

The causes of irredentist claims*

Seraina Rüeegg†

Draft. Do not circulate, do not cite. April 25, 2019

Abstract

Irredentist endeavors are a serious challenge for stability in today's world, as demonstrated by Russia's annexation of Crimea and the civil war in Eastern Ukraine. Irredentists demand that territory and people are detached from one country to be united with another. Less dramatic examples of current irredentist aspirations include the debated land swap of ethnic minority territory between Serbia and Kosovo or the Austrian government's announcement to give passport to South Tyrolans. While previous research has shown that arbitrary or precedent borders, loss of autonomy and political marginalization of transborder ethnic groups trigger irredentist conflict escalation, we know less about the causes of irredentist claims, regardless of whether or not they escalate to violence. Recently, scholars have started to investigate why ethnic minority groups demand increased self-rule, including claims for unification with co-ethnics abroad, yet our understanding of what drives governments to make demands on behalf of their foreign kin remains limited. For grasping irredentist conflict dynamics, it is essential to understand the motivations of involved governments. We suggest that border changes that divide previously united ethnic groups lie at the root of irredentist movements - after all irredentists demand to redeem "lost territory". Past unity fosters a common identity thanks to a shared history and institutions. Also, irredentist leader can instrumentalize myths of former statehood. Both affective and strategic interests shape irredentist behavior. A homeland regime might support a cut-off minority that experiences political discrimination and threats to its cultural identity, yet it might also engage in aggressive foreign policy behavior in order to distract from domestic problems and to increase popularity among voters. Irredentism not only manifests in radical demands for the merger with another country, which is seldom successful owing to the territorial integrity norm, but also in more moderate claims for independence or increased regional autonomy. We use novel data on irredentist claims by governments, which are linked to the EPR dataset, to test why

*Paper prepared for presentation at the 24th ASN Annual World Convention, May 2-4, 2019, Harriman Institute, Columbia University. This research was funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation.

†Center for Comparative and International Studies, ETH Zürich, Switzerland. E-mail: ruegger@icr.gess.ethz.ch.

governments make demands on behalf of ethnic kin groups abroad. The results indicate that governmental groups are more likely to make irredentist claims when they experienced border changes that cause a division of co-ethnics, when these co-ethnics are politically marginalized and when they experienced a decrease in domestic wealth. This shows that governments demand increased autonomy, independence or unification on behalf of ethnic kin abroad to increase their internal popularity and strength. While the current Ukrainian situation may represent a violent extreme, our results indicate that it would be wrong to write off irredentism and other types of nationalist revisionism as unimportant, infrequent phenomena. Researchers and policy-makers need to take historical claims seriously.

Introduction

The Austrian government's plan to give passports to the German-speaking minority in South Tyrol led to diplomatic disputes between Rome and Vienna in August 2018 (Ernst, 2018). When the first train since almost 20 years rolled from Serbia to Kosovo in 2017 it was painted in Serbian colors and the slogan "Kosovo is Serbia". This caused the Kosovar police to stop the train at the border and resulted in military threats between the two countries (Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 2017). These two examples demonstrate that irredentist endeavors are a serious challenge for political stability in today's world. Yet, our understanding of what drives claims for increased self-rule, including autonomy, secession, and unification with foreign co-ethnics is limited.

Past research has contributed to a better understanding of why civil conflicts and wars break out. For instance, groups are more likely to engage in conflict if they are politically marginalized (Cederman et al., 2010). Yet, the reasons of why groups demand increased political rights, regardless of whether this results in violent outcomes, have received less academic attention, besides some exceptions (e.g. Chenoweth and Cunningham, 2013). Building on Bartusevicius and Gleditsch's (2018) two-stage approach to civil conflict, we expect conflict dynamics to consist of at least two steps: First, ethnic groups voice their grievances and demand better rights, and second, they engage in violent conflict in order to achieve these goals. Hence, a better knowledge of why groups want more autonomy, secession or the merger with another country contributes to a better understanding of conflict processes and brings us closer to getting to the root of political conflicts. Therefore, this paper sets out to explain the causes of irredentist claims.

We build on the studies that specifically focus on the reasons why ethnic minority groups make self-determination claims, regardless of whether they escalate to violence or are successful. Researchers

agree that the arbitrariness of state borders with regards to ethnic settlement territories is a major cause of irredentist and separatist demands (Englebert et al., 2002; Goemans and Schultz, 2017a). Also, groups often base their claims on precedent political boundaries (Abramson and Carter, 2016; Carter and Goemans, 2011, 2014) or lost political autonomy (Siroky and Cuffe, 2015). However, most of these studies either only analyze self-determination movements or have a country-level or dyadic focus, which does not allow us to determine when governmental groups make claims in the first place. Furthermore, most research on self-rule demands examine when claims lead to violence, in comparison to non-violent strategies (Cunningham, 2014, e.g.), or when the claim type changes (Mylonas and Shelef, 2014, 2017). In this study, we elaborate how ethnic groups with access to state-decision making demand increased self-rule on behalf of co-ethnics abroad owing to structural conditions, such as political exclusion, historical legacies of past unification and statehood, which can lead to increased irredentist motivations, or strategic factors, particularly the motivation to ameliorate domestic popularity.

By examining the causes of irredentist movements, this study makes several contributions to knowledge: First, we gain better insight into the the dynamics of political mobilization, regardless of whether the outcome is armed conflict or not. While past research has significantly increased our understanding of the correlates of war, non-violent forms of conflict remain understudied. Second, the focus on ethnic groups as unit of analysis allows us to determine which governmental groups make claims. This improves on previous work that suffers from selection problems owing to the exclusive focus on minorities at risk or self-determination movements. Third, we consider historical and external, i.e. foreign, factors that contribute to an increased risk of making irredentist claims. While the conflict literature has given up the “closed polity”-assumption quite a while ago, and acknowledges that intra-state conflicts are not just determined by country-specific factors but also by regional impacts, such as instability in neighboring countries, the claim literature has still a rather restricted territorial focus, which is surprising. Particularly in the case of irredentist claims transnational political movements are pivotal, as illustrated by the two examples above. Fourth, we introduce new data on claims by governments on behalf of foreign kin groups which builds on the SDM dataset (Sambanis et al., 2018). This allows us to conduct a global analysis of the correlates of irredentism and to study the interaction between TEK minorities and their homelands, which so far has received no attention in the literature on the emergence of irredentist movements.

