State Religion and Discrimination Against Ethnic Minorities

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We address two issues neglected in cross-national ethnic conflict literature: the role of state religious exclusivity (SRE) in ethnic conflict and the causes of discrimination against ethnic minorities. We use data from the Minorities at Risk (MAR), Polity, and Religion and State (RAS) datasets to assess whether SRE influences the extent of discrimination and repression against ethnic minorities between 1990 and 2002. The results show that SRE is strongly and significantly associated with discrimination and repression against ethnic minorities. This is true both of ethno-religious minorities and ethnic minorities who are not religiously distinct from the majority group in the state.

While neglected in the cross-national literature for much of the 20th century, the role of religion in conflict has received increased attention since the late 1990s. This study addresses an aspect of this literature neglected by these recent studies of religion and conflict. Specifically, it uses data from the Minorities at Risk (MAR), Polity, and Religion and State (RAS) datasets to assess whether SRE influences the extent of discrimination and repression against ethnic minorities between 1990 and 2002. While this study certainly possesses implications for the larger issue of the dynamics and causes of ethnic conflict, the focus here is on the more limited but nevertheless important topic of two aspects of government behavior: SRE and government treatment of ethnic
minorities. Thus any discussion of other aspects of ethnic conflict either in
general or in particular within this study should not be taken as claims that
the results apply to all aspects of ethnic conflict but, rather, as attempts to
situate this study within the context of the larger body of research on ethnic
conflict.2

This study is both important and novel for several reasons. First, while
some previous studies test the impact of religion variables on discrimination
against ethno-religious minorities, none has evaluated the impact of these
variables on ethnic minorities that are not religiously distinct. SRE is par-
ticularly important in this context because, as is discussed below, there are
theoretical reasons to believe that it is related to discrimination.

Second, most quantitative studies of ethnic conflict use an action taken
by the ethnic minority as the dependent variable but do not assess the causes
of state behavior, including why states discriminate.3 The few studies that
do address the issue lack variables that provide the level of detail on SRE
provided by the variables from the RAS dataset.

Third, early warning is an important aspect of the cross-national liter-
ature on ethnic conflict. Discrimination against ethnic minorities is shown
by several studies to be a significant cause of ethnic conflict.4 Thus, under-
standing the causes of discrimination can help to provide an even earlier
prediction of where ethnic conflict might occur, potentially facilitating con-
flict prevention at an even earlier stage of conflict formation.

RELIGIOUS EXCLUSIVITY AND INTOLERANCE

This study tests whether SRE can be a cause of discrimination and repres-
sion against minorities. That SRE can lead to discrimination against religious
minorities is an uncontroversial proposition. Accordingly, the focus of this
discussion is the link between SRE and discrimination in general, including
against ethnic minorities that are not religiously distinct from the majority
group in a state.

SRE, in the context of this study, refers to state support for a single
religion to the exclusion of all others. While this exclusivity can manifest both
as support for one religion and restrictions on others, the empirical portion
of this study focuses on the former because the latter is unacceptably similar
to its dependent variables. An extreme example of a religiously exclusive
state is Saudi Arabia, which designates the Wahabbi version of Sunni Islam
as the state religion, barely tolerates Shi’i Islam and effectively bans all other
religions. Another religiously exclusive state, Iran, similarly supports a single
version of Islam but tolerates some, but not all, other religions, which are
given a second-class status. However, SRE usually is not this extreme and can
be found in most states. A previous survey of the SRE variables used in this
study finds that 85.1% of states “either support some religions over others,
place restrictions on some religions that are not placed on others, or both.”5
It is particularly appropriate to examine the impact of SRE on discrimination and repression because all of these factors are aspects of government policy. Thus, we are examining the impact of one aspect of government policy on another. This also simplifies some aspects of ethnic conflict that can often complicate a study. Many states have religiously and ethnically diverse populations. SRE measures the extent to which a single religious tradition influences a state. This is feasible even in religiously diverse states. It is even possible, though unusual, that a religious minority will control a state and enforce its religion through the government apparatus, as occurred in Iraq during the Saddam Hussein era when the Sunni minority significantly restricted the religious practices of the Shi'i majority. Thus, the presence of SRE in a state constitutes evidence that a single religious tradition influences the government apparatus, regardless of the extent of religious diversity in that state.

Religion is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon with the potential to influence many types of individual, group, and state behaviors, sometimes in a cross-cutting manner. For example, many argue that most religious traditions are sufficiently complex to support aggression and violence, on one hand, and peace and reconciliation, on the other. Accordingly, it is not surprising that there is considerable disagreement on the nature of religion and its potential influence on tolerance. This review reflects that diversity of viewpoints. Due to space considerations it is only feasible to highlight some of the relevant trends in the literature.

Intuition suggests that a state that is intolerant in one dimension of its behavior may be intolerant along others. For example, Madeley argues religiously exclusive states base at least part of their regime in unpluralistic concepts, thereby increasing the likelihood that they will reject pluralism in other contexts. Endorsing one religion usually entails supporting it in some exclusive manner and correlates highly with religious discrimination. Thus, to the extent that a state separates itself from religion, it should engage in less discrimination.

None of this is intended to claim that religion always leads to intolerance. In fact religion can be used as a force for tolerance and reconciliation. However, those that make this argument tend to acknowledge that religion often supports intolerance and focus on how to purposefully use religious traditions to support peace and reconciliation. Also, the presence of SRE implies intolerance in a state. Thus, this study attempts to link only religious intolerance (rather than religion in general) to other forms of intolerance.

