

Is self-determination contagious?

A spatial analysis of the spread of self-determination claims

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Abstract: Self-determination claims have abounded in the international system since the end of WWII. But these claims have not emerged everywhere. About half of the states in the international system face some challenge related to self-determination today. Why do some states face these demands while others do not? We argue that ethno-national self-determination is one of many identities that individuals can find affinity with. While an international norm related to self-determination has developed globally, its use as a basis for political claims has diffused regionally. Diffusion of self-determination occurs through observation of others using self-determination as a basis of organization, generating a sense of legitimacy, sensitivity to related grievance, and perceptions of tangible benefits related to self-determination identification. We test this empirically on global data on self-determination claims from 1960 to 2005 and find evidence of spatial diffusion, suggesting that self-determination is, to some extent, contagious.

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The 2014 referendum on Scottish independence from the United Kingdom was the culmination of a decades long increase in support for Scottish autonomy. More recently, the Catalanian regional parliament has voted in favor of a formal declaration of secession from Spain.¹ Violent conflicts over ethno-nationalist self-determination (SD) have become among the most common type of conflict in the international system.² These referenda and violent conflicts emerge out of a larger set of disputes in which groups of people within a state (typically defined by an ethno-nationalist distinction) make demands for greater local control, which can include, but is not limited to, secessionist aspirations. These challenges occur through conventional politics and non-violent campaigns, as well as violent conflict.³ Disputes over self-determination (both violent and non-violent) plague a large number of countries. Since 1960, seventy-six states have faced challenges for greater self-determination. Yet, just over half of the states in the international system have avoided these challenges. Why have some states faced self-determination challenges while others do not?

Existing work addressing self-determination tends to focus on the attributes of groups or states engaged in secessionist struggle, or on the global legality of self-determination.⁴ Some types of states are more prone to have groups mobilize to make collective demands against them, such as

¹ “Catalonia independence: Parliament votes to start secession from Spain” Accessed 11/09/15:
<https://www.rt.com/news/321276-catalonia-parliament-back-independence/>

² As a percent of wars, disputes over territory within states have overtaken international war, wars based on ideology, and civil wars fought over control of the state.

³ See Cunningham (2013) on the determinants of groups’ use of non-violent campaign, civil war or conventional politics.

⁴ Cassese 1979; Franck 1992.

non-democratic states,⁵ federal states,⁶ or ethnically diverse states.⁷ A number of characteristics of sub-state groups have also been associated with the emergence of rebellion including relatively poor groups,⁸ relatively wealthy groups,⁹ those with access to resources,¹⁰ geographically concentrated groups,¹¹ and those on the periphery.¹² While these works identify situations with a high probability of mobilization against the state, they do not speak to the pattern of the spread of claims over self-determination. Nor do many of these works directly address why claims over self-determination emerge in some places but not others, tending to focus instead on extreme challenges, whether violent or secessionist or both.

In this article, we propose an explanation focused on the spread of identification and mobilization related to national self-determination as a transnational process. That is, the rise of contemporary demands for self-determination is, in some sense, contagious. There are three mechanisms through which self-determination claim-making can spread. First, the increase in states facing demands over time creates more opportunity for non-relational diffusion, whereby individuals

⁵ Henderson 1991; Poe and Tate 1994.

⁶ On federalism and conflict, see Amoretti and Bermeo 2004; Bakke and Wibbels 2006; Roeder 1991; and Bunce 1999.

⁷ The role of ethnicity in producing conflict remains debated. Gurr 2000; Cederman and Girardin 2007.

⁸ Gurr 1970; Hechter 1975; Cederman et al 2010.

⁹ Gourevitch 1979; Alesina and Spolaore 2003.

¹⁰ Lujala 2010.

¹¹ Olson 1971; Toft 2003.

¹² Buhaug et al. 2008.

watch and learn from the experiences of others. Second, observation of such claims can inspire greater attention to related grievances that have not previously been a focus of political identity. Third, observation of accommodation of self-determination demands can increase perceptions of potential gains for making such demands. Each of these mechanisms relies on the observation of claim-making, and we argue that seeing self-determination claims emerge nearby leads to a spread of identification with self-determination related identity and claims.

We evaluate this approach using a spatial analysis building on work by Kristian Gleditsch and Halvard Buhaug¹³, employing a multi-level spatial autologistic model developed specifically to address this question. Each country is linked to a neighborhood of states, and we examine the effect of the onset of new claims related to self-determination being made in this set of states. An onset is the first appearance of an organization making claims on the group's behalf in the study period. We find that the chance that states will face new claims related to self-determination emerging increases when there is an onset of self-determination claims in the nearby states. This result holds even controlling for a number of characteristics of regional self-determination movements, states, and the international system.

A global norm of self-determination

The development of the contemporary state system, which grounds political legitimacy in territorially-based sovereignty, is intimately connected to the concept of the nation.¹⁴ The principle of self-determination evolved from a focus on the individual in the French Revolution to an emphasis on “peoples” or “nations” by the 1950s at the end of colonialism. After World War II, an

¹³ Gleditsch 2007; Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008.

¹⁴ Gellner 1983; Spruyt 1994; Wimmer and Feinstein 2010.

international norm of the right to self-determination solidified and colonialism stopped being seen as a legitimate practice. United Nations resolution 1514 established a right to self-determination and was designed to end the colonial ties between Europe and the developing world.¹⁵ The resolution created a set of principles to guide the development of international law that allows people freedom from alien subjugation and the freedom to determine their political status and economic and cultural development.¹⁶

The international community generally regarded the norm shift that led to decolonization as applying specifically to “colonies,” however, a number of groups have interpreted the right more broadly. There remains a tension between the norms of territorial sovereignty and self-determination, yet we have seen the successful secession of a number of non-colonial nations, such as South Sudan, Eritrea, East Timor, and Montenegro.

The outcome of the development of an internationally recognized (if not universally applied) right to self-determination is that we have seen the emergence of more states over time, more states facing sub-national claims to self-determination, and more groups making claims to self-determination. Figure 1 shows the growth in the number of states in the international system and the number of states facing challenges over self-determination from 1960 to 2005. We describe these data in more detail in the statistical analysis section.¹⁷

Insert Figure 1 About Here

¹⁵ The Atlantic Charter in 1941 also asserted a right to self-government (Sohn 1981, Menela 2009).

¹⁶ See Philpott (2001) on ideas and sovereignty.

¹⁷ Fazal and Griffiths (2014) observe a similar trend for secessionism.

The solid line indicates the number of state in the international system, which has steadily increased, with a jump at the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The dashed line indicates a commensurate increase in the number of states that face internal challenges over self-determination. The overall peak in the number of states facing self-determination claims is a given year is 73 states in the late-1990s. Many states face one or two groups, though a number of states consistently face more (such as India, which faced nine separate claims over self-determination at one point).

The proliferation of self-determination disputes over time is clear. Yet, there are many more groups that could choose to make self-determination claims at any given time than actually do so. For example, the Bretons in France have the historical credentials to make claims to self-determination, but did not do so until the late 1960s.¹⁸ States with multiples groups that have distinct cultures, languages, and historical ties to land abound, but only some states face claims for greater self-determination.

Most of the literature on secession addresses the spread of self-determination as a question of mobilization, generally focusing on the ability and incentives for groups to violently challenge the state.¹⁹ However, making claims over self-determination is not just a question of overcoming collective action within a group to seek some goods from the state. It is also a fundamental question about social identification. Brubaker (1996) argues that nationalism is a way of thinking and behaving.²⁰ Nationalist identity (which forms the basis of self-determination claims) is not just a pre-

¹⁸ Bretons have a distinct language and longstanding links to their territory (as early as the third century) (Ford 1993).

¹⁹ Hechter 1975; Gourevitch 1979.

²⁰ See Beissinger (2002) on the “ambiguous, arbitrary, and constructed character of nationalist claims and the shifting, embedded, and overlapping nature of cultural identities” (9).

condition, it is a process and a choice. Individuals are both subject to and a constructive part of the narrative that guides their aggregate behavior that leads to claims for greater self-determination.²¹

Spatial diffusion of self-determination identity

The onset of claim-making over self-determination can be understood as the product of a diffusion process.²² The activation of self-determination group identity as a basis for making claims on the state spreads across the globe spatially. Three things are required for a group of individuals to make collective claims related to self-determination.²³

First, individuals need to identify themselves in relation to a collective group that has a basis for making self-determination claims.²⁴ Even with some sense of “ethnic potential,” individuals have a number of identities they subscribe to at any given time. To make demands over self-determination, individuals need to see their ethno-nationalist identity as politically and culturally relevant.²⁵

²¹ Hardin 1995; Brubaker and Laitin 1998; Nome and Weidmann 2013.

