 20 legislators per congress are randomly dropped from the sample (500 iterations, 180 legislators dropped per iteration). The solid vertical line indicates the full-sample baseline estimate and the shaded region its 95% confidence interval.

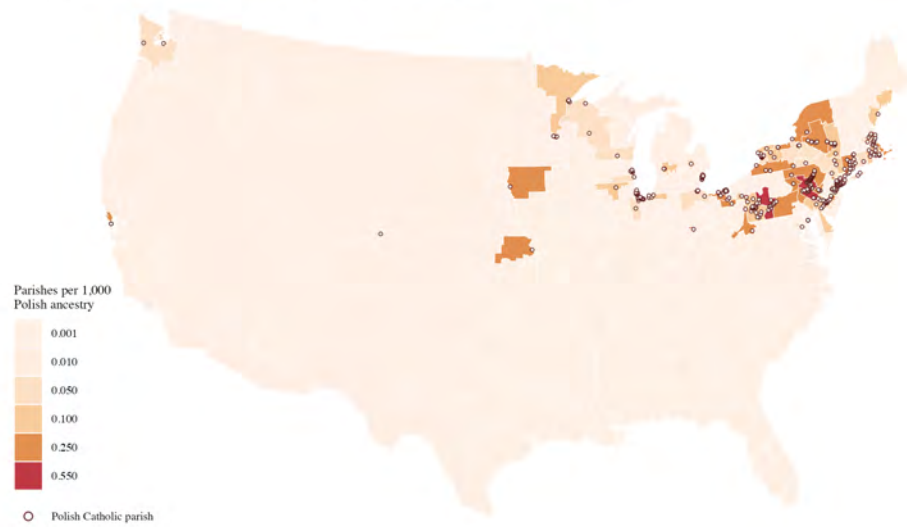
Figure A15: Distribution of Winning Vote Shares



Note: The figure displays the distribution of winner vote shares in U.S. House general elections, 1970–1994, at the district-election level. Each observation corresponds to one district-election pair. The dashed red line at 60% separates competitive elections, in which the winning candidate received less than 60% of the total vote, from non-competitive contested elections. The dashed grey line at 100% separates contested from uncontested races, where no opposing candidate appeared on the ballot. The spike at 100% reflects districts in which the incumbent ran without opposition.

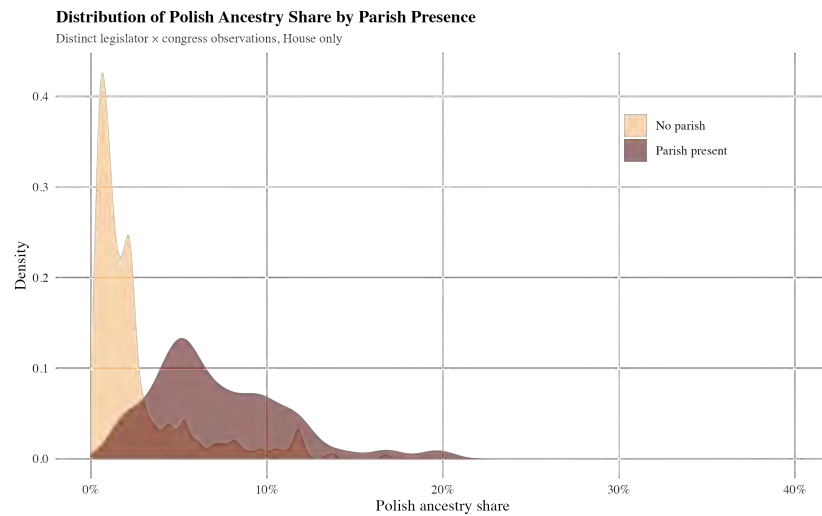
Figure A16: 1980 Polish Catholic Parishes by Congressional Districts

Polish Catholic Parish Density by 97th Congressional Districts



Note: The map shows the number of Polish Catholic parishes per 1,000 residents reporting Polish ancestry (1980 Census) by congressional district for the 97th Congress (1981–1983). Individual parish locations are shown as points. Parish data are drawn from the 1980 Official Catholic Directory.

Figure A17: Relationship between Polish Ancestry and Polish Parish Presence



Note: Distribution of Polish ancestry share across House districts, separately for districts with and without a Polish parish. Each observation is a distinct legislator x congress pair.

.3 Tables

Table A1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
<i>Panel A: Speeches</i>					
Word count	251.057	370.231	21.000	37,188.000	548,149
Poland mention	0.004				548,149
Germany topic	0.009				548,149
Oil topic	0.010				548,149
Soviet mention	0.042				548,149
<i>Panel B: Roll Calls (final passage, non-unanimous)</i>					
Civil liberties topic	0.037				1,957
Social welfare topic	0.125				1,957
Foreign policy topic	0.181				1,957
Gov. management topic	0.566				1,957
<i>Panel C: Votes (final passage, non-unanimous)</i>					
Conservative vote	0.364				735,570
Liberal vote	0.646				768,276
<i>Panel D: Legislators</i>					
Female	0.051				995
Republican	0.430				995
<i>Panel E: Congressional Districts</i>					
Population (000s)	481.012	120.298	17.120	1,362.481	988
Share Polish ancestry (%)	3.738	3.752	0.162	20.003	988
Share Irish ancestry (%)	17.837	4.462	5.382	33.800	988
Share German ancestry (%)	21.823	12.134	3.341	64.672	988
Share Italian ancestry (%)	5.674	6.007	0.380	31.106	988
Share foreign-born (%)	4.952	5.058	0.153	35.556	988
<i>Panel F: Monthly Salience</i>					
Poland mentions (monthly)	16,121.183	8,383.210	6,881.000	59,563.000	202
Poland mentions (log)	9.580	0.448	8.837	10.995	202
High salience (mean)	0.431				202
Ireland mentions (monthly)	368.490	109.576	142.000	792.000	202
Scandinavia mentions (monthly)	750.748	162.361	398.000	1,312.000	202
Oil price mentions (monthly)	2,583.876	421.204	1,576.000	4,726.000	202

Notes: Binary variables (0/1 indicators) report the mean only; SD, Min, and Max are omitted. Roll call and vote statistics are restricted to final passage votes excluding near-unanimous votes. Legislator and district statistics are computed at the legislator level. Monthly salience statistics are computed at the month level.

