REGIONAL REPRESENTATION AND SECESSIONIST VIOLENCE IN INDIA

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Abstract

We estimate the causal effect of representation by regional political parties on political violence in India. The election of a regional party candidate increases the occurrence of a violent event and death in the home constituency of the elected representative by 7.2 percentage points and the number of violent events and deaths by 9.9 and 13.4 percent. These increases are explained by heightened secessionist violence between rebel groups and government forces. As regional parties and secessionist rebels have a shared history and overlapping agendas, our results support the notion of a *quid pro quo*, where regional party representatives facilitate or overlook rebel activities in their constituencies in exchange for rebel support at election time. Finally, we show violence increases only when the regional party representative is an outsider to the governing coalition, suggesting that these representatives undermine state capacity to control political violence when in opposition.

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Regional political parties are important for political representation in democratic systems around the world,¹ representing large territorially-concentrated populations commonly identified by a particular race, language, or culture. While regional parties rarely form national government, they can be highly successful in more local elections, and can thus provide an outlet for voicing regional grievances via conventional politics at the highest levels of government, direct resources to their home region, and advocate for greater regional autonomy. In this way, regional parties soothe underlying hostilities towards central government rule and may serve to limit support for more extreme arms of regional movements, who tend to voice grievances through violent protest or prolonged armed conflict.

However, in many cases regional political parties are siblings of rebels, borne out of the same historical movements,² with a natural tendency to sympathize or maintain ties with rebels while participating in conventional politics.³ In particular, a symbiotic relationship between regional parties and violent secessionists may endure long after the regional party joins the conventional political process, as each can serve the other's political goals. As participants in the formal political process, regional parties have access to state resources, and may tacitly support radical activities which are destabilizing for the state. Similarly, rebels carry influence in the areas they operate in, often providing parallel public services, and swaying support for the party through various means. In a democracy, this symbiosis generates electoral incentives for regional political parties to support or overlook illegal rebel activities. In this way, regional parties can exacerbate violence between rebels and the state.

Despite playing an important yet ambiguous role in political violence, there is no causal

¹Examples in the developed world include Sinn Fein (Northern Ireland), The Scottish National Party (Scotland), and Plaid Cymru (Wales) in the UK; the Parti Québécois in Canada; the Basque National Party in Spain. Examples in the developing world include the Polisario Front in Sub-Saharan Africa, indigenous parties in Latin America, the SNLD in Myanmar, Kurdish parties in Iraq and Turkey and Tamil parties in India and Sri Lanka.

²Examples of regional parties that allegedly have a shared history with violent secessionist organizations include: Sinn Fein and the IRA (Northern Ireland), Tamil National Alliance and the LTTE (Sri Lanka), Batasuna and ETA (Spain), the HDP and PKK (Turkey)

³The transition from violent political movement to legitimate political party is complex and not always successful. See Acosta (2001) for further discussion.

evidence on the effects of regional political parties on political violence. This article provides the first such evidence, exploiting a close elections regression discontinuity design (RDD) to estimate the causal effect of electing a regional-party representative on the occurrence and severity of political violence in India. We show regional party representation increases the occurrence and severity of political violence considerably, and explore potential explanations for why this is the case.

India is especially useful for estimating the effect of regional party representation on violence for several reasons. First, India has a large number of regional parties representing a wide range of regions and ethnicities. This provides the rich variation one would get in a cross-national study while holding fixed country-specific unobservable factors. Moreover, the large number of parties facilitates an analysis of the effects of regional parties on a large scale, rather than of the effects of one or two parties, as would be the case in other countries. Second, India's state assemblies, the focus of our empirical analysis, collectively have more than 4000 constituencies holding elections over several years. This furnishes us with a large number of close elections, yielding statistically precise estimates. Third, our violence data is geo-referenced to electoral districts, meaning that we can estimate the effects of regional party representation on violence in the representative's home base. Estimates at this disaggregated level allow for a cleaner interpretation of the effect of regional party representation on political violence while increasing the plausibility of causal identification relative to other studies on party identity and political violence.

We find the election of a regional-party representative increases the occurrence of violence and death in the subsequent inter-election years by 7.2 percentage points. It increases the number of violent events and deaths by 9.9 and 13.4 percent respectively. Effects of this magnitude demand an explanation of why regional parties cause violence relative to other parties.

The first step to understanding these effects is to disambiguate the *type* of violence that regional representatives cause. While the sources of political violence in post-independence

India are wide ranging,⁴ regional parties in India are often the children of historical regional movements for autonomy or full independence. As such, regional parties retain complex and lasting ties with violent secessionist organizations. In addition to the personal relationships that link the regional parties and secessionist organizations, they tend to make similar regional and ethnic appeals, as well as represent many of the same grievances and demands.

We show the effect of regional candidates on political violence is explained entirely by an increase in secessionist violence. We do this by first isolating the Indian states with an active secessionist movement during the period of our sample, and comparing the estimated effect of electing a regional candidate in these states with the effect in states without a secessionist movement. In states with an active secessionist movement, a win by a regionalparty candidate increases the probability of a violent event occurring in the subsequent interelection years by 14 percentage points and the number of violent events by 26.3 percent. The number of deaths due to political violence increases by 40 percent. On the other hand, the effect of regional-party representation on political violence in states with no active secessionist movement is economically and statistically negligible.

The violence in states with secessionist movements in India is almost exclusively of two types, *anti regime* violence and *Sons of the Soil* violence, the latter a consequence of the nativism which often precedes or attends secessionist sentiment.⁵ Sons of Soil violence occurs when one ethnic group, typically indigenous to the region, deems itself the rightful inheritor of the land and its economic advantages, and takes up arms against perceived invaders and wrongful competitors. This is a common theme in India's Northeast, for example, where episodes of large scale immigration from both Bangladesh and other Indian states has stoked violence for several decades. Since the Northeast houses many of our secessionist states, it is not immediately obvious whether the increased violence we identify is explained by increased

⁴India has witnessed many episodes of communist (Naxalite) violence, caste violence, communal (primarily Hindu-Muslim and Hindu-Sikh) violence, Nativist ("Sons of the Soil") violence, and secessionist violence.

⁵While the notion of Sons of the Soil violence in India was introduced in (Weiner 1978), it has been recently studied in (Bhavnani and Lacina 2015) in the Indian context, and as a cause of civil war more broadly in (Fearon and Laitin 2011).

violence towards the state or by increased nativist violence.

We use information on protagonists and the specific location of the events to sort between these two stories. Nativist violence is intercommunal in nature, and the protagonists are either insurgent groups or civilians. Anti-regime violence, by contrast, involves government forces and an insurgent group. We thus classify the events in secessionist regions as "Antiregime" or "Nativist" and study the effect of regional representatives on each separately. We find the increase in secessionist violence is explained entirely by increased anti-regime violence. There is no such increase in violence between insurgent groups or in insurgent violence against civilians. We supplement this with evidence of a disproportionate increase in violence near state legislatures. As the areas around state legislatures typically contain many government buildings and offices, symbolically important as targets of anti-regime violence, this result is further evidence that regional candidates cause anti-regime violence in particular.

Why do elected representatives from regional parties cause secessionist violence to increase? Acemoglu, Robinson, and Santos (2013) study the question of why a state would give up the one characteristic that distinguishes it from other political actors - a monopoly on legitimate violence. In the Acemoglu, Robinson, and Santos (2013) model, paramilitaries (non-state armed actors) have preferences over policy and can affect election outcomes via their influence on voters. Paramilitaries deliver votes to candidates with similar policy preferences in exchange for the promotion or support of their preferred laws and policies as well as less oversight of their armed activities. The electoral support generated by paramilitaries weakens the incentives of central governments to eliminate non-state armed actors, and thus explains why paramilitaries persist in states around the world. Our findings together with anecdotes from India's troubled Northeast are indicative of a similar type of *quid pro quo* between regional parties and secessionist organizations, where regional party representatives facilitate or overlook rebel activities in their constituencies in exchange for rebel support at election time. Our findings suggest further that the Acemoglu, Robinson, and Santos (2013) incentive is operational at the level of local elected representative and, paradoxically, that the actions of this representative is what undermines the state's monopoly on violence.

To this end, our study is the first to identify local elected representatives as a cause of a weak or fragile state. In their study on the origins of weak or fragile states, Besley and Persson (2011a) analyze a model where the representativeness of political institutions is a key determinant of political violence by government and insurgent groups. More representative institutions moderate the returns to investing in political violence, *i.e.* maintaining or gaining political power, and decrease political violence in turn. Similarly, in their study of the origins of one-sided violence (repression by the government) and two-sided violence (civil conflict between the government and insurgents), Besley and Persson (2011b) analyze a parallel model, showing that the representativeness of political institutions decreases the chances of observing one- and two-sided violence. Our findings seem to run counter theirs, suggesting, first, that representativeness increases violence and, second, that all of the increase is generated by two-sided violence between the government and insurgent groups.