²² On diffusion of violent conflict see Gleditsch 2007; Buhaug and Gleditsch 2008; Braithwaite 2010.

²³ We build on Abdelal et al.’s (2009) four components: constitutive norms that define membership, social purpose (goals shared by members), relational comparisons, and cognitive models that are understanding of “political material conditions and interests that are shaped by a particular identity” (19).

²⁴ Social identity theory suggests that group identity requires both awareness of membership and that this awareness be related to some value connotation (Tajfel 1982).

²⁵ Self-determination movements are typically, but not necessarily, related to ethno-nationalism.

Second, individuals need to perceive some unaddressed grievance or social purpose related to that self-determination identity. This is the motivation for acting on their ethno-nationalist identity, and could entail issues such as discontent over the distance between people and governance structures or respect for traditional language or cultural practice, but could also align with other grievances such as economic disadvantage.

Third, there must be some expectation of success (whether short or long term). Individuals must see some positive benefit to activating their identity related to self-determination and support claims related to it. Success, per se, is difficult to define. The strengthening of affinity for an identity related to self-determination may be seen as a proximate success. Varshey (2003) suggests that identity is linked to value rationality in the context of nationalist mobilization. *Collective* claims for self-determination can, in themselves, provide benefits for individuals. Success can also be the expectation of other positive externalities, such as concessions from the state or international recognition.

In the next section, we identify three mechanisms through which the claim-making related to a self-determination identity can diffuse across space. These mechanisms correspond to the factors addressed here – recognition/activation of identity, perception of purpose or grievance, and perception of success.

Non-relational diffusion and norms entrepreneurs

The first mechanism specifies a path for self-determination norm adoption at the local level. The adoption of self-determination as a legitimate local identity can occur through non-relational diffusion and the actions of norm entrepreneurs. Non-relational diffusion is essentially learning

through watching others and adjusting individual behavior to conform to collective standards.²⁶

Individuals watch the experiences of people outside their own state and observe the rise in claim-making related to self-determination. The activation or use of identity related to self-determination consequently becomes more appropriate as others engage in it.

Observing self-determination claims in other places also creates a sense of relational comparison within the state, emphasizing the distinction between a group that can make claims to self-determination and a dominant population. For example, groups such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) were known to learn from each other and share both tactics (e.g., discriminate killings) and appeals (e.g., political/economic autonomy and territorial claims).²⁷ Early on, links between the IRA and the Basque separatist group were observed, each having similar aims. Subsequently, the IRA provided both a logistical and political example for ETA to emulate in conflict, and eventually, in peace.

This type of emulation concerning both self-determination tactics and appeals occurs not only among rebels in conflict situations but can also be observed among indigenous peoples and minority groups peacefully seeking greater autonomy. We observe indications of diffusion of self-determination claims among indigenous peoples of South America, particularly, Ecuador, Colombia, and Peru.²⁸ In 1980, indigenous peoples of Ecuador began to mobilize, creating the Confederation

²⁶ Tarrow 2005; Nome and Weidmann 2013; Bakke 2013. This is similar to “demonstration effects” (Hale 2000). Relational diffusion is also possible, whereby individuals in the same networks pass information or resources to another set of individuals.

²⁷ See Sánchez-Cuenca (2007) and Kaya and Erdemir (2008) for a discussion of learning between terrorist groups.

²⁸ Jácome 2011.

of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), a powerful grassroots organization that pushed for a bilingual educational system. In neighboring Columbia, the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC) was created in 1982, with the goals of greater political representation in addition to educational reforms. ONIC was able to achieve increased representation and concession through a strategy of aligning with established political parties. Ecuadorian indigenous organizations, as well as those of the Afro-Colombian community within their own culture, observed this success. Agrawal et al. (2012) argue that “Regional political transformations—including constitutional reforms in Colombia (1991), Peru (1992), Bolivia (1994), and Venezuela (1999)—paved the way for an opening of Ecuador’s political system to Indigenous people” (31). ONIC’s success in aligning with established political parties and gaining representation later informed their Ecuadorian precursor, CONAIE (Agrawal et al. 2012).

In combination with increased international recognition of minority “rights” and successful secessions, individuals increasingly adopt the belief that their own identification as a member of a group means that they can and should make claims to self-determination.²⁹ This diffusion process can be bolstered by norm entrepreneurs, individuals that promote the adoption and use of the self-determination identity.³⁰ For example, organizations such as the Cornish Language Fellowship promote the use of the Cornish language in Cornwall in the United Kingdom.³¹ Similarly, the Tatar Public Center attempted to bolster Tatar identification within Crimea.³² Thus, observation of other groups and individuals making claims over self-determination influences individuals to be mindful of

²⁹ See Brubaker (1996) on this process leading to the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

³⁰ Finnemore and Sikkink 1998.

³¹ Cunningham 2014.

³² Nome and Weidmann 2013.

their own ethno-nationalist identity and predisposes people to respond positively to norms entrepreneurs who seek to rally individuals to collective claim-making.

Perceptions of grievance

An increasing number of actors making claims related to national self-determination can also increase perceptions of grievance for individuals that have not previously had a high affinity for their ethno-nationalist identity. The issue of language is a common concern among self-determination groups. Observing an increasing number of groups that demand greater respect and rights for their traditional languages can induce grievance among others who then question why their own traditional language has been suppressed.

For example, many groups saw increased linguistic rights in Eastern Europe in the 1990s, including the Hungarians in Romania, the Buryat in Russia, and the Albanians in Macedonia. Initially, the Romanian government began to ease language restrictions against Hungarian in 1990 (although this was rescinded for a period in the early nineties).³³ Ethnic minority groups in Russia and Macedonia soon echoed this demand. The Buryat pushed for increased language rights in Russia, and the Buryat won these rights from the Russian minister of education by 1993.³⁴ By 1996, several states had signed bilateral treaty agreements supporting the use of Hungarian within their

³³ Gál 1999.

³⁴ Trofimov, Sergei. "Russia to help Buryatia develop national education system." TASS. 25 June 1993.

minority populations.³⁵ By 2000, Albanians in Macedonia received legal recognition of their language for higher education following state-wide protests.³⁶

The expression of grievance related to self-determination claims has the potential to focus others people on those same issues and increase their desire to make similar claims.³⁷ Moreover, greater exposure to self-determination claims can also shape how individuals perceive and identify events surrounding them.³⁸

Perception of likelihood of material success

Finally, in addition to value that comes purely from social identification, observation of success for groups that make claims over self-determination can create instrumental motivation to make self-determination claims. While successful secession is both uncommon and unlikely for any particular group of people, states offer a wide range of accommodations to groups making self-determination demands. These range from inclusion in power at the center of the state (such as the inclusion of the Afar in the transitional government in Ethiopia in 1991) to devolution and creation of new political institutions (such as the creation of the Scottish Parliament in 1997). While few groups that make claims for self-determination secede, the majority of active self-determination groups have gotten some type of concessions from the state they reside in. If other movements for

³⁵ Gál 1999.

³⁶ Cunningham 2014.

³⁷ This is similar to relative deprivation (Gurr 1970), but applied to social identification and claim-making.

³⁸ Davenport and Trivedi 2013.

self-determination are getting concessions from states, this may create further incentive for claim-making.

States may also respond negatively to groups making self-determination claims by repressing demands. For example, Angola suppressed Cabindan claims for greater self-determination in 2003. However, negative responses will not necessarily suppress claim-making. Repression can increase perceptions of grievance related to self-determination in general and can potentially bolster the legitimacy of groups and their claims that existing states are mistreating their people.

The geographic dimension

None of these three mechanisms—non-relational norm diffusion and entrepreneurship, increased perception of grievance, and increased perception of benefits to seeking self-determination—are by nature spatially bounded. For example, the debate over the status of the Quebecois frequently references how the Scottish have fared in the United Kingdom. However, all three mechanisms rely on information in order to facilitate comparison to others. Actions by people that are geographically closer are more observable than those of distant populations. News coverage and other media are likely to connect individuals and groups that are geographically closer. Moreover, individuals and groups are likely to perceive “others” that are nearby as likely to have more similarity than distant individuals or groups. As such, the effects of observing self-determination claim-making should resonate more with people that have a greater perceived similarity.³⁹

³⁹ Ideas and norms are thought to be more likely to be accepted when there is little “cultural friction” (Checkel 1999).

