Redemption through Rebellion: Border Change, Lost Unity and Nationalist Conflict

Lars-Erik Cederman*
Seraina Rüegger†
Guy Schvitz‡ §

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Abstract

To what extent are historical border changes responsible for today's civil conflicts? While the literature has analyzed ethnic civil wars quite extensively within a state framework, we argue that this perspective cannot adequately deal with important consequences of border change, such as division and irredentism. To address this shortcoming, we use transnational ethnic groups as our unit of analysis, which we define without regard to interstate borders. This conceptualization allows us to examine how border changes affect the territorial fragmentation of ethnic groups, which in turn may affect their risk of conflict onset in the long run. Focusing on ethno-nationalist grievances related to the group's unity, we argue that the level of territorial fragmentation, as well as its increase due to past losses of unity, are associated with a higher risk of civil conflict. In addition, our analysis accounts for other conflict causes that are unrelated to grievances. To test these propositions, we combine data on ethnic settlement areas with new geocoded data on international borders since 1886, in order to trace the territorial fragmentation of ethnic groups over time. Overall, we find robust support for our hypotheses.

*ETH Zürich, lcederman@ethz.ch
†ETH Zürich, ruegger@icr.gess.ethz.ch
‡ETH Zürich, guy.schvitz@gess.ethz.ch
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> Above all, we must acknowledge that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the century. As for the Russian nation, it became a real drama. Tens of millions of our fellow citizens and compatriots found themselves outside Russian territory. Moreover, the epidemic of disintegration spread to Russia itself.
>
> Vladimir Putin, April 25, 2005.[1]

In his televised address to the Federal Assembly in 2005, the Russian president bemoaned the geopolitical fragmentation of the Russian people following the breakup of the Soviet Union.[2] In particular, territorial loss and nationalist entitlement served as revisionist justifications for the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. The collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia had already triggered a series of nationalist conflicts in earlier decades, including the dispute in Nagorno-Karabakh and fighting over the fate of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. However, the geopolitical turbulence after the end of the Cold War constitutes merely the most recent wave of imperial collapse. In addition, the revival of ethnic nationalism that is currently sweeping through the world suggests an even greater potential for irredentist tensions.

These expressions of ethno-nationalist revisionism are real and unsettling, but conventional theories are poorly equipped to make sense of them. First, contemporary conflict research centers on states and parts of states, thus losing track of ethnic nations as lasting and border-transgressing identities. To the extent that studies of nationalism and violence analyze grievances, they focus on alien rule within multi-ethnic states rather than on the problem of division of ethnic nations. Second, the literature on nationalism is foremost concerned with tensions emanating from current incongruence between political and ethnic borders rather than with historical comparisons with earlier configurations.

To capture the effects of revisionist claims, we propose a radically different, macrohistorical perspective based on "aggregate groups," which we define without regard to international borders. This conceptualization allows us to study how border changes have affected the geopolitical cohesion of ethnic groups that are viewed as relatively stable entities. Without endorsing the ethno-nationalist worldview normatively, we identify the conditions under which historical revisionists are prone to exploit past cases of lost unity in order to mobilize against their current host states.

Our analysis uses new geocoded data on international borders since 1886 and combines this data source with information on ethnic groups' settlement areas, in order to construct a new indicator of the groups' territorial fragmentation. While this measure is structurally similar to conventional indices of ethno-linguistic fractionalization, it constitutes an entirely different concept in that it reflects political divisions of groups rather than ethnic cleavages inside states.

[1] See `http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/22931`, our translation.

[2] This revisionist outlook is still firmly entrenched in Putin's worldview. In March 2018, when asked which historical event in Russia he would like to change, Putin answered: "the collapse of the Soviet Union" (See `http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/56969`).

Our findings show that a group's territorial fragmentation is strongly linked it's risk of civil conflict. Analyzing the consequences of border change, we also find that past increases in fragmentation increase the risk of political violence. Using causal mediation analysis and newly collected data on irredentist claims, we furthermore show that the conflict-inducing effect of fragmentation is to a large degree mediated by irredentist tensions. While conventional theories of nationalism focus mostly on dissatisfaction with static configurations, nationalists' reasoning is in reality often profoundly "backward looking" in that it is obsessed by historically motivated definitions of national homelands and nostalgically framed "golden ages" (Shelef, 2016; Smith, 1986; White, 2004). Overall, our results suggest that ethno-nationalist revisionism typically has deep historical roots that help explain contemporary conflict. Indeed, our findings are robust to a wide range of confounding factors and alternative explanations. We show that they persist even if one controls for political exclusion and power loss at the level of the ethnic groups within their respective polities, which have been firmly linked to conflict in the existing literature (e.g., Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug, 2013; Gurr, 1993). We also explicitly consider a number of opportunity-driven mechanisms, some of which related to border change, that could trigger conflict without provoking grievances, and replicate our findings within different world regions and using alternative data sources on ethnic settlement areas.

The paper is structured as follows: after reviewing the relevant literature, we introduce our theoretical arguments and derive the main hypotheses. The paper proceeds with a description of the new data before presenting the main results, followed by a series of robustness tests. The concluding section summarizes our findings and evaluates their theoretical importance.

Literature review

Whether analyzing interstate wars or civil wars inside states, conflict researchers typically assume that the nation-state is the natural unit of analysis. In this sense, they subscribe to what has been labeled "methodological nationalism" by sociologists and anthropologists (Beck, 2000; Chernilo, 2011; Wimmer and Schiller, 2002) or "state centeredness" by geographers (Murphy, 2002; White, 2004). There are obvious conceptual and methodological reasons for this. The arguably most important types of political violence in the modern world, interstate and civil wars, are both defined in relation to the state. Moreover, the datasets used for systematic comparisons are typically organized along these lines as well. In fact, even those studies that explicitly analyze transnational processes and irredentism make similar assumptions, either pitching the analysis at the level of states (e.g., Carment and James, 1995; Davis and Moore, 1997; Gleditsch, 2007; Saideman and Ayres, 2000), or ethnic groups, which are viewed as "minorities" (Gurr, 1993, 2000), or more generally, as ethnic subpopulations within given states (Cederman et al., 2013). However, this narrow focus on states, or groups within states, makes it difficult to capture the logic of ethno-nationalist claims, which are often backward-looking and extend beyond contemporary country borders.

Another limitation of the literature is that it neglects long-term causation by focusing largely on conditions after WWII. Within that scope, conventional studies typically analyze

the impact of static causal variables. To some extent, previous research has been able to detect the conflict-inducing impact of short-term change, such as status reversals (see e.g., Petersen, 2002; Siroky and Cuffe, 2015). However, as political borders change, in some cases ending empires while creating new states, the continuity of these relationships is broken, since variables and properties are coded with respect to state units rather than to the relationships themselves.

Motivated by the desire to find exogenous sources of conflict, scholars have increasingly relied on historical sources from past epochs well before WWII (see e.g., Abramson and Carter, 2016; Besley and Reynal-Querol, 2014; Fearon and Laitin, 2014). Most of this research relies on arbitrary grid cells or contemporary states as units of analysis. For example, Wimmer and Min (2006) study the influence of geopolitical change on patterns of warfare during the past two centuries. Using contemporary states as a starting point for their empirical analysis, they collect data by projecting these spatial units backward in time. However, such an approach fails to circumvent the traps of methodological nationalism. Furthermore, these analytical obstacles are not merely methodological. Indeed, they characterize the entire literature on nationalism and warfare more generally. As pointed out by Hutchinson (2018) and Murphy (2002), the problem is that nationalism is typically reduced to a process that enhances military and societal mobilization within given state borders (see e.g., Posen, 1993; Tilly, 1990).

In the most recent literature, however, there are exceptions to these limitations. In an innovative article, Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2016) exploit the colonial powers' "scramble for Africa" in the late 19th century as a relatively exogenous source of territorial reconfiguration. They argue that those groups that enjoyed unified pre-colonial rule, but were split through colonial partitioning, are more likely to experience conflict than those that were never divided in the first place. Based on geocoded data on pre-colonial ethnic homelands and contemporary political borders, the authors find solid support for their hypothesis. Adopting a similar perspective on territorial disputes in Africa, Goemans and Schultz (2017) show that, conditional on the partitioned group's domestic political power, borders that divide ethnic groups are more likely to become disputed.

While these two studies make pioneering contributions to the analysis of borders and conflict, they are too limited to capture the global patterns of ethnopolitical revisionism. Both articles cover only Africa and so it remains unclear to what extent their conclusions can be generalized to the rest of the world. Furthermore, the studies adopt a static and binary perspective on ethnic division that makes it difficult to study the historical logic of revisionist claim-making.

Adopting an explicitly constructivist perspective, Shelef (2016) examines how changes in conceptions of national homelands affect the risk of interstate disputes (see also, Shelef, 2019). Based on discursive evidence, this analysis captures "homeland territoriality," which reflects nationalists' valuation of a given territory. Yet, by analyzing foreign policy behavior of states, Shelef's approach says little about the disruptive effect of non-state actors and relies on information that is potentially more vulnerable to endogeneity than structural measures. In this sense, our study complements his pioneering work.

Territorial fragmentation and its violent consequences

For analytical purposes, but without any normative implications, we adopt an explicitly ethno-nationalist perspective on politics. Taking a decisive step away from the conventional treatment of states as natural entities, we introduce "aggregate groups" as our fundamental transborder unit of analysis. We define this category as populations that share common ethnic attributes, but may be located in more than one state.[3] Rather than assuming that such entities have primordial, or even premodern, roots, we treat them as relatively stable, culturally and territorially defined collectives that are able to survive major geopolitical transformations of the state system. Contrary to radical constructivist views, as most prominently expressed by Brubaker (2004), we postulate some degree of "groupness" among members of the same aggregate group. This assumption should be seen as a pragmatic, empirical one, since the cohesion of ethnic groups varies from case to case.

