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When Good Faith Breaks:
*How Internal and Regional Factors
Decide the Success of Irredentist Conflict*

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
Honors in the Discipline – Political Science
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Abstract

Recent eruptions of ethnic-sponsored conflict throughout the international community have reintroduced the once-discredited concept of irredentism in foreign affairs, and underlined the importance of evaluating the evolution of ethnic conflict in the 21st century. As ethnic movements continually devolve into civil wars, violent stalemates, and icy regional tensions, scholars and world leaders alike must ask: is irredentism a beneficial and effective policy option? Why do some nations with prominent diasporas refrain from engaging in irredentism? What are the factors that enable or inhibit the successful execution of irredentist aims?

This research analyzes two case studies—Russia-Crimea and Greece-Macedonia—in an effort to identify prominent factors that enable or prevent successful irredentism. The two variations of evolution—an aggressive takeover and a low-tension rhetorical stalemate, respectively—offer a unique platform for understanding the internal and regional factors that influence the composition of irredentist conflict and exploring the significances and consequences of such action on both the homeland and regional neighbors.

Introduction

The Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 is the most recent case that clearly underlines the intersection of irredentist conflict and ethnic relations in the 21st century. In late 2013, an intention to shift away from a pro-Russian agenda and realign Ukraine with the Western powers was met with a wave of corruption scandals, civil unrest, coup attempts, and occupied administrative buildings that resulted in the removal of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich from power. To “protect and preserve Russian interests,” Russian President Vladimir Putin authorized troops to storm and occupy the Crimean peninsula in neighboring Ukraine. This was denounced quickly by the West as an illegitimate and imperialistic power move, yet Putin cited the security and protection of ethnic and regional interests as motivations for interference (Treisman 2016; “Ukraine Crisis” 2014). Not only did the contentious annexation of Crimea heighten tensions between Russia and the remainder of Ukraine and the Baltic States, but the UN, NATO, the EU, and the West expressed grave concerns regarding this ethnically-motivated interference in state sovereignty (Treisman 2016).

Irredentism once played a prominent role in the organization of territory after the devolution of empires and conclusions of war. Following the end of World War I, in an attempt to reunite the ethnic German people, reclaim previously seized territory, and reaffirm German superiority within the international system, Adolf Hitler's ethno-nationalist cause ignited an unforgettable series of devastation, death, and despair for decades to come ("World War II" 2009). A unified German race—albeit a temporary one—brought an onslaught of bloody, offensive action paved by military tanks and decorated with bullet holes. It also introduced the much-desired concept of a Greater Germany, which propagated an increase in territory, regional power and ethnic superiority ("World War II" 2009).

After a period of near-hibernation, ethnic conflict has resurfaced with a vengeance. Tensions between the Kurds in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, Catalonia and Spain, and New Caledonia and France have captured today's newsfeeds, bringing the debate on self-determination, human rights, and ethnic relations to the forefront of international affairs (Antoine 2018; Balfour 2017; Griffiths 2016; Qiblawi 2017).

As witnessed throughout the series of geographic successes and horrific repercussions on other ethnic groups, the paradox of compelling successes and crippling consequences is not unusual to cases of irredentism, and it places a unique focus on rational choices made by leading actors. If irredentist conflict leads to such destruction, why do some nations pursue these policies? Considering most irredentist conflicts fail to reach their aims, is irredentism truly a reliable, beneficial, and effective policy to pursue? When reviewing successful and failed cases of irredentist conflict, which factors enabled the homeland to succeed in reuniting their ethnic kind, and which factors prevented the aims to be reached?

This research seeks to elaborate on each of these questions in the following sections, beginning with analyzing the basic foundations and comparing approaches of irredentism, imperialism, and secession, before moving on to discuss the framework and methodology implemented. Based on an analysis of the Russia-Crimea and Greece-Macedonia case studies through the lenses of various theories of irredentism, this paper will make the following argument: While previous theories propose that border arrangements, diaspora size, and a history of regional instability may lead to the success of an irredentist project, the severity of economic-political power differentials between states, international organization membership and its impact on state behavior, and the strength and formation of diaspora relations play a central role in achieving irredentist success.

Foundations and Definitions

Irredentism

Irredentism, or irredentist activity, is defined as the act of physically reuniting ethnic kin separated by previously ordained borders, which can be executed through the absorption of territory, the creation of a new state, or the relocation of existing borders (Ambrosio 2016; Saideman 2005). These three options, respectively, were witnessed in the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea, the 2017 case of Kurdistan's independence vote, and the multi-century dispute over the Alsace-Lorraine region of France following the Franco-Prussian War, World War I, and World War II ("Alsace-Lorraine" 2016; Qiblawi 2017; "Ukraine Crisis" 2014).

In explaining irredentist activity, one central concern remains constant: the fair treatment, protection, and representation of a states' diaspora community by the host states. The diaspora community, constructed of ethnically-related individuals separated from the homeland either by choice as immigrants, or by force as refugees, continues as a point of contention between rival

states, and stands as a call-to-action for coordinating and implementing foreign policy (Saideman 2005).

State A (the homeland) must act in good faith that State B (the host state) will protect and represent the ethnic minority settled in state B: this includes guaranteeing basic human rights, economic prosperity, and individual freedoms guaranteed to the native majority in the host state. States may engage in presidential deal-making, weapons trading, and economic investments, or agree to diplomatic favors such as state dinners, photo-ops, or voting in support of international moves within UN, NATO, or EU discussion, to maintain friendly neighbor relations and ensure these protections (Pinkham 2017). However, rationally speaking, states must ultimately act in their best interests, i.e. the best interests of the majority population, ultimately forfeiting the fair treatment of minorities. When State A's faith in State B's ability to protect and represent their diaspora community is lost, states are forced to turn to less-than-ideal measures on how to resolve the conflict and defend the rights of their ethnic kin. Irredentism, intending to physically reunite the ethnic kin to the homeland, is the most severe of actions.

Often centered around a discussion of power, resources, or ability, the evolution of irredentist conflict takes many forms and is provoked by both individual and compounding elements. Based on previous research and popular theories of state power dynamics and conflict manifestation, the literature supports the factors of economic advantage (and corresponding political power), the presence of a history of instability, international organization membership, and diaspora relations as prominent factors within many case studies of irredentism (Ambrosio 2016; Auton 2016; Saideman 2005; Wimmer 2018). In this research, I focus my analysis on economic-power differentials, international organization membership, and diaspora relations,

and briefly explore other factors including regional history of instability and the presence of opportunity through decreased international policing and weak domestic leadership.

Additionally, the process of maturation is unique for each conflict: the most common types of irredentism include a takeover by aggressive or armed force, peaceful negotiations, a high-tension violent stalemate, and a low-tension, rhetorical stalemate. This research specifically highlights two cases: Russia-Crimea, an example of aggressive, armed takeover, and Greece-Macedonia, characterized as a low-tension, rhetorical stalemate. The diversity of these cases, in addition to many other cases of irredentism, illustrates that irredentist conflict is not required to be inherently violent: Ireland and Northern Ireland's peaceful negotiations, authorized referendums, the UK's "Handover" of Hong Kong sovereignty to China, and, as witnessed in the unique case of Kosovo, pressure or recognition from international supporters can each institute a successful, nonviolent means to an irredentist end (Griffiths 2016; "Handover" 2017).

