

Societal Heterogeneity, Weak States and Internal Conflict: Evaluating One Avenue to Territorial Peace and Instability

Karen Rasler

Professor of Political Science, Indiana University, USA

William R. Thompson

Distinguished Professor and Donald A. Rogers Professor of Political Science, Indiana University, USA

Abstract

As an exploratory study, we test a modified version of Ben Miller's regional theory of interstate and intrastate conflict. The argument is that regions with weak states and high internal and external societal incongruities are more likely to be war prone. This relationship is conditioned by the level of economic development and democratization. The findings support Miller's thesis for intrastate conflict at both the national and regional level from 1960-2009. These results pave the way for future work on interstate conflict and territorial disputes.

Keywords

regions, intrastate conflict, societal heterogeneity, ethnic conflict, transborder ethnic kinship, legitimacy, state capacity

Studying conflict resembles unpacking a variety of peace explanations that reside at multiple levels of analysis. We are attracted to various peace explanations that revolve around single variables. The democratic peace is predicated on a particular kind of regime type. The more newly emerged territorial peace is associated with spatial stability, especially around state borders. The capitalist peace depends on advanced economic development. But when you press these explanations, multiple possible pathways to the pacific outcomes emerge. Is the democratic peace due to institutional constraints or decision-maker socialization? Is the territorial peace based on older political systems having had the time to work out their boundary disputes or are some neighborhoods of states rougher because they encompass more states with nearby external threats? If it's the latter, why do some neighborhoods have more disputatious states in proximity? Is the capitalist peace based on industrialized weaponry that inhibits conflict with other states that also have industrialized weaponry, engaged in extensive trade that raises the costs of interrupted exchange networks, or modernized attitudes that discourage reliance on coercive solutions? In short, our explanations tend to lead to more puzzles which, if nothing else, keep conflict analysts in business.

We do not have a handy solution for the problem of nested explanations for peace and war. But, we are interested in adding another theoretical and empirical approach to these explanations. In this examination, we focus on societal heterogeneity which tends to be linked to autocracy, lower levels of development, majority-minority frictions, and intra- and inter-state conflict. Benjamin Miller's incongruity theory provides our theoretical and empirical focus. We ask if the theory's emphasis on internal incongruity (or heterogeneity), external incongruity (kindred groups in adjacent states), and weak states is a good starting place for inquiries into the phenomena of nested conflict. More precisely, we are interested in establishing whether there is empirical evidence for the linkages in Miller's theory. How well do incongruities and weak states explain interstate conflict?

One reason for beginning at this point is that a focus on territorial instability requires some consideration of agency. It seems unlikely that the causal mechanisms for pacifying state boundaries and borders are singular. Yet a conceivably prominent source of boundary conflicts are the many mismatches between nation and state. States that contain multiple groups that identify themselves as nations, especially if they are associated with states that are too weak to constrain domestic conflict or provide much in the way of state services and find themselves adjacent to states with overlapping identifications are unlikely to be very pacific. Peripheral groups near the border will seek to secede. Ethnic groups separated by state boundaries will aid each other, providing weapons and safe havens. Adjacent states will pursue irredentist claims to re-unify scattered kindred people.

As noted, it is unlikely that domestic group conflict is the sole avenue to territorial pacification. But it could be the major source in a broad arc of contemporary instability stretching from at least South Asia through the Middle East to sub-Saharan Africa—the regions in which nation-state misalignments are concentrated. Assessing whether or the extent to which this is the case will require several stages of examination. Our initial focus is on the relationship of structures of societal heterogeneity (internal and external) and weak states to internal conflict. How strongly are they intertwined? If we find that heterogeneity and weakness provide a strong foundation for explaining internal conflict, the linkages among these variables and territorial conflict can be examined in subsequent analyses.

One problem in this effort is that data for regime type and development are more readily available than are data for societal incongruities and state weakness. This is a problem that we think can be overcome but it leads to solutions that restrict the evidence to varying time periods. For instance, we can tackle state weakness best if the analysis is confined to the post-1995 period due to the availability of recent World Bank data. To move beyond that limited interval, however, means that compromises need to be made in what and how we can measure state weakness. Yet, if we find that empirical outcomes are similar despite different combinations of appropriate measures over different time periods, we can make strong theoretical claims. Fortunately, that is exactly what we find.

We believe that societal incongruities and state weakness offer a theoretically and empirically valid starting point for an analysis of intra-state conflict. In spite of the multiple indicators that we have applied to the problem, the empirical outcomes are basically similar. We maintain that our findings for an incongruity-weak state internal peace relationship also extends to other forms of conflict. Miller's theory appears to be one possible starting place but it will need elaboration and integration with other interpretations to fully disentangle the complexities of nested discord.