As argued above, it is very difficult to trace revisionist claims if the analysis is limited to ethnic groups within each country, because such a state-centric perspective hard-wires what should be varying—borders—into the very research design. Instead, our focus is on larger ethnic populations that are defined without regard to international borders. To give an example of this approach, rather than focusing on Kurds in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran or Armenia separately, we here aggregate them into a comprehensive category of Kurds regardless of whether they are settled in one or the other country (see Figure 1). In this paper, we label such groupings *aggregate groups* and refer to the parts of their population that fall into a particular state as *group segments*.

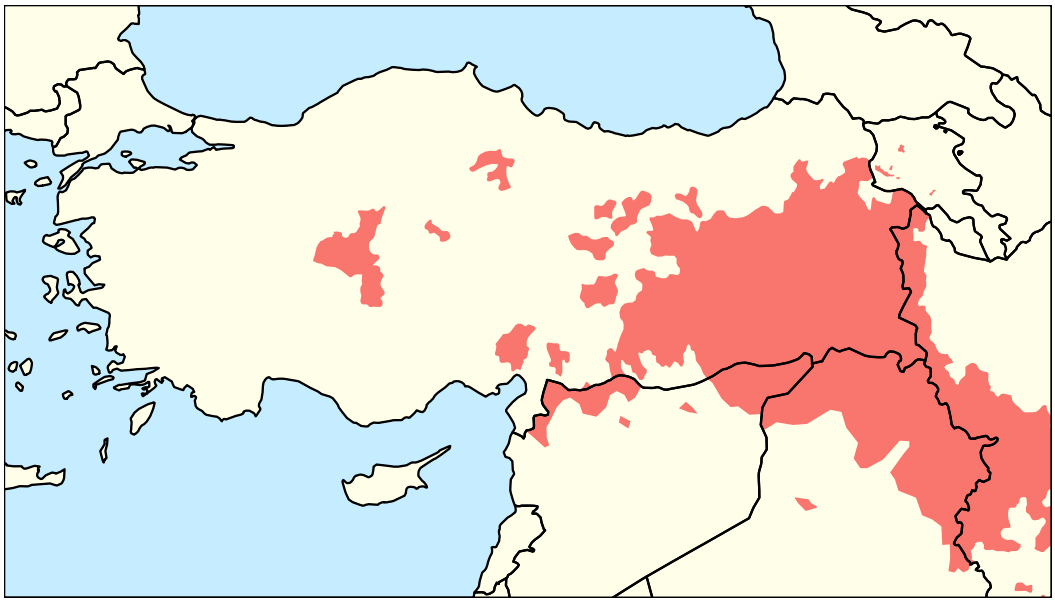

Figure 1: The Kurds as aggregate group in 2017

For the purpose of our analysis, we define *territorial fragmentation* as the degree to which state borders split an aggregate group into separate segments.[4] In the following section,

[3]We define ethnic groups as communities based on a combination of common cultural traits, such as language, religion or somatic features, and a subjective belief in a shared ancestry (see, Weber, 1978).

[4]This notion of cross-border fragmentation should not be confused with measures of ethnic groups' terri-

we provide operationalizations of territorial fragmentation with a dichotomous measure of territorial division and a continuous one based on a fractionalization index.

Paths to violence through ethnic nationalism and beyond

How does territorial fragmentation influence the risk of conflict? In the modern world, nationalism constitutes the dominant normative framework within which politicians evaluate ethnicity. Nationalism can be defined as the principle that prescribes that states and nations should coincide (Gellner 1983). It follows that ethnic nationalism requires that state borders be congruent with ethnically defined nations.[5] Our analytical focus on aggregate groups provides a structural starting point for the more elusive concept of ethnic nations. Thus, an aggregate ethnic group constitutes a likely "substrate" for ethno-nationalist claim-making, which does not mean that all entities of this type end up making ethno-nationalist claims. In fact, the historical record is replete with examples of border-transgressing ethnic groups that refrain from making cross-border claims (see e.g. Narangoa and Cribb, 2004).

The link to conflict can now be derived as a consequence of violations of ethno-nationalist principles. In an important set of cases, state-nation incongruence occurs if an ethnic group is forced to live under alien rule (see e.g. Gellner, 1983; Hechter, 2013). In such settings, the main complaint is about ethnic inequality and exclusion from power, which can be corrected either through increased influence within the country's government or through increased self-determination (see e.g. Cederman et al., 2013).

As illustrated by Putin's revisionism, however, state-nation disjunctions also apply to a conceptually distinctive, but sometimes overlapping, class of situations characterized by *division*, rather than mere suppression, of ethnic groups. Unity, then, constitutes as important a goal for nationalists as liberation from foreign rule. In some cases, bids for ethno-nationalist unification aim at a straightforward merger of ethnic kin groups that already fully control existing political units, as illustrated by German reunification in 1989. However, more often, overcoming fragmentation requires nationalists to claim territory currently ruled by other groups.

Territorial claims resulting from fragmentation-related grievances gain particular poignancy if they refer back to previous cases of "lost unity":

> National conflict then is not merely the result of the spatial disjunctions between nations and states but more precisely the spatial disjunctions between current and past states where past states enclosed the significant places of nations that current states do not (White, 2004, 114).

Such revisionist comparisons correspond to irredentism, which combines secessionist urges

torial concentration within countries (see e.g., Weidmann, 2009).

[5]Following (Weber, 1978, 176), we define nations as "a community of sentiment which would adequately manifest itself in a state of its own." When this community coincides with an ethnic group, we refer to it as an ethnic nation.

with the possible, ultimate goal of reunification.[6] Situations of this type emerge if territorial fragmentation of the ethnic group increases over time, as has often been the case following imperial collapse. In these cases, the previously dominant ethnic group loses its imperialist protection, leaving co-ethnic populations stranded outside whatever rump state remains of the erstwhile empire. Not only the Russians, but also the Serbs, Germans, Hungarians and Turks have shared this fate at different points in history.

Historical revisionism can operate over long time periods, even in the absence of formal political institutions. Nationalist intellectuals specialize on scouring the historical record in search for historical entities that allow them to make expansive claims in today's world. Based on cultural traditions, ethnic nationalists thus construct narratives about the nation's "golden ages" that were subsequently frustrated by geopolitical injustice (Connor, 2001; Smith, 1986). Specifically, they typically (re-)construct ideologically framed territorial entities that can be referred to as "ethno-nationalist homelands" (Shelef, 2016). While some homeland territories serve instrumentalist, power-related purposes, others are truly constitutive of the group's identity and thus inextricably linked to the group through a deep emotional bond formed by historical legacies and myths of ancestry.

Whether instrumentally or emotionally justified, ethno-nationalist revisionism gains credibility if it is supported by historical facts relating to past settlement patterns, as expressed by Gellner's (1992) "potato principle," which applies to territories where groups' ancestors were settled. Thus, ethnic nationalists typically view past increases of territorial divisions of their settlement area as especially serious historical violations. We have already seen that Putin's revisionist grievances fall into this category. The enthusiasm with which most Germans embraced the reunification process after the end of the Cold War offers a further illustration of the emotional power vested in projects that serve to reestablish unity. Indeed, ethnic activists and ideologues are prone to depict not only alien rule but also the loss of unity as a tragedy and the current situation of their peoples as a case of victimization. This normative rendering of the historical status quo creates an impetus for revisionist claims, which in turn are likely to put these communities on collision course with the defenders of the status quo.

Deriving the main hypotheses

We are now ready to derive the observable implications of our theoretical framework. Figure 2 offers an overview of the main theoretical dependencies. While territorial fragmentation is defined at the level of aggregate groups, we derive the main conflict-inducing mechanisms at the level of group segments. Thus, the starting point of our theory is a triangular configuration featuring a segment of an aggregate group that considers rebelling against its host government (Brubaker, 1996; Weiner, 1971). While the main relationship pits the group against its host government, the aggregate group casts a shadow over this dyad. The main question is whether the group's motivation to rebel is linked to the corresponding aggregate group's lack of unity in absolute terms or compared to a past state of unity.

[6] Strictly speaking, irredentism presupposes that earlier united territories that were subsequently lost through adverse border changes are "redeemed" and integrated into the ethnic nation.

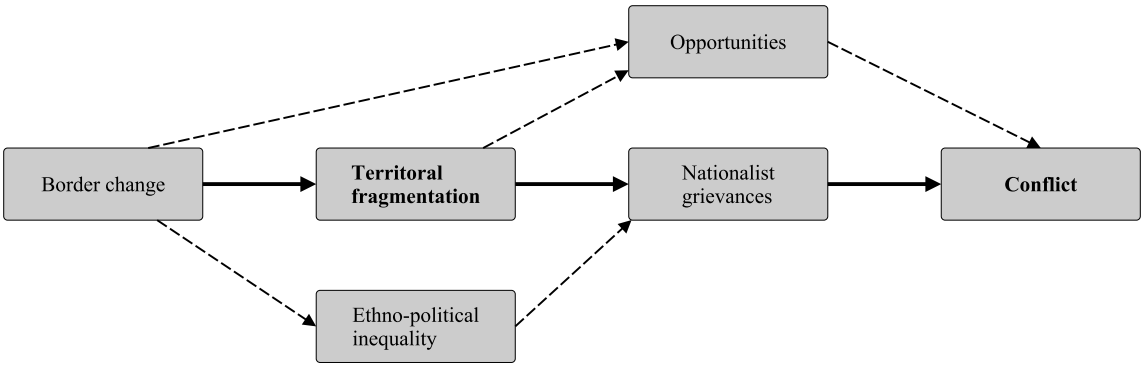

Figure 2: Theoretical framework

Based on the ethno-nationalist logic articulated in the previous section, we first derive a straightforward, static hypothesis that expects territorial fragmentation to drive conflict through nationalist grievances (see the horizontal pathway from "Territorial fragmentation" to "Conflict" in Figure 2). Other things being equal, disunity represents a source of nationalist grievances that in turn render ethno-nationalist mobilization more likely than in the case of unified groups. Rather than being separate from mobilization, the articulation of grievances often contributes to the leaders' success in mobilizing their populations (Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug, 2013).[7] Such mobilization processes are likely to be violent, especially since incumbent states are typically unwilling to relinquish the claimed territory, both for ideological and reputation-related reasons.[8] Even where unification remains a remote goal, segment populations may receive help from their cross-border kin to organize an insurgency against their host government. Again, Moscow offering help to the Russian-speaking rebels in the Ukraine is a case in point. We are now ready to present our first theoretical expectation:

Hypothesis 1. The higher the territorial fragmentation of its corresponding aggregate ethnic group, the more likely a group segment is to rebel against its ethnically distinct host government.