One explanation for the contrast between our findings and the theories of Besley and Persson (2011a,b) relates to whether political representation actually improves under local regional party rule. State resources for preventing and controlling political violence may be deployed more effectively in constituencies where the local representative belongs to the governing party or coalition of parties, perhaps due to better aligned incentives or clearer lines of communication. We examine this possibility and find the increase in secessionist violence is explained by instances where the representative was an outsider to the governing coalition. Interestingly, this is not true for outsiders generally, only outsiders who are members of regional parties. The findings suggest inclusiveness in terms of holding local office is insufficient for reducing violence, and may be counterproductive unless the regional party representative influences central executive decisions.⁶

 $^{^{6}}$ A core argument in (Besley and Persson 2009) is that inclusive institutions and political stability (as well as the absence of civil conflict) are important determinants of state capacity to raise revenue through taxation. Our findings say that inclusive institutions, i.e., incorporating violent secessionist organizations in the formal political process, can be damaging to political stability.

1 Related Literature

The scholarship on the consequences of regional political parties grew out of a large number of case studies and raw statistical evidence (Banerjee 1984; Bhatnagar and Kumar 1988; Gassah 1992, e.g.). Significant advances were made in (Brancati 2006) and Brancati (2008), whose systematic analysis of cross-national data supported the idea that regional political parties are a consequence of political decentralization (Chhibber and Kollman 1999),⁷ even after conditioning on regional cleavages, and that these parties mediate the effects of decentralization on conflict among minority groups, between minority and majority groups, and between minority groups and the state. Regional parties foment ethnic conflict and secessionism because they increase the salience of ethnic and regional identities, promote legislation favoring their potential supporters disproportionately, and help mobilize participants in conflict and other secessionist activities.

The Brancati (2006, 2008) analyses highlight the complexity of the relationship between regional parties and political violence from the perspective of separating cause from effect. Regional parties can be interpreted as both a cause and consequence of political violence. Regional parties and political violence both correlate with unobservables, such as the history of violence and overall inclusiveness of institutions. Our main contribution to this literature, therefore, is in providing the first causal evidence on the violent effects of regional parties.

The article contributes more generally to a literature which investigates the effect of party identity and party ideology on political violence. Nellis, Weaver, and Rosenzweig (2016) and Nellis and Siddiqui (2018) study settings where the violence is inter-communal, between either ethnic or religious groups, and where party supporters tend to demand less violence. We study a setting where there is significant internal disagreement both among party leadership and party supporters as to the usefulness of political violence, and where the violence is between secessionist rebels and the state, a form of violence that has engendered some of

⁷By "decentralization" we mean the devolution of government institutions and power to subnational units.

the most significant changes in political systems around the world over the last half century, including the formation of new states within national boundaries, and autonomous regions within states (Quinn and Gurr 2003). Further to this, and perhaps most importantly, we identify effects at the level of the electoral constituency rather than at the aggregate level of groups of constituencies. That is, we identify effects of individual representatives from a particular party, rather than the collective effect of a group of representatives from the same party, as Nellis, Weaver, and Rosenzweig (2016) and Nellis and Siddiqui (2018) are constrained to do in their respective analyses. As we later explain, estimates at this disaggregated level make causal identification more plausible while delivering a clearer picture of the mechanisms that underpin the relationship between party identity and political violence.

Where regional parties can be interpreted as a consequence, cause, or reflection of inclusive institutions (*i.e* ethnofederalism - power sharing with the central executive – or autonomy via decentralization) for fomenting or curbing violence,⁸ our findings draw into question the effectiveness of inclusive institutions for counterinsurgency (Blattman and Miguel 2010), or more specifically whether representation in parliament by itself qualifies as a grievancereducing concession for peripheral populations. The findings suggest elected representatives with secessionist sympathies increase the ability or willingness of secessionist organizations to engage in anti-regime violence,⁹ and consequently that conventional and militant politics are complementary in generating attention for their cause (Dunning 2011; Gurr 1970, c.f.). From these perspectives, the findings speak to a literature which examines the strategic choices of self-determination movements (Quinn and Gurr 2003).

Lastly, we contribute to a growing literature on causal identification of the sources of intrastate violent conflict, i.e. (Miguel, Satyanath, and Sergenti 2004; Dube and Naidu 2015;

⁸Regional parties and inclusive institutions both increase resources available to local actors, thereby facilitating militant activities. For studies examining the effects of inclusive institutions on violence, disaffection, or unity, see (Cederman et al. 2015), (Capoccia, Sáez, and de Rooij 2012), (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010), (Elkins and Sides 2007), (Eaton 2006), and (Kohli 1997).

⁹This is consistent with findings in (Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010), namely that the capacity to mobilize by ethnic groups is a key input into conflict with the government.

Dube and Vargas 2013; Nunn and Qian 2014; Magesan and Swee 2018), and (Blattman and Miguel 2010) for a review.¹⁰ These papers focus largely on the effects of economic variables such as growth, aid, and military aid/sales. Exogenous variation in election outcomes relative to political violence has been difficult to come by, on the other hand, perhaps explaining the relative paucity of work in this area. Importantly, in addition to explaining a large fraction of political violence, we explain violence in a country with relatively well-functioning democratic institutions, something the existing literature has struggled with. For example, while Miguel, Satyanath, and Sergenti (2004) are able to explain a large fraction of the probability of violent conflict with growth shocks in less developed countries with less democratic institutions, they find "the impact of growth shocks on conflict is not significantly different in richer, more democratic, or more ethnically diverse countries."

2 Context

2.1. Background. The number of political parties and candidates contesting elections in India has grown immensely since Independence in 1947. The majority of these are regional in nature, concentrating their attention on a particular geographic region.¹¹ As Ziegfeld (2016) notes in his study of the proliferation of regional parties in India, the existence of regional parties is usually attributed to two broad explanations. The first is regional cleavages, where minority ethnic groups are territorially concentrated and political parties can have success by appealing to the demands and historical grievances of these groups. These parties are constrained to operate regionally because their appeals will not make them competitive where the minority ethnic group is not prevalent. The second usual explanation for regional parties in India is the decentralization of fiscal and political power from central to local

¹⁰Though the violence in these papers is sometimes framed as "civil war," many of the civil wars of the last few decades are characterized by long and protracted asymmetric conflict between a state and one or several small groups, similar to the secessionist violence in India.

¹¹Prominent examples in India include the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the Asom Gana Parishad, Akali Dal, The National Conference of Jammu and Kashmir, and Telugu Desam who run candidates exclusively in Tamil Nadu, Assam, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir and Andhra Pradesh, respectively.

governments. The prospect of additional fiscal and political control strengthens incentives to run regionally without having to compete nationwide.

Many regional parties in India fit the first mould. One of the most successful is Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), who formed initially with the stated intention of seeking an independent homeland for the Dravidian people of South India, and was instrumental in obtaining statehood for Tamil Nadu in 1956, and no longer seeks independence formally. Northeast India also provides several useful examples. A number of political parties in the Northeast have formed over the years to represent the interests of "indigenous" ethnic groups who themselves seek greater autonomy together with greater economic and cultural protection from Bengali speaking immigrants. The largest regional party in Andhra Pradesh is the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) who in contrast to the parties mentioned above, has made no territorial claims, though it's primary intent has been to safeguard and advocate for the Telugu speaking people of Andhra Pradesh.

The combination of the two factors identified by Ziegfeld (2016) - concentrated ethnic populations and decentralized power - is a powerful explanation for the rise of regional parties in India, and likely explains why regional political parties have greater prominence in state legislative assemblies rather than the national parliament. Accordingly, our focus is on the violent effects of representatives in the lower houses (*Vidhan Sabha*) of state legislative assemblies, who are elected from local constituencies through a single-member simple-plurality system, and where state governments are formed by the party or coalition of parties that obtains the most assembly seats.

2.2. Formal Definition. Conceptually, we define a party as a *regional party* if it makes appeals on issues disproportionately affecting voters in a particular geographical region. This definition is impractical from an analytical standpoint, as it would involve locating and interpreting thousands of party platforms over many election years and in several languages. Further to this point, there is a great deal of subjectivity relating to what constitutes a regional issue. With this in mind, operationally, we define a regional party as a party which

satisfies two conditions:

RP1. It is officially recognized as a "State party" by the Election Commission of India;

RP2. Electoral support for the party is highly concentrated geographically.

A party is officially recognized as a State party in India if:

- (a) The party has been active for at least 5 years and won no less than 1/25 of the State's seats in the lower house of the national parliament (*Lok Sabha*) or 1/13 of the seats in the lower house of the state assembly.
- (b) The party obtained 6% of the popular vote in the state in the last national or state election.

