

Language and Religion: Different Salience for Different Aspects of Identity

Kürşad Turan

Assistant Professor

Dept. of International Relations, Gazi University

Ankara – Turkey

E-mail: kturan@gazi.edu.tr

Abstract

The salience of ethnic identity as a cause of domestic and international conflict received extensive coverage in the literature. Even though they recognize the multi-dimensional nature of ethnicity, most early studies treated the concept as uni-dimensional. More specifically, they focused on ethnic differences in general, mostly on what aspect of their identity groups differed and which differences are more likely to lead to violent conflicts. As it has been widely accepted, ethnic identities can develop along various lines (linguistic, religious, racial, etc.) and it would not be realistic to expect all of these dimensions to have the same level of salience for the individuals that belong to those groups. The question we must ask ourselves is which one of these dimensions is more likely to lead an ethnic group to conflict? Some of the more recent studies emphasized religion as a more salient aspect of ethnic identity. Here, I argue that, although religion is an important aspect of an individual's identity, it is linguistic differences that are more likely to lead to conflict by limiting individual's ability to self-express, communicate with others effectively, and take advantage of the opportunities available in that society. This is because when we look at conflicts between a state and an ethnic group one must keep in mind that the asymmetric nature of the actors may cause different motivations and salience levels. In order to test this argument, I build a two-equation simultaneous equations model that look at different characteristics of ethnicity and their impact on the coercive behavior by the ethnic group and the government. The results reveal that the issue may not be as straightforward as one may think.

Keywords: Ethnicity; Ethnic conflict; Identity; Language; Religion.

Introduction

Ethnicity is a very complex identity. An ethnic group is defined as “a group of people (...) who are united by a common inherited culture (including language, music, food, dress, and customs and practices), racial similarity, common religion, and belief in common history and ancestry – and who exhibit a strong psychological sentiment of belonging to the group”¹. Some of these are obtained by birth (i.e. race) and others are the result of the socialization process the individual goes through early in his/her life (i.e. language, religion, custom). As it is pointed out by identity and social identity theories, differences alone are not enough to make an identity salient². They also must be activated. Activation may take place following a repression of that aspect of ethnic identity or a mobilization effort by political entrepreneurs around that aspect. In short, activation requires an effort by one of the sides to the conflict. All other things being equal, it would be unrealistic to expect all these aspects to be equally salient to one's identity. The activation determines the relative salience of these aspects because not all characteristics of a group's identity are equally easy to activate.

The large amount of attention devoted to ethnicity in the last decade and a half led to the extensive coverage of relationship between ethnicity and conflict. Many of the early studies took ethnic differences as a given and did not focus on what made these groups different from each other. While it may be useful to adopt such an approach to determine general trends in ethnic conflicts, this approach does not allow us to get an in depth understanding of such conflicts. For example it does not explain why we observe ethnic conflicts between certain ethnic groups and not others. One notable exception in the literature to this general trend is the work of Jonathan Fox who disaggregated ethnic identity and distinguished between its many aspects with a heavy emphasis on religion. In a series of articles and books Fox and others³ argued about the salience of religion a mobilizing factor.

¹ R.C. Taras and R. Ganguly, *Understanding Ethnic Conflict: The International Dimension*, New York, Longman, 2002, p. 6.

² J.E. Stets and P.J. Burke, “Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory”, *Social Psychology Quarterly* Volume 63, No 3, 2000.

³ Fox, J. “The Effects of Religion on Domestic Conflicts”, *Terrorism and Political Violence* Volume 10, No 4, 1998; J. Fox, “The Influence of Religious Legitimacy on Grievance Formation by Ethno-Religious Minorities”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Volume 36, No 3, 1999; J. Fox, “Religious Causes of Discrimination against Ethno-Religious Minorities”, *International Studies Quarterly*, Volume 44, 2000; Fox, J. “Religion as an Overlooked Element of International Relations”, *International Studies Review* Volume 3, No

Despite the lack of conclusive evidence in these studies, the trend started following Huntington's lead in the 'Clash of Civilizations'⁴ and gained momentum after the events of 2001. These studies contended that because religious ideas represent 'absolute truths' and are not very open to compromise, groups with different religious traditions are less likely to reach a peaceful solution. With more attention to religious conflicts in international relations the attention devoted to religion as a source of conflict grew disproportionately in the literature, leaving out every other potential explanation. Here, I argue that because conflicts between states and ethnic groups are asymmetrical in nature, it is inappropriate to emphasize one aspect of ethnic identity, namely religion, as equally salient for all actors involved. By asymmetry I mean that regardless of their relative strength, participants do not share the same level of legitimacy. This, in turn, means they have different motivations, preferences, and even different tools at their disposal. Predictably, this also means they may consider different aspects of their identity salient and may engage in violent conflict over different issues. I look at two characteristics of ethnic identities that are most emphasized, namely language and religion, and the level of ethnic conflict those societies experience. Although there are many different sides to any given ethnic identity, others, such as race, and culture, are not included in this study because the goal is not to determine relative salience levels of various aspects. As Esman⁵ puts it, 'the principal cultural issues that generate ethnic conflicts are language and religion.'

