Ethnic Rights Restrictions and the Violent Escalation of Self-Determination Conflicts

Micha Germann*

December 23, 2025

Abstract

The reasons why self-determination conflicts escalate from nonviolent claims to violence remain poorly understood. I argue that restrictions of ethnic rights – a form of nonviolent repression – are likely to significantly increase the risk of conflict escalation, especially in their immediate aftermath when grievances are still fresh. Drawing on new data and difference-in-differences estimation, I find support for my argument in an analysis covering all self-determination disputes between 1945 and 2020. Critically, I find that both major autonomy downgrades and other types of ethnic rights restrictions lead to similarly sized increases in the risk of conflict escalation, suggesting that ethnic rights restrictions constitute a more important explanation of separatist violence than previously thought. Finally, I find evidence that the escalatory potential of ethnic rights restrictions is highest where groups have pre-existing grievances against the state and the opportunity structure incentivizes violent tactics, pointing to the value of combining structural and dynamic theories of civil war.

*Department of Politics, Languages & International Studies, University of Bath.

Introduction

Why do nonviolent intra-state conflicts turn into civil wars? The existing literature has identified a number of robust correlates of civil war onset (Cederman and Vogt 2017; Hegre and Sambanis 2006). However, most previous civil war studies focused on variables which only rarely change over time or are even completely time-invariant, such as the wealth, geography, and demography of countries, their regime type, levels of economic inequality, or the presence of natural resources. And while structural conditions can be useful to understand the root causes of civil wars, they are unlikely to accurately pinpoint the timing of civil wars (Tikuisis, Carment, and Samy 2013; Ward et al. 2013). To improve our understanding of civil war outbreaks, it is necessary to pay increased attention to the process of conflict escalation and identify the demands and actions by conflict actors that make it likely that nonviolent claims escalate to violence.

This article makes a step in this direction by analyzing the role of ethnic rights restrictions – a form of nonviolent state repression – in the violent escalation of self-determination conflicts. In keeping with the existing literature (Cunningham 2014; Sambanis, Germann, and Schädel 2018), I define self-determination conflicts broadly as any intra-state dispute over territorial self-rule, including both claims for internal autonomy and outright secession. By limiting the analysis to self-determination conflicts, I am able to increase causal homogeneity (Buhaug 2006), and I can focus on a type of nonviolent repression that I argue is particularly relevant for this type of conflict: restrictions of ethnic rights, here defined as state policies which reduce an ethnic group's cultural or self-rule rights. Learning about the causes of separatist wars is important since more than half of all intra-state armed conflicts fought since the end of the Second World War involve claims for territorial self-determination (Davies, Pettersson, and Öberg 2022). Separatist wars also tend to be particularly intractable and last longer compared to other types of civil war (Walter 2009).

Combining insights from grievance and bargaining theory, I argue that ethnic rights restrictions are likely to significantly increase the risk of nonviolent self-determination conflicts turning into armed conflicts, especially in their immediate aftermath. I argue that this is, first, because ethnic rights restrictions can provide a direct motivation for self-determination

movements to respond violently. Restrictions of groups rights are likely to be perceived as a form of unfair collective punishment and generate threat perceptions. Furthermore, they may demonstrate the futility of nonviolent tactics to self-determination movements and magnify commitment problems. Finally, ethnic rights restrictions may also indirectly increase the risk of violence by increasing radical demands, such as demands for outright secession, and by provoking self-determination movements into contentious nonviolent action harboring the seed for a later escalation to violence.

My argument builds on previous literature studying the consequences of autonomy loss for ethnic conflicts (Cederman et al. 2015; Gurr and Moore 1997; Hechter 2000; Saxton and Benson 2006; Siroky and Cuffe 2015; Paine 2019). However, previous studies have only rarely considered the consequences of autonomy losses for conflict escalation (though see Germann and Sambanis 2021) and tended to rely on correlational research designs that cannot establish whether ethnic rights restrictions are causally related to the emergence of violence. To improve causal inference, I leverage within-group variation in the timing of ethnic rights restrictions and estimate their effects on conflict escalation using generalized difference-in-differences. Drawing on new data covering the worldwide incidence of self-determination movements between 1945 and 2020, I find that that ethnic rights restrictions significantly increase the risk of nonviolent self-determination disputes escalating to violence. These causal estimates pass several tests assessing the plausibility of the parallel trend assumption and are robust to heterogeneous treatment effects (Liu, Wang, and Xu 2024). Providing further support to my argument, I find that ethnic rights restrictions are related to several causal mediators predicted by my theory, such as the emergence of radical claims for outright secession or protest activity.

Overall, the empirical evidence I present points to the conclusion that the relationship between ethnic rights restrictions and the emergence of separatist violence is not just correlational, but causal. In addition to this, I make three main contributions. First, previous studies have tended to focus on historic restrictions of group rights often dating back decades or even centuries. However, while memories of a golden age where group rights were better protected can be an important source of separatist demands, I argue and show empirically that ethnic rights restrictions primarily shape the risk of conflict escalation in their imme-

diate aftermath and, therefore, at a time when grievances about status loss are the freshest and most widely felt.

Second, previous studies have adopted a narrow conceptualization of ethnic rights restrictions limited to major autonomy downgrades, such as those resulting from the annexations of entire nation-states or complete revocations of extensive internal autonomy regimes. However, such major autonomy downgrades are empirically rare. Even if they represent important drivers of separatist violence, major autonomy downgrades cannot, therefore, help to explain many separatist wars. I argue, and show empirically using new data, that the escalatory potential of ethnic rights restrictions is not limited to major autonomy downgrades, but extends to many other types restrictions including partial centralization policies, revocations of indigenous land rights, and revocations of language, religious, or other cultural rights. This suggests that ethnic rights restrictions are a much more important explanation of separatist violence than previously thought.

Finally, I leverage the added statistical power provided by my broader conceptualization of ethnic rights restrictions to investigate the circumstances in which they are most likely to escalate self-determination conflicts. Building on the existing literature on the structural root causes of civil war, I argue that the escalatory potential of ethnic rights restrictions is largest in the presence of pre-existing grievances against the state and where the opportunity structure permits or even incentivizes the use of violent tactics. Consistent with this argument, I find that the effects of ethnic rights restrictions on conflict escalation are strongest where ethnic groups are excluded from political power as well as in contexts with a history of violence, in weak states, and in autocracies. These findings point to the value of combining processual and structural theories of civil war.

Related Literature

Historically, conflict research was mostly concerned with finding explanations for interstate war. This changed after the end of the Cold War, when the focus increasingly shifted to civil wars. The contributions of dozens, if not hundreds, of variables to the emergence of civil wars have since been tested, a concerted effort that has led to the identification of several

robust correlates of civil war onset, such as the exclusion of ethnic groups from political power (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010; Wimmer, Cederman, and Min 2009), high levels of between-group economic inequality (Cederman, Weidmann, and Gleditsch 2011), state weakness (Fearon and Laitin 2003), and geographic factors such as mountaineous terrain or group concentration (Toft 2003). Yet, despite these advances, our understanding of civil war outbreaks remains relatively limited. Some of the clearest evidence for this comes from the forecasting literature, which has attempted to make out-of-sample predictions of civil war outbreaks based on commonly highlighted empirical determinants of civil war, with at best moderate success (Ward, Greenhill, and Bakke 2010).

Recent literature suggests that improving our understanding of the outbreak of civil wars requires a double cognitive shift: first, towards the increased study of the process of conflict escalation, and, second, towards the increased study of conflict dynamics. A basic insight that, however, has long been effectively ignored in empirical civil war studies is that large-scale violence rarely emerges from a political vacuum. Rather, civil wars tend to be a product of conflict escalation, that is, of previously nonviolent conflicts turning violent. Therefore, a key part of explaining civil wars should be the explanation of the transition from nonviolent claims to violent conflict. Yet, existing empirical studies only rarely model the process of conflict escalation. Instead, civil war research typically compares cases of civil war onset with a heterogeneous set of control cases combining instances of nonviolent conflict and actual peace. Yet, this approach cannot distinguish the causes of nonviolent claims and their escalation to violence. As a result, most existing civil war research risks conflating the two.

Advancing our knowledge of civil war outbreaks requires the explicit empirical modeling of the process of conflict escalation. Following the lead of the literature on interstate war, where this is long-established practice (Reed 2000), several recent studies have done precisely this, often with the intention of testing whether established correlates of civil war onset in fact help to explain the escalation of nonviolent claims to violence. Based on their findings, the answer in many cases appears to be no. That is, and with some important exceptions (e.g., political exclusion and GDP per capita), many of the established "determinants of civil war" may be good predictors of the initial onset of nonviolent claims, but have only weak or

even no correlations with the escalation of nonviolent claims to violence (Bartusevicius and Gleditsch 2019; Cunningham et al. 2017; Germann and Sambanis 2021). This points to the necessity of a second shift in the civil war literature: the need to pay increased attention to the dynamics of dissent, mobilization, and repression that tend to precede civil wars.

