**Putting Out the Fire with Gasoline: How States React to Internal Challengers**

**Abstract**: Sovereign statehood entails considerable benefits for those recognized by the international system’s other sovereign states. Consequently, many political entities within sovereign states, particularly in the developing world, seek to enjoy these benefits themselves, and do so by attempting either to secede from their hosts or to take over part or all of the sovereign states within whose borders they operate. Resisting these internal challengers is necessary for state consolidation and survival, and so is an especially important part of the state making process. The most effective way sovereign states can resist these challengers is to deter them from emerging in the first place. We investigate the effectiveness of different methods of resisting and deterring internal challengers. To do so we take advantage of a new dataset characterizing 187 “territorial contenders” within 62 developing world sovereign states. Using a conditional interevent time modeling approach, we find that everything other than the forceful reintegration of territorial contenders increases the risk of subsequent emergence of additional challengers.

**Introduction**:

Most states face one or more threats from political entities that arise within their borders and challenge their territorial integrity or even their continued existence. The internal challengers come in many forms, including some rebels, self-determination movements, local administrators denying the state’s authority, criminal syndicates, etc. Some of these internal challengers seek to seize part of the state’s territory and become a sovereign state themselves. Others seek to take over the entire territory and replace the existing state’s authority as the recognized sovereign over that country. Yet others simply want to govern themselves autonomously and make no claims about recognition. Regardless of the challengers’ intentions about sovereign independence, the threats they pose to states are the most important part of each state’s state making experience. So central are these threats and state responses to them, that Charles Tilly uses the term “statemaking” specifically to designate the general phenomenon of “attacking and checking competitors and challengers within the territory claimed by the state…” (1990:96).

What should states do when faced with such internal challengers? They can violently suppress them through military action or violent repression. Alternatively, they might negotiate with them in hopes of gaining their acquiescence to restored state rule over the entire territory. Finally, they might ignore these internal challengers, perhaps trying to out-govern them so that the citizens of the state will “vote with their feet” and place their allegiance with the state. Alternatively, live-and-let-live tolerance may arise because the state’s weakness renders it unable to govern all of its territory or respond militarily. Some sovereign states may be so poor they have little to offer in concessions.

Little or nothing is known about which state responses are most likely to succeed in eliminating existing internal challengers and deterring future ones. In hopes of providing such an assessment, we present a theoretical argument anticipating varying success across the different response options. In order to test our theoretical expectations empirically, we make use of a recently released dataset about “territorial contenders” (Lemke and Crabtree 2020). Territorial contenders (TCs) are political entities that control populated territory but lack diplomatic recognition as sovereigns. By taking territory away from sovereign states, TCs directly challenge the state’s legitimacy and usurp some of its resources, diminishing its capacity. For a number of reasons detailed in the next section, TCs are the best set of non-state actors against which to test arguments about how states can address internal challengers.

After describing TCs in more detail, we develop our theoretical argument. Briefly stated, our argument treats the emergence of TCs as a costly confrontation for both states and TCs and thus something rational actors try to avoid through emergence-avoiding bargains. We motivate a series of hypotheses about state characteristics and about state responses to previous TCs that feature problems of private information, credible commitment, and concerns about reputations which prevent states and potential-TCs from reaching negotiated compromises that prevent TC emergence. We anticipate that only forceful reintegration of past TCs reduces the hazard of subsequent TC emergence. Using the newly available Territorial Contenders Dataset and a conditional interevent time model[[1]](#footnote-1) (as well as a variety of additional statistical estimation techniques), we find considerable support for our argument. Accommodative and tolerant state responses increase the risk of subsequent TC emergence. The best way for states to avoid the negative consequences of TC presence is to root them out forcefully.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Describing Territorial Contenders**:

Territorial contenders are political entities that control populated territories but lack recognition as sovereigns. They resemble states in all but international recognition. Admittedly, their governance of territory and population is sometimes rudimentary, but that is also true for many sovereign states in the developing world. What qualifies a political entity as a TC is that it can plausibly be claimed to be the political authority within a populated territory. That claim is made plausible by evidence of the TC removing the sovereign state’s representatives from the area, of taxing and providing services, or defending it against incursions by the sovereign state or by other armed actors.

The conceptualization of TCs subsumes a variety of non-state territorial entities, such as de facto states (Florea 2014), rebels that govern territory (Arjona 2016; Huang 2016; Stewart 2018), warlords (Marten 2012; Mukhopadhyay 2014), territorial self-determination movements (Coggins 2014), and unrecognized states (Caspersen 2012). In addition to subsuming all such non-state actors, the identification of TCs does not require political entities to have declared independence, persist for a minimum period of time, nor to be actively involved in hostilities with a sovereign state – each of these is a requirement for identification as a de facto state or territorial rebel or other territorial non-state group. The general motivation for broadening the inclusion criteria is that each of the restrictions curtails variation and thus prevents general understanding of state making processes among these entities. For example, short duration likely coincides with weakness, and selecting based on duration then curtails variation on capabilities, reducing the desirability of the data for duration analyses like ours. Similarly, restricting analysis only to non-state actors actively at war with a sovereign state prevents analysis of how ongoing war or past war outcomes affect the sovereign state’s subsequent experiences. Of course, arguments specific to each subset of TCs exist (indeed, these are the subject of Florea’s, Coggins’, Huang’s, Stewart’s and others’ statistical analyses) and thus there is nothing inherently wrong in studying subsets of TCs. But ours are important *general* questions and answering them requires a broader dataset encompassing all TCs.

We are able to study a broad set of TCs thanks to a recently-released dataset (Lemke and Crabtree 2020), that provides information about 187 TCs across the territories of 62 sovereign states, and covers the years 1816-2010. The dataset was collected by treating sovereign states as sampling units, and then pouring over the histories of each state in the sample (primarily via books and journal articles) in search of instances where some actor other than the sovereign state controlled territory within the state’s borders. Importantly, Lemke and Crabtree (2020) report that one-fifth of TCs never engage in militarized conflict with ‘their’ sovereign state, and among those TCs that do qualify as rebels, they do so for only about one-half of the time they exist in independent control of territory.[[3]](#footnote-3) The broader scope of TCs is important, because since there are many non-rebel TCs, Lemke and Crabtree are able to demonstrate that the more TCs in existence the worse the conditions for the sovereign state: TC presence is strongly correlated with both civil war and state failure. An analysis restricted to only one subset of TCs would give the false impression that only that subset is a threat to the sovereign’s efforts to build its state. For example, the persistence of Somaliland is a profound threat to the restoration of a Republic of Somalia, even though there has never been fighting between Somalia and Somaliland. Focusing only on territorial rebel groups (for example) as “the” threat sovereign states most dread would deny us the opportunity to consider all groups that take territory from a sovereign state and all of the periods after civil war hostilities end but in which a non-sovereign entity continues to deny the sovereign state control of all of its territory.

