Germany Inequality Report

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Executive Summary

Data

Two datasets on wealth and status distribution in Germany were analyzed: 2015 World Bank quintile and decile estimates of income, and 2014 International Labor Organization (ILO) data on income by occupation.

Results

Income data provided by the World Bank and occupational data provided by the ILO show similar patterns of a risk acceptant population with both the individuals or occupations earning the highest incomes being the most risk acceptant. Germany's mean Arrow-Pratt measure is a modest -3.97.

Significance for Risk Taking and Stability

The risk acceptant nature of the German population shows some potential for generating instability in both its civil society and political institutions. However, Germany's risk averse population may be its greatest liability for state stability. Risk aversion changes to risk acceptance by Germans in occupations where people fear loss in income and status. Russian propaganda and the surge of refugees have combined to create a perception of threat and loss in many working-class Germans, which appears to be fueling the rise of more authoritarian right-wing groups (Shuller, 2018 & Koehler, 2018); this extremism is represented by the white nationalist Alternative for Germany (AFD) which has gained seats in the German Bundestag and now possesses political power (Deutscher Bundestag, 2019). Germany also has an ongoing economic issue with its bottom 20% of society owning little to no assets (WSI, 2019). This gives people in this category very little chance to improve their quality of life.

Implications for US Interests

The US and Germany continue to maintain a strong alliance. Germany is often the most economically capable to aid the US in its Eastern European interests (Janning & Möller, 2016). Despite their close alliance, the two countries have some policy differences in the manner in which they deal with China and Russia (Sharma, 2018). The risk acceptance of Germany's population has allowed Russia to encourage far right-wing organizations that challenge the German political status quo. This risk acceptance has culminated in the insertion of Russian influence into German political institutions, which threatens US interests in Germany (Shuller, 2018; Applebaum, 2018).

Implications for China's Interests

China's interests in Germany are coming under suspicion by the German economic and political organizations it relies upon to continue its advancements (Düben, 2019). This is due to slowing economic reformation that is supposed to ease access to Chinese markets and is potentially a growing hurdle for China to overcome, as it has in the past had a warmer relationship with Germany than many of the other European Union member states (Kakissis, 2019). Even with the current shift toward Chinese skepticism, Germany's risk acceptant population is partially fueling grassroots movements by far right-wing organizations that favor autocratic governance presents China with an opportunity (Shuller, 2018).



Implications for Russia's Interests

Russia has both strong opportunities in Germany and major obstacles to overcome. It shares strong trade with Germany (OEC, 2017), however it has at the same time both inserted political influence and alienated itself from the German government (Applebaum, 2018; Stelzenmuller, 2017). It has ridden a wave of rightwing populism, giving media aid to members of the AFD in order to gain political influence in Germany (Applebaum, 2018). However, its success has put the rest of Germany's government, which make up the vast majority of its political offices, on high alert and helped highlight the saliency of keeping Russian influence out of Western democracies (Stelzenmuller, 2017).



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Introduction

This is a summary report on inequality in Germany compiled as part of the Aggrieved Populations project conducted in support of the 2019 Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) Future of Great Power Competition and Conflict project conducted for the JS-J39.

This report provides background on why the country was chosen, relevant historical background, literature review concerning inequality in the country, synopses of empirical data sources and analyses, and a concluding section that summarizes the findings. It is not intended to provide a comprehensive analysis of inequality and grievance in the country, but to place the empirical analyses conducted on this country in their social and political context and to highlight interesting cases of inequality pertinent to risk acceptance and great power competition. The analyses focus on the measurement of population risk sensitivity as a function of measured inequality using the Arrow-Pratt measure of risk aversion, whose positive values indicate risk aversion and negative values indicate risk acceptance. Studies have shown that risk acceptance is associated with social unrest, terrorism, and other forms of social disruption (Kuznar 2007; 2019). The full explanation of the underlying method and theory is presented in the summary report, Inequality, Risk Sensitivity and Grievance in Context: Summary of Aggrieved Populations Country Reports, submitted as part of this SMA project. This report is intended to be supporting material to that report and presumes familiarity with it.

In order to create an inclusive and more representative set of countries, an effort was made to analyze countries from each major region of the world (Africa, Central Asia, East Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, North America, South Asia).

Why Germany?

Germany was chosen for four reasons: 1) It is a representative nation from Europe, 2) it has experienced terror attacks, 3) the rise of right-wing groups indicates some degree of instability, and 4) Russia has interfered in German politics.

