

Periphery versus Periphery: The Stakes of Separatist War

Bethany Lacina, University of Rochester

Center versus periphery distributional conflict is the standard explanation for separatist war. However, many separatists face strong opposition from other groups in their area. The likelihood of separatist war depends on the center's political relationships with competing groups in the periphery. This article demonstrates two patterns in separatist war onset worldwide at the ethnic group level. Groups with a political advantage in the capital relative to their regional neighbors are less likely to have grievances about local political and economic institutions and have a lower probability of separatist war. On the other hand, ethnic groups that share territory with the most powerful ethnic group in their country are deterred from separatist violence. The center's commitment to defend the regional status quo is particularly credible. Given the importance of within-periphery rivalries to separatist war, policy interventions designed to resolve center/periphery resource conflict may be ineffective against violence.

Leading theories of separatism stress distributional conflict between the national capital and the geographic periphery. Either the center is bent on extraction from a rich periphery (Alesina and Spolare 2003; Collier and Hoeffler 2005; Gourevitch 1979) or an impoverished hinterland rebels against a wealthy metropole (Gellner 1964, 1983; Jenne, Saideman, and Lowe 2007). Such accounts downplay conflicting interests in the periphery. Yet many separatist movements face profound opposition from noncoethnics in their own area. For example, an autonomy plan for Jammu and Kashmir proposed by the Indian central government in 2000 was rejected by Hindus and Buddhists in Kashmir because “both minorities feared for their future under a Muslim-dominated state” (*Keesing's World News Archive* 2000; see also Bose 2003). Catholic insurgents in Northern Ireland faced armed resistance from local Protestants even after the English public favored the withdrawal of central forces (Ruane and Todd

1996). War in the southern Philippines began as an intercommunal conflict between Christian settlers and local Muslims (McKenna 1998). Close studies of separatism in Chechnya, Darfur, Eritrea, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Georgia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, southern Thailand, and Kurdish Iraq have all found opposition to separatism from other groups in the periphery.¹

Violent separatism is the product of interactions between a central government and competing ethnic groups in the periphery. A national executive's choice of economic and political institutions for the periphery reflects its political commitments to some groups in the periphery rather than others. The capital insists on the status quo when it is allied with pro-status quo ethnic groups in the periphery and not because of an implacable preference for centralization.

Whether an ethnic group becomes the source of a separatist rebellion depends on how much influence that ethnic

Bethany Lacina (blacina@ur.rochester.edu) is an assistant professor, Department of Political Science, University of Rochester, PO Box 270146, Rochester, NY 14627-0146.

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1. On Chechnya, see Bowker (2004); on Darfur, Prunier (2008); on Eritrea, Woldemikael (1993); on Sri Lanka, Fearon and Laitin (2011); on Tibet, Hansen (1999); on Georgia, Clogg (2008) and Kobaidze (1999); on Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, Hayden (1996); on Thailand, Jerryson (2011); and on Kurdish Iraq, Romano (2005) and Wolff (2010).

group has in the capital relative to other groups living in the same territory. Rebellions do not typically arise from ethnic groups that have better access to the central executive compared to their neighbors in the periphery. The center is likely to choose economic and political policies for the periphery that correspond to the favored group's interests. The lack of grievances translates into a lower probability of separatist violence. On the other hand, separatist rebellions can also be deterred by a strong and clear central commitment to opposing interests in the periphery. As a result of this kind of deterrence, ethnic groups that share the periphery with the most powerful ethnic group in their country are less likely separatists.

To demonstrate the periphery versus periphery dimension of separatist war, I analyze global data on rebellions at the ethnic group level. I record how much power ethnic groups have in the capital relative to the groups with which they have the greatest area of geographic overlap. These periphery/periphery power configurations explain the onset of separatist war. Groups with a political advantage in the capital relative to their regional neighbors have a lower probability of separatist war. Groups that share territory with the most powerful ethnic group in their country also have a lower probability of war. These patterns are not artifacts of territorial concentration, ethnic groups' inclusion in central power, the ethnic demography of the periphery, regional autonomy, or center/periphery inequalities in income or natural resources. Periphery/periphery variables also explain more variation in separatism than the standard operationalizations of center/periphery resource conflict, namely, regional income inequalities and regional oil wealth.

The contribution of this study is a theoretically novel and empirically powerful explanation for separatist war. Separatist conflict is the most common type of ethnic war (Cederman, Weidmann, and Gleditsch 2011) and is particularly likely to lead to prolonged conflict (Walter 2009). Separatist wars frequently cross international borders (Gleditsch, Salehyan, and Schultz 2005) and can also catalyze irredentist clashes between states (Saideman 2012). A clear understanding of such violence is critical. The finding that within-periphery conflict contributes to separatism also has important policy implications. Policy analysts have a tendency to discuss regional autonomy and interregional revenue transfer agreements as the natural solutions to separatist violence (Lake and Rothchild 1996; Sisk 1996). These interventions are designed to protect the periphery from the center but do not necessarily offer a solution to conflict within the periphery.

The next section reviews the existing literature on separatist war, a literature focused on center/periphery distri-

butional conflict. Then I propose an account of separatist violence based on competing interests in the periphery. The remainder of the article presents a cross-national analysis of separatist war at the ethnic group level.

CENTER VERSUS PERIPHERY

The dominant view of separatist violence stresses center/periphery distributional conflict.² There are at least three variants of this argument.³ One proposes that relatively poor areas seek separation (Horowitz 1985; Williams 1977), a second argues that relatively wealthy regions try to secede (Alesina, Baqir, and Hoxby 2004; Gourevitch 1979), and a third claims that resource-rich areas rebel (Collier and Hoeffler 2005).⁴ Economically disadvantaged regions are said to be prone to separatism because they blame central policies for underdevelopment. Rich regions and resource-rich regions try to separate to avoid transferring wealth to poorer regions.

