

ETHNIC GROUPS AND INSTITUTIONS: CAN AUTONOMY AND
PARTY BANS REDUCE ETHNIC CONFLICT?

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Can institutions successfully reduce ethnic conflict? Institutions such as autonomy and federalism are often advocated as a means to prevent ethnic conflict, however empirical evidence is largely mixed with regards to their effectiveness. In a similar manner, political parties have begun to receive more scholarly attention in determining their relationship with ethnic conflict, but their evidence is also mixed. In this research I examine autonomy, federalism, and the banning of political parties within ongoing ethnic group self-determination movements. While I do not find evidence for a relationship between autonomy and conflict, I do find that federalism increases the likelihood of ethnic conflict. Additionally, the banning of ethnic political parties indicates a strong increase the likelihood of ethnic conflict, while the banning of regional political parties significantly reduces the likelihood of ethnic conflict.

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ETHNIC GROUPS AND INSTITUTIONS: CAN AUTONOMY AND PARTY BANS REDUCE ETHNIC CONFLICT?

Introduction

In ethnically diverse countries, disagreements among ethnic groups and governments create complex governing challenges. How does a government contain ethnic conflict during periods of increased interethnic tensions? Maintaining the status quo in a political system where ethnic groups hold grievances against a government is not likely to end well. Practical solutions need to address the underlying issues that drive ethnic group discontentment. Group discontentment can often arise from ethnic groups being excluded from government power, or only having minimal levels of inclusion in government (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010; Gurr 1993; Wimmer, Cederman, and Min 2009). Because of this, the implementation of autonomy and other political institutions to address group grievances are often suggested (Lijphart 1981). However, it is largely unknown how effective these institutions are at mitigating ethnic conflict.

A related institutional remedy that has been touted by some is the use of ethnic or identity party bans work to stave off conflict. For instance, Rosenblum (2007: 29) observes how ‘the working assumption in democratic theory is that parties based on religious, ethnic, racial, or cultural identity are uniquely dangerous’ (see also Horowitz 2000). In many countries ethnic party bans are the norm and have been justified as a mechanism to reduce conflict by removing the principal organization often seen as instigating conflict—the ethnic or cultural identity party. Until recently, party regulation in general, and party bans in particular, has received relatively little attention in the literature (Basedau and Moroff 2011).

Although there are a number of institutional remedies to conflict that have been

suggested in the existing research, this project specifically seeks to contribute to the existing literature by examining the effects of the granting of autonomy and the use of federal arrangements in mitigating conflict in the face of self-determination demands by ethnic groups. A related question is whether the institution of “party bans” can be an effective way to prevent violence. In other words, do these mechanisms prevent the actions of self-determination movements from becoming violent?

To examine these questions, this research is structured in the following manner. The beginning of this paper features a discussion on the literature of various institutions and theoretical considerations. After which, a theory justifying why political institutions (as well as party bans) may be the best option to mitigate ethnic conflict is justified. These theoretical considerations are tested using mixed effects logistic regression models. The research findings are presented, and concluding remarks are given on this research’s findings

Literature Review

Institutions

Institutions are often advocated as a means to potentially mitigate against ethnic conflict. This is theoretically related to the notion that the more democratic and consolidated a country is, the less likely it is to experience civil conflict (Hegre 2001). If groups are given opportunities to participate legally through political institutions, they can solve grievances through legitimate institutional channels, rather than resorting to violence.¹

A focus on the conflict mitigating properties of institutions is a prominent focus of

¹ For the purposes of this paper, institutions can be broadly conceptualized as “a set of rules that structure interactions among actors” (Knight 1992: 3).

consociationalism. The consociationalist view is that the legislature, electoral system, executive, and overall government structure can be configured to potentially prevent ethnic conflict within heterogenous countries by giving greater representation to ethnic minorities (Lijphart 1969; 1981; 2004). In providing such representation, this will coopt these groups by providing them a position in maintaining the political system, and stave off secessionist efforts.

Advocates of consociational systems have proposed a set of political institutions that maximize representation and inclusion as an alternative to majoritarian arrangements (Selway and Templeman 2012). Although consociationalism contains many properties, three institutional arrangements are most often associated with the consociational solution—Proportional Representation Election Rules, Parliamentarism (as opposed to Presidentialism) and granting regional autonomy.² Lijphart himself claimed that that there has emerged a “strong scholarly consensus” in favor of these institutions for divided societies, and that there is “solid empirical evidence” that they help in mitigating ethnic conflict and violence (Lijphart 2004).

There have been, of course, alternatives to consociationalism. Prior to Lijphart’s seminal works, scholars have examined the use of institutions as a remedy for conflict in ethnically diverse countries. Some of the earliest work on the subject has involved elements of political sociology and psychology. The modern institutionalist approach draws heavily from

² Certainly consociationalism includes several features. Lijphart’s model contains four main features: 1) mutual ethnic groups’ veto power; 2) government by grand coalition, including most political leaders from all major ethnic sects; 3) proportional representation in politics, civil service appointments, and the allocation of public funds; and 4) a guaranteed degree of political autonomy for each ethnic sect (i.e., federalism). However, operationally many scholars use PR electoral systems, parliamentarism, and federalism as the key institutional components of the consociational solution (Selway and Templeman 2012; Drake and McCulloch 2011; Elleboudt 2007).

attempting to figure out a group's source of relative deprivation (Gurr 1970), and use institutions to solve ethnic group disputes or grievances. A counter argument to the institutionalist approach, is that institutions may only have a minimal impact on mitigating ethnic conflict. Conflict could be the product of existing social cleavages which are unaffected by political institutions. From this point of view, political institutions reflect existing social cleavages, rather than affecting them (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Others have argued that the institutional remedies advocated by Lijphart and others in fact makes things worse. Indeed, several scholars argue that consociational democracy does not necessarily lead to moderate and stable democratic systems but may lead to a centrifugal mechanism that moves people towards extreme politics (McCulloh 2014; Taylor 2006; McGarry and O'Leary 2006; Brass 1991). This is because, as Brass notes, features like proportional representation emphasize competition between ethnic groups (rather than individuals), and thus deepens and reifies ethnic divisions (Brass 1991).