PREVIOUS CROSS-NATIONAL STUDIES

The purpose of this review is to establish the following: (1) the religion variables in this study are more comprehensive and potentially relevant to the task at hand than those used in previous studies; (2) most prior studies focus
on the behavior of minority groups and not the behavior of governments, including discrimination against minorities; (3) existing studies indicate a link between religious factors and conflict; and (4) most previous studies of religion and ethnic conflicts do not specifically examine the impact of religious factors on conflicts between two groups that belong to the same religion. As the literature that examines the impact of religion on conflict in general (much less discrimination, the topic of this study), while growing, is still relatively small, this discussion includes all relevant cross-national, quantitative studies of which we are aware that focus on the role of religion in conflict in general. Unfortunately, space limitations restrict our ability to also address the more general literature on ethnic conflict beyond some brief references.10

The vast majority of studies that directly test the impact of religion on conflict focus on religious identity. Thus, they do not actually examine whether some more specific aspect of religion like SRE, religious institutions, or some other religious factor influences conflict. Many of these studies examine the link between specific religious traditions and conflict. For example, studies link Islam with a higher propensity toward terrorism11 and domestic conflict.

A second type of identity-based variable focuses on interreligious conflict and intrareligious conflict. Several studies found that intrareligious domestic conflicts are more common than interreligious domestic conflicts but reported mixed results on whether religious identity impacts conflict levels.12 Another series of studies found that the majority of terrorist acts and new terrorist groups in the past few decades have been religious ones13 but others argue that even so this terrorism is primarily motivated by nationalism.14 Studies of international conflict produce mixed results. Some find that states that belong to different religions are more likely to go to war with each other15 but others locate no such correlation.16

A third approach simply measures the religious diversity or fractionalization in a state.17

Finally, one of the more prominent research agendas focuses on Samuel Huntington’s18 clash of civilizations theory. Huntington predicted that in the post-Cold War era, most conflict would be between different entities, which he calls civilizations. As these civilizations are to a great extent religiously homogeneous,19 the findings based on them essentially test whether conflict between two entities that belong to different religions is more common and violent. Most of these studies find that religious identity, in the form of civilization, is not the primary driving force behind conflict. However, most of these studies find that a significant minority of conflicts are civilizational and that civilization impacts conflict but other factors matter. Even the studies that directly compare the impact of civilization and religion on conflict find that, while the civilization variables impact domestic conflict, the religion variables have a stronger effect.20
A small number of studies go beyond religious identity when measuring the impact of religion on conflict. Fox shows that religious discrimination, religious grievances, religious institutions, and whether the state has an official religion all have an impact on ethnic conflict, but this aspect of the study only looks at conflicts involving ethno-religious minorities. Svensson and Toft find that if a conflict is religious (that is, based on religious issues) it is likely to be more severe. However, Pearce finds that whether a conflict is religious does not have a significant impact.

Most quantitative studies of (nonreligious) ethnic conflict that address the issue agree that discrimination and repression against ethnic minorities and the grievances caused by these government actions are among the major causes of ethnic conflict. However, few of these studies focus on the causes of this discrimination and, rather, assess the extent of ethnic conflict, usually measured by the amount of protest and rebellion. Some focus on other factors like the extent of separatism, irredentism, regime characteristics, the impact of ethnicity on international conflict, or international intervention in ethnic conflict.

Discrimination, therefore, is in need of further attention regarding its causes. Gurr defines “group discrimination” as follows: “political, economic and cultural restrictions that are invidiously imposed on members of ethnic, religious and other communal minorities as a matter of public policy or social practice.” This definition brings out the multidimensional nature of discrimination as well as its existence as the result of intentional behavior. Like most other expositions, Gurr focuses overwhelmingly on the impact of discrimination rather than its causes. This is a natural set of priorities from the standpoint of public policy, but the goal here is to examine the causal arrow when it is pointed in the other direction, namely, why does ethnic discrimination occur in the first place?

The few studies that focus on religious causes of discrimination against ethnic minorities use limited religion variables that primarily focus on identity and whether religious issues are relevant to the conflict. They also include one relatively crude SRE variable that is coded as 1 if the state has an official religion or otherwise supports a single religious tradition and is otherwise coded as 0. This variable, though considerably less sophisticated than the variables for SRE used in this study, is significantly associated with higher levels of discrimination. This variable also correlates with several other aspects of ethnic conflict. Thus there is direct evidence that SRE impacts discrimination as well as other aspects of ethnic conflict. However, the religion variables for these studies, other than the religious identity variables, were collected only for 105 ethno-religious minorities. Thus, the findings do not address the impact of SRE on ethnic conflicts involving ethnic minorities that are not religiously distinct. As most other studies of the impact of religion on ethnic conflict use only religious identity variables, this means that no study of which we are aware of has specifically tested whether
RELIGION AND DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination can take many forms and vary in intensity. Thus two dependent variables will be investigated in this study: political restrictions and repression, in both instances referring to actions by governments. In turn, two independent variables, official support for religion and religious legislation, will be used to represent the different types of SRE.

The model for this study and the wide range of control variables implemented in the research design are based on those found to be important in previous studies of the causes of discrimination that provide a full discussion for the reasoning behind these variables. The research design also includes several additional variables that measure the religious demography of a state because previous studies have shown that religious demography influences ethnic conflict. While it is beyond the scope of this work to provide a detailed explanation for the inclusion of each control variable, the summary that follows is intended to make clear the theoretical expectations in place.

Religious identity, as noted above, is anticipated to be relevant to discrimination. What if the minority is of a different religion or denomination? The intuition is that discrimination becomes more likely. The identity of the minority and majority, respectively (Catholic, other Christian, Muslim, etc.), are included to control for religion-specific effects. The literature on each of these religious groupings is vast and reasonable arguments can be made back and forth as to which would be more or less likely to engage in (experience) discrimination as a majority (minority).

