Late to the Party: Why Do New Rebel Groups Join Civil Conflicts?

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Abstract

Civil wars featuring multiple rebel groups are among the most severe conflicts, but we know little about the causes of such structures, nor about the direction of this relationship. I focus on the entry of new groups to civil conflicts, which I argue requires both a decrease in the relative cost of fighting that induces previously non-violent dissidents to take up arms, and a social division that leads them to form a new group rather than joining an existing one. Government repression of all forms should satisfy the former condition, while repression that disproportionately targets certain social groups should satisfy the latter by activating particularistic rather than inclusive identities. Using poisson regression models of civil wars over the period 1946–2015, I show that both the level of repression and of political discrimination predict greater numbers of rebel groups. Furthermore, there is an interactive effect, indicating that the greatest number of rebel groups are expected in cases where the level of repression is high and repression is targeted at narrow portions of society. The results suggest that government strategy can play a surprisingly large role in shaping the structure of rebel movements.

1 Introduction

Why do some civil wars have multiple rebel groups, while others have only one? Theories of civil war tend to focus on individual- or group-level motives (e.g. Gurr 1970; Collier and Hoeffler 2004) or opportunities (e.g. Fearon and Laitin 2003) for rebellion, while giving little attention to the organization of dissent into rebel groups and coalitions. Even those studies which do explicitly consider rebel group formation tend to focus on group attributes such as treatment of civilians (e.g. Weinstein 2007), and do not consider the possibility that rebels do not always form a single group. Yet, at least two rebel groups are active at some point in 44% of civil conflicts.[1] Over the course of the Chadian Civil War, for

[1]Source: Pettersson and Wallensteen (2015).

instance, 25 distinct rebel groups fought against the government at various times. Conflicts in Afghanistan in the 1980's, Somalia in the 1990's, Sudan in the 2000's have been similarly complex. The ongoing civil war in Syria is contested by at least two dozen armed groups. Even ethnically-homogeneous, geographically-concentrated populations with common goals, such as the Karen secessionist movement in Myanmar, often fragment into multiple rebel groups. Furthermore, the number of groups operating in these conflicts often varies greatly over time. The existing literature offers many useful insights to the conditions under which civil war will emerge, but it has relatively few explanations for the structure of rebel movements. The studies that do address some aspect of the phenomenon focus overwhelmingly on the fragmentation of existing groups (e.g. T. McLauchlin and Pearlman 2011; Christia 2012; Staniland 2014), and do not consider the mobilization of entirely new groups. I thus address the question: why do rebel groups join ongoing civil conflicts?

While little attention has been given to the sources of rebel movement structure, several studies suggest that fragmented rebel movements are associated with particularly concerning conflict attributes. Conflicts with multiple rebel groups last longer than dyadic competitions (D. E. Cunningham 2006; D. E. Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009; Akcinaroglu 2012). Furthermore, D. E. Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan (2009) find that the presence of multiple government-rebel dyads decreases the likelihood of peace agreements and increases the likelihood of rebel victories, though M. Findley and Rudloff (2012), find that fragmented rebel movements are often associated with an *increased* likelihood of negotiated settlement. Relatedly, Atlas and Licklider (1999) and Zeigler (2016) find that episodes of conflict renewal often occur between formerly allied rebel factions. Finally, conflicts with multiple dyads feature more fatalities than dyadic ones.[2] Clearly, conflicts with multiple rebel groups comprise one of the most severe subsets of civil wars. Thus, understanding the causes of multi-dyadic conflict is of great normative and policy importance.

[2]Source: my own analysis using data from Sundberg (2008).

This work contributes to the existing literature by advancing our understanding of the complexity of civil conflict in terms of the number of warring parties. In doing so it builds on the growing literature on a related facet of complexity — the fragmentation of existing groups (see D. E. Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2009; W. Pearlman and Cunningham 2011; Staniland 2014). Furthermore, examining the relationships between rebel groups sheds new light on debates about the motives behind rebellion (e.g. Collier and Hoeffler 2004). For instance, if rebellion is fundamentally about ethnic or religious grievances as recent works have asserted (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010), we might expect to see such concerns influence the structure of rebel coalitions as well. If, by contrast, rebels are motivated by the desire for profits from natural resources or illicit activities, the propensity for new groups to enter conflicts would likely be related to the availability of such resources, and not to political context. Finally, as my theory emphasizes the role of repression in incentivizing new actors to join the conflict, it builds on existing work on wartime civilian targeting (e.g. Kalyvas 2006) to show that repression can shape not only whether individuals elect to join conflicts, but also how they organize themselves when choosing to do so.