Most of the existing literature focuses on "structural" explanations of civil wars. However, variables that are slowly changing or even completely time-invariant, such as a country's regime type, demography, or geography, are unlikely to accurately pinpoint the timing of violent conflicts (Blair and Sambanis 2020; Tikuisis, Carment, and Samy 2013; Ward et al. 2013). To improve our understanding of the outbreak of civil wars, it is therefore necessary to study the actions and demands of conflict actors, and theorize and test how they are related to the escalation of nonviolent claims to violence. Among the few existing studies that have done so is Vogt, Gleditsch, and Cederman (2021), which presented evidence to suggest that radical political demands that are far-removed from the status quo, such as claims for outright secession, significantly increase the risk of ethnic conflicts escalating to violence. Meanwhile, other studies have considered whether government concessions to *other* ethnic groups increase the risk of separatist violence, with disparate results (Bormann and Savun 2018; Forsberg 2013; Walter 2006). Finally, a number of studies have presented evidence that violent state repression can significantly increase the risk of civil war, especially when it is indiscriminate (Cederman et al. 2020; Lindemann and Wimmer 2018; Young 2013). I add to this small but growing literature by extending the focus to a *nonviolent* form of indiscriminate state repression: restrictions of ethnic rights.

This is, importantly, not the first study of the consequences of ethnic rights restrictions. Indeed, similar concepts, such as 'transitions from indirect to direct rule' or 'lost autonomy', represent a central theme in the literature on ethno-nationalist conflict, and several previous studies have linked autonomy losses with separatist mobilization (Cederman et al. 2015; Gurr and Moore 1997; Hechter 2000; Saxton and Benson 2006; Siroky and Cuffe 2015; Paine 2019). However, few existing studies have modeled the effects of ethnic rights restrictions on the escalation of self-determination conflicts. Therefore, it remains unclear whether ethnic rights restrictions help to explain violence as a qualitatively distinct conflict outcome, or whether they are "merely" associated with the emergence of separatist demands in the first

place. Moreover, most previous studies of ethnic rights restrictions focused on the long-run consequences of historical autonomy losses, such as autonomy losses resulting from the destruction of pre-colonial states. As a result, previous studies effectively treat ethnic rights restrictions as a time-invariant structural condition. However, states did not just restrict ethnic rights in historic times; they continue to do so today, and, as I argue below, recent restrictions may be more relevant for escalation processes.

To my knowledge, only a single existing study has demonstrated an empirical link between *recent* ethnic rights restrictions and the escalation of ethno-nationalist conflict (Germann and Sambanis 2021). However, ethnic rights restrictions are likely to be endogenous to the pre-existing risk of conflict escalation, among other things because states, similar to other forms of repression, may use them to contain separatism and quell dissent (Cederman et al. 2020). Therefore, it remains unclear whether the correlational evidence reported in that study can be causally interpreted. Furthermore, all previous literature on ethnic rights restrictions including the study by Germann and Sambanis adopted a narrow understanding of ethnic rights restrictions focused on major autonomy downgrades. However, the majority of ethnic rights restrictions do not take the form of major autonomy downgrades, but more limited changes in self-rule rights, revocations of indigenous land rights, and revocations of cultural rights. A key open question is therefore to what extent the effects of major autonomy downgrades extend to a broader notion of ethnic rights restrictions.

Finally, another important open question concerns the conditions under which ethnic rights restrictions are likely to lead to violence. As the broader literature on repression reminds us, repression sometimes "works", but in other cases it may backfire (Davenport 2007). Analogously, not all self-determination movements are likely to respond to attempts at cultural assimilation with violence. To improve our understanding of the consequences of ethnic rights restrictions, it is necessary to unpack their effects and explore the circumstances in which they are most likely to produce violent reactions.

Theory

In most corners of the world, the past two centuries have seen the creation of modern nation-states (Anderson 1991). From the national unifications in 19th Europe to decolonization and, more recently, the dissolution of the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia, this process has often meant that some ethnic groups landed at the top of power hierarchies while others are being ruled over (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010). In keeping with the basic principle of nationalism that the nation should be congruent with the governance unit, this has frequently coincided with the centralization of powers and cultural assimilation policies, such as the repression of minority languages or religions (Hechter 2000). In many cases, such ethnic rights restrictions ultimately represent an attempt at the creation of the unified *Kulturnation* propagated by classic German philosophers such as Herder or Fichte. Ethnic rights restrictions may also be seen as a way of quelling dissent, following the logic that an assimilated minority should be less likely to demand representation in the government or self-rule rights. Finally, there can be economic motivations for ethnic rights restrictions. Gellner (1983), for example, advanced the argument that cultural homogenization policies are linked to the process of industrialization and its ever-growing need for an educated workforce speaking the same language. Another prominent example involves the appropriation of land claimed by indigenous groups for cultivation, livestock farming, or the exploitation of natural resources. However, the groups affected by ethnic rights restrictions may not passively accept their rights being curtailed.

The reactions to ethnic rights restrictions may take several different forms. First, resentments about the diminished socio-political status may spur claims for the state to "reverse the reversal" and initiate a movement to restore or even further increase group rights (Gurr 2000). In many cases, these movements are likely to entail claims for territorial self-rule (Hechter 2000; Siroky and Cuffe 2015) and, given the high costs associated with violence and social norms against the use of violence, they are likely to be nonviolent initially (Germann and Sambanis 2021). Second, ethnic rights restrictions may embolden pre-existing self-determination movements and spur them into further action, possibly including the use of violence. Here, I focus on the latter. Combining insights from the existing literature

on autonomy losses with broader theories of civil war, I outline several causal mechanisms linking ethnic rights restrictions to the violent escalation of self-determination conflicts. Subsequently, I discuss why the effect of ethnic rights restrictions on conflict escalation should not be limited to major autonomy downgrades. Finally, I consider how the structural context in which ethnic rights restrictions occur is likely to shape their escalatory potential.

Ethnic Rights Restrictions and Conflict Escalation

I argue that there are two principal ways in which ethnic rights restrictions can lead to the violent escalation of self-determination movements. On the one hand, ethnic rights restrictions can provide a direct motivation for movements to switch from nonviolent to violent tactics, for at least three reasons. First, ethnic rights restrictions are likely to be perceived as a form of collective punishment and therefore increase perceptions of unfair treatment by the state. Moreover, given the threat of cultural assimilation, ethnic rights restrictions may also fuel a perception that the future safety and survival of the group is in question. In turn, perceptions of unfair treatment and threat are likely to generate emotional responses conductive to violence (e.g., anger and resentment), fuel a desire for revenge, and increase the moral justifiability of violence (Petersen 2002). Furthermore, the perceived injustice of ethnic rights restrictions can increase ethnic solidarity, thus alleviating collective action problems (Cederman, Gleditsch, and Buhaug 2013; Gurr 2000).

Second, ethnic rights restrictions may demonstrate to self-determination movements the futility of nonviolent tactics. If a state's response to a nonviolent claim for increased group rights is to decrease group rights, this creates a strong signal that nonviolent forms of resistance are not working, potentially motivating a switch to violent tactics (Rasler 1996). Finally, ethnic rights restrictions can increase the risk of bargaining failure. If the state restricts the rights a group has previously enjoyed, then this is likely to decrease the group's trust in the government upholding any potential future deals. The resulting commitment problem creates rational incentives for the use of violent tactics even if states agree to reverse the restriction or promise other concessions (Fearon 1995).

On the other hand, the link between ethnic rights restriction and conflict escalation may also be more indirect, that is, self-determination movements may respond nonviolently

initially but this leads to violent conflict further down the line. Given they have previously expressed an interest in more rights, members of self-determination groups are likely to perceive ethnic rights restrictions as a particular blow. Even if ethnic rights restrictions do not spur an immediate violent reaction, members of affected ethnic groups are therefore likely to become bolder in their claims. Support for self-rule and, in particular, support for outright secession is likely to grow, given the high level of protection a separate nation-state would offer to the group. Moreover, self-determination movements may initiate highly contentious nonviolent actions, such as mass protest campaigns (Cunningham 2013b), unilateral self-rule referendum (Germann 2022), or even a unilateral independence declaration (Knotter 2021). This is likely to increase threat perceptions among state leaders, especially where groups make radical claims for outright secession (Vogt, Gleditsch, and Cederman 2021). Therefore, states become likely to respond with further nonviolent or violent repression, causing further grievances (Davenport 2007). Ultimately, the resulting mobilization and counter-mobilization may spiral out of control, leading to violent conflict (Lichbach 1987).

In sum, ethnic rights restrictions provide both direct incentives for the use of violence and can cause violent escalation indirectly by spurring radical claims and contentious nonviolent actions. In either case, though, violence is likely to emerge relatively soon after restrictions. While historical ethnic rights restrictions may increase the demand for self-rule, grievances about status loss are likely to be felt particularly intensely in the immediate aftermath of restrictions, and the sudden change to the previous status quo is likely to prompt swift reactions (Davies 1962; Snow et al. 1998). Furthermore, sudden increases in grievances as a result of ethnic rights restrictions are likely to be felt by many group members at the same time, thus facilitating the coordination of collective action (Correa, Nandong, and Shadmehr, n.d.). This is not to say that ethnic rights restrictions cannot have lingering consequences. Indeed, as several previous studies have argued, historical autonomy losses are likely to generate demand for self-rule and therefore set the stage for the emergence of self-rule claims (Hechter 2000; Siroky and Cuffe 2015; Paine 2019). However, distant memories from the past are much less likely to instill the same degree of resentment (Germann and Sambanis 2021). When it comes to the escalation of pre-existing self-rule claims, it is therefore recent ethnic rights restrictions that are most likely to matter. This reasoning leads to the first

testable empirical implication:

> *H1: Ethnic rights restrictions increase the risk that nonviolent self-determination claims escalate to violence, especially in their immediate aftermath.*

Major Autonomy Revocations and Other Restrictions of Ethnic Rights

The above causal mechanisms are likely to apply to major autonomy downgrades, such as when the state dismantles entirely an internal autonomy regime or even annexes (parts of) another nation-state. However, they should extend to other types of ethnic rights restrictions. Similar to major autonomy downgrades, partial centralization policies and restrictions of cultural rights are likely to create perceptions of unfair treatment, erode trust in the state, magnify commitment problems, and may even lead to a perception that the survival of the group is threatened. A clear example of the latter are restrictions of the right to use one's language or practice one's religion, which may inhibit the inter-generational transmission of cultural practices, or revocations of indigenous land rights. Given the particularly high severity of the moral transgression and status loss associated with them, major autonomy restrictions may be particularly prone to violence. However, the escalatory effects of ethnic rights restrictions are likely to extend to other types of ethnic rights restrictions.

