

The Symbolic Logic of Pogrom Violence

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Abstract

What explains why pogroms result in violence in some places, but not in others? The pogroms literature suggests four competing explanations for spatial variation in pogrom violence: (1) political competition between pogrom organizers and the targeted group; (2) deep-seated animosity towards the targeted group; (3) associational cleavages that encourage or restrain violence; and (4) the symbolic uses of violence for organizers. I describe the causal logic behind each of these arguments and present testable hypotheses associated with each. To evaluate these explanations and associated hypotheses, I introduce a new geo-referenced dataset of Jewish prayer houses prior to the Kristallnacht (“Night of Broken Glass”) pogrom against Germany’s Jewish population from 9 – 10 November 1938, based on information gathered by a Jewish memorialization project. Using multivariate regression analysis clustered at the municipal level, I find that pogrom violence is most severe where the targeted population is most visible. This finding is robust to multiple measures of the outcome variable and both logit and curvilinear model specifications. I also find that cross-cutting associations restrain violence where the targeted group is less visible. These findings provide evidence for the symbolic logic of pogrom violence. I conclude discussing implications for the study of pogroms and other forms of political violence.

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1 Introduction

On 9 November 1938, senior officials of the Nazi government of Germany set off a brief wave of acute violence against the country’s Jewish population. In two days, Nazi paramilitaries, youth

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militias, civilian members of the Nazi Party, and state security forces laid to waste the last remnants of Jewish civil society in Germany. The pogrom, commonly called *Kristallnacht* (the “Night of Broken Glass”), was not the first episode of mass selective violence against German Jews and their communal institutions—nor, we now know, the last. The scale of violence during *Kristallnacht*, however, was a dramatic escalation from the previous five years of public abuse, harassment, and government-sanctioned property seizures that had characterized the German Jewish experience since Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party’s rise to power in 1933.

Anti-Semitic violence during the *Kristallnacht* pogrom ranged widely, but the episode did not affect all Jewish communities equally. Party members harassed and attacked their Jewish neighbors; Nazi paramilitaries defaced Jewish storefronts; members of the Nazi *Schutzstaffel* (SS) deported tens of thousands of Jews to concentration camps in Germany. In the most memorable aspect of the pogrom, perpetrators destroyed more than 1,200 synagogues and prayer houses across Germany. Approximately one-third of the more than 1,900 Jewish houses of worship in Germany, however, displayed no evidence of damage. What explains why perpetrators attacked synagogues in some areas, but not others? More generally, what explains why pogroms and similar forms of mass selective violence result in varying levels of violence against targeted groups?

In this paper, I articulate and test a symbolic logic of pogrom violence. I proceed in five parts. First, I define pogroms as a distinctive subset of mass selective violence against civilians. Second, I draw on the literatures on political violence, contentious politics, and inter-group relations to identify four competing explanations for spatial variation in pogrom violence. Third, I explain why cases similar to the *Kristallnacht* pogrom, in which there are few social costs to participation in collective violence, remain theoretically puzzling despite these existing explanations. Fourth, I present evidence of this argument using multivariate regression analysis of a new georeferenced dataset of Jewish houses of worship in Germany prior to the *Kristallnacht* pogrom, aggregated at the municipality (*gemeinde*) level. I conclude by discussing this argument’s implications for the theoretical and empirical study of violence in political science.

2 Defining Pogrom Violence

Historians of the European Jewish experience typically associate the Russian term “pogrom” with a recurring type of state-incited mass mobilization against Jewish communities, especially in the so-called Pale of Settlement during the waning decades of Tsarist Russia. Studies of ethnic conflict and collective violence demonstrate, however, that the anti-Semitic pogroms of the late 19th and early 20th centuries are part of a broader subset of political violence. Different terms for this type of violence appear in different social contexts: “race riots” in the United States (Ellsworth, 1992) and the United Kingdom, for example, or “intercommunal violence” in Nigeria and Indonesia (Krause, 2018). These descriptions depend, in part, on the ascriptive identity that observers—rather than participants themselves—view as the most salient explanation for violent contention (Brass, 2003).

A pogrom is a relatively brief episode of multiple violent acts by a large, informal group against multiple members of a select community (Horowitz, 2003; Kopstein and Wittenberg, 2018). Explaining where pogrom violence occurs—and where it does not—requires a discussion of the components of this definition that distinguish pogrom violence from conceptually adjacent forms of violent collective action.

Pogroms have an organizing principle—a logic—that distinguishes them from random acts of selective violence. This organizing principle makes pogroms an *episodic* form of collective action (Tambiah, 1997). In their influential volume summarizing the research agenda on contentious politics, McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001, p. 24) define episodes as “continuous streams of contention including collective claims making that bears on other parties’ interests.” Like other episodic forms of collective action, instances of pogrom violence are not necessarily coordinated across time or space. Pogrom organizers from one town to the next, or acting on separate days, do not always receive orders to act in a specific way at a specific time, or to use specific types of violence against the targeted group. The organizing principle of pogrom violence provides structure to disparate instances of collective mobilization and rationalizes the enactment of harm against others at a mass scale (Brass, 1997).

Pogroms are violent; they involve the enactment of physical harm against an individual or group of individuals, or their property. The tactical diversity of pogroms distinguishes as a category of

political violence. As in other forms of collective action, pogrom organizers draw on a “repertoire of violence” (Wood, 2009; Hoover Green, 2018; Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood, 2017) to accomplish their social or political goals. The idea of a repertoire implies an exchangeable set of “means” that actors use in contexts of collective action (Della Porta, 2013). Pogrom violence involves multiple—more than two—lethal and non-lethal acts, including but not limited to homicide, physical abuse, and the destruction of property belonging to the targeted group. Whereas acts like lynching involve the use of one violent technique, pogrom organizers use multiple forms of violent action to harm the targeted groups (Gutiérrez-Sanín and Wood, 2017).