Shifting the starting point to border change, we now consider a causal pathway that implies increased territorial fragmentation and revisionist claim-making, with possible irredentist violence as a result (see the horizontal chain of arrows starting with "Border change" and ending with "Conflict" in Figure 2). In this case, nationalist' grievances not only pertain to current incompatibilities but also, and more importantly, to historical reference points antedating border change. Under these conditions, nationalist activists can use the cause of lost unity as a mobilizational focal point to rebel against the group segment's current host government:

[7]While some claim-making may prompt governmental concessions that allow the process to deescalate, nationalist hardliners with populist leanings and a penchant for indivisible goods may block compromise, in addition to complications linked to uncertainty and commitment problems.

[8]For the reputation argument, see Walter (2009). In some cases, however, homeland claims can be rolled back (Shelef, 2019).

Hypothesis 2. The higher the increase of territorial fragmentation of its corresponding aggregate ethnic group, the more likely a group segment is to rebel against its ethnically distinct host government.

Again, we postulate that the main causal path runs through grievance articulation, which in turn sparks mobilization and ultimately civil conflict. Yet, as we have noted above, border change could trigger conflict through reactions to ethno-political inequality as well. Depicting this alternative mechanism, the dashed arrows below the main theoretical pathway in Figure 2 show how changed borders may potentially impact the power status of ethnic groups. Furthermore, their power access may change for other reasons as well. We therefore need to consider situations in which political inequality and exclusion drive conflict through nationalist grievances, both with respect to the current level of inequality and recent decreases thereof (see e.g. Cederman et al., 2013; Petersen, 2002). Although the causal pathway runs through ethno-nationalist grievances, inequality-related grievances differ from fragmentation-related revisionism.[9]

Finally, we turn to the general class of factors labeled as "Opportunities" in Figure 2. The perhaps most prominent explanation of this broad category centers on weak state capacity (e.g. Fearon and Laitin, 2003) capturing the institutional strength of the central state itself and its control of the state's territory. Territorial fragmentation's effect on conflict may operate through alternative, opportunity-driven channels that are unrelated to grievances.[10] For example, even in the absence of explicit grievances, rebels fighting for politically divided ethnic groups could be in a better position to challenge their home governments if they receive support from neighboring states and cross-border communities through the transfer of goods, fighters, smuggling of arms and establishment of rebel sanctuaries (e.g., Gleditsch, 2007; Salehyan, 2007). Arguably, the imposition of relatively arbitrarily drawn colonial borders that cut across the pre-colonial ethnic map of Africa brought about this dynamic even in the absence of full-fledged nationalism, although there are several exceptions including Somalia's irredentist aspirations (Asiwaju, 1985; Touval, 1999). More generally speaking, there should be more opportunities for rebels to challenge the current geopolitical order if the host state is particularly weak. Furthermore, as also suggested by Figure 2, it is also possible that border change reshapes rebels' opportunities directly without affecting territorial fragmentation of ethnic groups, for example by reducing state strength through the creation of new, less stable geopolitical entities (see e.g. Fearon and Laitin, 2003). Finally, as suggested by the civil-war literature, opportunity-related factors, such as population size and economic development, as well as colonial heritage and state age, may also act as confounders in their own right without having their origins in border change or the aggregate group's territorial fragmentation.

[9] In the empirical analysis, we operationalize these factors with measures of ethno-political exclusion and its increase through "downgrading."

[10] For these reasons, we introduce controls for the group segment's relative demographic size, previous history of rebellion, and distance from the capital. Of course, this does not mean that the grievance path is unrelated to opportunities. Controlling for factors, such as group size and previous history of violence, covers such interdependence.

Measuring territorial fragmentation

To examine how ethnic territorial fragmentation relates to the risk of civil war, we construct a dataset on aggregate groups (AGs). We then combine information on the settlement areas of AGs with new data on international borders since 1886, which allows us to derive our main measures of each group's territorial fragmentation, as described in more detail in this section.

Data on aggregate groups

Our operationalization of AGs is based on a list of politically relevant ethnic groups from the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset and on a secondary dataset on Transborder Ethnic Kin (TEK) linkages (Vogt et al., 2015). The TEK data identify transborder ethnic linkages based on shared names, including synonyms, and based on asessments by regional experts. We code groups in neighboring states that share ethnic linkages as members of the same aggregate group, while groups without TEK linkages are coded according to the original EPR ethnic group definition. Our dataset includes 510 aggregate groups, of which 139 are located in at least two separate states between 1946 and 2017.[11]

In order to code the settlement territories of AGs, we draw on the GeoEPR dataset, which records the settlement territories of politically relevant ethnic groups since 1946 (Wucherpfennig et al., 2011). We aggregate the settlement areas of those groups that belong to the same AG into a single territory that spans international borders. Again, for groups without transborder linkages, such as the Portuguese in Portugal, we use the existing territories as coded by GeoEPR.[12]

The GeoEPR polygons fully cover the first set of analyses that starts in 1946. For the period between 1886 and 1946, we start by making the relatively strong assumption that ethnic settlement patterns largely corresponded to the post-war period (see Figure 1 above). Although the GeoEPR data detect major changes in ethnic geography after 1946 and show that such changes are relatively rare, there have of course been several major changes before WWII that are not picked up by our data. To account for such large-scale changes due to resettlement or ethnic cleansing, we also use historical ethnographic atlases that date back to the 19th century and furthermore rely on Murdock's (1981) pre-colonial ethnographic atlas of Africa in another followup analysis.

[11] In some instances, ethnic groups have multiple TEK linkages. Here, we use a set of criteria to identify the most relevant TEK linkage based on shared names, political relevance and group sizes (see the Appendix for more detailed information).

[12] In contrast to the original GeoEPR dataset, our data include those periods during which groups are coded as politically irrelevant, to avoid coding changes in AG settlement areas that stem from the changing political relevance of ethnic groups.

Data on border change

To capture the impact of border changes on the level of ethnic groups, we draw on the CShapes 2.0 dataset, which provides historical maps of country borders since 1886 in a GIS format (Schvitz et al., 2018). CShapes 2.0 is an extension of the original CShapes data by Weidmann, Kuse and Gleditsch (2010), which covered independent states since from 1946 to the present. The new version improves on its predecessor by going much further back in time, and by including colonies and other dependent territories that were previously not covered. Overall, the new CShapes dataset covers a total of 246 political units and 256 border changes since 1886. Figure 3 provides a preview of the dataset, showing changing border configurations in Southeastern Europe up to 1946.

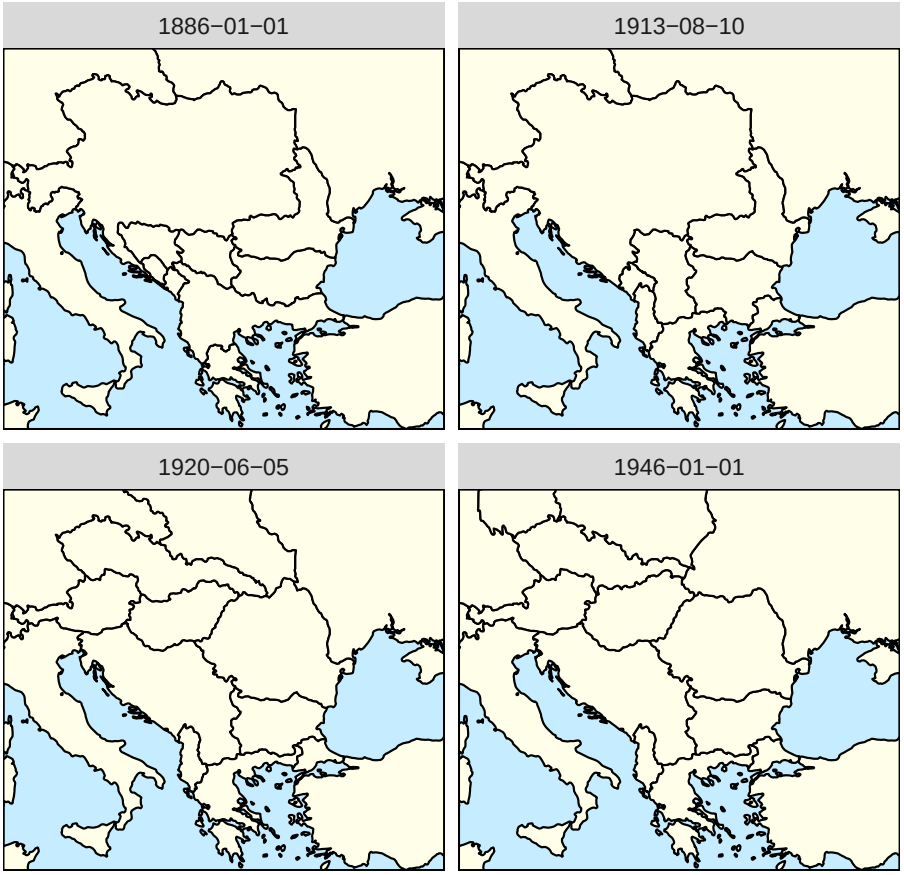

Figure 3: Border changes in Southeastern Europe, 1886-1946

Operationalizing territorial fragmentation

To measure the territorial fragmentation of aggregate groups, we overlay the settlement territory of each group with a yearly "snapshot" of international borders.[13] This results in a time-varying distribution of ethnic group segments since 1886. In its simplest configuration,

[13] We use borders as of January 1st in every year since 1886.

fragmentation can be coded as a dummy variable that captures whether or not the group is split by a state border in a given year. However, in this paper we rely mostly on a continuous measure of fractionalization based on the Herfindahl index, where the territorial size of each segment is computed as the segment's settlement area relative to the aggregate group's total area. The resulting measure is bounded by 0 and 1, with higher values indicating a higher degree of territorial fractionalization:

$$tfrac = 1 - \sum s_i^2$$

where s_i is the relative size of segment i as a proportion of the total size of the aggregate group.

