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Fighting over nation or state: States, communal demography, and the type of ethnic civil war

Matthew Lange[1] | Tay Jeong[2]

[1]McGill University, Montreal, QC, Canada

[2]Department of Sociology, Sungkyunkwan University, South Korea

Correspondence
Matthew Lange, Professor of Sociology, McGill University, 855 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, QC H3A 2T7, Canada.
Email: matthew.lange@mcgill.ca

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Abstract

We recognise nationalist and centre-seeking ethnic civil wars as distinct types of conflict and draw on key ideas from political sociology to make hypotheses about the causes of each. First, we argue that the character of states shapes antistate actors in ways that channel ethnic conflict in different ways, with pluralist states promoting nationalist warfare but integrative states contributing to centre-seeking civil war. Second, we propose that the relative power of communities affects the type of ethnic civil war, arguing that centre-seeking civil war is most common in situations of communal multipolarity whereas nationalist civil war is concentrated in regions with asymmetric power relations. And because historical statehood promotes elements of pluralist states and asymmetric communal power relations, we hypothesise that the risk of nationalist civil war is high in places with large and longstanding states. To test these hypotheses, we use ethnic fractionalisation to measure configurations of communal power and the state antiquity index to measure level of historical statehood, create a variable measuring the extent to which colonial states were pluralist, and run panel analyses of the odds of civil war onset. With one possible exception, the findings support our hypotheses.

KEYWORDS
colonialism, ethnic civil war, nationalism, pluralism, states

1 | INTRODUCTION

Ethnic civil warfare pits states against domestic rivals in violent conflict that is motivated to some degree by communal difference. Although researchers usually consider ethnic civil war a homogeneous category, ethnic civil wars consistently take one of two forms, which we refer to as *nationalist* and *centre-seeking*. Ethnic civil wars are nationalist when antistate actors focus on increasing communal self-rule within a set territory by pursuing either secession or greater regional autonomy. The Sri Lankan civil war between Tamil nationalists and the Sri Lankan state exemplifies this type. In contrast, ethnic civil wars are centre-seeking when antistate actors attempt to either take over the state or increase their control of it, with the civil war between Sunnite combatants and the Syrian state closely conforming to this type.

To date, only a few studies explore the extent to which nationalist and centre-seeking civil wars have similar determinants, and those that do offer evidence of causal heterogeneity. Hunziker and Cederman (2017) find that communities concentrated in regions with oil reserves are at greater risk of nationalist civil wars than centre-seeking civil wars. Their explanation focuses on how a concentration of oil facilitates the mobilisation of secessionist movements by creating opportunities for communal elites to gain support for secession. Similarly, Cederman et al. (2009) find that the distance from the capital and the roughness of terrain increases the risk of nationalist civil war but not centre-seeking civil war, as both enhance the ability of antistate actors to take control of peripheral territories but not to take over the state.

In this article, we continue to explore whether nationalist and centre-seeking civil wars have different determinants but shift the focus from geography to political sociology. One fundamental insight guiding political sociology is that state institutions pattern social relations in very influential ways. A common finding of the social movement literature, for example, is that states affect the resources, opportunity structures, frames, and expectations of movement actors in ways that shape their goals, tactics, and behaviour (Amenta & Young, 1999; Clemens & Cook, 1999; Goodwin, 2001; Johnston, 2011; Kitschelt, 1986; McAdam, 1982; Tilly, 1978, 2004). As a result, different state institutions promote different types of social movements. Both ethnic civil wars and social movements are clear examples of contentious politics in which civilians mobilise to make demands on the state, and many ethnic civil wars begin after social movements turn to violent repertoires in reaction to state repression. Given these similarities, the characteristics of states might shape the type of ethnic civil war. To explore this possibility, we contrast pluralist states—which institutionalise communal difference—with integrative states—which centralise political power and focus on a unified national population—and explore how they affect the risk of different types of ethnic civil warfare. We hypothesise that pluralist institutions increase the risk of nationalist civil war and that integrative states are more likely to contribute to centre-seeking civil war.

In addition to the effects of states, political sociology focuses on how the relative power of actors shapes their actions (Mann, 1986; Rueschemeyer et al., 1992; Swartz, 2013; Weber, 1968), and we consider how configurations of communal power affect the type of ethnic civil war. When a community's power is similar to or greater than the power of the community (or set of communities) controlling the state, it has opportunities to take over the state, thereby making possible centre-seeking civil war. When communities are relatively weak, however, centre-seeking civil war is unlikely because—barring external support or other exceptional circumstances—communities lack the power to take over the state. In contrast, communities are most likely to fight in nationalist civil wars when they are moderately powerful because high levels of power promote centre-seeking civil warfare whereas extreme weakness deters any type of ethnic civil war. While many factors affect communal power, demographic size is arguably the most important determinant. We hypothesise that centre-seeking civil war is most common when there are several communities that all make up only a small fraction of the total population, a communal demography that creates opportunities for many communities to take over the state. In contrast, nationalist civil war is most common when one community makes up over half of the population and all other communities are considerably smaller but make up at least a quarter of the population, a communal demography that prevents smaller communities from taking over the state but enables them to fight for greater autonomy.

Finally, we note that historical statehood commonly promotes states with pluralist traits and communal demographies with moderate to large power asymmetries. Because our previous hypotheses suggest that both promote nationalist civil war, we argue that places with large and longstanding states have an elevated risk of nationalist civil war but not centre-seeking civil war.

To test our hypotheses, we complete panel analyses using pooled logistic regression to explore relationships between the character of states, communal demography, historical states, and the odds of onset of nationalist and centre-seeking ethnic civil war between 1946 and 2020. The set includes all countries in the world with more than one million people for the analysis of communal demography and state history. Because of limited data, the analysis of pluralist and integrative states is limited to former British and French colonies.

2 | PLURALIST AND INTEGRATIVE STATES AND NATIONALIST AND CENTRE-SEEKING ETHNIC CIVIL WAR

Since bringing states "back in," political sociologists have analysed how states shape a great variety of phenomena (Evans et al., 1985). Several analyses focus on the direct effects of states, whereby states are influential collective actors whose policies directly shape a variety of social outcomes, ranging from industrialisation to social welfare (Evans, 1995; Skocpol, 1992). Others consider how states create institutional settings that affect the behaviour of other social actors, several of which analyse how states shape social movements (Amenta & Young, 1999; Clemens & Cook, 1999; Goodwin, 2001; Johnston, 2011; Kitschelt, 1986; McAdam, 1982; Skocpol, 1979; Tilly, 1978, 2004). In this section, we consider how the more environmental effects of states shape the type of ethnic civil warfare and make two hypotheses:

H1. Places with pluralist states have relatively high risks of nationalist civil warfare.