He argues that this is the case because both of these characteristics are at the core of an individual's identity as well as the center of the 'collective dignity and honor' of ethnic groups⁶. These are the two aspects I chose to focus on. This, by no means, minimizes the importance of the other characteristics of a person's identity. My aim, here, is to determine the relative importance of the top two candidates and to test the validity of the argument that religious differences are the main mobilizing factor in an ethnic conflict. In order to do that I test two main hypotheses: linguistic differences are potentially more likely to lead to violent conflicts than religious differences; and maybe more importantly, that in asymmetric conflicts differences in actors' positions may lead to differences preferences. It is certainly true that religion can be an important source of conflict and a very hard issue to reach a compromise over, it is possible for religiously different ethnic groups to live side by side for two reasons: partly because the religion's claim extends only to believers and usually exclude people with different beliefs, and also because it is possible for religious groups to lead isolated lives where they can practice their own religion without interference from others since one group's religious beliefs do not necessarily affect the daily lives of the other group's members. Because they can be used as indirect tools of repression by controlling language policies, an ethnic group can determine the official language, effectively excluding all other contending languages.

Linguistic differences and policies based on them, on the other hand, have more direct consequences for other groups. This, not only creates a psychological effect on other ethnic groups by making them feel as second class citizens, but it also has more practical distributional consequences. The adoption of a language as 'official' may mean that it will be the exclusive language of state business and education, limiting the access of non-speakers to both areas. This, in turn, limits the opportunities for advancement and leads to frustration, a necessary condition for conflict. In addition, states' language policies are more effective tools of discrimination than their religious policies. It is exceptionally hard to stop people from believing in a given religion or even from practicing it. What the governments are capable of doing is to limit or ban the public expression of a religion, which may not cause enough frustration to initiate a conflict if it does not harm individuals' ability to practice their religion privately. Language policies, however, may have a more profound impact on an individual's daily life by determining access to various areas and can be used to keep a people down by either limiting a people's ability to speak their language, or their access to certain areas, such as government jobs, the military, etc. In the following sections, I will begin by evaluating religion-centered arguments. Later, I will turn my attention to the linguistic differences. Finally, I test my argument using a model that looks at the impact of these two characteristics on the violent behavior by the state and ethnic group.

Religion and Conflict

Religion is often defined as 'a system of beliefs and practices by means of which a group of people struggles with the ultimate problems of human life – suffering, injustice, and meaninglessness'⁷.

3, 2001; J. Fox, *Religion, Civilization, and Civil War*. Landham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004; J. Fox, *A World Survey of Religion and State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008; M. Esman, *An Introduction to Ethnic Conflict*. Malden: Polity Press, 2004; J. Hutchinson, *Nations as Zones of Conflict*. London: Sage Press, 2005.

⁴ S. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 72, No 3, 1993.

⁵ M. Esman, *An Introduction to Ethnic Conflict*, 82.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁷ M. Yinger, *Ethnicity: Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?* Albany, State University of New York Press, 1994.

Yinger⁸ sees it as a source of refusal to give up against one's frustrations. This is a result of two things religion implies⁹: pain and injustice are 'fundamental facts of existence;' the believer can eventually be saved from those facts. Put this way, the importance of religion in individual's life becomes apparent. It not only creates a sense of solidarity by helping people understand that hardships they face everyday are shared by all, but it also gives them hope by providing a set of rules to follow in order to reach salvation. However religion's importance for ethnic groups comes, not from providing a way to escape the injustices they have been subject to in their daily lives, but from the portion of individual's life it regulates and its ability to unite individuals. Religion is the spiritual equivalent of totalitarian political regimes, meaning that it does not regulate a single section of the individual's life, but all aspects of it. While this regulation's degree may change from religion to religion, all expand their authority outside the area of worship to include, at the very least, codes of ethics and sometimes even what the individual can wear and eat. Through these limitations, belief systems may determine who the individual may or may not interact with.

Because 'religion offers not only a comprehensive world view, but also an all-embracing social identity'¹⁰ it becomes an important part of the early socialization process and the portions of ethnic identity that results from it. When it comes to ethnic groups, religious identities' salience mainly lies in their ability to provide a potential for group mobilization. Young¹¹ argues that this potential comes from two characteristics religion possesses. While one makes sure that the group members have a constantly renewed commitment towards each other through rituals, the second separates the group from others and maintains the group's boundary by closing down certain parts of the individual's life to non-members. This, however, creates isolation, not necessarily conflict. Once initiated, religious conflicts tend to be hard to solve. Even though, as Esman¹² puts it, groups fight over power, not theological issues, a conflict framed along absolute values does not have much room to bargain and compromise. 'Compromise, splitting the difference, or mutual toleration are hard to achieve, since live-and-let-live might imply betrayal of the true faith and toleration of heresy or falsehood'¹³.

