Dispersed Ethnic Groups and Probability of Civil War Onset, 1975 – 2001

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Abstract: *There are very few ethnically homogenous countries in the international system. The significant majority of the countries are multi-ethnic. Many ethnic groups are not concentrated in a single country, on the contrary, dispersed in several countries. Literature of conflict studies has not paid adequate attention to the impact of dispersed ethnic groups on civil war onset. This paper attempts to expand the theoretical dimension of the relationship between dispersed ethnic groups and civil war onset. It intends to find out if dispersion of ethnic groups between neighboring countries increases the probability of civil war onset. Additionally, the paper tests if some certain conditions between neighboring countries have any influence on the probability of civil war onset such as relative deprivation, democracy and wealth. It finds support for dispersion of ethnic groups only in the Middle East region while confirms the inverted relationship. Relative deprivation and democracy differences do not matter while wealth difference increases the probability of civil war onset in the richer country.*

Keywords: *ethnic conflict, civil war, ethnic groups*

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Introduction

Kurds live in several countries in the Middle East and are dispersed among several countries. In the last century, some rebellions by Kurdish groups occurred in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey. In these rebellions, the Kurdish groups counted on the Kurdish population living in the neighboring countries, and their ultimate goal was to create their own state that includes all the territories where Kurdish people are the majority. Groups in one country supported the rebellions of their kindred groups in neighbor countries. However, the Middle Eastern countries with Kurdish population always suppressed the rebellions and are very concerned about the current situation in Syria and the future of Iraq. This is simply because of the possibility that Kurdish groups in neighboring states may start rebellion with irredentist intentions which will result in territorial break up of several Middle Eastern countries.

In another case, Ethiopian army attacked Somalia to support the central government several times in the past years. The conflict between the central government and a resistance group known as the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) caused several causalities and displacement of hundreds of people in Somalia. Ethiopian forces also entered Somalia helping poorly equipped Somali forces fight al-Shabab terrorist organization. The Ethiopian ruling elites defended their action by stating that the hostile forces in Somalia have claims over the Ogaden region of Ethiopia. Ogaden is a region in eastern part of Ethiopia bordering Somalia. Somalis are the dominant ethnic group and it was the fear of annexation of Ogaden region that made Ethiopian government intervene. In this case, Ethiopian government's involvement showed that existence of Somalis in either side of the border is a concern for Ethiopia.

A common point in these two cases stands out: dispersion of a certain ethnic group in more than one neighboring country. If a certain ethnic group is dispersed among two neighboring countries, does this fact increase the probability of a civil war in a country? Does having some other members of the same ethnic group in the neighboring country motivate an ethnic group to rebel against the government? My objective in this paper is to expand the theoretical knowledge of the relationship between ethnic dispersion and civil war onset. This paper also intends to extend the empirical knowledge of the field by applying a different approach to civil war onset and ethnic dispersion and take a close look at some certain conditions between two neighboring states that can increase the importance of dispersion.

This study differs from previous research by studying each neighbor independently rather than using the sum or average of a variable for all the neighboring countries and regarding them as a single entity and as the same. Previous research that studied transnational dimension of ethnic groups had either focused on the ethnic groups,[1] not on states, or focused on the number of ethnic groups dispersed, not the percentage of dispersion, and did not adopt a dyadic approach.[2] I argue that the basic fallacy of the previous research was consideration of all the neighbors as the same. This might mislead the findings because a neighbor country that shares an ethnic community and another country that does not possess any member of that ethnic group should not be regarded as the same. Members of an ethnic group will compare themselves with the country in which their kindred group is inhabited more than other neighboring countries. What I pay attention here is territorial concentration, and diaspora members of an ethnic group are not my interest for this study. An ethnic group in an African country can have some members in Europe but this fact does not have the same effect as members of that ethnic group living in a neighboring country.

My argument is that students of ethnic conflicts should study also the conditions between two neighboring countries where the members of an ethnic group live. Put differently, if an ethnic group is dispersed in two neighboring countries we should analyze the political, economic and social variables of the two countries.

Theories of Civil War Onset

All civil wars are not same, primarily because of the root causes. Scholars who study civil war onset can be categorized into four groups according to their views on the fundamental reason behind civil wars. First group of scholars believe that what lies beneath internal conflicts is the security dilemma.

Scholars in the second category believe that civil wars occur because suppressed people in a society have some *grievances*, and these people can decide that armed rebellion is the only option for them to redress their grievances. According to the third category of scholars, what motivates the leaders to start an armed rebellion is the presence of abundant exploitable resources of the country such as oil, timber, or diamond. Because of the leaders' *greed* to possess or control these resources, they start an armed rebellion against their governments and mobilize people. A possible fourth category can be the *instrumentalist* approach. For this view, grievances are used by leaders to mobilize people around them and to recruit militias to fight with them against the government. We cannot exactly know the real motives behind the elites' decision to rebel because it can be ethnonationalism, material gains or even political rent. In spite of security dilemma and instrumentalist approaches, a huge scholarly debate continues between *greed* school and *grievance* school and the debate is not settled among the scholars because both arguments have some validity and can explain a good number of civil wars.