I proceed by elaborating a theoretical framework for studying the processes that might lead new rebel groups to join an ongoing civil conflict. Next, I argue that targeted repression is an especially influential force in producing new rebel groups, as it both reduces the relative cost of fighting, and induces individuals to identify more strongly with sub-national groups. After outlining a research design, I use fixed-effects poisson regressions to model the number of rebel groups competing in civil wars worldwide between 1946 and 2015, finding support for my hypotheses. Finally, I summarize the implications of the findings and identify several opportunities for further research.

2 Theoretical Framework

Broadly, a conflict can come to have multiple rebel groups through two processes - the splintering of existing groups into multiple successor organizations, and the formation of an entirely new organization by previously non-violent individuals. At a minimum, then, the creation of new rebel groups requires division among the dissidents who comprise the pool of current and potential rebels. Splinter factions must have a reason for leaving their parent organization, and newly mobilizing individuals must have a reason for forming a new group rather than joining an existing one. At their most benign, these divisions might simply reflect the difficulty of coordinating actions across physical distance or linguistic barriers. In such cases the formation of multiple rebel groups might be a matter of convenience rather than an indicator of animosity or divergent objectives. In other cases, however, divisions may be deeper and more difficult to reconcile. For instance, if some rebels make improving the status of their ethnic group a primary concern, it is unlikely that members of other ethnic groups will join their organization, and any existing members with differing ethnic identities will be likely to leave.

Table 1: Necessary Conditions for the Formation of New Groups

Splinter Group	Entirely New Group
Division among dissidents	Division among dissidents
	Change in relative value of fighting

In addition to divisions with existing groups, the formation of new groups requires that previously non-violent individuals change their mobilizational calculus. This entails either participation in violence becoming more attractive, or remaining non-violent becoming less attractive. The former might occur in situations where an individual found the

grievances that led to the initial violence insufficiently persuasive to justify fighting, but new, more persuasive grievances emerge. For example, violence against civilians might lead new dissidents to mobilize in response. Alternatively, the initial fighting might reveal the government to be weaker than perviously thought, leading some to reconsider their decision to abstain from fighting. Non-violence can become less attractive if, for example, the conflict disrupts economic activity, decreasing the opportunity cost of fighting (see Collier and Hoeffler 1998). Indiscriminate violence against civilians can have similar effects by reducing the the risk of participation in violence relative to that of non-violence (Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). If the physical risk of remaining peaceful is not dramatically lower than that of fighting, the cost of participating in rebellion is relatively low. In the following sections, I argue that government repression, particularly when targeted at specific ethnic groups, can satisfy both requirements for the formation of new rebel groups — repression reduces the relative cost of fighting, and targeted repression activiates social identities that can sow division among dissidents.

2.1 The Perils of Ethnic Politics

Rebellions are organized around a variety of identities, ideologies, and goals. The Communist Party of India advocates a Marxist-Leninist ideology, Darul Islam sought to establish an Islamic state in Indonesia, the National Forces of Liberation challenged the ruling Tutsi minority in Burundi on behalf of ethnic Hutus, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party backs an irredentist goal of creating an independent Kurdish state in parts of Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Many scholars have argued that ethnic identities are a particularly useful basis for mobilization. Ethnic groups tend to be among the most salient identities in society, and thus serve as a focal point for mobilization (Hardin 1995; Hechter and Okamoto 2001). Furthermore, coethnics often have overlapping social networks, meaning that their interactions occur under the shadow of the future, mitigating many barriers to cooperation (Habyarimana et

al. 2007). Indeed, several empirical studies find that ethnically-homogeneous groups are better able to cooperate than more diverse ones (Alesina, Baqir, and Easterly 1999; Miguel and Gugerty 2005; Habyarimana et al. 2007). Yet while activating ethnic identities may be advantageous for the initial organization of rebellion, I argue that in diverse societies such identities can have deleterious effects on the cohesion of rebel movement.

Intra-ethnic politics often follows a dynamic known as "outbidding," in which leaders make progressively more extreme proposals in hopes of winning the support of the group (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972; Horowitz 1985). Key to these models are the assumptions that individuals identify with a single ethnic group, that they care only about ethnic issues, and that ethnic politics is a zero-sum game. This produces a completely polarized bargaining space in which individuals hold positions on ethnic issues in which their group's interests are represented fully (e.g. a preference for a legislature in which group members hold a majority). In a spatial model of voting with such parameters, the optimal strategy for politicians is to adopt the most extreme position possible (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972). Even if a multi-ethnic coalition forms initially by creating uncertainty as to which group will be advantaged, it will eventually be undercut by challengers making more extreme appeals to one ethnic group. Other bases of mobilization, by contrast, tend to produce more heterogenous preferences - some members will actually prefer moderate positions - and thus greater potential for compromise. While the original formulation of the outbidding model assumes competition in an electoral context, it has also been shown to more violent forms of competition such as terrorism (Kydd and Walter 2006; Chenoweth 2010; but see M. G. Findley and Young 2012).

