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ABOUT

ABOUT

Demos is a group of undergraduate students at UCLA showcasing the collaborative efforts between students here and across the country. We are dedicated to displaying the academic excellence of those who are not just undergraduate students but those who have also earned the title of political science researcher. As an organization created by UCLA undergraduates, we aim to serve the undergraduate community and beyond by giving students a chance to publish their work, garner writing and publishing experience, and put a spotlight on valuable research.

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ABOUT THE COVER

While I have served as manager of publications for DEMOS, I wanted to do my best to make the journal look unique, while still being a functional academic publication. I have found the process rewarding to my academic passion of political scientist and my extracurricular passion of graphic design. This cover is a picture I took of Bunche Hall from a scenic balcony on the back of Haines Hall. With my graduation from the university, this personal touch felt fitting. The view of Bunche from Haines Hall was one that I loved to pass the time at, journaling in my freshman year. As a parting gift, I share that view with you, the reader of this issue.

- Evan Holter

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2023-2024

A special thanks to the writers, editors, and managers that made this issue possible

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FROM THE EDITOR

HEEYA FIRDAUS' LETTER

Dear Reader,

I am proud to present to you the 4th Issue of DEMOS Journal. This year, our talented team of authors and editors have worked tirelessly to showcase a dynamic array of topics. From the space race to legislative reform and COVID-19, the 4th edition of DEMOS covers diverse areas of research, a true testament to the versatile academic interests of the students in The Department of Political Science.

In the ever-evolving landscape of our world, this journal stands as our contribution to meaningful discourse and a platform for student voices to be heard. In challenging times when the quest for solutions is relentless, it is through discourse and reflection that progress can be made. DEMOS reflects the dedication of our contributors to understanding and addressing the complexities surrounding us.

My time with the Political Science Undergraduate Council has been one of the most fulfilling and memorable experiences. It has been an honour to serve as Editor-in-Chief, and I hope that within these pages, you find insights that inspire, challenge, and broaden your perspective.

Sincerely,
Heeya Firdaus
Editor-in-Chief, DEMOS 2023-24



Section 230: Probing Political Reforms to the Law

Jacob Nguyen

Edited by

**Miu Kikuchi &
Tania Ramon**

INTRODUCTION

Internet service providers have been protected from liability under Section 230 of the Telecommunications Act since 1996. Because of Section 230, Internet providers and large tech corporations cannot be held legally accountable for posts or tweets made by third parties. The exemption does not extend to all other third parties involved except for the platform itself. Section 230 has two provisions making up the backbone of its immunity. Under subsection (c)(1), online services are not responsible for the defamatory or illegal content posted on platforms through third-party users. Meanwhile, (c)(2) requires platforms to police their sites for “obscene, lewd, lascivious, filthy, excessively violent, harassing, or otherwise objectionable material” (Brannon), but it doesn’t require that they remove anything. Subsection (c)(2) grants platforms protection from liability if they choose not to dispose of the harmful content. Additionally, Section 230 imposes a limit on when the law can be used: only when objective material is removed in “good faith.” Courts have made clear that Section 230 (C1) applies to takedowns and distributions. The provisions of Section 230 are subject to statutory exceptions. Generally, there will be no application of this federal immunity to lawsuits arising from federal, intellectual property, and any state laws acting under Section 230 as well as specific privacy laws, some at the federal and state levels pertaining to sex trafficking.

Section 230 is considered to be the most crucial law protecting speech on the internet. Section 230 has shaped the Internet into a bastion of free and robust speech by providing broad protection for Internet service providers. Our current political climate has greatly affected the range of materials widely available on the internet. While there are clear social benefits, such as promoting the circulation of free speech and keeping the public informed, it also has created mounting debate over areas like hate speech. Policymakers on both sides of the political aisle are targeting the law for their concerns relating to free speech. Debates are ongoing among legislators and outside commentators regarding Section 230’s proper scope. Although the law has many defenders, some argue that courts have overinterpreted the immunity provided by Section 230. Section 230 immunity was amended by 26 bills in the 116th Congress. (Brannon) Proposals ranged from rescinding immunity entirely to adding certain conditions. To encourage sites to remove certain types of undesirable content, some bills attempted to amend Section 230(c)(1), limiting “publisher” immunity. By narrowing the interpretation of takedown powers, attempts are made to encourage sites to host more content. Section 230 has faced amending twice since its initial passing to ensure children are safe when browsing the internet. First, it was amended to require interactive computer services to alert parents of the safety controls in place. These safety controls look like computer software, hardware, and filtering services made to limit the type of vile content from being shown to minors. The second was to exclude its application to prostitution and sex trafficking cases. Courts have identified online service providers such as Google, Yahoo!, Facebook, and Craigslist to meet the definition. According to the “Congressional Research Service”, “Section 230 distinguishes those who create content from those who provide access to that content, providing immunity from suit to the latter group.” (Brannon, 3) Therefore, a service provider such as Facebook cannot be subjected to a lawsuit since they are the ones giving a platform for others to post. Instead, the user is responsible for any defamatory material they publish. However, if the platform were to modify the user’s post, Facebook could be deemed liable. It is critical to determine whether the content that is the basis for liability was developed by the service provider before applying Section 230’s immunity provisions. Nevertheless, Section 230 does not exempt giants such as Twitter from liability for information the companies themselves develop. The exception only applies to tech giants when a third-party user becomes the distributor. An issue raised by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration and the Department of Justice was whether the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), which is responsible for regulating both interstate and international communication from across telephones, telegraphs, and radio, has the power to apply Section 230. (Brannon) Yet, Section 230 does not explicitly mention the FCC, nor has the FCC been involved in its interpretation or application. Congress believes the FCC is responsible for regulating Section 230, including clarification over any vague language.

Plans to alter Section 230 could be halted due to two specific issues surrounding the First Amendment. Any given proposal must first prove that it does not infringe upon either providers' or users' constitutionally protected right to free speech – a significant danger since the bills under consideration represent action by the government to regulate the speech of companies and individuals. That is especially true for proposals that might limit providers' editorial discretion or create content or viewpoint distinctions. It is worth noting that likely, the First Amendment will not protect claims regarding decisions to host or restrict other people's speech. Protections the First Amendment provides are unlikely to be as extensive as those provided under the immunity of Section 230 if the law is repealed in whole or in part, as Section 230 provides protections that offer more substantive protections for users and platforms alike.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On February 8, President Bill Clinton signed the Telecommunications Act of 1996. The 26 words of the Telecommunications Act make up the internet and have lived up to its potential. As stated by the University of Chicago School of Law, the 26 words are: "No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any speech provided by another information content provider." (University of Chicago Legal Forum) Two court cases in the 1990s illustrated how U.S. law could not deal with intermediary liability issues that arose with the rise of the Internet, leading to the development of Section 230. The initial case was *Cubby v. CompuServe* in 1991, where the defendant, CompuServe, presided over an online forum devoted to journalism. (Castro) It included a daily newsletter available to the forum's subscribers, Don Fitzpatrick's Rumorville. The forum allowed Fitzpatrick to make alleged defamatory comments about Cubby. In addition to the lawsuit against Fitzpatrick, Cubby. Inc. owner Robert Blanchard sued CompuServe as well. Rumorville's publisher, CompuServe, was deemed responsible for Fitzpatrick's statements, according to the plaintiff. (Castro) CompuServe was unaware of the publication and was not given the chance to review what was written in the newsletter. Therefore, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York ruled CompuServe to be the distributor rather than the publisher. Eventually, CompuServe was not held responsible for the defamatory statements. Similarly, in the Supreme Court case, *Smith v. California* of 1959, Los Angeles city law criminalized books with obscene content. Eleazer Smith, an appellant and bookseller who had been convicted of violating Los Angeles City ordinances, appealed the ruling due to its unconstitutionality. She had every right under the First Amendment to have her books sold to the public. The Supreme Court later agreed with Smith. They clarified that if ordinances like Los Angeles were allowed, it would be unreasonable to expect every bookseller to be knowledgeable on the contents of each book in their store. This case draws emphasis on the point that publishers are given protection from liability.

Years later following *Cubby v. CompuServe*, the New York Supreme Court heard a similar case in *Stratton Oakmont v. Prodigy* (1995), where the plaintiff was an online service called Prodigy Services company. There was an anonymous post defaming Daniel Porush and his brokerage firm, Stratton Oakmont, Inc. on the Prodigy "Money Talk" bulletin board. The court took a conflicting approach to Stratton Oakmont. As a publisher instead of a distributor, Prodigy was held responsible for the defamatory statements posted on the "Money Talk" bulletin board. (Castro) An argument can be made that online services condoning the posting of abusive and unlawful content were protected by Section 230. On the other hand, online services practicing good-faith attempts at monitoring harmful content and removing them were ultimately faced with consequences. They are forced to expend unnecessary amounts of resources on legal defense for lawsuits made against them. A myriad of harmful content posted daily would have to be monitored and taken down to prevent liability from falling on platforms. These unrealistic expectations and burdens placed on platforms are only a few of the many obstacles they must address.

The double standard is clear to representatives Chris Cox (R-CA) and Ron Wyden (D-OR) who highlight the discrepancy and suggest new legislation to promote free speech online. According to

the “Information Technology & Innovation Foundation,” the purpose of Section 230 is “to promote the continued development of the Internet,” to preserve the free market on the Internet, and to encourage blocking and filtering of objectionable content.” (Castro) After the lawsuits mentioned previously, different interpretations emerged regarding whether service providers should be labeled as publishers or distributors of user-generated content. Thus, Section 230 was created in response to the pair of lawsuits filed against online discussion platforms in the early to mid-1990s.

LIBERAL ARGUMENT FOR AMENDMENT OR REPLACEMENT

Liberals seek to amend Section 230 with policies aimed at Conservatives and Liberals believe companies should be held liable for displaying harmful content to children such as exploitative material. They urge replacing the law as a way to contest the spread of misinformation, which often sows division in our country and enables dangerous acts. Essentially, many Liberals demand that big social media companies be held legally liable for potentially dangerous content. Liberals take it a step further and claim that websites should remove harmful content aimed at minorities and marginalized groups, such as Trump’s rally videos calling on the deportation of undocumented immigrants. Section 230 already dictates the nature of the Internet, and may render the current laws of the Internet ineffective if it faces extensive restrictions. For Liberals, this may come as good news because tech giants would have to prove free speech was safeguarded under Section 230. The journal article “Rewriting Section 230” emphasizes, “Many liberals seek to make big social media companies liable for content that could lead to harm.” (Harvard Model Congress, 7) If implemented into policy, this would reinforce Section 230 by defining more precisely what kind of content is liable. Rewriting Section 230 would also define what disciplinary action a company could face for allowing inflammatory content, and under what circumstances firms can invoke Section 230.

Increasingly at odds with the tech industry, the federal government is forming an unlikely coalition between those who view regulation as a negative and those who see reform as a positive. The authors in the article “Legislative Efforts and Policy Frameworks within the Section 230 Debate” argue “If a significant number of Republicans are willing to back President Joe Biden’s progressive pick to lead the Federal Trade Commission, Lina Khan, it’s not unreasonable to think that Section 230 reform might inspire the formation of a similar bipartisan coalition.” (Brookings) Although both sides of the political aisle want to amend or replace Section 230, they do it for different reasons. The liberal perspective says Section 230 condones widespread hate speech, election interference, and misinformation. Many of these issues became prominent in recent years as Former President Trump convinced his conservative base that the 2020 Presidential Election was rigged. The president has long feuded with big tech companies, arguing they are trying to “rig the election” against him and are masquerading as neutral while suppressing content they disagree with. (Council on Foreign Relations) After Twitter added fact-checks to several of his tweets regarding voting by mail, he decided to take action. Trump issued an executive order in May 2020 aimed at limiting Section 230’s legal protections. Although he has the authority to issue an executive order, there are ramifications for following through with such a policy. Congress could simply pass legislation to invalidate it and funding can be revoked. An order made by the president to restrict Section 230 would be difficult to carry out into effective policy. On a similar note, the Supreme Court holds the authority to check the president’s executive order by deeming it to be unconstitutional as it violates the First Amendment. Liberals expressed valid concerns when suggesting Section 230 should be replaced due to the Former President’s tweets propagating misinformation. They firmly believe changes to the law would prevent the spread of misinformation and provide the necessary policing needed on social media platforms. Specific changes to the law consist of providing platforms with the ability to police their sites through a set of terms and conditions a user must agree to before accessing it. Another alteration to the law would establish an age restriction on user access to platforms and proof of identity through the form of a valid ID or passport. Lastly, the law should be shifted to enforce a policy where before a post is made public, the platform sends out a warning that they will not be held liable for the

post in question and a warning stating if the post violates their guidelines then platforms reserve the right to take it down.

CONSERVATIVE ARGUMENT FOR AMENDMENT OR REPLACEMENT

Conservatives have the propensity to prioritize freedom of speech, regardless of the negative effects it could have on our most vulnerable members of society. They aim to ensure tech giants are held accountable for their platforms' content by introducing amending legislation to their constituents on both sides of the political aisle. Several have argued that the current state of Section 230 intentionally censors their voices, citing former President Trump's ban from platforms like Twitter and Instagram as an example. Conservatives want to limit the power of Section 230, while Liberals hope to do the opposite and believe greater scrutiny of vile content is needed. Conservators believe in limited censorship except in cases involving harm to children. This is perceived by some Conservatives to be a liberal bias on the part of Big Tech. Several conservative lawmakers have argued that "Section 230 violates free speech by unfairly censoring conservative viewpoints, such as de-platforming a sitting Republican president." (Bipartisan Policy Center) Despite what conservative lawmakers argue, transformative social media legislation has proven to be challenging to pass, but it didn't stop the House from trying. An Energy and Commerce Committee memo outlining proposals to guide the Republican legislative agenda was released on April 15, 2021, as part of the Big Tech Accountability Platform. A comprehensive package of discussion draft bills was proposed following the legislative roadmap. This was intended to hold the largest tech giants accountable for their actions. The agenda included mentions of Section 230: "Carving Out Big Tech Companies from Section 230 and Reauthorization of Section 230." (Bipartisan Policy Center) Conservatives demand a structure of transparency to prevent large tech corporations from being able to stay hidden behind vague language in their terms of service. Currently, Section 230 gives platforms the right to impose their terms of service and is not legally required to reveal how they do so. (Bipartisan Policy Center) With social media under intense scrutiny for how it collects data, curates algorithms, and promotes or removes content, legislators hope that mandating open information shown on platforms will create a space of clarity between users and the company. Several benefits arise from this transparency such as revealing the type of content being removed and giving a straightforward guideline for what constitutes a platform's need to hold users accountable.

Companies were accused by Republicans of utilizing Section 230 as a means of moderating content however they wished. Conservatives hold the belief that they are being politically silenced online at greater rates than their liberal counterparts. The primary concern expressed by legislators such as Josh Hawley was that tech companies intentionally display conservative bias. This bias came in the guise of determining what type of content violated company guidelines and was ultimately removed. In June, Republican Senator Hawley introduced a bill that would "get rid of Section 230 immunity for big social-media sites unless they could prove they hadn't moderated in a politically biased way." (MIT Technology Review) Essentially, Senator Hawley's statement emphasizes that Liberals seem to be more concerned with children's usage, as well as the spread of potentially harmful political viewpoints, while Conservatives are more focused on the political freedom of speech debate. The Federal Trade Commission would audit companies every two years. Discipline or termination would be imposed on employees who displayed bias. Several critics in the Senate have cited the bill's extremely vague nature and difficulty in enforcing it. Senator Hawley agrees with this perspective as he introduces a bill aimed at Section 230, which would eliminate the immunity given to big tech companies. The bill is intended to punish corporations such as Facebook, Twitter and Google. Eliminating immunity will give Conservatives leverage to hold tech giants liable for censorship. During his term in office, Trump also expressed his frustration regarding anti-conservative censorship. He drafted an executive order that would allow the White House to control the methods social media platforms use to police their users. (MIT Technology Review) Although Section 230 provides platforms with the capabilities to

moderate on their terms, Trump's order would limit the scope of their actions to only what the Federal Communications Commission deems fit. Conservatives and Liberals might eventually find common ground on Section 230, just as the progressive antitrust movement has gained allies in the Republican Party.

DEFENDING SECTION 230

Under the law, people have the freedom to express anything regardless of how hateful or vile. The First Amendment does not carve out an exception for "Hate Speech." On the contrary, it protects all speech, though statutes and court cases have created some exceptions (perjury, for instance, is unprotected speech, and defamation law provides penalties for speech that is false and defamatory). Many bills have been considered by Congress to amend or replace Section 230, but in the end, any attempt to limit speech challenges the fundamental principles of the First Amendment. Limiting Section 230 immunity will only bring further censorship and strip diverse voices from expressing themselves online.

Section 230 is fundamentally about personal responsibility. The law states that "you—not the service you use to share content—are responsible for what you post. There are a few exceptions, but by and large Section 230 leaves the responsibility for online posts with the appropriate agent: the user." (Cato Institute) As the user, you agreed to the terms of service and gave platforms the right to remove you if they determine that the content you post violates their guidelines. Section 230 has faced multiple bills aimed at amending or replacing the law from Liberals and Conservatives. For example, Georgia senator Kelly Loeffler's "Stopping Big Tech Censorship Act" would limit Section 230 protections toward interactive computer services moderating content from a neutral perspective. Senator Loeffler assumes that if her bill passed, "Facebook and Twitter would rush to adopt the First Amendment as their content moderation policy." (Cato Institute) However, as is often the case in Section 230 debates from both sides of the political spectrum, Senator Loeffler's bill makes the common mistake of assuming the First Amendment will be immediately integrated. Another argument that can be made in defense of Section 230 is a policy argument. Society gains more from innovation generated by these companies than from holding them liable. Similarly, the practical argument is that tech platforms would have an extremely difficult time managing all the content posted by third parties on their platform. (Reed) The internet is full of information, therefore it is unreasonable to demand companies remove all content considered offensive. Furthermore, tech giants shouldn't be held liable for content they are unaware of at the moment.

Amending Section 230 is more than just preventing misinformation or ending political censorship on social platforms. Restricting the law may result in diverse voices being shunned. For instance, the "American Constitution Society" states that, "current content moderation systems already disproportionately silence Black people and other historically marginalized populations, even when they do not violate platform rules." (American Constitution Society) Diversity of perspectives on significant issues such as racial and gender justice would be further silenced if platforms increased censorship to avoid liability altogether. According to an amicus brief filed by civil rights groups, Section 230 should be interpreted properly to not impede the enforcement of vital civil rights laws. (American Constitution Society) Section 230 assists historically marginalized communities such as people of color and the LGBTQ community. They may utilize online platforms to freely express themselves without fear of being targeted by hate organizations. On a similar note, awareness of politically controversial topics like abortion could be reduced if Liberals and Conservatives successfully push Anti-Section 230 legislation. The ACLU has pointed out a different perspective on defending Section 230 that "people could have found their voices censored, especially when talking about ideas that are under political attack today: race and racism, sexuality, and gender justice." (Granick) By amending Section 230, platforms that give advertisers tools for targeting ads based on a user's sex, race, or other civil rights laws would not have a haven. In today's world, people can communicate instantly and on a scale previously unimaginable. As a result, the loss of Section 230 will jeopardize the internet as we know it, as this law gives online users

a safe outlet to voice their opinions.