To reiterate, this application of the territorial fractionalization index differs from previous uses of the fractionalization index in the literature on civil war and development. Based on state-centric research designs, such applications typically measure ethnolinguistic or ethnoreligious diversity in terms of population shares of several groups within a given country (see e.g., Alesina et al., 2003; Fearon and Laitin, 2003). Our use of fractionalization is entirely different since it focuses on the geopolitical dispersion of aggregate groups rather than on ethnic cleavages within a state.

This contrast becomes particularly clear if we consider the case of Russia as a country and the Russians as an aggregate group. Based on conventional state-centric analysis, Figure 4 contrasts ethnic fractionalization within the Soviet Union and its successor state Russia to territorial fractionalization of all Russians across the (former) Soviet Union. Strikingly, a state-centric perspective focusing on Russia leads us to believe that the situation after the break-up of the Soviet empire is more compatible with nationalist principles than the period before, because the conventional measure of ethnic fractionalization within the USSR/Russia decreased drastically. This fact is in line with a general depiction of the collapse of the communist multiethnic states as the liberation of previously "imprisoned" peoples. At the same time however, territorial fractionalization of the Russians as an aggregate group increased from zero to over 0.2, which underpins Putin's grievances.

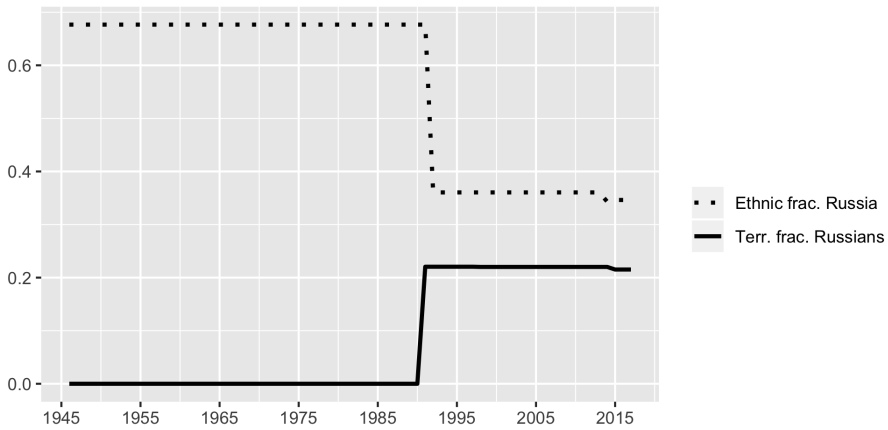

Figure 4: Comparing ethnic fractionalization of USSR/Russia and territorial fractionalization of Russians,, 1946-2017

The Russian predicament suggests a straightforward operationalization of territorial loss.

Highlighting the long-term, historical perspective implied by irredentist grievances, we test Hypothesis 2 with a measure of fractionalization increase that compares any current point to $tfrac_min_t$, the lowest level of territorial division that the group experienced since the beginning of measurement, or formally:

$$tfrac_incr_t = \max(tfrac_t - tfrac_min_t, 0).$$

For example, in case of the Russians as depicted in Figure 4, *tfrac_incr* remains zero until the collapse of the USSR, after which is increases to over 0.2, which corresponds to the increase of *tfrac* compared to *tfrac_min*, which remains zero. In the following, we use this measure of increased territorial fractionalization as a proxy for the degree of lost unity compared to the group's "golden age."

Empirical analysis

We are now ready to analyze the effect of territorial fragmentation and its increase on civil conflict outbreaks. Throughout this section, segment-years serve as the unit of analysis in a series of logit models with conflict onset at the segment level as the dependent variable. Conflict data are drawn from the ACD2EPR Dataset (Wucherpfennig et al., 2012) and the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict (ACD) Dataset (Gleditsch et al., 2002, Version4_2014).[14] The main independent variables capture territorial fragmentation at the AG level.

All models include control variables at three levels:

- At the AG level, our control variables include the overall territorial size of the total settlement areas corresponding to the AG. We also include a lagged control variable indicating whether there was any fighting in the AG during the previous year.
- The segment-level controls feature indicators for ethno-political exclusion based on EPR's power status, as well as status reversals during the previous two years. Beyond this, there is also an indicator of the segment's demographic size compared to the ruling group's population size, an indicator holding the number of rebellions launched by the group (since 1945), and a variable measuring the logged distance to the host country's capital.[15]
- At the country level, GDP per capita, total population size, a dummy indicating whether the country had a colonial past (drawn from CShapes 2.0), and a logged indicator of the state's age as an independent unit.

In our main analysis, we study the effect of territorial fragmentation for the period from 1946, which allows us to trace the influence of border changes that have occurred since

[14]The ACD coding defines an armed conflict "as a contested incompatibility that concerns government or territory or both where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths. Of these two parties, at least one is the government of a state" (Gleditsch et al., 2002, 618-619). The ACD2EPR dataset provides the necessary information to link conflict onsets to specific group segments.

[15]To account for temporal dependence, all models feature peace years as cubic polynomials (Carter and Signorino, 2010) (not shown in the tables).

WWII (see Table 1). For this temporal scope time-varying GeoEPR data on settlements areas are available. To compare our global results to Michalopoulos and Papaioannou's (2016) study of split ethnic groups in Africa, we start by considering the effect of group division in Model 1.1. Indeed, there is a significant effect of this variable on the onset of civil conflict. Adding more nuance, Model 1.2 introduces our continuous measure of territorial fractionalization, which is found to have a strong and even more precisely estimated impact on conflict outbreak in line with Hypothesis 1. As a direct test of Hypothesis 2, Model 1.3 tests whether an increase in fractionalization since 1946 makes the group segment more likely to rebel. Again, we record a strong effect on the dependent variable.[16]

Importantly, we report these findings while controlling for a number of confounding influences. In particular, the control variables for political exclusion and downgrading, which capture aspects of foreign rule, exhibit strong effects on civil conflict. The analysis also controls for alternative "opportunity" pathways at the group level, including the group segment's relative demographic size within the country, its history of previous conflict and its distance from the country's capital. Whereas the effect of the two first variables is particularly pronounced and precisely estimated, the distance measure does not reach statistical significance. Finally, at the level of the state, we introduce a battery of control variables, including GDP per capita, total country population, a flag for colonial history and a variable holding the state's age. The effects of these variables generally point in the expected direction, with group segments residing in wealthy and populous states being particularly likely respectively unlikely to rebel. The variables for colonial history and state age, however, yield much weaker results.

To illustrate the substantive importance of our findings, Figure 5 depicts the predicted probability of conflict onset as a function of the increase of territorial fractionalization since 1946, while holding all continuous control variables at their mean and binary variables at their mode. Based on Model 1.3, the graph illustrates how the risk of conflict varies with increases in fractionalization. Although the 95% confidence intervals are relatively wide at the margins, increased fractionalization is clearly associated with a growing risk of civil conflict.

Tracing nationalist claims further back in history, Table 2 extends the historical scope back to 1886. Since there is no systematic spatial data on ethnic settlement areas before 1946, we start by projecting the GeoEPR data backward all the way to 1886. As we have already noted, this involves a strong assumption that we will revisit below. For now however, the first step is to replicate Model 1.3 with the extended data. Model 2.1 tells us that our findings hold up well: while the coefficient decreases substantially, which is to be expected given the longer historical duration involved, the effect is still precisely estimated. This difference is visible in Model 2.2, which separates the effect of border changes before 1946 from those after 1946. This comparison confirms that the effect on conflict is primarily driven by the more recent cases of border change, but the contribution of the pre-1946 data is both significant and substantively nontrivial. Finally, we exploit the additional historical depth in our measure of territorial fractionalization by using pre-1946 increases in fractionalization to explain conflicts after WWII (see Model 2.3), which helps us to address

[16]Because territorial fractionalization and its increase are highly correlated, we test Hypotheses 1 and 2 separately.

Table 1: Logit models of civil conflict onset

	Model 1.1	Model 1.2	Model 1.3
AG-level variables			
Divided group	0.487*		
	(0.199)		
Fractionalization		1.635***	
		(0.369)	
Frac. incr. since 1946			2.618***
			(0.728)
Territory km^2, logged	−0.068	−0.139	0.084
	(0.124)	(0.109)	(0.101)
Conflict, lagged	0.137	0.013	0.196
	(0.401)	(0.336)	(0.398)
Segment-level variables			
Exclusion	0.892**	0.883**	0.918**
	(0.293)	(0.276)	(0.287)
Downgraded	1.265***	1.305***	1.325***
	(0.273)	(0.267)	(0.273)
Relative size	1.090*	0.915*	0.925*
	(0.429)	(0.414)	(0.369)
War history	0.707***	0.695***	0.701***
	(0.107)	(0.106)	(0.096)
Dist. to capital	0.130	0.127	0.123
	(0.083)	(0.089)	(0.083)
Country-level variables			
GDP	−0.305***	−0.305***	−0.292***
	(0.069)	(0.067)	(0.068)
Population	0.116*	0.136**	0.077+
	(0.046)	(0.045)	(0.045)
Colonial history	0.366	0.333	0.464+
	(0.296)	(0.282)	(0.248)
State age	0.005	−0.020	0.096
	(0.137)	(0.132)	(0.120)
Peace years controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	−4.188***	−3.957***	−4.773***
	(0.808)	(0.766)	(0.730)
Observations	27586	27586	27586
χ^2	405.668	523.838	399.250

AG-clustered standard errors in parentheses.