Throughout history, each case of irredentism has held a diverse series of compounding causes, shifting power dynamics, and varying final results, but five main theories of explaining irredentism appear:

- 1) **Structural:** Regional makeup and opinion regarding state sovereignty over self-determination dictate a state's motivations and success;
- 2) **Realist:** Balance of Power relations and acquiescence towards or tolerance of irredentist states decide how much or how little larger, more powerful states get away with;
- 3) **Rational Choice:** Irredentist concerns or policy may be used as a diversionary tactic or a strategy to increase a politician's domestic popularity;
- 4) **Domestic-Level:** Authorization to engage is dependent on either the homogenous ethnic makeup of the domestic population or the classification of a state as a non-democratic regime devoid of institutional restraints; and,

- 5) **Constructivist:** Common ethnic identities bolster national unity across borders and justify the right to reunify the diaspora to the homeland, regardless of cost (Ambrosio 2016).

The structural approach holds that systems or regions that favor state sovereignty over self-determination will lead to failed irredentist conflict due to the inability to “override the inviolability of sovereign borders” (Ambrosio 2016). The realist argument outlines the importance of power differentials in conflict and the inherent advantages of stronger states. Nazi Germany’s ability to pressure strong Western states like France and Britain to making territorial concessions highlights the possibility for tolerance or acquiescence towards more intimidating states, as compared to weaker states, like Albania, which failed to shift its own post-Yugoslavia border (Ambrosio 2016).

The rational choice approach illustrates the use of irredentist strategies as a diversionary technique to distract the public from domestic issues or as a method to rally support for personal political campaigns “by appealing to nationalist sentiments,” as utilized by Serbian then-politician Slobodan Milošević against Kosovo, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Ambrosio 2016). Domestic explanations are contingent on a state having a relatively ethnically homogenous population, which would ultimately provide a path to irredentism free of domestic pushback. Further, this theory also suggests that non-democratic regimes are able to engage in such action because they do not have institutional or bureaucratic restraints, constitutional protections for minorities, membership to international organizations, nor are they tied to the Democratic Peace Theory-way of problem-solving (Ambrosio 2016). Finally, the constructivist approach lends the framework that socially constructed ideas and concepts are “instrumental [to] determine political outcomes,” as national identity and the draw to be unified prevails over all

hesitations and the inherent right and obligation to unify the country justifies action (Ambrosio 2016).

Each of these approaches is clearly outlined in the foundational basis for extended crises in Europe, the Balkans, Serbia, Armenia, the Baltic States and most notably, Adolf Hitler's invasion of Poland and launch into World War II. Irredentist conflict has been responsible for a significant amount of political, ethnic, and geographic alterations throughout global history. Some states aim to reunite Diasporas across many existing states, opting for a "Greater" nation, similar to an empire, as seen in the recent "Greater Serbia" and "Greater Russia" debates (Ambrosio 2016). Similar to the initial rise in the late 19th and 20th centuries, the present rise of ethnonationalism, secessionism, populism, and devolution within global politics expresses the tedious nature of ethnic relations spanning more than one border.

When this reliance on good faith-diplomacy falters, however, and the homeland no longer believes the interests of their kin are protected, state leaders must choose to discount two major costs before engaging in irredentist conflict:

- 1) **Domestic political costs:** Costs that may hinder the state's access to power and ability to succeed in power struggles, or "costs that contribute to the overall instability of the domestic political situation." Additionally, states are at risk for the endangered welfare and well-being of its citizens, and unstable economic basis (Saideman 2005); and
- 2) **International costs:** Applicable both to the state's role in the international community or to the international community as a whole, costs sparked by action or policy include: the loss of alliances, loss of influence—and/or membership—in international forums, and benefits gained from the participation with states or IGO (Saideman 2005).

In pursuing irredentist activity, states must overlook corresponding independent or collective costs, which are significantly detrimental to the short-term and long-term wellbeing of

a states' people, governance, or rank in the international power hierarchy. By analyzing the costs of conflict on GDP, trade partnerships, investment, regime stability and longevity, the probability of controlled and effective governance of the citizenry, and the human costs that interfere with education, health, employment, human security, and access to resources in contrast to the rights of an external group of ethnic kin, leading actors must decide if these actions are rational (Saideman 2005). In situations where a state or group selects aggressive irredentist policy, it is suggested their interests lie, first and foremost, in the protection of the diaspora community's rights and livelihood.

Imperialism

Imperialism, described as the “state policy, practice, or advocacy [for] extending power and dominion...specifically by direct territorial acquisition, or by gaining political and economic control of other areas,” almost always requires the use of military force or coordinated aggression in order to successfully undermine the legitimacy and sovereignty of a state or region (“Imperialism” 2017). Alternative sources of aggression or military force may include both hybrid warfare and sharp power tactics. Each concept compositionally modern and uniquely concerning, both hybrid warfare and sharp power have introduced new approaches that capitalize on opportunity and multi-faceted campaigns of propaganda, support for ethno-nationalist groups, sweetheart weapons deals, electoral interference, and diplomatic enticements (Pinkham 2017). These strategies effectively delegitimize the domestic sovereignty of a nation's governing leaders and quietly coerce territory into its strong-arm counterpart's possession.

The similarities to irredentism revolve around the concept of ethnic kin and morality. In an effort to liberate citizens from a tyrannical regime and bless them with the freedoms and qualities of a superior lifestyle, the imperialistic strong-hold state may intervene to save and

protect those persecuted under a much freer and morally sound “haven” state (“Imperialism” 2017). Following this logic, comparisons can be extended to irredentist action. State A intervenes in state B’s affairs—sometimes violently—to free citizens from minority persecution under an improper regime, thus restoring the citizens’ rights to organization, language, education, and opportunity, among many other things.

However, it is essential to note that the predominance of imperialist action occurs in favor of aggressive, security-based motives rather than morality-based interests. Irredentist action is not required to be violent in nature, while imperialist action often relies on multiple forms of “aggression” (e.g. propaganda campaigns, manipulative narratives, weakening the state from within, supporting nationalist groups) to successfully topple the reigning leader or disrupt their monopoly of power (Klimkin 2017; Pinkham 2017; Walker 2017).

Secession

Secession, like irredentism, is a movement for change that is motivated by both ethnic tensions and the assertion of the right to self-determination. Defined as “the act of separating from a nation or state and becoming independent,” secession is uniquely different from the concepts of irredentism and imperialism (“Secession” 2018). Like imperialism, irredentism is a movement pursued by the reigning state regime. Secession, however, is crafted at the community level and waged against the reigning party, most recently witnessed in Catalonia’s series of formal declarations, protests, and referendums (Griffiths 2016; Minder 2017).

Successful secession relies on the following three key elements:

- 1) The interests of the State
- 2) The international recognition of the regime; and,
- 3) The strategies employed by secessionist movements (Griffiths 2016).

Additionally, two traditional strategies of movement follow: either the secessionists target the central government regime, demanding increased rights, autonomy, or the formal right to referendums; or, the movement ushers support from the international community into the fight, employing international naming-and-shaming pressure to force the regime's hand. The case of Kosovo's secession, however, introduced a unique third option: the international community may bypass traditional allegiances and opt to recognize the seceded nation directly, refusing the homeland's sovereignty and legitimacy (Griffiths 2016).

Irredentist movements, like secessionist movements, have been privy to ebbs and flows throughout history. The end of World War II and the advancement of global economies, weaponry, war strategies, and shifts in social, ideological, and security factors altered states' interests in maintaining large landmasses. Power-through-geography was no longer necessary when states could "secure capital and resources, and leverage their competitive advantage" through economic means (Griffiths 2016).

However, this "adjustment of interests" ignited a swell of ethnic-centered campaigns for independence. Over 130 states have been established since 1945, and from 2011-2016 over 55 secessionist movements have resurged throughout the world (Griffiths 2016). Most recently, secession movements by Kurds, Catalans, and New Caledonians rocked 2017, reinforcing the pressing responsibility to understand the motivations behind, and evolution of, campaigns focused on ethnic relations, reunification, and independence before violence, chaos, or civil war erupt (Minder 2017).