IDEAS FOR REFORM

The goals of reform for Section 230 are to address unclear and inconsistent moderation practices that restrict speech and extend beyond the current law. For reform to be successful, legislators should confront the ever-growing issue of illicit and harmful content shown online. Section 230 should be amended in a way that allows companies to enforce their guidelines to simultaneously protect users without being held liable and set up restrictions preventing complete censorship by big tech. Despite the goals being logical, there are still risks of reform such as drowning out authentic voices, free expression, and human connection. (Yale Law Journal 2023) Another factor to take into consideration is third parties not being held liable for the content they post, and forcing platforms to pay the price for providing users with an outlet for freedom of speech. Lawsuits could potentially arise from reforming Section 230 to the point where it limits the scope of their protections to companies. The risks of reform are certainly evident, but it is also time for an updated version of Section 230 that eases the burden placed on tech giants and users.

As advised by the Department of Justice, “The first category of potential reforms is aimed at incentivizing platforms to address the growing amount of illicit content online while preserving the core of Section 230’s immunity for defamation.” (Department of Justice 2020) This outlines a way to improve Section 230 without disrupting its benefits in terms of allowing robust speech and debate. To begin with, the Department of Justice proposes depriving truly bad actors of Section 230 immunity. Section 230 immunity is meant to incentivize and protect responsible online platforms by its title “Protection for ‘Good Samaritan’ Blocking and Screening of Offensive Material.” Online platforms that intentionally facilitate or solicit content or activities that violate federal criminal law make little sense to be protected from civil liability. The Department also proposes exempting specific categories of claims from immunity, including those involving abusive child content, terrorism, and cyberstalking. (Department of Justice 2020) In this way, victims would be able to seek civil redress for causes far beyond Section 230’s original purpose and curb the overextension of Section 230 immunity. A third recommendation by the Department is that Section 230 immunity is excluded in cases where a platform knew or had notice that the third-party content violated federal criminal law or when the platform received a court judgment that the content was illegal. Despite the changing nature of technological advancements making it difficult for Section 230 to keep up, the public reserves the right to know when platforms become aware of illegal third-party activities. Users harmlessly accessing platforms for content should feel safe when navigating. The proposals outlined above will make it possible to create changes to Section 230 without worsening political tension, thereby advocating for robust speech and debate.

CONCLUSION

Section 230 has opened the conversation on whether platforms should be granted immunity. At the core of Section 230, the law provides limited federal immunity to providers and users of interactive computer services. However, from the perspectives of Liberals and Conservatives, the law has either been far too lenient on policing sites or is very strict to the point where the issue of censorship enters the debate. Ultimately, as both sides continue to reach a discussion on partisanship regarding political reforms, they must determine if Section 230 can still be effective in striking a balance between freedom of speech and regulating harmful online content.

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Younger Candidates, More Voters: The Relationship Between Candidate Age and Youth Voter Turnout

Emily Rusting

Edited by

**Samia Gazi &
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INTRODUCTION

Historically, young voters have turned out at much lower rates than older voters in U.S. elections (Pomante & Schraufnagel, 2015). This disproportionate representation of youth voices has problematic implications for American democracy. America's 30 million eligible voters between the ages of 18 and 24 have a unique set of policy concerns, including reproductive healthcare, climate change, and minimum wage (Medina et. al., 2023). Yet their generally low levels of political participation provide little incentive for elected officials – typically three or four decades older – to address these issues (Blazina and Desilver, 2023). If younger adults vote at higher rates, more lawmakers committed to addressing the concerns of young constituents may be elected. Similarly, incumbents may be more interested in salient policy issues for young voters (Pomante & Schraufnagel, 2015).

Why do youth voters turn out at such low rates? Based on the relationship between descriptive representation and political empowerment, I hypothesize that this may result from a lack of younger candidates on the ballot. With an absence of ingroup members (younger candidates) on the ballot, young voters may feel that the political system is not responsive to their needs and that their input has little value. To test this hypothesis, I examined the relationship between average candidate age and youth voter turnout in U.S. federal elections, controlling for two variables that affect both candidate age and voter turnout: the type of election and the presence of an incumbent. I also conducted an experimental survey to examine whether youth voters feel more represented by younger candidates and whether these feelings of representation translate into a greater intent to vote. In the following sections, I describe the theoretical background behind my hypotheses, discuss the methods and results for both the correlational study and the experimental survey, offer an overall interpretation of the results, and conclude with limitations and directions for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Factors Contributing to Youth Voter Turnout

There are many potential causes of the large and consistent turnout gap between older and younger voters in U.S. elections. Most research in this area examines factors that affect youth turnout regardless of the context of an individual election. Some work suggests that more permissive voting laws tend to increase youth voter turnout because young people disproportionately lack the time and resources to participate in politics (Juelich and Coll, 2020; Holbein and Hillygus, 2015). Specifically, the implementation of voter preregistration laws or same-day registration policies is associated with higher turnout among young voters across both race and party (Holbein and Hillygus, 2015; Bonica et. al, 2021). A key limitation of these findings is that levels of political efficacy are generally low among young voters (Juelich and Coll, 2020; Booth et. al., 2023). That is, many young voters believe they have little political influence, which may prevent them from taking advantage of permissive laws even where they are implemented. While election law reforms may increase turnout for those already interested in politics, they are ultimately incapable of mobilizing the politically unempowered.

To this end, additional research examines how environmental factors mobilize young voters. For example, Siegel-Stechler (2019) finds that high schoolers who take civics are 11.6% more likely to vote as young adults, on average. Yet Weinshcenk and Dawes (2021) find the opposite: service-learning and civic skills education have a null effect on voter turnout in adulthood. Another study examining whether the social pressure to vote can increase youth voter turnout produced similarly mixed results. Peer pressure to vote only increased voter turnout among participants who were already registered voters, a finding consistent with the implications of Juelich and Coll (2020) and Booth et. al., (2023) (Bergan et. al., 2021). There is some evidence that young voters who live in more politically competitive environments have higher turnout rates (Sandell-Pacheco, 2008)., However, this work has unclear practical implications for increasing youth voter turnout since political competitiveness is a static environmental characteristic difficult to manipulate. There is not a clear consensus as to which interventions contribute to mobilizing

young voters, nor as to how these interventions may be used to increase turnout.

Candidate Age and Youth Turnout

Limited research suggests that the age of candidates on the ballot is an important component of what mobilizes and empowers young voters. Pomante and Schraufnagel (2015) evaluate how candidate age impacts interest in voting among youth aged 18 to 24 using an experimental design. They find that students who view pictures of old candidates running in a hypothetical election are less committed to voting than students who view pictures that include at least one young candidate. In a real-world test of these results, they find that large age gaps in Illinois political races and the presence of a candidate under 35 are both associated with greater turnout among young voters. This suggests that candidate age may increase turnout among young voters, independent of the potential impact of electoral reforms, the political environment, and civics education.

However, Pomante and Schraufnagel (2015) lack evidence regarding why younger voters are more committed to voting when younger candidates are on the ballot. Understanding this mechanism is important because factors other than candidate age may be driving increased turnout. For instance, younger candidates may be selecting campaign issues that resonate with younger populations. If issues are behind increased youth turnout for younger candidates, then candidate age may be irrelevant. Indeed, young candidates may decrease youth turnout if they select platform issues of less interest to young voters. Testing whether identification with a candidate's age is the mechanism driving the real-world patterns Pomante and Schraufnagel (2015) observed would provide information about whether issues, candidates, or other institutional reforms are key to closing the youth turnout gap. The following section applies research on the relationship between descriptive representation and political engagement to explain why the presence of younger candidates on the ballot may result in higher youth turnout.

Descriptive Representation and Political Engagement

Research on voter mobilization indicates that descriptive political representation is a good predictor of political participation. That is, individuals are more politically engaged when representatives who share their demographic characteristics or social identities are also active in politics. This phenomenon has been well-documented in the context of racial and ethnic groups underrepresented in American politics. For example, the presence of Black individuals as elected representatives or candidates at the federal, state, and district levels is associated with greater political efficacy, greater trust in government, and higher turnout among Black voters (Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Whitby, 2007; Merolla, Sellers, and Fowler, 2013; Gleason and Stout, 2014). Similarly, Latino turnout is higher in states with a higher proportion of racially minoritized legislators, and Latinos feel politically empowered when represented by a Latino legislator at the state or federal level (Rocha et. al., 2010; Pantoja and Segura, 2003; Uhlaner and Scola, 2016). Similar relationships between descriptive representation and political participation exist beyond the American context. For example, members of marginalized immigrant groups in Europe are more likely to turn out when representatives in the national governing body share their ethnicity (Geese, 2023). While most of this work examines descriptive representation in government, it suggests that descriptive representation on the ballot may produce similar patterns in political engagement and voter turnout.

However, the relationship between descriptive representation and political participation for underrepresented social groups, namely women, is more tenuous. Studies conducted in sub-Saharan Africa and Uruguay demonstrate that women's political engagement, political trust, and feelings of efficacy increase when the proportion of female national legislators is greater (Barnes and Buchard, 2012; Hinojosa, 2021). In the US, women are generally supportive of increasing the number of female elected officials, suggesting that descriptive representation could mobilize female voters (Sanbomatsu, 2002; Phillips, 2018). Yet, evidence suggests that descriptive representation has no impact on women's political engagement when female candidates or officeholders differ from them on other social identities,

such as race or party (Philpot and Walton, 2007; Reingold and Harrel, 2009; Uhlener and Scola, 2016). Moreover, the most recent study on women’s descriptive representation found that living in an area with a high proportion of female officeholders did not affect women’s level of political interest (Wolak, 2020) suggesting that descriptive representation is not always associated with political engagement.

Both theory and empirical research suggest that feelings of political empowerment explain why descriptive representation sometimes—but not always—results in political engagement. Bobo and Gilliam’s (1990) theory of Black political empowerment suggests that the presence of candidates or officials with certain characteristics translates into greater political efficacy among voters who share similar characteristics. The presence of demographically similar candidates or elected officials causes voters to feel that the political system is responsive to their needs and that they can make a difference. This positive orientation towards the political system then motivates individuals to vote.

Most evidence suggests that this theory can explain political engagement under two conditions. First, the electoral environment must be low in political information for descriptive representation to meaningfully impact voter turnout (Bassi, Morton, and Williams 2011; Matson and Fine, 2006). If voters have detailed information about candidates’ policy preferences and political history, it is less likely that identification with candidate demographics alone will drive turnout. Second, for descriptive representation to increase political engagement, a voter’s shared social identity with the candidate must be more politically empowering than any differing identities (Uhlener and Scola, 2016; Reingold and Harrell, 2009). This explains why descriptive representation is not always associated with political engagement. Candidates or officeholders may share some identities with voters, but if they differ along identities understood as highly politically important—such as party or race—effects on political engagement are typically low (Uhlener and Scola, 2016; Reingold and Harrell, 2009).

Young voters meet the two criteria to be politically empowered by descriptive representation. First, young voters generally have lower levels of political knowledge than older adults, making descriptive representation and consequent political efficacy more likely to motivate turnout (Booth et al., 2023; Angelucci and Prat, 2023). Additionally, youth identity is politically salient. In the context of a Congress dominated by legislators in their seventies, debates surrounding the need for younger politicians have intensified (e.g. Hutzler and Farrow, 2023). Finally, there is evidence that youth identity is strengthening. Young people hold age-based stereotypes about both themselves and older individuals and sometimes act on these stereotypes (Van Rossum, 2018). They also condemn members of the older Baby Boomer generation, exhibiting outgroup derogation consistent with strong ingroup identity (Ng and Indiran, 2023). Given low political knowledge among youth and the existence of a strong, salient youth identity, I believe that descriptive representation on the ballot will increase youth political engagement, and offer the following hypotheses:

H1: Turnout among young voters will be higher when candidates on the ballot are younger.

H2: Young voters will be more politically empowered when younger candidates are on the ballot.

H3: Younger voters will express greater intent to vote when young candidates are on the ballot.

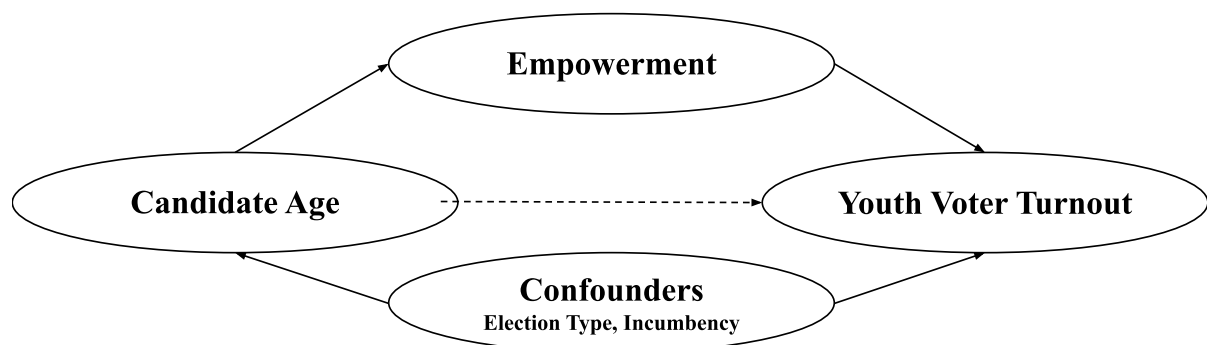


Figure 1: Directed acyclic graph for independent variable, outcome variable, mediator, and confounders.

STUDY 1: CORRELATIONAL STUDY

My method consists of two parts: an observational study (Study 1) and an experimental survey (Study 2). The observational study examines the relationship between candidate age and youth voter turnout in US federal elections, offering a real-world test of Hypothesis 1. The experimental survey tests whether group-based political empowerment can explain youth voter turnout for younger candidates. This section will discuss the methods and results of the observational study.

Method: Study 1

I examined youth voter turnout in presidential and midterm elections from 1994-2022, in the 10 most populous U.S. states according to the Census Bureau: California, Florida, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Illinois, Ohio, Georgia, Michigan, and North Carolina. I collected data on the outcome variable from only 10 states, rather than all 50, due to time and resource constraints. These 10 states were chosen because they represent a large portion of the U.S. youth population and vary in region and political leaning. A youth voter was defined as an individual aged 18-24, consistent with the Census Bureau. To simplify the data analysis process, I only collected data for elections in which all youth voters in a given state cast a ballot for the same set of candidates. The dataset therefore included all presidential elections and any midterm elections with a U.S. Senator on the ballot.

I measured candidate age by averaging the ages of all major-party candidates in each election. For example, if the election was a presidential election, I averaged the ages of both presidential candidates and both Senate candidates. If the election was a midterm election, I averaged only the ages of the Senate candidates. This method contrasts with that of Pomante and Schruafnagel (2015), who examined the association between the candidate age gap and voter turnout. They hypothesized that youth voter turnout would only increase when the age gap between the candidates was large, since the age gap would make youth identity more salient. However, I elected to average the age of the candidates because I hypothesized that the presence of a young candidate alone could be enough to increase political empowerment and therefore increase youth voter turnout. Additionally, I chose this method over using the proportion of youth candidates because age is a continuous variable, so categorizing a candidate as either “young” or “old” could diminish the accuracy of the analyses.

I also included two confounding variables in my model (see Fig. 1). First, I controlled for the presence of an incumbent. Incumbents, who are more politically seasoned and typically older, have an electoral advantage due to name recognition and an established record of serving their constituents (Gelman and King, 1990). Second, I controlled for election type because presidential elections consistently have a higher voter turnout than midterm elections, and presidential candidates also tend to be older due to the substantial political experience necessary to be considered a viable candidate (Desilver, 2014). With these two confounding factors in mind, I examined the relationship between youth voter turnout and candidate age separately by election type and recorded whether each election was a midterm or presidential election.

Results: Study 1

Using a linear regression model, I first examined the overall relationship between youth voter turnout and candidate average age without controlling for any confounding variables. I predicted that as candidate average age decreased, youth voter turnout would increase (Hypothesis 1). However, the results demonstrated the opposite relationship: when candidate age increased by one year, youth voter turnout increased by 0.62%, on average ($p < 0.001$).

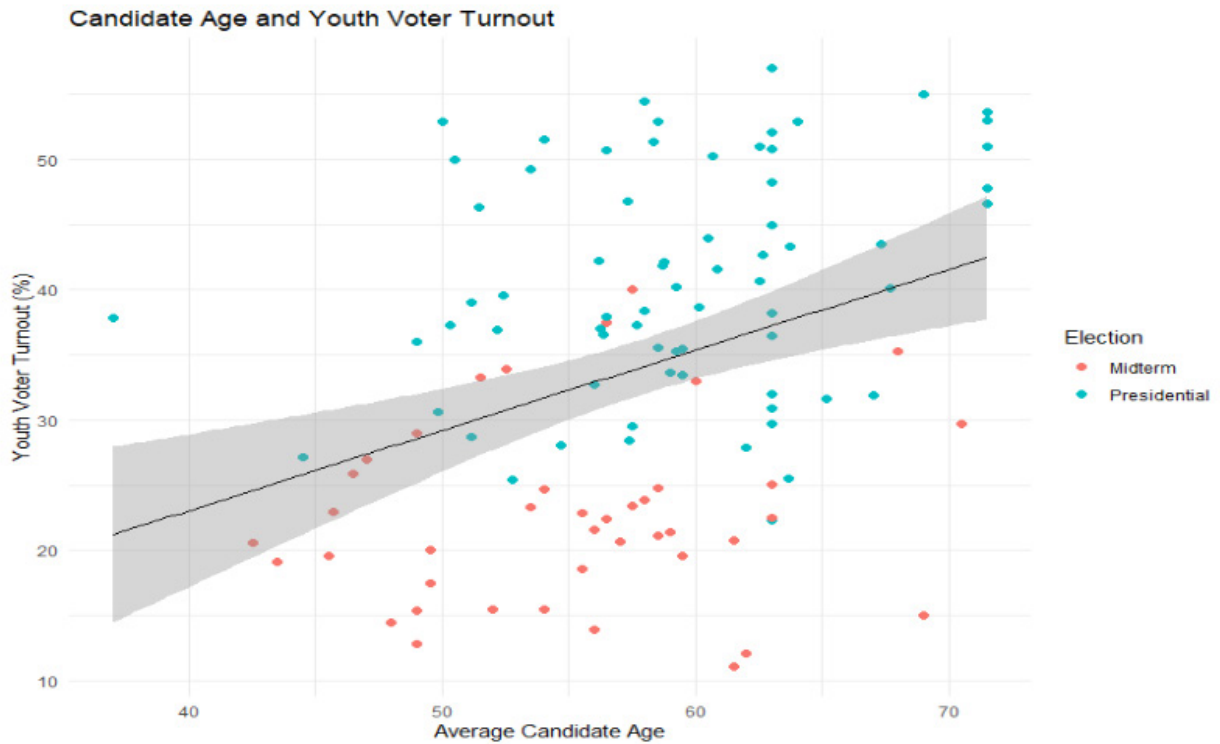


Figure 2: Relationship between average candidate age and youth voter turnout.