Critics also argue that federalism can in fact exacerbate conflict. For instance, when federal systems create significant economic or social disparities among sects, especially in terms of access to natural or economic resources, the system creates a sense of relative deprivation and often leads to political and social instability (Bakke and Wibbels 2006; Saideman et al. 2002). In addition, adopting a federal system based on ethnicity often ends with the creation of regional ethnic political parties that deepen these identities and hinder accommodation. Despite these parties being perceived as effective political institutions by certain ethnic representatives, they can also be harmful to political and social stability, especially when ethnicity-based political programs are pursued that lead to an unequal

distribution of resources along ethnic or regional lines (Brancati 2006; Bakke and Wibbels 2006).

In this paper, I focus on how the use federal systems and the granting of political autonomy can be desirable for deeply divided nations, mainly because they provide ways of guaranteeing broad autonomy to various ethnic groups and decreasing the number and scope of affairs that must be solved by the central authority (Lijphart 2004; Bakke and Wibbels 2006). In trying to reduce ethnic conflict by adopting particular institutions the goal is to minimize existing social and political cleavages, even in ethnically heterogeneous countries. Given that political institutions span a broad array of subjects, the empirical evidence of institutions effectiveness on conflict reduction is highly mixed. There is, however, strong empirical evidence which suggests that when ethnic groups are excluded from political power, they are more likely to become involved in ethnic conflicts. (Asal et al. 2016, Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010; Deiwiks, Cederman, and Gleditsch 2012; Cunningham 2013; Gurr 1993; Wucherpfennig et al. 2011). The evidence that excluded ethnic groups increase the likelihood of ethnic conflict has resulted in institutions being proposed as solutions to counter ethnic group exclusion. The granting of autonomy is often cited as a potential solution that governments could implement to assuage the demands of ethnic groups, and lead to greater political accommodation.

Autonomy

Autonomy can be considered "an institutional arrangement that delimits a regionally-based, self-administering entity or entities within a state as having explicit policy-making responsibilities in one or more political, economic or cultural spheres" (Rothchild and Hartzell

1999, 259). For my purposes, autonomy refers to a government that *officially* recognizes a group's autonomy status. Thus, granting autonomy is a positive act of government. The legitimacy of a group's autonomy is what ultimately allows groups to have significant freedom on governance issues at the local level, while maintaining its membership within a government. Autonomy granting through this legal framework gives groups more opportunities to participate in the political process.

This definition excludes situations where an ethnic group unilaterally declares autonomy. In my view, this would not be classified as a positive act of government. The latter situation of a unilateral declaration would be characterized as a self-determination dispute. Ethnic group autonomy is a complex subject which is evidenced by nuanced critiques and contested claims of its effectiveness. Part of the challenge discerning the relationship between autonomy and conflict prevention, is that empirical evidence examining autonomy is relatively sparse. Cederman et al. (2015) found that autonomy successfully maintained peace, but autonomy's effect diminished after an ethnic group engaged in a conflict. Part of the difficulty in evaluating the effectiveness of autonomy, is that autonomy is rarely covered as a single issue. Most research on autonomy is subsumed within other institutional forms such as federalism. In fact, most of the criticism or skepticism about autonomy's effectiveness is largely confined to its overlap with federalism.

Federalism and Autonomy

Federalism and autonomy have a rich history in the ethnic conflict literature (Lijphart 1977; Elazar 1985; Horowitz 2000). Arend Lijphart (1977) described federalism as a diffusion of power. Typically, federalism is characterized by having multiple layers of government such as a

regional, local, and national government. At each level of government, policy makers are either elected or appointed by public officials (Filipov, Ordeshook, and Shvetsova 2004, 9). Federalism and autonomy are often grouped together because they are intrinsic to the concept of devolution. Federalism is flexible in terms of political structuring, which makes the implementation of autonomy in a federal system an attractive idea. However, much of the theoretical criticism of autonomy arises from its integration with federalism. There are concerns that a federal structure could potentially embolden ethnically autonomous territories, resulting in ethnonationalist and separatist movements. (Bunce 1999; Erk and Anderson 2009; Roeder 1991).

For instance, the ethnofederal structure of Yugoslavia with a rise in ethnonationalist movements leading up to its ultimate collapse, highlights one of the main critiques against federalism (Bunce, 1999; 2003; Leff 1999; Roeder 1991). However, using the example of Yugoslavia to make the case against federalism is not necessarily appropriate. Yugoslavia was an ethnofederation, designated by subnational governing or territorial units based on ethnic group characteristics (Hale, 2004; Roeder, 1991).

From a larger perspective, the critique of autonomy in a federal system is largely a critique of incongruent or asymmetric federalism. Asymmetric or incongruent federalism features territories having distinct features or governing permissions which are different from other territories. Congruent or symmetrical federalism involves territories that have relatively uniform characteristics across the country without having special government permissions. (Lijphart 1999; Tarlton 1965) Canada, Belgium, and India are all feature examples of asymmetrical federalism that differ in their degree of heterogeneity. Quebec Canada, and the

Walloons and Flemings of Belgium, represent sizable populations whose territories have distinct cultural, linguistic, and government rights. India is an example of largely asymmetric federalism in that there many territorial units divided along linguistic lines (Adeney 2017). While autonomy and asymmetric federalism are very similar, they are not necessarily the same thing. Autonomy still entails a group receiving a large degree of self-government power, which may or may not exist in asymmetric federalism. Arguably the greatest critique against autonomy, is whether it actually reduces conflict when political devolution allows groups greater self-governance capabilities. Just as empirical evidence is lacking for evaluating autonomy's effectiveness, there is also a lack of evidence as to whether multi-ethnic federalism is good or bad. This is likely because federalism is such a broad political structure that its ability to produce political stability in ethnically diverse countries, is contingent on a multitude of other factors, autonomy being one of them. The existing research on federalisms capacity to reduce ethnic conflict is mixed. Some of the earliest empirical research on federalism linked it to reducing rebellion but increasing protests (Cohen, 1997). Brancati (2006) finds that decentralization reduces intra-communal conflict and anti-regime rebellion, but the presence of regional parties in a decentralized system offsets its effect. Other research has found federalism in autocratic countries increases protest and reduces conflict, but has no effect in democracies. (Saideman et al. 2002). One of the strongest critiques against both autonomy and federalism is that in certain contexts, these institutions could create secessionist movements, by giving groups more governing power.