Predictions

The theoretical discussion above leads to two main hypotheses. First, claims for self-determination should influence the onset of claims by other groups nearby.

H1: The onset of self-determination claims in a country will be more likely when an onset of claims has occurred in the country's geographic neighborhood recently.

Second, new claims should be more likely when individuals observe accommodation of self-determination demands.

H2: The onset of self-determination claims in a country will be more likely when accommodation of claims has occurred in the country's geographic neighborhood recently.

Data and empirical analyses

We test these two hypotheses using data on all claims made for ethno-nationalist self-determination movements in all states for the period 1960 – 2005. The unit of analysis is the country-year. The dependent variable is a measure of whether an organization representing an ethno-nationalist group in the country began demanding self-determination in the country in a given year (*SD new onset in country*). We code the year in which a group makes its first claim for self-determination in the history of the group's tenure as "1", with all other years coded as "0" where subsequent claims are made by the same self-determination group. The emergence of additional organizations making claims on behalf of the group are not considered a new onset, however, a

period of no claims can lead the group to have a second onset.⁴⁰ The coding of self-determination movements is based on the Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM) list of self-determination movements provided in the 2003 Peace and Conflict Report and Cunningham's⁴¹ study of internal politics of self-determination disputes. The CIDCM report includes all minority groups deemed at risk that demonstrate concern in one of the following areas: "general concern for autonomy, union with kindred groups, political independence, greater regional autonomy, limited autonomy, or other autonomy issues."⁴² Cunningham improves upon this by providing novel data with a yearly indicator of whether demands were made related to the group's self-determination status by examining directly organizations representing these groups and when they are actively making demands on the state.⁴³ We coded self-determination movements as active if groups made demands for increased autonomy, independence, union or reunion with another state, or the creation of a super-national entity (such as a pan-ethnic state that includes group members in other states).⁴⁴ Empirical examples of different types of demands include those for cultural and linguistic autonomy from the Kurdish People's Democracy Party in Turkey, and

⁴⁰ This occurred in only 14 groups.

⁴¹ Cunningham 2014.

⁴² Definition based on communication with MAR. The MAR dataset includes groups that have either suffered or benefited from systematic discriminatory treatment. The data may exclude groups making SD claims within societies that have never had systematic discrimination affect the group. Recent "regionalist" groups could exemplify this, yet the nature of SD claims means that groups usually have long historical roots that likely meet the criteria for inclusion in MAR.

⁴³ Cunningham 2014.

⁴⁴ Autonomy demands include autonomy in substantive areas and devolution of decision-making.

demands for federalism and independence from the Democratic Crimea Movement and the Republican Movement of Crimea in Ukraine, respectively.

The time varying measure of whether the group was actively making claims relies on public demands being observed. Cunningham's coding is from the Minorities at Risk project, Uppsala Conflict Data Project, Keesing's Record of World Events, and Lexis Nexis Academic news sources. We then aggregate these data for all groups seeking self-determination to the country level, allowing us to determine if new claims over self-determination are made in a country in any given year.

Countries that had no self-determination movements listed in the CIDCM report are considered to have no demands for self-determination. Countries can experience multiple onsets in different years. For example, in India, the Bodos began pressing demands for greater self-determination in 1973, while the Tripuras had done so in 1968. Among countries that face self-determination challengers, about 14% experience multiple onsets since 1960.⁴⁵ There are 6,811 country-years in the data, with 118 onsets of demands for self-determination in 69 of the 175 countries.

To capture the concept of diffusion, the primary independent variable is a measure of the onset of new self-determination demands in the state's neighborhood. We code a new onset when an organization representing an ethno-nationalist group makes a new claim on behalf of the group in a state within the neighborhood. Employing Gleditsch and Ward's database on minimum distances, we code states as "neighbors" if the shortest distance between the two polities, in the particular year, is less than 950 kilometers.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Since the first year in the data is 1960, we also reran the analyses to exclude onsets in 1960 (which may have occurred earlier). The results are similar (Appendix Table 4).

⁴⁶ The nature of the state's separation (by land or sea) is not meaningful (Gleditsch and Ward 2001).

We develop a multilevel spatial autologistic model for this analysis to account for both the dependence between observations, as the chance of a self-determination movement making claims is likely affected by the presence/absence of other groups making claims in the region, as well as the variance in terms of accommodations between movements that are spatially close to the group and those that are farther away. The advantage of using a random-intercept, multilevel, spatial autologistic model is that it provides a balance between ignoring any variation in claim-making between near and distant self-determination movements, and overstating differences between geographic regions, by offering a partial-pooling compromise.

While ignoring spatial nesting can lead to underestimated standard errors, and overstated statistical significance, no-pooling can lead to skeptical or even biased estimates.⁴⁷ Together, the inclusion of a spatial lag and random-intercept can account for different forms of spatial dependence that we would ignore if we employed a spatial autologistic model alone. For example, when nearby self-determination movements do not engage in claim-making, the coefficient on the spatial lag is zero, and the model reduces to its logit form. By properly adjusting for spatial dependence, we can gain a better understanding as to why and when some self-determination movements make claims.⁴⁸

Empirically, we model this by including the spatial lag, $r_{i,t}^s$, and by allowing the intercepts for the expression of the self-determination movement's attributes, α , to vary according to their

⁴⁷ Gelman and Hill 2006.

⁴⁸ As the onset of new self-determination claims occurs in less than 5% of all country-years (1.73%), we assess the advantage of model fit by also running a non-nested, rare events logit analysis. Nearby claim-making still has a significant impact on the likelihood of the onset of new claims at home (Appendix Table 5).

proximity to other self-determination groups, indexed by j .⁴⁹ As we expect that the likelihood of any particular self-determination group making claims will be conditioned by the presence/absence of claim-making from nearby groups, $r_{i,t}^s$, attributes of the state (e.g, the country's area, population) $X_{i,t}$, as well as attributes of the international system, $N_{i,t}$ (e.g., interregional conflict), the probability of observing the onset of self-determination claims by a group, i , at time t , can be estimated as follows:

$$Pr(y_{i,t}^s = 1) = \frac{e^{Z_i}}{1 + e^{Z_i}}$$

where $Z_i = \gamma r_{i,t}^s + \pi_{i,t} + N_{i,t}\varphi$

and $\pi_{i,t} = \alpha_{j[i,t]} + X_{i,t}\beta$

As means of comparison, we first run a bivariate logistic model predicting the onset of self-determination claims based on the presence of claims in the country's surrounding geographic neighborhood in the previous year. The bivariate logistic model returns a positive and significant coefficient on the onset of a self-determination claim in the country's neighborhood. That is, the

⁴⁹ We define the spatial matrix according to the inverse distance between the state in which an onset occurs and the neighboring group. Gleditsch and Buhaug (2008) and Braithwaite (2010) employ similar specifications. The results are robust to alternative spatial econometric specifications including a dichotomous spatial lag representing neighbors, the inverse of the square root of the distance between the state and the neighboring onset, and the inverse of the natural log of the distance between the state and the neighboring onset.

onset of claims to national self-determination in a nearby state in one year increases the likelihood of a new claim in the next year in a country that is in the state's neighborhood.

Insert Table 1 About Here

Other factors beyond the existence of claims in the neighborhood should affect the emergence of self-determination claims. Indeed, H2 suggests that the success of self-determination claims should also matter. In Table 2, we include a number of factors at the neighborhood, country, and international levels.⁵⁰ The first set of covariates are used to measure the extent to which self-determination claims in the neighborhood affect the probability of onset at home and include a one-year lagged measure of whether concessions were made in response to self-determination claims in the neighborhood (which follows the same coding procedure for spatial neighborhoods as the onset variable). The concessions data come from Cunningham and includes all concessions made to self-determination groups related to the group's status in the state.⁵¹ Concessions must be related to the issue of self-determination, which we would expect to impact perceptions of the efficacy of claim-making. Neighborhood concessions occur in approximately 18.25% percent (1,243) of country year observations.

We also include additional measures on self-determination; specifically, we include the number of active self-determination movements in the home country (lagged one year) and whether

⁵⁰ We also backdated onsets that began prior to 1960 and created decay variables measuring the onset of self-determination claims in the neighborhood with a four-year half-life. The results are statistically and substantively similar to those presented in Table 2 (see Appendix Table 4).

