

# Territorial Autonomy in the Shadow of Future Conflict: Too Little, Too Late?\*

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## Abstract

A number of scholars have argued that territorial autonomy arrangements prevent and reduce secessionist conflict. By offering concessions to ethnonationalist rebels, governments can potentially help bring about political stability. Other experts warn against such measures since they could deepen ethnic divisions and empower the secessionists by strengthening their institutional capacity, thus increasing the likelihood of future conflict. Despite the amount of research conducted in this area, the debate between the two positions remains unresolved. This study tries to bring more clarity to the debate by setting up a clear baseline for comparison and by considering the effect of prior conflict. Basing our analysis on ethnic groups around the world since WWII, we investigate the influence of both governmental and territorial power sharing before and after the outbreak of the first conflict. Our evidence indicates that both types of governance have a strongly conflict-preventing effect in situations where there is no prior conflict history. In post-conflict settings, however, only inclusion in power sharing arrangements at the central level reduces the probability of conflict recurrence. By contrast, post-conflict use of regional autonomy is most likely too little, too late. While suggestive, these findings are still preliminary in the sense that future data improvements and more sophisticated analysis taking endogeneity fully into account could possibly strengthen the case of autonomy as a conflict management tool.

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# 1 Introduction

The violent breakup of Yugoslavia, and to a lesser extent the former Soviet Union, in the early 1990s gave decentralization along ethnic lines a bad name. It is easy to find other examples of ethnic federations afflicted by separatist violence, including Nigeria, India and Indonesia. It may therefore not be altogether surprising that for many scholars offering ethnic groups regional autonomy is likely to trigger secessionist conflict. In particular, experts advise strongly against opting for ethnic federalism as a way to manage ethnically diverse polities (e.g., Brubaker, 1996; Snyder, 2000; Bunce, 2004; Bunce and Watts, 2005; Roeder, 2007). More generally, there is growing skepticism as regards any type of power sharing, whether territorial or governmental, since it is feared that such arrangements risk reinforcing divisive ethnic identities and fuel further conflict (Brubaker, 1996; Rothchild and Roeder, 2005).

This paper presents an empirical evaluation of power sharing in general, and territorial power sharing in particular. We argue that the critics have overstated the case against autonomy policies (for similar arguments, see McGarry and O’Leary, 2009; Regan and Wallenstein, 2012; Grigoryan, 2013 (forthcoming)). Much of the previous research on this important topic has focused on select cases, making it difficult, if not impossible, to set up fair comparisons. In particular, there has been a tendency to highlight cases that have already experienced conflict, thus ignoring peaceful cases of decentralization along ethnic lines. Moreover, previous studies have typically focused on outcomes at the country level, thus obscuring important differences within the countries under scrutiny.

By basing our sample on politically relevant ethnic groups since WWII, we select a more objective baseline for comparison than approaches that focus only on post-conflict cases or cases where some type of decentralization or federal arrangements were implemented. We expect the conflict-dampening effect of inclusive reforms to hinge critically on the previous occurrence of conflict between the group in question and the state. In our empirical anal-

ysis we find that both regional autonomy and central power sharing have a strongly conflict-preventing impact before the onset of the first conflict. However, the situation is much less clear-cut once the group-state relationship has turned violent. Our evidence suggests that while regional autonomy is most certainly too little, too late after a conflict, inclusion in power sharing arrangements at the central level reduces the probability of conflict recurrence to some degree.

In the next section we discuss the literature on which we draw to present our theoretical argument in section three. Section four presents the data that we use in our empirical analysis. Our results appear in section five, followed by a set of sensitivity analyses in section six to assess the robustness of our results. Section seven illustrates our main findings with a series of cases. Finally, the concluding section summarizes our findings and puts them into broader context.

## 2 Literature Review

Many ethnically divided societies around the globe rely on territorial decentralization and governmental power sharing to manage their divisions. Furthermore, these institutional solutions enjoy increasingly widespread support among policy makers and representatives of the international community who attempt to create sustainable peace after civil conflict.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore not surprising that both types of shared governance have attracted considerable scholarly interest. In the past two decades, a number of studies have appeared that seek to evaluate the effectiveness of both territorial and governmental power sharing. Yet, their results offer far from a unified view. We argue that this in part has to do with a lack of conceptual clarity.

In this paper, we use the term power sharing broadly to designate any scheme of governance that allows group representatives to share in decision

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<sup>1</sup>Mehler (2009) notes, for instance, that a large majority of recent peace agreements concluded in Africa contain power sharing provisions.

making, either through accommodation at the central level or by granting certain territorially concentrated groups regional autonomy. The governmental type of power sharing overlaps with Lijphart's (1969, 1975, 1977) notion of consociationalism, but our definition of central power sharing is less restrictive since it focuses primarily on ethnic groups' access to executive power without requiring that they enjoy a veto, or that the regime is characterized by a culture of elite accommodation, or for that matter proportional representation in the bureaucracy and segmental autonomy.

Given the group perspective adopted in this paper, power sharing of a territorial type implies that an ethnic group has autonomy in at least one region predominantly settled by itself.<sup>2</sup> Such autonomy may come about, from the perspective of the central government, in different ways. Some that come immediately to mind are federal arrangements with territorial units that confer regional autonomy to some ethnic groups. Such types of federal arrangements are normally described as ethnofederal (for a detailed discussion, see Deiwiks, 2011; Grigoryan, 2013 (forthcoming)). Note, however, that not all federal arrangements entail regional autonomy for ethnic groups. Territorial units whose borders do not follow the settlement patterns of ethnic groups or carve these settlements up in various parts may fail to confer to the latter any territorial control. In this context it is also useful to note what federalism actually stands for. Based on Riker's (1964) path-breaking study Bednar (2008, 21) advocates a strictly structural definition with three necessary components: geopolitical division, independence, and direct governance. A quick look at Bednar's (2008, 26) list of federal countries suggests that the particular types of federal arrangements vary considerably.<sup>3</sup> Both

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<sup>2</sup>Lijphart (1985) himself noted in the 1980s that federal arrangements may actually lead to one component of his definition of consociationalism, namely segmental autonomy.

<sup>3</sup>Thus, it is problematic, as do Hoddie and Hartzell (2005, 87) based on Ghai (1998), to argue that federalism implies a symmetric distribution of powers across subunits, while what they consider as regional autonomy (from the perspective of the state) implies asymmetric distribution of powers. For illustrations simply turn to the asymmetric federal arrangements in Belgium, Spain, the URSS etc. (see also Kymlicka, 1998).

forms of territorial power-sharing have been subject to intensive study in the civil war literature, but as of now, no satisfactory answer can be given as to the question of whether territorial decentralization is an effective method of conflict prevention or post-conflict consolidation.

Several scholars claim that granting regions autonomy will ease ethnic tensions and reduce the likelihood of recurrent conflict (e.g., Lijphart, 1985; Gurr, 2000*a*; Hechter, 2000; Lustick, Miodownik and Eidelson, 2004). Other scholars adopt a more skeptical perspective on regional autonomy that views it as an ineffective conflict-resolution method, or sometimes even as an impediment to peace (e.g., Brubaker, 1996; Kymlicka, 1998; Bunce, 1999; Snyder, 2000; Roeder, 2007). Evidence from the partly violent breakup of the Soviet Union (Hale, 2008) and Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, the disintegration of Czechoslovakia (Bunce, 1999) and separatist violence in Russia and the successor states of the Soviet Union (Cornell, 2002; Bunce and Watts, 2005) and in the ethnic federations of Nigeria, India and Indonesia, constitutes a “terrible track record” of autonomy (Snyder, 2000, 327). These observations have inspired growing counsel against decentralization along ethnic lines. Such arrangements, these critics argue, risk reinforcing divisive ethnic identities (Chapman and Roeder, 2007) while “providing resources that groups can then use to bring more pressure on the state” (Elkins and Sides, 2007, 693). Furthermore, Brancati (2006) argues that territorial decentralization also strengthens regional parties and thereby increases secessionist groups’ mobilization capacity, provided electoral institutions do not impede on these tendencies (see also Brancati, 2009).

More generally, there is also growing skepticism among many academics as regards governmental power sharing institutions in ethnically divided societies. Although such arrangements may facilitate the transition from civil conflict in the short run, the critics contend, they are likely to thwart the consolidation of peace and democracy in the long term by cementing ethnic divisions, undermining crosscutting cleavages and increasing the likelihood

of conflict escalation. Horowitz's (1985) classical study proposes institutions that provide politicians with incentives to reach out across ethnic boundaries. Similarly, Roeder and Rothchild (2005) try to overcome the weaknesses of power sharing by advocating what they call "power dividing schemes." Rather than empowering minorities directly, such institutions limit majorities' power by expanding individual rights and liberties and by creating multidimensional identities that are both issue-specific and crosscutting ethnic cleavages.<sup>4</sup>

The literature that focuses specifically on autonomy concessions as a part of post-conflict settlements offers a slightly more optimistic perspective as regards their conflict-curbing consequences. Many of these studies confirm that negotiated civil war settlements that include territorial autonomy provisions have a positive and significant effect on settlement stability (Hartzell, Hoddie and Rothchild, 2001; Hoddie and Hartzell, 2005; Jarstad and Nilsson, 2008). Explaining this outcome by applying bargaining models, they argue that the offer of territorial decentralization constitutes a signal of moderate intent from the victor.<sup>5</sup> While agreeing that territorial decentralization in civil war settlements can be an effective solution for ethnically divided societies, Lake and Rothchild (2005) and Rothchild and Roeder (2005) assert that this is so only under very restrictive conditions, such as a robust democracy, moderate group leaders, mixed settlement patterns and the absence of dominant ethnic groups. Yet, these conditions are unfortunately very unlikely to be present after civil wars.