Party Bans

Until recently there has been relatively little work on the use of party bans to regulate

conflict. This is surprising, given the widespread practice of banning ethnic parties (particularly in Africa) and also the advocacy of such practices by notable scholars such as Horowitz (2000) and Rosenblum (2007). For Horowitz, ethnic parties often are the instrument that leads to ethnic outbidding between contending groups, and this in many ways leads to the inevitable emergence of violent conflict. Further, Rosenblum (2007) argues that ethnic and religious party bans are often necessary to defend democracy and that under certain conditions, such bans are necessary, and effective, in combating extremism.

However, since 2007 a relatively robust literature has emerged that has empirically examined whether such a widely used practice is effective in reducing conflict. The research has been decidedly mixed (Basedau et al. 2007; Bogaards, Basedau and Hartman 2010; Basedau and Moroff 2011), Bogaards et al. (2010), argue that party bans have had limited impact on conflict, whereas Basedau and Moroff (2011) argue that instituting bans make conflict more likely. Thus, there is considerable debate over the effectiveness of party bans in containing conflict.

Self-Determination Movements

Self-determination disputes arise from disagreements among groups and governments over a group's political status. (Cunningham 2013). While secession can be the ultimate goal of some groups, self-determination movements do not always feature such maximalist aims. Groups involved in self-determination movements make claims ranging from wanting autonomy, to claims of outright independence. The commonality across different self-determination movements, is that ethnic groups are seeking some form of greater self-rule (Cunningham 2013). Logically then, autonomy could represent a bargain for governments and

ethnic groups. An offer of autonomy potentially gives groups calling for secession an opportunity to feel that their voices are being heard as well as protected. (Lustick, Miownik, and Eidelson 2004). However, the politics among actors in intra-state conflicts are highly complex, and conflict sometimes erupts. “The combination of social discontent, lack of peaceful alternatives, unwillingness to accommodate the opposition, and failure to deter violence interact to result in the outbreak of civil conflicts” (Cunningham, Gleditsch and Salehyan 2009, 576). A predominant countering argument to autonomy in multi-ethnic federations, is that it can lead to political turmoil or a rise in nationalism, and may do little to prevent secessionist movements (Brubaker 1996; Bunce 1999; Roeder 2007).

The concern that autonomy may give rise to secessionist movements, arises in part because of the strategy which plays out among actors in self-determination movements. In terms of a dyadic relationship, ethnic groups and governments each have their own preferences. There are many reasons why autonomy granting could be a highly risky proposition for a state. A state may not want to grant concessions to an ethnic group, fearing that such a policy may exacerbate tensions in the region, or potentially provide a signal to other groups that they too could challenge the legitimacy of the government (Toft 2005; Walter 2006). Ethnic groups may also perceive the state accommodating other ethnic groups as endangering their own survival by increasing the competition for public goods and resources when relative gains are at play (Muller and Opp 1986; Cunningham and Weidmann 2010). However, this logic involves ethnic groups thinking about the politics of accommodation as a zero-sum game when relative gains are at stake (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972; Cunningham and Weidmann 2010). The bottom line is that self-determination disputes are important in

understanding the effects of the granting of autonomy. Almost half of the civil wars since 1990 have involved ethnic groups demanding more autonomy or statehood (Toft 2012).

Theory and Hypotheses

In trying to mitigate ethnic conflict, the identification of group motivation is critical. In ethnically diverse countries, the development of ethnic group grievances is potentially problematic when those grievances can increase a group's motivation to rebel against the government. It is difficult to generate workable solutions towards preventing ethnic conflict, when group grievances and group motivations often vary. However, within this variation ethnic conflict often shares a commonality. From 1940 to 2000, 73 percent of all ethnic civil wars were fought over territory, whereby groups either sought greater control over a territory, or outright separation from a state (Toft 2012). Building off the institutionalist literature, I advance the theoretical notion that institutional choices like autonomy and federalism have the ability to reduce conflict across a wide number of cases. Such institutions are highly flexible, and thus can be implemented in various ways to meet the different needs of various ethnic groups. I develop a theoretical framework which takes into account ethnic groups involvement in self-determination movements. This allows for autonomy to be better understood within the context of heightened tensions between governments and ethnic groups.

Institutions like autonomy and federalism theoretically have the potential to address ethnic group needs ranging from control over territory, to increased cultural or language recognition. However, this assumption is largely based on previous theoretical notions as well as anecdotal case-studies. The limited amount of quantitative research on autonomy, has not provided a clear causal direction in terms of autonomy's actual effect on conflict reduction

(Cederman et al. 2015; Hartzell and Hoddie 2003; 2015). Hartzell and Hoddie (2003;2015) empirically examined the pacifying effects of autonomy only in post conflict settings, while Cederman et al. (2015) examined autonomy both before and after conflict. Importantly however, the previously mentioned scholarship does not include self-determination movements. I build off this previous work by incorporating self-determination movements to examine the potential for autonomy and other institutions to reduce conflict. In doing so, I examine ethnic group autonomy and self-determination claim making both before and after instances of conflict. Aside from some notable research on autonomy and self-determination movements (Cunningham and Weidmann 2010; Cunningham 2013; Toft 2012), there is often more literature examining institutions and self-determination movements as individual topics, rather than two subjects which can often be linked together due to autonomy. Methodological challenges may offer an explanation for why there has been limited quantitative research on autonomy.