Another set of control variables is based upon politico-economic development. Ceteris paribus, democracies are anticipated to engage in less discrimination for both constitutional and normative reasons. Gurr showed that stable long-term democracies engage in less discrimination, so the interaction of years since the last polity change with democraticness also is included. Similarly, all other things being equal, more prosperous states are expected to be more enlightened as well, with subsequent lower anticipated levels of discrimination. In addition, an interaction between wealth and democraticness will be added to recognize the especially low likelihood of discrimination on the part of the most advanced states.

Third-party effects also are incorporated among the controls. Events in surrounding states, most notably protest and rebellion, may impact upon government policies in the state at hand. Discrimination and repression may become worse if protest and rebellion are at high levels in the “neighborhood” because of concerns about contagion. Third-party effects may take place more directly in the form of intervention, whether political or military...
in nature. The expectation here is that intervention would tend to reduce levels of discrimination and repression.

Potential inertial effects are recognized by including past levels of protest and rebellion in the research design. Discrimination and repression may be expected to increase in response to high levels of such behavior.

Most states strongly resist separatist challenges. Accordingly, separatist minorities are likely to suffer from higher levels of repression and discrimination. Previous studies of ethnic conflict have shown that cultural differences and the population of a state influence the extent of ethnic conflict. These same studies have shown shifts in the overall extent of ethnic conflict over time. Thus it is appropriate to control for time in this study.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study examines the link between SRE, as measured by state support for religion, and discrimination against ethnic minorities. The data from this study comes from three datasets. The Religion and State (RAS) dataset includes data for 175 countries between 1990 and 2002. For reasons described below, only 161 of these countries are included in this study. The unit of analysis is the state and the focus is on the extent of government involvement in religion. The Polity dataset includes state-level information on a country’s regime from 1800 to 2006. Finally the Minorities at Risk (MAR) dataset focuses on ethnic conflict and contains data from 1945 to 2003. The unit of analysis is ethnic minority within a state. Two hundred eighty-five of these groups were active in the time period covered by this study and are included in the analysis. This study focuses on the 1990 to 2002 period as this is when all three of the datasets overlap.

While there is an overlap between ethnic minorities and religious minorities, it is important to note the two are not the same. For example, among the 285 ethnic minorities in this study, 148 are not religiously distinct from the majority group in the state. Similarly, many religious minorities are not included in MAR’s list of ethnic minorities. For example, Catholics in the United States can be considered a religious minority but do not meet MAR’s criteria for a politically active ethnic minority. This is not surprising as many like Gurr and Horowitz argue that religion, while a potential element of ethnicity, is not always an accurate marker of ethnicity. Thus, the problem set used here constitutes one of ethnic rather than religious minorities.

We first describe the variables used in this study.

**Dependent Variables**

Two dependent variables are taken from the MAR dataset:
Political restrictions is a composite variable based on restrictions on nine types of activity or political rights each coded on a scale of 0 to 3.36. Repression is a composite variable based on 23 types of repression: ranging from small scale arrests of group members to military massacres of suspected rebel supporters. Each of these variables is coded on the following scale:

1. Tactic not used.
2. Tactic used against group members engaged in collective action.
3. Tactic used against group members in ambiguous situations.
4. Tactic used against group members not engaged in collective action.

The resulting scale ranges from 0 to 69. This variable is only available from 1996 to 2002.

Independent Variables: SRE Variables

The two variables for SRE are taken from the RAS dataset. The first, official support for religion, focuses on whether official state policy in general supports religion and to what extent. It is coded as follows:

0 No support for religion.
1 Supportive: The state supports all religions more or less equally.
2 Cooperation: The state falls short of endorsing a particular religion but certain religions benefit from state support more than others.
3 Civil religion: While the state does not officially endorse a religion, one religion serves unofficially as the state’s civil religion.
4 The state has more than one official religion.
5 The state has one official religion.

The second variable, religious legislation, is based on a list of 33 types of religious legislation that may exist in a state. For each law on the list, the coding of the religious legislation variable is increased by one to create a variable ranging from 0 to 32, as two of the religious education laws are mutually exclusive.

Control Variables

Religious differences measures whether the ethnic minority and the majority group in the state belong to different religions based on the following scale: 0–same religion and denomination; 1–different denominations of the same religion; 2–different religions. It is taken from a set of religion variables
designed for use with the MAR dataset. This variable is used only in regressions that look at all of the cases included in this study.

The majority religion in a state is taken into account with three variables. Each is coded as 1 if the majority group belongs to a specific religious tradition. The three religious traditions included are Catholicism, other Christian groups, and Islam. The RAS dataset coded the majority religion of all countries but these are the only general categories for which there are a sufficient number of states for the inclusion of a dummy variable to be meaningful. Also this general coding of “other Christian groups” and Islam is not meant to ignore the diversity that exists within each of these religions. Rather, these more general codings are necessary to permit a sufficient number of cases to be coded as positive for each variable. The religion of the minority group is taken into account in the same way using three variables for the same three religious traditions. The minority religion variables were only included in some of the regressions, the details of which are described below and are taken from Fox.

The religious demography of the state is taken into account using two variables from the RAS dataset. The first measures what proportion of the population belongs to the majority religion. The second measures how many minority religions exist that constitute at least 5% of the population.

The following variables are taken from the MAR dataset.

Cultural differences measures the extent of cultural differences between the majority and minority groups based on differences in the following five factors: ethnicity or nationality; language; historical origin; social customs; and residence. Each of these factors is coded on the following scale: 0–no differences; 1–some indeterminate differential; 2–significant differential. The resulting variable ranges from 0 to 10. A sixth component measuring religious differentials was not included in this variable due to covariance with the religious differences variable described above.