Despite its importance for the individual, religious differences may fall short of expectations as a rallying point for political mobilizations. Because in addition to difficulties in solving religiously based conflicts, such disputes are also extremely hard to control for their leaders. There are two reasons why the impact religion has may be less than it first appears. First, as Yinger¹⁴ argues, because religion often covaries with class, with demographic characteristics, with length of residence in a society, and other factors, it is difficult to determine if religion is a major source of conflict. Although I agree with Yinger's¹⁵ argument, the same can be said for other aspects of an ethnic identity, showing us the difficulty in relying on a single marker as the most salient. Second, and maybe more importantly, framing grievances in religious terms may mean that political entrepreneurs transfer the control to religious elites, the experts of these issues. Inability to control the conflict and the possibility of not achieving their own goals may cause political entrepreneurs to shy away from religion as a rallying point. This argument is also supported by Gurr's¹⁶ findings where he claims that their "comparative evidence and cases suggest that religious cleavages are at best a contributing factor in communal conflict and seldom the root cause."

It is clear that religious aspect of an ethnic identity is important for the individual as well as the community. This, however, does not mean groups will frame their challenges on religious differences nor does it mean that these differences have more potential to lead to violent conflicts. From the point of view of political entrepreneurs, the uncontrollable and inflexible nature of religious conflicts makes them less desirable as a mobilization point. Individuals, on the other hand, rarely face effective limitations on what to believe or how to worship. This can be seen in a survey of the groups of the Minorities at Risk (MAR) dataset, where "only eight of the forty-nine militant sects in the study are defined solely or mainly by their religious beliefs"¹⁷. Many of the religious limitations governments adopt tend to be indirect and less disturbing at the individual level because they aim to limit group activity. It would be an exaggeration to argue that religious conflicts are not on the rise in various parts of the world in the near past. A quick study of the newspapers would suggest the opposite.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 256.

¹⁰ C. Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism*. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1976, p. 51.

¹¹ Ibid., 51-52.

¹² M. Esman, *An Introduction to Ethnic Conflict*, 85.

¹³ Ibid., 85.

¹⁴ M. Yinger, *Ethnicity: Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?*, 168.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ T. Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts*. Washington, D.C., United States Institute of Peace Press, 1993, p. 317.

¹⁷ Ibid., 317.

However, because the focus of this study is ethnic conflicts many of those religious conflicts remain outside its scope because they take place between groups from the same ethnicity and religion, but differ on the role they believe religion should play in politics and the daily life of their society. Today's religious conflicts have two common characteristics. The first common characteristic is what is at stake. Parties to religious conflicts fight over the regime, not the right to practice their faith. This makes these conflicts ideologically based, not identity centered. Second, the majority of domestic religious conflicts are between religious and secular groups, not between the members of different religions over the role of religion.

Language and Conflict

In order to successfully wage a conflict, ethnic groups must be able to effectively separate themselves from others and base their grievances on these differences, in other words, activate those differences. In the previous section, we have seen that religion is a relatively potent separator, but here, I argue that language is even more effective. This is not because their language is more important to people than their religion, but because discrimination based on language tends to have a more direct impact on the individual's life. What sets language apart from other potential aspects of ethnic identity may be its ability to separate groups effectively. Language determines peoples' ability to directly communicate with each other. As Yinger¹⁸ argues, the sharper the language divide, other things being equal, the clearer are the ethnic lines of division.

Studies that look at ethnicity and religion as different aspects of one's identity point out that 'ethnic conflicts are less amenable to accommodation than religious or class conflicts (Barry, 1989). This is so not because of some irreducible 'essence' of ethnicity, but due to a structural requirement: non-territorial solutions are much more difficult to attain when language is the main dividing marker than when religion or class acts as the main marker.'¹⁹ The impact of linguistic differences on the relationship between ethnic groups depends on language policies adopted by the state. At the very least, the state may adopt an official language giving an indirect advantage to its speakers, or at the other extreme, it may restrict the education in a given language, or ban its use altogether. We can evaluate the impact of these policies over a group in two main categories: psychological and economic.

Psychological impact of language policies

Psychologically, the status of a language is similar to the one of religion in that it reflects the status of the individual in that society. This is similar to what Young²⁰ and, later on, Arel²¹ called 'social prestige.' This is a relative concept. The prestige of a given language is determined by comparing its position to other languages used in that society. 'It [language] symbolizes which of two or more ethnic communities is strong enough and prestigious enough that its language should be honored as the official language of government and education, while the languages of other ethnic communities are reduced to vernacular status, to the family and marketplace.'²² The concept is rarely applicable to religious differences the way it is to linguistic differences because while every state has at least one official language, much fewer states announced an 'official religion.'²³ It is possible to interpret the declaration of an official religion as positive discrimination in that it gives certain privileges to the believers of that religion that others cannot benefit from without necessarily imposing limitations on others.

Declaring an official language, on the other hand, is a negative discrimination because it limits the access of non-speakers to certain areas of life. The ethnic language is the one the individual learns and uses throughout the early socialization period when his/her identity develops and first contacts with the rest of the society are made. Weinstein²⁴ points out, 'in a very natural way all humans associate their first language with their most intimate social groups – family and peer. As a result, the original language has deeper meaning for the individual and it is quite hard to completely replace it with another. During this period the individual's main focus is usually on his/her immediate surroundings and s/he may not fully realize his/her status in the larger society. The crucial point comes when the group member comes into contact with the official language of the state s/he lives in. usually taking place around the school age. Inability to speak the official language well may limit the individual's options in education and may create the perception of being secondary class to others.