A party who meets either of these criteria in more than 3 states is officially recognized as a National Party. The remaining parties are labelled "Registered Unrecognized" or "Independent." Thus, **RP1** rules out independent candidates and small parties that run for idiosyncratic reasons,¹² as well as National parties. In many ways **RP1** itself is a useful starting point for categorizing a party as regional. In the Online Appendix Table OA1, we check the robustness of our main results to using **RP1** as the sole condition for defining a regional party. However, we do not use this as our main definition because many State parties have national ambition and run on positions with broader appeal, but have simply failed to win enough seats or obtain enough of the popular vote.¹³

¹²It is common for small splinter groups of larger parties to run candidates, or for parties to float fake candidates in order to confuse voters. "Registered Unrecognized" parties are also regional in a sense, as their success tends to be even more geographically limited than the success of state parties. We require regional parties to be "State" parties for several reasons. First, unrecognized parties rarely win the constituencies they contest, winning less than 2% of the time in our estimation sample, and therefore have little bearing on our estimates. Second, unrecognized parties contest few constituencies, often only one. A limited geographic presence makes any claim to represent a regional interest unreasonable. Lastly, unrecognized parties tend to differ qualitatively from State parties. Many campaign on very narrowly-defined issues. A few are former factions of major National parties. These parties rarely make regional appeals in pursuit of political power.

¹³By this token, our definition captures only regionalist parties. Regional parties are those whose support is limited geographically, whether by design or not. Regionalist parties obtain support in a limited geographical area by design.

We follow Ziegfeld (2016) in constructing a measure of geographic vote concentration at the level of the party (**RP2**). We let $V_{p,r}$ to be the total vote received by party p in state r during our sample period and $S_{p,r} = \frac{V_{p,r}}{\sum_{r'} V_{p,r'}}$, such that $S_{p,r}$ is the share of party p's vote coming from state r. We then measure geographical concentration using

$$C_p = \sum_r S_{p,r}^2, \tag{1}$$

which is effectively the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) typically used to measure market concentration in economics.

We adapt this measure to account for the fact that Indian states vary greatly in terms of population size. This is important because a single vote in the state of Uttar Pradesh (population over 200 million) has less value than a single vote in the state of Assam (population around 30 million), as there are far fewer votes to be won in Assam than Uttar Pradesh. To equalize the value of a vote across states, we divide votes received in a state by the relative electoral size of the region, θ_r , where:

$$\theta_r = \sum_p V_{p,r} / \sum_{p',r'} V_{p',r'}$$
(2)

That is, total available votes in a region divided by total available votes in the country. Then, let $\tilde{V}_{p,r} = \frac{V_{p,r}}{\theta_r}$, $\tilde{S}_{p,r} = \frac{\tilde{V}_{p,r}}{\sum_{r'} \tilde{V}_{p,r'}}$, and

$$\tilde{C}_p = \sum_r \tilde{S}_{p,r}^2, \qquad (3)$$

which is our adjusted measure of geographical concentration.

Figures 1(a) and 1(b) plot the distribution of \tilde{C}_p for State and National Parties in our sample.¹⁴ Unsurprisingly, the distribution for National parties is skewed right, as the ma-

¹⁴These are party-year distributions. While \tilde{C}_p remains fixed over time by definition, the State or National party designation can change, such that the same party can appear in both distributions.

jority of National parties have their support spread across many states. Any skew for the distribution for State parties is less obvious, as many of them have vote shares which are spread across many states, suggesting that many are not truly regional in nature. One prominent example of this is the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), an ethnic party which appeals to Scheduled Castes as well as Scheduled Tribes and Other Backwards Castes across India, and which had State party status for many years, but has National status currently. To keep truly regional parties in our set, our definition only includes State parties with a value of $\tilde{C}_p \geq 0.5$. Our definition of regional parties ultimately fits well with the definition in (Brancati 2006), where regional parties are "parties that compete and win votes in only one region of the country."

On the one hand, states borders provide a natural definition for a geographical region given the origins of the division of India into states, in which case we would just define regional parties to be State parties with $\tilde{C}_p = 1$. In accordance with the States Reorganization Act 1956, state boundaries were drawn to correspond roughly with the dominant language in the area, and by consequence with the area's dominant ethnicity, religion, and culture. The boundaries make states fertile ground for the emergence of parties organized around issues which tangibly affect voters in other states only indirectly.¹⁵ However, many regional parties transcend state boundaries. This is the case for regional parties in the Northeast for example. Northeast states (Assam, Tripura, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram) were all part of one state, "Assam", until the 1970s. While the division of what was then Assam into several smaller states was meant to ease tensions, some ethnic groups straddle the new borders, and regional parties run in more than one state in this area. Similar cases exist in other parts of India as well. For this reason, we do not restrict regional parties to be state parties with $\tilde{C}_p = 1$.

It is worth noting that, by our definition, regional and ethnic parties are not synonymous.

¹⁵The boundaries also make states fertile ground for violence among ethno-linguistic groups because, while the state boundaries may be drawn in accordance with a dominant ethnicity, religion, or culture, states have minority ethno-linguistic groups and often persistent tensions between the majority and minority groups.





(b) Concentration for National Parties

Figure 1: Regional Party Success and Political Violence.

Chandra (2004) defines an ethnic party as one that "appeals to voters as the champion of the interests of one ethnic category or set of categories to the exclusion of others, and makes such an appeal central to its mobilizing strategy." By her definition, The People's Party of Arunachal is not an ethnic party. It represents various indigenous tribes in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. One of its aims, in fact, is to preserve the distinctive cultures of these various tribes. By our definition, on the other hand, the People's Party of Arunachal is a regional party. Alternatively, the BJP, a national party according to the Election Commission, is not regional because it runs in all states, yet by most accounts it is ethnic, championing the interests of Hindus over other religious and ethnic groups.

2.3. Political Violence and Law Enforcement. Violence has been endemic to the political process in several regions of India since long before Independence. The sources of violence in the post-Independence era are as varied as the regions themselves. Prominent examples include: Secessionist violence in the Northeast, Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir, Naxalite (Maoist) Violence in the "Red Corridor",¹⁶ intercommunal violence, especially Hindu-Muslim violence in Gujarat and North India, Nativist violence in Assam, as well as other types of religious and ethnic violence.

Law and order are the responsibility of state governments under the Indian Constitution. State governments have the power to prevent and stop the escalation of political violence with force. State governments recruit, train, and deploy members of the state police. They appoint a district magistrate and police superintendent to represent their interests in each of the administrative districts within the state. Furthermore, the federal government (i.e., the Indian military) will generally only intervene within a state's boundaries if they are invited to do so by state officials.¹⁷

¹⁶The Red Corridor of India is comprised primarily by Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand, but also historically includes Orissa, West Bengal and Chattisgarh. Maoist violence is not exclusive to these states, however, and can be found in Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu as well.

¹⁷The federal government can bypass this rule if the state government fails at maintaining law and order, by dismissing the state government, and temporarily taking over direct rule. This option has only been exercised under very extreme circumstances.

Elected representatives can ask state government officials for resources to help them combat or prevent violence in their home constituencies, drawing for example on their privileged information about the likelihood of imminent violence. They can influence the hiring and firing of local police and bureaucrats, for example by lobbying the state government to change the local district magistrate or police superintendent. Lobbying will be more effective, however, if the outsider has the support of the other 5 to 8 state assembly representatives who occupy the same administrative district.¹⁸ This suggests the effects of regional party representatives on political violence may vary with their status as an outsider or member of the governing party or coalition of parties in the state. It is thus worth noting that regional parties belong to the governing coalition in about 25% of the elections in our sample.

3 Data

Our elections data comes from the Election Commission of India. The elections data includes information on the party identity and party type (national, state, unrecognized, independent) of all candidates contesting a state assembly constituency, as well as their respective vote shares. It covers all state assembly elections that have taken place since elections were first held in India in 1951.

Our violence data comes from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) (Sundberg and Melander 2013; Croicu and Sundberg 2017). To our knowledge, this is the most comprehensive database on political violence in India, compiling information for 1989 onwards from a range of sources. Primary sources include army and police on the ground, while secondary sources include media outlets such as the Associated Press and the BBC as well as more local media, and other violence databases such as the South Asian Terrorism Portal (SATP). The UCDP data includes information on the precise

¹⁸For our primary estimation sample, there was a little over 4100 constituencies and 467, 593, and 640 administrative districts following the 1991, 2001, and 2011 populations censuses, respectively. Each administrative is roughly partitioned into 6 to 9 state assembly constituencies on average, therefore, implying further that there are approximately 6 to 9 representatives per district magistrate and police superintendent.

date and location (latitude and longtitude) of the violence, whether it is one- or two-sided, as well as the number of casualties, which provides a measure of the severity. It also includes information on who was involved, state armed actors such as the state police or military, non-state armed actors including radical arms of secessionist movements, or civilians. It also includes information on the source of the report of a violent event.

