Political Polarization and Internal Conflict: A Cross-National Analysis Using Popular Support and Government Cohesion as Proxies

Brandon Parsons*

Department of Economics, Graziadio School of Business: Pepperdine University, Malibu, California, USA.
Email: brandon.parsons@pepperdine.edu

ABSTRACT

The study uses proxies of political polarization, popular support of the government, and government cohesion, to examine its role in explaining internal conflict and the specific types of political violence and civil disorder. The study uses panel data from 135 countries from 1990 to 2021. The research uses two econometric models, Quantile via Moments, to examine the effects of popular support and government cohesion across the distribution of internal conflict, and two-way fixed effects with Driscoll and Kraay standard errors. The two models account for heteroscedasticity, cross-sectional dependence, and autocorrelation. The study finds popular support of the government and its cohesion robustly explain internal conflict and its specific forms of political violence and civil disorder. The research also finds political polarization that reduces popular support and government cohesion influences internal conflict regardless of regime type. The variables are significant from autocratic to democratic, suggesting political polarization that reduces popular support and government cohesion can negatively affect internal conflict levels irrespective of regime. Finally, the study finds the internet has a minor mitigating impact on internal conflict, while its interaction with popular support and government cohesion slightly exacerbates internal conflict.

Keywords: Internal Conflict, Political Polarization, Government Cohesion, Popular Support, Political Violence, Civil Disorder
JEL Classification: 010

1. INTRODUCTION

Many developed countries have experienced limited external conflicts following WWII (Armitage, 2017). This "Long Peace" for developed countries contrasts with increases in "intra-state" conflict, especially in developing countries (Collier, 2007; Hironaka, 2005). Many researchers and theorists claim democratization and reliance on trade networks would reduce external conflict (Kant, 1795; Armitage, 2017). While there is evidence of a reduction in inter-state conflict that parallels increases in democratization, trade, and globalization, it is not the case for intra-state conflict. (Collier, 2007; United Nations, 2022).

Moreover, increases in internal conflicts are not confined to developing or undemocratic countries (United Nations, 2022). For instance, increased political polarization in the United States

contributes to a growing perception of vulnerability (Hetherington and Rudolph, 2015). United States perceived increase in fragility is reflected in the United States' ranking in the Fund for Peace's Fragile States Index (FSI), where it saw the most significant rise in fragility in 2021 (Haken and Cockey, 2021). Furthermore, looking over a decade, from 2011 to 2021, the United States' score on the fragility index deteriorated by 20% (Haken and Cockey, 2021; FSI, 2022). Among the various factors contributing to intra-state conflict, one prominent dimension attracts growing attention: affective political polarization (hereafter "political polarization"). Affective political polarization is the robust and intense preference towards one's political party and dislike towards opposing political parties (Piazza, 2023). Political polarization, especially among democracies, affects a growing number of countries (e.g. Bangladesh, Brazil, Columbia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Poland, Turkey, the United States, Venezuela, and others) (Carothers and

O'Donohue, 2019; Boxell et al., 2022). For example, Coppedge et al. (2020) claim that the intensity of political polarization increased 26.2% in democracies from 2000 to 2018.

The mechanisms with which political polarization can affect internal conflict manifest in different ways. One, political polarization directly spurs internal violence because of the dehumanization of political opponents and an increase in tolerance for violence (Kornfield and Alfaro, 2022; Feinberg et al., 2022). Two, governments weaken because of political polarization, leading to opportunities for those with opposing views (e.g. insurgents) (Fearon and Laitin, 2003). Third, political polarization erodes government unity and cohesion, diminishing the government's capacity to avert or mitigate conflicts (Hetherington and Rudolph, 2015). Moreover, political polarization creates cleavages (e.g. within branches of government and between them), limiting governmental strength to address grievances and mediate conflict resolutions (Lijphart, 2012; Hetherington and Rudolph, 2015). This study analyzes the extent to which political polarization, proxied through government support and cohesion, explains internal conflict over the last 30 years.

This research is unique and distinctive in several ways. First, although there are studies on the effects of political and ideological polarization on specific countries, there is a gap related to more extensive cross-national studies (Piazza, 2023). Second, the study explores whether political polarization is significant in developing and developed countries. Third, the study examines political polarization across a spectrum of governments (e.g. authoritarian to alternating democracies). Is political polarization more of a problem in democracies? Fourth, the study explores the role of political polarization on internal conflict, using indicators of popular support for the government and cohesion within the government. The premise for using these proxies is that escalating political divisions will become evident through these indicators (Hetherington and Rudolph, 2015). For instance, political polarization might diminish the public's trust in the government (Hetherington and Rudolph, 2015).

Furthermore, political polarization fosters division within and between governmental branches, leading to decreased government cohesion (Hetherington and Rudolph, 2015). Consequently, these partisan splits hinder governmental efficacy, as the absence of compromise halts the advancement of policy implementation. The connection between political polarization and internal conflict emerges when stark political divisions lead to declining governmental efficiency and popular support, leading to internal conflicts such as political violence and civil disorder. Fifth, the study examines how access to information, mainly through the internet, directly influences both the indicators of political polarization and internal conflict. Sixth, the research examines how well the proxies of political polarization account for variations in internal conflict, broadly, and also specific categories of internal conflict, which include civil disorder and political violence. The study tests the explanatory power of political polarization proxies over the broad spectrum of internal conflict and its ability to explain finer distinctions, such as acts of civil disorder and political violence. This approach allows for a more detailed understanding of the relationship between political polarization and the different forms and intensities of conflict within a country. Seventh, to enhance the findings' robustness and find variations across the spectrum of internal conflict, the study employs a dual methodological framework: Moments-based Quantile Regression (MMQR) and Driscoll and Kraay Standard Errors (DKSE). MMQR allows for analysis that accounts for the differences across various quantiles within the distribution of the internal conflict data, providing insights into how political polarization affects different points in the distribution (Machado and Silva, 2019). DKSE is used to obtain robust standard errors that account for cross-sectional dependence, autocorrelation, and heteroskedasticity. By incorporating both MMQR and DKSE, the study ensures that the estimated relationships are statistically significant across models and capture quantile variations (Driscoll and Kraay, 1998).

The study begins with literature on political polarization and internal conflict. Section 3 discusses sources and the econometric model. Section 4 presents the panel data analysis findings. Section 5 discusses insights and reflects on the study's contributions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Political polarization and its propensities toward the partisan crystallization of unyielding ideological views can lead to political gridlock, weakened institutions, and violence (Iyengar et al., 2019). Iyengar et al. (2019) find previous polarization in the United States was issue-based (e.g. economic policy). Issue-based polarization has transcended to partisan polarization across a platform of ideologies (Iyengar et al., 2019). In addition to partisan polarization, many countries have experienced intensifying polarization (Haken and Cockey, 2021). In addition to the United States, Brazil has experienced increasing partisan polarization, leading to violence and protests (Carothers and O'Donohue, 2019). In Columbia, political and social polarization has led to violence, including armed conflict (Pécaut, 2021).