Prominent accounts of separatism that do not explicitly focus on regional inequality are nonetheless undergirded by arguments about center/periphery distributional conflict. For example, Hale (2004, 2008) argues that the center's ability to credibly commit to a settlement with separatists is a function of the economic value of the periphery. Per Walter (2009), the center's fear of future separatism depends on the economic value of all potentially secessionist regions. Fearon and Laitin (2011) argue that separatism occurs when the center cannot commit to stopping economic migration between resource-poor and resource-rich areas. Another example is the debate over the effects of regional autonomy on separatism, which uses the lens of a center/periphery resource struggle. One camp argues that autonomy creates a regional power base that facilitates attacks on the center (Jenne et al. 2007; Roeder 2007; Toft 2005; Treisman 1997). The other camp argues that autonomy may reduce grievances by protecting the periphery from central exploitation (Anderson 2014; Hartzell and Hoddie 2003; Lustick, Miodownik, and Eidelson 2004; Siroky and Cuffe 2015). Likewise, the demography of the periphery is interpreted in terms of its implications for the antagonism between center and periphery. Toft (2005) claims that ethnic homogeneity in the periphery enables mobilization and violence against the center. That argument is bolstered by the correlation between ethnic territorial concen-

2. Separatism encompasses demands for greater self-rule, secession, or merger with all or part of a neighboring country.

3. Sambanis and Milanovic (2014) review the literature but do not find any accounts focused on within-periphery inequalities.

4. However, if interregional transfers can be credibly promised, efficiency gains from being in a large country can compensate regions that might otherwise seek separation (Oates 1999).

tration and separatist violence (Gourevitch 1979; Minorities at Risk Project 2009; Toft 2014). On the other hand, Cunningham and Weidmann (2010) argue for a nonlinear relationship between demographic diversity in the periphery and separatism. They hold that homogeneity and extreme heterogeneity both limit local resource competition and, by extension, reduce distributional grievances against the center.

Despite the prominence of center/periphery distributional conflict as an explanation for separatism, large-n empirical work finds mixed evidence that center/periphery income or resource disparities predict separatist violence. Cederman et al. (2011) find a correlation between regional inequalities and separatist war; both relatively rich and relatively poor regions are more likely to rebel, although the correlation is clearer with regard to poor regions. Earlier studies find no evidence (Jenne et al. 2007) or weak evidence of a correlation between ethnic or regional inequality and separatist conflict (Buhaug et al. 2011; Østby 2008; Østby, Nordås, and Rød 2009; Østby et al. 2011). In all of these studies, relative poverty outperforms relative wealth as a correlate of violence. Natural resource abundance is also an uncertain correlate of separatism. Reviewing the literature, Ross (2006) argues that secessionist war is positively correlated with onshore oil or gas but that a small number of cases drive this finding. He also argues that correlations between diamond wealth and separatism are spurious. In sum, there is stronger evidence for a correlation between relative poverty and separatist war than for one between relative wealth and separatism or between natural resources and separatism.

That empirical record should give researchers pause. Theories that link separatism to distributional conflict have tended to argue that relatively rich and/or resource-rich regions have stronger incentives for separation than poor regions (Alesina et al. 2004; Collier and Hoeffler 2005; Sambanis and Milanovic 2014). A rich region has more resources at its immediate disposal if it becomes fiscally autonomous (Horowitz 1985). The high value of the region also makes it difficult for the central government to credibly promise not to extract wealth in future (Hale 2008). Yet, empirically, it is regional deprivation that is most strongly associated with separatism. These findings can be reconciled with separatism-as-distributional-conflict post hoc. For example, the opportunity costs of fighting are higher for rich regions.⁵ However, the correlation between regional poverty and rebellion is also consistent with other theories—for

example, fighting in areas of state weakness (Hegre, Østby, and Raleigh 2009)—and with reverse causality—that is, economic slowdown due to violence or expected violence.

The next section lays out an account of separatism based on competing interests in the periphery. Existing literature has argued that features of the periphery, like local autonomy or ethnic composition, influence separatism. In the account below, however, I focus not on the autonomy or demography of the periphery per se but rather on the central government's political ties to competing groups in the periphery.

PERIPHERY VERSUS PERIPHERY

Separatist grievances cannot, in many cases, be reduced to a question of resources moving between center and periphery. Consider the separatist movement in Assam, India, that reached the proportions of a civil war by the mid-1980s.⁶ The centerpiece of Assamese nationalist mobilization was a demand that the Assam state voter rolls be purged of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, most of them Muslim Bengalis. Some ethnic minorities in Assam were sympathetic to this demand. However, the largest minority in the state, ethnic Bengalis, feared that Bengali Indian citizens would be disenfranchised en masse in a roll revision. That fear reflected the historical fault line in Assamese politics between Assamese Hindus and Bengali Hindus. The latter had a disproportionate share in the state's white-collar employment and held powerful positions in the state's ruling party, the Indian National Congress (INC), which also controlled the national government. Bangladeshi immigrants, by contrast, were much poorer. They were, however, agriculturists, and their presence threatened to create a scarcity of arable land. Illegal migrants depended on local political bosses for security, forged documentation, and government services. These bosses also persuaded or compelled their migrant clients to vote in large numbers, in most cases for the ruling INC. For the Assamese nationalists, these illegal voters threatened to cement the INC's hold on state power and, by extension, the social and economic privileges of elite Bengalis.

Beginning in the late 1970s, Assamese pressure groups, especially student organizations, organized protests calling for review of the electoral rolls. The central government refused and called state elections based on the existing rolls in 1983. Assamese voters observed an almost complete boycott of the election. Militant Assamese nationalists killed

5. I thank an anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this point.

6. This overview of the conflict is based on Baruah (2007), Fearon and Laitin (2011), Gupta (1984), Hazarika (1994), Lacina (2009), and Weiner (1978).

hundreds of Bengali Muslims in election day pogroms. The center deployed the military to restore order. Once there, the military found itself pursuing a radical fringe group, the United Liberation Front of Assam, which metastasized into a separatist rebel group in the next few years.

Several features of this vignette are noteworthy. First, center/periphery distributional conflict was not the primary driver of conflict. Assamese resentment of the center for regional underdevelopment was, at best, a secondary aspect of the movement. Some movement sympathizers argued that Assam's commodity-driven economy made it an example of neocolonialism by the center (e.g., Misra 1980). However, Assam was, by a very large margin, a net recipient of tax revenue and transfers from the center (Rao and Singh 2005). Instead of resentment of central extraction, Assamese nationalists were concerned with the distribution of resources among groups in Assam. Such in-periphery economic rivalry is not uncommon before separatist conflicts. For example, Fearon and Laitin (2011) argue that one-third of ethnic civil wars are militant responses to noncoethnic migrants that seem to threaten local livelihoods, particularly control of agricultural land.