A state-by-state summary of the base sample is provided in Table 1. The table summarizes the number of national and regional party candidates in each constituency, their success in terms of the percentage of seats won, and political violence. Note that by our definition of a regional party, national parties are parties which are either deemed National by the Elections Commission of India or State parties with low vote concentration, $\tilde{C}_p < 0.5$. The table shows significant across-state variation in national and regional party entry, success, and political violence. Many states have at least one regional party candidate contesting each constituency, and seats are won by a regional party a non-negligible fraction of the time. Most states experience some political violence, and a few experience large amounts of violence.

Figures 2(a) and 2(b) respectively plot the number of violent events against the win percentage of regional and national parties, aggregated up to the state level. The figures indicate that a higher success rate for regional parties is associated with more political violence, while the opposite is true for national parties. The slope of the lines relating party success to violence are of modest slope.

The picture becomes slightly clearer, however, once we inspect regional parties in states with and without a secessionist movement. Figure 3(a) shows a positive association between the number of violent events and the win percentage for regional parties in states with an active secessionist movement, while Figure 3(b) shows a negative association in states with no active movement. The R^2 is 6.6% in secessionist states and 0.0% in non-secessionist states, implying that violence in non-secessionist states exhibits more randomness, especially in relation to the win percentage of regional parties. Our main conclusions are supported

Table 1: Summary Statistics by State. Regional parties are officially recognized as a State party by the Election Commission of India and obtains votes which are highly concentrated geographically. National parties are parties which are either deemed National by the Elections Commission of India or State parties with low vote concentration. Candidates refers to the average number of candidates per assembly constituency in the state. Win Percentage refers to the percentage of seats won in the state.

	Candidates		Win Percentage		Political Violence	
	National	Regional	National	Regional	Event	Death
State	Parties	Parties	Parties	Parties	Count	Count
Andhra Pradesh	2.2	1.0	50.1	42.1	446	1,826
Arunachal Pradesh	2.0	0.2	84.7	1.0	11	77
Assam	3.2	1.3	58.1	27.8	$1,\!390$	3,862
Bihar	5.2	0.4	89.1	3.2	141	619
Chhattisgarh	4.3	0.4	100.0	0.0	528	1,559
Delhi	4.4	0.6	96.8	0.4	9	61
Goa	2.2	1.2	70.0	23.5	0	0
Gujarat	3.2	0.3	95.7	0.4	77	823
Haryana	3.8	1.0	53.8	21.3	8	115
Himachal Pradesh	3.4	0.4	92.3	1.8	4	40
Jammu & Kashmir	3.2	1.8	30.3	52.9	6,018	$15,\!351$
Jharkhand	4.9	1.3	58.6	29.6	369	734
Karnataka	3.4	0.6	83.3	8.7	26	83
Kerala	2.9	0.4	73.0	20.1	4	15
Madhya Pradesh	3.9	0.2	96.6	0.0	13	208
Maharashtra	2.8	0.6	66.7	18.3	148	$2,\!481$
Manipur	3.2	1.3	60.9	30.3	527	1,520
Meghalaya	1.9	1.4	51.3	33.0	46	99
Mizoram	1.5	1.6	44.5	41.5	2	18
Nagaland	1.4	0.6	61.0	22.3	240	617
Orissa	3.2	0.6	61.8	33.2	264	643
Pondicherry	2.0	1.4	42.2	38.9	0	0
Punjab	2.8	1.0	57.7	35.3	42	382
Rajasthan	3.5	0.3	92.9	0.4	7	24
Sikkim	1.3	1.6	1.9	96.9	2	2
Tamil Nadu	1.6	2.0	15.4	78.6	5	77
Tripura	2.7	0.2	92.0	6.7	392	$1,\!300$
Uttar Pradesh	4.2	0.2	89.3	0.0	70	489
Uttarakhand	5.2	0.8	90.6	1.6	0	0
West Bengal	3.4	0.2	91.0	5.1	298	450



(a) Regional Parties



(b) National Parties

Figure 2: Party Success and Political Violence.

therefore by aggregate correlations in the raw data, regardless of whether the margin of victory for regional parties is small or large.

We assigned violent events to state assembly constituencies on the basis of the Haversine distance between the latitude and longitude of the event and the center of the constituency, and on the basis that the event took place in the years between the current and next election in the constituency.¹⁹ Our primary estimation sample is therefore based on all state assembly elections between 1988 and 2011 and all political violence between 1988 and 2015. The sample covers all 28 states and 2 union territories (New Delhi and Puducherry). We restrict the sample to elections where a regional party was the winner or runner-up, the relevant comparison for our purposes. This restriction leaves the primary estimation sample with 3925 constituency-election observations.

Figures 4(a) and 4(b) preview our main results. The figures plot the occurrence of violent events against the vote margin between the most successful regional and non-regional party candidates in close elections (elections where the winner-runnerup margin was less than 2.5%). In Figure 4(a) we plot this for the full sample, while in Figure 4(b) we focus on the states that have a secessionist movement. Each dot in the figure represents a bin-level average of the incidence of violence. Note that the scales on the y-axes are different in each picture, as there is a generally higher propensity for violence in the states with a secessionist movement than in the rest of India.

The figures have several notable features. There is a 5 and 15 percentage point increase respectively in the probability of a violent event around the threshold in India and the secessionist states. This is consistent with the aggregate correlations in Figures 2(a) and 3(a) - regional parties have an effect on violence, and this effect is larger in the secessionist states. Note as well how secessionist states have many more instances with no violence to the left of the threshold. This suggests the large relative effect of regional parties on political violence in secessionist states is partly explained by how low violence is in these states when

 $^{^{19}}$ State elections typically occur at regular 5-year intervals, though there are instances of irregular elections.



(a) States with Active Secessionist Movement



(b) States with no Active Secessionist Movement

Figure 3: Regional Party Success and Political Violence.



Figure 4: Regional Party Success and Political Violence. The running variable is the vote margin between the winner and runner-up. The sample is restricted to constituencies where either the winning or runner-up candidate belonged to a Regional party. The figures use evenly spaced bins. The dots are averages within bins. The solid line is the outcome as predicted by a linear polynomial in the vote margin.

a National party wins. Finally, there is more variability in the occurrence of a violent event when a constituency elects a regional party representative.

4 Baseline Analysis

We estimate:

$$Violence_{jse} = \alpha + \beta RPW_{jse} + f(z_{jse}^* - 0) + f(z_{jse}^* - 0)RPW_{jse} + \varepsilon_{jse}$$

where j denotes the state assembly constituency, s the state, and e the election year.²⁰ The running variable, z_{jse}^* , is the difference between the vote shares of the most successful regional and non-regional party candidates. RPW_{jse} is a binary variable that equals 1 when the constituency was won by a regional party candidate, $z_{jse}^* > 0$, and equals 0 when the constituency was won by candidate with no formal affiliation with a regional party, $z_{jse}^* < 0$. $f(\cdot)$ is a polynomial in z_{jse}^* . The interaction $f(z_{jse}^* - 0)RPW_{jse}$ allows the polynomial to differ depending on whether the constituency was won by a regional party was won by a regional party.

Our baseline analysis considers four different violence measures: (i) a binary indicator of whether a violent event occurred in constituency j between election e and e + 1; (ii) the logarithm of the total number of events occurring during this time; (iii) a binary indicator of whether a death occurred; (iv) the logarithm of the total number of deaths. We use logarithms for the total number of events and deaths to deal with the large spread and outliers in these variables across constituencies.²¹

Our interest is in β , which measures the effect of electing a regional rather than a nonregional party representative on political violence. Our primary estimates of β will be based on the data-driven bandwidths of CCT (2014) and a first-order polynomial in z_{jse}^* . Standard errors are clustered at the level of the constituency. Note that the estimates will have a causal

²⁰Election years are specific to the state, as states have elections at different times.

 $^{^{21}}$ As this variable can take the value of 0, we add 1 to all observations before taking logs.

interpretation when political elites have imprecise control over who wins the constituency (Lee 1998), that is, when a close win by a regional party candidate can be attributed to idiosyncratic factors which are unrelated to future political violence.

While the identification strategy here is fairly conventional from the perspective of regression discontinuity design, it differs from strategies used in other studies of the effects of party identity on political or economic outcomes. Other studies, often within the context of India, are constrained by the fact that outcomes are measured over a geographic area which is wider than the electoral constituency, such as the administrative district, nesting several constituencies. Because of this measurement problem, these studies exploit instrumental variables designs where the fraction of seats won (over the wider geographical area) by the relevant party in close elections is used to instrument for the fraction of seats the party won in all elections, close or not,²² effectively identifying the effect of a group of representatives with a shared identity on outcomes defined over the set of constituencies they collectively represent. This effect aggregates the individual representative effect on their own constituency, the group effect on the collection of constituencies they formally represent, as well as individual and group effects on constituencies they do not formally represent. We instead identify the effect of a single representative with a particular identity on the constituency he or she represents. Identification of the individual-level effect facilitates more precise conclusions about the mechanism generating relationships between party identity and outcomes.

