Political Exclusion, Lost Autonomy, and Escalating Conflict over Self-Determination

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Abstract

Most civil wars are preceded by nonviolent forms of conflict. While it is often assumed that violent and nonviolent conflicts are *qualitatively* different and have different causes, that assumption is rarely tested empirically. This paper uses a two-step approach to explore whether political exclusion and lost autonomy—two common causes of civil war according to extant literature—are associated with the emergence of nonviolent separatist claims, with the escalation of nonviolent separatist claims to war, or both. Our analysis suggests that different types of grievances matter more at different stages of conflict escalation. We find that political exclusion is a significant correlate of the escalation of nonviolent claims for self-determination to violence, while its association with the emergence of nonviolent separatist claims is weaker. By contrast, lost autonomy is correlated with both the emergence of nonviolent separatist claims and (if autonomy revocations are recent) their escalation to violence. We argue that these results are consistent with both grievance- and opportunity-based theories of conflict.

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1 Introduction

The conventional approach to the quantitative study of civil war is to compare observations of civil war onset to a heterogeneous control group that combines cases of actual peace with cases of nonviolent conflict of varying type and intensity. This approach has identified some robust correlates of civil war, but it has ignored the question of conflict escalation. Civil wars almost always grow from nonviolent claims expressed intra- or extra-institutionally (Cunningham et al. 2017), so to understand civil war we must really understand why nonviolent conflicts escalate. A key insight from the literature on contentious politics is that we cannot simply assume that violent and nonviolent conflict have different causes (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly 2001). To effectively test civil war theories, we need to study the process of conflict escalation from nonviolent claims to violence.

We address this gap in the literature by analyzing the role of ethnic grievance factors in the process of conflict escalation. Recent studies have established that grievances increase the risk of ethnic war (Cederman, Wimmer & Min 2010, Wimmer, Cederman & Min 2009). However, these studies cannot tell us whether grievances have this effect because they trigger the emergence of nonviolent claims, or because they affect the likelihood that such claims, once formed, will turn violent. We are aware of only two studies that explicitly consider the effects of ethnic grievances on conflict escalation and they point to mutually contradictory conclusions (Bartusevicius & Gleditsch 2019, Lindemann & Wimmer 2018). Thus, the exact role of grievances in conflict processes remains an open question.

We focus our analysis on conflicts over self-determination. Self-determination (or separatist) conflicts revolve around disagreements over ethnic self-rule. While fundamentally domestic in nature, separatist conflicts can have important consequences for the international system. Separatist claims led to the formation of more than twenty new states since the end of the Cold War, as well as several *de facto* states and officially sanctioned autonomy regimes. Separatism can sow the seeds for major inter-state disputes, as it has in Sudan, Kashmir, and eastern Ukraine, and it accounts for more than a third of all civil wars fought since 1945. However, according to a novel data source that we describe

in more detail below, 90% of all separatist movements emerged as nonviolent—and two thirds of all separatist movements never turned to violence. This paper explores whether ethnic grievances are associated with the emergence of nonviolent claims for greater autonomy or statehood and with the escalation of those claims to violence.

Previous literature has analyzed the effect of ethnic grievances on both separatist and center-seeking wars. An advantage of our narrower focus is that we can theorize the role of grievances among a set of cases with greater causal homogeneity and, therefore, with greater specificity. We focus on two sources of grievances that are widely seen as pertinent in the context of separatism: the exclusion of ethnic groups from state power and losses of territorial autonomy, which can arise due to both domestic reasons (e.g., state consolidation or assimilation) and international dynamics (e.g., annexation, conquest, or border changes). Combining insights from different theoretical traditions, we argue that while exclusion and lost autonomy may fuel both the emergence of nonviolent separatist claims and their escalation to violence, they are not equally relevant at each stage of conflict escalation in part because they create different incentives for mobilization and opportunities for redress.

In keeping with a processual conception of conflict, our empirical analysis involves two steps. In the first, we estimate the association between grievances (exclusion and lost autonomy) and the onset of nonviolent separatist claims, broadly defined to include both extra-institutional protest and institutional mobilization. In the second step, we establish the association of the same two grievance factors with escalation to separatist civil war conditional on a prior nonviolent separatist claim. Our analysis combines recently introduced, group-level data on violent and nonviolent claims for self-determination (Sambanis, Germann & Schädel 2018) with data on political exclusion (Wimmer, Cederman & Min 2009, Vogt et al. 2015) and new data on recent and historical autonomy loss for more than 750 ethnic groups around the world.

We find empirical support for our argument that not all types of ethnic grievance are equally relevant at different stages of separatist conflict escalation. According to our results, autonomy loss has a strong and highly robust association with the emer-

gence of nonviolent separatist claims while exclusion does not. We suggest that this could be because exclusion is more likely to motivate efforts to re-gain inclusion in the central government rather than mobilization for territorial autonomy or secession. However, exclusion from the central government is robustly associated with the escalation of nonviolent separatist claims to violence. We argue that this is in part because lack of government representation reduces the effectiveness of pursuing separatist claims nonviolently. Finally, our results suggest an association between autonomy loss and violent escalation; however, that applies only to recent autonomy revocations and not to historical cases of autonomy loss. A possible reason is that distant memories from the past do not inspire the same degree of resentment.

These new results contradict claims by opportunity theorists who see no significant role for grievances in the escalation of nonviolent claims to violence. However, they also suggest that sharp distinctions between opportunity and grievance factors may be misguided since exclusion could be related to the escalation of nonviolent separatist claims via both affective mechanisms highlighting the role of state illegitimacy and unfairness and by shaping the opportunity structure. This points to the intertwined logics of grievances and opportunities, which are complementary, rather than competing explanations for conflict.

2 Related Literature and Approach

2.1 The Classic Debate

Classic studies by Gurr (1970), Horowitz (1985), and others see grievances as a direct cause of both nonviolent contention and rebellion. However, that view has been questioned by the opportunity school, which argues that while grievances may be necessary for the formation of nonviolent claims and social movements, they are too ubiquitous to explain why some dissident groups resort to violence and others do not. For Tilly (1978) and other opportunity theorists, it is not grievances that are the key to understanding why nonviolent conflicts escalate, but the political opportunity structure—constraints

and costs to violent mobilization. These arguments are echoed in political economy approaches, such as Fearon & Laitin (2003) and Collier & Hoeffler (2004).