This pessimism concerning pacifying post-conflict effect of regional autonomy is even more visible in studies that argue in favor of partition as a

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<sup>4</sup>See both Lipset (1963, 81f) and Friedrich (1968, 175f) for arguments against ethnofederalism along these lines.

<sup>5</sup>Rothchild and Hartzell (1999) come to the same result, but recognize that the stability in three out of the four stable negotiated settlements that employed regional autonomy, namely Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan, South Ossetia in Georgia, and Nicaragua, is likely to have been caused by coercive force through security-related powers given to the substate units (for a related argument, see Regan and Wallensteen, 2012).

solution to (allegedly) intractable conflict. According to Kaufmann (1996), a stable settlement can only be achieved if the opposing groups are demographically separated into defensible enclaves. In his view, the eruption of ethnic violence makes any notion of shared governance under the same political roof inconceivable. Arguing along similar lines based on quantitative data, Chapman and Roeder (2007) advocate partition as opposed to power sharing and autonomy (see also Lapidot, 1997). However, this debate is far from settled. Powerful counter arguments have been advanced by scholars who doubt the accuracy of the partition proponents' arguments (see for instance Fearon, 2004; Laitin, 2004; Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl, 2009).

This brief survey of the relevant literature shows that it is difficult to draw any conclusive inferences as regards the appropriateness of power sharing as a conflict-preventing and conflict-reducing method. In our view, previous scholarship suffers from three major shortcomings that threaten to give such schemes an undeservedly bad reputation:<sup>6</sup>

*Case selection.* First, many studies select their units of analysis on the dependent variable and focus on cases where conflict actually broke out. In doing so, these studies exclude all cases where autonomy had a preventive effect, thus inherently biasing the evidence against this type of governance. This bias not only concerns the civil-war settlement literature but also many quantitative studies, including Keller and Smith (2005) on Ethiopia, Cornell's (2002) study of Georgia and Bunce's (1999) book on the breakups of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.<sup>7</sup>

If we consider regional autonomy from a groups's perspective, studies focusing on federal countries alone are equally problematic. Yet, regional autonomy is not limited to federal countries but is also granted to ethnic groups and regions in more centralized states, as illustrated by territorial

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<sup>6</sup>See McGarry and O'Leary (2009) and Grigoryan (2013 (forthcoming)) for similar arguments.

<sup>7</sup>However, there is also research that is more successful in steering clear of this problem, including Ahuja and Varshney (2005) and Lacina (2013).



concessions granted to the Papuans and Acehnese in Indonesia, the Aymara and Quechua in Bolivia and Peru, the indigenous people in Colombia and Ecuador and the Corsicans in France. Since our study is based on group-level data, we can directly account for such cases by assessing the effect of a group's regional autonomy both independently, and as a function, of the institutional context, such as federal or unitary state structures.

*Dependent and independent variables.* Another aspect of the existing literature that contributes to its diverging results is the conceptual confusion brought about by the potpourri of dependent variables scholars use to test the effectiveness of regional autonomy. These range from non-violent rebellion, secessionist violence or the recurrence of it to state crises and outright state breakup. Hale (2004) and Bunce (1999), for example, find that autonomy can cause state breakup and collapse. Lake and Rothchild (2005) investigate the long-term stability of territorial decentralization. Other studies use more than one outcome dimension, including conflict and stability of the polity (see McGarry and O'Leary, 2009). The literature that examines autonomy concessions in civil-war settlements focuses on the resumption of conflict or the holding of timely elections in the initial five years after the settlement (Hoddie and Hartzell, 2005), the number of years that the signatories are at peace following an agreement (Jarstad and Nilsson, 2008) or the likelihood of settlement stability (Rothchild and Hartzell, 1999). Others study the impact of regional autonomy on secessionist activity, ethnopolitical mobilization and secession (Lustick, Miodownik and Eidelson, 2004), and on secessionism and conflict (Cornell, 2002; Alemán and Treisman, 2005). There is also significant variation as regards the independent variable. Here, the most widely studied categories under the umbrella of territorial power sharing are decentralization, (ethno-)federalism and territorial autonomy concessions in peace settlements (Hartzell and Rothchild, 1997; Hartzell and Hoddie, 2003; Walter, 2004; Hoddie and Hartzell, 2005; Jarstad and Nilsson, 2008; Toft, 2009; Forsberg, 2013).

*Overaggregation.* As with most quantitative conflict research, many of the aforementioned approaches suffer from overaggregation and rely on country-level indices to measure the influence of ethnicity on conflict. The choice of country-year as unit of analysis makes it difficult to analyze key actors and their motivations (Cederman and Gleditsch, 2009). Moreover, country-level analysis obscures important the asymmetric nature of some power sharing arrangements. In order to overcome these shortcomings, this paper disaggregates the unit of observation to the group-level and employs a more fine-grained, configurational analysis of conflict onset. Civil wars are attributed to a certain ethnic group, creating center-periphery dyads that pit central states against their regionally concentrated ethnonationalist challengers.<sup>8</sup>

### 3 Theory

While many scholars have expressed doubts about grievance-based arguments in the civil-war literature (e.g., Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Collier and Hoefler, 2004), others insist that states' exclusion or maltreatment of minorities explains ethnic groups' rebellions around the world (e.g., Gurr, 1993; Gurr, 2000*b*; Petersen, 2002). This claim can be directly derived from basic principles of political legitimacy in the modern world, following the emergence of nationalism (Gellner, 1983). Nationalism prescribes that foreign rule cannot be tolerated, which is of course the case wherever ethnic minorities are blocked from political influence. Using new data, a recent series of studies argues that those groups that are excluded from central executive power tend to fight the government (Cederman, Wimmer and Min, 2010; Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug, 2013). Rather than finding a qualitative difference,

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<sup>8</sup>Obviously, it is possible to disaggregate the analysis below the level of ethnic groups, which in themselves do not constitute agency and may be more or less cohesive. Rather, individuals and organizations act on behalf of groups. Still, since secessionists usually mobilise and act along ethnic lines, it makes sense to pitch the analysis at the level of ethnic groups. See also Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug (2013), who advance more general arguments in support of such analysis.

this research shows that conflict propensity increases gradually with declining power access. Thus, groups that play a senior role in power sharing coalitions are less likely to rebel than those that have to content themselves with a junior role. Furthermore, both these categories are less conflict-prone than those that are entirely excluded from the national executive. In the latter cases, however, there are also nuances suggesting that ethnic groups that have been granted local autonomy are more peaceful than those that do not.

The finding that exclusion fuels conflict seems to be extraordinarily robust.<sup>9</sup> Although secessionist conflict has not been the main focus of these previous studies, the exclusion result can be shown to hold for both governmental and territorial civil wars. Thus, for the purposes of the present study, it would be tempting to conclude that full inclusion into power-sharing arrangements should be the safest way to reduce territorial conflict. In addition, because regional autonomy offers less proximity to executive power than full inclusion, it could be expected that such arrangements would also pacify the relations between governments and potentially or actually separatist groups, but to a lesser degree than governmental power sharing.

We summarize this logic in three related hypotheses:

- H1. Groups that are included through central power sharing are less likely to rebel than those that are excluded
- H2. Excluded autonomous groups are less likely to rebel than other excluded groups.
- H3. The conflict-reducing effect of autonomy (H2) is weaker than for full inclusion (H1).

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<sup>9</sup>The results appear to hold up even if the possibility of endogenous political institutions is considered (see Wucherpfennig, Hunziker and Cederman, 2012). Below, we will return to the issue of endogeneity in the context of power sharing concessions.

However, this reasoning suffers from a major flaw since it overlooks the influence of past conflict. Once an armed conflict erupts, it drastically changes the relationship between the group and the incumbent government. Recent research along these lines controls for previous conflict, but without analyzing how this modifies the impact of power access itself (see Cederman, Wimmer and Min, 2010; Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug, 2013). This difference suggests that the effectiveness of governments' concessions to ethnic groups may well depend on whether the relationship has so far been peaceful or not. In other words, what works as a preventive measure before the outbreak of violence, may not be successful in a post-conflict setting.

Studying governmental concessions as a response to prior conflict, most scholars have overlooked this difference. Yet, even where it has not been measured explicitly, a history of armed conflict constitutes a possible stumbling block in theories of ethnic accommodation. For example, Horowitz (1985, 625) highlights the crucial role of past violence:

An early, generous offer of autonomy, made before extreme separatist organizations outflank moderate leaders, may avert secession. A similar offer, made after separatist violence has broken out, may well do what opponents of concessions fear: it may testify to the weaknesses or vacillation of the central government and the success of the separatist, thereby fortifying their will to fight on.