Although there are overlaps between the TC dataset and other compilations of territorial non-state actors, the TC dataset is an independent data collection. It is not a mere combination of existing datasets about territorial rebels and de facto states.[[4]](#footnote-4) In addition to the Karenni, Mosquitia, and Somaliland examples above and in footnote 3, additional examples of TCs include the varying parts of Colombia controlled by the FARC from 1966-on (example of a territorial rebel group), the Katangan secession from Congo from 1960 to 1963 (example of a de facto state), the Rwenzururu Kingdom in Uganda which ruled itself autonomously from 1962-1982 (example of a territorial but non-violent self-determination movement), and the 1908-1909 seizure of Tabriz by Sattar Khan due to dissolution of the Iranian central government (example of a warlord).[[5]](#footnote-5) With so many examples of internal challengers to sovereign states, the TC dataset permits us to investigate which responses to such challengers best affect sovereign states’ abilities to maintain control of their territory. We turn now to our argument about the emergence of TCs.

**Theoretical Argument**:

As Lemke and Crabtree show (2020:531-535), the presence of territorial contenders is associated with higher risks of civil wars and state failure episodes. These are costly for the state and for the TC. Given the likelihood of these consequences, the relationship between a sovereign state and a TC is necessarily confrontational. Even when a TC emerges in opposition to other TCs, that emergence signals that the sovereign state is not in control of all of its territory, and thus the state suffers a reputational loss. The presence of TCs is clearly costly for states, and as a result states would be advantaged if they could grant concessions to potential-TCs who would then agree to leave the state in monopoly control of all of its territory.

When an opposition group emerges as a TC it gains some benefits. By controlling territory it has exclusive access to the resources within that territory: it can tax the population and decide how much to extract from economic activity. In addition, the opposition group likely has policy goals for the territory it controls, and with the state’s administration of that territory eliminated, the TC can implement its preferred policies. Upon emerging the TC has also discredited the state by usurping some of its assets and has drawn attention to its demands.

However, emergence as a TC also brings with it potentially frightful costs. Over forty percent of TCs are forcefully reintegrated into the sovereign state. At some point in their existence, eighty percent of TCs find themselves involved in lethal conflict with the sovereign state, other TCs, or with non-territorial non-state actors like non-territorial rebels or ethnic militias. A little over thirteen percent of territorial contender leaders wind up being killed or captured by the sovereign state. To be sure, not all TCs fare poorly, but the majority do pay military costs that destroy assets and kill people – including TC leaders.

Given that TC emergence is costly for both the sovereign state and the TC, it is interesting to consider their interaction within the bargaining perspective (Fearon 1995, Walter 2009). We envision a hypothetical bargaining continuum one end of which is the state’s ideal point, where it neither loses any territory to the potential TC nor makes any policy concessions. The other end of the continuum is the TC’s ideal point, where it controls all the territory it desires and has unfettered ability to establish its preferred policies therein. Between those two points is all mixes of territorial control and policy autonomy. If the TC emerges it establishes an outcome between the ideal points along the continuum, but since the state is likely to contest that territorial control both the state and the TC will pay costs for that emergence. The state might have preempted the TC’s emergence by offering policy concessions ahead of time. If those concessions reflect a point on the continuum with higher utility for both the potential TC and the state than does the emergence-less-costs point on the continuum, then that bargained outcome is preferable to TC emergence for both sides. Likely the best compromises would involve no territorial control for the potential-TC but considerable policy autonomy or other inducements.

This application of bargaining theory suggests the reason any TCs emerge is that something prevents potential-TCs and states from reaching emergence-avoiding bargains. Private information about each actor’s capacity to resist the other is surely a prominent source of state/potential-TC bargaining failure. The state has (likely massive) uncertainty about how formidable an opponent a potential-TC would be, and that potential-TC has strong incentives to misrepresent its capacity in order to secure larger concessions from the state. At the same time, the state has reason to doubt how resolved the potential-TC is, and again, the potential-TC has incentives to overstate its resolve. Similarly, the potential-TC is uncertain about how strongly the state can resist it should it emerge as a TC, and thus is not sure how small or large a concession to accept.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Commitment problems are present in state/potential-TC bargaining as well. If the potential-TC bargains with the state it has revealed itself as a potential-TC. Doing so leaves it at the mercy of the state. Since it has not emerged as a TC yet, it does not have its own territory within which to shelter, and thus is reliant on the state’s promise not to repress its leaders and supporters once exposed. Another type of commitment problems arises if the state offers concessions while at a weak ebb in its capabilities (perhaps due to confrontation with an existing TC or due to an economic downturn). How can the potential-TC trust that the state will honor the concessions it made while weak if later it enjoys an increase in its power?

Another source of bargaining failure does not fall as conveniently within the traditional bargaining framework. Namely, sometimes the bargaining interaction between two actors influences one of those actor’s interactions with other, third-party, actors. David Lake (2010/2011:29-30, 44) speculates about why Saddam Hussein may have been unable to signal to the United States in 2003 that he had eliminated his weapons of mass destruction. Lake suggests that even though such a revelation might have prevented a catastrophic war between the US-led coalition and Iraq, had Hussein revealed this information it would have told his domestic opponents (the Kurds and Shiites) as well as his regional rival (Iran) that he no longer had such weapons, and then he and his regime might have faced disastrous internal or regional conflict. Faced with such a lose-lose tradeoff, Hussein did not reach a war-avoiding bargain with the US.

This n-player dynamic very likely influences state-potential-TC interactions. When the state is considering providing concessions to a potential-TC it is aware that doing so may incentivize other potential-TCs to demand similar concessions. If so, then while it might be in the state’s interest to provide those concessions in the present interaction, it might be in the state’s long-term interests to deny the current potential-TC those concessions and thereby avoid similar interactions with other groups in the future.[[7]](#footnote-7) This dynamic is investigated in Barbara Walter’s (2006a, 2006b) studies of ethnic secessionism, though she does not employ a bargaining framework. Walter argues that if there are many potential ethnic secessionists, the state will be less likely to make concessions to any one of them. Similarly, if there are many potential ethnic secessionists, each ethnic minority will be less likely to start a secessionist movement in order to avoid being made a bloody example. Translating from ethnic minorities to TCs, this suggests that the fewer potential-TCs the more likely one is to emerge and the more likely the state is to make concessions.

The problem with directly translating Walter’s expectations to our application is that TCs are far more diverse than potential ethnic separatists. States know how many ethnic groups reside within their borders. But the sovereign state is at a disadvantage with regard to TCs because it has a much harder time anticipating the population of potential-TCs that could emerge. Some TCs previously were first order administrative units like Somaliland in Somalia which emerged as a TC in 1991. Other TCs are organized around ethnic groups, such as Mali’s Tuaregs, who seized territory and emerged as a TC in 2006. In yet other instances TCs are organized by the ethnic brethren of the state’s leaders, but who nevertheless are opponents of the regime and are not specific to one part of the country. The Khmer Rouge, which emerged as a TC in Cambodia in 1965, is an example. Since predicting the number of potential-TCs is difficult, the strategic calculations facing sovereign states are particularly acute, and they likely will anticipate there are many potential-TCs within their borders and avoid, unless absolutely necessary, making meaningful concessions to potential- or actual-TCs. But this then prevents many bargains that would prevent territorial contender emergence.

