

The Impact of Battle Violence on the Political Status of Ethnic Groups *

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Abstract

In ethnic civil wars, rebels use violence on the battlefield to pressure the government to fulfil their demands. Until now, however, there has been no systematic analysis how the use of battle violence actually improves the rebels' prospects of achieving their goal, i.e. achieving more autonomy or political power for 'their' ethnic group. We address this gap in the literature by analyzing how the intensity and duration of battle violence used by rebels affect the political status of ethnic groups. Based on models of intra-war bargaining, we hypothesize that a high intensity and long duration of battle violence increases the likelihood that the insurgents' demands for more power or autonomy are met. The paper employs a logistic regression model to test these hypotheses. The dependent variable is measured with group status indicators taken from the Ethnic Power Relations data. The data for the independent variables is taken from the Uppsala/PRIO Armed Conflict data. Finally, we control for democracy, the number of ethnic groups in the conflict-affected country and rebel group characteristics (rebels' relative military strength, external support and territorial control). We find that only the intensity of battle violence and the number of ethnic groups are statistically significant and positive predictors of a group's political power status.

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1 Introduction

A frequent source of ethnic civil wars are demands for more access to political power or regional autonomy voiced by domestic self-determination movements towards the government of a state (e.g., Gleditsch et al. 2002*a*; Marshall and Gurr 2005). The processes and dynamics leading to increases in political power, however, remain largely unexplored. It is unknown, for example, how the use of battle violence in these conflicts affect the eventual outcomes. This is a relevant gap in our knowledge as ethnic conflicts show a considerable variation in their intensity and duration (Marshall and Gurr 2005, p. 21-27).

Generally, it is assumed that ethnic groups which are able to enter a military contest with the government of a state are more likely to extort significant concessions from the state in terms of increased access to political power due to their relatively highly developed political and military capabilities (e.g., Horowitz 1985; Gurr 2000*b*). Recent theoretical studies, however, show that wars are characterised by a complex bargaining process between conflict actors in which violence plays a central role in determining the final outcome of the military contest (e.g., Powell 2002; Reiter 2003). Consequently, the impact of violence on the group's political power status needs further scrutiny in order to improve our knowledge on the development and stability of conflict outcomes. Ultimately, this does not only inform future research but also helps the efforts of international actors to prevent, mediate and solve ethnic and especially self-determination conflicts.

In the present study, we investigate how violence on the battlefield affects the government's willingness to increase a minority group's political power status. We identify the intensity and duration as the central characteristics of battle violence (Hegre 2004; Lacina and Gleditsch 2005). An increase in

the access to political power, on the other side, is defined as an increase in executive-level power (representation in the presidency, cabinet, and senior posts in the administration, including the army) (Wimmer, Cederman and Min 2009). In line with bargaining models of war, we assume that governments as well as rebels resort to violence as a strategy to promote their political objectives (e.g., Wagner 2000). Ultimately, our research addresses the following question: *What level of battle violence leads governments to devolve more power to groups in ethnic conflicts?* To answer this question, we empirically analyse 65 ethnic civil wars between 1946 and 2002.

The study is structured as follows: Firstly, we review past research on the use of violence in civil wars. Secondly, we present our theoretical framework and develop hypotheses about the link between the magnitude and duration of battle violence and an increase in political power of the ethnic group. The third section presents the empirical model. Fourthly, we empirically analyse the impact of battle violence using a logit regression model. We conclude with a brief summary of our main findings and suggestions for future research.

2 Literature Review

Competition for executive power is at the heart of civil wars and other violent political encounters. In civil wars, this competition can occur between members of government themselves, as well as between members of government and challengers from inside the polity (Tilly 1978). Both conceptualizations are captured by standard civil war definitions, where one party to the conflict must be the government (Gleditsch et al. 2002*b*). Along with Wimmer, Cederman and Min (2009), we distinguish three types of conflict: first, infighting, i.e. conflict among elites in government; second, rebellion, i.e.

conflict between a group, which is excluded from state power, and elites; and third, secessionist conflict, i.e. the attempt of a group (excluded or included) to leave the polity.