Pogrom violence is jointly produced by two categories of groups: elite organizers, who orchestrate and incite mass mobilization, and a large body of people, which is often responsible for the actual acts of physical assault and intimidation (Brass, 2003). Collective violence requires both that organizers stoke popular participation in targeted acts of physical harm, and that mass groups participate in turn (Krause, 2018). As a result, pogroms require the mobilization of many individuals, who provide pogrom organizers with both an ad-hoc corps of violent footsoldiers and an audience for the public performance of violent acts. The successful enactment of pogrom violence cannot occur without either of these factors. Other forms of violence against civilians require relatively fewer perpetrators. In contexts of civil war, for example, a relatively small number of individual militia members or military soldiers can accomplish the organizers’ strategic objectives. Mass-participatory violence without some form of top-down organization is a riot, although scholars of collective violence question whether an ideal-type “anarchic riot” can occur without any process resembling leadership or collective organization (Brass, 1996). The dynamics of each of these types of violence differ from pogroms, with important implications for both perpetrator action and civilian experiences of violence.

Mass mobilization during pogroms serves two symbolic purposes. First, the large number of pogrom perpetrators demonstrates their political strength to state officials and elites, in the same way that a public protest shows popular support for a social cause. Second, the organizers’ capacity for mass mobilization conveys to the targeted group the persistent possibility of mass collective violence (Tambiah, 1997; Brass, 1996).

An informal—rather than formal—set of directives and social codes shapes perpetrator be-

havior during pogrom episodes. In professional security organizations like military, intelligence, or police units, structured rules of professional behavior encourage the use of violence by members. These structured rules shape the behavior of professional agents even in extreme instances of political violence like genocide (Browning, 1992). During pogroms, no central authority proscribes the repertoire of violent acts. Instead, pogrom organization more closely mirrors Fujii’s (2009) concept of violent “webs,” in which group dynamics motivate individual and small-group participation in broader violent mobilization.

Pogroms are a selective form of mass violence, in that pogrom organizers target a specific group rather than a general population. In episodes of selective violence, organizers target individuals according to their specific ascriptive identity or membership in a social group (Brubaker and Laitin, 1998).¹ Episodes of indiscriminate violence, by contrast, involve attacks against individuals or groups in a specific location without regard to their identities.

One cannot observe selective violence simply by counting the number of members of the group that pogrom organizers attacked; nor are the *post-hoc* statements that actors release to media reporters and the general public necessarily evidence of the motivations for collective action *prior* to the episode. But pogroms also do not occur in a political vacuum. The visual and rhetorical symbols that pogrom organizers use before the episode, the position of the organizers within the broader society, and the social networks they use to coordinate violence are all credible indicators—if not proof—of the pogrom’s selective design.

3 Competing Explanations for Pogrom Violence

What causes large groups of people to harm their neighbors? The literature on pogroms and similar forms of violence offers two approaches to these questions. The first approach addresses the combination of social factors that lead to a wave of violence at a specific moment in *time*. The catalyst for pogrom violence is often a dynamic system of rumors and misinformation that provocateurs use to incite mass violence (Horowitz, 2003). Others associate temporal variation in

¹(Steele, 2017) terms this type of violence “collective targeting.” Meanwhile, the literature on collective violence and contentious politics (Tilly, 2003) refers to the organizers of the violence, rather than targeted groups, as the “collective.” I prefer “selective violence” because it is unambiguous in referring to the *targets* of violent mobilization.

pogrom violence with particular junctures in political order: Tajima (2014), for example, attributes the outbreak of mass riots in Indonesia to the brief moment of political uncertainty during the transition from Suharto's autocratic regime.

A large historical and comparative literature pogroms and riots as contingent symptoms of social transformation. So-called "group-threat" theories explain that dominant groups will use selective violence against those whose changing status or authority threatens the dominant group's position in the social order (Petersen, 2002; Kopstein and Wittenberg, 2018; Ellsworth, 1992). One social mechanism by which group threat manifests is ethnic resentment. A close reading of these studies indicates that they explain *when* pogroms will begin, rather than *where* violence will take place after pogrom onset (Grosfeld, Sakalli and Zhuravskaya, 2019).

The second approach addresses the dynamics of pogrom violence as it varies across *space*. The onset of a pogrom episode does not guarantee fully equivalent levels of violence in all nearby locations; some localities will experience violence after the onset of an event, while others will not. Some scholars attribute the non-occurrence of ongoing violence to the contingent actions of local officials, like resistance or reconciliation efforts by community leaders (Krause, 2018). Other studies, like Kopstein and Wittenberg's (2018) analysis of anti-Semitic violence in Eastern Europe during World War II, give greater weight to structural variables that broaden or constrain the agency of both perpetrators and civilians. In these instances, aggregate factors like the capacity or social identities of associational groups to explain common tendencies of violence after pogroms have begun.

This article seeks to explain macro-level spatial variation in pogrom violence. Below, I describe four competing explanations for this variation from the literature on pogroms and other forms of violent contention: (1) political competition; (2) deep-seated ethnic hatreds; (3) associational cleavages; and (4) the symbolic logic of violent attacks. I also identify testable hypotheses that follow from each.

3.1 Political Competition

Studies of multiple different forms of mass violence explain collective acts like pogroms as a function of political competition and conflict between pogrom organizers and targeted groups prior to an episode’s onset. In one logic, competition between political groups calcifies political identities and lowers the barriers to collective action after an episode’s onset. Groups with a shared political identity—and, importantly, a shared political enemy—are easier to recruit, coordinate, and mobilize towards violent action. Balcells (2017), for example, finds that pre-war political mobilization explains variations in direct and indirect violence during the Spanish Civil War.

Another logic views violence as a form of retribution against a threat—either real or perceived—to the political power or social status of the pogrom organizers. In these cases, political leaders use selective violence to punish their political opponents (Wilkinson, 2004).