As indicated above, Walter (2006a, 2006b) investigates similar dynamics surrounding such interactions between states and ethnic groups. Ideally we would graft her argument and research design to our application. However, just as states have a much harder time anticipating how many potential-TCs exist than in recognizing how many potential ethnic self-determination movements they might face, we as analysts also cannot identify the population of potential-TCs and thus Walter’s main hypotheses about the number of potential self-determination movements a state may face have no parallel in our TC research. Consequently, her focus on identifying which ethnic groups launch self-determination movements cannot be duplicated by us since we do not know the population of potential-TCs.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Instead, we pitch our theory at the level of the sovereign state, and develop specific arguments about the characteristics of the state and, importantly, about its experience with existing TCs. We begin with consideration of background conditions that make it hard for states to commit to keeping bargains with potential-TCs and that exacerbate information problems for states and potential-TCs. We then turn to the important role that past interactions between states and actual TCs have on the strategic calculations of states and potential-TCs. In these hypotheses we come closest to Walter’s logic, because as in her work, the important influence here is the reputation the state develops. When we turn to the past-behavior/reputation effects, our attention shifts to the emergence of subsequent TCs. This is a worthwhile question to address, and maybe even more important than addressing questions about the emergence of a first TC, because there is considerable variation in how many TCs a state suffers from over time and those that suffer from many TCs are among the world’s most beset states. We turn now to our hypotheses.

**Hypothesis 1**: Large sovereign states characterized by large size, non-democratic regimes, rough terrain, and/or diverse populations are more likely to experience TC emergence.

We expect this hypothesis to be supported whether we are considering the emergence of a first TC or subsequent TCs. Large size, rough terrain, repressive governance, and population diversity are permissive conditions for challengers to sovereign states. We see this in insurgency, secession, and other literatures about internal challengers. It would not be surprising for these characteristics also to be associated with TC emergence. Nevertheless, the bargaining argument demands to know why the sovereign state and potential-TC fail to reach a bargain to avoid that emergence. Many reasons spring to mind, but we focus on three here. First, the sovereign state has tremendous uncertainty about the capacity of the potential-TC. This is a private information problem, and it prevents the sovereign state from knowing how large of a concession to make to the potential-TC. It cannot trust what the potential-TC tells it because that potential-TC has incentives to misrepresent its capacity. Second, in order to begin negotiations that might lead to those concessions, the potential-TC must trust that when it indicates it is so dissatisfied that it might emerge as a TC that the sovereign state will not launch a preemptive punitive attack on the potential-TC’s leaders or supporters. This is a commitment problem. Finally, the sovereign state has to worry that any concessions it gives to a preliminary potential-TC to prevent its emergence will only incentivize other potential-TCs to make demands of the state. This is an example of Lake’s n-player dynamics bargaining obstacle. All three of these problems are exacerbated by the background conditions, because larger states have more room for TCs to emerge, rough terrain increases a TC’s ability to resist a sovereign state’s reprisals against it, autocratic regimes have a harder time credibly committing to honor bargains in the future because those commitments are less public, and more diverse populations likely have more identity groups around which TCs might form.

**Hypothesis 2**: When a sovereign state is in confrontation with an existing TC, the probability of additional TC emergence increases.

With this hypothesis we move from background conditions that affect the emergence of all TCs, including the first one, to behavioral experiences that generate reputations for being conciliatory or conflictual, and affect the emergence of subsequent TCs. We expect that the existence of one TC increases the risk of additional TCs emerging due to private information, credible commitment, and n-player dynamics problems. Rather than motivate this general version of the hypothesis, we present two specific versions and explain the logic of each with respect to the bargaining framework.

**Hypothesis 2a**: If a TC persists and the sovereign state tolerates it peacefully, subsequent TC emergence is more likely.

In such a situation the sovereign state has revealed private information indicating it has low capacity. This emboldens subsequent TCs to emerge. There are three reasons why a subsequent potential-TC is unable to receive large concessions to induce them to stay put. First, a low-capacity sovereign state may not be able to make those big concessions and it might have a particularly difficult time anticipating how large of a concession to make to the potential-TC since that potential-TC has incentives to misrepresent its private information about capacity and resolve. Second, the sovereign state has to worry about the precedent they set for other potential-TCs (this is an instance of the reputational n-player dynamic). Third, conditions may improve for the sovereign state in the future (particularly if the existing-TC is eventually subdued), and then it might demand back the concessions made to the opposition group to prevent them from becoming a TC. This is a credible commitment problem.

**Hypothesis 2b**: If an existing TC persists even though the sovereign state engages in militarized conflict with it, subsequent TC emergence is more likely.

Fighting but failing to reintegrate the territory of a TC reveals private information about the state which constitutes an even larger admission of low capacity than is indicated by peacefully tolerating an existing-TC. For this reason, we anticipate the substantive effect of this hypothesis may be larger than for Hypothesis 2a. By being unable to defeat the existing-TC, the sovereign state has indicated to potential-TCs that their costs of emerging as a confrontational territorial actor are lower than they might have anticipated. This reduces the bargains the potential-TC is willing to accept to avoid emerging and makes emergence more likely. As in other instances, the sovereign state is uncertain how much of a concession to make to avoid subsequent TC emergence, because the potential-TC has incentives to misrepresent its private information about its capacity and resolve. Simultaneously, the sovereign state has to worry that any concession it might give to the potential-TC to prevent its emergence will incentivize other potential-TCs to emerge, raising the n-player dynamic problem. Finally, there are credible commitment problems here as well. If the sovereign state is later victorious in its war with the existing-TC, it will be stronger and thus able to demand back concessions it gave to the potential-TC. Faced with this commitment problem, the potential-TC might have no alternative but to emerge as a TC.[[9]](#footnote-9)

**Hypothesis 3**: How a sovereign state resolves its confrontation with a previous TC influences the probability a subsequent TC emerges within its territory.

In this third hypothesis we turn to the reputational effects that arise from how previous confrontations between sovereign states and TCs have been resolved. Since those confrontations can be resolved in ways favoring the sovereign state or favoring the TC, we separate these two effects into specific variants of Hypothesis 3.

**Hypothesis 3a**: Outcomes favorable to TCs in their confrontations with sovereign states make subsequent TC emergence more likely.