Second, regional autonomy was also not precisely the issue at stake in Assam's burgeoning conflict. In the 1970s, there was already a federal state of Assam with an elected government. The majority of elected officials in Assam were also ethnically Assamese. However, autonomy for the territory of Assam was insufficient, from the protesters' point of view, to protect the Assamese from exploitation by other communities in the state. The protesters objected to the disproportionate power of non-Assamese communities in regional institutions and feared that this disproportionality would increase over time. In this context, more autonomy from the center for the existing state government would not have satisfied the protesters.

Third, the central government was motivated by concern with political control of the periphery rather than resource extraction. In fact, the center was not only willing but anxious to placate the Assamese protesters with additional central transfers. The center stonewalled on revising the state voter rolls rather than on center/periphery distributional questions. The national executive explained its stonewalling as a defense of regional minorities. But the INC was also the primary beneficiary of both legal and illegal Bengali voting. Changed voter rolls were simply not in the central executive's partisan political interest.

Most large-n studies of separatist war do not capture grievances among groups in the periphery like those illustrated by the Assam case. For example, the most important study of economic inequality and separatism compares the

income of territorially defined ethnic regions to national income (Cederman et al. 2011). The distribution of wealth among ethnic groups in the periphery is not the independent variable of interest. In fact, the measurement of income at the geographic level makes estimating that distribution infeasible. Likewise, although there are multiple studies of how devolution of political power to the periphery influences separatism, these studies do not examine how much power different communities in the periphery have within regional autonomous institutions. Yet, there are examples other than Assam of a separatist movement in direct conflict with an existing autonomous regional government. For example, Northern Irish Catholics clashed with the Protestant-dominated Belfast regime.

The lack of data comparing groups in the periphery is matched by a dearth of theories of separatism incorporating multiple interests in the periphery. For example, regional incumbents have coercive and conciliatory tools available to manage in-periphery ethnic conflict. Their incentive to do so depends on the center's disposition toward the competing ethnic groups there and its likely response to violence.

This article takes a first step toward filling empirical and theoretical gaps in our knowledge about in-periphery conflict and separatism. I argue that central governments' political ties to overlapping groups in the periphery encourage or deter separatist violence. The next sections justify and test that claim.

Will the center address grievances?

Separatists call for revised political arrangements in a particular territory. The central government is both the *de jure* and *de facto* guarantor of regional political institutions. When separatists challenge regional arrangements, the central executive responds with accommodations, stonewalling, or repression. The center's decision reflects competing demands from the periphery: the separatists and their supporters versus their noncoethnics, who anticipate being worse off politically, economically, or socially under changed arrangements (Cunningham and Weidmann 2010; Horowitz 1985; Lacina 2014a).⁷ The capital caters to the ethnic groups in the periphery that are most important to the central executive's political survival. In the Assam example, the central ruling party hoped to avoid a voter roll purge that would hurt its regional political allies.

An ethnic group that is more politically important to the central executive than other groups in its region can successfully petition the center for favorable institutions in

7. Separatists' demands are often controversial among their coethnics as well (Horowitz 1985; Lacina 2014b).

the periphery. This lack of grievances translates into a lower risk of rebellion. Conversely, ethnic groups at a political disadvantage in the capital relative to other groups in the periphery develop grievances against local political and economic institutions that favor other interests in their region:

H1. *Likelihood of grievances related to competing interests in the periphery.* An ethnic group is less (more) likely to begin a separatist rebellion if it has better (worse) political standing in the capital than do its neighbors in the periphery, *ceteris paribus*.

Hypothesis 1 assumes that central policies that reduce a group's grievances will also reduce its probability of violence. That assumption contrasts with the argument that regional elites use any new resources to undermine the center (e.g., Roeder 2007).

Separatism deterred

If a group has unresolved grievances regarding political or economic institutions in the periphery, some activists may consider violence to pressure the center for change. In most cases, would-be militants are much weaker than the state. Success requires wearing down the center's resistance by attrition. If the center prefers to fight for a long time and/or at high costs rather than concede, success by attrition is unlikely. One indicator that the center will be zealous in defense of the status quo is its political reliance on the regional opponents of separatists' demands. If the center's political commitment to the separatists' opponents in the periphery is particularly strong and obvious, rebellion will be perceived as a less viable strategy. An implication of this logic is as follows:

H2. *Deterrent effect of likely central intervention in favor of other groups in the periphery.* An ethnic group is less likely to begin a separatist rebellion if it overlaps territorially with the most powerful ethnic group in a country, *ceteris paribus*.

By contrast, if the group in the periphery opposed to separatists' demands is not the most powerful constituency in the capital, the center's willingness to pay high costs to defend the status quo may seem doubtful. The prospects for militant success seem comparatively good.

DATA ON POTENTIAL SEPARATISTS AND THEIR NEIGHBORS

The previous section makes two claims regarding the likelihood of separatism. Groups favored by the center relative

to their neighbors in the periphery are less likely separatists. Separatism is deterred when an ethnic group overlaps with the most powerful group in the country. With these hypotheses in place, the remainder of this article investigates separatist war using a global panel of ethnic groups.

I follow most large-*n* studies of separatism by taking ethnic groups as the unit of analysis rather than subnational geographic units (e.g., Cunningham and Weidmann 2010) or countries (e.g., Buhaug, Cederman, and Gleditsch 2014; Gubler and Selway 2012). In one respect, ethnic groups are the most natural unit of analysis for a study of separatism. Separatists most often articulate their claims on behalf of a particular ethnic group. Thus, the dependent variable, separatist rebellion, is most naturally coded at the group level. Also, the theory above predicts which ethnic group in a particular regional power configuration would be expected to rebel. Testing those predictions at the country or jurisdictional level would create an ecological inference problem. Country or regional measures of groups' relative power in the periphery might correlate with separatist war even though the "wrong" group is rebelling.⁸

I use the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) Dataset version 2.0 (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010; Wimmer, Cederman, and Min 2009) to create a list of potentially separatist ethnic groups, 1946–2009.⁹ EPR is agnostic as to what features define an ethnic group, allowing ethnicity to reflect linguistic, religious, regional, and racial cleavages. Within a country, ethnicity need not be defined by a single cleavage. For example, the EPR groups in the United Kingdom are the English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish Protestants, and Northern Irish Catholics. EPR is descended from the Minorities at Risk (MAR) Dataset (Minorities at Risk Project 2009), which similarly defines ethnic groups on the basis of a variety of characteristics. Chandra (2006) points out that MAR and other widely used data sets on ethnicity all take this "umbrella" (397) approach of allowing ethnicity to be defined in terms of varied categories. She argues that there has been a high degree of convergence on "which identities we classify as ethnic" (398).