Table A2: Polonia, Salience, and Poland Speeches (Including Placebo Ancestry Shares)

	Poland Topic						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Polonia $\times$ Poland sal. (t)	0.0008*** (0.0003)	0.0008*** (0.0003)	0.0008*** (0.0003)	0.0009*** (0.0003)	0.0009*** (0.0003)	0.0009*** (0.0003)	0.0008*** (0.0003)
Polonia $\times$ Poland sal. ($t - 1$)	0.0004* (0.0002)	0.0004* (0.0002)	0.0004* (0.0002)	0.0003 (0.0002)	0.0005 (0.0003)	0.0004 (0.0002)	0.0004* (0.0002)
Polonia $\times$ Poland sal. ($t + 1$)	0.0000 (0.0003)	0.0000 (0.0003)	0.0000 (0.0003)	0.0000 (0.0003)	-0.0001 (0.0003)	-0.0001 (0.0003)	0.0000 (0.0003)
Placebo ancestry $\times$ Poland sal. (t)	-0.0001 (0.0001)	0.0000 (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0002)	-0.0002 (0.0002)	-0.0001 (0.0002)	-0.0001 (0.0002)	0.0001 (0.0002)
Placebo ancestry $\times$ Poland sal. ($t - 1$)	0.0001 (0.0001)	0.0000 (0.0001)	-0.0001 (0.0001)	0.0002 (0.0002)	-0.0003 (0.0004)	-0.0001 (0.0003)	0.0000 (0.0001)
Placebo ancestry $\times$ Poland sal. ($t + 1$)	-0.0001 (0.0001)	0.0000 (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0001)	-0.0002 (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0003)	0.0001 (0.0001)	-0.0001 (0.0001)
# Legislator	994	994	994	994	994	994	994
# Month-Year	202	202	202	202	202	202	202
Observations	548,063	548,063	548,063	548,063	548,063	548,063	548,063
R ²	0.02025	0.02025	0.02025	0.02026	0.02026	0.02025	0.02025
Within R ²	0.00023	0.00022	0.00022	0.00023	0.00023	0.00023	0.00022
Placebo ancestry	Irish	Scandinavian	German	Italian	Ukrainian	Hungarian	Afro-American
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Poland is a binary indicator equal to one if a speech mentions Poland. All ancestry shares are standardized throughout and salience is operationalized as a ProQuest global high-salience dummy. Each column includes both the Polonia share interacted with Poland salience and one placebo ancestry share interacted with Poland salience simultaneously. The placebo ancestry groups are: Irish, Scandinavian, German, Italian, Ukrainian, Hungarian, and Afro-American. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and month level are reported in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Sample: House speeches of republican and democratic voting legislators in the 93-101 Congress with at least 20 words.

Table A3: Polonia, Salience, and Poland Speeches (Including Placebo Topic Saliences)

	Poland Topic						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Polonia $\times$ Poland sal. (t)	0.0009*** (0.0003)	0.0009*** (0.0003)	0.0010*** (0.0003)	0.0008*** (0.0003)	0.0007*** (0.0003)	0.0008*** (0.0003)	0.0009*** (0.0003)
Polonia $\times$ Poland sal. ($t - 1$)	0.0004* (0.0002)	0.0001 (0.0003)	0.0003 (0.0002)	0.0003 (0.0002)	0.0004* (0.0002)	0.0004* (0.0002)	0.0004 (0.0002)
Polonia $\times$ Poland sal. ($t + 1$)	0.0000 (0.0003)	0.0002 (0.0003)	0.0000 (0.0003)	-0.0001 (0.0003)	-0.0001 (0.0003)	0.0000 (0.0003)	0.0000 (0.0003)
Polonia $\times$ Placebo sal. (t)	0.0001 (0.0003)	-0.0002 (0.0003)	-0.0004 (0.0004)	-0.0003 (0.0004)	-0.0001 (0.0003)	0.0003 (0.0003)	-0.0002 (0.0005)
Polonia $\times$ Placebo sal. ($t - 1$)	-0.0004 (0.0003)	0.0005* (0.0003)	0.0003 (0.0004)	0.0006* (0.0003)	0.0003 (0.0003)	0.0003 (0.0003)	0.0005 (0.0004)
Polonia $\times$ Placebo sal. ($t + 1$)	-0.0002 (0.0002)	-0.0003 (0.0003)	-0.0005 (0.0004)	0.0001 (0.0004)	0.0003 (0.0003)	-0.0004 (0.0003)	-0.0006 (0.0004)
# Legislator	994	992	994	994	994	994	994
# Month-Year	202	192	202	202	202	202	202
Observations	548,063	520,616	548,063	548,063	548,063	548,063	548,063
R ²	0.02028	0.02095	0.02032	0.02029	0.02029	0.02028	0.02030
Within R ²	0.00026	0.00033	0.00030	0.00026	0.00027	0.00026	0.00028
Placebo series	Israel	Sport Event	Germany	Ireland	Oil price	Pope	Cold War
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Poland is a binary indicator equal to one if a speech mentions Poland. Polonia share is standardized throughout and salience is measured using ProQuest monthly counts. Each column includes Poland salience and one placebo salience series simultaneously. The placebo series are: Israel mentions, any major sports event, Germany mentions, Ireland mentions, oil price shock related mentions, Pope mentions, and a Cold War composite. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and month level are reported in parantheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Sample: House speeches of republican and democratic voting legislators in the 93-101 Congress with at least 20 words.