When confrontations between sovereign states and TCs result in the peaceful reintegration of the TC or in the TC’s promotion to sovereign state status, the resolution is favorable to the TC. Peaceful reintegration is only recorded in the dataset if the TC’s territory is returned to state control without the state having to conquer that territory. No TC would surrender its territory unless it received valuable concessions, and so peaceful reintegration coincides with concessions from the sovereign state. Promotion of a TC to sovereign state status is also favorable to the TC because it now enjoys the privileges of membership in the Club of Nations (Fazal and Griffiths 2014). When confrontations between TCs and sovereign states end in these ways, private information about the sovereign state’s inability to subdue the TC without offering concessions can embolden potential-TCs to make larger demands for concessions to compensate them for not emerging as a TC. As always, though, the sovereign state is unsure how much to concede because of incentives the potential-TCs have to misrepresent their private information about capacity and resolve. These deliberations are, as always, further complicated by n-player dynamics where the sovereign state has to worry that concessions it offers to one potential-TC embolden other potential-TCs to make yet more demands for concessions. Finally, in these situations sovereign states have an especially hard time providing concessions to prevent potential-TCs from emerging because, as indicated by their poor performance against an existing-TC, they are weak and concessions they offer now might not be re-negotiation proof if the sovereign state later recovers. Thus, commitment problems exist too.

When the outcomes of past confrontations with TCs favor the TCs, the sovereign state is in the same unpleasant bind Walter (2006a, 2006b) identified for sovereign states that make concessions to ethnic self-determination movements.[[10]](#footnote-10) In this regard, it is quite interesting that the reputational effects leading to more demands against the state at the center of her theory have been substantiated in additional research. Although Forsberg (2013) concludes that concessions to one ethnic group do not make other ethnic groups more likely to use force in pursuit of concessions, Bormann and Savun (2018) come to the opposite conclusion, finding support for Walter’s claims about the consequences of reputation building for sovereign states in their interactions with non-state actors.

**Hypothesis 3b**: Outcomes favorable to sovereign states in their confrontations with past TCs make subsequent TC emergence less likely.

When a sovereign state conquers a TC the outcome is favorable to the state because it has re-gained control of its official territory and has done so without having to make concessions that reward the TC for having emerged. As such, outcomes favorable to the sovereign state do not send messages of incapacity to potential-TCs and thus discourage them from making demands for concessions. At the same time, the sovereign state’s victory over the existing-TC discourages potential-TCs from emerging as TCs in their own right, because their expectation of the costs of that emergence have surely increased. When potential-TCs believe their costs of emergence as a TC have risen, there is a greater likelihood that the territorial and policy-autonomy status quo is preferable to emergence, and thus they neither make demands for concessions to forestall emergence nor emerge as a TC. Additionally, after victory against an existing-TC the state is likely in a strong position to resist should another TC emerge. It has structured its military in a successful manner, it has mobilized resources, it has prevailed. Should a potential-TC make demands, this might be an ideal moment for the sovereign state to make an example of that potential-TC so as to deter other potential-TCs. In this way, an outcome favorable to the sovereign state gives it the opportunity to enjoy an additional success that mitigates the n-player dynamic problem all states confront due to the uncertainty of how many potential-TCs exist within their borders. Likely the best course of action for a potential-TC in the aftermath of an outcome favorable to the sovereign state is to bide their time quietly and wait in hopes of some future downturn in state capacity. For all these reasons, we anticipate that after outcomes favorable to the sovereign state, and only after outcomes favorable to the sovereign state, the probability of subsequent TC emergence decreases.

Our argument adapts the work of past scholars on bargaining, reputational effects, and strategic interaction to motivate the five hypotheses we test in our empirical analyses. Ours is not a simple argument, but nonetheless reality is likely far more complicated. For example, we assume away the possibility that states can make concessions to some potential-TCs or actual-TCs without incentivizing others to challenge the state. Differentiating among different self-determination movements permits Kathleen Cunningham (2011) to investigate how concessions from the state affect subsequent conflict dynamics. Unfortunately, since we do not know which TCs might emerge, we cannot similarly differentiate among potential-TCs and address our bargaining hypotheses with data characterizing the relationships between states and potential-TCs. We might identify potential-TCs that got concessions, but it is doubtful we could ever identify the potential-TCs that neither sought concessions nor emerged as TCs.

As a result of these data limitations, we do not develop an argument like Cunningham’s that looks at characteristics of the non-state actors since we would be unable to test it (although Hypothesis 1 is about specific types of states more at risk of TC emergence). This is disappointing because we can certainly imagine instances where the value of defeating or the costs of accommodating a TC are low. An example is offered by the case of the Balubakat TC which emerged in opposition to the Katanga TC that challenged Congo-Zaire in the early 1960s. Since Congo-Zaire was at war with Katanga when the Balubakat emerged, Balubakat’s existence was actually beneficial to the sovereign state because it weakened Katanga. Similarly, the peaceful tolerance of Bantustans in South Africa or of tribal reservations in the United States do not signal a weak sovereign state. By assuming away such variation across existing- and potential-TCs, we make it harder to find support for our hypotheses because we are treating the information revealing, credible commitment impeding, and n-player dynamic issues as uniform for each non-state group. Since they are not uniform in all instances, we may introduce measurement error on our independent variables which could inflate standard errors and increase the likelihood of insignificant coefficient estimates. While it would be fascinating to devise variables representing variation across internal challengers, we have bitten off as much as we can reasonably chew and leave such important improvements to subsequent research.

Another limitation arises because we do not incorporate the possibility of foreign support for the emergence of a TC. It is hard to conceive of Abkhazia’s or South Ossetia’s TC experiences against the Republic of Georgia without considering Russian support. Similarly, both Rwanda and Uganda played a large role in encouraging the emergence of territorial contenders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the 1990s. Erin Jenne (2007) and Harris Mylonas (2012) demonstrate that foreign support by external states influences how sovereign states treat ethnic minorities within their borders. More recently, Melissa Lee (2020) presents convincing evidence that foreign rivals weaken the state by promoting ungoverned areas within their rival’s borders. It is likely that similar foreign subversion is associated with the emergence of some TCs, and if so, then even states that send signals of high capacity by crushing past TCs might experience the emergence of additional TCs. Of course, it will be harder for foreign rivals to establish TCs as their proxies within the territories of higher-capacity sovereign states, so we would still expect that how confrontations with previous TCs are resolved will influence the emergence of subsequent TCs even in the presence of foreign subversion. Nevertheless, Mylonas and Lee demonstrate that foreign subversion can be an important influence on how states govern their territories and interact with internal groups. Informed by their work, we replicate our analyses controlling for the presence of international rivals as defined by Thompson and Dreyer (2012) in Appendix C7 and as defined by Diehl and Goertz (2000) in Appendix C8. Neither rivalry variable is consistently significant nor does the inclusion of either does not change our general results. We suspect that foreign subversion is a relevant source of TC emergence in some cases, but perhaps the rivalry variables we employ are too crude to uncover consistent evidence of such subversion.

