Received: 3 July 2023 | Revised: 25 March 2024 | Accepted: 18 June 2024

DOI: 10.1111/nana.13043

ARTICLE

WILEY

Social costs and policy preferences: Evidence from territorial strategies in Catalonia

Laia Balcells[1] | Alexander Kuo[2]

[1]Department of Government, Georgetown University, Washington, DC, USA

[2]Department of Politics and International Relations (DPIR) and Christ Church, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

Correspondence
Alexander Kuo, Department of Politics and International Relations (DPIR) and Christ Church, University of Oxford, Manor Road Building, Oxford OX1 3UQ, UK.
Email: alexander.kuo@politics.ox.ac.uk

Funding information
Duke University; Christ Church Research Centre at the University of Oxford; Georgetown University

Abstract

Research on territorial preferences in self-determination disputes has traditionally focused on economic and identity-related factors. However, the impact of social costs—encompassing overall societal comfort and conviviality—on specific preferences for territorial strategies remains understudied. This paper presents a novel perspective by investigating how social costs affect such policy preferences in Catalonia, a region in Spain where secession has become a politically salient and defining feature of the political debate in recent decades. Through embedded experiments conducted within regionally representative online surveys over two time periods, we examine the relationship between social costs and preferences for territorial strategies. Our theoretical framework and empirical findings underscore the importance of considering social costs as a determinant of policy preferences, warranting further cross-national exploration—beyond territorial debates.

KEYWORDS
Catalonia, conviviality, self-determination

1 | INTRODUCTION

The recent prominence of independence movements in Catalonia (Spain) and Scotland (United Kingdom) highlights the enduring issue, within multinational democracies, of substate territories aspiring to sovereignty. In recent

decades, there has been an expansion in research on why individuals in these areas support self-determination movements or secession and on territorial preferences more broadly. Events in Catalonia, Scotland and Corsica, among others, have renewed attention to self-determination movements, and social scientists have provided theory and evidence on their origins, success and potential for violence (see, e.g., Cunningham, 2014; Gehring & Schneider, 2020; Griffiths, 2016; Hechter, 2001; Horowitz, 1985, Elias et al., 2015). This scholarly literature, including studies of the aforementioned regions, welcomingly hones in on the individual-level correlates of support for such movements and associated political parties (e.g., Agneman, 2022; Argelaguet, 2021; Hierro & Queralt, 2021; Loewen et al., 2015; Muñoz & Tormos, 2015; Serrano, 2013). A more precise understanding of the individual-level determinants of territorial preferences and why they change can illuminate the long-term trajectory of these movements and contribute to understanding their comparative successes and failures.

Broadly, much of the theorising and evidence on pro-independence (or anti-independence) preferences falls into either *economistic* or *identitarian* explanations. Economistic explanations are mainly about individual economic self-interest, in terms of whether one would economically benefit (or not) from secession, or related beliefs about the overall economic benefit (cost) to the border changes involving the region (e.g., fiscal preferences as explicated in models such as Bolton & Roland, 1997 and for fiscal federalism as in Beramendi, 2012). By contrast, identitarian explanations emphasise the role of forms of cultural-group affinity (such as nation, ethnicity or language group) as the key causal explanation for territorial preferences (e.g., Darden & Grzymala-Busse, 2006; Loewen et al., 2015). These explanations are not mutually exclusive and can be challenging to disentangle, as these factors often reinforce each other.

However, the connection between territorial *preferences* and actual support for *policies or strategies* to attain preferred territorial outcomes can be complex. Territorial preferences may not always correspond with support for specific governmental or non-governmental actions. Further, other factors besides identitarian and economistic explanations, such as *social discomfort* and the possibility of *social discord*, can affect advocacy of different policies, which remain underexplored in the literature. This paper explores these two intuitions more systematically with new and detailed evidence from Catalonia, a region where secession has since the 2010s become politically salient and a defining feature of the political debate. We argue that aversion to 'social costs' in terms of overall societal comfort or conviviality constitutes an additional important and relatively neglected factor in explaining support for strategies to attain territorial goals, distinct from the economist and identitarian explanations mentioned above. We propose that the literature on secession should include social costs alongside other explanations for preferences over territorial strategies.

We use a set of experiments embedded in a two-wave regionally representative online survey in Catalonia to test our hypotheses. Overall, we find that the social costs of territorial strategies, regardless of whether one supports or opposes independence, reduce support for such strategies. Second, we find that social discomfort can reduce support for other salient policies related to territorial movements, which we capture with the case of displays of 'yellow ribbons', a symbol in favour of separatist political prisoners, in Catalonia. Finally, we find that such effects are slightly more pronounced for people who support independence versus people who support the territorial status quo or people who want Catalonia to have more territorial autonomy but not independence. Our results highlight both the importance of distinguishing territorial preferences from strategies (with their potential associated costs) and the relevance of concerns about social conviviality and comfort.

The next section provides a brief summary of the background literature and introduces our theoretical expectations. We then provide an overview of the Catalan case, explain the research design and present the results of a first survey experiment, the 'costs experiment'. The subsequent section presents the design and results of a second survey experiment, the 'ribbons experiment'. We conclude by summarising results and discussing avenues for future research and broader comparative implications.

2 | MOTIVATING LITERATURE AND EXPECTATIONS

Our study is motivated by two key lacunae in the burgeoning literature on self-determination movements. The first is that while there has been an understandable focus on individual territorial preferences, there has been an absence

of exploration of support for corresponding strategies by governments or non-state actors. The second is the negligence of social consequences that might underlie support for such strategies.

Regarding the first gap, the proliferation of recent research focusing on individual-level correlates or determinants of support for secession within democratic countries generally examines preferences over territorial *status*, such as independence or the status quo.[1] However, this research generally does not measure support for actual policies or strategies to attain territorial goals. While it is important to understand variation in citizen territorial preferences, these may not necessarily translate into support for actions. The correlation between support for a territorial status and action is unknown because measurement of the latter is largely absent. More theoretically, individuals may have abstract support for an 'ideal' political scenario, but some may have thought less precisely about the actual steps that a political authority would take to achieve that goal and the potential costs associated with those steps. As an analogue from the political-economy literature, there are studies on both public preferences for the desired amount of inequality in a country and the different policies that might reduce or increase inequality via taxes and spending and further variations in such policy mixes (Ballard-Rosa et al., 2017; Cavaillé & Trump, 2015).

This gap is important because political actors often argue for various strategies, and these strategies have distinct economic, political, legal and social repercussions. Thus, understanding sources of support for actions to attain territorial goals can contribute to understanding actual political outcomes regarding the resolution (or lack thereof) of territorial disputes. Recent events from salient cases show that there are varying approaches or actions that relevant political actors (e.g., regional and central governments, non-state actors) can pursue to attain territorial goals. From the 'pro-independence side', these include, among others, negotiation with the state, unilateral referenda, protests, civil disobedience, legal action, violence and international or domestic lobbying (Cunningham, 2023; Shelef & Zeira, 2022). From the central government's 'pro status quo' perspective, strategies include either compromising with secessionist demands or banning, arresting and violence, among others (Balcells et al., 2021; Cunningham, 2023). As argued above, most of the empirical literature on modern secessionism does not really consider individual-level support for actions. For example, it is typically assumed that opposition to independence implies support for state action against independence, but this requires validation. While in this study we do not focus on support for specific strategies, we theorise that territorial preferences need not translate automatically into support for strategies. This might be especially relevant as citizens observe and potentially learn about the success and the potential costs of different strategies.[2]

Regarding the second gap in the literature, there is an overall lack of discussion on social factors underpinning support for strategies to achieve (or impede) self-determination goals.[3] The discussion of the viability of secession in terms of corresponding economic costs has been salient in recent cases and is often invoked by politicians. Independence is often presented by pro-independence parties as a pathway for a substate territory to become more prosperous. It has also been framed as an outcome that would allow for social policies to benefit the middle and lower–middle classes in their substate territories, as opposed to individuals in other territories of the state. For example, in Catalonia and Scotland, politicians have often referenced the possibility of an independent state undertaking more redistributive policies benefiting poorer Catalans and Scots, respectively. Correspondingly, pro-status quo politicians often frame independence as resulting in economic costs or ruin.[4]

Beyond this debate, we posit that an underexplored reality of secessionist preferences and, critically, support for actor strategies to attain territorial goals is the possibility of social (dis)comfort resulting from such actions. We define such social discomfort as overall reductions in conviviality or comfort in social interactions in a society and argue that individuals on average prefer to avoid such discomfort in terms of daily or regular interactions in their social network (including family, friends, co-workers and acquaintances) and value such comfort in society. Such social comfort can be thought of as a component of personal utility that can affect support for relevant policies; one could generically model this preference and personal 'value' placed on comfortable social interactions as a parameter in a utility function, separate from income.[5] That is, in the same way that beliefs about overall economic outcomes are known to affect policy preferences, we argue that beliefs about social-comfort outcomes should also be relevant.

