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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

This year, Clocks and Clouds celebrates the publication of the 15th edition of our journal. Each year, we are honored to print outstanding research from our peers and are constantly in awe of the quality of undergraduate research we receive. We are also proud of our role in promoting undergraduate research at American University. At a time when academic freedom is under threat, our mission is more important than ever. We are driven to promote the values of high-quality, peer-reviewed research and hope to instill those principles in the next generation of leaders across our campus.

In the 2024-2025 volume of Clocks and Clouds, we are excited to share articles from five authors who exemplify these values through their work. Michael Bruk analyzes peaceful and violent approaches to Russia's attempts to reclaim former territories. Silia Dimasi challenges assumptions that queerness is a neocolonial import to African countries, highlighting the longstanding presence and vital role that queer people play in South Africa. Cara Martin tracks the evolution of two actors and their roles in resolving the conflict in Northern Ireland, focusing on their transition from violent to nonviolent roles in the movement. Noah Ochital studies how city managers impact voter turnout in municipal elections and investigates whether different municipal governance structures have different impacts on voter engagement. Finally, Julia Squitteri compares the movement for state-level Equal Rights Amendments in New York and Texas, spotlighting lessons that can be learned from different approaches to activism in each state.

As always, we are immensely grateful to our talented staff of reviewers and assistant managing editors, as well as our faculty advisors in the School of Public Affairs and School of International Service. Without the dedication of this group of people, the journal would not be possible. As you engage with each article, we hope you consider not only the efforts of our staff but the unique opportunity we have to share the work of impressive undergraduate students. We hope you enjoy reading and learning from these pieces as much as we did.

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Michael Bruk

Abstract

What explains state choices to pursue policies of irredentism through violence instead of peaceful means? Irredentism, a strategy aimed at annexing territories based on historical, nationalist, or geopolitical claims, has been studied extensively by scholars of international relations due to its destabilizing effects. However, less is known about why states choose to utilize annexation policies through violence (hard) or peaceful (soft) means. This research employs a neopositivist small-n methodology comparative exploratory case study, based on Alexander George's and Andrew Bennett's Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences, to examine the factors influencing states to choose violent over peaceful irredentist policies. Focusing specifically on exploratory case studies of Russia's actions in Crimea (Ukraine), Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Georgia), Narva and Setomaa (Estonia), and Transnistria (Moldova), the study identifies key independent variables including economic disparities, military strength, regime types, cost of conflict, and international involvement. The findings ultimately support the hypotheses that lower economic differences, higher costs of conflict, democratic governance, and greater international oversight tend to reduce the likelihood of violent irredentism, challenging different existing social theories on state conflict and territorial integrity. Conversely, autocratic regimes and weak international responses correlate with more aggressive annexation strategies as seen in Crimea, Ukraine, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia. While military power does not consistently predict violence, other factors, such as economic considerations and political structures play a significant role in contributing to the understanding of irredentist behavior and offer insights for policymakers on how to prevent territorial conflicts through stability. Ultimately, the empirical data compiled in this study is an important contribution to developing conflict-related theory. The explanations offered are pivotal to the understanding of aggressor state policies and the prevention of frozen conflicts in the Russian sphere and beyond.

Keywords: Irredentism, Russia, Russian-aggression, Ukraine, Crimea

Introduction

Since the end of World War II, numerous states worldwide have pursued policies aimed at reclaiming territories they consider to be rightfully theirs. This strategy, known as irredentism, is described as the intention to, or process of, annexing territories of another state by an existing state (Ambrosio 2001, 2016; Saideman 2005). While not always the case, such territories are typically inhabited by co-nationals from the irredentist actor.

Representing a complex intersection of historical grievances, nationalist ideologies, geopolitical considerations, and international norms, irredentism and its reasons for implementation have been the focus of many conflict studies and territorial integrity research, especially due to its destabilizing nature, post-annexation attempt. Within irredentism, some states have resorted to achieving their irredentist goals by controlling tangible resources through coercion, economic dominance, and violent means, known as hard powers. On the other hand, many others have opted for diplomatic and peaceful strategies of irredentism to create "soft" power appeals of intangible resources such as culture, ideology, and institutions (Walker and Ludwig 2017; Nye 1990). Not to be confused with secessionism, which is the efforts of a group to withdraw a territory from the authority of a larger in favor of self-autonomy, the goal of irredentism is to annex the territory in question and have the results recognized as legitimate by the international community (Horowitz 1991; Ambrosio 2001).

Historically, the success of irredentist policies has often hinged on a state's ability to control territories, secure international legitimacy, and manage domestic pressures. Yet, despite the global shift towards soft power, military force remains an important part of many states' international strategy. In some cases, states use strategies that involve establishing favorable rules and institutions through force rather than pursuing purely peaceful policies when it is more beneficial. In other cases, peaceful irredentism leverages diaspora conflict framing or issue linkages for annexation goals. By exploring the factors influencing irredentist policies, my research will focus on several key variables

including economic differences between the irredentist and target states, military disparities, the anticipated costs of conflict, the desires for unity within both the irredentist and target states, regime types, and the role of the international community.

To provide a nuanced case comparison, my research will specifically examine cases of Russian irredentism, including in Ukraine, Estonia, Georgia, and Moldova. These cases offer a variety of scenarios ranging from hard and violent actions (Crimea/Abkhazia & South Ossetia) to soft and peaceful relations (Setomaa & Narva), and a mixed case (Transnistria). Analyzing these cases will allow for a comprehensive exploration of the factors that shape irredentist policies as well as keeping common factors the same within Russian foreign policy.

By analyzing cases of Russian irredentism in the post-Cold War era, this paper will mainly work to answer the following question: What are the main factors influencing states to pursue policies of irredentism through violence instead of peaceful means? By examining a wide range of factors and configuring previous research on the topic, this paper will also explain how historical, cultural, and geopolitical factors contribute to a state's decision to employ violence in pursuing irredentist goals. This research aims to fill the gap in the literature by providing a detailed analysis on the lengths to which Russia is willing to go to achieve its goals and the long-term impacts of each action. Overall, with contemporary cases, specifically related to Russian irredentism, my research will relate to the current European geopolitical system and work to bring clarity on avoiding violence and prolonged instability from annexation policies globally.

Literature Review

Irredentism, the policy aimed at annexing territory from another country, manifests in various ways across the globe, with states using irredentism adopting either violent, hard, or peaceful, soft, strategies. Despite the objective of irredentism being clear, there is much debate over the validity of its classification, with some scholars restricting the policy to only focus on a state's military strategy against a neighboring

state to annex a territory (Hale and Siroky, 2022). However, for many other scholars, irredentism does not necessarily exclude the use of force by the host country that was inflicted on its target state. To understand the contributing factors to said violent or peaceful policies, this paper will opt to include non-military actions of intended annexation as irredentism.

In order to understand which factors influence violent or peaceful manifestations of irredentism, the causes for irredentist policies to be acted upon must be first understood. According to existing research, irredentism has often formed for a myriad of purposes, ranging from political to regime to ethnic to economic reasons for host countries. On the political side, scholars claim that irredentist policies are implemented when doing so will benefit the host state's domestic political agenda rather than protect coethnics against discrimination (Saideman and Ayres 2008). In essence, governmental leaders are more probable to portray irredentist policies when they benefit their average core political supporter (Saideman and Ayres 2000). These political claims are further supported by direct correlations of irredentist policy implementation with instances of major political reordering, territorial changes, or restructuring and uncertainty of the international system, such as during the Cold War (Chazan 1991).

In terms of regime type, irredentism has also appeared more often in majoritarian electoral systems and military dictatorships than in single-party dictatorships and proportional electoral systems (Saideman and Ayres 2000). This has been supported by the likelihood of irredentism significantly rising as the kin group's relative size grows under majoritarian systems. According to Siroky and Hale, this is because irredentism is more likely to occur when it allows political leaders to provide a specific mix of "private goods, public goods, and welfare transfers to citizens who desire them at the lowest tax rate" (Siroky and Hale 2022). Furthermore, previous scholarship has also claimed that the probability of irredentism significantly increases when both the states are anocratic compared to non-anocratic, and when the kin group is economically on par with the other ethnic groups in the irredentist state (Siroky and Hale 2016). This is mainly due to the

strategic calculations of political elites, who are more likely to pursue irredentism in anocratic states where weak institutions and fragmented authority create opportunities for nationalist appeals to consolidate power and legitimacy (Siroky and Hale 2016).

While scholars have extensively explored why states adopt irredentist policies, fewer have focused on the factors that shape the choice between the violent and peaceful pursuance of these objectives. In large part, this decision contributes to the degree of irredentist policy intestine executed by the state towards its diaspora. Analyzing the level of control over an annexed territory, either through military or rhetorical linkages with its diaspora, represents success in a state's ability to produce successful instances of irredentism (Ambrosio 2001). Even with successful irredentism projects, the benefits obtained from annexation are typically outweighed by the forced isolationism and "pariah" status given to the irredentist state by the international community (Ambrosio 2001). According to Ambrosio (2001), as international toleration of the level of ethnic territorial nationalism in an irredentist action decreases, irredentist states are often forced to adapt and even lower the outcome of their policies to satisfy pressures from the international community. Moreover, the measure of success is also often linked to the irredentist state's ability to gain legitimacy amongst both sides of the annexation and the international community (Nye 1990). According to Nye, the use of soft co-optive, peaceful, administration such as government, rebel, or third-party negotiations are recognized with greater legitimacy than violent overtakings (Gruber 2018; Nye 1990).

Many scholars have also pointed to the rising costs of warfare in the modernized world to explain the use of peaceful irredentist policies. As expressed by Nye, while military action is the clear instrument of domination and power in the realist "self-help" system, most larger states are less likely to use force as it is more costly than in previous centuries (Nye 1990). Providing an explanation for peaceful policies, he further states that with aspects of joint gain in economic and ecological involvements remaining exclusive to cooperation, some cases of irredentism have turned to negotiation instead of military operations (Nye 1990). Ultimately, Nye and other scholars believe that soft power is

becoming the increased choice of tactic by modern states due to the world's new focus on information-based economies and transnational independence where power has become harder to transfer and coerce. Yet, despite these shifts, scholars still recognize the roles of institutional power and the importance of military force as a factor for irredentism (Nye 1990). As Nye describes, hard powers of coercion and bargaining remain prevalent as they are more effective in achieving specific outcomes and in gaining long-term legitimacy within target states (Nye 1990). Similarly, as Siroky and Hale (2016) highlight, the application of violence relates to the population sizes of both the host state and annexed territory since it is unlikely for a host state to use violence when outnumbered, making military aggression simply not possible in certain cases.

It is also important to note that methods of command power are not limited to full-scale invasions, with violent actions such as "inducements (carrots) or threats (sticks)" also contributing to the hard powers of coercive military force used in irredentism (Nye 1990). The divergence in these approaches raises important questions about the underlying factors that influence states to employ one strategy over the other and the outcomes associated with each policy. Despite the differing approaches to irredentism, scholars agree that both policy applications share the same goal of benefiting from a net-positive in actions. Essentially, the annexing state attempts to make the damage to the target state high enough that it alters its policies to avoid paying the costs (Ambrosio 2001). However, if a territory is more valuable to the host state, it will fight harder to retain it, with the same applying to the irredentist state (Siroky and Hale 2016). Ultimately, scholars agree that an irredentist state will utilize whichever strategy better establishes "favorable rules and institutions" for itself, whether through soft or hard powers (Nye 1990).

One example of a state employing peaceful and violent irredentist policies in different situations is Russia's attempts to regain territories across Europe. Utilizing peace, Russia's "low-cost, opportunistic" rhetorical support over Estonia has represented the country's implementation of irredentist policies outside of military action.

Throughout the region, Russia has utilized media, propaganda, and manipulation of ultra-nationalist groups to amplify anti-Western, anti-EU, and anti-NATO support. Likewise, relying on tactics of backscratching to alter policy, Russia has additionally continued to provide economic incentives to its target countries by selling Russian military equipment at discounted prices, funding in infrastructure and schooling, and manipulating political policies through monetary investment (Samorukov 2017). On the other hand, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 with the justification that it is protecting the rights of ethnic Russians in the region, is a representation of violent "hard" irredentist policies (Siroky and Hale 2022). This attempt to unify the territories through military force and governmental claims of coethnicity shows a difference in policy from Russia's previous soft and peaceful applications of irredentism in Eastern Europe.

Ranging from temporary annexation to withdrawal of territorial claims, failed irredentist policies often lay the foundation for future conflicts. Amongst the modern cases of irredentism, "less than 4 percent of all potential cases from 1946 to 2014 produced irredentist conflicts" (Siroky and Hale 2017). Furthermore, despite pressures from domestic and foreign actors, both within the host state and ethnic groups they seek to redeem, many irredentist conflicts remain unsettled today (Ambrosio 2001). Due to the numerous factors involved, both peaceful and offensive irredentist action is at high risk of growing into either a high-tension, violent stalemate such as in the ongoing dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, or a low-tension, rhetorical stalemate such as in the case of Taiwan's claims of sovereignty versus China, leaving the situations unsettled (Gruber 2018).

Methodology

In this case study, I will be using a combination approach in order to integrate multiple methods of analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. By combining quantitative and qualitative data, each aspect of consideration will provide a comprehensive view of the factors influencing each nature of irredentist policies. Incorporating qualitative

data analysis will allow for nonnumerical explanations that often limit contextual distinctions and public sentiments. Quantitative data can make up for those lack of generalizations by using hard set data in explanations.

While managing and integrating data from differing sources and methods can be time-consuming and require careful analysis, the multifaceted complexities of combining research methods are necessary to provide accurate perspectives on the research of my case studies. Despite the difficulty of ensuring the accuracy and reliability of both quantitative indices and qualitative sources, combining methods of study gives a greater complexity to research findings that only focusing on one may restrict.

In addition to methodology, analyzing Russian irredentism across Ukraine, Georgia, Estonia, and Moldova offers a consistent framework for studying the causes of peaceful or violent irredentist policies. This selection provides a spectrum of scenarios ranging from hard and violent actions (Ukraine/Georgia) to soft and peaceful relations (Estonia), along with a mixed scenario (Moldova) while keeping the irredentist actor (Russia) consistent amongst all four.

In Ukraine, Russia's violent annexation of Crimea in 2014 provides clear avenues for examining military intervention and the geopolitical tensions involved with hard irredentist policies. Furthermore, Crimea presents an opportunity to view the response of the international community, which has, in large part, condemned Russia for its actions. Similarly, in Georgia, Russia's involvement in South Ossetia and Abkhazia showcases a violent approach to irredentism with both regions declaring independence from Georgia with Russian support. With the resulting Russo-Georgian War in 2008 providing an example of irredentist targeting, international efforts for resolution and remaining tensions in the region may provide insights into Russia's decision regarding the nature of its policy. Alternatively, the case of Transnistria, Moldova highlights Russia's support for separatist movements and the unresolved status of the breakaway region. Unlike the cases of Georgia and Ukraine, Moldova offers opportunities to study frozen conflicts, peacekeeping operations, identity politics, and the role of external powers in regional

stability concerning a mixed irredentist policy. Finally, unlike Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, Russian policy in Estonia – specifically the Narva and Setomaa regions – has represented peaceful, soft, uses of irredentism. With historical ties and irredentist rhetoric concerning Russian diaspora influence playing a large role in policymaking, the case will be useful in comparing alternative attempts for annexation policies to the aspects of violent, hard, strategies in Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova. Comparing these cases allows for the control of certain variables and for a comprehensive exploration of factors that shape irredentist policies amongst different states. Since each of these cases are former Soviet territories, relatively similar in size and economic strength, and are in the same geopolitical sphere, they can be compared with greater accuracy than cases where these factors may also influence outcomes. Overall, these case studies offer a perspective on the manifestation of irredentism in the Russian context, while still applying the differences between hard, soft, and mixed cases.

My research poses the following hypotheses:

I.   The lower the economic difference between the irredentist and target state, the less likely the irredentist state will use hard/violent irredentism.

II.   The weaker the military power of the target state, the more likely the irredentist state will use hard/violent irredentism.

III.   The greater the potential cost of conflict would be, the less likely the irredentist state will use hard/violent irredentism.

IV.   The more autocratic, single-party majoritarian the irredentist and target state regime is, the more likely to use hard/violent irredentism.

V.   The greater threat or role the international community plays in monitoring policy actions, the less likely the irredentist state will use hard/violent irredentism.

Following these hypotheses, I will examine independent variables across the cases and the role they have played in influencing the dependent variable: the use of peace/soft or violent/hard policies of irredentism. Using the independent variables level of economic difference, level of military difference, cost of conflict, irredentist and target state regime

types, and involvement of the international community, my examination of the cases of Russian irredentism will work to analyze the validity of each hypothesis. To examine economic differences, military differences, and regime types between target and host states, I will be using information databases such as the World Bank, the IMF, the OECD, the GINI Index, the Global Firepower Index, the Freedom House Index, and the Democracy Index. Alternatively, for qualitative variables such as international community involvement and estimated cost of conflict, I will use historical sources such as news reports, governmental publications, and other recounts to accurately describe irredentist policies in different regions.

Overall, my small-N comparative case study of Russia's policies in Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, and Estonia will work to uncover the nature of violent, hard, versus peaceful, soft, irredentist policies. By aiming to validate the hypotheses put forward, I will analyze the independent variables and sources used to inspect them for the purpose of answering the research questions of this paper.

Ukraine: Crimea

Ukraine's relationship with Russia leading up to the annexation of Crimea in 2014 is deeply rooted in a complex history of tension from the post-Soviet era. With Ukraine striving for sovereignty and Russia grappling with its diminished influence in the region, the 2014 annexation of Crimea can be seen as a manifestation of Russia's hardline irredentist policies—an aggressive reclaiming of what it views as historically and ethnically Russian territory.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukraine declared its independence, a move that Russia officially recognized; yet Ukraine's strategic importance, both geographically and politically, was never lost on Moscow. Ukraine not only bordered Russia but also contained a significant Russian-speaking population, particularly in the eastern regions and Crimea—a demographic that would later be used as a pretext for Russian intervention under the guise of protecting Russian nationals and co-ethnics. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s,

Ukraine's political landscape was marked by the continued battle for power between pro-Russian and pro-Western factions, and was exemplified by the Orange Revolution of 2004-2005 in which a series of protests and political events ultimately led to the annulment of a rigged presidential election and the victory of the pro-Western candidate, Viktor Yushchenko (Gross and Juncos 2011). This revolution was a significant blow to Russian influence in Ukraine, as it signaled the country's potential shift toward the European Union and NATO, both of which Russia perceived as direct threats to its sphere of influence, and inspired hardline irredentist ideals.

Russia's response to Ukraine's westward shift was initially restrained to soft irredentism, with simple economic and political leveraging, but it gradually evolved into a more assertive stance as the 2010 election of Viktor Yanukovych asserted a pro-Russian politician into power (Gross and Juncos 2011). Cultivating into Yanukovych's decision to reject an association agreement with the European Union in favor of closer ties with Russia, Ukraine was once again sparked with "Euromaidan" protests in late 2013 as the public became outraged over corruption and the perceived betrayal of Ukraine's European aspirations. Ultimately leading to Yanukovych's removal in February 2014, the protests and fall of Yanukovych's government marked a turning point in Ukraine-Russia relations as the protests and change in Ukraine's leadership were seen as a Western-backed coup designed to pull Ukraine out of Russia's control (Gross and Juncos 2011). The perception of this interference, combined with the historical and ethnic ties between Russia and Crimea, provided the public ideological and political foundation for Russia's irredentist ambitions, especially in the form of military annexation.

Russia's irredentist policies towards Crimea can therefore be understood as a combination of historical grievances, strategic interests, and a response to the perceived encroachment of Western influence in a region that Moscow considered its backyard. While clearly far from a democracy, Ukraine's closer position to the West created an atmosphere of Russian tension towards its neighbor that led to the eventual annexation of Crimea. Historically, the Crimean Peninsula had been part of Russia since 1783, and it remained so until 1954 when Soviet Premier

Nikita Khrushchev transferred it to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in a largely symbolic move at the time, as Ukraine and Russia were both part of the Soviet Union (Gross and Juncos 2011). However, after the Soviet Union's collapse, Crimea became part of an independent Ukraine, a reality that many in Russia never fully accepted and a contested fact throughout the course of Ukraine's independence. The annexation of Crimea in March 2014 was executed with military precision and was swiftly followed by a controversial referendum, in which Crimean voters supposedly expressed overwhelming support for joining Russia. However, the legitimacy of this referendum has been widely disputed, as the absence of international observers mixed with allegations of voter coercion caused tensions to rise as both states continued to dispute the others' claims. Since its independence in 1991, Ukraine's economy had been at a lowered state with Ukraine's real GDP having increased by only 0.2 by 2013 (World Bank Group 2013). With a total GDP of 1,522,657 million hryvnias (UAH) in 2013 or roughly 186,677.75 million USD (according to the average conversion rate for the year), Crimea ended up being the largest grossing region in the country, contributing 46,393 million UAH, or roughly 32.82% of the total economy (Exchange Rates Org UK 2013; State Statistic Service of Ukraine 2013). Meanwhile, Russia, with its vast natural resources and more developed economy, had a GDP of 1.3 trillion USD in the same year, though its real GDP growth had slowed to 1.8%, less than in previous years (World Bank Group 2013). At the same time, Ukraine's military was significantly underfunded and underprepared for a potential conflict with Russia with Ukraine's defense spending reaching only 1% of its GDP, approximately UAH 14.8 billion or 356.5 million USD, compared to Russia's 3.8% of 2.813 billion rubles, or about 88.4 billion USD (Слово і Діло 2021; Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2013). In addition to spending, the Ukrainian Armed Forces was also outnumbered, with only 168,201 people, 125,482 military personnel actively serving giving it a number #22 rank in the 2012 Global Firepower Index (Ukraine Military Pages 2015). Moreover, the readiness of the Ukrainian military was critically low, with Ukraine's Major General of the Armed Forces, Viktor Nazarov, stating that only around 40% of the

forces considered "готові до виконання завдань" or "ready to perform" their duties, as opposed to its 70% in 2021 (Радіо Свобода, 2021). This was in large part due to President Viktor Yushchenko's, and continued by Viktor Yanukovych, plan to move towards a NATO-style army with only a small mobile armed force. In contrast, Russia had been heavily investing in its military with a 2013 investment that had more than doubled over the previous decade and significant funds allocated to modernizing the military by expanding its capabilities (Gross and Juncos 2011). Employing approximately 1.26 million military personnel, the Kremlin continued its policies of military expansion while simultaneously conducting numerous unprecedented tests, ultimately earning the rank of #2 according to the Global Firepower Index (World Bank Group 2013).

Despite Ukraine's westernization, the state still remained comparatively less democratic than many of its European counterparts. Earning a 2013 Freedom House (2013) description of "partly free" as well as a classification of "electoral autocracy" by Our World in Data, Ukraine's democratization had been on a downward trend for the last few years (Our World in Data 2013). In fact, according to the Democracy Index, Ukraine has received a score of 5.8 out of 10 (10 being the most democratic), with a change of -1.1 and relative change of -16% since 2006. Comparably, Russia, while also "partly free" and an "electoral autocracy", had received a score of 3.6, a -1.4 change and -28% relative change representing its similar downward trend (Democracy Index 2006).

Yet, the annexation of Crimea was not without significant costs for Russia, even exceeding its previous expectations. Disregarding loss of life and the direct costs of its military operation, the economic burden of integrating Crimea into the Russian Federation was still substantial. In an early 2014 message from Vadmi Solovyov, deputy of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, their economists' expected costs of maintaining Russia's control over Crimea was estimated at a budget of only 90 billion rubles a year, or approximately 3.2 billion USD, a cost that experts, such as Oksana Dimitrieva, deputy chair of the Duma Committee on Taxes and Budget, believe is comparable to the average

budget of a Russian region (Радіо Свобода 2021). Additionally, Russia further anticipated greater financial benefits with its annexation, such as the elimination of fees for the Black Sea Fleet as well as the addition of Ukrainian ships, infrastructure, and ports in Crimea. With the erasure of the roughly $15 million annual fees in the Kerch-Yenikal Canal (Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich 2014) and the addition of property within the peninsula, Russia clearly saw the overall costs of annexation to be outweighed by the potential benefits prior to its occupation.

Ultimately, this shift towards violence and military intervention, as opposed to the soft power strategies previously employed, such as economic influence and cultural diplomacy, reflects the high stakes that Russia associated with Ukraine and 2014 Crimea. The desire to keep Ukraine within its sphere of influence and prevent it from aligning with the West outweighed the potential diplomatic and economic costs of international condemnation and sanctions. Yet, despite Russia's hope for low external responses in support of Ukraine, the international community's responses to Russia's actions were swift and severe with Western states imposing economic sanctions on Russia and publicly supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity. However, even with these measures, Russia's annexation of Crimea has remained intact, illustrating the effectiveness of hard irredentist policies when backed by military power and a willingness to defy international norms.

Georgia: South Ossetia and Abkhazia

The root of the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia, particularly in the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, can be traced back to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent emergence of nationalist movements within the state. Georgia, which had long sought to assert its sovereignty and territorial integrity, faced internal challenges from numerous entities within its borders, with especially strong separatist sentiments centralizing in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. As a means to prevent further westernization of its neighbors, Russia's approach to South Ossetia and Abkhazia combined elements of both hard and soft power, reflecting its evolving strategy in the post-Cold War

era and attempting to overturn the tide of reducing influence it had over the region.

While initially low-scale, Russia supported the separatist movements in South Ossetia and Abkhazia through a combination of diplomatic, economic, and military means, as well as with the recognition of the regions as independent states. These can be seen as a form of soft irredentism, where instead of direct annexation, Russia opted to create and support de facto states that remained dependent on Moscow for their survival.

The 2008 war, however, marked a significant escalation in Russia's irredentist policies, revealing the limits of soft power and the willingness of the Russian state to resort to military force to achieve its geopolitical objectives (Gross and Juncos 2011). The conflict was precipitated by a series of provocations and counter-provocations between Georgia and the separatist authorities in South Ossetia, with Russia acting as a key supporter of the separatists and an instigator in causing Georgian responses. Eventually, in early August 2008, Georgia launched a military operation to reclaim control over South Ossetia, prompting an overwhelming response from the Russian military, which then justified its actions on the grounds of protecting Russian citizens and peacekeepers (Gross and Juncos 2011).

Prior to the war, in 2007, Georgia's GDP stood at $11.16 billion, with a growth rate of 12.6%, a considerably positive state in comparison to many of its former-soviet counterparts (World Bank Group 2007). Yet, despite the positive state of Georgia as a whole, South Ossetia's economy was considerably lower, with an estimated GDP of only $15 million in 2002 and a $250 GDP per capita compared to the state's overall price of $1768.6 (World Bank Group 2002). In 2006, it was estimated that the total industry production value of the region was only 61.6 million rubles amongst 22 small factories holding up a majority of the country's revenue, yet by 2007 only 7 remained functioning. As opposed to Russia's significantly larger GDP at $1.23 trillion, with an 8.5% increase in 2007, Georgia's thriving, and even South Ossetia's struggling, economy was incomparable.

On the military front, Georgia's efforts to strengthen its defense capabilities saw new strides with the passing of a bill on September 14th, 2007, to enlarge the armed forces and raise the total manpower to 32,000 while also increasing defense spending. One of many defense measures the Georgian government had taken over the previous years, this new bill would call for a 315 million lar ($190.4 millions USD) increase in defense funding, making it the largest category of state budgetary expenditures for the year. However, even with this progress, Russia's military might, which was ranked #2 in the 2007 Global Firepower Index, still far surpassed the Georgian's attempts, as their numbers grew to approximately 1.476 million personnel that same year. Overall, the overwhelming Russian military presence in South Ossetia and Abkhazia transformed these regions into highly militarized zones, effectively serving as extensions of Russian power.

