Nationalism and the origins of separatist civil war in India

Bethany Lacina

Assistant Professor,
Department of Political Science,
University of Rochester

Abstract

Separatism is often conceptualized as a regional challenge to a central nationalist project. Explanations of separatist violence focus on the gap between the cultures embodied in central nationalism and regional nationalism or on obstacles to center-periphery bargaining. In India, however, many separatist movements face their strongest opposition from other groups in their area. Separatist violence is best understood by examining the central government's political ties to rival interests in the geographic periphery. Ethnic groups are most likely to become violent separatists if the central government moderately favors rival groups in their geographic area. I use a case study of the Meghalaya statehood movement in Northeast India to demonstrate how shifts in the central government's political ties to competing groups there shaped the movement's tactics and successes. I then show that the prime minister's political ties to rival ethnic groups in the periphery are an empirically powerful explanation of the incidence of separatist civil war in India, from 1950 to 2009. This relationship is robust to controls for self-rule; cultural, linguistic, historical or economic distance from the center; and measures of the center's national unity concerns.

Word count including abstract, notes, and references but not including tables and figures: 11,517

1 Introduction

Separatism is frequently regarded as an upstart nationalist project challenging the nationalist project of a subsuming state.[1] Describing post-colonial Asia and Africa, Geertz writes:

> removing European rule has liberated the nationalisms within nationalisms that virtually all the new states contain and produced as provincialism or separatism a . . . threat to the new-wrought national identity.[2]

In this view, "explaining separatism . . . largely boils down to explaining the rise of national consciousness."[3] India is an example of a country where separatism is usually discussed in terms of competing nationalisms.[4] Guha contrasts the "little nationalisms" of India's tribes and linguistic groups with the "great nationalism" represented by the emergence of the Indian National Congress (INC) Party in the 1880s.[5] Large bodies of academic work on individual separatist movements in India analyze the nationalist discourse of the separatists[6] or the marginalization of the separatists' region within the center's nationalism.[7]

It is almost necessarily true that separatists articulate an identity that differs from the center's nationalism. This study argues that, in India, the central government's reluctance to modify political arrangements in the periphery is explained by domestic political considerations. In particular, central political ties to competing interests in the periphery determine when subnationalism becomes separatist war. Attention to competing interests in the periphery is warranted given that many separatist movements face their strongest opposition from other groups in their own area. For example, an autonomy plan for Jammu and Kashmir proposed by New Delhi in 2000 was rejected by Hindus and Buddhists in Kashmir because "both minorities feared for their future under a Muslim-dominated state."[8]

Escalation to violence depends on New Delhi's political ties to pro-status quo interests in the periphery. The most-likely separatists are ethnic groups that are moderately disfavored in the

1

prime minister's coalition relative to their rivals in the periphery. Since the group is politically disadvantaged relative to its pro-status quo rivals, the center is unlikely to preemptively reform political arrangements in the periphery. The group's moderate, as opposed to extreme, political disadvantage is also important. If the group were at a more extreme political disadvantage, it would be deterred from violence by the expectation of government repression.

The study begins with a case study of the Meghalaya statehood movement in northeast India. In 1971, Meghalaya was created by dividing the state of Assam; Meghalaya's population is primarily Khasi and Garo, in contrast to the Assamese majority of Assam. The creation of Meghalaya has been heralded as an example of the flexibility of India's nationalist project.[9] I argue that the center's flexibility with respect to all-India nationalism played little role in the timing or success of negotiations to create Meghalaya. Instead, the fluctuating political strength of the ethnic Assamese within the ruling Congress Party explains when New Delhi was relatively compromising versus hardline toward the Meghalaya movement and explains variation in the movement's tactics.

I also present a statistical analysis of separatist rebellion by Indian ethnic groups, 1950–2009. I find that an ethnic group was most likely to rebel when the prime minister's party or coalition moderately favored the group's rivals in the periphery. These findings are not explained by grievances against central control, such as degree of self-rule; by linguistic or cultural distance from north India; regional inequalities in income and natural resources; or the center's concern for national integrity.

The primary contribution of this study is to show that conceptualizing separatism as a dyadic conflict of central and regional nationalism is potentially misleading. Conflict in the periphery is a well-known feature of many separatist conflicts, like those in Northern Ireland and Darfur. Yet, cross-national studies of separatism incorporate competing interests in the periphery in only a cursory manner.[10] The findings in this study suggest the value of revisiting comparative analysis with conflicting interests in the periphery in mind. This study is likewise a departure from analyses of separatist movements in India, which tend to focus on the tug-of-war between New Delhi's

2

anxiety about national unity and the concerns of minorities, rather than diverse interests within the periphery.

The study is structured as follows. The next section reviews the literature on separatist war and central nationalism. Section 3 proposes an account of separatism based on competing interests in the periphery. Section 4 uses the Meghalaya statehood movement to show how New Delhi's political ties to competing interests in the periphery explain the course of that movement. Section 5 uses an original panel dataset of ethnic groups in India to demonstrate that the political standing of competing groups in the periphery explains the incidence of separatist civil war.

2   Competing nationalisms

Theories of separatism—both general theories and accounts specific to India—tend to describe such conflicts as clashes between central and peripheral nationalist projects. Some such theories have a relatively primordial bent, stressing the near inevitability of friction in modernizing multi-ethnic states.[11] Others stress that nationalisms are socially constructed but nonetheless divisive.[12] For many scholars working in the latter vein, intervening variables explain when the tension between central and peripheral nationalism becomes violent. First, the feasibility of rebellion is thought to depend on myriad factors: terrain,[13] local autonomy,[14] relative capability,[15] territorial concentration,[16] or cross-border coethnics.[17] Second, regional inequalities in wealth or natural resource endowments may fuel the development of national consciousness,[18] increase the attractions of independence,[19] or make bargains between the center and the periphery unstable.[20] Other posited obstacles to bargaining between center and periphery are the center's fear of cascading national disintegration[21] and the periphery's fear of future exploitation.[22]

Observers of separatism in India likewise stress the competition between central nationalism and peripheral nationalisms. This tendency in part reflects the Indian central elite's historical anxiety on the subject of national integrity. The first national leaders emerged from the Partition

of India and Pakistan deeply concerned that India would split again. India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, famously described his horror at how, during the constitution writing process, "some of the ablest men in the country came before us and confidently and emphatically stated that language in this country stood for and represented culture, race, history, individuality, and finally a sub-nation."[23] The content and character of all-India nationalism has been a matter of major public controversy for decades.[24] Politically-salient sub-national identities clearly exist in India.[25] Nonetheless, Stepan, Linz, and Yadav argue that India is an example of a successful "state-nation" that engenders widespread loyalty from the people of multiple ethnic nations.[26] They further argue that separatist conflict has occurred when the center has overreached in imposing control over the periphery. Other scholars diagnose the center's failings in addressing sub-nationalisms somewhat differently but agree that the conflict between central and regional nationalisms has been a major challenge for India.[27]

3   Theory: Rivalry in the periphery and separatist war

A focus on clashes between central and peripheral nationalism obscures diversity in the periphery. In India, there has been some local resistance to every violent separatist movement, in some cases spawning rival militant movements. The Kashmiri separatist insurgency has given rise to calls for both Jammu and Ladakh to split from Kashmir, for example.[28] Kuki militants resist the demands of Naga rebels in Northeast India. Hindu militias battled Sikh militants in the early stages of the Punjabi separatist insurgency.[29] Militant groups from rival communities have also clashed in Tripura, Manipur, and Assam. In some of these instances the center has openly or covertly supported one or the other community. In other cases it has fought with both. Central intervention notwithstanding, local interests have been at odds in all of these conflicts.

This conflict in the periphery reflects the high material stakes of subnationalist movements for groups there. Such mobilization tends to be resolved by the creation of new states, the devolution of

more autonomy to an existing state, or the creation of an autonomous area with some of the powers of a state. Two constituencies in the periphery stand to lose from such new grants of statehood or autonomy. The first group is people who would become minorities in a new or newly-empowered state or autonomous area. Each Indian state sets its own official language(s) for secondary and higher education, the civil service, and employment in government-owned industries, generally advantaging the majority group.[30] A second opposed constituency is relevant if an autonomy movement seeks to split from an existing state with an ethnic majority. The existing state's majority ethnic group loses economically if a minority area separates. Indian states receive most of their budgets as per capita transfers from the center,[31] and access to these resources can be restricted to the dominant community.[32] Decreasing the minority population of a state thus decreases the per capita allocation of central resources to the majority group.

The probability of violence is a function of when sub-national autonomy is politically difficult for the center to concede. The center's inclination to change political arrangements in the periphery depends in turn on the central executive's political value[33] for the pro-status quo interests just described, minorities and/or the dominant group of an existing state. The Indian government's response to emergent Sikh separatism in Punjab in the 1980s illustrates this point. On several occasions, negotiations came close to a peace deal, only to have the central government renege. Both mediators[34] and a central government official[35] later claimed that the central government scuttled these agreements fearing lost votes among non-Sikh constituencies in Punjab and neighboring areas.

Separatism is unlikely when a group seeking autonomy is favored by the center. An ethnic group with a political advantage relative to its rivals in the periphery should be able to obtain the political arrangements it prefers peacefully. Thus, groups with politically disadvantaged local rivals do not need to rebel.