Civilians express political preferences through multiple forms of political behavior. One notable means of preference expression is voting behavior, which individuals use to signal their collective political identities to their communities as well as to demand policy goods from political leaders. These collective preferences are often visible to leaders seeking to use selective violence, despite the formal secrecy of the voting ballot.

Hypothesis 1. *Areas with higher levels of electoral support for the political opponents of pogrom organizers will experience higher levels of selective violence after the onset of a pogrom.*

3.2 Deep-Seated Hatreds

A second set of arguments describes pogrom violence as an expression of longstanding collective animosity towards the targeted group. These “culturalist” arguments (Brubaker and Laitin, 1998) describe the exclusionary characteristics of a culture or national ideology as the main driver of a pogrom’s onset and diffusion.

Extreme versions of culturalist arguments suggest a path-dependent relationship between exclusionary ideologies and patterns of selective violence.

In multiple contexts, electoral support for parties that adopt exclusionary ideologies is asso-

ciated with collective animosity towards the ascriptive groups that parties seek to exclude from society. Individuals tend to support ethnonationalist groups because they agree with the groups' exclusionary ideologies, rather than because of other indicators like their economic status. Culturalist arguments suggest that the concentration of individuals with these exclusionary preferences, in turn, predict the locations in which selective violence will be most severe.

Hypothesis 2. *Areas with higher levels of electoral support for ethnonationalist groups will experience higher levels of selective violence after the onset of a pogrom.*

Both historical and large-sample statistical studies also indicate that selective violence is cyclical at a local level: violence is most likely to occur where it has happened before. There are good theoretical reasons to be skeptical of these arguments, despite the empirical record. Among its other effects, selective violence often results in large-scale displacement that changes the social make-up of the physical locations in which violence occurs . These social characteristics are not fixed indefinitely. The process of mass displacement means that to identify as Tutsi in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide, for example, or as Black in Tulsa, Oklahoma after the 1921 race riots, carries a different social meaning than prior to the respective episodes' onset .

Hypothesis 3. *Areas with higher levels of previous violence against the targeted group will experience higher levels of selective violence after the onset of a pogrom.*

3.3 Associational Cleavages

A third explanation focuses on the social origins of pogrom violence. In these studies, pogroms and similar forms of selective violence occur where social cleavages are most pronounced, or where segregated neighborhoods or civic associations entrench divisions between communities. Some associational theories suggest that these cleavages reduce opportunities for meaningful personal contact between different ascriptive groups. Proponents of so-called "contact theory" find that the absence of interpersonal contact reduces intercommunal trust and makes communities more susceptible to violent rumors and other forms of incitement.

A second logic sees civic associations as a means of conflict resolution in divided societies; in their absence, violent triggers (Brass, 1996) quickly escalate and spread to other localities with

similar patterns of social division (Varshney, 2002).

Hypothesis 4. *Areas with higher numbers of “bonding” associations will experience higher levels of selective violence after the onset of a pogrom.*

Hypothesis 5. *Areas with higher numbers of “bridging” associations will experience lower levels of selective violence after the onset of a pogrom.*

3.4 Symbolic Violence

A last body of scholarship suggests that pogrom organizers use violence as a symbolic strategy, to convey to targeted groups—and, in many cases, to enact—the groups’ exclusion from the established social order. Like other agents of collective action, pogrom organizers use “master frames” to justify violent mobilization against the targeted group. Snow and Benford (1992, p. 139) describe master frames as the “interpretive medium through which collective actors associated with different movements...assign blame for the problem they are attempting to ameliorate.”

Movements engaged in collective action use public, visible symbols to communicate collective claims to their audiences (Tilly, 2008). These symbols add meaning to public forms of collective action. The symbols that animate group mobilization can be visual, as in flags or insignias, or narrative, as myths or tropes that refer to existing ideas of ethnic difference (Kaufman, 2001). They can also involve forms of public action. In her work on lynchings, mock executions, and other forms of intentionally staged violence, Fujii (2017) terms these categories of public action “violent display.”

Critical and interpretive studies also point to the performative and communicative purposes of violence. Violence is not simply an outcome of existing social cleavages, but an attempt by its perpetrators to align the social order with organizers’ ideological preferences. In his theoretical work on social practices, Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 127) introduces the concept of “symbolic violence,” or “gentle, invisible violence, unrecognized as such...that of trust, obligation, personal loyalty, hospitality, gifts, debts, piety.” As the definition indicates, Bourdieu’s violence refers to a broader set of strategies of social domination, but the concept also resonates with the social purpose of physical pogrom violence. In his writing on the Notting Hill race riots, for example,

culture theorist Stuart Hall observes that the pogrom aimed as much to alter the future demographic make-up of the Notting Hill neighborhood as to harm its current residents: “Notting Hill had been the location of calculated, violent nocturnal assaults on lone black men...The events of Notting Hill and Nottingham did much to convince significant numbers of Caribbean migrants that assimilation in English society was no longer a matter to be considered” (Hall, 2017, p. 90–1).

In its symbolism, the logic of violence during pogroms mirrors other forms of public violence against civilians. During civil wars, both government forces and rebel groups use selective violence as a means of indirect ethnic cleansing. In Colombia, for example, civilians fled towards ethnic enclaves after observing instances of selective violence by multiple competing armed groups (Steele, 2017). In encouraging mass civilian flight, armed groups achieved a policy of forced displacement in effect, if not by explicit design (Balcells and Steele, 2016). Selective violence against visible ethnic enclaves resulted in territorial clearances, making those areas easier for armed groups to control (Steele, 2019).

Studies of selective violence typically describe the symbolism of mass harm as a constant rather than a variable feature of violent mobilization.