The separatism index measures the extent to which a minority group is separatist on the following scale: 0–no separatism; 1–latent separatism, the group was historically autonomous or the land upon which they live was transferred from another state; 2–historical, the group gave rise to separatist or autonomy movements that persisted as an active political force for 5+ years in their region of origin between 1940 and 1980; 3–active separatist or autonomy movements in the 1980s or 1990s.

Political intervention and military intervention by foreign states are included separately. Each is based on four types of interventions by states.

Past protest and past rebellion measure the highest level of protest in which the minority group engaged during the past five years. Both variables are from the MAR dataset. Contagion of protest and contagion of rebellion measure the amount of protest and in the geographic region in which the ethnic conflict in question takes place. This is done by taking the average level of these variables in the region for the year in question.
The following variables are taken from the Polity dataset.

*Polity* measures regime type. It ranges from $-10$ to $10$ with $-10$ being the most autocratic regime and $10$ being the most democratic regime. The variable is based on the regulation, openness, and competitiveness of executive recruitment, constraints on the executive, and the regulation and competitiveness of political participation.

*Polity-squared* takes the square of the polity measure. This measure is used because previous studies suggest that there is often a curvilinear relationship between ethnic conflict variables and regime type.

*Years since last change* measures regime stability by measuring how long it has been since the polity variable has changed in a state.

The following variables are taken from other sources. The *log of per-capita GDP*, which controls for economic development, is taken from the GDP figures provided at the UN Statistics Division Web site. The *log of population* is based on the population figures provided by the CIA World Factbook. *Time* simply subtracts 1990 from the year of the case in question. It effectively measures whether there has been a change in overall discrimination over time.

**Research Design**

This study uses OLS regressions to determine the impact of the independent and control variables on each dependent variable. The three datasets use two different units of analysis. This study performs separate tests using each unit of analysis for reasons described below.

First, a test is performed using the minority group as the unit of analysis (the MAR unit of analysis). Each minority in the MAR dataset is considered a separate case for each year for which there are codings. If a state has three minority groups, each is a separate case for each year in which there is data for each group. The data is merged with that of the other datasets by adding the codings for the relevant year in the relevant state to each case year. Thus in a state with three minorities, the codings added from the RAS and Polity datasets would be identical for each of the three groups for a given year. This is appropriate as these two datasets measure state behavior and characteristics and while the minority groups in a particular state may be different, they all live in the same state.

This set of tests is performed three times for each dependent variable: once for all 3546 cases, once for the 1661 minorities that are members of different religions than the majority group or different denominations of the same religion as the majority group (designated here as ethno-religious minorities), and once for the 1885 minorities that belong to the same religion and denomination as the majority group (designated here as nonreligious minorities). The *religious differences* variable is included only in the tests for
State Religion and Ethnic Minorities

all cases because there is no variation in the tests looking at the two subsets. The variables measuring the religious identity of the minority group are not used in the regressions for nonreligious minorities because in these cases the majority and minority religion are the same.

This testing of these two subsets of the dataset allows us to determine whether any correlation found between SRE and discrimination or repression is independent of religious motivations. That is, it would not be particularly surprising to find that states that are religiously exclusive discriminate against religious minorities—though determining the extent of that discrimination is a potentially interesting endeavor—but to show (as the results presented below do) that such states are also more likely to discriminate against nonreligious ethnic minorities is a finding of a different order.

A second set of analyses uses the state as the level of analysis. This set of tests is secondary in nature. The primary results are those from the group-level data analysis described above. On the one hand, the MAR dataset has been criticized by Fearon and Laitin among others, on the grounds of selection bias. This is because the MAR dataset includes only minorities that are politically active or suffer from significant levels of discrimination and, thus, does not include null cases. On the other hand, Gurr effectively argues that despite this feature of the MAR dataset, studies based upon it are still valid. This position is reinforced by the simulation study of MAR data by Beger, who concludes that causal inferences made using MAR are not fundamentally flawed. In spite of the stronger argument offered by the latter, more favorable position on MAR data, performing tests based on the state as a unit of analysis provides an additional counter to criticism. Accordingly these tests are included simply to assess whether the results for state-level data are consistent with those of the tests performed on the group-level data and thereby counter this selection-bias criticism.

The MAR codings are altered to create state-level codings based on the maximum coding for the case—that is, if there is more than one group in the state, the coding for the group that scores the highest is used. This measurement assumes that whether a state engages in intense discrimination against any single minority is more important than how many minorities might suffer from a lower mean level of discrimination.

When merging the datasets for the state-unit-of-analysis version of the data, 14 of the states included in the RAS dataset were removed because they fell below the population threshold of the MAR dataset. Thus the analysis includes 161 states.

Forty-four of these states have no minorities recorded in the MAR dataset. For these cases, other than the contagion variables, the MAR variables are coded as 0. This is appropriate for some of the MAR variables as the criterion for inclusion in the MAR dataset is whether a minority engages in significant political activity or is subject to discrimination or repression. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that had there been any minorities in these
44 states that suffered from significant levels of discrimination or engaged in significant levels of protest or rebellion they would have been included in the MAR dataset.

However, no minorities that meet these criteria exist in these states. So it is not appropriate to include the intervention, separatism, or cultural differences variables in this set of tests. There is little likelihood of an intervention on behalf of a minority that has no need for it, so the intervention variables would effectively become a dummy variable for whether a state has politically active ethnic minorities. It is possible that a group in one of these 44 states was historically separatist but has not been politically active since 1990 so it is not possible to assume that these states should be coded as 0 on that variable. Finally, if no ethnic minority is coded for a state it is not feasible to code the cultural differences between a minority group and the majority group in the state. For similar reasons, the three variables measuring the religious denomination of the minority group are not included in these regressions.