However, there is not a strictly increasing relationship between disempowerment relative to other groups in the periphery and rebellion. Groups whose local rivals have very strong ties to New

Delhi may be deterred from violence because the center will pay high costs to rebuff challenges to the status quo. Therefore, ethnic groups whose local rivals are very influential in the capital are not likely separatists.

The highest probability of separatism is when a group's rival in the periphery is moderately politically favored. Moderate political favoritism toward a pro-status quo group means that New Delhi is reluctant to preemptively address separatists' grievances. However, unlike a case where separatists' rivals are heavily favored politically, New Delhi's willingness to defend the status quo is limited. In case of violence, it may make accommodations. Therefore, separatists have a political opportunity to use militancy.

It is important to stress that these arguments relate specifically to the probability of a separatist rebellion rather than the degree of popular separatist sentiment or to other forms of conflict. In particular, I focus on separatist insurgency, in which citizens use force against the recognized central government. Separatism is not a government-initiated campaign to subdue areas previously outside its control. Thus, in the statistical analysis below, I will examine only areas where the Indian government had de facto control of the territory before violence began.

Another assumption undergirding the analysis above is that regional autonomy is often effective in preventing or ending separatist violence. That assumption implies, first, that separatist leaders, rank-and-file, and civilian supporters are generally not so committed to independence as to reject all other forms of self-rule. This implication seems reasonable given that there are no cases of separatists winning independence from India but many cases of violence leading to greater local autonomy. The assumption that self-rule defuses violence also implies that regional autonomy is not merely a stepping stone to greater organizational capacity and increasingly strident demands against the center.[36] At least in the case of India, most scholars agree that decentralization, in conjunction with the creation of more ethnically homogenous federal states, has led to less violence over time.[37] However, the claim that decentralization promotes stability does not necessarily imply that these arrangements have other desirable properties. For example, Rao and Singh argue that

some of India's newer states are economically non-viable.[38] Lacina argues that the stability of the new states and autonomous areas in Northeast India is due to rulers' use of these institutions to limit political competition and marginalize ethnic minorities.[39]

Table 1 summarizes the theoretical arguments just made. Violence is most likely when the opponents of an autonomy movement are moderately politically favored in New Delhi. Rebellion is unlikely by groups that have a political advantage over their local rivals or by groups that are very politically weak relative to their local rivals. The next section uses a case study of the Meghalaya statehood movement in India to illuminate these claims.

[Table 1 about here.]

4   New Delhi, Assam, and the creation of Meghalaya

This section traces the history of the autonomy movement among hill tribes of Assam, focusing in particular on the Khasi and Garo tribes' statehood movement. In 1971, this movement succeeded in having the new state of Meghalaya carved from Assam after more than twenty years of mobilization. The hill tribes' mobilization was not primarily a reaction to central nationalism; instead, the proximate source of hill tribe discontent was the Assamese nationalist movement. Competition between central and tribal nationalism also cannot explain how central policy toward the movement changed over time. Instead, changes in the political importance of the ethnic Assamese explain variation in the tactics of the hill tribes' statehood movement and New Delhi's responses. The final column in Table 1 lays out the eras of the Meghalaya statehood movement that correspond to different values on the independent variable, which is the political strength of the Assamese. Between 1950 and 1962, the Assamese had a modest edge over the hill tribes in importance to the Congress Party. Hill groups extracted accommodation by means of irregular politicking and threats of violence. Some evidence suggests escalation to separatist war was a real possibility at this point. After the Sino-Indian War of 1962, however, the Congress Party began to falter nationally and the

Assamese became more important to maintaining the Party's parliamentary majority. New Delhi reneged on earlier concessions to the hill tribes. Despite the center's reversals, the tribal statehood movement dropped its militant tactics, realizing such tactics were unlikely to succeed. In 1966, Indira Gandhi came to power in the center. After a rift in the Congress Party, the Assamese were out of favor with the prime minister. The hill state movement was now politically favored in New Delhi and has able to succeed peacefully.

The history below is drawn from interviews conducted in Meghalaya in 2008–09; memoirs and papers of leaders of the Meghalaya statehood movement; materials from the National Archives of India, National Library of India, and the Captain Williamson Sangma State Museum in Shillong; and media sources. In official history, the movement is an exemplar of peaceful mobilization.[40] That history downplays the more confrontational periods of the movement. My interviews were critical for establishing the chronology of the movements' tactics and the details of its least peaceful periods. The next section gives some brief background on Assam; Section 4.2 begins my account of the hill state movement.

4.1 The hill tribes of Assam at independence

The contemporary state of Assam centers on the Brahmaputra river plain. The population of the plains is primarily Assamese and Bengali-speaking and majority Hindu. To the south and east are hilly areas that, along with some of the forests of the river plain, are linguistically and religiously dissimilar from the majority plains culture. Tibeto-Burman and Mon-Khmer languages predominate, instead of Indo-Aryan languages like Assamese and Bengali. Unlike the river plain, many hill regions were legally accessible to missionaries during British rule and became heavily Christian. The British colonial government designated the hill and forest populations in and around Assam as "tribal."[41]

At independence, Schedule 6 of the Indian Constitution created five autonomous districts for the hill tribes of Assam (Figure 1a).[42] These arrangements were challenged by the hill tribes and,

by the early 1970s, four of the five original autonomous tribal districts were no longer in Assam (cf. Figures 1a and 1b).[43] Most importantly for this case study, in 1969 the Garo Hills, home of the Garo tribe, and the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills, home of the Khasi tribe became a "sub-state" within Assam, dubbed Meghalaya. Meghalaya was elevated to the rank of a full state two years later.

[Figure 1 about here.]

4.2 The Assamese advantage in normal politics, 1950–1962

At the time of independence, the primary political struggle within the Garo and Khasi tribes was between a new Christian intelligentsia and the traditional leadership.[44] The Congress Party made its alliance with the new elite. The most important leader of the hill tribe intelligentsia, a Khasi minister named James Joy Mohan Nichols-Roy, was recruited in 1947 to run for the constituent assembly[45] on the Congress ticket. Nichols-Roy authored the 6th Schedule of the constitution giving special autonomy to the Northeastern hill tribes.

Early hill tribe activism was primarily motivated by elite resentment of Assamese nationalism and political dominance. The hill intelligentsia's entente with Congress broke down due to the domination of the state government by Assamese politicians and the Congress' continued patronage of the traditional tribal leadership, including the provision of reserved seats for these leaders on the autonomous district councils. Nichols-Roy left the Congress after the Assam Chief Minister, Bishnu Ram Medhi, did not give Nichols-Roy the tribal portfolio in the state cabinet. Medhi alienated the most important Garo leader, Captain Williamson Sangma, by making Garo Hills District Council appointments that Sangma opposed. The disaffected Nichols-Roy and Sangma set up the East India Tribal Union (EITU) to compete with the Congress in tribal areas.

The Assamese Congressmen were not so politically powerful in New Delhi that they had a veto on central policy toward Assam. Instead, Nehru tried to placate the EITU by using Congress party

discipline to curb Assamese nationalists. After the Assam state elections of 1957, Nehru forced out Chief Minister Medhi in favor of his more moderate rival, Bimala Prasad Chaliha. The EITU agreed to join the ruling coalition under Chaliha, in exchange for which both Nichols-Roy and Sangma were awarded cabinet posts.

The hill leadership's post-1957 alliance with Congress was damaged in April 1960, when the anti-Chaliha, Assamese nationalist faction of the state Congress Party passed a resolution calling for Assamese to become the state's sole official language. The official language bill "made hill leaders rethink Chaliha's strength to protect them."[46] Nichols-Roy and Sangma resigned from the cabinet and organized the All Party Hill Leaders' Conference (APHLC), which condemned the resolution. In August 1960, the APHLC demanded the creation of a state for the hill tribes or the revocation of Assamese as an official state language. The APHLC became the new political party of the tribes, winning 11 of 15 tribal state assembly seats in 1962.

New Delhi's reaction to the APHLC was initially accommodating. Nehru proposed a tribal sub-state. This "Scottish Plan" called for a statutory council of hill tribe representatives that would control all development-related matters in hill areas. The state assembly members elected from the hills would also form a committee that could block any state legislation from being applied to their constituencies.

The central government's rather generous autonomy offers at this stage reflect the tenuous position of the hardline Assamese in national politics, where other Congress constituencies were increasingly critical of the Assam government. The Assamese nationalists' language legislation had been accompanied by riots targeting Bengalis, Khasis, and other minorities. The riots created "a first-rate national crisis," [47] displacing at least 19,000 people.[48] West Bengal media outlets in particular took up the cause of minorities in Assam, both Bengalis and tribals.[49] In the central parliament, the opposition parties staged a walk-out to protest against the speaker's refusal to allow for debate on the Assam riots.[50] The center urged the Assam state government to make concessions to the hill tribes because of this outside pressure. The Assam government therefore

10

agreed to Nehru's Scottish Plan.