Comparing Approaches

I have outlined the divergences between irredentism, imperialism, and secession—in their simplest forms—as follows:

- 1) **Irredentism:** A state looks to reclaim territory and reunite the ethnic diaspora, with or without violence, in accordance with the diaspora's wishes;
- 2) **Imperialism:** A state aggressively occupies or annexes a region, without permission, traditionally for security or personal interests; and,
- 3) **Secession:** A minority separates itself from the majority to become an independent nation.

Every case of ethnic conflict is intricately different than others, regardless of decade or region. Because of this, it is exceedingly important to note that these three approaches to action are separated by very fine interpretations of movement, tactics, and motives. These different narratives continue to be argued and expanded by scholars with the rise of each new ethnic conflict. For this reason, I have clearly outlined my definitions of each transformation of ethnic conflict, and the remainder of my paper will reflect the definition and description of irredentism. The intention is not to dispute the true composition of each case study, but rather to focus on factors that predict the type of irredentist conflict that arose.

Conceptual Framework

This research acknowledges two main patterns identified in the evolution of irredentist conflict. Russia's takeover of Crimea showed an offensive and aggressive façade of irredentism. In this paper, the Russia-Crimea case study stands as the "successful" example of irredentism, as ethnic and religious groups were reunited, borders were redrawn, and rights and freedoms were restored to the "oppressed" diaspora population (Nardelli 2015).

The second pattern, a low-tension stalemate, predominantly rhetorical in nature, describes the Greece-Macedonia conflict in the Balkans. While the Macedonian diaspora in Northern Greece has reported severe and frequent human rights abuses, and while each side has clearly expressed interest over the same geographic region for centuries, no formal military-sponsored

action has been taken and no aggressive tactics have been employed. For this reason, this case acts as the “failed” case, as the diaspora has yet to be reunified with the homeland despite severe oppression and significant denials of human rights (US Bureau of Democracy 2016).

These cases provoke many questions regarding potential impediments to employing a successful and fruitful irredentist strategy. In exploring Russia-Crimea and Greece-Macedonia, each with a different “ending” status (for the time being), this research intends to highlight potential factors that encouraged successful irredentism and discuss reasons successful intervention may have been prevented.

Methodology

Throughout this research, I chose to analyze two case studies, one of which was a “success” in irredentist activity, and one of which was a “failure” in irredentist activity; these correlate with the two case studies of Russia-Crimea and Greece-Macedonia. My main research question—“If irredentism is a beneficial and effective foreign policy option, what are the main factors that enable or prevent such success?”—looks to identify and explore a variety of factors among individual nations and two-state conflicts alike. My intention is to identify three main “enabling” and “preventative” factors. Given the varied nature of each of these two cases of irredentism (one an aggressive takeover and one a low-tension stalemate), and due to the compounding nature of many variables, there may be no definitive pattern of success or failure across the two selected case studies. I aim to briefly discuss other factors that may hold a smaller influence over the composition of irredentist conflict before discussing issues associated with these factors.

Research conducted was obtained primarily from scholarly articles and documents provided by NGOs, IGOs and governments such as Human Rights Watch and the United States

Department of State. I accessed articles and documents from BBC News, Amnesty International, and the United Nations, in addition to think tank organizations like Foreign Affairs, the Council on Foreign Relations, and Foreign Policy magazine.

After identifying and discussing the prominent factors in cases of irredentist success and failure, this research briefly discusses limitations and caveats to my argument and findings. This research finishes with a discussion on the short-term and long-term consequences to irredentist action, a comparison of the positives and negatives of this action, and suggestions for foreign policy.

Case Studies

Russia-Crimea

A cauldron of contentious politics, shifting borders, and empirical reign, the Crimean peninsula was subjected to raucous ethnic divides, occupation, and annexation for centuries. The Russian Federation's recently regenerated strength and comparative power advantage within the Baltics was complimented by an interest in reuniting ethnic Russian kin forcibly segregated on the Crimean peninsula ("Crimea Profile" 2018). Instability in Ukraine provided both an opportunity and a need for intervention, as the livelihoods and the safety of ethnic Russians became increasingly endangered.

Relations between the native Tatar minority, ethnic Russians, and Ukrainians only heightened with the return of the Tatar exodus to the peninsula. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the once-deported Tatar minority returned looking to reclaim land. The influx of over 240,000 refugees caused serious housing crises, economic strain, scarcity of resources, and a massive employment crisis ("Crimea Profile" 2018). Ethnic Russians were pushed into segregated, ghetto-like housing, fostering even more hostility, denial of spoken language, and social reprisals throughout the Crimean society. These issues only further elevated the imperative

to realign with the Russian homeland for stability, access to resources, and the security of the ethnic Russian identity, language, culture, and interests.

However, from 2010 onward, accusations of vote-rigging, fears of corruption, and a shift in public opinion towards the West from a Russian ally stymied Russian influence in Ukrainian politics. The loss of critical Russian alliance and Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich threatened the future guarantees of rights and representation for ethnic Russians in Ukraine. Over 800,000 ethnic Russians began protesting these changes, and soon the Ukrainian presidential administration administered bans on the Russian language and the right to protest, preventing ethnic Russians from attempting to advocate for their interests or assume influence or roles of leadership within local political offices (“Ukraine Crisis” 2014). Ukrainian elections for state and local leaders were held, but polling stations were located in regions of Ukraine where ethnic Russians were absent (“Ukraine Crisis” 2014). After Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich fled the state and an opportunistic coup attempt failed, the Kremlin granted Russian President Vladimir Putin permission to legally annex the Crimean peninsula. On March 18, 2014, Crimea returned to the Russian Federation’s control (“Ukraine Crisis” 2014).

However, Moscow’s irredentist concerns did not stop with Crimea. Unrest continued to rise in the regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, and Novoazovsk regions of Ukraine, each located along the Russian border and each heavily populated by ethnic Russians (“Ukraine Crisis” 2014). Each of these four regions quickly moved to implement referendums declaring independence from Ukraine with the intent to realign the regions with the Russian Federation once again. Protests and clashes with Ukrainians intensified following the annexation of Crimea, leading Russia to send humanitarian aid to ethnic Russians located within the Luhansk region of Ukraine (“Ukraine Crisis” 2014).

Greece-Macedonia

Similar to that of Ukraine, instability—continuously prompted by Eurasian Ottoman control, regional wars, civil wars, and irredentist and genocidal activity—has most severely impacted the internal composition of regional relations within the Balkans. The First Balkan War (1912-1913) defeat of Bulgaria by Serbia, Greece, and Romania immediately sparked Bulgarian irredentist activity, causing the Second Balkan War (1913), as Bulgaria attempted to reclaim lost territory that had been absorbed by the Turks (Allcock 2017). Through appeasement, the Second Balkan War's Treaty of Bucharest (1913) partitioned parts of Macedonia to Bulgaria. From here, Macedonia became the easy target for expanding territory based of ethnic composition and historical grievances ("Treaty of Bucharest" 2010). Serbia claimed the northern and central parts of Macedonia and Greece followed, claiming the southern Macedonian territory.

For decades, Macedonian citizens were subjected to intense assimilation and identity imposition, severe Serbian colonization, and later, Bulgarian occupation, which heeded the expulsion of "undesirables" (Danforth 2017). Immediately following World War II, the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) prompted thousands of Macedonians and Greeks to flee the Greek State, activating even more severe social tensions and pressing economic crises (Allcock 2017).

