

Web appendix to
“The Loyalty Trap: Regime Ethnic Exclusion, Commitment Problems,
and Civil War Duration in Syria and Beyond”

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“The Loyalty Trap” argues that regime ethnic exclusion imposes an identity frame that undermines the credibility of rebel claims to pluralism. In turn, when rebels do not forward ethnic agendas, civil wars are longer the more exclusive the regime. In this web appendix, I first provide descriptive statistics for the key variables in the paper and in the appendix. I then list how, in comparison to Wucherpfennig et al’s original dataset,¹ I recoded some rebellions as excluded-group rebellions in order to ensure that the key result was not being driven by excluded-group rebellions erroneously coded as non-ethnic rebellions. I then do a more direct analysis showing the marginal contribution of a focus on the regime side over the original Wucherpfennig et al focus on the rebel side. I conduct two further robustness checks: first, I show that both the share of the population “included” and the share “politically irrelevant” matter as contrast sets to the share “excluded”; second, I show that the relationship between the share excluded and the duration of civil wars is not just because there are simultaneous rebellions mobilizing politically excluded ethnic groups. I conduct a third robustness check with an alternative measure of regime exclusiveness from Heger and Salehyan,² and while this does not support my central hypothesis, I provide an argument about why the measures of exclusiveness in the article are considerably better for my purposes. And, in an exploratory vein, I examine the impact of exclusiveness on different civil war outcomes.

¹ Julian Wucherpfennig et al., “Ethnicity, the State, and the Duration of Civil War,” *World Politics* 64, no. 1 (2012): 79–115.

² Lindsay Heger and Idean Salehyan, “Ruthless Rulers: Coalition Size and the Severity of Civil Conflict,” *International Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (June 2007): 385–403.

Descriptive Statistics

Table A1. Descriptive statistics

This gives descriptive statistics for non-ethnic rebellions only.

Variable	Obs	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Excluded share	179	.213	.222	0	.85
Share of largest excluded group	179	.137	.150	0	.74
Number of excluded groups	179	3.18	4.53	0	35
Included share	179	.530	.338	0	1
Politically irrelevant share	179	.257	.332	0	1

Variable	0	1
Territorial conflict	172	14
Rebels: territorial control	146	40
Democracy	151	35
Excluded share = 0	145	34
Other rebel organizations linked to excluded groups	144	42

Recoding Decisions

The original ACD2EPR data introduced by Wucherpfennig et al³ included several cases of rebel groups coded as non-ethnic that appear doubtful. Perusing the list, one finds, notably, Fatah and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the latter at least from 1983 to 1990. This raises the risk that in exclusive regimes, some rebellions that actually mobilized excluded ethnic groups were coded as non-ethnic, so that the main result in “The Loyalty Trap” might be driven by these ethnic rebellions and not by the exclusiveness of the regime in the context of a non-ethnic rebellion. The 2014 update of ACD2EPR corrects many of these errors. Therefore, my principal recoding rule was that

³ Wucherpfennig et al., “Ethnicity, the State.”

Table A2. Recoding of rebellions originally coded as nonethnic

State	Rebel group	From	To	New coding
Trinidad and Tobago	Jamaat al-Muslimeen	1990	1990	included
Ghana	Military Faction	1982	1982	included
Chad	Military Faction	1989	1989	excluded
Congo	Katanga	1960	1962	(missing)
Congo	MLC	1998	2001	excluded
Uganda	WNBF	1996	1996	(missing)
Djibouti	FRUD	1991	1994	(missing)
South Africa	SWAPO	1966	1988	excluded
Morocco	POLISARIO	1975	1989	(missing)
Lebanon	LNM	1982	1989	excluded
Israel	Fatah	1965	1975	included
Sri Lanka	LTTE	1983	1990	excluded
Ivory Coast	MPIGO	2002	2002	(missing)
Liberia	INPFL	1990	1992	(missing)

whenever the ACD2EPR-2014 data coded a rebellion as linked to an ethnic group and the original data do not, I use the ACD2EPR-2014 coding. I then used the EPR version 3.0 data to establish whether the ethnic group(s) in question were excluded or included. For three observations, the FRUD in Djibouti (linked to the Afar), POLISARIO vs. Morocco (linked to the Sahrawis of Western Morocco) and the INPFL in Liberia, EPR had no coding and I simply removed them from the analysis. In three cases (Katanga in Congo, 1960-62; West Nile Bank Front in Uganda, 1996; MPIGO in Côte d'Ivoire, 2002), rebel groups were coded in ACD2EPR-2014 as linked to ethnic groups that EPR coded as politically irrelevant. EPR's coding rules say that an ethnic category must not be mobilized for politics in order to be coded as irrelevant, but the rebel group itself seems to contradict this. I therefore excluded these rebel groups from consideration (coding them as non-ethnic rebellions changed nothing of substance). I also recoded SWAPO in