The strength of the tribal bargaining position is further indicated by the fact that the APHLC rejected the Scottish Plan. Convinced they could extract more through agitation, the APHLC began organizing itself for irregular politicking. In fall 1962, the party began to recruit thousands of men and women to form a direct action wing of the party. According to the memoirs of an APHLC leader, the direct action wing was to be deployed in acts of civil disobedience designed to paralyze government offices;[51] such a campaign would be particularly costly since Shillong, the state capital at the time, was in the Khasi Hills. An interviewee told me that the organizing for direct action also included a contingency plan for insurgency: the APHLC leadership had selected 10,000 men to go to China and train for guerrilla war should negotiations fail, although this step was never taken. The respondent described the belief that the well-educated Khasi population had the organizational acumen to launch "India's Vietnam." The timing of this reported contingency planning for insurgency parallels the verifiable organization of a mass action wing of the APHLC. It is also contemporaneous with mobilization for violence in Mizo areas. In 1961 the Mizo National Front (MNF) broke with the APHLC and declared that it would seek independence. Over the next two years, the MNF began amassing weapons and training cadres for rebellion, contacted Pakistan and China, and began a violent insurgency in 1966.

4.3   The resurgence of the ethnic Assamese, 1962–1966

The APHLC's plan for mass agitation was disrupted by India's war with China in October 1962. According to interviewees, the campaign of mass action was called off because the leadership believed it would appear treasonous and poison national sentiment toward the hill state. This supposition was reasonable: India's National Archives contain records of mass detention of suspected Chinese sympathizers in Northeast India during and after the war.[52]

The war with China ended in a humiliating defeat for India. The military debacle and a concurrent economic downturn rapidly eroded the strength of Congress. As Congress faltered, Assamese

leverage with the center improved and New Delhi became more resistant to the hill state demand. In 1967, a press observer pointed out that the APHLC movement had been stalled by increased Assamese political influence:

> The successful drive for passage of the controversial Assam Official Language Bill [in 1960] showed the forcefulness of conservative sentiment among Congress Party members from the plains. Parodoxically, the bargaining position of the Assam Congressmen has since then been further bolstered by the party's misfortunes on the national level. The weaker the party becomes at the center, the less inclined are Congress ministers to ram down the throats of the government of one of the few really "safe" states left in India a [hill state] measure for which the party itself can claim no credit.[53]

Enhanced Assamese political influence was reflected in the decreasing generosity of the center's offers to the APHLC. In June 1963, Nehru offered the hill leaders maximum autonomy "consistent with the cabinet form of Government within Assam ... very much less than the statutory Scottish Pattern envisaged in his earlier proposal."[54] In April 1964, "the APHLC indicated their willingness to reconsider the [Scottish] proposal...But the confirmation of the original offer was no longer forthcoming from Nehru."[55] The rebuffed APHLC backed down and passed a resolution in favor of Nehru's new, stingier offer. By contrast, the Assamese government was emboldened and rejected the plan. Further negotiations stalled after Nehru died in May 1964.

The increase in Assamese political strength corresponded with a decline in the militant activity of the APHLC. Between 1963 and 1966, the APHLC did not restart its program of general strikes or mass mobilization even though New Delhi reversed its previous offers. The party faltered electorally, as well. In 1962, the party won eleven of fifteen tribal seats in the state assembly. When the APHLC ordered these representatives to resign in solidarity with the hill state demand, four MLAs defected from the party rather than give up their posts. In the 1963 by-elections to the seven vacated APHLC seats, the party won only five races.

4.4   Indira Gandhi and the division of Assam, 1966–1971

A few years later, in 1969, a hill tribe sub-state, similar to Nehru's Scottish Plan, was ratified by Parliament. In 1971, New Delhi agreed to create the hill state of Meghalaya. This dramatic turnaround of the hill tribes' political fortunes was the result of a rift in the Congress Party and subsequent collapse of the political influence of the ethnic Assamese with the prime minister.

In January 1966, Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri died suddenly and Indira Gandhi became the new executive. She was chosen for the post by a group of Congress leaders known as the Syndicate and led by Morarji Desai, the deputy prime minister. The Syndicate leaders controlled majoritarian, state-specific political machines but were not charismatic national figures. Mrs. Gandhi countered the Syndicate's power base by courting minority groups, especially Muslims, lower castes, and tribal voters. In Assam, the Prime Minister's potential constituencies were Muslims, Bengalis, tribals, and Hindi-speaking migrants. Notably, when the Congress Party split outright in 1969, the first Assamese politicians to side with Indira Gandhi were Muslim or Bengali.[56]

In December 1966, Mrs. Gandhi announced that she intended to revisit the organization of Assam, reviving the idea of a sub-state for the hill areas. The Syndicate sided with the ethnic Assamese and insisted on the integrity of the state. *Asian Survey* described the ensuing standoff as follows:

> [March 1967] was the beginning [of] a war of attrition between Mrs. Gandhi supported
> by [Home Minister] Chavan by one side, and [Chief Minister of Assam] Chaliha and
> the Assam Congress on the other, with the backing subsequently of Morarji Desai,
> the Deputy Prime Minster. Congress party bosses of several states, who are collec-
> tively known as the syndicate, also decided to make common cause with Chaliha ...
> A deadlock between New Delhi and Assam soon developed, with both the [Assam]
> State Congress and the legislature party rejecting the subfederation idea "in categori-
> cal terms."[57]

The Syndicate's support for the Assamese position was further evidenced when the Congress Parliamentary Board sided with Chaliha. Desai threatened to vote against any reorganization bill introduced without the Assam government's consent.

The stand-off was resolved in a quid pro quo between Indira Gandhi and Desai. The Prime Minister helped Desai quash a corruption scandal and Desai withdrew his objections to the sub-state plan, bringing his faction of Congress into line.[58] Without the support of the Syndicate, the Assam Congress likewise had to concede. The Meghalaya sub-state was formed, granting more autonomy to the hill tribe areas.

Ironically, the APHLC was weaker politically in 1969 than it had been at the beginning of the decade when it was rebuffed by Nehru and Shastri. In state assembly elections in 1967, the party was able to capture the nine seats in Garo and Khasi areas but did not win any seats from other tribal areas. The party was also less aggressive in its mobilizations than it had been in 1961–62. In 1968, the party conducted a purge of its militant wing. Hopingstone Lyngdoh, the chief of the direct action volunteer corps in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, was expelled from the party. In the same year, when language riots again broke out in the Assam plains, APHLC areas remained quiet. When the sub-state plan was announced, the APHLC called a general strike to improve the terms of the deal but then quickly backed down.

The elevation of Meghalaya to statehood in 1971 came about as the Assamese reached a new low in Indira Gandhi's political coalition. Mahendra Mohan Choudhury, a pro-Syndicate politician, became chief minister of Assam in November 1970 in a grand coalition arrangement. Choudhury, recognizing that this truce was unlikely to hold, made a series of cabinet picks that left out Indira Gandhi's closest allies and excluded Muslims altogether.[59] A few weeks after those cabinet picks, Mrs. Gandhi announced her acceptance "in principle" of a separate state of Meghalaya without consulting the Assam state government.[60] The Assam Reorganisation Bill passed in December 1971, after Indira Gandhi's Congress won a huge victory in national elections.

4.5   Rivalry in the periphery and the hill tribe movement

The fortunes of the Meghalaya statehood movement depended on the political value of the ethnic Assamese to the prime minister. Between 1950 and 1962, the Assamese had a moderate political advantage in New Delhi. That advantage meant the center did not preemptively address hill tribe grievances. However, hill tribe mobilization extracted concessions when tribal mobilization generated political costs for the center. The war with China in 1962 was a positive shock to Assamese political importance within the Congress Party. Nehru reneged on earlier offers to the hill tribes, while the APHLC became more conciliatory. When Indira Gandhi came to power, her rivals sided with the Assamese nationalists. The peaceful formation of Meghalaya resulted from Indira Gandhi's alienation from Assamese interests.

This history is difficult to explain by focusing only on the tensions between all-India and Garo or Khasi nationalism. The impetus of the conflict was a clash between local nationalisms, Assamese and tribal. Meghalaya was not created at a time of unprecedented nationalist mobilization among hill tribes. Rather, by 1971 the statehood movement had declined substantially from its peak strength. Shifts in the national government's stance on all-India nationalism cannot explain changing central responses to the hill state demand. In the time between 1950 and 1971, the central government did not become more favorable to decentralization. If anything, Indira Gandhi's administration pursued centralization to a greater extent than Nehru and Shastri had done.[61] The center was also opposed to the creation of ethnically-defined states throughout this period. Indira Gandhi did not reverse Nehru's and Shastri's official opposition to such ethnic reorganization. For example, in Telangana in Andhra Pradesh, her government worked on a compromise to hold the state together. The center also did not become less nationalist. Kohli characterizes Indira Gandhi's leadership as generally less flexible toward subnationalism than Nehru had been.[62] The case of Meghalaya inverts this pattern. Nehru retracted offers of autonomy to the hill tribes while a new state was created peacefully during Mrs. Gandhi's tenure.

I now turn to an all-India analysis of separatism to confirm that rivalries in the periphery explain the incidence of separatist war in India.

5 Separatist war in India

The final empirical section of this study examines which Indian ethnic groups have fought separatist civil wars. The section presents a dataset of potentially separatist ethnic groups that measures the political standing in New Delhi of these groups and their local rivals. Regression results show that ethnic groups are most likely to rebel when their rivals in the periphery have a moderate political advantage in New Delhi. Ethnic groups are unlikely to rebel when they have much more or much less political representation in the prime minister's party or coalition than their rivals.