The peaceful establishment of the Republic of Macedonia from Yugoslavia in 1991 in a time of extreme regional inability, civil wars, and violent secession was looked upon as a positive step for Balkan advancement. However, the Kosovar refugee crisis (1991) caused an influx of Serbian refugees, costing Macedonia economic stability and foreign investments, decreasing Macedonian living standards, raising unemployment from 30 percent to over 50

percent, and increasing security crises between armed Albanian militants and Macedonian security forces (Allcock 2017).

The Macedonian state has been long unable to recover from a history of partition, exploitation by larger nations, and multiple waves of refugees. Secession attempts by minorities within Macedonia's borders and external attempts to create a Greater Serbia, Greater Bulgaria, Greater Greece, or Greater Albania, caused the need for forced-hand diplomacy regarding inadequate protections, most notably recognized in the Greek Naming Dispute that prevents Macedonia from gaining membership to the EU and NATO organizations (Danforth 1995; Danforth 2017).

In 2005, the European Community (later renamed the European Union) concluded that Macedonia met all appropriate criteria for accession and Greece's objection to the use of the "Macedonia" name was invalid, as it implied no claim to Greek territory (Danforth 2017). However, Greece pressured the EC to retract their conclusion and dismiss Macedonia. Per Greece's official claims, the "appropriation" of the Macedonian name is a "falsification of history," and is viewed as a felony offense (Danforth 1995). The Greece-Macedonian conflict has been riddled with human rights abuses toward the Macedonian minority throughout the Northwest region of Greece. The conflicting tensions and naming dispute has led to a continuous low-violence, rhetorical stalemate for over twenty years (Danforth 2017).

The conflict reaches further than the naming dispute, with Greece implementing an economic blockade towards Macedonia, which severely devastated the Macedonian population and dissuaded foreign investment within Macedonia. Greece and Macedonia signed the Interim Accords in 1995, as Greece agreed to halt the economic blockade and Macedonia made concessions on their national symbol (Danforth 2017).

The Macedonian diaspora within Northern Greece has been subjected to a high level of human rights denials. Freedom of speech, religious freedom, freedom of the press, the right to assemble, and the right to self-determination have all been heavily policed or denied under the rule of the Greek political administration. In addition to the international naming dispute that bans Macedonians from officially being recognized as Macedonians, Greece has implemented domestic legislative measures that charge ethnic Macedonians with felony convictions if a Macedonian openly declares themselves Macedonian, as Greece deems it a “plagiarism of the Greek” identity (Danforth 1995).

Following the Greek civil war, language oaths were implemented within Greek society, to force Macedonians to renounce their Slavic dialect and subscribe to the Greek language or face significant repercussions (Danforth 1995). The Macedonian language is recognized as an official world language by all nations except Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece. The intensive interest of imposing homogenous national culture on a diaspora with different, but related, linguistic and cultural traditions has highlighted the concept of “ethno-specificity,” or declaring allegiance to a set culture and identity that is distinctly different from neighboring identities. This concept and process outlines the potential rise of ultra-nationalist groups and intensified ethnic conflict, especially between diaspora communities in host nations (Danforth 1995).

The Greek government has denied the Macedonian diaspora the right to receive an education, attend church, and publish radio, TV, or newspapers in their own language. Further, Macedonians are banned from establishing a cultural organization to promote and protect the existence of the Macedonian minority and culture—it is against the interests of Greece and therefore illegal—and Greek law requires police to interfere and disperse any celebrations of Macedonian heritage, including festivals for folk songs and traditional dance (Danforth 1995).

Macedonians' ability to gain employment within Northern Greece is significantly restricted due to their placement in a small, ghetto-like, undeveloped region of land and a history of forced displacement, persecution, and the Greek government's refusal to recognize college degrees from Macedonian institutions. Activists who protest Greek administration are removed from their jobs, denied entry into Greece, and deprived of Greek citizenship or protections, as Macedonians are prohibited from gaining recognition or representation within Greek society (Danforth 1995). Further, the denial of political amnesty following the Greek civil war, in conjunction with the 1982 and 1985 laws, prohibited returning Macedonians from reclaiming property and possessions abandoned while fleeing this unrest, ultimately crippling an already-struggling population from achieving economic stability (Danforth 1995).

These extensive abuses on human rights and denials of freedom have afflicted from 150,000 to two million ethnic Macedonians within Greece (Chepkomoi 2016; US Bureau of Democracy 2016). Falsified census data and limitations on the circulation and content of Greek censuses has caused much debate over the intensity and prevalence of the Macedonian diaspora within Greece, only further highlighting the institutionalized denial of representation, self-determination, and basic freedoms and rights endowed by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNGA 1948).

Comparing the severity and extent of these abuses and infringements on ethnic Macedonians within Greece to those of ethnic Russians within Crimea and the border regions of Ukraine, what prevented Macedonia from successfully reclaiming their diaspora, and what enabled Russia to successfully annex and protect their ethnic kin?

Analysis of Cases

Inductive reviews of the Russia-Crimea and Greece-Macedonia case studies above reveal the following patterns:

- 1) States with greater economic and power advantages are more likely to engage in, and succeed in, irredentist conflict, while economically weaker states are more likely to be deterred from engaging in formal ethnic conflict;
- 2) States with aspirations of joining an international organization may be dissuaded from engaging in offensive action, but disinterest in and the lack of membership may enable and assure states to act in their interests without fear of reprisals; and
- 3) States that have a high level of domestic support and/or a diaspora community with a common history of experiences may be more likely to successfully pursue irredentist action.

While these factors and patterns may be present in the two selected case studies, there continues to be a smaller selection of minor contributing factors that may also lend influence to the success or failure of irredentist conflict, especially if paired with another minor or major factor. The lack of international policing, the weakness of leadership, the presence of a contentious, conflict-ridden regional history, and the size or dispersal of ethnic kin were each smaller contributing factors within the two case studies. While these factors are each found within their respective case studies, their ability to enable or prevent successful irredentist conflict remains reliant on a combination of other compounding factors.

The following discussion focuses on the three key variables influencing whether irredentist actions are successful.

Variables

Economic and Power Differentials. The ancient concept of “might” once chronicled the economic and political power advantage of a state, yet similar ideas remain constant throughout modern political philosophy and international affairs. Thrasymachus, in Plato’s *Republic*, claims that if injustice is “on a large enough scale, [it] is stronger, freer, and more masterly than

justice,” and that the concept of justice “is nothing but the advantage of the stronger” (Rauhut). A less philosophical approach to today’s debate on modern power relationships has taken the forefront, yet still focuses on economic abilities, alliances, and status within the international hierarchy.

The Realist theory of irredentism, as discussed previously in this paper, cites the balance of power between states as the most important factor within international conflict (Ambrosio 2016). States with a significant power advantage are easily able to pressure smaller states or weaker regional neighbors into making severe concessions to border arrangements and state sovereignty. As Ambrosio discusses, the level of tolerance given to a strong, threatening state decides the greed and severity of measures pursued throughout an irredentist conflict (2016). If states look to appease, as previously done with Nazi Germany in the late 1930’s, the aggressive state will continue to advance and expand their geographic range, thus assuming significantly more power and legitimacy.

But what makes a state “powerful” in the eyes of other states? Some power is naturally assumed throughout history as states survive crumbling empires better than their neighbors, some states benefit more from trade or agriculture, and some states avoided a history of costly wars; often, power is enlivened by money. Money defines ability, which in turn defines power. States with higher GDPs are less reliant on outside sponsors for weaponry, resources, or troops, should a conflict arise. Economic stability and the privilege to be economically autonomous, without a dire reliance on international trade or outside investment, allows nearly complete freedom for the state to act in accordance with its own needs at every turn.

Traditionally—although some smaller states have engaged in war with much larger counterparts—smaller states are unable to afford the economic, political, and social costs of war.