It is argued that security dilemma occurs in a country when the conditions among groups in a country are similar to the conditions among states.[3] The security dilemma, in the purest sense, means that attempts by one party to increase its security reduce the security of the others. In a failed state, the government cannot protect its citizens' security and probably internal and external threats can threaten the well being of the citizens. Such conditions create a self-help situation where each group mobilizes to protect itself like states in the international system. Under what conditions we can observe the security dilemma in a country? For Byman, there are six necessary conditions for the security dilemma to function: 1) ancient hatreds 2) a group's concern about its status being degraded 3) same ethnic group lives in multiple states 4) deliberate distortions by group leaders 5) weak or biased central government and 6) incomplete information.[4]

The security dilemma can be more prevalent in what is called *halfway house states*.[5] These are the states that fall in between ideal states with no ethnic problems because the state provides security, meets the needs of the people and also monopolizes the use of violence and collapsed states where anarchy exists and groups must protect their own security by shoring up their cohesiveness. In halfway house states ethnic competition will be higher because each group will want to capture the state power. In such an environment, each group will believe that if it fails to capture the state power, another group will capture and weaken other rival groups.[6]

Snyder and Jervis describe the security dilemma as a spectrum where at the one end security is the overriding objective of all of the protagonists.[7] At the opposite end of the spectrum some conflicts may be driven entirely by the desire of one or both parties to exploit or dominate the other for reasons that would not diminish even if security were not in jeopardy. They also note that in some cases the security concerns can be a vicious circle where security fears mix with predatory intentions. While ordinary citizens participate in the rebellion with security reasons, the elites can have hegemonic desires to mobilize people or just to dominate the other group in the country. In their words:

> *...the security dilemma often tends to turn even security-driven actors into predators, defined as actors who prefer exploiting others to cooperating with them, even when short-run security threats are small. Thus, the security dilemma gives rise to predators, and predation intensifies the security dilemma.*

In this chicken-egg situation ethnic groups in a country will adopt two basic strategies. The ethnic group with hegemonic ambitions will pursue offense-dominant strategies while other ethnic group(s) will pursue defense-dominant strategies.[8] Although all ethnic groups are concerned and act in order to guarantee their security, they differ in the ways of ensuring survival.

Tedd Gurr argues that *relative deprivation* is the necessary precondition for violent civil conflict.[9] He defines relative deprivation as "actors' perception of discrepancy between their *value expectations* and their environment's apparent *value capabilities*". For Lake and Rothchild ethnic conflicts are not caused directly by inter-group differences, ancient hatreds and centuries-old feuds.[10] They argue that the major cause behind ethnic conflicts is often collective fears of the future. Group members, especially when they do not constitute the dominant group, begin to be deprived of some rights due to their ethnic affiliation, to fear for their safety or assimilation. In the long term, the group members might predict that they will be worse off than today and start mobilizing to protect their interest. We can expect interdependence in divided societies where the minority group depends on the dominant group that has access to and power to control and allocate resources. Such interdependence will increase grievances and make the group identity and solidarity among its members stronger.[11] Such relative deprivation mostly occurs along ethnic or religious lines. The deprived group can resort to violence in order to redress their grievances. Although grievance/deprivation theory can explain many civil wars, it has only limited success in modeling ethnic conflicts in Africa. This is also the biggest problem this approach faces. They cannot provide a satisfactory explanation to account for why some people with grievances rebel against their government, while some others do not.

Some scholars, who can be put into the third category, have focused on the role of greed in internal conflict and attempted to explain the role of rents from conflict through activities such as pillaging and looting as a way of promoting violence and mobilizing people.[12] According to this approach, countries that have an abundance of lootable resources are more likely to have civil wars because the lootable resource functions as a way of livelihood and motivates especially the poor to participate in rebellions. For example, during the 1990s, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) earned around $700 million per year from drugs and kidnapping, and it has grown to employ around 12,000 people.[13] In short, the idea that non-material values underpin ethnic identity and that these may act as strong motivators is widely accepted.

According to the scholars in the fourth category, identities and grievances are tools for leaders to mobilize the masses. Deprivation language can dominate the discourse of the rebellion and can result in misperception of the causes in the world. In other words, the deprivation discourse is touching and effective and it can mask the real factors behind the rebellion such as greed and material benefits out of rebellion.[14] If the rhetoric of non-material values, sentiments or deprivation joins with the material benefits, then rational choice analysis can provide a more reasonable explanation.[15] According to this approach, in order to reach their personal goals, elites use citizens' material needs and their deprivation and grievances as a tool to mobilize and motivate them to join the rebellion and fight.

There are very few ethnically homogenous countries in the international system. The significant majority of the countries are multi-ethnic. Although most of the European countries became a nation-state in a process sparked by the Westphalia treaty, they still have ethnic minorities. According to the estimates, there are over 5000 ethnic minorities in the world.[16] One of the most important legacies of the colonialism is the artificial boundaries, especially in Africa where many ethnic groups were divided among two or more countries. As Ellingsen argues, "if the identity fails to coincide with territorial borders, as frequently happens, a conflict may arise within a nation-state".[17]

In many African countries contemporary borders were drawn by colonial powers and geographic conditions, not by social and cultural conditions. The borders were drawn in such a way that ethnic groups that were under the same rule during colonialism were divided between two countries in the post-colonial era because rivers became the borders.[18] It is also because of post-colonial border demarcation problems that Africa and the Middle East witness more civil conflict than other continents.[19] This is not to say that poverty, scarce resources, poor leadership and other factors are less important in civil conflict but to underpin another factor that is overlooked.

