The Influence of the Democracy-Level on the Rhetoric in UN-Security Council Speeches

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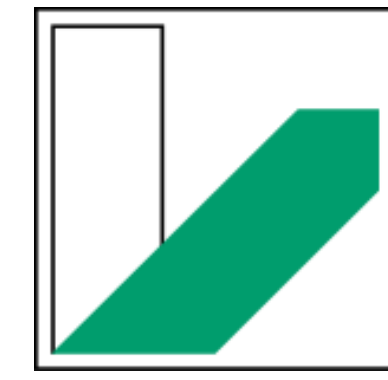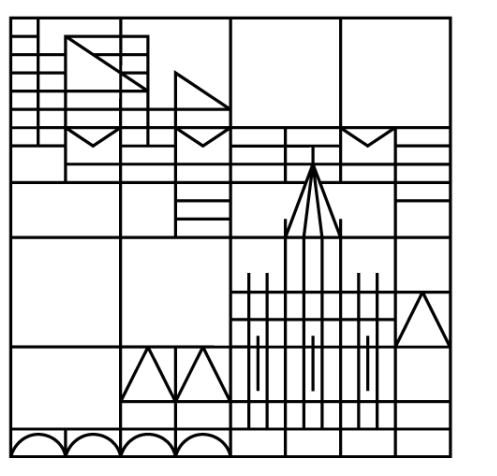
Research Question:

To what extend does the level of democracy influence how hostile the rhetoric of a state is?

Motivation:

Innovative approach by applying the Theory of Democratic Peace to the United Nations Security Council speech rhetoric.

Variables:

- **Independent variable:** Level of democracy according to Polity V Index (ranging from strongly democratic +10 to strongly autocratic -10)
- **Dependent variable:** Hostility score (percentage of hostile token)

Theory:

Democratic Peace:

- The idea goes back to Kant's Perpetual Peace (1795)
- Distinction between a monadic and a dyadic argument:
  - ➤ **Monadic argument**: *Democracies are overall more peaceful*
  - ➤ Dyadic argument: *Democracies are more peaceful only towards other democracies*
- **Focus on monadic argument as UNSC speeches have no direct target groups**
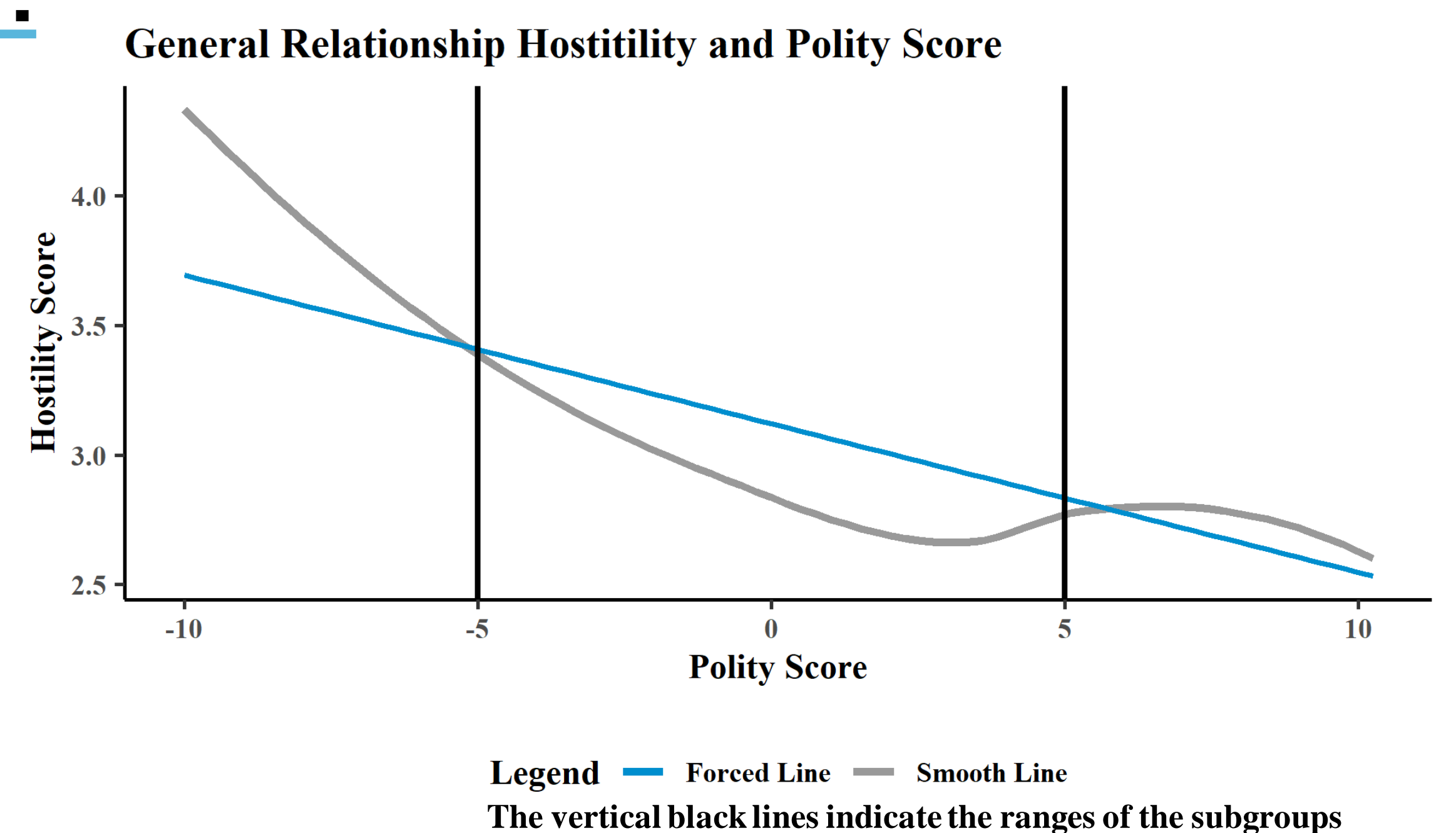
Data:

- Looking at 66.653 **UNSC speeches** (Schoenfeld et al., 2019) from 188 countries in the timeframe from 1995 – 2018
- **Self-constructed dictionary** with 195 words based on the General Inquirer dictionary; category "hostile" (Stone et al., 1966)
- **Polity V Index** for 160 countries in the same timeframe (Marshall & Gurr, 2020):

  3 Subgroups (score range):
  - ⬡ Democracies (6 – 10)
  - ⬡ Anocracies (-5 – 5)
  - ⬡ Autocracies (-10 – -6)

Hypotheses:

H1: On average, **countries** with a higher polity score use less hostile language in their UN Security Council speeches.

H2: On average, the usage of hostile language differs between the Polity V **subgroups** in their UN Security Council speeches. We expect democracies to have the lowest and autocracies the highest hostility scores.

H3: **a: Overtime**, the usage of hostile language constantly differs between the Polity V subgroups in their UN Security Council speeches.

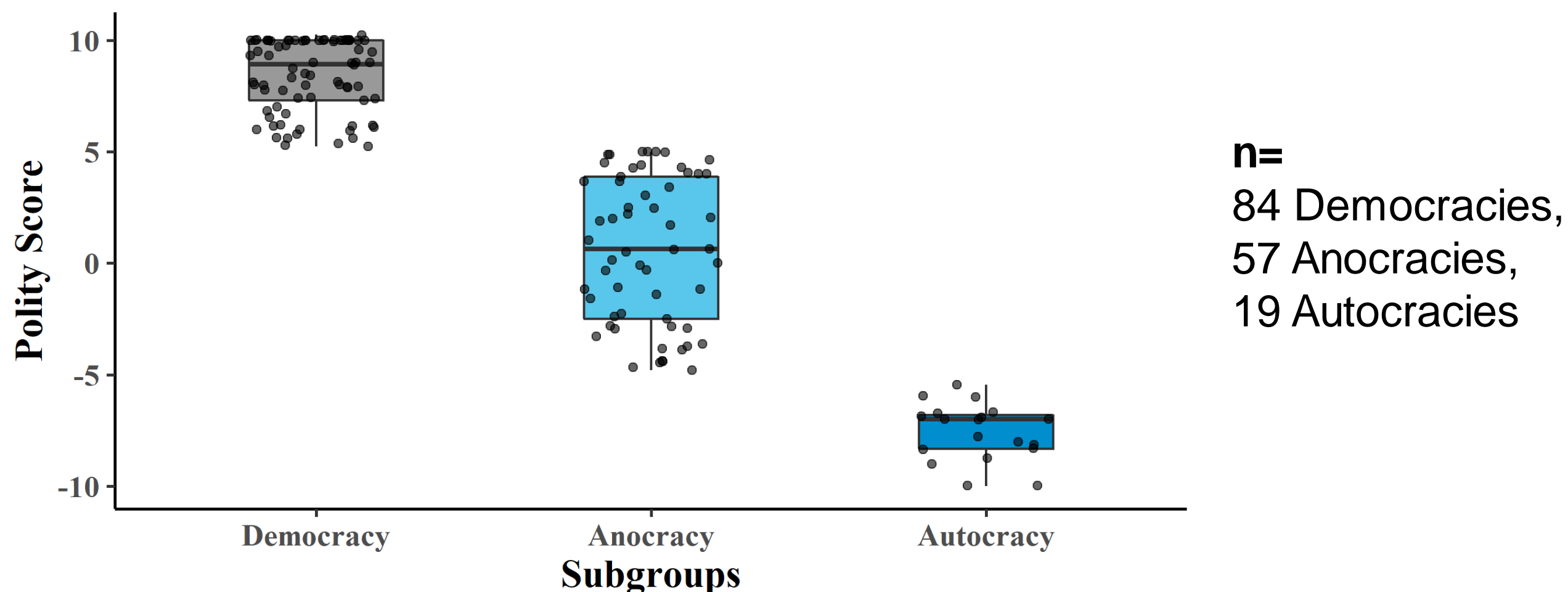**b: Overtime**, higher polity scores cause lower hostility scores in the UN Security Council speeches.

Descriptive Data:

Polity Score Distribution in the Subgroups

n=
84 Democracies,
57 Anocracies,
19 Autocracies

Hostility Scores around the World in %
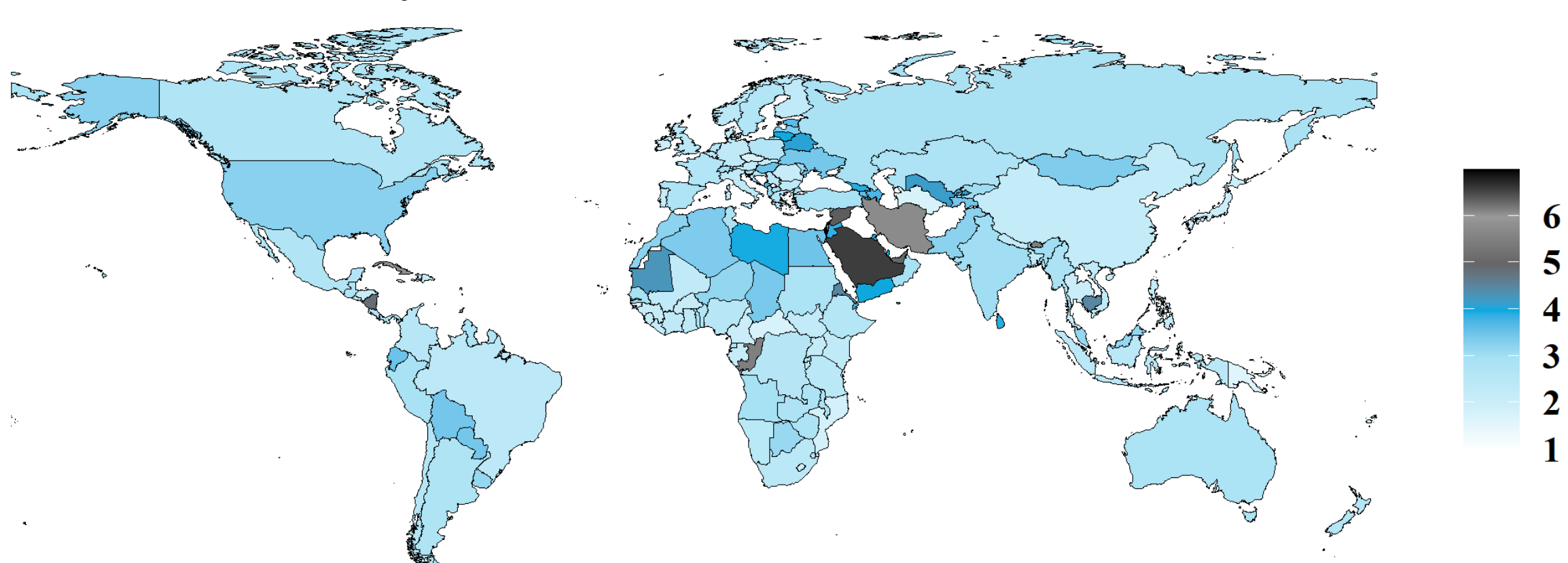
Outliers: Israel and Nicaragua are very hostile although they classify as Democracies; China, Turkmenistan are less hostile than expected.