Individuals increasingly intertwine personal identity with political affiliations similar to ethnicity and religion (Mason, 2015; 2018b). For example, in the United States, partisan identification has become more aligned with racial and religious identities (Ivengar et al., 2019). Individuals have become increasingly unwilling to associate with other political party members (Braley and Lenze, 2023). For example, Iyengar et al. (2019) find the percentage of Americans against their children marrying someone identifying with the other party has increased from 4% in 1960 to 50% in 2010. One factor increasing the intensity of political polarization is the proclivity of party members to exaggerate the radicalness of the opposing party's policy stances (Levendusky and Malhotra, 2016). Exaggerating the radicalness of viewpoints leads to reduced overlapping identities and increased animosity towards the opposing party (Mason, 2015; 2018; Iyengar et al., 2019). Piazza (2023) claims that political polarization fosters aversion to the opposing party and heightens tendencies to demonize and strip humanity from its members. Dehumanization and demonization of political opponents are often the link to aggression that fosters government disunity and ultimately leads to internal conflict

(Haslam et al., 2012). The use of dehumanization to make violence acceptable has a long history with numerous examples (e.g. WWII). Dehumanization propaganda is often a tool to legitimize violence in conflicts, both small-scale and large (Piazza, 2023).

Some researchers claim that media, including social media, has exacerbated partisan divisions and intensified political polarization (Iyengar et al., 2019). For example, Levendusky and Malhotra (2016) claim the stark increase in parents' adverse to their children marrying someone from the other party is because they assume they will marry outlier extremists portrayed in the media. Lelkes et al. (2017) claim increases in polarization result from the proliferation of partisan media outlets. The growth in these partisan media outlets re-entrenches one-sided views (e.g. confirmation bias) as well as ferments hostility through harsh and exaggerated descriptions of political opponents (e.g. calling opponents communists, fascists, etc.) (Puglisi and Snyder, 2011; Berry and Sobieraj, 2014). Levendusky (2013) also claims increases in partisan media content, which increases exposure to extreme positions, further intensifies polarization (Bakshy et al., 2015).

Additionally, since more viewers are drawn to more sensational "partisan" media content, it has led to less balanced and centralist media content. Media disinformation can also increase political polarization (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017). For example, a disinformation campaign in Brazil with outlandish and extremist claims intensified polarization between partisan groups. In this case, Bolsonaro claimed his opponent, da Silva, was a communist and Satanist who wanted to ban religion and mandate unisex bathrooms (Piazza, 2023). Da Silva spread information that Bolsonaro was a cannibal who would set up a fascist dictatorship if he won the election (Piazza, 2023). Partisan political polarization culminated in civil protests in Brazil, including ransacking the Brazilian Congress (Do Rosario and Campos, 2023).

Political polarization can lead to other undesirable outcomes. Some researchers claim that political polarization has led to a democratic breakdown and increased favoritism for authoritarian "populist" political leadership (Crimston et al., 2022). For example, Venezuela has had intense political polarization, and the sharp divide between supporters of the Chavista movement and the opposition has played a role in Venezuela's democratic decline (Corrales and Penfold, 2015). In addition, countries with high political polarization have parties that often fail to cooperate to address issues plaguing the country (Lelkes and Westwood, 2017). In the United States, healthcare reform has been fraught with political polarization (Skocpol, 2020). For instance, the divide between the Democratic and Republican parties over the Affordable Care Act is a current example. Despite widespread support for healthcare reform, common ground between parties is elusive (Skocpol, 2020). Also, countries with high political polarization often exclude, discriminate, and even punish those in opposing political parties (Broockmane et al., 2022; Piazza, 2023). For example, in Turkey, political polarization has intensified, particularly between supporters of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's ruling AK Party and its opponents (Piazza, 2023). The government initiated widespread purges, targeting not only coup perpetrators but opposition party figures, including journalists, academics, politicians, and public servants deemed to be against the administration (Filkins, 2016).

There is a dearth of empirical research on the relationship between political polarization and internal conflict (Druckman et al., 2021; Piazza, 2023). Although historical observation and country-level studies provide examples of severe political polarization cases that have led to political violence (e.g. Bolivia and Peru), few cross-national studies exist that consider broad measures of internal conflict, or specific forms of internal conflict (e.g. civil disorder and political violence). Furthermore, existing research is often country-specific and uses World Value Surveys to measure political polarization (Piazza, 2023). This study is a large cross-national study, which permits more generalizability of results. If political polarization, proxied through popular support and government cohesion, worsens internal conflict, it may suggest a growing international phenomenon. While the World Values Surveys offer insights into changes in societal beliefs and values, they may not link to mechanisms leading to internal conflict. For example, World Values Surveys may suggest a variance in views in a country. Still, if there is tolerance and acceptance instead of exclusion, discrimination, or retribution, it may not lead to conflict. In contrast, this study's proxies—namely, government cohesion and popular support for government—directly link to operational governance mechanisms.

3. METHODS AND DATA

3.1. Data Description and Variable Selection

Appendices A and Table 1 for sources and descriptive statistics. Internal conflict, from the International Country Risk Guide (ICRG), measures political violence, civil war/coup threats, and civil disorder. All ICRG measures are on a continuous interval scale. A rating of (12.0) demonstrates no active or perceived risk of internal conflict. The rating of (0) is when a country has an ongoing violent civil conflict. Figure 1 for binscatter of internal conflict from 1990 to 2021 across 135 countries. Apparent from Figure 1 is some convergence of internal conflict among developed and developing countries.

The ICRG measures on popular support of the government is one of two proxies of political polarization. A mix of data points measures popular support. One data point is opinion polls on the popularity of the government. A second data point is ICRG expert assessments of current or future issues that may erode popular support of the government. These issues include inter-party wrangling ahead of an election. A higher popular support rating of (12.0) represents broad support of the government and minimal issues likely to erode support. The lowest popular support rating of (0.0) means a government that lacks the support of its citizenry and the existence of ongoing issues likely to continue to erode popular support of the government. Figure 2 for binscatter of popular government support from 2001 to 2021. Apparent from Figure 2 are overall downward trends and slight variation based on development status.

The ICRG measures of government cohesion is the second proxy of political polarization. The government cohesion

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation, Min-Max)

	Full Panel	Developed countries	Developing countries
Max Countries in Panel	135	43	92
Max Observations	4,403	1,370	3,033
Civil Disorder	8.01	9.24	7.44
	1.71	1.58	1.45
	1.2-12.0	1.50-12.0	1.50-12.0
Cultural Tension	8.48	9.77	7.91
	2.27	1.77	2.38
	0.0-12.0	2.0-12.0	0.0-12.0
GDP Growth Rate	3.32	2.74	3.58
	5.52−64.0-86.8	3.61−23.8-25.2	6.12−64.0-86.8
Government Cohesion and Popular Support	7.50	7.83	7.35
	1.97	1.67	2.07
	667-12.0	1.25-11.5	0.667-12.0
Internal Conflict	8.82	10.5	8.12
	2.31	1.42	2.28
	0.0-12.0	3.0-12.0	0-12.0
Law and Order	7.28	10.0	6.07
	2.86	1.94	2.31
	0.0-12.0	2.0-12.0	0.0-12.0
Natural Log of Per Capita GDP	8.53	10.1	7.81
	1.48	0.676	1.12
	5.11-11.6	8.30-11.6	5.11-11.3
Political Violence and Terrorism	8.49	9.75	7.95
	2.41	2.08	2.35
	0-12.0	5.49-12.0	0-12.0
Political Regime	7.61	10.3	6.38
	3.30	2.55	2.82
	0.0-12.0	0.0-12.0	0.0-12.0
Natural Log Population Density	4.01	4.42	3.83
	1.45	1.62	1.33
	0.190-8.99	0.704-8.98	0.190-7.68
Share of Bottom 50 – Income Inequality	14.6	19.4	12.4
	5.22	4.75	3.75
	3.52-36.5	6.06-36.5	3.52-28.5