Our baseline estimates are found in Table 2. Electing a regional party representative party increases the occurrence of a violent event by 7.2 percentage points and the number of violent events by almost 10 percent. It increases the occurrence of a death by 7.2 percentage points and the number of deaths dues to political violence by 13.4 percent. The estimates are statistically significant at conventional significance levels. The estimates are also meaningful substantively, explaining well over half of the dependent variable mean in each case.

²²Nellis et al. (2016) and Nellis and Siddiqui (2018) use this approach to study the effect of party identity on religious violence in India and Pakistan. Clots-Figueras (2011), Clots-Figueras (2012), Bhalotra et al. (2014), Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras (2014) are all examples where this approach has been applied to study the effect of politician identity on development outcomes in India.

Table 2: Baseline Estimates. The unit of observation is the constituency and election. The dependent variable mean is based on the full sample. The bandwidths for the RD estimates are CCT (2014) optimal. The polynomial order is 1. Standard errors are clustered at the level of constituency. p-values are in parentheses.

	Occurrence of	# of Violent	Occurrence	# of Deaths
	Violent Event	Events (in logs)	of Death	(in logs)
Dep. Var. Mean	0.114	0.178	0.112	0.243
Regional Party Wins	0.072	0.099	0.072	0.134
	(0.006)	(0.042)	(0.005)	(0.042)
Bandwidth	0.119	0.139	0.118	0.137
Obs. (Effective)	2962	3305	2955	3271

4.1. Falsification and Robustness. We conducted several falsification tests for the RD design, searching in particular for evidence of manipulation around the threshold. Parties or candidates can manipulate where the candidate stands relative to the threshold by buying votes with money or goods such as alcohol, strong arming voters before they enter the voting booth, or altering the election outcome *ex post* by throwing out ballots. As noted, this is a concern from the perspective of a causal interpretation in so far as parties or candidates can use these strategies to perfectly manipulate the candidate's position relative to the threshold.

Figure 5 uses local polynomial techniques to explicitly test for a discontinuity in the density for the vote margin between state and non state parties (Cattaneo et al. 2017; McCrary 2008). Figures A1, A2, Panel A of Table A1, and Online Appendix Table OA3 estimate the effect of state party representation on various covariates, including one lag of violence, voter turnout, the number of candidates, as well as lagged polarization and fractionalization measures that use lagged vote shares and that is inspired by Montalvo and Reynal-Querol (2005), Reynal-Querol (2002), Esteban and Ray (1994), and Esteban and Ray (1999).

The tests in Figures 5, A1, and A2, Panel A of Table A1, and Online Appendix Table

Figure 5: Discontinuity in Density Test. The running variable is the vote margin between the winner and runner-up. The sample is restricted to constituencies where either the winning or runner-up candidate belonged to a state party. The histogram on the left has 50 bins. The density right uses a first-order polynomial for density estimation and a second-order polynomial for bias-correction estimate (see CJM (2017)). The discontinuity-in-density test statistic and p-value are 0.104 and 0.917 respectively, implying that we cannot reject the null hypothesis of a continuous density around the cutoff.



OA3 all support the null hypothesis of no manipulation around the threshold. To further rule out the possibility that the estimates are spuriously driven by past violence, Panel B of Table A1 shows our conclusions are robust to redefining our dependent variable as the growth in the occurrence or number of violent events or deaths. Finally, Panel C of Table A1 shows representation by a regional party increases violence in the 2 years following an election, providing evidence against reverse causality, namely the possibility that political leaders were using violence to mobilize co-ethnics and consolidate support in the lead up to an election itself (Wilkinson 2004).

We checked the robustness of the estimates to variants of our baseline specification. Figure OA1 and Figure OA2 show the estimates for the occurrences of violent events and death are robust across a wide range of bandwidth choices and polynomial orders of 0, 1, $2.^{23}$

²³We checked polynomial orders of less than or equal 2 at the recommendation of Gelman and Imbens

The figures also show that the number of violent events and deaths are a bit more sensitive to the bandwidth and polynomial choice, most probably because of the significant measurement error that is typically associated with counts of violence and deaths. Figure OA3 plots the density for RD estimates at fake cutoffs of -0.130,-0.125,...,0.125,0.130, showing that the estimates at the true cutoff are extreme relative to the mean of the estimates at the fake cutoffs.

One concern with the violence data relates to whether our estimates reflect the effects of electing a regional party representative on violence reporting. Online Appendix Table OA2 uses information on who initially reported the violence to evaluate whether regional party representatives increase or decrease the ratio of the number of events initially reported by police sources to the number of reports by other sources, such as the army or other organizations, separately for our full sample and for secessionist states. The reason we consider reports by police sources specifically is that these forces are the ones most likely to be manipulated by regional candidates - as we noted above, police forces are controlled by the states. The table shows the election of a regional party representative decreases the ratio of police reported violence, but that the estimates are insignificant statistically. This suggests that our estimates reflect the effects of regional party representation on violence rather than their effects on the reporting of violence.

5 Regional Parties and Secessionist Violence

Our first step in understanding why regional parties cause political violence in India is to identify what *type* of violence they cause. The sources of political violence in India are wide ranging. Some of the most commonly studied types of violence in India include Hindu-Muslim Communal violence (see e.g. Wilkinson (2004) and Mitra and Rey (2014)), "Sons of Soil" (Nativist) violence (see e.g. Weiner (1978) and Bhavnani and Lacina (2015)), and

⁽²⁰¹⁸⁾, who argue against the use of higher-order polynomials in RD designs.

Naxalite (Marxist) violence (e.g. Eynde (2017)). However the violence that would seem most clearly linked to regional parties is secessionist violence, which has not been systematically studied in the Indian context.

We expect regional parties to cause secessionist violence for a couple of reasons. First, because they often advocate for autonomy or even secession, their electoral success may stoke secessionist aspirations among the more violent segments of local populations. Second, because they often have historical ties to violent secessionist organizations, and they tend to make the similar regional or ethnic appeals as local violent secessionist organizations, they may facilitate or overlook violent secessionist activities.²⁴

States in India's troubled Northeast region provide useful motivating examples. The modern secessionist movement in Assam was borne out of the "Assam Agitation," a large scale Assamese Nativist movement against mostly Bengali speaking immigrants to Assam. The leader of that movement, the All Assam Students Union (AASU), agreed to the Assam Accord with the central government in 1985. In exchange for calling off the agitation, the movement was promised help from the center to identify "illegal migrants" and either delete them from the electoral record or expel them from Assam altogether.²⁵ With the signing of the accord, the agitation formally ended and the movement was transitioned to a (regional) political party, the AGP (Asom Gana Parishad).

A perceived inability of the AGP and the center to deliver on the accord, especially the expulsion of "illegal immigrants", led to the formation of the ULFA (United Liberation Front of Asom), an outlawed and explicitly secessionist organization seeking to establish an independent Assam through violent struggle.²⁶ While the ULFA sought to represent all people

²⁴Communist parties and violent communist movements also tend to have a similar agendas. However, communist parties are typically not regional, contesting elections across several if not most states.

²⁵In particular, any individual that could establish they were in Assam before 1966 would be regularised. Those who arrived between 1966 and March 25th 1971 were to be deleted from the electoral record, and required to register as a foreigner. Those who arrived on or after March 25 1971 were to be deemed illegal and expelled. The relevance of March 25 is that this is the date of Bangladeshi Independence.

²⁶The ULFA is not the only violent secessionist organization in Assam. There have been several, including the Bodo Liberation Tigers, an armed group seeking autonomy for the Bodo people of Assam.

of Assam and has often distanced itself from the immigration issue in particular (Baruah 1994), through its pursuit of Assamese independence (and later, self-determination), as well as its intervention into all aspects of Assamese life, it successfully embedded itself into the Assamese mainstream. The influence and power that the ULFA has exerted in Assam at times has complicated matters for the AGP. As Baruah (1994) writes, "As a regional political party wedded to the Assamese cause, the AGP shared a common ideological space with ULFA, and its government was incapable of effectively challenging the Front." Moreover, the two have allegedly cooperated at times, the ULFA providing electoral support to the AGP in exchange for the AGP's consent to the ULFA's illegal post-election activity.²⁷

To study whether the effect of regional candidates on political violence operates through an increase in secessionist violence, we divide our sample into two sets of Indian states: those with active secessionist movements during our sample period, and those without. States with a secessionist movement include: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, and Tripura. Our definition excludes states like Tamil Nadu, where there was a secessionist movement in the 1950s and 1960s prior to statehood, and where the secessionist movement largely died out following statehood.²⁸

Perhaps not coincidentally, the set of states that have a secessionist movement are also the set of states that the Indian government has applied an Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) to. These acts afford the Indian military special powers in areas that have been deemed "disturbed areas." The AFSPA's are extremely controversial as Armed Forces are given the ability to shoot to kill under very broad conditions, the ability to arrest on suspicion and without a warrant, and provides officers with immunity from prosecution in the event that the powers are abused. Many have argued that fundamental human rights

²⁷For a news report on AGP ministers signing pre-election agreements with ULFA leaders, see https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/states/story/19971201-agp-ministers-under-suspicion-for-links-with-ulfa-830991-1997-12-01, retrieved 05/04/2019. See Chapter 3 of Butt (2017) for a detailed account of the history of the AGP and ULFA as well as the evolution of their relationship during the counterinsurgency.