In the post-World War II era, these forms of political competition often happen between ethnic groups (Cederman and Girardin 2007*a*) resulting in ethnic conflict. Ethnicity seems to be particularly important in nation-states compared to other types of polities such as empires or city-states "because the nation-states itself relies on ethno-national principles of political legitimacy: the state is ruled in the name of an ethnically defined people and rulers should therefore care for 'their own people'" (Wimmer, Cederman and Min 2009, p. 321). Wimmer (2002) maintains that exactly this principle is inextricably linked to national forms of ethnic exclusion.

In contrast to scholars such as Fearon and Laitin (2003) and Collier and Hoeffler (2004), who dismiss ethnicity as irrelevant and who focus on material causes of civil wars, we follow the approach that ethnicity constitutes an important determinant of violent conflict. This holds both in terms of being the focal point for grievances such as exclusion as well as fostering collective action by providing a collective identity, which is deemed necessary (Gurr 2000*a*) or at least cost-reducing (Sambanis 2001*a*) with regard to mobilization.

If groups do not have access to state power, in other words are excluded from the government, conflict is found to be increasingly likely (Cederman and Girardin 2007*a*; Buhaug, Cederman and Rod 2008; Cederman, Wimmer and Min 2008; Wimmer, Cederman and Min 2009). In turn, one can assume that a group chooses war to end a period of exclusion and that indeed *violent conflict increases a group's access to power*. In this paper, we investigate whether organised violence as one potential strategy of ethnic groups and

their rebel organizations does indeed increase their access to state power.

Along these lines, violence in civil wars needs to be understood as a political instrument to promote the political objectives motivating the actors' war efforts. This understanding of violence has been accurately summarised in the famous statement of Clausewitz (1976/2007, p. 28) that "war is merely the continuation of policy by other means". Contemporary scholars follow this understanding of war and violence in their efforts to understand the dynamics of armed conflict (e.g., Smith 1998; Wagner 2000; Filson and Werner 2002). The theoretical work of these scholars is based on a conceptualisation of war as a fundamental disagreement between two or more parties over the likely outcome of an armed confrontation, the inability to credibly commit to non-violent behaviour in the future or the indivisibility of the issues at stake (e.g., Morrow 1985; Fearon 1995; Powell 1996). In the case of ethnic civil wars,¹ for example, governments often underestimate the willingness of rebel groups to resort to violence whereas rebels are reluctant to lay down their arms in exchange for a negotiated settlement as this would permanently bereave them from their power (e.g., Horowitz 1985; Gurr 2000*b*). Finally, the very issue at the core of civil wars, namely the distribution of political power in the state, is often perceived as indivisible as state concessions to a rebel group might result in the collapse of an often very fragile power balance (e.g., Sambanis 2000; Toft 2003).

Contrary to earlier studies on the subject, however, recent research does not consider war as the breakdown of politics. Instead, war is understood as the continuation of bargaining between the opponents by violent means (Reiter 2003, p. 30ff). This conceptualisation is based on the insight that

¹Although the presented literature primarily focuses on international conflicts, the theoretical models can be easily transferred to internal armed conflicts as both types of conflict share the same basic characteristics (e.g., Lake 2003).

violence on the battlefield imposes costs on both parties, which lead them to constantly re-evaluate whether they should continue to engage in armed conflict (Holl 1993, p. 277-283). According to this reasoning, battle violence does not only serve the obvious purpose to diminish the opponent's fighting capabilities but also the purpose to communicate information concerning one's own military capabilities and resolve (e.g., Wagner 2000; Powell 2004).

Against this theoretical background, the question emerges how exactly violence on the battlefield shapes the potential outcomes of an armed conflict. Filson and Werner (2002) address this question by looking in more detail at the costs of violence and the length of fighting. In their model, both factors constitute significant determinants of war termination. It might be possible, however, that different outcomes of armed conflict are driven by different dynamics of battle violence or even by factors not directly related to battle violence. Holl (1993), for example, argues that the effects of warfare on the negotiation process in civil wars differ with regard to the available solutions or even the type of conflict (see also: Sambanis 2001*b*; DeRouen and Sobek 2004; Brandt et al. 2008).