+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

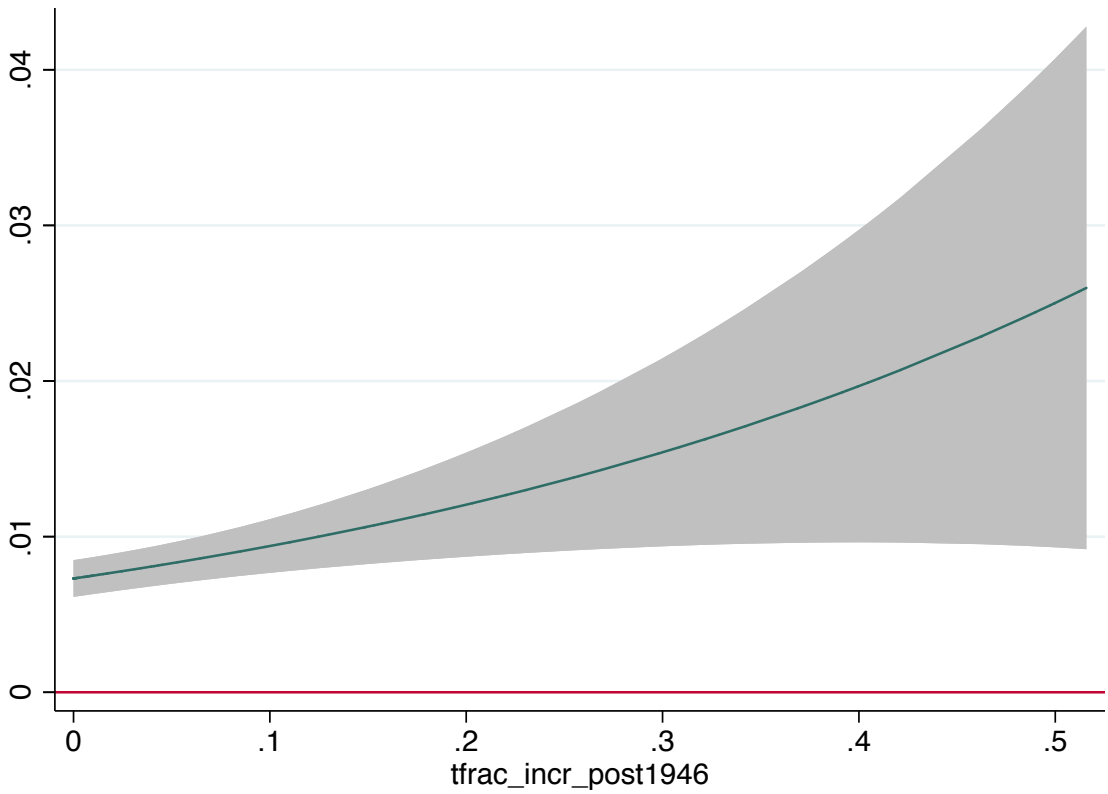

Figure 5: Predicted probability of conflict onset as a function of fractionalization increase since 1946

concerns of reverse causation. This analysis indicates that long-term historical dependency of this kind affects the risk of civil conflict in the long run. The coefficient of the pre-1946 variable is very similar to the one in Model 2.2.

Complementing our main analysis, we further investigate the mechanisms by which a group's territorial fractionalization affects its risk of conflict. More precisely, our goal is to examine whether the conflict-inducing effect of fractionalization is due to an increased potential for ethnonationalist tensions, as postulated by our theory. To this end, we draw on the causal mediation framework developed by Imai et al. (2011). This approach allows us to divide the estimated effect into a portion that is mediated by ethnonationalism and a portion that relates to other mechanisms (see Figure 2). To capture ethnonationalism as a mediating variable, we use newly collected data on nationalist claims, which are based on the self-determination movement (SDM) dataset by (Sambanis, Germann and Schädel, 2018). The original SDM dataset provides a rich set of indicators on territorial and other claims advanced by 464 movements around the world from 1946 to 2012. Our coding matches the SDM claims to EPR groups and extends the yearly claim coding by updating the it to 2017 and by including claims made by ethnic kin governments in neighboring states.[17]

[17]The dataset offers information on autonomous, secessionist and irredentist claims. The latter pertain to groups' claims for secession from the host state and consequent merger with another state, or the latter states' claims in support of independence or unification with foreign co-ethnics. We focus on irredentist claims only, rather than on autonomous and secesionist ones, since the latter two categories occur more frequently in cases

Table 2: Logit models of civil conflict onset, pre-1946 fractionalization increase

	Model 2.1	Model 2.2	Model 2.3
AG-level variables			
Frac. incr. since 1886	1.168**		
	(0.360)		
Frac. incr. since 1946		2.740***	
		(0.732)	
Frac. incr. before 1946		0.791*	0.689*
		(0.353)	(0.349)
AG-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Segment-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Peace years controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	27586	27586	27586
χ^2	476.055	465.049	477.499

AG-clustered standard errors in parentheses.
+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Using the claim data, we start by estimating a model that uses irredentist claims as the dependent variable, using the same set of explanatory variables as shown in the main analysis. The results, shown in Table A4 (Appendix), confirm that a group's current levels of fractionalization and past increases in fractionalization are associated with a greater likelihood of irredentist claims. Having established this relationship, we move on to the mediation analysis, in which we assess the degree to which fragmentation leads to conflict via irredentist claims. The results of our main mediation model are shown in Figure 6, which reveals that territorial fractionalization has both a direct effect on conflict onset (ADE) and an indirect effect, mediated by irredentist claims (ACME). More precisely, we find that around 32% of the direct effect is mediated by our claim variable. This suggests that irredentism is an important mechanism linking past border changes to civil conflict, albeit not the only one.

Robustness tests

To assess the robustness of main findings, we start by estimating a series of fixed effect models to further reduce omitted variable bias, as shown in Table 3. Our models include AG-fixed effects and retain the control variables that can be expected to change over time, such as exclusion, prior and lagged conflict. Fixed-effects estimation offers a natural way of evaluating Hypothesis 2 since it focuses on changes over time within an AG unit. In this sense, testing territorial fractionalization tells us whether changed values of this variable tend to yield conflict. However, fixed-effects analysis of increased fractionalization offers an even more direct test of Hypothesis 2. Based on conditional logit estimation, Models 3.1 and 3.2 test these two configurations. The results offer a clear confirmation of the hypothe-

that do not involve transborder groups.

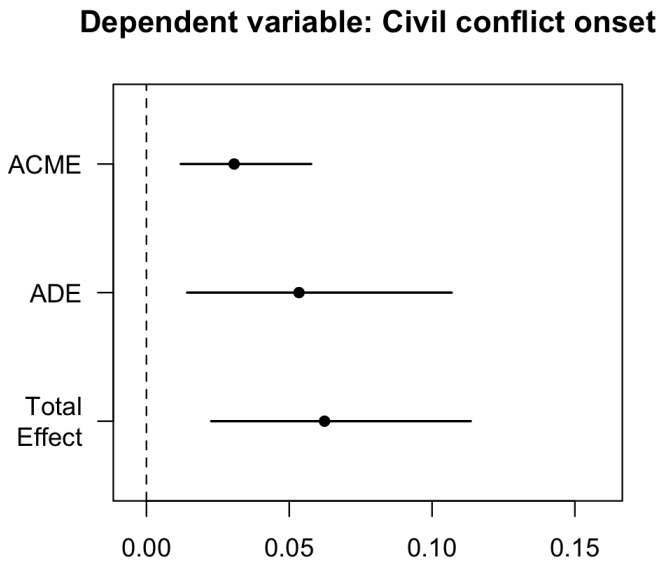

Figure 6: Effect of increased territorial fractionalization on civil conflict onset, mediated by irredentist claims

sis in both cases, both with respect to the effect itself and its significance. Since conditional logit forces us to drop all AG units that never experienced conflict, which reduces the sample considerably, we also estimate linear models, which do not face the same limitations. Models 3.3 and 3.4 rely on OLS, which also allows us to introduce year-fixed effects in addition to AG-fixed effects. Confronted with this demanding test, the effect is less precisely estimated but still significant at the 0.1 level.

A second set of robustness tests deals with historical changes in ethnic settlement areas that could undermine the validity of the analysis that relies on variation of territorial fractionalization during the period before 1946. The historical analysis shown above in Table 2 strengthens our confidence that our main findings are not an artifact of reverse causation, as it shows that even pre-World War II increases in territorial fractionalization raise a group's risk of civil conflict. However, one potential issue with this analysis is that we rely on post-1946 data on ethnic settlement patterns, and have made the strong assumption that these settlement patterns did not change much in the preceding period. This has of course not always been the case, as illustrated by the examples of the ethnic Germans, Greeks or the Armenians, who all experienced large-scale changes in settlement patterns during the first half of the 20th century. To account for such historical changes, we collect additional information on ethnic settlement areas in this earlier period.