For many years, research on civil war onset has tended to focus on domestic factors and regarded the countries as entities independent of factors related to the external actors. Scholars have attributed the causes of civil wars to the issues inside a country's borders. It is no doubt that the

greatest debate is along the greed/grievance line. *Relative deprivation* is the necessary precondition for violent civil conflict.[20]

The main mistake of the scholars in the greed – grievance debate has been the lack of more comprehensive explanations. Some supporters of greed argument totally ignored non-material dimensions of the conflict. It is obvious that financial viability of rebel groups an important determinant of the outcome of a civil conflict but communal grievances should not be considered only as a sentiment existing for the exploitation of the leaders pursuing material benefits.[21] These two major dimensions of the civil conflict should be taken into consideration together. Moreover, state dimension of the civil conflict should not be ignored as well because criminal states pave the way for the exclusionary policies that lie at the heart of civil conflicts.[22]

It is worth mentioning here that although relative deprivation is regarded as the major cause of the civil wars, it is somewhat difficult to measure and test it empirically. Some scholars used variables to measure it by looking at the groups if they have economic, social and cultural grievances in the country, and if they are not granted political rights.[23] Such variables can function as a good indicator of deprivation but they do not measure another significant motive behind the rebellion, which is fear. Therefore, material reasons and the discourse of greed are more likely to dominate the explanations of civil conflict because, unlike fear, they are tangible and concrete facts of life.

Causes of Civil War

Political regime type has been one of the most robust variables of quantitative studies on civil conflict. It is argued that civil wars are less likely in democracies, which provide greater opportunities for pursuing political objectives by peaceful means. Civil wars should also be less likely in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes because the rebellion can be suppressed by the state brutally in the absence of rule of law. Existing literature suggests that anocratic regimes that are neither democracy nor authoritarian are more prone to civil wars because neither they can allow the people to participate in the politics nor they can suppress the masses.[24] Previous research also shows that weak political institutions can increase the probability of a civil conflict in the country.

However, democratic or autocratic nature of the state is not the only factor. A polity's institutional structure and whether the regime is institutionally consistent matters too. Institutionally consistent regimes are expected to be more stable. We can also expect that at lower levels of political institutionalization, which is mostly seen in new democracies or non-democracies, income inequality also has a strong impact on political violence.[25] This is simply because of the absence of the rule of law and the dominance of an ethnic group in state institutions. This argument can be linked to relative deprivation in the sense that failed states or weak governments will be unable to provide basic services to all citizens. In some cases, the ruling class will favor its own ethnic or religious groups and this will result in the alienation and deprivation. The grievance-causing government will lose its legitimacy in the eyes of some groups and eventually they will attempt to redress the grievances by means other political participation or protest.

Moreover, existing literature emphasizes several variables on whose importance previous research agrees. For example, it is suggested that countries with low socioeconomic development and naturally low income are more prone to civil conflict.[26] In an influential study, Fearon and Laitin showed that geographical features of a country matters and argued that mountainous terrain is significantly related to higher rates of civil war.[27] They also found that new states and politically instable states are more likely to have civil conflict.

However, the previous research could not reach a consensus on the impact of ethnic fractionalization on civil conflict onset. While some scholars[28] argued that ethnic fractionalization is statistically insignificant, Ellingsen[29] and Sambanis[30] found that it is a significant factor. De Soysa argues that ethnicity is related to conflict when society is moderately homogenous and a highly plural society faces less risk.[31]

A growing literature has begun to focus on the transnational dimensions of ethnic conflicts and attempted to explain civil conflict onset by factors beyond a state's boundaries. Research began to consider the states in which a civil war occurs as a part of the international system and takes into account the possible factors at regional or international level. For example, Carment argued that involvement of super powers, major powers or other industrialized states tend to exacerbate ethnic conflicts.[32] Elsewhere, he argued that scholars should study ethnic conflicts in the international context and not regard as an epiphenomenon.[33]

As the international order changes, the attitudes of the states change as well. In the twenty-first century due to the technological advancements in communication, people all over the world are aware of political developments in a country thousands of miles away. As Gurr notes, the resurgence of regional separatist movements in the western nations is linked to the success of colonial independence movements.[34]

The changing environment in international system decreases the likelihood of states to resort to violence to suppress groups in their countries.[35] The same factor also increased the likelihood of involvement of external actors in civil wars. IGO involvement in secessionist conflicts has been limited. Rather than IGOs, it is NGOs that have come to the support of secessionists.[36] These NGOs have mainly been human rights and relief organizations and ad hoc groups supporting specific causes. This changing international relations game makes ethnic groups use these institutions to gain international support for their struggle and they become less likely to resort to violence in the early stages in order not to lose the international support. From this point of view, having kindred group beyond the border encourages the ethnic group in a country to continue the struggle and it becomes more likely to resort violence if the nonviolent means fail because they will count on the kindred group.