Figure 1: Internal Conflict by Year and Development Status
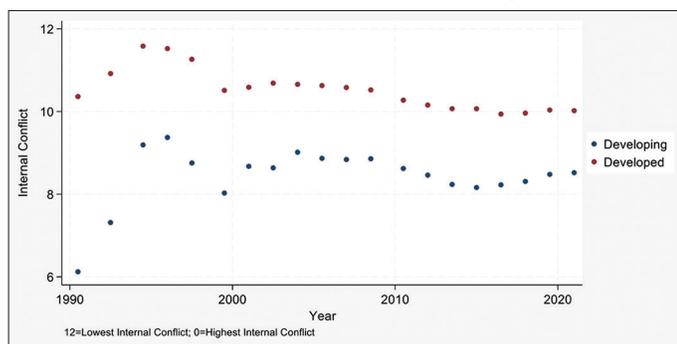
Figure 2: Popular Support of Government by Year and Development Status
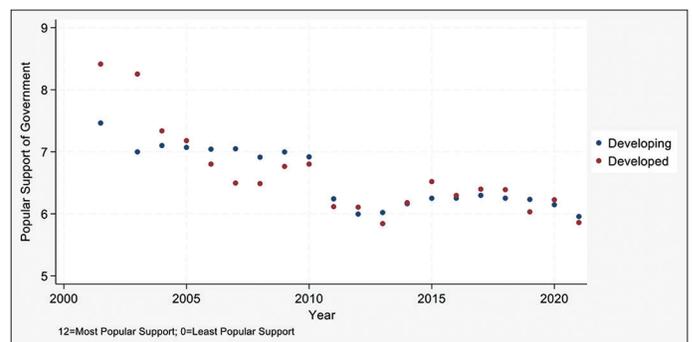
measure assesses the composition and dynamics of coalition governments. Furthermore, it considers the extent to which significant ideological or partisan differences exist between and among branches of government (ICRG, 2023). Finally, it assesses the extent to which there is strict party discipline and the existence of splits within the governing party. A higher cohesion rating of (12.0) represents broad government unity across and among branches. The lowest cohesion rating of (0.0) means a deeply divided government that limits effectiveness. Figure 3 for binscatter of government cohesion from 2001 to 2021. Figure 3 demonstrates similar downward trends and minimal variance between developed and developing countries, as is also the case with popular support in Figure 2.

Additional variables could potentially influence the proxies used to measure political polarization, as well as internal conflict directly. The study includes control variables to account for these other factors. The control variables adjust for the influence of other factors that would otherwise confound the results. Furthermore, it provides a clearer picture of how proxies of political polarization impact internal conflict and ensures that the observed relationships are not spurious correlations resulting from omitted variable bias (Wooldridge, 2012).

The study uses the ICRG political regime measure, which ranges from (0.0) for autarchy to (12.0) for alternating democracies. More democratic regimes have mechanisms to lessen conflict through

Figure 3: Government Cohesion by Year and Development Status
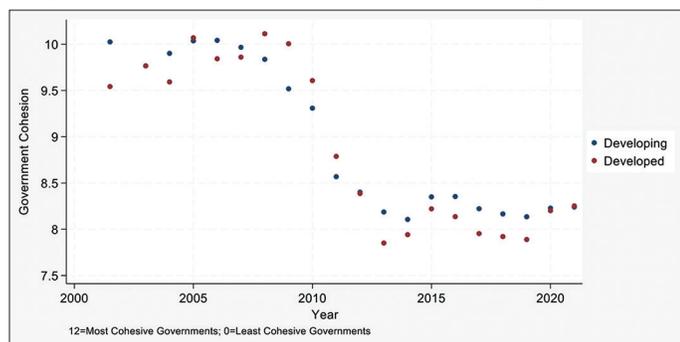
political participation (Barkan and Snowden, 2001). On the other hand, democracies may inherently have more partisan divisions than authoritarian countries (Lijphart, 2012). The expectations are that increases in regime democratization will decrease internal conflict but potentially lower government cohesion.

The study controls for cultural tension via ICRG's ethnic and religious tension measures. The measures evaluate ethnic divisions derived from race, nationality, or language. Religious tension is based on the suppression of religious freedom, the exclusion of certain religions from sociopolitical processes, and discrimination based on religious beliefs. The study aggregates the ICRG measures for ethnic and religious tension into one measure to lessen collinearity. The highest tension is (0.0), while the lowest is (12.0). Intra-state conflict literature has consistently recognized cultural tension as a critical factor contributing to conflict (Huntington, 1996; Cederman et al., 2010).

The study accounts for income inequality. Income distribution, measured by the percentage of pre-tax national income obtained by the bottom 50%, is from the World Income Inequality Database (WIID). Research finds worsening income distribution, can lead to tension between socioeconomic groups, manifesting into conflict (Alesina and Perotti, 1996; Cramer, 2003; Østby, 2008; 2013).

The study incorporates measures of economic prosperity through the natural logarithm of GDP per capita and its yearly expansion rate. Although a higher GDP per capita does not mandate less conflict, countries with greater economic wealth typically have stronger governance structures and more effective institutions, which can help prevent and lessen internal conflicts (Alesina and Perotti, 1996; Collier, 2007).

The study accounts for law and order through ICRG's measure. Law and order measures the strength and impartiality of the legal system and public adherence to the country's laws. The highest score is (12.0) while the lowest is (0.0), with the latter representing the worst possible law and order in a country. Law and order stabilize societies and reduce the propensity for internal conflict (Fukuyama, 2014). It serves as a deterrent to internal conflict, such as political violence, by increasing penalty risks (Fukuyama, 2014).

The study uses World Bank data to control population density. Population density is the number of people per square kilometer.

Population density impacts social dynamics and resource allocation, which are factors of internal conflict (Urdal, 2006). High population density countries may experience competition for limited resources, increasing conflict (Brinkman and Hendrix, 2011). Furthermore, dense populations can increase social tensions and rapidly spread discontent (Brinkman and Hendrix, 2011). Lastly, youth bulge, characterized by a high proportion of younger individuals relative to the population, is interrelated with population density. Youthful populations can experience increased pressures on employment and resources, increasing risks of conflict (Urdal, 2006).

3.2 Empirical Framework

The unbalanced dataset comprises 135 countries spanning from 1990 to 2021, but each country must have a continuous stretch of data for at least 18 years to be included. Developed and developing country panels are created by the United Nations classification. Appendix B for a list of countries.