We will here try to further develop this observation and to expose it to systematic empirical tests. Before considering the interaction between conflict history and power access, however, it is necessary to study the main effect of past conflict more closely. In principle, protracted violence could make both sides of a conflict more cautious and thus less prone to resort to arms again. Although this optimistic view could in principle be justified by rational learning, the empirical record is sobering. In fact, several scholars

have found that recurrent conflict is much more likely than first onsets, leading Collier and Sambanis (2002, 5) to label this the conflict trap (see also Collier, Elliott, Hegre, Hoeffler, Reynal-Querol and Sambanis, 2003; Walter, 2004). Societies get caught in this trap through the interdependence of economic conditions and civil conflict, where worsening economic conditions and poverty induce conflict. This in turn reduces economic opportunities, which makes the recurrence of conflict more likely, thereby creating a cycle of economic deterioration and recurrent conflict.

More specifically with respect to ethnic conflict, the results point in the same direction. For example, Cederman, Wimmer and Min (2010) and Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug (2013) find that ethnic groups' likelihood of experiencing recurrent conflict increases with the number of past onsets. Building directly on their arguments, we identify specific mechanisms that connect such a conflict history with recurrent outbreaks of fighting:

- First, and perhaps most fundamentally, large-scale violence ceases to be unthinkable and becomes part of the repertoire of protest actions that the opposition can resort to. Such a breach of trust can be very hard to recover from, especially after long and bitter fighting including atrocities and other violations of human rights. Kalyvas (2006) shows that vengeance is a recurrent motivation of participation in civil wars. Clearly, memories of such events can live on for decades without an active will to organize reconciliation and confidence building. Failure to break the cycle of resentment risks transforming group-government relations into hatred that could flare up easily (Petersen, 2002). In such cases, populist leaders may succeed in exploiting and further deepening a culture of violence for their own political purposes.
- Second, past conflict also tends to radicalize both sides. Violence polarizes by confronting both opponents and proponents of the government with the stark choice of fighting or not fighting. This radicalization typically leads to a splintering of the fronts, with hardliners insisting on

fighting rather than accepting compromises. Such a pattern includes attempts to outbid more moderate politicians with uncompromising and extremist positions even after the fighting has ended (Rabushka and Shepsle, 1972; Horowitz, 1985; DeVotta, 2005). In the context of territorial conflict, previous calls for autonomy and influence may easily tip over into explicit bids for secession at any price. Likewise, the spectrum of views among incumbent power holders can also be expected to include hardliners who view any compromise as a fatal weakening of the states integrity. All in all, fragmentation will lead to a lack of control on both sides, giving spoilers more room to block the implementation of peace initiatives (Stedman, 1997).

- Third, and finally, in most cases, armed combat leaves behind not only mental scars but also an infrastructural legacy that can serve as a trigger for future conflict. Most obviously, failed or partial disarmament of the opposition leaves it with recruitment networks, weapons, bases and resources to launch new campaigns against the government. Likewise, on the governmental side, the army and/or militias may have built up a repertoire of counterinsurgency capacity that can be used to suppress peaceful protest.

In short, uncurbed vengefulness, and lingering radicalization together with a remaining infrastructure of violence are a potent cocktail for recurrent conflict. For these reasons, we postulate the following:

H4. Ethnic groups that have experienced conflict in the past are more likely to experience conflict onset than those that have not.

We are now ready to explore how past conflict influences the pacifying effect of governmental concessions, as stated by H1, H2 and H3. Considering each of the three aforementioned mechanisms in turn, our analysis considers how prior conflict modifies the pacifying impact of both regional autonomy

and full inclusion:

*Post-conflict concessions in a climate of hatred and vengefulness.* Conflict-preventive reforms offering excluded groups regional autonomy may be helpful because they allow group leaders to argue for peaceful change within the system. In a post-conflict situation they may also send a costly signal of governmental moderation (Lake and Rothchild, 2005, 123). Yet, we argue that autonomy concessions are far less effective as pacifying tools in a climate of suspicion and even hatred, which is likely to be the case after conflict. Rather than attempting to overcome such feelings by creating a climate of bargaining and accommodative engagement, the main principle of decentralization is to grant excluded groups more leeway to govern their own affairs in specific areas. Separation into separate spheres of decision making may satisfy the opposition on specific issues, but, in most cases, it will do little to reestablish general interethnic trust, which is essential to prevent renewed secessionist bids. According to Lapidot (1997, 28), “no arrangements of autonomy have succeeded in a hostile atmosphere.” If there is hatred and frustration, it is too late, and autonomy will not be able to soothe the strained atmosphere (for a similar argument related to secession and interstates conflict, see Tir, 2005; Carter, 2010). In fact, autonomous institutions could even make interethnic discourse and dialogue more difficult by removing the necessity to reach compromises on important issues and reinforcing the temptation to demand more autonomous rights.

Of course, it can also be questioned to what extent governmental power sharing contributes to mutual responsiveness and confidence building. Some authors argue that consociationalism and power sharing are bellwether arrangements that could hold together ethnically diverse societies where a willingness to compromise already exists, but are much less likely to create such conditions in the first place. Along these lines, Rothchild and Roeder (2005, p. 43) contend that in societies emerging from intense conflict, ethnic groups may have less reason to trust one another and less experience with negoti-

ation and compromise. After a civil war a culture of accommodation may take longer than two generations to emerge.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of central power sharing is an empirical matter, but we expect it to be considerably more helpful as a tool of post-conflict pacification than regional autonomy without governmental inclusion at the center. Especially in the shadow of international pressure and expectations, the very practice of power sharing itself will help socialize politicians to behave in a more accommodative and responsible way compared to situations where they do not have a direct stake in the overall fate of the state through such institutions. In this sense, regional autonomy could well be too little, too late. As argued by McGarry and O'Leary (2009, 15)

federalism is about shared-rule as well as self-rule, and the relevant constituent entities and peoples are likely to want a federal government that represents them, that is inclusive and, indeed, consociational. National minorities excluded from the federal government will have a reduced stake in the federation and the federal government will be less inclined to promote their interests. It is not surprising, then, that all of the durably democratic pluri-national federations have practiced consociational forms of democracy within the federal government.

*Post-conflict concessions and extremist splintering.* We have argued that past conflict tends to produce organizational factions on both sides, some of which may refuse to give up the fight for full independence. Under such circumstances, it does not take much for one small extremist faction to sabotage attempts to forge compromise. It is therefore essential that any settlement be as inclusive as possible. But winning over extremists is going to be very difficult if merely regional autonomy is on offer. Why should extremists be satisfied with a consolation price that does not even guarantee them influence over the central state institutions, let alone full independence? Moreover, autonomous institutions can more easily be abused by ethnic populists if they



are relatively detached from state's central decision making mechanisms. Intense competition between regional parties may also facilitate ethnic outbidding where ethnic and regional boundaries overlap, because regional parties competing for the same electorate may adopt increasingly extreme views to attract votes away from other regional parties (Brancati, 2006, 658).<sup>10</sup> Relying on explicit evidence that organizational fragmentation fuels conflict, Cunningham (2011) argues that fragmented self-determination movements are more likely to respond violently to governmental concessions than are united ones.

Of course, central power sharing can also break down because of extremist posturing following conflict. No consociational arrangement is immune to collapse if faced with uncompromising demands. Indeed, the very principle implies shared sovereignty rather than full independence. Furthermore, ethnic elites may hold the entire government hostage by blocking important decisions (Rothchild and Roeder, 2005, 37). Nevertheless, governmental power sharing accords a higher status to the group than do autonomous rights as such, and it allows the group to control its fate much more readily. In such power configurations, it is easier for moderate representatives of the ethnic group to claim ownership of national policies and to show that they can deliver favorable policy outcomes. Representation in the inner circle of executive power is also likely to socialize ethnic politicians to become more loyal to the central state in the long run.

Thus, as long as ethnic group remain excluded from national influence, there should be more room for confrontational and extremist agitation. In contrast, central power sharing can be expected to have a more impressive pacifying impact even after a first conflict has taken place.

*Post-conflict concessions and secessionist capacity building.* Finally, we investigate whether territorial or power-sharing concessions influence the se-

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<sup>10</sup>See also Lacina's (2013) argument that territorial conflict often relates to power asymmetries at the periphery and their relationships with the central government.

cessionists' mobilization capacity. This is possibly the mechanism where the difference between the two types of power sharing is the most clear-cut. While not all autonomy concessions create a government in waiting, devolution reforms set up decision making institutions and resources that can be tapped by secessionists in order to support renewed fighting with the government if their increasingly radical demands are not satisfied. As we have seen in our review of the literature, several authors contend that especially regional autonomy along ethnic lines tends to empower separatist politicians:

Many institutions of partitioned decisionmaking, such as the powers of autonomous homelands in ethnofederal states, can be abused by regional leaders, including ethnomilitary warlords, to press the central government for further devolution and to extract income that can be invested in future fighting capacity (Rothchild and Roeder, 2005, 37).