Adding to the zero-sum character of competition between ethnic groups is the fact that ethnic rebellions are far more likely than others to claim specific pieces of territory. Ethnic rebellions often make secessionist or irredentist claims against the government, while such demands are relatively rare among multi-ethnic rebellions in the post-colonial era.

Territorial division is a zero-sum game - any territory gained by the secessionist movement comes at the expense of the state, and vice-versa. Furthermore, while in theory territory can be divided, resulting in compromise solutions, in fact it often takes on symbolic importance that renders it indivisible (Toft 2003). In addition to creating the zero-sum dynamic between an ethnic group and the state common to many ethnic issues, territorial claims can generate competition between different ethnic groups. Many territories are claimed by multiple ethnic groups (Toft 2003), placing secessionist claims into competition. Even in the absence of symbolic value, the territories that form secessionist claims are often remote, making them attractive bases for all rebel groups (Fjelde and Nilsson 2012). The activation of ethnic identities should thus create difficult-to-resolve competitions between dissidents of differing ethnicities, ultimately leading to an increase in the number of factions competing in a civil war.

2.2 Repression and the Dynamics of Identity

Some theoretical perspectives view ethnic and other social identities as largely immutable, deriving from ancient histories (Horowitz 1985). Increasingly, however, scholars view identity as a product of individual or collective choice. Posner (2005) argues that individuals choose to prioritize one of several identities such as ethnicity, language, religion, or class, selecting that which is likely to bring them the greatest benefit. Focusing on the realm of electoral politics, he finds that this choice is shaped by an interaction between group size and electoral institutions. In subsequent work Eifert, Miguel, and Posner (2010) find that individuals are more likely to identify with their ethnic group when interviewed near a competitive election. Penn (2008) models a similar calculation in which individuals choose to orient themselves toward a national or ethnic identity. She finds that ethnic identities become more prevalent as ethnic groups become homogenous, and as economic inequality between ethnic groups increases. Christia (2012) extends the argument to civil wars,

arguing that ethnic identities are deployed instrumentally, with rebel elites emphasizing particular identities to justify alignments that are in fact driven by power politics. A key consequence of this malleability of identity is that ethnic outbidding is not inevitable - if political actors can appeal to multiple, overlapping identities, competition is no longer zero-sum (Chandra 2005). The opposite is also true, however - previously cooperative relationships can be undermined by enhancing the salience of ethnic identities.

I argue that selective repression - repression which is targeted at certain individuals or groups while sparing others - should tend to increase the number of rebel groups in a conflict both by decreasing the relative cost of violent mobilization and by increasing the salience of particular identities. Indiscriminate repression, by contrast, should not systematically decrease the cohesiveness of dissident movements. First, repression should have a general effect of increasing the number of individuals participating in a conflict. Some individuals will participate in violence even when doing so comes at high cost. Many, however, will only participate when the cost of doing so is low relative to the cost of remaining non-violent. As one of the primary costs of participation in rebellion is the risk of physical harm, repression should tend to reduce the relative cost of rebellion by bringing the risk of physical harm to non-violent activities. Any form of repression should thus increase the number of individuals in a country willing to participate in violence.

Hypothesis 1: The number of rebel groups in a country should increase with the level of repression

The effect of repression on the structure of rebel movements, however, should depend on its form. While indiscriminate repression that targets many individuals within society should expand the pool of individuals willing to participate in rebellion, it should not systematically affect their desire to form new groups rather than joining existing ones. Some individuals may turn to an ethnic or religious group for protection, but in other cases widespread repression may unify citizens in opposition to their government. For

example, the citizens of many former colonies banded together to pursue independence, before subsequently fragmenting along ethnic lines. Thus while indiscriminate repression should in some cases lead to an increased number of rebel groups, the aggregate effect should be of moderate strength.

In comparison, indiscriminate repression should be far more likely to increase the number of rebel groups in a conflict, as it induces individuals to identify with particular subnational groups. While targeted repression can be done on the basis of support for existing rebels (Kalyvas 2006), often it is done on the basis of ethnicity or religion. For example, the Myanmarese government has frequently repressed the Rohingya ethno-religious minority, while being considerably more repsectful of the rights of the Burman majority. I focus on this sort of targeted repression. When individuals are targeted on the basis of group membership, these groups are likely to increase in salience relative to other social cleavages. Furthermore, individuals are highly likely to develop a sense of linked fate with fellow group members. In other words, they are likely to adopt the belief that their prosperity and perhaps even survival depends on their ability to band together and defend themselves. Thus, targeted repression should lead individuals to mobilize on the basis of the targeted group. Unless an existing rebel group was already mobilized on such a basis, this should result previously non-violent individuals forming new groups, and in members of existing groups forming splinter organizations that emphasize their identity.