Research has found that ethnoterritorial dominance is the most likely type of relationship (including rivalries between minorities and states) that can lead to violent conflict in the 1990-94 period.[37] When the smaller ethnic group in the conflict dyad made up more than 70 percent of the population of its home region, violent conflict was substantially more likely. Another research has examined seventy-two ethnic based civil wars since 1945 and found that 88 per cent involved groups that were regionally concentrated compared with only 6 percent that were dispersed. Research also shows that neighborhood is an important factor in conflict onset.[38] These findings indicate that there are theoretical reasons to expect that ethnic dispersion is an important factor when it is between two neighboring countries.

Ethnic Dispersion and Civil War Onset

Several empirical studies emphasized the relevance of ethnic dispersion to the onset of wars, showed the majority of the interstate wars were among neighbors and found that contiguity is an important source of conflict that leads to militarized confrontation or to war.[39] According to Vasquez's findings, 93% of the contiguous pairs have at least one military confrontation and 64% have at least one war. According to him, from 1648 to 1814, 91% (53 out of 58) of the major wars involved neighbors.[40]

Previous research has two shortcomings, the first one is theoretical and the other is methodological. First, lack of adequate theoretical explanation stands out in the literature. Scholars have failed to demonstrate why dispersed ethnic groups should matter when we talk about interstate or intrastate conflict. Literature does not shed much light whether dispersion of members of an ethnic group matters and, if it does, whether the existence of some other conditions increase the significance of dispersion. Second, methodology used by scholars to measure dispersion was problematic. For example, when measuring and testing variables, the focus is usually on the number of dispersed ethnic groups, and research is not confined to neighboring countries alone. Influence of a kindred group on its relatives in neighboring country will be much more than on the relatives living in a country that is far away. Another methodological error of the previous research is the consideration of all neighboring countries as the same. Research should use directed dyadic approach because ethnic dispersion can

matter only when relations and conditions between two states are at critical level. In other words, relations between two neighboring states are the major factor that makes ethnic dispersion a more important cause of ethnic conflict onset.

Gleditsch focused partly on transnational ethnic linkages of civil conflict.[41] He argues that the more ethnic groups that span international boundaries, the higher the potential for external support for insurgencies and the higher the risk that a country will experience a civil war. His empirical results show that ethnic dispersion is statistically significant. He suggested that an increase in the number of ethnic groups that span national borders will increase the probability of civil war. However, he did not measure the dispersion of ethnic groups between two neighboring countries. He relied on the number of ethnic groups in a state that also exist in adjacent countries. Yet, he did not adequately explain why this should matter and why it is important to study, although he spent a paragraph in his study, it was not a clear argument.

Relative deprivation has received much attention from scholars in explaining civil conflicts. Dudley and Miller agree that communal grievances are important factors behind the group rebellion and state response to such grievances are crucial in shaping the course and outcomes of minority conflicts.[42] They found that relative deprivation is important in accounting for the occurrence of group rebellion. However, they analyzed relative deprivation at four dimensions: political autonomy demands, economic grievances, social and cultural grievances, and political rights. They studied the ethnic groups in a country and failed to look at the transnational dimension of the issue and did not include the state of these dimensions in the neighboring countries. This paper differs from previous research also by considering other factors with relative deprivation and assuming that ethnic groups make comparison between state of their life and the kindred group living in the neighboring country.

I argue that dispersion of an ethnic groups between two neighboring countries increases the probability of a rebellion by the ethnic group members in a state because they start a rebellion also often by counting on their diplomatic, political and sometimes military support. Some scholars also argued that ethnic dispersion can motivate the members of the ethnic group in another country if that ethnic group is a disadvantaged group and its kindred are a favored or dominant group in a neighboring state.[43] In this study I attempt to find out the conditions that make ethnic dispersion an important factor increasing probability of civil war onset.

If the two states are rivals, provision of sanctuary can be a motivating force for the possible rebels but it can also be used by the neighbor state to weaken its neighbor. When ethnic ties combine with political competition it causes political leaders of states to support irredentist movements.[44] Given an ethnic group dispersed in two neighboring countries, a neighbor country can support an ethnic rebellion in a neighboring country also because of irredentist intentions. Since it will be more costly for the neighbor to weaken its rival neighboring country to gain the desired concessions by declaring war, it may prefer to use the ethnic unrest. Doing this will be less costly and the neighbor will not be in a position that threatens the international security by declaring war over its neighbor. Meanwhile, dealing with ethnic unrest or ethnic rebellion supported by the neighboring state(s) will also weaken that state both economically and politically. A neighbor state may wish and work for severe economic crisis, demographic pressures on minority groups, deterioration of infrastructure and public services in the neighboring country; all these increase the deprivation of ethnic groups.[45] Therefore, ethnic dispersion can play a more important role if the rivalry is high between the neighbors.

Ethnic dispersion also matters because ethnic kindred group in the neighboring countries can accommodate the possible rebels as a safe haven when they rebel against their government. An ethnic group can start a rebellion against their government if they are motivated by their kinsmen beyond the border. Provision of sanctuary for rebels by a neighbor country is very likely and can make a civil war more costly for the state.[46] This is mostly due to the fact that states are sovereign only within their territory, while rebels can be mobile and are not restricted by territory. Therefore, ethnic dispersion can increase the willingness of the members of an ethnic group to rebel because they will know that in case they cannot resist the government forces they can withdraw to the other side of the border and get some more time to organize since the government forces cannot pass the border.