➔ **The final sample after merging the two datasets contains values for 153 countries in the timeframe from 1995 until 2018**

Dictionary:

Most frequent hostile tokens (min. count 1000)
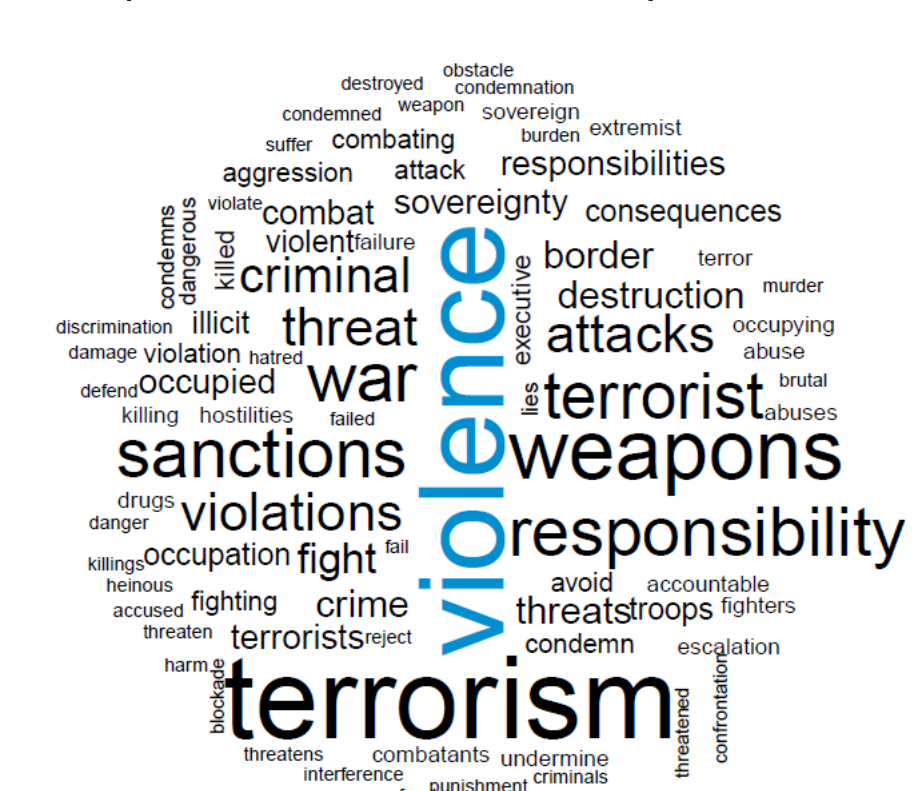
Percentage of Hostile Terms over Time
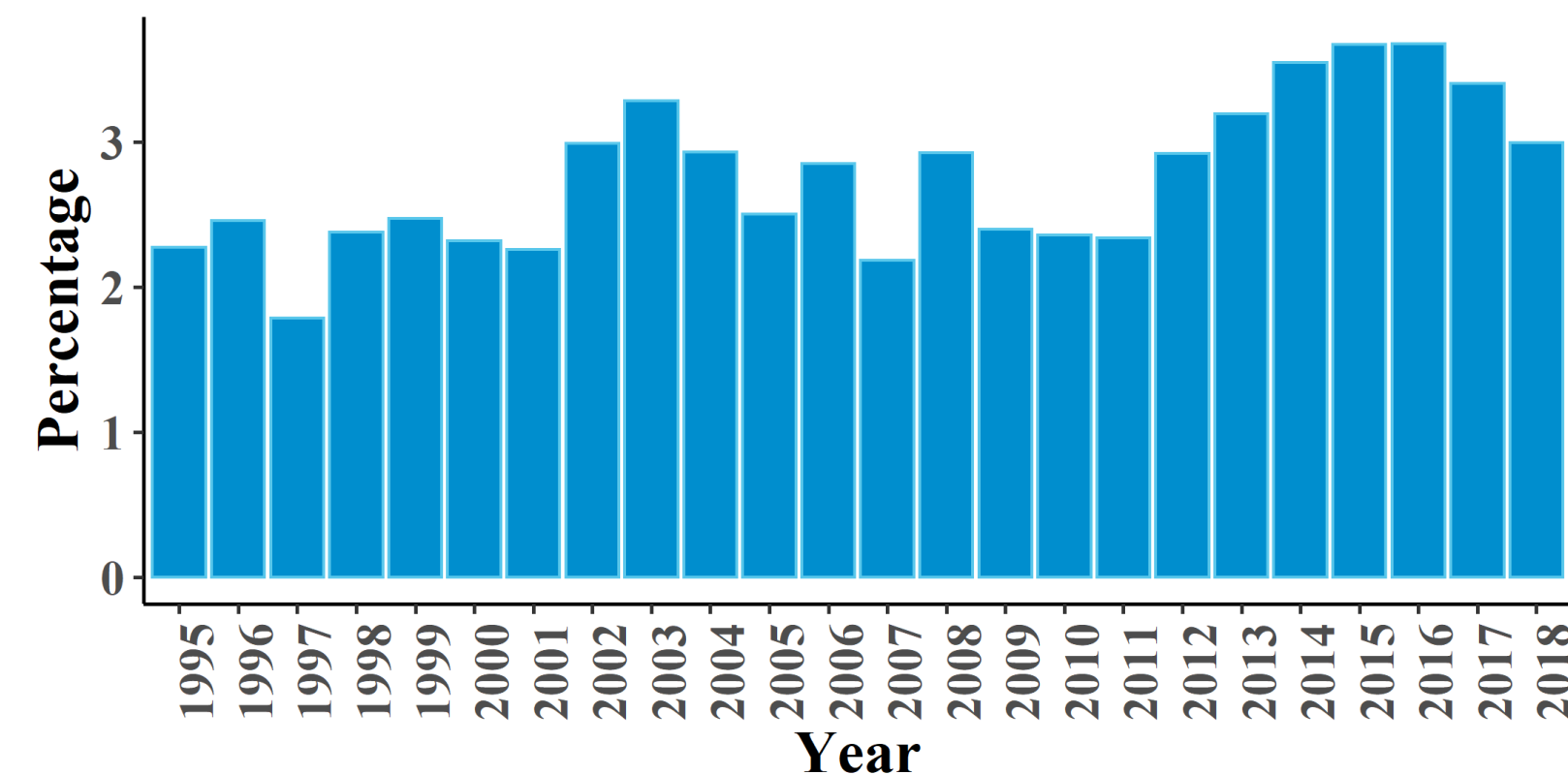
Limitations:

- Supervised learning methods or more validations could provide a better fitting dictionary.
- Additional control or context variables could increase predictive power of the model.
- Combination of countries for the time-series is somehow problematic.

Analysis H1:

Result:

Weak negative correlation (-0.335)