⁵¹ Cunningham 2014.

or not there was civil conflict in the country over self-determination (lagged one year). Countries with a history of conflict over the issue of self-determination may have dissuaded such claims, and may have incentives to do so if there are many challengers.⁵² Moreover, a history of conflict over the issue in the neighborhood could dissuade potential self-determination claims. Conflict data are drawn from the Uppsala Conflict Data Project (UCDP)/Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)'s Armed Conflict Dataset.⁵³

In Model 2, we control for the size of the country, both in terms of landmass and population size, as these measures have been shown to be positively associated with conflict over self-determination in the extant literature.⁵⁴ Alberto Alesina and Enrico Spolaore argue that larger states may create incentives for self-determination claims as such states may be greater than their optimal size.⁵⁵ The state's land mass is measured in (logged) squared-kilometers. Data for country area and population (logged) come from the World Development Indicators.⁵⁶

We also include a binary measure of the federalist nature of the country.⁵⁷ States with federal governance structures may invite such claims because they are already organized in a way that favors localized political demands. Several global changes in the international system have been shown historically to affect self-determination claim-making. We account for these changes in Model 3. In

⁵² Walter 2006. Alternatively, a history of conflict could solidify the relevance of SD identity.

⁵³ Themnér and Wallensteen 2013. UCDP defines armed conflict as a dispute between a government and at least one non-state actor that reaches 25 battle deaths.

⁵⁴ Cederman and Min 2010.

⁵⁵ Alesina and Spolare 2005.

⁵⁶ World Bank 2013.

⁵⁷ See Griffiths (2015) on regional governance structures.

particular, following the ratification of the United Nations Charter in 1945 and the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, which states that every person has a right to nationality, new states emerged from colonial powers. We explicitly address colonization, both whether the state was a colonial empire as well as whether an emerging country was a former colony, using data from the ICOW Colonial History Dataset.⁵⁸

Significant changes in both regional politics and the international system occurred post cold-war. We account for these changes in Model 3. We include a variable to distinguish the pre- and post-cold war era. Changes in intergovernmental bodies also arose, affecting legislation surrounding self-determination claim-making. We include variables for whether or not the country was a member of the European Union, the African Union, the Organization of American States, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the Latin American States as these bodies are indicative of institutional change with regards to the norms of state creation and represent newly created states in the period of our analyses, 1960-2005. Finally, we control for the history of conflict in the region with a binary measure of the neighboring states' conflict history (interstate and civil) from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Data.

Insert Table 2 About Here

The results reported in Table 2 not only demonstrate that the initial diffusion findings are robust to the inclusion of other factors but are statistically significant while adjusting for the spatial

⁵⁸ Hensel 2014.

clustering of self-determination claim-making as well. The onset of self-determination claims in the neighborhood remains a statistically significant predictor of claims onset in a country (in support of Hypothesis 1). We do not find strong support for H2, that observing success in other countries will increase the chance of onset. This may suggest that material or instrumental logic does not primarily drive the onset of new claims over self-determination, or that individuals view the chance of getting concessions as being more intimately tied to the behavior of their home state, thus concessions made by others states would have little impact on their decision to make a claim.

We find that geographically larger countries have a greater chance of onset of self-determination claims. We also find that a higher number of ongoing self-determination claimants increase the chance of new ones within a state. This potentially provides further support for the diffusion hypothesis. More actors making self-determination claims both in the country and in the geographic neighborhood make new claims over self-determination more likely. A history of conflict over self-determination in the neighborhood is possibility associated with new onsets, suggesting some support for the grievance mechanism wherein observing conflict against other similar groups promotes activation of self-determination claims.

The baseline probability of a new onset of self-determination in any given country year is low, about 0.01. To evaluate further the substantive effect of the statistically significant factors in Table 2, we calculated the predicted probability of the onset of self-determination claims using the margins program and holding all other variables to their observed values.⁵⁹ For binary variables, mean effect sizes are predicted as a change from 0 to 1, and for continuous variables, from the first to third quartiles.

⁵⁹ Hanmer and Kalkan 2013. Using Table 2, Model 2.

The effect of a movement in the number of onsets in the neighborhood in the previous year from no neighboring claims, zero, to even one onset in the neighborhood, leads to over a 47% increase in the probability that the country experiences a new claim in the year. The probability of a new onset increases exponentially with more neighboring claims: a change from no neighboring claims in the last year to the median number of neighboring claims, four, increases the probability that a given country makes a new claim in that year by more than 350%.⁶⁰ The positive effect of the size of a country (natural log of the geographic area measured in kilometers squared) is quite large. Moving from the first quartile (a country about the size of Costa Rica) to the third quartile (about the size of Afghanistan) about doubles the probability of an onset in a year. Moving from no active self-determination groups in the country to one active claim-making group in the country leads to about a 25% increase in the chance of a new onset of self-determination claims in a country in a year.⁶¹ These results demonstrate that in addition to structural and domestic factors, the onset of claims over self-determination in the neighborhood greatly increase the chance of a country facing the emergence of claims in their own territory.

Further Analysis

The length of time a state exists may also affect the probability of onset of self-determination claims, though potentially in either direction. New states may face early challengers,

⁶⁰ The changes in the predicted probabilities of a new self determination onset are: 0 to 1 onsets in the neighborhood (weighted by the inverse of their relative distance), 1.30% to 1.92%, 0 to 4 onsets, 1.30% to 5.91%, first to third quartile natural log of country area, 0.82% to 1.65%, and 0 to 1 SD groups in country, 1.16% to 1.45%.

⁶¹ Movement from the first to third quartile in the number of SD groups is a change from 0 to 1.

while older states have the potential to foster grievances over time that can lead to such claims. We adjust for issues of time dependence (i.e., the number of years a state exists in the international system likely affects both the presence and number of claims) in two ways: first, we include three terms: t (the length of time the state exists in the international system measured in years), t^2 , and t^3 , and a model with a simple control for state age.⁶² The results remain similar to those presented here (Appendix Table 6 and Appendix Table 7).

Moreover, the emergence of new states during the period of our analyses here likely affects the propensity for future self-determination claims, we duplicated our analyses controlling for the number of states in the international system (Appendix Table 2). The effect of neighboring claims on the probability of new claim-making within a state remains the same. In addition, we include a measure of nonfederal states with autonomous ethnic regions (Appendix Table 8)⁶³, and control for democratization and political instability (Appendix Table 9).

As we note, properly adjusting for spatial dependence improves our understanding as to why and when some SD movements make claims. We suggest here that this analysis reflects the diffusions of self-determination as a norm of social identification via spatial diffusion. Yet, norm diffusion could be transmitted through a number of different pathways. As network misspecification can result in biased spatial autocorrelation estimates, we follow Yuri Zhukov and Brandon Stewart's approach to adjudicate between multiple sets of potential networks.⁶⁴ We examine three alternative networks linking states – domestic political links, ethnic links, and similar levels of domestic

⁶² Carter and Signorino 2010.

⁶³ Roeder 2009.

⁶⁴ Zhukov and Stewart 2013.

repression.⁶⁵ We do not find any evidence of signal transmission along other paths beyond spatial diffusion.

Finally, to in part assess the value added of accounting for spatial proximity in our model, we compare the ROC curve from our multilevel spatial autologistic model from Model 2 of Table 2 (with the statistically significant predictors of contagion: neighborhood self-determination claim onset, the number of active self-determination groups, and the country size) to the ROC curve from a standard logit model without these predictors of spatial dependence. We then computed the area under the curve (AUC) to compare the predictive accuracy with and without our measures of spatial contagion. In comparing the figures, we find that adding the measures of spatial dependence increases the predictive accuracy of our modeling from 0.6929 (Appendix Figure 1) to 0.7311 (Appendix Figure 2).⁶⁶

Conclusions

A number of studies have demonstrated spatial diffusion of a variety of events, including democratization,⁶⁷ liberalization,⁶⁸ and civil war.⁶⁹ This study applies the basic concept of spatial diffusion to self-determination politics by treating social identification and subsequent claim-making related to self-determination as a process. Existing work that emphasizes links across borders has

⁶⁵ Coding based on the state's polity score (Marshall and Gurr 2012), whether groups have transethnic kin from the same self-determination group (Cunningham 2014), or if groups faced the same level of domestic terror (Political Terror Scale (2010)).

⁶⁷ Gleditsch and Ward 2001.