The secessionist bids of Slovenia and Croatia illustrate that governmental power sharing does not immunize regimes that engage in central power sharing from such centrifugal tendencies. Yet, governmental inclusion does not in itself grant territorially segregated powers to the group in question. On the contrary, it increases the need to bargain and coordinate policies on a daily basis rather than creating a separate compartment of governance. While Lijphart's (1969, 1975, 1977) conception of consociational power sharing presupposes a measure of autonomy over the groups' affairs, especially regarding cultural matters, in other central areas of decision making such arrangements provide the incumbent powerholders with more means to control the use of resources and infrastructure. Even in cases of shared military power, settlements will typically include safeguards that prevent single ethnic groups from seizing control over the whole or parts of the army (see for instance Hartzell and Hoddie, 2007).

Our discussion of the three mechanisms suggests that power sharing ar-

rangements of the governmental and territorial type will have different effects depending on whether they are introduced before or after a conflict. Thus, we are now ready to formalize our analysis of prior conflict and concessions by breaking up hypotheses H1, H2 and H3 depending on whether conflict has already occurred between the group and the government. Before the first conflict onset, there is no reason to modify the original hypotheses:

H1a. Groups that are included through central power sharing are less likely to rebel than those that are excluded if conflict has not yet occurred.

H2a. Excluded autonomous groups are less likely to rebel than other excluded groups if conflict has not yet occurred.

H3a. The conflict-reducing effect of autonomy (H2a) is weaker than for full inclusion (H1a) if conflict has not yet occurred.

Once large-scale violence erupts, however, the relationship becomes transformed, thus rendering both autonomy and power sharing potentially less effective:

H1b. The conflict-reducing effect of central power sharing decreases once conflict has occurred.

H2b. The conflict-reducing effect of regional autonomy decreases once conflict has occurred.

H3b. The conflict-reducing effect of autonomy (H2b) is weaker than for full inclusion (H1b) once conflict has occurred.

While we have strong reasons to believe that H2b and H3b will hold, the theoretical support for H1b is much weaker.

## 4 Data

We test our hypotheses by using group-level data on ethnic groups' access to executive power. The necessary information is provided by the most recent version of the Ethnic Power Relations dataset (EPR-ETH) (Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug, 2013), which has the advantage of being based on a full sample of politically relevant ethnic groups around the world from 1946 through 2009, including those that are dominant within their states.<sup>11</sup> Political relevance is defined by including groups that are active in national politics and/or directly discriminated against by the government.

The EPR-ETH dataset is especially suitable for our analytical purposes because it offers a series of power-access categories that include theoretically relevant types of power sharing. The power access variable is divided into three main groups depending on whether the group in question rules alone, shares power or is excluded from executive power. The first set of cases is subdivided into monopoly and dominant groups, depending on whether the government is composed entirely of members of the group or whether some token members of other groups participate in the executive.

The second set of power configurations entails power-sharing arrangements, whether of formal or informal nature. Included groups that share power play either a senior or junior role measured by their absolute influence over the cabinet, as illustrated by the Swiss Germans and the Swiss French respectively. In principle, this means that the group's representatives would need to defend the group's interests in the cabinet in a meaningful way rather than being a token member who is fully assimilated to the dominant ethnic identity.

The third main class of power configurations features groups that have

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<sup>11</sup>The can data can be found at <http://www.icr.ethz.ch/data/growup/epr-eth>. See Cederman, Wimmer and Min (2010) for the original version of EPR. The other leading dataset Minorities at Risk (MAR) (Gurr, 1993) does not include all majority groups and is therefore not suitable for the purposes of this paper.

no regular representation within the executive, and can therefore be labeled as excluded. Of these categories, those groups that enjoy regional autonomy have the least restricted influence. In this case, the group's elite members are excluded from central power but have been granted access to regional executive power through provisions of territorial autonomy.<sup>12</sup> By regional is meant a substate unit below the level of the state as a whole, such as provinces and federal administrative units, though not local counties. For example, within the former Yugoslavia, the Vojvodina Hungarians enjoyed regional autonomy of this type.

If the group in question is denied regional autonomy without being systematically and openly discriminated against, it is considered to be powerless. EPR-ETH reserves the category discriminated for groups whose members are subjected to explicit and targeted discrimination that effectively blocks their access to executive power. Discrimination can be implemented through denial of political rights, including citizenship, but may also be carried out through a systematic ban of parties that represent the ethnic group. The Kurds have been systematically discriminated by the Turkish regime at least since 1946. Similarly, the governments of Estonia and Latvia discriminate against their Russian populations by denying them citizenship, or at least severely restricting their opportunities for becoming citizens through language proficiency requirements.

There is a fourth type of excluded groups that is labeled separatist autonomy, not to be confused with regional autonomy. This condition applies if the group's representatives declared de facto independence from, and against the will of, the central government. Here the group has chosen to exclude itself rather than having been excluded. Examples include the Bosnian Serbs walking out of the central government of Bosnia Herzegovina or the Abkhazians having declared independence from Georgia when the country became inde-

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<sup>12</sup>Note already here that this limitation of the EPR-ETH data does not allow us to assess the effect of regional autonomy for included groups (see below for a more extensive discussion of this point).

pendent in 1991.

In the subsequent analysis, we operationalize governmental power sharing at the center as power sharing in either a junior or a senior role, which is used to test H1. Furthermore, we identify territorial power sharing of ethnic groups with the corresponding EPR-ETH subcategory that refers to regional autonomy (cf. H2). Separatist autonomy is not included in this operationalization since those groups decided to leave the polity without the government's consent and cannot therefore be characterized as governmental concessions.

It is important to note that the EPR-ETH dataset relies on a simple, one-dimensional coding of power status that combines information about access to central and regional power in a single variable. More specifically, the current coding suffers from the limitation that inclusion at the country level takes precedence over regional autonomy, although in practice groups in power frequently also exert power at the regional level. In other words, governmental and territorial power sharing are simultaneously possible, but by construction this is not reflected in the current version of EPR-ETH. As many groups that participate in power sharing at the center also enjoy regional autonomy, as illustrated by India, Switzerland, and Yugoslavia, this limitation is likely to bias downwards any effects we might find for regional autonomy. Nevertheless, a data-collection effort is underway in order to close this gap by coding governmental and territorial power sharing separately from one another. The next version of the paper will be able to benefit from this extension.

Having discussed the main independent variables, we now turn our attention to the dependent variable. In this paper, we explain the outbreak of territorial civil conflict based on a group-level coding of the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's Armed Conflict Dataset (Gleditsch, Wallensteen, Eriksson, Sollenberg and Strand, 2002), with supplementary information from the Non-State Actors dataset (Cunningham, Gleditsch and Salehyan, 2009). Because

the focus of the current study is on regional autonomy concessions in separatist conflicts, we focus on territorial rather than governmental conflict, as defined by the ACD dataset (see Buhaug, 2006). Moreover, the ACD2EPR dataset assures that each conflict onset is mapped to the corresponding EPR group, provided that the rebel organization expresses an aim to support the ethnic group and members of the group in question participate in combat (Wucherpfennig, Metternich, Gleditsch and Cederman, 2012). This means that there can be more than one organization claiming to represent an ethnic group.

Based on this conflict coding, it is straightforward to capture a history of previous conflict with a dummy variable that is one if the group experienced conflict with the government since 1946 or the independence of the country.<sup>13</sup> This variable is crucial for the tests of H4 and the pre-conflict and post-conflict versions of H1-H3 denoted with a and b respectively.

In keeping with previous research, we also control for group size (Cederman, Wimmer and Min, 2010; Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug, 2013, Chap. 4). We expect an inverse U-shaped relationship since smaller groups should be less likely to trigger territorial conflict due to their limited resources. Yet, very large groups will be more inclined to try to topple the government in a governmental conflict. For this reason we enter relative group size as both linear and squared terms. Relative group size  $g \in [0, 1)$  comparing the population of the group  $G$  to the population of the incumbent  $I$  is defined as  $\frac{G}{G+I}$  if the group is excluded and as  $G/I$  if the group is included (since the rebelling group left the incumbent coalition and would otherwise be counted twice).

Our analysis also controls for an important interaction effect applying to states with many ethnic groups. According to Walter's (2004) strategic logic, the number of excluded groups should be negatively related to the risk

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<sup>13</sup>There is a possibility that conflict before 1946 could have affected the relationship, but this is not part of the variable coding.

of conflict since governments facing many ethnic groups will be less willing to make concessions to single groups, as illustrated by Moscow’s hard line in dealing with the Chechens’ claims. We count excluded groups within the state, not counting the current group itself.