This economic and military disparity also underscored the profound dependence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia on Russia, which had been investing heavily into the regions over the years leading up to conflict and providing subsidies that made up a significant portion of South Ossetia's budget. Economists such as Andrei Illarionov of the Cato Institute in Washington DC and President of the Institute for Economic Analysis Foundation, predicted before the conflict that Russia had believed its costs in involvement would be similar to the role it had played in the region's previous budgeting. Even in 2006, two years before the conflict, Russian subsidies had made up 95% of South Ossetian Budget Revenues, while total subsidies from the Russian Budge made up to 200-400% of the South Ossetian GDP. Likewise, the number of people employed in security forces, armored vehicles, tanks, artillery pieces, multiple launch rocket systems, and armored personnel carriers per thousand of the population is several times higher than even the likes of North Korea. Most were employed by the Russian Federation. The following table represents Russia's contributions in billions of rubles per year and the percent of the region's budget it contributed to.

Abkhazia:	Billions of Rubles in Direct Subsidies from Russia	Estimated Percent of the Budget
2009	2.3	65% (Shvedov, 2009)
2010	3.7	50% (Cooley and Lincoln, 2010)
2012	6.8	71% (Abkhazinform, 2015)
2019	4.83	59.56% (Sieniawski, 2024, 186)
2020	x	58.5% (Kontrolnaia palata, 2020)

Table 1 – Subsidies to Abkhazia

South Ossetia:	Billion Rubles in Direct Subsidies from Russia	Billions of Rubles through "Investprogramma"	Estimated Percent of the Budget
2010	x	x	99% (International Crisis Group, 2010)
2011	x	x	97% (Yuga, 2010)
2014	x	x	91.78% (Gosudarstvennoe informatsionnoe agenstvo "Res", 2013)
2018	5.1	1.4	78.31% (Sputnik, 2019)
2019	4.713	2.787	86.21% (Sputnik, 2019)
2020	4.66	1.5	81.8% (Kontrolnaia palata, 2020)

Table 2 – Subsidies to Ossetia

In terms of political regimes, both Russia and Georgia were also undergoing significant shifts in 2007, with Georgia being classified as "Partly Free" by the Freedom House Index for its score of 3 in both political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House 2007). Similarly, as an "electoral democracy" the state received a democracy index score of 4.9 even despite its downward trend in democratic performance (Democracy Index 2007). Conversely, Russia was categorized as "Not Free" in 2007, with a Freedom House score of 6 for political rights and 5 for civil liberties, and a democracy index score of 5, marking it as an electoral autocracy on a downward trajectory (Freedom House 2007; Democracy Index 2007).

Overall, the 2008 war highlights the role of international norms and the response of the international community in shaping irredentist conflicts as the international community largely condemned the Russian military response as a violation of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity (Gross and Juncos 2011). Despite this condemnation, Russia's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia has continued to stand as the regions remain in a state of frozen conflict, with ongoing tensions and the potential for renewed conflict being present at any time (Gross and Juncos 2011). Ultimately, the conflict underscores the risks associated with irredentist policies, particularly when involving the use of violence, as it can lead to long-term instability and create significant implications for the broader regions involved.

The international condemnation of Russia's actions in the 2008 war led to diplomatic isolation, economic sanctions, and a temporary freeze in Western-Russian relations. The European Union and the United States strongly criticized the invasion, with the EU deploying a Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia to oversee the ceasefire and prevent further escalations. NATO responded by reaffirming its commitment to Georgia's eventual membership, while Western nations imposed diplomatic and economic pressure on Russia. However, despite these efforts, Russia maintained military and political control over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, recognizing them as independent states and solidifying their status as frozen conflicts, effectively preventing Georgia from fully integrating into Western institutions.

Moldova: Transnistria

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Moldova declared independence in 1991. Yet, despite its hope for sovereignty, Russia proclaimed immediate challenges in asserting the state's authority over the entire territory, particularly in Transnistria, where much of the population was opposed to Moldovan independence and feared the rise of Moldovan nationalism (Gross and Juncos 2011). The ensuing conflict in Transnistria in 1992, and the region's subsequent declaration of independence, has left Moldova divided and the conflict unresolved, with Russia playing a crucial role in sustaining Transnistria's de facto independence.

The origins of the Transnistrian conflict are rooted in the historical layout of the state, where Moldova was part of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, with Transnistria being more industrialized and Russian speaking compared to the rest of Moldova. However, it was the rise of Moldovan nationalism in the late 1980s, particularly during the calls for reunification with Romania, that the Russian-speaking population in Transnistria became alarmed and declared independence from Moldova in 1990 (Gross and Juncos 2011). The independence declaration escalated into a brief but intense war in 1992, with Moldova attempting to regain control over Transnistria, however, the intervention of the Russian 14th Army ultimately halted Moldovan advances and secured the de facto independence of Transnistria. The ceasefire agreement, signed in July 1992, effectively froze the conflict, leaving Transnistria outside the control of the Moldovan government but without international recognition as an independent state and Russia's role in the conflict—particularly its military intervention and continued presence in Transnistria — can be seen as a manifestation of irredentist policies aimed at maintaining influence in the post-Soviet space (Gross and Juncos 2011). Overall, Russia's involvement in Transnistria aligns with a broader strategy of irredentism, where the goal is not necessarily the annexation of territory, but rather the creation and support of dependent, pro-Russian entities that can serve as levers of influence in neighboring countries (Gross and Juncos 2011). In the case of

Transnistria, Russia's support of economic aid, military presence, and political backing, have been crucial in sustaining the region's de facto independence while allowing Russia to exert pressure on Moldova to prevent its full integration into Western institutions such as the European Union and NATO.

Transnistria in particular, which had been a highly developed industrial area within the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, is still considered the largest point of conflict and greatest target of Russian irredentism within the state. During the USSR, Transnistria produced 40% of the GDP in what is now Moldova, despite occupying only 13% of the territory and housing 18% of the population (Gross and Juncos 2011). After the Soviet Union's collapse, Transnistria's leadership implemented economic policies that were more extensive than those in Moldova and Russia, including the introduction of free currency exchange, liberal import-export rules, housing reforms, and the abolition of numerous benefits and subsidies. By 1999, Transnistria's GDP stood at $281 million USD, $424 per capita, with industry contributing 45%, and the service sector 43.4% (World Bank Group 1999). Even by 2004 the industry of Transnistria produced 80% of all products within Moldova and could be completely self-reliant during periods of positive economic status. Despite these efforts, the region's economy remained heavily dependent on Russia as, traditionally, Moscow had provided over 70% of Transnistria's budget and in 2015 they were already facing a $404 million USD (4.48 million Transnistrian rubles) budget deficit. According to Mikhail Burla, speaker of the Transnistrian parliament, when including benefits for gas and supplies, Russia had provided an estimated 1 billion dollars annually for the region with additional funding of 1.25 billion rubles and 533 thousand euros also going towards technical loans and interest-free loans. Moreover, Ambassador-at-Large Sergey Gubarev of Russia, also explained how Transnistria was often dependent on Russia for its provided substantial financial support which, including humanitarian aid and technical loans, amounted to over 5 billion rubles by 2019. While as a whole Transnistria could remain self-sufficient, the inefficient and closed-off economy makes it susceptible to most economic shifts, especially since much of its EU, Ukrainian, and

Moldovan trade was halted following Russia's aggression on Ukraine. Conversely, without Transnistria, Moldova's economic trajectory has been marked by a significant decline following independence, with a 16% decrease in GDP in 1991 and a GDP of 9.46 billion, compared to Russia's 5% decrease and 1.1 trillion GDP. Despite this, Moldova and Russia have experienced similar positive growth trends, but with an average difference of $1.1 trillion and a low point of $654 billion in 1998, and a gap of $1.5 trillion in 2023.

Military wise, the difference between both countries has extended since Moldova's independence, as Russia has continued to strengthen its armed forces, while Moldova's has weakened. In 1993 Moldova was spending roughly 0.5% of its GDP on military expenditures while supporting roughly 9,000 personnel. Comparatively, Russia was spending nearly 9 times that amount reaching a budget of 4.4% of its GDP in 1992 to support 1.9 million personnel. Since then, from 1992 to 2022 Moldova has spent between 0.3 and 0.5% of its annual GDP on military expenditures, totaling to 5,090,798 at its lowest and 52,293,262.2 at its highest. Yet, since peaking in 1996 with 15,300 military personnel, Moldova's number of armed forces has been significantly declining, reaching its lowest point of only 6,000 in 2019. Russia, on the other hand, has spent between 2.7 and 5.4% of its annual GDP on military expenditures between 1992 and 2022, totaling to about 6.47 billion at lowest and 88.35 billion at the highest (World Bank Group 2022). Similarly, while Russia's military personnel has fluctuated, with its lowest at 1.26 million and its highest at 1.9 million personnel, the number of forces has remained consistently high.

In Transnistria itself, as of 2015, it is known that the Russian Operational Group of Forces has been made up of about 1,700 individuals, as well as the 15,000 actively serving for the Armed Forces of the Pridnestrovian Moldovian Republic and additional 80,000 in reserves (World Bank Group 2015). While more recent data is not available, as recently as 2023, Transnistria has requested further people, more specifically an additional 3,100 peacekeepers, although the fulfillment of said request was not reported (World Bank Group 2023).

Politically, Moldova has fluctuated between an electoral autocracy and electoral democracy since independence, earning a "Partly Free" score in 1991 that has changed between "Partly and Not Free" to this day (Democracy Index 1991). In contrast, Russia has remained an electoral autocracy since 1991 with the Freedom House Index reflecting these differences, as Moldova generally scored higher in political rights and civil liberties. As scoring goes, the states have held an average difference of 10.9483 points different from 1993-2016 with a high point of 28 from 2012 to 2014, and a low difference of -5 in 1997 when Moldova actually scored less free than Russia (Freedom House 1993, 2012, 2014, 2016). However, according to the Democracy Index, Moldova has still maintained an average difference of 2.4 points above Russia, underscoring its relatively more democratic governance. Yet, despite these increasing differences in score, Moldova has not actually seen an increase in democratization, as during the lowest score differential of 1.5 during 2006 Moldova has a 6.5 in comparison to Russia's 5 whereas during the highest difference of 4.0 in 2023 showed a decreased Moldova at 6.2 and a substantially less democratic Russia at 2.2 (Democracy Index 2006, 2023).

Ultimately, the conflict in Transnistria reflects the interplay between hard and soft power in irredentist strategies and the differing uses of both to gain influence for Russia. While the initial phases of the conflict involved the use of military force, the long-term sustainability of Transnistria has relied more on economic and political support from Russia, as well as the region's own efforts to build a functioning state with a distinct identity that is separate from Moldova. As a result, the international response to the Transnistrian conflict has been characterized by a combination of diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict and a general acceptance of the status quo, given the lack of progress in negotiations and the relatively low level of violence compared to other post-Soviet conflicts (Gross and Juncos 2011). Despite efforts from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to establish mediation and prevent further Russian influence, the conflict remains frozen. In essence, despite calls for withdrawal, the continued presence of Russian troops in the region

underscores the geopolitical dimension of the conflict and the challenges of resolving it in the absence of broader agreement between Russia and the West. The Transnistria conflict serves as a key example of post-Soviet irredentism, where Russia has played a central role in shaping the outcome of the conflict by maintaining the status quo.

Estonia: Narva and Setomaa

Estonia's relationship with Russia, particularly in the Narva and Setomaa regions, is a representation of the broader geopolitical tensions that have shaped the Baltic states since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Russia's approach to these regions, characterized by soft cultural, economic, and political tactics rather than outright military aggression, aligns with its broader strategy of peaceful irredentism by seeking to assert influence over neighboring states without provoking a full-scale crisis (Gross and Juncos 2011). Moreover, Russia's strategy to pursue soft influences is further defined by its attempts to avoid the costs associated with violent annexation while still being able to pursue territorial and ideological goals of occupation.

Narva, located on Estonia's northeastern border, is predominantly Russian speaking, with over 80% of its residents identifying as ethnic Russians (Gross and Juncos 2011). Since Estonia regained its independence in 1991, Narva has been a focal point of Russian soft power efforts, which have included the promotion of Russian language and culture, the dissemination of Russian media, and the provision of Russian citizenship to ethnic Russians living in the region. Similarly, the Setomaa region, which is located next to the Russian border, has been subject to Russian irredentist claims with the region's natives, the Seto people, having historically lived on the Russian side. Russia's soft power strategy in Narva and Setomaa is consistent with its broader approach to soft irredentism in the post-Soviet space where unlike in Crimea or Georgia, it has opted for a peaceful approach of influence to assert its presence. This approach is rooted in the understanding that Estonia, as a member of both NATO and the European Union, is protected by international alliances that would make a military incursion costly and

risky for Russia (Gross and Juncos 2011). Therefore, by fostering a sense of Russian identity among the populations of Narva and Setomaa, Russia seeks to create populations that could be mobilized in the event of a political crisis or used as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the West.

Estonia regained independence from the Soviet Union on August 20, 1991, following decades of Soviet occupation. The move was part of the broader collapse of the USSR, with Estonia declaring sovereignty in 1988 and formally restoring independence after the failed Soviet coup attempt in Moscow. Unlike in some other post-Soviet states, Estonia's transition was largely peaceful, though tensions remained over its large Russian-speaking minority. Following independence, Estonia quickly pivoted toward Western institutions, joining NATO and the European Union in 2004 to solidify its security and economic stability.

The Russian government has also supported various social and cultural initiatives in Narva and Setomaa such as funding Russian-language schools and sponsoring cultural festivals that celebrate Russian heritage in order to strengthen the Russian identity of the local population and to foster a sense of connection with the state (Gross and Juncos 2011). At the same time, Russian media outlets, which are widely consumed in these regions and play a crucial role in shaping public opinion by often portraying Estonia as a hostile state that discriminates against its Russian-speaking citizens, deploy similar strategies to what is used in Moldova and Georgia (Gross and Juncos 2011). This media narrative is part of a broader effort to create a sense of grievance among the Russian-speaking population, which could be exploited to justify future irredentist claims. However, despite these efforts, Estonia has remained resilient in the face of Russian soft power with the Estonian government having implemented policies aimed at integrating the Russian-speaking population as well as solidifying its place in NATO and the EU to collectively counter Russian aggression (Gross and Juncos 2011). While they have so far remained soft and peaceful, Russia's soft irredentism in Narva and Setomaa can be seen as part of a broader strategy aimed at destabilizing the post-Cold War order in Eastern Europe in order to challenge the legitimacy of Estonia's borders and to assert its role as a dominant power in the post-Soviet space.

Economically, the disparity between Estonia and Russia is significant. Since 1991, Russia's GDP has generally risen, with exceptions during 2008 and 2020, reaching a high of $1.52 trillion in 2023 and a low of $666.81 billion in 1998 (World Bank Group 1991, 2008, 2020, 2023). Conversely, Estonia's GDP has steadily increased, peaking at $23.41 billion in 2007 and hitting a low of $9.81 billion in 1994. The average difference in GDP between Estonia and Russia has been about $1.12 trillion, with the largest difference of $1.52 trillion in 2023 and lowest of $663 billion in 1998. Within Estonia, regional GDP figures further illustrate the disparities, with Narva and Setomaa displaying significant economic potential but remaining average amongst Estonian regions (Gross and Juncos 2011).

Militarily, since its independence, Estonia has had relatively weak military standings with only about 0.8% of its GDP, or $13.146,559.9, going towards expenditures (World Bank Group 1992). Moreover, while Estonia has steadily increased its military spending and percent GDP, its total personnel has only slightly increased since the 1992 numbers of around 4000. Comparatively, Russia's initial numbers of 4.2% of the GDP in 1993 and about 1.9 million personnel in 1992 have stayed fairly consistent between 1992 and 2022 with a spending low point of 2.7% and 6.47 billion and a high point of 5.4% and 88.34 billion as well as a employment of personnel low of 1.26 million and high of 1.9 million. However, despite its independent weakness, Estonia has found strength in collective military alliances since its joining of NATO in 2004 and recent expansions in military spending to show strength against recent Russian foreign aggressions. Even with Estonia's military contribution to NATO being relatively modest, with around 8,000 personnel in 2024, NATO's total of approximately 3.39 million active military easily competes with Russia's large forces which include 1.32 million active personnel, 2 million in reserve, and 250,000 paramilitary units.

Politically, the differences between Estonia and Russia are stark. Aside from a few years as an electoral autocracy, Estonia has been a liberal democracy from 1996 to 2023, while Russia has remained an electoral autocracy since 1991. The Freedom House Index shows a significant gap in political rights and civil liberties between the two

states, with Estonia consistently scoring higher with an average difference of 50.546 and continued increases since its low of 12 in 1993 to its now high of 67 since 2014 (Freedom House Index 1993, 2014). Likewise, as of 2006, Estonia has maintained an average difference of 3.84 points in the Democracy Index compared to Russia, with Estonia's score reaching 8.0 in 2023, in contrast to Russia's 2.2 (Democracy Index 2006, 2023).

Results

Dependent Variable: Use of peace/soft or violent/hard policies of irredentism

Independent Variable I: Level of economic difference

Hypothesis I: The lower the economic difference between the irredentist and target state, the less likely the irredentist state will use hard/violence irredentism. Based on the data from each case, the first hypothesis on economic difference is **supported**. While comparing the economic status of each case study, it was clear that even in the wealthiest state, Estonia, Russia's economy far outweighed each country as a whole and the regions analyzed. Despite this, there was a correlation between Ukraine's poor economic status and hard irredentism as well as Estonia's positive economic status and soft irredentism. In Ukraine, while Crimea held an economic status as the wealthiest region, it still far underperformed regions of similar capacities in other states. Moreover, in the cases of Georgia and Moldova, while both states are only slightly wealthier than Ukraine, each faced far more mixed approaches of soft and hard irredentist actions by Russia, further showing that less violence was used when there was less economic difference. Although, future analysis may also focus on how the economic differences between region and state also affected Russia's choice of policy.

Independent Variable II: Level of military difference

Hypothesis II: The weaker the military power of the target state, the more likely the irredentist state will use hard/violent irredentism. Based on the data from each case, the second hypothesis on military difference is **unsupported**. While the data shows that Russia's military far outweighed each of the given cases, the strength of the military seemed to have no relation to the likelihood of hard/violent policies. Despite its weak individual military, Estonia's combination with NATO forces and avoidance of hard policies did seem to initially support the hypothesis yet it failed to correlate when examining how Ukraine had the strongest independent military of the four but was still a victim of Russian aggression. In these cases, the difference between military strength seemed to not matter as much for Russian policy, as even prior to Estonia's commitment to NATO, the Russian military far outweighed each of the cases, yet had harder policies towards the stronger Ukraine and Georgia, inversely to the hypothesis.

Independent Variable III: Cost of conflict

Hypothesis III: The greater the potential cost of conflict would be, the less likely the irredentist state will use hard/violent irredentism. Based on the data from each case, the third hypothesis on the cost of conflict is **supported**. While there is no concrete data showing Russia's estimated cost before initiating in hard/violent policies, the available reports and following costs combined with analysis on previous Russian contributions to the specific regions provided estimates for each conflict's cost. Examining the four cases, it was clear that Russia believed Crimea to be the most cost-effective annexation due to the region's inherent wealth and potential benefits. While the true cost may have differed from predictions, Crimea's estimation for annexation was lower than that of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Transnistria, and Narva and Setomaa. In the case of South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Transnistria, Russia saw the higher economic capacities of the regions compared to the rest of Georgia and Moldova, and viewed the potential cost of conflict as

lower due to their already high reliance on Russia for stability. On that note, Transnistria was seen as having a further cost of conflict as it had previously relied more heavily on Russia while also being extremely susceptible to economic shifts and European trade. Likewise, the potential costs for Narva and Setomaa are also higher as they are not economically beneficial regions, rather middle-low ground in comparison to others within Estonia, as well as being a part of NATO since 2004, which would involve further use of military funding.

Independent Variable IV: Target/Irredentist state regime types

Hypothesis IV: The more autocratic, single party majoritarian the irredentist regime is, the more likely to use hard/violent irredentism. Based on the data from each case, the fourth hypothesis on the target/irredentist state regime types is **supported.** As seen in the different indicators for autocracy and regime type, the periods during hard/violent irredentist policies were also moments when the target states were autocratic and had lower levels of democracy. As seen in Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia, the periods of conflict aligned during periods when each state was considered only "partly free" and an electoral autocracy. Compared to Estonia's significantly higher scores for democracy, the other three cases and the irredentist state, Russia, were more likely to be engaged in violence when both were autocratic.

Independent Variable V: Involvement of the international community

Hypothesis V: The greater threat or role the international community plays in monitoring policy actions, the less likely the irredentist state will use hard/violence irredentism. Based on the data from each case, the fifth hypothesis on the target/irredentist state regime types is **supported.** During the periods of hard/violent irredentist policies towards Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova, the threat of international involvement was far less than in the periods of soft/peaceful policies. As in the case of Estonia, the state's commitment to NATO escalated the dangers of international involvement in comparison to the other three

who had yet to join. In fact, as shown, the policies of increased irredentism, hard and soft, seemed to correlate with the potential threat of escalating international community involvement as many of Russia's actions were based on Ukrainian, Moldovan, and Georgian attempts to join western institutions such as NATO. While there were threats of sanctions and attempts at repercussions on the hard cases of irredentism, Ukraine and Georgia were less integrated and focused on during Russian aggression in comparison to the more western Estonia and Moldova. Ultimately, during the periods of Russian hard irredentist policy, there were fewer threats for the international community to interfere as a result of external focuses by western powers and the lesser integration of Ukraine and Georgia in comparison to Moldova and Estonia.

Conclusion

Ultimately, with strategies ranging from hard power coercion to soft power appeals, the differing policies of irredentism represent the complex interplay of political, economic, and international factors. While research regarding how political dynamics, regime types, ethnic nationalism levels, economic parity, and international tolerance influence irredentist actions already exists, this paper aims to understand what factors drive violent versus peaceful irredentism and their impacts on long-term stability in international relations. Despite shifts towards soft power, military force remains relevant, with states choosing strategies that establish favorable rules and institutions as opposed to peaceful policies. However, peaceful irredentism is still a widely used policy as it leverages diaspora conflict framing or issue linkages for annexation goals as opposed to violence's relation to population sizes and feasibility.

The analysis of the five independent variables offers valuable insights into the factors influencing Russia's choice between hard and soft irredentist policies across different regions and the ways in which four cases relate within the study. The findings reveal that economic differences, the cost of conflict, regime types, and international

community involvement play varying roles in determining the nature of irredentist actions, specifically, how the hypothesis that lower economic differences, higher costs of conflict, non-autocratic regimes, and greater international involvement correlate with a preference for softer, more peaceful irredentism. On the other hand, military strength did not consistently predict the likelihood of violent irredentist policies. Overall, the case studies of Crimea, Ukraine, Narva and Setomaa, Estonia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Georgia, and Transnistria, Moldova, highlight the complexity of these factors and contribute to a deeper understanding of the conditions under which states pursue violent versus peaceful irredentism. By analyzing these variables in the context of Russian irredentism, the study offers valuable insights for policymakers seeking to anticipate and mitigate the risks of territorial annexation and emphasize the importance of economic stability, democratic governance, and international cooperation in preventing violent irredentism and promoting long-term stability in contested regions.

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"In Drag, I Am a Healer:" Post-colonial Evolutions in Queer Acceptance and the Emergence of an "un-African" Identity

Silia Dimasi

Abstract

The privilege of being openly queer is most often linked with the notion of "sophisticated" social progress attainable only in Global North nations. Such assumptions have produced a misanalysis of the progressive nature of historic and contemporary non-Western societies, resulting in these communities being viewed as unable to foster space inclusive of queer identities. This research seeks to denounce these continued colonial logics as it delves into the complexities of the "un-African" identity and affirms the productive role queer-identifying people play in the social maintenance of and continuous fight for autonomy in various non-Western societies. Examining South Africa's pre-colonial social traditions in tandem with its ongoing history of apartheid resistance, this mixed methodological analysis supports the discursive analysis outlined in Michel Foucault's (1978) dismantling of the repressive hypothesis, falsifying assumptions of queerness being a neocolonial import. Through recurring interviews with drag performer and queer-rights activist Odidi Mfenyana (Odidiva) and the analysis of Steve de Gruchy in *Aliens in the Household of God: Homosexuality and the Christian Faith in South Africa* (1997), this paper concludes that for many Indigenous African communities, queer-identifying people have been the cultivators of and participants in socio-cultural tradition long before the construction of a South African state and, as a result, embody the innovative identity of their people to date.

Keywords: homocolonialism, drag, socio-cultural tradition, South Africa, repressive hypothesis, national identity building

Introduction

Under the contemporary image of what and, more specifically, who constitutes as being "queer," academic Queer Theory has been subjected to a narrow and inaccurate definition, applicable solely in the context of Euro-centric democracies. In modern-day geopolitics, the privilege of being openly queer, through systemic recognition and political mobility, has become directly linked with the notion of "sophisticated" social progress which, according to existing discursive assumptions, is attainable only in Global North nations. However, research into the origins of queer identity and culture indicates the opposite has been true. Before the age of colonization, Global South societies functioned with considerably greater social and legal queer acceptance than their Northern counterparts. Observable asymmetries in queer identity politics suggest that colonial imposition inverted the regional domination of queer acceptance from once being prevalent in Global South societies to now being a privilege of the Global North. Such a phenomenon should elicit further academic interest given the transition of queer identity politics from historical to contemporary, serving as a forum for which we can better come to understand that colonization does not end in the absence of the colonizer.

This paper highlights both historic and contemporary evidence in order to contest "un-African" rhetoric and supports the discursive analysis outlined in Michel Foucault's dismantling of the repressive hypothesis. Such conclusions are achieved by answering the following: In what ways did existing imperial discourses regarding queerness within South Africa influence how the public understands "African-ness?" How do anti-colonial, anti-apartheid narratives counter the conscription of a South African identity that has sought to repress integral queer-identifying people?

In the Western political sphere, legal protection for queer-identifying people and same-sex unions has become an indicator of social progress and a privilege of democratic civil society. Conversely, in non-Western political ideologies, such as those within the African continent, queerness has been characterized as an imperial export that requires rid of in the name of developing the post-colonial African identity. This is evidenced in the *International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association*'s annual "State-sponsored Homophobia Report," which has reported that 37% of the African continent and 8.3% of Europe operates under "legal barriers to

freedom of expression on sexual and gender diversity issues" (ILGA World 2020).

This considered, the African continent has the lowest collective GDP, while Europe has the second highest. In the wake of historical supremacist rhetoric and ideological domination as colonial/apartheid subjects, present-day South Africa struggles to strike a balance between the formation of a collective identity that is inclusive of queer expression and is likened to the West, while simultaneously independent of colonial thought.

Since England's physical exit from the African continent, same-sex relations have been repeatedly noted as being "un-African" as independent states justify why they have elected not to implement legal recognition and/or protective policy for queer-identifying citizens. The framing of queerness as being "un-African" is directly linked to political strategies of nation-building rooted in anti-neocolonial and populist rhetoric. As author Rahul Rao (2020) suggests in *Out of Time: The Queer Politics of Postcoloniality*, the advancement of the European "un-African" portrayal of queer identity was advanced for so long given the gain capital England experienced through its colonial exploits. In modern-day African nations, with attempts to rebuild national identities free of association and reliance on neocolonialism, the use of the "un-African" terminology has provided a national narrative that depicts African states as socially free from colonial-produced ideologies.

That said, to be ideologically freed of imperial European legacy, the denial of queerness within contemporary African society fails to acknowledge the fact that queer expression and practices did originate in pre-colonial Africa. Queerness, as something not only tolerated but valued as being productive for historic African societies, is evidenced in the *Nongayindoda,* women who publicly present in ways typically associated with masculinity. In the present day, the Nongayindoda identity is most typically tied to masculine-presenting women who engage in sexual relationships with other women. Nongayindoda women must navigate a complex political system as the South African constitution extends human rights protections across a "diversity of people" (terminology that is inclusive of queer-identifying people) despite stagnant public acceptance of that diversity (Matebeni 2021, 565-568). Despite the inclusion of queer-identifying people within their constitution, national opinions of queer acceptance among the South African public still echo the phenomena

occurring across much of the African continent, a reclamation of an African identity that denies queerness due to a misconception of its ties to Western self-expression.