H2. Places with integrative states have relatively high risks of centre-seeking civil warfare.

At its broadest, politics involves the rules and institutions central to collective decision-making. A core element of politics is therefore the presence of a collective, or community, for whom decisions are made. Because these communities are not natural, states delineate and define their political community, and states do this in different ways. The two main ways in which states conceptualise political community are by either lumping or splitting peoples, and two ideal types capture this difference: pluralist and integrative models. As ideal types, most cases combine elements of both, although to different extents.

As its name suggests, pluralist states recognise communal diversity within the polity and therefore suggest that the national community is composed of many different communities (Furnivall, 1957; Kymlicka, 1995; Lijphart, 1977; McEvoy & O'Leary, 2013; Stepan et al., 2011). In this way, the political community is diverse. Pluralist states deal with diversity in a number of ways, thereby promoting subtypes. For example, some recognise communal difference, others accommodate communities by providing community-specific public goods, others empower communities by providing them with representation and autonomy, and most combine these elements in different ways. Common policies of pluralist states include providing communities with special legislative representation, recognising communities in censuses, offering community-specific education and family law, institutionalising communal autonomy, and organising communal military units.

In contrast, integrative states lump people instead of splitting them. Thus, whereas pluralist states focus on communal diversity, integrative states ignore difference and recognise the presence of a single unified national community. Such unity can be based on different things, such as common descent, language, or citizenship. Whereas pluralist states commonly decentralise power by institutionalising communal autonomy, integrative states are usually highly centralised and match a unified nation with a unified state.

Paralleling the social movement literature, we hypothesise that pluralist and integrative states affect the resources, opportunity structures, frames, and expectations of social actors in ways that channel conflict towards either nationalist or centre-seeking civil war. Through recognition, accommodation, and empowerment, pluralist states provide communities with a variety of resources that create opportunity structures increasing the risk of nationalist civil war. Pluralism, for example, commonly institutionalises regional self-rule, and decentralised institutions are ideally suited for mobilising nationalist civil warfare and provide regional elites seeking to maintain or expand their power with opportunity structures that orient them towards nationalist conflict. Other aspects of pluralism also provide regionally based resources that are better suited for organising fights for local autonomy than capturing the state. Vernacular education, for example, provides organisational, human, and communication resources in communal homelands and commonly plays vital roles organising nationalist movements (Lange, 2012). In contrast, integrative states centralise political institutions and pay little attention to communities, so communities have relatively few ready-made resources available to organise nationalist movements. Instead, the main political resource is the central state itself, and this institutional setting pushes actors seeking to expand their power to increase their control of the central state. Along these lines, Tilly (2004) notes that contention shifted from more local powerholders to the state after the rise of more centralised states.

In addition to resources and opportunity structures, pluralist and integrative states potentially shape communal frames in ways that affect the type of ethnic civil war. Frames cause people to see the world and themselves in ways that influence how they act, and states can shape frames in different ways (Bendford & Snow, 2000; Brubaker, 2004). Pluralist states recognise and institutionalise communal difference in ways that strengthen communal frames and focus them on the cultural and political autonomy of communities, thereby promoting nationalist civil war. For example, communalised indirect rule is based on the principle that all communities should rule themselves, communal legislative representation makes formal politics is an arena for communities to pursue their interests, and both promote national frames that cause people to pay great attention to communal self-rule. Integrative states, in contrast, focus on a unified national community and rarely implement policies that recognise and empower communities in ways that promote strong communal frames. And because integrative states do not institutionalise communal power and autonomy, existing communal frames are less likely to focus on communal self-rule. Instead, highly centralised states are more likely to focus attention on a community's share of state power, thereby promoting centre-seeking conflict.

Finally, the different opportunity structures and frames resulting from pluralist and integrative states contribute to contrasting expectations and goals that affect the type of conflict. In providing communities with cultural and political autonomy, pluralism creates strong expectations for communal autonomy, and these expectations shape political goals and demands. When conflict occurs, communities therefore strive to maintain or expand their autonomy, something that directs the conflict towards nationalist civil war. More integrative states, on the other hand, create no such expectations. And because the state is the dominant source of power, integrative states are more likely to promote goals for greater control of the state, thereby channelling conflict towards centre-seeking civil war.

Sudan and Chad—two neighbouring countries with similar population structures—highlight how the character of states affects the type of ethnic civil war. In Sudan, a history of pluralism under British rule offered diverse communities important resources, including providing Southern Sudanese with their own administrations, security forces, and schools. The pluralist state also politicised communities in ways that promoted nationalist frames and expectations for power and autonomy. When postcolonial governments controlled by Northerners removed the political and cultural autonomy of Southern communities, Southern leaders began a nationalist civil war. In contrast, French rule institutionalised a more centralised state in Chad that was concentrated in the capital city and did not formally recognise, accommodate, or empower communities. This institutional setting promoted a political frame focused on maximising control of the state, not communal self-rule. And instead of creating expectations for national autonomy, communities focused on expanding their control of the state, thereby promoting centre-seeking civil wars between Southern and Northern forces.

3 | COMMUNAL DEMOGRAPHY AND THE TYPE OF ETHNIC CIVIL WARFARE

Along with the institutional effects of states, another major focus of political sociology is that the relative power of actors shapes their behaviour, suggesting that the relative power of communities might affect the type of ethnic civil war. In this section, we argue that communal demography—the number and relative size of communities within a population—shapes the configurations of communal power in ways that channel conflict towards different types of conflict. Communal demographies vary widely but commonly conform to three ideal-types. Some are characterised by relative parity, consisting of two or more communities that are comparably sized. Belgium (two comparable groups) and Tanzania (many comparable groups) belong to this category. Other countries—such as Japan—have a communal demography characterised by an absolute dominance of one community with miniscule ethnic minorities. Finally, other countries are located between these ideal types, including one moderately dominant group and one or more smaller yet substantial ethnic minorities. Sri Lanka and Myanmar belong to this category. Based on these ideal types, we make two hypotheses:

> **H3.** Communal demographies characterised by multiple similarly sized communities increase the risk of centre-seeking civil warfare.