We motivate this theoretical point with the primary intuition that beyond income or growth maximisation (common underpinnings of political-economy models of territorial preferences) and documented preference for in-group attachment (Tajfel, 1974), individuals also have a basic desire for some degree of 'comfort' in everyday interactions with family, friends, neighbours, at the workplace and in society writ large. A wealth of established research in social psychology and economics finds that comfortable social relations are a core component or correlate of life satisfaction and personal happiness or well-being (Appau et al., 2019; Argyle & Martin, 1991; Dolan et al., 2008; Haller & Hadler, 2006; Leung et al., 2011). Comfortable social relations are typically on par with factors such as partnership and income in terms of affecting personal happiness at different stages of the life cycle. These findings confirm a general intuition that daily comfort in social interactions is important to most people and a core component of happiness; thus, policies that might reduce it for society can be expected to be preferred less.

Valuing societal comfort is especially important in territorial disputes due to the consistent links observed among inter-ethnic relations, trust and overall life satisfaction across various geographic contexts. A raft of recent empirical research documents correlational and causal evidence linking ethnic heterogeneity with higher distrust (Dinesen et al., 2020; Lancee & Dronkers, 2011) and corresponding lower life satisfaction, although the evidence on this latter observation is less developed (Glatz & Eder, 2020). This implies that events or policies increasing the salience of ethnicity or national identity—such as territorial disputes—could increase distrust and correspondingly reduce pleasantness of daily interactions. Indeed, territorial policies, akin to other more 'second-dimension' policies when made salient, have the potential to affect social comfort because of its very activation of identity attachment and emotions directly linked to the territorial goal.[6] It is worth noting that territorial issues or policies can create countervailing effects on personal happiness, as individuals with a strong attachment to their ethnic or national identity may feel a sense of enjoyment when their identity is activated by territorial issues. However, this enjoyment may be countervailed by the discomfort of daily interaction with those who do not share the same identity or territorial-strategy preferences[7]; for example, social comfort might still be relevant in contexts such as the workplace.[8]

We argue that social discomfort is therefore a potential separate source of preferences over territorial strategies. Importantly, the value of social (dis)comfort need not be correlated with pre-existing identity attachments or one's own comfort levels, though we return to this question in the conclusion. We define this variable as distinct from inter-personal 'trust', on which there is vast literature.[9] Social discomfort can both stem from and lead to a lack of trust; we acknowledge that one reason people might prefer less social discomfort is its role in fostering interpersonal trust.

We argue that in mapping from preferences to policy views, social costs are both relevant to such views and complicate the traditional 'identitarian vs. economic' divide in reasoning and have been neglected as a source of territorial strategies. We expect that the prospect of heightened social costs or discomfort will symmetrically reduce the support for actions favoring either independence or maintaining the status quo. Our main hypotheses thus are:

H1a. The prospect of social costs for pro-independence actions reduces support for them.

H1b. The prospect of social costs for pro-status quo territorial actions reduces support for them.

H1c. The impact of social costs on reducing support for either independence or status-quo strategies is equivalent.

The previous hypotheses are sensible if one cleanly distinguishes between those who support independence and those who support the territorial status quo. However, recent research notes the relevance of a bloc with intermediate territorial preferences. These individuals neither fully endorse independence nor staunchly defend the territorial status quo; instead, they often favour compromises such as increased autonomy for a region (Cunningham, 2014; Griffiths, 2016). Recent studies on Catalonia and other Western Europe regions indicate that these territorial moderates tend to be emotionally less invested in such debates, showing fewer signs of affective

polarisation (Balcells et al., 2023; Hierro & Gallego, 2018). They also typically have diverse social networks, including both supporters and opponents of independence (Balcells & Kuo, 2023). We thus further hypothesise that social costs will have a stronger impact on individuals with intermediate territorial preferences. This is not only because they are less emotionally invested but also because they may be more averse to strategies to either achieve or impede independence that can potentially trigger conflict and discord within their social networks (Balcells & Kuo, 2021).

H2. The effect of social costs on support for territorial strategies is greater among individuals with moderate views on the territorial issue.

3 | BACKGROUND TO THE CATALAN CASE

Contemporary Catalan nationalism has its roots in the nineteenth century when it emerged partially in response to an unsuccessful process of nation-building in Spain (Colomer, 2019). In the 1930s, Catalonia attained significant autonomy within Spain, with institutions of self-rule. This autonomy was lost during the Francoist dictatorship (1939–1975), when cultural rights for national minorities in Spain (i.e., Basques, Galicians and Catalans) were repressed, and Spanish nationalism was fiercely promoted by state institutions (Beramendi, 1999).

After the process of devolution initiated with the transition to democracy in the 1970s, aspects of self-government in Catalonia were restored in a mixed regional governance system called the 'Statute of the Autonomies'. Decentralisation was uneven, and there were long-standing tensions between the Catalan and Spanish governments over issues of revenue transfer, political autonomy and language policy, among others. In the early 2000s, demands for further autonomy intensified and a new Statute of Autonomy was proposed, which was ratified by both the regional and the central governments in 2006. However, the Spanish Constitutional Court declared some provisions of the Statute unconstitutional in 2010. This controversial ruling helped increase Catalan nationalism and support for independence in Catalonia (Casas et al., 2024), in combination with the economic effects of the 2008 Great Recession and the 2011 victory of the right-wing centralist Partido Popular in the Spanish general elections.[10] Figure 1 depicts the evolution of support for independence in Catalonia since the 1990s.

In 2015, a pro-independence coalition of parties was elected and began the groundwork for a self-determination referendum in Catalonia. However, the Spanish government rejected demands for a referendum. In September 2017, a majority in the Catalan Parliament passed a series of laws unilaterally calling for a referendum on 1 October 2017.[11] On the day of the referendum, which had been declared unconstitutional by the Spanish Constitutional court (Sanjaume-Calvet et al., 2023), Spanish national police forces cracked down to try to prevent voter participation (Barceló, 2018). The crisis escalated with the declaration of independence by the Catalan parliament in late October, which led to the central government unprecedently activating a constitutional clause suspending the autonomy of Catalonia and dissolving its Government and Parliament. Various pro-independence politicians and social activists were imprisoned, others left the country to avoid judicial prosecution and new regional elections were held in December 2017. Since October 2017, yellow ribbons were used to symbolise support for the freeing of such politicians and social activists who were in prison (considered political prisoners by many); we discuss these symbols later.