5.1 Identifying ethnic groups

In India, compiling statistics on language, religion, and other indentity categories is controversial and often violent.[63] Official statistics also reflect prior political mobilization. For example, tens of millions of respondents to the Indian census provide a name for their language that is thrown out in favor of an official classification, reflecting the political dominance of some dialects over others. Religious identities are also homogenized by the census. India's separatist regions have particularly unreliable official data. The Indian census has not consistently been carried out in such regions and census results are not always published in disaggregated form because of political sensitivity.

To circumvent the role of post-independence politics in defining ethnic groups, I use the colonial *Linguistic Survey of India (LSI)* by Sir George A. Grierson to identify ethno-linguistic groups and their areas of settlement.[64] Using colonial data to define ethnic groups prevents selection on prior mobilization. The *LSI* was conducted prior to the British introduction of electoral institutions to India and without any popular participation. The survey was politically influential once published; however, ethnic identities in the *LSI* all share the political advantage of having been

recognized there. The data also do not reflect post-1890s migration, alleviating concerns about endogeneity between migration and violence.

5.2 The role of international borders

All of India's separatist wars have taken place along the country's northern land border. The clustering of rebellion on the border is possibly a product of the greater feasibility of rural insurgency where cross border sanctuaries are available. Cross border coethnics may also play a role in explaining why separatism clusters on the northern border, a point I return to below. I deal with the perfect correlation between separatism and the northern land border by looking only at ethnic groups in India's border states.

I identify potential separatist groups by finding enclaves of one or more contiguous districts in a state that share a plurality ethnic group. The result is a panel dataset with 52 groups observed from 1950 to 2009. Some groups enter the data after 1950. Most notably, the Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA) and Jammu and Kashmir were, in theory, governed by the Ministry of External Affairs in 1950, when the Indian constitution came into effect. In practice, these areas were partially or completely outside of New Delhi's control. Groups there are included in the analysis only after de facto control was established.[65]

The dependent variable is the incidence of *Separatist insurgency*. Ten of the groups (19%) have fought a separatist conflict according to the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset v.4-2010.[66] Table 2 lists all cases of separatist insurgency.

[Table 2 about here.]

17

5.3 Identifying rivals and measuring relative political importance to New Delhi

The independent variable of interest is the relative political importance of the potentially separatist ethnic group compared to local interests that favor the status quo. If potential separatists are a minority in a state with an ethnic majority, that state majority is identified as the rival, pro-status quo interest. If the potential separatists live in a state without a majority ethnic group or are the majority ethnic group in their state, their rival is defined as the largest minority in their area.

I measure ethnic groups' political importance to the central executive using their representation in the ruling party or coalition in the lower house of India's parliament, the Lok Sabha.[67] A group's government representation is the number of seats in the group's area held by the prime minister's party or coalition, weighted by the group's population share in each seat.[68]

I construct a measure of relative government representation by dividing the government representation of the rival group by that of the potentially separatist group. The minimum value of relative representation is zero, which occurs if the rival has no representation in the prime minister's coalition. Relative government representation of one implies equal representation for the main ethnic group and its rival. Relative government representation greater than one means that the rival group had more representation in the ruling coalition than the main group had. This measure is logged in the statistical analysis. Summary statistics for all variables are in Table 3; independent variables are lagged one year.

[Table 3 about here.]

The expected relationship between *Ln relative government representation* and separatist war is an inverted U-curve. Low values of relative government representation imply that the potential separatists had the political advantage in New Delhi and are expected to be peaceful; in other words, low values of relative government representation correspond to the "Rival disadvantaged"

18

category in Table 1. Very high values of relative representation imply the rival group is much better represented in the prime minister's coalition; this corresponds to the "Rival heavily favored" category in Table 1. Separatists are expected to be deterred from violence in such cases. Groups are most likely to rebel when their rivals in the periphery are moderately advantaged politically, the "Rival favored" case in Table 1. Thus, the peak probability of separatist war should occur when relative political importance is greater than one but not too large.

5.4   Potential confounds

Three sets of control variables are included in all of the models of separatism below. These controls capture ethnic groups' political power in the capital, variables that may explain both political importance and violence, and migration.

The first set of controls disentangles an ethnic group's own political power from relative political standing. I note each group's seats in the prime minister's party/coalition *(Ln group's government representation)*. Second, I code whether the group was the majority in an existing state *(Statehood)*. Groups with regional autonomy may be less aggrieved and be better able to influence the capital. Therefore, regional autonomy may drive both violence and political standing.

A second set of controls are variables that might explain groups' political importance and cause conflict directly. First, Cunningham and Weidmann argue that diversity in the periphery causes separatism.[69] Of particular concern is a possible non-linear relationship between groups' relative population and conflict. If population also drives political importance, a spurious non-linear relationship between relative political importance and conflict could result. I use a non-linear measure of relative population suggested by Cunningham and Weidmann: the squared difference in an ethnic group's and its rival's local population shares (*Difference group pop. shares sq.*). Second, both a group's population (*Ln group population*) and economic development are likely correlates of violence and political importance. Sub-national income data is not available for the first decades of Indian independence. Therefore, I proxy development with *Agricultural dependence*, the share of

the workforce employed in agriculture, in a group's area.[70] Finally, very remote groups may be un-likely to overlap with a dominant ethnic group and have better opportunities for rebellion.[71] There-fore, I measure distance between the ethnic group and New Delhi (*Ln distance to New Delhi*).[72]

Third, migration is a possible confound. Governments sometimes sponsor migration to the periphery as a means of pacification, as in Tibet or the West Bank. Migration may, therefore, create an endogenous relationship between the risk of violence and spatial overlap with a dominant or advantaged ethnic group. That concern is mitigated by the fact that the colonial data used here do not reflect recent migration. However, the specifications below include *Rival migrant*, a dummy variable indicating whether a group's rival in the periphery migrated there during British rule of India.[73]

Finally, all models include peace years and peace year splines to address autocorrelation in the dependent variable.

5.5 Main results

In the basic specification for separatist war in India (Model 1, Table 4), relative government repre-sentation is included as a linear and a squared term. Both terms are estimated to have a statistically significant relationship with separatist civil war. Figure 2a plots the predicted probability of con-flict against relative government representation, showing the expected inverted-U relationship with violence.[74] The x-axis is labeled with unlogged values of relative government representation, for ease of interpretation.

[Table 4 about here.]

[Figure 2 about here.]

As expected, when a group is much more politically significant than its local rival, the estimated probability of separatism is low. The predicted probability of insurgency is less than 0.01% at the

5th percentile of relative government representation (0.14). The highest predicted probability of separatist war, about 89%, is at 1.8, implying a group's rival has almost twice the seats in the ruling party or coalition that the main group has. This result corresponds to the expectation that groups with rivals that are moderately favored in New Delhi are the most likely to rebel. At the 95th percentile of relative government representation (15) the predicted probability of conflict is just 0.3%. Thus, as hypothesized, rebellion is unlikely by groups at a major political disadvantage relative to pro-status quo groups in the periphery.

5.6   Competing nationalisms

To ensure the findings above are robust, I now add variables that capture conflict between the center and the periphery to the model of separatist war. The first set of controls are measures of cultural and economic distance between an ethnic group and New Delhi.

First, I record the *Hindu population share* of each ethnic group's area. Wilkinson and Capoccia, Sáez, and de Rooij argue that conflicts involving religious minorities in India have been particularly violent.[75] Brass argues that the Partition of India and Pakistan made New Delhi especially wary of accommodating territorial demands construed in religious terms.[76]

Second, I measure the linguistic distance between an ethnic group and Modern Standard Hindi (MSH). MSH has been an integral part of all-India nationalism, particularly the centrally-sanctioned nationalism of the first Congress governments. In the nineteenth century, the term "Hindi" referred to one of two major literary forms of the language Hindustani, which was spoken in the region surrounding Delhi. Hindustani's two literary formats were Urdu and Hindi, characterized by distinct alphabets. Written Hindi was a relatively recent arrival, developed in Hindu schools eager to discard the Persian-derived Urdu alphabet in favor of the Devanagari alphabet, derived from one of the writing systems for Sanskrit. Thus, Hindi demarcated Hindus and Muslims at a time of increasing religious polarization.[77] Use of Hindi and/or Hindustani was also championed by Indian nationalists as a means to counter the argument that British India was too diverse to be a

viable country. Nationalists argued that all of northern India spoke closely-related languages and was rapidly converging on Hindustani.[78] After independence, New Delhi encouraged the idea that northern India had a single language. Not only was the term Hindi used in official statistics for most speech forms in northern India, Hindustani was being transformed into a new, official Hindi. The government propogated a language based on:

> a western Hindi dialect [Hindustani], but also demonstrating features from other re-
> gional dialects[,] adjoining Indo-Aryan languages, and even such non-Indo-Aryan lan-
> guages as Persian. Although the 'official' name of the language is simply 'Hindi,'
> in many grammar books the terms Standard Hindi, Modern Standard Hindi, or *Kharī*
> *Bolī* (lit. 'standing language') are used.[79]

I measure each ethnic group's *Linguistic distance from Modern Standard Hindi* based on the number of common branches in a universal table of language genealogy.[80]

Third, I code the historical political and administrative integration of each ethnic enclave with colonial and independent India. I note each group's accession year, the date when the majority of the ethnic group's area was incorporated into either British India or independent India. The earliest dates of accession are for areas that were administered by the British government when it took over governance from the British East India Company; most of modern day Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal are in this category. Britain also had hundreds of individual treaties with native states not subject to direct British administration. In some cases, these states were later dissolved into British India; their accession is coded at that point. Other native states signed accession treaties with independent India. Sikkim has the latest date of accession, in 1975, when the Indian government annexed what had formerly been an independent protectorate. For statistical analysis, I use these dates of accession to calculate *Years since accession* for each group-year.