Hypothesis 2: The number of rebel groups in a country should increase with the extent to which repression is discriminatory

In statistical terms, I expect that the relationship between repression and discrimination to be interactive, rather than additive. That is, I expect the effect of increasing the severity repression on the number of rebel groups to be very strong when it is targeted (discriminatory), and more modest when it is deployed indiscriminately. I expect the reverse to hold as well — the effect of discrimination should be greater when as severity of

repression increases. While targeted, but weak repression might enhance ethnic identities, I do not expect that it will dramatically alter the relative cost of fighting. In short, I expect to find a statistically significant, positive interaction term.

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive interactive effect between the level repression and the extent to which repression is discriminatory

3 Research Design

To test the preceding hypotheses I use a dataset of country war-years derived from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program and Peace Research Institute Oslo's Dyadic Dataset, version 4-2016 (Harbom, Melander, and Wallensteen 2008; Melander, Pettersson, and Themnér 2016). This dataset includes one observation for every government-rebel group dyad for each year in which it produced at least 25 fatalities. I excluded all interstate conflicts from the data, and include all civil wars, anti-colonial wars, and internationalized civil wars. I then aggregate this data to the country-year, producing a count of the number of rebel groups active in each country experiencing a civil war each year. This results in a dataset of 1,501 observations, covering the period 1946–2015. Note that the UCDP data typically allows for the presence of multiple conflicts within the same country-year — rebel groups pursuing secession are considered part of a separate conflict from rebels challenging the central government, and rebels pursuing secession for different territories are considered separate from one another. I ignore these distinctions and aggregate to the country-year for two reasons. First, my theory focuses largely on the role of government behavior in shaping rebel structure, and thus it makes sense to group all rebels facing the same government together. From the government's standpoint, beyond a tactical level it may make little difference whether a new rebel group is challenging the central government or pursuing secession — both outcomes are undesirable. Second, most of my independent variables are

measured at the country level, and in many cases it would be difficult to record subnational variation, particularly in a dynamic fashion.

3.1 Dependent Variables

- **Number of Rebel Groups** My primary dependent variable is the number of rebel groups active in a country-conflict-year. The data comes from the UCDP Dyadic data (Harbom, Melander, and Wallensteen 2008; Melander, Pettersson, and Themnér 2016), which considers rebel factions to be separate groups if they have a discernible name. In other words, a faction connected to a larger group would be considered an independent organization and count toward this measure if it had its own name; otherwise, it would be considered part of the larger organization. Name *changes*, however, only result in the entry of a new group to the data if they are accompanied by a substantial change to the organization's composition such as a merger with another group. Note that given the difficulties of determining precisely when many rebel groups ceased operations, this measure includes all groups that appear at any point during the calendar year; it is therefore possible that this measure overstates the number of groups that were active simultaenously in some cases.
- **Number of Non-Splinter Rebel Groups** As the process by which entirely new rebel groups emerge is likely to be somewhat different than the process by which existing rebel groups splinter, I employ an alternate DV that excludes splinter organizations from the count of active rebel groups. The measure is based on my own data collection on rebel origins, with groups being coded as splinter organizations if their leader and majority of members were previously part of a different rebel group, and transitioned directly to operating as an independent group (i.e. there was no period of peace between membership in the previous and new organizations).

3.2 Independent Variables

- **Human Rights** To measure repression I use the Latent Human Protection Scores, version 2 (Fariss 2014; Schnakenberg and Fariss 2014). This data uses a Bayesian measurement model to estimate latent human rights scores using several data sources including US State Department and Amnesty International country reports, and several scholarly datasets on repression and mass killing. This data improves on previous approaches to measuring human rights by accounting for the fact that the standards by government and NGO reports have judged countries have generally improved over time. The result is an aggregate measure that ranges from roughly -3 (most repressive) to 3 (most respectful of human rights). Within my data the mean score is -1.19, and no country year has a score higher than 1.51. This measure is lagged by one year.
- **Discrimination** Currently, all major human rights data is measured at the country level. A direct measure of the extent to which repression is targeted at specific ethnic groups, geographic locales, etc. is thus unavailable. I use a measure constructed from the Ethnic Power Relations Core dataset, 2014 version (Vogt et al. 2015). EPR codes the political status of each politically-relevant ethnic group in the world, as well as several group attributes including their size as a percentage of the population. I consider groups coded as "Discriminated" or "Powerless" to be the victims of discrimination, and use the group size measure to calculate the percentage of the total country population that is subjected to discrimination. To aid in interpretation, I use the percentage of the country that is *not* subjected to discrimination in the models. Thus, as the measure increases, the extent to which repression is targeted at a small minority increases. The rare cases where no members of society experience discrimination are recoded to 0, as this indicates a non-discriminatory regime. This measure is lagged by one year.