Social Homogeneity and Internal Peace

There is some possibility, we think, that all of the types of “peace” (democratic, territorial, and capitalist) are linked in some fashion, both in terms of domestic and interstate behavior. Regimes, for instance, do not spring forth in political-economic and societal vacuums. We know that some level of economic development and societal homogeneity facilitates the emergence and maintenance of democratic regimes (Lipset, 1959; Przeworski, Cheibub, Alvarez, & Limongi, 1990). There are also arguments that regime types are byproducts of their threat

environments (again, both internally and externally) in the sense that high threat environments do not preclude democratization but they do tend to work against processes aimed at wider political participation (see, among others, Thompson, 1986; Rasler & Thompson, 2004; Gibler, 2007).

Not surprisingly, arguments have been developed that claim that the regime type-conflict linkage is spurious or, at the very least, greatly exaggerated (among others, Rasler & Thompson, 2005). Since the democratic peace works much better among developed states than it does when less developed states are involved, it is not much of a stretch to suggest that economic development may be more important (Mousseau, Hegre & Oneal, 2003). What is sometimes called a “capitalist peace” can be used to encompass several distinctly different interpretations of why greater development leads to less conflict (Mousseau, 2003, 2012; Gartzke, 2007; McDonald, 2009; Rosecrance, 2010; Schneider & Gleditsch, 2010; Weede, 2011). Since it has been shown that settled borders are closely linked with peaceful interaction, it is also possible to assert that it is a territorial peace that is critical (Vasquez, 1993; Gibler, 2007, 2012; Rasler & Thompson, 2011; Owsiak, 2012). More developed states seem less likely to devote attention and resources to boundary disputes—perhaps because they have had time to negotiate their resolution or because affluence depreciates the value of territory. Low threat environments mean small probabilities of territorial disputes which, in turn, means interstate conflict is less likely. As in the case of greater economic development, low threat environments are also conducive to democratization processes. Thus, we have a complicated set of nested causal effects in which it is difficult to isolate what comes first. Is it regime type, economic development, or threat environment which is most likely to precede changes in the other two and/or to be most responsible for greater and lesser amounts of conflict?

Where do we begin to tackle these nested explanations? Societal homogeneity appears to be related to democratization, development, and quite probably, boundary and territorial disputes. Benjamin Miller (2007) argues persuasively that what is most important to understanding conflict is societal homogeneity. Heterogeneous societies for him, in combination with other variables, are the root cause of both interstate and intrastate conflict. More homogenous societies are more peaceful at home and abroad. Less homogenous societies engage in irredentism externally and civil wars internally over which domestic groups will rule. Democracy is one of his intervening variables. Yet, we also know that homogeneity facilitates democratization. The relationship between economic development and societal heterogeneity seems complex but there is a sense that more developed societies tend to blur their ethnic differences given time and continuous economic growth. Alternatively, it may be that modern economic growth, for a variety of

reasons, was more likely to emerge in relatively homogenous societies. Places that are more heterogeneous, then, have experienced problems in catching up in terms of economic development and democratization.

Miller's argument is all about high and low threat environments but he also adds that territorial disputes should not be the principal focus of interstate conflict. He maintains that we also need to know why people have grievances about who controls which slices of territory. Therefore, heterogeneity is the societal context in which domestic groups make political claims for territorial expansion or defense. Thus, Miller's argument holds some potential for integrating our disparate approaches while also adding a theoretical twist that has yet to be explored empirically.

We do not know how far the Miller argument will take us. Nonetheless, we do think it is worth investigating. The theory is complex and the data demands are challenging. We proceed initially with simple operationalizations and gradually improve them. Throughout this effort, we are exploring the extent to which Miller's theory has empirical support.

Miller's Theory of Regional War and Peace

Describing Miller's theory of regional war and peace should be a straight forward proposition but it is not since it offers multiple interpretations. From our vantage point, we will combine our interpretation of Miller's theory with some critical issues that will lead us to modify it, which could lead us to misspecify it. We take this risk with the presumption that we can always correct them in future empirical iterations (in much the same vein that we expect to improve our operationalizations over time).

Miller's theory is first of all a theory with region as the unit of analysis. Regions that possess certain attributes tend to be more conflictual within and between states than are regions that lack these attributes. There are three main attributes and two intervening variables. The first variable is the state-to-nation imbalance. Regions with many states encompassing multiple nations are imbalanced or incongruent. If most states in a region possess a singular national identification, the region is said to be balanced or congruent in an internal sense.

A second variable refers to external balance/congruence. Greater imbalance occurs in regions in which the groups found in one state are also resident in neighboring states. Miller prefers to merge these first two variables into one state-to-nation attribute. The greater the overall state-to-nation imbalance or incongruence, the greater is the conflict. The types of conflict that are most prevalent in

highly incongruent regions are wars of unification (one state attempts to expand in order to combine scattered groups in different states) or wars of secession (minority groups attempt to break away from a state in which the majority discriminates against the minority).