Finally, center/periphery conflict may be exacerbated by regional inequalities. I calculate regional *Inequality* with a formula suggested by Cederman, Weidmann, and Gleditsch.[81] If g is

agricultural dependence measured for the ethnic group's area and G is an all-India measure:

$$Inequality = (log(g/G))^2 \qquad (1)$$

In addition to this measure of income inequality, I also record regional natural resource abundance. I created an indicator variable for ethnic groups whose areas overlap petroleum deposits (*Oil region*).[82] I also code groups that overlap a copper, coal, zinc, lead, gold, and/or diamond *Mining region*.[83] Oil and mining regions are by definition resource-rich relative to India as a whole, which has limited resources of this kind.[84]

5.7 Regression results including cultural and economic distance

Model 2 (Table 4) adds the variables for religious and linguistic distance, historical integration, and regional inequalities to the specification for separatist war. The linear and squared terms for relative government representation remain statistically significant; the coefficient on the linear term is larger in this model than in the original specification. The magnitudes of the new coefficients are interpreted in Figure 2b. The effect of the larger linear coefficient is to shift the maximum predicted probability of rebellion toward higher values of relative representation. In Figure 2b the highest predicted probability of rebellion, 90%, occurs at relative representation of 2.0, meaning that the ethnic group's rival has twice the main group's representation in the central government. As in the original model, the predicted probability of conflict is nearly zero at very high and very low values of relative government representation. Thus, the inverted U-curve relationship between relative government representation and conflict is unlikely to be an artifact of religion, language, historical integration with India, or economic inequality.

5.8 Fears for national integrity

Model 3 adds a final set of control variables to the specification of separatist war. The central government likely perceives some separatist movements as a more serious threat to national unity than other movements. Some national unity concerns are already factored into the analysis here. All of the ethnic groups in the analysis lie on India's land border, which is the most critical region from a national security perspective. Demands for territorial autonomy from religious minorities may be particularly feared by the center. A short history of integration with British or independent India is also likely to capture the credibility of separatist threats. Nonetheless, Model 3 considers two more possible triggers of central fears for national integrity: the number of potential separatists in the country and the potential for separatists to gain aid from cross border coethnics.

First, Walter argues that governments are more fearful of cascading national defection if they face a larger number of potential separatists.[85] I calculate the number of ethnic groups in my data that have not previously rebelled in each year (*No. potential separatists*) and include this variable in Model 3. Second, I also control for the presence of *cross border coethnics in power* in the central government of a contiguous country and the presence of *cross border coethnic rebellion*.[86]

5.9 Regression results including national integrity concerns

Model 3 includes the indicators for the number of potential separatists and cross border coethnics. The terms for relative representation remain statistically significant. Figure 2c shows the predicted relationship between relative representation and rebellion. The results are similar to the other figures. The maximum predicted probability of rebellion occurs at relative representation of 1.8. Predicted levels of rebellion decrease rapidly above and below that point. In sum, Model 3 suggests that the relationship between central government ties to competing groups in the periphery and separatism is robust to controls for the number of separatist threats New Delhi faces and groups' cross border ethnic ties.

6 Conclusion

India continues to face crises related to subnationalist movements. Globally, separatism is the most common form of ethnic war. Therefore, an accurate understanding of why separatism escalates to violence is of great relevance. This study challenges the conceptualization of separatist violence as a rejection of a central nationalist project. Although Indian separatists articulate regional identities, the incidence of separatist war does not depend on physical, cultural, or economic distance from the center. Instead, the center's political ties to pro-status quo interests in the periphery are crucial to understanding when separatism becomes violent. Both the history of the Meghalaya statehood movement and a statistical analysis of original panel data on Indian ethnic groups suggest that the fluctuating political standing of separatists' rivals in the periphery determines the likelihood of rebellion.

The findings in this study should be tested for generalizability. In Kashmir, Northern Ireland, the Philippines, Chechnya, Darfur, Sri Lanka, Tibet, Georgia, Kosovo, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, southern Thailand, Sumatra, and Kurdish Iraq, separatists have faced resistance in the periphery. Thus, central ties to competing interests in the periphery may predict separatism beyond India. On the other hand, India's extraordinarily high level of diversity, as well as the lack of a national majority language, may set it apart. Perhaps India does not have a central nationalism that is sufficiently threatening to inspire resistance in the periphery. On the other hand, India does have a majority religion. Also, as noted in the introduction, post-colonial countries tend to have relatively new and tentative official nationalist projects.

Another possible scope condition could be the Indian government's willingness to decentralize. Periphery-versus-periphery rivalries may be important only where a central government is willing to grant regional autonomy. On the other hand, government willingness to decentralize is itself a phenomenon to be explained. Future work should investigate whether the cross-national incidence of regional autonomy can be explained by the political power of pro-status quo groups in the

periphery.

Notes

[1] Geertz 1963; Gellner 1964; Hechter 2000

[2] Geertz 1973, 237

[3] Hale 2008, 58

[4] E.g., Nag 1993

[5] Guha 1979. Oommen (2006) points out that "little" and "sub-" nationalism are common terms in scholarship on ethnic conflict in India.

[6] Ali 2002; Baruah 1994; Cockell 2000; Deol 2003; Kalita 2009; Mahmood 1996; Shani 2008

[7] Fazal 2012; Kikon 2009; Oommen 1986

[8] Keesing's 2000, 43625

[9] Hazarika 1994; Simon 1980

[10] Toft (2005) and Roeder (2007) argue that ethnic homogeneity in the periphery encourages separatism by aiding mobilization. Cunningham and Weidmann (2010) argue for a non-linear relationship between diversity and conflict; their argument is similar to the claim that similarly-sized ethnic groups are likely to clash (Buhaug et al. 2008; Horowitz 1985; Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2005). Thus, there is no consensus on the effects of diversity in the periphery nor the mechanism connecting it to violence.

[11] Geertz 1973; Harrison 1960

[12] Brass 1974; Mitra 2009

[13] Buhaug and Rød 2006; Cederman et al. 2009; Weidmann 2009

[14] Cornell 2002; Jenne et al. 2007; Roeder 2007; Treisman 1997

[15] Buhaug et al. 2008; Cederman et al. 2009

[16] Toft 2005

[17] Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008; Fearon 1998

[18] Gellner 1964, 1983; Giuliano 2006; Gourevitch 1979; Williams 1977

[19] Collier and Hoeffler 2005; Hechter 2000

[20] Alesina et al. 2004; Hale 2004, 2008; Walter 2009

[21] Walter 2009

[22] Hale 2008

[23] Quoted in Harrison 1956, 621

[24] Aneesh 2010; DasGupta 1970; Ganguly 2003; Hansen 1999; Van Der Veer 1994; Varshney 1993

[25]Singh 2010

[26]Stepan et al. 2011

[27]Brass 1994; Kohli 1997; Wilkinson 2008

[28]Behera 2006

[29]Dhillon 2006

[30]Weiner 1962, 58

[31]Rao and Singh 2005

[32]Weiner 1962

[33]By political value, I mean the ability to influence the executive's future tenure in office by extending or withdrawing support. Below, I operationalize political value as representation in the prime minister's party or coalition.

[34]Chima 2010; Jacob and Tully 1985

[35]Alexander 2004

[36]Cf. Roeder 2007

[37]Brass 1994; Kohli 1997; Lacina 2013; Stepan et al. 2011; Wilkinson 2008. In the statistical analysis below, statehood and violence are positively correlated. However, groups that use or threaten violence are much more likely to win states than peaceful groups (Lacina 2010). Therefore, a positive correlation between violence and statehood should not be interpreted as a positive effect of statehood on violence.

[38]Rao and Singh 2005

[39]Lacina 2009

[40]Simon 1980

[41]In contemporary India, the term "Adivasi," derived from "original inhabitants" in Sanskrit, is often used in place of "tribal." However, in Northeast India, "Adivasi" refers to tribal peoples who have migrated into the Northeast from other regions of India (McDuie-Ra 2006). Thus, I use "tribes" and "tribals" to refer to groups local to the Northeast.

[42]The Himalayan areas to the northeast of the Brahmaputra Valley were also transferred to India by the British, although the colonial government had never established a presence there. These tracts were designated the North Eastern Frontier Area (NEFA). Though nominally in Assam, the area was under the control of the Ministry of External Affairs.