Recent studies have challenged the primacy of opportunity over grievances as an explanation of rebellion. Using new data coded at the ethnic group level, Wimmer, Cederman, and Min show that political exclusion, defined as the lack of representation of ethnic groups in a state's governing coalition, is strongly correlated with ethnic war onset (Wimmer, Cederman & Min 2009, Cederman, Wimmer & Min 2010). Other studies using group-level data suggest that losses of territorial autonomy (Cederman et al. 2015, Saxton & Benson 2006) or wealth differences between ethnic groups (Cederman, Gleditsch & Buhaug 2013) are associated with ethnic civil war.

While these studies changed the debate on the role of grievances in civil war, a limitation is that they do not account for prior nonviolent mobilization. They cannot, therefore, establish whether grievances are directly related to civil war onset or indirectly, through their effect on nonviolent mobilization. A series of recent studies have linked political exclusion, lost autonomy, and other grievance factors with the emergence of extra-institutional protest campaigns (e.g. Chenoweth & Ulfelder 2017, Cunningham 2013*b*) and the occurrence of self-determination claims (Siroky & Cuffe 2015, Sorens 2012). Overall, it remains unclear whether grievances affect only the emergence of nonviolent claims (as opportunity theory predicts) or both the emergence of nonviolent claims and their escalation to violence (as grievance theory predicts).

2.2 Approach and Antecedents

To improve our understanding of the role of grievances in civil war processes, we need to shift to a more processual understanding of intra-state conflict. We do so by using a two-step approach that first considers the role of ethnic grievance factors in the emergence of nonviolent separatist claims and, in a second step, their role in the escalation of nonviolent claims to separatist war. This approach allows us to explore the role of ethnic grievances at different stages in the process of conflict escalation.

Our focus on escalation has antecedents in a small number of quantitative studies

(e.g. Cunningham 2013*a*). Directly relevant is a recent article by Lindemann & Wimmer (2018), which investigates the conditions under which 58 ethnic groups with high propensities for rebellion resort to arms. Their findings suggest that *both* grievances (resulting from indiscriminate state violence) and opportunities (in the form of refuge areas) matter for conflict escalation. Our study complements the findings of Lindemann & Wimmer in two main ways. First, we consider the association between violent outbreaks and *nonviolent forms of indiscriminate repression*, specifically revocations of autonomy and lack of representation at the center. Second, we use a two-step approach that allows us to explicitly distinguish the effects of grievances on nonviolent claims and their escalation in the same framework.

Two-step models similar to ours are common in the literature on inter-state war, but we are aware of only two prior studies employing this approach in the literature on civil war (Bartusevicius & Gleditsch 2019, Cunningham et al. 2017). The most directly relevant study is by Bartusevicius & Gleditsch, who also use a two-step approach to investigate the role of ethnic exclusion and discrimination in intra-state conflict. Their findings suggest that ethnic exclusion/discrimination is positively related to the emergence of "incompatibilities" between the state and domestic challengers, but *not* with the escalation of incompatibilities to violence, thus adding to skepticism regarding the role of grievances in violent rebellion. But while we agree with Bartusevicius & Gleditsch about the value of two-step approaches, we believe that their study design suffers from limitations that make us question their findings.

First, Bartusevicius & Gleditsch simultaneously analyze both ethnic and non-ethnic conflicts; and they conduct all analysis at the country level. However, there is no reason to expect that ethnic grievances should be related to *non-ethnic* conflict escalation; and aggregating all group-level data to the country level implies that the effects of group-specific grievances cannot be adequately captured. Group-level data, as we use below, is more appropriate to study group-specific escalation.

Second, Bartusevicius & Gleditsch argue that civil wars are only likely to emerge from extra-institutional nonviolent mobilization, such as demonstrations, strikes, or civil

disobedience. They suggest that as a result, institutional nonviolent mobilization can be disregarded in the study of conflict escalation. We disagree with this view. While most civil wars have roots in some kind of nonviolent conflict, the build-up to civil wars does not necessarily progress linearly from institutional to extra-institutional contention to war (McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly 2001). There can be direct transitions from institutional contention to war, such as when militant and extremist groups capture party politics (Mansfield & Snyder 2005). According to a recent data collection, only 26% of separatist violence onsets were preceded by one or more out of five common forms of extra-institutional mobilization in the previous year (40% when considering the three years preceding violence onsets) (Cunningham, Dahl & Frugé 2017). While a narrow focus on extra-institutional contention may be consistent with recent studies of nonviolent strategies of resistance (e.g. Chenoweth & Ulfelder 2017, Cunningham, Dahl & Frugé 2017), it is not necessarily the right approach when it comes to the study of conflict escalation as it results in omitting the nonviolent formative stages of some civil wars. Therefore, in our analysis we choose to rely on a broader definition of nonviolent conflict that includes any kind of organized nonviolent claim-making, including institutional forms.

Finally, Bartusevicius & Gleditsch draw their data on extra-institutional protest from the CONIAS dataset (Schwank et al. 2013). This compounds the problems we described above because CONIAS covers protests only if they cross an (ambiguously defined) intensity threshold. In particular, CONIAS includes protests only if they are rejected by the state as "unacceptable", which makes it even more likely that the nonviolent formative stages of civil wars are missing. Two thirds of the conflicts included in CONIAS are violent from the start (Bartusevicius & Gleditsch 2019, p. 230) despite clear evidence of prior nonviolent mobilization in many cases (see section 1 in the online appendix for details). Furthermore, by dropping "acceptable" forms of protest, CONIAS selects out protest campaigns that are unlikely to turn violent—especially in democracies, where demonstrations and strikes are widely accepted means of claim-making—and this can lead to bias. To avoid these problems, we rely on an alternative source of data on nonviolent separatist claims with improved coverage of the nonviolent formative stages of

separatist wars.

3 Theory

In this section, we develop a refined theory of the role of exclusion and lost autonomy in separatist conflict processes. Consistent with grievance theory, we expect that exclusion and lost autonomy matter at both conflict stages; however, we argue that exclusion has a weaker relation with the emergence of nonviolent separatism as it generates different mobilization incentives and opportunities for redress. Moreover, we suggest that affective mechanisms are not the only possible link between grievances and violent escalation.

3.1 Exclusion, Lost Autonomy, and Nonviolent Claims for Self-Determination

Existing theories point to two different mechanisms linking exclusion and lost autonomy to the emergence of nonviolent separatist claims. First, they can both lead to a collective interest in increasing ethnic self-determination. In the case of exclusion, this is because exclusion violates a core principle of political legitimacy in the modern era—rule by co-ethnics—and because it can generate economic inequality and material deprivation (Cederman, Wimmer & Min 2010). Lost autonomy, in turn, can stoke resentment about the group's diminished social status and incentivize efforts to restore the group's former power (Hechter 2000).