In October 2019, after the conviction and sentencing by the Spanish Supreme Court of 11 politicians and two social organisers who were involved in the unauthorised referendum to between 9 and 13 years of prison on charges of sedition, a sequence of mass demonstrations and riots occurred in Catalonia. In June 2021, the central government officially pardoned the nine Catalan separatist leaders who were jailed in Spain and agreed to have talks with the Catalan government to resolve the conflict. As of March 2024, as a result of negotiations with Catalan separatist political parties (ERC and Junts), and in exchange for their political support, the PSOE-led Spanish government has proposed and the lower chamber of Spanish congress has approved an amnesty law aiming to exonerate those

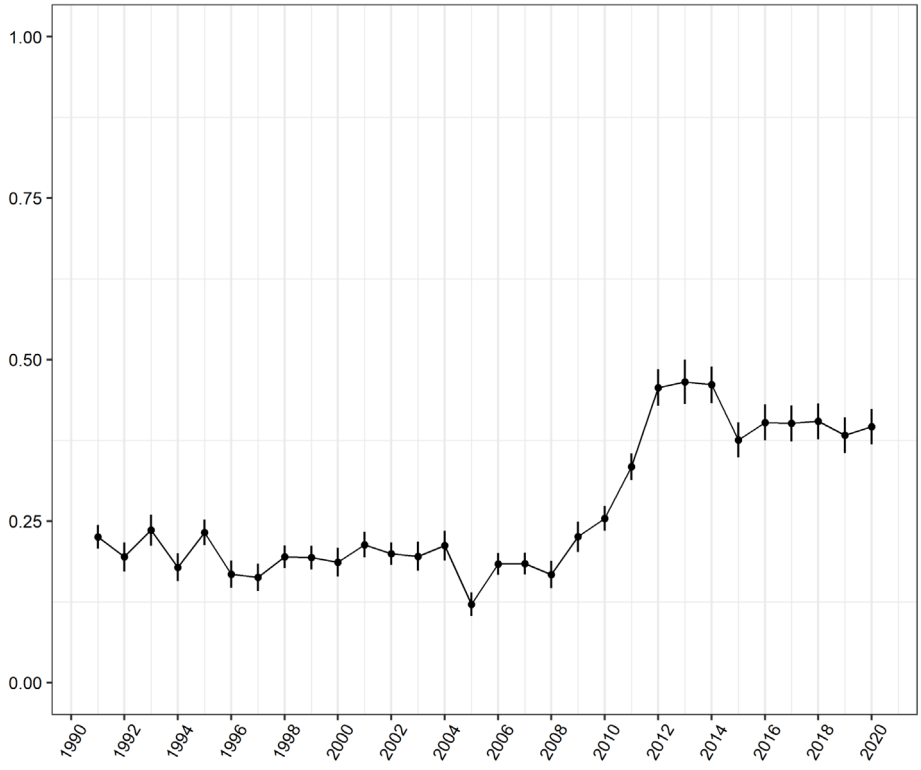

FIGURE 1 Catalonia: support for independence (1990–2021). *Note*: Figure 1 shows average support for independence measuring territorial preferences in a binary way: 1 is for respondents who support a Catalan independent state, 0 is for respondents who do not support independence. The latter group can have diverse preferences (such as Catalonia being a state in a federal state, being a region in a decentralised state or having no autonomy whatsoever). *Source: Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials* (ICPS). [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

prosecuted for their involvement in the organisation of the referendum; this has been the source of furious criticism, predominantly from the right-wing opposition.

The secessionist conflict has increased affective polarisation and allegedly hurt social conviviality in Catalonia; one example is the dispute over the instalment of yellow ribbons and other symbols in public spaces, which have sometimes escalated into verbal and physical aggressions. Animosity has increased between people with different territorial views (Balcells & Kuo, 2023), and the conflict has also increased animus towards Catalans from people in other parts of Spain (Albalate et al., 2023).[12] Thus, many Catalans are familiar with social costs of the secessionist conflict, the effects of which we systematically assess with experimental data.

4 | COSTS EXPERIMENT

As the preceding context indicates, Catalonia is a suitable and key testing ground for the impact of different costs on support for territorial policies, particularly in the midst of a secessionist challenge. Supporters of independence may not have necessarily favoured the declaration of independence by the Catalan parliament in October 2017; opposers of independence may not have uniformly favoured a violent crackdown of the referendum on 1 October 2017. Indeed, ample anecdotal evidence indicates much heterogeneity and unease regarding actual territorial actions, with

little systematic testing.[13] An empirical design should measure both support for independence and support for actions to attain independence by the regional government and pro-independence non-state actors. For other individuals, we should measure opposition to independence and support for central government actions to counter independence movements and defend the status quo.

To test our hypotheses, we embedded an experiment in a two-wave regionally representative survey, which allows us to assess the effect of costs of an independence strategy for those who are sympathetic to independence and, similarly, costs of a non-independence strategy for those who do not support independence. In particular, the experimental treatment makes specific costs salient to the respondents, which allows us to measure stated costs that people are willing to bear to achieve their preferred policy. We implemented the online survey, fielding the first wave between 11 and 20 December, just prior to the contentious 2017 regional elections. Our representative sample consisted of 2537 residents of Catalonia aged 18 or older, fulfilling age category (four age quartiles) and gender quotas. The survey was fielded in Catalan or Spanish (respondents chose the language at the beginning of the survey). We also measured, among other sociodemographic indicators, education, Catalan family origins (whether respondent and parents were born in Catalonia), income quintile and unemployment status; all regressions (unless otherwise noted) control for binary indicators of categories of each demographic variable with the 'lowest' level set as baseline.[14]

To measure the stability of preferences after the elections and after the re-imprisonment of several independentist leaders, we fielded a follow-up survey between 19 and 30 September 2018; 63% of respondents were re-interviewed in the second wave.[15] Tables A1 and A2 in Appendix S1 provide basic descriptive statistics of the sample; the composition is representative of the regional population, very similar to the samples used by the Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió (CEO), with a slight skew of younger respondents (we note that our results remain substantively very similar when estimated with weights by age and gender).

In the survey, after assessing basic territorial preferences, we provide a branched policy question depending on the person's territorial stance. We ask pro-independence supporters if they favour or oppose the Catalan government pushing for independence, and we ask non-independence supporters instead if they support or oppose the Spanish government taking action to prevent independence. For both types of policy preferences, we measure whether making salient potential costs of either policy affects support. We randomise assignment for each pro and anti-independence group into four experimental groups to measure policy support. The four groups are evaluation of the territorial policy in the case of *minimal* economic costs (the baseline), *medium economic* costs, *high economic* costs and *social costs*. The wording of each treatment is identical except for variation in the levels and types of costs, and for the actual policy, depending on if the respondent is pro or anti-independence. This branched design has the advantage of assessing similar treatments on support for specific policies, depending on initial territorial preferences.[16]

We first assessed territorial preferences following standard survey questions on this issue (i.e., those in the CEO or the CIS surveys). The response options were as follows: If they prefer Catalonia to be an independent state (we label this option 'Catalan Republic'), it should have more autonomy but not independence (we label this option 'More Autonomy'), the status quo should be kept or Catalonia should have less autonomy. Figure 2 shows the distribution of responses in the two waves of the survey. For our analyses below, we recode these into three broad categories: 'Catalan Republic' (1), 'More Autonomy' (2) and 'status quo and less autonomy' (3).

For respondents who initially indicated support for independence, the wording of the question that measured a preference for *regional-government actions* in the context of different costs was (phrases separated by a '/' indicate random assignment with probability .25): 'To make Catalonia an independent state, to what extent would you favor or oppose the implementation of measures decided by the Catalan government that make that goal possible if such measures would [have a very minimal impact on employment in Catalonia/ cause a temporary economic deterioration and loss of employment opportunities in Catalonia so that unemployment for the next five years would be 3 per cent higher than it is today / cause a temporary economic deterioration and loss of employment opportunities in Catalonia so that unemployment for the next five years would be 10 per cent higher than it is today/cause a

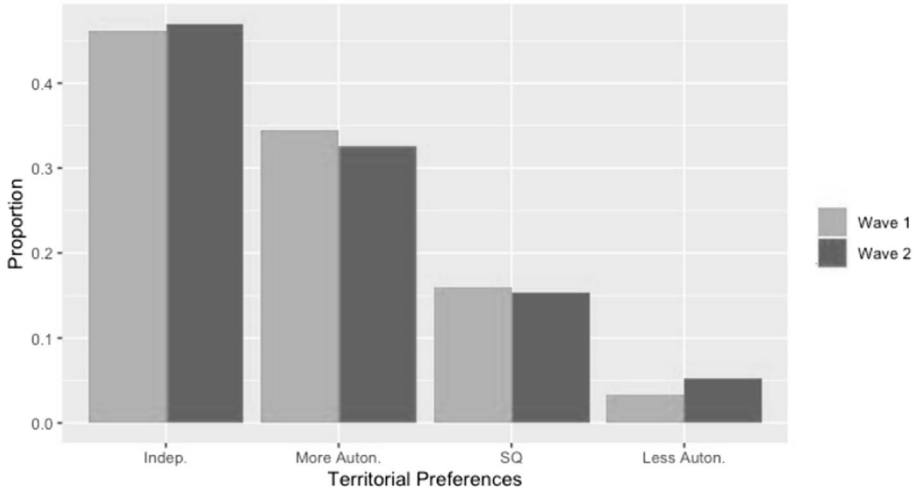

FIGURE 2 Territorial preferences in Catalonia (Survey Waves 1 and 2).