In addition, we introduce a number of variables to control for various country-level properties:

- Logged GDP per capita of the country as a whole, lagged (Penn World Table 7.0, see Heston, Summers and Aten, 2011).
- Logged population size of the country, lagged (Penn World Table 7.0, see Heston, Summers and Aten, 2011).
- Dummy variable ongoing conflict based on the ACD2EPR conflict data indicating if there was an ongoing conflict involving any other group in the country during the preceding year.
- Number of years since the previous conflict, entered as a nonlinear function, based on natural cubic splines with three knots (see Beck, Katz and Tucker, 1998).

## 5 Analysis

Our empirical analysis features a series of group-level models. The sample encompasses all politically relevant EPR-ETH groups from 1946 through 2009, which amounts to 28,182 group years of which 136 include territorial conflict onsets. An additional 67 onsets were classified as governmental and thus not included in the dependent variable. Relying on robust country-clustered standard errors, we conduct all analysis with logit models using the onset of ethnonationalist conflict at the group level as the dependent variable, dropping ongoing conflict years from the analysis.

Using excluded groups except regional autonomy cases as the baseline, Model 1 in Table 1 builds directly on previous analyses (see especially Cederman,



Gleditsch and Buhaug, 2013, Chap. 4). This model strongly confirms all of our direct hypotheses H1, H2, H3 and H4. As expected, the conflict-reducing impact of full inclusion is especially strong, but regional autonomy also has a pacifying effect that is smaller but significant. A Wald test reveals that the difference between the coefficients of inclusion and autonomy can be safely distinguished from zero ( $p = 0.0015$ ), thus corroborating H3. Finally, in line with previous research, H4 receives very strong support as well. Previous conflict appears to increase considerably the risk of recurrent onsets.

Since this model is merely shown for comparative purposes, we turn directly to Model 2 in Table 1, which introduces the crucial differentiation between pre-conflict and post-conflict settings. The switching variable indicates if the group experienced conflict with the government at any point in the past. The findings show that both governmental and territorial power sharing reduce the occurrence of conflict if offered before the outbreak of any previous violence. This preventive impact of both types of shared power strongly supports both H1a and H2a. Moreover, the evidence affirms H3a as well. The difference between the two effects is somewhat less pronounced than in the conflict-independent analysis above, but is significant at the  $p=0.09$  level. As expected, we also find firm evidence in favor of H4, showing that previous civil wars increases the risk of conflict recurrence considerably.

Turning now to the conditional effect of power sharing after the outbreak of the first conflict, we detect no support for H3a. This suggests that power sharing at the center in post-conflict situations should be as effective as it is in pre-conflict settings. The same cannot be said for autonomy concessions, however, because in this case the coefficient is positive and significant at  $p=0.07$ , suggesting that this type of power sharing may be considerably less effective in its conflict-reducing role after the occurrence of conflict. Based on this evidence, we would be inclined to accept H3b.

So far, we have found that previous conflict may blunt the stabilizing influence of regional autonomy. While this reduced effect is entirely in line

Table 1: Effect of inclusion and autonomy on conflict onset

	Model 1	Model 2
inclusion	-1.502*** (0.284)	-1.503*** (0.398)
autonomy	-0.453** (0.225)	-0.744*** (0.278)
postwar	1.373*** (0.261)	1.282*** (0.292)
inclusion $\times$ postwar		0.022 (0.725)
autonomy $\times$ postwar		0.687* (0.388)
relative group size	1.553 (2.158)	1.631 (2.194)
relative group size <sup>2</sup>	-3.385 (3.437)	-3.502 (3.501)
number of excluded groups	-0.023*** (0.008)	-0.020** (0.008)
log gdp <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.046 (0.109)	-0.051 (0.110)
log population	0.283*** (0.085)	0.261*** (0.088)
ongoing conflict	0.901*** (0.278)	0.908*** (0.274)
peaceyears	-0.270*** (0.065)	-0.268*** (0.064)
spline1	-0.001** (0.001)	-0.001** (0.001)
spline2	0.001 (0.000)	0.001 (0.000)
spline3	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Constant	-6.214*** (1.443)	-5.954*** (1.451)
Observations	28,182	28,182

Robust standard errors in parentheses

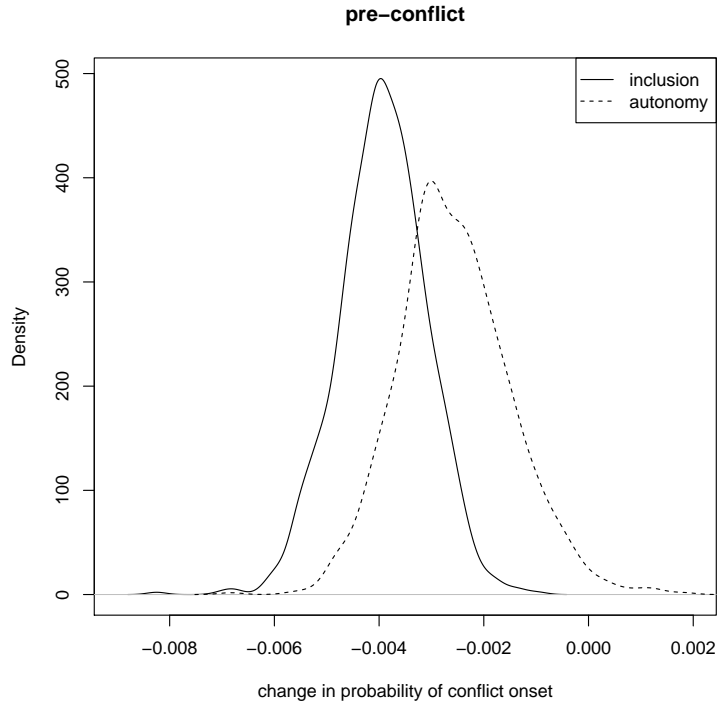
\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

with our theoretical expectations, we have left open the question of the relative substantive effects. To do so we rely on “average predictive differences” proposed by Gelman and Hill (2007, 466) (see also Gelman and Pardoe, 2007; Hanmer and Kalkan, 2013). Instead of comparing predicted probabilities for some imagined case (such as holding all variables at their mean), this method is based on calculating the predicted changes in probabilities for all relevant cases in the sample. More specifically, we sampled 1000 values from the estimated parameter distribution and computed for all group-years for which an upgrade to regional autonomy or inclusion was possible the predicted probability of conflict in two cases. The first one assumes that no such upgrade occurred and the second one assumes that inclusion or respectively autonomy was granted. The differences in these probabilities were then averaged for each parameter set and the density of these “average predictive differences” were finally depicted in Figures 1 and 2 both for the pre-conflict and post-conflict situations respectively.

To start with the situation for relations that have so far seen no conflict, Figure 1 shows that both territorial and government power sharing reduce the probability of conflict onset, which adds further support to H1a and H2a. While full inclusion appears to be more effective than regional autonomy, the latter also produces more peaceful outcomes. Once we turn to the post-conflict cases, it becomes clear that governmental power sharing continues to exert a powerful negative effect on the onset probability. As was the case in the pre-conflict settings, virtually all average changes in probability are within the negative range, clearly separated from zero. For regional autonomy, however, the picture changes dramatically. In this case, the distribution straddles zero, with both positive and negative outcomes on either side. This result suggests that, on average, ethnic decentralization does not affect the likelihood of recurrent conflict.

So far, our analysis leads us to conclude that while regional autonomy appears to prevent first-time onsets, preventing recurrent conflict requires

Figure 1: Effect on conflict of inclusion and autonomy in pre-conflict periods

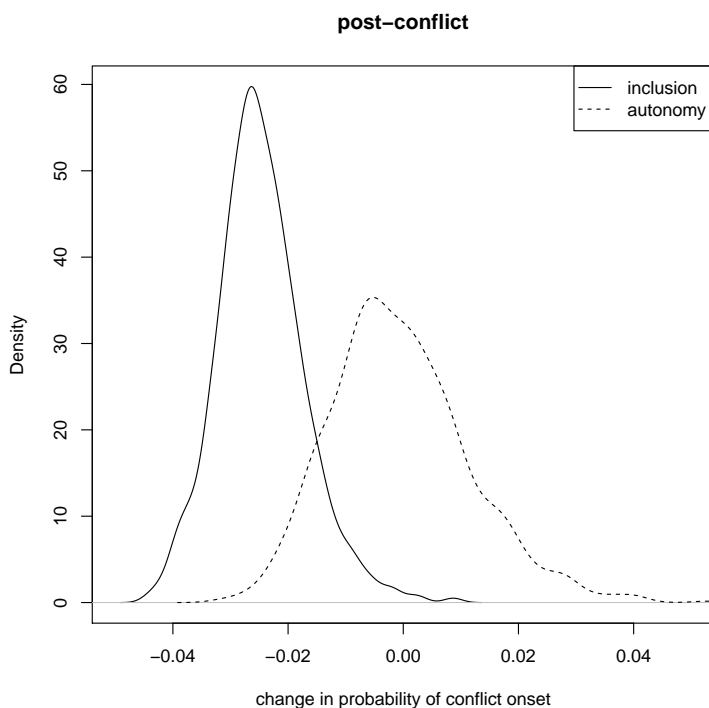


full inclusion through governmental power sharing. All the same, it should be stressed that these findings are preliminary. Therefore, we proceed by exploring the robustness of our empirical analysis.