> **H4.** Communal demographies characterised by one moderately dominant community and smaller yet substantial minority communities increase the risk of nationalist civil war.

Because the state is an important source of power, resources, and status, actors have strong incentives to increase their control of the state, thereby promoting centre-seeking civil war. To take over the state, however, communities must be strong enough to defeat state forces (Cederman et al., 2009). All things being equal, centre-seeking ethnic civil wars should therefore be most common when communities are relatively strong and have a reasonable chance at successfully taking over the state. Demographic size is arguably the most important determinant of communal power. Thus, a community's chances of taking over the state is much better when it is larger than other communities, much worse when it is smaller than the community (or communities) controlling the state, and moderate when it is equally sized. Centre-seeking civil war should therefore become increasingly rare as the relative size of the community controlling the state increases. This risk should be especially low when the community controlling the state makes up a large majority of the population. In contrast, centre-seeking civil war should be most common in places with a multipolar communal demography characterised by several similarly sized communities, as each community can possibly take over the state individually or in coalition with others.

Different from wars over the state, we argue that the Goldilocks principle applies to communal demography and nationalist civil war. Given the symbolic, institutional, and material value of states, communities that can take over the state will choose to take over the state instead of fighting for communal autonomy. In general, relatively large and powerful communities therefore fight centre-seeking civil wars instead of nationalist civil wars, making nationalist civil war relatively rare in places with similarly sized communities. In contrast to centre-seeking civil wars, nationalist civil wars do not require relative power parity, and smaller and weaker communities can successfully fight to increase their autonomy. This is because wars over regional autonomy are more localised and therefore do not require that antistate forces take over the entire country. Because they are centred in the regions in which the antistate combatants live, in turn, the combatants have a good knowledge of the social and physical environment, have access to important resources, and commonly receive support from the local population. Finally, guerrilla warfare is ideal for antistate combatants who are weak relative to the state, but these tactics are better suited for wearing down a state's desire to retain control of a region than for taking over the state. Although these factors allow relatively weak communities to fight nationalist civil wars, there is a limit, and very weak communities have little chance of gaining autonomy through military force. As a result, nationalist civil war is rare in places with one very large community that

makes up the vast majority of the population and other smaller communities that make up only a small fraction of the population, as the small communities are too weak to wage a nationalist civil war. Thus, we hypothesise that multipolar communal demographies promote centre-seeking civil war whereas communal demographies characterised by one dominant community and several smaller yet substantial communities channel conflict towards nationalist civil war.

Myanmar and Cote d'Ivoire highlight these hypothesised patterns. In Myanmar, two thirds of the population are Bamar, whereas many smaller communities make up the rest of the population. In ethnic civil wars involving the Arakanese, Kachin, Karen, Karenni, Mon, Rohingya, Shan, and Wa, communities were therefore too weak to take over the state and focused on regional autonomy and communal self-rule. In Cote d'Ivoire, on the other hand, there are dozens of communities, but none is demographically dominant. In this situation, all communities—either independently or in collaboration with other communities—have opportunities to increase their control of the state, and postcolonial Cote d'Ivoire has suffered centre-seeking civil warfare over the control of the state.

4 | HISTORICAL STATES AND TYPE OF ETHNIC CIVIL WAR

Although scholars consider how historical statehood affects ethnic conflict, there is no consensus on their effects. Some argue that historical states limit ethnic conflict by increasing the legitimacy of postcolonial states and promoting more homogenous populations (Englebert, 2000; Wimmer, 2018). Others claim that historical statehood promotes divisions and conflict between communities with and without historical states (Paine, 2019; Ray, 2019). All works, however, overlook the type of ethnic civil warfare, and we argue that historical statehood affects nationalist and centre-seeking civil wars differently.

> **H5.** High levels of historical statehood are positively related to nationalist civil war onset but not centre-seeking civil war onset.

Places with long histories of statehood commonly have relatively homogeneous populations because, over long periods, states promote assimilation into the dominant community (Wimmer, 2018). Such assimilation, however, is rarely complete, and most regions with high levels of historical statehood have several smaller communities, leaving a communal demography characterised by one moderate to large community that controlled the historical state and several substantial smaller communities. The most important reason for the persistence of communal diversity is that all large and longstanding historical states were imperial states until very recently. As such, they included core and peripheral regions, and the state usually granted considerable autonomy to communities in the peripheral regions (Barkey, 2008; Elliot, 1992; Lattimore, 1962; Mann, 1986; Tilly, 1992). Along these lines, Lange et al. (2022) find that places with more historical states subsequently experienced higher levels of pluralism. Large and longstanding states therefore promote relatively large core communities and smaller yet substantial minority communities, and these states are pluralist to the extent that they decentralise power to communities. Because we hypothesise that both of these characteristics channel conflict towards nationalist civil war, we propose that historical statehood commonly increases the risk of nationalist civil war.

Myanmar is an example of a place with a large and longstanding imperial state. The Bamar are the largest community and controlled historical states with imperial structures that provided smaller communities in more peripheral regions with considerable autonomy. Conflict between Bamar and smaller communities, in turn, promoted several nationalist civil wars. In contrast, Cote d'Ivoire lacks a large and longstanding precolonial state. As a result, it does not have a history of imperial statehood and has a multipolar communal demography characterised by many relatively small communities. Postcolonial ethnic civil wars, in turn, have focused on control of the state.

5 | STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Having presented our hypotheses, we now test them through a statistical analysis of the relationships between pluralism, communal demography, historical states, and civil warfare. Such an analysis is unable to provide direct insight into causation because it overlooks the actual processes and mechanisms leading to civil war. Yet relationships offer important insight into the possibility of general causal effects, and the analysis therefore provides a valuable first step in testing our claims.