This paper is structured as follows: The next section reviews previous research on ethnic minority groups that make claims for increased autonomy, secession or unification with co-ethnics, and transnational ethnic groups and conflict. The theoretical section explains the logic of how governments behave irredentist

owing to affective or strategic motivations. To examine the chances of making irredentist demands, the analysis section introduces a set of regression models using the data on governmental claims merged with EPR (Vogt et al., 2015), covering the years 1946 through 2017. The results confirm our hypotheses. Historical legacies, cross-border connections and strategic considerations contribute to a better understanding of which ethnic groups are at risk of experiencing irredentist crises.

Previous research on irredentist claims and conflict

Irredentist movements demand the unification with another state, or part of another state. Following Horowitz (1991, 9-10) and Ambrosio (2001, 2), we define *irredentism* as an ethno-nationally based demand for territorial incorporation of an ethnic group currently inhabiting a state under ethnically “alien” rule into a neighboring “homeland” state that is controlled by this group’s ethnic kin, thereby bringing it under “home rule”.¹ In this strict sense, independence can be seen as a precondition for irredentism, but autonomy and secession may serve as initial steps toward this goal. Full-blown irredentism is typically viewed as a radical position, which is seldom legitimized or supported by the international community owing to the territorial integrity norm (Zacher, 2001). Hence, many groups refrain from enunciating explicit irredentist claims. Instead they are more likely to express more moderate geopolitical demands, such as independence or regional autonomy (Chazan, 1991, 12). Since irredentists demand the incorporation of foreign territory that is inhabited by co-ethnics, irredentism can only occur where there is at least a nominal TEK link.

Furthermore, different actors can make self-rule demands: either the homeland government or the stranded groups (see Ambrosio, 2001; Chazan, 1991; Horowitz, 1991). Irredentism sometimes contributes to integration processes, as illustrated by the unification of Germany in the 19th century which extracted territorial gains from Denmark, Austria and France. Yet it differs from voluntary political unification processes of co-ethnic groups already enjoying sovereignty, such as the case of German reunification. In this sense, irredentist demands presuppose that the territory in question is to be retrieved from foreign rule, which bears violent potential. Originally, the concept of irredentism stems from the

¹An example of successful irredentism is the island of Crete. The majority of the population of Crete are ethnic Greeks, but when Greece became independent from the Ottoman Empire in 1830, Crete remained under Ottoman rule. After several revolts against the Turks, Crete became an independent state under protection of the Great Powers in 1898. A few years later the Cretans declared unification with Greece, which was internationally recognized in 1913. However, the majority of irredentist movements remain unsuccessful, as illustrated by Greeks in Cyprus, the South-Tyrolians, the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia during the 1990s or the Somali in Ethiopia.

Italian state's attempt to "redeem" its ethnic brethren in the Habsburg provinces of Venice and Trento at the end of the nineteenth century. The concept acquired notoriety through Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia under the pretext of rescuing the Sudeten Germans. Several irredentist conflicts broke out after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Other examples of irredentist groups include the Malay Muslims in Thailand, Kashmiri separatists in India, Ogadeni Somali in Ethiopia and Somali in Kenya, Lozi people in Zambia and Angola as well as the Diola from Senegal seeking unification with Gambia.

There is a relatively new branch of literature that specifically focuses on the reasons why ethnic minority groups make self-determination claims, and whether they escalate to violence or are successful (see Griffiths and Wasser, 2019). Researchers agree that the arbitrariness of state borders with regards to ethnic settlement territories is a major cause of irredentist and separatist demands (Englebert et al., 2002; Goemans and Schultz, 2017a). This is also a reason as to why many self-determination movements diffuse to neighboring countries (Sawyer et al., 2015). Also, current groups often base their claims on precedent political boundaries (Abramson and Carter, 2016; Carter and Goemans, 2011, 2014) or lost political autonomy (Siroky and Cuffe, 2015). In general, groups that made claims in the past are more likely to experience new claims (Sawyer et al., 2015). Finally, groups much rather make claims to territories with symbolic relevance as opposed to territories with material or strategic value (Kelle, 2017), which is in line with the finding that so called homeland territories are the most contested (Shelef, 2016; Toft, 2002)

So far, no study has explained the incentives of a foreign regime to make self-rule claim on behalf of stranded transborder kin groups, yet the literature on outside support in domestic conflict offers some insight: Ethnic groups spanning international boundaries have more opportunities for foreign support of their rebellion (Cederman et al., 2009; Gleditsch, 2007; Nome, 2012; Salehyan et al., 2011). Existing scholarship confirms that ethnic ties are a major source of affective motivations for external governments to engage in domestic wars (Carment, 1993; Davis and Moore, 1997; Heraclides, 1990; Horowitz, 1985; Petersen, 2002; Saideman, 1997, 2002; Suhrke and Noble, 1977). Country borders do not always determine perceptions of, and loyalty to what should constitute the political basis of a community. Thus, it does not surprise that many cross-border groups engage in transnational political mobilization (Davis and Moore, 1997; Lake and Rothchild, 1998; Saideman, 2002). Yet, supporting the realpolitik argument, Siroky and Hale (2016, 9) find that irredentist foreign policies are much more determined by economic and political interests, or to distract from domestic issues (Ashford, 1962, 643), than compassion for discriminated ethnic brethren. Similarly, Goemans and Schultz (2017a, 6) write: "A leader has the greatest

incentive to advocate for unification of his or her own ethnic kin. Such a claim might lead to an increase in the number of co-ethnics who become citizens in the event that the border is changed.” Beyond kinship ties, previous work substantiates that governments are more likely to provide support owing to strategic considerations to minorities that challenge a rivaling state (Kisangani and Pickering, 2014; Maoz and San-Akca, 2012).