They are bound by the strategic political and economic risks of losing outside investment or valuable trade partnerships and jeopardizing crucial political alliances often dissuades smaller states from engaging in conflict. In cases of irredentism especially, it is too great a risk for too little a reward (Saideman 2005).

Considering this framework, Russia's choice to annex Crimea makes sense: Russia reports nearly \$1.28 trillion in GDP per year, much greater than Crimea's \$4.3 billion annual GDP (Factbook 2018). Russia's supply of gas and monopolization of pipelines creates an even greater resource-reliance on the state, as well. Crimea's heterogeneous composition and decades of ethnic tensions, combined with presidential instability and corruption in Ukraine, only widened the divide between the refined power advantage Russia had over Crimea.

Additionally, the reputation of Russia within the Baltic States as an untouchable and uncontrollable wildcard superpower, a history of victories against fellow Baltic neighbors, and the monopoly over resources clearly outlines the inherent freedoms and appeasement gifted to the Russian Federation without question. Following the annexation of Crimea, NATO and the EU moved to impose severe sanctions against Russia as punishment for violating the international post-war order and rule of law. Yet due to a fear of reprisals and a reliance on Russian gas, multiple Baltic states refused the sanction agreements ("Sharp Divisions" 2016).

Greece and Macedonia, however, have a uniquely different problem: while Greece produces nearly 20 times as much GDP (Greece produces \$194.6 billion to Macedonia's \$10.9 billion per year), neither nation is economically stable enough to risk engaging in armed conflict. Greece's severe financial crisis (2009-2016) caused extreme economic insecurity, high unemployment, rising poverty, the onset of brain drain, and decreased access to essential services like healthcare (Amadeo 2018; Rodgers 2015). Additionally, Greece has absorbed over 62,000

refugees fleeing from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria, which only further strained their already-struggling economy (IRC 2018). Similarly, Macedonia's own history of refugee crises and political instability has plagued the state with extremely high unemployment and poverty rates. Families rely on remittances sent from sons working in Greece and neighboring states for survival, giving Greece another piece of economic leverage (Danforth 1995).

Macedonia's struggle to retain close ties with the United States may be due in part to the US's relations with Greece, or because of a return to the America First approach to isolationism, but Macedonia struggles to maintain necessary powerful alliances that could—or would—counter Greece or provide assistance to Macedonia in its irredentist fight. Further, Greece's blocking of Macedonian membership to NATO gives Greece yet another advantage over Macedonia, as NATO's status as a military bloc provides a system of collective defense against aggressors, and coveted military services such as international liaisons and counter-terrorism intelligence collection that are unavailable to Macedonia.

The Role of International Organization Membership. While membership within an international organization like the United Nations, European Union, or North Atlantic Treaty Organization comes with useful benefits, the rigorous process of accession into these organizations comes with countless specific requirements, guidelines, and expectations after being admitted.

To join NATO, states must engage in a series of high-level talks with NATO officials that ensure a state's dedication to “supporting democratic reforms...the establishment of civilian and democratic control over military forces...fostering patterns and habits of cooperation, consultation, and consensus-building...and promoting good neighborly relations” (NATO 2018). Additionally, states must prove they have:

- 1) “a functioning democratic political system based on a market economy;”
- 2) “the fair treatment of minority populations;”
- 3) “a commitment to the peaceful resolutions of conflicts;”
- 4) “the ability and willingness to make a military contribution to NATO operations;” and
- 5) “a commitment to democratic civil-military relations and institutional structures” (NATO 2018).

To join the European Union, states must have:

- 1) “stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;”
- 2) “a functioning market economy and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces in the EU;” and
- 3) “the ability to take on and implement effectively the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union” (“Conditions” 2018).

However, as noted in the European Union’s requirements for membership, states are required to act in accordance with the values and agendas of the partners, alliances, and investors of each organization. While the benefits of international organization have long been coveted by many states, membership ultimately limits states’ freedom of political movement and autonomy of action. If states do not comply, or if states make unfavorable moves, they risk losing key political allies, economic investments, or may be hit by crippling sanctions by multiple actors.

Saideman and Ayers theorized that states may not hold international organizations at such a high value—that interest in joining organizations was on the decline and would not be enough to deter states from engaging in conflict (2005). Moreover, while they acknowledge organizational ties may hold some influence over states’ decision-making, they do not believe states would be obligated to act in accordance with these guidelines and the interests of the alliance in the face of a growing conflict that threatens the stability of its domestic affairs (Saideman 2005). However, it is possible that pressures from the international community itself

may shape the behaviors of states, ultimately deterring them from initially engaging in conflict or successfully completing the irredentist project (Ambrosio 2001).

The Greece-Macedonia conflict is uniquely tied to this factor, as Macedonia is currently involved in the first rounds of NATO accession and Greece is dutifully committed to denying their accession. Greece's leverage on Macedonia's membership status has acted as a forced-hand diplomatic route for forcing concessions on behalf of Macedonian interests. By challenging the name and sovereignty of Macedonia, Greece prevents Macedonia's accession into NATO and the EU, while Macedonia's desperation to join NATO and the EU prevents Macedonia from engaging in formal or aggressive action towards Greece. Macedonia, to qualify for NATO and the EU as outlined in the requirements above, must be committed to ensuring the fair treatment of minorities, protect the human rights of outstanding minorities, and be committed to peaceful solutions for conflict, officially halting any state-sponsored attempt to forcefully reunify their diaspora suffering from abuses at the hands of Greek administration.

International organization membership can also work the opposite way: Russia refused to join NATO or the EU, allowing the state to be free of restricting political ties or alliance obligations. A lack of membership—and the split membership of neighboring Baltic States—also prevented Russia from experiencing severe repercussions from NATO and the EU after the annexation of the Crimean peninsula (“Sharp Divisions” 2014). Consisting of many Western states, NATO called for strict sanctions following Crimea's “illegal” and “illegitimate” annexation in 2014 (Pinkham 2017). However, some NATO states and members of the EU rejected the proposed sanctions, as they were Baltic States and heavily reliant on Russian gas and investments (“Sharp Divisions” 2014).

In this scenario, regional leaders acting on behalf of their most rational interest (energy security, economic investment) protected Russia from crippling penalties for successfully carrying out an irredentist strategy. The case of Macedonia reveals that at times, regional actors (Greece) and aspirations to join organizations (NATO) can prevent states from successfully reunifying the diaspora to the homeland. Accession requirements, accordance with alliance rules, and economic-power differentials, however, are not the only factors that enable or prevent the reunification. The basic foundations of irredentism illustrate the homeland seeking to regain the diaspora—but does the diaspora community wish to be reunited to the homeland?

Diaspora Relations. The role of the diaspora community in irredentist conflict is a complex and multi-faceted debate. While many scholars theorize that irredentist conflict is ignited by, or is successful because of border arrangements, Saideman and Ayers report that borders do not define the success of irredentist action nor do they sponsor the pursuit of irredentism (2005). Instead, interstate borders have a unique impact on the status of the diaspora community, their historical development, cultural awareness, and public opinion towards the homeland (Saideman 2005). In turn, it is a combination of these factors and qualities that may lead to the success of an irredentist movement.

Border assignments influence the identity of the diaspora, as identities—personal, societal, and cultural—are shaped by experiences within distinct communities. Separation from the homeland, whether near or far, can cause a distinct division between two populations of the same ethnic origin. A resilient, strong sense of identity that connects the diaspora to the homeland may be imposed due to a long-term, violent conflict (as seen with Palestinians or Greeks and Turks on the island of Cyprus), which may motivate the homeland to seek reunification with the diaspora (Saideman 2005).