¹⁸ M. Yinger, *Ethnicity: Source of Strength? Source of Conflict?*, 302.

¹⁹ D. Arel, "Political Stability in Multinational Democracies: Comparing Language Dynamics in Brussels, Montreal and Barcelona", in A.G. Gagnon and J. Tully (eds.) *Multinational Democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

²⁰ C. Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism*.

²¹ D. Arel, "Political Stability in Multinational Democracies: Comparing Language Dynamics in Brussels, Montreal and Barcelona".

²² M. Esman, *An Introduction to Ethnic Conflict*, 82.

²³ Barro and McCleary (2005) find that for the 1970-2000 period only 58 of 188 countries adopted and maintained a state religion throughout.

²⁴ B. Weinstein, "Language Strategists: Redefining Political Frontiers on the Basis of Linguistic Choices", *World Politics*, Volume 31, No 3, 1979, s. 345-364.

From this early age on a person's success heavily depends on his/her mastery of the official language. It also serves as a constant reminder of their status, contributing, in the long run, to the building up of frustrations that may eventually activate language-based group identities and potentially lead to conflicts with others.

Economic impact of language policies

A second impact language policies have is more practical and related to the resource distribution in a given country. This is what differentiates linguistic differences from religious ones. Unlike the psychological effect, distributional biases based on religious differences are relatively rare than the ones based on linguistic differences. This is mainly because linguistic policies can create such biases indirectly, while biases based on religion policies are more visible and, as a result, bound to attract sharper domestic, as well as international, reaction. As mentioned in the previous section, the social prestige of languages is a relative concept that creates a zero-sum situation which 'to large extent depends on the career opportunities they might provide.'²⁵ A high social prestige for the speakers of a language translates to better opportunities for them, while a lower social prestige means limited access to such opportunities. 'It is instrumentally important because those whose familial language is the language of instruction in school, the language of university entrance and civil service exams, of command in the military and of communication in government enjoy a distinct advantage, practical as well psychological, over those who are required to perform in a second language.'²⁶ One may argue that such restrictions tend to only affect the state sector and that the private sector would still remain open to all and play a balancing role.

However, we must keep in mind that because many of these multiethnic countries with a potential are developing and less developed. They tend to have a large portion of their economy controlled by the state and relatively high levels of unemployment. These conditions create a dependency for state-controlled jobs for income and security. A group's inability to access these resources is likely to diminish its ability to prosper and improve its circumstances. Linguistic policies have major impact on two areas: education and state-owned economic resources. The adoption of discriminatory policies in education aims at the assimilation of minority members at an early age and may impede their advancement depending on their mastery of the official language. Linguistic discrimination in resource distribution, on the other hand, creates an unequal distribution of jobs and resources ensuring the major ethnic group's economic dominance in the country.

By requiring the mandatory use of their own language in education, the dominant group may attempt to assimilate the minority at a relatively early age. The same policy also limits minority members' ability to improve their social, economic, and political status by excluding the individuals who cannot use the language effectively from the system. The inability to use the official language effectively also limits individuals' ability to take advantage of the legal system or pursue their political, economic, and cultural rights. By controlling the language a person must use in order to get a state sector job, a government can control the distribution of resources in the country. Under good economic conditions state-managed resources matter less because there are other opportunities available²⁷. This decreases the frustrations and the possibility of distributional conflicts. When the economic conditions are bad, however, jobs controlled by the state become important and by controlling the distribution of these jobs and resources, the dominant ethnic group can effectively favor its members and discriminate against the minorities in the country.

Even if we assume that the dominant ethnic group does not adopt special policies in order to discriminate against linguistic minorities, in a society where two or more ethnic groups compete for limited resources, such as jobs at the public sector, market processes tend to favor groups that are already economically advantaged because they have the skills and connections to take advantage of these opportunities. In order to remedy the problems that may surface as a result of linguistic policies, governments may take certain steps. Instead of using a single language for all state business, governments 'may adopt one or more languages for administrative use at the federal level and others at the provincial level. They may adopt special language requirements for entry into government service or they may permit the use of several languages as media of examination and require on-the-job language training in other languages after admission. In the schools, governments may recognize some languages and not others either as media of education or as languages of instruction'²⁸. However, even those mild language policies do not change the prestige difference among various languages because today's inequalities may have their roots in yesterday's discriminatory policies. Even though I have focused on language policies adopted by the dominant ethnic group and their impact up to this point, linguistic differences can be used as a tool in the hands of majority and minority politicians alike.

²⁵ D. Arel, "Political Stability in Multinational Democracies: Comparing Language Dynamics in Brussels, Montreal and Barcelona", 78.

²⁶ M. Esman, *An Introduction to Ethnic Conflict*, 82-83.

²⁷ R. Hardin, *One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1995.

²⁸ P. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*. Newbury Park, CA, Sage Press, 1991, p. 52-53.