Using the companion geographic information systems data set, GeoEPR-ETH version 2.0 (Wucherpfennig et al. 2011), I identify EPR groups that are regionally concentrated

8. On the other hand, country- or region-level testing may be better suited for modeling interdependent choices. The robustness checks for this article include controls for rebellion by all ethnic groups in a country (tables A18 and A19 in the online appendix) or region (tables A20 and A21).

9. I transform the EPR "group-period" data into "group-year" observations.

and include only these groups in the data. Thus, the data condition on territorial concentration.¹⁰

EPR codes separatist and nonseparatist rebellion at the ethnic group level.¹¹ Throughout the analysis below, *Separatist war onset* is the dependent variable.¹² The dependent variable is coded as missing for ethnic groups fighting an ongoing civil war—separatist or not.¹³ Thus, the dependent variable is conflict onset rather than conflict incidence, which would combine onset and duration.¹⁴

The next step in data preparation is to identify each group's most significant neighbor in the periphery. For each group in the data, I determine the ethnic group with which it has the largest territorial overlap.¹⁵ If a group has no overlap with other groups in the country, the contiguous group with the longest shared border is recorded. A few groups located on islands have no overlapping or contiguous neighbors. Their most important neighbor is the closest ethnic group, measured by minimum distance between the two ethnic settlement areas. In the online appendix, I use several alternative procedures: relying on population to choose the most important contiguous group in cases in which no overlaps were found, coding the modal political standing of all of a group's neighbors, and using the most powerful neighbor (see sec. A5 in the appendix).

10. The GeoEPR-ETH categories that correspond to regional concentration are "regionally based" and "regional and urban." The codings for groups without a regional concentration are "migrant," "urban," and "dispersed." There are no cases of separatist rebellion by groups in the latter categories. Adding these groups to the analysis does not markedly change the results below. See sec. A6 in the online appendix. GeoEPR codes "dispersed" ethnic groups with an area of settlement equivalent to the borders of the country. A dispersed group may enter my data as the most important neighbor of a potentially separatist (i.e., territorially concentrated) group. GeoEPR does not provide any settlement area information for migrant and urban groups. These groups do not enter the data as potential separatists or as potential separatists' most important neighbors.

11. Based on the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (Gleditsch et al. 2002).

12. Summary statistics for all variables are included in the online appendix in table A2.

13. Other ethnic groups in the same country remain in the data. A group fighting an ongoing war may also still be coded as the most important neighbor of another group.

14. The political variables highlighted above could have very different relationships to conflict duration. In particular, hypothesis 2 might be reversed. The logic of hypothesis 2 is that ethnic groups are deterred from rebellion if the center is willing to pay high costs to repress rebellion rather than make concessions. Conditional on a separatist war actually occurring in such a case, that war might be exceptionally long (Walter 2009).

15. In cases of an equal area of overlap with two or more groups, the one with the larger national population is recorded.

CENTRAL TIES TO COMPETING GROUPS IN THE PERIPHERY

The next step in data preparation is to record the political power in the capital of each potentially separatist ethnic group in comparison to the political power of the group in the periphery with which it most overlaps. The basis of this coding is EPR's ratings of all ethnic groups' access to the national executive. In EPR's coding, an ethnic group is either included in central power or excluded. EPR assigns included ethnic groups to a ranked tier of central power and excluded ethnic groups to nonordinal subcategories. EPR's political exclusion variable is a known correlate of ethnic war (Cederman et al. 2011; Wimmer et al. 2009) and an important control in the analysis to come.

A possible approach to structuring the EPR data for an analysis of relative power would be to code each ethnic group's EPR ranking, each overlapping group's ranking, and the interaction of these rankings. That approach is unwieldy, particularly because some combinations of rankings never occur. For example, an ethnic group cannot be the most powerful group in a country and overlap the most powerful group. A second possible approach would be to estimate a model with one variable for overlap with a more powerful group (to measure grievance) and second for overlap with the most powerful group in the country (to measure deterrence; see sec. A3 in the appendix). These variables are actually deceptively difficult to interpret because they covary by definition with political exclusion, a likely direct cause of separatism.

In order to capture both groups' inclusion/exclusion and their power relative to neighboring groups, I created a sixfold categorization scheme, outlined in table 1.¹⁶ As in EPR, ethnic groups are first categorized as included in or excluded from central power. I then add new information on how their power compares to that of their overlapping neighbor.

The *Included, overlap less powerful* category indicates that the main group is included in central power and the overlapping group is comparatively politically disadvantaged: either that neighbor is included at the capital but lower ranked or the neighbor is excluded.¹⁷ The *Included, overlap less powerful* category includes, by necessity, any group that is the most powerful group in its country. The second category in table 1, *Included, overlap more powerful*, indicates

16. Figure A1 and table A1 in the appendix describe the possible combinations of EPR categories corresponding to the political categories in table 1. Political categories are lagged one year. All independent variables are similarly lagged in multivariate analyses below.

17. For included groups with equal rank, the more populous is considered more powerful.

Table 1. Political Categories and Hypothesized Risk of Separatist Rebellion

Main Group	Overlapping Group	Factors Decreasing/Increasing (-/+) Separatist Rebellion		
		Inclusion or Exclusion	Overlap Less/More Powerful Group (H1)	Overlap Most Powerful Group (H2)
Included	Less powerful	-	-	
Included	More powerful	-	+	
Included	Most powerful	-	+	-
Excluded	Excluded	+	?	
Excluded	More powerful	+	+	
Excluded	Most powerful	+	+	-

a group included in central power with a neighbor that is more powerful at the capital but not the single most powerful group at the capital. The third designation, *Included, overlap most powerful*, indicates a group that is included in central power and overlaps with the most powerful group in the country.