3 Theory

3.1 Actor Assumptions

We identify the government of a state and rebel organisations challenging the authority of this government with violent means as the central actors of our analysis (Gleditsch et al. 2002*a*, p. 618f). The government of a state is defined as the internationally recognised sovereign government exerting control over a specified territory whereas a rebel group is defined as a formally organised actor enjoying a certain extent of popular support (Sambanis 2004,

p. 829). Regarding the rebel organisation, we restrict our conceptual focus exclusively on those groups which represent ethnic groups and fight for an improvement in the political status of this group (Marshall and Gurr 2005; Cederman and Girardin 2007*b*).

In our analysis, we assume that government and rebels are unitary actors which means that we exclude the internal dimension of these actors from our analysis (Hirshleifer 1995). Furthermore, we assume that government and rebels are rational actors which means that its action are motivated and guided solely by self-interest (Fearon 1995). Any decision is based on a preference ordering of these interests which provides information whether a particular option is preferred or not preferred to other options.

We consider the distribution of political power as the central incompatibility driving internal armed conflicts (Gleditsch et al. 2002*a*, p. 619). The rebels' objective is to achieve an improvement in the political status of their ethnic group relative to the government. Such an improvement can be power-sharing or regional autonomy agreement or - ultimately - secession (see below). The government, on the other side, has the objective to prevent the insurgent ethnic group from achieving any improvement.

3.2 Intra-War Bargaining

When government and rebels engage in armed conflict to enforce their political objectives, their use of violence on the battlefield is understood as the continuation of their pre-war bargaining process with violent means (e.g., Wagner 2000; Filson and Werner 2002; Powell 2004). Scholars have developed a rich theoretical literature on the mechanisms and dynamics of this understanding of war as the continuation of politics.²

²For an overview, we refer to the review articles by Powell (2002) and Reiter (2003).

At the core of this literature are two assumptions regarding the use of violence on the battlefield (Wagner 2000, p. 471ff). Firstly, battle violence is understood as a way to impose costs on the opponent by reducing its fighting capabilities through the killing of soldiers and destruction of equipment (e.g., Smith 1998; Smith and Stam 2004). This assumption captures the obvious consequences of an armed conflict.

Secondly, battle violence is understood as a way to address the informational asymmetries between the opponents. This assumption rests on a logic that identifies asymmetric information as the main obstacle for reaching a peaceful settlement of the conflict issues (Wagner 2000, p. 471ff). Each conflict actor has private information about its respective military capabilities and the resolve to succeed in combat. The problem is that the actors only have limited knowledge regarding the capabilities and resolve of the opponent. Prior to the onset of war, actors try to solve this problem of asymmetric information by peaceful bargaining. When this fails, however, they resort to violence as a way to address their informational asymmetries and - as a matter of fact - violence is an extremely reliable indicator of an actors' military capabilities (e.g., Wagner 2000; Powell 2004). Government and rebels use this information to update their expectations about the potential outcome of the war. Given this information, the war might either result in the defeat of the rebel organisation or a negotiated settlement between the conflict parties leading to an improved political status of the insurgents.

From the perspective of the group, there are several possible ways in which it can increase its access to power. First, the group can get included in the government or, if this was already the case, extends its share in a power sharing arrangement or even achieve dominant power in the executive. This means ethnic groups may be proportionally represented in the state-

level government in a proportional electoral system. Relatedly, group rights such as language rights, education, and protection for cultural or religious activities may be acknowledged through non-territorial federalism, especially if the group is not territorially concentrated (Sisk 1996). Second, it can get regional autonomy, i.e. achieve self-determination (to some degree at least) on a territorial basis. Regional autonomy is especially adequate if the group is territorially concentrated. E.g., ethnofederal structures can provide an institutional framework to govern multiethnic societies. Autonomy can be defined as "device to allow ethnic or other groups claiming a distinct identity to exercise direct control over affairs of special concern to them, while allowing the larger entity those powers which cover common interests" (Ghai 2000, 8), and territorial or regional autonomy is the result if the powers are devolved on a regional basis and the ethnic group in question is concentrated in that particular region. Third, if the group is able to leave the polity by secession, this obviously hugely increases its access to power since in this ideal case political power does not need to be shared with any other ethnic group.