It is certainly possible to criticize this inclusion of 44 states with no MAR minorities on the grounds that these states may be homogeneous with no real ethnic minorities. However, including these states is appropriate for two reasons. First, excluding them would replicate the selection bias this set of tests is meant to counter. Second, very few states have no ethnic minorities that meet the MAR minimum population threshold. It is the MAR requirement that minorities must be politically active or suffer from significant discrimination that excludes most of these minorities from the MAR dataset.47

To further address the selection-bias issue, Magnus Öberg’s dataset: *Minorities Not “at Risk”: A Control Group for Use with Minorities at Risk Data* is used as the primary data structure for creating the control group dataset.48 A detailed discussion about the recoding procedures for the Öberg data and the results of this analysis are provided in Appendix A.49 The results are largely consistent with the primary results of this study.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

Overall the results show that SRE is strongly connected to discrimination and repression against ethnic minorities. The results for the group-level analysis are presented in Tables 1 and 2.50 Consider first the two independent variables: *official support for religion* and *religious legislation* as related to political restrictions and repression, respectively. *Official support* is significantly and positively associated ($p < .05$) with *political restrictions* in all three regressions from Table 1. The results in Table 2 show that *religious legislation* is significantly associated with *political restrictions* in all three regressions ($p < .05$). Thus, states that are religiously exclusive engage in higher levels of
<table>
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<th>All minorities</th>
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<td>Polity-Squared</td>
<td>−0.004</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>−0.006*</td>
<td>0.016**</td>
<td>0.024*</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polity: Years since last change</td>
<td>−0.001</td>
<td>−0.021***</td>
<td>0.014***</td>
<td>−0.006</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>−0.009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-Per-Capita GDP</td>
<td>1.000***</td>
<td>1.568***</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>0.253</td>
<td>0.284</td>
<td>0.206</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (years since 1990)</td>
<td>−0.020</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>−0.050*</td>
<td>0.518**</td>
<td>0.529***</td>
<td>0.513***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-Population</td>
<td>−0.193*</td>
<td>−0.473***</td>
<td>−0.255</td>
<td>0.916***</td>
<td>0.904***</td>
<td>0.518</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Intervention</td>
<td>1.252***</td>
<td>0.130</td>
<td>2.145***</td>
<td>0.401</td>
<td>−0.125</td>
<td>0.705*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Intervention</td>
<td>0.680***</td>
<td>1.227***</td>
<td>−0.027</td>
<td>0.420</td>
<td>1.573*</td>
<td>−0.557</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contagion of Protest</td>
<td>−0.222</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>−0.328</td>
<td>0.496</td>
<td>−0.935</td>
<td>1.706***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contagion of Rebellion</td>
<td>0.528*</td>
<td>0.685***</td>
<td>−0.183</td>
<td>0.445</td>
<td>1.355*</td>
<td>−0.152</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Protest</td>
<td>0.452***</td>
<td>0.757***</td>
<td>0.314***</td>
<td>0.617***</td>
<td>1.092***</td>
<td>0.330***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Rebellion</td>
<td>0.142***</td>
<td>0.165***</td>
<td>0.155***</td>
<td>1.083***</td>
<td>1.169***</td>
<td>0.979***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>−3.188*</td>
<td>6.679***</td>
<td>−11.668***</td>
<td>−12.899***</td>
<td>−7.513**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Observations</td>
<td>3546</td>
<td>1661</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>1043</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R-Square</td>
<td>0.2541</td>
<td>0.2721</td>
<td>0.2713</td>
<td>0.3206</td>
<td>0.3467</td>
<td>0.3061</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All minorities Coef</th>
<th>Religious minorities Coef</th>
<th>Non-religious minorities Coef</th>
<th>All minorities Coef</th>
<th>Religious minorities Coef</th>
<th>Non-religious minorities Coef</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political restrictions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official Support for Religion</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Legislation</td>
<td>0.145***</td>
<td>0.196***</td>
<td>0.086***</td>
<td>0.115***</td>
<td>0.136**</td>
<td>0.086*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different Religion or Denomination</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.615*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority Catholic</td>
<td>0.678**</td>
<td>0.300</td>
<td>0.908**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority Other Christian</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>0.940**</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.141</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority Muslim</td>
<td>−0.814***</td>
<td>−0.942**</td>
<td>0.170</td>
<td>−1.776***</td>
<td>−0.696</td>
<td>−2.084***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority %</td>
<td>−0.006</td>
<td>0.017*</td>
<td>−0.043***</td>
<td>0.028**</td>
<td>0.040*</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Religious Minorities</td>
<td>−0.526***</td>
<td>−0.382**</td>
<td>−1.053***</td>
<td>0.233</td>
<td>0.341</td>
<td>−0.087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority Catholic</td>
<td>0.273</td>
<td>−0.764*</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>−0.649</td>
<td>−2.087*</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority Other Christian</td>
<td>0.067</td>
<td>−0.114</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>−0.862*</td>
<td>−1.661**</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority Muslim</td>
<td>0.603**</td>
<td>−0.250</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>−0.502</td>
<td>−1.032</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Differences</td>
<td>0.046*</td>
<td>−0.029</td>
<td>0.104**</td>
<td>−0.003</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>−0.015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separatism</td>
<td>−0.429***</td>
<td>−0.247**</td>
<td>−0.425**</td>
<td>−0.125</td>
<td>−0.158</td>
<td>0.100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polity</td>
<td>−0.153***</td>
<td>−0.222**</td>
<td>−0.100**</td>
<td>−0.242***</td>
<td>−0.279***</td>
<td>−0.183***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polity-Squared</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.007*</td>
<td>0.017**</td>
<td>0.025*</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polity: Years since last change</td>
<td>−0.001</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.007*</td>
<td>−0.006</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>−0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-Per-Capita GDP</td>
<td>0.627***</td>
<td>1.039***</td>
<td>−0.006</td>
<td>−0.061</td>
<td>−0.125</td>
<td>0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (years since 1990)</td>
<td>−0.039*</td>
<td>−0.011</td>
<td>−0.060*</td>
<td>0.497***</td>
<td>0.508***</td>
<td>0.495***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-Population</td>
<td>−0.325***</td>
<td>−0.552**</td>
<td>−0.359**</td>
<td>0.801***</td>
<td>0.841**</td>
<td>0.425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Intervention</td>
<td>1.296***</td>
<td>0.351</td>
<td>2.117***</td>
<td>0.437</td>
<td>−0.010</td>
<td>0.701*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military Intervention</td>
<td>0.660***</td>
<td>1.444***</td>
<td>−0.115</td>
<td>0.390</td>
<td>1.644**</td>
<td>−0.568</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contagion of Protest</td>
<td>−0.271</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>−0.333</td>
<td>0.458</td>
<td>−0.926</td>
<td>1.662***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contagion of Rebellion</td>
<td>−0.002</td>
<td>0.282</td>
<td>−0.358</td>
<td>0.179</td>
<td>0.998</td>
<td>−0.289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Protest</td>
<td>0.476***</td>
<td>0.834***</td>
<td>0.306***</td>
<td>0.646***</td>
<td>1.159***</td>
<td>0.316**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Rebellion</td>
<td>0.143***</td>
<td>0.139**</td>
<td>0.160***</td>
<td>1.087***</td>
<td>1.160***</td>
<td>0.991***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>1.794*</td>
<td>−1.201</td>
<td>7.759***</td>
<td>−10.079***</td>
<td>−11.328***</td>
<td>−6.569**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Observations</td>
<td>3546</td>
<td>1661</td>
<td>1885</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>1043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R-Square</td>
<td>0.2473</td>
<td>0.2983</td>
<td>0.2738</td>
<td>0.3173</td>
<td>0.3504</td>
<td>0.3093</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.
political restrictions against ethnic minorities, even if those ethnic minorities belong to the same religion as the majority group.