The linear model finds a **significant effect of -0.0574** at the 1%-level with a very low R²-value (~10%).
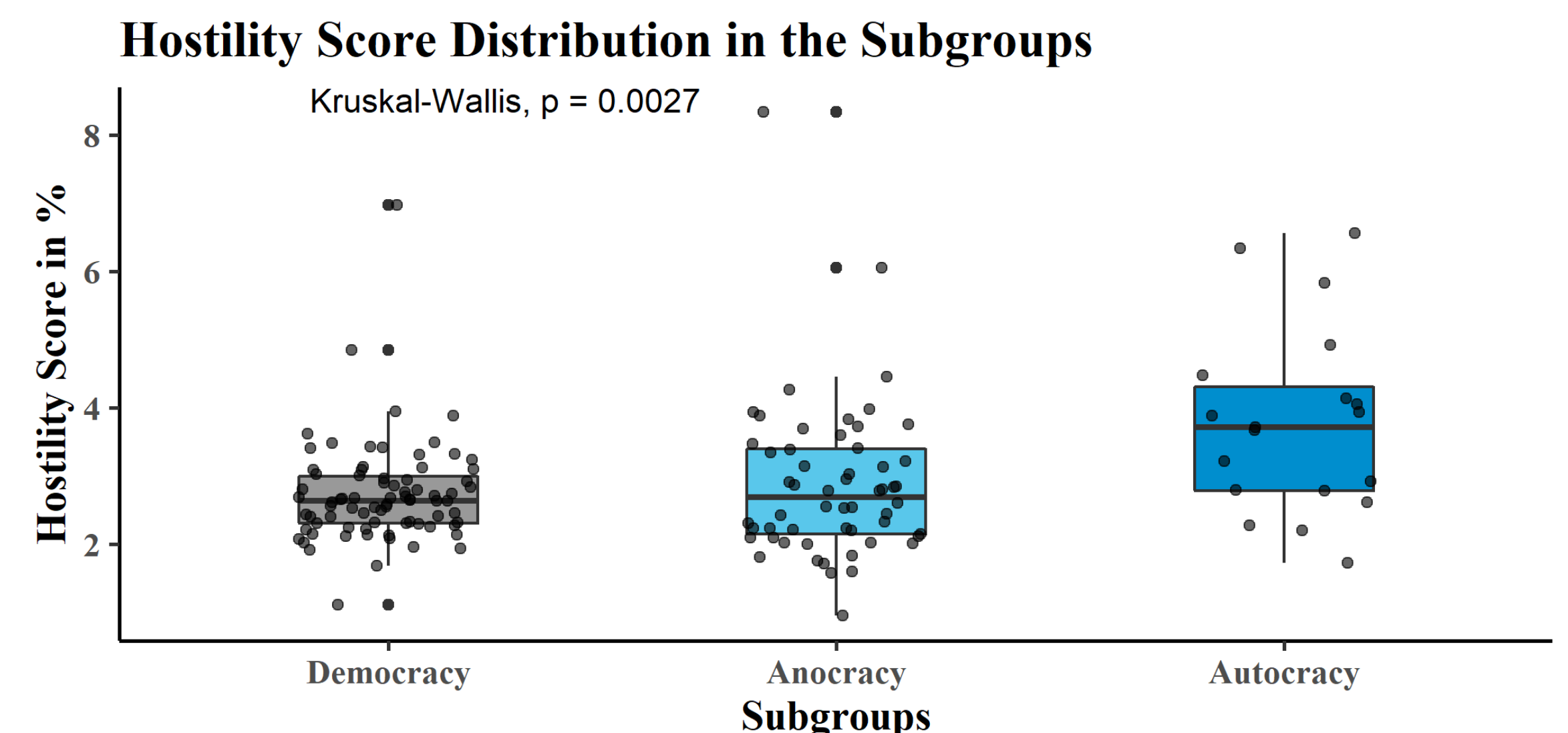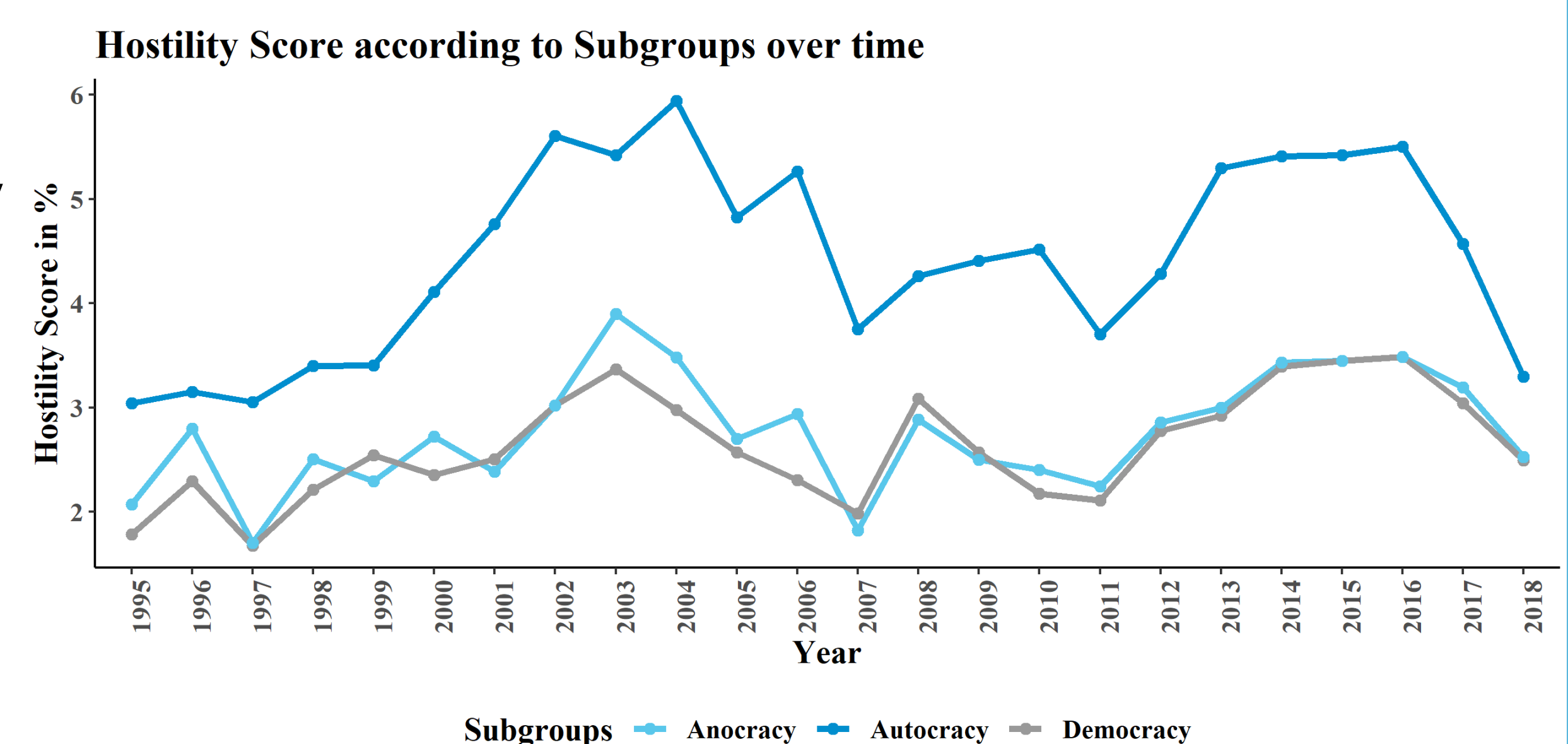
➔ We can still **confirm** our **H1**.