3.3 Control Variables

- **Conflict Intensity** To account for the possibility that human rights scores are simply a function of conflict intensity, rather than discriminatory intent, I include the maximum Conflict Intensity value from the UCDP Dyadic data. The measure is binary, with a value of 1 indicating that the dyad produced between 25 and 999 fatalities in a given year, and a value of 2 indicating that the dyad produced 1,000 or more fatalities. This measure is moderately correlated with the human rights score (Pearson's r = -0.30).
- **Number of UCDP Conflicts** I include the number of distinct UCDP conflicts in a country-year as a control. Recall that all rebels challenging the central government are coded as being part of the same conflict, but each territory that is subject to a secessionist movement is considered distinct.
- **Percentage Territorial Conflicts** To control for the possibility that secessionist conflicts produce different rebel structures, I include percentage of UCDP conflicts in a country-year that are fought over territory rather the central government.
- **Neighboring Civil War** One potential mechanism that might produce increased numbers of rebel groups in a conflict is the movement of groups from neighboring countries into new conflicts. To control for this possibility I construct an indicator for the presence of a civil war in a neighboring state using the UCDP Dyadic data and the Correlates of War Direct Contiguity data, version 3.2 (Stinnett et al. 2002).
- **Ethnolinguistic Fractionalization** To control for the possibility that simple ethnic diversity, rather than the repression of particular ethnic groups, accounts for the number of rebel groups in a country, I include a measure of ethnolinguistic fractionalization from Fearon and Laitin (2003). The measure represents the probability that two randomly selected individuals from a country will speak different languages.
- **Logged Population** Conceivably, the number of rebel groups in a country might simply be a function of the country's size. I thus control for the logged population of

the country using data from Gleditsch (2002).

- **Logged GDP per capita** Economic development correlates with a variety of important political outcomes, including the onset of civil war. I include the logged per capita GDP of each country, with data again from Gleditsch (2002).

Additionally, I have examined the effect of several other control variables. None were statistically significant, nor did they substantially alter the performance of my variables of interest. Thus, I excluded them from the models reported below. This included several country-level variables, as well as several attributes of the largest rebel group active in a country-year.

- **Democracy** A binary indicator for countries with a Polity IV score greater than 5 (Marshall, Jaggers, and Gurr 2012).
- **Mountainous Terrain** A measure of the percentage of land in a country that is mountainous (Fearon and Laitin 2003).
- **Oil Revenue** A binary indicator of whether one-third or more of a country's exports come from fossil fuels (Fearon and Laitin 2003).
- **Previous Conflict** A binary indicator of whether the country had experienced a previous episode of conflict separated by at least three calendar years with no fighting reaching the 25 fatality threshold.
- **Rebel Group Central Control** A binary indicator of whether the largest rebel group active during a conflict year had a centralized control structure (D. E. Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2013).
- **Rebel Group Political Wing** A binary indicator of whether the largest rebel group active during a conflict year had a political wing (D. E. Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2013).
- **Rebel Group Stronger** A binary indicator of whether the largest rebel group active during a conflict year was stronger than the government (D. E. Cunningham,

Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2013).

- **Rebel Presence in Other States** A binary indicator of whether the largest rebel group active during a conflict year had a presence in other states (D. E. Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2013).
- **Rebel External Support** A binary indicator of whether the largest rebel group active during a conflict year was received any form of support from an outside government (D. E. Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan 2013).
- **Multi-Ethnic Rebel Group** An indicator of whether a rebel group draws support from more than one ethnic group, constructed from the ACD2EPR version 4-2014 dataset (Vogt et al. 2015).

3.4 Statistical Model

As the dependent variable in this study is a count of rebel groups, Ordinary Least Squares regression would be inappropriate. A Cameron and Travedi test shows no evidence of overdispersion in any model specification, meaning that Poisson regression is an appropriate model, rather than negative binomial. I include fixed effects for both country and year. However, the time fixed effects do not substantially alter the results, and I exclude them frmo the models presented here. Additionally, I cluster the standard errors by country.