We can also approach the situation by using the security dilemma approach. It is argued that security dilemma occurs within a country when the conditions among groups in a country are similar to the conditions among states.[47] In a failed state the government cannot protect its citizens' security and probably internal and external threats can threaten the well being of the citizens. Such conditions create a self-help situation where each group mobilizes to protect itself like states in the international system. In such a case an ethnic group may prefer to mobilize in order to protect the interests of the group by counting on the kindred in the neighboring country. The security dilemma in this case is the factor that creates appropriate environment for a group to rebel. As discussed above, one of the reasons behind the group rebellion is the fear for safety and for the maintenance of status quo. In a chaotic or anarchic environment members of an ethnic group may start a rebellion by counting on the kindred group in neighbor state before they are subjected to any abuse or ill-treatment by other groups/government.

A state's behavior is influenced by ethnic dispersion as well and it can increase the probability of a civil war in a country mainly in two ways. First, the neighbor state can support, motivate and encourage the ethnic group to rebel against their government. Since the ethnic group will receive this signal and know that once they start the rebellion they will have foreign support. This was the case in Kurdish rebellion against Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq in 1975 and Albanian support to the rebellion of Kosovars in Serbia. Such signals by the external actors (in this case a neighboring country) can motivate the ethnic groups to rebel but sometimes the signals can be misinterpreted as well. Second, the neighbor can support, motivate and encourage its neighbor state to start a military operation to suppress an ethnic group, which is very likely to start a separatist movement or a rebellion against the government. Such a move can spark a new civil conflict or state can intensify its armed struggle against the rebel forces. A neighbor can do that if an ethnic group is dispersed between these two states because if the separatist movement achieves its goal of separation, then the same group can claim for land and protection of their kinsmen in the neighbor state. This was the case in Ethiopian interventions in Somali and its support to the transitional government in Somali in the past. Ethiopia was concerned that if the rebels succeed to overthrow the government they can claim for the Ogaden region in Ethiopia where ethnic Somalis live. Behavior of the neighboring state will be influenced by ethnic dispersion and impact the outcome of the civil conflict. Above discussion lends support to the arguments in the civil conflict literature which posit that what determines the emergence of irredentist or secessionist movements is mainly related to the domestic politics but the major determinants of its success are the factors beyond the state.[48]

Ethnic dispersion can increase the probability of civil war onset for several reasons. First, relative deprivation plays an important role in conflict onset because the members of an ethnic group in a country will compare their living standards with their kinsmen in the neighboring state. People question their rulers' performance in providing better living standards. They expect to have the living standards that they are entitled to have or what their kinsmen in the neighboring country have. If a two-year old child dies because of a preventable disease such as malaria or plague in a state and while in the neighboring country healthcare facilities are much better and such cases are very rare, then the parents of that child will question and possibly be desperate of their government because of its poor performance. Technological innovations and recent developments make it easier for people to know about the people and their living standards even in the other parts of the world.

An ongoing conflict in a neighboring country is also an important factor and can motivate a group in a state to rebel for three major reasons. First, some studies show that a civil war in a country can spill over to other neighbor countries.[49] For example, one of the reasons that facilitated the emergence of a conflict in Darfur was the fact that the long-term civil war in the Southern Sudan made arms and other military equipments available and easily accessible.[50] Second, a state's economy is negatively affected by a conflict in its neighbor. This will create insecure and unstable environment for regional as well as international trade and incoming refugees will bring extra financial burden for the state. Consequently this will weaken the state's economic position and state will be less able to provide better services to its people. This can result in progressive deprivation. Gurr argues that citizens who anticipate losses, especially reversal of an improving trend, experience progressive deprivation that disposes them to support movements those defend and promote the group's present

status and attainments.[51] Third, if a conflict is in progress in a neighbor country it will be easier to obtain fired arms. Those who experience relative or progressive deprivation can be motivated by this opportunity of easy access to arms to resort violent methods to defend and/or promote their rights and/or interests.

Finally, the whole argument in this paper begins with the idea of ethnic dispersion. I expect to find an inverted U-shape relationship between civil conflict onset and ethnic dispersion. In other words, I expect to find low probability of conflict onset at the lower and higher ends of the dispersion and higher probability at the moderate levels of dispersion. Low dispersion cannot increase the probability of conflict onset because it means that either group is not large enough to provide support. If they are not large enough then their support to the kindred group can cause more harm than the benefit provided by the group. Low probability of conflict onset can be expected when dispersion is higher because it means that a certain ethnic group is divided between the two countries or the members of the same ethnic group rule the countries. Therefore,

Hypothesis 1: *Probability of conflict onset is low when ethnic dispersion is very low or very high, and it should be high when ethnic dispersion is at moderate level.*

Building upon the above discussion on the relevance of ethnic dispersion and other conditions to civil conflict onset hypotheses will be put forward. As broadly explained above, living standards in a country matter for the dispersed members of an ethnic group. If the members in a country have worse living standards than the neighboring country where the kindred group lives, in other words relative deprivation exists, ethnic dispersion's significance will be increased. If ethnic groups in a country are insecure, they will either seek to join a state where their ethnic group is more secure.[52] Therefore,

Hypothesis 2: *The wider the gap between the living standards of two neighboring countries, the more likely that ethnic group in the country with lower standards will rebel.*

States usually embody the interests and political agenda of a dominant group in the country and views of some groups are ignored.[53] The basic fear behind it is the fear that once a group gains more rights, it will demand more say in the governance of the state and probably dominate the country. Naturally, this will not be welcomed by the elites or the dominant ethnic group who is favored by the state. Ward and Gleditsch show that as contemporary polities become more democratic they reduce their overall chances of being involved in war by approximately half.[54] They also find that rocky or especially rapid transitions or reversals are associated with an increase in the risk of being involved in warfare.

