

Autonomy Retraction and Intense Ethnic Conflict

March 11, 2013

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Why are some civil wars so much more violent than others? A large literature has been devoted to studying both specific indigents of civil war, as well as the causes of outbreak of conflict, but surprisingly few studies analyze why some wars come at a greater human cost. This paper argues the variation in levels of violence in conflicts where ethnic groups seek to separate themselves from the control of the central state is a factor of group-specific characteristics, namely, if the group has experienced a retraction in autonomy. This theoretical framework is tested using a Bayesian hierarchical model and several illustrative cases, and finds some evidence to support the claim that group-level factors play a major role in determine the levels of violence in a conflict.

1 Introduction

Why are some separatist conflicts more violent than others? While much literature has been devoted to the *outbreak* (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Hegre, 2003) and *length* (Fearon, 2004; Wucherpfennig et al., 2012) of civil and ethnic wars, relatively little attention has been focused on the intensity, or the level of violence, generated by each conflict. This paper seeks to answer this question for two reasons: first, because it may shed valuable light on the sometimes conflicting findings in the literature on civil conflict, and secondly it may aid in policy prescription of areas with a higher risk of conflict. In this paper, we argue that a focus on group-level, as opposed to state or dyad-level factors is required to understand why some separatist conflicts are more violent than others. Specifically, we argue groups who have experienced a retraction of autonomy are more likely to participate in violent separatist conflicts. For these purposes, we define ethnic separatist conflict as a deliberate attempt for independence from a central authority on behalf of an ethnic group. This paper proceeds in three major sections: first, it summarizes the literature on both the influence of autonomy status on ethnic conflict and also the factors that increase the intensity of civil conflicts. Second, it outlines a group-centered, yet still multi-level, approach to explaining the variation in the levels of violence in separatist ethnic conflicts, and provides illustrative cases to support these claims. Finally, it provides a quantitative analysis from a world-wide sample of ethnic groups that generally confirm the primary hypotheses that autonomy retraction plays a major role in predicting the propensity for ethnic groups to engage in violent separatist conflict.

2 The State of the Debate

This paper speaks to two distinct yet related literatures. The first discusses the role of autonomy in an ethnic group's propensity to launch a separatist campaign, while the other discusses the factors that lead to more violent civil conflicts. we will address both of these literatures in turn, before discussing where both literatures can contribute to the question of what causes increased violence in ethnic separatist conflicts.

2.1 Autonomy Status and Separatism

The academic debate on the matter of autonomy has proved quite controversial. Two major camps have emerged: those who think autonomy merely whets the appetite for full independence and one that sees autonomy as a way of easing tensions between the central state and culturally-distinct groups (Erk & Anderson, 2009). Decentralized rule has been suggested as a way to solve tensions in cases a variety of

diverse cases, from Catalonia and Scotland to Afghanistan. Since Horowitz's 1985 proposal that federalism may solve tensions in ethnically divided states, proponents have argued regional autonomy may save the state by easing centrifugal tensions (Bermeo, 2002; Bermeo & Amoretti, 2003; Stepan, 1999). The proponents of this approach argue federalist approaches proved a role for ethnic groups in the central state (Lijphart, 1977), reducing tensions between the state and outlying groups.

However autonomy is not universally accepted as a means to ease ethnic tensions. Some claim autonomy fails to adequately address the demands of ethnic groups while simultaneously placing states in a position where they may alienate their central constituencies. Secessionism has taken hold amongst ethnic groups even when they had autonomy in a variety of cases, including Russia (Cornell, 2002), the Caucasus (Brancati, 2009), and Nigeria (Roeder, 1991). In short, these scholars argue autonomy or "ethno-federal" arrangements fail to address the key concerns of the ethnic group, perpetuating the existing tensions between the ethnic group and the central state (Hale, 008b; Kymlicka, 2008).

In an attempt to make sense of this confusion, Siroky and Cuffe (2012) argue that a simple dichotomy between autonomous and non-autonomous groups overlooks the important role for the *loss* of autonomy. Autonomy loss, we argue, leads to a higher likelihood of separatism because autonomy retraction increases a group's grievances while not necessarily lowering the group's collective action capacity: two key factors if a group is to launch a rebellion. Using this approach, we showed a significantly higher likelihood of separatism amongst these groups, however these results said nothing on the *intensity* of separatist conflict. Before developing this relationship further, we now discuss the literature focusing on the intensity of intra-state conflict.

2.2 The Intensity of Conflict

The intensity of civil wars has received relatively little attention in the literature (Tarrow, 2007; Florea, 2012), with much of the literature focused either the causes behind the duration or onset of conflict. However, some scholars have sought to give this question their attention. These scholars often fall into one of two groups, who either focus on major violent events (for example genocide) but tend to forgo analyzing the conflict as a whole, and those who focus directly on the (potentially endogenous) relationship between violence and civil conflict.

The temptation to focus almost solely on the levels of violence in particular episodes is clear, since many genocides have coincided with ethnic or civil wars in recent years (Harff, 2003), thus making their importance to the level of severity in the overall conflict quite stark in human terms. Krain (1997) produces similar

findings, arguing that political opportunity structures and involvement in civil war increase the likelihood and severity of civil war. In this sense, ethnic cleavages may be seen as political opportunity structures. While we do not disagree that ethnicity is at least somewhat socially constructed, we also disagree with arguments suggesting ethnicity has little to contribute to the study of conflict. (Fish & Kroenig, 2006) Rather, we argue that ethnic cleavages (or grievances) are mobilizing factors (Ruggeri, 2012) that may exacerbate relations between the central state and the ethnic group.

However in recent years some scholars have sought a more inclusive approach in regards to both violent and non-violent elements of civil war. Kalyvas (2006) argues that violent tactics on behalf of the insurgency may be a useful tactic in the conflict as a whole, and attributes overall levels of violence to control over territory is a prime motivator for higher levels of violence, even in the presence of stable front lines. Lacina 2006 finds the level of democracy within a state to be a strong predictor of the levels of violence, where cultural differences are not. On a similar note, Heger and Salehyan 2007 find states with larger ruling coalitions are unlikely to be involved in major violent conflicts. These findings run counter the the earlier hypothesis put for by Saidemann and Ayres (2000) who argue the size of groups relative to the state plays a lesser role than expected when predicting conflict.