South Africa as an excluded-group rebellion, despite the fact that ACD2EPR has no coding for it, as a conservative decision to no longer consider as nonethnic a long rebellion in which identity probably played a major role. Table A2 summarizes.

Added value over past analysis

Table A3. Cox proportional hazard estimates

VARIABLES	(1) Wucherpfennig et al 2012	(2) With regime exclusion
Rebels linked to excluded ethnic group	-0.441*** [0.143]	-0.352 [0.231]
Rebels linked to privileged ethnic group	0.199 [0.193]	-0.053 [0.226]
Excluded share		-0.595* [0.342]
Excluded share * excluded-grp rebellion		0.161 [0.495]
Excluded share * included-grp rebellion		2.522*** [0.918]
Territorial conflict	0.180 [0.171]	0.103 [0.173]
Rebels: legal political wing	0.373** [0.169]	0.424** [0.174]
Rebels: strong central command	0.408*** [0.139]	0.428*** [0.137]
Rebels: territorial control	-0.336** [0.146]	-0.375** [0.147]
Resources in conflict zone	-0.284* [0.160]	-0.275* [0.159]
Democracy	-0.820*** [0.183]	-0.879*** [0.183]
Log GDP per capita	0.055 [0.070]	0.050 [0.069]
Log population	-0.023 [0.048]	-0.020 [0.048]
Observations	2,277	2,261

Robust standard errors in brackets

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

“The Loyalty Trap” claims to bring the regime side directly into focus, over and above Wucherpfennig et al’s analysis in which the key driver of civil conflict duration in ethnic politics is the ethnic claims of rebels. Here, I focus on the added value of my approach beyond Wucherpfennig et al’s contribution, by examining it using their model specification. (I use the new codings of the ethnic claims of rebels as listed above). In Table A3, Model 1 shows their original model; Model 2 adds the regime exclusion variable, as well as interaction terms to the ethnic claims of rebels (since my claim is still limited to non-ethnic rebellions). The results confirm that regime-side exclusion is an important factor in civil war duration, above and beyond the ethnic claims of rebels.

Robustness checks

In “The Loyalty Trap,” I measure ethnic exclusion first according to the share of the population excluded from access to the executive. The other classifications that the EPR project uses are politically privileged and politically irrelevant ethnic categories. Taking the share of the *total* population that is ethnically excluded implicitly treats these other two categories as the contrast set. I indeed argue that larger shares of both “included” and “irrelevant” should be associated with shorter conflicts. First, the identification of included-group members with the regime should be stronger when the included population is smaller in number. With smaller dominant groups, internal splits may not be readily apparent to outside observers, and everyone in the dominant group may be lumped in together. Rebel leaders’ non-ethnic claims should thus be especially lacking in credibility in the eyes of privileged-group members. In contrast, with larger dominant groups, political leaders can hope to forge a winning coalition on the basis of a

subset of that group.⁴ Hence, divisions in the dominant group may be more apparent, opposition politicians have more hope to forge alliances within the dominant group, and categorical violence against dominant-group members is less appealing. Further, when more of the population has no politically relevant ethnicity, neither systematically privileged, nor excluded, nor mobilized as an ethnic group, identity is simply not as salient a frame for understanding political alignments and action. Non-ethnic appeals are relatively more plausible and credible in these circumstances.

Hence, for my purposes, it would not be appropriate to remove politically irrelevant ethnic categories from the analysis and focus just on the relative balance of excluded vs. included.⁵ To do so would extinguish differences among regimes where the vast majority of people belong to politically salient categories and regimes where only a few do, and hence where identity politics does not matter as much. It would omit countries where ethnicity is not especially relevant to politics at all. But the loyalty trap approach expects non-ethnic rebel claims in such countries to produce shorter civil wars because pluralist claims are more credible.