significant worsening of the social situation in terms of conviviality for the next five years in Catalonia]?' Thus, the control group mentions only minimal economic effects, constituting a reasonable baseline group of comparison; the second treatment poses moderate economic costs, the third group high economic costs and the final group poses costs in terms of social conviviality.[17]

For respondents who did not indicate support for Catalan independence, they were asked a nearly identical policy question, but phrased in terms of Spanish government action, with the same four treatment text options. Again, '/' denotes random assignment of the phrase with probability .25. The question was, 'In order to prevent Catalonia from becoming and independent state to what extent would you favor or oppose the implementation of measures taken by the Spanish government that make that goal impossible …' (the rest of the question text is identical to the aforementioned question, with the same response options).

We emphasise some key results within the control groups for both independence and non-independence supporters. For those who are pro-independence in the control group where only minimal economic consequences were posed, unsurprisingly, 98% of respondents still somewhat or strongly support the Catalan government taking such measures. This large degree of support of regional-government action is reassuring validity of the territorial preference, as it indicates that most of those who express support for independence also wish the regional government to try to attain that goal. Yet, among those who do not support independence, within the baseline control group, only 56% of such individuals support the central government taking action to prevent independence. This majority is driven by individuals who support the status quo or less autonomy, as 89% of those individuals support central-government action to prevent independence. By contrast, less than half (42%) of those who are pro-autonomy, within the control group, support the central government taking actions to prevent independence. Thus, among those who do not support Catalan independence, there is considerable heterogeneity regarding support of governmental actions to prevent this outcome.

How do the economic and social cost treatments affect support for each type of territorial strategy? Do these treatment effects differ based on territorial preferences? Because the treatments were assigned by the branching question of support of Catalan independence, we conduct difference of means tests *within* the groups of Catalan independence supporters and non-supporters. We first describe in detail the differences across the treatment groups for both sets of individuals, as the core patterns confirming the importance of these cost treatments can be easily discerned in the figures. Recall that among those who are pro-independence in the control group, where only minimal, imprecise economic effects are presented, 98% of respondents still somewhat or

strongly support the Catalan government taking such measures. Figure 3a descriptively shows how this proportion changes as the policy costs change, with the second treatment posing moderate economic costs, the third group high economic costs and the final group posing costs in terms of social conviviality. Raising small economic costs reduces support for pursuing independence to 91% ($p < .01$), and larger economic costs reduce support to a comparable 90%. The treatment of reduction in social conviviality actually most greatly reduces support of regional-government action to 80%.

Thus overall, among independence supporters across the treatment groups, all cost treatments reduce support for actions of the Catalan government to pursue independence. But the largest effect is the cost of social comfort, reducing independence support by nearly 20 percentage points. Support for government action to pursue independence across all conditions nevertheless remains high, which suggests that pro-independence individuals have intense political preferences and are willing to bear significant (hypothetical) costs in order to achieve the goal of an independent Catalan republic. Another interpretation of these results is that simple statements of costs can reduce support for actions to pursue independence. Put otherwise, this is evidence that while there is rigidity in support for independence, preferences of actual policies to pursue that goal are sensitive to costs.[18]

Recall that among those who do not support independence, overall, in the control group, 56% support for the central government taking action to prevent independence. Medium economic costs reduce this support to 37%;

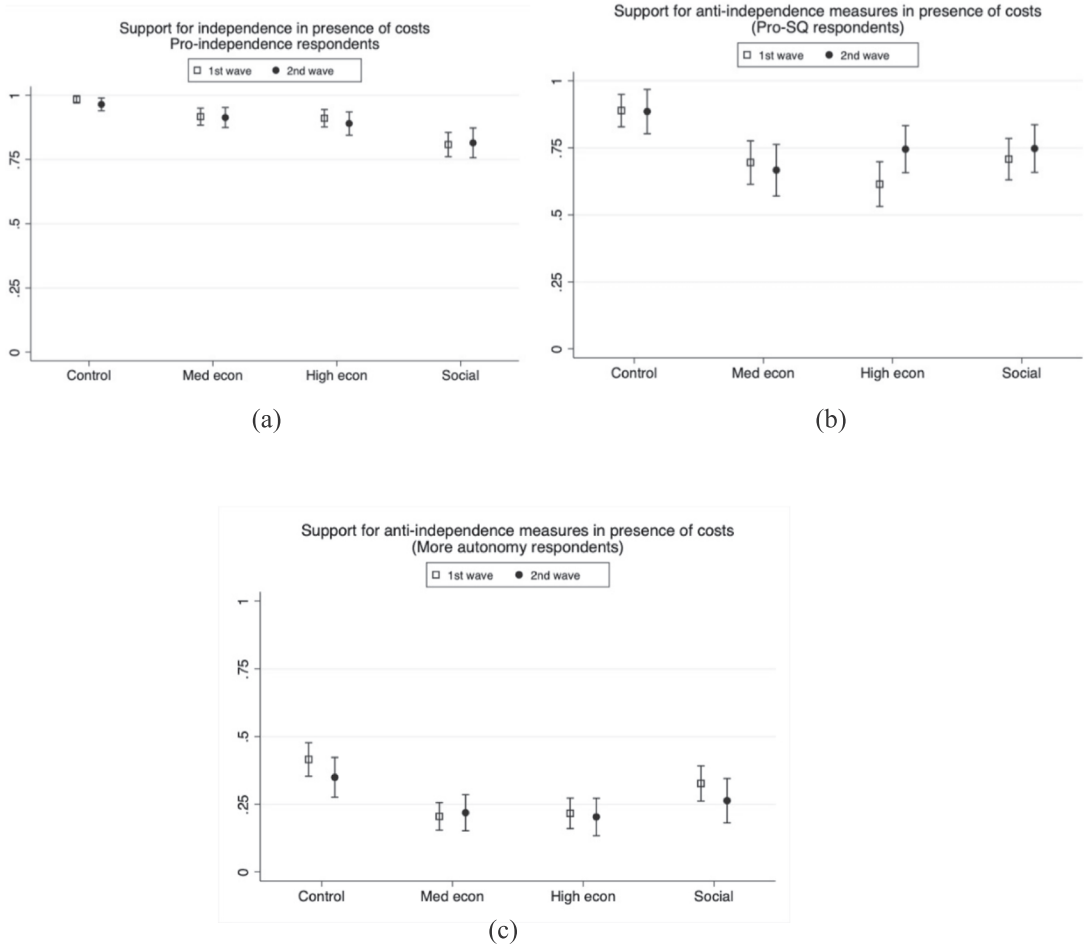

FIGURE 3 Support for territorial strategies, by cost treatment.

high economic costs also reduce this to 37%, and social costs reduce it to 48% (all differences significantly lower at $p < .001$). These lower figures across the board indicate not only strong treatment effects, but also lower baseline enthusiasm for strong countermanding state policies, in contrast to the generally higher support for pro-independence policies across all treatment groups for those who want secession.

Following previous empirical research on Catalonia (Balcells & Kuo, 2021), we distinguish anti-independence people between those who support the status quo versus those who support greater regional autonomy. Among respondents who support the territorial status quo, we note similar reductions in support for the government to take actions to prevent independence, though the overall treatment effects are actually larger than those for independence supporters. As Figure 3b shows, in the baseline condition, support for such central government actions is at 89%, but making salient medium economic costs reduces it to 70%. Making salient severe economic costs entails a further reduction to 62%, and making salient social costs reduces support for central action to 71%. Thus, individuals who support the status quo are also sensitive to costs, both economic and social.