3.3 Hypotheses

The theoretical logic linking violence on the battlefield to war outcomes is well established but - so far - lacking sound empirical support. It is necessary to explore in greater detail how exactly battle violence shapes the outcome of an internal armed conflict. In the following, we develop two hypotheses illustrating the relationship between violence and war outcome. Given that previous research has identified significant differences between war outcomes as well as war types (e.g., Sambanis 2001*b*; DeRouen and Sobek 2004; Brandt et al. 2008), we exclusively focus on ethnic civil wars, i.e. conflicts in which

the rebel group claims to act on behalf of an ethnic group and gets support from that ethnic group.

At the core of this analysis is a conceptual disaggregation of violence on the battlefield. Generally, battle violence is defined as those instances of violence which result in fatalities due to combat between at least two armed groups (Lacina and Gleditsch 2005; Harbom, Strand and Nygard 2008). This concept of battle-related deaths exclusively focuses on “political violence against any target, military or civilian, in which the perpetrator faces the immediate threat of lethal force being used by the opposing forces against him/her and/or allied fighters” (Lacina and Gleditsch 2005, p. 150). Ultimately, this means that battle violence depicts the scale and scope of the military contest between government and rebels. To capture the impact of the scale and scope of battle violence on the outcome of an autonomy conflict, we distinguish between two elements of battle violence. Firstly, we look at the intensity of battle violence understood as the average monthly rate of battle-related deaths in the conflicts under scrutiny (Lacina and Gleditsch 2005). Secondly, we examine the duration of battle violence defined as the length of time in which battle violence has been used by the conflict actors (Hegre 2004). In the remainder of this section, we formulate two hypotheses capturing the impact of the intensity and duration of battle violence on the war outcome.

Turning to the intensity of violence on the battlefield, we argue that state concessions improving the political status of the ethnic group are more likely when the rebels are showing a strong willingness to resist the government forces. During armed combat, rebels’ willingness can be effectively communicated by conducting an aggressive campaign on the battlefield (Mason, Weingarten and Fett 1999; Filson and Werner 2002; Ramsay 2008). Such

a behaviour can be captured with the intensity of battle violence defined as the average death rate inflicted on an actor during the civil war. Unfortunately, however, the existing data on battle-related deaths does not distinguish between casualties of government forces and casualties suffered by rebel groups. Instead, we can only rely on aggregate data on the yearly amount of battle-related deaths of a civil war (Lacina and Gleditsch 2005). The higher this rate, the more intense the fighting between government and rebels. As rebel forces normally avoid direct battles due to their relative weakness compared to government forces (Galula 1964), we argue that high intensity levels indicate militarily highly capable rebel forces. High military capabilities increase the likelihood of rebels achieving their political objectives. This reasoning can be summarised in the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The higher the intensity of battle violence, the more likely that rebels achieve an improvement in the political status of the ethnic group the rebels are fighting for.

Regarding the duration of violence on the battlefield, we argue that resolved rebel movements are more successful in improving their political status. This resolve is communicated to the government forces in the continuing use of battle violence. The longer the conflict drags on, the more likely are the rebels perceived as being committed to their cause which - for the government - ultimately means a likely perpetuation of the conflict. As rebel organisations in self-determination conflicts can rely on the robust popular support from their ethnic group (Byman et al. 2001), such a perpetuation of civil war is more dangerous for the government than for the rebel group. After all, the legitimacy of a government is derived from its ability to uphold peace and stability in the country. This reasoning is supported

by empirical studies identifying duration as a significant determinant of negotiated settlements between government and rebels (e.g., Mason and Fett 1996; Mason, Weingarten and Fett 1999; Brandt et al. 2008). This argument culminates in the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: The longer the duration of battle violence, the more likely that rebels achieve an improvement in their political status.