The degree to which a state prevents disadvantaged groups from expressing their interest and participating in the selection of leaders has often been hypothesized to influence the propensity of groups to rebel.[55] If the ethnic kindred of that group live in the neighboring state(s), the level of fear and suspicion rises. The leaders of a state may discriminate a certain ethnic group only on the grounds that their kinsmen live in the neighbor country. This will result in repression and lower level of democracy in the state. If the neighbor has higher level of democracy, if the people are freer, then the ethnic group in the state is more likely to be motivated to rebel. If there is no mechanism or channel available for the members of the ethnic group in the oppressive state to articulate, define and protect their interests and rights, while their kindred group has them, such inequality will be a motivating factor. Therefore,

> Hypothesis 3:   *The wider the gap between the levels of democracy of two neighboring countries, the more likely that ethnic group in less democratic country will rebel.*

Another factor can be an economic motivation for the ethnic group. If the relatives in the neighboring country are economically much better-off and wealthier than their kinsmen in the neighboring state, they will be motivated to rebel against the government because their strife can be supported by the members of the ethnic group in the neighboring country. This factor can play a more important role in situations where members of an ethnic group anticipate progressive or decremental deprivation. Gurr argues that people who have lost ground relative to what they had in the past are said to experience decremental deprivation and are motivated to seek redress for what was lost.[56] Those who anticipate losses, especially reversal of an improving trend, are said to experience progressive deprivation that disposes them to support movements that defend and promote the group's present status and attainments. One may also wonder if ethnic dispersion increases the probability of civil war onset if the members of that ethnic group in the adjacent country are wealthier, or they are almost equally wealthy. Therefore,

> Hypothesis 4:   *The wider the gap between the levels of wealth in two neighboring countries, the more likely that ethnic group in poorer country will rebel.*

After having laid out the hypotheses and before moving on to the empirical analysis part, it should be remembered that all the discussion argues that dispersion of one or more ethnic groups between two neighboring countries matter and increase the probability of civil conflict onset. The paper intends to find the extent to which dispersion matters. Additionally, the paper aims to find conditions that make dispersion more significant factor, namely, living standards, democracy and wealth.

Research Design and Data

Analysis in this research is a time-series cross-section of country-year observations from 1975 to 2001. Data set created for this research is from 1975 through 2001. The research does not cover civil conflicts after 2001 or earlier because data are not available prior to 1975. In order to avoid any negative impact of enormous amount of missing data on the results, I confined the research to a shorter period. However, if the tests are run including pre-1975 observations, the findings do not change at all. In order to be more precise about the time period of the study, I present the results for 1975 - 2001 period. Regression results will be evaluated to test the hypotheses. In the dataset for this research I include only those countries that are divided by land. Those countries that neighbor one another by sea or river will be excluded. My unit of analysis is a dyad year. The research design uses a directed dyadic approach so that I can measure and test the same variables for both neighbors.

       The dependent variable in this study is civil war onset, which is a dichotomous variable and is coded 1 for years in which a civil war onset is experienced in and 0 otherwise. I obtained the data for this variable from Uppsala/PRIO armed conflict data set version 4-2007. With regard to the main independent variable, ethnic dispersion, I used data provided by the CIA World Factbook to create a dispersion score for each dyad. I prepared a state-ethnicity table in which I showed the percentage and names of the ethnic group(s) in each country. I multiplied the probability of a person to be from a certain ethnic group in a country by the probability of a person's probability of being from the same ethnic group in the neighboring country. If there is more than one dispersed ethnic group, I did each calculation for every ethnic group and used the sum of the overall probability. In other words,

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$$dispersion = Pr\,(A_i).Pr(A_j) + Pr(B_i).Pr(B_j)+ ......$$

Where A and B are two different but dispersed ethnic groups and i and j are two neighboring countries that host the dispersed ethnic groups of A and B.

Table 1: Summary statistics for the dependent and independent variables

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Civil War Onset	.0407	.197	0	1
Ethnic Dispersion	.0873	.2100	0	.9801
HDI Score	.6296	.188	.245	.954
HDI Score Difference	-11	.115	-.414	.414
Polity Difference	0	24.081	-98	98
GDP Per Capita Difference	- 80.85	3833.64	-30,330	24,531
Years of Contiguity	42.808	41.144	1	186

One may have some doubt about the reliability of such a score of ethnic dispersion. I acknowledge the fact that ethnic composition of countries change over time. However, I used this method basically for three reasons. First, ethnic composition of countries does not change very fast and it happens over decades. Since the research covers less than three decades any possible change in ethnic composition of countries will not affect the results significantly. Second, ethnic composition of countries does not change unless the country is stroke by a catastrophe or genocide. Time frame covered in this research contains only two genocides; Bosnia and Rwanda cases. Third and final reason is that CIA World Factbook is the only source that one can get information about ethnic composition of countries.