This argument is notably supported by the case-based literature, where not just major autonomy downgrades but also various other kinds of ethnic rights restrictions are frequently made out as catalysts of separatist violence. As an example of the former, the emergence of the West Papuan armed resistance movement in the mid-1960s is often traced to the the UN-mediated handover of the territory to Indonesia in 1963 and the subsequent revocation of the autonomy the West Papuans had enjoyed under the Dutch (Saltford 2003, pp. 74ff). In similar fashion, the revocation of South Sudan's autonomy in 1983 is often described as a catalyst for the 1983–2005 insurgency in South Sudan (Ali, Elbadawi, and El-Batahani 2005) while the revocation of Kosovo's autonomy in March 1989 is often linked to the partly violent separatist clashes in Kosovo in 1989–1990 (Troebst 1998).

Reports pointing to the escalatory potential of less far-reaching autonomy restrictions are

similarly easy to come by. For example, in 1948 Burma curtailed the Kachins' autonomy, which Minahan (2002, p. 873) describes as a crucial catalyst for separatist violence in 1949–1950 even though the Kachins retained a semi-autonomous state. Similar dynamics can ensue after restrictions of indigenous land rights and cultural rights. For example, in 2009 Peru enabled the sale of indigenous territories in the Amazon lowlands, which paved the road for separatist violence leaving several dozen people dead (Cabitza 2012). Finally, cultural repression involving policies such as bans of Kurdish names and Kurdish broadcasts is often linked to violent Kurdish separatism in Turkey and Iraq (Loizides 2010; Natali 2005). Similarly, Moldova's 1989 language law, which elevated Romanian to the state's only official language, is seen as a crucial catalyst for the 1991–1992 war in the mostly Russian-speaking Transnistria region (Chinn and Roper 1995). This leads to the second hypothesis:

> *H2: (a) Both major autonomy downgrades and other ethnic rights restrictions increase the risk of conflict escalation, though (b) the former have a larger effect.*

Context Dependence

Even if they may increase the risk of violence, conflict escalation is of course far from inevitable after ethnic rights restrictions. Indeed, nonviolent responses to ethnic rights restrictions may fizzle out before they escalate to violence, or states may make concessions. Ethnic groups may not mobilize at all in response to ethnic rights restrictions, for example, because of successful state deterrence. Finally, in some cases, groups may choose to voluntarily assimilate into the core nation (Laitin 1998; Swaan 2001). I argue that whether or not ethnic rights restrictions lead to violence is likely to depend crucially on the structural environment in which self-determination movements are operating.

Structural variables may in and of themselves be poor predictors of civil war onset (Tikuisis, Carment, and Samy 2013; Ward et al. 2013). However, the political context does shape what actions are and are not available to social movements, and can incentivize a certain course of action over another (Kitschelt 1986). Therefore, ethnic rights restrictions should be particularly likely to lead to violence where the opportunity structure permits or even favors violent tactics. I argue, furthermore, that reactions to ethnic rights restrictions may

be shaped by pre-existing grievances. Where groups already feel mistreated by the state, the introduction of new grievances could have an amplifying effect, leading to a dangerous cocktail of old and new resentments furthering the perception that violence is morally justified and perhaps even the only possible answer.

Levels of pre-existing grievances and the political opportunity structure are shaped by many factors. Here, I focus on four variables that are likely to be particularly pertinent: political exclusion, a history of separatist war, state capacity, and a country's level of democracy. First, political exclusion is likely to be associated with persistent perceptions of maltreatment by the state since a lack of meaningful representation in a state's governing coalition violates one of the key principles of political legitimacy in the modern era: rule by co-ethnics (Gellner 1983). Furthermore, political exclusion often comes with manifest material disadvantages, such as worse access to government jobs, education, or health care (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010). To excluded groups, ethnic rights restrictions are therefore likely to represent further proof of the state's bad intentions, creating an explosive mix of old and new grievances. At the same time, political exclusion also reduces the effectiveness of nonviolent forms of mobilization because it reduces access to institutional channels (Germann and Sambanis 2021). Therefore, self-determination claims should be particularly likely to escalate to violence if ethnic groups are excluded from state power.

Second, a history of civil war can be associated with persistent historic grievances related to past atrocities and killings, which may nourish calls for revenge (Grossman, Manekin, and Miodownik 2015). Furthermore, a history of armed conflict may mean that violence has become part of the accepted repertoire of action (Laitin 1995) and that self-determination movements have easier access to weapons (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). If they were previously engaged in armed conflict, self-determination movements are also more likely to already dispose over the organizational resources and skills necessary for the conduct of war (Bell and Murdie 2018). Therefore, violent escalations should be particularly likely after ethnic rights restrictions if the state and the self-determination movement have previously engaged in armed conflict.

Finally, I argue that self-determination movements are particularly likely to respond violently to ethnic rights restrictions in weak and less democratic states. On the one hand,

strong states are likely to crush any armed uprising. Therefore, a strong and, in particular, a militarily strong state is likely to deter the use of violent tactics (Fearon and Laitin 2003). On the other hand, democracies are more open to nonviolent forms of political mobilization compared to autocracies and less likely to use heavy-handed repression against protesters (Cunningham 2013b). Furthermore, democracies may also be more likely to make concessions that could help to avert protests escalating into violence (Gurr and Moore 1997). Overall, this reasoning leads to the third and final hypothesis:

> *H3: Ethnic rights restrictions are particularly likely to increase the risk of violent escalation (a) if the group whose rights are restricted is excluded from political power; (b) if the group was previously engaged in separatist violence; (c) in weak states; and (d) in less democratic states.*

Data

I test my hypothesis using a new and extended version of the Self-Determination Movements (SDM) dataset (Sambanis, Germann, and Schädel 2018). Like the first version of the dataset, the new version provides global coverage of both violent and nonviolent self-determination claims, but it extends the temporal coverage of the data from 1945–2012 to 1945–2020. Furthermore SDM 2.0 adds new data on the worldwide incidence of ethnic rights restrictions in the context of self-determination disputes, as well as a several other possible predictors of conflict escalation (see the discussion of control variables below).

Identifying Self-Determination Claims

SDM 2.0 defines self-determination movements as as a collection of one or more political organizations that are connected to an ethnic group and make claims for increased territorially defined self-rule. This definition is relatively broad and includes claims for national independence (e.g., Catalans in Spain) and the merger with a different state (e.g., Somalis in Ethiopia), but also more limited claims for internal autonomy (e.g., many indigenous groups in the Americas). Furthermore, the definition covers any type of political mobilization, including both institutional (e.g., running for office) and extra-institutional (e.g.,

protests or armed resistance) action. However, the mobilization needs to cross a minimum level of political significance. Therefore, the following are all excluded from the dataset: fringe movements with a tiny number of supporters and without any political relevance; diaspora movements which exclusively mobilize outside of the borders of the state against which self-rule claims are made; and "micro-nation projects" such as the Principality of Sealand, a supposedly independent state located on an offshore platform off the coast of England).

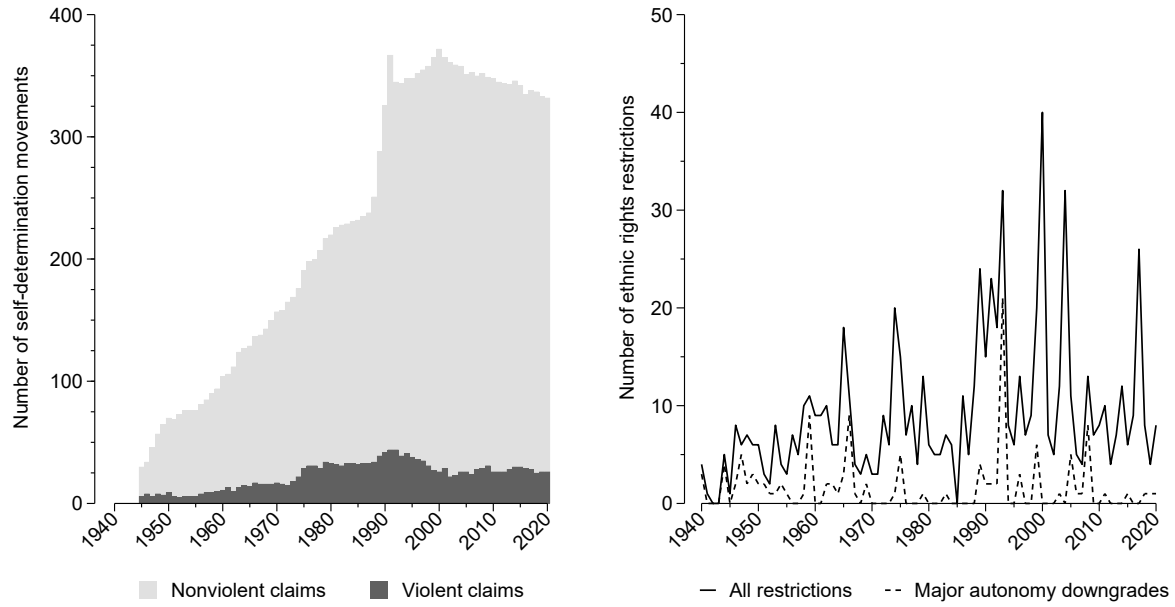
While claims need to be connected to an ethnic group, ethnicity is broadly defined as including regional identities in addition to identities based on more standard ethnic markers, such as language, religion, and race. This definition is consistent with, among others, Horowitz (1985), and, in practice, covers the full spectrum of identities that give rise to self-determination claims. Note that some ethnic groups make self-determination claims in multiple countries (e.g., Kurds in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran). In the data, self-determination movements are therefore formally identified via the combination of the ethnic group on whose behalf they make claims for increased self-rule and their host state (e.g., Iraq-Kurds).