Second, ethnic grievances generated by exclusion or lost autonomy can alleviate collective action problems (Cederman, Gleditsch & Buhaug 2013). Both exclusion and lost autonomy can be perceived as a form of nonviolent, indiscriminate repression targeting an ethnic group. The indiscriminate nature of such repression should increase ethnic solidarity (Gurr 2000) and, by triggering emotions such as fear and resentment, increase the willingness to resist (Nugent 2019, Young 2019).

These mechanisms can provide ethnic groups with a motive and increase their ability to pursue nonviolent separatist claims. However, we argue that autonomy loss should

have a stronger association with nonviolent separatist claims than exclusion. This is because aggrieved groups do not only face a choice between no action or mobilizing for territorial self-determination. Ethnic groups can also mobilize for inclusion at the center; and as representation at the center is likely to reduce political and economic dominance by 'ethnic others', mobilizing for inclusion can be an equally if not more attractive goal for excluded groups. By contrast, regaining territorial self-rule clearly constitutes the most direct form of redress for groups who have lost territorial autonomy. Therefore, we expect that autonomy losses are primary motives in the nonviolent pursuit of self-determination, whereas exclusion will have a weaker association.

H1: Both exclusion and lost autonomy are associated with a higher risk of nonviolent separatist claim onset, but the association between exclusion and nonviolent separatist claim onset is weaker.

So far we have taken a static view of grievances, but timing is likely to matter. Grievance theory suggests that, the more recent are grievances due to state policy, the more intensely felt is the frustration and motivation for collective action (Snow et al. 1998). In particular, recent retractions of autonomy are more likely to generate resentment about unfair treatment by the state and push groups to "reverse the reversal" (Cederman et al. 2015, Petersen 2002). Recent autonomy retractions should therefore be especially likely to increase the onset of nonviolent separatist claims.

However, analogously to our previous argument, this does not necessarily extend to recent loss of representation at the center. In fact, recent exclusion could plausibly have no effect at all. Compared to groups that have always been excluded, groups that until recently have formed part of a state's governing coalition are likely to have a relatively high degree of attachment to the state or nation. While recent exclusion is likely to motivate collective action, such action is likely to be directed at regaining representation at the center. We therefore expect that recent exclusion has either a weak or no association with the onset of nonviolent separatist claims.

H2: Recent autonomy loss is associated with a higher risk of nonviolent separatist claim onset, whereas recent exclusion has a weak or no association.

3.2 Escalation to Violence

Given social norms against the use of violence and considering the high costs of violent conflict, groups seeking self-determination are likely to make nonviolent claims initially. However, as Gurr (1970) and other grievance theorists have long maintained, grievances can increase the risk that nonviolent claims escalate to violence. In part, that is because perceptions of unfair treatment by the state increase the plausibility, justifiability, and diffusion of the idea that the state needs to be violently "smashed" and reorganized (Goodwin 1997, Wood 2003). Moreover, perceptions of unfair treatment increase the willingness of group members to participate in risky actions and rebellion (Petersen 2002).

In contrast to our argument about the emergence of nonviolent claims, we expect both exclusion and lost autonomy to have strong effects on escalation to separatist violence. The fact that groups have articulated an interest in greater self-rule and have begun to mobilize means that they can overcome some problems to collective action; and affective mechanisms triggered by either exclusion or autonomy loss should make it more likely that nonviolent claims escalate to violence. However, affective mechanisms are not the only possible link with violent escalation. We argue that exclusion may also be connected to violent escalation as it limits the opportunity to pursue claims nonviolently. The tactical choices of dissident groups are at least in part based on rational cost-benefit evaluations (e.g. Tilly 1978). Therefore, factors such as state capacity that are commonly associated with opportunity models should shape the decision to escalate (Fearon & Laitin 2003). But so should exclusion, which reduces access to institutional channels for claim-making and thereby the effectiveness of nonviolent strategies. More generally, persistent grievances, including those due to autonomy losses, demonstrate to nonviolent movements the futility of nonviolent tactics.

The bargaining model of war provides further support for the idea that both exclusion and autonomy revocations make it more likely that nonviolent separatist claims escalate to war. The bargaining model highlights the role of information asymmetries and commitment problems that impede the peaceful resolution of conflicts (Fearon 1995). Exclusion or revocations of autonomy serve as reminders that the state cannot be trusted to up-

hold a settlement, thereby magnifying the commitment problems from the perspective of groups challenging the state (Sambanis & Zinn 2004, Siroky & Cuffe 2015). Grievances due to long-standing exclusion or autonomy loss could also increase perceptions of issue indivisibility. Highly aggrieved groups are more likely to make maximalist claims, such as claims for outright secession (Regan & Norton 2005)—and territory is much harder to divide than sovereignty (Goddard 2006).

H3: Both exclusion and lost autonomy are associated with increased risk that nonviolent separatist claims escalate to violence.

The preceding discussion suggests that the risk of conflict escalation is highest if grievances are recently imposed. Recent status downgrades—such as losing representation at the center or losing autonomy—are especially likely to stoke ethnic violence due to resentment and desire for revenge. At the same time, commitment problems are magnified if the state has recently moved to curtail a group's rights. Moreover, since an active separatist claim signals a diminished attachment to the state/nation, a recent loss of power at the center will further diminish national identification and fuel the risk of violent escalation.

H4: Both recent exclusion and recent autonomy loss are associated with increased risk that nonviolent separatist claims escalate to violence.

4 Data

4.1 Self-Determination Claims

We use data from the recently introduced self-determination movements (SDM) dataset (Sambanis, Germann & Schädel 2018), which codes all SDMs from 1945 to 2012. SDMs are defined as movements constituted by one or more organizations that are connected to an ethnic group making claims for territorially-defined self-rule. SDM includes a broad range of claims ranging from limited internal autonomy demands (e.g. Mayas in Mexico) to demands for national independence (e.g. Scots in the UK) or merger with another state (e.g. Serbs in Bosnia). There must be evidence of organized political mobilization

for a movement to be included in SDM. Mobilization may be violent or nonviolent, extra-institutional, or part of conventional politics. SDM codes an end to a movement if a group ceases to make public claims or the group secedes.

For each year of activity SDM codes whether there was violent separatist conflict over self-rule, defined as lethal conflict with casualties on both sides. Both major wars and low-intensity wars are included. SDM draws its data on separatist war from several sources, including the UCDP dataset (Gleditsch, Wallensteen, Eriksson, Sollenberg & Strand 2002), Doyle & Sambanis (2006), and Minorities at Risk (MAR) (Gurr 2000). The left panel of Figure 1 gives annual counts of the number of violent and nonviolent SDMs.