Excluded ethnic groups are also divided into three categories according to the power of the group they overlap. An excluded ethnic group may overlap with another excluded group (*Excluded, overlap excluded*). Both the group and its neighbor are coded in EPR as having no access to power in the capital; they cannot be ranked relative to each other.¹⁸ The next category in table 1 is an excluded group that overlaps with a neighbor that is included in central power but is not the most powerful group in the capital (*Excluded, overlap more powerful*). The final, most disadvantaged category is made up of excluded groups that overlap with the most powerful group in the country (*Excluded, overlap most powerful*).

The columns of table 1 indicate how three considerations influence the likelihood of separatist rebellion in each political category. The first consideration is whether the main group is included or excluded in central power; this is a known correlate of rebellion. Tests of the periphery/periphery hypotheses will hold this factor constant. The next column indicates whether the group's overlapping neighbor is more or less powerful in the capital. According to hypothesis 1, groups with less (more) powerful neighbors are less (more) likely to have grievances regarding resource competition in the periphery. The minus signs in this column indicate that groups with relatively less powerful neighbors are less likely to rebel. The plus signs indicate that groups

with relatively more powerful neighbors are more likely to rebel. Note that the Excluded, overlap excluded category is ambiguous in this regard. In that category, the main and overlapping groups have equal (zero) access to central power.

The final column in table 1 captures the logic of hypothesis 2, which holds that a group is less likely to rebel if it overlaps the most powerful group in the country. In these cases, the center's commitment to defend the status quo in the periphery is particularly clear and credible, deterring rebellion. A minus sign is recorded in the two categories of groups that overlap the most powerful group in their country: Included, overlap most powerful and Excluded, overlap most powerful.

Grievance: Hypotheses

Working through table 1 highlights which groups can be compared to test hypotheses 1 and 2. Hypothesis 1 is that a group that is advantaged in the capital relative to its neighbors should have a lower rate of rebellion, all else equal. The clearest test of this logic is to compare the Included, overlap less powerful category to a category that is also (a) included in power in the capital and (b) not deterred from rebellion because of overlap with the country's premier group:

H3. The probability of separatist civil war onset among groups in the category *Included, overlap more powerful* is greater than the probability among groups in the category *Included, overlap less powerful*.

This hypothesis compares two categories of groups included in central power but differing in terms of the political strength of their neighbors in the periphery.

By contrast, the comparison of groups in the Included, overlap less powerful category to groups in the Included,

18. Thus, there is no category called Excluded, overlap less powerful. Excluded groups have hit EPR's floor for political access at the capital.

overlap most powerful category is ambiguous. Following the logic of hypothesis 1, grievances make the Included, overlap most powerful category more rebellious. However, hypothesis 2 implies that deterrence makes such groups less rebellious. The net change in degree of separatism is indeterminate.¹⁹

As seen in table 1, hypothesis 1 also implies that groups in the Included, overlap less powerful category would be less likely to rebel than groups in the categories Excluded, overlap excluded and Excluded, overlap more powerful. This is true in the data. However, these comparisons do not hold inclusion at the capital constant.

Looking for comparisons among the three categories of excluded groups, one might surmise that the rate of rebellion would be lower in the Excluded, overlap excluded category than in the Excluded, overlap more powerful category. The Excluded, overlap more powerful category is made up of groups disadvantaged in the capital relative to their neighbors. The Excluded, overlap excluded category records groups with neighbors that have the same level of power in the capital—albeit zero power. It does not necessarily follow that groups in the Excluded, overlap excluded category are less aggrieved than groups in the Excluded, overlap more powerful category. Any time the main group is excluded from central power, the capital might be unresponsive to its demands, allowing grievances to fester just as if the group were disadvantaged relative to its neighbor. Given the ambiguity, I do not generate a hypothesis comparing the Excluded, overlap excluded and the Excluded, overlap more powerful categories. The data do suggest that the former has a lower rate of rebellion, consistent with weaker grievances.

Deterrence: Hypotheses

The second claim above is that a group has a lower rate of rebellion if it shares territory with the most powerful group in the country, all else equal. The first category that fits this description is Included, overlap most powerful. The appropriate comparison is with groups that are classified as Included, overlap more powerful. Groups in the categories Included, overlap more powerful and Included, overlap most powerful have the same status in the first two columns of table 1: they are included in power and are disadvantaged relative to their neighbors in the periphery.²⁰ They differ in their power relative to their neighbors in the periphery, giving rise to the following hypothesis:

H4a. The probability of separatist civil war onset among groups in the *Included, overlap more powerful* category is greater than the probability among groups in the *Included, overlap most powerful* category.

Hypothesis 2 further suggests that groups in the Included, overlap most powerful category would have a lower rate of rebellion than groups in the Excluded, overlap more powerful category. Both categories are coded as disadvantaged relative to their neighbors (hypothesis 1), and groups in the Included, overlap most powerful category are subject to deterrence (hypothesis 2). Again, however, this comparison across included and excluded groups is not a clean test of the importance of within-periphery rivalries. Groups in the Included, overlap most powerful category may also have lower rates of rebellion because they share in central power.

Groups in the Excluded, overlap most powerful category also overlap the most important group in their country. In a comparison similar to that in hypothesis 4a, I expect the following:

H4b. The probability of separatist civil war onset among groups in the *Excluded, overlap more powerful* category is greater than the probability among groups in the *Excluded, overlap most powerful* category.

In this comparison, exclusion from central power and overlap with a more powerful group are both held constant. Hypothesis 4b is probably the most counterintuitive hypothesis to be tested. Groups in the categories Excluded, overlap most powerful and Excluded, overlap more powerful have similarly high levels of grievance; if anything, the group with the most powerful neighbors should have more severe grievances. However, the center's political commitment to the status quo in the periphery depresses the rate of rebellion in the Excluded, overlap most powerful category.

I do not make a prediction regarding a comparison between groups in the Excluded, overlap most powerful category and groups in the Excluded, overlap excluded category. The former are possibly more aggrieved according to hypothesis 1. But they are also deterred from violence under hypothesis 2. The net difference in risk of separatism is indeterminate.

