National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR)  
Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century

Working Paper No. 76

Ethnic Mobilization, Equality, and Conflict in Multi-ethnic States

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February 2014
Abstract

What are the effects of ethnic mobilization on ethnic equality and conflict? Most of the existing literature has seen ethnic mobilization as harmful to democracy and peace. In contrast, my dissertation argues that its effect depends on the type of multi-ethnic society at hand, distinguishing between “ranked” and “unranked” ethnic systems. Ranked systems are defined as countries characterized by the dominance of a European(-descendant) group over other groups perceived to be racially distinct. Unranked systems are based on other ethnic cleavages and characterized by more equal ethnic group relations without a historically determined hierarchy. The statistical analyses reveal that ethnic organizations increase the risk of ethnic dominance and violence in unranked systems. In contrast, in ranked systems, they increase the level of peaceful ethnic group protest only, while empowering historically marginalized groups. Four case studies based on field research reconstruct the mechanisms by which ethnic organizations influence equality and conflict.

Keywords: ethnic mobilization, ethnic conflict, ethnic inequality, ranked and unranked multi-ethnic societies, mixed-methods design, race, Africa, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Latin America, Guatemala, Ecuador
Introduction

This study addresses a fundamental political challenge for multi-ethnic countries: the equal and peaceful co-existence of different ethnic groups. Concretely, it analyzes the effects of ethnic mobilization on ethnic equality and civil conflict in different parts of the world, and under different configurations of inter-ethnic relations. Most of the existing literature has seen ethnic mobilization as harmful to democracy and peace. In contrast, this study argues that its effect depends on the type of multi-ethnic society at hand, distinguishing between “ranked” and “unranked” ethnic systems. Ranked systems are defined as countries characterized by the dominance of a European(-descendant) group over other groups perceived to be racially distinct. Unranked systems are based on other ethnic cleavages and characterized by more equal ethnic group relations without a historically determined hierarchy.

The present paper is not meant as a research paper. Instead, it summarizes the theoretical argument, research design, and main empirical results of my dissertation that is electronically published with the same title at ETH Zurich. The statistical analyses reveal that ethnic organizations increase the risk of ethnic dominance and violence in unranked systems. In contrast, in ranked systems, they increase the level of peaceful ethnic group protest only, while empowering historically marginalized groups. Four case studies based on field research reconstruct the mechanisms by which ethnic organizations influence equality and conflict.

Theoretical Argument

Most of today’s states are multi-ethnic, resulting in what has been termed a “state-to-nation imbalance” that creates political instability (Miller, 2007, p. 2). Indeed, the vast majority of armed conflicts since World War II have been intra-state wars, often along ethnic lines (Cederman, Wimmer, & Min, 2010; Gurr, 1994, p. 347; Harbom & Wallensteen, 2010, p. 503; Wimmer, 2004, pp. 1-2). While recent research has highlighted the connection between
ethnic inequalities and conflict (Birnir, 2007; Cederman, Weidmann, & Gleditsch, 2011; Cederman, et al., 2010; Gurr, 2000; Østby, 2008), we know much less about the important processes of collective action and group mobilization that lie in between these two variables. In particular, systematic empirical evidence about the effect of ethnic organizations is scarce.¹

In this study, I argue that the effects of ethnic mobilization depend on the type of multi-ethnic society at hand. Racial hierarchies created during centuries of colonization and mass slavery remain highly relevant today and continue to shape ethnic group relations, wherever the former colonizers live together with groups that are perceived to be racially distinct. Such differences between European or European-descendant groups and “racial others” are connected to the most profound ethnic inequalities and the most stable group hierarchies, as the historical outcome of dominance and subordination is maintained by persisting racist ideologies and tangible material interests. In the words of Horowitz (1985) we can call these societies “ranked ethnic systems”, distinguished from “unranked systems” which are composed of a priori equal groups, without any historically determined political hierarchy between them. The latter result from other types of ethnic cleavages, most importantly linguistic differences, and are often characterized by pervasive ethnic competition.