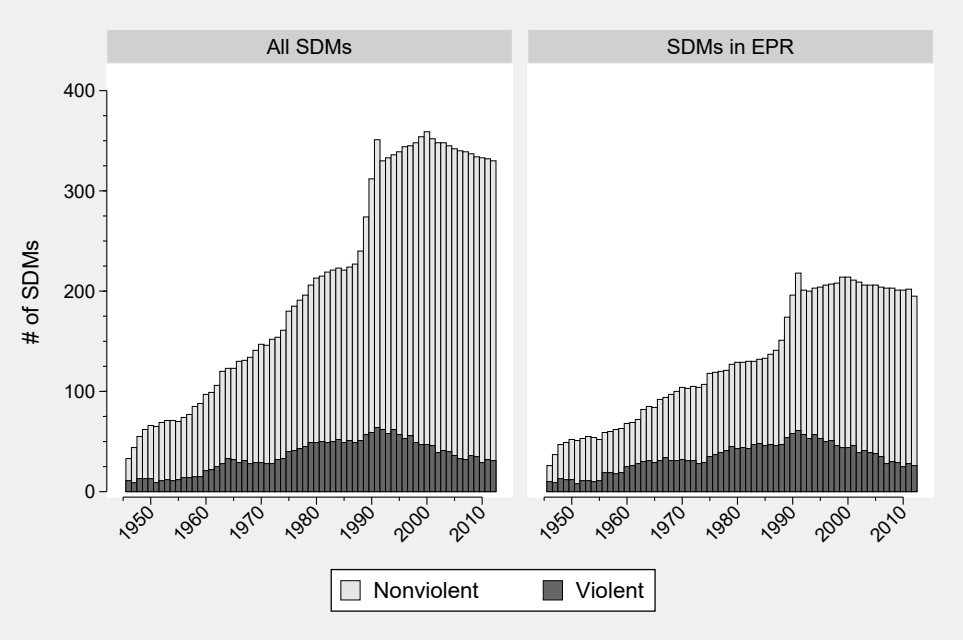
SDM significantly improves coverage of separatist claims relative to previously available sources, especially when it comes to nonviolent claims and the nonviolent formative stages of separatist wars.[1] Overall, SDM identifies 464 self-determination movements in 120 countries[2]—or around three times as many separatist conflicts as CONIAS or the well-known dataset by Cunningham (2014) during similar time frames. Two thirds of the separatist conflicts in SDM never became violent and only 10% of the separatist conflicts were violent in their first year. By comparison, half of the separatist conflicts identified by Cunningham became violent and a quarter were violent from the start. In the CONIAS dataset, 80% of the separatist conflicts were violent and almost half were violent in their first year (suggesting that CONIAS used violence outbreaks as an indication that protests were "unacceptable" to the government, per our earlier discussion).

4.2 EPR

We merge the SDM data on separatist claims with group-level data on exclusion from the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset (Wimmer, Cederman & Min 2009), version 2014 (Vogt et al. 2015). EPR is less likely than MAR to over-represent groups that are discriminated against by the state and merging with EPR allows us to engage with previous studies on political exclusion. However, it is important to note that our reliance

[1] See section 2 in the online appendix for an extended discussion.
[2] The supplementary materials include coding notes for all 464 cases.

Figure 1: Annual frequencies of violent and nonviolent self-determination claims



on EPR also has costs since by anchoring our study on EPR we lose many of the groups in SDM. In particular, EPR only includes groups defined over race, language, or religion. Similarly to MAR and other extant sources of data on separatism, the SDM dataset in addition considers regionally-defined groups (e.g. the Lombards in Italy). Given EPR's narrower definition of ethnicity, these cannot be included here. EPR also does not code groups in overseas territories and provides no data for 1945. Overall, we are able to match 289 of the 464 SDMs to EPR groups, or 62%.[3] The SDMs that can be linked to EPR are somewhat more likely to have engaged in separatist violence, but a majority (55%) never used violence, and in only 22 cases were self-rule claims violent from the start. The right panel in Figure 1 gives annual breakdowns of the number of violent and nonviolent SDMs in EPR.

4.3 Dependent Variables

We analyze two binary dependent variables. The first captures the onset of a nonviolent claim for self-determination, coded 1 in the first year an organization made a separatist claim on behalf of an ethnic group and 0 otherwise while dropping the 22 cases of SDMs

[3]See section 3 of the online appendix for more details.

that start violent. All group-year observations with an ongoing separatist claim after the first year are dropped. Overall, there are 192 nonviolent separatist claim onsets in our data. A total of 13 groups have two onsets due to discontinuous separatist activity. No group has more than two.

The second dependent variable captures conflict escalation, coded 1 if we observe a transition from a nonviolent separatist claim to separatist violence and 0 otherwise. All observations without a prior nonviolent separatist claim are dropped, including the 22 cases of SDMs that start violent, as are observations with ongoing armed conflict. We code 159 cases of conflict escalation; 77 are 'first-time' escalations, while the other 82 represent cases of conflict recurrence in the same state-group dyad.

4.4 Main Explanatory Variables

Our main explanatory variables are political exclusion and lost autonomy. We use data on exclusion from the EPR dataset, which measures exclusion as a binary variable indicating whether a group has (0) or does not have (1) representation in the national executive at the beginning of a calendar year.[4]

We provide new data on autonomy loss. Many previous studies have drawn data on lost autonomy from MAR (e.g. Siroky & Cuffe 2015), but MAR covers only a fraction of the groups in EPR (250 out of EPR's 800 groups). We revised and expanded the MAR data on lost autonomy to include all EPR groups in our analysis. Similarly to MAR, lost autonomy is coded equal to 1 under three scenaria: if a group used to control an independent state that was annexed, invaded, or no longer exists for any other reason (e.g., the Estonians in the former Soviet Union); if a change of borders leads to groups being stranded outside of their home state (e.g., Russians in Ukraine after 1991); and if a group had, but lost, significant internal autonomy within a larger state (e.g., the Kosovar Albanians in Serbia after 1989). For all three scenaria we code autonomy loss since the year 1800. We drew on a broad array of sources for the coding of lost autonomy, including several encyclopedias focused on ethnic and separatist groups, Encyclopedia Britannica,

[4]We revised EPR's coding of political exclusion in selected cases (see the online appendix).

the country studies series of the Library of Congress, EPRs regional autonomy indicator, MAR, and various case-specific sources.[5]

As it captures more than 200 years of ethnic group histories, this measure of autonomy loss is fairly static. To test our hypotheses about the short-term implications of losses of autonomy and losing representation, we code two additional binary variables measuring, respectively, whether groups lost representation at the center or autonomy during the previous two years.