## 6 Sensitivity analysis

How robust are these results? This section investigates a series of alternative specifications in order to explore the sensitivity of our main findings. We first consider what happens if the group in question loses its current power status (see Table 2, Model 3). Previous research has shown that such downgrading is associated with increased conflict risk in the immediate period after the re-

Figure 2: Effect on conflict of inclusion and autonomy in post-conflict periods



versal (Petersen, 2002). Cederman, Wimmer and Min (2010) and Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug (2013, Chap. 4) find strong evidence that civil-war onsets are considerably more likely in a two year period that follows after status loss. More specifically relating to regional autonomy, McGarry and O’Leary (2009, 11) argue that conflict is likely to follow if governments attempt to revoke already granted autonomous rights: “To an important extent, secession and violence in the territory of many failed federations followed directly from attempts by certain groups to centralize these federations.” They conclude that violence is not so much caused by decentralization as by its opposite, centralization.

We therefore introduce two new variables, one measuring downgrading

from autonomous status to full exclusion, and one variable recording any other loss of status (inside the excluded category or from senior to junior role in power sharing). Both variables indicate if a conflict occurred within a two-year period following the downgrading event.

The results show that there is a palpable and statistically significant conflict-inducing shock after demotions from regional autonomy. However, other types of downgrading do not have a strong or significant effect. These findings are very much in line with McGarry and O’Leary’s (2009) argumentation. Otherwise, there are no notable changes in the main results.<sup>14</sup>

We continue our sensitivity analysis by differentiating the base line of our analysis. So far, we have used all excluded groups except autonomous ones as the base category for comparison. Yet, as we saw in the data section, this category is quite diverse. Therefore, the current modification treats powerless groups as the basis of comparison by including additional dummy variables corresponding to discriminated and separatist autonomy (see Table 2, Model 4).

As would be expected for groups that challenge territorial rule of the government by withdrawing from the polity, separatist/self-excluded autonomous groups are much more prone to experience conflict than powerless groups. This effect is, however, strongly reduced after conflict. Discrimination also increases the risk of conflict, but only marginally so and even less so after a conflict. Despite these changes, the main findings stand with the exception that regional autonomy no longer has a statistically significant effect in either pre-conflict or post-conflict situations. We suspect that the current simplified coding of regional autonomy that does not record autonomy separately for centrally included groups is responsible for weakening the effect. Improved data will soon allow us to investigate this issue more carefully.

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<sup>14</sup>It is also possible to detect a weaker signal associated with upgrading events, although this effect is much harder to separate from zero. In the appendix we also present a table containing information on what categories of groups were more likely to be granted regional autonomy.

Table 2: Effect of inclusion and autonomy on conflict: sensitivity analyses

	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
inclusion	-1.464*** (0.402)	-1.071** (0.520)	-1.330** (0.528)	
autonomy	-0.721*** (0.279)	-0.378 (0.283)	-2.108*** (0.666)	
discrimination		0.626 (0.408)		
separatism (self-exclusion)		3.691*** (0.817)		
postwar	1.259*** (0.288)	1.492** (0.651)	-0.578 (0.446)	2.295*** (0.350)
inclusion × postwar	0.028 (0.725)	-0.132 (0.928)	-0.222 (0.762)	
autonomy × postwar	0.684* (0.392)	0.621 (0.541)	1.708** (0.715)	
discrimination × postwar		-0.359 (0.678)		
separatist × postwar		-2.707*** (0.843)		
federal				1.342*** (0.318)
federal × postwar				-1.805*** (0.470)
inclusion × unitary				-1.667** (0.730)
autonomy × unitary				-13.822*** (1.119)
inclusion × postwar × unitary				-0.778 (1.374)
autonomy × postwar × unitary				13.617*** (0.759)
inclusion × federal				-1.753*** (0.554)
autonomy × federal				-0.733*** (0.215)
inclusion × postwar × federal				0.834 (0.929)
autonomy × postwar × federal				1.139** (0.467)
downgraded from autonomy	1.073** (0.467)			
downgraded (other)	0.266 (1.000)			
relative group size	1.441 (2.212)	2.569 (1.855)	-0.245 (2.992)	1.502 (2.098)
relative group size <sup>2</sup>	-3.296 (3.485)	-4.335 (2.973)	-0.253 (5.753)	-3.659 (3.543)
number of excluded groups	-0.021** (0.008)	-0.018** (0.008)	0.008 (0.013)	-0.018*** (0.005)
log gdp <sub>t-1</sub>	-0.040 (0.110)	0.002 (0.109)	-0.063 (0.124)	-0.188** (0.090)
log population	0.267*** (0.087)	0.300*** (0.107)	0.242** (0.105)	0.169** (0.085)
ongoing conflict	0.904*** (0.273)	0.756*** (0.253)	0.836*** (0.301)	0.734*** (0.213)
peaceyears	-0.271*** (0.062)	-0.230*** (0.061)	-0.139* (0.075)	-0.259*** (0.061)
spline1	-0.001** (0.001)	-0.001* (0.000)	-0.000 (0.001)	-0.001** (0.000)
spline2	0.001 (0.000)	0.001 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	0.001 (0.000)
spline3	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Constant	-6.087*** (1.446)	-7.455*** (1.530)	-3.890** (1.524)	-4.697*** (1.268)
Observations	28,182	28,182	3,076	28,182

Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

Our next step is to restrict the sample to subcategories of groups. Using data from Minorities at Risk (MAR) project, we establish whether a group was mobilizing in favor of self-determination. Following Cunningham (2011), we used Marshall and Gurr's (2003) list (and dates) of self-determination movement and conflicts. As soon as such activity occurs, the group is considered to have a history of self-determination mobilization. This forms the basis of the sample in Model 5 (see Table 2). Down from 28,182 group years, the analysis comprises only 3,076 observations. This reduces the number of conflict onsets to 88 from 136 because 48 outbreaks pertain to groups that did not have a history of self-determination mobilization.

It can be expected that this subset of groups are especially likely candidates for secessionist conflict. This expectation is confirmed by the fact that regional autonomy has an even stronger conflict-dampening effect on territorial conflict than does governmental power sharing. Apparently, an early gesture of decentralization and autonomy is particularly well received by groups that have already started to express independence claims, thus reversing H3a for this category of groups. However, the other hypotheses continue to receive support from this analysis. Interestingly, there are signs that regional autonomy may be somewhat effective as a tool of conflict resolution even in post-conflict situations, but the impact is far from statistically significant.

From the outset, we have been careful to distinguish the concept of regional autonomy from that of ethnofederalism. Indeed, our regional autonomy variable is coded for groups regardless of the state's overall institutional properties. Yet, it is conceivable that the effect of regional autonomy and full inclusion differs within federal and non-federal states. Therefore, we separate the main status variables for these two types of states (see Model 6 in Table 2).

What does this model extension tell us? In federal states excluded groups are on average more likely to experience a conflict onset. Yet, this effect is



reduced if the group obtains autonomy or is included. These conflict reducing effects appear also in unitary states but especially the conflict reducing effect of autonomy has to be taken with a large grain of salt, as autonomy is much more likely in federal states. These effects for pre-conflict situations are strongly reduced after a conflict as in the analyses presented above.

Considering the overall consequences after conflict, we find that governmental power sharing still manages to prevent recurrence. Our robustness analysis has so far confirmed the main results of Model 2. There is, however, a major caveat, because up to this point we have assumed the status categories to be exogenous. This assumption is obviously very problematic since governments' decisions to include groups through either type of power sharing may well be made in anticipation of future conflict (for a general discussion, see Blattman and Miguel 2010). It is clear that our main explanatory variables relating to ethnic groups' power access are not randomly assigned and could therefore be at least partially dependent on our outcome variable, conflict onset (Fearon, 2010; Fearon and Laitin, 2011). This type of bias could lead to either underestimation or overestimation of the effect. If opportunistic governments tune the level of exclusion to "what they can get away with," thus aiming at primarily less threatening groups, the conflict-dampening effect of inclusion will be underestimated. Such a pragmatic approach is invoked by representatives of dominant ethnic groups who prefer to keep as much of the state's resources as possible, while at the same time being willing to make concessions in the name of inter-ethnic peace.

The opposite applies to situations where the government tries to preempt anticipated conflict by excluding threatening groups for security reasons. Such precautionary measures could be implemented in order to prevent ethnic competitors from staging coups from within the government. Applying this argument to Sub-Saharan Africa, Roessler (2011, 313) suggests that "ethnic exclusion serves as an expedient mechanism to eradicate perceived enemies." Incumbent leaders may even prefer waging low-intensity wars in

peripheral parts of the country rather than running the risk of being backstabbed by ethnic competitors within the governing coalition. As opposed to the previous scenario, this logic would imply that the pacifying influence of power sharing may have been overestimated.