There is a potential selection effect for autonomy, whereby a government may actually grant autonomy in order to prevent future conflict. When instances of conflict then occur, then incorrect inferences can potentially be made regarding the relationship between autonomy and conflict. While research has partially addressed this issue with selection models and instrumental variables (Cederman et al. 2015), it still does not offer a complete understanding of why some groups with autonomy may experience conflict and others do not. I argue that in order to fully understand the effects of autonomy granting, autonomy needs to be examined

within the context of self-determination movements.³

As scholars have noted, the granting of autonomy in ethnically diverse countries should work for ethnic groups who actually need it most. (Horowitz 2000; Lijphart 1977) Ethnic groups that are involved in self-determination movements are wanting some form of greater self-rule. Therefore, in order to claim that autonomy offers conflict mitigating effects for ethnic groups who need it the most, autonomy should be examined within the context of self-determination movements. Self-determination movements offer the opportunity to study the effects of autonomy, when tensions may be raised by the issuing of self-determination claims. Noted in the earlier literature review, self-determination movements involve cases which may lead to conflict, and other times self-determination disputes escalate into ethnic conflict. Given this, important inferences about the effect of autonomy can be drawn from the specific types of self-determination claims made. A prominent argument against autonomy has been that governments are resistant to grant autonomy because it could potentially degrade the security environment. (Toft 2005; Walter 2006) The absence of ethnic conflict involving autonomy claims could be a signal that governments do not view autonomy claims as significant as threat that independence claims may be. The first hypothesis is that self-determination claims for autonomy will not increase the likelihood of conflict but claims for independence and irredentism will increase the likelihood of conflict. If conflict is not more likely when ethnic groups issue claims for autonomy, then the potential danger of autonomy from the viewpoint

³The self-determination claim variable used in this research helps to minimize the problem of endogeneity, but it does not completely resolve it. The relationship between conflict and the the specific type of claim made before and after conflict, is able to partially address the endogeneity associated with the casual direction of whether the government pre-emptively initiates conflict before granting autonomy, or whether conflict may be a result from the granting of autonomy.

of the state may be over-emphasized. On the other hand, an ethnic group's independence claim signals to its host state, that the group no longer wishes to be a part of the state. I argue that when such a political environment exists, the likelihood of ethnic conflict will increase, because escalation by at least one side is likely.

Given this, when groups take the step beyond making a claim, and formally declare autonomy over a territory, I argue that ethnic conflict is more likely to occur. Unlike ethnic group claims for autonomy, ethnic groups taking the step of unilaterally declaring autonomy over a territory, undermines the legitimacy of the state. Furthermore, it is possible that the group may have already fought to win control over the territory in the first place. Situations involving groups making unilateral declarations of territorial autonomy, are inherently different than governmental offers of formal autonomy to ethnic groups. While there is likely always going to be some credible commitment problem where each side has some level of doubt that the other will keep their end of the bargain (Lake and Rothchild 2005); a governmental offer of autonomy signals willing intent on the part of the government to make the political system work. These assumptions lead to the second hypothesis, which is that governmental granting of formal autonomy decreases the likelihood of ethnic conflict, but an ethnic group's unilaterally declaration of autonomy increases the likelihood of ethnic conflict. Empirical research on autonomy and post conflict peace agreements highlights the promise of autonomy. In post-conflict power-sharing, territorial autonomy has been found to reduce conflict when it is implemented in conjunction with other forms of power sharing like political, military and economic dimensions (Hartzell and Hoddie 2003; 2015). Additional research has found similar linkages showing that various power-sharing configurations can play a stabilizing role in

negotiated civil war settlements (Hartzell, Hoddie, and Rothchild 2001; Martin 2013; Mattes and Savun 2009). Other research has found that previous ethnic group conflict can stifle the ability of autonomy to reduce future conflict (Cederman et al. 2015). This inconsistency in autonomy research, reaffirms the need to test autonomy's capability in reducing conflict.

The mixed results from autonomy research may also be a function of autonomy being examined within different institutional arrangements. In addition to examining autonomy in the context of self-determination movements, it is also important to examine the relationship between autonomy and federalism. Federalism and autonomy are often frequently paired because they both are derived from political decentralization. The third hypothesis is that federalism by itself does not increase the likelihood of ethnic conflict, but federalism with autonomy does decrease the likelihood of ethnic conflict. There is the argument that federalism shaped by ethnically based territorial units can enable conflict, however the argument made here is in regard to the division of power among various levels of government. This research argues that federalism alone does not decrease ethnic conflict because of credible commitment issues. While political decentralization may give local and regional levels of government greater self-discretion in governing, it does not offer the protections that formal autonomy does. I argue that when federalism is paired with autonomy, the levels of government below the national government are less likely to be involved in conflict, because governmental offers of autonomy can potentially serve as a credible commitment to decentralized regional governments. Finally, Brancati (2006) made a novel addition to research on decentralization and self-determination movements, by advancing the theory that regional parties may enhance the likelihood of conflict.

Political parties represent an integral part of the legislative electoral processes and are yet another factor which may have an influence on autonomy. Scholars have suggested that creating a stable federal political system may require politicians be incentivized in order to have individuals not diverge from the established rules and norms of the system. When self-interested politicians play the potential role of spoiler, political parties could potentially become sources of polarization (Filipov, Odeshook, and Shvetsova 2004). Brancati's (2006) work found that regional parties may become too powerful, leading them to challenge the national structure of the government (Brancati 2006). Building off this idea, this research proposes an examination of not only regional parties, but other parties containing specific party platforms too. Ethnic and religious parties can potentially be a source of great contestation in a political system. One of the most prominent theories regarding the danger of ethnic parties is the outbidding scenario. This scenario involves at least two ethnic parties competing against each other, where each party may exhibit increasingly extreme positions to differentiate themselves from the party they are running against (Horowitz 2000; Mitchell 1995; Rabushka and Shepsle 1972). While a pluralistic democratic society in an ethnically diverse country is a laudable goal, sometimes political institutions may benefit from having restrictions or regulations placed upon them. While this theory argues in favor of autonomy granting as a positive act of government, I argue that the negative act of government involving the banning of specific political parties potentially reduces ethnic conflict.