The vocabulary used to describe same-sex relations in traditional languages, predating colonialism, is further proof of the existence of such relations in pre-colonial, pre-apartheid Africa. Across a large portion of southern Africa, the *inkotshane*[1] of the Shangaan, *motsoalle*[2] of the Basotho, and *goor-jiggens*[3] of Senegal all exemplify queer expressions that existed outside of what is consistent with Western facets of queer identity. Within these southern African communities, the presence of same-sex relationships was viewed as socially integral, as it was believed to help ensure bountiful crop yields and abundant hunting, good health, and warding off evil spirits (Epprecht 2001, 124-127).

The modern phenomena of African states arguing that homosexuality is "un-African" in essence is based on colonial essentializing assumptions of Africa being a homogeneous entity. To develop a national identity unassociated with colonial legacy, African nations have come to weaponize sexuality. Such action creates a false sense of a centralized identity when, as the following paper will argue, an embrace of queerness would more effectively achieve this goal.

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[1] *Inkotshane* (also referred to as "mine marriage") is a term originating from the Shangaan of southern Africa which translates to male-wife. Historically, inkotshane relationships, first reported in the Taberer Report of 1907, involved two male-identifying gold miners who would engage in a sexual and domestic relationship (Epprecht 2001, 121).

[2] *Motsoalle* (translates from Sesotho to "special friend") is currently practiced by the Basotho women of Lesotho. Known to their husbands, Basotho women engage in a sexual relationship with another woman considered as a practice of friendship (Kendall 1998, 222).

[3] *Goor-jiggens* (translates from Wolof to "man-woman" or "womanish") are Senegalese people, who are biologically male, that subscribe to the behavior and fashion of women. First reported in "The Origins of Senegalese Homophobia: Discourses on Homosexuals and Transgender People in Colonial and Postcolonial Senegal" by Babacar M'Baye, goor-jiggens also engage in same-sex relationships with male-presenting community members (M'Baye 2013, 109).

Literature Review

Existing scholarship surrounding queer peoples and politics on the transnational stage still exists in a divide pertaining to either historic or modern realms, with little throughline drawn between the two. Traditional academic Queer Theory exists upon the notions of democracy circumvented in Western political thought, namely in the post-HIV/AIDS America. This is evidenced in the beginning chapters of Nikki Sullivan's *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, which notes how academic subscription of gender and sexuality often overlook other aspects of identity, a misanalysis typical of academia produced in the advent of the American gay-lesbian movement (Sullivan 2003, 37). This onset of a movement free of intersectional considerations left the responding field of study with a gap in knowledge production regarding the post-colonial dividends of the contemporary queer identity.

While this is in no way an effort to disregard the necessity for and impact of this academic community's contributions, this is to note that what does exist as "foundational" to the field is largely the product of Westernized subjectivity. Scholars only now are beginning to examine how the control of sexuality proved essential in the hegemonic control of cultures and peoples. This is not to disregard the presence and impact of non-Western Queer studies scholars. It is instead a place question upon why it is that, despite its inception thirty years ago, academic Queer Theory still subjugates itself to binaries of thought despite its focus being on binary-less peoples.

In a similar regard, queerness, like any other sect of identity studied contemporarily, has been bifurcated upon lines of constructivism and essentialism. Under these tenets of constructivist thought, man becomes the master of his identity, defining the terms that he assumes. While this stance has emboldened collective interest in the depths of identity construction, it has also created a system of politics where the prescription of social labels is not an autonomous act. The colonization of identity runs parallel to constructivist thought. If great power lies in our ability to construct and destroy ideas of self, then more power is assumed when we impose said scaffolding upon others.

In this vein, Michel Foucault's 1978 *The History of Sexuality* garners relevance to the subject of coloniality and queerness via contestation of the

Victorian era "repressive hypothesis" (Foucault 1978, 17-18). Amidst the industrial development of Europe, the repressive hypothesis posits that sexual repression is key to increasing national productivity (Foucault 1978, 22). Foucault finds such repression antithetical to human productive capacity, linking the rise of the capitalist model and bourgeois class to the repression of sexuality of the time. *The History of Sexuality* presents discursive traditions on the subject of sexuality as self-affirming, knowledge-producing efforts which motivate individual contributions to society (Foucault 1978, 22-8). In the proliferation of sexual discourse, Foucault argues new forms of identity and expressions of said identity are developed. What Foucault's work fails to mention is that the liberation of sexual identity not only enables new expressions of self and sexuality, but leads to the rediscovery for long-existing queer practices often dispossessed from Indigenous communities. Before the repressive hypothesis was applied within Industrial Age Europe, it was first "tested" on its colonial subjects.

Historical Constructivist

Scholars who have observed the inversion of sexuality fluid in the Global South are constantly furthering the repressive hypothesis. As the product of their work, contemporary scholars are then able to contextualize the "un-African" identity. Colonial oppression necessitates that the narratives of the Global North correctness, Victorian culture, and Christian dogma trump existing societal norms in Global South communities via "an ideology association of queerness with privatization and inhibition with capitalist marketization" (Prakash et al. 2024, 484). Academics such as Prakash et al. (2024) work largely in the examination of the repressive hypothesis, utilizing their analysis of the relationship between the state system and identity development to assess history.

Historical constructivist scholars have gathered how the British have weaponized sexual practices across South Africa. In the following case, for productive gain and to identify how pre-colonial, pre-apartheid sexuality and gender in South Africa take on a "primitive manner," or a clear rejection of morality, therefore a denial of a future in "heaven's garden of delights" (Macharia 2015, 140). This notion has produced two sectors of analysis for scholars, with the first being work examining the exact narratives developed to impose Euro-centric confines of sexuality, while the second being the

internalization of said narratives. As scholar and poet Kerugo Macharia asserts in the journal *Agenda; Empowering Women for Gender Equity* suggests, existing documentation of British rule in Africa shows the ways in which knowledge surrounding queerness, and its acceptance in pan-African communities, draws from salvage anthropologies (Macharia 2015, 142).

Decolonial Scholars & Post-colonial Analysts

The second claim regards the belief that "some legacies of the British colonial experience have made it less likely for countries that are former colonies to decriminalize homosexual conduct" (Han and O'Mahoney 2014, 282). Historical constructivist scholars suggest that such claims advance colonial ideology surrounding the Global South as being unable to address the prospects for liberalization and the repeal of anti-queer legislation. Such research, produced by Enze Han and Joseph O'Mahoney, attempts to prove these normative assumptions inaccurate through the use of systematic data analysis and historical ethnography. The results of their research indicated that the pace of decriminalized queer expression via state-based action is not "systematically slower for former British colonies due to a lack of progressive values and ideologies of human rights." Rather, advocates of queer acceptance have to combat historical inaccuracies to prove queerness has relevance to the development of post-colonial African identity building (Han and O'Mahoney 2014, 284).

Anti-neo-imperialist scholars focus on the present state of queer politics within a post-colonial world order with a specific emphasis on how queer communities still exist at large in the Global South, making a continuous effort to prove their role within national inceptions of identity (Simões de Araújo 2024, 5). This effort is characterized in Rahul Rao's *Out of Time*, where Rao develops the concept of "homocolonialism." Homocolonialism sits at the intersection of theoretical and empirical research on global perspectives of sexuality and can be defined as the imperialist export of "specific norms, politics, and rights regimes related to homosexuality; the concept elucidates the ongoing thrust of Western exceptionalism" in global politics (Rao 2020, 113).

Academics within this conceptual framework seek to assess how the contemporary implementation of colonialist, nationalist, and capitalist systemic structures disadvantages non-Western queer visibility in terms

created to serve Global North societies (Rao 2020, 149). Although this terminology may seem to convolute existing ways of theorizing power concerning sexual politics and governance, the prevalence of homocolonialism in contemporary academia provides a mode for better understanding how homosexuality and queer rights are tied to Western-centric imperial and colonial mobilizations, despite the lack of a physical colonial presence.

This concept is echoed in the work of queer African scholars such as Zandile Nkunzi Nkabinde, who documents her experience as a queer *sangoma* (traditional South African female healer) and explores the fluidity of gender performance among Black sangoma in the contemporary (Lake 2021, 23). The proposal to rethink and re-engage with indigenous African knowledge systems, according to Nkabinde, provides contention to the current "un-African" association made by the majority of African politicians and publics. The role of presenting such expressions of queerness in the present seeks to instill modernity in the queer rights movement in Africa, indicating the roles queer inclusion has in constructing national selfhood in the face of colonial and apartheid legacy.

Methodological Choices

It is essential to preface that the following research, regarding the subject of queerness, is conducted by a queer person. Rather than assume an epistemological position that would suggest this statement introduces hindrances to the following research, I propose that it serves as the basis for its success. The idea to engage with the question of the un-African identity first arose out of a personal desire to discover the origins of queerness. I have found that, more often than not, members of Western queer communities fail to form a comprehensive grasp of queer history, a history that, in its totality, places the Global South at the epicenter of queer identity politics. The product of this decision is an interpretivist study that reflects the process of education and reflection necessary for societies to assume if queer people are to be fully recognized at the transnational level.

In rendering queerness as a lineage solely accessible to and recognized within Western, white societies, the diversity and criticality of all queer-identifying people is disempowered. As a subject for academic proclivity, the histories of the Global South have been stained with contemporary

misanalyses and stereotyping. In such a way, places such as the pre-colonial southern African region are assumed to have always been uninhabitable spaces for queerness. This logic hinders the possibility for discoveries on the long-existing social "progressiveness" of non-white society and prescribes where and how queerness can be located today.

Given that this paper necessitates its author to assume the role of student, a cross-methodological approach has been assumed, fusing archival discourse and critical narrative analyses. In the portions of this paper that follow the guides of traditional archival analysis, the GALA Queer Archive (previously known as the Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action) served as a hub for accessible digital archives regarding the history, culture, and contemporary experiences of queer people in South Africa. Of particular significance to this paper are the documents accessed in August 2024 with the permission of GALA, which are select sections of Steve de Gruchy's manuscript of *Aliens in the Household of God: Homosexuality and the Christian Faith in South Africa* (1997), a collection of oral stories and essays on prejudice and discrimination experienced by queer people in South African churches. The portions of analysis that center around de Gruchy emphasize the role Western religious dogma played in shifting existing queer-accepting southern African culture towards imperialism ideals associated with Victorian era repressive hypothesis. The selected accounts reflect the imperial discourses regarding queerness within South Africa which came to influence how the public understands "African-ness."

The second portion of this study regards the integration of narrative within historical analysis. In the process of developing the following research, it was critical that archives not be the sole speaker for the African experience. If not considered, this research would assume a place among a plethora of academic texts that examine life and culture in Africa in the isolation of archives, thus denying the continent and its people the right to modernity. As to use the insights of the historical without falling into this repeated fallacy, semi-structured in-depth interviews with South African drag performer and queer-rights activist Odidi Mfenyana, known in performance as Odidiva (@odidiva), were conducted in August 2024 via video call.

It should be noted that Mfenyana is the only interviewee included in this work not by desire but by accessibility constraints. While this confines the ability of this paper to extend its findings to a broader community,

future research taking on this approach of analysis can aid in furthering the limitations of this paper's methodology. The interviews conducted for this analysis sought to center around Mfenyana's navigation of "un-African" rhetoric rather than extrapolate upon a collective in acknowledgment of this constraint. The interviews comprised of three sections of questions based on this understanding:

1. Basic information (e.g., age, self-identified sexual/gender identity, professions)
2. The post-colonial, post-apartheid state of queer inclusion in South African identity (e.g., "What is the South African identity?", "Who creates the South African identity?")
3. Interviewee's personal and communal experiences with what queerness functions as in South Africa (e.g., "Have you found/felt that your openly queer identity has impeded upon your connection to nationality?")[4]

It should be noted that in this paper, the LGBTQ+ acronym will not be utilized in referring to the non-cisgender and homosexual figures represented in this research. Rather, the term *queer* will be used to define the following: a spectrum of identities and orientations that do not align with the existing standard of heteronormativity and cisnormativity. The rationale behind this decision comes down to the reality that the LGBTQ+ acronym is a term constructed by the Global North, which was made by and labels individuals who fit within a post-colonial, Western construct of queerness.

Multi-Methodological Analysis

While many who are asked to think back to their high school history courses might recollect having asked a grandparent for assistance when assigned an oral history project, in the late 1980's, Odidi Mfenyana had a grander subject in mind. Over an invitation to lunch, Mfenyana asked Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu if God truly did view queer people the way then Namibian president, Sam Nujoma, and Zimbabwean President, Robert Mugabe, said he did. To this Tutu replied, "I would not believe in a homophobic God" (Mfenyana 2024). With Tutu's words serving as his

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[4] Reference Appendix for list of questions asked.

backing, Mfenyana engaged in a project that began unveiling questions similar to the ones presented in this paper. Years following, Mfenyana would come out to his father, reverend of the Holy Cross Anglican Church and successor to Archbishop Tutu, Mlamli Mfenyana (Mfenyana 2024). To date, the Anglican church and Mfenyana family have not turned their backs on Mfenyana. They believe he carries forth the same revolutionary spirit as the church's founding anti-apartheid leaders. The only difference: Odidi Mfenyana prefers to lead his revolution in heels.

Within a variety of Indigenous clans across contemporary South Africa, queer people have been assigned a societal role antithetical to the modern notion of the "un-African". Predating the arrival of European settlers, current communities still hold queer-identifying people who are vested in authority as "gatekeepers to the realm of ancestors" (Mfenyana 2024). Their divergence from supposed normativity is viewed as a gift that can function in a society as a healing force and reminder of who the community is, namely through the people who have come before. In essence, queer community healers, something Mfenyana feels his queerness and performance functions as, are the very source of defining what the commonly held identity of a given people is (Mfenyana 2024). The customary practice of South African ethnic clans (including but not limited to the Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele, and Venda) is to send children expressing duality in their gender identity to receive the education necessary to become a *sangoma*[5], on the grounds that these children possess freedom of self that is indicative of heightened spirituality (Prakash et al. 2024, 488-489). To Mfenyana, the continuation of the sangoma tradition is testament to the success of pre-colonial African society and its provision of "productive space for queer-identifying people," without the need for lingering applications of the repressive hypothesis (Mfenyana 2024). It should be noted that, in both the pre- and post-colonial, not all sangomas are queer-identifying, just as not all queer-identifying South Africans are sangomas.

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[5] *Sangoma* (also known as/are of equivalence to *ithwasane*) are practitioners of traditional southern and south-eastern African medicine. While there is delineation between diviners (referred to as *isangoma*) and herbalists (referred to as *inyanga*), the sangoma's role within a community ranges in socio-political responsibilities (e.g. directing birth and death rituals, divination, healing physical and spiritual illness, recounting and collecting oral history, and communicating with community ancestors) (Prakash et al. 2024, 488-490).

Additionally, the role of a sangoma was not the sole place where queer people have productive community benefits.

As previously mentioned, publicly accepted queer identity long predates the arrival of Westernized ideology and social practice across the African continent. The not only tolerated but respected role of people such as inkotshane, motsoalle, and goor-jiggens disprove the founding principles of the repressive hypothesis, and its use during colonial settlement and post-independence political control of various African nations on the part of the West. Based upon existing research, such as that conducted by Simões de Araújo, which looks into the queer social roles in pre-colonial Africa, a clear link between traditional polygamy and queerness can be drawn. Polygamy, the sociocultural and economically profitable tradition of having a marital arrangement that allows people to have multiple spouses whether it be multiple husbands, multiple wives, or both, has long been associated with families of high socioeconomic status across Africa (Simões de Araújo 2024, 7-9). Having a polygamous family unit can successfully raise a larger number of children, increase the number of household incomes, and increase female autonomy (e.g. allowing women who would typically have sole responsibility with childrearing to enter the labor force) at an increased rate to that of a monogamous unit.

Across several southern African ethnic communities, polygamous spouses engaged in marital and sexual relations. It is in this circumstance that queer identities such as motsoalle and goor-jiggens prove crucial. Their place within a polygamous family unit, which was publicly legitimized as a marriage, enabled sustained family cohesion, and offered space for sexual desires to be met, allowing increased social freedoms to exist in a household fear of violence (Rao 2020, 137-38). Despite historical sects of Christianity coexisting with polygamous, queer marital structures for centuries prior, the arrival of colonial forces and the imposition of Westernized Christian ideology produced a progressive demonetization of polygamy. In turn, this removed the queer legitimacy and social productivity from mainstream southern African society.

While those who integrated their anti-apartheid and Christian beliefs into one, such as the case for Mfenyana's childhood community, could acknowledge the criticality of queerness on both the levels of cultural reclamation, social productivity, and political equity, queer-Chrisitan relations often contrasted Archbishop Tutu's notion of there a non-

homophobic God. Excerpts pulled from the 1997 publication, *Aliens in the Household of God: Homosexuality and the Christian Faith in South Africa* by Cape Town-based theologian Steve de Gruchy highlight the tension between Christian-queer integration versus exclusion within a bifurcated apartheid state. Amidst his interview-based anthology, de Gruchy recounts the story of a man named "Freddy"[6]. Despite coming out at a similar age and time in apartheid history as Mfenyana, Freddy, whose family also held leadership within the church, was unable to express "the beautiful love [he] felt for [his] friend," a love which offered him a reminder of the kindness of his God. Although having never engaged in criminal activity or drug use, Freddy would find himself having to renounce his community's assumption of his involvement in "the conduct of a licentious lifestyle" (de Gruchy 1997, 12). Following a suicide attempt and move to London, having found no place of safety in South Africa or surrounding countries, Freddy continued to refer to his partners as "friends."

In de Gruchy's recording of the account, the term "my friend" is used by Freddy, suggesting a sustained inability at self-acceptance despite attesting to having rekindled a relationship with the church when in London. Such an example of subconscious repression echoes the biblical verse which the title of de Gruchy's work is in reference to. 2 Ephesians 19 records Paul addressing the Gentiles, viewed as unclean peoples for not subscribing to Masonic law, and promoting his belief in the teachings of Jesus, "...so then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (Ephesians 2:19). Disregarding the fact that Jews and Gentiles peacefully co-existed within one political territory, Paul's words indicate an inherited alienization associated with the lack of subscription to law, not a lack of belief in God. Consistent within the Roman Empire and apartheid South Africa, the possession of legitimized citizenship ensured rights non-accessible to those deemed non-citizens. As in the case of Freddy, his association with the church and concurrently his "South Africanness" were dissociated as the result of his lack of prescription to law, and not lack of prescription to culture or religious belief. Freddy's

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[6] For the purpose of ensuring anonymity, de Gruchy elected to identify research participants via nickname or title within the church. To date, there are no publicly known documents that provide further insight on Freddy or any of the other interviewees within *Aliens in the Household of God: Homosexuality and the Christian Faith in South Africa.*

choice to refer to his lovers as friends indicates the progressive suppression many queer South Africans began to engage with in efforts to retain some form of connection to their communal identity, whether that be connected to religion, family, culture, nationality, or any combination of these factors.

The question of connection to national identity presents an additional level of complexity to the nature of what is deemed "un-African" and "un-South African" specifically. In conversation, Mfenyana presented the argument that to cite reasoning for why someone fits the condition of being "un-African," what is "African" to begin with must be first known. When asked what he believes are the collective determinants for claiming South African and/or Africanness, Mfenyana replied, "We don't know!" (Mfenyana 2024). According to Mfenyana, the current contention caused by the term "un-African" extends beyond queerness and brings to light the harsh realities of post-colonial African politics. Within South Africa alone, experts cite there are between 80 to 200 distinct ethnic groups and at least 35 languages in current use[7] (Matebeni 2021, 565). These groups include those who are racially Indian, white, Coloured[8], and Black. Of those with the categories of Black and Coloured, tribal/clan-based ethnic identities are numerous. They are also what South Africans typically identify themselves by. As Mfenyana describes it, "South Africa is a border not drawn by us. Our national lines succeed in lumping a population together, just as it succeeds in dividing families and tribes" (Mfenyana 2024). Contemporary state lines, across the whole of Africa, were formed with limited consideration for the significance of clans, forcing ethnic groups with highly developed socio-political structures and communal identities to unify under the Western-made nationality.

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[7] In the post-apartheid adoption of the South African constitution, nine languages were given recognition as official languages of the country in an effort to promote national unity through the bridging of linguistic divides. This number would later be adapted to eleven. The current official languages of the country do not include interactions of indigenous creoles and pidgins.

[8] Note that the term coloured (or colored in American English) carries a much different connotation in South Africa as compared to in the United States. Between 1950 and 1992, the South African government utilized the term to describe citizens who were not white or Black Bantu. Today, the term is used to describe South African citizens who are of mixed-race ancestry.

To Mfenyana, the practice of referring to self by ethnic identity as opposed to nationality is indicative of the illogical nature of terming anyone as being "un-South African," as doing so enforces the subscription to identity imposed by Western powers. It is through this intersectional perspective that the emergence of the "un-African" identity can be seen as damaging to those who do not identify as queer. The productive role of queerness in traditional African societies has offered the opportunity for women and the youth to engage in self-autonomy and take on leadership within the community in ways reflective of Western-attribute notions of equity (e.g. women entering the labor force) and of pre-colonial practices (e.g. spiritual/medical authority of sangomas). The denial of diversity in African identities, that which "un-African" terminology promotes furthers the social divides imprinted by the Western legacy in Africa, thus leading to the second question presented in this paper.

Household of God: Homosexuality and the Christian Faith in South Africa features a culminating insight into this very dilemma presented by academic Edward P. Antonio. Antonio writes that while heterosexuality has been socially inscribed as historically and culturally valid, homosexuality has been deprived of this validity largely through the work of the white missionary, who took sexuality and made it a topic of sustained political conversation. Given Indigenous South African moral codes had long disregarded sexuality as being a determinant of a person's character, and thus not significant to be addressed ad nauseam, the contradictory narrative presented by missionary forces initiated the shift in South Africans' perspectives on cultural persistence and colonial revisionism.

As they sought to craft a South Africa in the image of their homeland and their religion, queerness was allotted to primitive ancient culture (de Gruchy 1997, 298-299). The reduction of history and truth to a level of equality meant that sexuality could serve as a diverse topic that the white man and Jesus could help resolve. To continue to hold on to such thinking, as those who believe in an "un-African" identity do, is to allow thousands of historical narratives to remain unearthed while those that are widely known have been warped into political tools of cultural dissimulation. It is also to allow for the belief in a Christian utopia, which has never existed, to remain the dominant image of what African society should aim to be.

Odidi Mfenyana and his drag persona Odidiva are representatives of a culture aiming to dismantle false narratives and engage in historical

reclamation/revision one performance at a time. Mfenyana's early years within the church and the anti-apartheid movement are examples that a South Africa that believes in "un-Africanness" is not representative of the nation's totality. In addition, Odidiva seeks to emphasize how Western and non-Western worlds achieve a peaceful coexistence within the world of queer performance art. Mfenyana is credited with the creation of the dance genre, bushwaacking. According to Mfenyana, the process of searching for Indigenous queer history led to exploring the integral role of queer leaders within the anti-apartheid movement who were exiled to the West. At this point, having long been involved in the club scene in 1990's South Africa, Mfenyana discovered that the ciphers and ballrooms of American street and club dance were reminiscent of the African spiritual dances performed within a crowd (Mfenyana 2024). Bushwaacking became the culmination of traditional South African dance styles with ballroom and street styles such as waacking and voguing.

In April 2014, Odidiva was invited to perform in the Infecting the City Festival[9], where she sought to host South Africa's first ball. To achieve this, Mfenyana began working with the organization JazzArt Kids, where he offered children of disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to engage in an extracurricular activity that could open them to a career path of performance. For nearly 90 days, Odidiva's project's youth participants were educated in South Africa's Indigenous cultures and Black America's dance cultures (Mfenyana 2024). In assuming this role of educator, Mfenyana served as proof that queer people continue to have a productive role in the welfare of their communities, even if that role has evolved from what was historically documented. When asked about the Infecting the City Festival's significance in both personal and professional regards, Mfenyana said, "...in drag, I am a healer whether or not people know they've been touched" (Mfenyana, 2024).

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[9] Founded in 2007, Infecting the City Festival is an annual multi-medium art festival held in Cape Town. The goal of Infecting the City is to make it freely accessible to all via site-specific art, art intervention, and performance in the central part of Cape Town. You can learn more about the festival's history and upcoming events by visiting the website https://infectingthecity.com/2023/.

Conclusion

While research focused on the criticality of queer identities within African society does exist, its proliferation among academic communities and civilian populations alike is very limited at this time. This is not to suggest that efforts on the part of researchers and advocates are in vain. The research conducted for the completion of this paper serves as a testament to the progressive interest in queer studies that is accumulating in both Global North and Global South societies. The work of Odidi Mfenyana is representative of a singular effort to reclaim queerness as an innately African identity. Odidiva is one of a multiplicity of advocates and citizens, some of whose names and contributions may never be publicly known, who choose for their existence not to remain denied inclusion within the country's national identity.

In referring back to this paper's guiding questions, it is clear that the presence of the "un-African" identity in the post-colonial/apartheid debate of South Africa's collective identity is an issue fraught with complexity unresolvable via a single piece of research. Evidence of a Western-controlled narrative is present within the thinking of those who believe queerness is "un-African" in its nature. When such rhetoric is re-examined, it is clear that queerness is not the Western import many Africans believe it to be. Indigenous cultural practice continues to this day and shows a vast range of ways queerness proved beneficial to South African communities. From contributions to independence movements, church congregations, spiritual medicine, and community welfare, queer people have been, and continue to be, an imperative part of what shaped South Africa into the nation it is today.

In further engaging with anti-colonial, anti-apartheid efforts, the advancement of queer acceptance provides the opportunity for multi-cultural innovation, art, and resistance to flourish. The life's work of Odidi Mfenyana mentioned within this paper is evidentiary of this statement. While contemporary drag and bushwaacking may not be perfectly reflective of historical queer expression, these art forms emphasize the innovative spirit of the queer community and its ability to always find relevance to current social needs and aspirations. Such an innovative, community-driven spirit has been, is, and should remain, the quintessential representation of what it means to be African. While there is progress needed so that queer

South Africans may live with further provisions of human rights and public respect, it should be noted that Global North societies also struggle in these same regards. Until this progress is achieved, the queer community of South Africa will continue, as it always has, serving as the unsung healers for generations to come.

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Appendix

Basic information (e.g., age, self-identified sexual/gender identity, professions)

1. What is your name? What are your pronouns? Is there any other basic identifying information you would like to share about yourself?
2. What is your relation to South Africa?
3. What is your definition of queerness? Does that definition align with the Westernized acronym LGBTQ+? Where in the spectrum of queer identity do you currently identify?
4. What is your current profession? How did you arrive on this career path? What is the local/national/international reception towards the work you do?
5. What does performance mean to you? Has performance always played an integral role in your construction of personhood? How do performance arts, specifically those you have engaged in over the years, relate to a "South African identity"/South African history/tradition?

The post-colonial, post-apartheid state of queer inclusion in South African identity (e.g., "What is the South African identity?," "Who creates the South African identity?")

1. Based on your perception of the country and its history, what is "the South African identity" and who has been and now is responsible for constructing this identity?
2. Is the notion of queerness being "un-African" present in South Africa? If so, where, when, and why do you find this has come to be the case?
3. What role have queer-identifying South Africans played in the country's history and traditions? In what ways has the queer community informed the construction of what being "South African"/ "African" is?
4. How is queerness met by South African citizens today? How/when does the queer community engage with the South Africa's general public? Does the general public have an understanding that queerness predates European contact with the African continent?

Interviewee's personal and communal experiences with what queerness functions as in South Africa (e.g., "Have you found/felt that your openly queer identity has impeded upon your connection to nationality?")