The effectiveness of the language policies comes from the fact that both sides, the dominant majority and the ethnic minority, can make use of such policies in order to advance their position. Especially during a period of 'state-sponsored nationalism, it has often been the deliberate policy of both ruling elites and putative counter-elites to seek to delegitimize rival linguistic claims, sometimes in quite openly opportunistic fashion'²⁹. In societies where a group's language has been adopted by as the official one, other groups face a choice. 'They may give up their mother tongue or use it only at home and choose education through the medium of the language that provides access to employment or, if the community has the resources, it may develop its own network of private schools to maintain its language and culture and simultaneously work to change government policies towards its language'³⁰. This, of course, can only be possible if the dominant group does not pursue an active policy of linguistic discrimination or block minority efforts. It is often possible for the dominant group to assimilate the members of the middle class of the minority group. In most cases, this is partly because these people are better educated and already fluent at the dominant group's language, and partly because the dominant group may be willing to share some of the resources avoid conflict. 'Others may reject assimilation out of a new pride in their wealth and culture.

The latter are joined by members of the disappointed second generation who find less room at the top as the ruling structures become less able or willing to absorb them'³¹. Under such circumstances, if the minority group members that are left out are bound to each other by a common language, politicians may be able to use this advantage as a tool to get what they believe they deserve. For minority politicians linguistic differences and discriminatory policies based on them provide a mobilization point as well as an audience with an activated identity, limiting the time and effort they have to spend in order to advance their movement. As Weinstein describes, 'the oppressed seek relief by organizing families, neighbors, and others who share some characteristics into a constituency to support their demands for entry or a redefinition of the rules of entry into existing structures. In the face of strong resistance, or because of their own increased self-confidence, they may challenge the existing structures and the bases that support them. Their intellectuals propose new community frontiers which, defined by different symbols, would exclude the former ruling classes and would facilitate their own access to power, prestige, and wealth. Some members of the assimilated first generation may join the new movement to counteract a growing sense of alienation from families, friends, and regions they had abandoned earlier'³².

Once the lines are drawn, 'the new elites tend to rely on the low-status language rather than on religion as a symbol of the new community and the mobilizing ideology.' Weinstein³³ lists several factors that contribute to this decision. First, religion, or religious leaders, may not recognize the exclusive boundaries, so important for political entrepreneurs. It is possible that religious leaders may choose to adopt an inclusive policy that will bring ethnically different groups together on the basis of religion instead of separating them. This, of course does not help the political entrepreneurs who base their powers on the differences between groups and who need clearly defined boundaries to effect to effectively mobilize the group. A second factor is the religious leaders' control over symbols and their use. This may limit politicians' manipulation of symbols. This gives an advantage to religious leaders over politicians who are often more interested in secular goals and see such symbols as tools for mobilization.

Weinstein's³⁴ third factor is the desire to prevent the symbolization of other cultural characteristics which will undermine the boundaries that elites are trying to build. A good example of this is post-colonial regimes in Africa, where leaders avoided the language issue in order not to undermine the unity developed during the resistance against colonial rule. Religious boundaries may represent different boundaries than the ones preferred by the elites and their use may greatly damage their cause by defining larger groups that are harder to mobilize and maintain. Up until this point I argued that because ethnic conflicts are asymmetric conflicts, the two sides have different priorities and possess different tools to achieve them. I argued that states rarely feel the need to discriminate based on religious differences because such policies tend to be ineffective. There are, on the other hand, a large number of policies that can effectively discriminate against other linguistic groups. This, in turn, I contend causes the ethnic minority to mobilize around one aspect of their identity that not only they perceive as under threat, but also against policies that limit their advancement opportunities in society: language.

²⁹ P. Spencer and H. Wollman, *Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*. London: Sage, 2002, 76-77.

³⁰ P. Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*, 53.

³¹ B. Weinstein, "Language Strategists: Redefining Political Frontiers on the Basis of Linguistic Choices," 351.

³² *Ibid.*, 351.

³³ *Ibid.*, 352-353.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Model

I build a two-equation simultaneous equations model to test my argument. I use a combination of the Minorities at Risk (MAR) and Polity data sets³⁵. MAR includes detailed information on 284 ethnic minority groups all of which are included in my study. The variables are coded bi-annually for the time period between 1994 and 2000³⁶ giving me four data points for each group. I use the three-stage least squares (3SLS) method to test my two equations and hypotheses generated from them. 3SLS is a combination of seemingly unrelated regression (SUR estimation) and two-stage least squares (2SLS). It allows us to test a multi-equation system by taking into consideration any interaction that may take place between variables in each equation. The two equations my model consists of focus on the protest/rebellion behavior of ethnic groups and the repression applied by the state. The asymmetric nature of the conflict increases the possibility that the parties may have different motivations and requires a two-equation model that will evaluate their behavior separately without losing sight of their interaction.

Protest/rebellion by the ethnic group

I have argued elsewhere that violent levels of ethnic group behavior are only an escalation of non-violent conflict behavior, not an entirely different phenomenon. Existing data sets, such as MAR, present separate measures for these two behaviors. In order to create a measure that will allow me to test my argument, I used an eight-point scale that consists of two variables from the MAR data set: Group protest activities (PROTXX) and anti-regime rebellion (REBXX). The scale varies between zero and seven and its details can be found in the appendix. The first category of variables that determine an ethnic group's protest and rebellion behavior is their relationship with the dominant group. Ethnic conflict, I argue, is a result of the interaction between the state and other ethnic groups in that society. Without the contribution of both sides it is hard to speak of a conflict because with just one actor engaging in conflict behavior either the state dominates other groups, or the groups achieves its goals peacefully.