2.3 The Path Forward

Although these two literatures have gone some way to describing the causes behind separatism and the intensity of conflict, we argue further dis-aggregation is required between separatist campaigns and attempts to seize the centralized authority in the state (Cederman et al., 2010). In the next section, we present a theoretical framework from which we derive several hypotheses that seek to explain why some ethnic separatist movements are more violence than others. Although these two literatures have gone some way to describing the causes levels of violence in civic conflict, little data suggests. In the next section, we present a theoretical framework from which we derive several hypotheses that seek to explain why some ethnic separatist movements are more violence than others. To test our theory, we then describe two illustrative cases, and then add a further test of our hypotheses using a hierarchical ordinal Bayesian regression.

3 Our Approach

we argue that the causes of more violent separatist events stem from both group-level *and* state level factors. Much previous research on the intensity of conflict has focused on state-level factors Florea (2012), which

overlooks key factors of a group's historical relations with the central state. Specifically, we argue groups who have lost autonomy are more likely to launch sustained, violent separatist campaigns compared to groups who have never been autonomous or are currently autonomous. we argue this for the same reasons Siroky and Cuffe 2012 argued autonomy loss is likely to lead to higher incidence of separatism-namely, a loss of autonomy increases a group's grievances while not necessarily reducing their collective action capacity. Although not the first to cite autonomy loss as a factor in increasing the likelihood of conflict (Gurr & Moore, 1997), our conception of the influence of autonomy loss is unique for two reasons. Firstly, the four-tiered classification of autonomy status that we adopt allows for dis-aggregation between groups who are currently autonomous, who may have the ability to launch separatist campaigns but the populace may lack the will to do so given the potential for loss of their status. However, Prospect Theory also argues individuals weigh current disadvantages heavier than the current benefits of their situation.

we cases such as these, we argue, individuals in an ethnic group who were previously autonomous weigh this lack of autonomy heavier than the current advantages of their situation. Although the application of prospect theory to groups has shown mixed results (McDermott, 2004; Mercer, 2005) we argue retraction of autonomy can serve as a powerful motivator for collective action. The sense of loss of status, in addition to either real or perceived discriminatory policies, has motivated groups to protest against the ruling bodies across the world. The logic behind this motivation is quite simple: a previously empowered group seeks to re-claim what they believe to be their "lost" power or prestige. The resentment driven by the perception of loss of power has been seen in a wide variety of cases, from the far right in the United States (Parker & Barreto, 2013; Lipset, 1973) or European countries (Kitschelt & McGann, 1997) to ethnic groups in the developing world (Darnell & Parikh, 1988) or in Russia (Giuliano, 2010, p 92). Although the motivation for the development of grievances differ amongst these cases, the overarching lesson is stressing ethnic resentment can be a motivator for collective action, even amongst relatively privileged groups.

Secondly, contrary to Gurr's (1993, 1997) conception of autonomy loss as a factor that *only* increases grievances, we argue autonomy loss increases both grievances and the collective action capacity of the group. While invasion or takeover by an outside agency will clearly leave the group aggrieved, the second claim may, on the surface, appear less obvious. If a group is autonomous, it will likely possess several advantages, such as leadership and political infrastructure (Bunce, 1999), as well as the mitigating factor of group grievances. If the central state retracts a group's autonomy, this will not necessarily eliminate these collective advantages, which are not only present in democracies (Skrede Gleditsch & Ruggeri, 2010). As seen in Kosovo

and Tibet, the local governmental structure enabled a group both to highlight its cultural distinctiveness (potentially increasing costs for free-riders) but also provides political infrastructures such as political parties and bureaucracies that aid in the organization of the ethnic group. Autonomy loss represents a political opportunity for leaders of groups, (Costalli & Moro, 2012) a mobilizing structure, and the opportunity for framing processes, all key elements of social movements, (McAdam et al., 2003) and by using autonomy loss as a key independent variable we hope to theoretically link the origin of conflicts to the outcome, an important task often over-looked in the study of contentious politics. (McAdam et al., 1997)

We do not, however, expect a group's collective action capacity to remain constant throughout time. We expect collective action capacity to decay over time, and as such we expect groups with a *recent* loss of autonomy to be more likely to launch and sustain violent separatist campaigns because their collective action capacity will not have decayed to the same extent as groups who lost their autonomy in the distant past (see Figure 1 below). Such an expectation accounts for *both* the potential decay of political leadership within the group (due to generational replacement) and potentially higher levels of integration of the group into the culture and political system of the central state, both of which reduce the probability that a group could sustain a violent conflict.

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—————Figure 1 About Here—————
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The approach we adopt gives me two distinct advantages. Firstly, we build and develop our theory based from the group level upwards, as group-level factors have shown to be highly linked to conflict (Saideman & Ayres, 2000; Cederman et al., 2010, 2009). Although variations on the definition of ethnicity exist, we argue that analyzing conflict on the group level is vital because important political cleavages form around ethnicity, which allows political entrepreneurs to mobilize the group for action. The second benefit of our approach is that we do not limit ourselves to only studying violent conflict (Tarrow, 2007). While some may argue non-violent and violent separatism are two unrelated phenomena, we argue that increased violence in a conflict is a sign of willingness to escalate the conflict, on behalf of the state, the ethnic group, or both, and is thus an indicator that the cleavages surrounding the ethnic group are severe enough for conflict to ensue. From a practical standpoint, using the count of battle deaths would present issues for the implicit baseline=0 battle deaths, which in this case could indicate the group was non separatist, or the group *was* separatist, but was peacefully attempting to gain autonomy.

4 Hypotheses

Given this theoretical backing, we are able to derive three hypotheses. First, all groups who have lost their autonomy, regardless of when, are more likely to launch a separatist campaign than currently autonomous groups. Secondly, currently autonomous groups will launch more intense separatist campaigns than groups that have never had their autonomy.

Hypothesis 1: Groups who lost autonomy (either recent or non-recent) are more likely to launch higher-intensity campaigns than currently autonomous groups.

Hypothesis 2: Currently autonomous groups are more likely to launch higher-intensity separatist campaigns than groups who have never held autonomy.