The results for the tests with repression as a dependent variable are weaker. Official support is not significantly associated with higher levels of repression in Table 1. Religious legislation is associated with higher repression significantly for all minorities ($p < .001$), religious minorities ($p < .009$), and nonreligious minorities ($p < .025$).

Overall, the evidence also shows that SRE is associated with repression and political restrictions against both ethno-religious minorities and nonreligious ethnic minorities. The one instance in which there is a difference in results is for religious legislation in relation to political restrictions: significant/nonsignificant for nonreligious minorities/religious minorities. If anything can be made of this difference it might be that the result feeds into the notion of a general culture of negative treatment for minorities as a result of SRE as opposed to something more clearly focused on religious minorities.

Several of the control variables prove to have a significant impact on discrimination and repression.$^{51}$

The majority and minority religions in a state have an impact but not consistently across regressions. It is interesting to note, however, that both political restrictions and repression reach higher levels (in two of three instances) as the majority religion’s percentage of population increases. This result goes against the notion that smaller (larger) minorities will be perceived as less (more) threatening by the majority. It also indirectly speaks in favor of religious diversity as a check against negative sanctions.

Political restrictions are higher against minorities in more economically developed states and when there are cultural differences from the majority group. Although it is beyond the scope of this discussion to explore the nuances in detail, it may be that these results are connected to each other. Perhaps developed societies are more likely to attempt to coerce those perceived as insular and different, that is, out of step with modernization and the mainstream.

Not surprisingly both repression and political restrictions are lower in more democratic states. Note that both Polity and Polity-Squared are statistically significant and negative, six and four times, respectively. This reinforces the idea of a curvilinear relationship, as anticipated.$^{52}$ It also is encouraging to see that years since a change in polity type are associated negatively with political restrictions in two out of three instances. This suggests that time itself is helpful in mellowing regimes with regard to this type of behavior.

Political restrictions have dropped over time (that is, measured in years since 1990) but repression has increased—a substitutability effect that is unfortunate to see in that the latter is more harsh than the former. Both political intervention and military intervention are associated with higher repression and political restrictions, but this relationship is slightly more extensive for
**TABLE 3** The Causes of Discrimination and Repression, 1990 to 2002—State Level of Analysis (Max Scores)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Political restrictions</th>
<th>Repression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coef</td>
<td>Coef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official Support for Religion</td>
<td>0.432**</td>
<td>0.397***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Legislation</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority Catholic</td>
<td>1.452***</td>
<td>−1.266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority Other Christian</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>−1.365*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority Muslim</td>
<td>0.531*</td>
<td>−2.063***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority %</td>
<td>−0.055***</td>
<td>−0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Religious Minorities</td>
<td>−0.723***</td>
<td>0.080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polity</td>
<td>−0.124***</td>
<td>−0.203***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polity-Squared</td>
<td>0.007*</td>
<td>0.033***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polity: Years since last change</td>
<td>−0.003</td>
<td>−0.024**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-Per-Capita GDP</td>
<td>−0.038</td>
<td>−0.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time (years since 1990)</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.506***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log-Population</td>
<td>0.844***</td>
<td>2.165***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contagion of Protest</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td>0.319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contagion of Rebellion</td>
<td>0.441*</td>
<td>−0.128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Protest</td>
<td>0.907***</td>
<td>0.882***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Rebellion</td>
<td>0.358***</td>
<td>1.329***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.762</td>
<td>−12.793***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Observations</td>
<td>2058</td>
<td>1127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R-Square</td>
<td>0.3157</td>
<td>0.4184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** ∗p < .05; ∗∗p < .01; ∗∗∗p < .001.