Hence, ethnicity is highly relevant for politics in both systems. Yet, while in ranked systems it serves as an instrument of permanent oppression, in unranked societies it forms the basis of intense group competition. This is not to say that ethnic exclusion or even discrimination does not occur in the latter type of multi-ethnic societies. However, the crucial point here is that generally, the patterns of inclusion and exclusion in unranked systems are more fluid over time.

These different ethno-political constellations influence the goals of ethnic mobilization, and the capacity of groups to engage in violent collective action. Ethno-nationalism, and ethno-political competition – the two main factors linking ethnicity to conflict – can frequently be found in unranked ethnic systems but are usually absent in ranked systems. At the same time, the profound inter-group inequalities in ranked systems have deprived the subordinated groups of the very means to violently challenge their marginalization – a situation that I label an “equilibrium of inequality” –, while the capacities for violent action are relatively evenly distributed between different groups in unranked systems.

I argue that these systematic differences, with respect to the motivations of mobilization and the capacity for rebellion, condition the effect of ethnic mobilization in the two types of multi-ethnic societies. Strong ethnic organizations have a negative effect on both ethnic equality and the prospects of peace in unranked systems, while the ethnic mobilization of historically marginalized groups in ranked systems helps to empower these groups and enhance ethnic equality, without increasing the risk of conflict. Table 1 summarizes this argument.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of multi-ethnic society</th>
<th>Role of ethnicity</th>
<th>Who mobilizes?</th>
<th>Goals of ethnic mobilization</th>
<th>Capacity for violence</th>
<th>Effect on equality</th>
<th>Effect on conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unranked system</td>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Excluded and included groups</td>
<td>Political hegemony, ethno-nationalism</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranked system</td>
<td>Permanent oppression</td>
<td>Excluded groups</td>
<td>Emancipation, end of discrimination</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>(no effect)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to this structural argument, this study also advances an actor-centered argument, focusing on the causal role of ethnic organizations as instruments of organizational power, which help to advance ethnic claims, mobilize people, and orchestrate collective action. The following testable hypotheses are proposed:
H1a: Ethnic mobilization in unranked systems harms ethnic equality by increasing the risk of ethnic dominance and exclusion.

H1b: Ethnic mobilization in ranked systems enhances ethnic equality by promoting the political empowerment of historically marginalized ethnic groups.

H2a: Ethnic mobilization increases the risk of ethnic conflict in unranked ethnic systems.

H2b: Ethnic mobilization in ranked ethnic systems does not increase the risk of ethnic conflict.

H3a: Trans-ethnic elite cooperation decreases the risk of ethnic conflict in unranked systems.

H3b: Intra-ethnic fragmentation decreases the likelihood of the political empowerment of marginalized groups in ranked ethnic systems.

Research Design

As King, Keohane and Verba (1994, p. 43) teach us, "social science should be both general and specific." The methodological approach used in this study follows this precept by combining the power of abstraction and generalization of quantitative research with the contextual precision and analytical depth of qualitative studies. Its global coverage allows to observe recurring mechanisms and to arrive at generalizable conclusions about the work that ethnicity does, and the consequences of its political invocation, across manifold regions.

The research design takes on the form of a pyramid symbolizing the step-wise procedure from the theoretical argument to the country-level case studies (see Figure 1). Starting from the theoretical basis outlined above, the empirical study consists of various analytical steps which move down from the broadest, the global, level to the quantitative analyses of two regions considered to be theoretically particularly meaningful – Latin America (ranked ethnic
and Sub-Saharan Africa (mostly unranked systems) – and finally to the examination of single cases, while simultaneously gaining in depth and precision.