Overall, the literature on external support of insurgents explains which violent groups receive military, financial or political support, identifies potential foreign supporters and analyzes how these external actors affect the duration of conflict and peace processes (e.g. Byman et al., 2001; Salehyan et al., 2011). Yet, the literature offers less guidance on why foreign governments would make irredentist claims for ethnic kin groups. Still, by confirming that other explanatory factors than structural mechanism affect secessionist and irredentist behavior, these studies present a helpful baseline to analyze the effect of transborder identifications on irredentist claims.

While knowledge on non-violent forms of irredentist incompatibilities is limited, the classic conflict literature helps understand the motivations of secessionist and irredentist groups. Pioneering social-scientific scholarship on transnational identities and their impact on civil conflict can be found within the field of nationalism and secessionism studies. In a classic article focusing on the Balkans, Weiner (1971) introduced the “Macedonian Syndrome”, according to which increasing identity tensions result from the interactions between an irredentist state, a neighboring state that opposes territorial change, and an ethnic group that lives in both countries while constituting a minority in the anti-irredentist country. Focusing on the newly independent states of former Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, Brubaker (1996) proposes a similar triadic nexus, where the combination of nationalizing states, minorities within them and national homelands with ethnic kin of the minority can lead to the escalation of a conflict.

Case-based evidence suggests that irredentist conflict often escalates owing to domestic or foreign elites that primarily act on behalf of strategic interests (Ambrosio, 2001; Chazan, 1991; Gagnon, 2006; Jenne, 2004; Mylonas, 2013; Saideman, 1998). Yet, given the large number of peaceful transborder ethnic groups, many scholars are skeptical about the dangers coming from irredentist constellations. They argue that the home state should refrain from irredentist adventures owing to the high costs of international clashes, domestic resistance, for instance from other constituting ethnic groups, or different political priorities (Ambrosio, 2002; Cetinyan, 2002; Horowitz, 1985; King and Melvin, 2000; Kornprobst, 2007; Rothschild, 1981; Schraeder, 2006; Suhrke, 1975). Also, host states often forbear from discriminating ethnic minorities with powerful protectors abroad (Cederman et al., 2013; Jenne, 2007; Nagle, 2013;

Van Houten, 1998). While the leaders of “unredeemed” groups may refuse to join the homeland owing to a lack of shared identity or common political ideas (Bahcheli and Noel, 2013; Hechter, 2000). Analyzing the effect of transnational ties systematically in larger samples, Saideman and Ayres (2000) and Cederman et al. (2013) similarly find that TEK groups are not per se conflict-prone, but that the cases of violent internal conflict that involve cross-border groups are determined by structural factors, in particular the combination of relative group size and political marginalization (Cederman et al., 2009, 2013; Forsberg, 2014; van Evera, 1994; Van Houten, 1998).² In sum, previous research presents reasons that downplay the dangers coming from irredentism. While it is true that examples of blatant irredentist war, such as in former Yugoslavia, Azerbaijan, Ethiopia’s Ogaden region or Kashmir, are rare, political tensions involving transborder ethnic groups occur frequently. Therefore, we argue that a better understanding of irredentist aspirations of governmental groups with transnational ethnic kin and how they can be peacefully settled is crucial to promote regional and international stability.

Theory: The logic of affective and strategic motivations to make irredentist claims

Why do governments demand increased autonomy, independence or unification with co-ethnics abroad? Irredentist claims challenge the sovereignty of a foreign state and threaten international stability, therefore political rulers must have good reasons that outweigh the risk of engaging in such behavior. For example, since several decades, the Armenian government supports the unification with Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, which severely strains the relationship between Armenia and Azerbaijan, and consequently violence is recurring. More than 100 soldiers died in clashes in 2016. In this section, we elaborate how irredentist claims by governmental groups on behalf of others, which directly relates to Horowitz’s (1985) notion of “state-led irredentism”, depend on three major factors, which are the opportunity and motivation to make claims, affective incentives and strategic considerations.

Emphasizing the constructivist nature of ethnicity, we define ethnic groups as communities based on a common marker, such as language, religion or somatic features, and a subjective belief in a shared ancestry (see Cederman et al., 2010; Weber, 1978). Although ethnicity is commonly defined within the context of states, the perception of being a community and the loyalty towards group members often

²Furthermore, transnational ethnic groups have been shown to influence foreign policy decisions, interventions and interstate crises (Davis and Moore, 1997; Gartzke and Gleditsch, 2006; Moore and Davis, 1998; Nome, 2012; Saideman, 2001; Siroky and Hale, 2016; Woodwell, 2004).

extends beyond country borders (see e.g. Davis and Moore, 1997; Saideman, 2002), which is why we observe many TEK groups.

First, in order to be able to make irredentist claims, a government must have transborder ethnic ties to politically relevant groups abroad. With a nationalist understanding ethnic groups that live spread across two or more countries provide a source for grievances. Nationalists demands that states and nations overlap (Gellner, 1883), while ethno-nationalist adopt this principle for ethnic groups, in that they expect state borders to coincide with ethnic group settlement territories. Since the idea of ethno-nationalism is violated in the case of transborder ethnic groups, this can give raise to irredentist demands. Particularly, ethnic groups that experienced an increase in their division over time may resort to irredentist behavior in order to reestablish previous statehood. For example, the division of ethnic Russians dramatically increased after the breakup of the Soviet Union. The same fate met ethnic Serbs when Yugoslavia collapsed, or the Turks when the Ottoman Empire dissolved. After all, irredentists intend to redeem “lost territory” which makes previous unity a precondition, whether it was actually experienced or is based on history and myths of previous statehood, great empires or “golden ages” (see Shelef, 2016; Smith, 1986). Therefore, we state the following first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. Governmental groups that experience border changes increasing their division across states are more likely to make irredentist demands than groups who do not experience border changes or never were united.