Our first follow-up analysis focuses on Europe, for which the most detailed ethnographic maps exist. We use a map of ethnic groups in Europe by Gabrys (1918), which documents settlement areas during World War I, after which some of the largest shifts in Europe's ethnic geography occurred. After geocoding this map, we match the information on ethnic settlement areas with our sample of post-1946 ethnic groups. We then compute changes in

Table 3: Models of civil conflict onset, fixed effects

	Model 3.1	Model 3.2	Model 3.3	Model 3.4
Estimation	Cond. logit	Cond. logit	OLS	OLS
AG-level variables				
Fractionalization	4.300**		0.038+	
	(1.456)		(0.022)	
Frac. incr. since 1886		4.606**		0.039+
		(1.479)		(0.022)
AG-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Segment-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Peace years controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
AG fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	No	No	Yes	Yes
Observations	8192	8192	27586	27586
χ^2	113.207	112.715		

AG-clustered standard errors in parentheses.
+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

territorial fragmentation, using the historical snapshot in for the pre-1946 period and relying on the GeoEPR data for the postwar period. Using this information, we estimate a set of models that are summarized in Table 4. Models 4.1 and 4.2 replicate our main findings in our European sub-sample, using the backward-projected GeoEPR data. As expected, we find further support for our hypotheses within this subset of cases, with larger effect sizes than in the global sample. Model 4.3 uses an adjusted measure of fractionalization increases, which relies on our historical ethnographic map for the pre-World War 2 period. Again, we find a positive and significant, albeit somewhat weaker, relationship between historical increases in fractionalization and a group's risk of civil conflict.

In our second follow-up analysis, we focus on the African continent, using data on pre-colonial ethnic settlement areas by Murdock (1981). Although this data source only offers a rough approximation of ethnic settlement areas and is likely to contain considerable measurement errors, it should generally enable us to account for major shifts in ethnic geography that have occurred since the onset of colonialism. A key advantage of the African case is the relatively exogenous nature of its borders, most of which were imposed externally by European colonizers following the Berlin conference of 1885. Although some have argued that the random nature of African borders has been exaggerated (Brownlie and Burns, 1979), their locations were clearly much more exogenous to conflict than in most other parts of the world. This is especially true when compared to Europe, where borders and ethnic settlement patterns were at least in part shaped by warfare (see e.g., Hutchinson, 2018; Tilly, 1990). To arrive at a measure of fractionalization, we overlay Murdock's groups with borders up to 1989,[18] as displayed in Figure 7.

[18]We use 1989 as our cutoff year, as the geocoded conflict data extends back to that year.

Table 4: Logit models of civil conflict onset, backdated settlement areas in Europe

	Model 4.1	Model 4.2	Model 4.3
Fractionalization	3.674***		
	(0.879)		
Frac. incr. since 1886		3.008**	
		(1.001)	
Frac. incr. since 1886 (backdated)			2.162+
			(1.305)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Peace years controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Log Likelihood	-167.778	-170.995	-172.48
Observations	5968	5968	5968

Notes: Controls include: Territory km^2, logged, Conflict, lagged, Exclusion, Downgraded, Relative size, War history, GDP, logged, Population, logged, State age, logged. Standard errors are clustered on the AG (aggregate group) level. Significance codes: $^{+}$p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01;***p<0.001

Since there are no conflict data available for Murdock's (1981) ethnic groups, we use the Uppsala Data Conflict Program's GED geocoded conflict events to measure group-level conflict onsets from 1989 through 2013 (Sundberg and Melander, 2013).[19] Table 5 shows the results of our analyses using the Murdock data. Model 5.1 uses a dummy variable that distinguishes between groups that are divided by country borders and those that are not, confirming that the former are more likely to experience conflict than the latter. Model 5.2 uses our continuous fractionalization variable, which again leads to consistent results. Finally, Model 5.3 again confirms our previous finding that groups that have experienced a past increase in fractionalization have been more conflict-prone.

To complement the present robustness tests, the Appendix presents supplementary sensitivity tests. First, we include models that evaluate whether the main results are stable when controlling for specific power constellations at the AG level, such as AGs with at least one segment that is included in the executive of its state, as well as AGs with only excluded segments (see Table A1). Finally, in two separate tables, we show that both fractionalization and its increase have an effect on conflict in Eurasia as well as in Sub-Saharan Africa, thus providing additional evidence that the main findings are not merely an artifact of a particular world region (see Tables A2 and A3).

[19]To code conflict onsets using the GED event data, we use the first event of every GED conflict episode that started after 1989. We assign conflict onsets to a given Murdock group if they fall within that group's settlement territory. Note that we only use information on statebased armed conflict, thus excluding episodes of onesided or non-state violence.

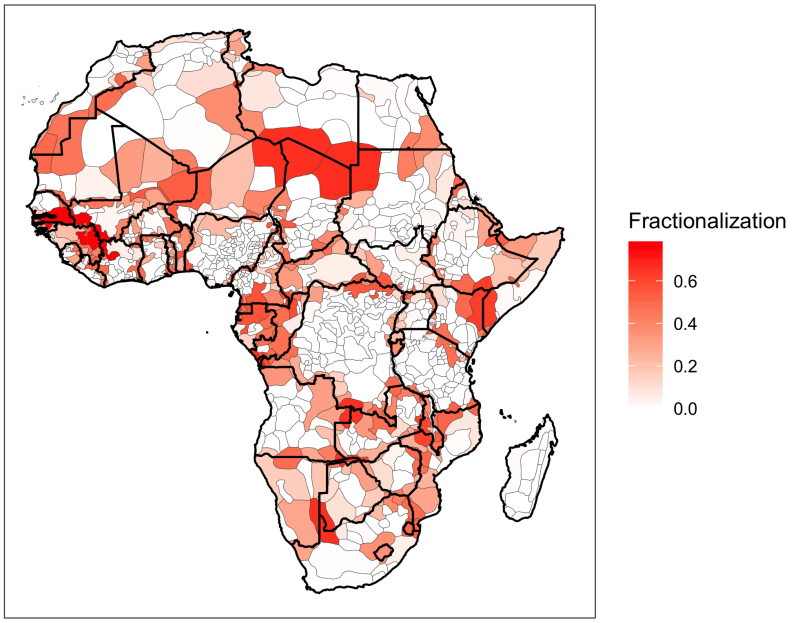

Figure 7: Territorial fractionalization in 2017, based on Murdock's (1981) Tribal Map of Africa

Illustrative cases

As a complement to the statistical analysis, this section analyzes how border change and increased territorial fragmentation generate grievances and rebellion in specific cases. First, we examine the mechanisms that led to conflict after new country borders were drawn after 1946 (see Table 1). Second, we provide case-based evidence that territorial changes before 1946 contributed to ethno-nationalist conflict after WWII (see Table 2).

The geopolitical shift after the end of the Cold War reshuffled South-Eastern, Eastern European and Central Asian borders. The collapse of the Soviet Union constitutes an important example of border change that generated ethno-nationalist grievances and political violence in a series of cases, with lasting implications as illustrated by the eruption of armed conflict in Ukraine in 2014. Following the independence of Armenia and Azerbaijan, large-scale violence broke out in 1991 between the stranded Armenian minority in Nagorno-Karabakh and the Azeri government (Broers, 2015; Melander, 2001, 50-51). After WWI, during a brief period during which Armenia and Azerbaijan were independent countries, the two groups fought over control in Nagorno-Karabakh and other territories. Under Soviet rule, all Armenians outside Iran had been united in the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic. Already from the 1960s, the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh expressed grievances, which triggered minor clashes (Cornell, 1997; Zürcher, 2007, 154). Another Caucasian group, the South Ossetians, attempted to secede from the Georgia in the late 1980s. Demanding independence and potentially unification with their North-Ossetian kin in Russia, this group reacted to increasing Georgian nationalism evolving around Georgia's independence from the Soviet Union in 1990. Tensions escalated to full-blown war in 1990 and again in 2008. South and North Ossetians were united in imperial Russia and during

Table 5: Logit models of civil conflict onset, Murdock groups in Africa (1989-2018)

	Model 5.1	Model 5.2	Model 5.3
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Divided group	1.449***		
	(0.431)		
Fractionalization		3.303***	
		(0.733)	
Frac. incr. since 1886			3.805***
			(1.054)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	835	835	835
Log Likelihood	−158.324	−155.374	−159.732

Notes: Controls include: Population (1880), logged, Territory km^2, logged, Terrain ruggedness, Capital dist. km, logged, French col. past, British col. past. Robust standard errors are clustered on the country level. Significance codes: $^{+}$p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01;***p<0.001

Soviet times, but the collapse of the USSR divided them by an interstate border.[20]

The dissolution of former Yugoslavia had similarly traumatic effects for the Serbs, who were left stranded in several countries in the early 1990s. This situation stood in stark contrast to the preceding 70 years of unity in the Yugoslav Kingdom and the subsequent socialist Yugoslavia. Starting in the late 1980s, Serbian political leaders expressed concerns over their co-ethnics' alleged discrimination in the increasingly decentralized Yugoslav republics. Above all, Slobodan Milosevic was able to instrumentalize Serbian grievances using an explicitly irredentist mobilization strategy. In his speech commemorating the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo in 1989, Milosevic referred to the mythical battle to promote Serbian ethno-nationalism (Edwards, 2015; Morus, 2007). Analogously to Putin's grievances, Milosevic described Serbian disunity as the "greatest disaster" in recent history:[21]

> Therefore, words devoted to unity, solidarity, and cooperation among people have no greater significance anywhere on the soil of our motherland than they have here in the field of Kosovo, which is a symbol of disunity and treason.

[20]Ossetian unity and home rule go back to the arguably mythical Kingdom of Alania from the 9th to the 13th centuries. The reference to "Alania" was picked up by nationalists in the 1990s and added to North Ossetia's official name, a local airline and various companies (Shnirelman, 2006, 43).

[21]To be more precise, in Russian, Putin referred to "krupneyshaya katastrofa", which translates to greatest disaster or catastrophe, while Milosevic in Serbian stated "najveća nesreća", which means greatest disaster or misfortune.