[43]In 1960, New Delhi agreed to form the state of Nagaland. The Mizos—the major tribe of the Lushai Hills district—demanded independence in 1961 and began open rebellion in 1966. In 1971, Mizoram became a centrally-controlled union territory; in 1986, it became a state as part of the peace treaty ending the conflict there. NEFA became the union territory of Arunachal Pradesh in 1971 and a state in 1986.

[44]Bareh 1967; Chowdhury 1998

[45]The constituent assumbly authored the Indian constitution, which came into effect in 1950 and created the central parliament.

[46]Ghosh 1960, 2

[47]Mukerjee 1969, 301

[48]Times of India News Service 1960

[49]E.g., Anandabazar Patrika 1960

[50]Times of India News Service 1960

[51]Lyngdoh 1996, 358

[52]Ministry of Home Affairs 1963

[53]Dommen 1967, 737

[54]Chowdhury 1998, 379

[55]Chowdhury 1998, 377

[56]Economic and Political Weekly 1970a

[57]Mukerjee 1969, 306

[58]Mukerjee 1969

[59]Economic and Political Weekly 1970b

[60]Economic and Political Weekly 1970c, 1995

[61]Brass 1991

[62]Kohli 1997

[63]Brass 1974

[64]Grierson 1903. The correspondence of *LSI* administrative units to later administrative units is from Census Commissioner (2004).

[65]Jammu and Kashmir's de facto accession date is set to 1954, when the legislative assembly that was recognized by the government of India voted for accession. I date de facto control of the Northeast Frontier Agency to 1961, when the Indian government was first able to take the census there.

[66]Gleditsch et al. 2002; Harbom and Wallensteen 2010

[67]The upper house is ceremonial.

[68]Delimitation orders from ECI (1951, 1956, 1966, 1976, 2008). Election results from ECI (2012). If the Lok Sabha constituencies in a group's area are numbered 1 to n, the group's government representation is $\sum_{i=1}^{n} P_i \rho_i$, where P_i is the number of seats in constituency i controlled by the prime minister's party or coalition and ρ_i is the group's

population share in constituency *i*.

[69]Cunningham and Weidmann 2010

[70]Census Commissioner 2001

[71]Buhaug et al. 2009

[72]GADM 2012

[73]Grierson 1903.

[74]Based on Table 4, Model 1. All predicted probabilities in Figure 2 are calculated with control variables set to median values and peace years at zero.

[75]Capoccia et al. 2012; Wilkinson 2008

[76]Brass 1974

[77]Khare 2002; King 1994; Krishna 1992

[78]Nehru 1946

[79]Shapiro 2003, 252

[80]I use a formula for language distance suggested by Fearon (2003). Language distance, $d = 1 - \sqrt{s}$, where *s* is the number of common branches in a universal table of language genealogy, from *Ethnologue* (Lewis 2009), divided by the maximum possible number of such branches, 15.

[81]Cederman et al. 2011

[82]Census Commissioner 2004; GADM 2012; Lujala et al. 2007

[83]Gilmore et al. 2005; IndiaStat 2013

[84]These sectors accounted for just 2–4% of India's annual GDP from 1950 to 2012 (CSO 2012).

[85]Walter 2009

[86]I use *Ethnologue* (Lewis 2009) to identify cross border ethnic groups. 85% of Indian border groups have cross border coethnics, and all but one separatist group—the Dimasa—have cross border coethnics. I code cross border coethnics in power based on the Ethnic Power Relations Dataset, v 2.0 (Cederman et al. 2010; Wimmer et al. 2009). cross border coethnic rebellion is from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset.
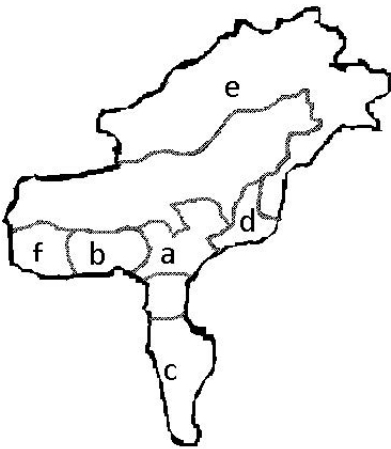
Autonomous district of Assam
a: United Mikir & N. Cachar Hills
b: United Khasi & Jaintia Hills
c: Lushei Hills
d: Naga Hills
f: Garo Hills

Centrally administered area
e: Northeast Frontier Agency

(a) Assam, 1950
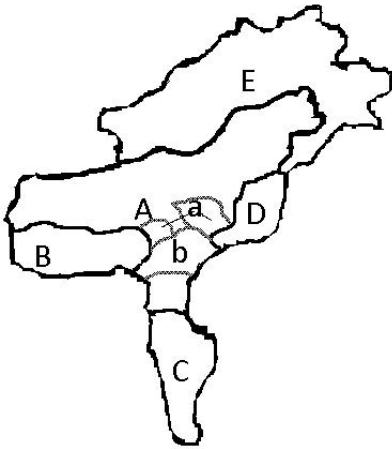
State
A: Assam
B: Meghalaya
D: Nagaland

Union territory
C: Mizoram
E: Arunachal Pradesh

Autonomous district of Assam
a: Mikir Hills
b: North Cachar Hills

(b) Assam and areas separated from Assam, 1971

Figure 1: Assam in 1950 and 1971
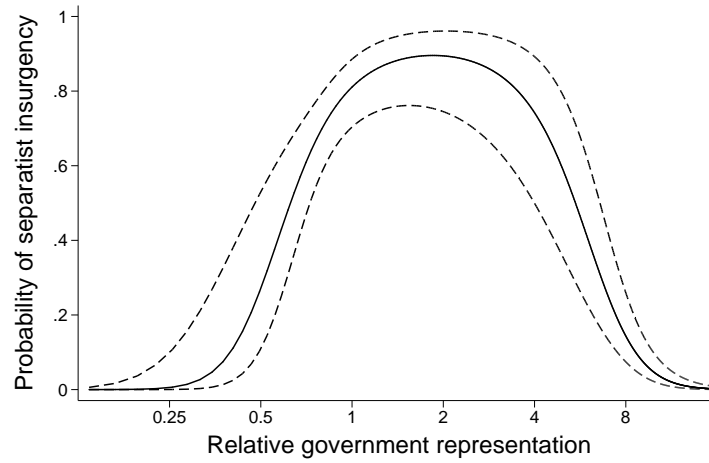
(a) Model 1
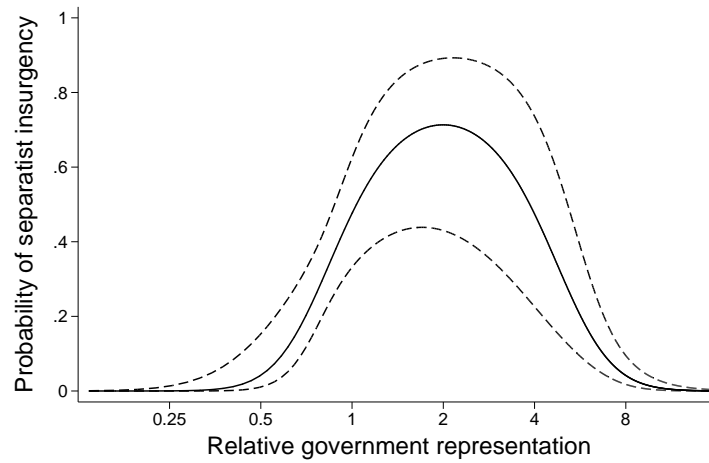
(b) Model 2
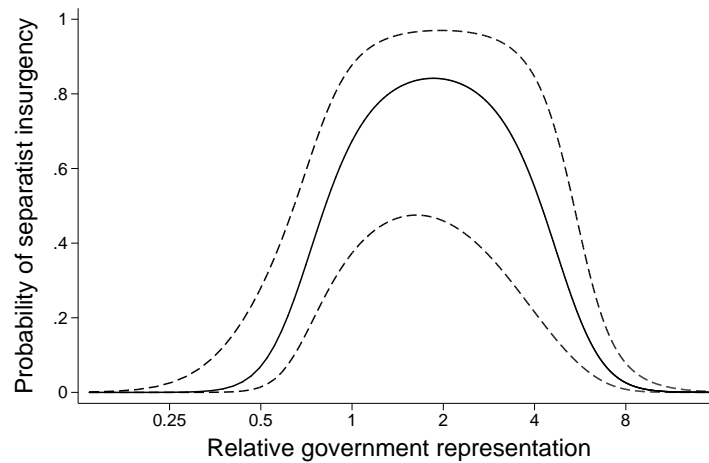
(c) Model 3

Figure 2: Predicted probability of separatist insurgency by a border-region ethnic group as a function of relative government representation, based on models in Table 4 and plotted with 90% confidence intervals

Rival's political position	Expected outcome	Meghalaya case study
Rival heavily favored	∼Violence (Deterrence)	1962–1966 (§4.3)
Rival favored	Violence	1950–1962 (§4.2)
Rival disadvantaged	∼Violence (Accommodation)	1966–1971 (§4.4)

Table 1: Expected relationships between political position of separatists' rivals and violence; corresponding sections of the Meghalaya case study indicated in the final column