In sum, our application of bargaining theory motivates five hypotheses about how the characteristics of sovereign states and about how interactions between sovereign states and existing-TCs influence the likelihood of subsequent TC emergence. As our footnotes and in-text citations make clear, our argument is consistent with a broad range of studies investigating interactions between sovereign states and non-state groups. Our work is different in a number of ways. First, existing work focuses on ethnic groups or rebel groups whereas we explore relationships between states and all territorial contenders. Second, none of the works we refer to explore as many facets of the sovereign state – non-state actor relationship as we do. That is, Walter’s studies (2006a, 2006b) are about concessions (which we include in Hypothesis 3a), and Bormann and Hammond’s (2016) study is about ongoing conflict (which we include in Hypothesis 2b). Each existing study we refer to deals with one, or at most two forms of interaction between the state and non-state actor. But in addition to concessions and ongoing conflict, we also consider how peaceful tolerance of an existing-TC, the promotion of a TC to sovereign state status, and the forceful reintegration of a TC also influence subsequent TC emergence. Our approach is thus far more comprehensive and enables us to make comparisons across a variety of state – non-state interactions with respect to future confrontations. We see this as a considerable advance compared to past research.

**Research design**:

Our analyses take advantage of the Territorial Contenders Dataset (Lemke and Crabtree 2020) which contains information about TCs from the time each first gains control of territory until it no longer controls territory, or when it is recognized as a sovereign state. Since the Territorial Contenders Dataset is far more comprehensive than other territorial non-state collections, it greatly expands the number of actors included in the dataset and thereby complicates the data making process because it requires finding information about many more candidate entities. Due to these constraints the dataset reports TCs within the borders of a random sample of 62 developing world sovereign states rather than for the entire international system. Coders were assigned sovereign states from the sample and read widely in that country’s history, looking for instances when part of the national territory was governed by something other than the sovereign state recognized as possessing the territory.

All told, 187 TCs were identified on the territories of the 62 developing world states included in the sample. This averages just over three TCs per sovereign, with a range from zero TCs (twenty sovereign states in the sample never had a TC on their territories) to twenty TCs (in Burma).[[11]](#footnote-11) This detail about the overall number of TCs plaguing each sovereign state is the most important element of this new dataset for our purposes. A second important type of information in the new dataset is how long each TC persisted and how each died (if it did: 27 of the 187 were still in existence in 2010 – the year coverage ends).[[12]](#footnote-12) This variable indicates whether the sovereign state was successful in responding to the threat posed by existing TCs, which is central to our theoretical argument.

Our first hypothesis anticipates that largely static characteristics are good predictors of which sovereign states confront TCs. Our second and third hypotheses anticipate that how sovereign states react to existing TCs is an important predictor of whether subsequent TCs emerge. These hypotheses are about what happens within a sovereign state in a given year. Thus, annual observations of the 62 sovereign states included in the Territorial Contenders Dataset constitute the observations in our analyses.

We leverage the temporal variation in these data to approximate our dependent variable, namely the likelihood in a given year that a sovereign state will face a new TC. We evaluate our theory using a duration analysis or repeat failure approach. As such, we operationalize our dependent variable as the state interevent time, or the time in years between TC emergence for each state. In the event that states experience more than one TC emergence in a given year, we simplify that into a single emergence event.[[13]](#footnote-13) If a sovereign state has existing TCs during the year they enter the data set, our model treats them as having their first TC emergence event during their first year.[[14]](#footnote-14)

Our first set of independent variables are anticipated in **H1** to be good predictors of the emergence of TCs. The four variables are the liberal democracy index from V-Dem,[[15]](#footnote-15) Area (as reported by C-Shapes), Mountainous terrain (as reported by Fearon and Laitin 2003), and a measure of ethnolinguistic fractionalization suggested by Fearon (2003).

In order to test hypotheses 2 and 3, we include a series of variables indicating what happened to previous TCs. We think of these variables as representing how the sovereign state responded to previous TCs on its territory, and consequently we identify them as ‘response’ variables. The first is “Peace with TC,” which takes on a value of 1 if a TC exists within the sovereign state’s territory during that year, but the sovereign state is not involved in conflict with it. Similarly, “Fighting with TC” takes on a value of 1 if the sovereign state is involved in military conflict with a TC during that year. These two variables (and the other sovereign state response variables) come from the new Territorial Contenders Dataset described above; these two are necessary in order to test **H2a** and **H2b**. Unlike the other response variables, these two indicate contemporaneous presence of a TC (with or without armed conflict) on the sovereign state’s territory. The other response variables indicate the fate of TCs within the last twenty years.[[16]](#footnote-16) More specifically, the remaining response variables take on a value of one in the year immediately after they occurred, with a linear decay function degrading that effect such that at year 20 it equals zero.[[17]](#footnote-17) If another TC is terminated in the same way before the 20th year, the variable resets to one and the decay begins again.

“Favorable for TC” indicates whether a previous TC has been peacefully reintegrated or whether a previous TC has been promoted to sovereign state status, within the last two decades.[[18]](#footnote-18) We apply the linear decay function such that in the year after a favorable outcome for a previous TC, this variable equals one, but then degrades to a value of zero by linear decay at year twenty. This variable is necessary in order to test **H3a**. “Favorable for Sovereign State” indicates whether a previous TC within that sovereign state’s territory was forcefully reintegrated within the last two decades. This variable is necessary in order to test **H3b**. TC “Absorbed” by other TC indicates whether a TC has been absorbed by a different TC, again with the same linear decay over two decades. We do not have a hypothesis about this outcome. We include it as a covariate because excluding it from our analysis implicitly assumes that such absorptions are equivalent to the non-presence of a TC. That assumption seems untenable to us. In sensitivity analyses we have included TC “Absorbed” by other TC alongside Forceful Reintegration within our “Favorable Outcome for State” variable because almost all instances of absorption are involuntary.[[19]](#footnote-19) For example, in 1982 the territory controlled by the Eritrean Liberation Front was conquered by the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front and incorporated within their TC. Such conquests tell other potential-TCs that emerging is a risky proposition. However, such instances are not clearly advantageous to the sovereign state, as Ethiopia learned when the EPLF proved to be an extremely formidable opponent in their long civil war.

The process we describe in which state responses to previous TCs shape the bargaining about whether potential-TCs choose to emerge is best conceptualized as an event history process in which an actor (in this case the state) can experience repeated failure events (the emergence of a TC or series of TCs). This is best studied using a repeat failure estimator (Box-Steffensmeier & Zorn 2002). Repeat failure approaches originated in biostatistics and epidemiology to model medical phenomenon like patient rehospitalization rates, post-operative infections, or tumor reoccurrence in cancer patients (Box-Steffensmeier & Zorn 2002; Amorim & Cai 2014; Andersen & Gill 1982; Prentice et al. 1981; Wei et al. 1989). Due to this diversity of applications, there are several estimators from which to choose. The majority are extensions of the familiar Cox proportional hazard model in which the lack of independence between the first and subsequent failure events is corrected within the model. This can be done through variance correction, in which the variance-covariance matrix is adjusted after the Cox model converges to account for actor specific effects, or through the inclusion of a frailty term in which a random effects term with an assumed distribution is included in the hazard (Box-Steffensmeier & Jones 2004; Box-Steffensmeier & De Boef 2006; Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2007, 2014). Analyses such as these allow us to examine how time-varying covariates such as past government-TC interactions affect the likelihood of new TCs emerging over time.