SDM 2.0 includes a total of 502 self-determination movements in 124 countries, or around 40 more than its predecessor. The new additions are a combination of new movements which only emerged after the temporal cut-off for SDM 1.0 (2012) and previously overlooked movements.

Measuring Conflict Escalation

Facilitating the study of conflict escalation, SDM 2.0 distinguishes whether self-determination claims were violent or nonviolent in any given year. Claims are treated as violent if rebels associated with a movement and their host state are engaged in an armed conflict over territorial self-rule which leads to at least 25 deaths in a calendar year. If the death count drops below 25 after the onset of a violent conflict, armed conflicts are treated as ongoing if there is sustained violence and the threshold is reached again within one or maximally two years. Sources for the identification of instances of separatist armed conflict include the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (Gleditsch et al. 2002; Davies, Pettersson, and Öberg

Figure 1: Annual frequencies of the number of self-determination claims and ethnic rights restrictions



2022), Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl (2019), and case-specific sources (e.g., academic or newspaper reports).

Overall, 1,766 of the 17,329 group-year observations in SDM 2.0 are coded with separatist armed conflict, or about 10%. Figure 1 shows the break-down of violent and nonviolent claims per year. Critically, a clear majority of self-determination movements (72%) never deployed violence and almost all (88%) of the 139 movements that did engage in separatist violence started out nonviolently. Moreover, among movements which eventually turned to violence, the time elapsed between the first emergence of a self-determination claim and the first separatist violence varies widely from 0 to 69 years, with a relatively high mean (16 years). This underlines the importance of improving our understanding of the timing of conflict escalation. The data includes a total of 203 instances of conflict escalation, defined as transitions from nonviolent to violent self-determination claims. A little more than half represent first-time escalations (110); the remaining 93 cases represent instances of recurring violence. Following McGrath (2017), I set observations with ongoing armed conflict to missing in all analyses reported below.

Coding Ethnic Rights Restrictions

Data on ethnic rights restrictions has been collected previously; however, existing datasets are limited to major autonomy downgrades (Cederman et al. 2015; Germann and Sambanis 2021; Minorities at Risk Project 2009). I broaden the definitional scope to include any policy imposed by the state which decreases the self-rule or cultural rights of an ethnic group. This includes any meaningful changes in a group's level of internal autonomy, such as a reductions of a group's ability to raise and spend taxes or the right determine economic, social, or security policy; reductions in the extent of control over natural resources; reductions in the territorial extent of autonomous regions; temporary impositions of direct rule; and restrictions of the rights of indigenous groups to their ancestral lands. Furthermore included are any policies which reduce the protection of language rights, such as restrictions of the right to be educated in one's native tongue; restrictions related to the free practice of religion; and restrictions of other cultural practices, such as the right to wear traditional ethnic attire or the right to use traditional ethnic names on official documents. A restriction must be at least partially implemented; mere threats are not sufficient for inclusion in the dataset.

Coders relied on a broad set of sources for the identification of ethnic rights restrictions, including encyclopedias related to separatism (e.g., Hewitt and Cheetham 2000; Minahan 2002, 2016; Roth 2015) and ethnic conflict more generally (e.g., Minority Rights Group International 2023); case reports by Human Rights Watch, International Crisis Group, and other reputable non-governmental organizations; the country studies series by the Library of Congress; newspaper reports and academic case studies; as well as previously existing datasets covering major autonomy downgrades.

Overall, this led to the identification of 742 ethnic rights restrictions (see Figure 1 for an annual breakdown).[1] Some of the most common types of ethnic rights restrictions include restrictions of language (19% of cases) and religious rights (9%); restrictions of indigenous land rights (13%); and decreases in internal autonomy rights that do not cross the threshold of a major autonomy downgrade (25%). Finally, about 17% (129) of the total number of restrictions represent major autonomy downgrades. Consistent with how autonomy losses

[1] This figure includes restrictions imposed up to 10 years before a movement first enters the dataset, such as restrictions imposed in the run-up to 1945 (the first year that is covered in the data) or a country's independence.

have been measured in previous studies (e.g., Cederman et al. 2015; Germann and Sambanis 2021; Siroky and Cuffe 2015), I define a restriction as a major autonomy downgrade if it entails the loss of national independence (i.e., annexations), the loss of a constitutional right to secede or hold an independence referendum, or the loss of a highly significant amount of internal autonomy. The latter includes cases where the state revokes entirely (e.g., Kosovo in 1989 or South Ossetia in 1990) or curtails highly significantly (e.g., Kashmir in 2019) a meaningful autonomy regime.

Identification Strategy

To identify the causal effect of ethnic rights restrictions on conflict escalation, I leverage between-movement and temporal variation in their imposition and estimate a generalized difference-in-differences model. This design is robust to bias due to any time-invariant confounder specific to countries, ethnic groups, or self-determination movements. Given that most known correlates of civil war change only slowly over time or are completely time-invariant, this is an attractive property (e.g., geographic factors such as the ruggedness of terrain, persistent ethnic inequalities, or historical autonomy losses). The design also accounts for temporal shocks, such as changes to conflict dynamics induced by the end of the Cold War. Finally, I include a set of time-varying controls to account for unrelated changes in the opportunity structure and levels of grievance against the state. I assess the plausibility of the central causal identification assumption (i.e., the parallel trends assumption) using a combination of placebo tests and formal sensitivity analyses.

More formally, I estimate several variations of the following two-way fixed effects regression:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha_i + \gamma_t + \beta X_{it} + \delta Z_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \tag{1}$$

where Y_{it} represents a binary indicator of whether or not ethnic group i experienced a transition from a nonviolent self-determination claim to separatist armed conflict in year t, α_i group fixed effects, γ_t year fixed effects, ε_{it} the observation-specific error term, and X_{it} a binary indicator of whether or not group i experienced an ethnic rights restriction

in the same year (t) or any of the two previous years. Bundling restrictions in this way offers a direct, well-powered test of the hypothesis that recent ethnic rights restrictions increase the risk of violent escalation. In alternative specifications, I separate the effects of major autonomy downgrades and other ethnic rights restrictions; include interactions with structural background characteristics to assess causal heterogeneity; and break up the treatment indicator to more closely investigate the temporal dynamics of the effect of ethnic rights restrictions on conflict escalation. To avoid reverse causality, I always drop restrictions if they followed, rather than preceded, the emergence of violence in the same year.

Finally, Z_{it} represents a vector of time-varying controls. This includes a large set of group-level variables which have been previously linked with separatist war, including whether separatist groups recently received a concession in the form of additional autonomy and/or cultural rights (Cunningham 2013a), whether groups have access to executive power at the central state level (Wimmer, Cederman, and Min 2009), whether groups enjoy a meaningful level of regional autonomy (Cederman et al. 2015), whether groups have achieved de facto independence (Florea 2014), whether the territory claimed by self-determination movements overlaps with known giant oil or gas fields (Lei and Michaels 2014), whether groups have transborder ethnic kin (Jenne 2007), their relative population size (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010), groups' level of spatial concentration (Toft 2003), whether groups were previously engaged in separatist armed conflict (Collier and Sambanis 2002), and cubic polynomials of "peace years", that is, the number of years since the last time a group was engaged in separatist violence or when the self-determination claim first emerged (Carter and Signorino 2010).[2] Country-level controls include a country's GDP per capita (logged) (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2003) and level of democracy (Cunningham 2013a). Data for all group-level controls is drawn from SDM 2.0, with the exception data on oil and gas fields (Cust, Rivera-Ballesteros, and Mihalyi 2021). Data on per-capita income comes from Fariss et al. (2022) and on democracy levels from V-Dem (Coppedge et al. 2023). Exact variable definitions and summary statistics can be found in Online Appendix, §1.

I estimate all models using linear regression, with standard errors clustered at the ethnic

[2] Some of the group-level controls change only rarely over time except when groups are involved in a country break-up (e.g., the presence of transborder ethnic kin).

group level to account for autocorrelation and heteroscedasticity. As is shown below, the results are similar when using alternative estimators that are robust to heterogeneous treatment effects. Finally, note that my preferred specification omits a number of potentially relevant confounders since my theory suggests they may be part of the causal chain linking ethnic rights restrictions to the violent escalation of self-determination conflicts (Dworschak 2024). Most notably, this includes the incidence of nonviolent protest, whether or not groups make claims for outright secession, and violent state repression. I report models including these variables in Online Appendix, §4. The results are similar.