H1: State repression levels will positively affect protest/rebellion levels by the ethnic group.

A second group of variables focus on religious differences and restrictive policies that are based on them. I use two variables for this: different religion and religious restrictions. The use of two variables allows me to observe whether the presence of religious differences are enough for the conflict to emerge, or if the attempts at religious repression are what trigger dissent. As I have argued throughout the paper, I do not expect religion to be a major mobilization point where no other major grievances exist. As follows, I do not expect any relationship between religious differences to have a major impact on protest/rebellion levels. Religious restrictions, however, may lead to grievances that, in turn, somewhat increase the levels of protest and rebellion.

H2: Religious difference will not affect protest/rebellion levels by the ethnic group.

H3: Religious restrictions will positively affect protest/rebellion levels by the ethnic group.

I also use a set of three variables that measure the linguistic differences and the impact of language policies. These three variables not only distinguish between linguistic differences and repression, but also between two different levels of repression that are available to the state. Because of their impact on the daily life of individuals, I expect linguistic differences to provide a mobilization point and have an impact on ethnic group's behavior. The other two variables are restrictions on use of language and restrictions on language instruction. Even though their impact will vary, both types of restrictions will have a major impact on group members and lead to dissent. As a result, both of them are expected to have a positive impact.

H4: Linguistic difference will positively affect protest/rebellion levels by the ethnic group.

H5: Restrictions on use of language will positively affect protest/rebellion levels by the ethnic group.

H6: Restrictions on language instruction will positively affect protest/rebellion levels by the ethnic group.

In addition to these variables that are central to my argument, I also test for four control variables that may play a role in the initiation of the conflict. These are economic differentials, political restrictions, demographic stress, and ecological stress. Even though they are of no direct interest to my argument, because there are other studies arguing these are key factors in ethnic conflicts it could pose problems to leave them out.

³⁵ The Minorities at Risk (MAR) data set is criticized by some in the literature for having selection bias because it focuses on minorities that are considered "at risk." Whether these accusations are well founded are not is beyond the scope of this study. This study is limited what lies at the root of ethnic conflicts that already begun, religion or language. As a result, MAR's becomes a good fit for the purposes of my study and its alleged shortcomings do not have a negative impact on my results.

³⁶ A list of the variables I used, as well as the description of the ones I coded can be found in the appendix section.

State repression

My second equation looks at the state repression levels and aims to show what differences the state finds more salient and feels the need to suppress. In order to measure the state's repression I devised a fourteen-point scale using thirteen variables from the MAR data set. The details of the scale can be found in the appendix section with the rest of my variables. As it was the case in the previous equation, the first variable I look at is the protest/rebellion by the ethnic group. Parallel to the argument in the previous equation I expect protest/rebellion levels to affect state repression levels.

H7: Protest/rebellion levels will positively affect state repression levels.

I expect religious differences play a role in determining the state's repressive behavior. Because a state cannot effectively regulate religion through policies, it may turn to less legitimate methods in order to discriminate against their religious minorities.

H8: Religious difference will positively affect state repression levels.

Linguistic differences, on the other hand, are less likely to be a factor in a state's decision to use direct repression. Because states have various policies at their disposal to indirectly discriminate against other language groups, open repression often becomes unnecessary. Consequently, I do not expect linguistic differences to be a major factor in determining state repression levels.

H9: Language difference will not affect state repression levels.

In addition, I use three control variables that have the potential to be effective in the state's repression decision: the group's proportion to country population, the number of groups in the country, and the democracy score of the country.

Results

In addition to being generally supportive, the results I present below are also rather interesting. They show that for each actor, a different aspect of their identity is salient and that the source of this difference in salience is the tools available to them. While differences in religion appear to be the main factor that leads states to repression, ethnic groups seem to protest/rebel over linguistic differences and restrictions. As argued before, this difference between groups and the most salient aspect of their identity is likely to come from the different status of actors and the set of policies available to them. I had pointed out in an earlier section, the dominant ethnic group has indirect linguistic policies at its disposal that will allow them to discriminate against the minority language speakers non-violently. By using the rights each sovereign state possesses, states are able to provide advantages to people using their own language. This either assimilates the speakers of other languages by encouraging them to switch to the dominant tongue, or discriminates against them if they insist on using their native language. If the activated aspect of their identity is religious, however, the state does not have any tools that may allow them to effectively stop the practice of the minority religion. As a result, violence may become the only option for a state that wants to keep its ethnic groups under control, while minority groups can practice their own religion despite any restrictions placed on it by the state.

Table-1 Protest/Rebellion by the Ethnic Group

	Coefficient	Standard Error	Significance
State repression	.5017	.0764	.000
Different language	3.9422	.7967	.000
Different religion	-1.3542	.6329	.032
Restrictions on religion	2.0310	.6921	.003
Restrictions on use of language	-2.3334	.7000	.001
Restrictions on language instruction	.0248	.0135	.067
Demographic stress	.0695	.0399	.082
Ecological stress	.0454	.0470	.334
Political restrictions	.0358	.0453	.430
Economic differences	.0118	.0230	.610
Constant	8.5044	2.0851	.000

N = 1136

As Table-1 shows, the results are supportive of my arguments, meaning linguistic differences are the main factor leading an ethnic group to protest/rebel. Of course with linguistic differences come policies like "official language" that aim providing advantages to a language without overtly discriminating against others. When the state takes a step further and places restrictions on the instruction of minority languages, we see the impact reducing. This may be attributed to the fact that more often than not such languages are learned at home, not in schools.