The symbolic function of pogrom violence implies, however, that organizers will use violence when harming others advances the goals of collective action, and that violence will be less severe where it is not as useful to pogrom organizers. The symbolic logic of pogrom violence suggests that pogroms are most likely to occur where the targeted group is most visible. This is not a function of group threat, but rather of opportunity: Pogrom organizers mobilize violent action to address the problem of social difference, and that problem is greatest where their target’s social role is largest.

Hypothesis 6. *Areas with a relatively large population of the targeted group will experience higher levels of selective violence after the onset of a pogrom.*

4 The Kristallnacht Pogrom: A Paradigmatic Case

The events of November 1938 are a paradigmatic case of pogrom violence; Kristallnacht establishes a conceptual standard for comparative analysis of similar forms of political contention (Brass, 1996).

Scholars and, perhaps more notably, agents of violence themselves look to Nazi practices as an index of contemporary organized violence (King, 2012). In methodological terms, the extreme political conditions of Nazi rule also make the Kristallnacht pogrom a “hoop” case for causal inference: factors that explain variations in violence in other cases should also account for patterns of violence during Kristallnacht (Bennett, 2004).

Two important factors differentiate the scope conditions of the Kristallnacht case from other prominent episodes of collective violence. First, local pogrom organizers enacted anti-Semitic attacks in a political context of state license, rather than state collapse. These “peacetime” conditions distinguish the Kristallnacht pogrom from the anti-Semitic riots that occurred in contested areas of Poland and Ukraine during World War II (Kopstein and Wittenberg, 2018). The proximate trigger for Kristallnacht was the assassination on 7 November 1938, of a German diplomat by a Jewish civilian in Paris. The assassination set off the wave of anti-Semitic riots in Germany that escalated by November 9 into a nationwide assault on Jewish civilians, their businesses and property, and their houses of worship (Kropat, 1988). The pogrom’s escalation occurred after the authorization of acute violence against Jewish civilians by senior Nazi officials. For their part, however, civilian members of the Nazi Party, the Hitler Youth, and German civilians perpetrated many of the direct attacks on Jewish civilians and civil society far in excess of senior officials’ narrower orders (Steinweis, 2009; Wildt, 2014). The collaboration-control model of violent conflict suggests that the dynamics of violence and incentives for violent behavior during peacetime will differ systematically from those in war or conditions of multiple sovereignty (Kalyvas, 2006). Second, the Kristallnacht pogrom occurred in the context of a consolidated autocracy. This differs from instances of communal violence in democratizing states, in which the means of violence are distributed to a wider range of military and paramilitary groups (Tajima, 2014).

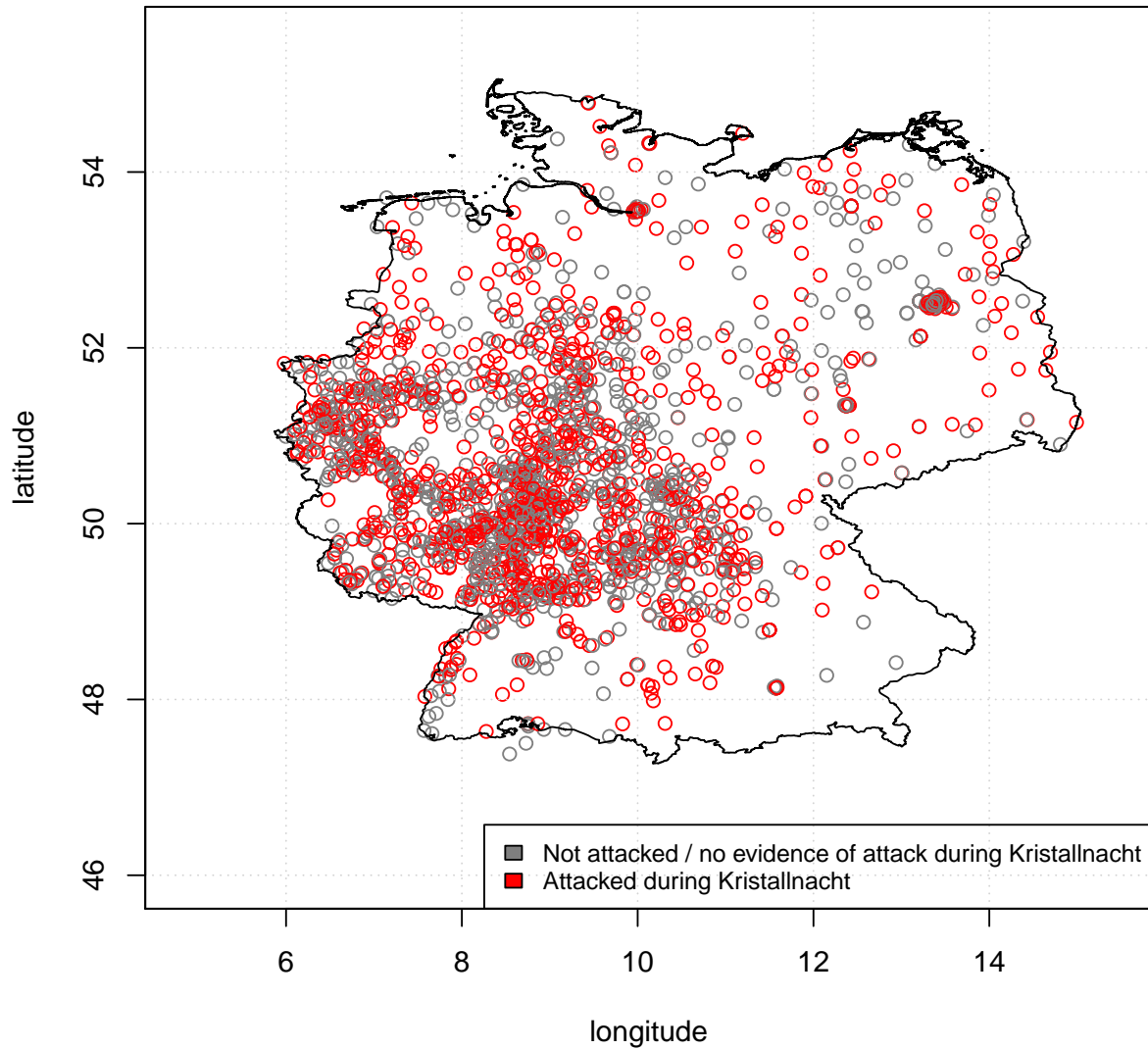
4.1 A New Dataset of Anti-Semitic Violence during Kristallnacht