4 Empirical Model

To test the hypotheses, we employ a logistic regression model. The unit of analysis is a *conflict episode dyad* of civil wars as defined by the Extended Armed Conflict dataset (EACD) (Cunningham, Gleditsch and Salehyan 2009).³ We only consider conflicts which have no ongoing conflict period in 2005 since we are interested in what happens after the end of a conflict. Armed conflict is defined 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. 2002a, p. 618f)

The link between a non-state actor in a conflict and ethnic groups is provided by a collaborative research project of ETH Zurich and University of Essex⁴, which lists information on whether a rebel organization claims to act in the name of an ethnic group, whether it is supported by an ethnic

³Available from <http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~ksg/eacd.html>

⁴Lars-Erik Cederman, Julian Wucherpfennig and Manuel Vogt at ETH Zurich; Kristian S. Gleditsch and Nils Metternich at University of Essex

group, and whether it recruits from an ethnic group. Whenever the first two conditions are given, we conclude that the rebel group acts on behalf of that ethnic group and we define that the ethnic group is involved in that conflict and therefore include the conflict in our sample.

It can be the case that several ethnic groups are involved in the same conflict. Also, a conflict can consist of several conflict episodes if there has been a period of at least two years where the battle deaths threshold of 25 has not been reached. Hence, our units of analysis are conflict episode dyads.

4.1 Dependent Variables

Our main **dependent variable**, status upgrade, is constructed using the dataset on Ethnic Power Relations (Min, Cederman and Wimmer 2008). The Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset identifies politically relevant ethnic groups in 155 sovereign states between 1946 and 2005, and in particular list their level of access to central state power. The EPR dataset differs from MAR dataset by not only encompassing 'at-risk' groups but also majority groups. Groups can have one of the following political status labels: Monopoly, Dominant, Senior Partner, Junior Partner, Regional Autonomy, Separatist Autonomy, Powerless and Discriminated.⁵ The former four labels can be subsumed under 'Included in central power'; the latter four labels can be subsumed under 'Excluded from central power'. Crucially, we make the reasonable assumption that this list is ordered, i.e. that there is a monotone increase of political power from Discriminated to Monopoly.

The power status of groups is bound to a certain time period, it can change in the course of time. A status upgrade is, hence, defined as any

⁵For a detailed description of these labels refer to Min, Cederman and Wimmer (2008)

change from a lower political status to a higher one; the number of steps does not matter since we do not assume any particular 'distance' between the levels.

We choose to take the snapshot of the political status for the dependent variable five years after the last conflict episode of a conflict ended. This seems to be a reasonable medium-level period of time since it will capture any changes which might take longer to implement or actually show than in the early aftermath of a conflict.

For reasons we will elaborate on later on, we use a second dependent variable, upgrade to regional autonomy, which is one value of the political status variable defined for groups. A group enjoys regional autonomy when "elite members of the group have no central power but some influence at the sub-state level, i.e. one level below the central government. This may be the sub-state, the provincial or the district (though not local) level, depending on the vertical organization of the state" (Cederman, Wimmer and Min 2008, 17). Again, we choose a 5 year period after the end of a conflict to measure this variable.

4.2 Independent Variables

Our **first main independent variable** is the average intensity of battle violence measured as the sum of battle deaths accumulated over the duration of a conflict episode divided by the number of months the conflict episode lasts. The battle deaths data come from Lacina and Gleditsch (2005) and is available for all armed conflicts in the time span under analysis in this study. The concept of battle-related deaths encompasses "all people, soldiers and civilians, killed in combat" (p.148). Whenever possible, we used the 'best estimate' of battle deaths; however, wherever this estimate was missing we

used the average of 'low estimate' and 'high estimate'.

Our **second main independent variable** is the duration of battle violence measured as the number of conflict months. Obviously, the monthly count provides a higher precision than a yearly measured duration. Conflict intensity as described above and conflict duration in months almost do not correlate at all with each other (-0.08).

4.3 Control Variables

As control variables we use the following country-level indicators measured in the year before conflict onset: First, the *level of democracy* might have an effect on whether a group's status gets upgraded; in a democratic setting, norms of granting minorities more autonomy are more likely to be present. Hence, we include a dummy variable of democracy, which is 1 if the country has a polity2 measure of 6 and above (Gurr 1974; Marshall and Jaggers 2009). Second, we include the *number of (politically relevant) groups* living in the country in the year before conflict onset. We expect a negative effect of this variable since states are likely to be more reluctant to grant concessions if there are many other groups which might want the same (Walter 2006).