The utility of autonomy is that it is a highly flexible political structure allowing for various governing structures. Autonomy and federalism allow for ethnic groups to devise lower levels of government policy that may deal with various issues of concern. Additionally,

autonomy allows greater self-governing freedom and the ability to adapt local government policies, to meet the changing needs or beliefs of ethnic groups. The four hypotheses mentioned in the previous sections are listed for convenience.

Hypotheses

H1: Self-determination claims for autonomy will not increase the likelihood of conflict, but self-determination claims for independence will increase the likelihood of ethnic conflict.

H2: Governmental granting of formal autonomy decreases the likelihood of ethnic conflict, but an ethnic group's unilaterally declaration of autonomy increases the likelihood of ethnic conflict.

H3: Federalism by itself does not increase the likelihood of ethnic conflict, but federalism paired with autonomy does decrease the likelihood of ethnic conflict.

H4: The banning of ethnic and religious parties will increase the risk of ethnic conflict, but the banning of regional parties will reduce conflict.

Research Design

The purpose of this research is to examine the effects of political autonomy and other mechanisms which may decrease the likelihood of ethnic conflict. This research employs group-level data on ethnic groups. The use of ethnic group-level data allows for a more accurate analysis than the use of country-level data on ethnic groups. This is because ethnic group level data allows for ethnic group characteristics to vary over time, and be analyzed to see if the change in characteristics make conflict more or less likely. This research also includes data on self-determination movements. The inclusion of self-determination movements data in this

research, allows for autonomy's effect to be analyzed within the context of ongoing ethnic group political movements. By integrating self-determination claims data, this research attempts to provide an important understanding of the effects of autonomy, and ethnic conflict likelihood. The statistical models presented are estimated using mixed effects logistic regression.

Ethnic Group and Self-Determination Data

Ethnic group data is from the "Geographic Research On War, Unified Platform" (*GROW^{up}*) dataset (Girardin et al. 2015). The dataset integrates ethnic group data from the Ethnic Power Relations Dataset (EPR) (Vogt et al. 2015). The EPR dataset defines ethnicity as "any subjectively experienced sense of commonality based on the belief in common ancestry and shared culture" (Vogt et al. 2015). Given the premise of this research, this fits in line with a constructivist approach towards ethnic identity. Ethnic groups enter the data set based on whether they are politically relevant. Political relevancy is defined as "if at least one political organization claims to represent it in national politics or if its members are subjected to state-led political discrimination" (Vogt et al. 2015)

The data on self-determinations is from the Self-Determination Movements (SDM) dataset (Sambanis, Germann, and Schädel 2018). The SDM dataset defines self-determination movements (SDMs) "as constituted by one or more political organizations that are connected to an ethnic group and make claims for increased self-determination from the state" (Sambanis, Germann, and Schädel 2018). Group self-determination is broadly defined as a right to greater self-rule involving increased authority over issues such as cultural and language rights, maintaining defense forces, management over taxation and tax revenues (Sambanis, Germann,

and Schädel 2018). This research utilizes a portion of the SDM dataset which involves a randomly selected sample of self-determination movements. This random sample is differentiated from the rest of the dataset by coding the type of self-determination claim made in a given year (Sambanis, Germann, and Schädel 2018). The SDM data set has a section which is coded to be partially compatible with the EPR data. (Vogt et al. 2015) This research manually coded and merged additional SDM data to be compatible with the EPR data, when a similar ethnic group name or ethnic group id was able to be linked. The manual coding enables all compatible ethnic groups from the random sample in the Self-Determination Dataset (Sambanis, Germann, and Schädel 2018) to be added to the Ethnic Power Relations Dataset. (Vogt et al. 2015)

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this paper is territorial ethnic conflict. It is a dichotomous variable indicating the presence of a territorial ethnic conflict in a given year. A territorial conflict is conceptualized by the actors stated incompatibility being over the status of a territory (Gleditsch et al. 2002). A territorial ethnic conflict is coded when the prior qualification is met, as well there being at least 25 battle deaths occurring in a year. (Gleditsch et al. 2002; Eck and Patterson 2018) The *GROW^{up}* dataset (Girardin et al. 2015) integrates the Armed Conflict Dataset (Gleditsch et al. 2002) and the ACD2EPR dataset (Wucherpfennig et al. 2012) in determining whether a conflict is coded as ethnic. For a conflict to be coded as ethnic, a rebel organization must make an explicit or implicit ethnic claim, and the rebel organization must significantly recruit from the ethnic group it is claiming to represent. (Girardin et al. 2015) When ethnic groups and rebel organizations are connected through both claim and recruitment

the conflict is considered ethnic. (Girardin et al. 2015) The *GROW^{up}* dataset (Girardin et al. 2015) only tracks ethnic conflict, therefore all conflicts are ethnically based. The dependent variable in this research tracks ongoing conflict. Given that the purpose of this research is to examine certain mechanisms that may reduce the likelihood of ethnic conflict, the dependent variable does not drop ongoing conflict. The aim of this research is not to predict the likelihood of conflict onsets, but rather examine the group and government characteristics which may have changed within the course of ongoing conflicts, thus effecting future conflict likelihood. Dropping ongoing conflict would censor this important time variant information.