Additionally, we hypothesize that groups with a more recent experience of autonomy loss will be more likely to launch higher-intensity separatist campaigns than those whose experience of autonomy loss occurred in the past. We expect to find evidence of this process for two reasons: first, a group's collective action capacity should decrease over time as the central state exerts continual control over the group's territory. Secondly, longer timespans between a group's autonomy loss and the present increases the likelihood that a group is assimilated into the political culture of the central state. For example Scotland, while having lost autonomy, did so in 1707 (formally), and thus has long been assimilated into British politics.¹

Hypothesis 3: Groups with a more recent loss of autonomy are more likely to launch higher-intensity separatist campaigns than groups who lost their autonomy more distantly in the past.

In order to test these predictions, we adopt a mixed-methods approach. Firstly, to provide insights into the complexity of the relationship between autonomy loss and conflict, we analyze three cases: Xinjiang in China, the Kurds in Iran, and Kosovo, and then use a global sample of ethnic groups and a hierarchical ordered logistic model with a global sample of ethnic groups to determine which factors make ethnic groups more likely to become embroiled in higher-intensity separatist conflicts.

5 Illustrative Cases

5.1 Xinjiang: Unknown Paradise

In northwest China, the Uyghur Muslim population of Xinjiang have the grievances, grounded in decades of discrimination, that some scholars associate the group with separatism. Although there has been periodic support for separatism, the group has largely failed to organize a sustained and serious separatist movement along the lines of Tibet or Assam in India. Part of the reason for this, we argue, is that it lacks the collective action and governance capacity that autonomous status affords. Instead, it has pursued disjointed acts of terrorism and rebellion, including large-scale riots in 2008 and bombing policemen during a training session in 2009. Despite sporadic violence, separatist incidents in Xinjiang are few and far between, and secessionist movements are perpetually weak and disorganized.

The history of Xinjiang and its residents is dominated by their relationship with the Han Chinese (Millward, 2004; Davis, 2008). Although the Uyghurs managed to achieve independence in November 1933 as the East Turkistan Republic (ETR), partly thanks to the distraction caused by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria, the newly minted nation only lasted four months, and was constantly engaged in war, before falling under Chinese control again. In 1944, a second ETR formed, although this time it was as a puppet state of the Soviet Union. In neither case, we submit, did Xinjiang develop sufficiently independent institutions and experience in self-rule to later form the foundation for organized separatism. Although some sentimental fondness for either ETR may exist, it is unlikely that four war-ravaged months and nearly five years of Soviet rule play a major role in Uyghur independence. The history of separatism in Xinjiang is a story of failure.

Separatism in Xinjiang has so far been limited to sporadic attacks that risk estranging the local population on whose support any separatist movement would ultimately depend. Uyghurs lack a consistent ideology and a history of self-rule that could serve to structure a separatist movement. However Xinjiang also shows a potential logical trap when discussing the intensity of separatist conflict: Although Xinjiang has shown sporadically higher levels of violence as compared to Tibet, this does not mean Xinjiang has a more active separatist movement. As such, the coding for the quantitative analysis below measures conflict intensity every 5 years, which gives higher weight to *consistent* separatist activity as opposed to one or two violent years every generation.

Although the Uyghurs lack a cohesive separatist movement, they have many grievances against the central state. First, given Beijing's policy towards religion, many Islamic residents view the expansion of the central

state with suspicion. Secondly, increased economic activity in the area on behalf of the central government has seen little benefit to the local population, and much of the local population views this activity as an attempt to assimilate the local culture into the central state. Finally, although Xinjiang is only 35% Han-Chinese (the ruling ethnic coalition), local citizens may feel aggrieved given the (locally) disproportionately Han-Chinese dominated government. Xinjiang, then, is a puzzle. Over the last two decades especially, sporadic violent separatist activity, however no single cohesive organization has successfully sustained the movement. This is, we argue, due to the fact that, until recently, most Uyghurs had little incentive to violate the status quo: as such, the capability to launch a separatist campaign is relatively high, however the group had, until recently, low motivation to risk its relative autonomy.

5.2 Kurds In Iran

Iran also provides an example that shows the potentially cloudy linkage between autonomy status and intense separatist conflict. The Kurdish population in Iran, whose ethnic brethren have rebelled against authorities in Syria, Iraq, and Turkey since the collapse and absorption of the Kurdish autonomous state into the Ottoman Empire and its successors. The Kurds represent an excellent example of how autonomy loss enhances a group's chances of engaging in intense separatist conflict. With support of the PKK in Turkey, the Iranian Kurdish PJAK has launched sustained (if not totally constant) rebellion against the central Iranian state. Initially supportive of the Revolution of 1979, occurrence of armed rebellion on behalf of the Kurds increased until 1995 (PRIO), although the conflict has recently dissipated (MarQualIr). This case shows the crucial factor of autonomy loss, however it would also be accurate to point out that the PJAK would have been unlikely to maintain the rebellion with the same levels of intensity without the support of the PIK and other foreign organizations. However, when we contrast the story of the Kurds with that of the Baluchis, who were also initially supportive of the 1979 revolution before withdrawing support, the advantages the Kurds gained during autonomy such as a higher level of group consciousness, and relatively easy access to outside support.

5.3 Kosovo

The case of Kosovo provides strong support for our theoretical assertion that autonomy retraction both increases grievances against the central state while not necessarily diminishing collective action capacity. Under the Communist regime, the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo were granted special considerations under the 1946 Constitution, and later were granted full autonomy in 1974. However, Slobodan Milosevic's increasing

power within the quickly fragmenting Yugoslavia, along with the local government’s policies towards ethnic Serbians (McGwire, 2000) resulted in the revocation of autonomy in 1990.