From rebel group indicators, we include *rebel strength* relative to the government (multinomial variable with 5 values ranging from 'much weaker' to 'much stronger') and *transnational support* by foreign governments since both increase the rebels' bargaining position vis-à-vis the government and hence might increase the chances that the ethnic group receives a power upgrade (Salehyan 2007). Finally, we include whether or not the rebel group controls territory (*control of territory*). We assume that this territory is occupied by the ethnic group in whose name the rebel group is fighting for and, hence, we expect a positive effect on status upgrade. All three

rebel group variables are taken from Cunningham, Gleditsch and Salehyan (2009).⁶

5 Findings

5.1 Descriptive statistics

Our dataset includes 93 conflict episode dyads in 65 conflicts taking place in 36 countries, of which the last conflict episode dyad ended in 2002.

Concerning the dependent variable, in 41% of the cases groups have a higher political status five years after the conflict episode ended than at the time of conflict onset. Only in seven cases, the group got downgraded. Concerning regional autonomy specifically, we count 5 instances of groups enjoying regional autonomy at the time of conflict onset. However, five years after the conflict episode ended, in 19 (out of 87) cases⁷, groups enjoy regional autonomy or achieved statehood. Generally, at the time of conflict onset, in 87 of 93 cases the group was excluded; five years after the end of the conflict, only 61 out of 87 were still excluded. This first look at the data indicates that there might be a relationship between the use of organised violence and the political status of an ethnic group.

Concerning the main independent variables, the mean intensity of a conflict is 440 battle deaths per months with a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 15,000. The mean duration of a conflict in months is 90 (7.5 years), with a minimum of 1 month and a maximum of 478 months (40 years).

⁶See the codebook of the EACD dataset at http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~ksg/data/eacd_codebook.pdf

⁷Some cases drop out, e.g. if groups cease to be politically relevant, merge with other groups etc.

5.2 Regression analysis

We run a logit regression with robust standard errors clustered on conflict-ID since observations within the same conflict are probably not independent of each other. We first estimate the bivariate models without controls, then the model with both main independent variables, and then the full model with controls. The results are given in Table 1 (reported are coefficients and robust standard errors).

	Political status upgrade 5 years after conflict end			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Intensity</i>	.0007 (.0004)		.0007 (.0004)	.0005 (.0004)
<i>Duration (months)</i>		.001 (.002)	.001 (.002)	.0009 (.002)
<i>Level of democracy</i>				-.293 (.780)
<i>Rebel strength</i>				.575 (.444)
<i>Transnational support</i>				-.516 (.652)
<i>Control of territory</i>				-.025 (.640)
<i>Number of groups</i>				.003 (.020)
<i>N</i>	90	90	90	81

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 1: Regression results I

The results show that in all four models, the magnitude of the coefficient of battle violence intensity as well as the one of conflict duration is as expected, namely positive, even if rather small. However, the results do not offer enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis that the intensity of battle violence or the duration of the conflict has no effect on the dependent

variable, an upgrade in a group's political status, as the coefficient do not deviate significantly from 0. We varied the point in time of measurement of the dependent variable from 1 year to 4 years after a conflict ended but this did not affect the findings.

To find out whether these non-results were due to the unspecificity of the dependent variable, we use as dependent variable whether a group's political status increased to *regional autonomy* within 5 years after the conflict. We estimate the same models as in the first analysis. The results are given in Table 2.

	Regional autonomy 5 years after conflict end			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>Intensity</i>	.0002 (.00009)*		.0002 (.00009)*	.0003 (.0001)**
<i>Duration (months)</i>		-.004 (.003)	-.004 (.003)	-.005 (.003)
<i>Level of democracy</i>				.607 (.955)
<i>Rebel strength</i>				-.626 (.402)
<i>Transnational support</i>				-.063 (.663)
<i>Control of territory</i>				.280 (.771)
<i>Number of groups</i>				.044 (.021)*
<i>N</i>	93	93	93	84

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

Table 2: Regression results II

This time, the intensity of battle violence has a positive and significant effect on the likelihood that the group upgrades to regional autonomy 5 years after conflict end. This finding supports Hypothesis 1. Conflict duration, however, has again no significant effect and its coefficient is even negative.