To assess the determinants of spatial variation in pogrom violence, I introduce a new dataset of houses of Jewish worship active prior to and destroyed during Kristallnacht. This dataset relies on a list of German synagogues and prayer houses developed by the Beth Ashkenaz Synagogue Memorial project (Ashkenaz, 2003). The Beth Ashkenaz project was one of multiple Kristallnacht-

related memorialization efforts published in conjunction with the 65th and 70th anniversaries of the pogrom in 2003 and 2008, respectively (Grellert, 2007).

The georeferenced dataset includes 2,238 observations, each representing an individual synagogue or prayer house active in Germany at some date prior to the Kristallnacht pogrom. Due to scarce data, the database excludes or provides incomplete information on pre-Kristallnacht synagogues in the eastern Silesia, East Prussia, and Pomerania provinces. To enable systematic comparison with Weimar-era political and social data, I also exclude synagogues in these territories from the dataset. Of the 2,238 German synagogues on the Beth Ashkenaz list, 1,890 institutions were still active in 1938. Of these active synagogues, 1,253 (66 percent) were attacked during the pogrom, while 637 (34 percent) were not.

Figure 1: Synagogues Attacked and Not Attacked during the Kristallnacht Pogrom



The Beth Ashkenaz database includes other information relevant to synagogue institutions and the activities of their Jewish members, such as the existence of a ritual bath or the number of Jewish community associations present in the municipality. However, these observations are only listed in the database by town or municipality rather than by synagogue, limiting the precision of the available data.

With select exceptions, each synagogue listed in the Beth Ashkenaz database includes a street address current to 2003. I gathered spatial point (latitude / longitude) data for each synagogue address using the `ggmap` (Google Maps) package in the statistical software R. Figure 1 displays the geo-referenced coordinates of attacked and non-attacked synagogues.

The geo-referenced format of the dataset allows for more systematic and precise aggregation of the Kristallnacht events at the municipality level. This study is the first to use aggregated data about the Kristallnacht violence to examine spatial variation during the pogrom. Aggregated event data offer important gains to precision versus other methods of assessing the spatial distribution of pogrom attacks. For example, these details allow for measures such as the number and percentage of synagogues destroyed in each administrative unit, where previous municipal-level studies of the Kristallnacht attacks only account for the presence or absence of a destroyed synagogue in each municipality (Voigtländer and Voth, 2012). These measures of the dependent variable—synagogue attacks—allow for the robustness checks displayed in Tables 6 and 7.

4.2 Research Design

To test competing explanations for pogrom violence during the paradigmatic case of Kristallnacht, I use a spatial-join algorithm in R to cluster the Kristallnacht event data by municipality. The algorithm uses a “k-nearest neighbor” technique to match spatial points in the new Kristallnacht event dataset to the (Euclidean) nearest municipal centroid, or geographic center (2012). The municipality, county (*kreis*), and province names and respective indices are compatible with the datasets for Hänisch (1989) and Falter’s (1991) data on Weimar voting and socioeconomic patterns, and with Voigtländer and Voth’s (2012) expanded dataset on indicators of medieval and 20th century anti-Semitism in Germany.

I use a multivariate “ordinary least squares” regression analysis to assess competing explanations for spatial variation in pogrom violence. This statistical method addresses a common dilemma of social observation: Are specific instances of violence representative of a broader pattern of causes and effects, or simply the result of an idiosyncratic and contingent combination of factors? This dilemma has clear implications for the study of pogroms. In the case of the Kristallnacht pogrom,

for example, one cannot know whether anti-Semitic sentiment in a particular German community accounts for the local severity of violence in November 1938 without observing the full universe of other locations in which German attitudes towards Jews might have had an effect. Statistical regression techniques assess whether these explanatory variables tend towards a common outcome in a large number of cases. Additionally, multivariate regression addresses the possibility that other social or political factors that might account for violence outcomes.

I test the following model of pogrom violence in the context of Kristallnacht:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{Pogrom violence}_{1938} = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Jewish population share} \\
 & + \beta_2 \text{Communist vote share} \\
 & + \beta_3 \text{anti - Semitism} \\
 & + \beta_4 \text{Civil society} + \epsilon
 \end{aligned}$$

I test this model using province fixed effects, which account for the possibility that unobserved characteristics of specific provinces explain some of the variation in municipal-level violence outcomes. In the appendix, I also include results for two alternative model specifications. The first, a logit model, assesses the effects of the explanatory variables on a limited outcome variable—that is, whether or not violence occurred in at the municipal level. The second specification, a curvilinear model, tests whether the explanatory variable of interest—Jewish population share—influences violence outcomes below or above an indeterminate population threshold.

Table 1 displays descriptive statistics for each of the following outcome and explanatory variables.