The revocation of autonomy led to immediate resentment amongst the ethnic Albanians within Kosovo, with the Kosovan “Shadow State”, although lead by individuals unwilling to pursue violence, greatly assisted in highlighting the group’s ethnic identity through schools and other cultural focwe (Pula, 2004, p. 797). However, the KLA, the more radical Kosvonan liberation movement, tired of the peaceful tactics after the Dayton Accords, and was eventually able to use the mobilization structure of the shadow state to recruit Kosvans into its militia.(Pula, 2004, p 805) This represents a key point: the structures developed by the Kosovans during their autonomy played a crucial role in the mobilization, and eventual militarization, of the group. Again, however, this picture is not as simple as such a short description can merit: both the central state and the Kosvans were accused of atrocities during the conflict that may have been down to how leaders of municipalities exploited potential ethnic ties,(Costalli & Moro, 2012) and once again external forces (NATO) played a decisive role in altering the course of the conflict, again meriting the inclusion of external support into any global assessment of the impact of autonomy loss on conflict.

These three cases demonstrate the ”murkiness” (Hechter & Okamoto, 2001) when attempting to identify a relationship between autonomy status and separatism. However each case, while only scratching the surface of the complexity of relations between ethnic groups, show some support

6 Quantitate Data Description and Measurement

In order to test if quantitative analysis can shed light on this murkiness, we culled data from both the Minorities at Risk and Ethnic Power Relations datasets.¹ Combined, the data contains information on 304 ethnic groups across 105 states. The data were measured in 5 year increments, starting in 1960 and ending in the year 2000, with the unit of analysis being an individual group in each country per year. 1990 was omitted from the dataset due to its proximity to the collapse of the Soviet Union, which may influence both the availability of data but also the reliability of a group’s autonomy status: here a group is defined as autonomous only if it has both formal and informal autonomy from the central state. In cases of state collapse and formation such as during the collapse of the Soviet Empire,

our dependent variable is a measure of the relative intensity of a group’s pursuit of separatism. It is

¹These datasets are quite similar, if not exactly compatible. Every attempt was made to confirm coding of groups whose names differed between the two datasets were accurate. If no confirmation could be found, the group was omitted.

an ordinal variable with 4 levels, generated from the combination of MAR's separatism index (sepx) and PRIO's conflict intensity index. The first level indicates no separatism, which came strictly from MAR's coding of the group.² The second level indicates if a group was exhibiting separatism according to MAR, but did not meet the criteria of having a conflict according to PRIO. The third level, classified "minor" conflicts, are separatist conflicts that range from 0-25 deaths in the year in question. Finally, "major" conflicts are classified as having over 25 deaths per year. Both of these two levels required *both* MAR to indicate the group was separatist and PRIO to indicate a conflict.

The theoretical difference between levels of conflict has also been an important source of confusion in the civil war literature. Sambanis and Zinn argue conflict escalation is likely to follow lower-intensity separatist movements. (Sambanis & Zinn, 2005). we argue autonomy loss is more likely to lead to this type of situation, where peaceful protest can turn to relatively low-scale violence. However we do not expect autonomy loss to influence the outbreak of major violence alone: the formation of a peaceful separatist movement on behalf of a group who has lost its autonomy does not necessarily equal³ a group moving from a relatively peaceful separatist movement to one where violence is common or severe. In addition, sustaining a violent conflict may require more resources than the grievances or leadership autonomy loss provides a group. we attempt to capture this theoretical impetus with our statistical model, by using an ordinal logit with flexible intercepts for each level on the dependent variable.

The data also contains an independent variable for each hypotheses above. For this project, the key independent variable is a measure of a groups autonomy status, based on Siroky and Cuffe's (forthcoming) trichotomous autonomy classification. However, for this project, this variable is disaggregated to four levels, in order (from theoretically least to most likely to pursue separatism): Never Autonomous, Currently Autonomous, Autonomy lost in non-recent past, and finally Autonomy lost in recent past. we have disaggregated this variable in order to analyze the enduring effects of autonomy loss on likelihood to engage in separatism. As such, in the second part of the quantitative analysis, we will define "Autonomy lost in recent past" as a group who lost their autonomy 50 years from the year in question.⁴ In order to support Hypotheses 3, this analysis should show significant differences between the two types of autonomy loss when "recent" autonomy loss is defined as 25 years, which should dissipate as the time between autonomy loss and the year in question grows larger.

We also control for several potentially confounding factors. First, we include MAR's measure of group

²This coding also ensures that groups that were engaged in non-separatist conflict, or control for the central state, were not coded as pursuing separatism

³In terms of effort, manpower etc

⁴Additional versions of this time scale (25, 75, and 100 years) will also be tested.

concentration, which is a 4-point measure of the percentage of a group's members living in the same territory. This measure is included to control for the likelihood that highly concentrated groups will have fewer obstacles due to collective action as compared to widely-dispersed groups. Secondly, we include a measure of the political regime of the central state, classified as either autocratic, hybrid, or democratic 2006, as the makeup of a political regime will play a major role in the likelihood of conflict (Beck et al., 2004; Fearon, 2004). Finally, we include a measure of external support for an ethnic group. This measure was derived from Salehyan et al's (2011) measure, with a group coded as having received support if there was either explicit or alleged support for an organization representing the group for a majority of the five year period preceding the time point measured.

Table 1 and Figure 2 show some initial support for our hypotheses on the relationship between autonomy status and separatism. Table 1 illustrates that "recent" autonomy loss is more likely to lead to separatism in any form as compared to autonomous and never autonomous groups.⁵ However, autonomous groups are almost as likely to engage in non-violent separatism as compared to groups who lost their autonomy. It must be noted here that Table 2 and Figure 2 below display the data in group-years, and as such may bias results towards groups who were measured at more time points.

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—————Table 1 About Here—————
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—————Figure 2 About Here—————
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In addition, Table 2 shows initial signs that Hypothesis 3 may not be matched by the data. For Hypothesis 3 to be confirmed, we should see the greatest difference between the pre- and post- incidents of separatism in the 25-year definition of "recent" autonomy loss, followed by 50 years, continuing until 75. Instead, we see little variation across the different "thresholds" of autonomy loss, indicating Hypothesis 3, that stated the effects of autonomy loss would decay over time, may not represent the data accurately.