Both the variance correction and frailty approaches to repeat failure event history analyses are appropriate for our study. Given evaluative work in which these approaches have been compared using simulations to assess their robustness, we remain agnostic as to which approach is best (Box-Steffensmeier & Zorn 2002; Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2014). As such, we elected to run our analyses using both approaches to give our hypotheses a rigorous test. We present the variance correction results in the main text as we believe they are the most clearly interpretable, however our findings using the conditional frailty in gap time estimator can be found in online appendices E3 and E4. Regardless of which approach we select, our findings hold.

To model the repeated-events nature of TC emergence, we follow the advice of Box-Steffensmeier and Zorn (2002) and use the conditional interevent time model first introduced by Prentice, et al. (1981). The conditional interevent time model (hereafter referred to as the “PWP Gap Time Model”) is a variance correction extension of the Cox proportional hazards model which accounts for the temporal dependence of the events experienced by the observed states. “Gap time” in the context of this model refers to the way in which the time counter is dropped to zero following each new TC emergence. This leads to modelling the time between events rather than the time since the state first became at risk for its first TC. Using interevent time rather than elapsed time assumes states are sequentially at risk for each new TC emergence. This means that the risk set for time t for the kth TC is limited to only those states who have already experienced k-1 TC emergences. The hazard function for the PWP Gap Time Model is given by

*λ(t|N(t), Z(t)) = λ0s (t-tn(t)) exp(z(t)βs)* **(1)**

where *Z* represents the vector of covariates available at time *t*, *s* represents the event number the state is currently at risk for, and *β* represents the stratum specific regression coefficients.

Unlike other variance-correction approaches, the PWP Gap Time Model stratifies TC emergence events by event rank. This allows the baseline hazard to vary for the first, second, third, etc., TC emergence. We leverage this feature of the model to explore whether there is an upper limit on the number of TCs that can emerge within a state before state responses cease to influence subsequent emergences.[[20]](#footnote-20) Among these strata, covariate effects are assumed to be constant. In order to explore the veracity of this assumption, we also present strata-covariate interactions as recommended by Box-Steffensmeier and Zorn (2002).

While we believe the PWP Gap Time Model is the most appropriate approach in this case, there are a few other variance correction estimators that one might recommend instead. The most common of these are Anderson and Gill’s (1982) unrestricted model and the marginal risk-set variance correction model introduced by Wei, et al. (1989). We applied these estimators to our hypotheses and found that our findings are robust to using alternate duration estimators. Model results of these alternative estimators as well as other robustness checks can be found in online appendices E1 and E2.[[21]](#footnote-21) A thorough discussion of the merits of these alternative duration models in direct comparison to the PWP Gap Time Model can be found in Box-Steffensmeier and Zorn (2002), and in Box-Steffensmeier et al. (2014).

**Results**:

Figure 1 presents our main findings using a stacked coefficient plot.[[22]](#footnote-22) For ease of interpretation, we also present all hazard ratios for significant variables in table 1. We find robust support for most of our hypotheses. The first model presented, labeled “All TCs” (i.e. “All Territorial Contenders”), presents the coefficient results for the full PWP Gap Time Model. The remaining four models show the strata-covariate interactive effects, broken up into the first TC, second to third, fourth to fifth, and sixth and greater. TC events from six on are combined due to the low number of states ever at risk for their sixth or greater TC. Before delving into a full written summary of our findings, we would like to provide some guidance for those unfamiliar with these types of models. Readers may think that the absence of significant coefficients across all strata in figures 1 and 2 is evidence against our hypotheses. This interpretation is inaccurate. First, the PWP Gap Time Model necessitates inclusion of all covariates in the All TCs model even though there are no observations of the state response variables prior to the emergence of a first TC. This artificially increases the hurdle for significance for these variables. Additionally, disaggregating into the various strata increases the difficulty of finding significance as well because we have fewer and fewer observations as we move up the strata and because we may have idiosyncratically unequal instances of certain variables, “Peace w/ TC” for example, in one strata or another. That we find robustly significant coefficients given the complexity of this model is quite reassuring. So too is the fact that we find the same results with every variant of repeat failure models recommended in the literature.[[23]](#footnote-23) In short, there is a strong conservative bias against finding support for our hypotheses with the PWP Gap Time Model.

We find some support for Hypothesis 1. Looking at the strata-covariate interactions for the first TC emergence (Figure 1, coefficients labeled “First TC”), we see that only mountainous terrain has a significant effect on initial TC emergence. Mountainous terrain’s hazard ratio of 1.24, indicates a positive relationship. This is in line with the expectations of hypothesis 1. State area, liberal democracy index, and ethnic diversity do not have a significant effect on initial TC emergence. However, ethno-linguistic fractionalization and democracy are significant predictors of TC emergence over all.

In line with our previous theoretical discussion regarding the effect of existing TCs on subsequent TC emergence, we find that peace with and fighting with a TC both increase the risk of states experiencing subsequent emergence. States fighting an existing TC in a given year are 4.33 times more likely to face subsequent TCs than are states not fighting a TC. Likewise, states in which there is an existing TC that is not actively in conflict with the state are 2.95 times more likely to face subsequent TCs. Looking at the strata-covariate interactions, we see that fighting with an existing TC greatly increases the likelihood of additional TCs for all event brackets, the magnitude of effect being largest for the second and third TC. Peace with an existing TC, however, only has a significant effect on the likelihood of subsequent TC emergence on the first few TCs. From these results, we conclude that Hypotheses 2a and 2b are supported, with the caveat that the effect of peaceful tolerance of existing contenders does not remain constant in states that are experiencing their fourth or greater TC. Perhaps when there is only one TC, peaceful tolerance is an intentional policy signalling to potential-TCs that the state may peacefully tolerate future TCs as well. As the state faces later TCs, it is possible that peaceful tolerance is more a matter of resource scarcity in the face of multiple challengers than it is an intentional policy. This could signal weakness on behalf of the state. However, at higher numbers of TCs, it is commonly observed that some are left at peace because the state is busy fighting against others. Our results suggest that the effect of peacefully coexisting with existing TCs dilutes as the number of total TCs faced by the state in the past increases.

We find mixed support for our hypotheses on the effects of state behavior (hypotheses 3a and 3b). Both reputational variables are insignificant in the full PWP Gap Time Model. However, previous outcomes that were favorable for TCs have a significant and positive influence on subsequent TC emergence in the case of second through fifth TCs. This supports Hypothesis 3a. States that have previously resolved confrontation with TCs in a way that favored the TC are more than 5 times as likely (hazard ratio of 5.54) to face a second or third TC. This effect continues for the emergence of fourth or fifth TCs, though the effect is weaker (hazard ratio of 1.91). These findings demonstrate an increased risk of TC emergence following peaceful reintegration or promotion to sovereign state status.