Table 1: Summary of Key Variables

Statistic	Obs.	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max	Source
attacked_1938_percent	1,074	0.712	0.404	0.000	1.000	New dataset
attacked_1938_dummy	1,164	0.735	0.441	0.000	1.000	New dataset
attacked_1938	1,164	1.122	1.778	0.000	42.000	New dataset
jews33_share	952	0.024	0.033	0.0001	0.377	Hänisch 1989
n309kpd_share	1,164	0.078	0.074	0.002	0.427	Hänisch 1989
n309nsda_share	1,164	0.183	0.098	0.008	0.777	Hänisch 1989
pog1349	1,056	0.204	0.403	0.000	1.000	VV 2012
pog20s	1,141	0.026	0.160	0.000	1.000	VV 2012
clubs_bonding_pc	228	0.472	0.415	0.000	2.964	SSV 2017
clubs_bridging_pc	228	1.888	1.177	0.016	6.670	SSV 2017
pop33_log	1,141	8.327	1.642	4.927	15.308	Hänisch 1989

4.3 Outcome Variables

Jewish prayer houses attacked during Kristallnacht: I use the geo-referenced Kristallnacht dataset to generate three municipal-level measures of violence during the pogrom. Because the above hypotheses refer to the *severity* of violence rather than its occurrence or non-occurrence, the primary measure of interest is the percentage of synagogues attacked in each municipality. To ensure that my results are robust to other measures of the outcome variable, however, I also test the effects of the explanatory variables on both the number of synagogues attacked in each municipality and whether or not an attacked synagogue was located in the municipality.

Although pogrom organizers used multiple forms of violence against Jews during Kristallnacht, the destruction of synagogues was the most distinctive feature of the nationwide pogrom.

4.4 Explanatory Variables

Jewish population share: I use Jewish population share, as recorded in the 1933 German census, to measure the proportion of the targeted group in each municipality. The 1933 German census is a controversial source, not least because the data-gathering effort was among the new Nazi regime's first attempts to redesign German institutions in the image of the Nazi Party's eugenicist ideology (Luebke and Milton, 1994). Scientific ethics demand attention to the ethical quandaries of

using data generated by the Nazi regime (Post, 1991). In addition to these ethical concerns, the empirical accuracy of these data also merit discussion. Given the Nazi ideology’s expansive definition of Jewish blood-lineage, might the German census-takers have overestimated the size of the country’s Jewish population? In fact, historical evidence suggests that the 1933 census may have *undercounted* Germany’s Jews. The census, which the Nazi regime conducted prior to the 1935 Nuremberg laws that established a blood-lineage standard for anti-Semitic discrimination, mainly recorded the country’s visibly observant population rather than its more assimilated membership (Luebke and Milton, 1994). Given that the Kristallnacht pogrom took place *after* the regime established the Nuremberg standard for Jewish lineage, it is reasonable to expect that the 1933 census provided a conservative estimate of the size of targeted Jewish communities in each municipality.

Communist Party vote share, 1930: I use the German Communist Party (KPD) vote share in the September 1930 federal elections to measure the proportion of electoral support for political opponents of the pogrom organizers. The KPD was the Nazi Party’s diametric opponent throughout the Weimar period, both at the polls and in street battles between the parties’ respective paramilitary forces. Soon after taking power, the Nazi regime liquidated the KPD and arrested, imprisoned, and deported many of the Communist Party’s known—and alleged—members (Bessel Political Violence). The Nazi Party also embraced the myth of so-called “Judeo-Communism,” an anti-Semitic trope that held a global Jewish cabal responsible for the proliferation of Communist ideology and the consolidation of Soviet rule (Longerich, 2010).

Although the 1930 elections were not the last open elections before the Nazi Party’s rise, they are the last open election for which municipal-level data are available. For the vote share data, I use Hänisch’s (1989) and Falter’s (1991) data on aggregate German voting behavior during the Weimar period. These data update and correct statistical errors in the previous Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) dataset on Weimar-era voting patterns (Falter and Gruner, 1981).

Nazi Party vote share, 1930: I use the Nazi Party vote share in the 1930 federal elections to measure the proportion of electoral support for ethnonationalist parties. The electoral period that best represents the relationship between Nazi Party mobilization and anti-Semitic attitudes is not obvious. Some scholars (Voigtländer and Voth, 2012) suggest that the May 1928 federal election

returns are a better predictor of aggregate patterns of anti-Semitism among Nazi voters, because the Nazi Party’s federal election strategy between 1928 and the 1933 crisis emphasized its “normal,” non-vanguard characteristics. The Nazi Party’s 1930 campaign messaging also involved the use of anti-Semitic tropes, however, that made clear the party’s ethnonationalist politics. Empirically, the May 1930 returns are also a more consistent predictor of other anti-Semitic behavior during the early Nazi period such as the municipal-level proportion of letters to the anti-Semitic newspaper *Der Stürmer*.²

Medieval and Weimar-era pogroms: The other indicator of municipal-level anti-Semitism in this article is prior instances of selective violence against German Jewish communities. This article tests the effects of both historical and more contemporaneous instances of anti-Semitic violence, following Voigtländer and Voth’s (2012) finding that the occurrence of pogroms during the 14th-century Black Death plague is associated with higher levels of Weimar- and Nazi-era anti-Semitism across multiple measures. The Voigtländer and Voth study includes municipal-level data on both 14th-century pogroms and on anti-Semitic violence during the 1920s.

“Bridging” and “bonding” associations: To test the effect of different associational formations on violence outcomes, I use data on “bridging” and “bonding” associations in Weimar Germany from Satyanath, Voigtländer, and Voth (2017). To collect this information, the authors identified 547 cities in Germany, Poland, and Russia that had greater than 10,000 inhabitants in 1925. After excluding cities outside present-day Germany, Satyanath, Voigtländer, and Voth contacted municipal archivists to solicit information about associational life during the Weimar period. From the final sample of 229 cities that responded to the survey with adequate data, they sorted the Weimar-era civic and military associations into “bridging” associations, which cut across social differences, and “bonding” associations that reinforce them.