⁵This finding depends on "recent" autonomy loss being defined as 50 years

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However simple bivariate relationships are insufficient to explain the variety of the data. As such, we adopt two approaches. we develop a Bayesian ordinal hierarchical logistic model, with a random effect for each state. we used this model for three reasons. Firstly, this type of model allows for the analysis of both variance of separatism both within and between groups *across time and country*, allowing for greater control and model specification. Secondly, as opposed to a GLMM, an ordinal logistic model will allow tests on if the relationship between levels of intensity is indeed non-linear. Secondly, given the unbalanced (and in some cases rare) presence of individual groups, Bayesian approaches are extremely useful as they allow for flexible parameterization, in this case using country-specific intercepts allows me to *a priori* treat individual countries as exchangeable, and drawn from a common distribution $N(\theta, \sigma^2)$ (Jackman, 2009), as well as doing the same for individual groups. Such an approach will also allow me to control for common factors of response by each *state*. While mathematically we treat each country as exchangeable, we am also cognizant that factors such as the political regime type and state capacity may play a role in the severity of any potential conflict, and as such control for these effects in the main model.

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{P}(\text{SeparatismIntensity})_i = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{AutonomyStatus}_{ikt} + \beta_2 \text{RegimeType}_{kt} \\ & + \beta_3 \text{GroupConcentration}_{ikt} + \beta_4 \text{Region}_k + \\ & \beta_5 \text{ExcludedGroups}_{kt} + \beta_6 \text{LoggedGDPPC}_{kt} + \\ & \beta_7 \text{Oil}_{ik} + \beta_8 \text{ExternalSupport} + b_1 \text{State} + \varepsilon_k \end{aligned}$$

7 Analysis

For our analysis, we developed this model using the *Jags* statistical software.⁶ Tables 4 below show the posterior means and standard errors from two models testing Hypotheses 1, 2, and 4, as well as the 95% credible intervals for the value of the coefficient. Similar to a 95% confidence interval, these numbers display the range of 95% of the posteriors found in each of the MCMC iterations. The models use informative beta-priors for the key independent variable, autonomy status, which were derived from the data itself. we also feel beta priors are appropriate with the baseline of never-autonomous groups, as previous work (Cuffe & Siroky, 2012) has shown these groups are less likely to be separatist than groups who are currently autonomous

⁶Full data and replicable code is available in the online appendix

and those who have lose their autonomy. The left column shows a model using group-specific intercepts, whereas the right-hand column shows country-specific intercepts. The models show general support for Hypotheses 1: Groups who were never autonomous were less likely to show high levels of separatism than autonomous groups. Additionally, groups have lost their autonomy are in turn more likely to be involved in higher-intensity separatist conflicts than those who are currently autonomous. Contradictory to Hypothesis 2, groups who lost their autonomy recently (< 50 years) are no more likely to become engaged in intense conflicts compared to those who lost their autonomy earlier in time. The relationship does not hold when allowing each *group* to have its own intercept. However, we maintain using state-level intercepts is the correct course here, as it allows the model to capture variance in country-specific policies that a group-level intercept is unable to capture. In addition, highly-concentrated groups and those receiving external support are more likely to be involved in more intense conflicts, and, in line with expectation, increased wealth in a country significantly decreases the chances of a high-intensity conflict in the state's borders. Our assertion that the relationship is non-linear receives some support, in that the distance between the cut-points is asymmetric in both models, confirming the slightly more complicated but more theoretically-driven ordered logistic regression is preferable to a generalized linear model.

—Table 3 here—

Diagnostics of the model reveal the model was able to converge on 150,000 iterations. Figures 3a, 3b, and 3c below illustrates the trace and density plots for each of the three autonomy statuses from the model using country-specific intercepts. Surprisingly, and contradictory to the theoretical expectation and the findings of Siroky and Cuffe (Cuffe & Siroky, 2012) groups that have never been autonomous are actually *more* likely to engage in high-intensity separatist conflict as compared to autonomous groups. Additionally, the model shows no significant differences between groups who lost their autonomy recently (here less than 50 years prior) or in the more distant past. For each type of autonomy status, the figure shows the trace plot (Left), all of which show good mixing, and the density plots of the posterior distributions (Right) where “0” represents a coefficient equaling the baseline category of never-autonomous groups. Figure 4 also below presents these results in a coefficient plot, and illustrates the generally similar findings between the two models.

—Figure 3 here—

—Figure 4 here—

However these results may not hold for all definitions of “recent”, and we turn to this discussion before investigating the substantively important elements of our research.

In order to measure the importance of *when* a group lost their autonomy, we re-specify our definition of “recent” autonomy loss across four different models using the model with country-specific intercepts from Table 3. Table 4 below shows these models. Critically, the table demonstrates that across all classifications of “recent” autonomy loss, groups are no more likely to launch higher-intensity separatist campaigns than groups who lost their autonomy in the more distant past. Although this finding is contra to theoretical expectations, this does not mean autonomy loss itself is unimportant: in all cases, autonomy loss is an important contribution to the understanding of civil conflict by disaggregating very different yet important group-level factors.

—Table 4 here—

However re-classifying “recent” autonomy loss in this manner may be inappropriate. As such Table 5 below provides another Bayesian hierarchical model, only this sample only includes group-years where the group is registered as having lost their autonomy. All variables were given uniformly distributed priors in this model. The results show, contra to Hypothesis 4, more recent experience of autonomy loss does not significantly increase the likelihood a group engages in high-intensity separatist conflict.

It is possible that dividing groups who have lost their autonomy temporally may be inappropriate, given the lack of differences in the models comparing different definitions of “recent” autonomy, this may be an example where disaggregation hinders the model. As such, we took a subset of our data that contains only groups who lost their autonomy. To this set of data we added a variable that measured the number of years since the group lost their autonomy. Theoretically, as a group’s autonomy status becomes a more distant memory, not only may group identity decrease, but several key aids to collective action (such as leadership or

an independent economy) will diminish with time. However we do not expect this relationship to be linear, and as such we log the number of years since the group lost its autonomy. Table 6 below shows the results of the model, confirming, as expected, that as the time between autonomy loss and the present *increases*, the probability that the group is involved in a violent conflict *decreases*. This finding provides support to Hypothesis 3, and additionally confirms, despite issues with model specification ⁷ autonomy loss has at least some effect on a group’s likelihood of being engaged in a violent separatism—although this finding was ascertained with only groups who have lost their autonomy, if autonomy loss had no effect on the likelihood of a group becoming separatist or being involved in violent conflict, then *when* the group lost its autonomy would also have no effect.⁸

—Table 5 Here—

Conclusion

This paper has argued that autonomy loss increases the probability that ethnic groups launch violent conflicts. While some results show this may indeed be the case, the paper as whole has several issues which we now discuss. Firstly, given the disaggregation of the dependent variable, some elements of the data are extremely lacking in observations, lending weight to the argument of Cederman and Gleditsch (2009) who argue over-disaggregating data creates additional problems for researchers, and may call for a different approach that takes into account this possibility such as fsQCA (Ragin, 2008).