To measure relative deprivation I use the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) scores. HDI is first introduced in 1990 and published annually by the United Nations. However, data is available for the years 1975, 1980 and 1985 as well. It covers more than 150 UN member countries on average. It is a comparative measure of life expectancy, literacy, education, and standards of living for countries worldwide. It is a standard means of measuring well-being. The index ranges from 0 being the lowest to 1 being the highest.

Income inequality is used in the literature as an indicator of the relative deprivation and used GDP per capita as an indicator.[57] I did not prefer to use income inequality because it measures relative deprivation in terms of economic well-being and ignores other aspects of life. Besides, GDP per capita reflects the economic dimension of the life only. HDI scores, on the contrary, evaluate the quality of life in general. However, as can be seen in figure-1, there is no linear relationship between GDP per capita and HDI scores. This is to say that if a country's GDP per capita is higher than its neighbor, it does not mean that it has better life quality. A country can have better life standards (higher HDI scores) than wealthier countries (whose GDP per capita is higher).
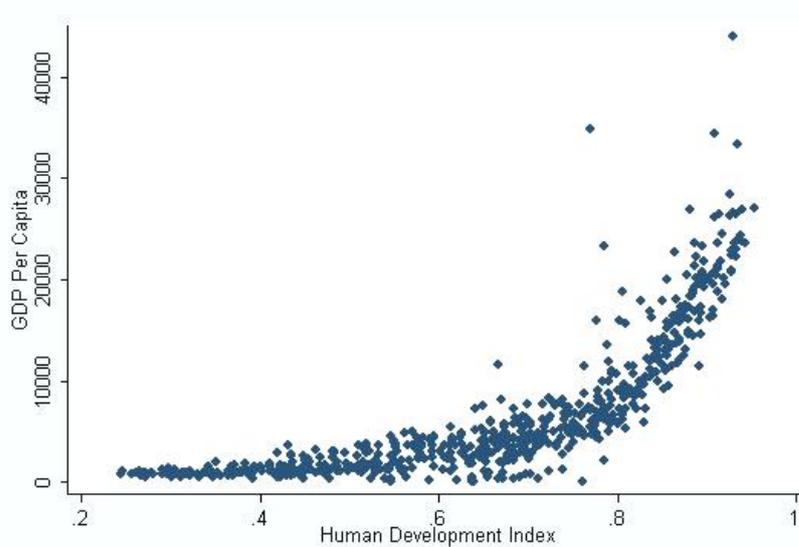
Figure 1

To measure the democracy levels of the states, I used Polity IV project's 21 point scale ranging from most autocratic (-10) to the most democratic (+10) regimes. To measure the final independent variable, I used GDP per capita as an indicator of wealth. Data for this variable were drawn from Penn World Table.

I controlled for the number of years that two countries have been neighbor and I used Correlates of War Project Direct Contiguity Data.[58] I also controlled for the capabilities of the countries. By using data from national material capabilities data set of the Correlates of War project, I created a ratio for each dyad.

Data Analysis

Table 2 presents results of the regression analysis for two time period. Second column covers the post-Cold War era to test if the collapse of bipolar international system has any impact on the role of ethnic dispersion. I begin by analyzing the primary independent variable, dispersion of ethnic groups. According to Table 2, ethnic dispersion is not statistically significant. However, in either column dispersion is negatively correlated while dispersion squared is positively correlated. This confirms the expected curve impact of ethnic dispersion. More information regarding ethnic dispersion is provided in Table 3 where regression results for the Middle East and Africa are provided. The reason behind choosing these two regions is obvious: colonial legacy and artificial boundaries. The first and second columns in Table 3 show that ethnic dispersion is statistically significant. Especially dispersion squared is significant at .001 in the second column.

How should we interpret the different findings in the Middle East region? Arabs live in several countries in the Middle East and some countries are inhabited by non-Arabs. In some countries where ethnically Arabs inhabit the two countries are very unlikely to have civil war due to the existence of Arab population beyond the boundary. However, other countries of the region inhabited by non-Arab populations can explain this difference. As mentioned at the beginning, the Kurds live in four different Middle Eastern countries (two of them are non-Arab, Turkey and Iran) and they can cause civil wars in their countries. In short, although the Table 1 does not lend support for the first hypothesis, we can argue that it is significant at least for the Middle East.

The third and fourth columns of Table 3 also show that the artificial boundaries argument for Africa cannot be supported by statistical findings. How can we explain this contradiction between the conventional wisdom and the findings of this study? I acknowledge the inadequacy of information regarding the ethnic composition of countries in Africa and whether we like or not this fact will

influence any cross-national study on Africa. This is simply because of the plethora of ethnic groups in the continent and lack of information about the most of them. CIA Factbook does not mention several ethnic groups while talking about ethnic composition of African countries, and instead gathers several ethnic groups under 'African' title. Therefore, even if some ethnic groups disperse between two countries, we cannot be informed of, at least currently.