Table A4: Polonia, Salience, and Placebo Topic Speeches

	Scandinavia (1)	Italy (2)	Germany (3)	Pope (4)	Oil price (5)	USSR (6)	Socialism (7)
Polonia $\times$ Poland sal. (t)	0.0002 (0.0001)	-0.0001 (0.0002)	-0.0001 (0.0003)	0.0002 (0.0002)	-0.0002 (0.0002)	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0001 (0.0001)
Polonia $\times$ Poland sal. ($t - 1$)	0.0001 (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0002)	0.0003 (0.0003)	0.0000 (0.0001)	0.0000 (0.0001)	0.0000 (0.0000)	0.0000 (0.0001)
Polonia $\times$ Poland sal. ($t + 1$)	0.0000 (0.0001)	0.0005** (0.0002)	0.0000 (0.0004)	0.0001 (0.0001)	0.0001 (0.0002)	0.0000 (0.0000)	-0.0001 (0.0000)
# Legislator FE	994	994	994	994	994	994	994
# Month FE	202	202	202	202	202	202	202
Observations	548,063	548,063	548,063	548,063	548,063	548,063	548,063
R ²	0.00641	0.01045	0.01403	0.00658	0.02487	0.00312	0.00534
Within R ²	1.64×10^{-5}	6.76×10^{-5}	7.24×10^{-6}	3.44×10^{-5}	2.35×10^{-6}	6.69×10^{-6}	8.14×10^{-6}
Legislator FE fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month FE fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: Polonia share is standardized throughout and salience is operationalized as a ProQuest global high-salience dummy. Each column replaces the Poland speech indicator with an alternative topic outcome: whether a speech mentions Scandinavia, Italy, Germany, the Pope, oil prices, the USSR, or socialism. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and month level are reported in parantheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Sample: House speeches of republican and democratic voting legislators in the 93-101 Congress with at least 20 words.

Table A5: Polonia, Salience, and Poland Speeches (Alternative Salience Measures)

	Poland Topic				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Polonia $\times$ Salience (t)	0.0014*** (0.0005)	0.0008 (0.0005)	0.0011*** (0.0004)	0.0017*** (0.0006)	0.0009 (0.0007)
Polonia $\times$ Salience ($t - 1$)	0.0009** (0.0004)	0.0008 (0.0006)	0.0004 (0.0004)	0.0007* (0.0004)	
Polonia $\times$ Salience ($t + 1$)	-0.0001 (0.0005)	0.0000 (0.0005)	0.0000 (0.0004)	-0.0001 (0.0006)	
Polonia $\times$ Salience ($t - 1$ week)					0.0006 (0.0006)
Polonia $\times$ Salience ($t - 2$ weeks)					-0.0003 (0.0008)
Polonia $\times$ Salience ($t - 3$ weeks)					0.0009* (0.0005)
Polonia $\times$ Salience ($t - 4$ weeks)					0.0001 (0.0006)
Polonia $\times$ Salience ($t + 1$ week)					0.0003 (0.0007)
Polonia $\times$ Salience ($t + 2$ weeks)					0.0006 (0.0005)
Polonia $\times$ Salience ($t + 3$ weeks)					-0.0009 (0.0007)
Polonia $\times$ Salience ($t + 4$ weeks)					0.0006 (0.0006)
# Legislator	994	994	994	994	994
# Month-Year	202	190	202	202	202
Observations	548,063	529,619	548,063	548,063	548,063
R ²	0.02023	0.02040	0.02047	0.02025	0.02029
Within R ²	0.00020	7.83×10^{-5}	0.00045	0.00022	0.00027
Salience source	Newspapers.com	Newspapers.com	Newspapers.com	ProQuest	ProQuest
Salience frequency	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Weekly
Salience definition	Global dummy	Within-congress dummy	Raw counts (scaled)	Global dummy	Above-week-mean dummy
Lag window	$t \pm 1$ month	$t \pm 1$ month	$t \pm 1$ month	$t \pm 1$ month	$t \pm 4$ weeks
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Poland is a binary indicator equal to one if a speech mentions Poland. Polonia share is standardized throughout. Columns (1)-(4) use monthly salience; column (5) uses weekly salience. Column (1) uses a global high-salience dummy from Newspapers.com. Column (2) uses a within-congress dummy defined relative to the congress-specific mean. Column (3) uses continuous raw mention counts scaled to unit standard deviation. Column (4) replicates column (1) using ProQuest as an alternative source. Column (5) uses a weekly above-mean dummy constructed from ProQuest daily counts aggregated to the week. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and month level are reported in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. Sample: House speeches of republican and democratic voting legislators in the 93-101 Congress with at least 20 words.

Table A6: Conservative Anchor Validation: Agreement Rates and Ideological Distance, 93rd–102nd Congress