Explanatory Variables

The independent variable “claim” is a categorical variable describing four types of self-determination claims. An autonomy claim seeks “the establishment of territorial autonomy or an increase in the number of competencies if they are already autonomous.” (Sambanis, Germann, and Schädel 2018). A Sub-state secession claim is “the separation from a pre-existing autonomous entity and the establishment of an autonomous entity of their own or the merger with another autonomous unit.” (Sambanis, Germann, and Schädel 2018) An independence claim is the claiming of internationally recognized independence. Finally, an irredentism claim involves secessionist claims to merge with another state, usually involving the ethnic group’s cultural motherland. (Sambanis, Germann, and Schädel 2018) Importantly, a group making an SDM claim does not necessarily reflect their political status. A group can have recognized autonomy and still make a claim for greater autonomy or even independence. The coding of the claim variable into four types of self-determination claims, is supportive of the literature on self-determination movements, whereby claims can vary in terms of severity (Cunningham

2013). The coding for the claim variable was recoded to include a reference category of no claim. An SDM of no claim is coded for ethnic groups that have made at least one self-determination claim.

Autonomy is an independent variable from the *GROW^{up}* dataset (Girardin et al. 2015). Regional autonomy consists of two conditions. First there is “a meaningful and active executive organ of some type that operates below the state level but above the local administrative level.” (Vogt et al. 2015) Meaningful used in this sense to refers to the right to having the legal ability to levy and collect taxes, have spending autonomy, or have control over cultural, language, or education rights. (Vogt et al. 2015) The second condition for regional autonomy is that group members have real influence on the decisions made within the organized body, and their representatives’ act in the group’s local interests. (Vogt et al. 2015) The autonomy variable used in this research is recoded as categorical variable, originally existing as a dichotomous variable. This research recodes autonomy in accordance with the EPR (Vogt et al. 2015) codebook rules to form three categories of autonomy, and a reference level of no autonomy.

Autonomy and Power-sharing occurs when an ethnic group has both regional autonomy and is included at the national level within the executive (Vogt et al. 2015). Regional autonomy involves an ethnic group having meaningful power at the regional level of government but does not have power at the national level within the executive (Vogt et al. 2015). Separatist autonomy applies to ethnic groups who have excluded themselves from central power. The group controls territory within the state and has declared it independent from the central government. The “separatist autonomy” variable is referred to as “self-exclusion” in the EPR

Codebook has been renamed for conceptual clarity purposes. “Separatist Autonomy” has been used in previous versions of the EPR dataset (Vogt et al. 2015).

The other explanatory variables are political party bans and federalism. The federalism and party ban variables come from the Varieties of Democracy Dataset (V-Dem) (Coppedge et al. 2019). The political party ban variables consist of ethnic party bans, religious party bans, regional party bans, and right party bans. Each party ban variable takes on a specific value between 0 and 1. This is an aggregated number reflecting the agreement of country coding experts, in terms of whether specific types of political parties are banned in a given year (Coppedge et al. 2019). For this paper, the party ban variables are transformed into dichotomous variables to make their interpretation more easily understood. Party ban variables receiving a threshold score of .875 or higher are classified as having been banned in a given country-year observation, while a score lower than this threshold would mean the party is not banned. The threshold of .875 for political party bans is chosen for methodological reasons. The first is an issue of perfect separation in the statistical models, whereby statistical software omits one or more of the covariates which are perfectly predicting the outcome of interest. (Zorn, 2005) Penalized likelihood is not applicable to this research project because this research data is not dealing with rare events, and penalized likelihood would result in the loss of the fixed effects properties in using mixed effects logistic regression. Exact logistic regression is incompatible because the large number of observations in this research is too computationally intensive for statistical software to complete. The second reason for the party ban, is that in the comparative politics literature, there is no clear consensus on the conceptualization of what constitutes specific political parties like an ethnic or regional party.

The closest thing to an agreement, is that a political party such as an ethnic or regional party, is defined by its core support of a specifically targeted group, and defined by some vote threshold the party receives from that targeted group (Horowitz 2000). The variable used for federalism, is the V-Dem division of power index variable “e_v2x_feduni_5C” (Coppedge et al. 2019). This is an “ordinalized” version of the variable ranging from 0 to 1. The division of power index variable measures whether there are elected local and regional governments, and the extent of their relative power to operate without interference” (Coppedge et al. 2019). While the explanatory variables represent much of this paper’s research theory, a variety of control variables are also introduced.

Control Variables

Several variables are chosen to control for other explanations which might have an effect on the likelihood of ethnic conflict occurrence. War history is a count variable indicating the number of times an ethnic group has previously been involved in territorial conflict onsets. (Gleditsch 2002; Wucherpfennig et al. 2012) Group size measures the ethnic group’s population size as a fraction of the country’s total population (Vogt et al. 2015). Transborder ethnic kin (TEK) is used as a count variable listing the number of transborder ethnic kin groups an ethnic group has (Cederman et al. 2013). GDP05 is a continuous variable which maps economic geo-spatial data corresponding to an ethnic group’s settlement area. The variable measures an ethnic group’s contribution to their country’s GDP, which is equated to the dollar value in 2005 (Nordhaus et al 2006; Weidmann, Kuse, and Gleditsch 2010). Mean elevation is the average terrain ruggedness of a country (DAAC, LP 1996; Wucherpfennig et al. 2011). Active groups count lists the number of politically active groups in a given year (Vogt et al. 2015). The natural

resources variable is the “real value of petroleum, coal, natural gas, and metals produced per capita” (Coppedge et al. 2019; Haber and Menaldo 2011). Liberal Democracy is the V-Dem index variable “e_v2x_libdem” measuring how autocratic or democratic a government is in a given year (Coppedge et al. 2019).

Analysis and Results

This research uses mixed effects logistic regression to estimate three separate models. One of the purposes of using a mixed effects model is to gain inference from both fixed and random effects. A mixed effects model is suitable for this research design based on several factors. A primary goal of this research is to examine how group and government characteristics change over time, effecting the likelihood of conflict occurrence. Thus, the use of mixed effects logistic regression accounts for both within and between group variation, that either random or fixed effects on their own would not be able to accomplish. Mixed effects models are also used when data is clustered or nested. The data for this research uses observations which are in a group-year format. Since ethnic groups are nested or clustered within countries in the data, the mixed effects logistic model corrects for the assumption of independence being violated among ethnic group observations which are clustered within the same country. This correction is accomplished by fitting a random intercept on the ethnic group id variable. The random intercept contains the variance of the random effects portion of the model. Standard errors are clustered at the highest level, which in this case is at the country level.