Figure 3c shows the treatment effects for individuals who are anti-independence but pro-autonomy (these respondents answered the same question as those who were pro-status quo, as they oppose independence). These individuals, even in the control condition, do not overall favour the Spanish government pursuing measures to prevent independence (support is below the majority at 42%).[19] Second, making salient various costs greatly reduces support for central action: Medium economic costs reduce it to 21%; severe economic costs entail a reduction to 22%; social costs reduce support to 33%. For pro-autonomy individuals, while all cost treatments matter, the economic cost scenarios have equivalent effects and are larger than the social-cost condition, although such individuals are still affected by social costs. Overall, for individuals who do not support independence, the cost scenarios reduce support for state action. Notably, for pro-status quo individuals the social-cost scenario is comparable with that of the medium-economic damage scenario. For pro-autonomy individuals, while baseline support for government action to stop independence is much lower, the social-cost scenario effect is about half the size of both economic cost scenarios effects but still large at around 9 percentage points.[20]

The regression results for this experiment are reported in Table 1, controlling for standard demographic characteristics.[21] We display the results for alternative measurements of the dependent variable to indicate the basic stability of the reported patterns and to illuminate some interesting nuances.[22] Support of pro-independence strategies are in the first three models (M1–M3); the remaining models (M4–M6) show the results for anti-independence central government actions.

Table 2 shows the results decomposing those who do not support independence into pro-autonomy and pro-status quo individuals: M1–M3 are for individuals who support autonomy; M4–M6 are for individuals who support status quo and less autonomy.[23] Our key takeaways from this table are that for pro-autonomy individuals, the social cost treatment exerts an effect, though it is slightly less so than that of either economic cost treatment. For pro-status quo individuals, social costs are close to medium-economic costs, but high economic costs have the biggest effect on dampening support for countering independence. Social cost account does affect preferences over territorial strategies, but there is no significant difference between these two subgroups, which is surprising given that pro-autonomy individuals generally show different attitudinal patterns from pro-status quo individuals, in the context of Catalonia (Balcells & Kuo, 2021).

Regarding over-time changes, Figure 3a–c also displays strong persistence in these treatment effects across the relevant groups between the two waves of our survey, which took place nearly 9 months apart. Moreover, Appendix S1 displays the descriptive statistics for both waves, and there is great stability in overall territorial preferences. Indeed, about 93% of the sample maintains the same binary (support or not support independence) territorial preference, with 85% of the sample even maintaining the same tertiary coding (independence, more autonomy and status quo).

Overall, our empirical results confirm H1a and H1b, but we find less evidence for H1c (positing symmetrical effects) and H2 (positing greater social effects for pro-autonomy individuals). We return to possible reasons in the discussion section below.

TABLE 1 Effect of cost treatments on support for regional and central government strategies, Wave 1.

	(M1) Ind.	(M2) Ind.	(M3) Ind.	(M4) Stop Ind.	(M5) Stop Ind.	(M6) Stop Ind.
Med econ cost	−0.13** (0.019)	−0.065** (0.024)	−0.31** (0.039)	−0.18** (0.026)	−0.20** (0.036)	−0.14** (0.030)
High econ cost	−0.14** (0.019)	−0.075** (0.024)	−0.32** (0.039)	−0.18** (0.027)	−0.21** (0.037)	−0.14** (0.030)
Soc cost	−0.20** (0.019)	−0.17** (0.024)	−0.40** (0.039)	−0.11** (0.027)	−0.088* (0.037)	−0.091** (0.030)

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. Sociodemographic controls are included but not displayed.
$^{+}p < .10$, $^{*}p < .05$, and $^{**}p < .01$.

TABLE 2 Effect of cost treatments on support for central government strategies, by non-independence territorial preference, Wave 1.

Treatment	More autonomy	SQ/less autonomy
Med econ cost	−0.21** (0.029)	−0.16** (0.039)
High econ cost	−0.20** (0.030)	−0.22** (0.039)
Soc cost	−0.14** (0.030)	−0.15** (0.039)
N	897	506
R^2	.093	.141

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. Baseline is the lowest category of each variable. Sociodemographic controls are included but not shown in the table.
$^{+}p < .10$, $^{*}p < .05$, and $^{**}p < .01$.

5 | YELLOW RIBBONS EXPERIMENT

Results thus far indicate that for both independence and non-independence supporters, both economic and social costs reduce support for regional and central actions to pursue territorial goals. In this section, we further probe the role of social costs and discomfort by examining support for *specific actions* stemming from a controversy particular to the Catalan case, which is the display of 'yellow ribbons'. As explained above, individuals initially adorned these symbols to indicate support for politicians and civic leaders who had been imprisoned or went to exile for events related to the 1 October 2017 referendum; while they are technically distinct from pro-independence symbols, display of yellow ribbons tends to connotate support of or empathy with the independence cause.

During the secessionist crisis and its aftermath, yellow ribbons were the source of heated disputes between pro-independence and anti-independence supporters; these symbols (along with other symbols indicating solidarity with the political prisoners) were banned from public spaces during the December 2017 electoral campaign, and they were later banned from public buildings.[24] Moreover, there were disputes among individuals regarding the placing versus removal of yellow ribbons in public spaces such as public squares or beaches; some of these disputes even led to a few verbal and physical confrontations among Catalan citizens. Politicians on both ends of the territorial spectrum took sides either supporting the placing of symbols (i.e., pro-independence politicians) or encouraging the removal of such symbols (i.e., anti-independence politicians). For example, Inés Arrimadas and Carlos Carrizosa (at that time, leaders of the political party *Ciudadanos*) undertook public performances of removing yellow ribbons from public spaces in different Catalan localities, including the former Catalan government leader Carles Puigdemont's hometown.[25]

Measuring policies about ribbon display and removal constitutes a precise examination of public support for independence-oriented actions that can have social implications, as installing or removing such ribbons is a publicly salient (and, for some, controversial) action, although it is non-violent. In the second wave of our survey (September 2018), we measured both comfort with the presence of these yellow ribbons and preferences for their removal. We examine how territorial preferences relate to such comfort and whether the prospect of social discomfort itself conditions support for the placement or removal of such symbols.

We first asked respondents, 'How do you feel towards the presence of symbols (yellow ribbons or banners) in public spaces in support of the release of the Catalan activists and politicians that are now in prison?'[26] Forty-seven per cent of our respondents are somewhat or very comfortable, 25% are neither and 28% are somewhat or very uncomfortable. Among people who support independence, 83% report being comfortable with such displays. Among people who support autonomy, 23% report comfort, and among people who support the status quo, 2%. Thus, territorial preference clearly and predictably conditions comfort with these public symbols.[27] This basic correlation holds in a simple OLS regression (Table 3) where the dependent variable is a rescaled measure of comfort (0–1, with 1 denoting maximum comfort and 0 maximum discomfort). Relative to the baseline pro-independence group, support

TABLE 3 Correlates of comfort with display of yellow ribbons, Wave 2.

Variable	OLS	LPM
Support auto	−0.39** (0.014)	−0.57** (0.021)
Support SQ	−0.72** (0.017)	−0.79** (0.025)

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. Baseline is support for independence. Sociodemographic controls are included but not shown in the table. Column 1 presents OLS estimates. Column 2 presents linear probability models of the binary outcome of comfort versus discomfort.
$^{+}p < .10$, $^{*}p < .05$, and $^{**}p < .01$.

for more autonomy is correlated with a 40 percentage-point reduction in comfort with public displays and support for the status quo nearly 72 percentage-point reduction.