Great Power Interests in Germany

China maintains strong economic ties with Germany as it is China's largest trading partner in the EU (OEC, 2017), and has consistently had more than 200 billion USD of bilateral trade (Elmer, 2019). Like many of its partnerships, China and Germany's relationship is primarily built on economic trade. Germany is the second largest importer of goods from China in the EU behind the Netherlands (Eurostat, 2019). It is also the EU's largest exporter of goods to China. This places Germany in a precarious situation as the US is one of its most important political allies and trading partners as well (OEC, 2017). Germany's entrapment between the two global powers is evident in the latest debate about China's bid to build Germany's 5G network (Kakissis, 2019). China's telecommunication giant Huawei is currently making a bid to build Germany's new technology network, however the US has warned Germany and several other EU countries that if they allow Huawei any influence in the construction of their telecommunication systems, then they will face the potential of losing intelligence transfers with the US.

China faces further political issues as Germany, which usually takes a more moderate stance than most Western countries on Chinese involvement, is beginning to shift closer to the US' skepticism of Chinese economic investments (Düben, 2019). This skepticism and weakening trust is brought on by a lack of



transparency in Chinese economic activity and what Germany believes is the purposeful slowing of economic reformation in China. Another key issue brought up by German economists is the lack of availability to invest and compete in China's market by foreign investors.

Like China, the US' largest trading partner in the EU is Germany (OEC, 2017). Much of Germany's economic interaction with the US is in high end goods including automobiles, which accounted for 19% of German exports to the US in 2017. Germany also fills key political roles throughout Europe in the EU, NATO, G-7, G-20, and the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (Index Mundi). Germany's leadership role in European organizations and its powerful economy makes it the most politically influential country in Europe (Janning & Möller, 2016). While the US and Germany maintain a strong alliance, differing foreign policy outlooks have often highlighted key differences between the two countries (Sharma, 2018). The US views Germany as its key ally in the region when dealing with what Washington perceives as encroachment by China and Russia. Despite this, the US and German governments diverge on several key issues including the US' retreat from the Iranian deal and US tariffs on steel and aluminum from Europe. Germany has often taken a softer approach to China as well, showing more openness to Chinese investment and political involvement than the US feels comfortable with (Kakissis, 2019).

While Russia's political ties with Germany are fraying and coming under pressure, Moscow is attempting to further economic cooperation with Germany (Myers, 2018). The most significant economic and political undertaking between the two countries is the Nordstream 2 pipeline that avoids countries with strong anti-Russian sentiment including Ukraine and Poland. Germany holds a special importance to Russia's economic activity for two main reasons: the amount of direct trade and Germany's role in the EU. When Moscow's trade with all the EU member states is added together, it accounts for the majority of Russia's economic activity (OEC, 2017). Despite the economic ties and ongoing joint efforts to avoid countries that are hostile to Russia, the two countries are politically estranged from one another (Trenin, 2018). This stems from Russian aggression in Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, which show its expansionist tendencies. Further political stress was placed on their relationship in 2012 when Russian President Vladimir Putin announced he would run for the Russian presidency again and eventually won, representing a loss of democratic principles.

While Russia's aggressive interactions in Ukraine has influenced German-Russian relations, recent activities occurring in Germany that are covertly orchestrated by Russia have further alienated the two countries. These activities include meddling in the German election process and the incitement of Germany's violent right-wing organizations. Like in many Western countries, Russia has used grass roots movements to undermine Germany's democratic political institutions, create instability, and increase civil unrest by using extreme and violent right-wing groups (Applebaum, 2018). Russia has also attacked Germany's political institutions by supporting members of Germany's Alternative for Germany (AFD) by spreading right-wing propaganda and giving financial aid to AFG politicians. Russia was successful in its meddling in German elections as it was able to help the AFD secure 91 out of 709 seats in the German Bundestag, Germany's lower legislative house (Deutscher Bundestag, 2019). This gives the extreme rightwing political organization the third most seats of any German political party. This helped aid several members of Germany's political and national security organizations to highlight the saliency surrounding issues revolving around keeping Russia out of Western democracies (Stelzenmuller, 2017). However, the remedy for the issue is not widely agreed upon and is a source for contention between many in Germany's political institutions. This issue goes further than Germany itself as it threatens the credibility of Germany's political institutions in the eyes of some of its EU counterparts.