5.1 | Set, methods, and variables

For the statistical analysis, we use two different sets. To test our hypotheses on communal demography and state history, we include all countries in the world with more than one million people in 2000. We exclude countries with very small populations—most of which are located on small islands—because data on several variables are missing for these cases. In addition, both nationalist and centre-seeking civil wars are extremely rare in countries with very small populations, suggesting the possibility of causal heterogeneity. No general dataset on pluralist and integrative states exists, however. In previous work, we created a dataset on the extent of pluralism among former British and French colonies, and we use this set for the present analysis (Lange et al., 2021, 2022). The models testing the hypotheses on pluralist and integrative states are therefore limited to former British and French overseas colonies.

The use of data on colonial instead of contemporary states affects the analysis in different ways. One advantage is that it limits endogenous results. Communal conflict is a very common cause of pluralist states, so places with pluralist states have a very high risk of ethnic civil war. Consequently, any relationship between pluralism and conflict is potentially spurious. In colonies, however, the most important factor affecting the extent of pluralism was the favoured model of the colonial power, thereby limiting the risk of endogeneity (Lange et al., 2022; Wucherpfennig et al., 2016). At the same time, an analysis of colonial states provides more focused insight in two ways. For one, an analysis of colonial states focuses attention on state legacies instead of the proximate effects of states. Second, colonial states are unique in certain ways, so it is uncertain whether findings on colonial states are applicable to non-colonial states.

Methodologically, we complete panel analyses employing a pooled logistic regression with regional fixed effects and a cubic polynomial for years since independence. Country-year is our unit of analysis, and the set includes data between 1946 and 2020. For countries that gained independence after 1946, the data begin the year of independence. Although our focal independent variables are time invariant, we chose to complete panel analyses for two reasons. First, many variables in our models are time-variant, and a panel analysis allows us to explore how changes in these factors over time are related to nationalist and centre-seeking civil war. Moreover, several cases experienced more than one nationalist or centre-seeking civil wars, and a panel analysis allows the analysis of multiple civil wars per country. In contrast, a cross-sectional analysis can only explore whether a country ever experienced a nationalist or centre-seeking civil war due to the structure of our data.

Our first focal independent variable measures the extent of colonial pluralism (Lange et al., 2021, 2022). The variable ranges from 0 to 1, with one being the highest level of pluralism and 0 the lowest. The variable equally weights measures of the presence of three pluralist policies: recognising communal difference in censuses, providing education in vernaculars, and giving communities special communal representation in the legislature. Because pluralist models are generally incompatible with integrative models and because past analyses recognise that French colonial states were relatively integrative, low levels of pluralism provides a proxy for integrative states. It is an imperfect proxy, however, as low pluralism does not necessitate highly centralised, integrative states. Our analysis therefore provides a stronger test of the hypothesis on pluralist states than the hypothesis on integrative states.

Our second focal independent variable measures a country's communal demography. For this, we employ an ethnic fractionalisation index that calculates the probability that two randomly selected co-nationals are from different ethnic communities (Fearon, 2003). In the presence of one demographically dominant community and one or more extremely small ethnic minorities, levels of ethnic fractionalisation are very low. In Japan, for example, there is one community that makes up the overwhelming majority of the population, and its ethnic fractionalisation score is only 0.012. In contrast, countries with high ethnic fractionalisation have several communities, each of which makes up only a small segment of the population. Examples include countries like Cameroon (ethnic fractionalisation 0.92) with over 200 small communities, with the largest making up approximately 25% of the population, and Lebanon (ethnic fractionalisation 0.75), which has three main communities that are all equally sized. Finally, countries with moderate levels of ethnic fractionalisation generally have one of two communal demographies: There are either two comparably large communities that make up almost all of the population or one relatively large community that makes up over half of the population and several smaller yet substantial communities that make up the between a quarter and half of the population. For example, Myanmar, which has an ethnic fractionalisation score of 0.53, has one majority community making up two thirds of the population and several smaller communities, whereas Fiji, which a similar fractionalisation index of 0.55, is composed of two equally sized communities.

We hypothesise that the risk of centre-seeking civil war is high with communal demographies similar to Cameroon, moderate to high with communal demographies like Fiji, low with communal demographies like Myanmar, and very low in places like Japan with very low ethnic fractionalisation. The relationship between ethnic fractionalisation and centre-seeking civil war should therefore be positive and linear. In contrast, we propose that the risk of nationalist civil war is greatest in places with communal demographies like Myanmar and relatively low for all other communal demographies. Because the ethnic fractionalisation index scores of countries with communal demographies like Myanmar are moderate, we therefore hypothesise that the relationship between ethnic fractionalisation and nationalist civil war is shaped like an inverted U. Yet moderate levels of ethnic fractionalisation measure two types of communal demography—multipolar with one dominant community like Myanmar and bipolar like Fiji—so this relationship will be weak if bipolar communal demographies are common. An analysis of all cases in our set with ethnic fractionalisation scores between 0.35 and 0.65, however, shows that most cases with moderate levels of ethnic fractionalisation are much closer to Myanmar in that they have one community that is considerably larger than any other, suggesting that ethnic fractionalisation is an appropriate indicator to test this hypothesis.[1]

Ethnic polarisation provides an alternative indicator of communal demography that measures how close the communal demography of a country approximates a bipolar distribution, with a maximum score accorded to an even split between the two largest communities (Montalvo & Reynal-Querol, 2005). At first glance, this appears an appropriate alternative indicator to test our hypotheses on communal demography. Upon closer inspection, this is not the case: Low polarisation scores are found in countries with one dominant community (e.g., Cambodia) as well as in countries with highly fragmented communal demographies (e.g., Tanzania), and medium levels of polarisation scores contain diverse communal demographies ranging from countries with a clear majority community (e.g., Algeria) to countries with several comparably populous communities (e.g., Lebanon). And although our theory suggests that high ethnic polarisation should increase the risk of centre-seeking civil war because the two largest communities are equally sized, we hypothesise that the risk of centre-seeking civil war is greatest when there are several equally sized communities (as many communities can take over the state), but polarisation scores in places with several small communities range from low (e.g., Tanzania) to moderate (e.g., Sierra Leone).

Our third focal independent variable measures the level of historical statehood. For this, we use data from Borcan et al. (2018) on the presence a longstanding and autonomous precolonial state that controlled the same territory as a contemporary state. The variable ranges from 0 to 50, with 0 measuring a region without the presence of any state and 50 measuring a region with a state that controls the same territory of a contemporary state. The authors provide this score for 50-year periods, and we average the scores for all periods between 1001 and 1700 AD to provide a score for the extent of statehood prior to the European overseas colonialism.