1. What was your childhood like? When did you first begin to engage with queerness as a culture and form of identity? What was/is the response of those closest to you as they watch your identity and art come into formation?

2. As a queer person in South Africa, do you feel that your identity has impeded your connection to nationality? If so, what/who in particular has caused this detachment? Do you wish to be included within a South African national identity, and if so, what can be done to achieve that?

3. Where do you see the state of queer acceptance in South Africa, and Africa at large, in the next ten years?

4. What is the end goal of your activism? What do you wish for your legacy to be?

"Members" of Óglaigh na hÉireann: Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness' Transformation from Violence to Nonviolence

Cara Martin

Abstract

This research is a single-case study following actors Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness and their contributions as former violent actors to a peaceful resolution in Northern Ireland. Outside institutions such as the Catholic Church, and influential actors such as Bill Clinton and the late Queen Elizabeth II, helped to unite the transition to a nonviolent movement and legitimize Adams and McGuinness politically. Contextualizing the IRA ceasefire and Good Friday Agreement within uncivil government action and the IRA memberships of Adams and McGuinness provides a more holistic understanding of the challenges they faced in peace negotiations, and how an eventual agreement came about. This conflict and resolution contribute to a broader understanding of how dependent nonviolence as peacebuilding is on external factors and situational influences.

Keywords: Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, IRA, Troubles, Belfast, Derry, Good Friday Agreement, Peace Building, Coexistence, paramilitary, Sinn Fein, parliament

Introduction

"The voice of sanity is getting hoarse" in Northern Ireland from the 60s to the 90s. Heany wrote this in his 1975 poem "Whatever You Say, Say Nothing" as he discussed the period of violent conflict known as the Troubles that had consumed Northern Ireland since 1968 (Heaney 1975). The history of Ireland is riddled with periods of conflict, as the island fought for united independence from the United Kingdom. The Troubles were a continuation of centuries of oppression, colonization, conflict, and starvation, an addition to the history of freedom fighting and desperate attempts to achieve self-rule that devolved into terroristic violence (Council on Foreign Relations 2023). There were many groups involved, with historical, religious, and national influences each playing a role in the violence. The paramilitary group, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA), took on a lead role in the struggle for independence, representing the Irish Catholic population in Northern Ireland (Council on Foreign Relations 2023).

Despite being leaders in the violence, multiple IRA members became involved in the peacebuilding process through governmental positions, with Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness being two of the most notable (BBC 2014). Gerry Adams was, allegedly, a high-ranking commander in the IRA based on reports from former IRA militants (BBC 2014). He was elected as the President of Sinn Féin in 1983, the IRA's political wing, and retired in February 2018 (BBC 2014). He has consistently denied IRA membership (BBC 2014). McGuinness was the IRA chief of staff. He partially acknowledged membership in The Bloody Sunday Tribunal, and was a Sinn Féin politician, serving as the deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland until his retirement in 2017 (Spackman 2011). As I examine these two actors in the context of their critical roles in peace negotiations, the decommissioning of the IRA, and the peacebuilding process in Northern Ireland, it is critical to view this through the lens of their past as IRA members. Why were violent actors efficient at establishing and maintaining the peacebuilding process when elected to office, and allowing a nation divided by nationality and religion to heal? I will answer this question through the case study of Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness' collaborative and lengthy political careers in Northern Ireland, examining external factors that contributed to their successes.

This question is important as it focuses on a unique case where the leaders of a violent movement abandon their prior course of action, attempt to cooperate with a formerly enemy government, and become leading actors in the nonviolent movement. These two men hold significant responsibility for the ceasefire, the change in the trajectory of the IRA and its decommissioning, and for allowing decades of healing and slow, steady progress. My main approach to my research will be through the examination of a single case study following the careers (terroristic and political) of Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness. It will span from their beginning endeavors to take a political stance within the IRA to peace-politics in the 2000s. I intend to apply theories of nonviolence to hypothesize the situational causes responsible for their success, politically and socially in the Northern Irish Catholic population and internationally.

Their success was due to the conflict being intertwined with a powerful outside institution, the Catholic Church, which gave them the reach and influence to unite the movement and direct it towards nonviolence. The religious institution helped to establish the initial channels of peaceful communication within the republican community. The tension and struggle leading up to the Good Friday Agreement was due to uncivil governmental action and centuries of discrimination and violence against the Catholic population. By confronting this and working within the parameters of the government, Adams and McGuinness represented a change within the institution that allowed for an IRA ceasefire, and eventually the Good Friday Agreement. It was their interactions and relationships with high-profile politicians and foreign representatives of state that legitimized Adams and McGuinness as peaceful representatives and established a change in direction towards friendly compromise and cooperation across party lines. This was further characterized by their respective handling of their IRA memberships, which influenced public perception and their influence over the maintenance of the peace agreement.

This contributes to the field of peacebuilding research by demonstrating the impossibility of replicating the success and peaceful outcome of this conflict through nonviolent action for other cases. It also explores how culture, religion, and nationality interacting in Northern Ireland is what allowed for the transition to peacebuilding through nonviolence. I offer insight into the importance of public demographics and how their relationship with violent actors impacts the overarching success

of peacebuilding. This case is unique in that the election of IRA members was highly dependent on the social, cultural, and religious history of Northern Ireland within the context of its relationship with the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. It shows that peacebuilding through nonviolent action is highly contextual and dependent on inclusion, history, scope, and the relationship between citizens, the government, and violent actors. Peacebuilding through nonviolence has proven to be successful yet can still be regarded as an unreliable method. This examination of this case will demonstrate how necessary many small influences, decisions, and historical relationships were to its success and how difficult it would be to replicate.

Methodology

The approach to this research is a single case study following the IRA membership and political careers of two Northern Irish politicians, Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness. It is restricted to their political involvement in Northern Ireland and how their participation in the IRA informed and impacted their contribution to the peace process post-Troubles. The main criteria for the selection of which actors to be researched was a combination of current or previous activity in a political role and alleged or acknowledged membership in the IRA. More specific factors were the level of seniority and influence in governmental roles, involvement in violent activity through the IRA, and involvement in the peace process and ceasefire in Northern Ireland. While there were certainly many members of the IRA who went on to become involved in politics, Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness are notable for their high-ranking positions within the IRA combined with later, senior roles in the government. Their success in both groups allowed them more control and influence over the conflict, and made them globally recognizable, which is why they were selected over other candidates.

Gerry Adams was the president of Sinn Féin for 34 years, from 1983 to 2017, and an alleged member of the IRA (McDonald 2017). Adams has consistently denied IRA membership, despite accounts from acknowledged IRA members, such as Dolores Price or Brendan Hughes stating his involvement and leadership in the paramilitary group (BBC News 2014), and multiple journalists naming him as an IRA member such as Ed Moloney

(2002), Patrick Raden Keefe (2019) and Richard English (2004). This paper will regard Adams as a member of the IRA, assuming for all intents and purposes that he had some level of involvement with the violent tactics used by the IRA while acknowledging his denial of said association. This denial will also be discussed in the findings portion as a factor that impacted the transition process from violence to nonviolence, and his influence as a politician in the lasting peace process in Northern Ireland.

British security analysts believed Martin McGuinness to be chief of staff for the IRA from roughly 1978 to 1982, when it is assumed by analysts that he stepped down to take a position in the IRA's army council (The Irish Times 2017). He served in Sinn Féin from 1982 to 2017, and as Northern Ireland's Deputy First Minister from 2007 to 2017 (The Irish Times 2017). McGuinness publicly confirmed IRA membership in the Bloody Sunday Tribunal, stating he was the IRA's second-in-command in Derry during Bloody Sunday (The Irish Times 2017). McGuinness was a necessary figure to include in this research due to his high-profile status as a politician in Northern Ireland and within the IRA. His acknowledgement of his membership contrasts his public service with Adam's and allows for deeper comparison regarding their roles in peacekeeping and the transition to nonviolence. McGuinness and Adams were also selected for their public profiles and social standing as two well-known actors in the international political community.

The boundaries of this case are set during the political and paramilitary careers of Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, from roughly the mid-1960s to 2018. Geographically, it will focus primarily on their activities in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, and England where their actions were most influential. The research will not be limited to these spaces as the actors' activities abroad, such as in America, are necessary contributions to the examination of their legitimacy and recognition on an international stage during the peacebuilding process in Northern Ireland. Political events in the United Kingdom related to the Troubles or the peace process, excluding these actors, will also be touched on briefly to contextualize specific moments of their involvement or decision making.

Information was gathered from a combination of primary and secondary sources. Most utilized will be interviews, speeches, and statements given by Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, and news reports on their activities and public perception. During their time as

political figures, most of their correspondence and speeches were recorded and stored. The CAIN Archive, an archive from Ulster University containing "a collection of information and source material on 'the Troubles' (from 1968 to 2007) and politics in Northern Ireland", is where these primary sources will be sourced from (CAIN Archive 2014). News agencies from Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and England provided speeches, public reactions to the actors' movements and activities, and public perceptions of the actors' roles in the peacebuilding process. Published works from journalists and historians regarding the peacebuilding process and the violence of the Troubles also provided a wealth of concise information, such as *Say Nothing* by Patrick Raden Keefe. Northern Irish and Irish political websites were utilized as a source for party information, political profiles, and statements. As this paper is discussing a long, violent conflict, accounts and sources are limited due to a reluctance of former members to discuss their participation and restrictions by the U.K. government.

Theory Section

The success of this case is highly dependent on multiple contextual factors acting as support for the IRA to transition from violence to nonviolence and come to a productive peace agreement. Northern Ireland is a small country, one-sixth the size of the Republic of Ireland, and has a "deep-knit closeness that is reflected in the society and culture" (Hayward and McManus 2021, 304). Religion is deeply intertwined with class and ethnicity, creating strong yet separate communities. Northern Irish Catholics were treated unequally and under-represented in government for decades, leading to the formation of a civil rights movement that was swiftly, and violently, ended by local armed forces, provoking a violent retaliation known as the Troubles. Catholic society, banded together under religion and segregation, was influenced by instructions such as the church, and socially bound to the IRA through community ties, even if the majority were against violence. Examining the rise of politicians from terrorism and the success of Adams and McGuinness in maintaining peace requires an understanding of the role the public, institutions, and government play in transitions to nonviolence and cooperation with nonviolent actors. The relationships between these three factors and a terrorist group set the stage for success

or failure and will provide a strong structure to comment upon the outcome and its uniqueness.

The concepts examined here are meant to provide scaffolding to support the various relationships Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness, and the IRA maintained and built to allow for the transition to peace. Public participation examines the community's contribution to the post-conflict climate based on their behavior, relationships, and coexistence during violence and fear. Government involvement touches on the impact government action or inaction can have on violent tactics and the direction resistance groups take, examining how taking sides to any degree can influence the government-citizen relationship. The section regarding diversity and the scope of the movement is vast, taking into consideration how diversity of the movement can impact access to various institutions and their resources, while touching on the negative impact expansion can have on intra party cooperation. This approach theorizes how dynamics, relationships, and experiences during conflict impact the dynamics of post-conflict relationships and situations, to contextualize the outcome by examining the beginning.

Public Participation

In times of violence life does not stop, people must continue to go to work, send their children to school, shop for groceries, and carry out other mundane activities that have become life-threatening in a conflict zone. This requires the population to adopt a collective forced ignorance, and operate as normally as possible alongside neighbors who would be potential aggressors to maintain their own safety and the stability of society beyond the activities of paramilitary groups. This concept of 'everyday peace', established by Roger Mac Ginty, is defined as "the routinized practices used by individuals and collectives as they navigate their way through life in a deeply divided society that may suffer from ethnic or religious cleavages and be prone to episodic direct violence in addition to chronic or structural violence" (Mac Ginty 2014, 549). It is a coping mechanism for the population to deal with increasing levels of polarization and violence. People are operating, striving for some sense of normality balanced with the social boundaries they need to respect in their community that exists due to the conflict centering on religious identity.

It is in everyday peace that civil action is employed, defined by Deborah Avant and others as "behavior characterized by (a) a reluctance to engage in violence and (b) a willingness to abide by a minimal level of respect to maximize engagement with others" (Avant et al. 2019, 2). People are trapped between the warring paramilitary and the society that has been divided by allegiance to either side of the cause. Civil action can take many forms, but it stems from the need for populations to continue operating in the presence of violence, and maintain the respected level of contact throughout their community that contributes to the continued fragile stability of everyday life. In engaging in civil action people can have mundane interactions with their neighbors beyond their identities, where they continue with social obligations and move through their routines of everyday life (Avant et al. 2019, 4). This also requires the people engaging in civil action to maintain a moderate level of respect for their counterparts across the conflict (Avant et al. 2019, 4). For interactions to maintain this front of willful ignorance regarding the polarizing conflict occurring amongst the community, neighbors must maintain respect in their interactions. This can be difficult as the conflict progresses and lives are impacted and taken, causing heightened emotion and tension.

Everyday peace is a fragile method of civil action. It takes place in communities that are not homogenous but fluid, displaying levels of diversity in intergroup interactions across gender, class, race, and religion (Mac Ginty 2014, 552). Due to this, strategies used in everyday peace rely on a "conversational contract" or an unspoken pact where actors agree to abide by the same rules and operate within the same parameters (Mac Ginty 2014, 554). This level of trust is an important part of civil action. Civil action manages the social benefits of trust by recognizing its social value and how this can affect the mobilization process, framing, and perception of threats (Avant et al. 2019, 20). This fragility implies that the changes that occur in the conflict will have a significant impact on the ability for everyday peace to continue, and how productively civil action will be performed. Concepts such as trust are fundamental to the functioning of a tight knit society. Without some level of trust an entire neighborhood could be reduced to paranoia, animosity, and contribute to the escalation of violence, even if the residents themselves are not directly engaging in violent acts. The climate of the population associated with a paramilitary group can have a significant impact on the continuation and support of the group.

Anonymity of involved community members, secret keeping, and small acts of support such as safe houses or food donations are all interactions communities can have without directly participating in the conflict. By ignoring subtle interactions with paramilitary groups and sharing a mutual understanding that the community will protect their own, two opposing groups can interact in a calm, rational manner, establishing 'everyday peace.'

Civil action can easily turn into uncivil action, as easily as trust can be broken, particularly in times of heightened tensions (Avant et al. 2019, 20-22). This is what limits the scope of everyday peace. MacGinty acknowledges that everyday peace is critiqued as being insincere, just a front for people to get through their day rather than actual interactions and constructive relationship building (Mac Ginty 2014, 558). It is also limited to situations where it can be employed as it requires the groups and communities to have contact with each other, for the boundaries to be social rather than physical such as walls or under paramilitary threat of violence. Other scholars critique it as being more conflict management rather than conflict transformation (Mac Ginty 2014, 557). This holds truth, but that is also the strength of everyday peace through a post-conflict lens. It plays a role in restricting or staving off an escalation of conflict, which has broader implications in the journey towards peace. By managing conflict there are more opportunities for communities to reconcile, more time for institutions to act and strive towards peace. Even if this atmosphere of everyday peace does not manage conflict for long, in maintaining a certain level of trust and communication across communities, they are setting the larger population up for post-conflict relationships. After peace is established, it is a huge benefit if communities can step into easy coexistence. If there was a complete separation of people the peace building process would not only be more complicated and lengthier, but less stable. Everyday peace has bottom-up origins, and it has a chance of bringing the legitimacy and authenticity that other initiatives lack. The people involved are the very people who are useful to peace actors when they intervene, some who might be inclined to take on a more formal role in the post-conflict environment representing the community (Mac Ginty 2014, 561).

Government Involvement

Deborah Avant's theories contributed to the discussion on civil action in the previous section, where she touches on the fact that civil action can very easily turn into uncivil action, contributing to the conflict or exasperating it while not being directly involved in the violent acts (Avant et al. 2019). This easy interchangeability of violent and nonviolent means of resistance are what Erica Chenoweth argues poses a new level of complexity to the reaction resistance groups can have when faced with repression (Chenoweth et al. 2017, 1960). Avant identifies governments as an institution that can directly contribute to uncivil action due to their position in society and level of power within the conflict (Avant et al. 2019, 8). "Governments often have significant capacity, by virtue of their resources and organization, to shape collective behavior," which allows them not only extreme influence over the paramilitary groups, but over the attitudes and level of involvement a community may have towards the conflict (Avant et al. 2019, 8). During conflict, the government's capacities could be tampered, as an institution relies on numerous outside factors to continue to operate at a certain scope and efficiency. If tax revenue is impacted, due to loss of life or inability to work or pay taxes if violence is preventing everyday life, the government's financial resources diminish, or if governmental offices and officials are attacked the very core of the institution is unable to operate (Avant et al. 2019, 8). The government can also expand its capacities during conflict if the public jumps to support their representatives, or outside groups offer support (Avant et al. 2019, 8). This expansion of capacities would not be a positive expansion if the government is engaging in uncivil action, as it would only enable further escalation of violence.

Avant utilizes Northern Ireland as the case to examine a government's role in uncivil action, as seen through police forces in Northern Ireland during the Troubles (Avant et al. 2019, 8). This case takes place before the parameters of what will be discussed in the findings section yet contributes a useful example to explain the theoretical impacts of government participation in uncivil action. As the government was a part of the United Kingdom, the police force often allied itself with loyalist paramilitary groups who were Protestant and identified as British, which put them at odds with the IRA (Avant et al. 2019, 8). Against government policies and laws, police

in Northern Ireland sanctioned the violence of loyalist paramilitary groups, further enabling the abuse and segregation of the Catholic population which contributed to the push of young Catholic men towards IRA involvement (Avant et al. 2019, 8). With the government clearly having picked a side in the conflict, the part of the population not represented will be directed towards violent actions, which further isolates the community from resistance through nonviolence. People might feel disillusioned with their government and its processes and feel that the only method of retaliation for the policy makers to hear their demands is through violent action. This case is an insight into the situation created by the local government that led to the challenges Adams and McGuinness faced attempting to establish an IRA ceasefire, and the peace process.

These "increases in repression tend to predictably increase the probability that nonviolent dissent becomes violent," as there are multiple resistance movements that do not view violence as their primary strategy but are pushed towards it due to a lack of options or paths to take (Chenoweth et al. 2017, 1960). Chenoweth touched on countervailing arguments claiming, "many dissidents (and governments) improvise their activities, essentially "acting without choosing" in contexts where fear and uncertainty dominate" (Chenoweth et al. 2017, 1960). The situation Avant describes is an example of the reactionary decision-making that takes place during times of conflict, which is why governments must consider the larger implications of their actions. By taking sides in a conflict, or participation in the violence by sanctioning it or enabling it, powerful institutions are directly contributing to the escalation of the usage of violent tactics. This harms the potential peace process. In the negotiation stage, it is expected for institutions such as the government to interact with and collaborate on some level with former paramilitary group leaders and members. If the usage of violent tactics on both sides of the conflict can be traced back to feelings of betrayal and disconnect between the people and their government, it can harm the productivity of peace building or prevent the process from beginning at all.

Diversity and Scope of Movement

The relationship and history a resistance group has with the surrounding community are important to the development of the group and

the way communication and institutional interactions are structured. The broader the relationship is, the more diversity that exists within the movement meaning "actors have different bases of authority and different constituencies" (Avant et al. 2019, 22). This sustains the longevity of the movement, by allowing the introduction of new perspectives, ideas, and experiences to coexist and mold the resistance movement to reflect the community's changing needs. Broadening the reach of the movement means that participants will be able to tap into their own networks, translating meaning and rhetoric across societal differences, and building solidarity (Avant et al. 2019, 22). This diversity within a movement, or more specifically a resistance group, will eventually change fundamentals regarding the operation and mission of the movement, which can help to buoy the movement throughout developments in the conflict or varying levels of support. It can also cause infighting over a change in the tactics being used such as switching from violent to nonviolent tactics, or vice versa. It opens itself to the influence and opinion of institutions the group chooses to utilize, such as religious ones. Connection with a religious institution allows access to the resources and support the institution has but also forces the movement to rely on outside whims and decisions. This takes agency away from a group if they begin to lean too heavily on institutions, but in some cases, it revolutionizes the outcome and progression of a resistance movement.

When conflict or unrest has persisted for decades or centuries, it becomes intertwined with the culture, history, and sociology of the nation it is operating within. An incredibly influential source of control and societal organization are religious institutions, which contain the resources, followers, and respect to exert considerable influence over a community, especially ones that are close knit or whose culture is inextricably intertwined with religion. They are connected at national and transnational levels, with ties to leaders across faiths which can lead to interfaith cooperation (Avant et al. 2019, 11). Religious institutions hold authority over their base of worshipers and believers, and in some communities have a network of smaller institutions, expanding the reach of power (Avant et al. 2019, 11). Religious institutions can be drawn into civil action as a method of encouraging membership with the institution, or uncivil action if it participates in exclusion and ignores the spread of violence (Avant et al. 2019, 11). This ability to influence the direction of the conflict in either

direction places pressure and responsibility on the institution and its leaders, which may encourage avoidance of the conflict. However, being so intertwined with the community and sometimes the daily lives of its members, a religious institution might see the responsibility to involve itself with resistance movements and contentious groups as upholding values. If the movement is nonviolent, religious institutions might already align with the methods and messaging, and if the movement is violent a religious institution might see an opportunity for change if it is able to steer the group towards nonviolence.

This diversity within a movement, across communities, professions, class, or interfaith, can lead to positive or negative developments. The growth of the movement means the growth of participation in group membership and activities, which can lead to changes in leadership or infighting. In the case of the Communist Party of Nepal during the early 2000s, Manish Thapa touches on how the party was able to make such a significant shift from armed conflict to nonviolence. The armed revolution lasted decades before ending in the peaceful establishment of a Federal Democratic Republic (Thapa 2014, 196). It stemmed from intraparty fighting, where two leaders found themselves at odds due to internal disputes regarding military efficiency and strategic methods (Thapa 2014, 196). One leader was removed from the group, and the party faced challenges keeping "armed cadres under strict control" which impacted their efficiency and ability (Thapa 2014, 196). Eventually these issues impacted their ability to carry out attacks, and their branding as a terrorist group threatened the continuation of the movement, encouraging the decision to pivot to support the "nonviolent democratic movement" (Thapa 2014, 196). This case offers insight into the complicated dynamics that come into play when diversity of the group begins to lead factions in opposing directions. It can result in the splintering of the group into smaller factions which would harm the momentum of the movement, or the group may choose to purge the members that make up the minority, to maintain cohesiveness and original intention.

Findings

The Catholic Church

Understanding the Troubles, what led to them, and societal and political relationships in Northern Ireland requires an understanding of the history of religion on the isle of Ireland and its relationship to the Irish British conflict. Catholicism and Protestantism in Northern Ireland became "symbols of ethnic conflict," and in the eyes of the Catholic community, "identity is inextricably bound up with the relationship between the institutional church and the nationalist community" (Rafferty 2008). It was a priest from the Catholic Church, Father Alec Reid, who initiated the talks between Gerry Adams and the Social and Democratic Labor Party leader John Hume that began the process of peace negotiations (Keefe 2019), and a Catholic priest was chosen by the IRA as one of the witnesses overseeing the IRA disarmament process (CBS 2005). The Catholic Church served as an important institution throughout the entirety of the conflict, inadvertently allowing for the IRA to utilize the resources and community the church had in Northern Ireland, while also serving as the main vessel through which the movement made a transition from violent to nonviolent tactics, aiding Gerry Adams in his efforts to establish peaceful communication.

It is important to establish that as a religious institution the Catholic church was not aiding the IRA in their military campaign and had publicly condemned the violence, but Catholicism was the identity facing discrimination that bound people together under violent tactics. The religious identity had become a "surrogate for ethno-political identity," and despite the religious institution of the Catholic Church attempts to encourage peace, the IRA as a paramilitary group was built around the community of the institution (Rafferty 2008). This relationship is what led to the ability of the Catholic Church and its members to create channels of communication across political boundaries. The strengths and weaknesses of the diversity and scope of a movement discussed in the theory section outlines the influences an outside religious institution can have on the direction of the movement if given authority or trust by leaders of the group. It was this trust that Gerry Adams had in priest Alec Reid, who initiated the conversation with Adams to end IRA violence (Keefe 2019, 237). He found Adams in agreement that only a joint peace agreement

between "the republicans, the nonviolent nationalists of the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), and the government of the Republic of Ireland" would convince the IRA to lay down its arms (Keefe 2019, 237). The church, or Fr. Reid, acting as the convener, would allow these parties to communicate without initiating a violent or angry response from their supporters as even Adams acknowledged that "the only organization that can do anything is the Church" (Keefe 2019, 237).

Reid's shuttling messages and organizing meetings between Adams and Hume eventually led to the publishing of the Adams-Hume statement, which opened communication between the different republican parties and began the process of peace. The church represented a nonviolent institution that people trusted while representing the people the IRA claimed to be liberating. Their presence throughout every stage was a representation of every Northern Irish Catholic who had experienced discrimination, fear, and loss throughout the Troubles and wished for both an end to the violence as well as a better quality of life and equal rights under their government. When the IRA began the disarmament process outlined in the Good Friday Agreement, they allowed two witnesses to oversee the Canadian, Finish, and American officials' work, "a Methodist minister and a Roman Catholic priest close to Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams" (CBS 2005).

It could be argued that the involvement of the Catholic church as a religious institution was not an example of diversity in the movement, as the Catholic identity had established the movement and was the required identifier for membership and involvement. It did not matter if Catholics supported the IRA's violence or not, their identity was enough to condemn them to mistreatment by the government and Protestant-unionist community, and the common goal of an improvement of civil rights allowed for the church to unite them in a movement towards peace. Without the publicly acceptable communication between different parties through the Church, the establishment of Sinn Féin as a legitimate and respected political party, and IRA ceasefire would have been impossible for Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness to achieve.

Actions Predating the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement

The Belfast Agreement, also known as the Good Friday Agreement, was signed on April 10, 1998, by representatives from the United Kingdom,

Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and the United States of America (Department of Foreign Affairs). It addresses a multitude of topics, including constitutional issues, power-sharing institutions to bolster national relationships, and the maintenance of peace and stability in Northern Ireland (Department of Foreign Affairs). This agreement was a success after multiple failures and breakdowns in attempted peace talks. This achievement is accredited to the cooperation between U.S. Senator George Mitchell, the U.S. envoy to Northern Ireland who chaired the talks, Irish Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, representatives from Northern Irish political parties Sinn Féin, the Social and Democratic Labor Party, the Ulster Unionist Party, the Ulster Democratic Party, the Progressive Unionist Party, and other independent assembly parties (Department of Foreign Affairs). All parties and governments remained in negotiations overnight after an initial deadline of April 9, 1998, failed to be reached, announcing the agreement on the morning of April 10th. The participation of Sinn Féin in the negotiations was required for the agreement to be reached, and their participation hinged on a ceasefire of IRA military operations. It was the combined efforts of Sinn Féin leaders Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness that led to the first IRA ceasefire in 1994, with these negotiations contextualized by the relationship military activity has with the uncivil action used by British soldiers and police.

The crucial factor that led to peace in Northern Ireland was the decommissioning of the IRA and pivoting the movement's activities to the political branch of Sinn Féin to allow for long term goals to be achieved. In an article published in *An Phoblacht* (Republican News) in 1995, Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams commented on the peace process being halted as the British government refused to participate in all-party talks until the IRA fully disarmed, saying the state was asking for "a concession which it knows will not be granted" (Adams 1995). His view that their true intention was to "frustrate Irish republicans" and "distract and immobilise Irish nationalists" was reflective of IRA and Sinn Féin opinions regarding the progression to peace talks (Adams 1995). The act of turning to nonviolence was impossible because in the eyes of Irish republicans the use of violent tactics was not a choice in the first place. Patrick Radden Keefe in his book *Say Nothing* comments on the idea that "paramilitarism was not a role IRA members had sought out but, rather, one that had been thrust upon them" after Gerry Adams wrote "the gun in Irish politics is not the sole responsibility of the

Irish. The British were responsible for putting it there in the first place and they continue to use it to stay in Ireland" (Keefe 2019, 243). This violence was justifiable to militants, their actions had a means to an end as Adams wrote under a pseudonym on the anniversary of the Easter Rising, "only if I achieve the situation where my people can genuinely prosper can my course of action be seen, by me, to have been justified" (Keefe 2019, 241). Avant's concept of governmental uncivil action when applied to Chenoweth's idea that intense repression of dissent turns nonviolent groups violent explains the initial impossibility of the idea of IRA disarmament, and the incredible challenge Adams and McGuinness faced if peace negotiations were to move forward.

Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness were able to achieve what they did because they "maintained a disciplined, unified stance, and enjoyed huge authority within the different branches of the movement," which allowed the British government to trust them (Dochartaigh 2021). They were intimately familiar with the distrust the IRA held for the politicians and governments trying to forge this peace deal, as they had been leaders within the movement. However, Adams and McGuinness knew that the only path forward that would allow the movement to succeed was nonviolent tactics such as political involvement. Adams stated that he and McGuinness met with the IRA army council three separate times to present their case. They argued that they "could set in place a process which could create new conditions for a genuine and just peace and from there build a pathway and a strategy into a new all- Ireland republic" (Moriarty 2019). In the third meeting the council decided in favor of a ceasefire (Moriarty 2019). The IRA announced the ceasefire on August 31, 1994, stating an "opportunity to secure a just and lasting settlement has been created" and the IRA was "determined that the injustices which created this conflict will be removed and confident in the strength and justice of our struggle to achieve this" (Irish Republican Army (IRA) 1994). They were clear in their messaging that there was a collective commitment to finding a peaceful way forward through politics, but there was a distrust that "others, not the least the British government" would follow through on agreements made during negotiations (Irish Republican Army 1994). The ceasefire briefly ended in February 1996 but was reinstated in July 1997, leading to the inclusion of Sinn Féin in peace negotiations (Moriarty 2019).

This moment for the IRA could have been the beginning of a split within the group, with some members remaining firm in their commitment to violence against those inclined to agree with Adams and McGuinness. Adams and McGuinness were not new recruits to the IRA, bringing new ideas of peace and nonviolence, but former leaders who had matured within the ranks and had realized the path forward was different from the group's current trajectory. Instead, similar to the outcome of Nepal's Maoists, the IRA recognized for the movement to continue and one day achieve the goal of Irish unity, they had to ensure the council remained united. Those who voted against Adams and McGuinness' proposal followed the ceasefire order, keeping the IRA united in their new commitment to peaceful change.

It was clear that the conflict was transformed with Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness acting as representatives of Sinn Féin and communicating peace across party, governmental, and IRA lines. Adams participated in secret negotiations with John Hume in 1993 to establish a shared understanding between the SDPL and Sinn Féin that encouraged Irish-British governmental talks, and eventually the beginnings of the Good Friday Agreement. The Good Friday Agreement allowed for the peace process to be established and set up institutions to maintain said peace, even as Adams later said on the 25th anniversary of the agreement, "it's an agreement to a journey without agreement on the destination" (Simpson 2023). By establishing themselves politically and creating working relationships across party lines, Adams and McGuinness began the work of tackling centuries of governmental uncivil action, transforming it into civil action, as demonstrated by their "willingness to abide by a minimal level of respect to maximize engagement with others" (Avant et al. 2019, 2).

Famous Friends

As a result of their efforts in establishing peace in Northern Ireland and decommissioning the IRA, Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness helped establish both Sinn Féin and themselves as legitimate political actors in Northern Ireland and on the international stage. Post-conflict, they had to maintain a delicate peace and work to ensure the agreements laid out in the Good Friday Agreement were carried out, and respected. By bolstering their public profile through global relationships and shows of friendship, Adams

and McGuinness fashioned themselves as important faces in the peace process, helped to reinforce their opinions and policy making decisions, and supported a positive public perception of Sinn Féin. Sinn Féin politicians meeting world leaders, attending events, or welcoming state visits helped to erase the past of Sinn Féin's failure to hold any strong position in government and have any meaningful impact on the governmental uncivil action that led to the violence of the Troubles. It also helped to ease public memories of IRA origins that had tainted the legitimacy of Sinn Féin in the past.

Gerry Adams benefited from the public assistance of U.S. President Bill Clinton during his efforts to establish an IRA ceasefire and bring Sinn Féin into peace negotiations prior to the Good Friday Agreement. He granted Gerry Adams a highly controversial visa in January 1994 to attend a conference in New York, against the wishes of the British government and the U.S. State Department (Clinton Foundation 2023). This visa was a critical step as it "elevated Adams' position and ability to be involved in the process, and laid the groundwork for a cease-fire by the IRA" (Clinton Foundation 2023). In fact, an IRA ceasefire was announced two months after Adams' visit to New York, eventually allowing Sinn Féin to join peace talks and legitimizing Adams further not only as a politician, but as a man who kept his word (Clinton Foundation 2023). He followed all the strict restrictions given to him with the visa, completed his trip and returned. The trip served as an opportunity to prove the truth of his claims to be working towards nonviolence and a peaceful agreement, both to the British and Northern Irish governments and to the IRA army council.

The late Queen Elizabeth of England shook hands with Sinn Féin politician and former IRA commander Martin McGuinness on June 27, 2012, at a charity event in Belfast's Lyric Theatre (BBC News 2014). The Queen had made previous state visits while McGuinness was deputy first minister of Northern Ireland in 2011, where he declined an invitation to a Dublin Castle event and Sinn Féin refused to meet with her during the visit (BBC News 2014). The first handshake took place in private followed by a public handshake, during which McGuinness spoke to her in Irish saying, "Goodbye and God's speed," (BBC News 2014). McGuinness was a senior member of the IRA when the Queen's cousin, Lord Mountbatten, was killed by the IRA by a bomb detonating on his fishing boat (The Guardian 2012). McGuinness stated after their meeting that he had raised the issue of Lord Mountbatten

and "the Queen was very gracious" (Evans 2012). In meeting with the Queen, Sinn Féin was breaking a long-standing tradition of avoiding honoring or recognizing the British state and monarchy after their refusal during her 2011 visit was seen to be "out of step with the overwhelming mood of the Irish people" (BBC News 2014). Not only was the McGuinness meeting changing long held policies within the republican movement, but it was also establishing a new step in the future of peaceful relations in Northern Ireland. In his work to transform the actions of the Northern Irish government after a history of uncivil action, to cooperate and collaborate across party lines for the good of the Catholic population, he was also changing the republican movement and establishing a new norm of Anglo-Irish cooperation and friendship towards peace.

Facing Violent Pasts

McGuinness and Adams had differing responses to their past as IRA members and their newfound public positions as Sinn Féin politicians and public figures of the peace process. The IRA was an illegal organization, admitting membership was grounds for arrest (Keefe 2019, 240). It was an open secret that Sinn Féin was the political branch of the IRA and members were known amongst their community. During the peace process Adams and McGuinness were successful due to their connections with the organization, which allowed them to negotiate with the army council, serving as the link between the IRA and negotiating parties that established the ceasefire and the Good Friday Agreement. It was their acknowledgement of this past that differed throughout their political careers. Claiming to have never been involved was difficult as the British government and those involved in the conflict knew both Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness to not only be members of the IRA but senior members that held leadership positions within the organization (Keefe 2019, 241). Acknowledging membership meant they could be arrested, and even if it were admitted in a situation where they were safe from the law, it could be used more frequently as ammunition by political opponents if confirmed publicly.

Gerry Adams' ardent denial of having ever been a member of the IRA seemed ridiculous, he had not only been known amongst governments and the community as an IRA leader but had written under a pseudonym about

the organization, acknowledging his membership (Keefe 2019, 241). This refusal to acknowledge his membership angered many of his former comrades; Seán Mac Stíofáin, Dolores Price, and Brendan Hughes all claimed that Adams was lying and had been a commanding officer in the IRA (Keefe 2019). During the 2019 Ballymurphy Inquest regarding the deaths of 10 people due to a shooting in 1971 he claimed not only that he was not a member but that he "would've been in a minority," as "the military tendency within republicanism was the dominant tendency" referencing his inclination to politics and peaceful tactics (Leitch 2019). In the theory section the concept of civil action as displayed through everyday peace was discussed, how during times of conflict anonymity, community trust, and willful ignorance were necessary to continue daily life and allow necessary interactions across community lines. Adams' refusal to acknowledge his past involvement in the organization was, on some level, participation in everyday peace on a larger, politically motivated scale. By avoiding his bloody past and reimagining himself as a politician who worked towards peaceful resolutions, he was creating an environment of willful ignorance where others would feel comfortable interacting across national, religious, and political lines.

Martin McGuinness took a different approach to his past, publicly confirming his IRA membership in the Bloody Sunday Tribunal, stating he was the IRA's second-in-command in Derry during Bloody Sunday (The Irish Times 2017). He stated he left the IRA in 1974, while historians and security analysts claim that he was promoted to the IRA army council post 1974, where he would have overseen deadly London bombings (Pogatchnik 2017) and was part of the secret channel "between the IRA and Prime Minister John Major in 1991 negotiating to end the war" (Powell 2017). His time as an IRA commander is what led to the success of the ceasefire and later peace in Northern Ireland, despite his claims that he was not involved in the IRA at that time. A former M15 spy within Sinn Féin claimed that "he delivered the IRA to the British government", with another Northern Irish activist stating, "no Martin McGuinness, no ceasefire – I think you can put it as strongly as that" (Robertson 2017). McGuinness acknowledged his IRA membership to a point, and allowed it to give him credibility instead of being a target for political attacks. By acknowledging his past, he was able to present himself as a legitimate peacemaker, who had participated in the violence and learned that the way forward was instead to be found in

cooperation rather than fighting. He did not need to rely on a willful ignorance when entering meetings, negotiations, or briefings, his opponents knew his past to a certain extent and could compare that 'truth' with the man standing in front of them as a peacemaker. Opponents saw his success as a result of his hand in the violence, claiming "If he were not a ruthless and unrepentant exponent of violence, he would never have become such a key figure in bringing violence to an end" (Pogatchnik 2017). Despite differing opinions on his legacy, many politicians and commentators on the conflict recognized that McGuinness was a key figure in the establishment of a peaceful agreement.

Implications and Understanding of Nonviolent Action in Peacebuilding

The examination of the Catholic church as a religious institution in Northern Ireland during the Troubles shows how the diversity and scope of a movement, in this case an outside institution representing the persecuted population, can have significant impacts on the transition to nonviolence. Leaders of the peace movement and the IRA benefited from the fact that the Catholic church has centuries of history intertwined with the demographic the movement was fighting for. When it came time for the transition to peace there was already an institution with considerable influence and reach to unite any dissenters towards nonviolence. The Good Friday Agreement was aided by the Catholic church. The struggle that led to establishing those negotiations in the first place is characterized by the decades of uncivil action that the government had participated in, so the church was able to step in as an alternatively trustworthy institution. The section regarding public relationships discusses how the history and institutions that led to peace elevated the positive impact public relationships had on the reputations of Adams and McGuinness, legitimizing their standing as peaceful politicians, and allowing opportunities to demonstrate cooperation, willingness to compromise, and a new commitment to nonviolence. The need for them to prove their legitimacy, to allow for the establishment and maintenance of the peace agreement, was created by complicated relationships with their pasts as violent actors as they navigated a nonviolent sphere. They utilized tactics such as everyday peace that was employed in the Northern Irish community throughout the conflict, relying on a familiar framework to navigate tenser relationships in

high stakes environments. Nonviolence as a tool for peacebuilding is seen here to rely on community history and cultural tactics to make room for the transition from violence and give violent actors the grey space to transition to peacebuilding. It is the reactions and help from outside institutions and public figures that cement actors' attempts to unite the rest of the movement under the new manifesto of nonviolence.

Conclusion

As displayed throughout the findings, the successful transformation of Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness from violent actors to nonviolent actors and leaders throughout negotiations and the maintenance of peace, was highly dependent on multiple cultural, societal, and institutional factors. Their ability to benefit from outside institutions and actors with credibility on the international stage was necessary for their success in transforming the movement. The Catholic Church, and figures such as Bill Clinton and Queen Elizabeth II helped to legitimize the actors as serious peace negotiators, offering resources and uniting the population. The negotiations between the IRA, Adams and McGuinness, and parties involved in peace talks was characterized by years of uncivil action by the government, and despite complicated relationships with their IRA pasts, Adams and McGuinness benefited from their connections, eventually securing an IRA ceasefire. This directly led to the Good Friday Agreement where McGuinness was Sinn Féin's chief negotiator and Adams was the Sinn Féin president. Their pasts as violent actors shaped the influence they had politically and socially, and their different approaches to acknowledging said pasts defined their reputations as politicians and peace actors.

This study demonstrated the factors that contributed to the success of violent actors in their transition to nonviolence and their contribution to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, which in turn allowed for the communities in Northern Ireland to begin to heal. This study was not limited by resources, as the Troubles are well documented and have been studied extensively, with many former IRA members having given testimonies regarding the group's operations and the road to peace. It was limited in the idea that there are so many different records available to pull from that creating a condensed research paper that comprehensively examines certain aspects or moments in the peace process is nearly impossible, the

amount of supporting evidence could result in a novel. This means there are many roads for future research, to examine statements and speeches and continue to dissect the incredibly complex history and societal structure that led to the conflict and allowed for a peaceful compromise.

This period of history, particularly the Good Friday agreement and political landscape post conflict, are necessary to study due to its similarities to ongoing conflicts around the world. While nowhere near an equal level of devastation, the Troubles and the Israel-Palestine conflict share key similarities in origin and structure of the conflict. Research on the racist, colonialist, and violent history that led to the Troubles, and how a peaceful resolution was achieved, offers useful theories and information to the existing Israel-Palestine conflict that could potentially aid in a better understanding of the position of the Palestinian people and potential pathways to peace. The idea of nonviolence being used to resolve the conflict in Palestine today is difficult to imagine, but the conflict in Ireland began with violence and decades later ended in peace. The transition of communities filled with anger and a need for justice to nonviolence is incredibly subjective, and this case only demonstrated the multitude of factors and situations that allowed for this transition. It cannot be implied that the nonviolent end to the Troubles is directly replicable in other cases, with this study demonstrating how dependent nonviolence as a peacebuilding tactic is on external influences. However, a careful examination of said influences, for which there are many opportunities in further research, may offer future peace builders the resource of potentially utilizing successful tactics to encourage transitions to nonviolence.

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Municipal Governance and Voter Turnout: Analyzing the Impacts of City Managers

Noah Ochital

Abstract

Municipal elections have long been studied, regarding the large, documented disparity between national and local electoral turnout. These studies have attempted to describe how turnout is correlated with various demographic, institutional, and time-related factors to identify strategies for increasing local turnout. This paper narrows the focus to one of these predictors: whether a city has a full-time manager. Prior studies have been limited by a lack of data. However, the recently published municipal elections database from Benedictis-Kessner and colleagues enables this analysis to occur. Combining this data, with U.S. Census estimates, and originally collected city manager data, I analyzed a random sample of 396 elections using several regression models. I improved the models' estimates further by pre-processing the data with a non-parametric matching algorithm to reduce confounding, which refined the sample to 194 elections. I find that despite significant differences in turnout between cities with and without managers, this difference diminishes after controlling the other covariates and becomes statistically insignificant after the matching process.

Keywords: Voter Turnout, City Managers, Municipal Elections, Propensity Score Matching, Political Participation.

Introduction

In the United States, municipal elections have consistently been shown to have far lower levels of turnout compared to federal elections (Morlan 1984; Bullock III 1990; Alford and Lee 1968). This divergence is measured as far back as the 1950s, where Bullock (1990) finds in a data set of elections from 1956-1979, that the average turnout rate in federal elections is 59.1% compared to 31% for municipal elections. This trend is particularly confusing given municipal governments' vast power over their residents' daily lives, overseeing essential utility, safety, and sanitary services. Additionally, municipalities have control over zoning, building permits, and other regulations which can have numerous and far more tangible impacts on communities than federal or state regulations. Understanding these vast powers, it might make sense to see municipal elections garnering higher turnout rates than federal elections, as potential changes to local governance could affect access to these vital services, but this is not the case.

Low municipal turnout is not just confusing from a logical perspective, but also has enormous ramifications for the legitimacy of our political system. The U.S. is built on a system of representative democracy and political participation, but when participation is extremely low, most especially at the most responsive level of government, it indicates that voters do not see any value coming from that system. This is especially dangerous because it allows for officials to be elected with far fewer votes than would be needed to win a specific office, giving them power which could be abused. Moreover, without enough voters casting ballots, it is increasingly difficult for a government to claim the proper mandate to govern. Ideally, even if federal turnout is declining (Bullock III 1990), local turnout should still be at a similar level. However, the deliberate choice by some voters to vote in federal elections but not in local elections (Hajnal and Lewis 2003; Caren 2007; Morlan 1984) reflect that there are fundamental deficiencies in the structure or administration of local governments that discourage voters from taking the effort to vote. These are issues that need to be rectified for local governments to regain their legitimacy and be able to accurately represent their constituents.

Researchers have proposed various factors to explain low municipal turnout typically split into categories involving the timing of elections,

overall demographics, and institutional aspects such as government type and electoral systems. Specific factors include but are not limited to, the relative size and demographic components of municipalities, the power of government officials, and the timing of local races compared to national or state races (Hajnal and Lewis 2003; Caren 2007; Karnig and Walter 1983; Kelleher and Lowery 2004; Wood 2002). This paper narrows the focus to just one factor: the presence of a city manager. City managers are unelected positions with wide-reaching powers and responsibilities as both the chief executive and chief administrator of the city. Although an individual city's charter sets the powers of the city manager and can vary from city to city, they typically include discretion over the budgets, policies, and administration. Conversely, in cities without managers, these responsibilities must be handled by elected officials, giving them more policy-setting power. City managers can be implemented to any form of municipal governance structure, meaning that cities with a mayor-city council, department commissioner, or just city council structure can all have managers. What distinguishes these managed cities from their unmanaged counterparts is the relative share of power held by the elected officials. This shift of power away from elected officials, towards appointed ones, in managed cities, reduces the direct influence voters can have on policies, providing a plausible explanation for decreased levels of turnout (Alford and Lee 1968; Hajnal and Lewis 2003). If people think that their votes will not have a sizable impact on their lives or resolve any issues they have with municipal governance because the major decision maker is not elected, then they simply won't vote. Therefore, if this relationship between city manager's and turnout is true, then the removal of the manager form of government would be a simple and effective policy to increase turnout and thereby increase the legitimacy of local governmental institutions. Many other factors that influence turnout are more up to free choice, chance, or are difficult to affect with policy, meaning that a critical examination of city managers provides an important avenue for real and relatively quick change.

The goal of this paper is to estimate the impact that city managers have on municipal turnout, while also updating existing literature with more recent analysis. Although many studies already document clear negative associations between turnout and city managers, these studies either are

outdated, or have been limited by lack of data (Hajnal and Lewis 2003; Caren 2007; Wood 2002). I plan to update this literature, using a recently published municipal elections database (Benedictis- Kessner et al. 2023), allowing for a broader sample and more robust analysis. I conducted my analysis by creating several regression models to capture the relationship between city managers and turnout while accounting for covariates, and a matching procedure (D. Ho et al. 2024; see D. E. Ho et al. 2007) to account for these covariates even further. I hypothesize city managers will negatively impact turnout as previous research describes. However, after performing my analysis, I find that the relationship is not statistically significant.

Examining the Historical Relationship Between City Managers and Turnout

City Managers were introduced to municipalities in the early 20th century as a central part of governmental reforms, intended to break up powerful partisan, political machines that had controlled many large cities for decades (Bridges 1997; Caren 2007). Political machines maintained power through corruption and clientelism, giving favors such as monetary assistance or jobs to their voters. Introducing city managers to handle these responsibilities instead of elected officials could potentially cut off the stream of favors, giving fewer incentives for voters to turn out. Another dimension of these reforms was also racial in nature. Many machines had gotten their power from large ethnic minority groups within these cities, so dismantling the machines would return power to white middle-class voters instead (Bridges 1997).

Early research into the topic has shown that these reforms were remarkably effective at achieving their goals. Several studies examining the decline in municipal turnout document that cities with managers exhibit significantly lower turnout than cities without managers (Alford and Lee 1968; Karnig and Walter 1983). Alford and Lee in their 1968 paper (1968), used data from the municipal elections in 1961 and 1962 in cities with populations of 25,000 and concluded that city managers had strong negative correlations with voter turnout, even after accounting for socioeconomic factors such as education and foreign-born percentage. Additionally, Karnig and Walter (1983), found similar results using data from

1935, 1962, and 1975 while also showing that switching away from city managers was positively correlated with voter turnout. This study is particularly important because it's able to draw data from 1935, which is the oldest of any study, and the closest there is to the adoption of these styles of government.

Bridges (1997) by contrast uses a case study approach examining several cities that were not reformed such as New York and Chicago to what are deemed big-reform cities in the Southwest such as Albuquerque and Phoenix. She shows in her analysis that reformed cities had far lower turnout rates than the non-reformed cities, concluding that in cities such as New York where reform coalitions (and the white middle class) had less power, the level of barriers they were able to erect was far smaller in magnitude than big reform cities (Bridges 1997). Although the sample size was small, and the statistical framework weak, the study nonetheless exhibits a strong negative correlation and provides important explanations behind the behavior of the reforms.

Recent research continues to corroborate these claims while using more advanced statistical techniques. In several papers, researchers Caren (2007), Hajnal and Lewis (2003), and Wood (2002) use more recent samples of elections. Wood uses a sample of 57 cities, and elections from 1993-2000, attempting to showcase the relationships between municipal governments on a scale of administrative to political. He finds a clear negative relationship between levels of administration and turnout on his scale, such that more administrative cities with less elected positions have lower turnout (Wood 2002). Hajnal and Lewis (2003), use a moderate-sized sample of cities from only California, in an advanced ordinary least squares multiple regression that includes many specific institutional characteristics such as mayoral term lengths, veto power, budget authority, and term limits, along with including demographic factors, and electoral concurrency to examine the impact of city managers. Caren (2007) on the other hand, adopted an approach that sampled 38 historically large cities and used a GLS random effects model with similar covariates to Hajnal and Lewis such as having a manager, demographic, and population characteristics, and concurrency, but was able to include non-partisan elections as well. As far as the measurements were concerned, all three studies generated statistically significant results, with Wood (2002) measuring a coefficient of

-3%, Hajnal and Lewis (2003) measuring about -8%, and Caren (2007) measuring -7.5% in their respective models.

The body of research on this topic is very small compared to other areas of political science research, and there were not any articles that concluded the opposite of the studies above. Although all these articles clearly show that city managers are associated with decreases in turnout, the body of information is not large enough to estimate a proper magnitude for the relationship or enough to conclude outright about its direction. Additionally, each of the more recent studies suffer from significant issues that impact the interpretation more generally. Caren's (2007) study uses a small sample of cities with historically large populations, potentially missing how this relationship could change between tiny and large cities. Hajnal and Lewis' (2003) study only cities from California, very few of which do not have managers due to municipal reforms. This makes the relationship they show hard to believe even given statistical significance, because the coefficient is being determined by small number of cities relative to the population. Wood's (2002) study also showcases a small sample size but is made worse by the five different types of governments used in the study, meaning the number of cities in each group is even smaller and harder to make inferences from. In this study, I attempt to rectify these issues by using a nationwide sample of cities that are diverse in institutional and demographic characteristics, while also contributing to the body as a whole with my findings.

Data and Methods

Data Description

This paper uses a new municipal elections database compiled by Benedictis-Kessner (2023) and colleagues containing local election data from 1989-2021. I focus on the subset of the data covering mayoral and town council elections, as these were the only municipal government positions in the dataset. I drew a simple random sample without replacement of 150 cities representing 18.69% of the dataset. I chose this sample size to minimize my original data collection, given the time constraints, while having a large enough sample of elections. QQ-plots in Figure 1, show the similarity in distributions of key continuous variables

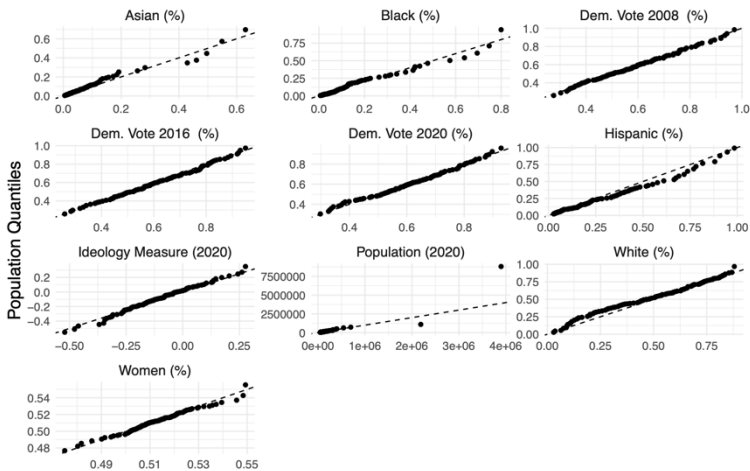between the sample and larger dataset, indicating my sample is representative of the rest of the data.

Figure 1 – Sample Quantiles

I then determined whether each city had managers or not, from their websites. Cities with managers were coded as 1, without managers coded as 0, and unincorporated cities as NA. I combined the sample with U.S. Census Data (U. S. Census Bureau 2022a, 2022b), to calculate the turnout rate (using voting age population), and racial demographics. Only the Census data from 2010 and onward was available for download, so I cut off the sample there. Using the sampled cities, I pulled the corresponding data from the elections database, and transformed it to appropriately change the unit of observation to each election, instead of each candidate. After the transformation, 59 elections contained turnout rates over 100%, and were removed. The whole process resulted in 396 elections from 90 different municipalities. The final list of cities and a map of their locations are in the appendix at Table 5 and Figure 4 respectively.

Summary statistics for the final sample are above in Table 1, all continuous variables except for population are measured in percentages from 1-100, while population is measured on the log scale as ln(population), to account for its large range. All other variables are binary dummy variables, where the mean represents the proportion of elections

with that characteristic. Key facts are that the average turnout rate was 31%, with a standard deviation of 22%, while 1% of elections were in cities with managers, indicating a large variance in turnout with a skew in the sample towards cities with managers. It is important to note that this class imbalance may hinder that analysis and all results should be taken carefully.

Model Building

The key covariates in my model have been drawn from what other researchers have used in prior research (Hajnal and Lewis 2003; Caren 2007), however, I was limited by what I could calculate from the Census estimates and electoral data. I was unable to gather data on non-partisan elections nor go into depth on mayoral power, but I constructed an expansive dataset with enough predictors to be produce a useful model. The covariates are categorized into three types: institutional (government structure and electoral competitiveness), demographic (population and racial percentages), and electoral timing (concurrency with other elections). Including these additional factors in the model allows for the differences in each city to be accounted for when estimating the impact of a city manager on the turnout rate, creating a better estimate that holds equal other predictors. If these were not included the model would simply attribute the whole difference in turnout rate between the cities with and without managers to be the impact of the manager, which is unrealistic because the city managers are not randomized among municipalities. This is especially important because these factors can be both related to the turnout rate and whether or not a city has a manager.