Next, I examined the relationship between youth voter turnout in midterm and presidential elections individually. In midterm elections, youth voter turnout increased by 0.15% with a one-year increase in candidate age, but this estimate was not statistically significant ($p > 0.1$), and the confidence interval for the correlation coefficient crossed zero. In presidential elections, as candidate age increased by one year, youth voter turnout increased by 0.36%; this relationship had moderate statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). In sum, there is evidence of a null relationship between candidate age and voter turnout in midterm elections, but a positive relationship in presidential elections.

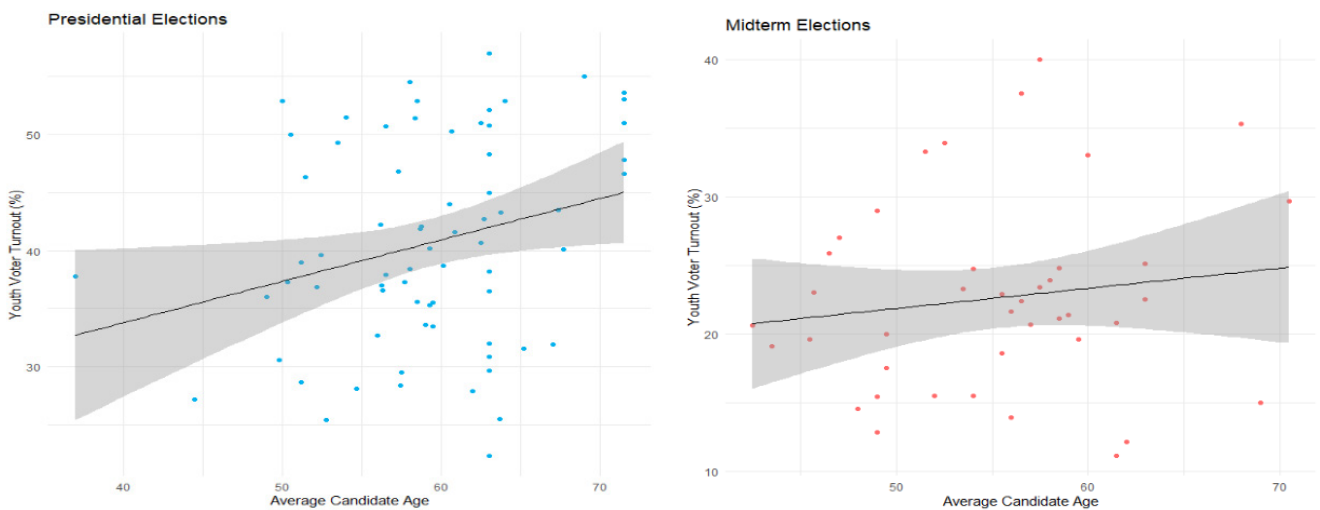


Figure 3: Relationship between candidate age and youth voter turnout by election type.

I used a multivariate linear regression to examine how both incumbency and election type influence the relationship between candidate age and youth voter turnout. This model demonstrated that the presence of an incumbent decreased voter turnout by 1.43%, but this result was not statistically significant ($p > 0.1$). However, the presence of a presidential election was associated with a 17.04% increase in youth voter turnout. This relationship was highly significant ($p > 0.001$). When election type was taken into account, a one-year increase in candidate age was only associated with a 0.29% increase in youth voter turnout. Although the relationship between candidate age and youth voter turnout was still statistically significant, the significance level was much lower than in the model without confounders ($p < 0.05$). Overall, these results indicate that election type significantly confounds the relationship between candidate age and youth voter turnout.

	Young Voter Turnout
Average Candidate Age	0.292** (0.118)
Incumbent	-1.430 (2.015)
Presidential Election	17.038*** (1.663)
Observations	111
R ²	0.559

Note: * $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Figure 4: Multivariate regression of youth voter turnout on candidate age.

STUDY 2: SURVEY EXPERIMENT

Although the results of the observational study indicate a positive relationship between candidate age and youth voter turnout, there is reason to doubt that this reflects a causal relationship. Moreover, because candidate age was only operationalized as the average age of candidates on the ballot, the results of Study 1 may be a product of measurement. Finally, the sample only includes data from ten states, so the results may reflect environmental characteristics specific to these states. Given the lack of a clear and convincing relationship between candidate age and youth voter turnout in Study 1, it is still valuable to test whether empowerment is a mechanism for increased turnout among younger voters when young candidates are on the ballot (Hypothesis 2 and Hypothesis 3).

Method: Study 2

I fielded a survey that presented subjects with information about two potential candidates using a randomized 2 x 2 design. Subjects viewed two candidates (Candidate A and Candidate B) instead of one to replicate the experience of using a ballot and voting in an election. The age of each candidate was varied such that subjects were randomly assigned to view two old candidates (control), or one old candidate and one young candidate (treatment). Additionally, I included a randomized key platform issue for each candidate to further replicate the experience of a real election. I selected the top two issues of concern for young voters in the 2022 elections: inflation and reproductive healthcare/abortion (Medina et al., 2023). This resulted in two control conditions and two treatment conditions (see Fig. 5).

Following treatment, I measured two outcome variables. First, subjects were asked how well each candidate represented them on a scale of 0 to 100, assuming they shared the same political ideology. This question was intended to parsimoniously capture two key dimensions of the political empowerment mechanism: first, whether respondents identified young candidates as part of their age group, and second, whether they felt that they had greater input in the political system when they saw a young candidate on the ballot. Ideally, two or more separate measures would have been used to operationalize political

empowerment, since it is a complex outcome variable. However, due to time and resource constraints, this was not possible. Next, subjects were asked whether they would vote in the hypothetical election, given that the candidates shared their political ideology. This information informed my assessment of whether the presence of a young candidate affected intent to vote.

The survey was fielded to a convenience sample of UCLA undergraduates (n = 163). The sample was 51% white, 10% African American, and 25% Asian American. 27% of respondents were Hispanic or Latino. In terms of political leaning, 30% of the sample were strong Democrats, 32% were moderate Democrats, 10% leaned Democrat, 5% leaned Republican, 6% were moderate Republicans, and 2% were strong Republicans. These subjects were randomly assigned to the treatments to mitigate any effects of subject race or political leaning on the two outcome variables.

	Candidate A Old	Candidate A Young
Candidate A Inflation	Control (Condition 1) A: Old, inflation B: Old, abortion	Treatment (Condition 3) A: Young, inflation B: Old, abortion
Candidate A Abortion	Control (Condition 2) A: Old, abortion B: Old, inflation	Treatment (Condition 4) A: Young, abortion B: Old, inflation

Figure 5: Control and treatment conditions in the 2 x 2 experiment.

Results: Study 2

There was a meaningful treatment effect on political empowerment, as measured by respondents' feelings of being represented. In the control condition with two old candidates, subjects rated Candidate B as 0.87 points more representative of them than Candidate A, on average. However, in the treatment, subjects rated the young Candidate A as 13.29 points more representative of them than Candidate B, on average. The confidence interval for this difference in average representation rating demonstrates that the treatment effect is different from zero: being in the treatment increased the average difference in representation rating between Candidates A and B by 14.16 points ($p < 0.001$). Additionally, the treatment effect persists when the candidates' platforms are held constant and the only variable altered is the candidates' ages, although the effect for Condition 1 vs. Condition 3 did not approach statistical significance ($p > 0.1$). This evidence further suggests that subjects generally felt more represented when a young candidate appeared, confirming Hypothesis 2.

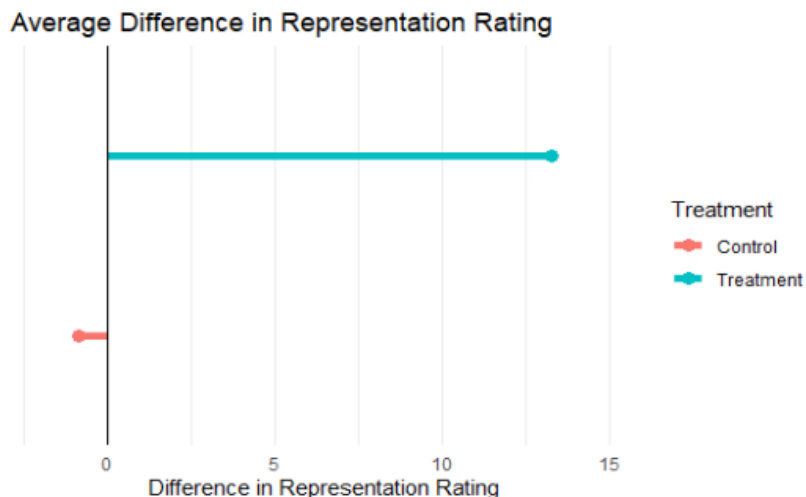


Figure 6: Average difference in representation rating by treatment.

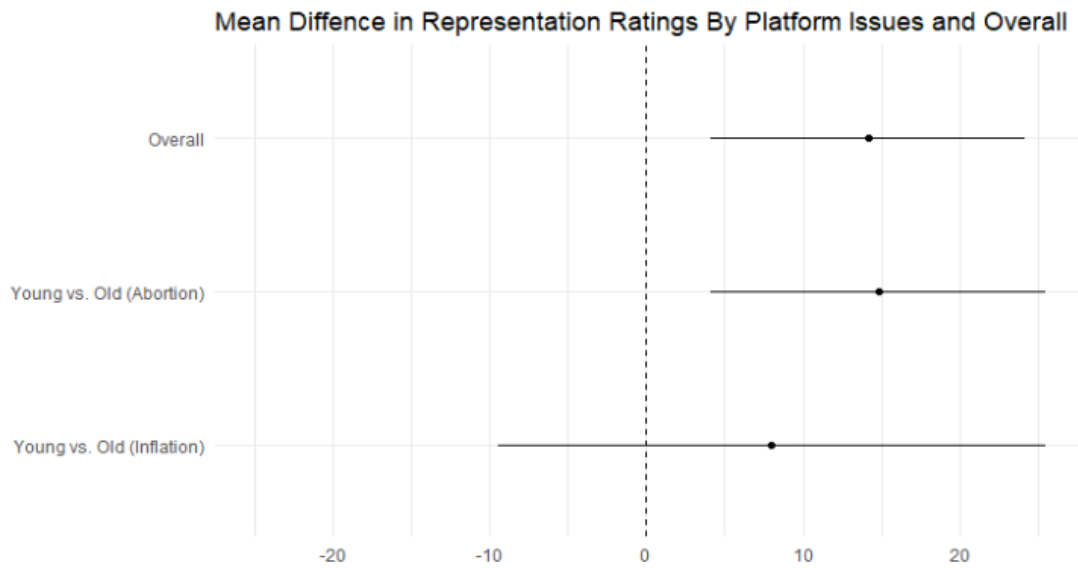


Figure 7: Confidence intervals for representation rating.

However, there was no meaningful treatment effect on the subjects’ intent to vote. In the control, 97.67% of respondents said they would vote in a hypothetical election contest between the two candidates, whereas in the treatment, 95.16% of respondents said they intended to vote. The overall confidence interval for intent to vote demonstrates that being in the treatment slightly decreased intent to vote, but this difference was not meaningfully distinct from zero ($p > 0.1$). When the two candidates’ platforms were held constant and the only variable that differed was age, treatment effects were still absent. The presence of a younger candidate does not meaningfully alter intent to vote, disconfirming Hypothesis 3.

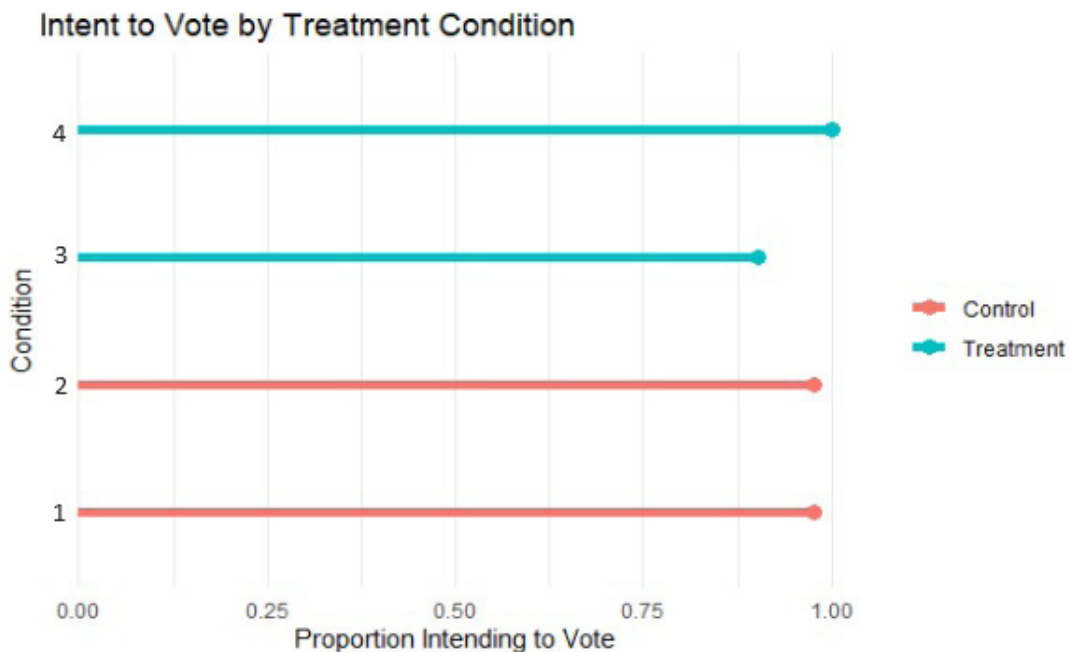


Figure 8: Intent to vote by treatment condition.

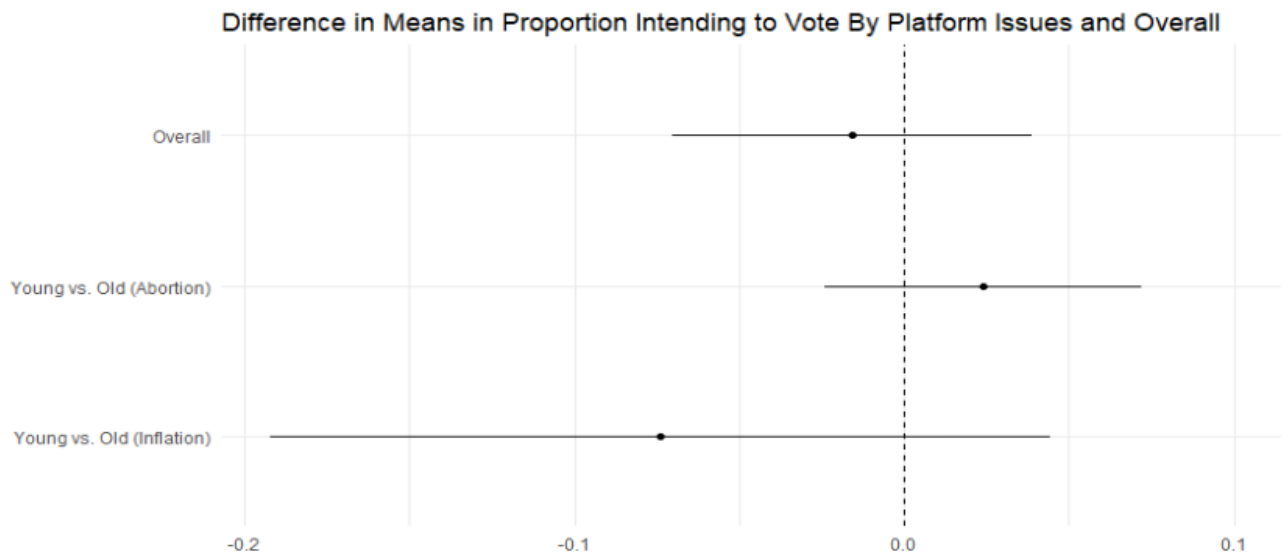


Figure 9: Confidence intervals for intent to vote.

DISCUSSION

The results suggest that there is a positive correlation between candidate age and youth voter turnout, which counters Hypothesis 1. Yet, there is reason to doubt that this reflects a causal relationship. When the data is separated by election type, the positive correlation holds for presidential elections; however, the relationship is null for midterm elections. If older candidates were causing higher levels of youth turnout, similar and consistent positive relationships across both presidential and midterm elections would exist. Election type also significantly confounded the relationship between candidate age and youth voter turnout, as evidenced in the multivariate linear model; in fact, election type explained more of the variation in turnout than candidate age. This suggests that the positive relationship between age and turnout in Study 1 can be attributed to the fact that turnout among all voters tends to be higher in presidential elections when candidates happen to be older. Although these results do not provide evidence that younger candidates cause greater youth voter turnout, they do not convincingly indicate that the opposite is true either.

The results of Study 2 were consistent with the absence of a clear association between candidate age and youth voter turnout. While subjects in the control group felt equally represented by both candidates, subjects in the treatment group consistently gave higher representativeness ratings to the young candidate. Moreover, when the candidates' platforms were held constant across the treatment and control, and only candidate age varied, subjects in the treatment still assigned the young candidate a higher representativeness rating. This evidence suggests that young voters do feel more politically acknowledged and empowered when there are young candidates on the ballot, confirming Hypothesis 2. However, subjects in the treatment with the young candidate did not differ from subjects in the control in terms of intent to vote in the hypothetical election. This suggested that the presence of a young candidate does not affect young voters' decisions to turn out, countering Hypothesis 3.

Collectively, the evidence from Study 2 suggests that my proposed mechanism based on political empowerment cannot fully explain patterns in youth voter turnout. Young voters generally feel more represented by young candidates, indicating that they perceive them as members of their ingroup and feel greater efficacy when they appear on the ballot. However, this sense of efficacy does not translate into an increased intent to vote. This lack of evidence for our proposed mechanism is consistent with the results of Study 1. The null relationship between candidate age and youth voter turnout is exactly what would be expected if the presence of younger candidates increases feelings of empowerment among young voters but does not affect their intent to turn out.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the results suggest that the presence of young candidates on the ballot likely does not motivate youth voters to turn out more. Although young voters do feel more empowered by young candidates, there is no evidence that this motivates their decision to vote. These conclusions suggest that incorporating younger candidates on the ballot is unlikely to motivate increased youth turnout. It follows that providing younger people with pathways into politics may not result in greater participation in politics among young people as a whole. The most effective methods of increasing youth voter turnout may emerge through the further study of why empowerment is not an effective mediator, or through the study of factors unrelated to the descriptive representation of youth in politics.