⁶⁸ Simmons et al. 2007.

⁶⁹ Gleditsch 2007.

focused on state actions or on violent secession and rebellion.⁷⁰ Yet, previous studies on conflict contagion have been somewhat limited by an absence of data on potential challengers. Here, we argue that the basic underpinning of the most common source of conflict—self-determination—is also contagious.

Using data on self-determination movements and a sophisticated empirical approach, our analysis shows that the onset of claims over self-determination in a state's neighborhood in the previous year increases the chance of claims beginning in a country in any given year. Self-determination appears to be contagious. As such, the challenges of self-determination can be seen, in part, as a regional phenomenon.

One avenue for extension is to look at the types of demands that emerge. Here, we have examined claims over self-determination, but not distinguished between different types of claims. It is also possible that the types of demands are spatially clustered. Further exploration could include distinctions such as autonomy vs. independence, cultural vs. political demands, or the degree to which claims are multifaceted. Further analysis could also address more regional dynamics, perhaps examining if different types of interventions occur in disputes over self-determination and which actors are inserting themselves in such disputes.

Finally, if self-determination is contagious in the contemporary international system, are there ways for states to avoid such claims, as Alex Braithwaite suggests they can for civil war contagion?⁷¹ Moreover, should that be a policy that is promoted (even tacitly)? Claims for self-determination can generate high costs for states, but they can also lead to better governance and higher quality of life for minorities. Based on the analysis in this study, the success of claims in the neighborhood does

⁷⁰ Saideman 1997; Jenne 2004.

⁷¹ Braithwaite 2010.

not appear to influence the chance of an onset of self-determination claims. Just the existence of claims is enough to engender the spread of self-determination.

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Appendix

Is Self-determination Contagious? A spatial analysis of the spread of self-determination claims

Appendix Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Sample Size	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Self-determination onset	6811	0.0169	0.1288	0	1
Number of active SD claimants	6811	0.5353	1.0069	0	7
Neighborhood onset	6811	0.2141	0.5717	0	8
Concessions in neighborhood	6811	0.2547	0.4357	0	1
Conflict in country	6811	0.1590	0.3657	0	1
County area (log)	6811	11.9702	2.1894	3.9120	16.6122
Country population (log)	6788	15.5779	1.9833	6.8565	20.9887
Federal state	6811	0.1401	0.3471	0	1
History of conflict in neighborhood	6811	0.1407	0.3477	0	1
Former colony	6811	0.4112	0.4921	0	1
Colonizer	6811	0.1669	0.3729	0	1
Post Cold War	6811	0.3942	0.4887	0	1
EU membership	6811	0.0724	0.2591	0	1
AU membership	6811	0.2882	0.4530	0	1
OAS membership	6811	0.1668	0.3728	0	1
ASEAN membership	6811	0.0421	0.2009	0	1
LAS membership	6811	0.1220	0.3273	0	1
Number of ongoing self-determination claims	6811	51.2914	16.3437	23	73
Autonomous ethnic region	6811	0.0592	0.2360	0	1
Political instability	6811	0.1109	0.3140	0	1
Democratization	6811	0.0311	0.1737	0	1

Appendix Table 2. Multilevel spatial autologistic analysis of determinants of self-determination claims onset (1960 – 2005) controlling for number of states in international system

	Model 1
Neighborhood onset (1 year lag)	0.398** (0.159)
Number of active SD claimants (1 year lag)	0.439*** (0.066)
Concessions in neighborhood (1 year lag)	0.099 (0.259)
Conflict in country (1 year lag)	0.376 (0.259)
Number of states in international system	-0.025*** (0.007)
Constant	-1.006 (0.957)
Log-Likelihood	-471.007
AIC	956.015
Observations	6,636

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$, two tailed tests.

Appendix Table 3. Multilevel spatial autologistic analysis of determinants of self-determination claims onset (1960 – 2005) controlling for the total number of ongoing self-determination claims in international system

	Model 1
Neighborhood onset (1 year lag)	0.420*** (0.158)
Number of active SD claimants (1 year lag)	0.439*** (0.066)
Concessions in neighborhood (1 year lag)	0.106 (0.259)
Conflict in country (1 year lag)	0.376 (0.259)
Number of ongoing self-determination claims	-0.027*** (0.008)
Constant	-3.456*** (0.346)
Log-Likelihood	-471.402
AIC	956.804
Observations	6,636

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1, two tailed tests.

Appendix Table 4. Multilevel spatial autologistic analysis of determinants of self-determination claims onset (1960 – 2005) adjusting for onset of claims prior to 1960 and four year half-life

	Model 1
Neighborhood onset	0.424*** (0.0679)
Number of active SD claimants	0.301*** (0.070)
Concessions in neighborhood	-0.281*** (0.099)
Conflict in country	0.125 (0.118)
Constant	-4.645*** (0.168)
Log-Likelihood	-471.149
AIC	954.297
Observations	6,636

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1, two tailed tests.

Appendix Table 5. Rare events logistic analysis of determinants of self-determination claims onset (1960 – 2005)

	Model 1
Neighborhood onset (1 year lag)	0.281** (0.115)
Number of active SD claimants (1 year lag)	0.093 (0.100)
Concessions in neighborhood (1 year lag)	-0.010 (0.281)
Conflict in country (1 year lag)	0.215 (0.257)
County area (log)	0.274*** (0.075)
Country population (log)	-0.056 (0.089)
Federal state	0.389 (0.323)
History of conflict in neighborhood	0.707** (0.280)
Former colony	0.208 (0.293)
Colonizer	0.635** (0.296)
Post Cold War	-0.358 (0.247)
EU membership	-0.104 (0.517)
OAS membership	-0.187 (0.392)
ASEAN membership	0.861** (0.393)
LAS membership	-0.205 (0.410)
AU membership	0.192 (0.252)
Constant	-7.351*** (1.320)
Observations	6,614

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1, two tailed tests.

Appendix Table 6. Multilevel spatial autologistic analysis of determinants of self-determination claims onset (1960 – 2005) with time controls

	Model 1
Neighborhood onset (1 year lag)	0.385** (0.163)
Number of active SD claimants (1 year lag)	-0.020 (0.103)
Concessions in neighborhood (1 year lag)	0.079 (0.264)
Conflict in country (1 year lag)	0.231 (0.271)
County area (log)	0.318*** (0.090)
Country population (log)	-0.009 (0.076)
Federal state	0.162 (0.323)
History of conflict in neighborhood	0.785** (0.311)
Former colony	-0.009 (0.392)
Colonizer	0.928*** (0.318)
Post Cold War	-0.281 (0.259)
EU membership	0.089 (0.549)
OAS membership	-0.252 (0.475)
ASEAN membership	0.540 (0.423)
LAS membership	-0.415 (0.412)
AU membership	0.077 (0.319)
Time state in system	-0.002 (0.006)
Time state in system squared	<-0.001 (<0.001)
Time state in system cubed	<0.001 (<0.001)
Constant	-8.354*** (1.270)
Log-likelihood	-448.099
AIC	938.198
Observations	6,614

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1, two tailed tests.

Appendix Table 7. Multilevel spatial autologistic analysis of determinants of self-determination claims onset (1960 – 2005) controlling for state age

	Model 1
Neighborhood onset (1 year lag)	0.384** (0.162)
Number of active SD claimants (1 year lag)	-0.019 (0.102)
Concessions in neighborhood (1 year lag)	0.079 (0.264)
Conflict in country (1 year lag)	0.229 (0.270)
County area (log)	0.319*** (0.089)
Country population (log)	-0.011 (0.074)
Federal state	0.165 (0.322)
History of conflict in neighborhood	0.781** (0.310)
Former colony	-0.034 (0.339)
Colonizer	0.929*** (0.318)
Post Cold War	-0.273 (0.251)
EU membership	0.109 (0.523)
OAS membership	-0.217 (0.394)
ASEAN membership	0.538 (0.423)
LAS membership	-0.421 (0.411)
AU membership	0.085 (0.312)
State age	-0.003*** (0.001)
Constant	-8.312*** (1.204)
Log-likelihood	-448.112
AIC	934.224
Observations	6,614

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$, two tailed tests.