4.5 Controls

We control for a large number of variables that have been associated with separatist war in previous studies. Group-level controls include regional concentration; relative group size; cross-border separatist kin groups; regional autonomy; presence of oil/natural gas resources; mountainous terrain; and non-contiguity to the main body of the country. The latter three are specific to ethnic settlement areas and therefore available only for regionally concentrated groups. Country-level controls include constant GDP per capita (in logs); total population size (in logs); democracy score; federal institutions; and the total number of politically relevant ethnic groups. Systemic conditions that might influence separatism are captured by a binary indicator for the Cold War. The online appendix provides information on data sources and summary statistics.

5 Results

5.1 Nonviolent Separatist Claim Onset

We start by analyzing the effects of exclusion and lost autonomy on the onset of nonviolent separatist claims, 1946–2012. Table 1 reports descriptive statistics and Table 2 a series of regression models. We drop all groups that dominate the executive branch of government without sharing power with any other groups (e.g. Turks in Turkey) because these groups almost by definition make no separatist claims against the state that they control. To

[5]See section 4 of the online appendix for additional details.

Table 1: Nonviolent separatist claim onset propensity by exclusion and lost autonomy

	Obs.	# of claim onsets	
Exclusion:			
No	8527	35	0.41%
Yes	15160	157	1.04%
Lost autonomy (since 1800):			
No	12541	55	0.44%
Yes	11146	137	1.23%
Recent exclusion (2 years):			
No	23460	189	0.81%
Yes	227	3	1.32%
Recent autonomy loss (2 years):			
No	23516	179	0.76%
Yes	171	13	7.60%
Total	23687	192	0.81%

account for time dependence, all regression models include cubic polynomials counting the number of years since the beginning of the sampling period or since the last time a group made a claim (Carter & Signorino 2010). We estimate both logit regressions with region fixed effects (odd model numbers) and ordinary least square regressions with country fixed effects (even model numbers). Standard errors are clustered by country. The unit of analysis is the country-group-year.

Consistent with *H1*, we find a positive, statistically significant, and robust association between lost autonomy and the onset of nonviolent separatist claims.[6] According to model 1 in Table 2, groups that have experienced a loss of autonomy since 1800 are 0.9 percentage points more likely (0.4% vs 1.3%) to start making a nonviolent separatist claim ($p < 0.01$).[7] For comparison, regional concentration, which many consider a necessary condition for separatism, increases the probability of a nonviolent separatist claim onset in the same model by 0.8 percentage points (from 0.2% to 1%). Cross-border separatist kin—another frequently cited factor conducive to separatism—leads to an increase of 0.5 percentage points (from 0.8% to 1.3%).

Model 1 also suggests a positive correlation between exclusion and the onset of non-

[6] All regressions control for a group's level of autonomy, which allows us to estimate the effect of autonomy *loss* at different levels of observed autonomy.

[7] All predicted probabilities are based on the observed values approach.

Table 2: Regression models explaining the onset of nonviolent separatist claims

	(1) Logit	(2) OLS	(3) Logit	(4) OLS	(5) Logit	(6) OLS	(7) Logit	(8) OLS
Ethnic grievances:								
Exclusion	0.987**	0.004+	0.718*	0.004				
	(0.314)	(0.002)	(0.324)	(0.003)				
Lost autonomy (since 1800)	1.098**	0.013***	0.871**	0.014***				
	(0.354)	(0.003)	(0.295)	(0.004)				
Recent exclusion (2 years)					0.516	0.006	0.617	0.007
					(0.508)	(0.007)	(0.497)	(0.009)
Recent autonomy loss (2 years)					2.363***	0.069*	2.113***	0.077*
					(0.434)	(0.027)	(0.457)	(0.032)
Group-level controls:								
Regional concentration	1.562***	0.009**			1.860***	0.014***		
	(0.372)	(0.003)			(0.376)	(0.003)		
Relative group size	0.536	-0.006	-0.272	-0.009	-1.274+	-0.015**	-1.798*	-0.021**
	(0.668)	(0.005)	(0.786)	(0.008)	(0.656)	(0.005)	(0.822)	(0.008)
Separatist $\text{kin}_{t\text{-}1}$	0.555**	0.008**	0.611**	0.008*	0.630**	0.009**	0.694**	0.008*
	(0.202)	(0.003)	(0.235)	(0.004)	(0.208)	(0.003)	(0.251)	(0.004)
Regional autonomy	0.210	0.002	0.036	0.003	-0.144	-0.000	-0.220	0.000
	(0.298)	(0.005)	(0.371)	(0.006)	(0.342)	(0.005)	(0.391)	(0.006)
Hydrocarbon $\text{reserves}_{t\text{-}1}$			0.679*	0.005			0.652*	0.002
			(0.268)	(0.003)			(0.304)	(0.003)
Mountainous terrain			0.203	-0.002			0.193	-0.001
			(0.356)	(0.004)			(0.329)	(0.004)
Noncontiguity			2.112**	0.023			2.200**	0.021
			(0.737)	(0.022)			(0.695)	(0.022)
Country-level controls:								
$\ln(\text{GDP per capita}_{t\text{-}1})$	0.454*	0.006	0.380	0.009+	0.414+	0.007	0.342	0.009+
	(0.215)	(0.004)	(0.241)	(0.005)	(0.224)	(0.004)	(0.251)	(0.005)
$\ln(\text{country population}_{t\text{-}1})$	0.339**	-0.005	0.306**	-0.010	0.340**	-0.005	0.297**	-0.008
	(0.108)	(0.007)	(0.110)	(0.009)	(0.113)	(0.007)	(0.115)	(0.010)
$\text{Democracy}_{t\text{-}1}$	-1.068	-0.021*	-1.848*	-0.018	-1.521*	-0.022*	-2.120**	-0.021
	(0.749)	(0.010)	(0.802)	(0.013)	(0.683)	(0.010)	(0.743)	(0.013)
Federal $\text{state}_{t\text{-}1}$	0.526	0.002	0.620+	-0.000	0.395	0.003	0.585+	0.002
	(0.371)	(0.012)	(0.333)	(0.015)	(0.392)	(0.011)	(0.344)	(0.014)
Number of relevant groups	-0.034***	-0.000	-0.034***	0.000	-0.030***	-0.000	-0.031***	0.000
	(0.007)	(0.001)	(0.008)	(0.001)	(0.007)	(0.001)	(0.007)	(0.001)
Systemic conditions:								
Cold War	-0.037	0.001	-0.295	-0.001	-0.152	-0.000	-0.372	-0.002
	(0.326)	(0.004)	(0.358)	(0.005)	(0.323)	(0.004)	(0.355)	(0.005)
Time controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FEs	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Country FEs	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Only concentrated groups	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Groups	686	686	528	528	686	686	528	528
Countries	140	140	121	121	140	140	121	121
Observations	23612	23612	18169	18169	23612	23612	18169	18169