On the other hand, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and correspondingly, the “disintegration of the old Russian Empire” left over 25 million Russians wondering “what it meant to be Russian” after being displaced outside of Russian borders in the 1990s (Saideman 2005). While this may be true for some Russian diasporas throughout the Baltic States, the diaspora of ethnic Russians within Crimea remained specifically dedicated to reunification with the homeland for over 60 years after Crimea’s return to Ukraine in 1954. This may have been due to the intertwined history of partition and control, the close geographic proximity to the Russian homeland, or the high concentration—ethnic Russians held the majority at over 65 percent—of ethnic Russians occupying the peninsula (“Crimea Profile” 2018; Factbook 2018).

This concept of “oneness” with the homeland dictates the public opinion, political agenda, and societal interests of the diaspora community within the host nation and the surrounding irredentist conflict. The representation of, or intention to represent, the ethnic diaspora community by the homeland provokes a much higher rate of nationalism and patriotism, inciting both regional tensions within the host nation and invitations to the homeland to act (Wimmer 2018). As witnessed in the Ireland-Northern Ireland conflict, a peacefully negotiated plan for separation of ethnic identities bolstered by religious leaders on both sides of the conflict who worked to foster the “oneness” connection and cohesiveness of the religious identities (Sandal 2018). Leaders worked to patch the societies marred by decades of terrorism, known as The Troubles, to heal societal tensions, stop religious violence, and form a lasting peace between Protestants and Catholics (Sandal 2018).

The strength and composition of relations of which the diaspora community is interested in pursuing is a significant factor that enables a homeland to engage in reunification measures in both the short-term and long-term prospects. A cohesive cultural connection to the homeland is

essential to the security and stability of internal relations, society, and governance following the annexation or reorganization of borders. Further, this “oneness” of ties to the ethnic history and interests allow for cohesive and streamlined domestic policy from the state’s governing bodies, further allowing the now-reunified populations an unthreatened right to freedoms, rights, and representation.

This cultural “oneness” may prove to be elusive, as research by Saideman and Ayers suggests there may be a constructed social hierarchy within those of the same ethnic allegiance (2005). In irredentism, the guiding force of nationalism—“the beliefs and attitudes defining who is the us, who are the relevant others, [and] the strength of feelings about various communities”—may be less contingent on overarching ethnic allegiance, but rather on moments, crises, and struggles experienced by the diaspora versus the homeland (Saideman 2005). Superseding ethnic allegiance is a spectrum of “*us*-ness and *other*-ness” that lifts domestic ethnic kin above the diaspora community, perhaps because this group has encountered a series of life experiences vastly different from those within the homeland (Saideman 2005). While the fate and security of ethnic kin is high on the list of concerns for the homeland’s citizenry, the interests of domestic kin may be more important—“they want their kin to do well, but to stay put” (Saideman 2005). This may not always be the case, however, as some states may experience the same, or similar, conflicts, discrimination, or crises as their diasporas, thus eliminating the potential strain or social distance between the homeland and the diaspora.

For decades, the Macedonian diaspora in Greece maintained a consistently strong level of interest in returning to the Macedonian homeland, and the Macedonian homeland continued to express great support for their return. However, a few key factors have prevented this reorganization from occurring. The Macedonian diaspora stems far beyond Northern Greece—

Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia each maintain a significant community of Macedonians founded following multiple post-war annexations and the partitioning of Macedonia. While ethnic ties to the homeland remain strong, the geographic proximity to, and the fractured nature of, the homeland may lessen the imminent desire to reunify. Additionally, as previously discussed in this paper, Macedonia is often plagued with economic issues, corrupt leaders and police, and downfalls of its own. Unemployment is high, GDP is low, and the state remains unrecognized by multiple other international actors and continues to be prevented from gaining stronger international legitimacy through other channels. Macedonian families send their sons to work across borders and rely on the remittances sent home, highlighting the logistical dilemmas of poverty and concerns of unemployment within Macedonia itself. If the homeland cannot support its current kin, is it rational for dispersed kin to return home, knowing a secure livelihood is still not guaranteed?

In the 2014 case of Crimea, Russia's ability to reclaim the Crimean peninsula was enabled by the significant majority of ethnic Russians occupying the peninsula, and their overwhelming, decades-long desire to rejoin the Russian homeland. This was partially sponsored by the return of the Tatar minority in the 1990s—which heightened community tensions and forced ethnic Russians into ghetto housing—and modern denials of the right to speak the Russian language, have or achieve representation in the political sector, and a series of reversals on policies and plans that were formerly pro-Russian in nature (“Rights in Retreat” 2014; “Ukraine Crisis” 2014). Public interest in realigning with the Russian homeland was high, and given the opportunity, Russia came to the rescue.

Table 1, below, illustrates the presence and severity of these three factors in terms of the Russia-Crimea and Greece-Macedonia case studies.

Table 1. Attendance of Dominant Factors in Case Studies

Case Studies	Economic-Power Differentials (money=ability=power)	Interest in International Organization Membership	Diaspora Relations/ Strength of the Connection to the Homeland
	<i>degree</i>	<i>yes/no</i>	<i>interest in reunification</i>
Russia-Crimea	HIGH	NO	HIGH
Greece-Macedonia	HIGH*	YES	MODERATE-HIGH**

*economic crisis in Greece may account for changes in this classification

**economic and employment troubles in Macedonia may account for the lessening of this interest, in terms of rationality and logistics

Minor Contributing Factors. In addition to economic-power relations, international organization membership, and diaspora relations, a few other factors may provide minor influence over the success or failure of an irredentist conflict. In reviewing the case of Russia-Crimea, an overlooked pattern emerged: the presence of domestic and international opportunity. Internal volatility due to Ukrainian President Yankovych’s corruption scandals, removal of power, and the public’s corresponding mass protests created the opportunity to emerge as a force of support and stability in a struggling ally’s state. A “Putin the Improviser” theory was proposed to explain Putin’s humble obligation to secure and protect regional and neighborly interests—not because he wanted to reclaim territory, but because domestic instability quickly becomes transnational instability (Treisman 2016). Putin had the overwhelming support of the ethnic Russian diaspora on the peninsula, which was actively looking to realign with the homeland after recent Ukrainian politics looked to align with the West over Russia.

Further, this altruistic intent to “save” the weak and struggling Crimea from collapse lacked the proper checks by other states at the top of the international power hierarchy. High-profile international distractions—US President Barack Obama’s second inauguration, rising North Korean nuclear tension, the 2014 Sochi Olympics, Edward Snowden’s NSA leaks, the ousting of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi from power, and chemical attacks waged on civilians by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad—captured and averted the international community’s attention away from any signs of sharp power, propaganda campaigns, or low-key infiltrations on behalf of Moscow.

While Greece and Macedonia’s irredentist conflict has continued for too long to be distracted by international events, smaller states in the Balkans, like Macedonia, are easily forgotten and overlooked compared to their more notable neighbors, i.e. Greece, Turkey, Italy, the Middle East, and Western Europe. Additionally, the world’s focus on the War on Terror, the Cold War (past or present), and the rise of ISIS within the Middle East diverts attention away from less formally troublesome regions, like the Balkans. The status as a low-violence ethnic conflict demotes the severity of the issue, in comparison to that of a heavily-armed ISIS. However, some theories suggest that the Balkans has the potential to turn into the next Middle East, due to heavy grievances with border assignments, diaspora abuses, and a toxic economic system. Also, the Balkans, like the Middle East, is known for having a long history of regional instability, civil war, and failed irredentist conflict.

Some scholars suggest that the presence of a fractured and violent regional history makes the region inherently more susceptible to the same conflicts, by way of the domino theory of violence and the spiral of violence theory (Auton 2016). In their most direct form, each of these theories suggests that violence breeds violence through uncontrollable environmental factors.