The quantitative part relies on regression analyses, and on data from different sources or from my own data collection efforts. The data on politically relevant ethnic groups stem from the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR-ETH) dataset (Cederman, et al., 2010). The dataset’s information on ethnic groups’ access to executive state power over time is used to measure the degree of ethnic equality in a country. The data on ethnic cleavage dimensions is taken from the EPR-Cleavages dataset composed by Bormann (Bormann, Cederman, & Vogt, 2013). The conflict data stem from the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflicts Dataset where a conflict is defined as a contested incompatibility over government or territory between two parties of which at least one is the government of a state, resulting in at least 25 battle-related deaths per year (Gleditsch, Wallensteen, Eriksson, Sollenberg, & Strand, 2002). Conflicts were classified as ethnic according to ACD2EPR (Wucherpfennig, Metternich, Cederman, & Gleditsch, 2012).
At the global level, due to data limitations I operationalize ethnic mobilization exclusively with the strength of ethnic political parties, while in the regional analyses I also take civil society networks into account. Ethnic parties were identified based on five main sources: the Minorities at Risk (MAR) dataset (Minorities at Risk Project, 2009); qualitative information from EPR-ETH; Birnir (2007) and Birnir and Satana (2013); Szöcsik and Zuber (2012); and Van Cott (2005). In many cases, this information was underpinned by numerous additional country-specific sources. The strength of ethnic parties was operationalized as their vote share in the lower chamber of parliament.² With the exception of Latin America, these data

on electoral ethnic mobilization are available from 1990 on only. Finally, specifically for the regional analyses, I collected data on ethnic civil society organizations in Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. The main time period under consideration is the post-Cold War era, from 1990 to 2009. The longer history of multi-party democracy in Latin America allowed me to collect data on ethnic parties in that region for the whole period from 1946 to 2009 and, thus, expand the sample period for the Latin American analyses.

The qualitative part relies mainly on field research carried out in four countries in both Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa: Guatemala, Ecuador, Côte d’Ivoire, and Gabon. Over 150 in-depth interviews with state officials (including several state ministers), political party leaders, parliamentarians, media representatives, and civil society leaders were employed to reconstruct the causal mechanisms that underlie the statistical relationships found in the quantitative part. This information from primary sources was complemented by a vast amount of country-specific secondary literature.

In the following, I will systematically summarize my main empirical results for each step of my theoretical argument. I start with the structural relationships before turning specifically to the role of ethnic organizations and the precise causal mechanisms underlying these relationships.

**Empirical Results**

*Ranked versus Unranked Societies: A Binary Classification of Multi-ethnic States*

The first element in the argument refers to the role of different ethnic markers in the structuring of multi-ethnic societies. The empirical results at both the country and the group level confirm that the type of ethnic cleavages is a highly important determinant for the
degree and persistence of inter-group inequalities. Racially divided states with European(-descendant) groups indeed experience the longest average periods of one-group ethnic dominance. At the same time, they exhibit the lowest frequency of ethnic power shifts, meaning that redistributions of political power between ethnic groups are extremely rare.

In contrast, linguistically divided countries, and racially divided countries without any European groups, experience on average the shortest periods of one-group dominance and the highest frequency of power shifts, which means that there is a more regular change in the set of included groups. Religion is somewhat in between these two poles regarding ethnic hierarchization but overall comes closer to the effect of linguistic cleavages. Importantly, these differences between the cleavage types are independent of the demographic structure. This shows that the ongoing political effect of European racism goes beyond the sheer ethno-demographic tyranny that Mann (2005) referred to as the result of the conjunction of nationalism and democracy. Clearly, there is a particularly powerful force inherent in this European racial paradigm that has made it possible even for minority groups to rule tyrannically.

The evidence at the group level confirms these patterns. Controlling for group size, there is a statistically significant link between European racial identity and long periods of political dominance. At the same time, the results prove that it is only European racial identity that matters. While other racial groups – as an umbrella category – are generally more likely to be politically discriminated for long periods of time, there are no systematic differences between them with regard to the political power distribution.

In sum, these findings support my notion of ranked systems as countries characterized by the dominance of a European(-descendant) group over other groups which are perceived to be racially distinct.

A dichotomized comparison confirms the argument that there are systematic differences between ranked and unranked systems regarding the degree of ethnic inequalities and the stability of ethno-political hierarchies. Comparing historical patterns of ethnic exclusion at the
group level, we can see that ethnic groups in unranked societies are politically excluded for just about half of their “life time”, i.e. of the years they are listed in the EPR-ETH dataset. In contrast, European(-descendant) groups in ranked systems almost never become politically excluded, while the historically marginalized “racial others” have a very high exclusion rate.