Table 2: Results of regression analysis, 1975 - 2001

	1975-2001	**1990-2001**
Dispersion	-.059 (.068)	-.094 (.100)
Dispersion Squared	.034 (.095)	.068 (.133)
HDI Score Difference	-.082 (.051)	-.174[**] (.076)
Polity Difference	.005 (.002)	.001[***] (.003)
GDP Per Capita Difference	3.50[**] (1.39)	5.43[***] (1.93)
Dyad Capability Ratio	.006 (.015)	.014 (.023)
Years of Contiguity	-.0001 (.0009)[*]	-.0003 (.0001)
Constant	.040 (.015)	.058 (.012)
R Squared	0.0091	0.031
N	1406	843

Coefficients are provided. Stand errors are in parentheses.
 * $p \leq .10$, ** $p \leq .05$, *** $p \leq .01$ (two-tailed tests)

The second hypothesis was about the role of relative deprivation between two neighboring countries. Overall results do lend support the hypothesis. It is statistically significant only in the post-Cold War era. The results show a negative correlation between HDI score difference and civil war onset in both overall and post-Cold War periods. This is to say that the lower the HDI score of the country than its neighbor, the higher probability for that country to have a civil war. Both Table 2 and Table 3 show that regardless of the region, HDI difference is negatively correlated with the dependent variable, and this supports our hypothesis.

Our third hypothesis argues that difference of level of democracy between two neighbors is related to the probability of civil war onset. This hypothesis is not confirmed and has found no support in 1975-2001 period in a particular region or worldwide. However, it is statistically significant in the second column of Table 2. Its significance again can be explained by the post-Cold War democratization wave because before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union, several ex-members

of the Soviet bloc adopted democracy. In a couple of years some neighboring countries were democracies while the neighbors are still non-democracies. And conflicts of the early 1990s occurred in such states.

Table 3: Results of regression analysis for regions

	Middle East		Africa	
	1975-2001	**1990-2001**	**1975-2001**	**1990-2001**
Dispersion	1.23*** (.415)	1.342*** (.416)	.020 (.317)	.265 (.517)
Dispersion Squared	- 1.44*** (.445)	- 1.531*** (.441)	.036 (.401)	-.256 (.617)
HDI Score Difference	-.233 (.249)	- .306 (.279)	-.156 (.090)	-.305* (.159)
Polity Difference	-.001 (.0009)	.002 (.001)	.0001 (.0004)	.0001 (.0006)
GDP Per Capita Difference	.0001*** (6.35)	.0002*** (7.57)	4.61 (6.18)	.0001 (.0001)
Dyad Capability Ratio	.178* (.104)	.142 (.112)	.015 (.31)	.058 (.058)
Years of Contiguity	-.0006 (.0007)	-.0007 (.0007)	.001 (.001)	.003 (.002)
Constant	.045 (.056)	.061 (.059)	.016 (.029)	.126 (.080)
R Squared	0.23	0.42	0.017	0.029
N	101	71	389	213

Coefficients are provided. Stand errors are in parentheses.
 * $p \leq .10$, ** $p \leq .05$, *** $p \leq .01$ (two-tailed tests)

Our final hypothesis argues that GDP per capita difference between two neighboring countries should be related to the civil war onset because if ethnic groups are dispersed the members in the richer country can provide material and financial support to their kindred groups in the neighboring and poorer country. GDP per capita difference is statistically significant in both Table 2 and Table 3. Its positive and high correlation mean that the richer the neighboring country, the more likely for it to have civil war. This is exactly the opposite of the expectation of the third hypothesis. I expected to find a relative correlation so that the poorer state would be more likely to have civil war because the richer kindred groups in the neighboring country would provide assistance. is positively correlated. In Table 3 is also statistically significant in 1975-2001 and 1990-2001 periods, .004 and .008 respectively and the coefficient is very low and positive.

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Conclusion

In this research empirical analysis showed that dispersion of ethnic groups does not increase the probability of having civil war. However, I found that it matters in the Middle East in particular. The results confirm that the relationship between ethnic dispersion and probability of civil war onset has an inverted shape where lower dispersion is related to lower probability of civil conflict onset and higher dispersion is related to higher probability. However, this does not look like exactly an inverted U-shape, nor a linear relationship. Although it is not statistically significant except for the Middle East, dispersion and squared variable of this indicator have always opposite signs for their coefficients. The results also show that the end of the Cold War has a great impact because some of the variables either became significant and if their significance increased in the model that covers 1990-2001 periods.

Relative deprivation argument is supported by the research. Although it was not statistically significant in 1975-2001 period, negative correlation lends some support to my hypothesis. I also found that the 'artificial boundaries' and 'colonial legacy' arguments for Africa cannot be supported by statistical evidence. Third and fourth columns of Table 3 showed that these arguments do not receive support. The other main independent variable of the study used to measure relative deprivation, HDI scores, is not supported. Interestingly, this research also found an unexpected result between GDP per capita difference between two neighboring countries and the probability of civil war onset.

The result may vary after more accurate data about ethnic groups' dispersion between states and quality of life and living standards. Further research should use different sources of information and attempt to use different statistical methodology to measure the variables. Introduction of more accurate GDP per capita data can also influence the results.

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