Second, motivated by kin loyalty, the foreign group could have an affective motivation to support its stranded co-ethnics by promoting unification, which increases the risk of irredentism (Davis and Moore, 1997; Saideman, 2002). Nationalist ideas again help understand this dynamic. When ethno-nationalist principles are violated, and part(s) of a group have to live under foreign rule, irredentists may demand to revert this ethnic inequality and that stranded minorities either are included in the host country’s state decision-making through increased autonomy rights, become independent from alien rule, or merge with the irredentist state to live under allegedly preferred home rule. For example, the Russian minority in Ukraine, although being included in a power-sharing government, was aggrieved by the national law that favored the Ukrainian language, which was also a concern among the Russian government. Therefore we state the following second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. Governmental groups that have transborder ethnic kin that is politically dissatisfied and

mobilized are more likely to make irredentist demands than groups with transnational co-ethnics that are not.

Third, homeland governments may provide support owing to strategic reasons, including economic benefits or distraction from domestic issues (Ashford, 1962; Siroky and Hale, 2016). Homeland regimes might even make territorial claims towards stranded minorities that do not challenge their host country themselves. Such proof of cross-border political projects severely challenges the host state's sovereignty. On the one hand, we expect governmental groups to make irredentist demands in order to boost their local popularity, which is especially important before presidential elections. For example, while we do not know much about Putin's emotional attachment to ethnic Russians in Ukraine, we know that the claim and consequent action to annex Crimea boosted his popularity in Russia, that was decreasing before, indicating that strategic considerations influenced the irredentist behavior. Or the Albanian prime minister Edi Rama's repeatedly stated intention to unify Albania and Kosovo is motivated by dissatisfaction with the stagnating EU integration process in the Western Balkans (see Bytyqi and Robinson, 2015). The Serbian government, however, abandoned their claims on Republika Srpska after 1995, owing to prospects of European integration. Although the relationship between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia remain difficult and the Serbian minority's blatant irredentist claims impede the functioning of state institutions, violence has not escalated again after the Dayton conference (see e.g. Ker-Lindsay, 2016).

On the other hand, governments may engage in irredentism to distract from domestic economic problems such as unemployment, inflation, decreasing productivity and a general lack of economic growth. Similarly to the elections-effect, governments may be irredentist during economic hardship to increase their popularity and to distract the population from domestic issues thanks to the increased media coverage of its foreign behavior. Therefore, we state the following third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. Governmental groups that have domestic political problems are more likely to make irredentist demands than groups without domestic problems.

Data and Analysis

To test the hypotheses we use logistic regression models. Our sample includes all ethnic groups worldwide that participate in governments between 1946 and 2017. The following section describes the data, the operationalization and the regression results.

Operationalization

The dependent dichotomous variable indicates whether an ethnic groups with access to state decision-making makes public statements demanding regional autonomy, independence or unification with co-ethnics in another country. We collected new annual data on irredentist claims of state-controlling ethnic groups with transborder ethnic ties. We code a claim if a group explicitly demands and pursues policies to support autonomy, independence or unification with foreign co-ethnics. For example, the Serbian government openly demanded that Serbs in Bosnia be united with Serbs in Serbia after the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Some governmental groups make claims other than irredentist ones for their transnational kin, as illustrated by the Hungarian government's demands for greater autonomy rights on behalf of Serbian Hungarians (Ambrosio, 2002). This distinction has been captured by Landau's (1981, 1) categorization of moderate and extreme irredentist demands: the former claims include the desire to defend co-ethnics from discrimination or assimilation, while the later aim at annexing territories that kin groups inhabit.

These new claim data go beyond previous nominal identifications of TEK links and allow us to test whether, rather than assuming that, ethnic groups spanning national borders show solidarity to their kin (Davis and Moore, 1997; Lake and Rothchild, 1998; Saideman, 2002). Public claims of governments demanding increased self-determination for foreign co-ethnics are a direct indication of political support. In contrast, military support is difficult to measure, as it is mostly provided in covert ways and often disputed. Thus, by recording public statements, we apply a conservative but reliable measurement of irredentist support. These types of claims are highly correlated with conflict, because political demands could be raised in anticipation of mobilization or during already ongoing conflict escalation. For example, the Albanian government did not interfere in the conflict in Kosovo until the late 1990s, when it demanded an end to the discrimination of Kosovo Albanians (International Crisis Group, 1998).

The first set of explanatory variables reflects the opportunity to make irredentist claims, which depends on having transborder connections to co-ethnics. First, we count the number of foreign segments of an ethnic group, that is to how many countries an ethnic group is split. For example, Byelorussians are found in five countries - Belarus, Poland and Russia, Estonia and Latvia. Second, we measure whether the group experienced an increase in division since 1886 owing to border changes on its settlement territory. Data on ethnic settlement territories is drawn from the GeoEPR dataset (Wucherpfennig et al., 2011) and information on country borders from the Cshapes 2.0 dataset (see Weidmann et al., 2010) that

goes back to 1886 and includes colonies and dependencies.³ The second set of independent variables measures characteristics of the transborder kin groups, whether it experiences conflict, is excluded from political decision-making in the host state or was recently downgraded, meaning it had an influential role but lost it during the last two years. This information is obtained from the TEK dataset and EPR (Vogt et al., 2015). Also, we control if a TEK group demands increased self-determination, as recorded in the SDM Dataset (Sambanis et al., 2018).⁴ The variables are lagged one year to account for temporal dependence. The third set of explanatory variables captures domestic issues, that political leaders want to distract from by engaging in foreign activities. First, we measure whether presidential elections are coming up in the following year and second, whether the country experienced a decrease in its GDP recently (Heston et al., 2011) .