Note: All models include a constant (not shown). Standard errors clustered by country in parentheses. $^{+}$ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

violent separatist claims. However, this correlation is both smaller[8] and less robust. As model 2 shows, the association of exclusion with nonviolent separatist claim onset misses conventional levels of statistical significance when country fixed effects are included ($p = 0.09$). By contrast, the effect of autonomy loss since 1800 increases in both size (+1.3 per-

[8]Model 1 implies that exclusion increases the probability of a nonviolent claim onset by 0.7 percentage points, from 0.4% to 1.1%.

centage points) and statistical significance ($p < 0.001$) when accounting for unobserved country-level heterogeneity. Similar conclusions are reached when we restrict the sample to regionally concentrated groups (see models 3 and 4). Regional concentration comes close to a necessary condition for separatism[9] and restricting the sample to concentrated groups allows us to include three additional controls that are specific to ethnic settlement areas: the presence of hydrocarbon reserves, non-contiguity, and mountainous terrain.[10]

Models 5 to 8 in Table 2 re-estimate the same suit of models while replacing the static versions of exclusion and lost autonomy with our variables measuring recent exclusion and recent autonomy loss within the previous two years. In line with *H2*, model 5 suggests that a recent autonomy revocation is associated with a 6 percentage point increase in the probability of a nonviolent separatist claim onset in model 5 (from 0.8% to 7%, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that ethnic groups that have recently experienced a loss of autonomy are almost 800% more likely to make nonviolent claims for self rule. This result is robust to the inclusion of country fixed effects (model 6) and to the addition of numerous controls (models 7 and 8). Meanwhile, we find no evidence to suggest that recent loss of representation would affect the probability of nonviolent separatist claim onset; a conclusion already suggested by a simple χ^2-test ($p = 0.39$).[11]

We report additional robustness checks in section 8 of the online appendix, including models with only region or country fixed effects and no other controls, models with a large battery of additional controls, a formal sensitivity analysis to assess sensitivity to hidden bias, changing the threshold used to code historical losses of autonomy from 1800 to 1900; and using different temporal cut-offs for the recent exclusion and recent autonomy loss variables. Overall, these additional checks suggest that both historical and recent autonomy loss have a highly robust, positive association with nonviolent separatist claim

[9]Only 5% of the nonviolent separatist claim onsets in our data involve groups that lack regional concentration as coded in EPR.

[10]In section 10 of the online appendix, we investigate whether the association of exclusion with nonviolent nonviolent separatist claim onset is conditional on groups having lost autonomy; and, conversely, if the association of lost autonomy with nonviolent nonviolent separatist claim onset is stronger or weaker for excluded groups. Although it is plausible that group resentment is maximized when both forms of repression are present, we see no clear evidence for interactive effects in the data. Due to the low number of cases, we cannot explore interactions involving recent exclusion and/or recent autonomy loss.

[11]There are only 3 instances of nonviolent separatist claim onset after a recent loss of representation. The overlap is therefore too limited for formal hypothesis testing in regression models.

onset whereas political exclusion at the center does not. The formal sensitivity analysis provides additional evidence that the effect of exclusion is sensitive to violations of the exogeneity assumption. Moreover, we find that the effect of exclusion (but not autonomy losses) is sensitive to dropping influential countries with large numbers of nonviolent separatist claim onsets, such as Russia and the former Soviet Union. Across a large number of specification and measurement choices, recent loss of representation almost never has a statistically significant effect.

Summing up the results thus far, we find strong evidence that autonomy loss and especially recent autonomy revocations are correlated with the onset of nonviolent separatist claims. Meanwhile, exclusion has a weaker association with nonviolent separatist claim onset that is not robust, whereas recent exclusion is clearly uncorrelated. These results could suggest that exclusion (especially if recent) is more likely to lead to mobilization aimed at reinstating the group's representation at the center rather than a push for self-determination. We posit this as a hypothesis in need of further testing, since a direct test would require the collection of new group-level data on nonviolent claims for more inclusion in central government. We cannot, therefore, rule out that exclusion is simply a weaker type of grievance around which to mobilize nonviolently.

5.2 Conflict Escalation

Most SDMs in our data remain nonviolent; and those that do escalate are, on average, preceded by 9 years of nonviolent claim-making before the first outbreak of violence. We now explore whether exclusion and lost autonomy are associated with the violent escalation of SDMs, 1946–2012. The unit of analysis remains the country-group-year, but all analyses are now conditional on prior nonviolent separatist claims. The dependent variable is conflict escalation, defined as a transition from nonviolent separatist claims to separatist war. Table 3 shows descriptive statistics for each type of grievance.

Table 4 reports the regression results. We show separate models for first-time escalations (dropping all observations after the first incidence of violence) and all escalations (including cases of war recurrence). All regressions include controls for time dependence

Table 3: Escalation propensity by exclusion and lost autonomy

	First-time escalation			All escalations		
	Obs.	# of escalations		Obs.	# of escalations	
Exclusion:						
No	1088	11	1.01%	1485	27	1.82%
Yes	3683	66	1.79%	5200	132	2.54%
Lost autonomy (since 1800):						
No	1299	11	0.85%	1795	24	1.34%
Yes	3472	66	1.90%	4890	135	2.76%
Recent exclusion (2 years):						
No	4739	74	1.56%	6638	155	2.34%
Yes	32	3	9.38%	47	4	8.51%
Recent autonomy loss (2 years):						
No	4728	71	1.50%	6616	145	2.19%
Yes	43	6	13.95%	69	14	20.29%
Total	4771	77	1.61%	6685	159	2.38%

(cubic polynomials of the number of years since the group first made a nonviolent separatist claim or, where applicable, since the last spell of separatist war). As before, we estimate both logit models with region fixed effects (odd model numbers) and ordinary least squares regressions with country fixed effects (even model numbers). As the groups that make separatist claims are almost all regionally concentrated and this allows us to include the full set of controls, all regression models restrict the sample to concentrated groups (results are similar when all groups are included; see the online appendix). Standard errors are clustered at the country level.