Although a definitive answer to these questions would require a more sophisticated research design than can be provided by this paper, we have reasons to believe that our exogenous analysis underestimates, rather than overestimates, the beneficial influence of both territorial and governmental power sharing. A look at the conditions under which governments grant either type of concessions may offer some clues (see Models 7 and 8 in Table 3). These two models feature dependent variables that indicate if there was an upgrade to regional autonomy or to full inclusion, and zero otherwise.

Model 7 shows that self-determination groups are overrepresented as candidates for promotion to autonomy. Furthermore, the more excluded groups in the country, the more likely concessions become. This result seems to offer cursory evidence that it is not necessarily through repression, as argued by Walter (2004), that governments attempt to stop possible domino effects in countries with many excluded groups, but that accommodation is also often tried.<sup>15</sup> The fact that the influence of relative group size is negative should be seen in relation to governmental power sharing. Larger groups that already challenged the state before are more likely to become included in power sharing at the center than smaller groups and those with no conflict prehistory. These findings appear to support the assumption that governments grant concessions to threatening groups rather than excluding them.

Turning to Model 8, we see that the decision to grant full inclusion is strongly associated with occurrences of past conflict. Larger groups are also directly threatening in the case of power sharing, since they are difficult to marginalize once they have gained access to the executive. A history of

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<sup>15</sup>Yet, future research needs to fully endogenize the conditions under which concessions are offered (for an interesting theoretical consideration based on a signalling perspective, see Regan and Wallenstein, 2012).

Table 3: Explaining granting autonomy and inclusion

	Model 7	Model 8
selfdetermination group	0.757*** (0.269)	-0.362 (0.403)
territorial postwar	0.469 (0.356)	
postwar		0.760** (0.315)
relative group size	2.638 (2.089)	12.753*** (2.392)
relative group size <sup>2</sup>	-7.181** (2.953)	-15.107*** (3.727)
number of excluded groups	0.039*** (0.011)	
Constant	-5.811*** (0.319)	-6.410*** (0.329)
Observations	21,148	26,432

Robust standard errors in parentheses

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

self-determination has no influence, and the number of excluded groups a negative impact, which may mirror the fact that full inclusion is more likely in smaller states.

There is additional evidence pointing in the same direction. Focusing on internal conflict in post-colonial states, Wucherpfennig, Hunziker and Cederman (2012) come to the conclusion that the distorting impact of endogeneity has been overstated in relation to ethnic inclusion. By exploiting systematic differences between the strategies of the French and British colonial empires toward ethnic groups, this study instruments for exclusion of each group at the moment of independence. As opposed to the French colonies where ethnic groups' power access mostly follows a straightforward center-periphery logic privileging groups at the coast, the British were much more likely to apply a strategy of "selective indirect rule" that allowed peripheral groups to have a

much higher influence than in the French cases. If it is possible to generalize from these cases, one would have to conclude that once endogeneity is taken into account, ethnic inclusion, whether through governmental or territorial power sharing, may pacify more than suggested by the findings of this study.

## 7 Case illustrations

In this section, we illustrate the validity of our main quantitative findings with a survey of case evidence from around the world. First we briefly discuss some cases illustrating that autonomy policies help keep group-government relations peaceful. In this respect, regional autonomy in the form of federal arrangements has worked very well in Canada, Belgium and Switzerland. Yet, in all these cases, autonomy is not the only form of power-sharing but is accompanied by inclusion at the center and it is therefore difficult to isolate the effects of autonomy (see H3a). With the exception for the Basque region, regional autonomy concessions have also worked preventively in Spain, where the 1978 Constitution guaranteed the Spanish nationalities their right to self-government and acknowledged “the existence of other nationalities within the one and indivisible Spanish nation” (Conversi, 2000, 144). In Catalonia and Galicia, Statutes of Autonomy were approved in referenda in 1979 and 1980 respectively. Even more effectively, the autonomy concessions granted through the 1947 Italian Constitution have maintained peace between Rome and five autonomous regions – Sardinia, Sicily, Valle d’Aosta, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and Trentino-Alto Adige. Further evidence of the pacific consequences of early devolution can be found in Malaysia. As an incentive to join the new Malaysian federation, the two resource-rich states of Sabah and Sarawak in Borneo were offered autonomous rights surpassing the rights of the peninsular states (Brown, Ali and Muda, 2004). Finally, there are numerous other autonomous, or formerly autonomous, groups that have remained peaceful, such as the Peruvian and Bolivian Aymara and Quechua,

indigenous people in Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela (Van Cott, 2007), Germans in Belgium (Wolff, 2013), or the various groups in Indonesia that benefited from the Regional Governance Reform starting in 1999 (Aspinall and Fealy, 2003).

While these cases illustrate that autonomy can have a pacifying effect when applied preventively before the outbreak of violence, our quantitative models indicate that, when applied after conflict has already broken out, regional autonomy loses much of its effectiveness. India and its northeastern region in particular provide numerous examples of how the occurrence of previous conflict can hamper the effectiveness of autonomy. When the Nehru government created the linguistic states in 1956, the Bodo people were denied their own state and instead were incorporated into the state of Assam. The Bodo belong to the Tibeto-Burman speaking Indo-Mongoloid ethnic group and had already claimed a separate homeland while still under colonial rule. Anxious to protect the identity, political representation and economic security of the Bodo in response to Assamese dominance, a new movement demanding the creation of a full-fledged state of Bodoland outside of Assam was launched in 1987 (George, 1994). After more than a decade of violent protests, negotiations involving the central government, the government of Assam, and the insurgent groups led to the creation of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) in 2003.

Despite these developments, militant Bodo organizations continued to engage in militant activity (Lacina, 2009). While the Bodo were refused a state of their own, the armed struggle of the Naga was rewarded with the creation of Nagaland as a state of the Indian Union in 1963. However, despite being granted substantial autonomy, armed Naga groups have continued to fight with few interruptions (Baruah, 2003). Their claims encompass an entirely independent Nagaland or the integration of the Naga-inhabited districts of the neighboring states into a greater Nagaland. This long history of insurgency in Nagaland made the rebels “some of the most sophisticated militant

outfits in the region in terms of their access to weapons and funding, level of training, and network of safe areas” (Lacina, 2009, 1014), thereby providing evidence for our third mechanisms, according to which the infrastructural legacy of a conflict can facilitate further outbreaks.

The Naga insurgency was the first to take up the path of violence in Northeast India and constituted the force behind other insurgencies in the region. In its attempt to create an own state, it was soon followed by Manipur, which was also merged against its will within the Indian Union in 1949. Fuelled by spillover effects from separatist activities from the neighboring Naga tribes, separatist insurgency in Manipur began in the 1960s and ultimately led to the creation of Manipur as a full-fledged state of India in 1972. However, resentment over the forced merger and the delay in the conferring of statehood further alienated the Manipuris and provided breeding ground for the emergence of a separatist movement that demanded a separate independent Manipur. In addition to demands for independence, territorial demands of Nagaland and deep divisions within the state itself have turned the conflict into the currently “worst fighting in the Northeast” (Lacina, 2009, 1016), with an estimated 15 militant groups comprising about 10,000 fighters. These examples demonstrate that conflict can impede the effectiveness of autonomy. Although these Indian groups were granted considerable autonomy rights, these concessions were made reluctantly, in reaction to violent protest and were thus unable to ease increasing grievances.

More empirical support for the “too little, too late” pattern is provided by the violent conflict between the government of the Philippines and the armed Moro secessionist movement. In the early 1970s and in response to the imposition of martial law by the Marcos regime, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) started an insurgency campaign in the search for more autonomy from the government. After decades of conflict, leaving more than 100,000 dead, a failed autonomy agreement in 1976 and the establishment of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in 1987, a

new agreement was reached in 1996 granting meaningful autonomy to the Moro people (Bertrand, 2000). Considering this agreement unsatisfactory, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), a radical splinter group of the MNLF, continued the armed struggle for independence.

The Kachins in Myanmar also illustrate that the pacifying impact of autonomy can be negatively influenced by previous conflict. Prospects initially looked very promising when ethnic leaders signed the Panglong Agreement in 1947. This agreement promised the Kachin, among other groups, wide-reaching administrative, judicial and legislative powers. Moreover, in exchange for voluntarily joining the federal political union, they were allowed to preserve their language, culture and religion (Williams and Sakhong, 2005). The spirit of Panglong, however, was never realized. Instead, misunderstandings, mistrust and fundamental disagreements about the division of power led to disunity, discontent and long-lasting rebellion. In order to preempt secession, the military embarked on a reign of terror. Having engaged in violent activism before, the military coup in 1961 made the Kachin forces withdraw from the Burmese army and form the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the military arm to the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO). But although being virtually independent from the mid-1960s, violence did not stop for decades, providing further empirical evidence for our assumption that previous conflict and mistrust can thwart the peace preserving effect of autonomy (Silverstein, 2002).