Another potential issue with the findings lies in the fact that the models are quite sensitive to the priors selected for each variable, an indication of unstable model fit, despite the fact that diagnostics do not indicate any issue. Another possible explanation is that the hierarchical ordered logit model is inappropriate because high-intensity conflicts are extremely rare events themselves. Such rare events have been show to cause under-estimation of occurrence and thus mis-interpretation of the coefficients without corrections for, (King & Zeng, 2001) a problem compounded by the fact that some regime types or regions never host violent conflicts, a problem common for social science research that may dictate a new approach. (Ragin, 2008) Other estimates from the model point to issues, such as the lack of significant differences between regime

⁷See Below

⁸Of course, the other possibility is that this finding reflects only a coincidence. It is possible that countries that expanded and since stabilized also happen to be the sorts of countries that do not host violent conflicts (e.g. democracies). Further research will investigate this possibility

types, however this problem may be a result of the fact that no democracy in the time-period studied hosted a major conflict.⁹ However other findings from the paper are encouraging to the assertion that *group* level factors play a major role in the intensity of ethnic conflicts. In particular, external support for groups consistently increases the intensity of conflict across all model specifications, as does the geographical concentration of the group, both of which ease the collective action problems for groups. Future research must investigate the issues presented here, as well as develop the connection between micro-level grievances towards the central state generated by autonomy loss and the macro-level behaviors required for violent separatist conflict.

⁹Some would argue avoiding bloodshed is the main benefit of democracies

Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Theoretical Expectations

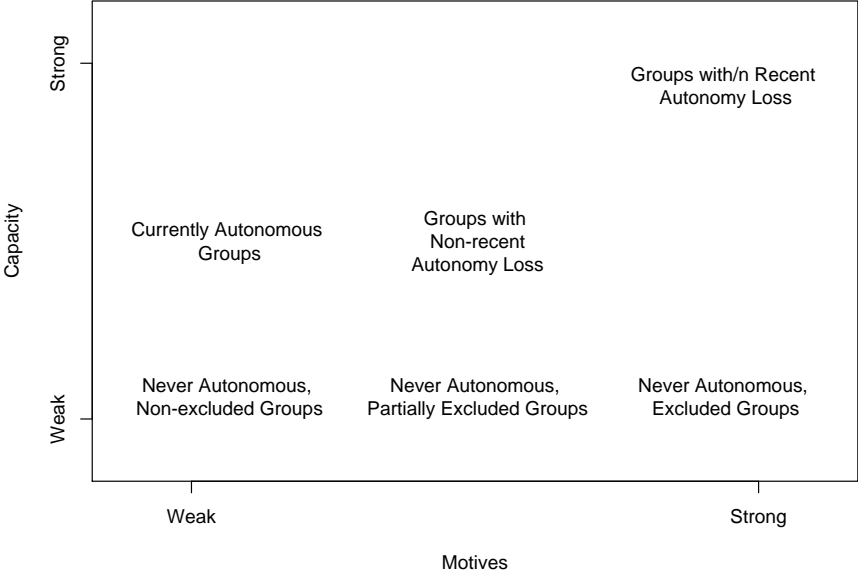


Table 1: Autonomy Status and Levels of Conflict

	Never Autonomous	Autonomous	Autonomy Loss over 50 years	Autonomy Loss within 50 years
No Separatism	81.56	56.67	32.90	29.13
Non-Conflict Separatism	16.10	36.67	42.81	42.52
Minor Conflict	2.22	6.67	21.08	26.77
Major Conflict	2.22	0.00	3.19	1.57
N	1167	59	411	382

Note: Percentages based on group-years in each category by column.

Figure 2: Relationship between Autonomy Status and Separatism

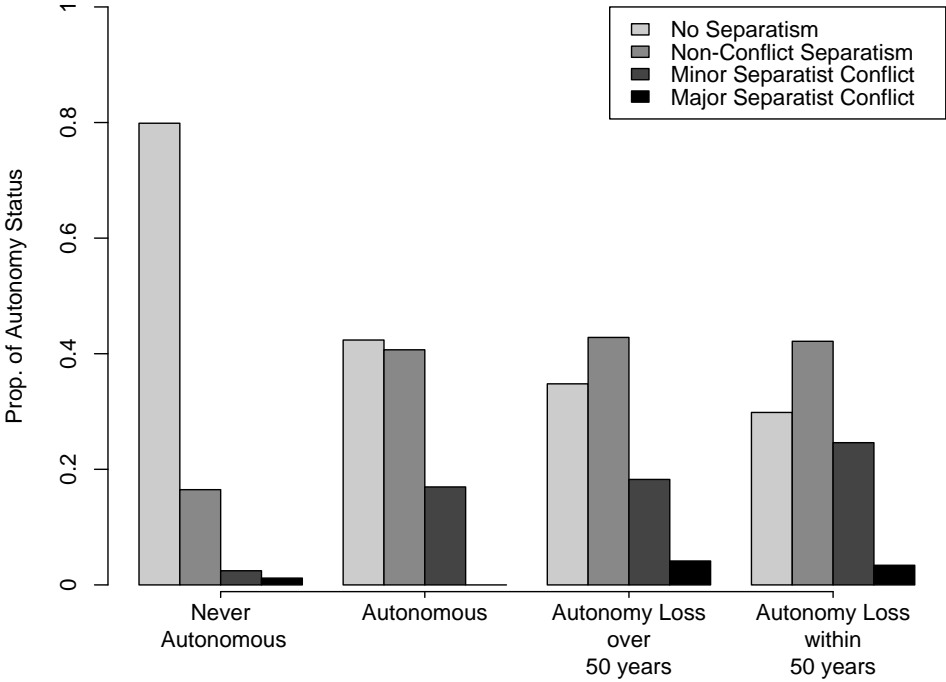


Table 2: Comparison of Definitions of “Recent” Autonomy Loss

	25 Years		50 Years		75 Years		100 Years	
	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before	After	Before
No Separatism	34.79	33.17	34.79	29.84	34.79	29.84	34.79	29.84
Non-Conflict Separatism	42.82	39.11	42.82	42.15	42.82	42.15	42.82	42.15
Minor Conflict	18.25	22.28	18.25	24.61	18.25	24.61	18.25	24.61
Major Conflict	4.14	5.45	4.14	3.4	4.14	3.4	4.14	3.4