Congress	Conservative Anchors	Mean DW-N	Most Liberal Member	Liberal DW-N	Ideo. Gap	Total Roll-calls	2+ Anchors (%)	All 3 Agree (%)	Liberal Dis-agrees (%)
93rd	GROSS (3853) / LANDGREBE (12020) / CRANE (12041)	0.83	CONYERS	-0.66	1.49	1077	1038 (96%)	71.5	74.5
94th	M (14252) / PAUL (14290) / CRANE (12041)	0.83	CONYERS	-0.66	1.49	1249	1136 (91%)	81.1	74.2
95th	M (14252) / CRANE (12041) / SYMMS (14056)	0.77	CONYERS	-0.66	1.43	1530	1438 (94%)	86.3	70.2
96th	M (14252) / PAUL (14290) / CRANE (14615)	0.83	CONYERS	-0.66	1.49	1266	1228 (97%)	79.0	71.8
97th	M (14252) / PAUL (14290) / CRANE (14615)	0.83	DYMALLY	-0.69	1.51	810	779 (96%)	76.3	63.4
98th	M (14252) / PAUL (14290) / CRANE (14615)	0.83	DYMALLY	-0.69	1.51	876	653 (75%)	84.9	76.5
99th	CRANE (12041) / STUMP (14454) / DANNEMEYER (14616)	0.71	DYMALLY	-0.69	1.40	889	867 (98%)	79.0	76.7
100th	DANNEMEYER (14616) / CRANE (12041) / STUMP (14454)	0.71	DYMALLY	-0.69	1.40	939	911 (97%)	85.0	76.1
101st	DANNEMEYER (14616) / CRANE (12041) / STUMP (14454)	0.71	WASHINGTON	-0.77	1.48	878	854 (97%)	82.4	80.4

Notes: Mean DW-NOMINATE first dimension score across the three conservative anchors per congress. Ideological gap is the difference between mean anchor score and the most liberal member's score. 2+ Anchors (%) is the share of rollcalls where majority-rule direction is defined (at least 2 of 3 anchors voted). All 3 Agree (%) is computed over rollcalls where all three anchors cast a Yea/Nay vote. Liberal Disagrees (%) is the share of rollcalls where the most liberal House member voted opposite to the conservative anchor majority.

Table A7: Polonia, Salience, and Conservative Voting (Party Heterogeneity)

	Conservative Vote			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Polonia $\times$ Salience	0.0132*** (0.0031)		0.0134*** (0.0040)	0.0119*** (0.0033)
Polonia $\times$ Salience $\times$ Democrat		0.0115*** (0.0031)		
Polonia $\times$ Salience $\times$ Republican		0.0168*** (0.0050)		
# Legislator	988	988	422	566
# Month-Year	193	193	193	193
Observations	722,334	722,334	278,598	443,736
R ²	0.23827	0.23827	0.16429	0.13618
Within R ²	0.00020	0.00021	0.00018	0.00019
Sample	Full	Full	Republicans	Democrats
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Conservative Vote is a binary indicator equal to one if a legislator voted like the conservative anchor majority. All specifications use the self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census) interacted with a global high-salience dummy, and include legislator and month-year fixed effects. Column (1) reports the baseline activation effect on the full sample. Column (2) uses a three-way interaction to allow the effect to differ between Democrats (party code 100) and Republicans (party code 200). Columns (3) and (4) restrict the sample to Republicans and Democrats respectively, estimating the activation effect within each party separately. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and roll call level are reported in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. Sample: All final passage roll call votes that were not near unanimous in the House of Representatives during the 93rd–101st Congress.

Table A8: Polonia, Salience, and Conservative Voting (Sample Variations)

	Conservative Vote				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience (t)	0.0023 (0.0016)	0.0040* (0.0022)	0.0106*** (0.0037)	0.0110*** (0.0037)	0.0041 (0.0085)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience ($t - 1$)	0.0052*** (0.0015)	0.0058*** (0.0020)	0.0080** (0.0033)	0.0061* (0.0033)	0.0088 (0.0081)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience ($t + 1$)	0.0026* (0.0016)	-0.0012 (0.0021)	-0.0030 (0.0033)	-0.0038 (0.0033)	0.0033 (0.0078)
# Legislator	988	988	988	988	988
# Month-Year	200	195	193	187	150
Observations	3,513,678	1,316,410	722,334	557,791	171,009
R ²	0.15913	0.12251	0.23831	0.22608	0.33134
Within R ²	6.41×10^{-5}	5.79×10^{-5}	0.00026	0.00022	0.00021
Vote sample	All	All	Contested (10–90%)	Donut (10–40% + 60–90%)	Middle (40–60%)
Final passage only		✓	✓	✓	✓
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Conservative Vote is a binary indicator equal to one if a legislator voted like the conservative anchor majority. All specifications use the self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census) interacted with a global high-salience dummy, and include the interaction at t , $t-1$, and $t+1$, with t being the month the roll call is held. Column (1) is an unrestricted baseline including all House votes. Columns (2)–(5) restrict to final passage votes only. Column (3) further restricts to contested votes, defined as roll calls where the yea share falls between 10% and 90%. Column (4) applies a donut restriction, retaining only votes in the 10–40% and 60–90% yea range, excluding both near-unanimous and purely partisan votes. Column (5) is a placebo restricted to the partisan middle (40–60% yea), where constituency pressure is less likely to dominate over party discipline. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and roll call level are reported in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Sample: House of Representatives, 93rd–101st Congress.

Table A9: Polonia, Salience, and Conservative Voting (Alternative Estimators)

	Conservative Vote		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
	OLS	Probit	Logit
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience (t)	0.0106*** (0.0037)	0.0329** (0.0130)	0.0576** (0.0224)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience ($t - 1$)	0.0080** (0.0033)	0.0251** (0.0121)	0.0419** (0.0209)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience ($t + 1$)	-0.0030 (0.0033)	-0.0087 (0.0116)	-0.0158 (0.0201)
# Legislator	988	987	987
# Month-Year	193	193	193
Observations	722,334	722,329	722,329
Squared Correlation	0.23831	0.23905	0.23922
Pseudo R ²	0.19800	0.19348	0.19329
BIC	812,420.4	779,985.4	780,163.9
Estimator	OLS	Probit	Logit
Ancestry measure	Self-reported	Self-reported	Self-reported
Salience measure	Global dummy	Global dummy	Global dummy
Contested votes only	✓	✓	✓
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Conservative Vote is a binary indicator equal to one if a legislator voted like the conservative anchor majority. All specifications use the self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census) interacted with a global high-salience dummy, and include the interaction at t , $t-1$, and $t+1$, with t being the month the roll call is held. Column (1) is the baseline linear probability model (OLS). Columns (2) and (3) re-estimate the same specification using probit and logit, respectively. As probit and logit coefficients are not directly comparable in magnitude to the OLS estimates, signs and significance are the relevant comparison. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and roll call level are reported in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Sample: All final passage roll call votes that were not near unanimous in the House of Representatives during the 93rd–101st Congress.