At the group level, we control for the size of the group, whether it rules alone and if it experienced conflict or war in the past. 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). At the country level, we control for the GDP per capita, population and the age of the state (all logged). Finally, we include a no-claim-years variable with squared and cubed terms to control for temporal dependence (Carter and Signorino, 2010). We test the hypotheses using logistic regression models with the onset of irredentist claims as the dependent variable. The unit of analysis is the ethnic group-year, with the standard errors clustered at the country. The analysis covers the years from 1946 to 2017. In these, we observe 39 onsets of new irredentist claims. The sample includes all ethnic groups listed in the EPR-ETH dataset that are included in the government. These are the groups that EPR codes as “monopoly”, “dominant”, “senior” or “junior partner” (Vogt et al., 2015).

Results

Table 1 displays the results of the logistic regression models. Standard errors are clustered on the country-level. The first model is estimated with the control variables only. The second model investigates how border changes affect the risk of irredentist behavior. Model 3 includes characteristics of TEK groups. In the fourth model, two variables measuring domestic problems are included. Model 5 incorporates all variables.

³This project was a collaborative effort by Guy Schvitz, Seraina Rüegger, Lars-Erik Cederman, Luc Girardin, Kristian Gleditsch, Dragana Vidovic and Baris Ari with conceptual input from Nils Weidmann.

⁴We thank Andreas Schädel for providing us the updated version that is linked to EPR.

Table 1: Logit models of irredentist claims onset

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 |
|------------------------------------|-----------|---------------|---------|-----------------|----------|
| | Base | Border change | TEK | Domestic issues | All |
| Segments nr. | | 0.093* | | | 0.040 |
| | | (0.047) | | | (0.053) |
| Division increase | | 2.909*** | | | 3.540* |
| | | (0.833) | | | (1.507) |
| TEK conflict | | | -0.086 | | -0.344 |
| | | | (0.862) | | (0.824) |
| TEK powerless | | | -0.613 | | -0.972 |
| | | | (0.850) | | (0.925) |
| TEK downgraded | | | 1.467* | | 1.421+ |
| | | | (0.663) | | (0.731) |
| TEK claim | | | 0.992* | | 0.499 |
| | | | (0.500) | | (0.648) |
| Elections | | | | 0.023 | -0.080 |
| | | | | (0.614) | (0.785) |
| GDP decrease | | | | 0.247* | 0.359* |
| | | | | (0.121) | (0.147) |
| Group size | 2.219** | 1.887* | 1.464+ | 2.278** | 1.170 |
| | (0.721) | (0.758) | (0.861) | (0.721) | (0.996) |
| Rules alone | 1.010* | 0.985* | 0.966 | 0.994+ | 1.103+ |
| | (0.514) | (0.498) | (0.634) | (0.516) | (0.663) |
| War history | 0.815* | 0.423 | 0.834* | 0.795+ | 0.601 |
| | (0.408) | (0.440) | (0.418) | (0.410) | (0.451) |
| GDP/pc | -0.112 | -0.089 | 0.124 | -0.191 | 0.262 |
| | (0.145) | (0.161) | (0.265) | (0.155) | (0.295) |
| Population | -0.080 | -0.085 | 0.020 | -0.083 | 0.177 |
| | (0.127) | (0.144) | (0.168) | (0.133) | (0.235) |
| State age | -0.346+ | -0.164 | -0.376+ | -0.331+ | -0.219 |
| | (0.195) | (0.199) | (0.208) | (0.198) | (0.265) |
| Time since last claim | -0.338** | -0.379*** | -0.277* | -0.303** | -0.248* |
| | (0.113) | (0.112) | (0.109) | (0.117) | (0.115) |
| Time since last claim ² | 0.012* | 0.013** | 0.009* | 0.011* | 0.008+ |
| | (0.005) | (0.005) | (0.004) | (0.005) | (0.004) |
| Time since last claim ³ | -0.000+ | -0.000* | -0.000+ | -0.000+ | -0.000 |
| | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) | (0.000) |
| Constant | -3.523*** | -4.575*** | -6.385* | -3.294*** | -10.323* |
| | (0.749) | (0.907) | (3.182) | (0.819) | (4.073) |
| Observations | 14262 | 13620 | 14089 | 14262 | 13455 |
| χ^2 | 120.174 | 110.842 | 152.959 | 143.607 | 179.704 |

Country-clustered standard errors in parentheses.

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

In Model 1, the effect of the group size, whether the group rules alone and the war history are positive and significant. This indicates that relatively large groups that have exclusive access to the state government are more likely to become irredentist. Yet, the state age has a negative effect on irredentist claims, which implies that stable and long established borders are less likely to be challenged (see Abramson and Carter, 2016).

Past border changes significantly increase the risk of irredentist crises, as shown in Model 2, which supports our first Hypothesis. The number of segments of an ethnic kin group increases the risk of irredentism. The higher the number of host countries of a divided ethnic group, the higher the opportunity for its homeland to make claims on behalf of the stranded kin. In particular, groups that experienced an increase in their division are likely to become irredentist. We believe that previously united groups have a strong feeling of commonality and solidarity, and that their division may cause grievances, which they would like to revert.