Statistic	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Turnout(%)	31.48	22.35	0.0001	99.28
Has a Manager	0.76	0.43	0	1
Incumbency	0.68	0.47	0	1
Margin of Victory(%)	30.32	31.17	0.07	100.00
Women(%)	51.10	1.32	45.80	55.60
Black(%)	15.34	16.56	0.70	84.70
Hispanic(%)	28.56	23.15	1.20	96.40
Asian(%)	9.30	11.31	0.40	61.70
Population(ln)	11.43	0.72	10.38	14.95
Concurrent Presidential	0.19	0.40	0	1
Concurrent Midterm	0.21	0.41	0	1
Has a Mayor	0.91	0.29	0	1
Mayoral Election	0.67	0.47	0	1

Table 1 - Summary Statistics of Selected Covariates in Unmatched Sample

The main outcome or dependent variable is voter turnout (percentage, 1-100), and the primary predictor is whether the city has a manager (1 = yes, 0 = no). Other factors include margin of victory (percentage, 1-100; uncontested election is a margin of 100), incumbency (1 = incumbent present, 0 = no incumbent), the contested office as a factor with 2 levels (city council, and mayoral), population size (natural log of Census estimate), demographic estimates (sex and ethnicity percentages, 1-100), and concurrency as a factor with 3 levels (not concurrent, midterm concurrency, and presidential concurrency) that tracks concurrency with federal elections. Elections were determined to be concurrent if they occurred within the same year and month as a federal election. Presidential concurrency means the municipal elections took place concurrently with the presidential election. Midterm means the election was held at the same time as the Congressional midterm elections, while all others were labeled not concurrent. Gubernatorial elections are not accounted because most take place during the mid-term cycle, however, gubernatorial elections in New Jersey, Louisiana, and Virginia occur in years without midterm or presidential elections and were thus coded as mid-term, to align them with other states.

Several variables that were present in the dataset were excluded from my estimation of the model, because ordinary least squares (OLS) regression models require that variables cannot be perfectly collinear. The percentage of white residents was strongly correlated with black residents (-0.61), and the percentage of males which was perfectly correlated with

women (1). For example, when the percent of men increases, the percent of women decreases by the same amount, so computing a coefficient for both is impossible. Therefore, for each of these cases, one variable was removed (White (%) and Male (%)), to allow for the estimation of the model. The information contained by these variables is not lost, but instead held by the other demographic variables used in the model. On the other hand, moderately correlated variables such as mayoral election type and mayoral government (0.46) were kept, because they reflect key information about the city and election type necessary for the model. Correlation Matrices for each group are available in the appendix as Table 6, Table 7, and Table 8, respectively.

I determined the polynomial degree for each continuous covariate using scatter plots to compare a linear approximation with LOESS estimation provided by geom_smooth() in ggplot2. As shown in Figure 2 below, although the relationships are not linear, the linear approximation is good at capturing the general trend and intercepts, so have been chosen to reduce the risk of over-fitting the data.
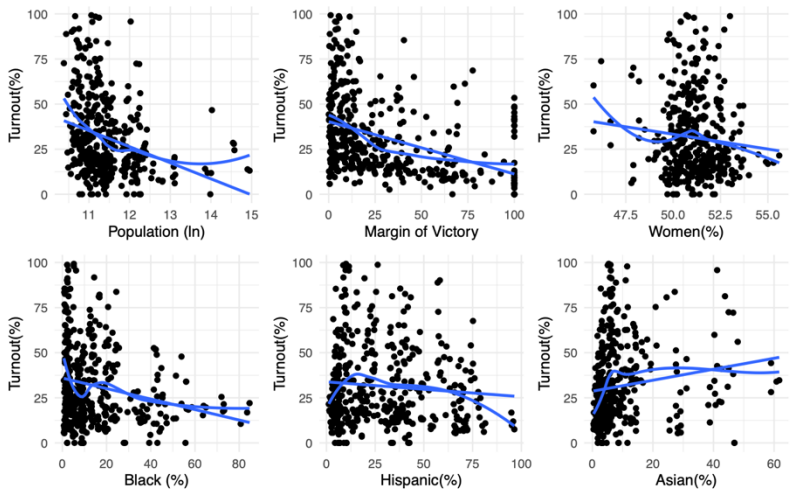

Figure 2 - Model Building: Comparing Linear Terms to Loess Regression

The final linear model I estimate is below using turnout as the dependent variable, and the additional measured covariates as independent variables:

$$Turnout_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1(Manager_i) + \beta_2(Concurrency_i)$$
$$+ \beta^3(Mayoral\ Government_i) + \beta_4(Office\ of\ Election_i)$$
$$+ \beta_5(Incumbent\ Present_i) + \beta_6(Margin\ of\ Victory_i)$$
$$+ \beta_7(Percent\ Women_i) + \beta_8(Percent\ Black_i)$$
$$+ \beta_9(Percent\ Hispanic_i) + \beta_{10}(Percent\ Asian\ American_i)$$
$$+ \epsilon_i$$

This model assumes that the impact of having a manager on turnout is the same across all elections. On the aggregate level this assumption clearly holds, because on average city managers typically have similar responsibilities and powers so should be correlated with the same change in turnout.

Matching

City managers are not randomly assigned to municipalities. Instead, each municipality chooses whether or not to adopt the manager form of government. This introduces confounding into the data, as the decision to have a manager is contingent on many factors such as population size, administrative needs, resident priorities, etc., which are also affecting turnout at the same time. Although OLS regressions accounts for this and adjusts coefficients accordingly, this adjustment can make it hard to use them as causal estimates and interpret properly. For example, if population size is highly correlated with having a manager, such that cities with and without managers have completely different populations as well, then the coefficient will give an estimated association of the manager on turnout holding population constant. However, if this comparison does not exist within data, the regression's estimate of this association will be biased.

To address this, I implemented a matching procedure through the MatchIt package. (D. Ho et al. 2024). This procedure involves reducing the dataset down to pairs of elections, for which the only difference between them is whether they have a city manager or not. Therefore, now the comparison of all else equal does exist, creating the opportunity to have a less biased representation of the impact city managers have on turnout. Although perfect matching is impossible, the procedure is still able to remove samples that may be biasing the analysis of the regression. The regression model will then be more able to capture a more realistic

representation of how city managers effect turnout, holding other factors constant. This procedure, however, does not allow for causal estimates, because the covariates I use are not determined pre-treatment. The demographic, institutional, and electoral competitive factors, have dramatically shifted since the initial switch to a city manager system, and likely because of the manager. For example, if managers are correlated with better governance, and better outcomes for residents, than people will move to those cities and elections might become less competitive. Therefore, they are still confounding the relationship because the data on this time is not present or available. Despite this, the procedure is still worthwhile for its ability to prune the dataset and produce a more reliable regression (D. E. Ho et al. 2007, see figure 1) with less bias coming from the measured covariates I have. All the additional covariates included in my linear model were used to match observations. It is also important to note that this procedure does not reduce bias across all the regression coefficients, but only for the coefficient for city managers.

The MatchIt procedure has two key parameters for tuning which are the matching algorithm and method for determining the distance between two observations. Determining the distance can be down via a propensity score or distance metric like Euclidean distance, while the matching algorithm determines how observations are paired based these scores (see Greifer 2024b for a full list of methods). The authors (Greifer 2024c) recommend balance metrics and cutoffs which determine the performance of each method combination. The 2 metrics used for this analysis are the standardized mean difference and the variance ratio between each group in the matched sample. The cutoff for the standardized mean difference is recommended to be within -0.1 and 0.1 ($|X_{iC} - X_{iT}| < 0.1$) for each covariate, and the variance ratios between 0.5 and 2 ($0.5 \leq \frac{Var(X_{iC})}{Var(X_{iT})} \leq 2$). When these metrics are inside these cutoff ranges, it indicates that the distribution of each covariate is relatively similar for cities with managers and those without. If these conditions cannot be met, it means the matching is unsuccessful and likely not useful. After testing every combination of methods, the best results were produced by the optimal matching algorithm and logistic regression for propensity score calculations. This combination produced 10 balanced means out of 12 variables and 6

balanced variances out of 6 continuous variables.

Covariates	Type	Diff.Un	V.Ratio.Un	Diff.Adj	M.Threshold	V.Ratio.Adj	V.Threshold
Propensity Score	Distance	1.2367	1.0961	0.163		0.8428	Balanced, <2
Not Concurrent	Binary	-0.5381	NA	0.0413	Balanced, <0.1	NA	
Concurrent With Midterm	Binary	0.2804	NA	0.024	Balanced, <0.1	NA	
Concurrent with President	Binary	0.352	NA	-0.0734	Balanced, <0.1	NA	
Has a Mayor	Binary	-0.3758	NA	0	Balanced, <0.1	NA	
Mayoral Election	Binary	-0.5543	NA	-0.0211	Balanced, <0.1	NA	
Population (ln)	Contin.	-0.1821	0.4267	0.1555	Not Balanced, >0.1	0.5027	Balanced, <2
Incumbent Prescence	Binary	0.0556	NA	0.0444	Balanced, <0.1	NA	
Margin of Victory	Contin.	-0.5481	0.7458	-0.0215	Balanced, <0.1	0.9926	Balanced, <2
Women (%)	Contin.	-0.453	1.4776	-0.0877	Balanced, <0.1	1.631	Balanced, <2
Black (%)	Contin.	-0.8972	0.476	-0.3035	Not Balanced, >0.1	0.8838	Balanced, <2
Hispanic (%)	Contin.	0.3331	1.115	0.0448	Balanced, <0.1	1.0742	Balanced, <2
Asian (%)	Contin.	0.6027	19.7559	0.0219	Balanced, <0.1	0.5421	Balanced, <2

Table 2 - Balance Table Results for Matching Procedure

This optimal matching method seeks to minimize the absolute sum of differences between propensity scores of each pair, and therefore tests every possible combination of pairs until this function is minimized. Then the matches for the minimized difference are returned as the selected dataset. A mathematical representation of this process is below:

$$argmin \sum_{i=1}^{\min (C,T)} |P_{C_i} - P_{T_i}|$$

The logistic regression is used to estimate the probability of each observation having a city manager based on the key covariates which is used as the propensity score. The functional form for the model:

$$P(Has\ a\ Manager_i = 1|X_{1i}, ..., X_{10i}) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-(\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \cdots + \beta_{10} X_{10i})}}$$

$where\ X_1 = Concurrency, X_2 = Mayoral\ Government, X_3$
$= Contested\ Office, X_4 = Incumbent\ Present, X_5$
$= Margin\ of\ Victory, X_6 = Percent\ Women, X_7$
$= Percent\ Black, X_8 = Percent\ Hispanic, X_9$
$= Percent\ Asian, X_{10} = Population\ (\text{ln})$

Table 2 and Figure 3 showcase the success of this matching procedure with the matched sample scoring better on these key metrics than the unadjusted sample. Table 2 reports standardized mean difference and variance ratios both before and after matching, while also showcasing which

covariates are balanced based on the criteria above. Figure 3 shows the same visually using blue dots for the matched sample and red dots for the unmatched. Dots within the dashed lines are considered balanced. Overall based on the figure and metrics, the procedure was very successful and balancing the covariates in the sample. However, unbalanced variables such as population size and the percentage of Black residents are still present and therefore the confounders remaining among the observed data. The precise distributions before and after matching for each variable are in the appendix at Figure 5. These figures were produced by cobalt (Greifer 2024a), an accompanying package to MatchIt used for assessing balance.
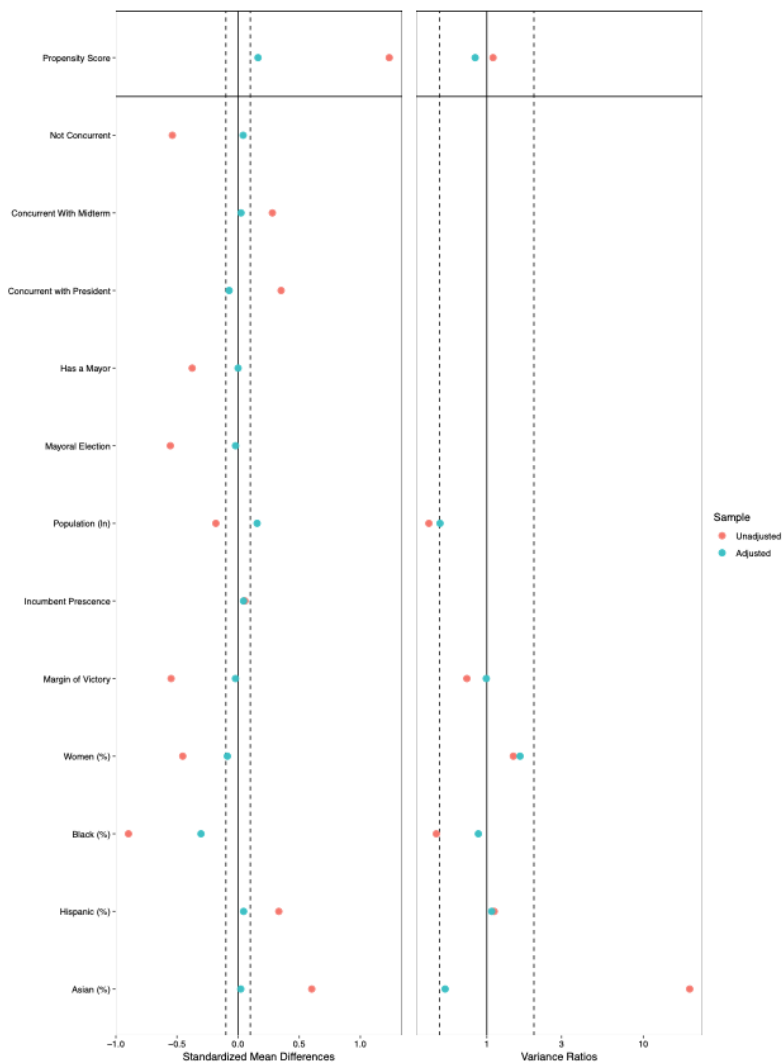
Figure 3 - Love Plot for Matched Covariates

This new matched sample has 194 elections, with 97 pairs of elections. Summary statistics for the matched sample are above in Table 3, but some major differences are now that all cities have mayors (as opposed to 90%), 87% of elections were mayoral (up from 67%), only 20% of elections are

concurrent with presidential, midterm, or gubernatorial elections (down from 40%), and average turnout has dropped from 31% to 23%, while standard deviation as decreased from 22% to 18%. While these variable differences are not that important substantively, it's important to recognize that the shifting of these summary statistics is a direct result of the matching procedure working properly to remove pair together observations of similar values. It's clear that these differences are resulting from the wide-ranging values in the original sample which made the two groups incomparable.

Statistic	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Turnout(%)	22.94	17.52	0.0001	99.28
Has a Manager	0.50	0.50	0	1
Incumbency	0.67	0.47	0	1
Margin of Victory(%)	42.10	33.71	0.08	100.00
Women(%)	51.50	1.27	47.80	55.60
Black(%)	22.66	19.65	1.00	84.70
Hispanic(%)	23.23	22.35	1.20	96.40
Asian(%)	3.80	2.44	0.40	13.20
Population(ln)	11.56	0.83	10.47	14.95
Concurrent Presidential	0.07	0.25	0	1
Concurrent Midterm	0.13	0.34	0	1
Has a Mayor	1.00	0.00	1	1
Mayoral Election	0.87	0.34	0	1

Table 3 - Summary Statistics of Selected Covariates in Matched Sample

I conducted my analysis using R version 4.41 (R Core Team 2024), while relying on several tidyverse packages (Wickham et al. 2019), the RStudio IDE (Posit Team 2024) , MatchIt for matching (D. Ho et al. 2024), Cobalt for assessing balance (Greifer 2024a), Stargazer for all the tables (Hlavac 2022), and gridExtra for arranging plots (Auguie and Antonov 2017).

Results

Regression Analysis

Table 4, below, reports the results of the regression models with confidence intervals for the coefficients in parentheses, and p-values less than 0.05, are noted with asterisks. It is important to note that all the cities

with managers have mayors, while all the cities without managers do not have mayors, meaning the covariate no longer influences the model. Additionally, the model's residuals feature heteroskedasticity (see Figure 6; the variance of the residuals increases with the fitted values.), violating one of the key assumptions of the linear model, making the estimates of standard errors and p-values flawed. This issue is less concerning given I've failed to reject my most important hypothesis. For all the hypothesis testing in this section α = 0.05. The p-values for Manager coefficients have been adjusted using the "BH" method, to account for the higher type I error rate associated with multiple tests. This adjustment was made to balance the risk of increased type I errors and the power of the tests, although only 4 tests were conducted. The adjusted p-values do not change any of the rejection decisions.

In the first model, City Managers are associated with a 9.48% increase in turnout compared to cities without managers, with a 95% confidence interval from 4.47% to 14.50%. However, accounting for other covariates in the second model reverses this association to a 3.59% decrease in turnout, with a 95% confidence interval from -6.57% to -0.60%. The changes in the coefficient indicate confounding in the data, as described earlier, which the model attempts to account for. In the models using the matched data, initially, city managers (without covariates) are associated with a 2.72% decrease in turnout, with a 95% confidence interval between -7.65% and 2.21%, while after accounting for covariates city managers are associated with a 2.54% decrease in turnout, with a 95% confidence interval between -5.23% and 0.16%. The much smaller change between the third and fourth models is another indicator that the matching procedure was successful. If the covariates were still drastically confounding the sample, then it would have changed the coefficient for managers as occurred between models one and two.

	Dependent variable:			
	Voter Turnout			
	OLS			
	Unmatched		Matched	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Manager	9.51* (4.48, 14.55)	−3.55* (−6.56, −0.55)	−2.72 (−7.65, 2.21)	−2.54 (−5.23, 0.16)
Midterm Concurrency		24.88* (21.70, 28.06)		24.06* (19.58, 28.53)
President Concurrency		35.06* (31.87, 38.26)		30.38* (24.79, 35.97)
Has a Mayor		−5.75* (−10.50, −1.00)		
Mayoral Election		−13.48* (−16.60, −10.37)		−17.89* (−22.27, −13.51)
Incumbent Presence		2.86* (0.34, 5.37)		2.40 (−0.49, 5.29)
Margin of Victory		−0.18* (−0.22, −0.14)		−0.15* (−0.19, −0.10)
Percent Women		0.98 (−0.05, 2.01)		0.46 (−0.76, 1.69)
Percent Black		−0.12* (−0.21, −0.04)		−0.06 (−0.14, 0.03)
Population(ln)		0.18 (−1.63, 2.00)		0.58 (−1.42, 2.58)
Percent Hispanic		−0.23* (−0.29, −0.18)		−0.17* (−0.24, −0.10)
Percent Asian		−0.21* (−0.33, −0.09)		0.40 (−0.28, 1.08)
Constant	24.30* (19.92, 28.68)	−1.84 (−61.44, 57.77)	24.30* (20.81, 27.78)	12.20 (−58.11, 82.51)
Observations	396	396	194	194
R^2	0.03	0.73	0.01	0.73
Adjusted R^2	0.03	0.72	0.001	0.71
Residual Std. Error	22.00 (df = 394)	11.75 (df = 383)	17.51 (df = 192)	9.46 (df = 182)
F Statistic	13.69* (df = 1; 394)	87.16* (df = 12; 383)	1.17 (df = 1; 192)	43.66* (df = 11; 182)

Note: *p<0.05

Table 4 – Regression Model Results: With 95% Confidence Intervals

The fourth model presents my final estimate of the relationship between city managers, which is -2.54%, meaning that when all other factors are held constant, I would expect turnout to be 2.54% lower in a city with a manager. However, as mentioned before the procedure does not ensure a causal interpretation because many unmeasured confounders are still impacting the results. For example, I lack data on institutional characteristics related to the intricacies of power such as term limits and length for officials, economic status, and electoral system each city uses. These factors were used in previous research (Hajnal and Lewis 2003; Caren 2007) and thus excluding them willingly even with the lack of data introduces bias. Additionally, an important unmeasured factor is the state legislative environment, which is completely variable. Each state has its own rules regarding voter registration, city charters (the documents that define a municipality's scope and authority), along with the types of governments municipalities are allowed to have. All of these factors have the potential be correlated with turnout rate, and whether or not a city has a manager, so their lack of inclusion biases the results even with the matching.

The matching has only clarified the relationship to the regression model, given what covariates I include from the data. Nevertheless, the level of bias for city manager coefficient has still been reduced, providing a more accurate estimate for the true relationship. The 95% confidence

interval (-5.23%, 0.16%), around this coefficient indicates the general degree of uncertainty. If I were to collect 100 other samples of elections and create similar 95% confidence intervals, I would expect 95% of these intervals to contain the true underlying value which is unknown. The actual width of the interval reflects the variance of the coefficient, as when the variance is lower, or the sample size is larger we can be similarly confident with a smaller interval. Thus, the construction of the interval's size (from around 10% to 5.4%) through the models, shows that the coefficient's variance has drastically reduced even as there are 202 fewer elections in the sample after matching.

Hypothesis Testing

Testing these coefficients for significance, in all cases, my null hypothesis is that there is no relationship between city managers and turnout ($H_0: \beta_1 = 0$), while the alternate hypothesis, is that the relationship between city managers and turnout is not 0 ($H_A: \beta_1 \neq 0$). Setting $\alpha = 0.05$:

1. In model 1, $p = 0.001$ and since $p < 0.05$, I reject the null hypothesis.
2. In model 2, $p = 0.042$ and since $p < 0.05$, I reject the null hypothesis.
3. In model 3, $p = 0.2801$ and since $p > 0.05$, I fail to reject the null hypothesis.
4. In model 4, $p = 0.0887$ and since $p > 0.05$, I fail to reject the null hypothesis.

These p-values represent the probability of seeing the coefficients of that magnitude given the H_0 that the true $\beta_1 = 0$. It is a measure of how extreme the result is compared to what I assume from the H_0. When these probabilities are lower than my set α, I have enough evidence to reject H_0's assumption, but when they are higher than α I do not, and therefore fail to reject H_0. Failing to reject suggests that the obtained value is consistent with a hypothetical sampling distribution of β_1's based on the null hypothesis' assumption.

Using the fourth model's coefficient as my final estimate of the relationship between city managers and voter turnout in municipal elections, my failure to reject the null hypothesis indicates my results are not statistically significant. Therefore, I cannot conclusively say that city managers have any relationship without a turnout rate, and these observed results could be due to random noise. This directly contradicts previous

research that has documented the relationship as significant (Hajnal and Lewis 2003; Caren 2007; Wood 2002), and their substantive interpretations of their results. Based on my sample, I cannot predict with certainty that removing a city manager would result in any change in turnout.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to isolate the impact of city managers on turnout, in hopes of identifying a simple, effective solution for cities to implement. The small magnitude of the coefficient (only around 2.5%) suggests that even if this could be estimated as a causal effect, the real-world impact of switching forms of government would be marginal. Furthermore, the lack of statistical significance indicates cities struggling to increase turnout in their local elections should consider other policy options instead.

This information is still useful: professional city managers can potentially run cities more efficiently, improving access to many of the essential services voters would care about. If this is true, then it's clear why the relationship is relatively benign compared to other factors in the model such as concurrency with midterm and presidential elections. The perceived lack of power that may arise could be balanced by the potential for a municipal government that is more responsive to residents' needs and desires. If raising turnout would come at the expense of any benefits provided by a manager, it would be hard to justify the change.

Although it's certainly possible to imagine an individual voting less because their perceived lack of influence, this study has shown at the aggregate level the relationship city managers and turnout is not statistically significant. It is certainly worth considering that this perception of city managers may no longer hold for contemporary voters who are so far removed from the initial implementation of these reforms they are unaware of their city manager. It's clear from the regression that the most influential variable is concurrency with the presidential election and midterms (associated with 30% and 24% respective increases in turnout in model 4), indicating that the importance of the federal election is what draws voters to the polls. Therefore, the people who turnout out in nonfederal election years are uniquely committed to participating in local affairs and will likely participate no matter the governance structure. Conversely, the people who

only vote in federal election year, are clearly not committed to local politics, and whether a city manager can change that is unknown but unlikely given the results of the study. Future studies into local politics should investigate this relationship, and perhaps focus more on what causes an individual to turnout instead of what is associated with the aggregate turnout rate.

This study has the potential to raise important concerns within the field by contradicting previous research. However, it is not without limitations. Most importantly, the use of matching can never replicate randomized experiments. The distributions of each variable are still not perfectly aligned after matching (see Figure 5). This means even the measured covariates are still potential confounders, with the unbalanced covariates being the most salient (population size, and percentage of black residents). Additionally, the matching procedure can only work on measured characteristics, so unmeasured confounders or those not adequately measured in the data such as the competitiveness of an election, the power of an office, or the overall political culture of a region are still impacting the results. Additionally, the reduction in sample size also poses a problem, as it becomes more difficult to generalize the results. Verifying the results of this paper involves leveraging the rest of this electoral database (Benedictis-Kessner et al. 2023) with similar matching methods to see if these findings hold. Sampling from the dataset also had drawbacks. Random sampling ensures a representative sample from the population, but if that population is not representative than its also flawed. The cities that ended in the sample do not appear to be representative of the nation at large. (see Figure 4). Many cities are concentrated in California, and Connecticut, with hardly any in the Northwest and Southeast. This is far more diverse than what other recent researchers have accomplished but still falls short.

By no means do these limitations render this study irrelevant but the caveats with methodology and interpretation are paramount to consider when using results to influence policy outcomes. These results are most readily applicable to the cities contained within the sample, which the results directly reflect. However, they can also be generalized (carefully) to any municipality that broadly has similar characteristics and is located in a similar region to a sampled city. More importantly, is that this work contributes to an area of research that is sparse and underdeveloped, while also applying new methods to provide a unique take on the issue. Additionally, by diverging from other researchers in the field (Wood 2002;

Hajnal and Lewis 2003; Caren 2007) this work highlights an unclear consensus in the field, showing that more discussion is needed. The findings presented by this paper serve as a stepping stone to a better understanding of municipal governance and local political participation in the United States.

Ideally, the next steps for future research would be to replicate the analyses conducted by Caren (2007) and Hajnal and Lewis (2003) on all the cities in this electoral database, using the same detailed information, providing more evidence on all the correlates of turnout. However, for a robust study of city managers, the next steps would require gathering important pre-manager municipal data so that more robust causal estimates could be made from regressions or difference-in-difference design.