This study has a few notable limitations. First, due to time and resource constraints, I only sampled election data from 10 states in Study 1. Therefore, the results may not be representative of youth turnout patterns in the U.S. as a whole. Second, only one measure of candidate age was used in Study 1, so the results could be the product of measurement. Finally, the experimental survey was fielded to a sample of UCLA undergraduates who are likely to be more politically engaged than the general youth population. This may have skewed the results; specifically, the question asking about intent to vote may have captured already high levels of political interest rather than the treatment effects. Future work may test the robustness of these findings by replicating this study with a national sample of election data and a survey sample representative of the U.S. youth population.

Beyond the need for robustness testing, this research suggests multiple directions for further work. First, there is a need to establish why empowerment may not always translate into increased voter turnout. Bobo and Gilliam's (1990) seminal theory of political empowerment suggests that voters' feelings of inefficacy stem primarily from the belief that they hold little power in the political system (Lariscy, Tinkham, and Sweetser, 2011). However, political inefficacy can also arise when individuals believe they lack enough information to cast an informed vote. This political information inefficacy is especially common among youth, perhaps dampening the effects of political empowerment generated by young candidates (Kaid, McKinney, and Tedesco, 2007; Lariscy, Tinkham, and Sweetser, 2011). Further research should examine whether political information efficacy depresses political participation among youth, even when they are highly motivated to vote.

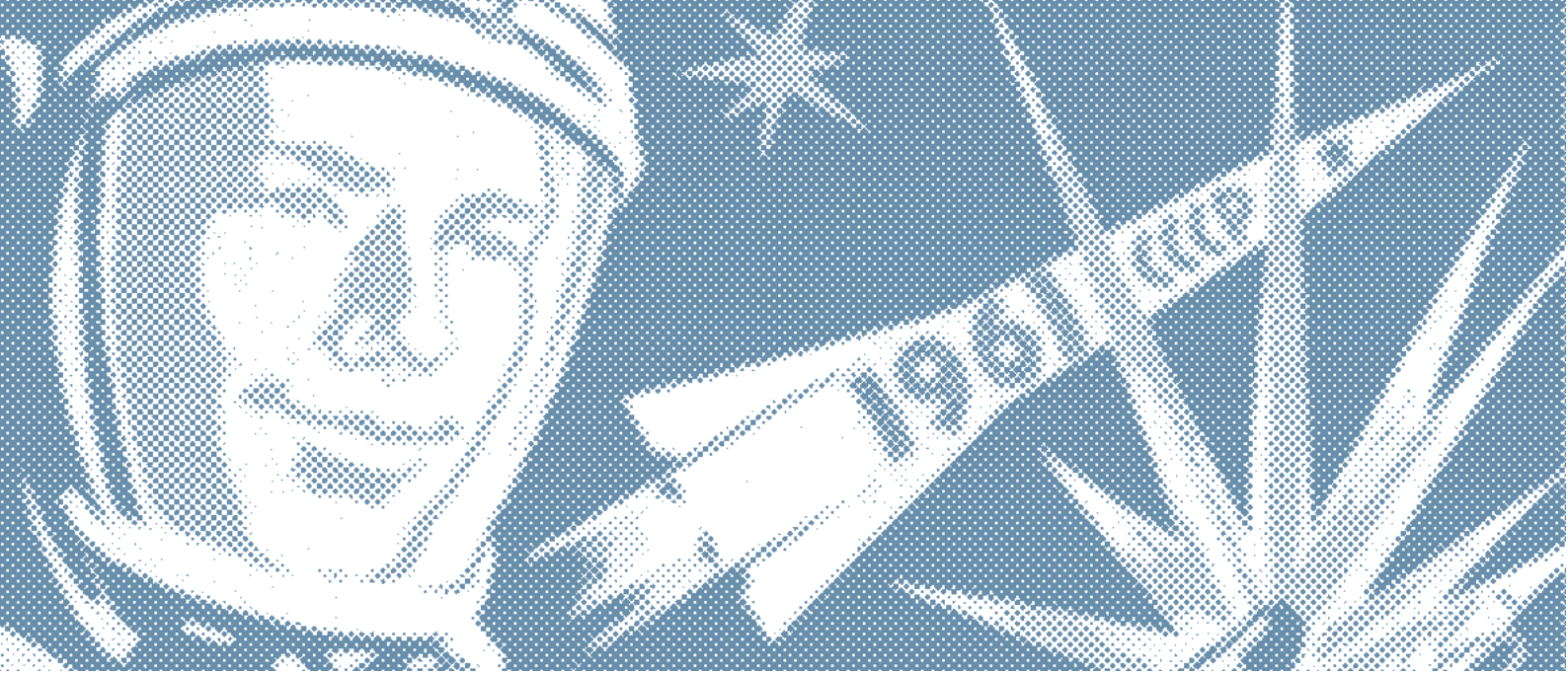
Given the null relationship between candidate age and youth voter turnout, future work may focus on resolving questions in the literature on legal, educational, and environmental factors that increase youth turnout in the U.S. (Juelich and Coll, 2020; Stechler, 2019; Weinshenck & Dawes, 2021; Bergan et. al., 2021). This work might clarify the relationship between civic education and turnout, or examine which types of election laws are associated with the highest youth turnout. It may also explore the factors that motivate turnout and political participation among politically apathetic youth. Future research might further explain the relationship between descriptive representation on the ballot and voter turnout among other demographic groups. Although my proposed mechanism could not account for patterns in turnout among young voters, descriptive representation of racial, gender, or religious groups on the ballot may increase turnout for those groups through the mediator of political efficacy.

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The Sputnik Shock: Lessons for a 21st century Analysis of Technological Soft Power

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Edited by

**Sophia Hua &
Risha Trivedi**

ABSTRACT

The early triumphs of the Sputnik program and Iuri Gagarin's pioneering flight to outer space are probably what come to the mind for most people when the words 'Soviet' and 'Technology' are mentioned together. These two technological accomplishments marked the history of the Cold War and portrayed the Soviet Union as the standard bearers of humanity in the final frontier of space exploration. Although the Sputnik satellite did not pose any direct military threats to the Western block, the launch caused panic across Europe and the United States. From a constructivist perspective of international relations, this research paper argues that state-led technological development is intrinsically connected to international soft power and prestige promotion. This paper follows a cross-case analysis research methodology. First, by examining the technological developments of the USSR under Nikita Khrushchev, this paper posits that state-led technological research and development is an efficient soft power strategy to increase a state's admiration, respect, and fear in the international arena. Secondly, by examining the People's Republic of China under Xi Jinping, this essay argues that state-led technological research and development is still a relevant soft power strategy in the 21st century.

Keywords: Soviet Union, China, Sputnik, Space Race, Soft Power, Technology, Research and Development (R&D)

INTRODUCTION

The early triumphs of the Sputnik program and Iuri Gagarin's pioneering flight to outer space are probably what spring to the mind of most people if the words 'Soviet' and 'Technology' are mentioned together. These two technological accomplishments marked the history of the Cold War and portrayed the Soviet Union as the standard bearers of humanity in the final frontier of space exploration. Although the Sputnik satellite did not pose any direct military threats to the Western block, the launch caused panic across Europe and the United States (Levine, 2018, p. 57). The prime minister of the United Kingdom, Harold Macmillan, remarked in November 1957, "Never has the threat of Soviet Communism been so great" (Levine, 2018, p. 59). In the United States, Walter Reuther, head of the United Automobile Workers and one of the greatest American labor leaders, described Sputnik as a "bloodless Pearl Harbor" (Levine, 2018, p. 59). For the West, it seemed that the Soviet Union had beaten them in their own game of technological development as Soviet communism, not liberal democracy, enjoyed the glory of pioneering the space age (Levine, 2018, p. 58).

From a constructivist perspective of international relations, this research paper argues that technological development is intrinsically connected to international soft power and prestige promotion. This essay will refer to Joseph Nye's definition of soft power as the ability to influence the international agenda through cultural, ideological, and diplomatic means, relying on attraction, persuasion, and cooperation to shape the preferences of other states (Nye, 1990, p. 167). By examining the Khrushchev era of the Soviet Union, this essay posits that state-led technological research and development is an efficient soft power strategy to increase a state's admiration, respect, and fear in the international arena. Lastly, this essay will examine the People's Republic of China, its high levels of state-led technological development under Xi Jinping, and its impacts on Chinese soft power and prestige promotion in international relations.

This paper will follow a cross-case analysis research methodology, examining the technological developments of the USSR under Nikita Khrushchev during the Cold War and the People's Republic of China under Xi Jinping and its implications for soft power. The rationale behind the purposive sampling selection is associated with the significantly higher levels of state-led technological R&D during Khrushchev's and Jinping's political mandates. Furthermore, many international relations scholars considered both states revisionist under these two leaders. Lastly, since the end of the 19th century and early 20th century, the Russian and Chinese states have shared a similar social construction regarding technology where science and technological development are seen as a means of overcoming their historical scientific-industrial underdevelopment to Western powers.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Traditionally, in international relations literature, technological development has been associated with power maximization through military and economic means. This materialistic analysis of technology is most prominent within the realm of Realism. Famously, in the book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, John Mearsheimer stated that global hegemony is virtually impossible, except for a state that has acquired clear-cut nuclear superiority capable of devastating rivals without fear of retaliation (Mearsheimer, 2001, pp. 348-51). Realists' materialistic understanding of technology can also be observed in Hans Morgenthau's reaction to the Sputnik launch, even though the satellite did not pose direct military or economic threats to the USA. In 1957, Hans Morgenthau published the article *The Decline of America* in which he stressed the consequences of the Soviet Sputnik prowess for intercontinental ballistic missiles, warning of a possible deterrence gap that could allow Soviet first-strike capability (Levine, 2018, p. 60). After the Sputnik launch, Morgenthau stated that he believed the Soviet Union was "superior to the United States in almost every department of warfare" (Nobel, 1995, p. 73).

This paper strays from the traditional realist and deterministic understanding of technology by providing a constructivist analysis of the role of technological development in international relations. Constructivism emphasizes the role of ideas, norms and values in determining state behavior in the international arena (Wendt, 1992, p. 399). The theoretical framework of this analysis will be technoscientific orientalism, a social-constructivist theory proposed by Dimitrios Stroikos in the article *China, India, and the Social Construction of Technology in International Society*. Stroikos emphasizes the role of states in shaping the norms and values of the international system (Stroikos, 2020, p. 714). Accordingly, by the 19th century, technological advancement had gained a socially constructed meaning, serving as an informal standard for modern civilization and state superiority (Stroikos, 2020, p. 715). Stroikos traces this socially constructed understanding of technology as a driving factor behind the expansion of European international society into the Eastern world after the Industrial Revolution (Stroikos, 2020, p. 717). The expansion of the international community led by the industrialized Western European powers came with a socially constructed classification of "civilized" and "barbarian" states based on levels of industrialization (Stroikos, 2020, p. 717). Consequently, non-industrialized states of Europe and Asia, such as Russia and China, struggled for complete statehood status, respect and admiration in the international arena (Stroikos, 2020, p. 717).

Therefore, in the post-expansion of the international community, technologies gained a Eurocentric, socially constructed meaning of cultural modernity and political emancipation (Stroikos, 2020, p. 718). Consequently, technological development and scientific breakthroughs became intrinsically connected to soft power, fostering admiration and respect for those setting the standards of civilization by exploring the final frontier of human prowess. Furthermore, by the late 20th century, technological development increasingly became an indicator of national purpose, international status, and global aspirations amid the political tensions of the Cold War (Stroikos, 2020, p. 728). The following paragraphs will analyze the role of technological development as a soft power strategy under Nikita Khrushchev to promote communism internationally and portray the Soviet Union as the standard bearer of humanity in scientific progress.

THE KHRUSHCHEV ERA AND TECHNOLOGICAL SOFT POWER AMID THE COLD WAR

Science and technology were always central to the Soviet communist vision of the preordained future. Nineteenth-century Marxists embraced scientific progress, seeing it as the necessary precondition for all social and economic change (Froggatt, 2018, p. 2). Furthermore, Marxism, most explicitly in Friedrich Engels's interpretation, was intended to be a scientific ideology that took account of the latest discoveries in the physical and biological sciences, put forth verifiable hypotheses, and ultimately

arrived at objective and universal laws (Froggatt, 2018, p. 2). The generally positive attitude towards science and technology shared by Marxists was accentuated in the case of Soviet Russia. The Bolsheviks saw the concerted promotion of technology as a means of overcoming Russia's historical industrial underdevelopment to the West (Froggatt, 2018, p. 2). As a result, the Russian Communist Party made the rapid advancement of science and technology a cornerstone for developing the USSR (Froggatt, 2018, p. 2). Hence, science and technology were at center stage in the Khrushchev era as Western capitalism and Soviet Communism laid superiority claims on social and economic progress amid the Space Race (Froggatt, 2018, p. 2).

Nikita Khrushchev's mandate was marked by technological breakthroughs that seemed to propel the Soviet Union to the level of a competitor for global hegemony (Froggatt, 2018, p. 2). The Sputnik and Yuri Gagarin triumphs were the fruit of a massive expansion in funding for the scientific community, where party support for technological development did not simply rest on a pragmatic interest in economic growth or military hardware (Froggatt, 2018, p. 2). Instead, the generous funding for R&D rested on the instrumental view that scientific progress was consonant with Bolshevik political culture and international objectives. (Froggatt, 2018, p. 3). Therefore, the Soviet state provided scientists with resources in exchange for scientific breakthroughs which furthered the USSR's legitimacy and prestige internationally (Froggatt, 2018, p. 9). Soviet scientific propaganda contributed to the project of forging the Homo Sovieticus, a worthy inhabitant of a communist world, by convincing Soviet citizens and the international community that Communist Utopia was imminent (Froggatt, 2018, p. 3). Furthermore, under Khrushchev, scientific progress played a more significant propaganda role as he held personal identification with large-scale technologies as emblems of political leadership domestically and internationally (Josephson, 1995, p. 538).

The centrality of technological development as a soft power foreign policy of Khrushchev's Soviet Union was synthesized in developing the Soviet Space Program and the Sputnik 1 launch that ignited the Space Race (Froggatt, 2018, p. 188). The Space Race was a contest overwhelmingly driven by the need for propaganda, although it also presented, to a lesser extent, military incentives for rival political systems (Barry, 200, p. 108). This historical moment of the Cold War was marked by competition of which regime would be the standard bearer of humanity in the final frontier of space exploration. Accordingly, the Sputnik launch was a successful soft power strategy in increasing Soviet prestige internationally, crediting the USSR for pioneering the space age. A month after the launch, in November 1957, the prime minister of the United Kingdom, Harold Macmillan remarked, "Never has the threat of Soviet Communism been so great" (Levine, 2018, p. 59). In the United States, Walter Reuther, head of the United Automobile Workers and one of the greatest American labor leaders, described Sputnik as a "bloodless Pearl Harbor" (Levine, 2018, p. 59). American senator Henry Jackson, a hardliner on defense spending, described Sputnik as a "devastating blow to American prestige" (Levine, 2018, p. 59).

For the West, the message was clear: with the Sputnik launch, the Soviet Union had beaten them in their own game, technological development. Now, Soviet communism, not liberal democracies, enjoyed the glory of space technological superiority (Levine, 2018, p. 58). Many following space missions were timed to boost Soviet prestige abroad in strategically important states (Froggatt, 2018, p. 198). According to Roald Sagdeev, former director of the Space Research Institute of the USSR, the launch of Sputnik III was timed to give a boost to the Italian Communist Party prior to their national elections (Sagdeev & Eisenhower, 1994, pp. 157-58). Furthermore, the Gherman Titov Vostok II Soviet space mission in 1961 was scheduled to provide a morale boost to the East German regime as Walter Ulbricht was about to embark on the construction of the Berlin Wall (Froggatt, 2018, p. 198).

Furthermore, the Soviet space program not only provided an opportunity to demonstrate the positive virtues of the USSR and Soviet Communism, but also offered the opportunity to mock US space endeavors, diminishing their international prestige. Khrushchev himself took great pleasure in deriding the American satellite Explorer I as being 'no bigger than a grapefruit' as it weighed only 14 kg compared to the 80 kg of Sputnik I and the 500 kg of Sputnik II (Doran & Bizony, 2011, p. 105).

Furthermore, Lunik III was launched in late 1959 to coincide with Khrushchev's visit to the USA, giving him a chance to present a replica of the satellite to Eisenhower himself (Froggatt, 2018, p. 198). Soviet media comments about the inferiority of American aircraft were also common. For instance, in 1962, a radio broadcast noted the problems of G-force suffered by astronauts Gus Grissom and Alan Shepard, claiming this was due to the inadequacies of American rocket technology (Froggatt, 2018, p. 201).

In addition, Soviet space superiority and mockery of American technological prowess granted opportunities for broader criticisms of American society. One 1960 science fiction story, supposedly based on the authentic story of a defector, 'Samuel D.' which had parallels with the story of American pilot Gary Powers, played upon the perceived inadequacies of American rocket technology (Froggatt, 2018, pp. 201-02). It tells the story of Charlie Wright, a Black American ex-GI plagued by poverty, who becomes a test pilot but soon discovers that the German engineer in charge of the program uses human guinea pigs to guide his rockets to their target (Froggatt, 2018, pp. 201-02). This story, therefore, managed to combine a portrayal of faulty American technology with the social status of African Americans in the United States, criticizing American values and society (Froggatt, 2018, pp. 201-02).

Another example is the film *Planeta Bur*, where an American, Allan Kern, is allowed to join the Soviet expedition to Venus to test his robot 'Iron John.' The American character is individualistic, egocentric, and pessimistic about humanity (Froggatt, 2018, p. 202). When stranded with a fellow cosmonaut, Kern refuses to believe the rest of the Soviet expedition will rescue them, claiming that people are naturally cowards and egoists (Froggatt, 2018, p. 203). Lastly, when discussing the possibility of Venus's atmosphere being breathable, Allan Kern thinks exclusively about how eager he is to win the Nobel prize, refusing to believe that men can act altruistically for the greater good without personal gains (Froggatt, 2018, p. 203). Therefore, the USSR's space superiority granted opportunities for broader criticisms of American society and culture through media as a soft power strategy to increase Soviet prestige domestically and abroad.

To conclude, the Soviet case study reinforced the centrality of technological development as a soft power foreign policy strategy to increase a state's prestige and influence internationally. Through pioneering the space age, the Soviet Union was perceived as more materially and ideologically advanced than the Western bloc. The successes of Soviet space missions also served to demoralize capitalists and liberal democratic regimes abroad while influencing states to turn to the Soviet model by boosting the morale of other communist parties. Lastly, Soviet technological breakthroughs also served to criticize American society and norms, promoting class consciousness and socialist values in the USA and abroad. In the next section, this research paper will explore the People's Republic of China case study and how state-led technological research and development is still a relevant soft power strategy under Xi Jinping for promoting Chinese international prestige in the 21st century.