Moreover, there are two additional results that point to the structural difference between ranked and unranked systems. First, regional autonomy is much more widespread in unranked systems than in ranked societies. Hence, excluded groups in the former type possess an escape hatch that is often unavailable for the historically subordinated groups in ranked societies. Secondly, formal democracy has a different effect on ethnic inclusion and exclusion in the two types of multi-ethnic societies. In unranked systems, higher levels of democracy strongly correlate with less exclusion. In contrast, although this seems to have changed in the last two decades of the 20th century, the profound ethnic inequalities of ranked systems have long been comfortably embedded into (formally) well-functioning democratic regimes. In fact, ranked systems actually have a higher average level of democracy than unranked systems in the period from 1946 to 2009. This is particularly important because it shows that in contrast to unranked systems, the ethno-political inequalities in ranked societies are not only immune to the demographic conditions but also to the context of democratic institutions.

It is not surprising then that ranked systems have often been able to project an image of order compared to the sometimes chaotic worlds of unranked societies. Their significantly lower risk of civil conflict in general, and of ethnic conflict in particular – despite very high levels of ethnic exclusion – is a direct consequence of the “equilibrium of inequality” mentioned before. The very different – yet equally fundamental – role of ethnicity in the two types of multi-ethnic societies is clearly exposed in the four case studies. In Guatemala and Ecuador, indigenous and African-descendant people have been effectively subordinated by a European-stemming elite – which contrasts starkly with the dynamics of competition between
the different clusters of linguistically (and, in the case of Côte d’Ivoire also religiously) defined
groups in Côte d’Ivoire and Gabon.

The second step of my theoretical argument asserted that this systematic variation of inter-
ethnic relations influences the patterns, and aims of ethnic mobilization. The statistical results
reveal, first, that the average strength of ethnic parties is much higher in unranked systems
overall, and that, second, politically included and excluded groups are equally likely to
mobilize in these countries, while in ranked ethnic systems it is above all the excluded
groups that engage in ethnically based electoral mobilization. These results are confirmed by
the two regional analyses of Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. Finally, the evidence
from the multivariate statistical analyses of ethnic party formation at the global level suggests
fundamental differences between ranked and unranked systems in what are regarded as the
motives of ethnic mobilization. In unranked ethnic systems, groups’ mobilization is fuelled by
ethno-nationalist competition over hegemony: the presence of other ethnic parties and
previous ethnic conflicts, while also depending on mobilization capacity in the form of
geographic concentration and group size. In contrast, in ranked societies ethnic party
formation is mainly driven by grievances stemming from a low political status, suggesting that
emancipation from marginalization constitutes the main motive of mobilization.

Conflict versus Emancipation: The Differential Effect of Ethnic Mobilization

The third, and most important, part of the theoretical argument referred to the consequences
of ethnic mobilization under these different structural conditions. What is the effect of ethnic
mobilization in unranked ethnic systems? First of all, ethnic mobilization in unranked
societies seems to carry with it a self-reinforcing power. The establishment of ethnically
based parties by some groups as a result of the competitive environment impels other
groups to do the same, as mentioned above. This also points to the independent causal role
of ethnic organizations which harden group boundaries and increase competition. The case
study of Côte d’Ivoire reconstructs this mechanism in a particularly instructive example,
showing how the ethnic mobilization of one group has led to a spiral of competition and mobilization.

Secondly, the statistical results at the global level and from the African region demonstrate that ethnic parties increase the probability of groups to achieve and maintain ethnic dominance, leading to situations of ethnic inequality. This lends support to hypothesis H1a. Nevertheless, the analysis also reveals that this relationship reflects a combined effect of ethnic parties on both the achievement and conservation of political dominance, indicating that the variable does a better job in explaining the incidence of ethnic dominance than its initiation. Clearly, further research and additional empirical instruments are needed to more closely analyze the exact causal sequence between ethnic party formation and the installation and conservation of one-group ethnic dominance.