For our dependent variables, we use information from PRIO's Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) to measure the onset of nationalist and centre-seeking ethnic civil wars. We employ UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (v20.1) data for the dates of all civil wars after 1945 (Pettersson & Öberg, 2020) and supplement this information with data from EPR Core dataset (v2021) to identify civil wars as ethnic (Vogt et al., 2015). For all civil wars in the UCDP dataset, EPR provides information on whether the antistate actors (1) make ethnic claims, (2) recruit based on ethnicity, or (3) receive support from particular ethnic communities, and we categorise civil wars as ethnic if EPR scores antistate combatants as ethnic in at least two of these indicators. Notably, many civil wars in the UCDP dataset have breaks during which fighting ceases. For the panel analysis, we categorise the civil war as having a new onset if the break is greater than a decade.

To categorise ethnic civil wars as nationalist or centre-seeking, we employ a UCDP variable measuring whether a war was due to territory incompatibility or government incompatibility (Pettersson & Öberg, 2020). Civil wars over government incompatibility focus on the "type of political system, the replacement of the central government, or the change of its composition" (Lacina, 2009, p. 3). As Hunziker and Cederman (2017) note, it is therefore "centre-seeking," or attempting to take over the state. In contrast, civil wars caused by territory incompatibility are over secession or autonomy and are therefore nationalist conflicts, with communities seeking to either secede to form their own nation-state or gain greater self-rule within an existing nation-state. With one exception, UCDP codes all ethnic civil wars as either caused by government or territorial incompatibility. The exception is the civil war in Syria beginning in 2012 that pitted Kurds against the Syrian state, which was categorised as territory compatibility from 2012 to 2015 but as a mix of territory and government incompatibility in 2016 and 2018. For our analysis, we code this war as a nationalist ethnic civil war, as UCDP codes it as territory incompatibility in 4 years but as a mix of territory and government incompatibility in two.

While regressing nationalist and centre-seeking ethnic civil war onset on colonial pluralism, ethnic fractionalisation, and historical statehood, we include three sets of control variables. The first set controls for historical factors that might have shaped colonial pluralism, ethnic fractionalisation, historical statehood, and postcolonial civil warfare. One of these measures a region's latitude. As noted by Alesina et al. (2003), a country's latitude measures ecological conditions that have shaped long-term trajectories of development and communal diversity, both of which might have influenced colonial models of political community and historical patterns of ethnic warfare. Our second historical control measures the natural log of the extent of a country's territory that is mountainous (Fearon & Laitin, 2003). Mountains facilitate resistance and affect communal diversity, and both potentially shaped the form of colonialism and postcolonial ethnic warfare. Finally, the physical size of colonies might have shaped the form of colonial rule, ethnic fractionalization, and the type of ethnic warfare. Most notably, larger territories generally have relatively high levels of communal diversity, which potentially promotes pluralist colonial models, yet diverse populations spread over large territories might also contribute to nationalist ethnic civil warfare. We therefore control for the natural log of a case's territorial size in kilometres.

We also include temporal and regional control variables and a measure of previous conflict in all models. We include a measure of years since 1945 to account for temporal variation in ethnic civil war. In models with a set limited to former overseas colonies, we modify this variable to measure years since colonial independence because past studies find that the risk of civil warfare is very high during and shortly after the independence process (Wimmer, 2013). We also include regional dummies for Europe, the Americas, Asia and Oceania, sub-Saharan Africa, and North Africa and Middle East (using sub-Saharan Africa as the reference category) to account for unobserved background factors that may vary between these broad regional groupings. In models with sets limited to former overseas colonies, we remove the European control. Finally, we measure the number of previous ethnic civil wars in a country. In our models, this variable measures the same type of civil war as the dependent variable.

The third set of control variables measures postcolonial socio-economic factors that are commonly included in statistical analyses of ethnic civil war: the natural log of a country's per capital GDP (Feenstra et al., 2015), the natural log of total population (Feenstra et al., 2015), and level of democracy taken from the 'polity2' variable of

the Polity5 annual time-series dataset (v2018) (Marshall & Gurr, 2020). The polity2 variable has approximately 200 missing values out of 3763 country-years in our dataset, and we extrapolated the value of a previous year (the next year in case no value is available for the previous year) to impute missing values. As a robustness check, we completed analyses with listwise deletion and found minimal difference. Because colonial pluralism, ethnic fractionalisation, and precolonial statehood potentially influenced these control variables, their inclusion might transform relationships between the focal independent variables and the dependent variables. That being said, these variables potentially have independent effects on civil war onset. To deal with the possibility of endogenous selection bias, we exclude these control variables in some models. To deal with the possibility of omitted variable bias, we include them in others.

We standardise all independent variables except the nominal-level variables and temporal controls. We include the temporal controls as cubic polynomials (Carter & Signorino, 2010).

5.2 | Analysis

In Table 1, we begin the analysis by exploring relationships between the pluralist index and the odds of onset of nationalist and centre-seeking civil war. The first two models use nationalist civil warfare as the dependent variable, whereas the final two models substitute centre-seeking civil war. For both sets of models in this and all subsequent tables, the first model includes the historical, regional, and temporal controls, and the second model adds democracy, GDP, and population size. In this Table, the set is limited to former British and French colonies due to data availability.

A comparison of the findings in Table 1 highlights important differences between nationalist and centre-seeking civil warfare. Of greatest concern to this analysis, the pluralist index is positively related to the odds of nationalist civil war onset in Models 1 and 2 but shows no evidence of a systematic relationship with the odds of centre-seeking civil war onset in Models 3 and 4. The coefficients of the pluralist index in Models 1 and 2 are significant and show that an increase in the pluralist index by one standard deviation is associated with an increase in the odds of onset of nationalist civil warfare by between 90% and 220%. Alternatively, the coefficients of the pluralist index are near one and lack significance in the models of centre-seeking civil war.

The findings for nationalist civil warfare (Models 1 and 2) support H1 and suggest that nationalist and centre-seeking civil wars have different determinants and dynamics. However, the results for centre-seeking civil war (Models 3 and 4) fail to support H2. The most apparent explanation of this finding is that H2 is wrong and integrative states do not promote centre-seeking civil war. Another possibility is that the pluralist index provides an inaccurate measure of the level of integrative statehood, as low levels of pluralism do not necessarily translate into high levels of integrative statehood. Finally, we might be unable to detect the hypothesised effect because our dataset is very limited. Unfortunately, we are unable to tell whether poor theory, bad data, or insufficient sample size accounts for the unexpected null result.