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND TECHNOLOGICAL SOFT POWER AMID THE 21ST CENTURY

One constant variable in Chinese history since the middle of the nineteenth century is that imperial reformers, early Republicans, and Chinese Communists have all prioritized modern

science and technology (Elman, 2007, p. 523). Consequently, the role of science in contemporary China cannot be undervalued. China's obsession with technological development in the twenty-first century is partly a response to the shock of heavy-handed Western imperialism after the 19th century (Elman, 2007, p. 523). Following the Opium Wars and the Taiping Revolution, the Qing Chinese elites advocated institutional reforms to adapt to the new international environment (Stroikos, 2020, p. 721). Adopting Western technology was a central aspect of reforms proposed in the Qing restoration, when pursuing technological advancement was seen as essential for strengthening the Chinese state domestically and internationally (Stroikos, 2020, p. 722). This mentality was predominant among leading reformists, such as Feng Kuei-fen, who saw the construction of Chinese machines as an indicator of

China's leading role in international society, and a way to right the wrongs of past humiliations through increasing China's international prestige (Ssu-yu & Fairbank, 1979, pp. 51-54).

In the 21st century, technological development as a foreign policy strategy to increase Chinese soft power and prestige has become more relevant than ever under Xi Jinping. From 2014 to 2018, the Chinese Communist Party published a three-work collection by Xi about international affairs, expressing his views on Chinese foreign relations (Zhang, 2019, p. 9). Xi's works emphasize a common theme for Chinese foreign policy in the 21st century: overcoming the Century of Humiliation through Chinese rejuvenation and contribution to the international community (Zhang, 2019, pp. 9-11). Under Xi, the People's Republic of China (PRC) intensified state-led technological development, which became central not to economic growth but also as a foreign policy strategy (Denoon, 2021, p. 43). On 28 May 2018, in his opening address at the 19th Meeting of the Academicians of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Xi Jinping publicly announced the goal of developing China into the world's leader in science and technology, stressing the importance of scientific breakthroughs (Cao et al., 2018, p. 120).

Consequently, technological innovation played an increasingly important role in growing Chinese prestige in the global hierarchy. After years of rapid growth, China's research and development spending reached 410 billion USD in 2016, more than that of Japan, Germany, and South Korea combined (Denoon, 2021, p. 43). PRC investments have helped Chinese firms take the lead in many tech-focused fields, such as robotics, energy storage, EVs, 5G, quantum information systems, and, potentially, biotechnology (Denoon, 2021, pp. 46-47). In the case of telecommunications for example, Chinese technology has dominated the African market, making China one of the most pivotal actors in ensuring connectivity in the region's digital realm (Edney et al., 2020, p. 199). Although China missed the Industrial Revolution, Xi's PRC is determined to be the standard bearer of scientific progress in the current high-tech revolution (Denoon, 2021, p. 47).

Furthermore, Xi's heavy investments in the technological development of renewable energies and his "ecological civilization" policy have generated popular support both domestically and internationally (Denoon, 2021, p. 51). In 2013, Beijing declared a "war on pollution" as China had long confronted severe environmental degradation (Denoon, 2021, p. 51). In December 2018, the State Council released an ambitious "zero-waste city" pilot plan in eleven cities to minimize solid-waste generation and maximize recycling in urban areas (Denoon, 2021, p. 51). Furthermore, Xi's recent efforts to shut down many heavily polluting factories and promote clean-energy cars seem to yield positive reactions worldwide (Denoon, 2021, p. 51). From 2006 to 2016, three state-led programs for electric vehicle research and development were promoted by the PRC focusing on power batteries, battery management systems, motor drive and power electronics assemblies, EV intelligent technologies, and power systems (Zang et al., 2017, p. 703). Not surprisingly, China became the world's largest electric vehicle (EV) market, further reinforcing the image of the PRC as a leader in clean energy worldwide (Denoon, 2021, p. 49).

In addition, the partially state-owned Chinese BYD has maintained the rank of the third largest EV company in the world since 2016, operating factories across the world, such as in Russia, Syria, Egypt, Sudan, the USA, and Brazil (Masiero et al., 2016, p.7). Furthermore, many Latin American cities, such as the Colombian capital of Bogota and the Chilean capital of Santiago, are greening their urban public transportation with the help of Chinese manufacturers, who have become the largest suppliers to the region (You, 2023). In 2020, Chile became the country with the most Chinese EVs outside of China, and this year, Santiago's public transport operator announced that it ordered 1,022 e-buses from Beijing-based Foton Motor, the biggest overseas deal the firm ever received (You, 2023). These groundbreaking statistics regarding the presence of Chinese EVs in Latin America reinforce the PRC soft power narrative of leading climate change cooperation and green economic transition in the international arena (Denoon, 2021, p. 51).

Lastly, although the West is leading the artificial intelligence race, the People's Republic of China has mobilized its resources to surpass the United States as the standard bearer of humanity in AI technological development (Knox, 2020, p. 300). In 2017, the Xi government published the State

Council's National Strategy for AI Development (Knox, 2020, p. 300). This document stated the goal of making the PRC the world's primary AI innovation center by 2030, with a gross output exceeding 1 trillion Chinese Yuan (Knox, 2020, p. 301). It also provided a concrete strategy for central ministries and local governments to invest in R&D in order to achieve technological breakthroughs (Segal, 2018, p. 14). Furthermore, in 2018, the PRC released the Action Plan for Artificial Intelligence Innovation in Colleges and Universities (Knox, 2020, p. 301). This policy provides two main objectives that are achievable through state-led initiatives and investments (Knox, 2020, p. 301). First, it would establish university infrastructures and curricula capable of adapting to AI by 2020. Second, it would enhance R&D and workforce training in specific AI-related skills in public universities by 2025 (Knox, 2020, p. 301). Once again, the People's Republic of China's efforts to surpass the United States and lead R&D in AI technology emphasize the social construction of technology, where states that are the most innovative and technologically advanced tend to influence and dominate international relations (Knox, 2020, p. 300).

CONCLUSION

This paper strays from a realist and deterministic understanding of technology by providing a constructivist analysis of the role of technological development in international relations. Through Dimitrios Stroikos's techno-scientific orientalist theoretical framework, this essay emphasizes that by the 19th century, with the expansion of the European international society into the Eastern world after the Industrial Revolution, technological advancement became a symbol of modernity and political emancipation. Therefore, technology gained a Eurocentric socially constructed value of superiority. Consequently, in the post-expansion era of the international community, the non-industrialized states of Europe and Asia, such as Russia and China, saw state-led technological development as a tool for overcoming their historical industrial underdevelopment to the West and gaining complete statehood status and admiration from the international community.

Through a social constructivist perspective, this research paper analyzes the role of technology in 21st-century foreign policy, arguing that technological development is intrinsically connected to soft power and prestige promotion in international relations. Through an in-depth analysis of the Space Race and Nikita Khrushchev-led Soviet Union, state-led space technological research and development served as an efficient soft power strategy. It propelled the USSR as a competitor for global hegemony by portraying the Soviet Union as the standard bearers of humanity in the final frontier of space exploration. Therefore, by pioneering the space age, the Soviet Union was perceived as more materially and ideologically advanced than the Western bloc, emphasizing the positive virtues of Soviet Communism while diminishing American and liberal democracies' prestige in the international arena. Furthermore, by analyzing the case of the People's Republic of China under Xi Jinping, this essay argues that state-led technological research and development is still a relevant soft power strategy in the 21st century.

The Xi government is marked by heavy investment and state-led R&D in many high-tech industrial sectors. Chinese high-technological telecommunication services dominate the African market, while PRC's renewable technology advancements have generated popular appeal domestically and abroad. Through state-led R&D, China has the largest electric vehicle market and is Latin America's greatest EV supplier. These statistics support the PRC's narrative of leading climate change cooperation and the green economic transition. Lastly, although the West is leading the artificial intelligence race, the PRC has mobilized its resources to compete for the position of standard bearer in AI technological development. To conclude, the Khrushchev and Xi governments' heavy investment in technological research and development further reinforces the social construction over technology advocated by David Stroikos—the most innovative and technologically advanced states tend to influence and dominate international relations.

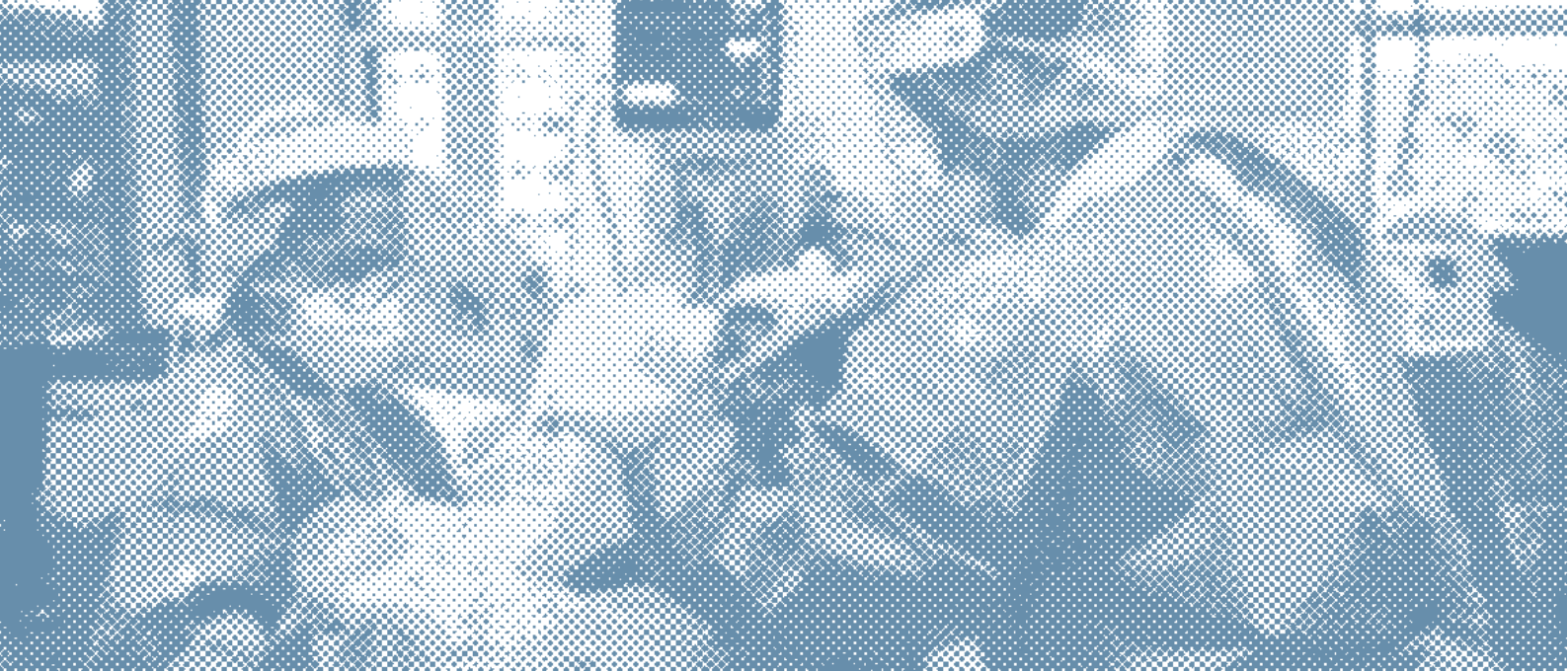
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Economic Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Men vs. Women in the United States

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to collect and analyze data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics in order to evaluate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on labor market outcomes, specifically focusing on wages, labor force participation rates, and unemployment rates for men and women in the United States. Upon analyzing data from 2008 and 2020, this study reveals that women faced disproportionately worse economic consequences during the 2020 recession, experiencing higher unemployment rates, lower labor force participation rates, and increased economic vulnerability when compared to men. The findings underscore the urgent need for deeper exploration of gender disparities in economic downturns and highlight the necessity of targeted policies to mitigate the unequal impacts of future crises.

INTRODUCTION

In December 2019, the first case of COVID-19 was identified in Wuhan, China. A month later, in January 2020, the Director-General of the World Health Organization announced that the COVID-19 outbreak was an international public health emergency. In the same month, the first case of COVID-19 in the United States was discovered, and by February, the country witnessed its first death from the virus. In April 2020, the United States experienced an initial increase in COVID-19 cases, reporting 601,000 cases and 24,129 deaths on April 14, 2020, with numbers only continuing to rise.

The effects of COVID-19 did not only lead to a public health crisis, but also gave rise to a global economic crisis. The World Bank called this pandemic ‘the deepest global recession in decades’ upon predictions of a 5.2% contraction in the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2020. Just before the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. economy was in a relatively stable condition, marked by some of the lowest unemployment and inflation rates the country had seen in recent years. In the first quarter of 2020, however, which is when the United States experienced the initial brunt of the pandemic, the nation’s real GDP fell by nearly 31.40%, and unemployment rates skyrocketed to levels (14.7%) not seen since the Great Depression (Horsely, 2020).

COVID-19 has affected both people’s personal and professional lives, leaving a strain on the nation’s economy. Workers in the country faced economic uncertainty throughout the pandemic with concerns ranging from pay cuts and health risks to unemployment and workplace shutdowns, leaving them in a financially vulnerable state.

Conventionally, workers from industries in the tertiary sector of the economy, or middle and high wage workers, face the direct consequences of economic downfalls. A majority of industries in these parts of the economy have a higher representation of men than women in their workforce. Consequently, several economists’ analyses indicate that, on average, men experience worse or more severe consequences than women during and after recession periods.

Due to the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, of the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic repercussions that people faced in 2020 surpassed those of previous recessions, showing distinct trends between men and women. This paper focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on labor market outcomes of wages, labor force participation, and unemployment, and presents a statistical analysis in order to explain such inconsistent trends.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Amidst the unfolding COVID-19 pandemic, scholars have undertaken pivotal research to understand its impact on diverse segments of the workforce. As researchers delve deeper into the pandemic’s repercussions, a notable trend emerges: the disproportionate burden of the pandemic on women as compared to men. This has been observed in several capacities, including women in non-remote work sectors, as well as women at home who took on the role of the primary caregiver during the pandemic. Andrew et al. conducted a survey with 4,915 parents in England with children aged four to fifteen, illuminating the challenges faced by parents in maintaining work-life balance during

the pandemic. The findings indicate a significant increase in parents' childcare responsibilities since the onset of lockdowns, exacerbating pre-existing gender disparities in the workforce. Women, who were already less likely to be employed before the pandemic, were now facing amplified challenges in bearing the brunt of primary caregiving responsibilities, leading to potential long-term impacts on their job prospects and economic autonomy. On the other hand, women who continued to work during the pandemic were largely employed in non-remote industries and work sectors. Despite lockdown measures, this event increased their vulnerability to health risks. Angelucci et al. conducted pioneering research on the economic and respiratory health outcomes of these groups in the U.S., analyzing data from 6,922 adults in the Understanding America Study (UAS), a panel of 14,000 respondents at the University of Southern California (USC), who represent the United States by participating in surveys and studies. Their findings revealed that non-remote workers, due to limited social distancing and policy impacts, experienced higher layoffs (24% for non-remote versus 8% for remote workers) and increased health risks, highlighting the disparities in the pandemic's effects on different segments of the workforce.

Another important factor that contributed to this increasing gender disparity was the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on men and women's mental health during this time. Etheridge and Spanting's paper covers information and analysis about the difference in mental well-being for men and women. Using the UK Household Longitudinal Survey (UKHLS) and data from interviews conducted within the study, the authors indicate that mental health declines since March 2020 have been twice as severe for women than men. This paper discusses the most plausible factors that have contributed to this disparity, including increased responsibilities, financial constraints, and varying work situations. Moreover, the authors display data demonstrating that, on average, women are more predisposed to the negative effects of lockdowns and social distancing than men. Variables like an individual's occupation type, income before the pandemic, familial responsibilities, and social networks play a huge role in the way that people face the ramifications of the pandemic. For example, women typically occupy jobs that require more direct interaction with others, such as in the service industry or healthcare, which exposes them to higher levels of stress and potential risks of infection. Additionally, women often shoulder the majority of caregiving responsibilities within households, which became more pronounced during lockdowns and school closures. The increased pressure to balance work, caregiving, and household duties amidst economic uncertainty took a toll on women's mental well-being. Moreover, women's pre-pandemic social networks were, on average, larger compared to men's, providing crucial social support and buffering against stressors. The loss of these regular social interactions due to lockdown measures further isolated women, contributing to heightened feelings of loneliness and depression. In essence, the aggregated effects of increased responsibilities, occupational hazards, caregiving duties, economic precarity, and social isolation amplified the negative impact of the pandemic on women's mental health. Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires comprehensive support systems and policies tailored to mitigate the unique stressors faced by women during times of crisis.

Overall, in light of previous research on the economic aspects of gender inequality, this paper analyzes available data on labor market outcomes of wage, labor force participation, and unemployment rates to assess differences in the pandemic's economic impact on men and women in the United States and to explore potential reasons for these disparities.

RESULTS

The tables and charts in this paper present data on labor force participation, unemployment rates, and wages in the form of median weekly earnings in the United States. These figures are divided to show results from 2008 and 2020 on a monthly or quarterly basis.

Labor Force Participation

Men consistently had a significantly higher labor force participation rate than women in both years, spanning before and after the shock of the recessions.

Between January and December of 2008, women’s labor force participation rose by 0.2 percentage points (nearly negligible change). In the same year, men’s labor force participation fell by 1.2 percentage points. In 2020, women’s labor force participation fell by 2.1 percentage points, while men’s labor force participation rate declined by a similar margin: 2 percentage points. Figure 1 shows a nearly stable labor force participation rate for both men and women in 2008. There is a significant decrease, however, in participation between March and April 2020 for both men and women due to the initial impacts of COVID-19.