Because the city centroids in the Satyanath, Voigtländer, and Voth study are not perfectly equivalent to the municipality centroids in the Voigtländer and Voth study, I used a “k-nearest neighbor” algorithm to match the associational data to the nearest municipality. In their statistical

²To compare the effect of the May 1928 and the September 1930 returns, I regressed *Der Stürmer* letters per 10,000 people on the May 1928 returns and on the September 1930 returns. The 1928 effect is not statistically distinguishable from zero ($t = -0.747$), whereas the 1930 effect is statistically distinguishable from zero at $\alpha = 0.1$ ($t = -1.881$). The *Der Stürmer* data are from Voigtländer and Voth (2012).

tests, Satyanath, Voigtländer, and Voth compute the proportion of associations per 1,000 residents, according to the population count in the 1925 German census; I follow this procedure.

Both observed and unobserved selection effects color the make-up of the restricted sample. The municipalities in the pre-survey sample are relatively populous, and unobserved factors like administrative capacity or attitudes towards a locality's Nazi past might also effect their likelihood of responding to the Satyanath, Voigtländer, and Voth survey. To estimate the effects of attrition in the restricted sample, I run balance tests on both the outcome variable and the other explanatory variables to assess the relationship between the variables and inclusion in the restricted sample. The results of the balance tests, displayed in Table 2, suggest that the restricted sample under-represents municipalities with a large Jewish population share, and over-represents municipalities with higher levels of pogrom violence, large populations, and a high concentration of Communist voters. It is therefore possible that the municipalities for which there is information about associational life in Weimar underestimate the effect of Jewish population share on violence outcomes.

Table 2: Balance Tests for Inclusion in Restricted Sample of German Municipalities

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	restricted				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
attacked_1938_percent	0.104*** (0.029) t = 3.543				
jews33_share		-3.007*** (0.388) t = -7.758			
n309kpd_share			1.641*** (0.146) t = 11.278		
n309nsda_share				0.090 (0.115) t = 0.777	
pop33_log					0.148*** (0.005) t = 27.239
Constant	0.111*** (0.024) t = 4.657	0.283*** (0.016) t = 17.885	0.052*** (0.016) t = 3.311	0.164*** (0.024) t = 6.850	-1.048*** (0.046) t = -22.763
Observations	1,074	952	1,164	1,164	1,141
R ²	0.012	0.060	0.099	0.001	0.394
Adjusted R ²	0.011	0.059	0.098	-0.0003	0.394

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Population: The literature on collective violence generally associates pogroms with urban locations, due to the possibility of mass mobilization and the heterogeneity of urban communities (Tambiah, 1997; Varshney, 2002). To control for the urban character of pogrom violence, I control for the natural log of each municipality's 1933 population. Using the natural log of population rather than the aggregate number of people in a given municipality accounts for the possibility that population levels above a certain threshold have a diminishing effect on variations in violence.

5 Findings

The regression analyses provide some evidence in support of the “symbolic violence” explanation for spatial variations in pogrom violence. Model 1 (Table 3), which encompasses the full sample of municipalities but excludes the associational variables, provides evidence for a strong positive effect of Jewish population share on levels of violence during Kristallnacht that is statistically distinguishable from zero. The effect of Jewish population share is robust to alternative measures of pogrom violence—specifically, to the aggregate number of houses of worship attacked (Table 6) and whether or not an attack occurred in the municipality (Table 7). The effect is also robust to a curvilinear specification of the model (Table 8).

The effect of Jewish population share becomes statistically indistinguishable from zero in Model 2, which tests the Model 1 variables in the restricted sample, and Model 3, which includes controls for the associational variables. The results of the logit test (Table 7), however, indicate that Jewish population share is associated with the *occurrence* of anti-Semitic violence during Kristallnacht, although not its severity. As discussed above, bias in the restricted sample should lead us to be cautious about interpreting the results of Models 2 and 3. The balance tests in Table 2 suggest that the municipalities in the restricted sample had a lower-than-average Jewish population in 1933, while experiencing higher-than-average levels of violence during the Kristallnacht pogrom. These findings suggest that Models 2 and 3 may underestimate the true effect of Jewish population share on violence outcomes.

The results of Model 3 (Table 3) also provide some conditional support for the “associational cleavages” explanation for variations in pogrom violence. The coefficient on the “bridging clubs” variable indicates a substantively small but statistically significant *negative* effect of the presence of cross-cutting associations on levels of pogrom violence. Within the constraints of the restricted sample, this macro-level finding provides evidence that a higher concentration of cross-cutting civil society groups helps mitigate violence after a pogrom’s onset. By contrast, a higher concentration of “bonding” associations does not have an effect on violence that is statistically distinguishable from zero. The relatively small average Jewish population share in the restricted sample, however, suggests that the moderating effect of “bridging” civil society might be limited to areas in which

the baseline visibility of the targeted group is lower.

Table 3: Explaining Anti-Semitic Violence during the Kristallnacht Pogrom (province fixed effects)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	attacked_1938_percent		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
jews33_share	1.948*** (0.473) t = 4.118	2.925 (3.581) t = 0.817	1.566 (3.511) t = 0.446
n309kpd_share	0.152 (0.229) t = 0.666	0.448 (0.335) t = 1.336	0.434 (0.326) t = 1.331
n309nsda_share	-0.270* (0.148) t = -1.821	-0.370 (0.325) t = -1.140	-0.377 (0.318) t = -1.183
clubs_bonding_pc			-0.053 (0.060) t = -0.889
clubs_bridging_pc			-0.057** (0.023) t = -2.494
pog1349	0.048 (0.037) t = 1.293	0.118** (0.053) t = 2.227	0.102* (0.052) t = 1.965
pog20s	0.051 (0.086) t = 0.595	0.042 (0.079) t = 0.526	0.070 (0.077) t = 0.902
pop33_log	0.021* (0.013) t = 1.673	-0.063*** (0.019) t = -3.378	-0.083*** (0.019) t = -4.318
Constant	0.610*** (0.109) t = 5.573	1.401*** (0.210) t = 6.661	1.778*** (0.238) t = 7.470
Observations	796	169	169
R ²	0.103	0.263	0.313
Adjusted R ²	0.073	0.128	0.175