We find no evidence that forceful reintegration deters future TC emergence, as expected in Hypothesis 3b. This result is consistent across strata-covariate interactions. It is important to recognize that although this coefficient’s effect is insignificant, it is the only state response that does not raise the hazard of additional TC emergence, regardless of strata. In that regard, by not making things worse, forceful reintegration appears to be a sovereign state’s best response option as all other paths risk encouraging future TC emergence. In this relative sense, there is support for H3b because outcomes favorable to the sovereign state are better than all other responses.

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Figure 1: PWP Gap Time Model Results

Chart

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Figure 2: PWP Elapsed Time Model Results

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Our results using the PWP Gap Time Model assume that TCs emerge in single file, with each state only at risk for one TC at a time. In practice, however, TCs form over time through a variety of divergent means. Among the TCs included in the Territorial Contenders Dataset, 5% emerge from incidents of state failure, 58% emerge by seizing territory from the sovereign state, 12% splinter from a preexisting group, 19% declare their independence from the sovereign state, and 4% were created by other sovereign states (Lemke & Crabtree 2020). Given the variety of different birth types and the real possibility that potential-TCs may develop simultaneously, the PWP Gap Time Model’s assumption of sequential risk may be inaccurate.[[24]](#footnote-24) To test the validity of our hypotheses when the assumption of sequential risk sets is relaxed, we use an elapsed time variant of the PWP model.

Prentice, Williams, and Peterson’s conditional elapsed time model (PWP Elapsed Time Model) uses the total time (in years) that has elapsed since a state first enters the data set as the dependent variable. This results in states being considered at risk for their first, second, third, etc. TC simultaneously. The PWP Elapsed Time Model with strata-covariate interaction becomes unstable past the fifth territorial contender, which prevents us from exploring strata-covariate effects for the fifth or higher TC. We present the results of this model in Figure 2.

The results of the PWP Elapsed Time Model demonstrate that our findings hold even when the strong assumption of sequential TCs is relaxed. A state being in conflict with an existing TC remains a strong, positive influence on the likelihood of subsequent TC emergence. Peaceful tolerance of existing TCs has a significant, positive effect in the full model and for the second and third TC. With regards to Hypothesis 3a, we find that past favorable outcomes for TCs increase the likelihood of subsequent TC emergence across all event strata. Past favorable outcome for the state remains insignificant overall, though it has a significant negative effect on the likelihood of TC emergence for the fourth and greater event. Again, forceful reintegration remains the only state response that does not increase the risk of subsequent TC emergence. In all, there is robust partial or full support for all of our hypotheses across both types of repeat failure models.

**Discussion**:

Our findings are directly relevant to state making research. State making researchers are interested in how states come to be, and how well they survive. TCs are state makers, and thus information about them is extremely valuable for complementing what we already know about sovereign states. Almost all empirical research about state making, and particularly about Tilly’s (1990) bellicose theory, analyzes sovereign states. But Tilly’s argument is clearly about all state makers, and as indicated above one of the essential activities Tilly anticipates all successful state makers undertake is the elimination of internal competitors. TCs are the premier internal competitors to sovereign states. Thus, how well sovereign states perform in meeting the challenges TCs pose is central to anticipating how well built their states will be.

The theory anticipates that vanquishing TCs sends positive signals about a sovereign state’s capacity and legitimacy which clarify how costly TC emergence will be and thus makes it less likely. Two state making expectations based on our results are that deterring subsequent TCs is associated with longer sovereign state survival and with greater success in building the state. A broader implication of our work is for state making researchers to pay more attention to the strategies state makers employ in confronting their internal challengers.

Our results show that forcefully reintegrating the territory of TCs within the area controlled by the sovereign state is the only response that does not increase the risk of subsequent challengers. This may seem very non-controversial, but our results also show evidence that peacefully reintegrating TCs does not insulate sovereigns from subsequent challengers: making accommodations does not improve conditions for sovereign state makers. Depicting successful military campaigns or peaceful negotiations as state making strategies is quite crude, and yet it is more sophisticated than existing research which leaves entirely unspecified how state makers respond to internal challengers.

Our results offer interesting implications for civil war research as well. While the overlap between TCs and rebels is far from perfect, there nevertheless are many TCs engaged in civil wars and many civil wars that involve TCs. Within civil war research it is well-established that decisive military victories reduce the probability of civil war recurrence (this extends back to Licklider 1995). Of particular interest to civil war researchers might be the finding here about forceful reintegration of TCs. These forceful reintegrations are a kind of government victory. If government victories against TCs are the best response to deter future opposition groups from themselves becoming TCs, perhaps a similar deterrent logic explains why government victories in civil wars are better than negotiated settlements at reducing the risk of civil war recurrence. That is, when governments decisively win civil wars perhaps other opposition groups within the state are deterred from initiating civil wars against that state’s government. Existing arguments about why victory leads to lower probability of civil war recurrence stress that the losing side is unable to restart the war. Our argument is about government victory deterring the rise of *other* potential rebels. Thus, civil war researchers might find the general deterrent argument developed here useful for their research on civil war onset and recurrence.

State failure researchers should care about our findings too. An obvious question asks whether sovereign states are more likely to fail given competitive pressures of TCs on their territory, or whether sovereign state failure makes TC emergence easier and thus more likely.[[25]](#footnote-25) Questions about the direction of causality are clearly of interest for state failure researchers, and we leave definitive resolution of it to future work. Our intuition is that state weakness promotes the emergence of TCs, the sovereign’s failure to reintegrate them quickly encourages other opposition groups to become TCs, and the sovereign then spirals through fragility into failure.

**Conclusions**:

Our theory anticipates that fundamental characteristics of sovereign states such as their regime type, terrain, area, and ethnic heterogeneity help us anticipate which sovereign states are threatened by the emergence of territorial contenders. However, those fundamental characteristics of sovereign states are reasonably static (or are entirely inert), and thus we also develop hypotheses about how sovereign states reveal additional information about their capacity and ability to commit to preserve agreements by how they respond to TCs that do emerge. If they fail to reintegrate TCs’ territories rapidly, they signal weakness and encourage more TCs to emerge. If, instead, they are able forcefully to reintegrate TCs, they signal strength and do not encourage subsequent TC emergence. Using the recently available Territorial Contenders Dataset, we tested hypotheses motivated by this argument across a random sample of 62 developing world states confronted by the emergence of 187 TCs. The results of those analyses are robustly consistent and supportive of our hypotheses.

The implications of our analysis seem quite clear: the accommodations accompanying peaceful reintegration of past TCs make subsequent TC emergence more likely. Similarly, leaving existing TCs at peace and learning to “live and let live” also increases the likelihood of subsequent TC emergence. The only state response that persistently does not increase the risk of additional TC emergence is the forceful reintegration of an existing TC’s territory. That successful forceful reintegration has to occur: our results clearly show that merely fighting an existing TC (without defeating it) encourages more TCs to emerge.