²⁸Our definition includes states Nagaland and Manipur because secessionist violence has persisted even though these states were granted statehood in 1963 and 1972 respectively.

have been violated in the "disturbed states" on a fairly large scale, and Indian soldiers have come to be viewed as a symbol of oppression, and have only served to increase the animosity between locals and the central government. All this is supported by raw statistics on police presence across India. From 2001-2012, there was 5.57 police per 1000 persons in secessionist states, whereas there were only 1.91 police per 1000 persons in non-secessionist states.²⁹

Table 3 reports estimates for the two subsamples. Panel A examines the effects of regional party representatives on political violence in states with active secessionist movements. Panel B examines the effects in states without active secessionist movements. The first column of Panel A shows a regional party representative increases the occurrence of a violent event occurring by 14.4 percentage points in states with a secessionist movement, a 56.7% increase over the dependent variable mean, where the estimate is statistically significant at the 5 percent level. The first column of Panel B shows a regional party representative increases the occurrence of a violent event by 6.5 percentage points in states without a secessionist movement. This estimate is less significant substantively and insignificant statistically. The estimates in the Columns 2 to 4 yield qualitatively similar patterns.

Table 3 implies ultimately that our baseline results in Table 2 are explained entirely by the effect of regional candidates on violence in states with a secessionist movement. Given that violence in these states is almost entirely secessionist in nature,³⁰ we can conclude that representatives from regional parties cause secessionist violence to increase.

5.1. Anti-Regime vs. Inter-Communal Violence. Secessionist violence can be antiregime or intercommunal in nature (Brancati 2006), and it is not obvious which type of violence will emerge under regional party representation. Regional party representatives

²⁹The statistics here are obtained using the Crime in India 2012 database, from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), which has information on the number of police officers across states, as well as the censuses of population from 2001 and 2011.

³⁰Hindu-Muslim violence occurs primarily in Gurarat, while Naxalite violence occurs along India's "Red Corridor" (Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Andrha Pradesh, Karnataka). Caste violence is widespread, but is not common in the Northeast states that compromise much of our states with a secessionist movement. While there is Sons of Soil violence in some of our secessionist states, we show in the next section that regional party representatives have no effect on this type of violence.

Table 3: RD Estimates for Secessionist and Non-Secessionist States. States with a secessionist movement are: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, and Tripura. The unit of observation is the constituency and election. The dependent variable mean is based on the full samples of secessionist and non-secessionist states. The bandwidths for the RD estimates are CCT (2014) optimal. The polynomial order is 1. Standard errors are clustered at the level of constituency. p-values are in parentheses.

	Occurrence of Violent Event	# of Violent Events (in logs)	Occurrence of Death	$\begin{array}{c} \# \text{ of Deaths} \\ (\text{in logs}) \end{array}$		
	Panel A: States with a Secessionist Movement					
Dep. Var. Mean	0.254	0.485	0.251	0.644		
Regional Party Wins	$0.144 \\ (0.014)$	$0.262 \\ (0.050)$	$0.142 \\ (0.014)$	$0.399 \\ (0.022)$		
Bandwidth Obs. (Effective)	$\begin{array}{c} 0.124\\ 842 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.140\\ 909 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.124\\ 842 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.144\\919\end{array}$		
	Panel B: States without a Secessionist Movement					
Dep. Var. Mean	0.065	0.073	0.065	0.105		
Regional Party Wins	$0.027 \\ (0.153)$	$0.008 \\ (0.748)$	$0.029 \\ (0.136)$	-0.002 (0.164)		
Bandwidth Obs. (effective)	$0.181 \\ 2813$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.160 \\ 2625 \end{array}$	$0.161 \\ 2640$	$0.179 \\ 2803$		

may purposefully overlook or incite violence against the federal/state government or between ethnic groups depending on the strategy they or violent secessionist organizations believe will most effectively serve secessionist goals. Assam again provides a useful example. Assam experiences both anti-regime violence as well as nativist intercommunal violence, largely between indigenous groups and Bengali speaking immigrants, but also between competing tribes and ethnic groups.

We exploit the richness of the UCDP data to investigate whether regional party representatives increase anti-regime violence, intercommunal violence, or both. The UCDP data includes detailed information on the protagonists in violent events, such as whether the events involve the state and an insurgent group, insurgent groups alone, or an insurgent group and civilians. The data will, for example, classify the event defined by the Reuters article titled "Indian troops kill six rebels near Myanmar border" (23 February 2008) as violence between the state and insurgent groups. The event corresponding to the BBC article "More Naga-Kuki clashes in Manipur" (10/1/1993) will be classified as insurgent-insurgent violence. Finally, the Hindustan Times article "3 More Hacked to Death in Diphu" (2005-10-04), in references to attacks on civilians by the extremist group DHD in Assam and Nagaland, is an example where the event would be classified as insurgent-civilian violence.

We interpret state-insurgent violence as anti-regime violence and insurgent-insurgent violence as violence between intercommunal groups. We are more agnostic on the interpretation for insurgent-civilian violence. Most of these events can be interpreted as intercommunal violence because they involve insurgent attacks on civilian members of a different ethnic group. Other insurgent-civilian events do not fall naturally into our classification, as they may for example entail violence against business owners who refuse to pay taxes levied by the insurgent group. We therefore include events that involve insurgents and civilians if only for the purposes of completeness.

Estimates of the effect of the election of a regional party representative on state-insurgent violence are found in Panel A of Table 4, insurgent-insurgent violence in Panel B of Table

4, and insurgent-civilian violence in Panel C of Table 4. Note the means for the dependent variable, which show that violence between insurgent groups - the primary form of intercommunal violence - is a relatively rare event, whereas state-insurgent violence is far more common. We will focus the remainder of our discussion on Column 1, as the remaining estimates tell a qualitatively similar story.

Panel A shows the election of a regional party representative increases the probability that a violent event occurs between the state and insurgents by 11.2 percentage points (p < 0.05), a 44% increase over the mean probability. Panel B shows an increase in the occurrence of violent event among insurgents of 1.5 percentage points, though the increase is not statistically significant at conventional significance levels.³¹ Panel C shows an increase in the occurrence of a violent event between insurgents and civilians of 2.6 percentage points, though this estimate is also far from significant. Altogether, the evidence suggests regional party representatives increase anti-regime rather than intercommunal violence.

Our results for violence involving civilians tells us that, regardless of whether the representative belongs to a regional or national party, the same level of violence involving civilians prevails. Why is the incidence of this type of violence independent of the identity of the representative? One answer is that politicians of different stripes are equally tolerant of violence where civilians are involved. This is consistent with the idea that all parties have incentives to keep violence and crime rates low, because few citizens support those outcomes.

Anti-regime violence is often highly symbolic - the dates and places of the violence are a major part of the intended message.³² We use the location of government buildings to further examine the nature of the political violence caused by regional candidates. The idea is that, if regional representatives affect anti-regime violence more than any other type,

³¹Indian Intelligence Agencies have been accused of inciting violence between rival insurgent groups for the purposes of weakening insurgent movements Bhaumik (2007). The statistically insignificant effect on insurgent-insurgent violence further suggests that this type of violence is unresponsive to the election of a regional party representative.

 $^{^{32}}$ (Lacina 2009) provides evidence of secessionist insurgent groups in India being more likely to plan attacks on National holidays for their symbolic effect.

Table 4: Antiregime Violence. Estimates are based on states with a secessionist movement: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, and Tripura. The unit of observation is the constituency and election. The dependent variable mean is based on the full samples of secessionist and non-secessionist states. The bandwidths for the RD estimates are CCT (2014) optimal. The polynomial order is 1. Standard errors are clustered at the level of constituency. *p*-values are in parentheses.