Appendix C provides model validation tests that support the use of fixed effects for country and year. Validation tests include the Breusch-Pagan Lagrange Multiplier and Hausman for model specification and Wald, Pesaran, and Wooldridge tests, which indicate the presence of heteroskedasticity, autocorrelation, and cross-sectional dependence. The Im-Pesaran-Shin (2003) test dismisses concerns over unit roots. The mean VIF is low (1.68), suggesting that multicollinearity is not a concern, as no individual variable's VIF exceeds (2.54). To further address multicollinearity, the lagged dependent variable is centered. This approach also serves two purposes: it accounts for the theoretical understanding that internal conflict can persist over time, and it provides a methodological benefit by capturing the effect of unobserved, time-invariant factors, thus reducing endogeneity and potential bias (Achen, 2000; Keele and Kelly, 2006). The econometric model design helps ensure integrity of the results, as overlooking these aspects can lead to flawed conclusions (Wooldridge, 2010; Baltagi, 2013).

The analysis uses two econometric models to ensure depth and reliability in its findings: Quantile via Moments (MMQR) and Driscoll and Kraay Standard Errors (DKSE). MMQR captures nuances within dependent variable distribution, offering a more granular view of the impacts of the proxies of political polarization across different levels of internal conflict. Simultaneously, DKSE provides a robustness check as it also accounts for potential issues such as autocorrelation, heteroskedasticity, and cross-sectional dependence, which could otherwise skew the results.

The study uses MMQR and its Quantile via Moment methodology, Machado and Silva (2019) for several reasons. Its robust capabilities address model specification requirements, especially when heterogeneity is a concern. The MMQR approach accounts for conditional heterogeneity in the covariance structure of the data, as documented in studies by Koenker (2004), Canay (2011), and Machado and Silva (2019). MMQR also mitigates the potential endogeneity of independent variables, a common issue in panel data analysis (He, 1997; Machado and Silva, 2019). MMQR provides consistent coefficients even in non-linear relationships (Machado and Silva, 2019). While alternative models may handle

endogeneity and correlations with instrumental variables, they often fail to account for non-linearity and heterogeneity (Machado and Silva, 2019). The MMQR extends beyond coefficient and standard error consistency; it assesses the influence of explanatory variables across the entire distribution of the conditional mean. The MMQR model (1) is an econometric framework that mitigates endogeneity and non-linearity and accounts for cross-sectional dependence, autocorrelation, and asymmetric influences on the dependent variable. The MMQR model (1) uses fixed effects for temporal and spatial dimensions through the absorption of year and country. The model (1) also clusters standard errors at the country level, and the robust option, to make the standard errors robust.

$$Q_y\left(\tau|X_{it}\right) = \left(a_i(\tau) + \delta_i q(\tau)\right) + X'_{it}\,\beta(\tau) + Z'_{it}\,\gamma(\tau) \qquad (1)$$

whereas $a_i(\tau)$ represents the quantile $-(\tau)$ fixed and location/ distribution effects for countries (i), $\delta_i q(\tau)$ is the scale effect (i.e. variability of dependent variable across different quantiles of the conditional distribution), τ is the quantile, $Q_y(\tau|X_{it})$ is the dependent variable and its quantile, $X'_{it}\,\beta(\tau)$ is the vector of independent variables, and $Z'_{it}\,\gamma(\tau)$ is the vector of differentiable transformations of individual components of X.

The research further reinforces the validity of the results by using DKSE as a secondary econometric approach (Model 2), which integrates two-way fixed effects, which accounts for time and country variations. Model 2 addresses heteroskedasticity, autocorrelation, and cross-sectional interdependencies with Driscoll and Kraay (1998) standard errors. Model 2 mitigates risks associated with endogenous variables and spurious correlations by applying a three-year lag within these standard errors.

$$IntConf_{it} = \alpha + X_{it} + \mu_i + \lambda_t + \varepsilon_{it}\ and\ (i = 1,\ldots n; t = 1,\ldots T) \qquad (2)$$

$IntConf_{it}$ is the measure of internal conflict for country (i) and time (t). X_{it} is the vector set of explanatory variables that vary across time and countries. The parameter α contains a constant and country-specific variable invariant over time. The μ_i captures unobservable individual-specific effects and λ_t captures unobservable time-specific effects. ε_{it} is the error term.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Government Cohesion, Popular Support, and Internal Conflict

Table 2 for results for internal conflict and ICRG government cohesion/popular support with MMQR and DKSE models. A singular variable reflects government cohesion and popular support data from 1990 to 2021. As previously mentioned, the ICRG metrics are designed with an ascending scale where elevated scores reflect more desirable states, such as greater popular support and cohesion, diminished cultural conflict, less internal conflict, enhanced democratic processes, and stronger law and order. The positive coefficient indicates decreases in government cohesion and public support for the government increases internal conflict. Furthermore, government cohesion and popular support are statistically significant, with a 99% confidence level, across all MKSE quantiles and DKSE models.

Refer to Table 3 for regressions with internal conflict, government cohesion, and popular support of government. The data for government cohesion and public support span from 2001 to 2021 and are examined independently in this table. ICRG began isolating government cohesion and public support in 2021. Similar to Table 2, when government cohesion and public support were combined, the positive coefficient indicates decreases worsen internal conflict. Government cohesion and popular support remain significant across models and quantile distribution.

Analysis robustly finds that should political polarization that lessens government cohesion or public support for the government; it is highly likely to worsen internal conflict. This aligns with literature linking eroding public trust and institutional fragmentation to growing ideological divides that manifests in internal conflict (Putnam, 2000; Norris, 2011).

Table 2: Internal Conflict and Government Cohesion and Popular Support (1990-2021)

	MMQR -Quantile 25	MMQR -Quantile 50	MMQR -Quantile 75	DKSE – Full Panel	DKSE – Developed	DKSE – Developing
No. in Group	135	135	135	135	43	92
Obs.	4,403	4,403	4,403	4,403	1,370	3,033
F				***	***	***
R-Squared				0.819	0.795	0.828
Government Cohesion and Popular Support	0.115*** (0.014)	0.114*** (0.013)	0.114*** (0.014)	0.114*** (0.022)	0.059*** (0.014)	0.133*** (0.030)
Covariates						
Lag Internal Conflict	0.811*** (0.017)	0.779*** (0.014)	0.724*** (0.014)	0.778*** (0.041)	0.776*** (0.051)	0.779*** (0.041)
Cultural Tension	0.030* (0.017)	0.041** (0.020)	0.052** (0.021)	0.040** (0.015)	0.053** (0.025)	0.035** (0.015)
Political Regime	0.026** (0.011)	0.024*** (0.008)	0.022** (0.009)	0.024*** (0.009)	0.018 (0.019)	0.026** (0.011)
Income Inequality	0.027** (0.012)	0.018* (0.010)	0.008 (0.011)	0.018 (0.013)	0.031*** (0.010)	0.011 (0.018)
Law and Order	0.047*** (0.018)	0.040** (0.016)	0.034* (0.018)	0.041** (0.018)	0.050** (0.022)	0.031** (0.015)
Nat Log Per Capita GDP	−0.014 (0.087)	−0.030 (0.077)	−0.048 (0.085)	−0.030 (0.075)	−0.023 (0.092)	−0.050 (0.062)
GDP Growth Rate	0.016*** (0.004)	0.014*** (0.003)	0.012*** (0.003)	0.014*** (0.003)	0.012*** (0.004)	0.014*** (0.003)
Nat Log Population Density	−0.078 (0.149)	−0.143 (0.138)	−0.211 (0.143)	−0.142 (0.158)	0.035 (0.219)	−0.222 (0.147)

***P<0.01, ** P<0.05, * P<0.10. The dependent variable is internal conflict-standard errors in parenthesis.

4.2. Government Cohesion, Popular Support, and Political Violence

Table 4 for a focused analysis of political violence as a specific category of internal conflict. To clarify results and address multicollinearity concerns, particularly between government cohesion and public support, the study performs three distinct regressions, each incorporating a singular model of covariates. The regression covers 2001-2021, coinciding with the availability of separate data on political violence, popular support, and government cohesion.