In line with *H3*, we find evidence that nonviolent claims are more likely to escalate to separatist war if groups are excluded from power. According to model 1, exclusion increases the risk of first-time escalation by 1.5 percentage points (from 0.7% to 2.2%, $p < 0.01$). If we include cases of war recurrence in the analysis (see model 5), exclusion increases escalation risk by 1.2 percentage points (from 1.6% to 2.8%, $p < 0.05$). The magnitude of these changes is similar to the association of per capita GDP with escalation[12]; GDP per capita is generally considered the strongest predictor of civil war

[12]According to models 1 and 5, respectively, moving GDP per capita from the 25th to the 75th percentile decreases the risk of first-time escalation by 1.3 percentage points and the risk of all escalations by 1.2 percentage points.

Table 4: Regression models explaining the escalation of nonviolent separatist claims to separatist war

	First-time escalation				All escalations			
	(1) Logit	(2) OLS	(3) Logit	(4) OLS	(5) Logit	(6) OLS	(7) Logit	(8) OLS
Ethnic grievances:								
Exclusion	1.135**	0.024*			0.607*	0.021+		
	(0.386)	(0.012)			(0.267)	(0.011)		
Lost autonomy (since 1800)	0.353	0.004			0.299	0.008		
	(0.371)	(0.005)			(0.263)	(0.007)		
Recent exclusion (2 years)			1.190*	0.068			0.589	0.044
			(0.573)	(0.044)			(0.488)	(0.040)
Recent autonomy loss (2 years)			1.086*	0.067			1.877***	0.178***
			(0.512)	(0.044)			(0.360)	(0.051)
Group-level controls:								
Relative group size	1.188	0.029+	-0.509	0.002	-0.056	0.028	-0.952	-0.001
	(1.029)	(0.017)	(1.195)	(0.019)	(0.875)	(0.019)	(1.067)	(0.020)
Separatist $\text{kin}_{t\text{-}1}$	0.318	-0.002	0.644+	0.004	0.356+	0.003	0.538**	0.008
	(0.378)	(0.009)	(0.368)	(0.008)	(0.198)	(0.007)	(0.198)	(0.006)
Regional autonomy	0.556	0.013	0.471	0.010	0.347	0.014	0.319	0.012
	(0.504)	(0.013)	(0.475)	(0.012)	(0.301)	(0.011)	(0.275)	(0.010)
Hydrocarbon $\text{reserves}_{t\text{-}1}$	0.142	0.009	0.247	0.010	0.216	0.021+	0.188	0.021+
	(0.367)	(0.009)	(0.333)	(0.010)	(0.286)	(0.011)	(0.241)	(0.011)
Mountainous terrain	0.217	0.003	0.354	0.005	0.506	0.013	0.502	0.016+
	(0.588)	(0.013)	(0.612)	(0.012)	(0.353)	(0.009)	(0.372)	(0.009)
Noncontiguity	-0.885	0.020	-0.420	0.029	-0.710	0.016	-0.635	0.026*
	(0.651)	(0.014)	(0.605)	(0.018)	(0.475)	(0.011)	(0.485)	(0.013)
Country-level controls:								
$\ln(\text{GDP per capita}_{t\text{-}1})$	-0.615*	-0.012	-0.563*	-0.013	-0.323+	-0.006	-0.272	-0.007
	(0.243)	(0.009)	(0.223)	(0.009)	(0.169)	(0.007)	(0.168)	(0.008)
$\ln(\text{country population}_{t\text{-}1})$	-0.060	-0.019	-0.038	-0.015	-0.005	-0.018	0.003	-0.015
	(0.153)	(0.022)	(0.151)	(0.022)	(0.103)	(0.014)	(0.101)	(0.014)
$\text{Democracy}_{t\text{-}1}$	-0.288	0.015	-0.762	0.010	-0.417	-0.012	-0.554	-0.014
	(0.987)	(0.016)	(0.862)	(0.014)	(0.624)	(0.018)	(0.643)	(0.018)
Federal $\text{state}_{t\text{-}1}$	0.153	0.004	-0.065	-0.001	0.259	0.013	0.185	0.008
	(0.416)	(0.031)	(0.343)	(0.028)	(0.302)	(0.025)	(0.284)	(0.023)
Number of relevant groups	-0.010	0.000	-0.005	0.000	-0.015	-0.001	-0.012	-0.000
	(0.017)	(0.002)	(0.016)	(0.002)	(0.012)	(0.001)	(0.012)	(0.001)
Systemic conditions:								
Cold War	0.472	0.015*	0.547+	0.014+	0.086	0.010	0.154	0.009
	(0.346)	(0.008)	(0.309)	(0.008)	(0.190)	(0.006)	(0.189)	(0.007)
Time controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FEs	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Country FEs	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Only concentrated groups	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
No. of groups	221	221	221	221	260	260	260	260
No. of countries	86	86	86	86	89	89	89	89
Observations	4452	4452	4452	4452	6351	6351	6351	6351

Note: All models include a constant (not shown). Standard errors clustered by country in parentheses. $^{+}$ $p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

onset. Models 2 and 6 suggest that exclusion remains positively associated with both first-time escalation ($p < 0.05$) and all escalations ($p = 0.06$) when country fixed effects are included.

Table 3 shows that escalations are around twice as likely among groups that have lost autonomy; however this correlation misses conventional levels of statistical significance after regression adjustment (see Table 4). A possible reason is that this variable captures historical losses of autonomy going back decades or longer. Resentment and other effects of autonomy loss may dissipate over time. In line with *H4*, we find much larger and statistically significant associations when looking at more recent autonomy losses. This applies especially when we include repeated escalations. According to model 7, a recent autonomy revocation increases the risk of violent escalation by a massive 10 percentage points (from 2% to 12%, $p < 0.001$). If we drop cases of war recurrence, the association with escalation is smaller (+3 percentage points according to model 3, $p < 0.05$) and misses conventional levels of statistical significance when country fixed effects are included (model 4). Although we cannot make any causal claims with this analysis, these patterns could suggest that the logic of conflict escalation is different in conflicts that have already turned violent; and that revocations of autonomy are then especially damaging. The violence and protests in the aftermath of the recent scrapping of Kashmir's special autonomy arrangement offer a case in point. However, the small number of cases constitute a significant limitation and we point out that the unadjusted escalation risk after a recent autonomy downgrade is not too different in the first-time escalation sample (see Table 3).

Finally, Table 3 also points to a possible relation between recent exclusion and conflict escalation. However, there are only 32 instances of groups losing representation at the center during an active nonviolent separatist claim and in only 3 cases do we see a violent escalation. In regression models, we generally find no statistically significant association; but in light of the small number of cases, we cannot fully explore the connection between recent exclusion and escalation.