But we find this merger of internal and external incongruence to be awkward. A region might encompass many states with strong majorities and multiple minorities. In fact, if all states in a region have the same strong majority and similar multiple minorities, it could be viewed just as incongruent as a region with one state with a majority that is linked to minorities in a number of adjacent states (the Somali variant). Yet these two hypothetical regions, presumably, would be much different in terms of conflict potential. The first region might be very pacific while the second one would have a greater potential for being turbulent. Our solution is to treat internal and external congruence as two separate variables. A region is congruent in the internal sense if most states in the region have predominant majorities. A region is congruent in the external sense if groups in one state are not also found in adjacent states.

The central issue seems to be whether groups are satisfied with their national identities. We assume that states lacking a predominant majority are more likely to contain dissatisfied groups than is the case in states in which one group is predominant.¹ We also assume that there will be more dissatisfaction in regions in which similar groups are found in multiple but proximate states. Groups in one state will be unhappy if groups with which they identify are mistreated in a neighboring state. Alternatively, dissident groups are likely to find assistance from kindred groups residing in adjacent states.

The third variable is state strength. International relations scholars tend to think of state strength as an externally-oriented calculation based on which states possess more troops, tanks, and planes. It is a question of which state has the capability to project its power into other states. But it seems clear that Miller is talking about the internally-oriented version of state strength.² He states:

The strength of states is determined by the institutions and resources available to them for governing the polity. Weak states lack effective institutions and resources to implement their policies and fulfill key state functions. Most notably, they lack effective control over the means of violence in their terri-

1 The cost of this assumption is that we give up the connection to wars of unification for this examination.

2 It is not always clear, however, that Miller himself maintains this distinction throughout his discussion of how the theory works.

tory and an effective law-enforcement systems. Weak states thus face difficulties maintaining law and order and providing security in their territory. This hobbles the economic activity in these states, making it difficult for them to raise sufficient revenues, to collect taxes, and maintain an effective bureaucracy and provide vital, or even rudimentary, services to the population... (Miller, 2007, p. 54).

This is the conventional comparative politics version of state strength. Strong states monopolize violence, collect taxes, and provide services to their populations. Weak states lack the resources to instigate interstate trouble but they also lack the ability to maintain order or prevent secession attempts in their own territory. They also cannot police very well their dissidents who either reside in another country and/or receive aid across their borders. Miller's basic point is that weak states aggravate regional incongruence. Such states cannot control nationalistic or secessionist propensities very well. If there are predominantly weaker states in an incongruent region, the greater the potential there is for conflict. Yet, it is not clear whether this sub-argument is compatible with the initial focus on wars of unification and secession. It would seem to apply better to the latter than the former.

Table 1, taken from Miller (2007) underscores this problem. It is not clear whether we can regard states in the South American southern cone, North Korea, Pakistan, Syria, or Iraq as strong states. Or, perhaps, they are weak states with relatively strong militaries at least for their neighborhoods. On the other hand, North Korea, Pakistan, Syria, and Iraq have all been unsuccessful in their revisionist efforts at least so far. This does not differentiate them from genuinely strong states such as Germany and Japan prior to World War II but at least Germany and Japan were initially successful in their revisionist efforts. One way to reconcile this problem is to insert a category in between strong and weak in which the Southern Cone and many of the Asian/Middle Eastern examples might fit better. The argument could be that states of medium strength in incongruent circumstances are more likely to find themselves in protracted conflicts that are difficult to resolve while stronger states are tempted to take on the odds against them and seek revisionism on a grander scale.

Internal incongruence, external incongruence and weak states, therefore, are Miller's trinity for explaining which regions are likely to be most conflictual. Two other variables are introduced as intervening variables. According to Miller, liberal compatibility can overcome incongruence. If most of the states in a region are liberal in politics and economics, they will become status quo-

Table 1. Miller's Examples of Combinations of Congruence and State Strength

State strength	Congruent	Incongruent
Strong states	Status quo states	Revisionist states
	Europe	Asia/Middle East
	Oceania	(China-Taiwan, N. Korean-S. Korea,
	North America	India-Pakistan on Kashmir, Syria,
	South America (Southern Cone)	pre-2003 Iraq
Weak states	Frontier states	Incoherent/Failed states
	(some likelihood of evolution	sub-Saharan Africa
	toward	
	state-to-nation balance)	
	South America (northern)	
	Central America	

Source: Based on Miller (2007, 58). "Frontier states" are described as states that are not especially fragmented but are too weak to fully control their territory or borders (Miller, 2007, 59). The other categories seem self-explanatory.

oriented.³ But the adoption of liberal institutions and values seems to be more likely if states are nationally congruent. If national congruence precedes liberal institutions, it is not clear whether liberalness truly overrides regional incongruence or merely makes regional peace all the more likely (in conjunction with strong states and congruence). There is also the problem that liberal compatibility encompasses a number of processes (economic interdependence, elections, human rights) that are usually considered as pacifiers in their own right—with or without the other parts of the liberal package (Russett & Oneal, 2001; Mansfield & Pollins, 2003). Finally, there is the problem of dealing with situations that are characterized by parts of the liberal package. Does it matter, for instance, if most of the states in a region are democratic but not economically interdependent or vice versa? This is the type of intervening variable which will require considerable experimentation and probably some unpacking in order to see just how it works empirically.