Table A10: Polonia, Salience, and Conservative Voting (Excluding Individuals Congresses)

	Conservative Vote								
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience (t)	0.0105*** (0.0037)	0.0120*** (0.0039)	0.0065* (0.0039)	0.0096** (0.0041)	0.0097*** (0.0037)	0.0115*** (0.0039)	0.0096** (0.0039)	0.0122*** (0.0042)	0.0131*** (0.0039)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience ($t - 1$)	0.0077** (0.0034)	0.0033 (0.0034)	0.0084** (0.0035)	0.0096** (0.0038)	0.0070** (0.0033)	0.0099*** (0.0035)	0.0100*** (0.0036)	0.0074** (0.0037)	0.0085** (0.0035)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience ($t + 1$)	-0.0021 (0.0034)	-0.0033 (0.0036)	-0.0016 (0.0036)	-0.0025 (0.0035)	-0.0039 (0.0033)	-0.0026 (0.0035)	-0.0023 (0.0035)	-0.0031 (0.0036)	-0.0058 (0.0035)
# Legislator	892	983	979	979	969	983	981	985	945
# Month-Year	169	171	171	170	172	173	171	173	174
Observations	637,617	606,677	608,383	622,251	659,196	658,077	661,578	665,233	659,660
R ²	0.24621	0.24412	0.24120	0.23723	0.24728	0.23179	0.23220	0.23397	0.23494
Within R ²	0.00028	0.00019	0.00018	0.00028	0.00019	0.00034	0.00028	0.00029	0.00031
Congress dropped	93th	94th	95th	96th	97th	98th	99th	100th	101th
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Conservative Vote is a binary indicator equal to one if a legislator voted like the conservative anchor majority. All specifications use the self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census) interacted with a global high-salience dummy, and include the interaction at t , $t-1$, and $t+1$, with t being the month the roll call is held. Each column re-estimates the baseline specification dropping one congressional term at a time, with the dropped Congress indicated in the row below the estimates. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and roll call level are reported in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Sample: All final passage roll call votes that were not near unanimous in the House of Representatives during the 93rd–101st Congress.

Table A11: Polonia, Saliency, and Conservative Voting (Extended Fixed Effect Models)

	Conservative Vote						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Constant	0.3683*** (0.0105)						
Polonia share	-0.0662*** (0.0087)						
Poland Saliency (t)	-0.0122 (0.0121)						
Poland Saliency ($t - 1$)	-0.0076 (0.0112)						
Poland Saliency ($t + 1$)	0.0083 (0.0114)						
Polonia share $\times$ Poland saliency (t)	0.0103*** (0.0039)	0.0104*** (0.0038)	0.0106*** (0.0037)	0.0076** (0.0036)	0.0104*** (0.0037)	0.0102*** (0.0037)	0.0107*** (0.0037)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland saliency ($t - 1$)	0.0079* (0.0043)	0.0073** (0.0035)	0.0080** (0.0033)	0.0046 (0.0033)	0.0079** (0.0033)	0.0073** (0.0034)	0.0081** (0.0034)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland saliency ($t + 1$)	-0.0025 (0.0039)	-0.0028 (0.0034)	-0.0030 (0.0033)	-0.0048 (0.0034)	-0.0034 (0.0033)	-0.0032 (0.0033)	-0.0030 (0.0033)
# Legislator	—	988	988	988	988	988	988
# Month-Year	—	—	193	193	193	193	—
# State $\times$ Congress	—	—	—	387	—	—	—
# Party $\times$ Congress	—	—	—	—	18	—	—
# Birth Cohort $\times$ Congress	—	—	—	—	—	453	—
# Roll Call	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,870
Observations	722,334	722,334	722,334	722,334	722,334	722,334	722,334
R ²	0.01622	0.21948	0.23831	0.24135	0.24003	0.23991	0.38158
Within R ²		0.00023	0.00026	8.75×10^{-5}	0.00025	0.00021	0.00032
Legislator fixed effects		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects			✓	✓	✓	✓	
State $\times$ Congress fixed effects				✓			
Party $\times$ Congress fixed effects					✓		
Birth Cohort $\times$ Congress fixed effects						✓	
Roll Call fixed effects							✓

Notes: The outcome variable Conservative Vote is a binary indicator equal to one if a legislator voted like the conservative anchor majority. All specifications use the self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census) interacted with a global high-saliency dummy, and include the interaction at t , $t - 1$, and $t + 1$, with t being the month the roll call is held. Column (1) is a pure OLS baseline with no fixed effects, including main effects and interactions. Column (2) adds legislator fixed effects only. Column (3) is the main specification with legislator and month-year fixed effects. Columns (4)–(6) extend the main specification by additionally absorbing state *imes* congress, party *imes* congress, and birth cohort *imes* congress fixed effects, respectively. Column (7) replaces the month-year fixed effect with roll call fixed effects. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and roll call level are reported in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Sample: All final passage roll call votes that were not near unanimous in the House of Representatives during the 93rd–101st Congress.