Separatist war onset across political categories

Table 2 reports the rate of separatist war onset in each of the political categories just described. Groups included in the central government and advantaged over their neighbors

19. For similar reasons, a comparison between the Included, overlap less powerful and the Excluded, overlap most powerful categories is theoretically ambiguous.

20. As noted above, comparison between Included, overlap most powerful and Included, overlap less powerful is ambiguous.

Table 2. Onset of Separatist War by Political Standing Relative to Neighboring Group

Main Group	Overlapping Group	Separatist War Onset (0/1)		
		Mean	SD	N
Included	Less powerful	.00057	.024	6,995
Included	More powerful	.0041	.064	1,702
Included	Most powerful	.0022	.047	1,823
Excluded	Excluded	.0075	.086	8,448
Excluded	More powerful	.017	.13	1,039
Excluded	Most powerful	.0062	.079	6,746
All	All	.0052	.072	26,753

(Included, overlap less powerful) have the lowest rate of rebellion: 0.057%. As hypothesis 3 suggests, the rate of rebellion is greater in the Included, overlap more powerful category. In fact, the rate of rebellion is seven times higher, 0.41%. The difference in mean rates of rebellion between the Included, overlap less powerful and Included, overlap more powerful categories is statistically significant in a two-tailed test at the 99% confidence level.

The rates of rebellion in table 2 are also consistent with hypothesis 4a. The Included, overlap most powerful category has a rate of rebellion of 0.22%, which is lower than the 0.41% rate of rebellion observed in the Included, overlap more powerful category. However, the difference between these rates is not statistically significant in a *t*-test ($p = .31$). Thus, a comparison of means provides only equivocal evidence of deterrence when comparing groups included in central power.

Turning to the excluded groups, the Excluded, overlap more powerful category has the highest rate of rebellion among all groups, 1.7%. Consistent with hypothesis 4b, the rate of rebellion in the Excluded, overlap most powerful category is 60% lower: 0.62%. The difference in means is statistically significant ($p = .000$). This simple test suggests that excluded groups are deterred from separatism when they overlap the most politically powerful group in their country.

PERIPHERY VERSUS PERIPHERY MODELS OF SEPARATIST REBELLION

Table 2 is a preliminary investigation of how intraperiphery rivalry shapes separatist war. This section conducts a more elaborate analysis, bringing in confounding variables, including the center/periphery wealth disparities emphasized in existing work. I begin by describing potential confounds.

Potential confounds

Ethnic groups' ties to the center determine which groups are likely to have grievances related to governing arrangements in the periphery. It is also true that governing arrangements in the periphery influence relative political power at the center. In particular, groups with regional autonomy may be less aggrieved and be better able to influence the capital. Therefore, in the multivariate analysis below, I control for groups' regional autonomy. Doing so produces conservative estimates of the effects of relative access to central power. The models below include a dummy variable for *Autonomy*, which codes regional self-rule at the ethnic group level.²¹ I also include an indicator for the autonomy of the overlapping ethnic group (*Overlapping group autonomy*) and an interaction between the groups' autonomy (*Autonomy* × *Overlap autonomy*). Models also include dummies for *Anocracy* and *Democracy*, which relate to how widely power is shared and capture political grievances not specific to any ethnicity.²²

Other group features might cause both political ties to the center and conflict. *Ln group population* and *Ln distance to capital* are likely influences on political inclusion and rebellion.²³ It may also be necessary to control for the relative population of the main group and its neighbor. Relative size may drive groups' standing in the capital and aggravate conflict directly. I measure the similarity in group size using the measure suggested by Cunningham and Weidmann (2010): the squared difference in the groups' national population shares (*Difference group pop. shares sq.*; population shares from EPR).

In addition, all models below include country-level controls for *Ln country GDP per capita* and *Ln country population*, as well as ethnic group peace years and peace year splines to capture temporal dynamics.²⁴

21. This dummy variable is coded as a one if a group has regional autonomy per Roeder (2007) or EPR. Both sources define autonomy by ethnic group rather than by territory.

22. These scores are based on the Polity IV data set (Marshall, Jaggers, and Gurr 2012). Polity's combined autocracy and democracy scores range from -10 to 10. Democracies score ≥ 6 . Anocracies score between -5 and 5 or are coded as missing by Polity IV. Regimes in the omitted category, autocracy, score ≤ -6 .

23. Ln group population is calculated on the basis of population shares from EPR and country population data in Heston, Summers, and Aten (2012). Ln distance to capital is measured in kilometers from the ethnic group's GeoEPR-ETH centroid to the capital. Capital locations are from Weidmann, Kuse, and Gleditsch (2010).

24. Country GDP and population are from Heston et al. (2012). Peace years reflect time since separatist or nonseparatist war. Note that the GDP data begin in 1950 so that the years 1946-49 drop out of the sample when GDP is included as a control.

Distributional conflict

Most accounts of separatism focus on center/periphery distributional conflict. To measure center/periphery inequality, I use data from Cederman et al. (2011). If g is the per capita GDP of an ethnic group's area and G that of the country, then

$$\text{Inequality} = [\ln(g/G)]^2. \quad (1)$$

The data can also be used to distinguish between relatively poor and relatively wealthy areas:

$$\text{Relative poverty} = \begin{cases} G/g & \text{if } g < G \\ 0 & \text{otherwise,} \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

$$\text{Relative wealth} = \begin{cases} g/G & \text{if } g > G \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases} \quad (3)$$

Finally, I create a dummy variable for *Relative oil wealth*. I calculate whether the ethnic group's region earned a larger share of its income from oil or gas than did the country as a whole.

Models estimated

Table 3 reports logistic regressions of separatist war onset at the ethnic group level. The regression coefficients have been translated to odds ratios.²⁵ Five of the six political categories introduced in table 1 appear in the models; the omitted reference category is Included, overlap less powerful. Model 1 includes all the confounding variables described above. Model 2 adds Inequality and Relative oil wealth. Model 3 adds Relative poverty, Relative wealth, and Relative oil wealth.