The positive coefficient indicates decreases in government cohesion and public support collectively and individually, worsens political violence in all but two cases. Government cohesion is insignificant in the MMQR 75 quantile and the developed country DKSE panel. The MMQR's 75th quantile contains observations from countries with the lowest levels of political violence, which is also a characteristic of developed countries (United Nations, 2023). As a result, the analysis mirrors the political violence conditions

in these countries, thereby accounting for the uniformity in the observed lack of significant results in these two cases.

A question does arise as to why popular support is consistently significant across all models while government cohesion is not. The results may indicate popular support may be a stronger driver of political violence than government cohesion in these two cases of statistical insignificance in developed countries with less political violence. For instance, a lack of popular support could lead to protests, unrest, or even rebellion, while issues in government cohesion may not escalate to violence without the loss of popular support. Furthermore, countries with less political violence tend also to be developed countries, and features of these countries, such as strong institutions, may lessen the impacts of government disunity.

Regardless, political polarization that lessens government cohesion or public government support is likely to worsen political violence

Table 3: Internal Conflict, Government Cohesion, and Popular Support of Government (2001-2021)

	MMQR -Quantile 25	MMQR -Quantile 50	MMQR -Quantile 75	DKSE – Full Panel	DKSE – Developed	DKSE – Developing
No. in Group	135	135	135	135	43	92
Obs.	2,669	2,669	2,669	2,669	860	1,809
F				***	***	***
R-Squared				0.653	0.664	0.662
Government Cohesion	0.079*** (0.015)	0.074*** (0.014)	0.069*** (0.015)	0.074*** (0.018)	0.078*** (0.024)	0.089*** (0.015)
Popular Support	0.075*** (0.011)	0.070*** (0.009)	0.065*** (0.010)	0.070*** (0.014)	0.049*** (0.008)	0.086*** (0.021)
Covariates						
Lag Internal Conflict	0.708*** (0.021)	0.674*** (0.024)	0.634*** (0.024)	0.675*** (0.043)	0.669*** (0.048)	0.680*** (0.042)
Cultural Tension	0.063** (0.031)	0.046 (0.040)	0.030 (0.045)	0.047 (0.031)	0.073** (0.029)	0.037** (0.017)
Political Regime	0.020 (0.018)	0.020 (0.014)	0.021 (0.020)	0.020 (0.021)	−0.076 (0.080)	0.024 (0.024)
Income Inequality	0.032** (0.015)	0.022* (0.012)	0.011 (0.014)	0.022*** (0.007)	0.025*** (0.010)	0.026** (0.010)
Law and Order	0.060* (0.031)	0.041 (0.028)	0.021 (0.026)	0.042 (0.026)	−0.022 (0.041)	0.055 (0.038)
Nat Log Per Capita GDP	0.074 (0.169)	0.074 (0.154)	0.074 (0.160)	0.074 (0.109)	−0.169 (0.164)	0.127 (0.168)
GDP Growth Rate	0.013*** (0.004)	0.012*** (0.003)	0.009*** (0.003)	0.012** (0.005)	0.017*** (0.005)	0.010** (0.004)
Nat Log Population Density	0.053 (0.201)	0.004 (0.187)	−0.045 (0.205)	0.006 (0.143	0.367 (0.457)	0.022 (0.170)

*** P<0.01, ** P<0.05, * P<0.10. The dependent variable is internal conflict-standard errors in parenthesis.

Table 4: Political Violence, Government Cohesion, and Popular Support of Government (2001-2021)

	MMQR -Quantile 25	MMQR -Quantile 50	MMQR -Quantile 75	DKSE – Full Panel	DKSE – Developed	DKSE – Developing
No. in Group	135	135	135	135	43	92
Obs.	2,537	2,537	2,537	2,537	817	1,720
F				***	***	***
R-Squared				0.656	0.696	0.650
Government Cohesion and Popular Support	0.080*** (0.025)	0.057*** (0.021)	0.042** (0.021)	0.060*** (0.010)	0.073*** (0.020)	0.053*** (0.015)
Government Cohesion	0.049** (0.021)	0.041** (0.017)	0.033* (0.017)	0.041*** (0.009)	0.023 (0.024)	0.049*** (0.011)
Popular Support	0.047** (0.019)	0.039** (0.015)	0.031** (0.015)	0.039*** (0.008)	0.036** (0.018)	0.045*** (0.009)
Covariates						
Lag Political Violence	0.740*** (0.021)	0.729*** (0.018)	0.732*** (0.023)	0.727*** (0.045)	0.763*** (0.054)	0.717*** (0.042)
Cultural Tension	0.065** (0.030)	0.059* (0.030)	0.065** (0.030)	0.040** (0.020)	0.060 (0.076)	0.031 (0.044)
Political Regime	0.025 (0.018)	0.022 (0.016)	0.025 (0.018)	0.028 (0.018)	0.065 (0.089)	0.029 (0.018)
Income Inequality	0.033** (0.015)	0.030* (0.016)	0.006 (0.020)	0.020** (0.010)	0.014 (0.017)	0.028** (0.013)
Law and Order	0.061* (0.031)	0.058* (0.031)	0.061* (0.031)	0.023 (0.030)	−0.117 (0.070)	0.060 (0.049)
Nat Log Per Capita GDP	−0.157 (0.212)	−0.153 (0.165)	−0.154 (0.165)	−0.182 (0.133)	−0.489 (0.313)	−0.117 (0.218)
GDP Growth Rate	0.003 (0.003)	0.003 (0.003)	0.004 (0.003)	0.004 (0.004)	0.013 (0.011)	0.003 (0.005)
Nat Log Population Density	0.703 (0.298)	0.484 (0.282)	0.274 (0.259)	−0.504** (0.206)	0.663 (0.440)	−0.491*** (0.139)

***P<0.01, ** P<0.05, * P<0.10. The dependent variable is political violence-standard errors in parenthesis.

in most cases. The findings align with existing research that claims increased political polarization, eroding governmental cohesion, and diminishing public support, can heighten political violence (Kalyvas, 2006).

4.3. Government Cohesion, Popular Support, and Civil Disorder

Table 5 uses the specific category of civil disorder as the dependent variable for internal conflict. For clearer insight and to mitigate multicollinearity—especially between the variables of government cohesion and public support—Table 5 executes three separate regressions for each panel column. Each column is streamlined, utilizing a single model with a single set of covariates. This approach corresponds with the timeframe from 2001 to 2021, which aligns with the period when individual data on civil disorder, popular support, and government cohesion became available.

The positive coefficient indicates decreases in government cohesion and public support worsen civil disorder. Furthermore, all measures of government cohesion and popular support are statistically significant at the 99% confidence level across all MKSE quantiles and DKSE models. Hence, the research finds should political polarization reduce government cohesion or public support; it will exacerbate civil disorders and their risks. The study aligns with Hafez and Mullins (2015), who suggest the escalation of political polarization is a catalyst for civil disorders.