4 Results

The poisson regression results are reported in Table 2. Models 1 and 2 use a dependent variable that includes all rebel groups active in a given year. Models 3 and 4 exclude splinter organizations. The "Human Rights" coefficient in Model 1 provides a test of *H1* which predicted that the number of rebel groups should increase with the level of repression. I am able to reject the null hypothesis of no relationship between repression and the number

of rebel groups, as the latent respect for human rights measure has a negative relationship that is statiscally signficant at the 99.9% level. As respect for human rights improves, the expected number of rebel groups declines. As a country becomes more repressive, by contrast, the expected number of rebel groups increases. Model 3 shows similar results (though only at a 95% significance level), suggesting that the relationship is not driven by the fragmentation of existing groups, but rather includes the mobilization of many new groups. Substantively, the effect of repression is large. As Figure 1 shows, the predicted number of rebel groups at the most repressive end of the spectrum is roughly 3. In the country-years where respect for human rights is highest (moderately high, in absolute terms), the expected number of groups is around 1.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Intercept	-2.17^{***}	-2.03^{***}	-15.19^{***}	-15.09^{***}
	(0.59)	(0.60)	(0.71)	(0.85)
Human Rights	-0.26^{***}	-0.08	-0.27^{***}	-0.15^{*}
	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.07)
Discrimination	0.40^{***}	-0.00	0.43^{**}	0.15
	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.14)	(0.20)
Human Rights X Discrimination		-0.31^{***}		-0.19
		(0.08)		(0.10)
Intensity Level	0.01	0.02	0.17^{***}	0.17^{***}
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Number of Conflicts	0.38^{***}	0.38^{***}	0.33^{***}	0.33^{***}
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
% Conflicts Over Territory	-0.22^{***}	-0.21^{***}	-0.26^{***}	-0.25^{***}
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Logged GDP per capita	0.10^{**}	0.10^{**}	-0.10^{*}	-0.10^{*}
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Ethnolinguistic Fractionalization	-1.21^{***}	-1.42^{***}	-0.21	-0.33
	(0.28)	(0.29)	(0.42)	(0.42)
Contiguous Civil War	0.02	0.01	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Logged Population	0.07	0.09	-0.14^{*}	-0.13
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.07)	(0.07)
AIC	3084.14	3082.34	2828.59	2829.58
BIC	3503.30	3506.55	3247.75	3253.79
Log Likelihood	-1459.07	-1457.17	-1331.30	-1330.79
Deviance	210.38	206.59	406.70	405.69
Num. obs.	1153	1153	1153	1153

$^{***}p < 0.001$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{*}p < 0.05$

Table 2: Poisson Regression Models of Rebel Group Count

Models 1 and 3 also provide tests of *H2*, which expects that the number of rebel groups should increase with the extent to which repression is targeted in a discriminatory fashion. Again I am able to reject the null hypothesis, as the effect of discrimination is positive and statistically significant at the 99.9% level in Model 1, and at the 99% level in Model 3. As the percentage of a country's population that is *not* subjected to discrimination (i.e. discrimination becomes more targeted), the expected number of rebel groups increases. The substantive effect is smaller than that for Human Rights, however (see Figure 1).