If the state acts even more ambitious and tries to restrict the use of a given language altogether, the impact we see is the opposite of the desired one, a significant drop in protest/rebellion levels. This may have two reasons: either the state manages to effectively assimilate the group, or it fails to effectively apply those policies. In either case we would observe a drop in protest/rebellion behavior. In addition to these general tendencies there are other interesting results. First, religious differences variable in the protest/rebellion equation carries the wrong sign. This leads me to conclude that when there are religious differences, ethnic groups tend to lead separate lives where the interaction is kept to a minimum, effectively reducing the potential for conflict. Once there are restrictions placed on religious freedoms, we see a significant increase in protest/rebellion levels, showing once again that the salience religious differences have for the ethnic group comes from its activation as a conflict issue. Unlike linguistic differences that do not need to be activated.

Table-2 State Repression

	Coefficient	Standard Error	Significance
Protest/Rebellion by the ethnic group	.6407	.1333	.000
Different language	-.5674	1.0710	.596
Different religion	2.0794	.6817	.002
Group proportion to country population	-.0067	.0154	.664
Number of ethnic groups	.6268	.2477	.011
Democracy	-.8059	.1304	.000
Constant	6.0086	3.0078	.046

N = 1136

Table-2 shows that the state repression equation also lends support to my argument. While linguistic differences do not affect a state's repressive behavior, religious differences have a significant positive impact on repression levels. These results show us that states do not use violent discrimination indiscriminately. As long as they can achieve their goals through non-violent repression, such as the case with language policies, they use policies and only resort to violence when they have no other effective tools at their disposal. Two other variables that appear to have significant impact on state repression levels are protest/rebellion by the ethnic group and the regime type of the country. Both of these results are straightforward. An increasing level of protest/rebellion increases state's repressive behavior, while repression seems less common in democracies.

Conclusion

Throughout the paper I argued that various aspects of a group's ethnic identity possess different salience levels. As a result, what aspect of their identity they differ on determines not only the likelihood of conflict between two groups, but also who will initiate it. There appear to be a widespread agreement that language and religion are the two most salient aspects of an ethnic identity and that we are more likely to witness conflict when two groups differ from one another on one of these dimensions. However, some of the more recent literature on the subject argued that between the two, religion caused the more salient divide. I disputed this view, arguing that, for ethnic groups, linguistic policies posed not only psychological, but also economic problems. This, in turn, increases the frustrations and the possibility of a conflict. This view is also supported by Hardin³⁷ (1995: 59) who points out that 'language policy is inherently conflictual because different policies differentially affect relevant parties. The current two or three generations of speakers of the minority language will be losers if their language loses its utility. The resent generations of speakers of the majority language will be losers if the minority language is kept viable' (Hardin 1995: 59).

I developed a two-equation model in order to determine the causes of conflict for dominant groups and minorities. This allowed me to see if the status of the group in the society had an impact on what dimension of their identity they conflict over. The results support this idea. While states use violence on the basis of religious differences, ethnic groups protest and/or rebel on the basis of linguistic differences. Despite using the same data set (MAR) my results conflict with most of the recent studies. The difference comes from the method and certain variables used here. These two are also the two main contributions of this study to the literature. First, I adopted a method, simultaneous-equations model that emphasizes the asymmetrical nature of ethnic conflicts by looking at participants separately. This actor-based approach is an improvement over studies that look at the conflict as their level of analysis. Because conflicts begin and escalate as a result of actors' motivations, when dealing with different actors one needs to evaluate each individually. The simultaneous-equations model allows us to do just that. Second, the two scales I have constructed make a better use of the existing MAR variables than other studies that use them in their raw form. By combining protest and rebellion that are collected by the MAR project,

³⁷ R. Hardin, *One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict*, 59.

I am able to observe the whole spectrum of dissenting behavior by groups in a single variable. Similarly, instead of different types of state repression I used a scale that captures and ranks various levels of state repression, making it possible to track changes in a time-series model. I argued that these two improvements allow me to capture a more accurate picture of the causes of ethnic conflicts. Even though the results are supportive, they also warrant further research on the issue. There are two main areas where this study could improve. First, the time period it covers must be extended in order to include the post-2001 years. The second improvement would be the inclusion of additional control variables. Two of these variables are racial differences and state's role in the economy. Racial differences would add another dimension of ethnic identity, but what is needed is perceived racial differences, rather than existing objective measures of race. State's role in the economy would allow us to see people's dependence on state controlled jobs to earn their livelihood. Despite its shortcomings, this study shows us that the next step in ethnic conflict studies may be the disaggregation of identity and focusing on its various dimensions. If nothing else, this study aims to stimulate thinking on different ways we can approach the issue.

