

Erratum: Comparative Politics and the Synthetic Control Method

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We thank Joseph Francis for pointing out the mislabeling of the per-capita GDP variable in the empirical application of Abadie, Diamond, and Hainmueller (2015). The article reported the variable in PPP 2002 USD. The correct units are PPP current USD. The error stems from legacy labels carried over from an earlier draft.

While the change in units does not affect the validity of the analysis, it does alter the interpretation of the results of the empirical application. Specifically, absolute differences in per-capita GDP between West Germany and its synthetic control should be interpreted in PPP adjusted current USD prices, not constant 2002 USD prices.

To our knowledge, no harmonized real GDP series at constant PPP units exists for West Germany and the donor pool during the sample period. To approximate real per-capita GDP, one can divide both the West Germany and synthetic control series (current GDP in PPP units) by a common deflator. This changes the units of measurement, but leaves the estimated percentage effects unchanged. Alternatively, one can deflate per-capita GDP before constructing the synthetic control. Results from both approaches are nearly identical. We report them in an online appendix.

We also correct an error we detected in the third column of Table 2, which reports the average predictor values for the OECD donor pool prior to German reunification. The original text described this column as presenting a population-weighted average for the 16 OECD countries in the donor pool, but there was a coding error in the calculation of the averages. The corrected

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version of the table is shown below in Table 1. The correction affects only the descriptive statistics on the last column of Table 2, and not any other result in the study. The original description of the results of Table 2, “Overall, the results in Table 2 suggest that the synthetic West Germany provides a much better comparison for West Germany than the average of our sample of other OECD countries” (pg. 502-503) stays unchanged.

Note that the third column of Table 2 is reproduced in the last column of Table 4; accordingly, the same correction applies there. The corrected version is presented below in Table 2.

Table 1: Corrected Table 2: Economic Growth Predictor Means before German Reunification

	West Germany	Synthetic West Germany	OECD Sample
GDP per-capita	15808.9	15802.2	15037.8
Trade openness	56.8	56.9	35.3
Inflation rate	2.6	3.5	5.7
Industry share	34.5	34.4	34.2
Schooling	55.5	55.2	44.4
Investment rate	27.0	27.0	25.7

Note: GDP per capita, inflation rate, trade openness, and industry share are averaged over the 1981–1990 period. Investment rate and schooling are averaged over 1980–1985. The last column reports a population-weighted average across the 16 OECD countries in the donor pool. Population weighting is for population in 1990.

Table 2: Corrected Table 4: Economic Growth Predictor Means before the German Reunification for Combinations of Control Countries

	West Germany	Synthetic West Germany <i>Number of countries in synthetic control:</i>					OECD Sample
		5	4	3	2	1	
GDP per-capita	15808.9	15802.2	15800.9	15492.9	15580.9	14817.0	15037.8
Trade openness	56.8	56.9	55.9	52.5	61.50	74.6	35.3
Inflation rate	2.6	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.80	3.5	5.7
Industry share	34.5	34.4	34.6	34.80	34.3	35.5	34.2
Schooling	55.5	55.2	57.60	57.7	60.70	60.9	44.4
Investment rate	27.0	27.0	27.2	26.8	25.6	26.6	25.7

Note: GDP per capita, inflation rate, and trade openness are averaged for the 1981–1990 period. Industry share is averaged for the 1981–1990 period. Investment rate and schooling are averaged for the 1980–1985 period.

References

Abadie, Alberto, Alexis Diamond, and Jens Hainmueller (2015). “Comparative Politics and the Synthetic Control Method”. In: *American Journal of Political Science* 59.2, pp. 495–510.