Results

Table 1 shows the results of several two-way fixed effects regressions. Consistent with *H1*, model 1 suggests that the risk of self-determination conflicts escalating to violence increases by 3.8 [2.5, 5.1] percentage points after a recent ethnic rights restriction ($p < 0.001$). For comparison, the same model estimates that a one-standard deviation increase in a country's GDP per capita — one of the strongest known predictors of civil war (Hegre and Sambanis 2006) — decreases the escalation risk by 2.2 [-3.9, -0.5] percentage points. The effect of a recent ethnic rights restriction is also substantially larger than the 1.6 [0.0, 3.1] percentage points increase in the risk of violent escalation associated with the exclusion of ethnic groups from state power. Most other covariates do not have substantial effects (see Online Appendix, §2, for the complete results).

Model 2 in Table 1 separates the effects of major autonomy downgrades (which have been studied previously) and other types of ethnic rights restrictions (which have not). In keeping with theoretical expectations (*H2a*), I find that both major autonomy downgrades ($p < 0.05$) and other ethnic rights restrictions ($p < 0.001$) increase the risk of conflict escalation. This is an important result given the much higher frequency of ethnic rights restrictions that do not cross the threshold of a major autonomy downgrade. At 4.8 [1.0, 8.6] percentage points, the increase in the risk of violent escalation associated with a recent major autonomy downgrade is notably about 25% larger than the 3.6 [2.3, 5.0] percentage points increase associated with a recent minor restriction. However, the difference in the size of the coefficients is

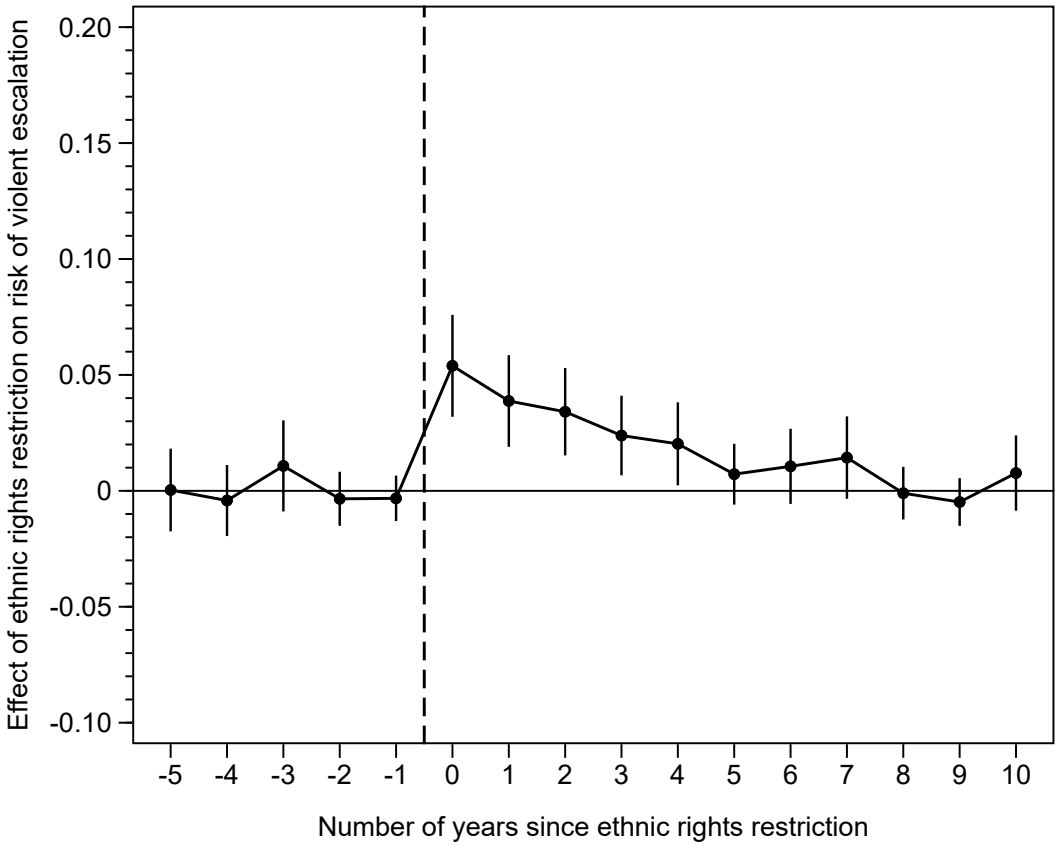
not statistically significant ($p = 0.53$). This means that *H2b* should be rejected, although the comparatively small number of major autonomy downgrades represents an important caveat.

Table 1: Two-way fixed effects regressions explaining the risk of conflict escalation

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Recent ethnic rights restriction	0.038***		0.037***	
	(0.007)		(0.007)	
Recent major autonomy downgrade		0.048*		
		(0.019)		
Recent other ethnic rights restriction		0.036***		
		(0.007)		
Placebo treatment			-0.003	
			(0.005)	
Recent ethnic rights restriction (non-targeted)				0.020*
				(0.008)
Group FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Standard controls	✓	✓	✓	✓
Groups	485	485	485	485
Countries	118	118	118	118
Years	1945–2020	1945–2020	1945–2020	1945–2020
Observations	15591	15591	15591	15591

Note: All models are estimated with linear regression. Standard errors clustered by the self-determination group in parentheses. FEs = fixed effects. $^{+}$ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 2: Dynamic treatment effects including 95% confidence intervals



The estimates reported thus far bundle the effects of restrictions in the current and the two previous two calendar years. Next, I more closely explore the temporal dynamics of the effect of ethnic rights restrictions on conflict escalation by estimating a distributed lag model including separate indicators for restrictions in the current and each of the previous 10 years. The results are shown in Figure 2. Consistent with theoretical expectations (*H1*), I find that the effect of ethnic rights restrictions on conflict escalation is largest in their immediate aftermath and decreases in subsequent years. After 5 years, the effect of ethnic rights restrictions can no longer be statistically distinguished from zero.

Evaluating the Parallel Trends Assumption

Whether or not the above estimates can be causally interpreted depends crucially on the plausibility of the parallel trends assumption. In the present context, this requires that the risk of conflict escalation would have moved in parallel in treated (i.e., movements that

were exposed to a restriction) and control cases (i.e., movements that were not exposed to a restriction) in the absence of any restrictions. The parallel trends assumption ultimately refers to a counterfactual and cannot, therefore, be directly tested. However, one common way to gauge the plausibility of the parallel trends assumption is to check whether outcomes moved in parallel during the pre-treatment period. To do so, I define a placebo treatment and code it 1 in the three years before an ethnic rights restriction, 0 otherwise. Model 3 in Table 1 shows the results when the placebo treatment is added to the standard specification. Consistent with the parallel trends assumption, I find that the placebo treatment effect is substantively close to zero and clearly not statistical significant ($p = 0.53$). Figure 2, which includes leads up to five years before an ethnic rights restriction, provides further evidence in favor of parallel pre-treatment trends.

Of course, despite parallel pre-treatment trends there remains a risk that trends would have diverged post-treatment even in the absence of ethnic rights restrictions (Gibson and Zimmerman 2021). To gain further insight into the plausibility of the parallel trends assumption, I report two types of formal sensitivity analysis in the Online Appendix. First, I evaluate the sensitivity of my causal estimates to violations of the parallel trends assumption (Rambachan and Roth 2023). The results (see Figure AX) suggest that the effect of ethnic rights restrictions on conflict escalation is robust to violations of the parallel trends assumption that are at least twice as large as the largest violation in the pre-treatment period. Second, I simulate an unobserved time-varying confounder (Cinelli and Hazlett 2020). I find that the effects of recent restrictions are robust to an unobserved confounder that is more than 10 times as strong as any of the observed covariates, and five times as strong as the combined effects of all observed covariates (see Figure AX). Overall, the sensitivity analyses suggest that the effect of recent ethnic rights restrictions on conflict escalation is robust to substantial amounts of hidden bias due to potential violations of the parallel trends assumption.

Finally, model 4 in Table 1 reports the effect of a subset of ethnic rights restrictions that are more plausibly exogenous to the dynamics of self-determination disputes. States typically restrict the ethnic rights of individual groups, and such "targeted" restrictions are likely to be an outcome of case-specific dynamics related to the underlying risk of conflict

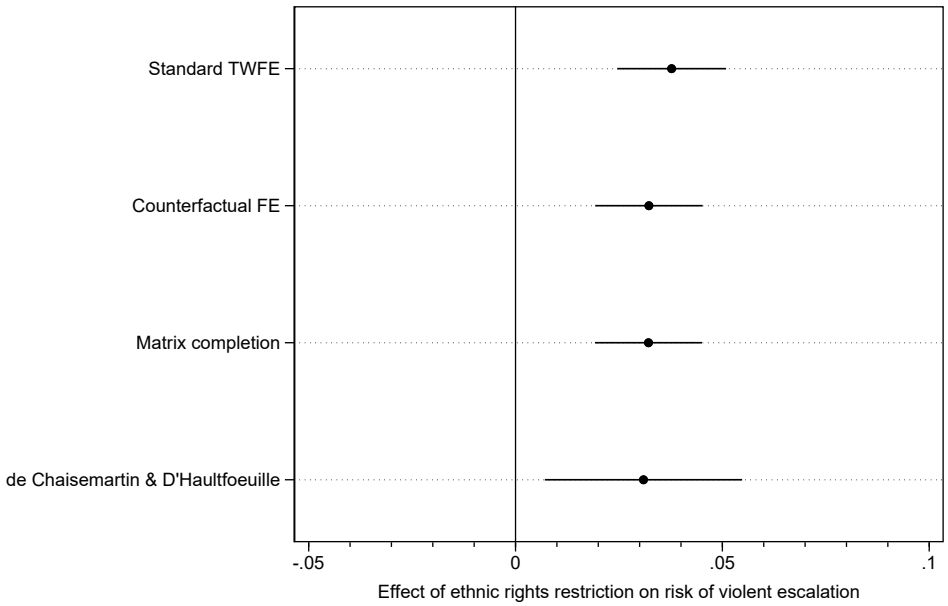
escalation. However, in around 40% of cases, ethnic rights restrictions result from broader reforms which affect many or even all ethnic groups in a state simultaneously. Examples include centralization policies affecting all regions at the same time and the revocation of legal guarantees protecting all minority languages or religions in a country. Because they affect many groups at the same time, such "non-targeted" restrictions are likely to be a result of country-wide developments. As a result, they should be less endogenous to the risk of a specific self-determination conflict escalating to violence. Further alleviating endogeneity concerns, I find that that non-targeted restrictions lead to similar, if slightly smaller, increases in the risk of conflict escalation ($p < 0.05$).