Labour Force Participation Rates (%)

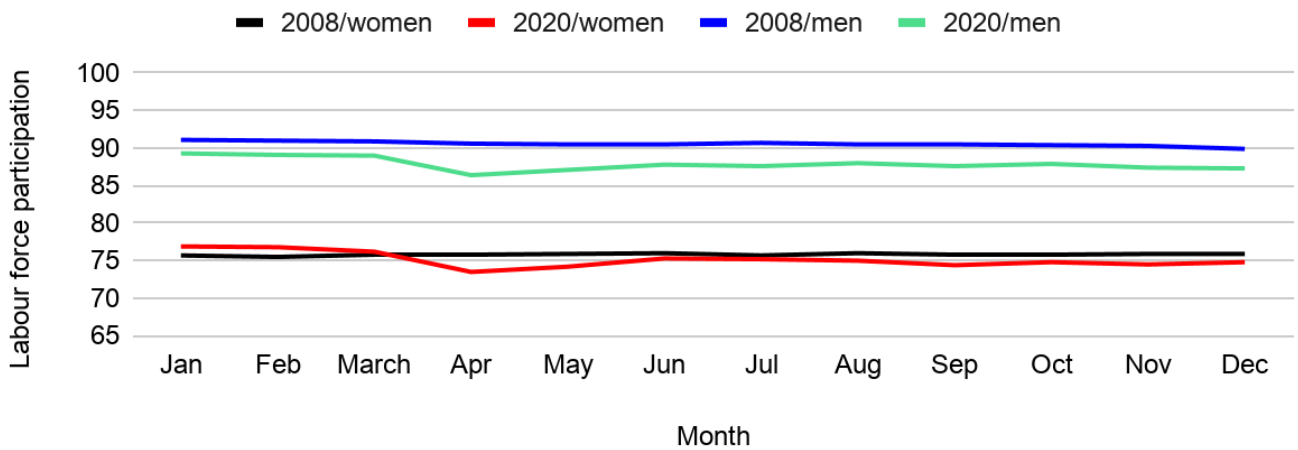


Figure 1

Labour Force Participation (% change)

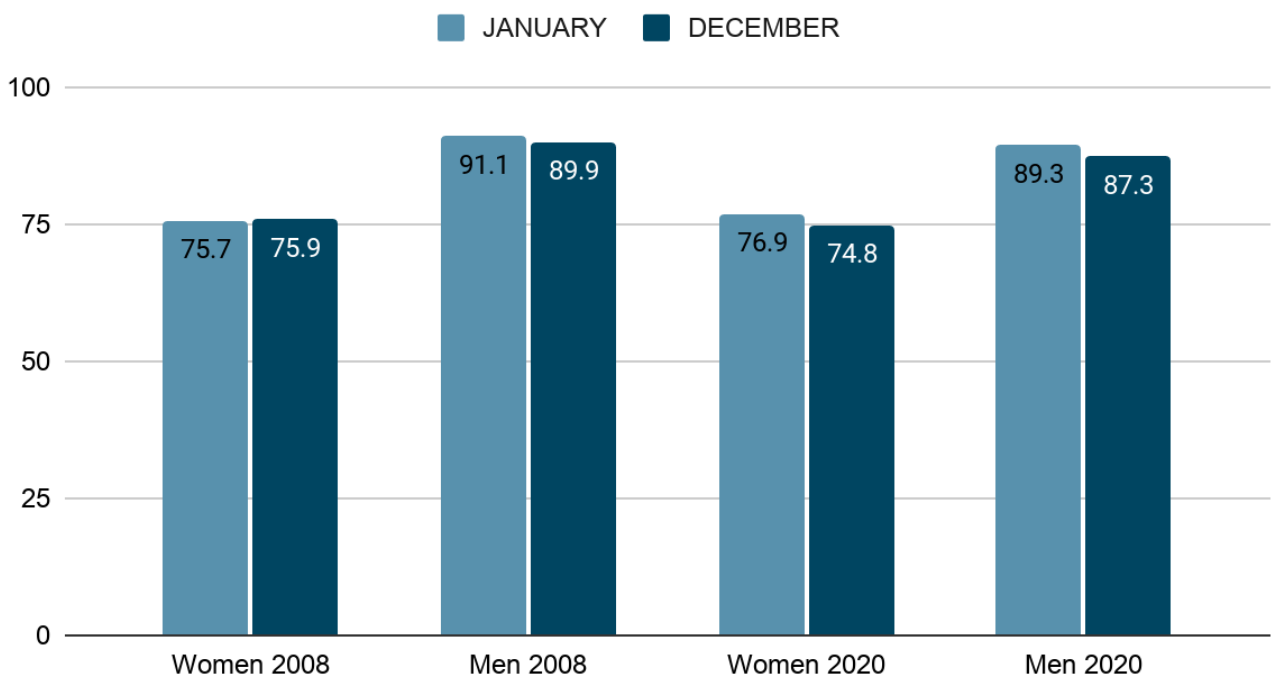


Figure 2

Wages (Median Weekly Earnings In Dollars)

In both 2008 and 2020, the median weekly earnings for men stayed above total median weekly earnings for men and women. For women, median weekly earnings were consistently lower than the total. Figure 3 illustrates that men persistently had higher earnings in both years, spanning before and after the initial shocks of the recessions.

Results showed that between January and December 2008, women’s median weekly earnings increased by 2.21% (+\$14) and men’s increased by 2.94% (+\$23). In 2020, women’s median weekly earnings increased by 5.04% (+\$43) and men’s increased by 1.14% (+\$12) (United States Census Bureau, 2020).

Median Weekly Earnings (\$)

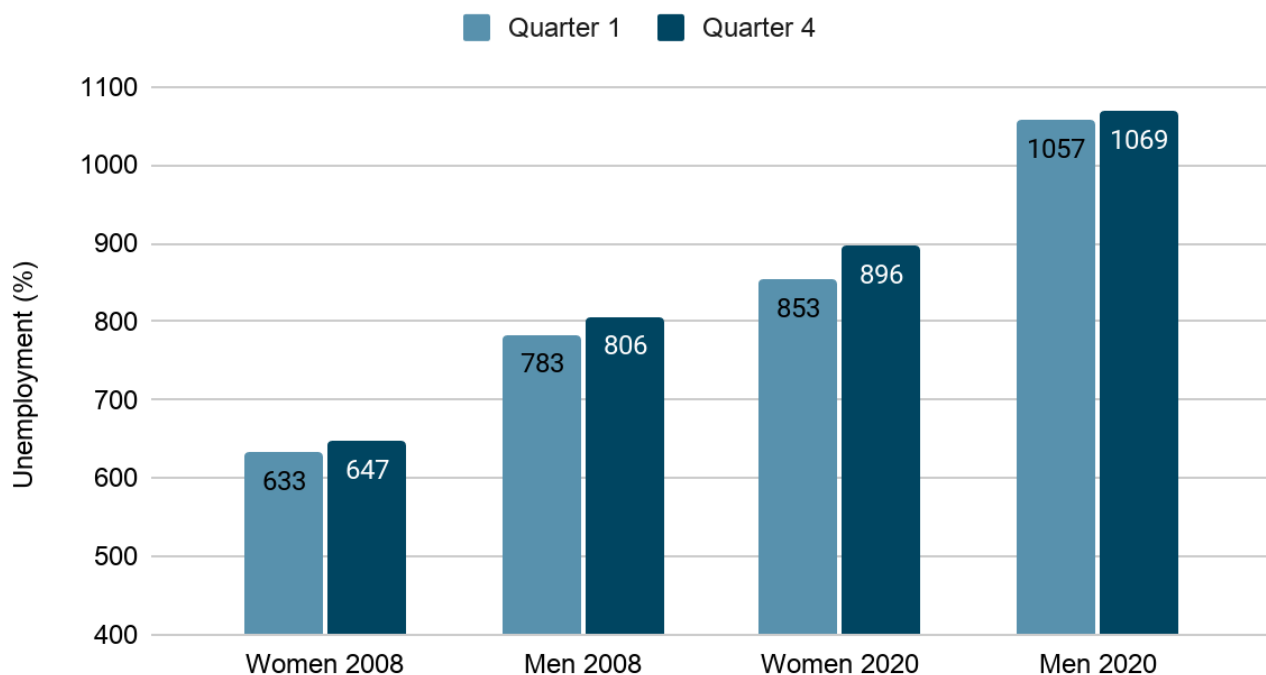


Figure 3

Unemployment Rate

Unemployment rates increased by 1.8 percentage points for women and 2.8 percentage points for men between January and December 2008. In 2020, women and men both experienced a 2.8 percentage point increase in unemployment from January to December. With the peak of the pandemic between March and April, however, women’s unemployment rate rose to 13.8% while men’s rose to 12% (United States Census Bureau, 2020). Women faced a higher unemployment rate, by 1.8 percentage points, than men in April 2020 as shown in Figure 4 below.

Results also show that in the face of an economic shock such as the 2020 recession, a woman, on average, was more likely to experience the brunt of the pandemic due to a lower economic standing when compared to men.

Unemployment rates (%)

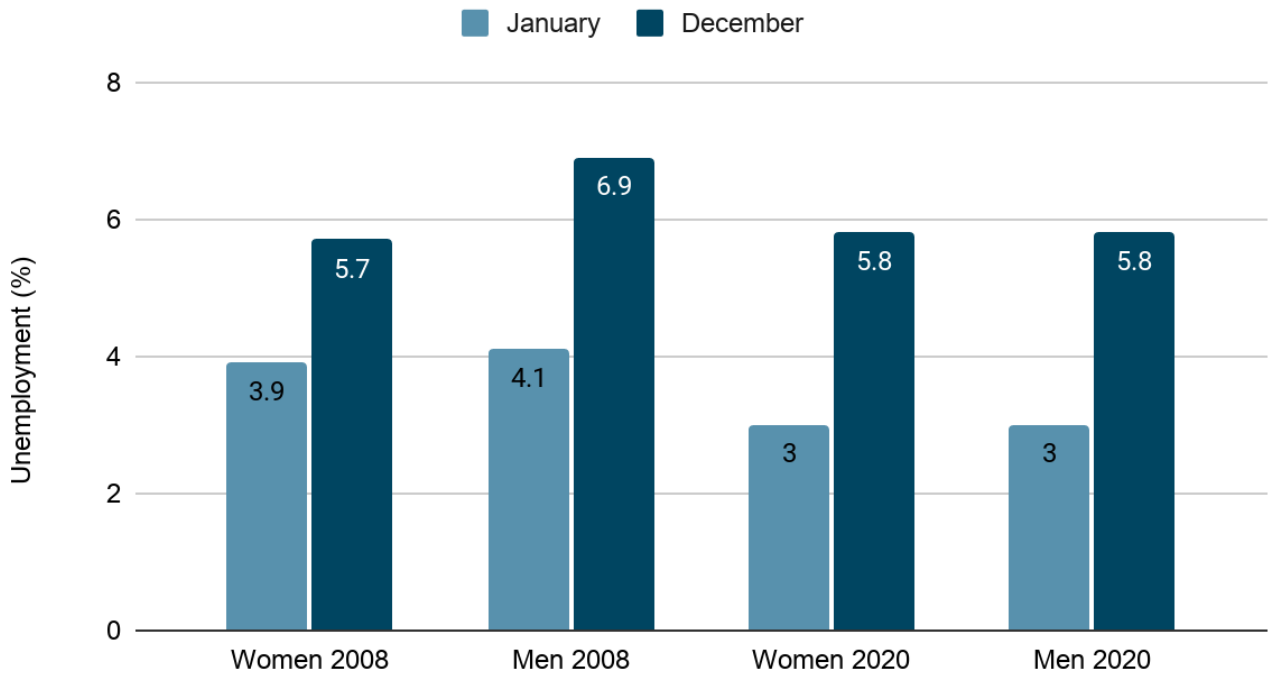


Figure 4

FIGURES, TABLES AND EQUATIONS

Table 1: Labor Force Participation Rates By Sex - 2008 & 2020 - US
Bureau Of Labor Statistics

Month	Value (2008 Women)	Value (2008 Men)	Value (2020 Women)	Value (2020 Men)
Jan	75.7	91.1	76.9	89.3
Feb	75.5	91	76.8	89.1
Mar	75.8	90.9	76.2	89
Apr	75.8	90.6	73.5	86.4
May	75.9	90.5	74.2	87.1
Jun	76	90.5	75.3	87.8
Jul	75.7	90.7	75.2	87.6
Aug	76	90.5	75	88
Sep	75.8	90.5	74.4	87.6
Oct	75.8	90.4	74.8	87.9
Nov	75.9	90.3	74.5	87.4
Dec	75.9	89.9	74.8	87.3

Table 2: Median Usual Weekly Earnings Of Full-Time Wage And Salary Workers By Sex - 2008 & 2020 - US Bureau Of Labor Statistics

Quarter	Total (Current Dollars)	Men (Current Dollars)	Women (Current Dollars)
Q1 2008	713	783	633
Q2 2008	722	802	636
Q3 2008	724	802	637
Q4 2008	727	806	647
Q1 2020	949	1057	853
Q2 2020	1009	1092	918
Q3 2020	996	1110	900
Q4 2020	983	1069	896

Table 3: Unemployment Rate (%) For Workers By Sex For Ages 25-54 Years - 2008 & 2020- US Bureau Of Labor Statistics

Year/Sex	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2008/Women	3.9	4	4.2	4.1	4.4	4.4	4.4	5.2	4.6	5.2	5.5	5.7
2020/Women	3	3	3.7	13.8	12.5	10.1	9.4	7.6	7.3	6.3	5.8	5.8
2008/Men	4.1	3.9	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.6	5	5.2	5.6	5.8	6.2	6.9
2020/Women	3	3	3.5	12	10.6	9.4	8.8	7.4	7	6.5	6.3	5.8

DISCUSSION

The economic gender gap presents a persistent challenge rooted in women’s historic vulnerability to economic shocks. As evident by data illustrating lower earnings, higher unemployment rates, and reduced labor force participation compared to men, women typically start at a disadvantage. This initial disparity is exacerbated by the prevalence of women in low-income positions and the persistence of workplace discrimination, leaving women less equipped to weather economic downturns. While the COVID-19 pandemic affected both genders adversely, women bore a disproportionate burden, underscoring the enduring nature of the gender gap, irrespective of the recession’s form.

Historically, recessions in the United States have often been labeled as ‘mancessions,’ indicating a greater impact on men’s employment than on women’s. Throughout previous economic downturns, such as the 2008 recession, men consistently experienced higher unemployment rates, as evident from past trends. The COVID-19 recession, however, marks a departure from this pattern, with women facing a sharper increase in unemployment rates compared to men for the first time. This economic gender gap, which has persisted over decades, magnifies women’s vulnerability during recessions akin to the COVID-19 pandemic (Pew Research Center, 2022). Various factors, including occupation type, marital status, number of children, and the remote or non-remote nature of work, contribute to the hypothesis that women bear a heavier burden following the 2020 pandemic recession, contrasting with past recessions that predominantly impacted men.

The contrasting effects of the 2008 recession and the 2020 pandemic-induced recession reveal significant shifts in industry vulnerabilities and workforce demographics, particularly in terms of gender representation and job loss patterns. In 2008, the two industries that faced the brunt of the recession were manufacturing and construction. The majority of the workforce in both industries were represented by men. On the contrary, in 2020, industries such as hospitality and retail experienced the highest layoffs, both having a higher share of women in their respective workforces. The lockdown imposed in the United States, coupled with decreasing consumer and supplier confidence during the first stages of the recession, led to more women than men experiencing job losses and pay cuts. In 2020, unemployment rose to 13.8% for women as compared to 12% for men.

Additionally, more women than men worked in jobs that could not be performed remotely. After the U.S. government implemented legislation to enforce a nation-wide lockdown, workers in certain industries, particularly service-based sectors, lost their jobs and struggled financially as their occupations could not be performed from home. The proportion of women in these industries—many of which require high amounts of physical contact; for example, childcare and restaurant services—is much higher than the proportion of men: 74% as compared to 26%. Women working in these fields were also more likely to experience layoffs and pay cuts due to business closures or a drastic decrease in demand for these services.

Furthermore, many of these service-based occupations make up the ‘low-wage’ sector of the economy’s workforce. This meant that people in predisposed states of vulnerability would also face the brunt of this pandemic. For employees who worked in the high-wage sector or in industries where demand increased, such as healthcare sectors and other front line industries, the risk of infection was much higher, leaving them more vulnerable to the pandemic. Women make up 64.4% of the workforce in front line sectors. According to the Center for Economic Policy and Research in the United States, more than one third of these front line workers were from low-income families (Center for Economic and Policy Research, 2020). The overrepresentation of women in front line jobs makes it more likely that women are not only at a higher risk of infection, but also more economically vulnerable due to the nature of their occupations. In sum, women are overrepresented in both sectors facing high unemployment and sectors where infection rate and health risks are much higher.

Another important factor that contributes to impact on labor market outcomes for men and women is their marital status and number of children. In marriages and households in general, women are said to be the ‘primary caregivers’. Due to this, throughout the year of 2020, women were more likely to leave jobs and stay at home to take care of the family. In contrast, in 2008, men faced higher unemployment rates and job cuts. As a result, women’s jobs were compensating for almost half of the earnings lost by their households due to the 2008 recession. At the time, this ensured that women were less likely to be forced out of the workplace. In 2020, however, due to regulations which promoted social distancing and the shutdown of schools and childcare centers, mothers were more likely than fathers to quit their jobs and stay at home to take care of their children. 32% of women in the United States’ workforce were mothers with a child under the age of fourteen.

Increased unemployment rates tended to create an impact on labor force participation. For both men and women, labor force participation rates fell with the onset of the 2020 pandemic. Job losses, pay cuts, lack of incentives, and other socio-economic factors came together to provide reasons for people to be unwilling to work. For those who work in front line industries, there was increased stress, exposure to infection and risk of both physiological, and psychological harm. As consumer habits shifted during the pandemic, industries like travel and hospitality experienced a drastic decline in demand, prompting layoffs and reduced work hours for many employees. Consequently, workers in these sectors faced reduced motivation to remain in their jobs, compounded by limited opportunities for alternative employment within struggling industries. These factors combined created an environment in which people were not motivated to work. Apart from the volatility in the market during the pandemic, people were also having to maintain a work life balance. As mentioned before, more women than men were

staying home to take care of the household. This pattern within households increased the likelihood of women dropping out of the labor force. Yet, as the pandemic progressed and many jobs continued to operate remotely, the number of hours spent on housework increased for men. All in all, labor force participation rates decreased by similar margins for men and women, showing the distinctive effect of this pandemic and recession when compared to past economic downturns.

Employment and labor force participation saw significant decreases in 2020; however, wages did not. On the contrary, women and men both experienced a rise in their median weekly earnings. In isolation, this could be seen as a beneficial effect of the pandemic. When coupled with the unemployment rates and labor force participation rates, however, one can infer that although wages did increase, the part of the population that was benefitting from this rise, decreased. Both the number of people seeking and obtaining jobs declined. In addition, despite the increase in median weekly earnings for both men and women, the wage gap between the two persisted, with the gap being larger than the one previously observed after the 2008 recession.