Federalism and regional autonomy arrangements have often failed to take firm roots in Africa, where the “unitary approach to the nation-state project was the predominant choice ... in the decades following independence” (Konings and Nyamnjoh, 2003, 1). When ethnic federalism was introduced in Ethiopia in 1991, its western region of Ogaden had already seen years of fighting and severe human rights violations between the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) and the Somali Army on one side and the central government of Ethiopia on the other. After the Ethiopian People’s Revo-

lutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) came to power in 1991 and turned the hitherto centralized state into an ethnic federation, autonomy concessions failed to ease the accumulated resentment that provided the ground for the new insurgency by the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF). The patchy implementation of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia, and in the Ogaden region in particular, illustrates just how difficult it is to reconcile former opponents. While modest autonomy concessions might have worked in a more peaceful environment, the shadow of previous conflict has exacerbated the situation to such an extent, that anything short of outright secession would be unrealistic (Samatar, 2004).

Another exemplary case is the autonomy arrangement in the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972 that followed after the First Sudanese Civil War. The agreement stated a single national government with significant autonomy for the southern groups. However, the agreement did not endure, and when the regional government was dissolved in 1983, a conflict with “essentially the same sides and issues” (Atlas and Licklider, 1999, 38) broke out again. We will never know for sure what would have happened had the regional government not be dissolved by President Nimeiry. Nevertheless, the recurrence of conflict in the Sudan again illustrates the enormous difficulty associated with the reconciliation of former adversaries. This is equally true for the situation after the Second Sudanese Civil War, which led to temporary southern autonomy for six years, followed by a referendum on independence that ultimately resulted in the secession of South Sudan. Yet, the hostilities did not end thanks to secession, but continued to escalate, ultimately causing the 2012 border war between Sudan and South Sudan.

In the case of Basque separatism, one could also argue that too little was granted too late. ETA terrorism had its bloodiest years after the ratification of the Statute of Autonomy that granted the Basque country far-reaching autonomy, such as its own parliament and its own security force (Abadie and Gardezabal, 2003). In order to justify violent activism, nationalists



repeatedly referred to the collective memory of severe repression by both the Franco regime and continuous acts of coercive force in the “guerra sucia” (dirty war) after democratization (Llera, 1999). This lends support to the mechanisms we outlined above according to which autonomy does not work when vengefulness and radicalization have undermined interethnic trust.

Noting that the abovementioned cases point to substantial empirical evidence for H2b, we conclude this section by studying cases where conflict was not followed by mere autonomy schemes but by governmental inclusion at the center. According to H3b, we would expect such post-war inclusion to be much more effective in reducing the risk of recurring conflict than autonomy concessions. The case of the Igbo in Nigeria provides evidence for this claim. The ethnonationalist struggle of Nigerias eastern Igbo region triggered the devastating Biafran War that left deep scars. But despite devastation, when the Igbo were defeated, the victorious Gowon government adopted what Bah (2005, 93) calls an “inclusionary approach” and a “generous post-war reconciliation” that included a general amnesty, reintegrated the secessionist Igbos in the civil service, prohibited retaliation against the Igbo and rehabilitated some of the destroyed areas. This is not to say that Igbo did not suffer discrimination and marginalization in the post-war period and still today (Nwachuku and Uzoigwe, 2004), but more than forty years after the end of the Biafran War, violence has still not recurred.

The second case strengthening our argument that full inclusion at the political center after conflict can ease tensions is the Sikh conflict in Punjab. In the process of independence, Sikhs had hoped for a renewal of the Sikh state similar to the one of the first half of the nineteenth century. These aspirations, however, were only satisfied in 1966, when Punjab was formed as the last linguistic state after a series of violent protests. But discontent continued when the Akali Dahl as the major Sikh political party could only rule in coalition with Hindu parties and was later even entirely dismissed with the Congress returning to power in Punjab. In addition, there were

ongoing territorial disputes and discrimination of the central government against Punjab. The struggle for an independent Sikh nation was never abandoned. In the 1980s, parts of the secessionist movement turned militant and attacks on Hindu civilians increased, provoking counter-militancy actions by the Indian government under Indira Gandhi. When Indira Gandhi's Sikh bodyguards retaliated against Delhi's oppressive measures by assassinating her, anti-Sikh riots erupted, killing several thousand Sikhs around the country (Guha, 2008). The killing of both Sikh and Hindu civilians continued until the 1990s, after Punjab had been governed directly by Delhi for several years and harsh police action has weakened the insurgency movement. Political inclusion of the former adversaries has come a long way, as illustrated by Manmohan Singh's election as the first Sikh prime minister in 2004. That Sikhs command some of the most important jobs in the state, such as the posts of prime minister, chief of army staff and the deputy chairman of the Planning Commission (as of 2005), represents one of many signs of "Punjab's successful reconciliation with India" (Guha, 2008, 622).

## 8 Conclusion

In this paper, we have investigated to what extent, and in what form, ethnic inclusion mitigates internal conflict. Our point of departure has been past research indicating that exclusion triggers war. However, this does not automatically imply that inclusion will guarantee peace, especially if the relationship between an excluded group and the incumbent government has already seen violence. In such situations, we have found that regional autonomy is most likely "too little, too late." It is too little, because only full inclusion reduces conflict propensity significantly. Furthermore, it is too late, since regional autonomy could be effective, but only if offered in a timely, preventive fashion before the outbreak of the first conflict in the group's history.

While these findings fall short of an across-board endorsement of regional

autonomy as a conflict resolution tool, it differs significantly from the dominant tenor of the current literature, which has tended to depict ethnic decentralization, especially ethnofederalism, as pernicious, conflict-fueling schemes that should be avoided at any price, typically in favor of partition or even ethnic dominance. Such one-sided arguments are usually derived from over-aggregated analysis and biased sampling. Here we have presented a disaggregated and more balanced framework that produces radically different results. First, regional autonomy can serve a useful conflict-preventing purpose, a role that the critics often overlook. Second, in stark contrast to the critics' admonitions, there is no support for a conflict-fueling influence of regional autonomy. Third, we find strong support that ethnic inclusion at the center can effectively pacify previously violent relationships. Thus, as recommended by McGarry and O'Leary (2009), if regional autonomy is to be offered, it should be combined with governmental power sharing at the center. This is an important empirical result that directly contradicts claims that no solutions short of partition can possibly improve the situation (e.g., Kaufmann, 1996; Chapman and Roeder, 2007). In this very sense, our main result upholds the most basic interpretation of the formula that inclusion breeds peace.

While we believe to have disentangled some important aspects of power sharing with this study, this is obviously far from the final word on the matter. Several important issues call for further research. First, it should be recalled that our current data do not allow us to separate entirely the cases of regional autonomy from governmental power sharing. As already noted, however, ongoing data collection efforts will soon solve this problem. Second, much more can be said about the types of territorial and governmental power sharing offered by governments. In particular, we expect that the shape of governance units and the extent to which they coincide with ethnic settlement areas could have a major influence on the conflict propensity of regional autonomy. Again, the data situation is quite promising. For example, this

type of analysis could be conducted by extending Deiwiks's (2011) geocoded data on administrative units in federations to all states. Third, and most importantly, the main challenge will be to confront the issue of endogeneity more squarely than has been possible in this study. Future research will have to offer a clearer picture of the conditions under which governments decide to grant different types of ethnic inclusion to previously excluded groups, and integrate these findings in sophisticated research designs that allow us take the possibility of reverse causation into account. For now, we conclude that most evidence points in the direction of previous research having underestimated the effectiveness of territorial and governmental power sharing, and that such institutional methods have therefore acquired an undeservedly bad reputation. Whether that suffices to tip the balance in favor of regional autonomy remains open. In any case, one is probably on much firmer ground arguing in favor of full inclusion as a way to prevent and solve conflict in ethnically divided societies.

## Appendix

In table 4 we report the descriptive statistics of the variables used in our main analysis. Table 5 reports what groups obtained in our sample regional autonomy as a function of their previous status.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max
onset	28182	0	0.07	0	1
inclusion	28182	0.31	0.46	0	1
autonomy	28182	0.18	0.39	0	1
postwar	28182	0.08	0.27	0	1
relative group size	28182	0.16	0.22	0	1
relative group size <sup>2</sup>	28182	0.07	0.16	1.57E-008	1
number of excluded groups	28182	12.12	18.77	0	55
log gdp <sub>t-1</sub>	28182	7.93	1.26	3.91	11.97
log population	28182	10.18	2	5.42	14.1
ongoing conflict	28182	0.14	0.35	0	1
peaceyears	28182	26.44	17.74	0	63
spline1	28182	-15182.18	16257.94	-56862	0
spline2	28182	-22017.7	26458.38	-94760	0
spline3	28182	-16407.01	21573.09	-81432	0

Table 5: Groups obtaining regional autonomy

	n	col. %	n group-years	% group years	proportion
Discriminated	11	8.53	5101	12.78	0.22
Dominant	0	0.00	2105	5.27	0.00
Irrelevant	25	19.38	6127	15.35	0.41
Junior partner	5	3.88	5899	14.78	0.08
Monopoly	0	0.00	1846	4.63	0.00
Powerless	78	60.47	9798	24.55	0.80
Regional autonomy	0	0.00	5345	13.39	0.00
Senior partner	3	2.33	3081	7.72	0.10
Separatist autonomy	6	4.65	516	1.29	1.16
State collapse	1	0.78	93	0.23	1.08

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