**political restrictions. Past protest and past rebellion** are strongly associated with both dependent variables, while the effects of contagion of protest and contagion of rebellion are inconsistent.

**Political restrictions** are less likely, across the board, as the number of religious minorities increases. This linkage reinforces the point made earlier about the potentially positive effects of religious diversity. Separatism is connected negatively in two out of three instances to **political restrictions**. This is an odd result, given that separatism is anticipated to play an aggravating role in state center relations with a minority group.

Perhaps the most puzzling result concerns the effects of logged population: uniformly negative with respect to **political restrictions** and positive regarding repression. Finally, there are simply nonresults to report with respect to the control variable for different religions or denominations.

The tests for the state level of analysis are presented in Table 3. As will be recalled, the purpose of these tests is to assess whether the selection-bias criticism of the MAR dataset is applicable to these results. As these results are consistent with those of the group-level analysis it is unlikely that selection bias is an issue in this study. The results show **religious legislation**
to be positively and significantly associated with both political restrictions and repression. Official support for religion is significantly and positively associated with political restrictions.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The results show that for the 1990 to 2002 period regimes that are religiously exclusive tend to engage in higher levels of political restrictions and repression against ethnic minorities. This is true of both ethno-religious minorities and minorities that belong to the same religion as the majority group, though the link between SRE and repression for nonreligious ethnic minorities is weaker than the other results presented here. One possible explanation for this is that political restrictions are more closely related to exclusion from politics than is repression. That is, SRE implies a government tendency to be exclusive in its habits. While this can certainly be related to repression—which includes acts like mass arrests, torture, killing, etc.—these acts go beyond simple exclusivity. Rather they are government activities intended to maintain policies of exclusivity and are thus one step removed from the policies of exclusivity themselves. Political discrimination includes the types of behavior that directly create exclusivity like restrictions on voting rights, access to higher office, and recruitment into the military and police. This implies that where religious-identity differences are involved governments need to make a more concerted effort to maintain exclusivity policies.

As noted above, it is not surprising that SRE leads to other types of exclusivity toward religious minorities. The fact that it also leads to political discrimination and repression toward nonreligious ethnic minorities is a more novel finding. Thus it makes sense that the link between SRE and other types of exclusivity is stronger for ethno-religious minorities than for other ethnic minorities.

States with low levels of SRE such as the United States, Albania, Cameroon, and Taiwan engage in very little discrimination and repression against ethnic minorities, whether or not those minorities are religiously different from the majority group. States with mid-levels of SRE, such as Panama, Bulgaria, Ethiopia, and Spain, tend to restrict some minorities but not others and the restrictions are generally but not always low level. The higher level restrictions in these states tend to be associated with separatists groups such as the Basques in Spain.

States with high levels of SRE engage in discrimination and repression against most ethnic minorities, even those that belong to the same religion as the majority in the state. For example, Iran, a Shi’i Muslim state, restricts its Shi’i Azerbaijani minority as well as several Sunni Muslim minorities. Pakistan, a Sunni Muslim state, restricts the Baluchi, Mohajir, Pashtun, and Sindhi minorities—all of whom are also Sunni Muslims. However, as predicted by
the general results, both of these states restrict some religious minorities such as the Christians and Bahai in Iran and Ahmadis in Pakistan to a greater extent than nonreligiously distinct minorities. It is also important to note that most states with high levels of SRE are also nondemocratic states. This tendency is consistent with the finding that states with SRE tend to be less tolerant.

Other variables, designated as controls in this research design, have an impact, including various aspects of religious demography, characteristics of the regime itself such as whether the state is democratic or autocratic and characteristics of the minority including the extent of past protest and rebellion by the minority group. Thus, the overall results show that SRE is an important factor in determining the extent of political restrictions and repression against ethnic minorities, but not the only factor. This is consistent with past quantitative studies that show that religious factors influence conflict but they are rarely the only cause or even the primary cause.

This study is novel in that it uses religion variables that are arguably more detailed and potentially accurate than those used in previous studies of religion and conflict. Past studies mostly used variables based on religious identity. In this study as well as others that include both religious identity variables and variables that measure other more specific aspects of religion’s impact on conflict, the variables that measure the more specific aspects of religion tend to be more significant. Thus, developing and applying variables that measure manifestations of religion more specific than religious identity to the study of ethnic conflict should be an important part of the agenda for future research.

This study is also novel in that it is one of the few that focuses on state participation in ethnic conflict, rather than the extent of conflict behavior by minority groups. The concept that the state is an actor in conflict is not a new one. This has been so at least since Skocpol argued that the state is an actor in revolutions. Yet the quantitative literature on ethnic conflict, other than controlling for regime characteristics, has much more often than not neglected this insight. That is, studies tend to control for state characteristics but few of them specifically examine the causes of state behavior in ethnic conflict. Thus, the results of this study show that a greater focus on state behavior in ethnic conflict should also be part of the agenda for future research.