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Appendix

Figure 4 – Map of Sampled Cities

	city	state
1	amarillo city	Texas
2	ann arbor city	Michigan
3	antioch city	California
4	arcadia city	California
5	asheville city	North Carolina
6	augusta-richmond county consolidated government (balance)	Georgia
7	bloomington city	Indiana
8	bossier city city	Louisiana
9	bridgeport city	Connecticut
10	bristol city	Connecticut
11	burnsville city	Minnesota
12	chattanooga city	Tennessee
13	chicago city	Illinois
14	cincinnati city	Ohio
15	colton city	California
16	columbia city	Missouri
17	cranston city	Rhode Island
18	eagan city	Minnesota
19	el monte city	California
20	el paso city	Texas
21	elyria city	Ohio
22	encinitas city	California
23	escondido city	California
24	fargo city	North Dakota
25	flagstaff city	Arizona
26	gary city	Indiana
27	gilroy city	California
28	glendale city	Arizona
29	grand rapids city	Michigan
30	hartford city	Connecticut
31	hendersonville city	Tennessee
32	hialeah city	Florida
33	iowa city city	Iowa
34	irvine city	California
35	jonesboro city	Arkansas
36	lafayette city	Indiana
37	lakeville city	Minnesota
38	lakewood city	Colorado
39	little rock city	Arkansas
40	los angeles city	California
41	lubbock city	Texas
42	lynn city	Massachusetts
43	memphis city	Tennessee
44	merced city	California
45	miami city	Florida
46	midland city	Texas
47	modesto city	California
48	muncie city	Indiana
49	napa city	California
50	new bedford city	Massachusetts
51	new haven city	Connecticut
52	newark city	New Jersey
53	norfolk city	Virginia
54	north charleston city	South Carolina
55	north little rock city	Arkansas
56	norwalk city	California
57	orland park village	Illinois
58	overland park city	Kansas
59	palm desert city	California
60	palmdale city	California
61	pearland city	Texas
62	petaluma city	California
63	phoenix city	Arizona
64	pittsburg city	California
65	pomona city	California
66	portland city	Maine
67	providence city	Rhode Island
68	reading city	Pennsylvania
69	redding city	California
70	redwood city city	California
71	rialto city	California
72	royal oak city	Michigan
73	santa ana city	California
74	santa clara city	California
75	santa monica city	California
76	sioux city city	Iowa
77	smyrna city	Georgia
78	south san francisco city	California
79	southfield city	Michigan
80	st. louis park city	Minnesota
81	thornton city	Colorado
82	topeka city	Kansas
83	vacaville city	California
84	vallejo city	California
85	waterbury city	Connecticut
86	westland city	Michigan
87	whittier city	California
88	wichita city	Kansas
89	wilmington city	North Carolina
90	woodland city	California

Table 5 – List of Sampled Cities

	Has a Manager	Turnout	Has a Mayor	Mayor Election	Incumbency	Margin
Has a Manager	1	0.18	-0.18	-0.25	0.02	-0.22
Turnout	0.18	1	-0.25	-0.49	0.08	-0.40
Has a Mayor	-0.18	-0.25	1	0.46	-0.07	0.18
Mayor Election	-0.25	-0.49	0.46	1	-0.05	0.42
Incumbency	0.02	0.08	-0.07	-0.05	1	-0.004
Margin	-0.22	-0.40	0.18	0.42	-0.004	1

Table 6 – Correlation Matrix of Institutional Covariates

	Has a Manager	Turnout	Population(ln)	Men(%)	Women(%)	White(%)	Black(%)	Hispanic(%)	Asian(%)
Has a Manager	1	0.18	-0.07	0.20	-0.20	0.06	-0.32	0.14	0.28
Turnout	0.18	1	-0.29	0.10	-0.10	0.13	-0.22	-0.09	0.15
Population(ln)	-0.07	-0.29	1	0.09	-0.09	-0.21	0.19	0.16	0.004
Men(%)	0.20	0.10	0.09	1	-1	0.16	-0.40	0.26	0.13
Women(%)	-0.20	-0.10	-0.09	-1	1	-0.16	0.40	-0.26	-0.13
White(%)	0.06	0.13	-0.21	0.16	-0.16	1	-0.61	-0.19	-0.37
Black(%)	-0.32	-0.22	0.19	-0.40	0.40	-0.61	1	-0.26	-0.30
Hispanic(%)	0.14	-0.09	0.16	0.26	-0.26	-0.19	-0.26	1	0.01
Asian(%)	0.28	0.15	0.004	0.13	-0.13	-0.37	-0.30	0.01	1

Table 7 – Correlation Matrix of Demographic Covariates

	Has a Manager	Turnout	Concurrent Pres.	Concurrent Mid.
Has a Manager	1	0.18	0.16	0.13
Turnout	0.18	1	0.49	0.35
Concurrent Pres.	0.16	0.49	1	-0.26
Concurrent Mid.	0.13	0.35	-0.26	1

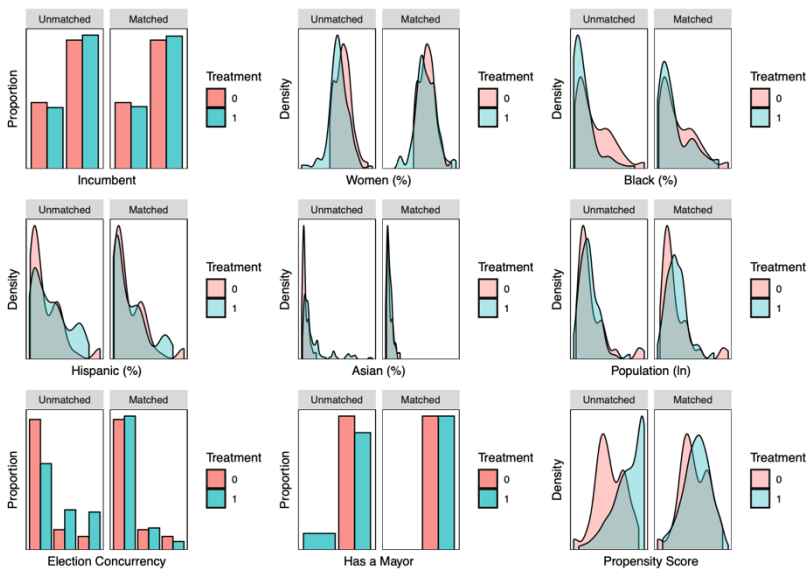*Table 8: Correlation Matrix of Timing Covariates*

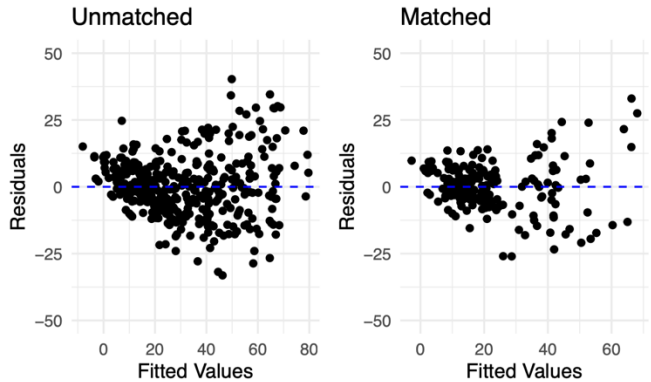*Figure 5 – Individual Distributional Balance for Matched Covariates*

Figure 6 – Residual Plots for the Multiple Regression Models

State Equal Rights Amendment Mobilization and Reproductive Rights Activism in a Post-*Dobbs* America: Lessons from New York and Texas

Julia Squitteri

Abstract

For nearly a century, feminists and legal scholars have considered the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), a conversation that has only grown in relevance following the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. This paper discusses political mobilization to push state-level Equal Rights Amendments forward, and the relationship between reproductive rights advocacy and ERA advocacy in both Texas and New York. This research tracks feminist organizing history from the suffragette era to today, evaluating trends in feminist political mobilization that may inform future avenues for civil rights and reproductive rights advocacy in the United States. Building on the methodology of Soule and Olzak (2004), this paper conducts a qualitative realist synthesis and historical review of primary and secondary sources that explain the historic feminist mobilization in Texas and New York, the state ERA movements in Texas and Florida, the status of reproductive rights, and post-*Dobbs* action. Findings suggest several criteria that can explain when reproductive rights advocacy is likely to drive state ERA mobilization: (1) Advocates, stakeholders, and voters must believe that the passage of an ERA will have a tangible, positive impact on reproductive rights; (2) State organizations require sufficient institutional knowledge to direct successful lobbying and mobilization efforts; (3) States with protective abortion policies are more likely to experience pushes for an ERA as a protective remedy for reproductive rights; (4) Grassroots advocacy alone may not be enough to carry out an effective state ERA movement—some level of "top-down" support is critical.

Keywords: Equal Rights Amendment, Reproductive rights Feminist mobilization, Grassroots organizing, Pro-choice activism, New York, Texas, Dobbs, Suffrage Movements, ERA mobilization

Introduction

In 1972, the proposed Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) to the U.S. Constitution passed Congress with strong bipartisan support, and states began ratifying the ERA. This momentum from the movement for a national ERA had profound effects on state-level mobilization capacity, as state organizations and local leaders rallied their states to ratify the ERA (Hawkinson and Logerfo-Olsen 2024). States across the country ratified state-level ERAs soon after the federal ERA passed Congress, including Alaska, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Texas, Washington, and Louisiana (Hawkinson and Logerfo-Olsen 2024). In March 1972, Texas ratified the national ERA, followed by a state-level ERA, joining a wave of states passing state-level ERAs in 1972. Texas' ERA used similar language to the proposed national ERA: "Equality under the law shall not be denied or abridged because of sex, race, color, creed, or national origin. This amendment is self-operative."[10] Some states, however, have yet to pass an ERA. In November 2024, New York voters passed a state-level ERA, a legislative initiative that follows closely on the heels of post-*Dobbs* efforts to protect reproductive rights in New York. Equal Rights Amendments concern a plethora of issues, from marriage equality to divorce law, child support, childcare, abortion, and education, among other issues. As such, ERA mobilization has the capacity to create a cross-cutting, diverse movement for gender equality that works closely alongside reproductive rights organizing. Given this context, this paper asks: When are reproductive rights crises, such as *Dobbs*, most likely to drive ERA mobilization, and how does grassroots ERA mobilization impact the success of ERA activism?

This article begins with an overview of the history of the ERA and the women's suffrage movement. I then consider scholarship on state ERAs, relevant legal cases, and scholarship on abortion and feminist mobilization. This research employs a qualitative synthesis to conduct a review of primary and secondary sources that explain the historical context of feminist mobilization in Texas and New York, the dynamics of the state ERA movement, with special emphasis on institutional strength, mobilization capacity, and political priorities, the state of reproductive rights in Texas and

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[10] Texas Constitution, Article 1, Section 3

New York, and post-*Dobbs* action in each state. Last, this article will evaluate trends in state ERA mobilization in each state, drawing conclusions about grassroots mobilization and when reproductive rights crises are most likely to drive ERA mobilization. Synthesized findings suggest that grassroots movements for state ERAs were historically short-lived, even when successful in passing legislation. Rather, modern movements for ERAs engage strategic, "top-down" means of passing policy that are increasingly tied to reproductive rights, especially in the wake of *Dobbs*.

Historical Background on the Equal Rights Amendment

The movement for the ERA largely grew out of the women's suffrage movement—which had an already mobilized base of women with a strong dedication to women's equality, a developed network of organizations and women's clubs, and experience with constitutional amendment advocacy. The Nineteenth Amendment was critical in reshaping the role of women in American politics and expanding the vote to women (most of whom were white), but gender inequality remained. Georgia and Mississippi, for example, initially refused to update the voter registration deadline for women, effectively barring women from practicing their newfound constitutional right (Graves 2020). Many Black women could not vote in practice following the Nineteenth Amendment (Graves 2020). Despite winning the right to vote, most women did not have property rights, could not sign a legal contract, could not divorce abusive husbands, and did not have the right to custody of their children, among many other rights women were denied (Eisenberg and Ruthsdotter 1998). Women had received the vote but not the right to equality under the law.

Alice Paul's draft of the ERA responded to this context, proposing a constitutional amendment that would regard women as equal under the law. Paul, a prominent suffragette in the fight for the 19th Amendment and the leader of the National Women's Party, pivoted feminists to a new goal of an Equal Rights Amendment. While initially proposed in 1923, the ERA did not pass Congress until 1972. Advocates in the 1920s may have expected the mobilization behind the Nineteenth Amendment to carry the ERA across the finish line, but they underestimated the motivations behind the Nineteenth Amendment. First, the right to women's suffrage was largely supported by white supremacists who sought to diminish the power of

Black voters by engaging white women in the political process (Giddings 1984, 125). By 1900, suffrage leaders like Susan B. Anthony and Elisabeth Cady Stanton publicly worked with white supremacists (Golway 2011). This racist context is critical to the history of the Nineteenth Amendment— Southern Democrats supported the suffrage amendment because of a political strategy to advance white supremacy, not a commitment to women's rights (Giddings 1984, 127). Belle Kearney, a well-known white supremacist, daughter of wealthy southern plantation owners, and a future state legislator went as far as to proclaim that "the enfranchisement of women would insure immediate and durable white supremacy" (Golway 2011).

Second, state legislatures would continue to be comprised mostly of men, and there was no guarantee that women would vote in ways advantageous to their sex. Most women were driven into politics by social reform initiatives and the Nineteenth Amendment did not immediately shift this trend. Many of these social reform projects were closely connected to women's roles and motherhood, as reformers often focused on the prohibition to mitigate abusive husbands, increasing access to education, and assisting the poor. Despite the intersections between these issues and feminism, some women at the time hesitated to endorse the label of feminist. Social reformers and women engaged in organized labor feared that the ERA would erase workplace protections they had created for women (Library of Congress 2024). The divide between those who supported labor laws designed to "protect" women, which often engaged in gender discrimination, and supporters of the ERA was long-lasting (Library of Congress 2024). Third, male legislators were often opposed to the ERA on the grounds that equality would harm women, arguing that the ERA would take away women's privileges and subject them to harm.

These concerns are best exemplified by Myra Wolfgang's testimony against the ERA:

> "There are various kinds of protection for women workers
> provided by State laws and regulations… It would be
> desirable for some of these laws to be extended to men,
> but the practical fact is that an Equal Rights Amendment is
> likely to destroy the laws altogether rather than bring
> about coverage for both sexes. Those State laws that are
> outmoded or discriminatory, should be repealed or

amended and should be handled on a 'case by case' basis"
(Wolfgang 1970).

The opposition against the ERA had political legitimacy, for organized women's labor groups expressed serious concerns. As such, the base that supported suffrage was, by a sizable majority, not aligned in support of the ERA.

From 1923 to 1970, the ERA was introduced into every session of Congress. In 1946, the amendment was narrowly defeated by the Senate, but this progress signaled gradually increasing support for constitutional gender equality. On the heels of World War II, a time in which women became the financial support for their families while many men fought overseas, the concept of equality slowly gained momentum. While working class women and women of color had long worked, World War II was one of the first times that white and middle-class women held independent jobs, and they were resistant to leave the workforce—and their newfound independence—following the end of the war (McEuen 2016, 2). Yet it was not until 1970 that the ERA gained serious momentum, coinciding with the increased economic freedom and political mobilization of women (Shultz 2014, 1007-1008). Following tireless advocacy by the newly formed National Organization of Women (NOW), the ERA passed both chambers of Congress in 1972 (National Organization of Women). Notably, organizations like the National Education Association and the United Auto Workers endorsed the ERA in 1971, signaling widespread political support across a wide range of organizations (National Organization of Women). Beginning in 1975, however, serious opposition to the ERA grew, and right-wing groups gained more representation in state legislatures. In response, ERA advocacy grew as well. Republican First Lady Betty Ford even ran a bipartisan ERA call center out of the White House, engaging national attention to the cause (Clement 2024). In 1977, women's groups held a national convention in Houston, Texas, in which delegates from every state voted in support of ratifying the ERA. That same year, NOW argued for a boycott of states that had not ratified the ERA, ramping up the pressure on states that had yet to ratify the ERA (National Organization of Women). As 1979—the original deadline for the ratification of the ERA—approached, pro-ERA groups lobbied for an extension of the deadline. Over 100,000 women marched on the capital demanding an extension of the ERA ratification deadline, and in 1978, Congress set a new deadline of 1988 (National Organization of

Women). Yet in 1980, the ERA began losing momentum, which was, in part, driven by the election of President Ronald Reagan, who opposed the ERA—an election that was strongly influenced by anti-ERA groups (National Organization of Women). By 1988, the ERA was three states short of ratification—which, as later analysis has shown, was the product of a lack of diversity of women and people of color in state legislatures, as well as a loss of support for the ERA in the Republican party (National Organization of Women).

Yet ERA advocacy has continued, and in 2020, the ERA reached the thirty-eight-state ratification line required by the constitution—thirty-two years past the ratification deadline set by the Senate (Feminist Majority Foundation). The ERA now hangs in legal limbo, with advocates pushing for the Senate to remove the deadline to clear the way for enactment into the U.S. Constitution. In the meantime, states have continued to implement ERAs into their state constitutions, responding to the delay in the enactment of the national ERA.

Literature Review

State-Level ERAs

Beginning in the 1960s, states began passing their own constitutional amendments to guarantee gender equality (Thieschafer and Schultz 2021, 113). Twenty-eight states have a state ERA: Texas, Florida, Virginia, California, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, Hawaii, Alaska, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, Iowa, Illinois, Maryland, Delaware, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, Nevada, and New York (Baker 2024; Hawkinson and Logerfo-Olsen 2024). Despite a limited amount of litigation under state ERAs, the impact thus far has been clear—state-level ERAs have endorsed marriage equality, protected the right to abortion, and attacked sex segregation. Yet, in other states, courts have held that their state ERA does not protect the right to abortion nor prevent sex-based classification in the law. Thieschafer and Shultz (2021) have critiqued the reliance on state-level ERAs, arguing that regardless of statutory language differences, how many years it has been since the ERA was enacted, or the intended protections, "litigation remains low and case outcomes remain unfavorable to women" (113). Their analysis also revealed minimal impact

on issues like the pay gap, women's political representation, and abortion (Thieschafer and Schultz 2021, 114). The prognosis, according to Thieschafer and Shultz (2021), is grim: "Pushing [state and federal ERAs] may divert political mobilization and energies that might be better devoted to adopting laws that adopt specific legal, political, economic, or social issues that need to be addressed. … even if a federal ERA is adopted … there is no guarantee [it] will be interpreted in ways favorable to women" (115). These conclusions are correct in that most state ERAs have scarcely been litigated, and when they have, courts have come to inconsistent conclusions (Thieschafer and Schultz 2021). The ERA's impact is dependent on the courts, a profound limitation—but a limitation that should not discredit the ERA's capacity to protect gender equality. In Pennsylvania this year, for example, the state Supreme Court ruled that abortion was a protected right under the state ERA, holding that bans on abortion are gender discriminatory (Baker 2023).

Earlier scholarship has noted that when an ERA is litigated, it is often done so in cases that challenge laws that discriminate against men in favor of women—with men making up the majority of litigants (Linton 1997, 940). Yet state ERAs have reaffirmed gender equality in cases where women experience discrimination as well. Beach's (1984) analysis points to Pennsylvania and Washington as two states that have taken equality under their ERA "seriously" by applying the ERA with a "standard of review that surpasses the rigor of strict scrutiny" (717). Beach argues that state ERAs may present a quality alternative to a federal ERA, or at the very least, an important step in using state courts to challenge gender discrimination, a conclusion noted by Avner (1984) as well. The established scholarship indicates that state-level ERA language may not be the problem in the documented ineffectiveness of state ERAs, but rather the courts themselves. Driscoll and Rouse (1978) found that state court judges have been reticent to step beyond the evaluations of gender that federal courts use under the Fourteenth Amendment, even when they have a state ERA that could legitimate the use of strict scrutiny. While this has particularly been the case in Virginia, which has used intermediate scrutiny under the ERA, other state courts have used strict scrutiny for claims made under the ERA (Hawkinson and Logerfo-Olsen 2024). Courts consider discrimination against protected groups through different levels of scrutiny. Intermediate scrutiny requires states to prove that they have an important government interest in

engaging in gender discrimination and that the action is substantially related to that interest. Strict scrutiny entails the highest level of protection from discrimination, a legal standard applied in cases concerning race, religion, or national origin. Rational-basis scrutiny is the lowest level of scrutiny a court can apply under equal protection standards, a level of scrutiny that previously included gender. This shifted in 1976 when the Supreme Court ruled in *Craig v. Boren* that gender would be evaluated under intermediate scrutiny, which requires state actors to have an important government interest for discrimination using policy language that is substantially related to that interest.[11] Intermediate scrutiny offers a lower level of protection against gender discrimination when claims are brought to court, compared to racial discrimination cases which merit strict scrutiny evaluations by the court. As such, discriminatory state laws are more likely to stand if gender discrimination occurs, compared to discrimination impacting a suspect class, which includes race, religion, and national origin. Stronger applications of the ERA have been used in select states. In *Darrin v. Goud* (1975), the Washington Supreme Court ruled in favor of eliminating sex discrimination in courts, holding that "[w]hatever doubts on that score might have been formerly entertained, Const. art. 31 [the Washington Equal Rights Amendment] added something to the prior prevailing law by eliminating otherwise permissible sex discrimination if the rational relationship or strict scrutiny tests were met."[12] This high evaluation of the state ERA, however, is a product of the state courts, as Beach (1984) indicated. The scholarship overwhelmingly points to a need for an overarching consensus on how to interpret the ERA, a problem that is unlikely to be resolved without a federal ERA.

Abortion, the ERA, and Mobilization: A Gap in Research

Until the ERA is enacted, states will likely continue to pass state-level ERAs. This paper considers how states will engage in mobilization for state-level ERAs and what issues may push state ERA proposals to a greater level of popularity. While scholarship widely discusses the Equal Rights Amendment and reproductive rights, there is a gap in the literature

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[11] Craig v. Boren is 429 U.S. 190 (1976)
[12] Darrin v. Gould 85 Wash.2d 859 (1975).

assessing the relationship between reproductive rights and the ERA in a mobilization capacity. Research that has concerned the ERA and reproductive rights has often assessed equal protection standards and abortion without considering the political implications reproductive rights may have on state-ERA mobilization efforts.

Scholarship has often referred to the ERA as a potential source for new approaches to abortion protections in courts. Kavinsky (2023) argued that state ERAs can reach beyond pre-*Dobbs* substantive due process reasoning—which stigmatizes reproductive care and reinforces paternalism—by grounding the abortion right as a gender equality issue. Kavinsky points to cases like *Gonzales v. Carhart* (2003), in which the Supreme Court held that "abortion restrictions are necessary to protect women from themselves."[13] The larger community of legal scholars has posed many proposals for interpretations of state-ERA language in cases of abortion, as Kavinsky does, but there has been less discussion on the interactions between grassroots advocates and these theories. In other words, research must consider the *tangible* impacts of ERAs as they are *currently* being interpreted and how advocates have interacted with these decisions. While this paper will note relevant abortion cases, state ERAs have not been used extensively in litigation—and when used with questions of abortion, have had varying interpretations.

Scholars have also considered the role of social movements and politics during the ERA ratification process. Soule and Olzak (2004) found that social movement organizations were statistically important in ERA ratification movements, but public opinion also directly influenced legislative action—especially in cases where there was little electoral competition (491). Their findings also indicate that anti-ERA social movements were successful in slowing down ratification efforts, which was amplified by Republicans in legislative majorities—yet the same was true for pro-ERA advocacy and Democrats (492). Critchlow and Stachecki (2008) noted that such anti-ERA movements, however, were more successful in mobilizing opponents than pro-ERA advocates, whose base declined in the late 1970s (158). Their analysis points to several factors as critical in the failure of the federal ERA: Advocates disagreed as to the intended use on issues of abortion and LGBTQIA+ rights, and even more significantly, the pro-ERA movement was

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[13] Gonzales v. Carhart 550 U.S. 124, (2007).

not grassroots enough, having largely been based out of Washington, D.C. (Critchlow, Stachecki, 169). As such, grassroots capacity was a critical factor in the success of ERA ratification efforts. Critchlow and Stachecki argued that "anti-ERA activists proved more determined, more politically active and politically knowledgeable, and more effectively organized than were their opponents" (171). Their findings suggest that scholars must consider social mobilization and movement tactics in analyses of the ERA rather than public opinion data alone.

This research expands on such scholarship to consider the relationship between reproductive rights advocacy and state ERA mobilization through the lens of organizational capacity, mobilization efforts, movement tactics, and political context. This research also offers modern analysis, considering recent state ERA movements rather than the 1970s-1980s ERA movement alone. As such this research considers: When are reproductive rights crises, such as *Dobbs*, most likely to drive ERA mobilization, and how does grassroots ERA mobilization impact the success of ERA activism? Considering previous scholarship, this paper tests the following hypothesis: Reproductive rights, post-*Dobbs,* can act as a central motivator for ERA mobilization, which manifests in more grassroots forms of mobilization. Given that this research is primarily interested in the relationship between reproductive rights activism and ERA mobilization, this article considers both federal and state level ERA mobilization when referring to general ERA mobilization. Additionally, grassroots mobilization describes bottom-up activism in which decisions about the movement priorities are made from advocates, not top-up decision makers, and an extensive canvassing campaign is carried out on local levels, thus producing widespread mobilization.

Methodology

Building on the methodology of Soule and Olzak (2004), this paper considers the role of different types of political mobilization in efforts to pass state ERAs. Using case studies of Texas and New York, this paper assesses the relationship between abortion, political mobilization, and the ERA through a realist synthesis. As such, this paper synthesizes qualitative sources to explain trends in mobilization, movement dynamics, or present contextual data. The following areas are considered: (1) The historical

context of feminist mobilization in each state, including significant movements or organizations for the ratification of the national ERA; (2) The movement for a state ERA, including organizational strength, mobilization capacity, and political priorities; (3) Reproductive rights analysis, including past and current abortion policies and state political culture; and (4) Post-*Dobbs* action on a statewide level, noting advocacy efforts and ERA relevance. This analysis will synthesize scholarship, historical archives, published interviews, newspaper articles, and legal documents to illustrate the state of ERA and reproductive rights advocacy in Texas and New York. I use records, data, and explanations from relevant feminist associations widely in this analysis, given that this paper focuses broadly on the role of organizations in historic and modern ERA mobilization.

Although many states across the United States have unique feminist histories and state ERA movements, Texas and New York offer two cases in which states have passed the federal ERA during the height of ERA activism in the 1970s. Both have rich histories of feminist political mobilization and diverging state ERA movements that allow this paper to consider ERA mobilization across generations, in vastly different political cultures, and in current political contexts that offer distinct differences concerning abortion and reproductive rights. Historically, New York served as a mobilizing base for the women's suffrage movement, a product of the intellectual and activist hub that convened the nation's leading feminists in New York City, the state's matriarchal indigenous tribes, and its position as the birthplace of many prominent suffragettes (Museum of the City of New York; New York State Government). Today, New York has some of the most progressive abortion laws and strong support for reproductive rights (Guttmacher Institute). The recent movement for a state-level ERA in New York provides relevant and timely information about ERA mobilization post-*Dobbs*. Texas, on the other hand, has some of the most restrictive abortion laws in the country despite its state-level ERA in place since the 1970s (Guttmacher Institute). Texas was once a leading state in the feminist movement. Today, Texas is one of the leading states for anti-choice and anti-feminist policies. The erosion of support for women's rights in Texas since the 1970s provides valuable insights about the long-term impact of grassroots mobilization. Given that Texas has had a state-level ERA in place for several decades, this article also examines the impact of Texas' state ERA on reproductive rights. New York passed their state ERA in November of 2024, and as such, this

article cannot examine the impact of the New York ERA but will discuss the recent movement to pass the New York ERA—which offers a uniquely modern look at a state ERA movement.

Analysis

New York

A. Historical Feminist Organizing Background

In 1848, New York began a long history of women's rights activism with the Seneca Falls Convention, which produced the Declaration of Sentiments. The sentiments affirmed women's rights to suffrage, property rights, and equality—yet the decision to adopt suffrage at the convention was controversial and hard-fought (National Parks Service). Notably, the convention represented grassroots advocates—only five of the individuals present were movement leaders (Wellman 1991). The Seneca Falls convention was supported, in large part, by networks of women from central and upstate New York and inspired by local Indigenous tribes with matriarchies (Wellman 1991; Wagner). Prior to the convention, women's rights advocates had begun work in the region, spurred by abolitionists— work that had already culminated in policy successes like the New York Married Women's Property Act (Gable 2017). Despite the fact that the abolition movement was a significant catalyst for the women's suffrage movement, Black women faced exclusion from the movement (Bailey). Suffrage parades and associations, for instance, were overwhelmingly segregated (Bailey).

Major women's suffrage organizations were founded in upstate New York, such as the Women's Equal Rights Union, following a convention in Rochester. The Woman's Loyal National League, the first national women's organization, was also founded in 1963 in New York by suffragettes Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony (Gable 2017). New York was the birthplace of many women's organizations and a strong base for the women's suffrage movement with an advanced network of advocates. Women of color played a significant role in suffrage organizations like the Colored Women's Progressive Franchise Association, National Federation of Afro-American Women, and the National Association of Colored Women were pivotal in the fight for suffrage (Gable 2017). Rosenthal et al. (1985)'s

network analysis found that women's rights conventions, the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), and the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) had some of the strongest networks of supporters and partners in the New York women's movement between 1840 and 1914. The reform movements women participated in during this time period were "highly interlocked" across women's organizations (Rosenthal et al. 1985, 1050). Such mobilization strength resulted in success: by 1880, women could vote in school elections, and by 1917, women won the right to vote in New York. In 1919, New York ratified the Nineteenth Amendment.

Following the suffrage movement's success, the Equal Rights Amendment was introduced by Alice Paul in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1923 (Library of Congress). Newspaper clippings from 1924-1925 show New York-based advocacy for the ERA led by the National Woman's Party, with regular meetings to develop tactics for congressional support (Library of Congress and Sewall-Belmont House and Museum 2024). Ongoing activism for the ERA in the 1940s-1960s by the National Woman's Party acted as an institution to "[keep] the women's movement alive" (Rupp 1985, 720). The 1960s saw a revival of ERA popularity, and in 1972, New York ratified the federal Equal Rights Amendment following advocacy by New York-based activists and leaders including Rep. Shirley Chisholm (Eversley and Habell-Pallan 2015, 18).