Additional Robustness Checks

A second potential concern with the above estimates is that standard two-way fixed effects regression can be biased in the presence of heterogeneous treatment effects (Goodman-Bacon 2021; Sun and Abraham 2021). In Figure 3, I thus report the results of three alternative difference-in-differences estimators that are robust to heterogeneous treatment effects: counterfactual fixed effects (Liu, Wang, and Xu 2024); counterfactual matrix completion (Liu, Wang, and Xu 2024); and the estimator proposed by de Chaisemartin and D'Haultfoeuille (2024). All estimates account for group-level heterogeneity, year-level heterogeneity, and the standard set of time-varying controls. In each case, I find similar results. It is worth noting that the matrix completion estimator relaxes the strict exogeneity assumption; under certain assumptions, matrix completion estimates are therefore robust to violations of the parallel trends assumption. The complete numerical results including additional explanations of the precise estimands and model specifications are reported in the Online Appendix, §2.

I report several additional robustness checks in Online Appendix, §4. First, I report models controlling for additional time-varying variables, such as whether the state made concessions to other groups, the level of movement fractionalization, and the size of a country's military. Second, I report models clustering standard errors at the country instead of the group level, as well as two-way clustered standard errors accounting for possible dependencies in both space and time. Finally, I use an alternative measure of violent escalation based exclusively on data from UCDP/PRIO (Gleditsch et al. 2002; Davies, Pettersson, and

Figure 3: Alternative difference-in-differences estimates including 95% confidence intervals



Öberg 2022). I invariably find similar results.

Causal Heterogeneity

Is the escalatory potential of ethnic rights restrictions shaped by structural grievances and the opportunity structure, as predicted by my third hypothesis? To find out, I add multiplicative interactions with the following time-varying covariates to my main specification: political exclusion, whether self-determination disputes were previously violent, state capacity, and a country's level of democracy. Following Fearon and Laitin (2003), I proxy for state capacity using a country's GDP per capita (logged). The results are shown in Table 2 and Figure 4).

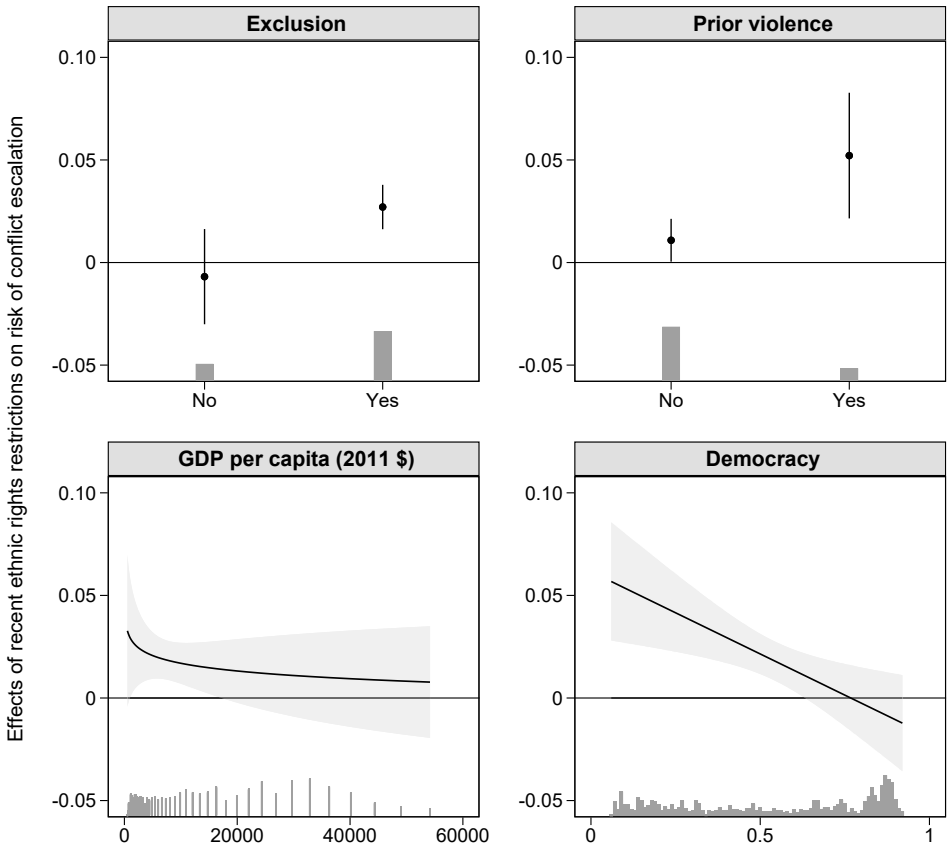
I find strong support for the argument that the effects of ethnic rights restrictions are shaped by the structural environment in which self-determination movements are operating. A particularly striking result emerges for political exclusion: a recent ethnic rights restriction only increases the risk of conflict escalation if the self-determination group is not represented in the national executive. Furthermore, self-determination conflicts are much more likely to escalate after an ethnic rights restriction if the dispute was previously violent. These results suggest that the escalatory potential of ethnic rights restrictions is highest where they are

Table 2: Multiplicative interaction models

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Recent ethnic rights restriction	0.007	0.026***	0.166**	0.080***	0.077
	(0.012)	(0.006)	(0.054)	(0.015)	(0.055)
Exclusion	0.014+	0.016*	0.016*	0.017*	0.014+
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Prior violence	-0.111***	-0.117***	-0.110***	-0.109***	-0.115***
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)
ln(GDP per capita)	-0.018*	-0.019*	-0.017*	-0.020**	-0.020**
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Democracy	0.003	0.003	0.001	0.014	0.012
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.010)
Recent restriction * exclusion	0.037**				0.034*
	(0.013)				(0.014)
Recent restriction * prior violence		0.050**			0.041*
		(0.017)			(0.017)
Recent restriction * ln(GDP per capita)			-0.015*		-0.005
			(0.006)		(0.007)
Recent restriction * democracy				-0.107***	-0.080**
				(0.025)	(0.029)
Group FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Year FEs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Standard controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Groups	485	485	485	485	485
Countries	118	118	118	118	118
Years	1945–2020	1945–2020	1945–2020	1945–2020	1945–2020
Observations	15591	15591	15591	15591	15591

Note: All models are estimated with linear regression. Standard errors clustered by the self-determination group in parentheses. FEs = fixed effects. $^{+}$ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 4: Conditional effects on conflict escalation including 95% confidence intervals, based on model 5 in Table 2



combined with pre-existing perceptions of unfair treatment by the state.

The interaction models also provide support to the idea that violence is particularly likely to emerge where ethnic rights restrictions are combined with an opportunity structure that favors the use of violence. While exclusion tends to be seen as an indicator of structural grievances, it also limits the opportunities available to ethnic groups to overturn restrictions nonviolently. Furthermore, a history of violence may mean that weapons and experienced fighters are more readily available. However, perhaps the clearest evidence in this direction comes from the interaction with democracy, which suggests that the risk of conflict escalation after a recent ethnic rights restriction is highest in autocracies with a democracy score close to 0 and decreases to zero in full-fleshed democracies with a democracy score close to 1.[3] This points to the conclusion that self-determination conflicts are likely to stay nonviolent even after an ethnic rights restriction if ethnic groups have access to nonviolent means of

[3] This result replicates with alternative measures of democracy (see Online Appendix, §5).

redress, and where nonviolent tactics are more likely to be effective.