The results of Model 3 confirm Hypothesis 2 that governments with politically dissatisfied foreign co-ethnics are more likely to make irredentist claims. In particular, irredentist claims are raised when TEK groups were deprived of political power recently or when they demand increased self-determination. Yet, conflict-experiencing groups or minority groups without political power do not automatically increase the risk of irredentism, it is much rather the loss of political influence, power reversals and independently expressed dissatisfaction with the political status quo that lead to irredentist behavior from a homeland government. Host governments are thus urged to include ethnic minorities in the decision-making process, to address their wishes for political influence and to avoid sudden political downgradings in order to prevent regional destabilization and challenges by irredentist foreign states.

Model 4 includes the elections and GPD decrease variables to capture domestic issues which we expect to be another reason for making irredentist claims. Against expectations, upcoming elections, that require popular support for the incumbent to be re-elected, have no effect on making irredentist claims. Yet, a recent decrease in the country's wealth, measured in GDP, significantly increases the risk of irredentist endeavors. This supports our hypothesis that governments make irredentist claims owing to strategic considerations to distract from domestic issues, in particular economic hardship, and less so political problems.

Model 5 includes all variables. While the individual covariates become slightly less robust, owing to smaller beta coefficients and larger standard errors, they behave similarly to the disaggregated models

before. All three hypotheses are confirmed: Irredentist claims are more likely when transnational groups experience border changes causing their division, when transborder groups recently lost power and thus are aggrieved with politics in the host state, and when governmental groups experience economic hardship. We conclude that powerful groups make irredentist claims on behalf of their foreign kin groups owing to either the opportunity to do so, motivation, affection or strategic reasons.

Sensitivity analysis

The results are subject to various robustness checks, including different samples, regional variables and standard error-clustering on TEK groups, as shown in Table 3. Across all sensitivity models, the effects of increased group division, politically downgraded transborder kin and decreasing GDP remains positive and significant.

...

Conclusion

...

Table 3: Logit models of irredentist claims onset, sensitivity analysis

| | Model 6 TEK sample | Model 7 Eurasia | Model 8 TEK-clustered | Model 9 All EPR groups | Model 10 Without Arabs |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Eurasia | | 1.368* (0.676) | | | |
| Segments nr. | 0.014 (0.058) | 0.069 (0.056) | 0.040 (0.030) | 0.036 (0.055) | 0.040 (0.053) |
| Division increase | 2.341 (1.514) | 2.987* (1.381) | 3.540* (1.587) | 3.179** (1.150) | 3.540* (1.507) |
| TEK conflict | -0.258 (0.806) | -0.261 (0.788) | -0.344 (0.991) | -0.549 (0.770) | -0.344 (0.824) |
| TEK powerless | -0.670 (0.897) | -0.410 (0.975) | -0.972 (0.950) | -1.141 (0.792) | -0.972 (0.925) |
| TEK downgraded | 0.752 (0.828) | 1.369+ (0.740) | 1.421* (0.711) | 1.373+ (0.810) | 1.421+ (0.731) |
| TEK claim | 0.316 (0.592) | 0.277 (0.653) | 0.499 (0.717) | 0.429 (0.616) | 0.499 (0.648) |
| Elections | -0.016 (0.831) | -0.084 (0.797) | -0.080 (0.749) | -0.024 (0.782) | -0.080 (0.785) |
| GDP decrease | 0.399* (0.160) | 0.350* (0.143) | 0.359 (0.239) | 0.353* (0.138) | 0.359* (0.147) |
| Group size | 1.038 (0.995) | 0.943 (1.061) | 1.170 (0.857) | 2.262* (0.920) | 1.170 (0.996) |
| Rules alone | 1.455* (0.700) | 1.315+ (0.721) | 1.103+ (0.596) | 1.276+ (0.707) | 1.103+ (0.663) |
| War history | 0.608 (0.442) | 0.516 (0.492) | 0.601 (0.457) | 0.663* (0.296) | 0.601 (0.451) |
| GDP/pc | 0.129 (0.353) | 0.103 (0.287) | 0.262 (0.296) | 0.132 (0.288) | 0.262 (0.295) |
| Population | 0.117 (0.244) | 0.072 (0.213) | 0.177 (0.198) | 0.076 (0.219) | 0.177 (0.235) |
| State age | -0.116 (0.298) | -0.235 (0.269) | -0.219 (0.299) | -0.259 (0.252) | -0.219 (0.265) |
| Time since last claim | -0.235* (0.112) | -0.247* (0.115) | -0.248+ (0.134) | -0.234* (0.116) | -0.248* (0.115) |
| Time since last claim ² | 0.008+ (0.004) | 0.009+ (0.005) | 0.008 (0.005) | 0.008+ (0.004) | 0.008+ (0.004) |
| Time since last claim ³ | -0.000 (0.000) | -0.000 (0.000) | -0.000 (0.000) | -0.000 (0.000) | -0.000 (0.000) |
| Constant | -8.366+ (4.574) | -9.121* (4.062) | -10.323** (3.724) | -9.196* (3.937) | -10.323* (4.073) |
| Observations | 6687 | 13455 | 13455 | 34608 | 13455 |
| χ^2 | 124.028 | 161.203 | 241.179 | 320.793 | 179.704 |

Country-clustered standard errors in parentheses.