B.   Recent Movement for a State-Level ERA

Voters approved the New York State ERA passed in November 2024, but the effort to pass a state ERA dates back to the 1960s. NOW had begun lobbying for a state ERA in the late 1960s, building grassroots support from pro-choice and feminist groups in New York (Taranto 2017, 97). After seeing the ERA lose momentum in the wake of strong anti-ERA advocacy in other states, New York feminists rallied to pass a state-level ERA in 1974, work that was replicated in many other states at the same time (Taranto 2017, 94). Hundreds of feminist groups endorsed the proposed amendment, identical to the federal ERA, which received bipartisan support (Taranto 2017, 94). New York had such a strong base of feminists that Phyllis Shafley did not send anti-ERA activists to the state (Taranto 2017, 94). Yet the amendment failed by just 400,000 votes on the ballot referendum to pass

the state ERA—the result of "Operation Wakeup," an anti-ERA campaign led by white, middle-class homemakers in the suburbs of New York City (Taranto 2017, 94). Operation Wakeup sought to prevent the passage of the ERA under concerns that a state ERA would threaten women by removing sex-segregated bathrooms, forcing women into the military draft, and requiring women to enter the workforce (Taranto 2017, 94). Like its federal counterpart, the New York ERA struggled to appeal to conservative homemakers who were satisfied with the status quo.

The movement for a state ERA did not regain momentum until recently. In 2022, following a leaked draft of the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs*, New York Senator Liz Kreuger introduced a state Equal Rights Amendment, which was quickly passed. In 2023, Senator Kreuger reintroduced (New York requires bills to be passed twice to amend the state Constitution) an amendment to the state constitution to add protections for gender, which was passed and signed by Governor Hochul in 2023. The proposed amendment:

> "Provides that no person shall be denied the equal protection of the laws of this state or any subdivision thereof; provides no person shall, because of race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, creed, religion, or sex, including sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, pregnancy outcomes, reproductive healthcare and autonomy, be subjected to any discrimination in their civil rights by any other person or by any firm, corporation, or institution, or by the state or any agency or subdivision of the state."[14]

Notably, the amendment language creates clear protections for reproductive health decisions, an unprecedented provision in an ERA. While explicitly situated in the context of abortion, the state ERA would also expand LGBTQIA+ rights, unlike most state-level ERAs (Baker 2023). Many organizations have been active in advocating for a New York ERA, including the New York ACLU, Planned Parenthood, N.A.A.C.P. New York, the National Institute for Reproductive Health, the New York Immigration Coalition, League of Women Voters New York State, and other organizations including

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[14] New York Equal Rights Amendment, § 11, Art. 1 New York Constitution.

disability justice groups, feminist organizations, LGBTQIA+ organizations, and racial justice groups (NYCLU 2023; Rubinstein 2023).

The movement to pass the state ERA won a high level of support from New York Democrats that proved pivotal. Democratic lawmakers, for instance, chose to release the ballot referendum in 2024 instead of 2023 to boost voter turnout (Rubinstein 2023). As the *New York Times* noted, advocates had a clear strategy: "Get Democrats to the polls by focusing attention on a 2024 statewide referendum, the New York Equal Rights Amendment, that will explicitly bar New York from using its power and resources to penalize those who have abortions" (Rubinstein 2023). Indeed, Democrats devoted over $20 million to building support for the ERA—a clear partisan issue that is directly aligned with Democratic party goals (Rubinstein 2023).

Overall, the movement for a state ERA was supported by a diverse, powerful coalition of well-funded organizations. This movement engaged in less grassroots mobilization than the ERA movements of the 1970s but has instead been *led* by a majority of legislators in support of the ERA. The New York ERA passed in November 2024 with the support of over 60% of voters (Baker 2023). Despite the decisive victory for the New York ERA, the movement faced criticism for its lack of grassroots action. Just one month before the 2024 election, the *New York Times* warned of concerns for the success of the New York ERA because of a failure to reach voters across the state (Oreskes 2024). Rather than invest a majority of funding in grassroots advocacy, New Yorkers for Equal Rights, the organization spearheading the movement, spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on political consultants (Oreskes 2024). Despite financial mismanagement, phone banking for the NY ERA did take place, as did in-person canvassing, although the extent of canvassing is currently unclear (Oreskes 2024).

Alongside the diverse coalition in support of the New York ERA was an expensive opposition movement that warned of the destruction of sex-segregated bathrooms and sports teams (Oreskes 2024). It is notable that opposition to the ERA was led by "mega-donors," many of whom invested $8 million into anti-ERA advertisements just a week before the New York elections (Ashford 2024). This increase in funding was concerning, given the mismanagement of funds by pro-ERA groups who had spent more money on consultants than political ads (Ashford 2024) Despite opposition, in a "surprisingly large victory," the New York ERA passed (Zernike 2024). This

success can most likely be attributed to pre-existing support for reproductive rights in New York, a diverse coalition of organizations supporting the amendment, and the leadership of the state Democratic Party and Governor Hochul in promoting the ERA.

C.   Reproductive Rights

Abortion has been legal until 24 weeks of pregnancy in New York since 1970, with exceptions for life or health of the mother (The Center for Reproductive Rights; New York State Attorney General). Following 1970, New York acted as a haven state for people seeking abortions from other states. In 2019, New York passed a state law that protected the right to abortion as a "fundamental right" and protected autonomy regarding reproductive decisions (The Center for Reproductive Rights). Survey data has found that a considerable majority of New Yorkers support a legal right to abortion, and state political culture is generally supportive of reproductive rights (Pew Research Center). The newly passed state ERA codified the right to protections against discrimination on the basis of "pregnancy, pregnancy outcomes, and reproductive healthcare and autonomy."[15] This language will expand existing protections beyond abortion, including other elements of reproductive healthcare.

D.   Post-Dobbs Action

Dobbs was quickly followed by legislative proposals to protect reproductive rights in New York, ranging from bills that protect doctors performing abortions from out-of-state investigations, legalizing midwives and nurses to perform abortions, taxpayer-funded abortion funds, requirements for insurers to cover abortion—and the proposal for a state ERA (Zraick and Ashford 2022). Governor Hochul and many other Democratic elected officials reacted to *Dobbs* by pushing for people to mobilize and signaling support for reproductive rights in New York. Mayor Adams of New York City responded by releasing a Sexual and Reproductive Health Bill of Rights, protecting rights to gender-affirming care, abortions,

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[15] New York Equal Rights Amendment, § 11, Art. 1 New York Constitution.

birth control, sexual health care, and other forms of reproductive care (City of New York 2024).

Although advocates like the New York ACLU have been particularly vocal post-*Dobbs* in fighting to strengthen reproductive access and rights in New York, this work has largely been led, or at the very least, supported by state lawmakers. Organizations who advocated for the state ERA like the NYCLU, Planned Parenthood, and the National Institute for Reproductive Health, placed the state ERA in the context of regressions on reproductive rights and the need for constitutional protections (Baker 2023). The state-ERA was contextualized as a method to protect reproductive rights at the highest level in New York State, extending beyond the 2019 protections on abortion to codify a constitutional right to reproductive autonomy. In the case of New York, *Dobbs* clearly sparked the movement for the state ERA.

Texas

A. Historical Feminist Organizing Background

Texas has a strong history of women's rights advocacy through organized associations and coalitions. Beginning in the early 1900s, women's groups began organizing in Texas, sparked by the suffrage movement, anti-slavery activism, and the prohibition movement. The Texas Equal Rights Association (TERA) was first assembled in Dallas in 1893 through a state effort to combine forces of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), a prohibition organization, and the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) (Taylor 1976). Many early feminist associations suffered from contentious divides over leadership, tactics, and the vision of the movement. TERA was no different; The association lasted less than ten years, followed by newer suffrage associations in Texas (Taylor 1976). It was not uncommon for larger associations to splinter into smaller organizations, a trend that continued well after the culmination of the suffrage movement.

In Houston in 1902, Black women formed the Married Ladies Social, Art, and Charity Club, which allowed them to partake in social reform initiatives (Women in Texas History). Other Texas women's clubs were heavily involved in lobbying for child labor regulations and married women's property law for over a decade in the early 1900s—organizations that

included the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs and the Texas Congress of Mothers (Women in Texas History). The Texas Federation of Women's Clubs were deeply successful in passing laws establishing juvenile courts, kindergartens, and child adoption regulations (Women in Texas History). By 1903, several large women's suffrage organizations formed in Texas. By 1910, women had begun being admitted to the Texas Bar Association, and over 30% of women in Texas cities worked in paid employment, creating a population of well-educated women working outside of the home (Women in Texas History). In 1918, after winning suffrage in the Democratic primaries, over 360,000 Texan women registered to vote in just seventeen days, a testament to the civic involvement of Texan women (Women in Texas History). Black women in Texas were deeply involved in lobbying and suffrage work. Their work, along with the work of white women's clubs, resulted in dozens of successful legislative campaigns in Texas for progressive reform—cultivating political skill development for Texas women's organizations. In 1919, Texas became the first Southern state to ratify the women's suffrage amendment (Selber and Selber 2004). Many suffragette organizations in Texas, however, opposed the national ERA, "fearing it would invalidate hard-won state laws protecting women factory workers" (McArthur and Smith 2010). Yet, by the 1950s, there was a resurgence of Texas women's organizations that paved the way for the national ERA (Selber and Selber 2004). Scholars Judith McArthur and Harold Smith noted that the *Texas Observer* reported the ratification of the national ERA in 1972 by claiming "it raised about as much interest as a sewer bond referendum" (McArthur and Smith 2010). The ratification of the national ERA in Texas was a relatively smooth process compared to other states—the result of a strong group of educated working women who had voted anti-ERA politicians out of office (Selber and Selber 2004; McArthur and Smith 2010).

B. *Past Movement for a State-Level ERA*

In 1957, Hermine Tobolowsky proposed a state ERA to the Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs (Selber and Selber 2004). By 1958, the state ERA was proposed to the Texas legislature but offered broader protection of rights than the national ERA, including protections on discrimination against race and national origin (Selber and

Selber 2004). Rather than pursue traditional lobbying tactics, Tobolowky took a strategic approach to building support for a state ERA, beginning with study courses for women (Selber and Selber 2004). Grassroots support was critical during the 15-year campaign to pass a state ERA, a base that was built via public education initiatives like a federal versus state ERA handbook, door-to-door distribution of state ERA flyers, and letters published in newspapers (Selber and Selber 2004). One ERA pamphlet (pictured) published by the Texas Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs Inc. countered the misconceptions that the ERA would create unnecessary litigation, undermine rape laws, deprive wives of the homestead right, and that the ERA is not necessary (Southwest Collection Archive). Pamphlets like those pictured were rhetorically effective, centering on the idea of equality without dismantling other rights or protections. The cultivation of widespread support for the ERA played a large role in prompting voters to vote anti-ERA politicians out of office, removing the legislative obstacles for ratification of the state and national ERA.

The Texas Women's Political Caucus, formed in Austin in 1971, used a network of local caucuses across the state to campaign for the Texas ERA, utilizing a well-financed staff that included full-time lobbyists (Cottrell, 2022). There was also close coordination between national advocates and Texas legislators; correspondence from Representative Martha Griffiths to Texas Representative Tarlton Farenthold advocated for a state ERA that could closely scrutinize discrimination issues like "employment, civil and political rights, social insurance, domestic relations, taxes, crime, property, and education (Griffith 1971)." Griffith's wide range of issues tied to the ERA reflects the consideration of the ERA in Texas as a response to a myriad of social issues women had lobbied for in Texas for decades. In 1971, the Texas legislature passed the state ERA, and by 1972, just a few months after ratification of the national ERA, Texas voters affirmed the state-level ERA. By 1975, however, Phylis Shafley's quest to stop the ERA had garnered momentum, and anti-feminists sought to rescind Texas' ratification of the national ERA. Interestingly, the state ERA, despite having nearly identical language to the national ERA, produced considerably less anti-ERA propaganda concerned with issues like unisex bathrooms and "de-sexing" (McArthur and Smith 2010). The efforts by anti-ERA activists to rescind the federal ERA's ratification vote were ultimately unsuccessful. State legislators were reluctant to call a vote to rescind the ERA ratification vote because of

the high level of support for the ERA cultivated by mobilization efforts for a state-level ERA. The state-level ERA in Texas was passed before Congress passed the national ERA—indicating that the movement to pass the state-level ERA was largely responsible for the ease with which the legislature ratified the national ERA.

It is significant that Texas was the first Southern state to ratify the ERA—and to date, the only Southern state that ratified the ERA that has not since rescinded its vote. This can be explained by several unique mobilization factors. First, Texas has a lengthy history of incredibly

successful lobbying efforts by women's groups—organizations that had, as a result, built considerable skill, experience, and support over time. Second, given this institutional experience, women's organizations for the state ERA had large networks, ample resources, and high lobbying capacity. ERA advocates also engaged in effective grassroots mobilization, creating a base that voted out many anti-ERA politicians. The effective mobilization of voters, advocates, and organizations was ultimately responsible for the passage of a state-level ERA in 1972.

C. Reproductive Rights

The strong support for women's rights in Texas during the early 1970s quickly dissipated amid backlash from the passage of the Equal Rights

Amendment. Scholars note a divide in organizations that supported the ERA between professional working women with more moderate demands for legal equality and younger activists who fought for abortion rights to be included in feminist advocacy (McArthur and Smith 2010). The fervor for the Equal Rights Amendment did not extend to abortion. While some states relaxed their abortion laws in the 1960s and 1970s, Texas did not follow, keeping a ban in place that only allowed exceptions for the life of the mother (McArthur and Smith 2010). Since 1857—when the Texas penal code was created—abortion had been banned in Texas, with exceptions only for the life of the mother, prohibitions that originated with Spanish colonial law (Klibanoff; 2022). Regardless, women's organizations mobilized to provide abortion access by flying women out of state to receive the procedure, referring them to clinics in Mexico. In some cases, they referred women to the underground abortion network, which was unregulated and dangerous (Klibanoff; 2022). While *Roe v. Wade* was under consideration, middle-class women across Texas cities formed organizations to lobby for a repeal of Texas' abortion ban. Their cause celebrated when *Roe* struck down Texas's abortion ban (Klibanoff; 2022).

The Catholic Church, which opposed the ERA, immediately began organizing alongside other far-right groups, transforming Texas into the increasingly extreme right-wing state that it is today. Texas anti-abortion groups such as Texas Right to Life became some of the strongest advocates against Roe, utilizing a rhetorically effective campaign that painted abortion as murder. The 1977 National Women's Conference in Houston only compounded the rise of the far-right, who labeled all feminists as lesbians in an attempt to stigmatize feminism and erode support for feminist groups (McArthur and Smith 2010). Clinic violence also escalated in the 1980s, including violence directed at abortion clinics in Texas and protests designed to shut down clinics, some of which were successful (McArthur and Smith 2010). By the 1990s, the Texas House was filled with a pro-life majority.

Prior to the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization,* Texas repeatedly expanded its restrictions on abortion. In 2003, Texas imposed a 24-hour waiting period and restricted which types of centers could perform abortions (ACLU of Texas). Abortion was then banned after 24-weeks in 2005, and in 2011, Texas required doctors to show patients sonograms prior to performing abortions (ACLU of Texas).

Reproductive advocates challenged these laws in court in the years before *Dobbs*.

D. Post-Dobbs Action

Notably, since the 1990s, advocates relied on the courts to mediate abortion restrictions in Texas given that the legislature was hostile to pro-choice measures. The rise of the religious right in Texas weakened options available to reproductive justice activists, and following the Supreme Court's 2022 ruling in *Dobbs*, these avenues became largely untenable. In 2021, Texas implemented a law that allows citizens to sue anyone who aids an abortion procedure and collect up to $10,000 (ACLU of Texas). In 2022, Texas' abortion ban took effect immediately after the decision in *Dobbs,* with only narrow exceptions for the life or health of the mother that create a gray zone of legal liability many doctors are hesitant to enter (ACLU of Texas).

Since 2022, tactics have shifted. Abortion rights advocates in Texas are now focusing on rapid response efforts to help pregnant women access the abortions they need or want. One activist noted, "there are a lot of trainings for folks to become abortion doulas, to assist people getting abortions, raise money, drive them to clinics, take care of them after they had the abortions" (ACLU of Texas 2023). Other activists have noted putting increased emphasis on access to contraceptives and sex-ed in place of the ability to offer abortion services in Texas (ACLU of Texas 2023). Doctors and abortion networks have also relied on travel to New Mexico for abortion procedures—yet this option is largely inaccessible to working or low-income people (Klibanoff; 2023). Grassroots abortion funds have become one of the largest areas of resistance in Texas, but this work has slowed post-*Dobbs*, given legal uncertainty (Klibanoff; 2023). Underground networks to provide medical abortion care have become increasingly popular in Texas post-*Dobbs*, utilizing pharmacies in Mexico and online providers (Klibanoff 2023). Legal advocacy is still a key tactic for reproductive rights advocates. Given that Texas already has an ERA in place, how is the state ERA being used in response to crackdowns on abortion rights? In Texas, litigation under the state ERA has been scant. In *Bell v. Low Income Women of Texas* (2002), the Supreme Court of Texas held that restricting funding for abortion in Texas' Medical Assistance Program did not violate the state Equal Rights

Amendment, one of the few abortion cases that have been brought under the state ERA (Klibanoff 2023). Given the holding in *Dobbs* that restricting abortion was not an act of gender discrimination, it is unlikely that Texas courts will find merit for the application of the state Equal Rights Amendment in future cases.

National advocates have pointed to the ERA as a solution in the wake of *Dobbs*, but there is little evidence of the extent to which this push originated with Texas advocates (Klibanoff 2023). Grassroots advocates in Texas are prioritizing rapid response efforts and litigation to assist women who urgently need abortions. There are few, if any, links that suggest a strong connection between national ERA advocacy and reproductive rights advocacy in Texas. Without a clear legal opportunity to use the ERA to defend abortion rights, Texas advocates will likely continue reproductive rights advocacy that does not focus on the national ERA as a solution.

Discussion

Both Texas and New York have some of the strongest histories of feminist mobilization in the United States, partially motivated by immigrant influxes that resulted in large numbers of working women. Each state has been home to some of the highest immigration rates in the United States, building large demographics of working-class immigrant women who experienced widespread discrimination (Migration Policy Institute). New York City has long been home to influxes of immigrants, many of whom were working women (Gold 2009). During the first push for a New York Equal Rights Amendment, for example, feminists relied on the existing organizing knowledge and institutions formed by tenant leaders, many of whom were women (Gold 2009). The young feminists of the 1960s were the mentees of an older generation of female tenant leaders, of which many were immigrants, driving "labor feminism" (Gold 2009, 388). Texas, likewise, has long had some of the highest immigration rates in the United States (Migration Policy Institute). Less research has examined the extent to which immigration in Texas drove feminism, but recent trends have identified immigrant women in Texas as the subjects of extreme discrimination and violence, issues that are intrinsically tied to feminist interests in preventing gender-based violence (Wright et al. 2021). As reports of reproductive violence against immigrant women in Texas continue to rise, it is possible

that immigrant women in Texas could escalate a state feminist movement that has already been overwhelmingly led by women of color. Scholars indicate that women play a strong leadership role in the immigrant right's movement in the United States, confirming links between feminism and immigration (Milkman and Terriquez 2012). This paper did not explore these links in depth due to a lack of data about feminism and immigrant populations, particularly in Texas. Future research should consider the role of immigration in driving feminism and what policies this activism is most likely to prioritize.

It is also notable that ERA movements in Texas and New York (both in the 1970s and 2020s) led to considerable opposition. The 2024 ERA movement in New York stirred up well-funded, expansive opposition that could present future obstacles to the feminist policy agenda. Yet in the 1970s in New York, anti-feminists generally lacked organization and connection to national resources, while feminist organizations shared a large network of support and resources. Texas feminist organizations, in contrast, lacked the institutional strength offered by national feminist organizations that New York advocates enjoyed. Indeed, while New York feminist organizations were resilient and well-connected, Texas feminist organizations lacked the resilience and resources to *maintain* political support following the rise of right-wing Christian politics. It is significant, however, that Texas women's organizations had a long-standing history of successful lobbying that was responsible for the passage of the statewide ERA—a fact made more significant by the grassroots nature of the movement. Texas feminists did not have the initial support of the legislature nor the citizens —the ratification of the state ERA was the sole product of strategic, tireless grassroots mobilization by Texas women. It is possible that such grassroots advocacy only magnified the backfire feminists experienced in Texas by religious groups who likely encountered activists, pamphlets, or other interactions with the grassroots movement—an assumption that future research should test.

This article tested the following hypothesis: Reproductive rights, post-*Dobbs,* can act as a central motivator for ERA mobilization, which manifests in more grassroots forms of mobilization. This hypothesis is, in part, correct—Reproductive rights did motivate ERA mobilization in New York. Yet, this was a top-down campaign that presented a constitutional solution to a constitutional problem. Less recent campaigns, such as the Texas ERA

movement, were far more grassroots. This may be the product of less receptive legislatures, however. The hypothesis was additionally incorrect in expecting an increase in mobilization for the federal ERA in Texas following *Dobbs*, which can be explained by a primary focus on rapid-response efforts to restrictive abortion policies and the poor legal performance of the state ERA. As such, this research finds that ERA mobilization is primarily a product of the state's political leaning, including all three branches of government, activist capacity and resources, and policy priorities.

Explaining Trends in ERA Mobilization

The movement to pass the Texas ERA was successful in the face of little opposition, but those same organizations ultimately failed in the face of powerful religious opposition to women's rights beginning in the late 1970s. This may indicate that grassroots mobilization is weaker in sustaining long-term movements. Grassroots mobilization is more resource intensive, relying on the sustained support and commitment of advocates and volunteers, which rallied around the objective of the Equal Rights Amendment, a shorter-term policy goal. The backfire from *Roe* followed shortly after the success of Texas ERA advocates, a time in which grassroots mobilization had subsided considerably, leaving ample space for well-funded anti-feminist voices to take control of the political agenda in Texas. It is also notable that the movement to pass the state ERA and ratify the federal ERA did not raise formidable opposition, as Texas passed both bills before the rise of organized anti-ERA opposition led by Phylis Shafley. The recent movement for a state ERA in New York was far less grassroots in nature than the Texas movement in the 1970s—the result of a feminist majority in the New York legislature. This is especially significant, considering NOW's analysis findings that concluded the federal ERA ultimately failed because of a lack of diversity in state legislatures (National Organization of Women). New York likewise had the advantage of a large network of women's advocacy organizations, such as the National Woman's Party which was based in New York. The strength of women's advocacy groups in New York created a reality in which state lawmakers pushed for the ERA, which is especially significant given that ERAs typically originate from grassroots pushes. This high level of support for a state ERA in New

York can help to explain the success of the ERA in 2024—a strong base that is closely linked to the regression of abortion rights in *Dobbs*.

The current movement for a state ERA in New York indicates that reproductive rights crises drive ERA mobilization—a considerable feat considering that the ERA has largely been relegated to a chapter of second-wave feminism. This is not, however, true in Texas—a pattern that can be explained by several factors. For reproductive rights advocacy to drive ERA mobilization, the following should be true. First, advocates and stakeholders must truly believe that passing an ERA (either federal or state) will have a tangible, everyday impact on their reproductive rights. This is largely contingent on the leaning of the courts and the political culture of the state in question.

Second, there must be existing institutional knowledge to support effective lobbying and advocacy. In the cases of both Texas and New York, advocates had long-standing organizations with grassroots support, lobbying experience, resources, and legitimacy—which was critical for movement building and successful lobbying. The relationships forged between political elites and advocates through these organizations also play a strong role in legitimizing the movement and building support at the legislative level. Particularly in states with very unique political cultures, like Texas, national organizations may not be as welcome nor as prepared to lobby. Successful state and local networks have stakeholder legitimacy and constituent connections that national organizations often lack, making them a critical factor in lobbying success for movements.

Third, reproductive rights advocates may require the security of law to pursue the ERA as a protective remedy rather than having to prioritize rapid-response efforts in the face of a ban. If abortion is banned or restricted in a state, people will actively need assistance from reproductive rights groups—shifting the emphasis from proactive policy to rapid–response service work. This has been the case in Texas, but this reality is also a product of the lack of responsiveness from Texas courts to use the state ERA to protect reproductive rights. Given the state ERA's lack of success in protecting reproductive rights thus far, reproductive rights advocates have little reason to devote their resources to lobbying for the federal ERA. Instead, they must meet the critical demands of each day, which often include helping people access abortions in other places. In states like New York, with highly protective abortion laws, state lawmakers

and advocates have the luxury of time to pursue constitutional protections for reproductive rights.

Fourth, these results indicate that some level of top-down support or advocacy is necessary for advocates to consider passing an ERA a feasible goal. While this may seem an evident conclusion, current polarization and partisanship have made bipartisan support of the ERA nearly impossible; the support of one or two legislators is not enough to power a movement if they are from the minority party. The success of the New York ballot amendment may imply that top-down support from party elites is critical in movement building. Although grassroots advocacy is certainly important— and played a crucial role in securing the federal ERA's ratification in Virginia, the thirty-eighth state—top-down support may become increasingly essential as partisanship increases.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

This research did not consider an in-depth analysis of anti-ERA perspectives or activism, but both were prominent from the inception of the ERA until today. Additionally, it is especially important to note that the ERA, even post-Dobbs, has faltered politically on a national level, as the Senate holds the future of the ERA in its hands. The days of bipartisanship support for the ERA have passed, which may create future challenges for grassroots ERA campaigns in states with less sympathetic legislatures. As such, while these findings are significant and can play a pivotal role in informing future ERA mobilization, New York is one of the most progressive states in the country. As such, modern state ERA campaigns in other states may look far different. This paper's findings on the Texas movement for an ERA, likewise, share mobilization conclusions from a political era that has passed, and as such, should be interpreted more broadly for future application. There are also several other explanations that may account for ERA mobilization in New York and Texas: The existence of well-resourced feminist organizations that had long focused on constitutional change or individual ERA activists that relied on existing networks of activists to spark the movement.

As such, future research should account for polarization patterns, levels of opposition to the ERA, state political culture, and public opinion data, in addition to considering organizational capacity and mobilization trends.

Scholars should also consider how reproductive rights crises like Dobbs motivated other movements, including anti-choice movements. Likewise, state ballot amendments to enshrine the right to abortion in state constitutions should be studied in future analyses of mobilization trends.

Conclusion

The vast majority of state ERAs were passed in the 1970s, with the exceptions of Delaware (2022), Florida (1998), Iowa (1998), Oregon (2014), Nevada (2022), and New York (2024). Other states have limited gender equality protections, but twenty-two states still do not have an ERA. The success in New York should be closely examined by gender equality advocates considering the future of ERA movements. New York officials were strategic in proposing the ERA immediately following *Dobbs*, offering a constitutional solution to a constitutional problem. While the ERA has been tied to abortion in political debates since the 1970s, New York made the ERA a popular solution by using it as a response to a lack of abortion protections in constitutional law. The principal issue with state ERAs lies with inconsistent legal interpretations—but this points to a larger issue of ERAs only pertaining to gender discrimination. The New York ERA considers a wide array of civil rights, including gender and reproductive rights among race, disability, religion, and sexual orientation protections—thereby appealing to a wide coalition of supporters. The concept of an ERA as a protection on gender alone relegates the ERA to a long-standing critique of second-wave feminism: that such advocacy is not intersectional enough. The New York ERA and its movement suggest that an ERA, to appeal to contemporary social justice struggles, must include protections beyond abortion—specifically for reproductive rights. Abortion rights are popular, and ballot referendums to include abortion rights in other state constitutions have been incredibly successful, even in conservative states (Baker 2024). By using the ERA as a tool to protect both gender and abortion explicitly, reproductive rights advocacy may re-popularize the ERA, serving as a means to mobilize people to achieve legal protections on gender and reproductive decision-making that are missing in many states across the United States.

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