In all the reported models, the magnitude and statistical significance of the coefficients on the periphery versus periphery political categories imply dramatic differences between rates of rebellion. However, the key tests for the theory—hypotheses 3, 4a, and 4b—each compare two political categories. Below each model in table 3 are the p -values from two-tailed Wald tests of the equality of the pairs of regression coefficients indicated by each hypothesis.

Grievance: Empirical results

Groups with more power in the capital than their neighbors are unlikely rebels. Hypothesis 3 predicts that the rate of rebellion is lower in the Included, overlap less powerful category than in the Included, overlap more powerful cat-

egory. The coefficients in model 1 imply that the odds of rebellion are about 6.7 times higher in the former category. That is a substantively impressive difference. For example, if an ethnic group has an average likelihood of rebellion—about 0.5% (table 2)—a 6.7-fold increase in the odds of conflict implies increasing the probability of rebellion to 3%. A Wald test implies that the difference in likelihood estimated in model 1 is significant at the 95% confidence level.²⁶ Thus, even conditional on inclusion in central power, ethnic groups are less likely to produce separatist rebels if the center favors the group politically over its regional neighbors.

Models 2–3 add measures of economic and natural resource inequality to model 1. The substantive significance of within-periphery grievances increases. The Included, overlap more powerful category is estimated to have almost 10 times higher odds of separatist rebellion than groups disadvantaged at the capital (i.e., Included, overlap less powerful). For both models 2 and 3, the hypothesis of equal chances of rebellion in the Included, overlap less powerful category and Included, overlap more powerful category can be rejected.

Deterrence: Empirical results

The regression coefficient estimates also suggest that included groups are less likely to rebel if they overlap the most powerful group in the country (hypothesis 4a). Model 1 implies that a group in the Included, overlap most powerful category has less than half the odds of rebellion of an included group with an advantaged but not preeminent neighbor—that is, a group classified as Included, overlap more powerful. However, a Wald test cannot reject the null hypothesis that the categories Included, overlap more powerful and Included, overlap most powerful have the same rate of rebellion. In models 2 and 3, the gap in odds of rebellion between the Included, overlap more powerful category and the Included, overlap most powerful category is larger than in the original specification. An included group that overlaps with the most powerful group in the country is predicted to have 70% lower odds of rebellion than an included group that is less severely disadvantaged. This difference is close to being statistically significant in Wald tests ($p = .106$ in model 2 and $p = .105$ in model 3). However, it is still not possible to reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference in rates of rebellion.

25. An odds ratio is e^β , where β is the standard logistic regression coefficient. An odds ratio greater than one implies increased likelihood of war as the independent variable increases. An odds ratio less than one implies decreased likelihood as the independent variable increases.

26. The Included, overlap less powerful category is the reference category in the regressions. The statistical significance of the coefficient on Included, overlap more powerful is thus a Z-test of hypothesis 3.

Table 3. Logistic Regressions of Separatist War Onset Cross-Nationally at the Ethnic Group Level

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Included, overlap more powerful	6.7*	9.6*	9.9*
	(5.0)	(7.9)	(8.1)
Included, overlap most powerful	3.0	2.7	2.7
	(2.9)	(2.5)	(2.6)
Excluded, overlap excluded	13*	16*	15*
	(7.9)	(10.0)	(9.6)
Excluded, overlap more powerful	25*	29*	31*
	(15)	(19)	(20)
Excluded, overlap most powerful	9.8*	14*	14*
	(5.7)	(9.1)	(9.2)
Anocracy	2.9*	2.5*	2.5
	(1.2)	(1.1)	(1.2)
Democracy	2.5	2.7	2.6
	(1.5)	(1.6)	(1.5)
Ln distance to capital	1.2	1.1	1.1
	(.26)	(.23)	(.22)
Ln group population	1.1	1.1	1.1
	(.074)	(.076)	(.080)
Ln country GDP per capita	1.4	1.3	1.3
	(.26)	(.25)	(.25)
Ln country population	1.3	1.3	1.3
	(.19)	(.21)	(.21)
Autonomy	1.2	1.5	1.4
	(.48)	(.64)	(.64)
Overlapping group autonomy	.74	.58	.57
	(.32)	(.30)	(.30)
Autonomy × Overlap autonomy	.68	1.0	1.0
	(.26)	(.46)	(.48)
Difference group pop. shares sq.	.35	.54	.51
	(.34)	(.48)	(.46)
Inequality		1.5*	
		(.31)	
Relative oil wealth		1.8	1.8
		(.82)	(.79)
Relative poverty			1.4
			(.26)
Relative wealth			1.2
			(.14)
Peace years with splines?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	21,407	18,548	18,548
Log likelihood	-553	-510	-509
<i>p</i> -values:			
H3: Included, overlap more powerful >			
Included, overlap less powerful	.011	.0060	.0053
H4a: Included, overlap more powerful >			
Included, overlap most powerful	.34	.11	.11
H4b: Excluded, overlap more powerful >			
Excluded, overlap most powerful	.0036	.037	.018

Note. Coefficients are reported as odds ratios. Standard errors, clustered by country, are in parentheses. *p*-values for two-tailed Wald hypothesis tests of equality of coefficients are reported below the models.

* *p* < .05, two-tailed test.

A group excluded from power in the center is less likely to rebel if it overlaps the most powerful group in a country. Hypothesis 4b holds that the Excluded, overlap most powerful category has a lower rate of separatist rebellion than the Excluded, overlap more powerful category. That expectation is corroborated in model 1. If a group's neighbor in the periphery is also the most powerful group in the capital, the odds of separatist rebellion are about 60% lower than if that neighboring group has an advantage, but not preeminence, at the capital. That difference is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. In models 2 and 3, which include regional inequality measures, the Excluded, overlap most powerful category has about one-half of the odds of rebellion of the Excluded, overlap more powerful category. Again, the differences between the chances of rebellion in these categories are statistically significant in both models.

As in the bivariate analysis in table 2, there is clearer support for a deterrent effect of overlap with the most powerful group in a country among excluded groups (hypothesis 4b) than among included groups (hypothesis 4a). There are two possible explanations for the clarity of the effect of deterrence among excluded groups but not included groups. The first is that the center's commitment to repressing rebellion is inherently questionable if the separatists' ethnic group has some share of power in the capital. Thus, included groups are not deterred even if they overlap the most powerful group in the country. Second, there may not be enough data to demonstrate that deterrence is taking place among included groups, given the low rates of rebellion in these categories.