The other intervening variable is not as complex as liberal compatibility but it is also less than straight forward in its application. One of the aspects of the Miller theory that is so appealing is its combination of multiple levels: system, region, state, and society. Not surprisingly, this combination also complicates research designs. The systemic variable is the nature of great power involvement in the region which can encourage/discourage more or less conflict. Four types of great power involvement are envisioned. At one end of the continuum, a single great power

³ Political liberalism refers to states that have free/fair elections and separate powers, respect human rights, and maintain the rule of law. Economic liberalism encompasses free markets, free trade, and economic interdependence.

Table 2. Great Power Involvement and Regional Outcomes

GP Involvement	Less congruent	More congruent
Hegemony/ cooperation	Cold peace Balkans, 1815-1878 (cooperation) Balkans, 1939-1991 (hegemony)	Warm peace Western Europe during the Cold War (hegemony)
Competition/ disengagement	Cold war punctuated by hot wars Balkans, 1878-1939 (competition) Middle East during Cold War (competition) Africa post-Cold War (disengagement)	Warm peace Western Europe post-Cold War (partial US disengagement)

Source: based on Miller (2007, 65). Note that Miller 's categories for rating regional outcomes is based on a probability of the use of force continuum, ranging from hot war to cold war to cold peace to warm peace (Miller, 2007, 12).

can dominate (hegemony). At the other end of the same continuum, no great powers may be involved (disengagement). In between these end points, two or more great powers can choose to cooperate or compete with one another.

Essentially, great power involvement can work at the margins of regional realities and make things better or worse. They cannot eliminate regional incongruence. Table 2 gives some examples. Great powers can help suppress conflict if they are hegemonic or cooperative. Competition and disengagement tends to exacerbate conflict. It is not clear, however, just how strong this effect is other than that we are told that it cannot eliminate the effect of regional incongruence. Moreover, great power involvement effects can apparently be partial. Miller cites the Egyptian-Israeli dyad as a cold peace example in the hegemony-less congruent cell. The cold peace of this rivalry has persisted throughout a fair amount of conflict in the system—some of which is traceable to the nature of great power involvement which can be either coercive or benign. That record would suggest that great power hegemony does not guarantee regional cold peace but can facilitate dyadic cold peace. Similarly, one wonders whether the western European warm peace is due to U.S. hegemony, the Cold War, or the effects of World War II? Most likely, it has been some combination of the three, in conjunction with some aspects of the liberal compatibility variable.

These considerations make the effects of great power involvement a bit nebulous. That does not mean that we should ignore this part of the argument. The idea that great powers can facilitate or exacerbate conflict in regions makes too much sense to ignore. Yet it is also an added on effect that might be most easily treated as something of an auxiliary consideration. Once we have assessed the

relative contribution of congruence, state strength and liberal compatibility, can the basic nature of great power involvement add much to our understanding of regional conflict?

Research Design

Accordingly, our initial examination of the Miller regional war and peace theory focuses primarily on the two congruence variables, state strength, and liberal compatibility. This paper represents our third attempt to operationalize Miller's theory. We began with simple indicators with limited applicability over time due to the non-availability of some of the data prior to 1996. While the early efforts were successful in providing validation for the theory's core arguments, our subsequent efforts have been characterized by a search for indicators less restricted by time and more sophisticated in conceptualization. We generate main indicators for each of the variables in the following way:

Internal or national congruence: Initially, the relative size of the largest single group in each state was taken as an indicator of the degree of societal homogeneity. In most cases, we looked at the distribution of ethnic groups. In some cases, however, other identities claim priority. Tribes in sub-Saharan Africa and religious sects in the Middle East constitute most of the exceptions.⁴ The principal source used was Central Intelligence Agency (2012).

The largest single group approach has several weaknesses. Some readers will be bothered by changing the focus from country to country depending on which type of categorization seems most problematic in specific political systems. But this is a question of focusing on congruity as opposed to a single form of societal discrimination. Still, looking only at the size of the largest group does not tell us much about the size of the smaller groups or how they are treated. A configuration in which there is a large majority and a number of small minorities is apt to be structurally different from a society which also has a large majority and one significant minority of respectable size.

An alternative and oft-used measure is the Taylor and Hudson (1972) ELF (ethno-linguistic fractionalization) index. This indicator, also used initially, tells us something about the relative size of different societal groups but also does not tell us much about who is unhappy with whom. ELF is also based on 1960 informa-

⁴ We have discussed this issue with Benjamin Miller and he agreed that it was compatible with his original intent.

tion and has a checkered track record of analysts finding the full gamut of possible relationships with civil war behavior. Nonetheless, ELF was a positive and significant predictor of civil war in one of our earlier examinations.

To get away from the apolitical nature of our two earlier indicators, the measure used in this examination is the relative size of politically excluded ethnic groups based on 1946-2009 country level data taken from the Ethnic Power Relations dataset (Cederman, Wimmer & Min, 2010). While the dataset is designed for group level analyses, we take the logged size of the largest politically excluded group for each state as our proxy for incongruity that matters politically. Politically excluded groups are judged to be blocked in their access to political power.