Appendix

1. Protest/Rebellion by the ethnic group:

Group protest activities vary from zero to five: (0) None reported; (1) Verbal opposition; (2) Symbolic resistance; (3) Demonstrations by less than 10,000 people; (4) Demonstrations by less than 100,000 people; (5) Demonstrations by more than 100,000 people. Anti-regime rebellion, on the other hand, varies between zero and seven: (0) None reported; (1) Political banditry; (2) Campaigns of terrorism; (3) Local rebellion; (4) Small-scale guerrilla activity; (5) Intermediate guerrilla activity; (6) Large-scale guerrilla activity; (7) Protracted civil war. Combining these two variables, I created the thirteen-point scale presented in the following table. Because it would be unrealistic to expect each step in my scale to be at equal distance from each other, I assigned weights to each type of behavior.

Minorities at Risk Value	My Scale	Weighed Value	Description
PROT/ REB 0	0	0	None reported
PROT 1	1	5	Verbal opposition
PROT 2	2	15	Symbolic resistance
PROT 3	3	23	Demonstration (under 10,000 people)
REB 1	4	34	Political banditry
PROT 4	5	40	Demonstration (under 100,000 people)
PROT 5	6	49	Demonstration (over 100,000 people)
REB 2	7	62	Campaigns of terrorism
REB 4	8	70	Small-scale guerrilla activity
REB 5	9	79	Intermediate guerrilla activity
REB 3	10	88	Local rebellion
REB 6	11	96	Large-scale guerrilla activity
REB 7	12	100	Protracted civil war

1. State repression:

To measure state repression I construct a weighted scale based on repression variables from the MAR data set. MAR includes 23 variables (REP01XX to REP23XX) aimed to measure the presence of various repressive methods states use against ethnic groups. Taken individually none of these variables is sufficient for my purposes. As such, I have chosen 13 of these variables and ranked them from the lowest (systematic spying) to highest (ethnic cleansing) 51 levels of repression. I have converted each variable to dummies, coded one if the specific form of repression is present and zero if it is not. I assumed that if a country records at a certain level on the scale for a given year, all activities ranked lower will also be present in the country for that year. For example, if the members of a group are executed, it is also assumed that some members are also arrested. Because the items on the scale cannot be expected to be at equal distance from each other, they are later weighed between zero and one hundred.

Minorities at Risk Variable	My Scale	Weighed Value	Description
0	0	0	None reported
REP15XX	1	7	Systematic domestic spying
REP11XX	2	15	Restriction of movement
REP01XX	3	21	Few arrested
REP02XX	4	27	Many arrested
REP18XX	5	35	Limited use of force against protest
REP03XX	6	44	Leaders arrested/ disappeared/ detained
REP19XX	7	57	Unrestrained use of force against protest
REP16XX	8	64	State of emergency
REP20XX	9	75	Military campaigns against armed rebels
REP06XX	10	81	Members executed
REP09XX	11	87	Systematic killings by paramilitaries
REP22XX	12	96	Military massacres of suspected supporters
REP14XX	13	100	Ethnic cleansing

3. Different language: (CULDIFX2)

The variable looks at the differences between language spoken by the ethnic group and the dominant group's language. It is coded as (0) No differential; (1) Some indeterminate differential; and (2) Significant differential.

4. Different Religion: (CULDIFX4)

The variable looks at the differences between religion of the ethnic group and the dominant group's religion. It is coded as (0) No differential; (1) Some indeterminate differential; and (2) Significant differential.

5. Restrictions on religion: (CULPO1XX)

This variable measures the level of restrictions placed on the minority group's religious practices. It is coded as (0) No restrictions; (1) Activity informally restricted; (2) Activity somewhat restricted; (3) Activity sharply restricted.

6. Restrictions on use of language: (CULPO2XX)

This variable measures the level of restrictions placed on the minority group's use of its own language. It is coded as (0) No restrictions; (1) Activity informally restricted; (2) Activity somewhat restricted; (3) Activity sharply restricted.

7. Restrictions on language instruction: (CULPO3XX)

This variable measures the level of restrictions placed on the minority group's ability to use of its own language in education. It is coded as (0) No restrictions; (1) Activity informally restricted; (2) Activity somewhat restricted; (3) Activity sharply restricted.

8. Demographic stress: (DSTER)

Demographic stress index is the sum of three variables. It is based on the existence and magnitude of deteriorating public health (DMSICK), declining caloric intake (DMFOOD), and high birthrates (DMBIRT) for the group vis-à-vis the dominant group.

9. Ecological stress: (ECOSTR)

Ecological stress is based on the existence magnitude of environmental decline (DMENV), competition with other groups for land (DMCOMP), and dispossession from one's land (DMEVIC). It is the sum of these three variables.

10. Political restrictions: (POLRES)

11. Economic differences: (ECDIFXX)

12. Group proportion: (GPRO)

The variable measures the group's proportion to country population.

13. Number of groups: (NUMGRP)

It is the number of major ethnic groups, other than the dominant ethnicity, in a state.

14. Democracy: (DEMOCRAC)

It is the country's democracy score taken from the POLITY data set. It varies between minus ten, autocracy, and plus ten, democracy.

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