Each labor market outcome cannot be seen in isolation in order to fully grasp the economic impact of the pandemic on men versus women. When data for each labor market outcome is analyzed in relation to the others, it is apparent that women were at a significantly more vulnerable position than men during the 2020 pandemic. Although, when data is scrutinized in more detail—industry-wise and according to wage sectors—other trends are noticeable as well. The bigger picture, however, shows that women faced worse economic consequences than men, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

CONCLUSION

This paper focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on labor market outcomes—wages (median weekly earnings), labor force participation rates, and unemployment rates for men versus women in the United States. Through the analysis of the datasets, it is evident that women were predisposed to face more severe consequences of the economic crisis. In addition to their initial vulnerability, they were also more likely to experience worse economic outcomes and a worsened overall economic condition as a result of the recession that began in 2020. We compared trends from 2008 to those from 2020 to see if the claims that 2020 experienced a ‘she-cession’ (when women are more affected than men in a recession) rather than a ‘mancession’ (where men are more affected than women in a recession), were justified.

In conclusion, when the three labor market outcomes were analyzed together, we noticed that women were more likely to be facing higher unemployment rates, low labor force participation rates, and increased economic vulnerability. However, for future studies that aim to derive data on similar lines, it may be beneficial to look deeper into other aspects such as occupation and job type along with more statistical data on marital status, age, number of children, and living conditions (e.g. through the Human Development Index) in order to consider other variables that impact the quality of life during a recession.

Overall, this paper provides an insight into three specific labor market outcomes, individually and collectively, in order to showcase the economic conditions that the pandemic left people in. The COVID-19 pandemic is still prominent today and much more research will be carried out in both the short and long-term in order to fully understand the nature of this pandemic and the consequences it entails.

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The 'Pas De Deux' of Power: The Conflict of Cooperation between South Korea and Japan

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The ‘Pas De Deux’ of Power: Examining the Conflict of Cooperation between South Korea and Japan Relative to International Political Theory

ABSTRACT

Within the international political structure, nation-states with volatile historical dynamics rise to cooperate given aggressive circumstances. Current cooperation between the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan, despite lingering animosities rooted in Japan’s occupation of Korea from 1910 to 1945, consume the foreign sphere’s attention within the twenty-first century. This study evaluates two hypotheses: firstly, that states with hostilities are more likely to cooperate when facing a greater external threat within a shared region, and secondly, that states, regardless of historical hostilities, are more likely to cooperate due to a common ideological standpoint and mutual allies. The analysis discovers the impact of the China and North Korea threat on ROK-Japan relations and examines the role of the United States in fostering trilateral cooperation. Additionally, this review considers the influence of historical grievances and cultural exchange on diplomatic efforts. Within the ROK and Japan’s intricate dance, historical tensions and the pursuit of shared strategic interests continue to mold their evolving relationship.

INTRODUCTION

The international system is commonly characterized by anarchy and power competition among state actors, as a higher authority is absent to properly adjudicate disputes, consisting of states of various political ideologies and compositions. Kenneth Waltz’s theory of international anarchy posits that the competition for power among states is a defining feature of the international system. This realist school of thought suggests that states must be self-helpers in order to survive, and there is the absence of a higher authority to intervene in conflicts between states linked to slow dispute resolution and interstate rivalries (Waltz 2018). This theory has been used to explain the lack of cooperation and the formation of strategic interstate rivalries in the international system. Due to numerous stimuli other than military competition—such as historical context, the intensity of regional competition, and the magnitude of tolerance—for hostilities, it is crucial to establish how rivalries are defined. For this review, rivalries are considered conflict-oriented scenarios, complimentary to intersecting goals.

Specifically, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan have a longstanding history of dyadic tension that originated from Japan’s occupation of the Koreas between 1910 and 1945, resulting in multiple disputes complicated by institutional confusion. However, despite hostilities, the ROK and Japan maintain cooperative measures, such as the US-ROK-Japan trilateral agreement, to counter deterrence from China and North Korea through nuclearization. Given the establishment of a ‘strategic rivalry,’ could South Korea and Japan grow to seek formal closure to the ongoing animosities brought about through post-colonial tensions? The essential question is not only why countries with ancient and historical hostilities build cooperative cultural, economic, and political ties, but how they are expected to alleviate animosities and operationalize stable and cooperative relations.

This review aims to observe how the ROK and Japan have maintained cooperative measures despite ongoing animosities. I will begin by providing a historical review of pre-war and post-war dynamics between South Korea and Japan. Two hypotheses will be tested: Firstly, H1 argues that states with hostilities are more likely to engage in bilateral and trilateral relations if there is a greater external

threat within a shared region. Meanwhile, H2 argues that states, regardless of historical hostilities, are more likely to cooperate due to a common ideological standpoint with one another and their mutual allies. Then, I will adjudicate which hypothesis is more applicable to the given case study and the general scope of strategic rivalries. Finally, I will conclude by analyzing potential methodologies and data sources to extend this study to additional scholars.

HISTORICAL REVIEW: PRE-WAR AND POST-WAR DYNAMICS OF STATES

Tracing the Pre-War Interplay Between Korea and Japan

In 1910, Japan annexed—the previously unified—Korea, asserting control over the state and initiating a period of colonization. Driven by extreme nationalist sentiment, Japan’s desire for strategic dominance across East Asia was rooted in stripping them of national identity and forcing Japanese assimilation. This event marked a critical turning point in Japan-Korea relations and laid the foundation for subsequent issues, such as the Korean Comfort Women conflict, which would continue to strain bilateral ties for decades to follow.

By 1938, Japan had implemented the *Naissen Ittai* policy to assimilate Korean culture into the Japanese imperial framework. This included limiting Korean language and culture in institutions, forcing the adoption of Japanese names, and establishing a “compulsory military service system” (Caprio 2017). While the *Naissen Ittai* rhetoric purported cultural assimilation, it significantly showcased the oppressive nature of Japanese colonial rule, leading to further discontent and resistance among the Korean population.

During World War II, the Japanese military’s participation in the Axis Powers led to the plight of the Korean Comfort Women. These were ethnic Korean women forcibly recruited and subjected to sexual slavery, forced labor, and abuse by the Japanese military. This raises concern over Imperial Japan’s ignorance of Confucian principles in Korean culture, which heavily emphasized premarital chastity. Given that most of the Comfort Women were young girls and wives, this breached the ethnic and religious framework within Korean culture, leading to strained identities, psychological trauma, and human rights violations (Dudden 2022). Japan’s approach to apologizing to Korea’s remaining Comfort Women survivors—through war reparations and funding—continues to be a leading constraint upon dyadic interactions between South Korea and Japan. Since 1945, the ongoing point of contention between Japan and South Korea has been the Liancourt Rocks dispute. This is a territorial disagreement over the sovereignty of the Dokdo (South Korea) or Takeshima (Japan) islets. These islands serve as a symbolic land for both Japan and South Korea; Japan, having annexed the islands in 1905, claimed it as national territory. Meanwhile, South Korea argues that the islands constitute Korean independence from Japanese colonization (Tasevski 2019). While this debate has been temporarily held due to extenuating regional issues, the ROK and Japan intend to diplomatically settle the dispute within the coming years.

From Conflict to Cooperation: Post-War Dynamics Between [South] Korea and Japan

By the 1950s, the East Asian dynamic was characterized by a commitment to the containment of Communism, an emphasis on the importance of economic development, and the promotion of regional stability as South Korea and Japan emerged as democratic sovereignties. Most notably, the former U.S. Eisenhower administration adopted a strategy of a balance of power by providing military aid to nations in East Asia, while attempting to avoid brinkmanship through military deterrence (Brands 1987). This theory of ‘massive retaliation’ was more a psychological and declaratory policy rather than an operational military practice (Cottrell 1969). Additionally, at this time, North Korea had not yet developed as a global nuclear threat, encouraging the notion that “the more atomic weapons each side obtains, the more anxious it will be to use these weapons” (Glennon 1984). This concept of deterrence and psychological weaponry spearheaded Eisenhower’s goal to limit the risk of nuclear war by delegating security measures

to other superpowers within Eurasia.

The Geneva Conference of 1954 was vital in the Korean War's history, and the future of Inter-Korean relations due to its role in separating North and South Korea, and the democratization of the ROK. This event was the first international discussion of the Korean War and was a major step towards the potential reunification of the Koreas. While it did not achieve its objectives, the conference resulted in a ceasefire agreement as well as the establishment of a demilitarized zone between North and South Korea, contributing to regional stability.

Meanwhile, Japan's pathway to democratization through U.S. policy had implications for its relationship with South Korea. President Eisenhower, advised by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, promoted economic growth in Japan. Their defense status in the post-war was critically fragile. It was considered an easy target for the Sino-Soviet forces, as the Post-Surrender Policy of 1945 stripped Japan of a proper military (The SHAFR Guide Online). Measures such as supporting Japan's entry into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the 1954 U.S.-Japan Commerce and Navigation Treaty helped alleviate these conditions and increased Japan's interstate trade between 1952 and 1955 (Forsberg 1996). These efforts provided a foundation to stimulate Japan's economy, establish contemporary allyship, and enabled Japan with political and economic resources to enable bilateral conversation with South Korea (Japan Friendship Commerce and Navigation Treaty 1953).

By 1960, political leaders from Japan and South Korea were brought together in a series of meetings, including a summit in Washington. These gatherings, including the Kishi/Korean Minute 1960, strengthened ties between the two states. This summit effectively demonstrated one of the first operations of a US-ROK-Japan trilateral agreement, since the Minute derived official documentation through the means of a security alliance between South Korea and Japan amidst a hostile environment (Lee 2012). The Minute also created the Korean Clause, an agreement added to the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951, stating that Japan renounced all rights, titles, and claims to both Koreas. The subsequent signing of the Japan-Republic of Korea Treaty of 1965 further normalized relations between the two countries and introduced potential resolutions for the territorial dispute over the Liancourt Rocks, ensuring lasting peace and stability. Despite initial challenges in bilateral ties, the concerted endeavors of South Korea and Japan not only propelled them into the ranks of influential economic powerhouses in East Asia, as well as set in motion a continuous process of war reparations that would significantly shape the extent of normalized interactions well into the next millennium (Lee 2012).

SCENARIO 1: ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS AMIDST A GREATER REGIONAL THREAT

The present study concerns the hypothesis that states are more likely to cooperate due to an active and more significant regional threat, such as China and North Korea (as an extension of Chinese political mobilization). H1 is supported by several international relations theories that argue that states with similar political ideologies and structures tend to maintain an organic balance of power, which could lead to the expansion of their principles when faced with a powerful, opposing party in their region (Mearsheimer 1994). Within East Asia, the ROK and Japan play a crucial role in maintaining democratic ideologies, ultimately promoting regional security by preventing domination from other states. Recent political developments have also emphasized a "West vs. East" scenario, with democratic Western countries competing against socialist or near-communist Eastern countries for global power. This competition underscores the importance of maintaining democratic values and principles in the region to promote regional stability.

A Tale of Two Autocrats: North Korea and China

Recently, the escalation of China's economic and North Korea's nuclear threat across the Pacific amidst the Russia-Ukraine War has pressured discussions for a trilateral agreement among the United States, the ROK, and Japan.

The Democratic People’s Republic of North Korea—DPRK—poses critical concern given its mass nuclear mobilization and human rights abuses. As of June 2023, it has developed Hwasan-31, a nuclear warhead that is relatively small, yet is capable of hitting South Korea, Japan, and some U.S. bases in the Pacific (Robles and Choe 2023). Sanctions upon the DPRK are additionally ineffective, as China economically supports it through trade and defense alliances—such as the Sino-North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance (Albert 2024). Additionally, North Korean governance has embarked on a draconian stance toward its citizen’s consumption of South Korean media. In 2020, the regime introduced the Rejection of Reactionary Thought and Culture Act. This doctrine rigorously enforced punishments for individuals engaging with South Korean, Japanese, and Western media. These penalties range from arduous labor sentences and even the death penalty for the magnitude in which a citizen engages with South Korean media. For instance, individuals of any age who use “capitalist” terminology face up to fifteen years of arduous labor at a concentration camp (Kim 2023). Meanwhile, the death penalty is strictly enforced for those caught distributing South Korean and Western media. The most recent mandate to support this action is exemplified by the directive for citizens to read at least 10,000 pages of propaganda in 2023, urging citizens to read nearly thirty pages daily. North Korean citizens are required to diligently journal their daily readings, as this will be presented to the party organization at the end of the year (Son 2023). Despite acknowledging the lackluster nature of propaganda when faced with the allure of South Korean media, compliance with such measures is non-negotiable, as the consequences of nonconformity are severe and even fatal. Media suppression and extreme censorship in North Korea demonstrate the government’s obstinate refusal to embrace cultural exchange within state borders. By strictly controlling its citizens’ exposure to external influences, North Korea seeks to safeguard its grip on power and negate potential challenges to its authoritarian regime. This implies the DPRK’s adamance to facilitate their own means of Korean media among the domestic and global population, allowing minimal opportunities for future strategic diplomacy and thus prompting intensified relations between the ROK and Japan.

The ‘China Threat’ concept has also garnered considerable attention in recent years, particularly in the context of East Asian regional power dynamics. The ascent of China as a formidable force in both economic and military realms has generated apprehension among neighboring nations regarding its intentions and the ramifications for regional power equilibrium (FBI 2020). Moreover, China’s technological advancement—spearheaded by companies like Huawei—has posed concerns over international espionage and propaganda. Huawei has been accused of building backdoors into its technology, enabling unauthorized access and surveillance by the Chinese government (Clark and Swanson 2022). China’s additional Great Firewall poses safety concerns to state sovereignty in East Asia. This extensive censorship apparatus restricts access to foreign websites and social media platforms, limiting the flow of information and independent journalism. The Great Firewall not only undermines freedom of speech but additionally hinders transparency (Dou 2015).

Notably, ROK and Japanese administrations cooperate to manage their current relationship. Yet, this may be a particular result of U.S. intervention to combat the balance of power issue across East Asia (Wu 2018). Lee regards “the military footprint of US forces stationed on the peninsula [is] still persistent,” thus the concern of whether Japan will be welcomed as a mutual ally by the ROK (Lee 2013). Hence, it is unclear whether the ROK and Japan are engaging in cooperation due to U.S. encouragement, or the eagerness to maintain sovereignty due to joint security pressure of a greater regional threat (Lee 2013, 95). The United States’ intervention between the ROK and Japan could potentially serve as both a net benefit and hindrance, benefiting all parties by stabilizing autocratic power with democracy within East Asia. As such, this hypothesis would apply to examining whether this cooperation is truly sustainable and whether the ROK and Japan would have made an effort to operationalize joint security measures without U.S. intervention.

Extensive research of this study also reveals that the ROK is likely to be more hesitant than Japan to engage in strategic rivalry: South Korea’s grievances have remained stable for years, predominantly

regarding the comfort women issue during the Japanese colonization period. Specifically, former South Korean President Moon Jae-In exacerbated these events during his presidential terms from 2017 to 2022, such as constant stipulations from Japan's Prime Ministers Shinzo Abe and Fumio Kishida for formal apologies alongside over \$8.7 million in reparations (Lee 2023). While it is justified that Moon's passion for reclaiming Korean identity and national integrity, Japan's previous attempts to amend hostilities have often been overlooked: During South Korean Park Geun-Hye's presidency in 2015, she and Abe implemented the Comfort Women Agreement, which established one billion Japanese yen to be paid to the ROK and official closure to the century-long dispute (Hosaka 2021). Additionally, from 1992 to 2019, Japan administered over twenty public apologies to South Korea, which Korean officials criticized due to inauthentic means of issuing them (Shiomi 2019, 4). Moon's obstinance in recognizing Japan's attempts—such as deeming the 2015 agreement unfair—to make amends have caused a recent downplay and insincere apologies from the Japanese administration. However, the current ROK president, Yoon Suk-Yeol, and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida have frequently declared diplomatic reform and plans to participate in nuclear deterrence strategies, which is a pragmatic scenario of building future ties with one another as well as additional foreign nations seeking to balance ideological power in East Asia (Shiomi, 4).

This hypothesis currently generates an accurate depiction of the ROK and Japan's strategic rivalry, as evidenced by recent initiatives in cooperation. Firstly, the ROK-Japan dyad encompasses one another through equal political capabilities and status within the agreement (Thompson 2001, 557-560). This includes the recent shift in domestic and foreign policies prioritizing regional security over historical animosities, such as increased information sharing of military intelligence through the US-ROK-Japan Intelligence Sharing Agreement (ISA) and the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA). By working together, the ROK and Japan have coordinated the effective detection of North Korea Aegis ballistic missile launches as well as Chinese modernization (Lee and Botto 2020, 78). Secondly, despite a history of territorial conflict, the ROK and Japan have effectively deferred addressing war reparations and apologies amidst regional security threats. Political discourse among notable ROK and Japanese politicians and the media has been replaced with joint strategies to operationalize against China and North Korea and decrease negative sentiment between South Korean and Japanese citizens (Manyin et al. 2016)(CRS Report 2015, 10). Furthermore, the restoration of Japan on the ROK's 'white list' after three years of volatile trade relations has been a crucial step forward in promoting bilateral and trilateral relationships (Tong-hyung 2023). The ROK and Japan will continue reconciling if Chinese and North Korean regional aggression persists.

SCENARIO 2: ROK-JAPAN RELATIONS AS A RESULT OF IDEOLOGICAL SIMILARITIES

H2 deduces that states with strategic rivalries are more likely to engage in extended cooperation due to a common ideological standpoint with one another and greater mutual allies. While the realist school of thought proposes the level of motive and survival a state will pursue given the anarchical structure of the international system, it does not examine foundational reasonings for conditional diplomacy (Wu, 806). Waltz correlates the assumption that "states will compete and be socialized into similar action patterns by emulating the most successful ones" (Wu, 807). States evaluate the actions of successful actors and seek to replicate them to enhance their survival and security, as established in the ROK and Japan's current joint security measures.

However, from a constructivist perspective, state behavior is not primarily determined by material factors, but also by social constructs, principles, and historical influences. Constructivist theorist Alexander Wendt offers a nuanced understanding of how cooperation emerges in the presence of animosities and can shift the "content of their interests, the security dilemma, and the like" (Wendt 2014, 396). For instance, the ROK and Japan's joint security arrangements through trilateralism with the United States are essentially conducted out of "mutual security anxiety" (Lee 2016, 290). The greatest common

threats to both states are China’s long-term existential threat, and North Korea’s confined security threat in the Pacific. Wendt’s philosophy raises concerns about national security and China’s potential regional hegemony in East Asia, in which the ROK and Japan have similar ideologies that oppose this hypothetical. Thus, it is advantageous to all parties to mobilize through trilateral arrangements, as they uphold democratic ideologies and are willing to put their animosities aside to satisfy strategic interests.

Additionally, although they participate in security measures with the United States, the ROK and Japan lack comprehensive joint military coordination. This is expected due to the fragility of their bilateral relations; yet, their individual militaries are enhanced if combined, hence why joint mobilization with the United States—a mutual, pro-Western ally—strengthens military exercises and provides additional material support should a conflict arise. Expected findings include enhanced US-ROK-Japan diplomatic and social relations and promotion of greater regional security, especially given the United States’ inherent passion for conserving democracy.