General Relationship Hostility and Polity Score

Legend — Forced Line — Smooth Line
The vertical black lines indicate the ranges of the subgroups

Analysis H2:

Result:

The p-values of the pairwise Wilcox test suggest a significant difference between democracies and autocracies and anocracies and autocracies.

➔ Thus, we can **partly confirm** our **H2**.

Hostility Score Distribution in the Subgroups

Kruskal-Wallis, p = 0.0027

Analysis H3:

Result:

Medium strong positive correlations of all three time-series for the hostility score.

Pairwise Spearman Correlation Coefficients suggest significant negative correlations between autocracies and democracies as well as between autocracies and anocracies.

Hostility Score according to Subgroups over time

Subgroups — Anocracy — Autocracy — Democracy

➔ Again, we can only **partly confirm H3a** and **H3b**.

Conclusion:

➔ **Overall, we see that with a higher level of democracy the usage of hostile language in UN Security Council speeches decreases.**

➔ With an increase of the polity score by one point, the hostility score decreases by 0.0574 percent.

➔ We found a significant difference in the level of hostile language between autocracies and the two other subgroups, which also persists over time.

➔ Further, the development of the hostility scores for all subgroups follows a similar trend.

Department: Politics and Public Administration

Seminar: Analysis of political speech in the UN Security Council Summer term 2021

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