Finally, this study is novel in that it compares the impact of religious factors on religious minorities to the impact of the same factors on ethnic minorities who are not religiously distinct from the majority religion in their state. It is not particularly surprising that SRE can lead to political discrimination and repression against ethnic minorities that are also religious minorities. Both intuition and past studies indicate this could be the case. However, this study also shows that SRE is associated with political restrictions and, to a lesser extent, repression against ethnic minorities who belong to the same
religion and denomination as the majority group. Thus this study shows that institutionalized SRE is positively associated with discrimination against ethnic minorities whether these minorities are religiously defined or not. This finding also has a more general significance because it shows that religious variables can influence an ethnic conflict even if that conflict is not a religious conflict. Few past studies specifically test for this.

Priorities emerge for future research in terms of theory and empirical research. To what extent are discrimination against ethnic minorities and SRE both outcomes of a broader causal process, as opposed to SRE causing greater ethnic minority discrimination? Perhaps there is something about a state that makes it more likely to discriminate along multiple identity lines; therefore, if SRE is encountered, ethnic discrimination also should be encountered. A more comprehensive theoretical model would be needed to get at the preceding question. In addition, estimation of substantive effects for variables could be used to set priorities for case studies, which also could help in terms of causal analysis via process tracing. On a final note, this study provides encouragement for a much more extensive effort to understand the causes of state discrimination and repression.

NOTES

1. This research was supported by the Israel Science Foundation (Grant 896/00), the Sara and Simha Lainer Chair in Democracy and Civility, and the John Templeton Foundation. The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the John Templeton Foundation.


3. As noted below, this is not true of qualitative studies.

4. See the discussion of this assertion in the next section.


8. Appleby; Gopin.

9. For similar ideas of exclusivity such as group entitlement and ranked vs. unranked groups, see Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 21–35, 185–227.

10. For a more thorough discussion of this literature and many of the studies to which this discussion refers see note 2.


23. The Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT) Terrorism Database contains information on whether terrorist organizations have “religious ideologies.” One hundred twenty-three of 578 groups that were active between 1968 and 2005 have religious ideologies. See http://www.mipt.org/Home.jsp. [accessed 21 January 2009].


27. See note 2 for references including those that discuss other collections of state-level religion variables.


30. Ibid.

31. See note 2 for details, frequencies, and reliability tests for all of the control variables as well as for the reasons for including them in this study.

32. For more on the MAR dataset including issues of collection, reliability, and frequencies of the variables see note 2 and the MAR Web site at www.biu.ac.il/soc/po/ras [accessed 21 January 2009]. The MAR Web site also has a copy of the dataset.

33. The MAR data was extracted using the Margene program. The data for each individual year was extracted separately using the program’s extrapolation feature to fill in data for variables that were coded only periodically. Copies of the MAR and Polity datasets are available at www.cidcm.umd.edu.


35. For a discussion of all variables in this study and the reasoning for using the independent variables in this study see the references in note 2. These references also include discussion of all relevant MAR and Polity variables along with the relevant sources for additional discussion of these datasets. This includes listings of the variables components and the reasoning behind the methodology for building these variables.

36. The Cronbach’s Alpha for the combined elements of this scale is .5820. The values for the other scales are as follows: repression (.8484), religious legislation (.8858), and cultural differences (.5388).

37. The data is available at www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar/resources.asp [accessed 21 January 2009].

38. This includes cases where there is no particular Christian group that is in the majority but Christians in general are in the majority in the state.

39. The omitted category for both the majority and minority religion variables are all non-Christian, non-Muslim groups.


42. As both the dependent and independent variables all change over time this use of a case year as the unit of analysis is appropriate. The codings for political restrictions and repression changed for 171 and 146 minority groups respectively during the period of this study. At least one of the MAR variables changed in 116 countries during the period covered by this study.


44. Gurr, *Peoples Versus States*.

45. Beger also observes that, if anything, selection bias in MAR is likely to weaken coefficient estimates and inflate standard errors. This, in turn, will increase the likelihood of rejecting true hypotheses. See Andreas Beger, “Simulating the Effects of Selection Bias in the Minorities at Risk Project” (Tallahassee, FL: Department of Political Science, Florida State University, Unpublished manuscript, April 2008), p. 8.

46. The state in MAR with the smallest population is Djibouti, which has a population of 457,000.

47. Gurr, *Minorities at Risk*, pp. 5–6; See the CIA Factbook’s listing of ethnic minorities by country at http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/fields/2075.html [accessed 21 January 2009], which shows that the only country included in the study that might not have minorities or tribal divisions that meet the MAR minimum population threshold of 100,000 or 1% of the country’s population for states with populations of less than ten million is Lesotho.


49. Appendix A is available online at http://fac-staff.seattleu.edu/liy/web/research/obergappendixa.pdf [accessed 21 January 2009].
50. Due to a relatively high level of correlation \((r = 0.72)\), the results for official support and religious legislation are reported separately.

51. The results from Tables 1 and 2 are very similar and thus the discussion that follows focuses on just the former of the two.

52. One anomaly should be pointed out from Table 1: An odd curvilinear relationship among polity, polity-squared, and repression. For religious minorities, the polity and polity-squared coefficients are \(-0.284\) and 0.024, respectively. This produces a tipping effect where at a value of 12 the effect becomes positive again, but this value is not within the range of the data.

53. As in any study with a limited time span (in this case, 13 years), the results presented here apply only to this period. The time span presented here is the best that can be achieved given limitations on existing data on religion. Nevertheless, the robustness of the results indicate a strong likelihood that, were data available for a more expanded time span, the results would be similar.

54. Theda Skocpol, States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

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APPENDIX A: CODING PROCEDURES FOR THE ÖBERG CONTROLLED GROUP

For Appendix A, please visit http://fac-staff.seattleu.edu/liy/web/research/obergappendixa.pdf.