Table 2 presents the results of models analysing ethnic fractionalisation and the odds of onset of either nationalist or centre-seeking civil warfare, and the analysis uses the set of all countries in the world. We hypothesise a quadratic relationship between ethnic fractionalisation and nationalist civil war onset but a linear relationship between ethnic fractionalisation and centre-seeking civil war onset. Table 2 therefore includes ethnic fractionalisation and its squared term as the focal independent variables. To simply analyse linear relationships, the table also includes a third model for centre-seeking civil war omitting the squared term. Models 1 and 2 provide evidence of a quadratic relationship between ethnic fractionalisation and nationalist civil war, whereas Models 3, 4, and 5 indicate a linear relationship between ethnic fractionalisation and centre-seeking ethnic civil war. To visualise these differences, Figure 1a,b plots the predicted probabilities of nationalist and centre-seeking civil war by ethnic fractionalisation using Models 2 and Model 5, respectively. As hypothesised, Figure 1a is clearly shaped like an inverted U in which the probability of nationalist civil war onset peaks when ethnic fractionalisation is around 0.6

TABLE 1 Pluralism and the odds of nationalist and centre-seeking civil war.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Pluralist index	1.901**	2.174**	1.068	1.251
	(1.233, 2.931)	(1.268, 3.726)	(0.709, 1.609)	(0.819, 1.912)
Latitude	1.179	1.103	0.772	0.718
	(0.838, 1.660)	(0.691, 1.761)	(0.453, 1.315)	(0.407, 1.267)
Log proportion mountainous	1.058	0.999	1.478+	1.538+
	(0.714, 1.569)	(0.687, 1.453)	(0.981, 2.226)	(0.991, 2.386)
Log land area	2.709***	3.188***	1.364	1.595
	(1.954, 3.756)	(1.700, 5.978)	(0.857, 2.169)	(0.762, 3.341)
Number of previous onset	1.184***	1.127+	1.283*	1.188
	(1.080, 1.299)	(0.997, 1.274)	(1.028, 1.600)	(0.933, 1.513)
America	0.000	0.000	0.802	0.987
	(0.000, 0.000)	(0.000, 0.000)	(0.116, 5.522)	(0.084, 11.596)
North Africa & Middle East	1.008	1.532	1.250	1.688
	(0.322, 3.156)	(0.450, 5.215)	(0.372, 4.202)	(0.403, 7.078)
Asia & Oceania	1.283	1.489	0.281*	0.340*
	(0.680, 2.419)	(0.650, 3.410)	(0.097, 0.813)	(0.136, 0.847)
Extent of democracy		1.187		0.854
		(0.723, 1.947)		(0.512, 1.424)
Log GDP pc		0.494*		0.572*
		(0.268, 0.914)		(0.355, 0.922)
Log population		0.756		0.606
		(0.472, 1.208)		(0.333, 1.105)
Years since independence	0.944	0.954	1.026	1.027
	(0.842, 1.058)	(0.847, 1.075)	(0.894, 1.179)	(0.896, 1.176)
Years since independence^2	1.002	1.002	1.000	1.000
	(0.999, 1.004)	(0.999, 1.005)	(0.996, 1.003)	(0.997, 1.004)
Years since independence^3	0.985	0.986	0.998	0.996
	(0.966, 1.004)	(0.966, 1.006)	(0.975, 1.022)	(0.973, 1.020)
Constant	0.012***	0.005***	0.006***	0.003***
	(0.004, 0.038)	(0.001, 0.021)	(0.002, 0.026)	(0.001, 0.016)
N country-years	3763	3763	3763	3763
N war onset	48	48	34	34

$^{+}p < .1$.
$^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, and $^{***}p < .001$.

and then declines rapidly, and Figure 1b shows a linear relationship in which higher ethnic fractionalisation is related to an increasing probability of centre-seeking civil war onset. The results therefore strongly support H3 and H4.

The models in Table 3 employ state history as the focal independent variable to test the hypothesis that large and longstanding states promote nationalist civil war. Like the analysis presented in Table 2, this analysis uses the full set of countries. In Models 1 and 2, the coefficients of state history are above one and significant, showing that an

TABLE 2 Ethnic fractionalisation and the odds of nationalist and centre-seeking ethnic civil war.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Ethnic fractionalisation (in tens of per cents)	2.501**	3.195**	1.403	1.365	1.244*
	(1.252, 4.995)	(1.498, 6.817)	(0.734, 2.681)	(0.731, 2.551)	(1.021, 1.517)
Ethnic fractionalisation	0.932*	0.905**	0.988	0.991	
	(0.875, 0.992)	(0.840, 0.975)	(0.928, 1.052)	(0.932, 1.054)	
Latitude	1.905	1.474	6.606*	6.364+	6.847+
	(0.466, 7.780)	(0.324, 6.695)	(1.075, 40.590)	(0.941, 43.024)	(0.982, 47.726)
Log proportion Mountainous	1.178	1.175	1.475**	1.430*	1.430*
	(0.912, 1.523)	(0.925, 1.493)	(1.121, 1.940)	(1.085, 1.885)	(1.085, 1.885)
Log area	1.580***	1.459***	0.896	0.888	0.889
	(1.307, 1.911)	(1.175, 1.811)	(0.719, 1.117)	(0.680, 1.159)	(0.683, 1.157)
Previous war onset	1.237***	1.156**	0.315**	0.299**	0.298**
	(1.150, 1.330)	(1.039, 1.286)	(0.134, 0.741)	(0.124, 0.720)	(0.124, 0.720)
America	0.000***	0.000***	0.179*	0.239+	0.250+
	(0.000, 0.000)	(0.000, 0.000)	(0.045, 0.713)	(0.050, 1.138)	(0.055, 1.128)
Europe	0.946	0.960	0.032**	0.048*	0.047*
	(0.273, 3.283)	(0.187, 4.930)	(0.003, 0.309)	(0.004, 0.521)	(0.004, 0.541)
North Africa & Middle East	0.996	1.135	0.351	0.456	0.470
	(0.378, 2.625)	(0.370, 3.479)	(0.100, 1.234)	(0.119, 1.747)	(0.130, 1.695)
Asia & Oceania	1.474	1.164	0.267*	0.292*	0.296*
	(0.658, 3.301)	(0.471, 2.877)	(0.081, 0.881)	(0.088, 0.974)	(0.088, 0.992)
Extent of democracy		1.318+		1.027	1.026
		(0.994, 1.748)		(0.678, 1.555)	(0.677, 1.556)
Log GDP pc		0.633**		0.772	0.773
		(0.447, 0.896)		(0.481, 1.239)	(0.485, 1.232)
Log population		1.307		1.064	1.055
		(0.875, 1.952)		(0.714, 1.585)	(0.708, 1.572)
Years since 1945	0.992	1.014	0.952	0.972	0.971
	(0.872, 1.129)	(0.881, 1.168)	(0.780, 1.162)	(0.798, 1.183)	(0.797, 1.183)
Years since 1945^2	1.000	0.999	1.003	1.002	1.002
	(0.996, 1.003)	(0.996, 1.003)	(0.997, 1.008)	(0.996, 1.008)	(0.996, 1.008)
Years since 1945^3	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
	(1.000, 1.000)	(1.000, 1.000)	(1.000, 1.000)	(1.000, 1.000)	(1.000, 1.000)
Constant	0.000***	0.000***	0.005**	0.004**	0.005**
	(0.000, 0.000)	(0.000, 0.000)	(0.000, 0.145)	(0.000, 0.151)	(0.000, 0.163)
N country-years	8881	8672	8881	8672	8672
N war onset	89	89	42	41	41