External congruence: For a simple index of external congruence, we initially asked whether each country's largest minority was also resident in an adjacent country. This procedure generates a binary indicator (present or absent) and does not discriminate between situations in which minorities in one country are also minorities or majorities in other adjacent states. Nor does it tell us whether the largest minority is discriminated against politically. The principal source used was information found in Central Intelligence Agency (2012). Needless to say, creating this indicator requires some interpretation on a country-by-country basis. The variable was coded 1 for years in which a minority resides in some neighboring country and 0 otherwise for each state and corresponds to our first internal congruence measure.

Fortunately, there is a better indicator that corresponds to the relative size of the largest politically excluded ethnic group. The indicator of external congruence used in this examination is the relative size of the trans-border ethnic kin (TEK) group and is taken from the Cederman et al. (2013) TEK dataset. This variable is based on the relative demographic weight of a TEK group compared to the incumbent's population across the border where its primary ethnic kin reside. According to Cederman et al (2013, pp. 396-397), the larger the TEK group, the more likely that it will intervene on behalf of internal opposition groups against the incumbent regime. In addition, this group is likely to encourage the political radicalization of internal opposition group(s) against the incumbent regime.⁵ But Cederman et al (2013) argue, and find, that the relationship is actually curvilinear. Smaller TEK groups tend to be more cautious while larger TEK groups, especially if they are in power in their own countries tend to demonstrate restraint in assisting kindred groups in other countries. It is TEK groups that are roughly the same

5 We thank Idean Salyehan and his research team for their generosity in providing the TEK dataset for this analysis.

size as the size of the dominant group in the adjacent state that are more likely to escalate conflict (Cederman et al., 2103; Cederman, Giraden, & Gleditsch, 2009; Van Evera, 1994; Van Houton, 1998). For those countries that had more than one TEK group residing across a border area, we selected the largest TEK group for the analysis and employ its size as the external incongruence indicator.

State strength: We assume that it is the comparative politics version of state strength (and not the international relations version of armed forces size) that is most germane to Miller's theory. Accordingly, we first applied a new operationalization of the concept that focuses on Holsti's (1996) definition of state strength (Hendrix, 2011). Three major components are emphasized (Thompson, forthcoming). Extraction capability is captured by the size of central government revenues as a share of gross domestic product. Violence monopoly is measured by a World Bank political stability and violence composite index. While this indicator is referred to as a "political stability" measurement, it actually focuses on the individual sense of security and the level of conflict in the society that might destabilize government. Legitimacy is operationalized by four World Bank indexes on rule of law, government effectiveness, government accountability, and corruption described in table 3.⁶ Since the modeling effort treats conflict as the dependent variable, we were forced to drop the violence monopoly measurement. Both aggregate (combining extraction and legitimacy) and the two components separately were found to be related negatively to civil war. But use of the World Bank data restricts the temporal scope to 1996-2010. To avoid being limited in this fashion, several different measures related to state strength are employed in this paper.

Relative Political Capacity: As a measure of state extractive strength, we use the Relative Political Capacity measure found in the dataset (Arbetman-Rabinowitz et. al., 2013; Arbetman-Rabinowitz & Johnson, 2007; Kugler & Tammen, 2012). This variable measures extraction as the ability of governments to appropriate or extract portions of their national output. Operationally, it is actual extraction divided by expected extraction based on the size and type of economy. Some states tend to under-perform (collect fewer tax revenues than expected), especially weak states, or over-perform. Relative political capacity is an interval level variable and replaces our earlier reliance on state revenues as a proportion of gross domestic product.

State Legitimacy: We utilize two new indicators for state legitimacy. One indicator, suggested earlier by Belkin and Schofer (2003, p. 607), is derived from combining two measures from the Polity IV dataset: durability (the number of

⁶ States are first rank ordered on each index and then the four rank orders are averaged for the full legitimacy score.

Table 3. Four Subjective Composite Indicators of Legitimacy

Indicator	Description
Voice and Accountability	Perceptions of the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media
Government Effectiveness	Perceptions of the quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government's commitment to such policies
Rule of Law	Perceptions of the extent to which agents have confidence in and abide by the rule of society, and in particular the quality of contract enforcement, property rights, the police, and the courts as well as the likelihood of crime and violence
Control of Corruption	Perceptions of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as "capture" of the state by elites and private interests

Source: <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/resources.htm>.

years since the most recent regime change) and parcomp (the extent to which political competition occurs) dimensions. Basically, this measure captures the degree to which contests for political office and political parties are allowed. We standardized each measure and then added them together to form a single variable. We find that this measure is strongly correlated with our earlier state legitimacy measure using World Bank governance data ($r=.75$).