Note: Percentages based on group-years, not each individual group

Table 3: Posterior Means for Bayesian Hierarchical Logistic Models

	Group-Specific Intercepts		Country-Specific Intercepts	
	Mean (Std. Dev)	Credible Intervals	Mean Mean	Credible Intervals
Autonomous	0.29 (0.16)	[0.04, 0.64]	0.23 (0.13)	[0.03, 0.54]
Lost Autonomy (> 50 Yrs)	0.21 (0.12)	[0.03, 0.49]	0.82 (0.07)	[0.67, 0.93]
Lost Autonomy (< 50 yrs)	0.30 (0.14)	[0.06, 0.60]	0.77 (0.08)	[0.59, 0.91]
Partial Democracy	0.05 (0.25)	[-0.44, 0.54]	-0.06 (0.25)	[-0.56, 0.43]
Democracy	-0.08 (0.32)	[-0.72, 0.55]	-0.2 (0.32)	[-0.82, 0.43]
Group Concentration	0.26 (0.14)	[-0.01, 0.53]	0.73 (0.08)	[0.57, 0.9]
External Support	0.38 (0.38)	[0.38, 0.38]	1.71 (.08)	[1.63, 1.79]
GDPPC (Logged)	-0.30 (-0.30)	[-0.30, -0.30]	-0.09 (-0.09)	[-0.09, -0.09]
E. Europe/frn USSR	0.05 (0.51)	[-0.95, 1.03]	-0.19 (0.83)	[-1.83, 1.43]
Latin America	-1.76 (0.55)	[-2.79, -0.66]	-2.59 (0.37)	[-2.99, -1.61]
M.E. & N. Africa	0.26 (0.55)	[-0.82, 1.34]	0.28 (0.98)	[-1.61, 2.23]
Sub-Saharan Africa	-1.38 (0.40)	[-2.18, -0.61]	-0.81 (0.76)	[-2.29, 0.7]
Western Democracies	1.19 (0.69)	[-0.17, 2.54]	0.42 (1.05)	[-1.66, 2.44]
Year	0.03 (0.02)	[0, 0.07]	0.01 (0.01)	[-0.02, 0.04]
Post-Cold War	-0.42 (0.39)	[-1.19, 0.35]	0.25 (0.31)	[-0.37, 0.87]
No Separatism: Peaceful Separatism	-0.99 (0.01)	[-1, -0.97]	-3.20 (0.52)	[-3.97, -2.16]
Peaceful Separatism: Minor Conflict	0.33 (0.05)	[0.23, 0.43]	-0.29 (0.52)	[-1.13, 0.73]
Minor Conflict: Major Conflict	0.99 (0.01)	[0.97, 1]	3.10 (0.53)	[2.09, 3.95]

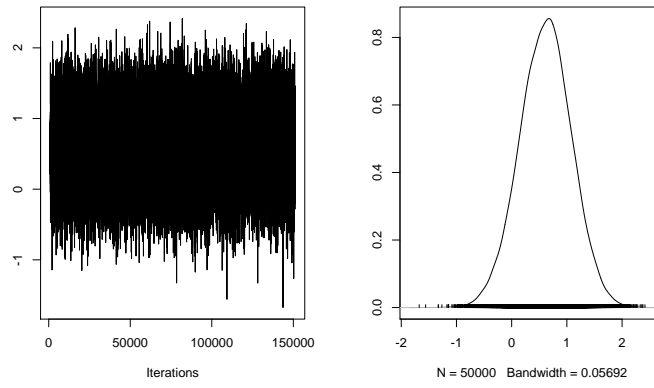
Note: Standard Deviations in parentheses

Note: 95 % Credible Intervals in brackets

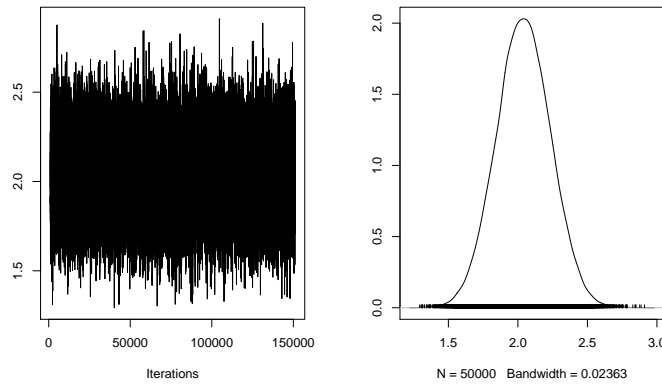
Note: Posteriors where p compared to 0
is less than .05 are bolded