These implications appear grim for incapable sovereign states like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burma. It may be that in larger states it is possible for the sovereign to persist for long periods of time in the capital city because the TCs occupy remote territory. Burma fits this pattern, where the government has never lost control of the capital city, and for most of Burmese history has controlled the areas adjacent to the capital as well. The many TCs confronting Burma are found along the country’s mountainous and forested borderlands. Their persistence has not prevented the sovereign state of Burma from persisting, but they clearly have prevented Burma from thriving. Our research uncovers no additional strategy for sovereign states like Burma to pursue. Perhaps leaders of incapable sovereign states understand this, and the absence of viable alternatives leads them to coopt other powerbrokers within their states in an effort to deter them from setting up TCs (for example, Englebert [2009] offers this explanation for the relative dearth of secessionism in Africa). In Zaire, Mobutu followed such a strategy, even employing a former TC leader, Moises Tshombe of Katanga, as prime minister in his national government in the late 1960s. If such behavior is common, then we may have uncovered a causal path whereby sovereign states may persist (thanks to norms against external conquest), but never thrive. State making research anticipates internal challengers like TCs are an important part of state making processes; defeating TCs builds stronger sovereign states. Sovereigns that fail to beat TCs may be doomed to fragility and state failure.

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1. Modeling approaches such as this are sometimes referred to as repeat failure models [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. We recognize that some TCs are preferable to the sovereign states they confront. Somaliland, for example, is more stable, prosperous, and democratic than the Republic of Somalia has been since the late 1960s. Kurdistan out-performs Iraq. We set normative concerns aside and simply address the topic of “statemaking” as introduced by Tilly: what can states do to “check” internal challengers to their authority. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Mosquitia (a.k.a. the Miskito Kingdom) which persisted in eastern Nicaragua from 1860 to 1894 is an example of an entirely peaceful TC. A Karenni TC in Burma has persisted from 1948 to the present, but only engaged in conflict against Burma in 1957, 1987, 1992, 1996, and 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Lemke and Crabtree (2020:526-531) provide a detailed comparison of their and other non-state actor datasets. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. All TC examples in this article are drawn from the extensive case descriptions that accompany the Territorial Contender Dataset; those descriptions can be found at <https://sites.psu.edu/territorialcontenders/datasets/> . [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. We express TC uncertainty with respect to state capacity, but say nothing about uncertainty over a state’s resolve. We suspect potential-TCs have little uncertainty about the state’s resolve to resist their emergence, given how bad TC existence is for sovereign states. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. We might conceive of the n-player dynamic as bargaining failure due to issue indivisibility, specifically that the sovereign state’s reputation as a capable and legitimate opponent is at stake. Refusing to offer emergence-avoiding concessions to a potential-TC is costly, but if the state is able to decisively defeat the TC if it emerges, that will send a clear signal to subsequent challengers and preserves the sovereign state’s reputation as an imposing foe. Issue indivisibility is often dismissed by bargaining theorists, though Hensel and Mitchell (2005), Goddard (2006), Toft (2006), and Fang and Li (2020) argue persuasively that it should receive more attention. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Braithwaite and Cunningham’s (2020) success identifying the organizations from which rebel groups emerge could offer a roadmap to how the population of potential-TCs might be identified in the future. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Consistent with our expectations that ongoing but unresolved conflict make subsequent confrontations more likely, Bormann and Hammond (2016) find that ongoing unresolved civil war increases the risk of additional rebels challenging the state. Similarly, Cunningham and Sawyer (2017) find that one self-determination movement’s existence increases the probability others arise. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Dawn Brancati’s (2006) claims about the circumstances under which political concessions, such as decentralization of political power to ethnic groups, increase the risk of subsequent ethnic conflict, are another example of the dynamics we theorize about. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Appendix A2 presents the total number of TCs faced by each country in the dataset as a heat map. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Coverage begins with independence. Latin American sovereign states included in the dataset are thus present from the early 1800s on, Middle Eastern sovereign states generally begin their inclusion in the inter-war years, and most African and Asian sovereigns enter the dataset after World War II. A list of all states and TCs included in the dataset can be found in the online appendix of Lemke & Crabtree (2020). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. There are 23 instances of multiple TCs emerging in a sovereign state during a year. Four of these are instances where the state had several TCs during their first year. A full list of these cases is reported in appendix A1. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. This was the case for four sovereign states: Burma, Georgia, India, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. As sensitivity analyses, we also ran our analysis using alternative democracy indicators (the Polity score as well as V-Dem’s electoral democracy index) and found no major changes in our findings. See appendices C4 and C5. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The “response variables” representing how the sovereign state has dealt with past TCs have no obvious timeframe against which to test expectations about them. We use a 20-year interval because it seems plausible that “lessons learned” by opposition groups will be roughly generational, and twenty years is the standard representation of generations in social science research. In online appendix D we discuss how insensitive our results are to the time frame used. White (2017) offers a recent example of conflict research that sees conflict lessons persisting across twenty year generations. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Our model results are robust to alternative assumptions regarding this decay. See the online appendix D for model results with no decay and with exponential decay assumptions. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Disaggregating the types of favorable outcomes for TCs generates consistent results. See appendix C1. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Combining forceful integration and absorbed in this way does not affect our findings. See appendix C2. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. As can be seen in Table 1, the covariates cease to matter after a 6th TC emerges. Realistically, a state that has faced more than 6 TCs is beyond the point of communicating capacity or resolve. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. In addition to alternative duration estimators, one could also approach our hypotheses using other forms of generalized linear regression models. As robustness checks, we evaluated our hypotheses using censored probit, zero-inflated negative binomial, and hurdle model approaches. Findings supported the general expectations of our argument, but were not conclusive. Model results for these estimators can be found in online appendices E5-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. In the main text, we present our findings visually for ease of interpretation. Full tabled coefficient results for all figures in the main text can be found in appendix B. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Appendix E presents seven alternative models suggested by the literature along with justification for why they are not as appropriate as the PWP gap time model in this case. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Other work has suggested the potential importance of state birth legacy. While we do not directly address the potential effects of state birth legacy in this paper, we did include the state legacy indicator proposed by Lemke and Carter 2016 in our analyses as a robustness check. Such inclusion resulted in no major change in findings nor significance of the birth legacy indicator. A table of these results is found in appendix C6. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. While more work is left to be done on the relationship between territorial contenders and state failure, we did run our analysis including the -77 “interregnum” coding from polity as a stand in for state failure, as advocated by Iqbal and Starr 2016. While this addition did not change our primary finding regarding the strategies used by states to address territorial contenders, the inclusion of state failure did cause ELF and the V-Dem liberal democracy index to lose significance. Please see appendix C3. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)