A second measure focuses less on how the political system functions and more on how it was structured. Englebert (2000, p. 127) develops a binary historical continuity index that separates states that have been colonized, experienced diminished sovereignty at independence, lacked human settlements prior to colonization, virtually eliminated or assimilated the indigenous population during colonization, or created post-independence institutions that deviated considerably from pre-existing institutions. States that lack continuity are considered to be less legitimate than those that can claim continuity over time. Years in which states are identified as "non-legitimate" by Englebert's measure are coded 1 and zero otherwise. Since we have two legitimacy measures, the Polity-based indicator is referred to as (political system) "legitimacy" and the Englebert index is labelled (state) "non-legitimacy."

Liberal Compatibility: For this analysis, we use, as before, the most common measure, the Polity 21 point scale taken from the Polity IV Project: Political Regime Characteristics and Transitions, 1800-2012 at www.systemicpeace.org/polity/polity4.htm. Given two measures of legitimacy, however, it remains unclear how useful this indicator will prove to be. In earlier analyses, it tended to lack sta-

tistical significance.

Conflict: For this analysis, we focus exclusively on internal warfare as captured by the PRIO/Uppsala data (Gleditsch et al, 2002; Themner & Wallersteen, 2012). This is a binary variable in that the years in which a country's government is involved in the use of armed force against an internal opposition group, resulting in 25 deaths or more, is coded 1 and 0 otherwise.

Control Variables: Only three control variables are considered. We choose to control for development (GDP per capita) and total population size since either one might be expected to influence the amount of conflict experienced. Economic development, all things considered, should dampen conflictual tendencies. Larger populations, other things held constant, might be expected to be more conflict-oriented than smaller states, especially in the Global South. A third control is the now standard attempt to control for autocorrelation in conflict with a peace years count measure. We anticipate some possible problems using these control measures, especially with GDP per capita, in the context of relative political capacity which is based on calculations employing GDP.

Units of Analysis: We use a cross-sectional, pooled time series design with country-year as the unit of analysis at the national level for the first stage of analysis. Correlations are developed for the regional level of analysis in a second stage that directly address Miller's theoretical emphasis on the regional unit of analysis. Variables that perform as expected at the national level are averaged across the relevant years at the national level and then aggregated for a regional mean which are used to create regional rank orders by variable. The rank orders are then aggregated to create composite scores reflecting Miller's theoretical argument.⁷ The rank order of the composite score is then compared to the rank order established by the incidence of conflict which has also been aggregated by region.

Regions: We began with a 21 region menu originally developed to group interstate rivalries (Thompson & Dreyer, 2011). The idea is that conventional groupings often overlook sub-regions within regions. Examples include dividing the Middle East and North Africa into Maghreb, Mashriq, and Gulf or sub-Saharan Africa into East, West, Southern, and Central Africa. Since some readers might be dubious about our straying from the usual approach, the 21 groups have been collapsed into 11 regions that will appear to adhere to more conventional regional groupings. Our expectation was that it should not matter too much exactly how fine-tuned the regions are specified and our findings support this assumption. However, we restrict the reported outcome to 11 relatively conventional

⁷ In some cases, we need to reverse the rank orders to make the aggregation meaningful.

regions: North America, South America, Caribbean and Central America, Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, South Pacific, South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the Former Soviet Socialist Republic states.

Expectations: Our expectations are that intra-state conflict is most probable in states and regions characterized by internal and external incongruence and state weakness. There is more to Miller's argument but these three variables are at the heart of it. We can examine briefly his argument that liberal polities reduce conflict propensities. We choose not to pursue at this time the more complicated question of great power involvement, Miller's fifth variable. We evade this issue in part because of its complexity but also because it seems more pertinent to inter-state conflict and our immediate analysis focuses exclusively on domestic conflict.

Findings

The aim of our analysis is to assess Miller's thesis that some regions are more war prone than others. The main reasons for variations in regional conflict are the "state-to-nation balance" or the degree to which ethnic/national and political boundaries in a region are congruent and the extent of state strength. Miller argues that regions with "weak and incongruent" states are more likely to experience civil wars. Regions with predominantly more states that have weak governing structures coupled with internal and external incongruence are likely to have more internal conflict than regions with states that have strong national structures and internal and external congruence. Internal congruence occurs when ethnic majorities exist as opposed to incongruence where states have multiple ethnic and sub-nationalist communities. States experience external incongruence when ethnic minority communities exist in neighboring states. External congruent states have few or no ethnic minority communities nearby.

In order to pursue a preliminary analysis of Miller's thesis, we pursue two approaches. First, we conduct an investigation linking intra-state conflict to the measures of internal and external congruence between 1960 and 2009. Initially, we measure the linkages between these variables at the individual nation-state level. The full sample of states varies between 5,949 and 6,320 observations depending on the data availability of the independent variables in the sample. In a second approach, we aggregate these variables at the regional level (11 regions) and look at their associations. Since the number of observations is small, our analysis will center on measures of association and scatterplots.