We now turn to our experimental design where we assess support or opposition to the installation or removal of such symbols in public spaces depending on social costs. The design mirrors the format of the previous experiment. If the respondent first answered that she was 'comfortable or very comfortable', with the yellow ribbons, she was randomly assigned to respond to one of two versions of a follow-up question (with equal assignment probability)[28]; the '/' denotes the different version of the text. The questions read, 'Do you support the installation of yellow ribbons and banners in support of Catalan prisoners in public spaces/ [even if some people who use the public space feel uncomfortable with those displays]?'[29] The treatment version of the question randomly makes salient the possible social cost and discomfort associated with such displays.[30]

For the rest of the respondents (i.e., respondents who are neutral in comfort with yellow ribbons or uncomfortable with them), they received a similarly worded question, only it was about support for *removal* of such symbols with the treatment making salient the policy reducing potential comfort. Again, respondents were randomly assigned with equal probability to one of two version of the questions: 'Do you support the removal of yellow ribbons and banners in support of Catalan prisoners in public spaces/ [even if some people who use the public space feel comfortable with those displays]?'[31]

We describe the simple differences in means across the treatment groups: For those who professed comfort with the symbols, simply raising social discomfort associated with those symbols dramatically reduces support for placing those symbols publicly. In the control group, 92% support their installation, but in the treatment group, only 19% support this action. This is a huge effect, and it indicates that overall, individuals who are initially comfortable with public displays of support are willing to considerably curb their support of the publicisation of these views if social costs in terms of discomfort are made salient.[32]

Turning to the treatment regarding social discomfort caused by removal of symbols, for those who did not profess comfort for such symbols, we find less support for such removal, but also little to no treatment effects when we make social costs of their removal salient. In the control group, 49% support removal of such symbols; in the treatment group, this falls to about 46%, but the difference is not statistically significant.

As with initial symbol comfort, we estimate a simple OLS model where the covariate of interest is the treatment assignment, using a rescaled measure of comfort (0–1, with 1 denoting maximum comfort and 0 maximum discomfort) as the dependent variable. Table 4 displays the results, which confirm that for those who had some comfort with ribbons, making social costs salient greatly reduces support for their installation. Conversely, for those who did not have such initial comfort, making social costs of their removal salient does not affect support for the policy.[33]

6 | DISCUSSION

This study should spur more interest in measuring support for policies to pursue territorial goals and the role of social costs and discomfort in affecting such support. Our findings from Catalonia indicate that social costs matter for both supporters and opposers of independence, with some asymmetries in their consideration of these costs.

TABLE 4 Effect of social costs on ribbon installation or removal, Wave 2.

	(1) OLS Instal ribbons	(2) LPM Instal ribbons	(3) OLS Remove ribbons	(4) LPM Remove ribbons
Discomfort cost	−0.67** (0.020)	−0.73** (0.024)	−0.036 (0.023)	−0.013 (0.034)
N	787	787	863	863
R^2	.606	.562	.055	.053

Note: Sociodemographic controls are included but not shown in the table. Standard errors in parentheses.
$^{+}p < .10$, $^{*}p < .05$, and $^{**}p < .01$.

Recapping, individuals in Catalonia do consider both economic and social costs related to independence bids and attempts to impede independence. However, social costs appear more relevant than economic costs for supporters of independence, as the prospect of reduced conviviality makes them less supportive of independence. In addition, those who are comfortable with political symbols such as yellow ribbons (the vast majority of whom are independence supporters) report high sensitivity to the social costs of installing them. Supporters of the territorial state of affairs are also sensitive to the conviviality costs of taking action to protect the status quo, though the magnitude is smaller than for pro-independence individuals; moreover, they are not sensitive to these costs when it comes to removing yellow ribbons from public spaces.[34]

These asymmetries may be due to who bears the costs or differences between promoting an extreme territorial change (i.e., secession) and defending the territorial status quo. Defenders of the latter might feel more legitimised in supporting the state's multiple strategies to defend its territorial integrity. Social costs might be perceived as less relevant if they are the result of such state actions, which might be perceived as more legitimate and even necessary to preserve a given constitutional order. By contrast, on average, those who are willing to radically challenge the status quo might be more aware or be more self-conscious about the social costs of their actions. Finally, contrary to our expectations, territorial moderates do not show greater sensitivity to social costs than pro-status quo individuals, although they have a lower baseline support of central government actions to prevent independence.

7 | CONCLUSION

We highlight several contributions of this research to the fields of secessionism, nationalism and comparative behaviour, as well as potential avenues for further exploration. First, we emphasise the value of differentiating between preferences for 'outcomes' and preferences for 'strategies', a distinction that has received limited attention in the self-determination literature. Our results indicate that individuals who share territorial preferences do not necessarily share views on strategies to achieve those goals, which are linked to potential costs. Future research should delve deeper into the relationship between preferences for outcomes versus strategies. While much of the literature has focused on violent versus non-violent tactics, variation in support for territorial strategies, including those used by governments to defend the status quo against territorial challenges, deserves further analysis.

Second, the concept of social costs extends beyond territorial preferences and can be relevant to understanding support for any public policy with significant 'emotional' implications that may complicate interpersonal relationships and be perceived to divide society. This may be particularly true for 'second-dimension' issues involving cultural or religious values, as well as group identity. While our study focuses on territorial preferences, the aversion to social discomfort could be examined in other contexts, including areas with high partisan polarisation. Future research could explore demographic, contextual and psychological correlates of such aversion. Given the topic, our study focuses on individual territorial preferences as a key moderator, but sources of heterogeneity should be different for other issues. For example, a strong identity linked to an issue or personal importance could negatively correlate with concern about social discomfort regarding a policy, but it need not. Psychological bases of conflict avoidance may

also be relevant. Our findings constitute a starting point for this topic in comparative political behaviour scholarship, beyond just examining debates in territorial politics.

Third, the design feature of a question on a specific policy that was highly salient and relevant to the territorial debate—the removal of yellow ribbons—is a constructive example of non-violent 'micro symbolic' policies that are typically less asked in scientific surveys (compared with assessment of 'broader' public policies and components thereof). Such 'context-specific' policies tend to be more salient as they are frequently discussed by the media and local politicians. Consequently, individuals are more likely to have informed preferences about them. We believe that measuring such preferences is valuable as they offer precise, instructive insights into broader, linked policies. From a normative perspective, these policies may hold significant personal importance for voters and thus democratically relevant to study. Of course, in some contexts, politicians prefer to activate debate on such policies precisely to activate emotions or distract from other issues. A natural trade-off is that inferences might be difficult to generalise; however, we believe that more measurement of such policy preferences can provide fertile ground for testing our theory of social discomfort, as well as other policy families.

We caution that the measurement of support for territorial preferences and strategies generally occurs in a context where politicisation, mobilisation and structural conditions have already contributed to those issues being salient. This is the case of Catalonia, but conditions might be different in other substate territories which have had different historical or violent trajectories (Conversi, 1997), where our results might not generalise. We encourage scholars to consider the role of social costs in other contexts, including regions where territorial issues are politically relevant but less salient, and to further explore variation within countries or across multiple regions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank José Fernández-Albertos for helpful consultation and discussion and Simón Ballesteros and Ana Paula Pellegrino for research assistance. We are grateful to seminar audiences at the European Political Science Association (EPSA) meeting, the American Political Science Association (APSA) meeting, and the University of York for helpful comments. We thank Ignacio Jurado, Sandra León, the editor and two anonymous reviewers for helpful feedback. This research has been funded by Duke University, the Christ Church Research Centre at the University of Oxford and Georgetown University.

ENDNOTES

[1] This literature, in unpacking group-level claims and focusing on individual preferences, challenges and builds upon classic works that had theorised about group-level sub-state identities—such as Horowitz (1985) regarding ethnic separatism or Hechter's (2001) typologies of political struggles of nations—which tended to downplay the nuances of individual territorial preference in favour of group-level analysis.

[2] For example, in Quebec, there is discussion about the economic effects that the self-determination referendum had on the regional economy, with many firms relocating from Montreal for Toronto. In Spain, self-determination movements are conscious of the social costs of separatist violence due to the history of militant violence and its social consequences in the Basque Country.

[3] Because there is a voluminous literature on this topic, we briefly summarise some recent findings. Sorens (2008), after differentiating between secessionist and regionalist parties, finds that secession is more tied to economic interests, whereas regionalism is more tied to cultural and identity-based interests. Muñoz and Tormos (2015) and more recently Hierro and Queralt (2021) find that economic considerations are an important driver of territorial preferences in Catalonia. The former study notes the importance of looking at variation in reasons for pro-independence views and finds that economic considerations mostly matter when people do not have a strong national identity.