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

6 Conclusion and Implications

This article identifies pogroms as a distinct form of collective violence that merits additional theoretical and empirical inquiry apart from other forms of ethnic conflict. I also identify symbolic politics as an understudied explanation for macro- and meso-level variation in mass selective violence. Following multiple recent political science studies, this article additionally demonstrates the theoretical and empirical benefits for scholars of contentious politics of studying of the Nazi Holocaust. In recent years, political scientists have looked to micro- and meso-level data about perpetrator behavior (Kopstein and Wittenberg, 2018) and civilian mobilization (Braun, 2016; Finkel, 2017) during the Holocaust to test theories about the causes and dynamics of mass violence and conflict. The relative availability of spatial data about Nazi violence has been an important contribution of this literature (King, 2012; Braun, 2016). And lastly, this article presents a model for reconciling rationalist and culturalist explanations for the causes and dynamics of mass violence.

7 Avenues for Future Research

I anticipate three next steps for this research. The first step involves elaborating on the competing explanations for pogrom violence, in particular the components of “practice theory” that explain the symbolic uses and effects of pogroms. Second, I plan to estimate a Heckman selection model to account for selection bias in the restricted sample. This selection model involves controlling for an exogenous variable, such as administrative capacity, that informs the non-random selection of the restricted sample. Third, I plan to use contemporaneous media accounts and survivor testimonies about the Kristallnacht pogrom to assess the meso-level dynamics of symbolic pogrom violence.

8 Appendix

Table 4: Explaining Anti-Semitic Violence during the Kristallnacht Pogrom (covariates)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	attacked_1938_percent			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
jews33_share	0.922** (0.384) t = 2.402			
n309kpd_share		0.537*** (0.166) t = 3.242		
n309nsda_share			-0.527*** (0.125) t = -4.214	
pog1349				0.119*** (0.032) t = 3.731
pog20s				0.040 (0.082) t = 0.483
Constant	0.716*** (0.016) t = 45.290	0.670*** (0.018) t = 37.583	0.808*** (0.026) t = 31.238	0.691*** (0.015) t = 47.428
Observations	888	1,074	1,074	956
R ²	0.006	0.010	0.016	0.016
Adjusted R ²	0.005	0.009	0.015	0.014

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 5: Explaining Anti-Semitic Violence during the Kristallnacht Pogrom (covariates, ctd.)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	attacked_1938_percent		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
clubs_bonding_pc	-0.094* (0.049) t = -1.908		
clubs_bridging_pc		-0.024 (0.017) t = -1.445	
pop33_log			0.031*** (0.008) t = 4.066
Constant	0.846*** (0.030) t = 27.913	0.847*** (0.037) t = 23.138	0.456*** (0.064) t = 7.105
Observations	199	199	1,052
R ²	0.018	0.010	0.015
Adjusted R ²	0.013	0.005	0.015
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01		

Table 6: Explaining Anti-Semitic Violence during the Kristallnacht Pogrom (province fixed effects)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	attacked_1938	
	(1)	(2)
jews33_share	9.210*** (1.581) t = 5.824	64.423*** (23.370) t = 2.757
n309kpd_share	0.502 (0.774) t = 0.649	1.550 (2.216) t = 0.699
n309nsda_share	-0.466 (0.499) t = -0.934	1.169 (2.122) t = 0.551
pog1349	0.003 (0.124) t = 0.020	0.023 (0.342) t = 0.067
pog20s	-0.436 (0.284) t = -1.535	-0.537 (0.513) t = -1.048
clubs_bonding_pc		-0.050 (0.400) t = -0.124
clubs_bridging_pc		-0.002 (0.154) t = -0.015
pop33_log	0.402*** (0.042) t = 9.617	0.540*** (0.127) t = 4.262
Constant	-2.335*** (0.360) t = -6.489	-4.995*** (1.487) t = -3.358
Observations	853	178
R ²	0.240	0.343
Adjusted R ²	0.216	0.220
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table 7: Explaining Anti-Semitic Violence during the Kristallnacht Pogrom (logit, province fixed effects)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	attacked_1938_dummy	
	(1)	(2)
jews33_share	28.208*** (5.354)	396.535*** (150.836)
n309kpd_share	0.571 (1.755)	-5.172 (6.268)
n309nsda_share	-1.632* (0.964)	8.449 (8.164)
pog1349	0.457 (0.290)	2.843*** (1.069)
pog20s	0.088 (0.802)	1.063 (1.544)
clubs_bonding_pc		0.329 (0.784)
clubs_bridging_pc		-0.653** (0.316)
pop33_log	0.560*** (0.105)	-0.484 (0.391)
Constant	-3.867*** (0.874)	4.046 (3.761)
Observations	853	178
Log Likelihood	-389.736	-29.053
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Table 8: Explaining Anti-Semitic Violence during the Kristallnacht Pogrom (curvilinear, province fixed effects)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	attacked_1938_percent	
	(1)	(2)
jews33_share	3.513*** (0.919) t = 3.824	13.500 (9.266) t = 1.457
n309kpd_share	0.183 (0.229) t = 0.797	0.494 (0.328) t = 1.507
n309nsda_share	-0.263* (0.148) t = -1.774	-0.321 (0.320) t = -1.002
pog1349	0.049 (0.037) t = 1.328	0.092* (0.052) t = 1.775
pog20s	0.047 (0.086) t = 0.548	0.074 (0.077) t = 0.958
pop33_log	0.026** (0.013) t = 2.023	-0.089*** (0.020) t = -4.529
clubs_bonding_pc		-0.048 (0.060) t = -0.796
clubs_bridging_pc		-0.059** (0.023) t = -2.574
Constant	0.539*** (0.115) t = 4.681	1.758*** (0.238) t = 7.395
Observations	796	169
R ²	0.108	0.322
Adjusted R ²	0.077	0.181

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

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