Table A12: Polonia, Salience, and Conservative Voting (Including Placebo Topic Saliences)

	Conservative Vote						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Polonia $\times$ Poland sal. (t)	0.0041** (0.0020)	0.0033* (0.0020)	0.0029 (0.0020)	0.0035* (0.0020)	0.0032* (0.0019)	0.0037* (0.0020)	0.0029 (0.0020)
Polonia $\times$ Poland sal. ($t - 1$)	0.0049*** (0.0018)	0.0053*** (0.0018)	0.0052*** (0.0018)	0.0036** (0.0018)	0.0052*** (0.0018)	0.0045** (0.0018)	0.0049*** (0.0018)
Polonia $\times$ Poland sal. ($t + 1$)	-0.0008 (0.0018)	-0.0009 (0.0018)	-0.0006 (0.0018)	-0.0009 (0.0018)	-0.0011 (0.0017)	-0.0015 (0.0018)	-0.0007 (0.0017)
Polonia $\times$ Placebo sal. (t)	0.0005 (0.0015)	0.0017 (0.0015)	0.0037* (0.0020)	-0.0018 (0.0024)	0.0004 (0.0017)	-0.0004 (0.0017)	-0.0029 (0.0022)
Polonia $\times$ Placebo sal. ($t - 1$)	-0.0003 (0.0015)	-0.0011 (0.0014)	0.0003 (0.0018)	0.0006 (0.0022)	0.0006 (0.0016)	0.0043** (0.0017)	0.0023 (0.0021)
Polonia $\times$ Placebo sal. ($t + 1$)	0.0014 (0.0014)	-0.0015 (0.0016)	0.0006 (0.0020)	0.0062*** (0.0023)	0.0044*** (0.0016)	0.0007 (0.0018)	0.0044** (0.0022)
# Legislator	988	985	988	988	988	988	988
# Month-Year	193	184	193	193	193	193	193
Observations	722,334	687,534	722,334	722,334	722,334	722,334	722,334
R ²	0.23833	0.23641	0.23836	0.23839	0.23841	0.23838	0.23837
Within R ²	0.00028	0.00025	0.00032	0.00036	0.00039	0.00035	0.00034
Placebo series	Israel	Sport Event	Germany	Ireland	Oil price	Pope	Cold War
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Conservative Vote is a binary indicator equal to one if a legislator voted like the conservative anchor majority. All specifications use the self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census) and one placebo ancestry share, each interacted with Poland salience, and include the interaction at t , $t - 1$, and $t + 1$, with t being the month the roll call is held, and legislator and month-year fixed effects. Each column includes both the Polonia share interacted with Poland salience and one placebo ancestry share interacted with Poland salience simultaneously. All ancestry shares are standardized to mean zero, unit standard deviation and salience is operationalized as a ProQuest global high-salience dummy. The placebo ancestry groups are: Irish, Scandinavian, German, Italian, Ukrainian, Hungarian, and Afro-American. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and roll call level are reported in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Sample: All final passage roll call votes that were not near unanimous in the House of Representatives during the 93rd–101st Congress.

Table A13: Polonia, Salience, and Conservative Voting (Including Placebo Ancestry Shares)

	Conservative Vote						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Polonia $\times$ Poland sal. (t)	0.0040** (0.0019)	0.0040** (0.0020)	0.0042** (0.0020)	0.0028* (0.0015)	0.0026* (0.0016)	0.0031* (0.0016)	0.0040** (0.0020)
Polonia $\times$ Poland sal. ($t - 1$)	0.0052*** (0.0017)	0.0052*** (0.0018)	0.0054*** (0.0018)	0.0037*** (0.0014)	0.0044*** (0.0016)	0.0048*** (0.0016)	0.0052*** (0.0018)
Polonia $\times$ Poland sal. ($t + 1$)	-0.0009 (0.0017)	-0.0009 (0.0018)	-0.0007 (0.0018)	-0.0005 (0.0013)	-0.0014 (0.0014)	-0.0012 (0.0015)	-0.0009 (0.0018)
Placebo ancestry $\times$ Poland sal. (t)	-0.0007 (0.0011)	0.0008 (0.0015)	-0.0015 (0.0017)	0.0026 (0.0016)	0.0021 (0.0014)	0.0020** (0.0010)	0.0012 (0.0014)
Placebo ancestry $\times$ Poland sal. ($t - 1$)	0.0005 (0.0010)	0.0004 (0.0016)	-0.0018 (0.0017)	0.0030** (0.0015)	0.0012 (0.0013)	0.0008 (0.0011)	-0.0002 (0.0014)
Placebo ancestry $\times$ Poland sal. ($t + 1$)	-0.0006 (0.0009)	0.0000 (0.0011)	-0.0016 (0.0016)	-0.0008 (0.0014)	0.0008 (0.0012)	0.0006 (0.0009)	0.0006 (0.0013)
# Legislator	988	988	988	988	988	988	988
# Month-Year	193	193	193	193	193	193	193
Observations	722,334	722,334	722,334	722,334	722,334	722,334	722,334
R ²	0.23832	0.23832	0.23837	0.23836	0.23834	0.23834	0.23832
Within R ²	0.00027	0.00027	0.00033	0.00033	0.00029	0.00029	0.00027
Placebo ancestry	Irish	Scandinavian	German	Italian	Ukrainian	Hungarian	Afro-American
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: All specifications include legislator and roll call fixed effects with standard errors two-way clustered by legislator and roll call, estimated on final passage contested House votes from the 93rd-101st Congress. All ancestry shares are standardized throughout and salience is operationalized as a ProQuest global high-salience dummy. Each column includes both the Polonia share interacted with Poland salience and one placebo ancestry share interacted with Poland salience simultaneously. The placebo ancestry groups are: Irish, Scandinavian, German, Italian, Ukrainian, Hungarian, and Afro-American.