However, a counterargument to this suggests that the presence of such a history would dissuade states from engaging in similar conflict, as the short-term and long-term consequences of violence, civil war, and instability are intimately well known within all societies. In combination with other economic, political, and power factors, this counterargument may provide insight into Macedonia’s hesitation to engage in irredentist conflict with Greece.

Table 2, below, illustrates the presence of these minor contributing factors within the Russia-Crimea and Greece-Macedonia case studies.

Table 2. Attendance of Minor Contributing Factors in Case Studies

Case Studies	Opportunity & Weak Leadership	Extended History of Contention	Dispersal of Diaspora/Size
	<i>degree</i>	<i>degree</i>	<i>size & distribution</i>
Russia-Crimea	HIGH	MODERATE	LARGE; WIDE
Greece-Macedonia	MODERATE*	MODERATE	UNKNOWN; MODERATE

*A series of coups and corruption scandals have plagued Macedonia, but the absence of mass protests or the need for international intervention may lessen this degree

Following this analysis, if a combination of factors does enable successful irredentist conflict, can irredentist conflict be a truly beneficial and effective policy option? Does the results of a successful case of irredentism produce results that align with the interests of the citizenry and the state? In addition to restoring the freedoms and rights previously denied to the ethnic diaspora, fostering greater social cohesion, and promoting representation of interests, states and regime leaders can benefit from higher popularity, an edge above political opponents,

and a unified body without significant factions that allow for streamlined policy and easy political progress.

Is it Effective?

Interests of the Citizen. Does successful irredentist intervention effectively benefit the interests of the citizenry? Maybe. Uniting a minority diaspora community back to the ethnic homeland immediately enables the newly integrated ethnic kin into a majority-led society looking to represent their interests. In government and society both, formerly persecuted or oppressed individuals are now granted exceedingly beneficial expansions in their representation, freedoms, opportunities, and social cohesion. In the Russia-Crimea case, the diaspora communities gained the freedom to join in political discourse, run for seats in Parliament or a Cabinet, and obtain legitimate representation on social, cultural, or political issues. Ethnic Russians in Crimea had reportedly high approval ratings of their newfound Russian geopolitical status, as Russian domestic and foreign policy was increasingly kinder and better suited for their interests and culture (Pinkham 2017). However, for non-Russians newly annexed into the Russian Federation's reign, this streamlined approach to policymaking may be extremely counteractive and detrimental to the safety and security of their interests, as revenge-seekers may explicitly target previously-oppressive populations.

For the reunified diaspora, annexation, absorption, or realigned borders may grant a greater sense of representation, empowerment, and strength within the entire international system, thus benefitting societal and personal interests of this population. Conversely, the psychological effects of being a small minority in conflict with a larger majority—experiencing abuses on basic human rights, limited freedoms, segregated housing, or denied right to speak a native language—can be increasingly damaging.

However, as witnessed in the Russia-Crimea case, annexation may have an adverse effect in the international system, as the majority of top world powers have decried Russia's actions as illegitimate, illegal, and intentional acts of malicious destabilization. Combating domestic illegitimacy from the host nation is also increasingly difficult. Many diaspora communities are repeatedly denied representation or recognition due to inaccuracies of government-sponsored censuses (US Bureau of Democracy 2016).

In reuniting those repressed by other regimes into the ethnic homeland, precious freedoms are returned: the simple right to speak a language or be taught in a school that speaks the native diaspora language, the right to attend a school, or gain employment, healthcare, and legitimate shelter. The freedom to organize, to be politically active, or to express views, long denied by many majority governments to suppress dissent and secure a monopoly on power, are immediately given to individuals long deprived of a voice, or outlet to speak.

In bringing the ethnic kin back to the ethnic homeland, representation, recognition, freedoms, and basic opportunities each play into an even greater sense of unity. Swells of nationalism and patriotism boosted Vladimir Putin's popularity by 30 percent to an astronomical 90 percent from Russian citizens (Nardelli 2015). Finally free from decades or centuries of oppression and repression, scapegoating and segregation, a celebration of strengthened culture and belonging boosts social, human, and community interests of the diaspora and homeland kin alike.

States' Interests. The positives of irredentist actions do not stop at the citizenry. While states' benefits appear to be much more narrow, states still benefit from a streamlined foreign and domestic policy agenda. Following irredentist activity, it is increasingly clearer which interests the state should pursue, as there is an even greater majority population outnumbering the much

smaller minorities. In terms of personal political gain, Vladimir Putin and Slobodan Milošević, both benefitted from increased political popularity against electoral opponents in the pursuit of irredentist claims (Ambrosio 2016; Pinkham 2017).

Then again, this may be where states' benefits end. Irredentist interventions may affect regional stability, causing refugee crises—as witnessed in Russia's occupation of the Crimean peninsula—or igniting civil wars—as seen in Israel and Palestine (“Crimea Profile” 2018). Likewise, the arrangement of newly-annexed ethnicities—i.e. miniscule clusters of Tatars and Ukrainians absorbed into the Russian Federation—within the social hierarchy of the homeland raises the potential for revenge-motivated human rights violations by civilians and government institutions alike, which only furthers the cycle of violence and deepens ethnic divides within the region. Further, in revisiting the Rational Choice theory, war is economically and politically costly. Trade partnerships, oil deals, political alliances, counterterrorism forces, economic benefits from tourism, and the security of a leader's own reign each may be jeopardized in the pursuit of irredentist conflict.

Limitations

This research, and the approach taken to conduct this research, encountered a series of limitations and caveats. Irredentism, diverged from ethnic- and group-based conflict, is naturally afflicted by a long series of compounding, nearly inseparable factors that contribute to the success or failure of the mission. Because of this, difficulties in clearly identifying and defining variables were frequent roadblocks, especially regarding the diaspora relations factor. Intentionally skewed census data, the lack of comprehensive records, and manipulated reports of abuses prevented the true understanding of the size of the diaspora, the overall severity and frequency of the abuses.

At this time, due to the lack of sufficient resources on the Internet, and the lack of trustworthy or legitimate resources provided by states or international organization (States block access to regions where minorities are forced to live.), I decided to focus solely on the diaspora's social connections to the homeland, with the intention to continue researching to expand and uncover the importance of severity of abuses and the size of the diaspora.

Due to the varying nature, patterns, and execution of irredentist conflict, difficulties were also faced in forming the clear definition of irredentism. Similarly, this research was also exposed to divergences between case studies, which interfered with clean, linear analyses of my chosen factors in multiple settings. As previously stated in my methodology, in preparing for these divergences, this research aims to highlight and discuss popular and significant contributing factors, rather than propose a definitive framework for the analysis of irredentist activity.

Furthermore, the nature of this research was based on a qualitative design. I relied on documentaries, country reports, maps, government documents, and scholarly articles to identify variables and obtain my conclusions. This research does not contain extensive quantitative data, significance tests, or statistical reviews, which exposes my argument to issues of opinion and subjectivity.

Finally, there is great debate over validity in Russia's cited motive for the 2014 annexation of the Crimean peninsula in Ukraine. While Russian President Vladimir Putin has officially declared the aggressive takeover of Crimea as an act of irredentism in an effort to ensure the protection and representation of the ethnic Russian kin inhabiting the peninsula, many scholars and observers, including myself, have expressed concerns regarding this characterization. Tending to favor a defense-based or security-based argument for imperialism,

many in the field of international relations reject the official word of Moscow focused on ethnic rights and human rights. This discrepancy, depending on the analysis and framework a scholar chooses to employ, poses a significant detriment to my argument. In this research, I have chosen to use the Russia-Crimea case study out of modernity, clarity of action, and government-cited motivations.