	Occurrence of Violent Event	# of Violent Events (in logs)	Occurrence of Death	$\frac{\text{\# of Deaths}}{(\text{in logs})}$	
	Panel A: State-Insurgent Violence				
Dep. Var. Mean	0.254	0.396	0.211	0.906	
Regional Party Wins	$\begin{array}{cccc} V_{\text{ins}} & 0.112 & 0.207 \\ (0.037) & (0.088) \end{array}$		$\begin{array}{c} 0.112 \\ (0.034) \end{array}$	$0.565 \\ (0.040)$	
Bandwidth Obs. (Effective)	$\begin{array}{c} 0.128\\ 858 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.143\\919\end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.129 \\ 863 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.158\\970\end{array}$	
	Panel B: Insurgent-Insurgent Violence				
Dep. Var. Mean	0.026	0.030	0.026	0.088	
Regional Party Wins	$0.015 \\ (0.580)$	$0.014 \\ (0.621)$	$0.015 \\ (0.580)$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.013 \ (0.154) \end{array}$	
Bandwidth Obs. (effective)	$\begin{array}{c} 0.146\\926\end{array}$	$0.137 \\ 894$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.146\\926\end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.149\\937\end{array}$	
	Panel C: Insurgent-Civilian Violence				
Dep. Var. Mean	0.148	0.222	0.147	0.618	
Regional Party Wins	$0.026 \\ (0.715)$	$0.118 \\ (0.240)$	$0.028 \\ (0.454)$	$0.246 \\ (0.391)$	
Bandwidth Obs. (effective)	$\begin{array}{c} 0.133\\ 883 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.119\\ 827 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.142\\917\end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.122\\ 838 \end{array}$	

Table 5: RD Estimates by Proximity to State Legislative Assembly. Estimates are based on states with a secessionist movement: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, and Tripura. The unit of observation is the constituency and election. The dependent variable mean is based on the full samples of secessionist and non-secessionist states. The bandwidths for the RD estimates are CCT (2014) optimal. The polynomial order is 1. Standard errors are clustered at the level of constituency. *p*-values are in parentheses.

	Occurrence of Violent Event	# of Violent Events (in logs)	Occurrence of Death	$\begin{array}{c} \# \text{ of Deaths} \\ \text{(in logs)} \end{array}$		
	Panel A: Constituencies Close to State Assembly					
Dep. Var. Mean	0.241	0.410	0.236	0.563		
Regional Party Wins	$0.202 \\ (0.004)$	0.261 (0.092)	$0.213 \\ (0.004)$	$0.449 \\ (0.029)$		
Bandwidth Obs. (Effective)	$\begin{array}{c} 0.141 \\ 479 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.104 \\ 415 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.116\\ 442 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.103 \\ 415 \end{array}$		
	Panel B: Constituencies Far From State Assembly					
Dep. Var. Mean	0.268	0.563	0.266	0.731		
Regional Party Wins	$0.058 \\ (0.722)$	$0.131 \\ (0.901)$	$0.061 \\ (0.680)$	0.253 (0.682)		
Bandwidth Obs. (effective)	$\begin{array}{c} 0.107\\ 354 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.90\\ 314 \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.110\\ 360 \end{array}$	$0.098 \\ 332$		

we should see a disproportionately large increase in violence close to government buildings. By contrast, if the increased violence was intercommunal we wouldn't expect there to be a systematic difference in violence with respect to distance from government buildings. In India, many government buildings are typically located in proximity to State legislatures, so we can use the geographical location of State Legislatures to study whether the increased violence is anti-regime violence in particular.

Table 5 studies the effect of regional representatives on two subpopulations. In Panel A we estimate the effect of regional representatives on violence in constituencies close to the State Assembly, and in Panel B we estimate the effect for constituencies far from the State

Assembly.³³ The table shows the increased violence that follows the election of a regional party representative occurs in constituencies which are close to the State Assembly. This is consistent with the idea that the violence is anti-regime in nature. It is also consistent with insurgent groups targeting institutions that garner attention for their cause.

6 State Capacity and Governing Coalition Membership

Our results tell us that variation in political violence across constituencies is explained to a large degree by the identity of the elected representative. Why do regional party representatives cause violence to increase at such a local level? We investigate three potential hypotheses:

- H1. Representatives have the ability to influence the deployment of state resources and may do so in a way that facilitates political violence by armed groups;
- H2. Representatives diminish the ability of the state to deploy resources to control violence in constituencies outside of its direct control. Government coordination with local leadership may be better when the representative is part of the government, whether due to better aligned incentives or clearer lines of communication;
- H3. Representatives embolden violent groups to carry out more attacks, perhaps because a secessionist group may interpret the election of a regional candidate as a signal of popular secessionist sentiment in the electorate and capitalize on this by engaging in violence against the state.

To sort through these hypotheses, we examine how the representative's effect on political violence differs depending on whether their party belongs to the state's governing coalition

 $^{^{33}}$ We determine whether a constituency is "close" to the State assembly by ranking the constituencies within a state by distance. The closest half of constituencies are defined as "close" and the remaining half are defined as "far."

or the opposition. If their effect on violence is larger when their party is included in the governing coalition, then we interpret this as evidence of H1. If the effect of the representative is larger when their party is outside the governing coalition, then we interpret this as evidence of H2. If the representative's effect is no different when their party belongs to the governing coalition, then this would point to an emboldening effect, H3.

Before discussing the results, we note that governing coalition membership is not a rare event during our sample. Among the secessionist states, a regional party was a member of the governing coalition in 20 percent of the elections in Arunachal Pradesh, 40 percent in Assam, 0 percent in Jammu & Kashmir, 60 percent in Manipur, 60 percent in Mizoram, 20 percent in Nagaland, 50 percent in Punjab, and 0 percent in Tripura. This variation in where and when regional parties are political insiders facilitates an investigation into whether the effect of regional party representatives on political violence differs depending on their party's governing coalition membership.

Table 6 reports estimates of the effect of electing a regional party representative when their party belongs to the governing coalition (Panel A) or to the opposition (Panel B). The results suggest the effect of electing a regional party candidate on secessionist antiregime violence is explained entirely by instances where the representative's party was part of the opposition. The effect on the incidence of violence in the first column of Panel A is substantively small relative to the effect in the first column of Panel B, and statistically insignificant. The estimate in Panel B tells us that the election of a regional party representative who is part of the opposition increases the occurrence of a violent event by almost 24%, which explains about 83% of the mean. These results are consistent with the idea that, when a constituency is represented by an outsider to the governing coalition, mobilizing state resources to prevent and contain violence is more difficult.

It is fair to ask if this is true in general, for any type of candidate. Is there more violence in a constituency where the elected representative is part of the opposition, whether the party is a regional or not? We explore this possibility in Panel C of Table 6. The estimated **Table 6: Regional Candidates in Government or Not.** Estimates are based on states with a secessionist movement: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, and Tripura. The unit of observation is the constituency and election. The dependent variable mean is based on the full sample. The bandwidths for the RD estimates are CCT (2014) optimal. The polynomial order is 1. Standard errors are clustered at the level of constituency. *p*-values are in parentheses.