Nation-State Level

A logit regression model with robust standard errors is used to estimate the relationships between intra-state conflict and the independent variables, including controls for GDP/per capita, democracy, and total population. A count variable for the number of peace years in addition to three splines is included in the model to control for temporal dependence. The results in table 4 below show that five models were estimated. The first three models in table 4 are estimated with different variations associated with the state legitimacy (the polity-based index) and relative political capacity. Meanwhile, models 4 and 5 are estimated without the presence of the count variable for peace years, which is highly collinear with state legitimacy and rela-

Table 4. Logistic Regression of Intra-State Conflict Years, 1960-2009

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.
% Excl. Ethnic Pop	1.016**	1.104**	1.059**	1.769**	1.828**
	0.196	0.225	0.208	0.138	0.129
TEK Size	1.227**	1.165**	1.215**	1.150**	1.905**
	0.573	0.647	0.592	0.443	0.389
TEK Size Squared	-1.164**	-1.182**	-1.163**	-1.121**	-2.362**
	.574	.650	.590	.446	.394
Non Legit. State	.186*	.263**	.195**	.596**	.301**
	.108	.122	.113	.089	.074
State Legitimacy	—	.006	—	-.005**	—
	—	.002	—	.001	—
Rel. Pol. Capacity	—	—	.274	—	-.208**
	—	—	.115	—	.072
LGDPC, lagged	-.147**	-.131**	-.117**	-.002	—
	.039	.046	.043	.030	—
LPOP, lagged	.329**	.337**	.349**	.537**	—
	.037	.039	.037	.028	—
Peace Years	-1.539**	-1.553**	-1.522**	—	—
	.084	.092	—	—	—
Constant	-1.751	-2.129	-2.405**	-7.497**	-2.167**
	.529	.591	.554	.401	.069
N	6320	5988	5949	5988	6187
Log Likelihood	-1386.55	-1189.91	-1311.03	-2188.61	-2716.77
Chi-Square	1399.94**	1241.81**	1332.66**	591.11**	351.72**
Pseudo R-square	0.52	0.53	0.52	0.14	0.06

Note: Robust standard errors are reported below coefficients. **p<=.05; *p<=.10 Sample sizes vary due to data availability on GDP and relative political capacity variables. Three spline coefficients are not reported for Models 1-3.

tive political capacity. Finally, we dropped the GDP and population variables from Model 5 since the measure for the relative capacity variable incorporates GDP and the size of the economy is related to population size.

The overall results show that the internal incongruence measure for size of the excluded ethnic population is positively and statistically associated with intrastate conflict years from 1960-2009. The external incongruence measure for the size of the relative trans-border ethnic kin (TEK) relative to the incumbent's population is also strongly associated with intra-state conflict. We included a squared value of TEK, because Cederman et al. (2013) found that at the upper range of TEK size, a negative relationship with intra-state conflict emerged. In other words, there is an inverted U-shaped curvilinear relationship between TEK size and intrastate conflict. Our state-level findings replicate the ones they found at the group level. Meanwhile, non-legitimate states (Englebert's measure) have a strong and robust connection to intrastate conflict. The Polity-based measure of state legitimacy has a statistically significant negative association with conflict (see Model 4) when the count variable for peace years is not in the equation. Meanwhile, the relative political capacity variable also has a strong negative association with intrastate conflict (see Model 5) in the absence of the count variable.

Table 5 provides the post-estimation simulation results derived from two models estimated in Table 4. In the upper half of the table, the expected value of intrastate conflict increases by 86% when the size of the excluded ethnic population is held at its highest value while the remaining variables are held at their

Table 5. Post-Estimation Simulation Results: Expected Values for Intrastate Conflict, 1960-2009

	Variable	Expected Y for Max. Value of X	95% Confidence Interval
Model 1:	% Logged Excluded Ethnic Pop.	.060	.021, .101
Intrastate Conflict	% Size of TEK	.100	.052, .167
	% Size of TEK, Squared	.027	.124, .052
	Non-legitimate State	.111	.083, .146
Model 4	State Legitimacy: (Polity IV Measure)	.047	.026, .076
	Baseline Model 1 (Conflict)	E(Y)= .052	.045, .061
	Baseline Model 4 (Conflict)	E(Y)= .113	.104, .123

Notes:

- a) Simulations are based on Models 1 and 4 in Table 4 and are generated by CLARIFY: Software for Interpreting and Presenting Statistical Results, Version 2.0 by Tomz, King and Wittenberg (2003). Post-estimation estimates are provided for key independent variables that are statistically significant.
- b) Expected values of Y for Models 1 and 4 are based on the maximum value of X while the remaining X variables are held at their mean.

means. The expected value of conflict increases by 52% when the size of the TEK population is held at its highest value while the remaining independent variables are held constant at their means. Another key variable of interest is non-legitimacy which is associated with a 47% increase in intrastate conflict. The polity measure for state legitimacy has a stronger association with a 140% decrease in internal conflict, but again, the count year for peace years and the splines are not included in this model. Finally, the relative political capacity variable is associated with a 28% decline in intrastate conflict. Overall, we think these findings suggest that the linkages between incongruity and political exclusion are the most important of the Miller core trinity (the two types of incongruity and state strength). Yet they leave little doubt that the theory has been supported strongly by the empirical outcome.