> In the memory of the Serbian people, this disunity was decisive in causing the loss of the battle and in bringing about the fate which Serbia suffered for a full six centuries. Even if it were not so, from a historical point of view, it remains certain that the people regarded disunity as its greatest disaster. Therefore it is the obligation of the people to remove disunity, so that they may protect themselves from defeats, failures, and stagnation in the future (Milosevic 1989 cited by Morus 2007).

This revisionist attitude encouraged Serb minorities in newly independent Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina to fight fiercely to reunify with the Serbian rump state. Simultaneously, the Croatian minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina started to make claims for political independence as a consequence of Bosnia and Herzegovina's new sovereignty and founded the de facto independent Herzeg-Bosna entity in 1991, which used Croatian currency or state symbols (Caspersen, n.d.). Furthermore, Bosnian Croat claims were supported by Croatia under president Tudjman who favored the partition of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Hoare, 1997).

Beyond the collapse of the socialist states in the early 1990s, border change also caused geopolitical tensions in connection with decolonization. For example, India's partition in 1947 left the Punjabi divided across Pakistan and India. In Pakistan, the Punjabi constitute the largest and politically most influential group, while its Indian counterpart is a small minority. The issue of Punjabi unification arose immediately after Pakistan's independence and triggered conflict within in India as well as interstate tensions between the two states. The Khalistan insurgency aiming for an independent Sikh state in India's Punjab region starting in 1983 triggered escalating violence that persists until today (Racine, 2013, 161).

We now shift the focus to border changes that took place between 1886 and 1946. During this period, it was colonialism, rather than decolonization, that caused the most momentous border alterations. British colonialism triggered border-related conflict in several other cases in India and beyond. Pashtuns were divided by the Durand Line in 1893, that marked the border between British India and Afghanistan, and today's Pakistan and Afghanistan (Saikal, 2010, 7). After Pakistan's independence in 1947, Pashtun nationalism emerged, with some calling for an independent Pashtun state and some for a merger with Afghanistan (Roth, 2014, 307). In later decades, Pashtuns in Pakistan gained better political access and consequently, secessionist aspirations diminished. The Baloch were also divided by the Durand Line between Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran. The Baloch in Pakistan have engaged in secessionist struggle since 1947 owing to the loss of autonomy enjoyed under the previous British rule, yet both Pakistan and Iran suppress Baloch political mobilization (Horowitz, 1991, 19).

The Malay Muslims in Thailand launched a secessionist rebellion in the Patani region resulting in escalated conflict in 1965. The Bangkok treaty of 1909 between Great Britain and Siam that defined the border between today's Malaysia and Thailand divided the Malays across these two states (Islam, 1998). Owing to increased cultural assimilation threats, such as government-imposed Thai language use and customs, Malay nationalism increased in Patani, and Malay leaders demanded to be united with its Malaysian kin-state. Malaysia remains reserved towards the Patani case in order not to strain its relation with Thailand, but it supports talks between the Thai government and Patiani insurgents (Lamey, 2013).

Even within the United Kingdom, our historical data capture conflict cases that reflect changes that occurred before WWII. When Ireland's declaration of independence was confirmed in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1922, Ireland was partitioned. Most of the Irish gained home rule in the new republic, but the Catholics in Northern Ireland were stranded in the United Kingdom under what they considered to be foreign rule (Hewitt, 1981; Minahan, 2002). In the following decades, the Catholics expressed the wish to be united with their Irish co-ethnics, which was opposed by the Protestant Unionists in Northern Ireland (see English, 2003). This clash of nationalist projects resulted in armed civil conflict that escalated in 1971 and again in 1998. Even though the Irish loss of unity predates these events by more than half a century, the sense of commonality persists until today.

Such long-term historical claims based on pre-colonial or colonial borders are less common in Africa, but they are not entirely absent. The previously independent Kingdom of Kongo, unifying the Bakongo people, was a precolonial kingdom and became a vassal state under Portuguese rule until it was divided upon between the Angola colony and the Cabinda protectorate in 1914. Political movements representing the Bakongo, who today settle in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zambia, demanded unification of co-ethnics based on these historical state institutions, such as the Uniao das Populacoes de Angola and the Bundu dia Kongo in the DRC (Minahan, 2002; Shillington, 2013). Likewise, Tuareg nationalists in the Sahara reminisce of the times before state borders partitioned their ancestral homeland. Before the Tuareg rebellion in Niger, many Tuaregs "were exposed to revolutionary discourses calling for the creation of a Tuareg state in Algeria and Libya and, in the case of Libya, were even given training in Gaddafi's military" (Alesbury, 2013, 120).

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire had similar implications for several groups that were divided across new states after WWI. The Ottoman provinces had permeable borders and common governance structures, permitting wide-reaching regional autonomy in many cases. For example, the Sunni Arabs in today's Syria and Iraq were united under Ottoman rule before their territory became divided into mandates and eventually independent countries (Masters, 2013). The Islamic State builds on the historic desire to reestablish religious-political unity of the Ottoman empire (Mehmetcik and Kursun, 2018).[22] The loose borders between Ottoman provinces together with far-reaching regional autonomy also gave the Kurds considerable political unity, which was disrupted by the rigid borders of the Ottoman successor states. Despite their internal differences, the Kurds have generally sought unification in a common Kurdish state.

Likewise, the emergence of Albanian nationalism goes back to the weakened Ottoman control. After the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78 weakened the empire, the Albanians organized in a joint organization, the League of Prizren(Frantz, 2009; Skendi, 1953). Initially the league demanded unification of all Albanians in a single Ottoman province but soon advanced more radical claims, including independence. Also, the League promoted Albanian nationalism by fostering a common standard Albanian language and culture. Although the League of Prizren ultimately failed, and the independent Albanian state established in 1912 included only a part of the territories inhabited by Albanians, the dream of pan-Albanian unity had been awakened and is still alive today. Albanian frustration peaked in 1998-1999

[22]Going even further back, the most important legacy refers to the the Abbasid caliphate, which united most of the Middle East and North Africa from the 8th to the 13th centuries (750–1258 A.D.).

during Kosovo's independence war from Serbia. Most recently, the Albanian prime minister Edi Rama's repeatedly stated intention to unify Albania and Kosovo is motivated by dissatisfaction with the the European Union's stagnating integration process in the Western Balkans (see Bytyqi and Robinson, 2015).

In contrast to the frequent reactions to lost unity, it is much harder to find instances where high, but unchanging levels of territorial fractionalization have triggered conflict. Perhaps the most prominent example of such a case is Ethiopia's Ogaden region, which despite never having been united in a common state, experienced repeated Somali insurgencies supported by neighboring Somalia (Kornprobst, 2002). [23]

Conclusion

Previous quantitative studies of transnational links and conflict have overwhelmingly adopted a state-centric perspective. While such research designs help us understand conflict caused by transnational ethnic kin, they obscure the dynamic link between border change and ethno-nationalist conflict. By putting aggregate groups at the center of our theory—without endorsing such a view normatively—we are in a better position to capture the deep historical roots and disruptive potential of ethnic nationalism.

Based on new geocoded data that document border changes worldwide since 1886, we find strong support for the proposition that ethnic groups' fragmentation and, even more importantly their loss of unity, are associated with internal conflict. We argue that current levels of territorial fractionalization, as well as past losses of unity, are associated with a higher risk of civil conflict due to irredentism and related forms of ethno-nationalism. As illustrated by numerous examples, including Putin's stated grievances regarding the divided Russian nation following the collapse of the USSR, our findings cannot easily be reduced to other prominent explanations relating to nationalism, such as alien rule and ethnic exclusion. Nor can they be equated with opportunity-driven, structural effects of ethnic politics operating across state borders, such as the well-established effects of transborder rebel activities (e.g., Salehyan, 2007).

Of course, as suggested by our mediation analysis, the structural nature of our analysis leaves plenty of room for alternative mechanisms that operate in parallel to our main explanation. Yet, our findings clearly show that macro-historical change over long time periods matters for contemporary conflict in ways that appear to be entirely compatible with ethnonationalist principles. Indeed, we have found that the conflict-inducing effects of territorial fractionalization and its increase are robust to a number of confounding variables and tests. Fixed effects analysis reduces the risk that unobserved heterogeneity of our samples biases these results. Our findings also stand when exposed to various tests for reverse causation, such as using border constellations and change from the pre-WWII era to account for post-WWII conflict, or intersecting post-colonial borders with precolonial ethnic groups'

[23] Revealingly, Somalia's irredentist intentions are incorporated in its flag with a five-pointed star representing the five territories where ethnic Somalis historically lived, that is southern Somalia, Somaliland, Djibouti, Ogaden and Kenya's North Eastern Province (Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2016).

settlement areas in Africa. While the latter test is limited to that continent, our empirical analysis generalizes recent results reported on the conflict-inducing effect of borders dividing ethnic groups in Sub-Saharan Africa (Goemans and Schultz, 2017; Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2016). Tests based on historical ethnic settlements areas in Europe before WWII also confirm the robustness of our findings.

This paper contributes to the systematic analysis of irredentist nationalism by tapping into the historical logic of this phenomenon. While Gellner's classical congruence principle has been justifiably central to previous studies of nationalism, conventional theorizing and analysis, including Gellner's own work, have tended to pay insufficient attention to the long-term consequences of border change, and more specifically to grievances referring to territorial losses causing lost unity. Nationalist politicians are prone to formulate their grievances with an eye to past slights, even if those date back many generations. Glorifying the nation's history while inculcating school children with a sense of deep-seated injustice, ethnonationalist mobilization makes contemporary conflict more likely, especially where these claims clash with each other in the current state system. Recently referring to his own group segment's division from co-ethnics north of the Russian border, South Ossetia's president Anatoly Bibilov explicitly referred to "a historical injustice, when one nation is divided."[24]

In this very sense, our study constitutes an important complement to discourse-based conceptions of national homelands that offer a related, but more so far mostly state-based perspective on ethnic nationalism (Connor, 2001; Shelef, 2016). Clearly, this constructivist literature offers important clues about the mechanisms at work and could be used to evaluate the extent to which the structural configurations and macro-historical comparisons actually correspond to nationalists' stated motives. In view of civil conflicts' general importance as the most consequential type of political violence in today's world, we have limited the current analysis to this type of conflict. However, a full treatment of irredentism requires consideration of how border changes and nationalist grievances affect interstate conflict, as illustrated by Russia's annexation of the Crimea.