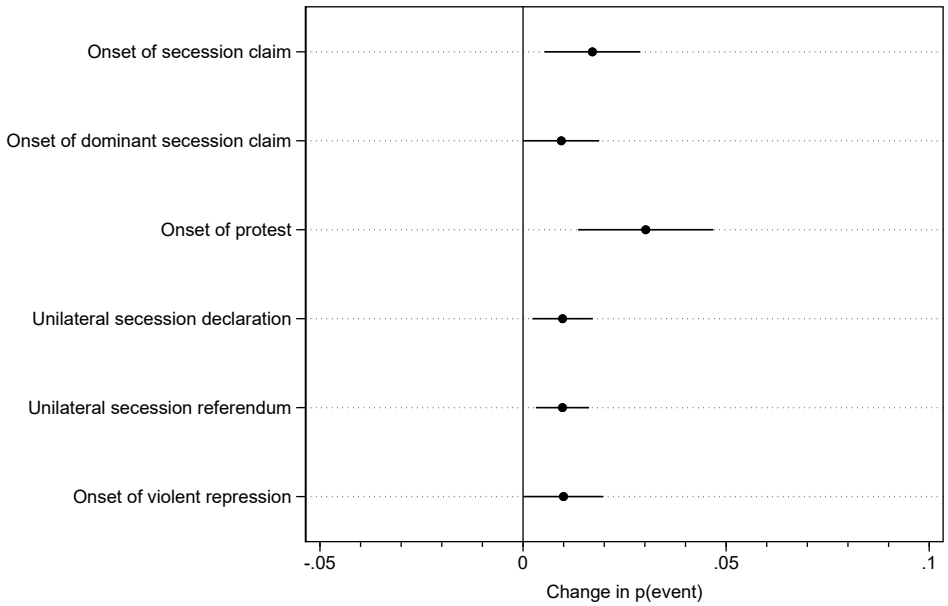
Finally, I also find partial support for the argument that ethnic rights restrictions are particularly prone to violence if the state is weak. However, the interaction with GDP per capita loses statistical significance when all interactions with structural context factors are jointly considered (see model 5 in Table 2). One possible reason are known challenges with the measurement of state capacity (Hendrix 2010). In Online Appendix, §5, I explore several alternative measures of state capacity. I find stronger support with some alternative measures (e.g., the Correlates of War Project's composite indicator of national capabilities) but not others (e.g., military personnel per population). Overall, then, the causal heterogeneity analysis suggests strong support for *H3a*, *H3b*, and *H3d*, while support for *H3c* is more mixed.

Causal Mechanisms

To provide further support to my theory, I explore the plausibility of a selection of my causal mechanisms. Above, I argued that ethnic rights restrictions may motivate a switch to violent tactics by causing a range of micro-level cognitive and affective reactions, such as perceptions unfair treatment by the state and emotions such as anger, which cannot be observed in a historical cross-national study such as this. However, I also argued that ethnic rights restrictions can more indirectly increase the risk of conflict escalation by affecting several more readily observable outcomes. This includes, first, that self-determination movements should become more likely to make radical claims for outright secession in the wake of ethnic rights restrictions. Relying on original data on the claims made by all self-determination movements between 1945 and 2020 and an analogous two-way fixed effects regression set-up, I indeed find that a recent ethnic rights restriction increases the probability of movements that hitherto have only made claims for internal autonomy starting to make claims for outright secession ($p < 0.01$; see Figure 5). Furthermore, I also find that ethnic rights restriction increase the probability of a self-determination movement's dominant claim switching from autonomy to secession ($p < 0.05$).

Second, my theory suggests that ethnic rights restrictions increase the probability of contentious nonviolent actions that could ultimately pave the road to violence, especially

Figure 5: Effects on selected causal mediators including 95% confidence intervals



since they may motivate states to respond with further heavy-handed repression. In keeping with this argument, I find that a recent minor ethnic rights restriction increases the probability of protests ($p < 0.001$), unilateral secession declarations ($p < 0.05$), unilateral secession referendums ($p < 0.01$), and the onset of lethal state repression ($p < 0.05$). I draw data on protest from the following datasets: NAVCO (Chenoweth and Shay 2022), Mass Mobilization (Clark and Regan 2016), and Strategies of Resistance (Cunningham, Dahl, and Frugé 2020); on secession referendums from the Contested Sovereignty dataset (Mendez and Germann 2018; Germann 2022); on lethal state repression from the Ethnic One-Sided Violence (Fjelde et al. 2021) and the UCDP Georeferenced Event (Sundberg and Melander 2013) datasets; and for secession declarations I rely on original data. Online Appendix, §5, contains additional details on measurement, model set-up, and the complete numerical results.

Conclusion

TBA

References

Ali, Abdel G., Ibrahim Elbadawi, and Atta El-Batahani. 2005. Sudan's Civil War. Why Has It Prevailed for So Long? In *Understanding Civil War. Volume 1: Africa,* edited by Paul Collier and Nicholas Sambanis, 193–219. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Mationalism.* London: Verso.

Bartusevicius, Henrikas, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2019. A Two-Stage Approach to Civil Conflict: Contested Incompatibilities and Armed Violence. *International Organization* 73 (1): 225–248.

Bell, Sam R., and Amanda Murdie. 2018. The Apparatus for Violence: Repression, Violent Protest, and Civil War in a Cross-National Framework. *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 35 (4): 336–354.

Blair, Robert A., and Nicholas Sambanis. 2020. Forecasting Civil Wars: Theory and Structure in an Age of "Big Data" and Machine Learning. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 64 (10): 1885–1915.

Bormann, Nils-Christian, and Burcu Savun. 2018. Reputation, Concessions, and Territorial Civil War: Do Ethnic Dominoes Fall, or Don't They? *Journal of Peace Research* 55 (5): 671–686.

Buhaug, Halvard. 2006. Relative Capability and Rebel Objective in Civil War. 42 (6): 691–708.

Cabitza, Mattia. 2012. *Peru's Indigenous People: From García to Humala Their Battle Goes On. The Guardian*, June 5.

Carter, David B., and Curtis S. Signorino. 2010. Back to the Future: Modeling Time Dependence in Binary Data. *Political Analysis* 18 (3): 271–292.

Cederman, Lars-Erik, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, and Halvard Buhaug. 2013. *Inequality, Grievances, and Civil War.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cederman, Lars-Erik, Simon Hug, Andreas Schädel, and Julian Wucherpfennig. 2015. Territorial Autonomy in the Shadow of Future Conflict: Too Little, Too Late? *American Political Science Review* 109 (2): 354–370.

Cederman, Lars-Erik, Simon Hug, Livia I. Schubiger, and Francisco Villamil. 2020. Civilian Victimization and Ethnic Civil War. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 64 (7-8): 1199–1225.

Cederman, Lars-Erik, and Manuel Vogt. 2017. Dynamics and Logics of Civil War. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61 (9): 1992–2016.

Cederman, Lars-Erik, Nils Weidmann, and Kristian S. Gleditsch. 2011. Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison. *American Political Science Review* 105 (3): 478–495.

Cederman, Lars-Erik, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min. 2010. Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis. *World Politics* 62 (1): 87–119.

Chenoweth, Erica, and Christopher W. Shay. 2022. Updating Nonviolent Campaigns: Introducing NAVCO 2.1. *Journal of Peace Research* 59 (6): 876–889.

Chinn, Jeff, and Steven D. Roper. 1995. Ethnic Mobilization and Reactive Nationalism: The Case of Moldova. *Nationalities Papers* 23 (2): 291–325.

Cinelli, Carlos, and Chad Hazlett. 2020. Making Sense of Sensitivity: Extending Omitted Variable Bias. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series B (Statistical Methodology)* 82 (1): 39–67.

Clark, David, and Patrick Regan. 2016. *Mass Mobilization Protest Data.* https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/HTTWYL.

Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoeffler. 2004. Greed and Grievance in Civil War. *Oxford Economic Papers* 56 (4): 563–595.

Collier, Paul, and Nicholas Sambanis. 2002. Understanding Civil War: A New Agenda. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46 (1): 3–12.

Coppedge, Michael, John Gerring, Carl Henrik Knutsen, Staffan I. Lindberg, Jan Teorell, David Altman, Michael Bernhard, et al. 2023. *V-dem country-year dataset v13.*

Correa, Sofía, Gaétan Nandong, and Mehdi Shadmehr. n.d. Grievance Shocks and Coordination in Protest. *American Journal of Political Science,* 1–14.

Cunningham, David E., Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, Belén González, Dragana Vidović, and Peter B. White. 2017. Words and Deeds: From Incompatibilities to Outcomes in Anti-Government Disputes. *Journal of Peace Research* 54 (4): 468–483.

Cunningham, Kathleen Gallagher. 2013a. Actor Fragmentation and Civil War Bargaining: How Internal Divisions Generate Civil Conflict. *American Journal of Political Science* 57 (3): 659–672.

———. 2013b. Understanding Strategic Choice: The Determinants of Civil War and Nonviolent Campaign in Self-Determination Disputes. *Journal of Peace Research* 50 (3): 291–304.

———. 2014. *Inside the Politics of Self-Determination.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cunningham, Kathleen Gallagher, Marianne Dahl, and Anne Frugé. 2020. Introducing the Strategies of Resistance Data Project. *Journal of Peace Research* 57 (3): 482–491.

Cust, James, Alexis Rivera-Ballesteros, and David Mihalyi. 2021. The Economic Effects of Giant Oil and Gas Discoveries. The American Association of Petroleum Geologists, ENI, Armstrong Oil & Gas, Inc., / Repsol.

Davenport, Christian. 2007. State Repression and Political Order. *Annual Review of Political Science* 10:1–23.

Davies, James C. 1962. Toward a Theory of Revolution. *American Sociological Review* 27 (1): 5–19.

Davies, Shawn, Therése Pettersson, and Magnus Öberg. 2022. Organized Violence 1989–2021 and Drone Warfare. *Journal of Peace Research* 59 (4): 593–610.

de Chaisemartin, Clément, and Xavier D'Haultfoeuille. 2024. Difference-in-Differences Estimators of Intertemporal Treatment Effects. Mimeo, Sciences Po. https://ssrn.com/abstract=3731856.

Dworschak, Christoph. 2024. Bias Mitigation in Empirical Peace and Conflict Studies: A Short Primer on Posttreatment Variables. *Journal of Peace Research* 61 (3): 462–476.