Regional Level Analysis

The variables in this section are calculated for eleven fairly standard regions: North America, South America, Caribbean and Central America, Europe (West, East and the Balkan states), sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa or MENA, South Pacific, South Asia (including Afghanistan), Southeast Asia, and the former Soviet Socialist Republics. Table 6 displays the inter-correlations among the various measures for internal and external incongruence. With the exception of relative political capacity, the correlations among the remaining variables are fairly high, ranging from .38 to .65. The two variables dealing with legitimacy are correlated at .55, while excluded population regional ranks are correlated at .44 with relative TEK size. The highest correlation is .65 between regional ranks on state non-legitimacy and excluded population size. Relative political capacity is negatively correlated with the other independent ranked variables.

Table 7 displays the correlations between the internal and external incongruence ranked variables and the ranked variable for intra-state conflict. Starting with the internal incongruence measure, table 7 shows that regions with states that have higher percentage values of an excluded ethnic population are positively correlated

Table 6. Inter-correlations among Ranked Regional Variables for Internal & External Congruence and Legitimacy Measures

	Excluded Ethnic Pop. Size	Relative TEK Size	State Non-legitimacy (Englebert)
Excluded Ethnic Pop Size	1.00		
Relative TEK Size	.44	1.00	
State Non-Legitimacy	.65	.38	1.00
State Legitimacy (Polity)	.51	.50	.55

N=11 regions.

Table 7. Correlations for Ranked Variables by Region, 1960-2009^a

	Intra-State Conflict
Internal Incongruence Measure:	
Excluded Population Size	.57
External Incongruence Measure:	
TEK Population Size	.34
Legitimacy Measures:	
State Non-legitimacy (Englebert)	.65
State Legitimacy (Polity-based)	-.49
Total Rank ^b (Excluded Pop Size + TEK Pop Size + Non-legit + Legit)	.63

N=11.

^a Each region yielded a mean value for the variables; then, regions (based on their mean) were rank ordered from highest (value of 1.0) to lowest for each variable (11.0) to produce rank-ordered variables.

^b The rank order has been reversed for State Legitimacy in order to include it in the total rank.

Regions: North America, South America, Caribbean & Central America, Europe, Africa, MENA, South Pacific, South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, Former Soviet Socialist Republic states.

($r=.65$) with regions that have higher intra-state conflict. Meanwhile, the external incongruence measure for TEK shows that it is moderately correlated with intra-state conflict ($r=.33$). Regions higher ranked on non-state legitimacy are strongly positively associated ($r=.63$) with higher ranked regions on intra-state conflict. As expected, the polity-based measure for state legitimacy shares a negative ($r=-.47$) association with internal conflict. Finally, when we combine the total ranks on the independent variables, the correlation with intra-state conflict is high ($r=.70$).

In sum, both statistical approaches to assessing Miller's argument provide support for his main argument. Regions that are characterized by internal and external incongruence and less legitimate states are more likely to be those that have greater intra-state conflict involvement.

Conclusion

We are all looking for ways to make our explanations of inter- and intra-state conflict more parsimonious and efficient. Benjamin Miller has developed a theory which is quite promising. The core propositions work well at both the national and regional levels. Incongruent and weak states are closely linked to intrastate conflict in our examination. We think we are off to a good start but it is only a start. Corroboration has been provided for the Miller theory. At the same time, the focus has been sharpened by shifting from incongruity in general to incongruity

leading to political exclusion of ethnic groups. A parallel change has been made to the interpretation of external incongruity in the form of replacing a linear relationship with a curvilinear one. We may have also offered a bridge to a larger canvas for analysts working on regionalized civil war.

What we need to do now is to extend the incongruity/political exclusion/state strength combination in two, quite probably overlapping directions. One path is to pursue the link to interstate warfare and great power involvement already present in the Miller theory. A second path is to explore the linkages from incongruity/political exclusion/state strength to boundary disputes and earlier findings that stress the conflict escalatory significance of another combination of variables—proximate rivals involved in spatial disputes (Rasler & Thompson, 2006; Colaresi, Rasler & Thompson, 2007). Both of these targets reflect an interest in the underpinnings of the asserted territorial peace. It is not enough to say that most international conflict is about territorial disputes and, therefore, resolving the disputes will end international conflict. We need to take the next step and ask why there are territorial disputes in the first place. No doubt, the sources of contention about and around state borders are multiple but we think we have specified one of the most likely suspect culprits. Of course, whether ethnicized exclusionary politics are actually linked systematically to territorial disputes remains to be investigated. At some point, though, we will also need to pursue a third path that links incongruities and state strength to democratization, economic growth, and threat environments (see, for example, Gibler & Tir, 2010, 2014). All in all, the conflict-peace dynamics are nested within domestic, regional and international systems and manifest themselves in multiple processes. Unraveling their complexities will not be a simple matter.

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