Literature Review on Inequality in Germany

Germany has been experiencing an increase in income inequality and currently the top 10% of German's control 60% of the wealth (WSI, 2019). Only Lithuania had a higher Gini coefficient in the Euro Zone in 2018. Even though other developed countries like the US have higher amounts of wealth inequality, Germany is facing a small socioeconomic crisis where its bottom 20% own essentially very few assets or none at all (WSI. 2019).

Germany is a homogenous country when compared to others. More than 90% of its population is ethnically German (Index Mundi, 2019). This is not the case religiously, however, as Germans that adhere to Roman Catholicism and Protestant Christianity make up only 56% of the population combined. 36% of Germans do not identify religiously while the remaining eight percent is made up of Muslims, Orthodox Christians, or other smaller religious affiliations.

Despite Germany's ethnic homogeneity there are still occurrences of ethnic repression. This is both at the state level with the lack of job opportunities available to immigrants, and ethnic violence perpetrated and inspired by a resurgence from right-wing organizations (Shuller, 2018; Koehler, 2018). At the institutional level, many immigrants flowing into Germany from the Middle East and Southern Asia are experiencing a lack of job opportunities that many less educated Germans possess (Shuller, 2018). In 2015 and 2016, refugees from the same regions also poured into Europe, many of whom landed in Germany (Koehler, 2018). This influx of displaced ethnic and religious minorities into Germany gave way to an explosion of right-wing violence that was fueled by radical right-wing ideology. These groups varied in their level of organization, extremism, motives, and mode of carrying out attacks. They ranged from lone attackers, organized neo-Nazi bomb plots, and spontaneous mob riots against immigrants or refugees in its vicinity. By 2018, the German government had conducted numerous trials and convicted dozens of radical rightwing leaders and organization members of violent acts or terrorist plots (Shuller, 2018). While violence from right-wing groups is on the rise it is partially in response to a rise in crime in areas where migrants were common (BBC, 2018). Saxony is one such region that experienced an increase of ten percent in its violent crimes at the height of the migration.

Country-Level Measures of Inequality in Germany

Germany was initially assessed with a collection of country-level metrics. These metrics provide measures of the country's inequality compared to other nations, inequality within the country, social conditions that may be consequences of that inequality, and the prognosis for stability in the future (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

Germany is among the wealthiest and most stable countries in this study. It has a GDP Per Capita of more than \$44,000. It possesses a smaller Gini coefficient than two-thirds of the world's countries and an informal employment rate that equals only 10.2% total employment 2013. Germany is in the 93rd percentile for the Fragile States Index of 2018 and has a low chance of mass killings. However, it does have a higher than normal chance of being influenced by terror tactics or to experience a terror attack than the average country for the study. Germany's average Arrow-Pratt Measure is -3.97 which is well above average, indicating a modestly risk acceptant population.



Table 1. Germany: Basic Statistics on Inequality

Measure	Value	Rank	Source
Inequality Compared to Other Nations			
Per Capita GDP 2018	\$44,769	18 of 187	WB
Country Measures of Inequality			
Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) 2018	0.861	8 of 151	UN
Gini Coefficient 2015	42.3%	57 of 184	WB
Informal Employment as % of Total Employment 2013	10.2%	100 of 112	ILO
Measures of State Instability			
Fragile States Index 2018	25.8	164 of 175	FFP
Terrorism Index 2018	4.601	39 of 160	IEP
Probability of Mass Killing 2018	0.003	107 of 161	EWP
Risk Sensitivity			
Average Arrow-Pratt Measure 2015	-3.97	40 of 158	This Study

^{*}EWP – Early Warning Project, FFP – Fund for Peace, IEP – Institute for Economics and Peace, ILO – International Labor Organization, UN – United Nations, WB – World Bank