Navigating Historical Grievances and Ideological Security in ROK-Japan Relations

The constructivist perspective provides valuable insight into H2’s current application within ROK-Japanese relations and the proliferation of negative sentiments. From the 1990s to the present day, the ROK and Japan have made notable efforts to cooperate through cultural, economic, and political similarities. Despite bilateral cooperation setbacks presented during the Moon administration due to unsatisfactory sentiment for existing Japanese reparations, the historical connection between Korean and Japanese culture offers a new approach to establishing relations. The presence of the media offers a push-and-pull dynamic, as South Korean, Japanese, and external actors heavily emphasize acknowledging historical tensions within diplomatic measures. For instance, South Korean media has actively bridged the cultural exchange gap by enacting “soft power” of Korean perspectives of the effects of the Imperial Japanese Army through music and television (Glosserman 2020). This has touched the hearts of multiple Japanese citizens, leading to a stir of sympathy, respect, and a stronger desire for unity and peacemaking within the domestic populace.

H2 is further examined through the formerly volatile ROK-Japan trade and economic relations. In 2019, both states removed one another from their “white list” of trusted exporters due to unresolved forced labor and Korean comfort women issues (Reuters 2019). This hypothetical proves that the ROK and Japan are not void of trade and cultural relations, but the ambiguity of their post-colonial ideologies continues to hinder long-term prosperity. Meanwhile, the ROK and Japan have maintained appropriate economic relations since the 1990s: Japanese firms currently invest over \$1.5 billion in Korean corporations while serving as one of South Korea’s sole suppliers of intermediate goods (Gyu-Pan 2017, 26-27). The subsequent changes in the ROK and Japan’s trading lists and economic scope suggest a shift in newfound parallels with their neo-liberal, market-driven economies as well as the desire for economic prosperity beyond the constraints of historical grievances.

Political Leaders, The Biden Administration, and the ‘Trilateral Mitigator’

North Korea’s nuclear weapons program and China’s assertiveness and growing regional hegemony have heightened tensions and created a need for increased cooperation among the United States, the ROK, and Japan. This trilateral agreement helps promote U.S. ideals and allows the president to exert power over foreign diplomacy, which is crucial to the U.S.’s diplomatic reputation and external cooperation. As it stands, Japan and South Korea politically disagree with current reparations for the Korean Comfort Women and forced labor issues of World War II, naming disputes over the Dokdo/Takeshima islands, and maintain a volatile trade relationship—along with other disagreements (Tasevski et al.). Such hostilities between South Korea and Japan allow China and the DPRK to undergo mass political and military mobilization.

By collaborating under the Biden administration, the United States will significantly address security challenges in the region posed by China, North Korea, and now Russia. Furthermore, this trilateral agreement allows for increased economic cooperation and promotes democratic values in the region. US-ROK-Japan trilateralism is crucial in advancing U.S. interests and fostering stability in the Asia-Pacific. President Biden advertises his policy as ‘unification-driven’ in a post-COVID era, and the United States’ mission has become to conserve democracy—especially within East Asia—rather than deter states from nuclear proliferation. Although nuclear warfare complications are still very relevant in the international sphere, this conflict is now dependent on technological and trade advancements, such as data privacy, security, and China’s prominence in the global markets (Frohman et al. 2022, 10).

Upon assuming office in January 2021, President Biden emphasized the importance of maintaining strong alliances with both countries and encouraged them to work towards a peaceful resolution. In March of 2021, a series of virtual summits occurred, involving officials from the United States, South Korea, and Japan to address shared concerns, including North Korea’s nuclear program and regional security, with the US-Japan Summit on April and the US-ROK Summit on May 21st. These summits aimed to strengthen the trilateral partnership and address common challenges in the region. Discussions included regional security, climate change, and economic cooperation. Therefore, the trilateral relationship has been strengthened, via increased cooperation on various joint issues, due to shared concerns over North Korea’s nuclear program and China’s rise as a global power (Bae 2021, 95). The lasting effects of this policy will be a stronger and more unified East Asia, which will benefit the U.S. by creating a more secure and prosperous region.

With newly-elected South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, the scope of US-ROK-Japan trilateralism has dramatically improved. Yet, Biden acknowledges the limitations his status and the United States maintain upon third-party mitigation to directly solve post-war disputes, compared to the malleability of South Korean and Japanese sovereignty in immediate post-war operations. Biden has shown to narrow the American interest in pursuing domestic security rather than containment or psychological warfare. Specifically, the leading discussion between the three states regards “critical and emerging technologies, supply chains, and data transparency, among others,” making US-ROK-Japan coordination “essential given the importance of Korean and Japanese firms in the semiconductor and battery supply chain ecosystem” (Foreman and Yeo 2023)(Foreman and Yeo). The semiconductor crisis is vital for trilateral cooperation, as all rely heavily on semiconductor production, and any disruption in the supply chain could have severe consequences for their economies. The COVID-19 pandemic has already caused a shortage of semiconductors, and the 2021 power outage in Texas has further exacerbated the problem (BBC News 2021). To the United States, combating Chinese influence through global markets meet the domestic and international demand for the balance of ideological power. Furthermore, Biden focuses less on alleviating tensions between the ROK and Japan and concentrates on each nation’s respective interests. Given the current trilateral agreement between the three allies, halting Chinese export flows, disrupting easy currency exchanges, and enacting trade sanctions have proven effective against China and North Korea.

Finally, the United States’ economic and security interests are closely intertwined with East Asia, and any instability or conflict could have significant implications for the U.S. economy and national security. The rise of China’s social media presence and as the leading exporter has led to increased competition and tension in the region, which has forced Biden and the American government to adopt a more assertive stance on allyship. The COVID-19 pandemic’s aftermath upon international trade and globalization has also highlighted the importance of international cooperation. It has underscored the need for the U.S. to work closely with its regional allies that aim to preserve the neoliberal market and democratic landscape. As a result, American foreign policy in East Asia is closely tied to the ROK and Japan’s domestic policy agenda, particularly in trade, national security, and public health.

ADJUDICATION: EVALUATING CURRENT HYPOTHESES AND APPLICATIONS

Both hypotheses presented within this review offer distinct analyses of dyadic interactions and strategic rivalries between states with historical hostilities. H1, rooted in realist theory, postulates that states with hostilities are more likely to engage in cooperation when faced with a common regional threat. This hypothesis emphasizes the role of power dynamics and how self-interest shapes cooperative behavior. Rather than ideology, H1 advocates for a greater looming threat to sovereignty and a state’s international survival. In this case study, the ROK and Japan are concerned about democratic preservation in East Asia, given China’s existential constraints and North Korea’s confined threat. Thus, both actively pursue trilateral agreements with the United States to address security threats emanating from North Korea and China. The United States maintains favorable relations with both countries and is crucial in safeguarding their national security and sovereignty.

For H1, it is also critical to note the difference in presidential leadership that represented this era of a trilateral agreement. Most notably, the South Korean dialogue was represented by former ROK President Moon Jae-in, a strong anti-Japanese advocate constantly demanding extensive war reparations. While his presidency deteriorated the economic relationship with Japan alone, Moon was continuously supportive of trilateral cooperation (Shin 2021). On the contrary, former Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, a member of the Liberal Democratic Party, embraced bilateral ties with South Korea for trilateralism to operate regional security smoothly.

Furthermore, the three nations share a common objective and concern: countering the nuclear and political threats posed by North Korea and China. In this context, the United States serves as a catalyst, exerting both encouragement and potential pressure on South Korea and Japan to embrace trilateralism as a means to enhance cooperative security measures. According to the South China Morning Post, China’s semiconductor equipment purchases—a driver of its economy and threat to global technological trade—experienced a significant decline, primarily driven by the US-ROK-Japan trilateral alliance. This trend can be seen as a manifestation of the ongoing tech war between China and the United States and its allies; however, trilateral operations intensify the ROK and Japan’s individual and bilateral chip production capabilities, aiming to reduce regional dependence on Chinese technology and strengthen their national security (Butts and Cao 2023).

To exemplify the realist perspective of ROK-Japan’s dyadic relationship, I have modeled this argument below:

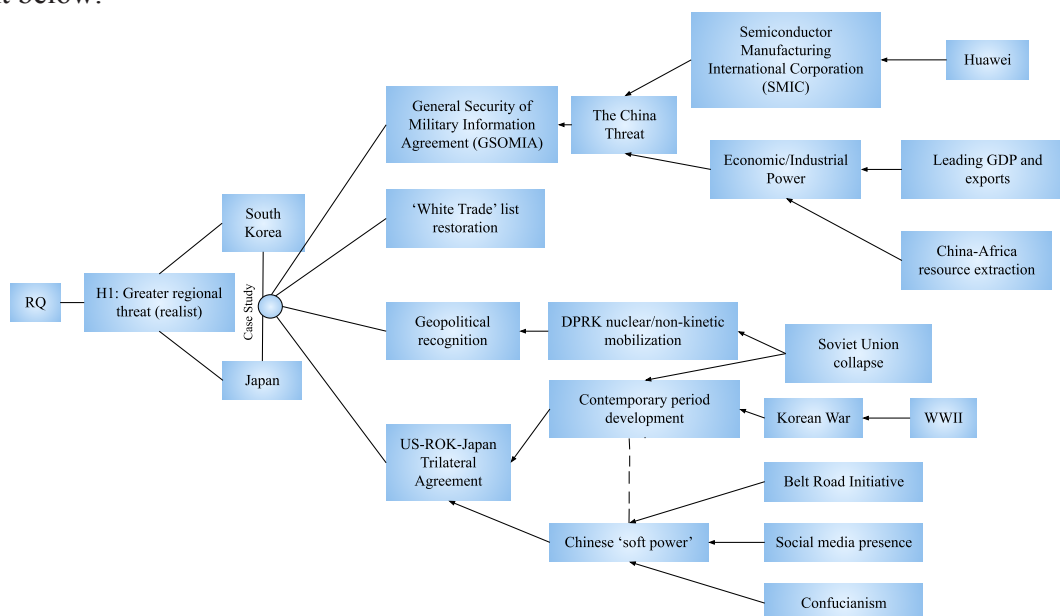


Figure 1: ROK-Japan Relations Amidst a Greater Regional Threat

Figure 1 analyzes H1 from a realist foundation of bilateral and trilateral relations. It discerns prominent global events and phenomena that have shaped the prevailing dynamics in East Asia, particularly influencing ROK-Japan interactions. Evidently, the impelling factors driving their relationship encompass the perceived threat posed by China, the nuclear mobilization of the DPRK, and the impact of soft power dynamics on the formation of contemporary developmental patterns. These factors have exerted a substantial influence on the strategic calculus of the ROK and Japan, prompting them to navigate the complexities of regional politics with a keen awareness of the challenges and opportunities such circumstances present.

In contrast, H2's constructivist approach highlights ideational factors in dyadic interactions between states with animosities, such as the perception of common cultural heritage, historical narratives, and the desire for reconciliation. The surface-level observation of H2 also assumes that negative sentiments driven by historical grievances will inevitably hinder cooperation between states. Yet, as scholars observe further, they will notice how the convergence of constructivism upon shared values and operations presents a common ideological foundation that can catalyze strategic allyship. H2 is modeled as such:

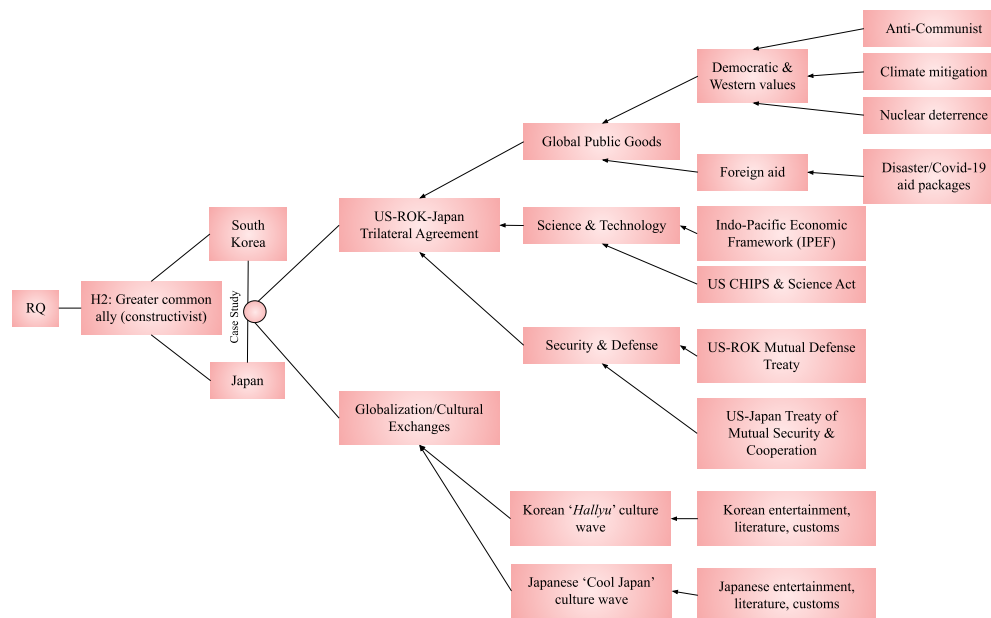


Figure 2: ROK-Japan Relations Amidst Cooperation with a Greater Common Ally

Figure 2 supports the constructivist theory of H2, that states with historical animosities, engage in strategic cooperation with a greater mutual ally. This model contends that despite their tumultuous past, the capacity for collaboration exists when there is a shared appreciation of cultural and historical bonds. While H2 acknowledges that lingering negative sentiments stemming from historical grievances may pose challenges, it recognizes the potential for such sentiments to undergo transformation, ultimately encouraging mutual comprehension and collaborative endeavors between states. This notion, more evident since the early millennium, has occurred through globalization efforts and an exponential increase in media exchanges. For instance, South Korea and Japan's respective culture waves served as soft power initiatives that eventually opened an extensive dialogue for cross-cultural cooperation. Comparatively, H2's model and argument are constructed to emphasize the ideological nexus for interstate operations, rather than external stimuli.

Considering the case study and the plausibility of each inference, H1 has the highest validity claim, as it coincides with current incentives and security cooperation between the ROK and Japan. It is also the most applicable hypothesis, allowing for a more intricate observation of how states build partnerships despite their hostilities. Realism defines power dynamics, self-interest initiatives, and the

pursuit of security cooperation as incentives to state behavior. Therefore, H1 resonates with this theory application, as it finds support in historical examples—such as allyship formed amidst global crises and the establishment of collective security operations—to explain the current geopolitical, economic, and sociocultural structure.

While H2 is valid within the international scheme, it is more challenging to validate empirically. While constructivist factors of ideological foundation contribute to shaping international relations, they are difficult to quantify, prohibiting conclusive evidence for H2 during times of global security threat. The perception-based narrative limits the argument through the lack of circumstantial review for bilateral operations, which H1 allocates in a multifaceted manner. Specifically, H2 is modeled to include the US-ROK-Japan trilateral agreement with a mutual-incentive approach. However, mere mitigation and similarities are not a substantial argument to imply reasoning for volatile relationships and operations. H1, fueled by realist theory, offers nuanced reasonings and documents the frequencies and magnitude for which bilateral and trilateral relations are pursued.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH TOPICS AND METHODOLOGIES

It has been identified that H1 provides the most comprehensive explanation for international dynamics, given that states are more likely to cooperate in relation to concerns over regional stability and national survival. This concept accurately applies to East Asia’s political atmosphere and similar regional compositions in the international system. However, this does not fully identify the full scope of international cooperation, given the diversity of the geopolitical structure and how applicable this case study is to other regional disputes (Fearon 2018, 20-21). As competition among states arises, how does the historical scope impact their response to such interstate conflicts and cooperation? In an environment of competition and mistrust, states must constantly be vigilant to protect national interests. In the scenario where the national interests of one state are parallel to another with whom they have hostilities, is it possible to facilitate cooperation? The process and theories proposed in this case study have yet to be falsified, and are still plausible unless additional research and tracing prove otherwise.

Additional research methods include utilizing the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) within multiple International Relations databases, as it allows for event aggregation and a process-tracing design between South Korean and Japanese media streams. Another potential avenue for future research is to explore the influence of domestic politics on bilateral relations between states with animosities. Specifically, an emphasis on domestic factors—such as political leadership, public opinion, non-state actors, and interest groups—can thoroughly analyze the willingness of states to put aside historical tensions and engage in cooperative measures. Aside from administrative documents, observing ROK-Japanese diplomatic trends within United Nations Security Council Resolutions and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Resolutions could potentially provide deeper insight into state dynamics. Simple observations such as these have shown that the exacerbation and levels of hostilities can be traced to former presidential operations and the extremeness of anti-Korean or anti-Japanese sentiment among them. While tracing the primary source of these relations is essential, one could consider the additional subsidiary concept of H1 when investigating the causal process in cooperation.

Current political conditions in East Asia are adequate enough to test these theories since the concepts and structural changes are recent for two years or less. The causal factors for increased cooperation between South Korea and Japan—trilateral agreement with the United States and regional security threats from autocratic regimes—have yet to be proven, hence the validity of suspicions that this research process may result in a single-case explanation. This case study’s process-tracing design will assist me in establishing the connections between South Korea and Japan’s—and ultimately additional states—cooperation and overcoming their animosities amidst international affairs.

To conduct the design, various materials, including official documentation from the 1990s—presidential addresses, relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, and press coverage of conferences addressing reparation and conflict issues—could be examined to apply the hypotheses. Multiple

perspectives and sources, including English-translated South Korean-Japan media addressing their dyadic tensions, will be considered to explore the complex relationship between South Korea and Japan. This data will be utilized alongside a predictive model to gain insights into future dynamics and outcomes of bilateral relations, creating a comprehensive research design that combines historical analysis with future forecasting.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The analysis reveals that bilateral dynamics between the ROK and Japan are more likely to cooperate, given concerns over greater external threats and national security (H1) and the desire to maintain civil relations with a mutual ally of similar ideological frameworks (H2). H1 has been proven to claim higher validity than H2, as current negotiations and trilateral operation with the United States demonstrates that historical animosities could be diverted amidst growing regional hegemony and threat. This concept accurately applies to East Asia's political atmosphere and similar regional compositions regarding the international system. However, given the diversity in geopolitical structure, possible criticisms include how applicable this case study is to other regional disputes. Yet, the process and theories proposed in this case study have not been disproven, unless extensive research and tracing demonstrate updates within the scope of strategic rivalries and dyadic interactions between states with animosities. Current political conditions in East Asia are adequate to test these theories since the concepts and structural changes are relatively recent, spanning three years or less. The causal factors for increased cooperation between South Korea and Japan—trilateral agreement with the United States and regional security threats from autocratic regimes—have yet to be proven, hence the validity of suspicions that this research process may result in a single-case explanation. This case study's process-tracing design will assist in establishing the connections between the cooperation of the ROK and Japan, and potentially other states, as they address historical animosities in the realm of international affairs.

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