In Table A4, I justify this argument empirically. Model 1 includes the shares included and with politically irrelevant ethnicity, so that the share excluded is now the contrast set, the component against which each of these is estimated. It shows that relative to the excluded share, increases in *both* included and irrelevant shares, and especially the latter, are correlated to shorter conflicts. This is consistent with the loyalty

⁴ On winning coalitions in ethnic politics, see Daniel N. Posner, “The Political Salience of Cultural Difference: Why Chewas and Tumbukas Are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi,” *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 04 (2004): 529–45.

⁵ This is the practice in, e.g., Andreas Wimmer, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Brian Min, “Ethnic Politics and Armed Conflict: A Configurational Analysis of a New Global Data Set,” *American Sociological Review* 74, no. 2 (April 2009): 316–37.

trap logic. It also provides empirical justification for the decision to include the share of the population that belongs to politically irrelevant ethnic categories as a variable, rather than (for example) the relative balance of excluded and included groups. Both political inclusion and the political irrelevance of ethnicity matter, and can improve the credibility of non-ethnic rebel claims.

Table A4. Robustness checks (Cox proportional hazard estimates)

VARIABLES	(1) Non-ethnic rebellions	(2) Non-ethnic rebellions
Excluded share		-0.737* [0.434]
Privileged share	0.826* [0.437]	
Politically irrelevant share	1.229*** [0.422]	
Territorial conflict	0.449 [0.291]	0.486 [0.314]
Rebels: territorial control	-0.382* [0.212]	-0.314 [0.212]
Democracy	-0.746*** [0.271]	-0.784*** [0.283]
Number of excluded ethnic groups	0.056** [0.027]	0.065** [0.027]
Other rebel orgs linked to excluded groups		-0.436* [0.242]
Observations	927	927

Robust standard errors in brackets

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

I next examine to what degree this result may have to do with the simultaneous presence of excluded-group rebellions. After all, in Syria, whatever the claims of the secular opposition, the sectarian rebel groups that emerged over time clearly reinforced the fears of Alawites. In turn, these fears may plausibly have reduced the credibility even of *non-ethnic* rebels, putting all rebels in a common identity frame. The threat to inference, then, is that the results so far may be driven by simultaneous rebellions with

ethnic claims, which are more likely under ethnic exclusion, rather than by the direct effect of exclusion on non-ethnic rebellions. In Model 2 in Table A4, therefore, I include a dummy for the simultaneous presence of an excluded-group rebellion, which is clearly correlated to the share excluded ($r = .3131$). Both this variable and the share excluded are associated with longer civil wars in this model, statistically significantly so despite the multicollinearity that comes from including these two correlated variables. In a sense, this suggests a synthesis between my approach and the existing rebel-side approach: ethnic rebellions reinforce the regime's identity frame, undermining non-ethnic rebels' credibility. This synthesis may be an interesting avenue for future research.

Alternative data

Heger and Salehyan⁶ examine the relationship between the severity of civil wars and regime exclusiveness, which they measure in terms of the small size of a leader's ethnic group. I do not think this measure adequately captures exclusion for my purposes, because a leader may decide to be more or less inclusive of people beyond his or her own ethnic group. For example, both Iyad Allawi and Nuri al-Maliki, former Prime Ministers of Iraq, are Shi'ites, but the former's political party included Sunnis and Kurds to a much greater degree; indeed, according to many analysts, it was the latter's exclusion of Sunnis that helped to spur political unrest and initial support among some Sunnis for ISIS. However, it is worth examining whether my hypothesis holds despite this caveat. Heger and Salehyan use the Fearon and Laitin⁷ civil-wars list rather than the Uppsala Conflict Data Program list as well; I decided therefore to attempt to reproduce my result using

⁶ Heger and Salehyan, "Ruthless Rulers."

⁷ James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 01 (2003): 75–90.

their dataset rather than attempt to match them and lose many observations. I controlled for a dummy variable for democracy (Polity score greater than 6) as well as the number of ethnic groups in the country according to Fearon and Laitin. I also restricted the sample to conflicts that Fearon and Laitin do not code as “ethnic”. Since the larger the leader’s group, the more inclusive the polity may be (if this is indeed a valid indicator), my approach should expect a positive coefficient: larger leader’s group, shorter civil wars. The results of Cox proportional-hazard models are in Table A5. In a model without control variables, the sign of the coefficient is not in the expected direction. Controlling for democracy and the number of groups, it is; however, it is not statistically significant.