+$p < .1$.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, and ***$p < .001$.

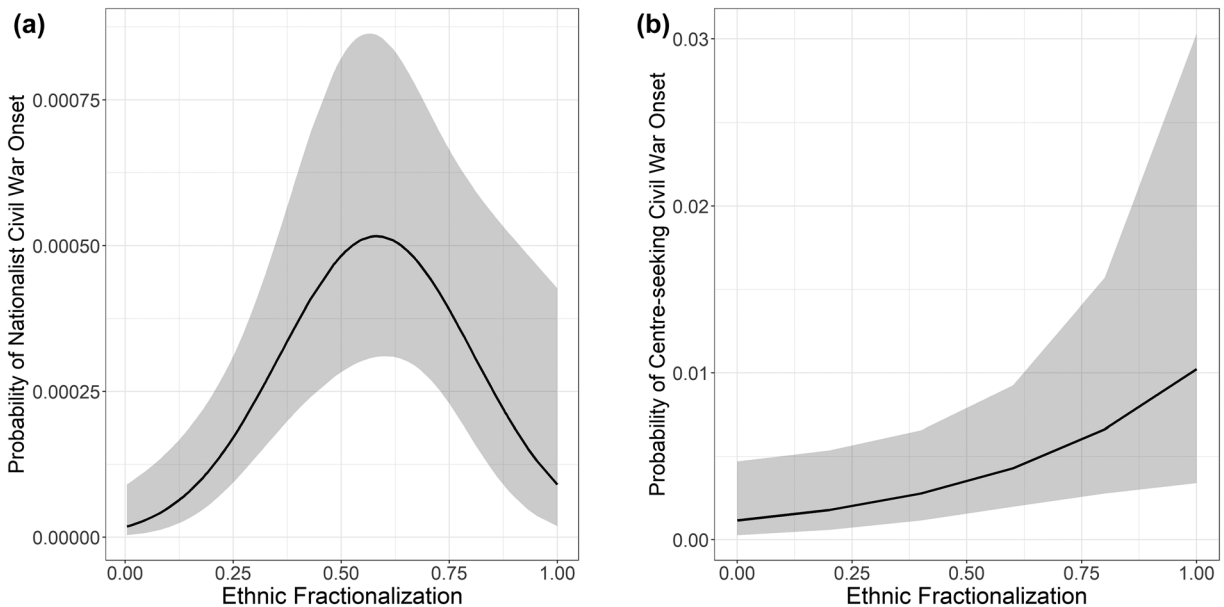

FIGURE 1 Predicted probability of civil war onset by ethnic fractionalisation.

TABLE 3 Historical statehood and the odds of nationalist and centre-seeking civil warfare.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
State history	1.779**	1.931**	0.953	0.914
	(1.253, 2.526)	(1.290, 2.892)	(0.664, 1.367)	(0.596, 1.400)
Latitude	0.507	0.528	7.605*	7.344*
	(0.080, 3.202)	(0.085, 3.272)	(1.135, 50.984)	(1.046, 51.545)
Log proportion mountainous	1.148	1.166	1.432**	1.396**
	(0.919, 1.434)	(0.943, 1.443)	(1.118, 1.834)	(1.092, 1.784)
Log land area	1.443**	1.516**	0.977	0.983
	(1.139, 1.828)	(1.153, 1.992)	(0.797, 1.198)	(0.780, 1.238)
Number of previous onset	1.229***	1.179***	0.358*	0.344*
	(1.151, 1.313)	(1.071, 1.298)	(0.152, 0.840)	(0.145, 0.817)
Americas	0.000***	0.000***	0.104***	0.134**
	(0.000, 0.000)	(0.000, 0.000)	(0.031, 0.346)	(0.037, 0.480)
Europe	0.558	0.516	0.014***	0.020**
	(0.145, 2.146)	(0.104, 2.563)	(0.001, 0.138)	(0.002, 0.214)
Asia & Oceania	0.976	0.568	0.203*	0.252*
	(0.442, 2.158)	(0.224, 1.438)	(0.053, 0.784)	(0.064, 0.996)
Extent of democracy		1.491**		1.059
		(1.115, 1.994)		(0.713, 1.571)
Log GDP pc		0.699*		0.752
		(0.509, 0.960)		(0.490, 1.156)
Log population		0.947		1.046
		(0.630, 1.422)		(0.684, 1.600)
Years since 1945	0.989	1.011	0.943	0.963
	(0.867, 1.129)	(0.880, 1.160)	(0.779, 1.142)	(0.793, 1.169)
Years since 1945^2	1.000	1.000	1.003	1.002
	(0.996, 1.004)	(0.996, 1.003)	(0.997, 1.008)	(0.997, 1.008)
Years since 1945^3	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
	(1.000, 1.000)	(1.000, 1.000)	(1.000, 1.000)	(1.000, 1.000)
Constant	0.000***	0.000***	0.011**	0.007**
	(0.000, 0.005)	(0.000, 0.002)	(0.001, 0.236)	(0.000, 0.228)
N country-years	8881	8672	8881	8672
N war onset	90	89	42	42

$^{+}p < .1$.
$^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, and $^{***}p < .001$.

increase in state history by one standard deviation is associated with an increase in the odds of nationalist ethnic civil war onset by between 79% and 93%. Places with large and longstanding precolonial states therefore have a relatively high risk of nationalist civil war. In contrast, Models 4 and 5 show that state history has no systematic relationship with centre-seeking civil war, and the analysis therefore finds that the effect of state history depends on the type of conflict, lending support to H5.