In table 1, model 1 is the base model which is primarily focused on autonomy, self-determination claims, and federalism. Model 2 then adds variables for political party bans. Model 3 is the full model containing all of the primary explanatory variables, in addition to

interactions of autonomy and federalism, with an added control variable for natural resources. The natural resource variable is not added until model 3, due to the variable lowering the total number of observations. In looking at the hypotheses, the first hypothesis (H1), was that *self-determination claims for autonomy will not increase the likelihood of conflict, but self-determination claims for independence will increase the likelihood of ethnic conflict.*

Table 1: Coefficient Estimates Dependent Variable = Territorial Ethnic Conflict

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Autonomy Claim	0.464 (1.002)	0.345 (0.950)	0.251 (1.014)
Sub-state secession	0.648 (0.773)	0.623 (0.726)	0.452 (0.763)
Independence	2.712*** (0.697)	2.617*** (0.617)	2.536*** (0.643)
Irredentism	3.771*** (1.057)	3.727*** (1.065)	4.350*** (1.163)
Aut+Pwrshare	-0.646 (0.666)	-0.491 (1.032)	1.411 (0.924)
Regional Autonomy	-0.775 (0.617)	-1.053 (0.662)	-1.802* (0.813)
Separatist Autonomy	0.552 (0.929)	0.383 (0.855)	-1.037 (1.114)
Federalism	2.494** (0.925)	2.188* (1.005)	2.967* (1.218)
Warhist_terr	0.955** (0.365)	0.986** (0.372)	1.115* (0.460)
TEK_count	-0.155 (0.161)	-0.246 (0.196)	-0.283 (0.213)
meanelev	-0.000508 (0.000345)	-0.000650* (0.000277)	-0.000535 (0.000340)
actv_groups_count	0.0189 (0.0159)	0.0162 (0.0184)	0.0205 (0.0287)
gdp05_total	-0.0000140 (0.000362)	-0.00000988 (0.000351)	-0.00296 (0.00532)

(table continues)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Groupsize	-1.346 (2.889)	-0.808 (2.861)	-2.015 (4.540)
Liberal Democracy	-2.747 (1.681)	-2.371 (1.740)	-2.566 (1.836)
eth_party_ban		2.148*** (0.574)	2.214*** (0.634)
rel_party_ban		0.324 (0.724)	1.044 (0.868)
reg_party_ban		-4.515** (1.477)	-5.001** (1.548)
right_party_ban		-0.537 (0.725)	-0.167 (0.784)
(Aut+Pwrshare) x (Federalism)			-3.029* (1.522)
(Regional Autonomy) x (Federalism)			1.025 (1.288)
(Separatist Autonomy) x (Federalism)			2.926* (1.348)
Natural Resources			-0.000413 (0.000498)
Constant	-5.630*** (0.985)	-5.109*** (0.959)	-5.363*** (1.209)
var(_cons[gwgroupid]) Constant	3.382*** (0.962)	2.977*** (0.878)	4.024** (1.311)
Observations	3185	3185	2751
Log Pseudolikelihood	-746.11391	-699.22354	-589.1633
Wald Chi2	(15) = 278.78	(19) = 2582.21	(20) = 6193.21
Prob > Chi2	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

Clustered Standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.00$

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

	Incidence_terr_flag	Claim	Autonomy	Federalism	Rel_Party_Ban	Eth_Party_Ban	Reg Party Ban	Right_Party_Ban	Warhist_Terr	Tek_Count	Meanelev	Active Groups Count	Gdp05_total	Groupsize	Liberal Democracy	Natural Resources
Incidence_terr_flag	1															
Claim	.28	1														
Autonomy	.04	-.04	1													
Federalism	.03	-.13	.06	1												
Rel_party_Ban	-.04	-.01	.05	.07	1											
Eth_party_Ban	.14	.15	.03	-.06	.53	1										
Reg_Party_Ban	-.13	.20	-.07	-.15	.40	.33	1									
Right_Party_Ban	.09	.12	-.11	.18	.30	.60	.14	1								
Warhist_terr	.37	.38	.11	-.11	-.07	.04	-.06	-.02	1							
tek_count	-.07	-.04	-.02	.15	.11	.06	-.06	.06	-.02	1						
Meanelev	-.04	-.02	.20	-.33	-.09	-.02	-.13	-.08	.27	.10	1					
Active_Groups Count	-.10	-.28	.41	-.34	-.12	-.17	-.11	-.23	-.02	.33	.38	1				
Gdp05_total	-.05	-.01	.06	.05	.05	-.01	-.02	-.02	-.06	-.05	.03	.04	1			
Groupsize	-.07	-.13	-.12	.08	.38	.26	.16	.13	-.16	-.33	-.07	-.29	.16	1		
Liberal Demo-cracy	-.04	-.03	.09	.76	.22	.22	-.14	-.11	-.15	.11	.03	.23	.02	.07	1	
Natura-l Resources	-.11	-.14	.20	.14	-.05	-.12	-.14	-.11	-.15	.11	.03	.23	.02	.07	.16	1

Ethnic group self-determination claims for independence and irredentism are strongly statistically significant at the .001 level. Ethnic group claims for independence increase the likelihood of conflict. The coefficients for irredentism claims are even larger than those of independence claims. When an ethnic group wants to join another state, the increase in ethnic conflict likelihood is even greater than independence claims. While these claims increase the chances of ethnic conflict, claims falling under the categories of autonomy and sub-state secession are positive but not significant. While there is no relationship among autonomy and sub-state secession claims with ethnic conflict likelihood, it suggests that autonomy and sub-state secession claims do not nearly increase ethnic conflict likelihood like independence and irredentism claims do. Based off the strong statistical inferences which can be made across all models regarding independence and irredentism claims, the first hypothesis can be accepted.