Table A14: Polonia, Salience, and Dovish Voting

	Dovish Vote			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience (t)	-0.0100*** (0.0027)	-0.0030 (0.0019)	-0.0096*** (0.0029)	-0.0022 (0.0017)
# Legislator	988	988	986	986
# Month-Year	193	193	193	193
Observations	754,449	754,449	750,830	750,830
R ²	0.24285	0.24278	0.24360	0.24353
Within R ²	0.00012	2.76×10^{-5}	0.00010	1.58×10^{-5}
Ancestry measure	Self-reported	Self-reported	Foreign-born	Foreign-born
Salience measure	Global dummy	Raw counts/10k	Global dummy	Raw counts/10k
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Dovish Vote is a binary indicator equal to one if a legislator voted like the dovish anchor majority, coded using the bottom decile of extciteJeong2018 foreign policy ideal point scores as dove anchors, and is the mirror image of the Conservative Vote outcome used in the main specifications. Columns (1) and (2) use the self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census); columns (3) and (4) use the foreign-born share (1970 and 1980 Census). Columns (1) and (3) interact the ancestry measure with a global high-salience dummy; columns (2) and (4) use continuous monthly mention counts per 10,000. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and roll call level are reported in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Sample: All final passage roll call votes that were not near unanimous in the House of Representatives during the 93rd-101st Congress.

Table A15: Polonia, Salience, and Dovish Voting (Lead and Lag Model)

	Dovish Vote					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience (t)	-0.0080** (0.0032)	0.0015 (0.0027)	-0.0039 (0.0027)	-0.0080** (0.0035)	0.0018 (0.0027)	-0.0033 (0.0028)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience ($t - 1$)	-0.0062** (0.0030)	-0.0098*** (0.0026)	-0.0079*** (0.0025)	-0.0052 (0.0032)	-0.0081*** (0.0026)	-0.0075*** (0.0026)
Polonia share $\times$ Poland salience ($t + 1$)	0.0024 (0.0030)	0.0021 (0.0022)	0.0036 (0.0027)	0.0022 (0.0032)	0.0016 (0.0023)	0.0031 (0.0028)
# Legislator	988	988	988	986	986	986
# Month-Year	193	193	185	193	193	185
Observations	754,449	754,449	728,325	750,830	750,830	724,885
R ²	0.24288	0.24288	0.24199	0.24361	0.24360	0.24272
Within R ²	0.00015	0.00015	0.00011	0.00013	0.00010	9.02×10^{-5}
Ancestry measure	Self-reported	Self-reported	Self-reported	Foreign-born	Foreign-born	Foreign-born
Salience measure	Global dummy	Raw counts/10k	Within-congress	Global dummy	Raw counts/10k	Within-congress
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Dovish Vote is a binary indicator equal to one if a legislator voted like the dovish anchor majority, coded using the bottom decile of extciteJeong2018 foreign policy ideal point scores as dove anchors, and is the mirror image of the Conservative Vote outcome used in the main specifications. Columns (1)–(3) use the self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census); columns (4)–(6) use the foreign-born share (1970 and 1980 Census). Each specification includes the interaction at t , $t - 1$, and $t + 1$, with t being the month the roll call is held. Columns (1) and (4) interact the ancestry measure with a global high-salience dummy; columns (2) and (5) use continuous monthly mention counts per 10,000; columns (3) and (6) use a within-congress high-salience dummy. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and roll call level are reported in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Sample: All final passage roll call votes that were not near unanimous in the House of Representatives during the 93rd–101st Congress.

Table A16: Electoral Pressure and the Activation Effect (Uncontested vs Contested Elections)

	Conservative Vote				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Polonia $\times$ Salience	0.0132*** (0.0031)	0.0100* (0.0059)	0.0124*** (0.0030)		0.0128*** (0.0031)
Polonia $\times$ Salience (Contested)				0.0130*** (0.0031)	
Polonia $\times$ Salience (Uncontested)				0.0185*** (0.0062)	
Uncontested					0.0050 (0.0044)
Polonia $\times$ Salience $\times$ Uncontested					0.0068 (0.0054)
# Legislator	988	229	974	986	986
# Month-Year	193	193	193	193	193
Observations	722,334	70,900	648,549	719,449	719,449
R ²	0.23827	0.22450	0.24172	0.23870	0.23870
Within R ²	0.00020	0.00010	0.00017	0.00021	0.00022
Sample	Full	Uncontested only	Contested only	Full	Full
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Conservative Vote is a binary indicator equal to one if a legislator voted like the conservative anchor majority. All specifications use the self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census) interacted with a global high-salience dummy, and include legislator and month-year fixed effects. Column (1) reports the baseline activation effect on the full sample. Columns (2) and (3) split the sample by whether the legislator ran uncontested (vote share $\geq 99\%$) or contested in the most recent election. Column (4) interacts the baseline term with the uncontested indicator without lower-order terms, reporting separate coefficients for each group. Column (5) reports the triple difference-in-differences specification including all lower-order terms, where a positive coefficient on the triple interaction would indicate that uncontested legislators respond more strongly to Polonia activation. The insignificant triple interaction in column (5) provides no evidence that electoral safety amplifies the activation effect. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and roll call level are reported in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Sample: All final passage roll call votes that were not near unanimous in the House of Representatives during the 93rd–101st Congress.