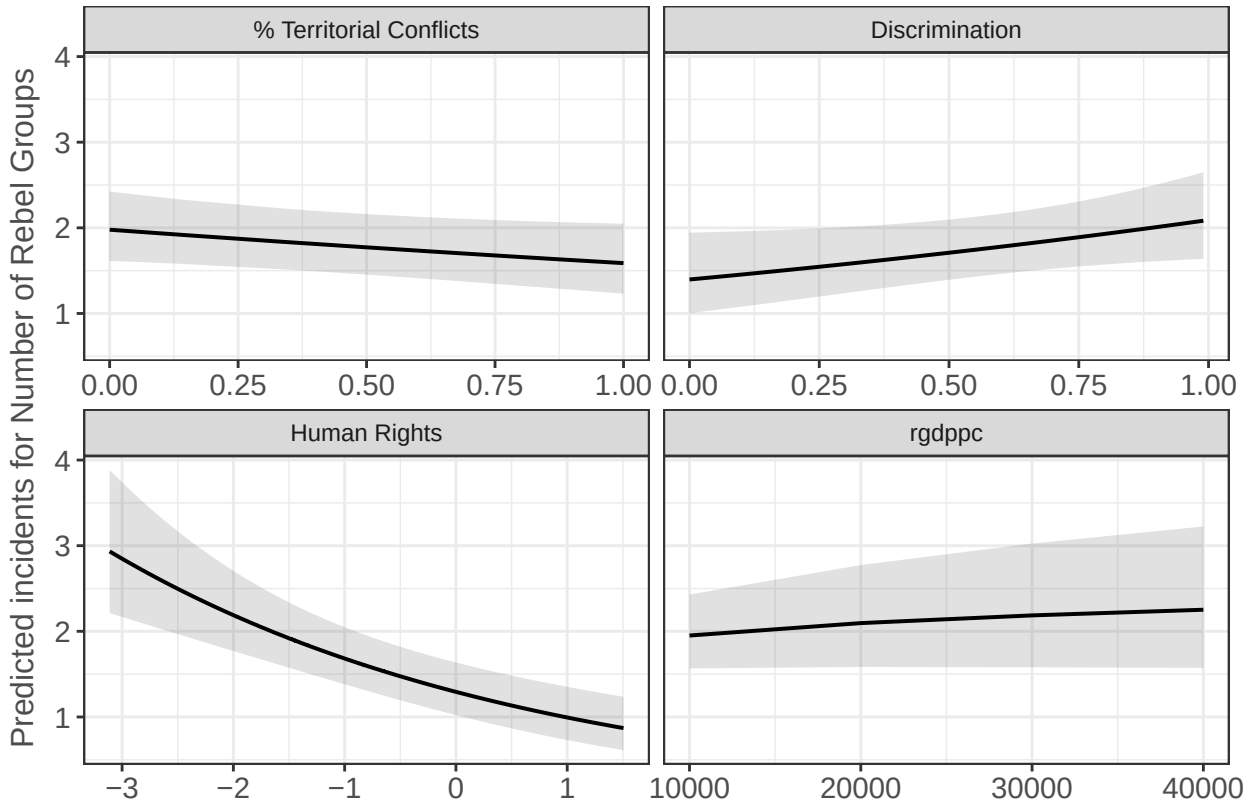

Figure 1: Effect Plots for Model 1

Moving from perfectly indiscriminate policies to the most finely targeted increases the expected number of rebel groups from roughly 1.4 to slightly over 2.

H3, which predicts an interactive effect between repression and discrimination, is tested in Models 2 and 4. In Model 2 the interaction is positive and statistically signficant at the 99.9% level. The marginal effects are plotted in Figure 2. The red line shows the predicted effect of Human Rights at the lowest observed value (i.e. the most repressive). At the lowest values of Discrimination (i.e. a perfectly indiscriminate political system) and most repressive values of Human Rights, the expected number of rebel groups is slightly below 2. As discrimination increases, however, the effect of repression increases. When 50% of the population is subject to discrimination, the expected number of rebel groups is roughly 2.8. When discrimination is at its highest, with 99% of the population being free from political discrimination, the effect of repression is quite strong, with a