Table A5. Cox proportional hazard estimates

	(1)	(2)
	Fearon and Laitin (2003) non-ethnic wars	Fearon and Laitin (2003) non-ethnic wars
Leader’s group share	-0.214 [0.307]	0.100 [0.383]
Democracy		-0.449** [0.197]
Number of groups		0.031 [0.026]
Observations	152	152

Standard errors in brackets

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Hence, the result from the paper does not appear to be robust to this alternative coding and dataset. However, for reasons noted above, I do not consider this to be a severe problem, because I do not consider this alternative measure appropriate for my ends.

Ethnic exclusion and outcomes of civil conflicts

The loyalty trap approach is about the credibility of rebel claims. Ethnic exclusion should undermine this credibility in the eyes of privileged-group members, making them more fearful of rebels. This should lengthen civil conflicts, but which civil war outcomes does it make more difficult? I believe a plausible case could be made for several. Above all, it should make rebel victories more difficult to achieve. Rebels start from a position of weakness and depend on regime supporters, notably soldiers, defecting and surrendering⁸; when rebels make non-ethnic claims, defection should be more feasible when regimes are less exclusive and rebels' non-ethnic claims are harder to discredit. However, this mechanism may plausibly make other forms of civil war conclusion harder too. Government victories may be more difficult for similar reasons: even if rebels do not make ethnic claims, many members of excluded groups may fear that the regime paints the conflict in ethnic terms and will repress them later. If, for example, Alawites are willing to say that “the opposition is all Sunnis, and they want to kill us all”⁹, could Sunnis not see this as an implicit threat to them as well? Hence, out-group members may be more likely to fight hard, despite rebels not articulating ethnic grievances. Negotiated settlements may also be more difficult to achieve, given the serious difficulties in cooperation that the loyalty trap should entail. However, the loyalty trap approach applies to many more actors than just political leaders, who are the key players in negotiations, though a settlement may certainly require widespread trust to succeed.

⁸ D.E.H. Russell, *Rebellion, Revolution, and Armed Force: A Comparative Study of Fifteen Countries with Special Emphasis on Cuba and South Africa* (New York: Academic Press, 1974); Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

⁹ Aryn Baker, “Syria’s Minority Alawites Cling to Assad, Hope for Peace,” *Time*, October 24, 2013.

In Table A6 I break down the data into different civil war outcomes, examining the duration until the outcome in question occurs. In essence, civil wars that do not end in the specified fashion are considered right-censored. This follows Wucherpfennig et al.¹⁰ Again, the data only include conflicts in which rebels do not mobilize along ethnic lines. I use the size of the largest excluded group as the key measure of both exclusion and concentration of the excluded population. The results indicate that, as expected, the key effect appears to be for rebel victories: a 25-percentage-point increase in exclusiveness is associated with a 47% decline in the likelihood that a civil conflict ends in a rebel victory in any given period. Government victories and negotiated settlements are made less likely with more exclusion, but these results are not statistically significant. Finally, exclusivity appears positively associated with wars just petering out, but again this is a statistically insignificant finding.

Table A6. Cox proportional hazard estimates

VARIABLES	(1) Rebel victory	(2) Government victory	(3) Negotiated settlement	(4) Low intensity
Size of largest excluded group	-2.599* [1.393]	-0.437 [1.048]	-0.321 [1.156]	0.163 [1.049]
Territorial conflict	-42.527*** [0.502]	1.206** [0.473]	0.497 [1.079]	0.068 [0.541]
Rebels: territorial control	-0.001 [0.386]	-0.038 [0.366]	-0.226 [0.706]	-0.488 [0.469]
Democracy	-1.610** [0.683]	-0.448 [0.369]	-1.311** [0.513]	-0.281 [0.413]
Observations	927	927	927	927

Robust standard errors in brackets

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The key effect of an exclusive regime may therefore be to prevent the large-scale defection that ends civil conflicts in victory, just as, in Syria, Alawite soldiers have

¹⁰ Wucherpfennig et al., “Ethnicity, the State.”

remained quite committed to the regime even as Sunni soldiers defected. But it is not clear that this poses strong barriers to negotiated settlements. As outside commentators suggest that the only solution for Syria is a political settlement, how have negotiated settlements in the past managed to overcome problems of exclusiveness?

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