Appendix Table 8. Multilevel spatial autologistic analysis of determinants of self-determination daims onset (1960 – 2005) with controls for ethnic federalism and autonomous ethnic regions (Roeder (2009))

	Model 1
Neighborhood onset (1 year lag)	0.352** (0.166)
Number of active SD daimants (1 year lag)	-0.011 (0.094)
Concessions in neighborhood (1 year lag)	-0.094 (0.263)
Conflict in country (1 year lag)	0.230 (0.271)
County area (log)	0.239*** (0.083)
Country population (log)	-0.031 (0.068)
Federal state	-0.240 (0.346)
History of conflict in neighborhood	0.690** (0.300)
Former colony	0.0230 (0.355)
Colonizer	0.686** (0.312)
Post Cold War	-0.252 (0.252)
EU membership	-0.154 (0.516)
OAS membership	0.207 (0.410)
ASEAN membership	1.174*** (0.440)
LAS membership	-0.126 (0.414)
AU membership	0.452 (0.343)
Autonomous ethnic region	1.416*** (0.338)
Constant	-7.500*** (1.080)
Log-Likelihood	-444.815
AIC	927.630
Observations	6,614

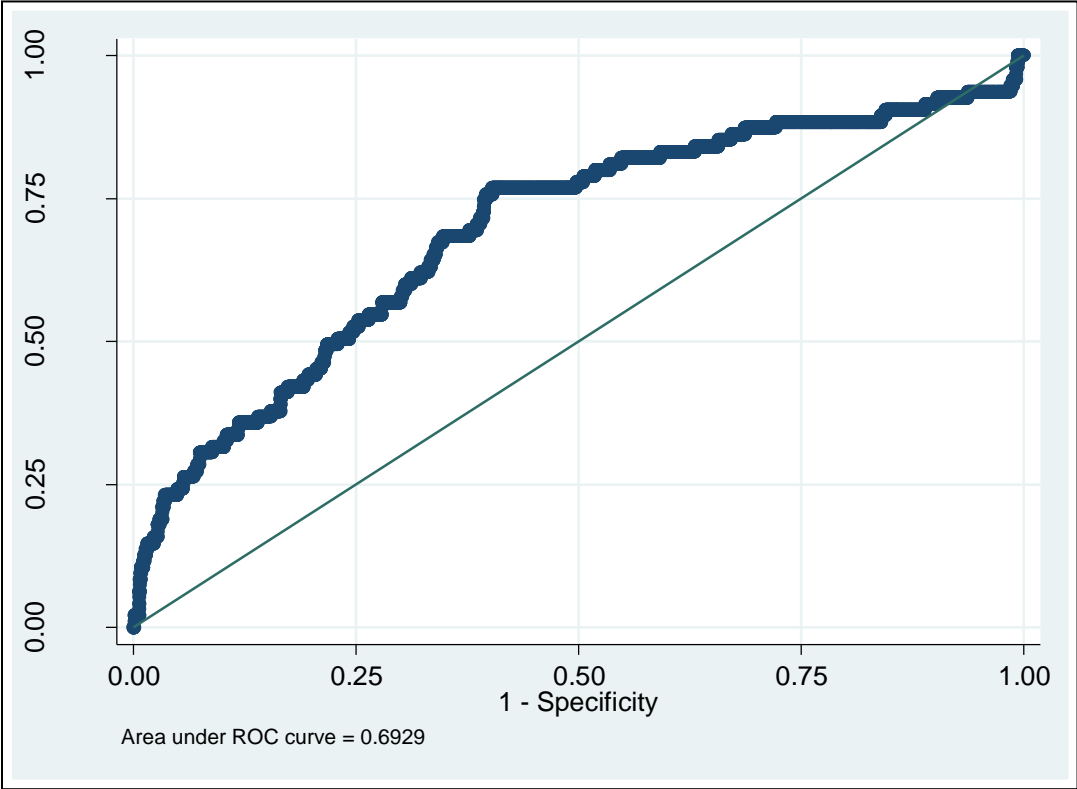
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1, two tailed tests.

Appendix Table 9. Multilevel spatial autologistic analysis of determinants of self-determination daims onset (1960 – 2005) with controls for political instability and democratization

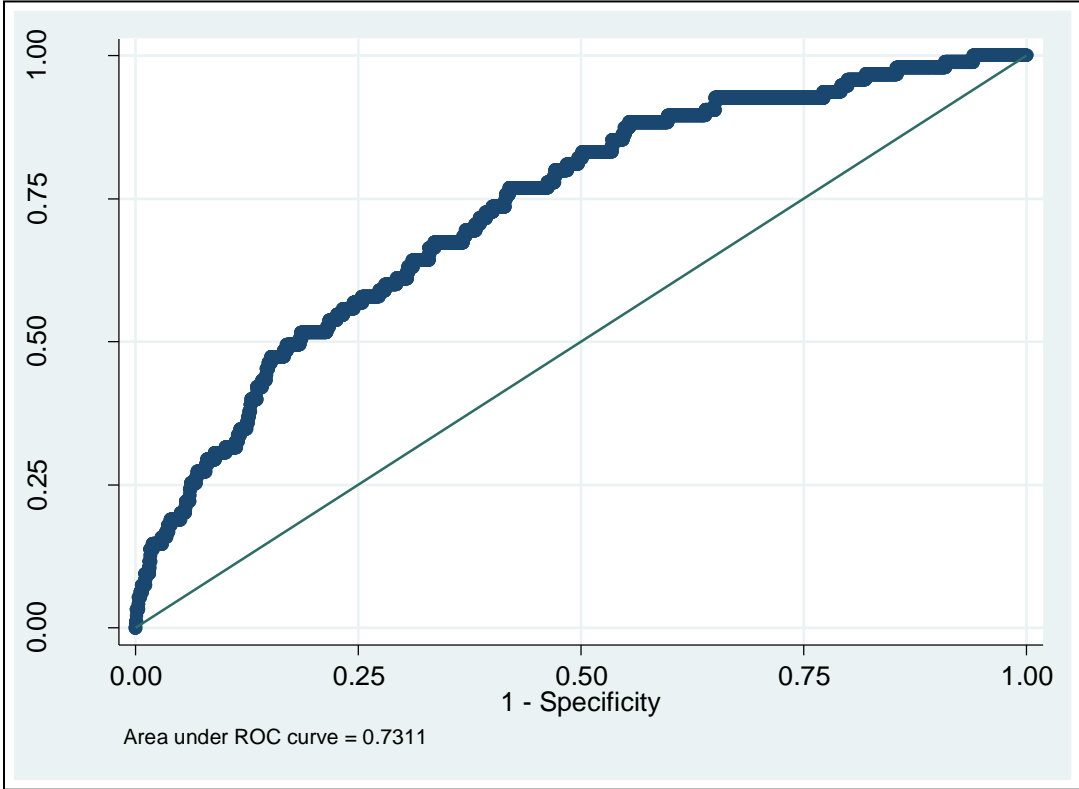
	Model 1	Model 2
Neighborhood onset (1 year lag)	0.374** (0.164)	0.385** (0.163)
Number of active SD daimants (1 year lag)	0.0839 (0.0959)	0.0797 (0.0961)
Concessions in neighborhood (1 year lag)	-0.00591 (0.261)	-0.00541 (0.262)
Conflict in country (1 year lag)	0.250 (0.270)	0.232 (0.270)
County area (log)S	0.277*** (0.0840)	0.274*** (0.0837)
Country population (log)	-0.0500 (0.0702)	-0.0497 (0.0705)
Federal state	0.379 (0.297)	0.381 (0.297)
History of conflict in neighborhood	0.673** (0.299)	0.721** (0.300)
Former colony	0.195 (0.336)	0.184 (0.336)
Colonizer	0.646** (0.311)	0.634** (0.311)
Post Cold War	-0.363 (0.250)	-0.346 (0.250)
EU membership	-0.152 (0.514)	-0.193 (0.514)
OAS membership	-0.256 (0.394)	-0.206 (0.393)
ASEAN membership	0.788* (0.418)	0.808* (0.418)
LAS membership	-0.255 (0.403)	-0.278 (0.402)
AU membership	0.158 (0.315)	0.205 (0.312)
Political instability	0.424 (0.288)	
Democratization		-0.206 (0.609)
Constant	-7.590*** (1.103)	-7.508*** (1.103)
Log-Likelihood	-452.181	-453.120
AIC	942.361	944.239
Observations	6,614	6,614

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1, two tailed tests.