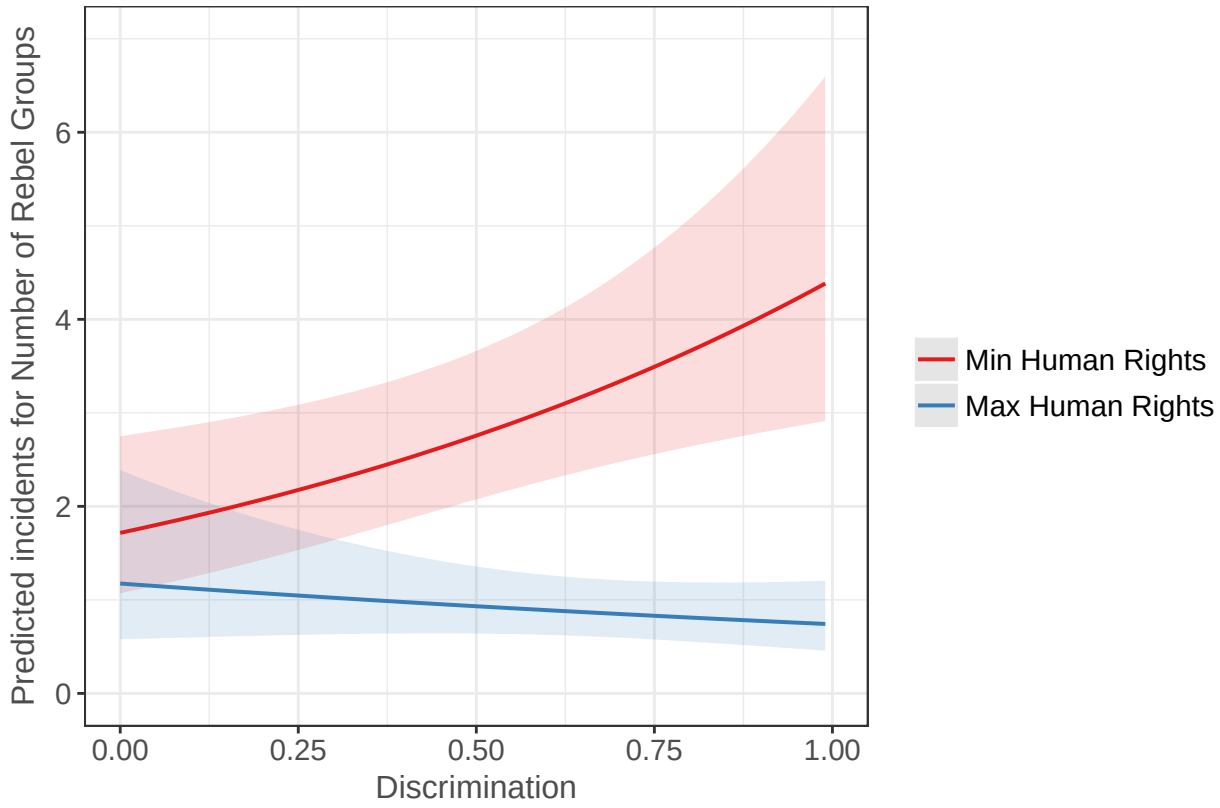

Figure 2: Marginal Effects Plots for Repression X Discrimination Interaction (Model 2)

prediction of roughly 4.3 rebel groups. At the highest observed levels of human rights, the expected number of rebel groups is consistently around 1, and not affected by the level of Discrimination. In short, the interaction result suggests that we should see the greatest number of rebel groups when governments use strongly repressive tactics, but deploy such repression in a highly targeted fashion. When used indiscriminately, repression has little effect on the number of rebel groups. In Model 4, the interaction term is just shy of statistical significance. This suggests that splintering accounts for some of the interaction effect.

While the results are largely consistent with my hypotheses, this analysis does have limitations. Perhaps most notably, it does not use a perfect measure of targeted repression, instead relying on political discrimination as a proxy. I would argue, however, that this limitations is more likely to create bias *against* my hypotheses than for them. There may

be people who are not part of an excluded minority group, but nevertheless are subjected to human rights violations. Indeed, as factors such as judicial independence and press freedom are significant components of the Latent Human Rights Scores, such patterns are likely. In such a case my measure would detect discrimination, but there would be many individuals behaving as if repression was indiscriminate. Conversely, some individuals may face limited political opportunities as a result of discrimination against their ethnic group, while avoiding threats to their physical integrity. This combination should produce individuals who are discinclined to cooperate with other members of society, but are not especially incentivized to resort to violence due to the absence of physical repression. Nevertheless, more precise measures should be pursued.

Additionally, this analysis does not facilitate causal claims. It is possible that government repression strategy is endogenous to the expectation that multiple rebel groups will emerge, for example. While lagging the repression and discrimination variables may mitigate this concern slightly, the addition of an instrumental variable or other quasi-experimental technique would greatly improve the validity of the analysis.

5 Conclusion

I have argued that targeted repression should increase the number of rebel groups active in a civil war by reducing the relative cost of participation in rebellion, and by activating ethnic and other subnational identities that provoke divisions among dissidents. In my empirical analyses I find support for this theory, as both repression and discrimination are associated with an increase in the expected number of rebel groups in a conflict. Furthermore, an interaction effect shows that repression has the greatest effect on the number of rebel groups when it is most targeted.

These results suggest that the government plays a surprisingly large role in shaping

rebel movement structure. Existing work on rebel structure tends to focus on the social context from which rebels emerge (Staniland 2014), and studies that do consider the role of the government have often found that repression increases cohesion among target groups (Simmel 1955), though the effect may be contingent on internal group dynamics (Theodore McLauchlin and Pearlman 2012). Future work should examine the government's strategic calculus in more detail. My theory gives little agency to the government, treating as a largely exogenous source of repression. While it is quite plausible that governments would prefer to fight a divided opponent rather than a unified one, my theory and findings suggest that the source of this division is often new individuals entering the conflict. As this is a seemingly undesirable outcome, the government's use of targeted repression in conflict settings is puzzling.

There are also significant opportunities for methodological improvements to this line of research. First, my empirical analysis does not directly test my theoretical mechanism - the reorientation of individuals away from national identities and toward ethnic and other subnational ones. Survey or experimental research on individuals who have been targeted by repression would provide a much more direct test of the mechanism. Additionally, a better measure of targeted repression would improve the validity of the study. It may be possible to construct such a measure from geocoded events data. Finally, an instrumental variable or other causal inference technique would greatly improve the analysis.

A final direction for new research would examine the relationship between original and joining rebel groups. If my theory is correct, joining groups should tend to have different ethnic make-ups, and likely a stronger emphasis on ethnic identity than originating groups. I do not make any predictions about the relationship between rebel groups when multiple are present. Surprisingly few works explore conflict between rebel groups (but see Fjelde and Nilsson 2012), nor do many explore alliances between rebels (but see Bapat and Bond 2012). If the results presented here are to be believed, such work will be relevant

so long as governments repress.

6 References

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