4.4. Regime Type, Government Cohesion, Popular Support, and Internal Conflict

Table 6 analyzes how different political regime categories impact internal conflict, with data separated under three regime types: most autocratic, anocratic, and most democratic. Using DKSE model, the study assesses the effects of collective government

Table 5: Civil Disorder, Government Cohesion, and Popular Support of Government (2001-2021)

	MMQR -Quantile 25	MMQR -Quantile 50	MMQR -Quantile 75	DKSE – Full Panel	DKSE – Developed	DKSE – Developing
No. in Group	135	135	135	135	43	92
Obs.	2,537	2,537	2,537	2,537	817	1,720
F				***	***	***
R-Squared				0.532	0.600	0.523
Government Cohesion and Popular Support	0.184*** (0.029)	0.181*** (0.024)	0.177*** (0.022)	0.181*** (0.045)	0.114** (0.043)	0.213*** (0.046)
Government Cohesion	0.097*** (0.022)	0.099*** (0.018)	0.100*** (0.018)	0.099*** (0.023)	0.049** (0.022)	0.129*** (0.025)
Popular Support	0.167*** (0.017)	0.150*** (0.014)	0.135*** (0.015)	0.152*** (0.037)	0.110*** (0.026)	0.167*** (0.043)
Covariates						
Lag Civil Disorder	0.610*** (0.021)	0.584*** (0.018)	0.561*** (0.021)	0.586*** (0.019)	0.637*** (0.036)	0.565*** (0.020)
Cultural Tension	0.029 (0.069)	0.037 (0.054)	0.045 (0.053)	0.037 (0.070)	0.193* (0.101)	0.007 (0.057)
Political Regime	0.033 (0.033)	0.030 (0.023)	0.027 (0.018)	0.031 (0.026)	−0.095* (0.047)	0.033 (0.029)
Income Inequality	0.048 (0.030)	0.041** (0.020)	0.035* (0.019)	0.042 (0.025)	0.038 (0.025)	0.034 (0.021)
Law and Order	0.030 (0.065)	0.011 (0.047)	−0.005 (0.040)	0.013 (0.017)	0.018 (0.140)	0.022 (0.027)
Nat Log Per Capita GDP	0.110 (0.237)	0.210 (0.202)	0.301 (0.206)	0.203 (0.201)	−0.045 (0.294)	0.026 (0.350)
GDP Growth Rate	0.018*** (0.005)	0.015*** (0.003)	0.014*** (0.003)	0.015** (0.007)	0.041*** (0.014)	0.012* (0.007)
Nat Log Population Density	0.502 (0.318)	0.391 (0.274)	0.291 (0.280)	0.367 (0.457)	−0.062 (0.788)	−0.061 (0.186)

*** P<0.01, ** P<0.05, * P<0.10. The dependent variable is civil disorder-standard errors in parenthesis.

Table 6: Regime, Internal Conflict, Government Cohesion, and Popular Support (1990-2021 or 2001-2021)

	DKSE – Most Autocratic Regimes	DKSE - Anocracies	DKSE – Most Democratic Regimes
No. in Group	70	104	105
Obs.	904	1,591	1,918
F	***	***	***
R-Squared	0.793	0.810	0.714
Government Cohesion and Popular Support	0.209*** (0.038)	0.136*** (0.030)	0.065*** (0.017)
Government Cohesion	0.159*** (0.040)	0.087*** (0.016)	0.051** (0.021)
Popular Support	0.120*** (0.019)	0.108*** (0.029)	0.045*** (0.010)
Covariates			
Lag Internal Conflict	0.674*** (0.049)	0.753*** (0.042)	0.740*** (0.048)
Cultural Tension	0.100*** (0.037)	0.067* (0.039)	0.081*** (0.020)
Political Regime	−0.010 (0.031)	0.072*** (0.024)	0.031 (0.028)
Income Inequality	0.111** (0.042)	−0.010 (0.016)	0.014* (0.008)
Law and Order	0.157** (0.072)	0.052** (0.022)	0.041* (0.023)
Nat Log Per Capita GDP	0.125 (0.116)	−0.108 (0.131)	−0.212 (0.202)
GDP Growth Rate	0.010*** (0.003)	0.013*** (0.005)	0.023** (0.008)
Nat Log Population Density	0.194 (0.218)	−0.232 (0.225)	0.134 (0.180)

*** P<0.01, ** P<0.05, * P<0.10. The dependent variable is internal conflict-standard errors in parenthesis.

Table 7: Internal Conflict, Internet Access, Government Cohesion, and Popular Support (1998-2021)

	DKSE – Full Panel	DKSE - Developed	DKSE – Developing
No. in Group	134	43	91
Obs.	2,249	893	1,536
F	***	***	***
R-Squared	0.699	0.685	0.714
Government Cohesion and Popular Support	0.106*** (0.024)	0.091** (0.041)	0.118*** (0.027)
Internet Access	0.013** (0.005)	0.024** (0.010)	0.030** (0.015)
Interaction	−0.002*** (0.001)	−0.001 (0.001)	−0.004** (0.002)
Covariates			
Lag Internal Conflict	0.700*** (0.036)	0.687*** (.035)	0.697*** (0.044)
Cultural Tension	0.035 (0.034)	0.103*** (0.032)	0.013 (0.037)
Political Regime	0.016 (0.010)	0.020 (0.050)	0.024** (0.012)
Income Inequality	0.021** (0.006)	0.024** (0.011)	0.009 (0.009)
Law and Order	0.053** (0.023)	0.033 (0.056)	0.061 (0.045)
Nat Log Per Capita GDP	−0.014 (0.012)	0.052 (0.237)	0.050 (0.184)
GDP Growth Rate	0.010*** (0.003)	0.011* (0.006)	0.009*** (0.003)
Nat Log Population Density	0.126 (0.153)	0.798 (0.447)	−0.073 (0.239)

*** $P<0.01$, ** $P<0.05$, * $P<0.10$. The dependent variable is internal conflict-standard errors in parenthesis.

cohesion and public support from 1990 to 2021 and the individual effects of each from 2001 to 2021. The reported covariate effects relate to the combined government cohesion and public support metric, while the others are omitted for clarity.

The results indicate decreases in government cohesion or public support for the government worsen internal conflict irrespective of regime type. Furthermore, all but one government cohesion and popular support measures are statistically significant, with a 99% confidence level. In the most democratic panel, the significance for government cohesion is at the 95% confidence level. The results suggest that political polarization that decreases government cohesion and popular support for the government can worsen internal conflict regardless of regime type.

4.5. Internet Access, Government Cohesion, Popular Support, and Internal Conflict

Table 7 of the DKSE models assessing the impacts of internet access and its interaction with government cohesion and popular support of the government. Broadband subscription data, indicating internet access per 100 households, is sourced from the World Bank. Analysis ranges from 1998 in the model incorporating the combined metric of government cohesion and public support and from 2001 to 2021 for analysis focusing on their separate impacts. The presented covariate pertains to the aggregate measure of government cohesion and public support.

The analysis reveals that the availability of internet access has a slight dampening influence on internal conflict across panels. The negative interaction coefficient suggests that the combined effect of an increase in both government cohesion/popular support and broadband subscriptions slightly reduces the positive effect that each variable has individually on reducing internal conflict. Therefore, while each factor individually positively affects reducing internal conflict, their combined effect slightly dampens this benefit. The results align with research claiming that the increased use of the internet does not lead to a rise in internal conflict, neither as a direct influence nor through its association with indicators of political polarization (Boxell et al., 2017).