Additional results reported in section 9 of the online appendix suggest that the effects of recent autonomy loss (when including cases of war recurrence) and exclusion survive a large number of robustness checks, model specification changes to add/drop controls, models using different temporal cut-offs to code recent autonomy loss, and models drop-

ping influential countries with multiple instances of conflict escalation.[13] We get similar results when using data on separatist armed conflict from a different source (UCDP) and, according to a formal sensitivity analysis, the effects of these variables are relatively robust to unobserved confounders.[14] We also find evidence that exclusion has a pronounced effect on conflict escalation if groups are not only powerless, but actively discriminated against by the state. This is consistent with our theoretical framework, given that discrimination is likely to increase resentments against the state and commitment problems.[15]

5.3 Beyond Exclusion and Lost Autonomy

The regression models reported above control for many common predictors of separatist war onset. Therefore, our results also allow us to shed light on the ability of variables other than exclusion and lost autonomy to account for the escalation of nonviolent separatist claims. First, though, it is worth noting that several of our controls have more or less robust associations with the emergence of nonviolent separatist claims—this is true notably for regional concentration, territorial non-contiguity, country-level population size, and GDP per capita. However, we find that many of the variables that are purported to measure "opportunity" for insurgency (e.g. non-contiguity, mountainous terrain, and country population) (Fearon & Laitin 2003) have no robust association with the escalation of nonviolent separatist claims to violence. Similarly, resource wealth (hydrocarbon reserves) in the territory occupied by separatist groups, relative group size, as well as (see Tables S11 and S15 in the online appendix) regional concentration, the size of a government's military, and occurrences of civil war in neighboring countries have no

[13]We find no evidence for a meaningful interaction between exclusion and lost autonomy (see section 10 of the online appendix).

[14]Unobserved factors correlated with selection into the nonviolent conflict stage and with violent escalation could bias estimates. Sample selection models constitute a standard econometric response, but these require a valid instrument. As we explain in section 5 of the online appendix, we do not believe that a valid instrument for nonviolent separatist conflict can be found. While this limits our ability to make causal claims, the formal sensitivity analysis helps improve our confidence in the correlations we have presented and establishes their robustness to hidden sources of bias.

[15]Further evidence for a connection between exclusion and violent separatist claims emerges as all but one of the 22 separatist claims that started out as violent involve excluded groups (see section 11 in the online appendix).

robust association with the escalation of nonviolent separatist claims.

An important conclusion that emerges from our analysis is that many of the variables that have been thought to explain the outbreak of separatist war are in fact capturing conditions that are conducive to the emergence of nonviolent separatist claims and cannot explain why nonviolent separatist claims escalate to violence. An exception is country-level GDP per capita, which has a positive and significant association with the onset of nonviolent separatist claims and a negative and significant correlation with violent escalation. Income is therefore one of the few covariates that increase the specificity of models of separatist war beyond exclusion and recent autonomy loss. Additional results reported in the online appendix suggest that the proximity of an ethnic group to international land borders can also increase the risk of escalation. This is consistent with arguments about the difficulty of state-building in peripheral areas and with previous results on the destabilizing effect of cross-border groups and cross-border sanctuaries (Salehyan 2007).

6 Conclusion

Patterns of conflict escalation have been under-explored in the literature on civil war. We made use of novel data and a two-step approach to explore the role of ethnic grievances in separatist conflict processes. While our analysis cannot identify causal effects of exclusion or lost autonomy, the two-step approach improves over the conventional way of modeling civil war onset and produces valuable new insights.

One new insight is that ethnic grievances matter for both the onset of nonviolent separatist claims and the escalation of such claims to violence; however, different types of grievances matter more at different stages of the escalation process. On the one hand, we find that while political exclusion is robustly associated with the escalation of separatist conflicts to violence, exclusion has no robust association with the emergence of nonviolent separatist claims. A possible explanation that could be usefully explored further using qualitative methods is that excluded groups often choose to mobilize for representation

at the center rather than pursue territorial self-determination; and that this might reflect a higher attachment to the nation for groups that have had some prior experience of inclusion. On the other hand, our results suggest that whereas both recent and more historic autonomy losses increase the probability that groups start to make nonviolent separatist claims, only recent autonomy revocations affect the escalation risk.

Taken as a whole, our analysis contradicts claims by opportunity theorists that grievances are too ubiquitous to explain why conflicts escalate from nonviolent claims to violence while lending support to grievance theory as articulated previously by Gurr, Horowitz, Cederman, and Wimmer. However, this paper adds a more nuanced perspective to this literature that puts grievances front and center while also supporting opportunity-cost theories of mobilization and rebellion. Political exclusion is not simply a measure of grievance; reduced access to the state implies diminished opportunities to address grievances nonviolently and, in turn, limited opportunities for the nonviolent adjudication of disputes increase the risk of war. More generally, consistent with recent studies that merge grievance- and process-based theories (Lindemann & Wimmer 2018, Shadmehr 2014) we find that factors associated with both grievance and opportunity models (especially country wealth and proximity of ethnic groups to borders) are associated with the escalation of separatist conflicts from nonviolent claims to violence.

That said, we also found that many other variables that are thought to be "determinants" of civil war cannot in fact distinguish between violent and nonviolent separatist claims. While models of civil and separatist war tout their specificity and predictive accuracy, many of their key explanatory variables seem to explain separatist claims generally, rather than separatist war *per se*. Our results suggest that the extant literature on civil war may be overly confident about its ability to identify the causes of war onset, which could explain the predictive failures that have been identified by scholars in the forecasting literature (Ward, Greenhill & Bakke 2010).

Our analysis points to several avenues for future research. First, future research could extend our focus on separatist conflict processes and collect analogous data on ethnic

claims for representation at the center. That would allow similar two-step tests of the role of ethnic grievances and other factors in ethnic conflicts related to control over the center, including a direct test of one of our key predictions—that exclusion has a weaker association with the emergence of nonviolent separatist claims as many excluded groups instead mobilize for inclusion.

Second, we employed a broad understanding of nonviolent separatist claims that includes both institutional and extra-institutional mobilization. While this allowed us to more reliably cover the nonviolent formative stages of separatist war, it could also be instructive for future research to disentangle escalation patterns following different forms of nonviolent claim-making. Of interest would be to explore *nonviolent escalation* from conventional claim-making to extra-institutional protest.

Finally, even though the number of cases we had to work with was small, our finding that recent autonomy revocations make escalation to separatist war more likely suggests that a cognitive shift away from structural indicators to more fine-grained data and dynamic models could prove the key to increasing the specificity of civil war models and improving out-of-sample predictions. A promising avenue for further research would be to collect detailed event data on both violent and nonviolent government responses to groups making claims for self-determination.

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