Ethnic group	Years of separatist insurgency
Nagas	1956–68
	1992–1997
	2000
	2005–07
Mizos	1966–68
Tripuri	1979–1988
	1992–93
	1995
	1997–04
	2006
Meitei	1982–88
	1992–2000
	2003–2009
Punjabi Sikhs	1983–93
Kashmiri	1989–2009
Bodo	1989–90
	1993–2004
	2009
Assamese	1990–91
	1994–2009
Kukis	1997
Dimasa	2008

Table 2: Ethnic groups fighting separatist insurgencies in India, 1950–2009

	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Separatist insurgency	0.051	0.22	0	1
Peace years	27	17	0	62
Ln relative government representation	0.16	1.3	-3.0	3.4
Ln group's government representation	-0.13	1.9	-4.6	3.7
Statehood	0.21	0.40	0	1
Difference group pop. shares sq.	0.41	0.24	0.0045	0.90
Ln group population ('000s)	6.7	2.2	1.9	11
Agricultural dependence	0.61	0.18	0.012	1
Ln distance to New Delhi	6.8	0.67	4.8	7.6
Rival migrant	0.12	0.33	0	1
Hindu population share	0.59	0.32	0.0057	0.99
Linguistic distance to modern standard Hindi	0.74	0.24	0.32	1
Years since accession	74	46	0	150
Inequality (Agricultural dependence)	0.19	0.46	3.9 e-8	16
Oil region	0.43	0.50	0	1
Mining region	0.30	0.46	0	1
No. potential separatists	43	4.3	36	51
Crossborder coethnics in power	0.19	0.39	0	1
Crossborder coethnic rebellion	0.014	0.12	0	1
Observations	2843			

Table 3: Summary statistics for analysis of separatist insurgency in India

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Ln relative government representation	2.3*	2.9*	3.1+
	(1.1)	(1.3)	(1.6)
Ln relative government representation sq.	-1.8***	-2.1**	-2.5*
	(0.54)	(0.72)	(0.98)
Ln group's government representation	-0.12	0.043	0.36
	(0.49)	(0.66)	(0.83)
Statehood	2.4**	2.3*	3.7***
	(0.79)	(1.0)	(1.0)
Difference group pop. shares sq.	1.3	-1.1	-0.97
	(1.7)	(1.5)	(2.4)
Ln group population ('000s)	0.47+	0.87+	0.62
	(0.25)	(0.47)	(0.67)
Agricultural dependence	0.74	-2.2	-1.1
	(1.6)	(2.4)	(3.0)
Ln distance to New Delhi	1.5***	0.83	0.90
	(0.38)	(0.81)	(0.75)
Rival migrant	-0.19	-0.61	-0.94
	(0.54)	(0.90)	(0.89)
Hindu population share		-3.1***	-2.8**
		(0.87)	(0.90)
Linguistic distance to modern standard Hindi		3.0	3.5
		(1.9)	(2.9)
Years since accession		-0.0090	-0.0063
		(0.0088)	(0.0085)
Inequality (Agricultural dependence)		0.36	0.44
		(0.31)	(0.39)
Oil region		1.6**	0.85
		(0.57)	(0.64)
Mining region		1.6*	2.0*
		(0.75)	(0.82)
No. potential separatists			0.23*
			(0.097)
Cross border coethnics in power			-0.96
			(1.0)
Cross border coethnic rebellion			2.9+
			(1.5)
Constant	-13***	-11+	-20*
	(3.7)	(5.9)	(9.2)
Peace year splines?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1588	1588	1588
Ln likelihood	-63	-59	-54

Standard errors, clustered by ethnic group, in parentheses
$^+$ $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4: Logistic regressions of the incidence of separatist insurgency by India's border-region ethnic groups, 1950–2009

References

Alesina, Alberto, Reza Baqir, and Caroline Hoxby. 2004. "Political Jurisdictions in Heterogeneous Communities." *Journal of Political Economy* 112, no. 21: 348–396.

Alexander, Padinjarethalakal Cherian. 2004. *Through the Corridors of Power: An Insider's Story*. New Delhi: HarperCollins.

Ali, Nasreen. 2002. "Kashmiri Nationalism Beyond the Nation-State." *South Asia Research* 33, no. 2: 145–160.

Anandabazar Patrika. 1960. *Some Facts about Recent Disturbances in Assam*. Calcutta: Anandabazar Patrika.

Aneesh, A. 2010. "Bloody Language: Clashes and Constructions of Linguistic Nationalism in India." *Sociological Forum* 25, no. 1: 86–109.

Bareh, Hamlet. 1967. *The History and Culture of the Khasi People*. Calcutta: Naba Mudran Private Ltd.

Baruah, Sanjib. 1994. "'Ethnic' Conflict as State-Society Struggle: The Poetics and Politics of Assamese Micro-Nationalism." *Modern Asian Studies* 28, no. 3: 649–671.

Behera, Navnita Chadha. 2006. *Demystifying Kashmir*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Brass, Paul R. 1974. *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1991. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*. New Delhi: SAGE.

———. 1994. *The Politics of India since Independence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2 edition.

Buhaug, Halvard, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Jan Ketil Rød. 2008. "Disaggregating Ethno-Nationalist Civil Wars: A Dyadic Test of Exclusion Theory." *International Organization* 62, no. 3: 531–51.

Buhaug, Halvard, Scott Gates, and Päivi Lujala. 2009. "Geography, Rebel Capability, and the Duration of Civil Conflict." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 4: 544–569.

Buhaug, Halvard and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2008. "Contagion or Confusion? Why Conflicts Cluster in Space." *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 2: 215–233.

Buhaug, Halvard and Jan Ketil Rød. 2006. "Local Determinants of African Civil Wars, 1970–2001." *Political Geography* 25, no. 3: 315–335.

Capoccia, Giovanni, Lawrence Sáez, and Eline de Rooij. 2012. "When State Responses Fail: Religion and Secessionism in India, 1952–2002." *The Journal of Politics* 74, no. 4: 1010–1022.

Cederman, Lars-Erik, Halvard Buhaug, and Jan Ketil Rød. 2009. "Ethno-Nationalist Dyads and Civil War: A GIS-Based Analysis." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 4: 496–525.

Cederman, Lars-Erik, Nils B. Weidmann, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. 2011. "Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison." *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 3: 478–495.

Cederman, Lars-Erik, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min. 2010. "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis." *World Politics* 62, no. 1: 87–119.

Census Commissioner. 2001. *Census of India 2001*. New Delhi: Directorate of Census Operations and Government of India Press.

———. 2004. *India Administrative Atlas, 1872–2001: A Historical Perspective of Evolution of Districts and States in India*. New Delhi: Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner (India).

Chima, Jugdep S. 2010. *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India: Political Leadership and Ethnonationalist Movements*. New Delhi: Sage.

Chowdhury, Jyotirindra Nath. 1998. *The Khasi Canvas: A Cultural and Political History*. Shillong and Calcutta: Chapala Book Stall and Jeetraj Offset.

Cockell, John G. 2000. "Ethnic Nationalism and Subaltern Political Process: Exploring Autonomous Democratic Action in Kashmir." *Nations and Nationalism* 6, no. 3: 319–345.

Collier, Paul and Anke Hoeffler. 2005. "The Political Economy of Secession." In Hannum, Hurst and Eileen F. Babbitt, eds., *Negotiating Self-Determination*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 37–60.

Cornell, Svante E. 2002. "Autonomy as a Source of Conflict: Caucasian Conflicts in Theoretical Perspective." *World Politics* 54, no. 2: 245–276.

CSO. 2012. *Components of Gross Domestic Product (at Factor Cost)*. New Delhi: Central Statistics Office and Reserve Bank of India.

Cunningham, Kathleen Gallagher and Nils B. Weidmann. 2010. "Shared Space: Ethnic Groups, State Accommodation, and Localized Conflict." *International Studies Quarterly* 54, no. 4: 1035–1054.

DasGupta, Jyotirindra. 1970. *Language Conflict and National Development*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Deol, Harnik. 2003. *Religion and Nationalism in India: The Case of Punjab*. New York: Routledge.

Dhillon, Kirpal. 2006. *Identity and Survival: Sikh Militancy in India, 1978–1993*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.

Dommen, Arthur J. 1967. "Separatist Tendencies in Eastern India." *Asian Survey* 7, no. 10: 726–739.

ECI. 1951. *Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies Order, 1951*. New Delhi: Election Commission of India.

———. 1956. *Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies Order, 1956 (Corrected up to the 31st March 1957)*. New Delhi: Election Commission of India.

———. 1966. *Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies Order, 1966*. New Delhi: Election Commission of India.

———. 1976. *Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies Order, 1976*. New Delhi: Election Commission of India.

———. 2008. *Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies Order, 2008.* New Delhi: Election Commission of India.

———. 2012. *General Election Results and Statistics.* New Delhi: Election Commission of India.

Economic and Political Weekly. 1970a. "After Chaliha." *Economic and Political Weekly* 5, no. 11: 472–473.

———. 1970b. "After Chaliha in Assam." *Economic and Political Weekly* 5, no. 45: 1795–1796.

———. 1970c. "Quick End of an 'Experiment'." *Economic and Political Weekly* 5, no. 50: 1995.

Fazal, Tanweer. 2012. "Minorities and their Nationalism(s): The Terms of a Discourse in South Asia." *South Asian History and Culture* 3, no. 2: 163–176.