5. CONCLUSION

A foundational premise of the study is political polarization manifests through government cohesion and popular support of the government (Hetherington and Rudolph, 2015). Political polarization drives divisions, and the intensity of these political divisions leads to the loss of government cohesion and public support for the government, which can lead to internal conflict.

One significant insight from the study is that measures of government cohesion and its public support serve as strong indicators for internal conflict. In nearly all cases, the study finds these indicators are significant to the 99% confidence level. Therefore, as political polarization decreases government cohesion and public support, the study finds it increases internal conflict.

A second significant insight is the significance of government cohesion and public support in predicting internal conflict is consistent across various forms of internal conflict. The study finds it explains the broader measure of internal conflict and the specific forms of political violence and civil disorder.

A third major insight is the universal impact of government cohesion and public support across the regime spectrum. Suppose political polarization worsens government cohesion and public support. In that case, the effect on internal conflict transcends regime types, from autocratic to democratic, suggesting it is a universal phenomenon affecting countries regardless of their governance structures.

A fourth insight is while internet access appears to have a standalone mitigating influence on internal conflict, the interaction between increased internet access and government cohesion and public support does not significantly enhance this mitigating effect. Results suggest that greater internet use does not drive increases in internal conflict, directly or indirectly, through its interaction with the proxies of political polarization.

A fifth insight is public support is a better indicator of political violence than government cohesion in developed countries. It

suggests that popular opinion may be a more critical factor than government cohesion in the onset of terrorism in developed countries. A lack of popular support may lead to political violence, while a loss in government cohesion may not escalate to political violence in developed countries.

There are some limitations to the study. Although the study has 135 countries with over 4,000 observations, which increases the generalizability of its findings, analysis of individual countries is essential. It could be the case that certain countries have relationships different from their group. For example, it could be the case that the role of the internet and communication worsens internal conflict in some countries, while this study finds it has a moderating effect at the large-N level. Another limitation is that measuring variables such as internal conflict, government cohesion, and regime is challenging and could lead to measurement error. Future research should consider directly exploring the role of political polarization on government structure and mechanism.

6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

REFERENCES

Achen, C.H. (2000), Why Lagged Dependent Variables Can Suppress the Explanatory Power of Other Independent Variables. Annual Meeting of the Political Methodology Section of the American Political Science Association.

Alesina, A., Perotti, R. (1996), Income distribution, political instability, and investment. European Economic Review, 40(6), 1203-1228.

Allcott, H., Gentzkow, M. (2017), Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. Journal of Economic Perspectives, 31(2), 211-236.

Armitage, D. (2017), Civil Wars: A History in Ideas. New York: Vintage Books.

Bakshy, E., Messing, S., Adamic, L. (2015), Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on Facebook. Science, 348(6239), 1130-1132.

Baltagi, B. (2013), Econometric Analysis of Panel Data. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.

Barkan, S., Snowden, L. (2001), Collective Violence. Boston, Mass: Allyn and Bacon.

Berry, J., Sobieraj, S. (2014), The Outrage Industry: Political Opinion Media and the New Incivility. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Boxell, L., Gentzkow, M., Shapiro, M. (2017), Greater internet use is not associated with faster growth in political polarization among US demographic groups. Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, 114(40), 10612-10617.

Braley, A., Lenz, G. (2023), Why voters who value democracy participate in democratic backsliding. Nature Human Behavior, 7(8), 1-12.

Brinkman, H.J., Hendrix, C.S. (2011), Food Insecurity and Violent Conflict: Causes, Consequences, and Addressing the Challenges. World Food Programme Occasional Paper No. 24.

Broockman, D.E., Kalla, J.L., Westwood, S.J. (2022), Does affective polarization undermine democratic norms or accountability? Maybe not. American Journal of Political Science, 67(3), 808-828.

Canay, I. (2011), A simple approach to quantile regression for panel data. The Econometrics Journal, 14(3), 368-386.

Carothers, T., O'Donohue, A. (2019), Democracies Divided: The Global Challenge of Political Polarization. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institute Press.

Cederman, L., Wimmer, A, Min, B. (2010), Why do ethnic groups rebel? New data and analysis. World Politics, 62(1), 1-10.

Collier, P. (2007), The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Falling and What Can Be Done About It. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Coppedge, M., Gerring, J., Glynn, A., Knutsen, C., Lindberg, S., Pemstein, D., Wang, Y. (2020), Varieties of Democracy: Measuring Two Centuries of Political Change. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Corrales, J., Penfold, M. (2015), Dragon in the Tropics: Venezuela and the Legacy of Hugo Chávez. 2nd ed. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

Cramer, C. (2003), Does inequality cause conflict? Journal of International Development, 15(4), 397-412.

Crimston, C.R., Selvanathan, H.P., Jetten, J. (2022), Moral polarization predicts support for authoritarian and progressive strong leaders via the perceived breakdown of society. Political Psychology, 43(4), 671-691.

Do Rosario, J., Campos, R. (2023), Investors See Brazil's Polarization, Fiscal Plans as Key Risks after Protests. London: Reuters.

Driscoll, J., Kraay, A. (1998), Consistent covariance matrix estimation with spatially dependent data. Review of Economics and Statistics, 80, 549-560.

Druckman, J., Klar, S., Krupnikov, Y., Levendusky, M., Ryan, J. (2021), How affective polarization shapes Americans' political beliefs: A study of response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Journal of Experimental Political Science, 8(3), 223-234.

Fearon, J., Laitin, D. (2003), Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war. The American Political Science Review, 97(1), 75-90.

Feinberg, A., Branton, R., Martinez-Ebers, V. (2022), The trump effect: How 2016 campaign rallies explain spikes in hate. PS: Political Science and Politics, 55(2), 257-265.

Filkins, D. (2016), The Purge Begins in Turkey. The New Yorker. Available from: https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-purge-begins-in-turkey [Last accessed on 2016 July 16].

Fukuyama, F. (2014), Political Order and Political Decay: From the Industrial Revolution to the Globalization of Democracy. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Hafez, M.M., Mullins, C.A. (2015), The radicalization puzzle: A theoretical synthesis of empirical approaches to homegrown extremism. Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 38, 958-975.

Haken, N., Cockey, S. (2021), A Booming Economy Will not Save Us: The US Needs to Deal with its Polarization Problem. Fragile State Index. Available from: https://fragilestatesindex.org/2021/05/20/a-booming-economy-will-not-save-us-the-us-needs-to-deal-with-its-polarization-problem [Last accessed on 2021 May 20].

Haslam, N., Bastian, B., Laham, S., Loughnan, S. (2012), Humanness, dehumanization, and moral psychology. In: Mikulincer, M., Shaver, P.R., editors. The Social Psychology of Morality: Exploring the Causes of Good and Evil. United States: American Psychological Association. p203-218.

Hetherington, M., Rudolph, T. (2015), Why Washington Won't Work: Polarization, Political Trust, and the Governing Crisis. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Hironaka, A. (2005), Neverending Wars: The International Community, Weak States, and the Perpetuation of Civil War. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Huntington, S.P. (1996), The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of

World Order. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Im, K., Pesaran, H., Shin, Y. (2003), Testing for unit roots in heterogeneous panels. Journal of Econometrics, 115(1), 20-30.