[4] In a key contribution that tests this specific logic in the case of 'scenarios' of independence that are assumed to affect various economic outcomes, Muro and Vlaskamp (2016) examine how the prospects of EU membership influence support for secession in Catalonia and Scotland with a survey experiment in both regions. They find that the prospects of EU membership have only a limited effect on support for the creation of a sovereign state; this effect is strongly moderated by the participants' previous degree of nationalism and their attitudes with respect to the EU. Isolating the causality of these factors is difficult, as identity can be manipulated by regional and national politicians making the territorial issue salient, and beliefs about economic consequences might be a form of 'motivated reasoning' where people on either side

of the territorial issue might wish to believe the corresponding consequences of whatever their preferred government strategy is.

[5] Importantly, we specify that individuals can prefer to minimise discomfort in society generally; such a preference may (but need not) correlate with individual preferences to reduce (maximise) discomfort (comfort). Analogous to discussion of how expected economic outcomes affect political preferences, much literature indicates the weight of socio-tropic economic outcomes on preferences in the territorial context (Muñoz & Tormos, 2015).

[6] Territorial issues are more likely to be perceived as more zero sum than other first-dimension issues where forms of compromise are more politically feasible. Thus, disagreement over strategies might lead to greater discomfort because it is perceived as more difficult to reach a political compromise, and therefore, dialogue aimed at finding common ground on strategies is expected to be less effective (Balcells et al., 2023; Balcells & Kuo, 2023; Hobolt et al., 2021).

[7] We take the group composition as given and recognise that a large literature addresses the causes and consequences of spatial segregation of ethnicities and nationalities (Laitin, 2004 provides one discussion in the context of ethnic 'unmixing' and conflict). Relatedly, the effect of social discomfort is likely higher in contexts where there is some possibility for inter-ethnic interaction (Loewen et al., 2015; Rodón & Guinjoan, 2018). However, even in localities with little potential for inter-ethnic contact, individuals might still have a socio-tropic desire to avoid increasing discomfort.

[8] Mutz and Mondak (2006) discussed the workplace as a source of reducing partisan polarisation in the US context.

[9] For example, see Criado et al. (2015) study of trust and secessionism in Catalonia.

[10] Basta (2018) argues that it was not the ruling itself, but the narrative constructed around that event by Catalan nationalist parties that contributed to the rise in secessionism.

[11] The Catalan Parliament passed these laws on 6–7 September 2017, which planned a self-determination referendum and claimed to 'disconnect' Catalan legality from the Spanish system if the 1 October referendum resulted in a victory in favour of independence.

[12] Despite this affective polarisation around the territorial issue, in Catalonia, pro-independence and anti-independence supporters are not highly geographically segregated (unlike places such as Belgium or Northern Ireland), and thus, there are many spaces where they interact (at work, school, public spaces, etc.). This is relevant because social costs can be more intensively perceived than in a context of high segregation; more precise measurement of such segregation and its connection to social discomfort is warranted.

[13] Balcells and Kuo (2021) provide detailed and systematic evidence of variation in support for various Catalan and Spanish government actions during the 2017 secessionist crisis, prior to and after the October referendum.

[14] Our primary empirical findings of interest relate to the impact of different cost scenarios and how these vary for people with differing territorial views. However, we include sociodemographic controls as interested readers may wish to examine baseline correlates of preferences for territorial strategies. Coding details of these control variables and the full tables with the sociodemographic controls are included in Appendix S1.

[15] The survey was fielded by Respondi (now Respondi&Bilendi), which sampled from their pool of survey respondents in Spain, using quotas by province, age groups and gender. We registered two pre-analysis plans with EGAP/OSF prior to receipt of data.

[16] For example, it would be non-sensical and inefficient to ask pro-independence individuals how much they support central government actions to prevent independence, given that they have just expressed a pro-independence position.

[17] The response options were 'strongly favour', 'somewhat favour', 'somewhat oppose' and 'strongly oppose'; we generate binary measures with 'strongly' or 'somewhat favour' coded as one and the rest zero.

[18] Reported policy preferences may not be sincere policy preferences, as the costs are hypothetical and respondents may engage in motivated reasoning, but we can still interpret support for policies despite given costs as a signal of how much the respondent cares about pursuing or preventing independence.

[19] This is not surprising as such individuals have expressed a preference for greater autonomy of Catalonia within Spain, but still, it is notable that fewer than half in the baseline condition support the central government taking steps to prevent independence.

[20] Section E of Appendix S1 presents results of text analysis with the open-ended responses in the first wave of the survey. These analyses indicate that awareness of social costs is not necessarily different among individuals with different territorial preferences.

[21] The full models including all the coefficients for the sociodemographic controls are included in Section B of Appendix S1.

[22] M1 and M4 present results of OLS estimations where the outcome is coded as 0–1 continuous, with higher values indicating more support for the strategy. M2 and M5 show the results when support is coded binary with a linear probability

model (1 = favour or strongly favour the strategy). M3 and M6 show results where the strategy is coded binary for choosing the most extreme response of 'strongly favour' (i.e., it captures if the treatment affects support for the most extreme response).

[23] Again, M1 and M4 show results from coding strategy support on a scale of 0–1 continuously as in the previous table, and M2 and M5 and M3 and M6 show results with the outcome coded accordingly in the same models as in Table 1.

[24] This judicial order was later disobeyed by then Catalan premier Quim Torra, in April 2018, and this led to his political disqualification by the High Court of Justice of Catalonia (TSJC) in December 2019.

[25] Source: https://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20190217/46496313702/ciudadanos-retira-lazos-amarillos-pueblo-carles-puigdemont-amer-video-seo-ext.html.

[26] Response options were 'very comfortable', 'somewhat comfortable', 'neither comfortable nor uncomfortable', 'somewhat uncomfortable' and 'very uncomfortable'.

[27] Note that among those who support autonomy, a small proportion (less than a quarter) of individuals are comfortable with the public displays of ribbons.

[28] Recall that 47% of respondents initially reported comfort and thus were assigned to this design.

[29] The response options were 'strongly support', 'somewhat support', 'neither support nor oppose', 'somewhat oppose', 'strongly oppose' and 'do not know'.

[30] We employed this design to maximise the probability that the preferred policy option posed would be sensible to the respondent.

[31] The response options are again: 'strongly support', 'somewhat support', 'neither support nor oppose', 'somewhat oppose', 'strongly oppose' and 'do not know'.

[32] We note that we cannot provide unbiased estimates of these treatment effects by territorial preference, because as previously shown, territorial preference is strongly correlated with treatment assignment (whether the respondent is comfortable with such symbols).

[33] We also examine the treatment effect on support for ribbon removal on two different subsamples of individuals who do not express comfort with ribbons, that is, those who feel neutral about them and those who feel discomfort. Section B of Appendix S1 shows the results. For those with a neutral view of ribbons, making the social cost salient slightly reduces support for their removal, but the treatment does not significantly decrease overall support for their removal (as indicated by the binary coding).

[34] This is somewhat counterintuitive given that pro-status quo defenders are more likely to bring up social conviviality costs when asked about the situation in Catalonia in an open-ended question, as shown in the word cloud in Section E of Appendix S1. In terms of salient anecdotes, pro-status quo politicians in Catalonia (e.g., Albert Rivera, Inés Arrimadas, Carlos Carrizosa and Miquel Iceta) have in general brought up conviviality costs more so than pro-independence supporters, and they argue that these costs are one additional reason for Catalonia not to pursue independence.

REFERENCES

Agneman, G. (2022). How economic expectations shape preferences for national independence: Evidence from Greenland. *European Journal of Political Economy*, *72*, 102112. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2021.102112

Albalate, D., Bel, G., & Mazaira-Font, F. A. (2023). Dynamics of intergroup conflict and attitudes towards outgroup members: Evidence from terrorist and secession conflicts. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, *11*(4), 834–853.