Table A17: Electoral Pressure and the Activation Effect (Competitive vs Non-Competitive Elections)

	Conservative Vote				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Polonia $\times$ Salience	0.0124*** (0.0030)	0.0128*** (0.0032)	0.0081** (0.0040)		0.0117*** (0.0030)
Polonia $\times$ Salience (Non-competitive)				0.0114*** (0.0030)	
Polonia $\times$ Salience (Competitive)				0.0155*** (0.0045)	
Competitive					-0.0130*** (0.0036)
Polonia $\times$ Salience $\times$ Competitive					0.0028 (0.0035)
# Legislator	974	790	656	974	974
# Month-Year	193	193	193	193	193
Observations	648,549	435,521	213,028	648,549	648,549
R ²	0.24172	0.24803	0.23693	0.24173	0.24180
Within R ²	0.00017	0.00019	5.63×10^{-5}	0.00018	0.00028
Sample	Contested only	Non-competitive only	Competitive only	Contested only	Contested only
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Conservative Vote is a binary indicator equal to one if a legislator voted like the conservative anchor majority. All specifications use the self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census) interacted with a global high-salience dummy, and include legislator and month-year fixed effects. The sample is restricted throughout to legislators who ran in contested elections (vote share < 99%). Column (1) reports the baseline activation effect on this sample. Columns (2) and (3) split the sample further by whether the legislator ran in a non-competitive (vote share $\geq 60\%$) or competitive (vote share < 60%) contested election. Column (4) interacts the baseline term with the competitive indicator without lower-order terms, reporting separate coefficients for each group. Column (5) reports the triple difference-in-differences specification including all lower-order terms, where a positive coefficient on the triple interaction would indicate that electorally vulnerable legislators respond more strongly to Polonia activation. The insignificant triple interaction in column (5) provides no evidence that electoral competitiveness amplifies the activation effect. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and roll call level are reported in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. Sample: All final passage roll call votes that were not near unanimous in the House of Representatives during the 93rd–101st Congress.

Table A18: Electoral Pressure and the Activation Effect (Electoral Timing)

	Conservative Vote				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Polonia $\times$ Salience	0.0132*** (0.0031)	0.0124*** (0.0039)	0.0144*** (0.0047)		0.0128*** (0.0043)
Polonia $\times$ Salience (Non-election year)				0.0128*** (0.0043)	
Polonia $\times$ Salience (Election year)				0.0134*** (0.0035)	
Polonia $\times$ Salience $\times$ Election year					0.0006 (0.0045)
# Legislator	988	980	981	988	988
# Month-Year	193	93	100	193	193
Observations	722,334	382,707	339,627	722,334	722,334
R ²	0.23827	0.22819	0.25311	0.23827	0.23827
Within R ²	0.00020	0.00019	0.00020	0.00020	0.00020
Sample	Full	Election year only	Non-election year only	Full	Full
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Conservative Vote is a binary indicator equal to one if a legislator voted like the conservative anchor majority. All specifications use the self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census) interacted with a global high-salience dummy, and include legislator and month-year fixed effects. Column (1) reports the baseline activation effect on the full sample. Columns (2) and (3) split the sample by whether the vote occurred in an election year (even-numbered year) or a non-election year. Column (4) interacts the baseline term with the election year indicator without lower-order terms, reporting separate coefficients for each group. Column (5) reports the triple difference-in-differences specification including all lower-order terms, where a positive coefficient on the triple interaction would indicate that legislators respond more strongly to Polonia activation in election years when electoral incentives are highest. The insignificant and near-zero triple interaction in column (5) provides no evidence that electoral timing amplifies the activation effect. Standard errors clustered at the legislator and roll call level are reported in parentheses. * p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01. Sample: All final passage roll call votes that were not near unanimous in the House of Representatives during the 93rd–101st Congress.

Table A19: Polish Ancestry and the Activation Effect

	Conservative Vote			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Polonia share $\times$ Salience	0.0132*** (0.0031)	0.0074 (0.0054)	0.0133*** (0.0032)	0.0141*** (0.0034)
Polonia share $\times$ Salience (Polish-American)				-0.0064** (0.0029)
# Legislator	988	18	970	988
# Month-Year	193	193	193	193
Observations	722,334	15,721	706,613	722,334
R ²	0.23827	0.06469	0.23726	0.23827
Within R ²	0.00020	0.00010	0.00020	0.00021
Sample	Full sample	Polish-American	Non-Polish-American	Full sample
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The table reports estimates from two-way fixed effects regressions of a conservative vote indicator on the interaction between district-level Polish ancestry share (standardized) and Poland media salience. All specifications include legislator and month-year fixed effects with standard errors two-way clustered by legislator and roll call, estimated on final passage contested House votes from the 93rd–101st Congress. Column (1) reports the baseline activation effect. Columns (2) and (3) split the sample by whether the legislator is identified as Polish-American in the Biographical Directory of Congress. Column (4) interacts the baseline DiD with the Polish-American indicator without lower-order terms, reporting separate coefficients for each group. The insignificant triple interaction provides no evidence that legislators of Polish ancestry are more responsive to Polonia activation than those without Polish roots.

Table A20: Polonia, Salience, and Conservative Voting (Vote Type Robustness)

	Conservative Vote			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Polonia $\times$ Salience	0.0132*** (0.0031)	0.0111*** (0.0038)	0.0090*** (0.0028)	0.0088*** (0.0028)
# Legislator	988	987	988	728
# Month-Year	193	179	192	193
Observations	722,334	357,398	619,766	535,304
R ²	0.23827	0.18105	0.24353	0.24413
Within R ²	0.00020	0.00013	9.86×10^{-5}	9.33×10^{-5}
Sample restriction	None	Excl. party unity votes	Excl. conservative coalition votes	Excl. southern states
Legislator fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓
Month-Year fixed effects	✓	✓	✓	✓

Notes: The outcome variable Conservative Vote is a binary indicator equal to one if a legislator voted like the conservative anchor majority. All specifications use the self-reported multiple ancestry share (1980 Census) interacted with a global high-salience dummy, and include legislator and month-year fixed effects. Column (1) reports the baseline activation effect on the full sample. Column (2) excludes party unity votes, defined as votes where a majority of one party opposes a majority of the other. Column (3) excludes conservative coalition votes, defined as votes where a majority of Republicans and a majority of southern Democrats oppose a majority of northern Democrats. Column (4) excludes legislators representing southern states (AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, TX, VA). Standard errors clustered at the legislator and roll call level are reported in parentheses. * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$. Sample: All final passage roll call votes that were not near unanimous in the House of Representatives during the 93rd–101st Congress.