	Occurrence of	# of Violent	Occurrence	# of Deaths
	Violent Event	Events (in logs)	of Death	(in logs)
		Panel A: Regiona	l Party is a	
	ſ	Member of Govern	ing Coalition	
Dep. Var. Mean	0.200	0.286	0.198	0.202
Regional Party Wins	0.060	0.128	0.056	0.148
	(0.405)	(0.201)	(0.438)	(0.281)
Bandwidth	0.081	0.070	0.082	0.071
Obs. (Effective)	262	230	266	242
		Danal D. D	1 Deertee in t	
		Panel B: Regiona Momber of Or	1 Party is a	
		Member of Op	position	
Dep. Var. Mean	0.289	0.614	0.285	0.799
Regional Party Wins	0.237	0.408	0.232	0.629
0	(0.002)	(0.056)	(0.003)	(0.022)
Bandwidth	0.147	0.143	0.133	0.137
Obs. (effective)	541	534	513	517
			л 1 C	
		Panel C: Any N	lember of	
		Governing Oc	Januon	
Dep. Var. Mean	0.201	0.282	0.198	408
Governing Coalition	-0.030	-0.070	-0.037	-0.156
Party Wins	(0.924)	(0.790)	(0.847)	(0.458)
Bandwidth	0.098	0.095	0.098	0.131
Obs. (Effective)	759	744	759	885
`````				

effects have the anticipated negative sign - when the constituency representative is part of the governing coalition violence is lower. None of the estimates is statistically significant, however. This suggests that regional party representatives cause violence when they are members of the opposition, but that this is untrue for political parties in general.

Table 6 is consistent with the mechanism in (Cederman et al. 2015), which uses disaggregated data on ethnic groups from 1949-2009 and find that "inclusive institutions" (i.e., ethnofederalism or decentralization) are an effective tool for preventing conflict in cases where it has never occurred. India's institutions are inclusive in the sense that most anyone can run for office, even parties platforming on issues which can be construed as threatening to the sovereignty of the state.³⁴ Our findings imply this type of inclusive institution can cause violence if the representative's party is outside the governing coalition. This suggests that the sharing of executive power between competing ethnic groups is essential for regulating conflict in ethnically divided societies (Lijphart 1969, 2004).

### 7 Conclusion

This article investigates the effect of representation by regional political parties on political violence in India. More specifically, it uses a close election regression discontinuity design to estimate the causal effect of electing representatives from regional political parties on political violence in the representative's home constituency. We show that the election of a regional party representative increases the occurrence of a violent event and death in the representative's constituency by 7.2 percentage points, and the number of violent events and deaths by 9.9 and 13.4 percent. Our baseline estimates show that political violence is, in effect, part of the trade off that comes with giving voters better opportunities to express their preferences, and in this case their preferences for regional party representation. From this angle, our study complements recent work that uses exogenous variation to assess the

³⁴Many countries have experimented with bans on regional or identity based political parties. See Basedau and Moroff (2011) for a study of this approach in Sub-Saharan Africa.

costs of expressive voting (Kapoor and Magesan 2018; Pons and Tricaud 2018).

We go further and examine the hypothesis that regional party representatives are willing facilitators or agitators of violence by paramilitaries in their home constituency. We show regional party representatives increase secessionist anti-regime violence. We explain this through the origins of regional parties in India, which are borne out of the same parent movements as violent secessionist organizations and retain complex ties with them, representing some of the same grievances and demands, and making similar regional appeals. Given the popularity and influence that secessionist organizations sometimes possess, there is a strong sense in which the electoral support generated by violent secessionist organizations can improve the electoral chances of regional political parties.

The findings are consistent with the electoral support of paramilitaries weakening the incentives of regional party representatives to curb political violence (Acemoglu et al. 2013). The findings are paradoxical in the sense that regional party representatives, formally members of the state apparatus, undermine the monopoly over legitimate violence that normally resides with the state. To this end, we further establish that regional party representatives have a larger effect when their party is excluded from the governing coalition, consistent with a diminished ability of the state to deploy resources to control violence in constituencies out of its direct control. One could argue that our findings are also consistent with other models, such as one where paramilitaries threaten elected representatives with violence when they fail to support paramilitary activities (Dal Bó, Dal Bó, and Di Tella 2006; Alesina, Piccolo, and Pinotti 2018; Daniele and Geys 2015). However, it is unclear why this incentive should be strong for regional party representatives exclusively.

It has been argued that the leaders who seek independence by political means avoid serious armed conflict, choosing instead to build support through active participation in peaceful election and protest campaigns (Quinn and Gurr 2003). Our findings suggest that peaceful election and protest campaigns do not preclude these leaders from utilizing the support generated by violent secessionist organizations. To this end, conventional and militant politics appear to be complementary in generating attention for secessionist causes.

The findings of this article speak more broadly to debates about the effects of representative democracy on conflict in developing countries (Kohli 1997). The Northeast of India is home to more than 40 million people, 500 ethnic groups, and 400 languages. The populations in these areas have identities and political and social structures that have been developed over many centuries. The imposition of a federal structure can be interpreted as an affront to these identities and political and social structures. Having representatives in the national or state parliaments may not appease these populations because, while local representatives improve opportunities for power sharing with the central executive, these opportunities may not translate into actual power sharing. This argument aligns with events in Nagaland and Manipur, who were granted statehood within the Indian federation in 1963 and 1972 respectively, and where the granting of "substantial autonomy" caused armed groups' demands to be more radicalized and violence to intensify (Cederman et al. 2015). It is unsurprising, therefore, that federal structures are met with resistance, that these populations elect one of their own, and that the person they elect facilitates or incites secessionist violence against the center.

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### 8 Appendix

**Figure A1: Lagged Violence Around the Threshold.** The running variable is the vote margin between the winner and runner-up. The sample is restricted to constituencies where either the winning or runner-up candidate belonged to a regional party. The figures use evenly spaced bins. The dots are bin-level averages. The solid line is the outcome as predicted by a linear polynomial in the vote margin.



Table A1: Anticipation Effects. The unit of observation is the constituency and election. The bandwidths for the RD estimates are CCT (2014) optimal. The polynomial order is 1. Standard errors are clustered at the level of constituency. p-values are in parentheses.

	Event	# of Events	Death	# of Deaths	
	Occurrence	(in logs)	Occurrence	(in logs)	
	Panel A: One Lag of Dependent Variable				
State Party Wins	0.020	0.041	0.004	0.065	
,	(0.541)	(0.405)	(0.896)	(0.357)	
Bandwidth	0.131	0.152	0.138	0.148	
Obs. (Effective)	3455	3187	3584	3140	
	Panel B: Election-over-Election Growth				
State Party Wins	0.052	0.052	0.060	0.074	
, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	(0.055)	(0.048)	(0.023)	(0.059)	
Bandwidth	0.189	0.237	0.208	0.235	
Obs. (Effective)	4449	4275	4751	4257	
	Panel C: Within 2 Years of Election				
State Party Wins	0.048	0.061	0.050	0.087	
	(0.029)	(0.089)	(0.026)	(0.100)	
Bandwidth	0.130	0.161	0.126	0.156	
Obs. (Effective)	3475	4071	3377	3963	

Figure A2: Further Covariate Balance Around the Threshold. Turnout and Candidates refer to the percentage of eligible electors who turned out to vote and the number of candidates contesting the constituency. Polarization is one lag of  $\sum_{p} v_p^2(1-v_p)$ , where  $v_p$  is the vote share of party p. Fractionalization is one lag of  $\sum_{p} v_p(1-v_p)$ . The running variable is the vote margin between the winner and runner-up. The sample is restricted to constituencies where either the winning or runner-up candidate belonged to a state party. The figures use evenly spaced bins. The dots are bin-level averages. The solid line is the outcome as predicted by a linear polynomial in the vote margin.



# REGIONAL REPRESENTATION AND Secessionist Violence in India

# **Online Appendix** (Not for Publication)

April 22, 2019

Table OA1: Robustness of Baseline Estimates to Regional Party Definition. Here we define a regional party as a State party, in accordance with the official definition of the Election Commission of India. The unit of observation is the constituency and election. The dependent variable mean is based on the full sample. The bandwidths for the RD estimates are CCT (2014) optimal. The polynomial order is 1. Standard errors are clustered at the level of constituency. p-values are in parentheses.

	Occurrence of	# of Violent	Occurrence	# of Deaths
	Violent Event	Events (in logs)	of Death	(in logs)
Dep. Var. Mean	0.093	0.138	0.091	0.190
Regional Party Wins	0.051	0.067	0.052	0.096
	(0.004)	(0.031)	(0.004)	(0.027)
Bandwidth	0.121	0.134	0.121	0.133
Obs. (Effective)	4520	4839	4524	4814

**Table OA2: Regional Party Representatives and Violence Reporting.** The dependent variable is the number of violent events reported by the police relative to the total number of violent events. States with a secessionist movement are: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, and Tripura. The unit of observation is the constituency and election. The dependent variable mean is based on the full sample. The bandwidths for the RD estimates are CCT (2014) optimal. The polynomial order is 1. Standard errors are clustered at the level of constituency. *p*-values are in parentheses.

	Dependent Variable = Relative			
	Number o	or Fonce Reportings		
	Full	Secessionist		
	Sample	States		
Dep. Var. Mean	-0.033	-0.105		
Regional Party Wins	-0.019	-0.048		
	(0.355)	(0.425)		
Bandwidth	0.151	0.144		
Obs. (Effective)	3466	919		
· · ·				

Table OA3: Further Covariate Balance Around the Threshold. Turnout and Candidates refer to the percentage of eligible electors who turned out to vote and the number of candidates contesting the constituency. Polarization is one lag of  $\sum_{p} v_p^2(1-v_p)$ , where  $v_p$  is the vote share of party p. Fractionalization is one lag of  $\sum_{p} v_p(1-v_p)$ . The unit of observation is the constituency and election. The bandwidths for the RD estimates are CCT (2014) optimal. The polynomial order is 1. Standard errors are clustered at the level of constituency. p-values in parentheses.

	Voter	Number of	Polarization	Fractionalization
	Turnout	Candidates	(One Lag)	(One Lag)
State Party Wins	0.002	-0.258	-0.001	0.001
	(0.874)	(0.484)	(0.283)	(0.422)
Bandwidth	0.111	0.120	0.110	0.125
Obs. (Effective)	2202	3248	2542	2840

Figure OA1: Robustness to Bandwidth Choice. Grey dots are defined by the point estimate and bandwidth combination. The 95 percent confidence interval is based on standard errors which are clustered at the constituency level. The polynomial order is 1.



Figure OA2: Robustness to Polynomial Order. Grey dots are defined by the point estimate and bandwidth combination. The 95 percent confidence interval is based on standard errors which are clustered at the constituency level. The CCT (2014) optimal bandwidths are used for each dependent variable. The bandwidths can be found in Table ??.





Figure OA3: Fake Cutoffs. The density plots RD estimates at fake cutoffs ranging from -0.130,-0.125,...,0.125,0.130. The vertical red line corresponds to the estimate at the true cutoff.