Prognosis for Change to 2029

The level of risk acceptance in Germany is unlikely to change. Germany's chief of domestic intelligence agency, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution or BfV, said in early 2019 that there are currently more than 12,000 right-wing extremists that are both active in Germany and willing to use violence (Connolly & Olterman, 2019). He went on to say that the bureau does not have the resources to constantly monitor all of the potentially violent members of right-wing organizations. The largest far-right organizations in Germany include the AFD, the National Democratic Party, and Pegida (Knight, 2017). Many of these group's followers and some of their leaders overlap with each other as some are political organizations (AFD) and others are grass-roots movements (Pegida). Germany's government is beginning to crack down on and prosecute right-wing extremists that either plotted or carried out attacks against refugees or German public institutions (Shuller, 2018). Despite this, Russian support for these organizations has aided them in not only surviving but expanding their influence and control over small grass roots organizations (Applebaum, 2018). This trend could potentially see Germany's extreme rightwing political party (AFD) gain more representation in the Bundestag and thus gain more political power and influence. The AFD is comprised of two main factions with one being moderate and one extending to right-wing extremism (Chase, 2017). Its strongest appeal to its voting base comes from a strong antiimmigrant stance. It mainly attracts ethnically German white men that are not necessarily economically poor but who do fear the loss of their current socioeconomic status (Georres, 2018). More influence from the AFD and similar groups would likely mean a higher favorability in Germany for Russia and China. This would hurt the US' interests in Germany and pose a threat to its interests in the EU as Germany is often placed in one of its leading roles (Janning & Möller, 2016).



⁻The Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) is a UN measure of well-being and is a scale based on per capita GDP, life expectancy and education levels of the population.

⁻ The Fragile States Index is based on twelve conflict risk that include security apparatus, factionalized elites, group grievance, economy, economic inequality, human flight and brain drain, public services, state legitimacy, human rights and rule of law, demographic pressure, refugees and IDPs, and external interventions. The potential range of the index is zero (no fragility to 120 total fragility).

⁻ The Terrorism Index scores each country on a scale from 0 to 10; where 0 represents no impact from terrorism and 10 represents the highest measurable impact of terrorism.

Empirical Data on Inequality in Germany

Dataset 1: 2015 Germany World Bank Quintile Data

The World Bank provides data on lowest and highest decile, and quintiles of percentage of income or consumption.¹ These data are used to calculate their Gini coefficients. While not exactly measuring the actual income, the percentage of overall income provides an approximation. The German data was gathered in 2016. *Error! Reference source not found.* presents the original data and the fitted distribution curve from which the Arrow-Pratt risk sensitivity measures will be derived, as well as the Arrow-Pratt measures of risk sensitivity.

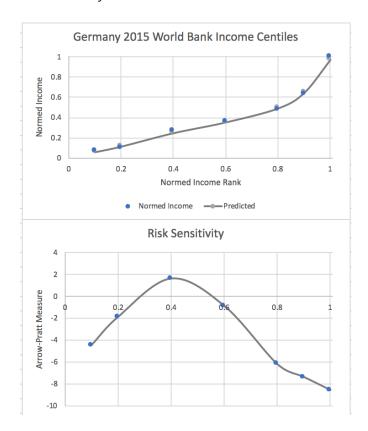


Figure 1: Distribution of Income, World Bank Quintiles Germany 2015 and associated Risk Sensitivity.

Summary Dataset 1: 2016 Germany World Bank Quintile Data

The data from the World Bank shows a risk acceptant population, with the highest income earners being the most risk acceptant. The mean Arrow-Pratt score for Germany is a relatively high -3.97 (75th percentile) compared to other countries, indicating an on average less risk acceptant population. However, only those in Germany with an income that falls on the 40th percentile are scored as risk averse. The highest income earners in German society show the most risk acceptance with an Arrow-Pratt score of less than -8.

¹ http://wdi.worldbank.org/table/1.3



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Dataset 2: Germany ILO Income by Occupation 2014

Occupational data provided by the ILO shows a breakdown of risk acceptance in Germany by occupation. The data shows each occupation's average salary and how many people were employed. Some occupations are broken down more granularly than others into subgroups.