Comparative model testing

Table 4 presents Vuong nonnested model tests comparing the explanatory power of the periphery/periphery variables to variables for center/periphery distributional conflict.²⁷ Each column of table 4 indicates a set of center/periphery variables in a logistic regression model of separatist war onset and the model's log likelihood.²⁸ Model 4 is Inequality and Relative oil wealth. The second center/periphery model is Relative poverty, Relative wealth, and Relative oil wealth (model 5). Below each model, the Vuong statistic compares the model's log likelihood to the log likelihood of a model (not shown) that includes the periphery/periphery variables: Included, overlap more powerful; Included, overlap most powerful; Excluded, overlap excluded; Excluded, overlap

Table 4. Vuong Nonnested Model Testing

	(4)	(5)
Center/periphery model includes:		
Inequality	X	
Relative poverty		X
Relative wealth		X
Relative oil wealth	X	X
Ln likelihood center/periphery model	-790	-787
Ln likelihood periphery/periphery model	-754	-754
Vuong statistic	2.68	2.86
<i>p</i> -value	.007	.004

Note. Periphery/periphery model is Included, overlap more powerful; Included, overlap most powerful; Excluded, overlap excluded; Excluded, overlap more powerful; and Excluded, overlap most powerful. See online table A3 for estimated coefficients and standard errors.

more powerful; and Excluded, overlap most powerful. The Vuong statistics also correct for degrees of freedom. Both Vuong statistics are positive, which indicates that the periphery/periphery specification better explains the data. The null hypothesis—that the periphery/periphery and center/periphery variables have equal explanatory power—can be rejected at the 99% confidence level.

This test may be too favorable to the periphery/periphery hypothesis; those variables owe some of their explanatory strength to capturing whether groups are included or excluded in the capital. In section A.3 of the online appendix, I conduct some additional comparative model tests to address this concern. The relative power of peripheral groups continues to explain more variance in the data than inter-regional income or resource inequality. Even these results should be treated with caution, however, as ethnic groups' power relative to that of their neighbors and their power in an absolute sense are inevitably intertwined. Richer theories of the multisided interactions between the capital and groups in the periphery may allow for sharper tests of the relative importance of in-periphery rivalries compared to other aggravators of separatism.

Robustness

The online appendix for this article reestimates the models above without controls and with additional control variables: country dummies; interactions between group autonomy and regional inequality or national wealth (Koubi and Böhmelt 2014); ethnic and nonethnic federalism, alone and in interaction with autonomy; the reputational costs of concessions to separatists (Walter 2009); and country- and region-level conflict and ethnic diversity (tables A8–A15 and

27. Vuong tests are described in an international relations context by Clarke (2001).

28. See table A3 in the online appendix for the full results of each model.

A18–A21). Other tests explore possible threats to national integrity, controlling for cross-border coethnics (Forsberg 2014; Hockenos 2003; Saideman 2002) and groups' spatial position vis-à-vis international borders (tables A16 and A17). Governments with national integrity fears may sponsor migration to the periphery as a means of pacification, as in Tibet or the West Bank. Migration may therefore create an endogenous relationship between violence and spatial overlap with powerful ethnic groups. However, the results above are similar after including a proxy for whether an ethnic group overlaps with a migrant population (tables A16 and A17).

CONCLUSION

Theories of separatism stress center/periphery distributional conflict; large-n empirics follow suit. Yet, separatists often face strident opposition from noncoethnics in the periphery. The national executive's alliance with that opposition conditions its response to a regional movement. The capital's politics-driven calculus is more varied than a constant imperative for wealth extraction and centralization. Separatist violence at the ethnic group level is more or less likely depending on the group's political clout with the capital relative to the clout of neighboring groups. An ethnic group that has more power in the capital than its neighbors is unlikely to have grievances regarding central policies in the periphery. Rebellion becomes less likely. On the other hand, ethnic groups that overlap with the territory of the most powerful group in a country are deterred from separatist rebellion. The central executive can credibly promise to resist violence for a long time and at great cost to avoid concessions that would hurt its most important supporters.

Using panel data on ethnic groups worldwide, I show evidence that separatist rebellion is less likely among groups that are politically favored by the capital over their neighbors in the periphery. At the same time, overlap with the most powerful group in the capital is associated with decreased likelihood of rebellion. This pattern of deterrence is clear in comparisons of groups that are excluded from central power. Among groups included in central power, those that overlap with the most powerful group in the country have a lower rate of rebellion than those that overlap with a privileged but not preeminent group. However, among groups included at the capital, it is not possible to reject the null hypothesis of no differences in rebellion due to deterrence. All findings are robust to controlling for self-rule in the periphery, regime type, demography, geography, and center/periphery wealth disparities. The explanatory power of the periphery/periphery variables introduced here also compares favorably to that of regional inequalities in income and in oil wealth.

A periphery versus periphery perspective on separatist war suggests new research agendas. This study only begins to theorize the interactions of a central executive and competing regional ethnic groups. More complete accounts will yield additional hypotheses about how social, economic, and political structures in the periphery influence the likelihood of separatist war. On the empirical side, process tracing of governments' responses to separatism can disentangle the periphery/periphery and center/periphery issues at stake in these conflicts. I noted above that cross-national data sets on inequality and regional autonomy do not record within-periphery disparities in wealth and power. A global coding of ethnic groups' access to power in subnational governments would be a substantial but worthwhile endeavour. Data on ethnic inequality collected in individual surveys (e.g., Gubler and Selway 2012; Østby et al. 2011) could be modified to estimate within-periphery distributional grievances. Such surveys might also be used to gather data on domestic migration, a possible aggravator of within-periphery conflict (Bhavnani and Lacina 2015; Fearon and Laitin 2011).

Research on the role of within-periphery conflict in separatist war is particularly important because of its possible policy implications. Prescriptions for ending separatist violence focus on decentralization and center/periphery revenue sharing. Neither policy addresses competition for political and economic power between groups in the periphery. Such measures may not satisfy separatists who believe they are marginalized by other communities in their own region. Alternatively, such interventions may be hamstrung by resistance from pro-status quo groups in the periphery.

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