Fearon, James D. 1998. "Commitment Problems and the Spread of Ethnic Conflict." In Lake, David A. and Donald Rothchild, eds., *Ethnic Conflict*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 107–126.

———. 2003. "Ethnic and Cultural Diversity by Country." *Journal of Economic Growth* 8, no. 2: 195–222.

GADM. 2012. *GADM database of Global Administrative Areas, v 2.0.* Davis, CA: University of California, Davis.

Ganguly, Sumit. 2003. "The Crisis of Indian Secularism." *Journal of Democracy* 14, no. 4: 11–25.

Geertz, Clifford. 1963. *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa.* New York: The Free Press.

———. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures.* New York: Basic Books.

Gellner, Ernest. 1964. *Thought and Change.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

———. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Ghosh, A. 1960. *Some Facts about Recent Disturbances in Assam: Collected from Various Authentic Sources and Newspaper Reports.* Calcutta: Shree Saraswaty Press.

Gilmore, Elisabeh, Nils Petter Gleditsch, Päivi Lujala, and Jan Ketil Rød. 2005. "Conflict Diamonds: A New Dataset." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 22, no. 3: 257–292.

Giuliano, Elise. 2006. "Secessionism from the Bottom Up: Democratization, Nationalism, and Local Accountability in the Russian Transition." *World Politics* 58, no. 2: 276–310.

Gleditsch, Nils Petter, Peter Wallensteen, Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Sollenberg, and Håvard Strand. 2002. "Armed Conflict 1946–2001: A New Dataset." *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 5: 615–637.

Gourevitch, Peter Alexis. 1979. "The Reemergence of 'Peripheral Nationalisms': Some Comparative Speculations on the Spatial Distribution of Political Leadership and Economic Growth." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 21, no. 3: 303–322.

Grierson, George Abraham. 1903. *Linguistic Survey of India*. Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing (India).

Guha, Amalendu. 1979. "Great Nationalism, Little Nationalism and [sic] Problem of Integration: A Tentative View." *Economic and Political Weekly* 14, no. 7/8: 455–458.

Hale, Henry E. 2004. "Divided We Stand: Institutional Sources of Ethnofederal State Survival and Collapse." *World Politics* 56, no. 2: 165–93.

———. 2008. *The Foundations of Ethnic Politics: Separatism of States and Nations in Eurasia and the World*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hansen, Thomas. 1999. *The Saffron Wave*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Harbom, Lotta and Peter Wallensteen. 2010. "Armed Conflicts, 1946–2009." *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 4: 501–509.

Harrison, Selig S. 1956. "The Challenge to Indian Nationalism." *Foreign Affairs* 34, no. 4: 620–636.

———. 1960. *India: The Most Dangerous Decades*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Hazarika, Sanjoy. 1994. *Strangers in the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from India's Northeast*. New Delhi: Viking.

Hechter, Michael. 2000. *Containing Nationalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Horowitz, Donald. 1985. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

IndiaStat. 2013. *IndiaStat: Revealing India Statistically*. New Delhi: Datanet India.

Jacob, Satish and Mark Tully. 1985. *Amritsar: Mrs.Gandhi's Last Battle*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Jenne, Erin K., Stephen M. Saideman, and Will Lowe. 2007. "Separatism as a Bargaining Posture: The Role of Leverage in Minority Radicalization." *Journal of Peace Research* 44, no. 5: 539–558.

Kalita, Rakhee. 2009. "Writing Terror: Men of Rebellion and Contemporary Assamese Literature." In Baruah, Sanjib, ed., *Beyond Counterinsurgency: Breaking the Impasse in Northeast India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 101–123.

Keesing's. 2000. "India." *Keesing's World News Archive* 46, no. June: 43625.

Khare, Santosh Kumar. 2002. "Truth about Language in India." *Economic and Political Weekly* 37, no. 50: 4993–4994.

Kikon, Dolly. 2009. "From Loincloth, Suits, to Battle Greens: Politics of Clothing the 'Naked' Nagas." In Baruah, Sanjib, ed., *Beyond Counterinsurgency: Breaking the Impasse in Northeast India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 81–100.

King, Christopher R. 1994. *One Language, Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Kohli, Atul. 1997. "Can Democracies Accomodate Ethnic Nationalism? Rise and Decline of Self-Determination Movements in India." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 56, no. 2: 325–344.

Krishna, S. 1992. "The Language Situation: Mosaic or Melting Pot?" In Arora, Balveer and Nirmal Mukarji, eds., *Federalism in India: Origins and Development*, New Delhi: Vikas, 64–86.

Lacina, Bethany. 2009. "The Problem of Political Stability in Northeast India: Local Ethnic Autocracy and the Rule of Law." *Asian Survey* 49, no. 6: 998–1020.

———. 2010. "The Politics of Security Policy: Evidence from Language Violence in India, 1950–1989." Ph.D. thesis, Stanford University.

———. 2013. "India's Stabilizing Segment States." *Ethnopolitics* forthcoming.

Lewis, M. Paul, ed. 2009. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World.* Dallas, TX: SIL International.

Lujala, Päivi, Jan Ketil Rød, and Nadja Thieme. 2007. "Fighting over Oil: Introducing A New Dataset." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 24, no. 3: 239–256.

Lyngdoh, R. 1996. *Government and Politics in Meghalaya.* New Delhi: Sanchar Publishing House.

Mahmood, Cynthia Keppley. 1996. *Fighting for Faith and Nation: Dialogues with Sikh Militants.* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

McDuie-Ra, Duncan. 2006. "Civil Society Organisations and Human Security: Transcending Constricted Space in Meghalaya." *Contemporary South Asia* 15, no. 1: 35–53.

Ministry of Home Affairs. 1963. *Dossiers (Assam) 1/27-1/63-Intt.* New Delhi: National Archives of India.

Mitra, Subrata K. 2009. "The Rational Politics of Cultural Nationalism: Subnational Movements of South Asia in Comparative Perspective." *British Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 1: 57–77.

Montalvo, José G. and Marta Reynal-Querol. 2005. "Ethnic Polarization, Potential Conflict, and Civil Wars." *American Economic Review* 95, no. 3: 796–816.

Mukerjee, Dilip. 1969. "Assam Reorganization." *Asian Survey* 9, no. 4: 297–311.

Nag, Sajal. 1993. "Multiplication of Nations? Political Economy of Sub-Nationalism in India." *Economic and Political Weekly* 28, no. 29/30: 1521–1532.

Nehru, Jawaharlal. 1946. *The Discovery of India.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Oommen, Tharaileth Koshy. 1986. "Insiders and Outsiders in India: Primordial Collectivism and Cultural Pluralism in Nation-Building." *International Sociology* 1, no. 1: 53–74.

———. 2006. "Nation and Nationalism in South Asia." In Delanty, Gerard and Krishan Kumar, eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*, London: SAGE, 438–449.

Rao, M. Govinda and Nirvikar Singh. 2005. *Political Economy of Federalism in India.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Roeder, Philip G. 2007. *Where Nation-States Come From: Institutional Change in the Age of Nationalism.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Shani, Giorgio. 2008. *Sikh Nationalism and Identity in a Global Age*. New York: Routledge.

Shapiro, Michael C. 2003. "Hindi." In Cardona, George and Dhanesh Jain, eds., *The Indo-Aryan Languages*, New York: Routledge, 250–285.

Simon, Ivan Martin. 1980. *Meghalaya*. New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

Singh, Prerna. 2010. "Subnationalism and Social Development: A Comparative Analysis of Indian States." Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University.

Stepan, Alfred, Juan J. Linz, and Yogendra Yadav. 2011. *Crafting State-Nations: India and Multinational Democracies*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Times of India News Service. 1960. "Red Members Walk Out of Lok Sabha. Speaker Rejects Move to Debate Assam." *Times of India* August 2: 1.

Toft, Monica D. 2005. *The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Violence, Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Treisman, Daniel Simon. 1997. "Russia's 'Ethnic Revival': The Separatist Activism of Regional Leaders in a Postcommunist Order." *World Politics* 29, no. 2: 212–249.

Van Der Veer, Peter. 1994. *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Varshney, Ashutosh. 1993. "Contested Meanings: India's National Identity, Hindu Nationalism, and the Politics of Anxiety." *Daedalus* 122, no. 3: 227–261.

Walter, Barbara F. 2009. *Reputation and Civil War: Why Separatist Conflicts are so Violent*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Weidmann, Nils B. 2009. "Geography as Motivation and Opportunity." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53, no. 4: 526–543.

Weiner, Myron. 1962. *The Politics of Scarcity: Public Pressure and Political Response in India*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Wilkinson, Steven. 2008. "Which Group Identities Lead to the Most Violence? Evidence from In-

dia." In Kalyvas, Stathis N., Ian Shapiro, and Tarek Masoud, eds., *Order, Conflict, and Violence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 271–300.

Williams, Stephen Wyn. 1977. "Internal Colonialism, Core-Periphery Contrasts and Devolution: An Integrative Comment." *Area* 9, no. 4: 272–278.

Wimmer, Andreas, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Brian Min. 2009. "Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict: A Configurational Analysis of a New Global Dataset." *American Sociological Review* 74, no. 11: 316–337.