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

References

- Abramson, S. F. and D. B. Carter (2016). The historical origins of territorial disputes. *American Political Science Review* 110(4), 675–698.
- Ambrosio, T. (2001). *Irredentism: Ethnic Conflict and International Politics*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Ambrosio, T. (2002). Vanquishing the ghost of trianon: Preventing hungarian irredentism through western integration. *Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations* 3, 39–52.
- Ashford, D. E. (1962). The irredentist appeal in morocco and mauritania. *Political Research Quarterly* 15(4), 641–651.
- Bahcheli, T. and S. Noel (2013). The ties that no longer bind: Greece, turkey and the fading allure of ethnic kinship in cyprus. In T. J. Mabry, J. McGarry, M. Moore, and B. O’Leary (Eds.), *Divided Nations and European Integration*, pp. 313–340. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bartusevicius, H. and K. S. Gleditsch (2018). A two-stage approach to civil conflict: Contested incompatibilities and armed violence. *International Organization*, 1–24.
- Brubaker, R. (1996). *Nationalism Refrained: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Byman, D., P. Chalk, B. Hoffman, W. Rosenau, and D. Brannan (2001). *Trends in outside support for insurgent movements*. Rand Corporation.
- Bytyqi, F. and M. Robinson (2015). Albania and kosovo to unite, inside eu or not - albanian pm. Online: <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-albania-kosovo-unification/albania-and-kosovo-to-unite-inside-eu-or-not-albanian-pm-idUKKBN0MY19320150407>. Accessed: 18.4.2019.
- Carment, D. (1993). The international dimensions of ethnic conflict: Concepts, indicators, and theory. *Journal of Peace Research* 30(2), 137–150.
- Carter, D. B. and H. E. Goemans (2011). The making of the territorial order: New borders and the emergence of interstate conflict. *International Organization* 65(2), 275–309.
- Carter, D. B. and H. E. Goemans (2014). The temporal dynamics of new international borders. *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 31(3), 285–302.
- Carter, D. B. and C. S. Signorino (2010). Back to the future: Modeling time dependence in binary data. *Political Analysis* 18(3), 271–292.
- Cederman, L.-E., L. Girardin, and K. S. Gleditsch (2009). Ethnonationalist triads: Assessing the influence of kin groups on civil wars. *World Politics* 61(03), 403–437.
- Cederman, L.-E., K. S. Gleditsch, I. Salehyan, and J. Wucherpfennig (2013). Transborder ethnic kin and civil war. *International Organizations* 67(02), 389–410.
- Cederman, L.-E., A. Wimmer, and B. Min (2010). Why do ethnic groups rebel? New data and analysis. *World Politics* 62(1), 87–119.
- Cetinyan, R. (2002). Ethnic bargaining in the shadow of third-party intervention. *International Organization* 56(3), 645–677.
- Chazan, N. (1991). *Irredentism and International Politics*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- Chenoweth, E. and K. G. Cunningham (2013). Understanding nonviolent resistance: An introduction. *Journal of Peace Research* 50(3), 271–276.
- Cunningham, K. G. (2014). *Inside the Politics of Self-determination*. Oxford University Press.
- Davis, D. R. and W. H. Moore (1997). Ethnicity matters: Transnational ethnic alliances and foreign policy behavior. *International Studies Quarterly* 41(1), 171–184.
- Englebert, P., S. Tarango, and M. Carter (2002). Dismemberment and suffocation a contribution to the debate on African boundaries. *Comparative Political Studies* 35(10), 1093–1118.