Iyengar, S., Lelkes, Y., Levendusky, M., Malhotra, N., Westwood, S. (2019), The origins and consequences of affective polarization in the United States. Annual Review of Political Science, 22, 129-146.

Kalyvas, S. (2006), Building reputation: Why governments fight some separatists but not others. American Journal of Political Science, 50(2), 313-330.

Kant, I. (1795), In: Reiss, H.S., editor. Nisbet, H.B., Trans. Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Keele, L., Kelly, N.J. (2006), Dynamic models for dynamic theories: The ins and outs of lagged dependent variables. Political Analysis, 14(2), 186-205.

Koenker, R. (2004), Quantile regressions for longitudinal data. Journal of Multivariate Analysis, 91(1), 74-89.

Kornfield, M., Alfaro, M. (2022), 1 in 3 Americans Say Violence against Government Can be Justified, Citing Fears of Political Schism, Pandemic. The Washington Post.

Lelkes, Y., Sood, G., Iyengar, S. (2017), The hostile audience: The effect of access to broadband internet on partisan affect. American Journal of Political Science, 61(1), 5-20.

Lelkes, Y., Westwood, S.J. (2017), The limits of partisan prejudice. The Journal of Politics, 79(2), 485-501.

Levendusky, M., Malhotra, N. (2016), (Mis)perceptions of partisan polarization in the American public. Public Opinion Quarterly, 80(S1), 378-379.

Levendusky, M., Malhotra, N. (2016), Does media coverage of partisan polarization affect political attitudes? Political Communication, 33(2), 283-301.

Levendusky, M.S. (2013), Partisan media exposure and attitudes toward the opposition. Political Communication, 30(4), 565-581.

Lijphart, A. (2012), Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-six Countries. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Machado, J., Silva, S. (2019), Quantiles via moments. Journal of Econometrics, 213(1), 145-173.

Mason, L. (2015), I disrespectfully agree: The differential effects of partisan sorting on social and issue polarization. American Journal of Political Science, 59(1), 128-145.

Mason, L. (2018), Ideologues without issues: The polarizing consequences of ideological identities. Public Opinion Quarterly, 82(1), 280-301.

Mason, L. (2018b), Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Norris, P. (2011), Democratic Deficit: Critical Citizens Revisited. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Østby, G. (2008), Polarization, horizontal inequalities and violent civil conflict. Journal of Peace Research, 45(2), 143-162.

Østby, G. (2013), Inequality and political violence: A review of the literature. International Area Studies Review, 16(2), 206-231.

Pécaut, D. (2021), Between political polarization and social protest. Análisis Político, 34(102), 175-189.

Piazza, J. (2023), Political polarization and political violence. Securities Studies, 32(3), 476-504.

PRS Group. (2023), International Country Risk Guide (ICRG).

Puglisi, R., Snyder, J. (2011), Newspaper coverage of political scandals. The Journal of Politics, 73(3), 931-950.

Putnam, R.D. (2000), Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Skocpol, T. (2020), The Obama legacy and the future of health care reform. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 689(1), 10-31.

The Fund for Peace. (2022), Fragile State Index. Available from: https://fragilestatesindex.org

United Nations. (2022), A New Era of Conflict and Violence. Available from: https://www.un.org/en/un75/new-era-conflict-and-violence

Urdal, H. (2006), A clash of generations? Youth bulges and political violence. International Studies Quarterly, 50(3), 607-629.

Wooldridge, J.M. (2010), Econometric Analysis of Cross Section and Panel Data. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

APPENDIXCES

Appendix A – Variable Sources and Descriptions

Variable	Indicator/Description	Source
Cultural Tension	The ICRG measures of ethnic and religious tension is on an interval scale of (0) high tension to (12.0) low tension. Ethnic tension is based on levels of racial, nationality, or language divisions. Religious tension is based on the suppression of religious freedom, the exclusion of certain religions from sociopolitical processes, and discrimination based on religious beliefs.	ICRG
GDP Growth Rate	Annual growth rate of per capita GDP.	World Bank
Government Cohesion	The ICRG government cohesion measure is on an interval scale of (0) lowest cohesion to (12) most cohesion. The government cohesion measure assesses the extent to which significant ideological or partisan differences exist between and among branches of government, the extent to which there is strict party discipline, and the existence of splits within the governing party.	ICRG
Internet Access	Broadband subscription per 100 households.	World Bank
Internal Conflict	ICRG measure of internal conflict is on a scale of (0) high conflict to (12) low conflict and is based on the subcomponent measures of civil war/coup threat, political violence, and civil disorder.	ICRG
Law and Order	The law and order index gauge a country's legal system effectiveness and public compliance with laws, ranging from a high of (12.0), indicating strong adherence, to a low of (0.0), signifying poor law and order.	ICRG
Natural Log of Per Capita GDP	The natural log of per capita gross domestic product (GDP).	World Bank
Natural Log of Population Density	The natural log of the number of people per square kilometer.	World Bank
Political Regime - ICRG	The democratic accountability index is on an interval scale from (0) for autarchy to (12) for alternating democracies.	ICRG
Popular Support of Government	Popular support is measured through opinion polls and expert analysis of inter-party conflicts, with a rating scale from (12.0) for widespread support to (0.0) for minimal public backing and persistent issues undermining support.	ICRG
Share of Bottom 50 – Income Inequality	The measure of income inequality is from the World Income Inequality Database (WIID). The study uses the percentage of pre-tax income obtained by the bottom 50%. The smaller the percentage of income distributed to the bottom 50% denotes higher income inequality.	World Income Inequality Database (WIID)

Appendix B – Country Panel

Full panel: Albania, Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Columbia, Congo R, Congo DR, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hong Kong, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Vietnam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Appendix C – Model Specification Testing
Hausman (1978) specification test

	Coef.
Chi-square test value	48.23
P-value	0

Joint Test – test perm

$F_{(28, 2976)} = 21.42$

$Prob > F = 0.0000$

Cross sectional independence

Pesaran's test of cross sectional independence = 15.26, Pr = 0.0000

Average absolute value of the off-diagonal elements = 0.492

Modified Wald test for groupwise heteroskedasticity in fixed effect regression model

H0: sigma(i)^2 = sigma^2 for all i

chi2 (134) = 5.8e+05

Prob>chi2 = 0.0000

Wooldridge test for autocorrelation in panel data

H0: no first-order autocorrelation

F(1, 134) = 1300

Prob > F = 0.0000

Fisher-type unit-root test

Based on augmented Dickey–Fuller tests

Inverse chi-squared(278) P 319.0692 0.0184

Modified inv. chi-squared Pm 4.3082 0.0176

Variance Inflation Factor

Variable Name	VIF	1/VIF
Law and Order	2.540	0.393
Center Lagged Internal Conflict	2.440	0.410
Natural Log per Cap GDP	1.970	0.507
Cultural Tension	1.670	0.598
Share Bottom 50	1.620	0.616
Political Regime	1.450	0.689
Government Cohesion/Pop Support	1.290	0.775
Natural Log Population Density	1.080	0.930
GDP Growth Rate	1.050	0.953
Mean VIF	1.680	