Appau, S., Churchill, S. A., & Farrell, L. (2019). Social integration and subjective wellbeing. *Applied Economics*, *51*(16), 1748–1761. https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2018.1528340

Argelaguet, J. (2021). The relevance of language as a predictor of the will for independence in Catalonia in 1996 and 2020. *Politics and Governance*, *9*(4), 426–438. https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v9i4.4531

Argyle, M., & Martin, M. (1991). The psychological causes of happiness. In *Subjective well-being: An interdisciplinary perspective* (Vol. 21). International Series in Experimental Social Psychology. (pp. 77–100). Pergamon Press.

Balcells, L., Daniels, L.-A., & Kuo, A. (2023). Territorial disputes and affective polarization. *European Journal of Political Research*, *63*, 906–926. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12640

Balcells, L., Dorsey, S., & Tellez, J. F. (2021). Repression and dissent in contemporary Catalonia. *British Journal of Political Science*, *51*(4), 1742–1750. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0007123420000307

Balcells, L., & Kuo, A. (2021). Preferences in between: Moderates in the Catalan secessionist conflict. *Politics and Governance*, *9*(4), 386–398. https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v9i4.4563

Balcells, L., & Kuo, A. (2023). Secessionist conflict and affective polarization: Evidence from Catalonia. *Journal of Peace Research*, *60*(4), 604–618. https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433221088112

Ballard-Rosa, C., Martin, L., & Scheve, K. (2017). The structure of American tax policy preference. *Journal of Politics*, *79*(1), 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1086/687324

Barceló, J. (2018). Batons and ballots: The effectiveness of state violence in fighting against Catalan separatism. *Research and Politics*, *5*(2), 205316801878174. https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168018781747

Basta, K. (2018). The social construction of transformative political events. *Comparative Political Studies*, *51*(10), 1243–1278.

Beramendi, J. (1999). Identity, ethnicity and state in Spain: 19th and 20th centuries. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, *5*(3–4), 79–100. https://doi.org/10.1080/13537119908428571

Beramendi, P. (2012). *The political geography of inequality: Regions and redistribution*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139042796

Bolton, P., & Roland, G. (1997). The breakup of nations: A political economy analysis. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *112*(4), 1057–1090. https://doi.org/10.1162/003355300555420

Casas, A., Curci, F., & de Moragas, A.-I. (2024). Judicial decisions, backlash and secessionism: The Spanish constitutional court and Catalonia. *The Economic Journal*, ueae041. https://doi.org/10.1093/ej/ueae041

Cavaillé, C., & Trump, K.-S. (2015). The two facets of social policy preferences. *Journal of Politics*, *77*(1), 146–160. https://doi.org/10.1086/678312

Colomer, J. M. (2019). *The Spanish frustration: How a ruinous empire thwarted the nation-state*. Anthem Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjz828f

Conversi, D. (1997). *The Basques, the Catalans, and Spain: Alternative routes to nationalist mobilisation*. Hurst Publishers.

Criado, H., Herreros, F., Miller, L., & Ubeda, P. (2015). Ethnicity and trust: A multifactorial experiment. *Political Studies*, *63*(S1), 131–152. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.12168

Cunningham, K. G. (2014). *Inside the politics of self-determination*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199364909.001.0001

Cunningham, K. G. (2023). Choosing tactics: The efficacy of violence and nonviolence in self-determination disputes. *Journal of Peace Research*, *60*(1), 124–140. https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433221145961

Darden, K., & Grzymala-Busse, A. (2006). The great divide: Literacy, nationalism, and the communist collapse. *World Politics*, *59*(1), 83–115. https://doi.org/10.1353/wp.2007.0015

Dinesen, P. T., Schaeffer, M., & Sønderskov, K. M. (2020). Ethnic diversity and social trust: A narrative and meta-analytical review. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *23*(1), 441–465. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-052918-020708

Dolan, P., Peasgood, T., & White, M. (2008). Do we really know what makes us happy? A review of the economic literature on the factors associated with subjective well-being. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, *29*(1), 94–122. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joep.2007.09.001

Elias, A., Szöcsik, E., & Zuber, C. I. (2015). Position, selective emphasis and framing: How parties deal with a second dimension in competition. *Party Politics*, *21*(6), 839–850. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068815597572

Gehring, K., & Schneider, S. A. (2020). Regional resources and democratic secessionism. *Journal of Public Economics*, *181*, 104073. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2019.104073

Glatz, C., & Eder, A. (2020). Patterns of trust and subjective well-being across Europe: New insights from repeated cross-sectional analyses based on the European Social Survey 2002–2016. *Social Indicators Research: An International and Interdisciplinary Journal for Quality-of-Life Measurement*, *148*(2), 417–439. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-019-02212-x

Griffiths, R. D. (2016). *Age of secession*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316676479

Haller, M., & Hadler, M. (2006). How social relations and structures can produce happiness and unhappiness: An international comparative analysis. *Social Indicators Research: An International and Interdisciplinary Journal for Quality-of-Life Measurement*, *75*(2), 169–216. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-004-6297-y

Hechter, M. (2001). *Containing nationalism*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/019924751X.001.0001

Hierro, M. J., & Gallego, A. (2018). Identities in between: Political conflict and ethnonational identities in multicultural states. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *62*(6), 1314–1339. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002716682593

Hierro, M. J., & Queralt, D. (2021). The divide over independence: Explaining preferences for secession in an advanced open economy. *American Journal of Political Science*, *65*(2), 422–442. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12549

Hobolt, S. B., Leeper, T. J., & Tilley, J. (2021). Divided by the vote: Affective polarization in the wake of the Brexit referendum. *British Journal of Political Science*, *51*(4), 1476–1493. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123420000125

Horowitz, D. L. (1985). *Ethnic groups in conflict*. California University Press.

Laitin, D. D. (2004). Ethnic unmixing and civil war. *Security Studies*, *13*(4), 350–365. https://doi.org/10.1080/09636410490945938

Lancee, B., & Dronkers, J. (2011). Ethnic, religious and economic diversity in Dutch neighbourhoods: Explaining quality of contact with neighbours, trust in the neighbourhood and inter-ethnic trust. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *37*(4), 597–618. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2011.545277

Leung, A., Kier, C., Fung, T., Fung, L., & Sproule, R. (2011). Searching for happiness: The importance of social capital. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *12*(3), 443–462. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-010-9208-8

Loewen, P. J., Heroux-Legault, M., & de Miguel, C. (2015). Nationalism and ethnic heterogeneity: The importance of local context for nationalist party vote choice. *Electoral Studies*, *39*, 129–141. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2015.04.005

Muñoz, J., & Tormos, R. (2015). Economic expectations and support for secession in Catalonia: Between causality and rationalization. *European Political Science Review*, *7*(2), 315–341. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773914000174

Muro, D., & Vlaskamp, M. C. (2016). How do prospects of EU membership influence support for secession? A survey experiment in Catalonia and Scotland. *West European Politics*, *39*(6), 1115–1138. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2016.1149993

Mutz, D., & Mondak, J. (2006). The workplace as a context for cross-cutting political discourse. *Journal of Politics*, *68*(1), 140–156. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2508.2006.00376.x

Rodón, T., & Guinjoan, M. (2018). When the context matters: Identity, secession and the spatial dimension in Catalonia. *Political Geography*, *63*, 75–87. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2018.01.004

Sanjaume-Calvet, M., Cetrà, D., & Franco-Guillén, N. (2023). Leaving Europe, leaving Spain: Comparing secessionism *from* and *within* the European Union. *West European Politics*, *47*, 1121–1149. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2023.2191104

Serrano, I. (2013). Just a matter of identity? Support for independence in Catalonia. *Regional & Federal Studies*, *23*(5), 523–545. https://doi.org/10.1080/13597566.2013.775945

Shelef, N. G., & Zeira, Y. (2022). International recognition and support for violence among nonpartisans. *Journal of Peace Research*, *60*, 588–603. https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433221088034

Sorens, J. (2008). Regionalists against secession: The political economy of territory in advanced democracies. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, *14*(3), 325–360. https://doi.org/10.1080/13537110802289670

Tajfel, H. (1974). Social identity and intergroup behaviour. *Social Science Information*, *13*(2), 65–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847401300204

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

How to cite this article: Balcells, L., & Kuo, A. (2024). Social costs and policy preferences: Evidence from territorial strategies in Catalonia. *Nations and Nationalism*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.13043