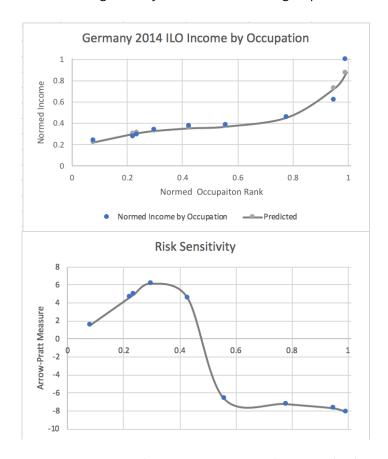


Figure 2. Germany ILO Income by Occupation 2014 and associated Risk Sensitivity

Summary Dataset 2: Germany ILO Income by Occupation 2014

The occupational data provided from ILO shows a country that is moderately risk acceptant. When measured from occupational data, the mean Arrow-Pratt score for Germany is -.90. The occupations around the 30th percentiles are the most risk averse; these occupations include machine operators and craftsmen. The occupations that make the largest average monthly salary are the most risk acceptant. These occupations include professionals, technicians, and managers. Far right-wing movements have built their support from individuals along the economic spectrum using the common fear of loss of socioeconomic standing rather than their immediate economic standing (Georres, 2018). Recent research shows that 75% of immigrants to Germany have lost jobs across the job spectrum, including in skilled trades. Even though immigrants may not be displacing Germans across the spectrum of employment, immigrants may very well threaten Germans across the spectrum at many socioeconomic levels, leading to widespread loss aversion. This then flips risk aversion to much greater level of risk acceptance (Camerer, 2000; Jervis, 1994; Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 2000; Kuznar & Lutz, 2007; Tversky & Kahneman, 1992).



Findings on Inequality in Germany

Relevance to Instability and Social Cleavages

Even though Germany is very homogenous and its population less risk acceptant than most, it is still facing a sharp increase in right-wing extremism in several forms, varying in organization and ideological extremity (Shuller, 2018). This surge of extremist driven violence coincides with an increase in refugees coming into Germany; furthermore, Russia influenced Germany's latest national election through media and financial aid to its right-wing and white nationalist political party in the AFD (Applebaum, 2018). The AFD has a moderate wing, but mainly appeals through extreme right-wing stances on immigration to build its supporter base from moderately educated ethnic Germans who fear the loss of their current socioeconomic status (Georres, 2018). The fear of loss of socioeconomic status is a major driver for followers of these right wing movements, and recent successes of immigrants across the economic sector in Germany appears to reinforce this perceived fear and match Georres et al.'s (2018) findings that perceived loss, and not occupational status or income, is the driver of right-wing nationalist support. The fear of loss presents a classic case of loss aversion, in which decision makers who are risk averse over gains, are more strongly risk accepted when considering losses. Russia's use of grass roots extremist organizations took advantage of the fear of loss and aided the AFD in becoming the third largest political party in the Bundestag, with 91 seats shows slight instability along Germany's social cleavages in an otherwise stable country (Deutscher Bundestag, 2019). The sharp rise in right-wing violence throughout Germany and the influx of refugees from the Middle East and Southern Asia has, to some extent, overshadowed a political discussion surrounding Germany's increasing wealth gap (WSI, 2019).

Opportunities and Pitfalls for the US and Adversaries

The US has a strong ally in Germany. It shares strong trade and economic ties that are mostly built off of high-end mechanical and car parts (OEC, 2017). The US also consistently looks to Germany as a leader in the EU as it has one of the strongest economies in Europe (Janning & Möller, 2016). Even with these strong ties, some of Germany's actions and current trends cause concern for the US' future role and influence in the country. Germany's openness to Chinese investment—which is waning—and susceptibility to Russian influence during its elections are cause for concern as these areas could weaken the US-Germany political relationship (Kakissis, 2019; Trenin, 2018). In this regard, Germany's risk acceptant behavior is a potential pitfall for the US and its allies.

China

China's relationship with Germany has often been better than with most other EU states (Kakissis, 2019). This is evident as Germany has refused to block China's Huawei from the potential to work on its 5G network. This is a step that the US and many of its EU member states have urged. Germany is beginning to confront China on issues of economic reform and government transparency (Düben, 2019). This growing skepticism is a potential major pitfall for China. However a minor governmental shift that saw influence from Russian media aid allowed members of the AFD to gain seats in Germany's Bundestag and right-wing extremists gain power in regional and grassroots organizations is a potential opportunity for China to increase its own political influence and spread its ideology as many of these right-wing groups believe in a more autocratic order (Shuller, 2018 & Applebaum, 2018).

Russia

Russia views the current shift in German politics and its risk acceptant behavior as a major opportunity to spread its influence, ideology and weaken its political opponents in the EU. With its success in aiding members of Germany's right-wing political party (AFD)—which views the Kremlin as a potential ally—in



gaining political office Russia has inserted its influence into the institutional makeup of German politics and policy (Applebaum, 2018). It has also been able to use the influx of refugees into Germany to ignite grass roots movements that have resulted in violent actions based on ethnicity (Shuller, 2018). While Moscow has made inroads into Germany, its covert way of doing so has further alienated the rest of German society and government from Russia (Trenin, 2018). This could stifle further Russian influence if the right-wing political surge proves to be unsustainable.



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