Appendix Figure 1. Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curve of standard logistic model of determinants of self-determination claims onset (1960 – 2005)



Appendix Figure 2. Receiver Operating Characteristic (ROC) curve of multilevel spatial autologistic model of determinants of self-determination claims onset (1960 – 2005)

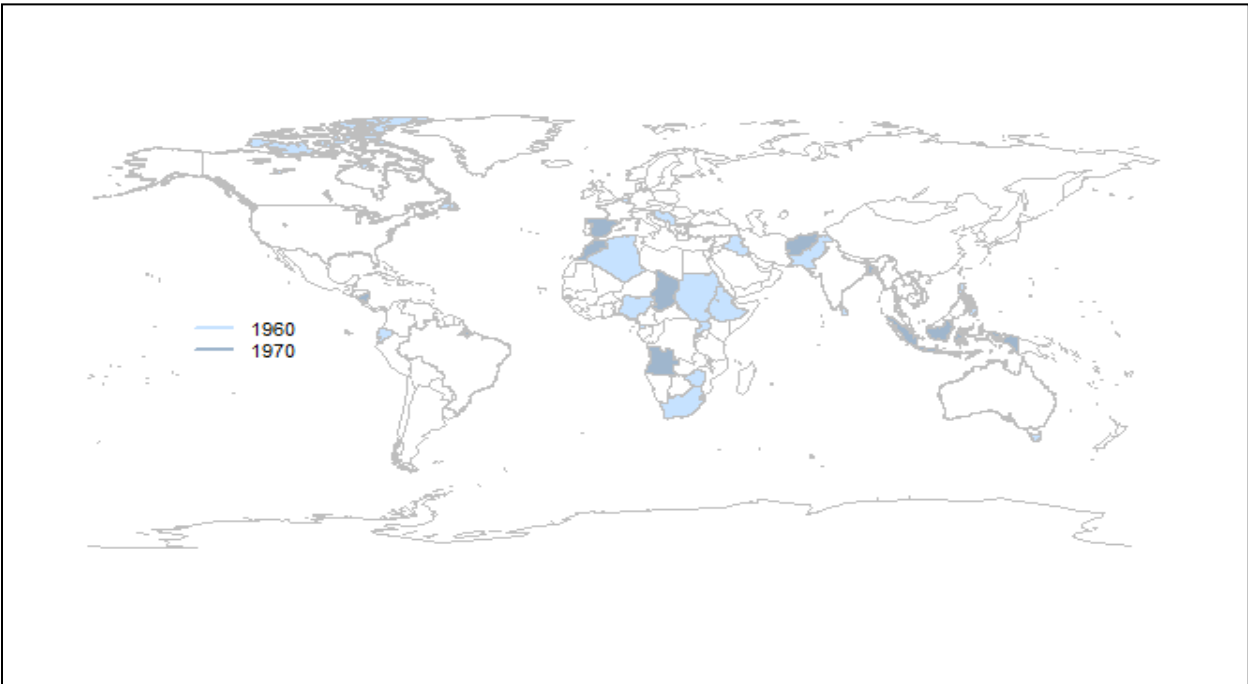


Appendix Figure3. World map of total number of new self-determination onsets by country (1960-2005)

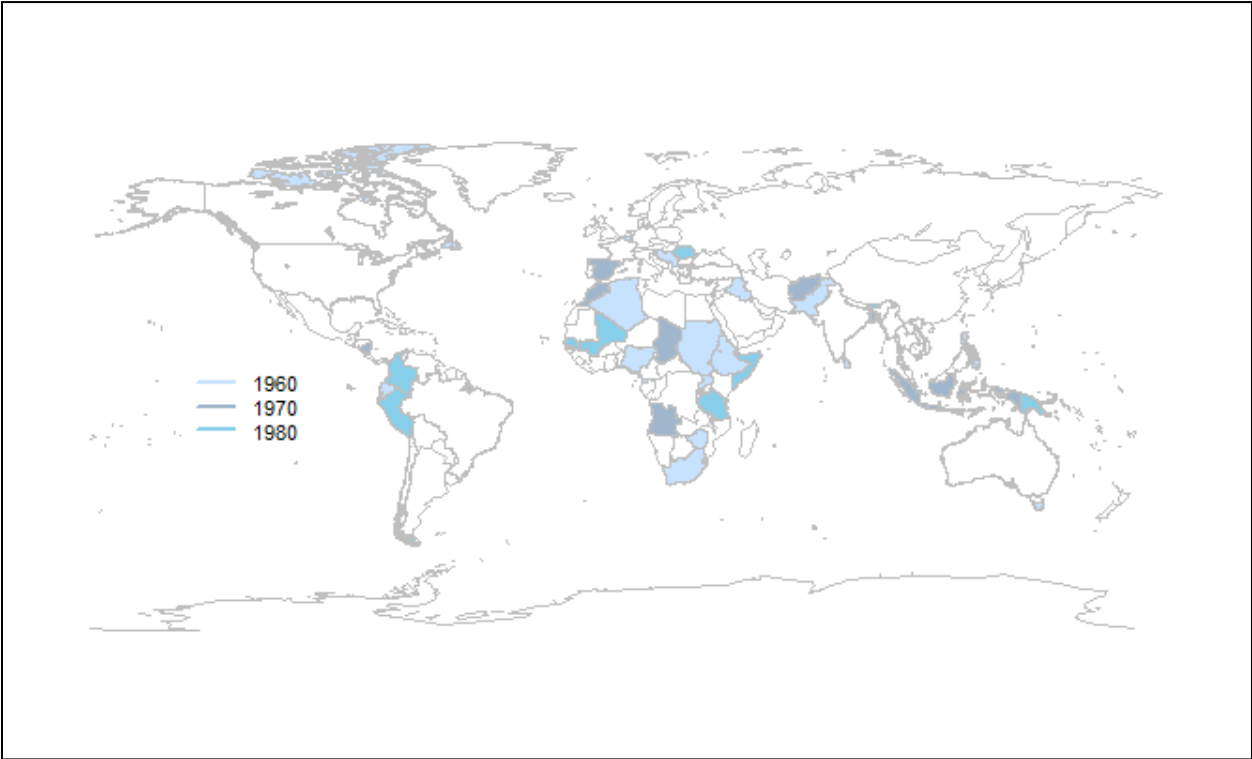
1960-1970. New onset of self-determination movements by country in the decade.



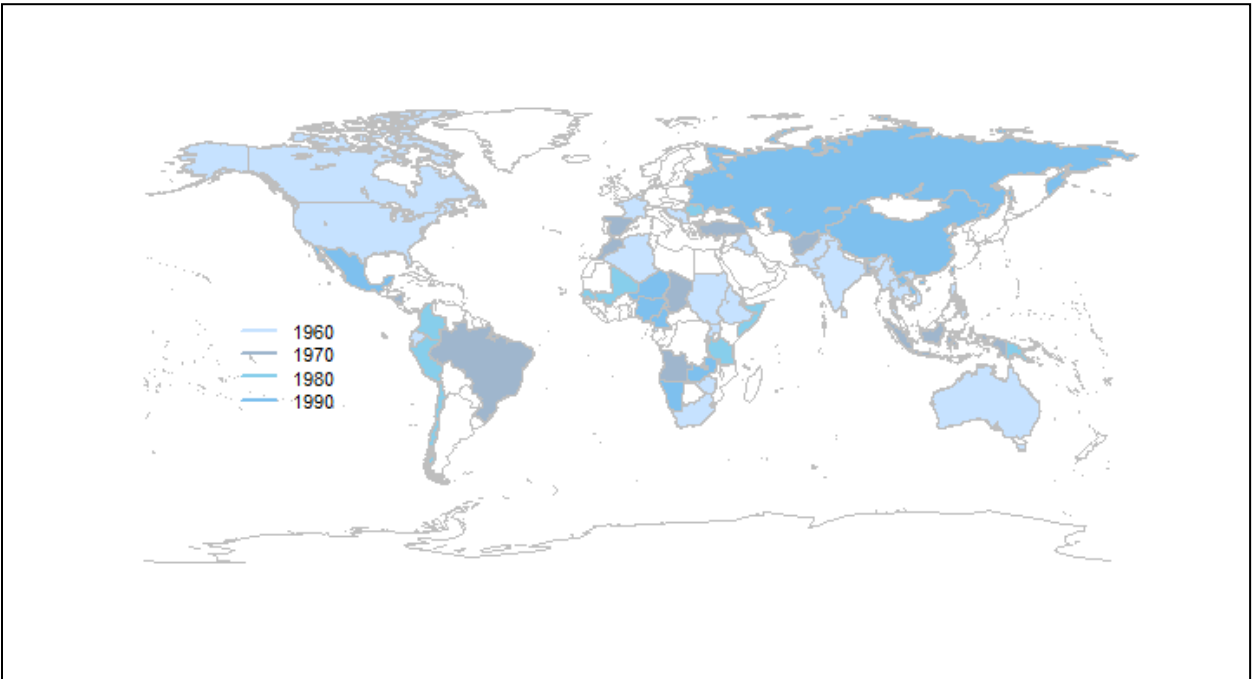
1970-1980. New onset of self-determination movements by country in the decade.