The second hypothesis was that *governmental granting of formal autonomy decreases the likelihood of ethnic conflict, but an ethnic group's unilaterally declaration of autonomy increases the likelihood of ethnic conflict.*

Examining models 1 and 2, it is fairly clear that hypothesis two is rejected. While the variables "Aut+Pwrshare" and "Regional Autonomy" have a negative relationship in terms of decreased conflict likelihood, the variables fail to reach levels of statistical significance with the exception of the constitutive term for regional autonomy in model 3. Additionally, an ethnic groups self-declared autonomy, or "Separatist Autonomy" indicates a positive relationship in terms of conflict in models 1 and 2, but this too falls short of statistical significance.

The third hypothesis was that *federalism by itself does not increase the likelihood of ethnic conflict, but federalism paired with autonomy does decrease the likelihood of ethnic*

conflict. The results for models 1 and 2 examining federalism are not supportive of the hypothesized relationship between federalism and conflict, as federalism increases the likelihood of ethnic conflict. Models 1 and 2 indicate a positive relationship showing increases in ethnic conflict likelihood. Thus, federalism by itself appears to increase the likelihood of ethnic conflict. Federalism in model 1 is statistically significant at the .01 level, but then drops to being significant at the .05 level once the variables for political party bans are added. Model 3 shows interesting results for the effect of autonomy and federalism. The interaction level of “Aut+Pwrshare” and federalism, indicate that when ethnic groups have both inclusion at the national executive level as well as regional autonomy, the likelihood of ethnic conflict is substantially reduced by -3.029. These results are contrasted with the interaction between “Separatist Autonomy” and Federalism. This interaction in model 3 shows that conflict likelihood is increased by 2.96. The constitutive terms for the types of autonomy and federalism are included in model 3 to make appropriate inferences about the interaction term. (Brambor, Clark, and Golder 2006) Additionally a Wald Test on the interaction terms confirms that the interactions are statistically significant. In addition, a statistically significant likelihood ratio test indicates that model 3 with the interaction terms included, has better predictive power than models 1 and 2. Based on this information the third hypothesis can be accepted. Finally looking at models 1 and 2, the fourth and final hypothesis can be examined.

The fourth hypothesis was that *the banning of ethnic and religious parties will increase the risk of ethnic conflict, but the banning of regional parties will reduce conflict*. Looking at models 2 and 3, ethnic party bans show that there is a strong statistical relationship that when ethnic parties are banned, the likelihood of conflict is increased. This relationship indicates that

ethnic party bans result in an increase of 2.148 in model 2 and 2.214 in model 3, while holding the other variables constant. Both of these results are statistically significant at the .001 level. Conversely, the banning of regional political parties indicates that it results in a large decrease in the likelihood of ethnic conflict occurrence. In model 2 regional party bans result in a decrease of -4.515, and in model 3 with the interactions of autonomy and federalism, there is a -5.001 reduction in the likelihood of ethnic conflict occurrence. Regional party bans are statistically significant at the .01 level in both models 2 and 3. However, when examining the banning of religious parties, there is no discernable relationship in either models 2 or 3. While the banning of religious parties shows an increase in the likelihood of conflict, not much inference can be made from this considering the variable falls short of statistical significance. All of this taken together means that hypothesis 4 is only partially supported. While the statistical evidence is supportive of the hypothesized relationships between ethnic party and regional party bans, the lack of statistical evidence for religious party bans makes it difficult to gain accurate inference from the suggestive positive relationship.

Discussion and Conclusion

The primary focus of this research was to examine the effects of autonomy in differing contexts. This research fails to find a definitive relationship between autonomy by itself, and territorial ethnic conflict. However, when autonomy is interacted with federalism it appears to be a double-edged sword. Autonomy and Power-sharing in a federal system indicates a reduction in the likelihood of ethnic conflict. However, this optimism may be slightly diminished by the fact that an ethnic group's self-declared autonomy "Separatist Autonomy", causes an increase in the likelihood of ethnic conflict. It is important to note, that this is not theoretically

saying federalism increases the likelihood for groups to self-declare autonomy, but rather once groups have already unilaterally declared autonomy, or obtained the “Separatist Autonomy” status, ethnic conflict is more likely in federal systems.

This research also shows that federalism on its own, increases the likelihood of ethnic conflict. While it is beyond the scope of this research, it would be fruitful for future research to continue to empirically investigate the relationship of federalism separatist causes. This research also found results consist with what one may expect in regards to claims of independence and irredentism claims. Both of these claim types raised the likelihood of ethnic conflict occurring. This is contrasted with claims falling under the category of autonomy, whereby there is no statistically significant effect between autonomy claims and conflict. Simply making claims for autonomy is not associated with an increased chance for ethnic conflict. Finally, this research has found important links regarding political parties. By far the greatest predictor across all models in decreasing the likelihood of ethnic conflict, was the banning of regional political parties. On the other hand, the banning of ethnic parties is likely a bad idea. The research models in this paper indicate that banning ethnic parties results in an increase in the likelihood of ethnic conflict occurring.

The research presented here is important not only for testing long held assumptions within political science, but it is also important for policy makers in trying to manage tensions in ethnically diverse countries. An example of this would be a miscalculation that banning ethnic parties may reduce ethnic tensions and decrease the risk of ethnic conflict. Based on this research, that would be a bad mistake inadvertently increasing the risk of conflict. The research findings that federalism increases the likelihood conflict are interesting as well as problematic.

While this research operationalized federalism in terms political decentralization, future research should try to address issues of federalism and autonomy by gathering data which incorporates more specific details regarding whether or not territories might be ethnically based. If this is the case, instances of ethnic federalism may be part of the explanation as to why federalism leads to an increase in the likelihood of conflict.

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