6 | CONCLUSION

In this article, we explore whether nationalist and centre-seeking ethnic civil wars have similar or different determinants. For this, we accept common understandings in political sociology and argue that the types of state and the relative power of communities affect whether ethnic civil warfare is nationalist or centre-seeking. We hypothesise that pluralist states and moderately large intercommunal power asymmetries channel inter-communal conflict towards nationalist civil wars, whereas integrative states and relative power parity increase the risk of centre-seeking civil wars. Based on these hypotheses, we argue that historical states should create a higher risk of nationalist civil war because they are usually imperial states with pluralist traits and communal demographies characterised by one large community and several smaller yet substantial communities.

To test these hypotheses, we complete statistical analyses that examine the relationships between the extent of pluralist states, communal demography, historical statehood, and either nationalist or centre-seeking ethnic civil wars. We find that the odds of nationalist civil war are greatest when the levels of state pluralism and historical statehood are high and when the level of ethnic fractionalisation is moderate. Alternatively, we find that the odds of centre-seeking civil war increase as ethnic fractionalisation increases and that state pluralism and historical statehood have no systematic relationship with centre-seeking civil warfare. We therefore provide strong evidence in favour of our hypotheses with one exception: We hypothesised that the pluralist index is negatively related to centre-seeking civil warfare, but the analysis finds no evidence of a systematic relationship between the pluralist index and centre-seeking civil war.

This article makes several contributions to distinct literatures. One important contribution concerns causal heterogeneity, something that the literature on ethnic conflict largely ignores. Expanding on the work of others, our findings offer evidence that nationalist and centre-seeking ethnic civil wars have very different correlates. This suggests that scholars can improve insight by analysing nationalist and centre-seeking civil wars separately. Similarly, a growing number of works on ethnic civil war considers the general effects of historical states, and our analysis provides strong evidence that their impact depends on the type of ethnic civil war.

Our analysis also engages with and redirects the literature on pluralism. This literature focuses on how pluralist policies manage communal competition and contention in ways that limit the risk of conflict, but the quantitative literature offers limited insight into these claims. We provide an original analysis of the impact of pluralist models on ethnic warfare and offer evidence that their effects depend on the type of conflict, being associated with nationalist civil war but not centre-seeking civil war.

In employing a measure of colonial pluralism, our analysis also makes contributions to the literature on colonialism. Past analyses explore whether different colonial models had contrasting effects on postcolonial ethnic violence, and the results are very mixed, with some finding a greater concentration of ethnic violence among former British colonies (Blanton et al., 2001; Brunnschweiler & Bulte, 2009; Collier et al., 2009; Henderson, 2000; Lange & Dawson, 2009), others finding no difference (Cederman et al., 2015; Collier & Hoeffler, 2002; Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Paine, 2019; Wimmer, 2018), and still others providing evidence of a greater concentration among French colonies (Wucherpfennig et al., 2016). We enter this debate by shifting the focus from how the form of rule affected the prevalence of ethnic violence to how the pluralist character of colonial states—which is shaped by the identity of the colonizer—affected the type of ethnic civil war.

A final contribution of this article comes from bringing key insights from political sociology more squarely into the study of ethnic conflict. Two core assumptions of political sociology are that the power of actors and the state institutions that channel and mould this power shape patterns of social relations in important ways, thereby suggesting that analyses of ethnic conflict should pay close attention to communal power and states. Although some political sociologists and political scientists have made important contributions to the literature by showing how states, power, and political exclusion affect ethnic conflict in very important ways (Wimmer, 2013; Wimmer et al., 2009), most political sociologists have left the analysis of ethnic conflict to political science, and a growing interdisciplinary divide has limited the analysis of ethnic conflict from more sociological perspectives. This article offers evidence that political sociology can contribute to the analysis of ethnic conflict in important ways.

Our findings, however, are hardly conclusive, and we end by briefly noting the main limitations. First, and most generally, our analysis presents causal theories and statistical patterns that support our hypotheses but does not demonstrate specific historical processes leading to either war or peace. More qualitative analyses are therefore needed for greater confidence in the results. Moreover, we use low levels of pluralism to measure high levels of integrative statehood, but this is an imperfect proxy producing uncertain results. A better measure of integrative statehood is therefore needed to test this hypothesis. Finally, our findings on pluralism might not be generalisable. The pluralist index is only available for former British and French colonies and measures the form of colonial rule, and this set is not necessarily representative of the entire world. Most notably, colonial pluralism is highly (but imperfectly) concentrated in the British Empire, and past works find that British colonial officials commonly employed pluralist policies in a divide-and-rule fashion that pitted communities against one another in a way that promoted conflict (Breuilly, 1994; de Silva, 1986; Gravers, 1999; Idris, 2005; Lange, 2012; Pollis, 1973; Tudor, 2013). It is therefore uncertain whether pluralism is similarly related to nationalist civil war onset in non-colonial settings.

ORCID


Tay Jeong https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1018-2923

ENDNOTE

[1] The ethnic polarisation index, which ranges from 0 to 1 and measures the extent to which a country's two largest communities are equally sized, offers insight into whether countries with moderate levels of ethnic fractionalization are more similar to Myanmar or Fiji (Montalvo & Reynal-Querol, 2005). The average polarisation score of all countries in our set with moderate levels of ethnic fractionalization is 0.686, nearly identical to Myanmar's score (0.650) and much lower than Fiji's (0.930).

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