Fariss, Christopher J., Therese Anders, Jonathan N. Markowitz, and Miriam Barnum. 2022. New Estimates of Over 500 Years of Historic GDP and Population Data. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 66 (3): 553–591.

Fearon, James D. 1995. Rationalist Explanations for War. *International Organization* 49 (3): 379–414.

Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 2003. Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War. *American Political Science Review* 97 (1): 75–90.

Fjelde, Hanne, Lisa Hultman, Livia Schubiger, Lars-Erik Cederman, Simon Hug, and Margareta Sollenberg. 2021. Introducing the Ethnic One-Sided Violence Dataset. *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 38 (1): 109–126.

Florea, Adrian. 2014. De Facto States in International Politics (1945-2011): A New Dataset. *International Interactions* 40 (5): 788–811.

Forsberg, Erika. 2013. Do Ethnic Dominoes Fall? Evaluating Domino Effects of Granting Territorial Concessions to Separatist Groups. *International Studies Quarterly* 57 (2): 329–340.

Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Germann, Micha. 2022. Pax Populi? An Analysis of the Conflict Resolution Potential of Referendums on Self-Determination. *European Political Science Review* 14 (3): 403–423.

Germann, Micha, and Nicholas Sambanis. 2021. Political exclusion, lost autonomy, and escalating conflict over self-determination. *International Organization* 75 (1): 178–203.

Gibson, Landon, and Frederick Zimmerman. 2021. Measuring the Sensitivity of Difference-in-Difference Estimates to the Parallel Trends Assumption. *Research Methods in Medicine & Health Sciences* 2 (4): 148–156.

Gleditsch, Nils P., Peter Wallensteen, Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Sollenberg, and Havard Strand. 2002. Armed Conflict 1946-2001: A New Dataset. *Journal of Peace Research* 39 (5): 615–637.

Goodman-Bacon, Andrew. 2021. Difference-in-Differences with Variation in Treatment Timing. *Journal of Econometrics* 225 (2): 254–277.

Grossman, Guy, Devorah Manekin, and Dan Miodownik. 2015. The Political Legacies of Combat: Attitudes Toward War and Peace Among Israeli Ex-Combatants. *International Organization* 69 (4): 981–1009.

Gurr, Ted R. 2000. *Peoples versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century.* Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Gurr, Ted R., and Will H. Moore. 1997. Ethnopolitical Rebellion: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of the 1980s with Risk Assessments for the 1990s. *American Journal of Political Science* 41 (4): 1079–1103.

Hechter, Michael. 2000. *Containing Nationalism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hegre, Havard, and Nicholas Sambanis. 2006. Sensitivity Analysis of Empirical Results on Civil War Onset. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50 (4): 508–535.

Hendrix, Cullen S. 2010. Measuring State Capacity: Theoretical and Empirical Implications for the Study of Civil Conflict. *Journal of Peace Research* 47 (3): 273–285.

Hewitt, Christopher, and Tom Cheetham. 2000. *Encyclopedia of Modern Separatist Movements.* Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO.

Horowitz, Donald L. 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Jenne, Erin K. 2007. *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Kitschelt, Herbert P. 1986. Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest: Anti-Nuclear Movements in Four Democracies. *British Journal of Political Science* 16 (1): 57–85.

Knotter, Lucas. 2021. Why Declare Independence? Observing, Believing, and Performing the Ritual. *Review of International Studies* 47 (2): 252–271.

Laitin, David D. 1995. National Revivals and Violence. *European Journal of Sociology* 36 (1): 3–43.

———. 1998. *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lei, Yu-Hsiang, and Guy Michaels. 2014. Do Giant Oilfield Discoveries Fuel Internal Armed Conflicts? *Journal of Development Economics* 110:139–157.

Lichbach, Mark I. 1987. Deterrence or Escalation? The Puzzle of Aggregate Studies of Repression and Dissent. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 31 (2): 266–297.

Lindemann, Stefan, and Andreas Wimmer. 2018. Repression and Refuge: Why only Some Politically Excluded Ethnic Groups Rebel. *Journal of Peace Research* 55 (3): 305–319.

Liu, Licheng, Ye Wang, and Yiqing Xu. 2024. A Practical Guide to Counterfactual Estimators for Causal Inference with Time-Series Cross-Sectional Data. *American Journal of Political Science* 68 (1): 160–176.

Loizides, Neophytos G. 2010. State Ideology and the Kurds in Turkey. *Middle Eastern Studies* 46 (4): 513–527.

McGrath, Liam F. 2017. Estimating Onsets of Binary Events in Panel Data. *Political Analysis* 23 (4): 534–549.

Mendez, Fernando, and Micha Germann. 2018. Contested Sovereignty: Mapping Referendums on Sovereignty over Time and Space. *British Journal of Political Science* 48 (1): 141–165.

Minahan, James. 2002. *Encyclopedia of the Stateless Nations: Ethnic and National Groups Around the World.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

———. 2016. *Encyclopedia of the Stateless Nations: Ethnic and National Groups Around the World. Second Edition.* Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press.

Minorities at Risk Project. 2009. *Minorities at Risk Dataset.* http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/. College Park, MD.

Minority Rights Group International. 2023. *World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples.* http://www.minorityrights.org/directory/.

Natali, Denise. 2005. *The Kurds and the State: Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran.* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Paine, Jack. 2019. Ethnic Violence in Africa: Destructive Legacies of Pre-Colonial States. *International Organization* 73 (3): 645–683.

Petersen, Roger Dale. 2002. *Understanding Ethnic Violence: Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rambachan, Ashesh, and Jonathan Roth. 2023. A More Credible Approach to Parallel Trends. *Review of Economic Studies* 90 (5): 2555–2591.

Rasler, Karen. 1996. Concessions, Repression, and Political Protest in the Iranian Revolution. *American Sociological Review* 61 (1): 132–152.

Reed, William. 2000. A Unified Statistical Model of Conflict Onset and Escalation. *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (1): 84–93.

Roth, Christopher F. 2015. *Let's Split! A Complete Guide to Separatist Movements and Aspirant Nations, from Abkhazia to Zanzibar.* Sacramento, CA: Litwin Books.

Saltford, John. 2003. *The United Nations and the Indonesian Takeover of West Papua, 1962–1969: The Anatomy of Betrayal.* London: RoutledgeCurzon.

Sambanis, Nicholas, Micha Germann, and Andreas Schädel. 2018. SDM: A New Data Set on Self-determination Movements with an Application to the Reputational Theory of Conflict. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62 (3): 656–686.

Sambanis, Nicholas, and Jonah Schulhofer-Wohl. 2019. Sovereignty Rupture as a Central Concept in Quantitative Measures of Civil War. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63 (6): 1542–1578.

Saxton, Gregory D., and Michelle A. Benson. 2006. Structure, Politics, and Action: An Integrated Model of Nationalist Protest and Rebellion. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 12 (2): 137–175.

Siroky, David S., and John Cuffe. 2015. Lost Autonomy, Nationalism and Separatism. *Comparative Political Studies* 48 (1): 3–34.

Snow, David A, Daniel M Cress, Liam Downey, and Andrew W Jones. 1998. Disrupting the "Quotidian": Reconceptualizing the Relationship between Breakdown and the Emergence of Collective Action. *Mobilization* 3 (1): 1–22.

Sun, Liyang, and Sarah Abraham. 2021. Estimating Dynamic Treatment Effects in Event Studies with Heterogeneous Treatment Effects. *Journal of Econometrics* 225 (2): 175–199.

Sundberg, Ralph, and Erik Melander. 2013. Introducing the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset. *Journal of Peace Research* 50 (4): 523–532.

Swaan, Abraam de. 2001. *Words of the World.* Cambridge: Polity.

Tikuisis, Peter, David Carment, and Yiagadeesen Samy. 2013. Prediction of Intrastate Conflict Using State Structural Factors and Events Data. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 57 (3): 410–444.

Toft, Monica Duffy. 2003. *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Troebst, Stefan. 1998. *Conflict in Kosovo: Failure of Prevention? An Analytical Documentation, 1992-1998. ECMI Working Paper #1.* https://www.ecmi.de/publications/ecmi-research-papers/01-conflict-in-kosovo-failure-of-prevention-an-analytical-documentation-1992-1998.

Vogt, Manuel, Kristian S. Gleditsch, and Lars-Erik Cederman. 2021. From Claims to Violence: Signaling, Outbidding, and Escalation in Ethnic Conflict. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 65 (7-8): 1278–1307.

Walter, Barbara F. 2006. Information, Uncertainty, and the Decision to Secede. *International Organization* 60 (1): 105–135.

———. 2009. *Reputation and Civil War: Why Separatist Conflicts Are so Violent.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ward, Michael D., Brian D. Greenhill, and Kristin M. Bakke. 2010. The Perils of Policy by p-Value: Predicting Civil Conflicts. *Journal of Peace Research* 47 (4): 363–375.

Ward, Michael D., Nils W. Metternich, Cassy L. Dorff, Max Gallop, Florian M. Hollenbach, Anna Schultz, and Simon Weschle. 2013. Learning from the Past and Stepping into the Future. *International Studies Review* 15 (4): 473–490.

Wimmer, Andreas, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Brian Min. 2009. Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict: A Configurational Analysis of a New Global Data Set. *American Sociological Review* 74 (2): 316–337.

Young, Joseph K. 2013. Repression, Dissent, and the Onset of Civil War. *Political Research Quarterly* 66 (3): 516–532.