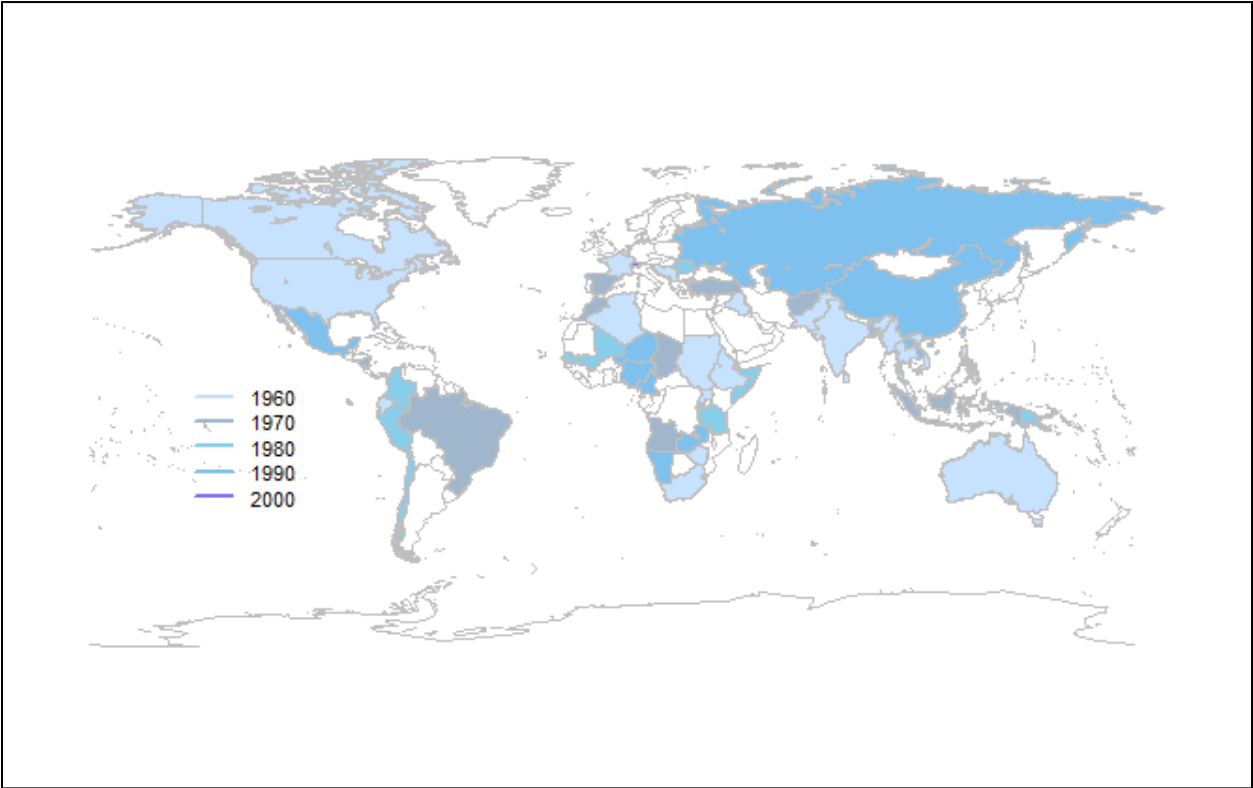
1980-1990. New onset of self-determination movements by country in the decade.



1990-2000. New onset of self-determination movements by country in the decade.



2000-2005. New onset of self-determination movements by country in the decade.



Tables

Table 1. Spatial determinants of onset of self-determination claims

	New onset in country	
	Coefficient	Standard Errors
Neighborhood onset ⁺	0.555***	(0.143)
Constant	-4.345***	(0.113)
Observations	6,665	
Pseudo R2	0.011	

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10, two tailed tests
⁺Indicates one-year lag

Table 2. Multilevel spatial autologistic analysis of determinants of self-determination claims onset

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Neighborhood onset ⁺	0.451*** (0.152)	0.400** (0.157)	0.382** (0.163)
Number of active SD claimants ⁺	0.377*** (0.062)	0.228*** (0.076)	0.080 (0.096)
Concessions in neighborhood ⁺	-0.192 (0.245)	-0.147 (0.245)	-0.007 (0.262)
Conflict in country ⁺	0.259 (0.257)	0.247 (0.261)	0.235 (0.270)
County area (log)		0.272*** (0.077)	0.274*** (0.084)
Country population (log)		-0.014 (0.070)	-0.048 (0.070)
Federal state		0.491* (0.264)	0.385 (0.297)
History of conflict in neighborhood			0.710** (0.298)
Former colony			0.190 (0.336)
Colonizer			0.627** (0.310)
Post Cold War			-0.351 (0.250)
EU membership			-0.185 (0.513)
OAS membership			-0.213 (0.393)
ASEAN membership			0.809* (0.418)
LAS membership			-0.275 (0.402)
AU membership			0.202 (0.312)
Constant	-4.638*** (0.145)	-7.870*** (1.031)	-7.543*** (1.099)
Log-Likelihood	-477.960	-462.414	-453.18
AIC	967.920	942.827	942.360
Observations	6,636	6,614	6,614

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10, two tailed tests

⁺Indicates one-year lag

Figures

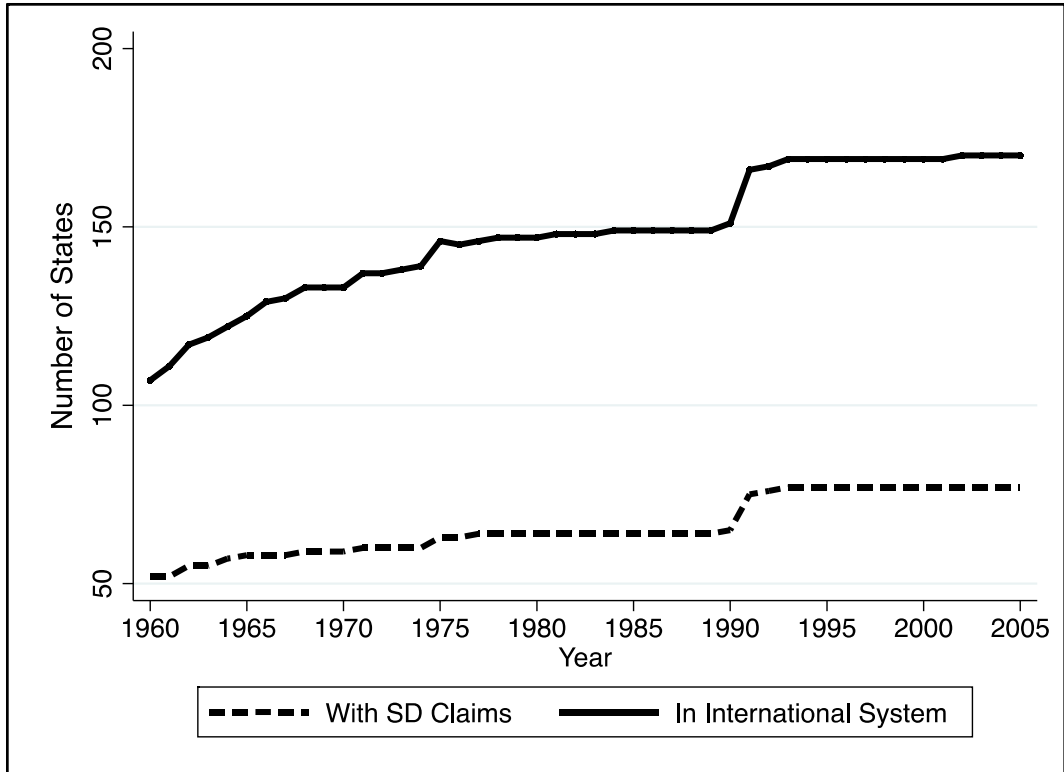


Figure 1. Number of states and states facing SD claims over time