- Ernst, A. (2018). Italiener verärgert über angebot des österreichischen passes an südtiroler, neue zürcher zeitung. *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*.
- Forsberg, E. (2014). Transnational transmitters: Ethnic kinship ties and conflict contagion 1946-2009. *International Interactions* 40(2), 143–165.
- Gagnon, V. P. (2006). *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press.
- Gartzke, E. and K. S. Gleditsch (2006). Identity and conflict: Ties that bind and differences that divide. *European Journal of International Relations* 12(1), 53–87.
- Gellner, E. (1883). *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press.
- Gleditsch, K. S. (2007). Transnational dimensions of civil war. *Journal of Peace Research* 44(3), 54–66.
- Gleditsch, N. P., P. Wallensteen, M. Eriksson, M. Sollenberg, and H. Strand (2002). Armed conflict 1946-2001: A new dataset. *Journal of Peace Research* 39(5), 615–637.
- Goemans, H. E. and K. A. Schultz (2017a). The politics of territorial claims: A geospatial approach applied to Africa. *International Organization* 71(1), 31–64.
- Goemans, H. E. and K. A. Schultz (2017b). The politics of territorial claims: A geospatial approach applied to africa. *International Organization*, 31–64.
- Griffiths, R. D. and L. M. Wasser (2019). Does violent secessionism work? *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63(5), 1310–1336.
- Hechter, M. (2000). *Containing Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heraclides, A. (1990). Secessionist minorities and external involvement. *International Organization* 44(3), 341–378.
- Heston, A., R. Summers, and B. Aten (2011). Penn world table, version 7.0. Online: http://pwt.econ.upenn.edu/php_site/pwt_index.php. Accessed: 14.3.2012.
- Horowitz, D. L. (1985). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- Horowitz, D. L. (1991). Irredentas and secessions: Adjacent phenomena, neglected connections. In N. Chazan (Ed.), *Irredentism and International Politics*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.
- International Crisis Group (1998). The view from Tirana, the Albanian dimension of the Kosovo crisis. *ICG Balkans Report* 36, 1–17.
- Jenne, E. K. (2004). A bargaining theory of minority demands: Explaining the dog that did not bite in 1990s Yugoslavia. *International Studies Quarterly* 48(4), 729–754.
- Jenne, E. K. (2007). *Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment*. Ithaca, London: Cornell University Press.
- Kelle, F. L. (2017). To claim or not to claim? how territorial value shapes demands for self-determination. *Comparative Political Studies* 50(7), 992–1020.
- Ker-Lindsay, J. (2016). The hollow threat of secession in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Online: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/research/LSEE/PDFs/Publications/>. Accessed: 10.10.2016.
- King, C. and N. J. Melvin (2000). Diaspora politics: Ethnic linkages, foreign policy, and security in Eurasia. *International Security* 24(3), 108–138.
- Kisangani, E. F. and J. Pickering (2014). Rebels, rivals, and post-colonial state-building: Identifying bellicist influences on state extractive capability. *International Studies Quarterly* 58(1), 187–198.
- Kornprobst, M. (2007). Dejustification and dispute settlement: irredentism in european politics. *European Journal of International Relations* 13(4), 459–487.
- Lake, D. and D. Rothchild (1998). *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion and Escalation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Landau, J. M. (1981). *Pan-Turkism, From Irredentism to Cooperation*. Hurst & Company.
- Maoz, Z. and B. San-Akca (2012). Rivalry and state support of non-state armed groups (nags), 1946–20011. *International Studies Quarterly* 56(4), 720–734.
- Moore, W. H. and D. R. Davis (1998). Transnational ethnic ties and foreign policy. In D. A. Lake and D. Rothchild (Eds.), *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict*, pp. 89–103. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Mylonas, H. (2013). *The politics of nation-building: Making co-nationals, refugees, and minorities*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mylonas, H. and N. Shelef (2014). Which land is our land? domestic politics and change in the territorial claims of stateless nationalist movements. *Security Studies* 23(4), 754–786.
- Mylonas, H. and N. Shelef (2017). Methodological challenges in the study of stateless nationalist territorial claims. *Territory, Politics, Governance* 5(2), 145–157.
- Nagle, J. (2013). Does having a kin state lessen the likelihood of minorities engaging in secessionist mobilization?: An analysis of the moderating influence of kin states. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 19(3), 287–309.
- Neue Zürcher Zeitung (2017). Serbischer 'Propaganda-Zug' an der Grenze zum Kosovo gestoppt. Online: <https://www.nzz.ch/panorama/spannungen-zwischen-serbien-und-kosovo-serbischer-propaganda-zug-an-der-grenze-zum-kosovo-139865>. Accessed: 3.10.2018.
- Nome, M. A. (2012). Transnational ethnic ties and military intervention: Taking sides in civil conflicts in Europe, Asia and North Africa, 1944-1999. *European Journal of International Relations* 0(0), 1–25.
- Petersen, R. D. (2002). *Understanding Ethnic Violence - Fear, Hatred, and Resentment in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Rothschild, J. (1981). *Ethnopolitics, a conceptual framework*. Columbia University Press.
- Saideman, S. M. (1997). Explaining the international relations of secessionist conflicts: Vulnerability versus ethnic ties. *International Organization* 51(4), 721–753.
- Saideman, S. M. (1998). Inconsistent irredentism? political competition, ethnic ties, and the foreign policies of Somalia and Serbia. *Security Studies* 7(3), 51–93.
- Saideman, S. M. (2001). *The Ties that Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy, and International Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Saideman, S. M. (2002). Discrimination in international relations: Analyzing external support for ethnic groups. *Journal of Peace Research* 39(1), 27–50.
- Saideman, S. M. and R. W. Ayres (2000, 11). Determining the causes of irredentism: Logit analyses of minorities at risk data from the 1980s and 1990s. *The Journal of Politics* 62, 1126–1144.
- Salehyan, I., K. S. Gleditsch, and D. E. Cunningham (2011). Explaining external support for insurgent groups. *International Organization* 65(3), 709–744.
- Sambanis, N., M. Germann, and A. Schädel (2018). Sdm: a new data set on self-determination movements with an application to the reputational theory of conflict. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62(3), 656–686.
- Sawyer, K., K. G. Cunningham, and W. Reed (2015). The role of external support in civil war termination. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.
- Schraeder, P. J. (2006). From irredentism to secession: The decline of pan-Somali nationalism. *After Independence: Making and Protecting the Nation In Postcolonial And Postcommunist States*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 107–40.
- Shelef, N. G. (2016). Unequal ground: Homelands and conflict. *International Organization* 70(1), 33.
- Siroky, D. S. and J. Cuffe (2015). Lost autonomy, nationalism and separatism. *Comparative Political Studies* 48(1), 3–34.

- Siroky, D. S. and C. W. Hale (2016). Inside irredentism: A global empirical analysis. *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Smith, A. D. (1986). *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Blackwell.
- Suhrke, A. (1975). Irredentism contained: the thai-muslim case. *Comparative Politics* 7(2), 187–203.
- Suhrke, A. and L. G. Noble (1977). *Ethnic Conflict in International Relations*. Westport: Praeger Publishers.
- Toft, M. D. (2002). Indivisible territory, geographic concentration, and ethnic war. *Security Studies* 12(2), 82–119.
- van Evera, S. (1994). Hypotheses on nationalism and war. *International Security* 18(4), 5–39.
- Van Houten, P. (1998). The role of a minority's reference state in ethnic relations. *European Journal of Sociology* 39(1), 110–146.
- Vogt, M., N.-C. Bormann, S. Rüeegger, L.-E. Cederman, P. Hunziker, and L. Girardin (2015). Integrating data on ethnicity, geography, and conflict: The ethnic power relations dataset family. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59(7), 1327–1342.
- Weber, M. (1978). *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology*, Volume 1. Univ of California Press.
- Weidmann, N. B., D. Kuse, and K. S. Gleditsch (2010). The geography of the international system: The CShapes dataset. *International Interactions* 36(1), 86–106.
- Weiner, M. (1971). The Macedonian syndrome: A historical model of international relations and political development. *World Politics* 23(4), 665–683.
- Woodwell, D. (2004). Unwelcome neighbors: Shared ethnicity and international conflict during the cold war. *International Studies Quarterly* 48(1), 197–223.
- Wucherpennig, J., N. W. Metternich, L.-E. Cederman, and K. S. Gleditsch (2012). Ethnicity, the state, and the duration of civil wars. *World Politics* 64(1), 79–115.
- Wucherpennig, J., N. B. Weidmann, L. Girardin, L.-E. Cederman, and A. Wimmer (2011). Politically relevant ethnic groups across space and time: Introducing the GeoEPR dataset. *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 28(5), 423–437.
- Zacher, M. W. (2001, 3). The territorial integrity norm: International boundaries and the use of force. *International Organization* 55, 215–250.