Figure 3: Diagnostic Plots for Autonomy Status

(a) Trace (L) and Density (R) Plots for Autonomous Groups



(b) Trace (L) and Density (R) Plots for Autonomy Loss > 50 years



(c) Trace (L) and Density (R) Plots for Autonomy Loss < 50 years

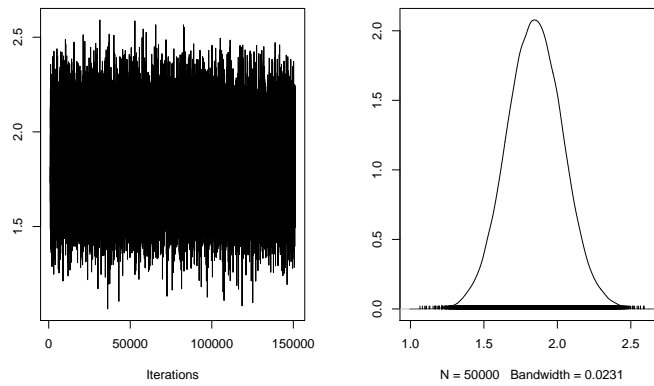


Figure 4: Coefficient Plot of Full Model

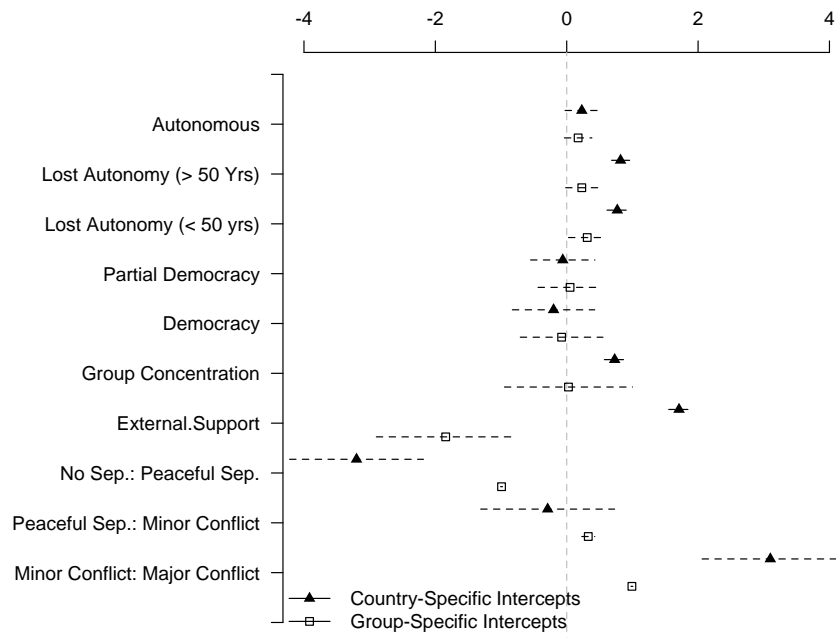


Table 4: Comparison of Four Definitions of “Recent” Autonomy Loss

	25 Years	50 Years	75 Years	100 Years
Never Autonomous	0.07 (0.04) [0.01, 0.16]	0.08 (0.05) [0.02, 0.19]	0.06 (0.03) [0.01, 0.14]	0.06 (0.03) [0.01, 0.13]
Lost Autonomy (> 50 Yrs)	0.50 (0.19) [0.14, 0.85]	0.82 (0.09) [0.6, 0.96]	0.50 (0.19) [0.15, 0.85]	0.50 (0.19) [0.14, 0.86]
Lost Autonomy (< 50 yrs)	0.50 (0.19) [0.15, 0.85]	0.84 (0.08) [0.65, 0.96]	0.50 (0.19) [0.15, 0.86]	0.50 (0.19) [0.15, 0.85]
Group Concentration	0.79 (0.12) [0.57, 1.02]	0.57 (0.10) [0.37, 0.78]	0.65 (0.10) [0.46, 0.86]	0.65 (0.10) [0.46, 0.86]
External Support	0.61 (0.17) [0.26, 0.89]	0.54 (0.18) [0.18, 0.87]	0.60 (0.17) [0.25, 0.89]	0.60 (0.17) [0.25, 0.89]
Partial Democracy	0.36 (0.16) [0.10, 0.71]	0.37 (0.16) [0.10, 0.71]	0.36 (0.16) [0.1, 0.71]	0.36 (0.15) [0.1, 0.69]
Democracy	0.43 (0.17) [0.12, 0.78]	0.39 (0.17) [0.11, 0.74]	0.39 (0.17) [0.11, 0.74]	0.39 (0.17) [0.11, 0.74]
No Sep.: Peaceful Sep.	-1.92 (0.08) [-2.00, -1.71]	-1.94 (0.05) [-2.00, -1.80]	-1.94 (0.06) [-2, -1.79]	-1.94 (0.05) [-2.00, -1.80]
Peaceful Sep.: Minor Conflict	0.29 (0.14) [0.01, 0.58]	0.23 (0.12) [-0.01, 0.47]	0.2 (0.13) [-0.05, 0.45]	0.19 (0.13) [-0.05, 0.44]
Minor Conflict: Major Conflict	1.93 (0.06) [1.77, 2.00]	1.95 (0.04) [1.84, 2]	1.95 (0.05) [1.83, 2]	1.95 (0.05) [1.83, 2]

Note: Standard Deviations in parentheses

Note: 95 % Credible Intervals in brackets

Note: Controls for Region, GDPPC, and Year

Fixed-Effects included in model but excluded from table

Note: Posteriors where p compared to 0

is less than .05 are bolded

Table 5: Time Since Autonomy Loss and Intensity of Separatism

	Mean	SD	95% Credible Interval
Years Since Loss (Logged)	-0.37	0.15	[-0.66 , -0.08]
Partial Democracy	0.44	0.40	[-0.34 , 1.21]
Democracy	0.48	0.51	[-0.51 , 1.48]
Group Concentration	0.01	0.16	[-0.31 , 0.33]
External Support	0.48	0.37	[-0.24 , 1.20]
GDPpc (Logged)	-0.38	0.17	[-0.71 , -0.04]
E. Europe/frn USSR	0.19	0.88	[-1.53 , 1.91]
Latin America	-1.90	1.53	[-4.90 , 1.10]
M.E. & N. Africa	0.23	0.94	[-1.62 , 2.08]
Sub-Saharan Africa	-1.16	0.71	[-2.56 , 0.24]
Western Democracies	2.39	1.14	[0.15 , 4.63]
Year	0.03	0.02	[-0.01 , 0.08]
Post-Cold War	-0.39	0.57	[-1.51 , 0.74]
No Separatism: Peaceful Separatism	-1.93	0.06	[-2.06 , -1.80]
Peaceful Separatism: Minor Conflict	0.22	0.15	[-0.07 , 0.51]
Minor Conflict: Major Conflict	1.93	0.07	[1.80 , 2.06]

Note: Standard Deviations in parentheses

Note: 95 % Credible Intervals in brackets

Note: Posteriors where prob. compared to 0
is less than .05 are bolded

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