Our analysis therefore does not lend any empirical support to Hypothesis 2. Regarding the control variables, only the number of groups living in the country has a significant but unexpectedly positive effect on the dependent variable.

To illustrate the effect of battle violence intensity, Figure 1 plots the predicted probability of a group to upgrade to regional autonomy 5 years after the conflict as a function of the average monthly death rate of a conflict. The middle curve displays the probability of a conflict episode resulting in regional autonomy for the group with battle violence intensity varying from its minimum to its maximum while all other independent variables are held at their means. The short-dashed curve illustrates the effect when the number of groups is minimal; the long-dashed curves illustrates the effect when the number is maximal. One can see that in all cases the predicted probability is almost 1 when the battle death intensity reaches its maximum.

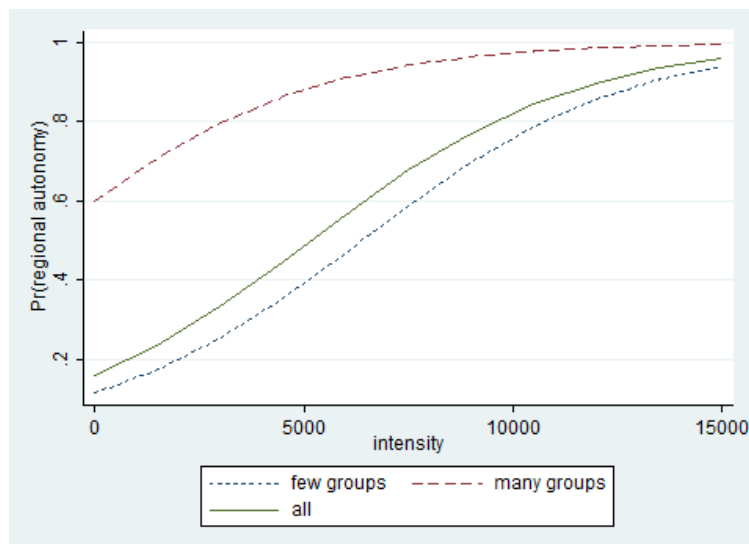


Figure 1: Predicted probabilities of regional autonomy as a function of conflict intensity

6 Conclusion

In this paper, we have tackled the question how the intensity and duration of battle violence in ethnic conflicts affects the political status of the groups in whose name the conflict is fought. We assumed that the violence on the battlefield is the continuation of a pre-war bargaining process in which the magnitude as well as duration of battle violence are indicators for the rebels' military capability. Hence, we hypothesized that a high intensity of battle violence and a long duration leads to a higher bargaining position of the rebels and, ultimately, increases the post-war access to power of the respective ethnic group.

To test the hypotheses, we examined 65 ethnic conflicts and regressed the increase of political status of the involved ethnic group on the intensity and duration of battle violence. Unexpectedly, neither any of our independent variables nor the control variables show a significant effect. Only if we use a more precise dependent variable (i.e. increase to regional autonomy), the intensity of battle violence shows a significant effect on the probability that the ethnic group's status will increase to regional autonomy.

Our analysis may have suffered from the fact that in our conflict sample we do not distinguish between conflicts which ended with military victory by the state or the rebels, and those which ended in a peace agreement. Obviously, one would only expect an increase in power status if the war ended in a peace agreement with whatever provisions. Hence, the next step to improve our analysis would be to control for how the conflict ended. Furthermore, it might also be beneficial to extend the analytical focus beyond cases of civil war and also test for political violence below the threshold of armed combat. It is possible that our analysis overly restricted the universe of cases by excluding the potential impact of political violence in the form

of demonstrations, riots or assassinations. In any case, we hope that we have still made a step towards understanding the relationship between the use of battle-related deaths and conflict outcome in terms of whether ethnic groups actually achieve more political power.

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