Previously noted as the most pressing caveat, irredentist activity is intricately unique per conflict. Therefore, it is increasingly difficult to definitively elaborate on a distinct structure, pathway, or pattern of actions that is clear, consistent, and uniform in all cases of irredentism. I have chosen, in this research, to place my emphasis on the factors that lead to success or failure of irredentist missions, rather than refining classifications of conflict. The differences between irredentism and moral imperialism are very slight—overlap is inherently unavoidable. Given the tractability of these ethnic-relation-based conflicts, I have chosen to address the similarities and continue to use the Russia-Crimea case study.

Conclusion

“The record of irredentism is generally one of self-destruction,” writes Saideman and Ayers (2005). While it is true that the predominance of irredentist cases have failed to reunify the homeland and diaspora, and while most irredentist states anticipate severe political and economic repercussions from the international community, irredentist leaders place potential domestic and international costs behind the nationalistic interests of the domestic majority in choosing to engage in these policies (Saideman 2005).

Successful irredentist conflict brings a greater sense of social cohesion, personal empowerment, and national pride to the forefront of civil society. Long-coveted freedoms, such as obtaining an education, employment, or financial stability and the rights to assemble, practice

religion, or celebrate culture are restored to the ethnic kin, drastically improving their standards of living.

The homeland's promise to provide safety and security, and to serve the interests of the diaspora has provoked a higher rate of satisfaction within the homeland, as witnessed in the Russia-Crimea case. Following Crimea's annexation, ethnic Russians within Crimea and the homeland both reported higher satisfaction with Putin's decision to protect and secure the rights of their ethnic kin through irredentist, people-first policy strategies that went against the post-war international order (Treisman 2016; Pinkham 2017). Because of Putin's overt defiance towards the West and international norms, Putin's approval ratings increased significantly, and this swell of nationalistic support secured Putin's regime, previously embroiled in domestic turmoil, although new reports say this swell of support could be fading ("Crimea Consensus" 2017; Nardelli 2015). In addition to increased support for the regime, states also benefit from a unified populace, which enables the smooth passage of political activity without factions or protests by significant minority populations.

However, perils brought by states engaging in irredentist conflict are too severe to ignore. Internal instability breaches the borders, inciting tensions with border states, creating community-wide disturbances, and rising ethnic tensions everywhere. The presence of retaliatory policy or vicious treatment towards the minute ethnic factions forcibly seized into the homeland is distressing, yet great difficulty remains in fully understanding the expanse of this issue. Local and state-controlled media often suppress reports of abuses on minorities' human rights, and authoritarian regimes frequently restrict or deny access to contentious regions, preventing international monitors, IGOs/NGOs, and journalists from uncovering the true extent of abuses or living conditions.

Open conflict and internal instability can provoke an exodus of refugees to infiltrate multiple surrounding states, igniting economic crises and social unrest. In reviewing the Israel-Palestine irredentist conflict, it is brought to light how the aggressive pursuit of territorial disputes can evoke a near-civil war situation if states choose to employ violent tactics over peaceful or diplomatic strategies. The resurgence of intra-state violence since 2015 has resulted in thousands of Palestinian casualties, as Israeli forces continue to enforce severe and highly discriminative policies through live gunfire, stabbings, and the use of military weaponry on predominantly peaceful civilian uprisings near the Israeli-Palestinian border (Human Rights Watch 2017).

Irredentism in its simplest form involves the absorption of territory and the people within that territory. Disturbingly, this means that Russia's annexation of the Crimean peninsula also included the annexation of a variety of native Tatars and ethnic Ukrainians. Both minority groups were vehemently anti-Russia. The annexation and confinement of miniscule minorities against their wishes only heightens ethnic tensions within the community and reverses the initial justification and defense of irredentist action. If Russian policy is streamlined to benefit the ethnic Russians and persecutes the Tatar and Ukrainian minorities, Ukraine may choose to engage in irredentist conflict against Russia for their Ukrainian minority, which establishes the potential for a continuous battle for minority rights and ethnic belonging that is extremely detrimental to the short-term and long-term security, stability, and well-being of both states and the entire surrounding region.

Finally, human, economic, environmental, and domestic and international costs are often the defining factor as to whether State A chooses to engage in a conflict with State B. If the conflict is violent in nature, human lives are at risk due to the need for soldiers and the potential

for nondiscriminatory attacks by the enemy state. Additionally, war is an economically draining activity. Millions of dollars are spent each year with little-to-no return or progress. Extensive funds are needed to train and transport soldiers, provide food and medical resources, and procure weaponry, and smaller, less economically privileged states are unable to shell out the costs necessary to win a long-term battle.

Additionally, smaller states are frequently reliant on outside allies to execute expensive logistical support, lend modern weapons, and provide troop and resource assistance. These smaller states, therefore, are at the mercy of their allies' requests or limitations, whereas larger, more powerful, more economically autonomous states are free to move politically without factoring in outside interests or constraints. Larger states are not as tied to acting in accordance with alliances or international organizations as weaker states are. The political costs of losing strategic allies or membership are far more detrimental to a state like Macedonia than a state like Russia.

Consequences of irredentist action expand further than regional instability, displaced persons, and infighting. Disputes over the legitimacy of reunifying the diaspora territory to the homeland, as well as concerns over upsetting the existing balance of power within the region also arise following the close of successful irredentist conflict. Russia's annexation of Crimea continues to be denounced by the West and many European nations as an illegitimate sham over four years after the conflict was settled, which only increases the diplomatic and political strain between Russia and the West (Pinkham 2017). Reorganization of power dynamics is also a concerning side effect of successful irredentist conflict. Nazi Germany's sudden and unexpected dominance within Western Europe clearly outline the dilemma of an unbalanced power system, and the lack of international checks and policing on such power increases is alarming.

Finally, the presence of conflict, whether violent or not, severely scars the tourism and investment sectors within a state or region. Following Catalonia's independence referendum, social unrest, clashes with police, and the exile of politicians, multiple investors pulled business bases out of Spain, as civilian investment dropped and markets appeared increasingly unstable (Minder 2017). The tourism sector is also affected by both violent and tense conflict, as vacationers heed warnings of unrest, violence, and heightened insecurity. A visitor's country of citizenship may also release warnings against travel to conflicted areas or place bans on traveling to the specific state or region due to significant security risks.

Considering the economic, political, social, and environmental risks of engaging in irredentist conflict, the international community must take extra steps to ensure that peaceful, nonviolent approaches to solving ethnic conflict are carried out. States choose to overlook domestic and international costs to reunify the diaspora to the homeland, but this does not mean these costs are irrelevant, and some states with large diasporas choose to avoid engaging in irredentist conflict due to the severity and tractability of these risks. Some states fail to justify the rationality of engaging in conflict to reunify a diaspora that is alike in ethnicity but vastly different in life history and experiences. Some states with larger diasporas have no true motivations for reunifying the diaspora—the commitment to good faith procedures remain intact and the presence of threats to security are low.

However, the recklessness of arbitrary border assignments by third-party actors following the end of conflicts must be addressed. Border lines that divide ethnic allegiances and create massive gaps between the majority and minority create an environment prone to discrimination and intrinsically place strain on any good faith agreements. These border assignments actively work against the fundamental goals of peace and prosperity within the entire international

community. State leaders and international organizations must commit to a better understanding of ethnic concerns and ethnic politics in terms of international relations and regional unrest. International organizations like the United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the European Union, in addition to state leaders and non-governmental organizations, must work to reinforce the importance of rights and freedoms guaranteed to individuals under the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Collectively, the international community must make a larger effort to understand the motivations, dynamics, and enabling factors that decide the implementation and success of irredentist conflict, as ethnic-based conflict continues to rise to the forefront of modern international relations.

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