While the current Ukrainian situation may represent an exception, it would certainly be a mistake to write off irredentism and other types of nationalist revisionism as unimportant, infrequent phenomena. Exposed to the pressure of ethnic nationalism and populist urges, international public law appears to be weakening. The Trump Administration's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital underlines this trend. Furthermore, as (or if) Britain ultimately leaves the European Union, the issue of Irish unity may spark recurrent conflict in Northern Ireland. Indeed, our analysis shows that scholars and decision makers need to take historical claims of this type seriously rather than dismissing them as emotional aberrations. Yet, the need to take ethnic nationalists' motives seriously does not mean endorsing sweeping arguments in favor of ethnic unmixing. While there are those who believe in such "clean" solutions, we fear that they could trigger even more violence. Instead of redrawing state borders and ethnic boundaries, then, power sharing and other types of ethnic cohabitation are likely to offer more peaceful solutions in most cases.

[24] See `http://cominf.org/en/node/1166514305`.

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Appendix

Aggregate groups coding rules

We code aggregate groups based on information on transborder ethnic linkages obtained from the TEK dataset (Vogt et al., 2015). Relying on the group list of the Ethnic Power Relations Dataset (EPR-ETH), the TEK dataset identifies all ethnic groups with kin in other state. Using this information, we summarize ethic groups in neighboring states that share ethnic linkages as aggregate groups, while groups without TEK linkages are coded according to the original EPR ethnic group definition.

The TEK dataset codes ethnic linkages based on shared names, including synonyms, and regional expertise on politicized transborder identities. For example, the Albanians currently are politically relevant in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, as well as in the previously existing states Serbia and Montenegro and Yugoslavia. Albanians settle in further countries in the Balkans and beyond, where they, however, do not seek political representation at the state level. The Albanian transnational ethnic group's identifier is the common language. The differences in terms of dialect (Tosk in the South and Gege in the North) or religion (Muslims, Christians and Atheists) cross-cut political units. Besides these differences, the Albanians have a long history of common group identification, in particular to distinguish themselves from powerful foreign rulers, such as the Ottomans or the Serbs (see e.g., Draper, 1997; Schmitt, 2012). Yet, the idea of "Greater Albania", a state that unifies all ethnic Albanians, receives little support among the political leaders of the Albanian segments (Hilaj, 2013, 412).

In some instances, ethnic groups have multiple TEK linkages. For instance, the Palestinians in Israel are connected to both Palestinians and Arabs in other countries. In these instances, the aggreate group coding relies on the most important TEK link, which we define according to the following criteria (in hierarchical order).

1. If the group is part of an umbrella group (see EPR definition), we maintain the TEK linkages of the largest group in the umbrella group. For example, the Russian-speakers in Kazakhstan include Russians and Ukrainians and thus, the group has two TEK connections. However, the majority of Russian-speakers in Kazakhstan are ethnic Russians and thus, the link to other Russians is most important.

2. Connection to kin group with same name (or synonym and adjective). For example, the Ewe in Togo have TEK connections to Ewe, Fon and Adja. Here, we consider the link to other Ewe as most relevant.

3. Connection to the most closely related group (based on country-expertise), that is the politically most relevant link, such as the link between Palestinian group segments.

4. Connection to the largest kin group abroad. The size of the kin group refers to the sum of segments of an ethnic group in several countries.

5. Connection to neighboring group (if other links are to more distant groups).

Table A1: Logit models of group segments with AG-level power constellations

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
onset_do_flag			
Fractionalization	1.902***		
	(0.430)		
Frac. incr. since 1946		2.843***	
		(0.727)	
Frac. incr. since 1886			1.301**
			(0.407)
All excl. in AG	−0.069	0.212	0.060
	(0.205)	(0.191)	(0.212)
Incl. in AG	−0.324+	−0.209	−0.217
	(0.182)	(0.182)	(0.190)
Territory km^2, logged	−0.098	0.117	0.017
	(0.116)	(0.118)	(0.119)
Conflict, lagged	−0.012	0.107	0.110
	(0.327)	(0.385)	(0.390)
Exclusion	0.842**	0.819**	0.846**
	(0.288)	(0.290)	(0.297)
Downgraded	1.330***	1.330***	1.279***
	(0.267)	(0.273)	(0.269)
Segment-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Peace years controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	27586	27586	27586
χ^2	528.081	401.240	474.560

AG-clustered standard errors in parentheses.
+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A2: Logit models of group segments, Eurasia only

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
onset_do_flag			
Fractionalization	1.731***		
	(0.462)		
Frac. incr. since 1946		2.351**	
		(0.899)	
Frac. incr. since 1886			1.246*
			(0.499)
AG-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Segment-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Peace years controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	15515	15515	15515
χ^2	402.290	304.174	331.620

AG-clustered standard errors in parentheses.
+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table A3: Logit models of group segments, sub-Saharan Africa only

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
onset_do_flag			
Fractionalization	2.399***		
	(0.676)		
Frac. incr. since 1946		2.355*	
		(1.085)	
Frac. incr. since 1886			1.823*
			(0.723)
AG-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Segment-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country-level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Peace years controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	7999	7999	7999
χ^2	204.687	188.919	203.420

AG-clustered standard errors in parentheses.
+ p<0.1, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

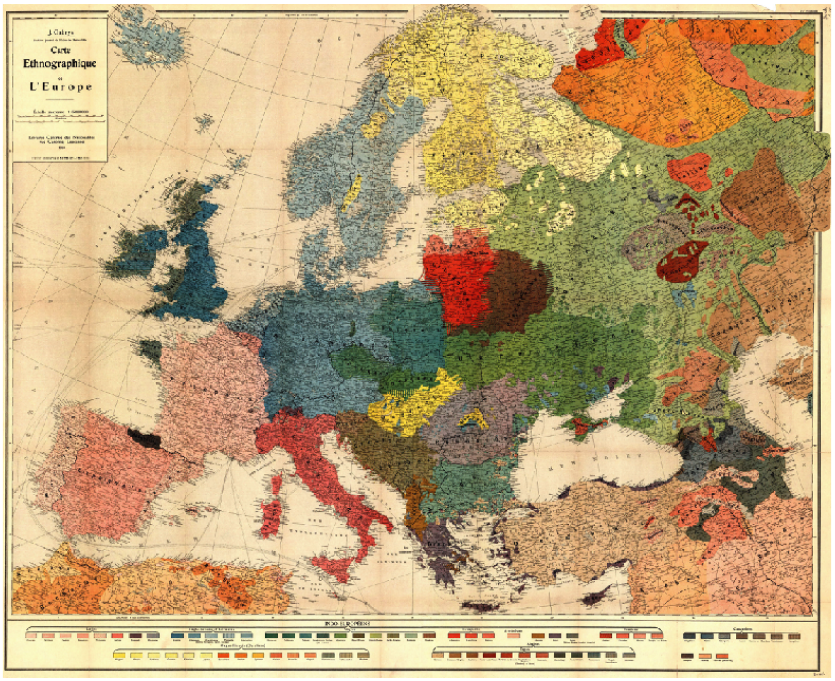

Figure A1: Map of ethnic groups in Europe in 1918, by Gabrys (1918).

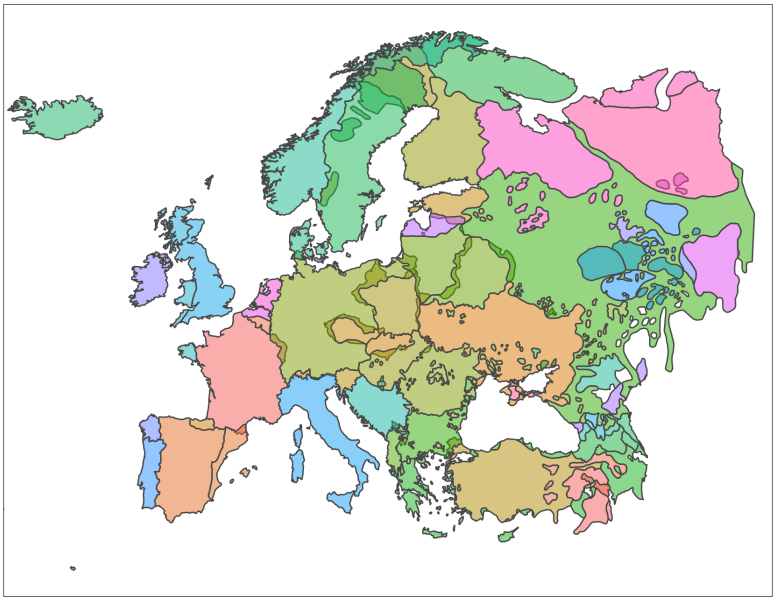

Figure A2: Geocoded version of 1918 map (used in robustness test).

Table A4: Logit models. Dependent variable: irredentist claims

	Model A7.1	Model A7.2	Model A7.3
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Divided group	2.331**		
	(0.840)		
Fractionalization		4.485***	
		(0.890)	
Frac. incr. since 1946			6.147***
			(1.202)
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: Controls include: Territory km^2, logged, Conflict, lagged, Relative size, War history, GDP, logged, Population, logged, Dist. to capital, Colonial past, State age, logged, t, t^2, t^3. Robust standard errors are clustered on the AG level. Significance codes: $^{+}$p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01;***p<0.001