Regarding ethnic violence and conflict, the statistical results show a strong and direct effect of ethnic parties on electoral violence. Since elections are the main focal points of the power struggle in democratically governed unranked countries, this result is revealing. It does not only highlight ethnic parties’ potential to organize violence but it also shows how they increase the intensity of inter-group competition. The relationship to other forms of small-scale violence is less pronounced although in the within-country comparison over time, the variation in ethnic party strength correlates positively with the degree of social violence.

Moreover, the results indicate that under conditions of ethnic exclusion, this mobilizational capacity increases the risk of full-blown ethnic conflict. While the direct link between the strength of ethnic parties and ethnic conflict risk is weaker at the global level, and absent in Sub-Saharan Africa, the statistical analyses at both levels reveal a statistically significant interaction effect of ethnic party mobilization and ethnic exclusion on the risk of ethnic conflict. In sum, there is good evidence for hypothesis H2a about the conflict-fuelling effect of ethnic parties in unranked systems, although in a more nuanced way than expressed therein. Different forms of ethnic mobilization have distinct effects on different types of ethnic conflict.
and violence. Moreover, ethnic exclusion works as a magnifier of the destructive forces of ethnic mobilization.

In contrast, trans-ethnic cooperation seems to have a conflict-reducing effect in Sub-Saharan Africa, in line with hypothesis H3a, although only in the long term and with regard to civil conflicts. This result is confirmed by a series of comparisons of most-similar conflict and control cases, in which the peaceful cases had generally experienced clearly higher levels of trans-ethnic civil society cooperation over time. The example of Gabon serves to exemplify this stabilizing effect of trans-ethnic cooperation both within political parties and civil society organizations – although the evidence from both countries (Gabon and Côte d’Ivoire) also clearly indicates that in the socio-political context of Sub-Saharan Africa, political parties are the main actors in the ethnic competition game.

Furthermore, the comparative case study of Côte d’Ivoire and Gabon reveals (or underlines) two additional insights. First, the historical evolvement of elite networks – their reach and composition – decisively influences patterns of collective action, peace, and violence in unranked ethnic systems. Secondly, processes of ethnic mobilization or, reversely, trans-ethnic cooperation often follow a vicious or virtuous cycle. Mobilization may result in ethnic exclusion, conflict, increased mobilization, and renewed ethnic conflict as in Côte d’Ivoire, whereas early trans-ethnic elite alliances limit ethnic mobilization, and promote inclusion and peace, which in turn lead to increased cooperation, as observed in the case of Gabon.

Regarding the effect of ethnic mobilization in ranked systems, the statistical results at both the global level and from the Latin American analyses show that ethnic parties significantly increase the chances of historically marginalized groups of attaining political power either at the national or (more frequently) at the regional level. The temporal sequence is important here. Ethnic parties (and, for that matter, ethnic civil society organizations in Latin America) are almost never established by empowered groups, yet they are robustly linked to a higher probability of achieving and maintaining political empowerment. Importantly, none of these mobilizing historically discriminated groups has ever achieved a position of political
dominance. Hence, their empowerment implies a clear improvement of ethnic equality in these notoriously unequal societies, as hypothesis H1b proposed.

The regional analysis of Latin America, in particular, provides us with two additional crucial insights. First, ethnic parties do not only increase the chances of such *de-facto* political empowerment but are also linked to *de-iure* improvements of ethnic equality, in particular to states’ ratification of the ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples which protects the political and cultural rights of historically marginalized groups. Secondly, ethnic civil society organizations in Latin America exert the same positive effect on the chances of empowerment as ethnic parties, although it is somewhat weaker and less immediate, paralleling the evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa.

Furthermore, while ethnic parties have become more influential since the mid-1980s, the effect of ethnic civil society organizations has significantly diminished over time. This implies that the dominant elites in Latin America’s ranked societies have been able to adjust to the challenge of popular ethnic movements, developing a repertoire of counter-strategies to shield themselves from their demands, many of which we can observe in the cases of Guatemala and Ecuador. They include “divide-and-rule” strategies, the targeted co-option of leaders of mobilizing groups, exploiting intra-ethnic divisions, the use of clientelism to buy off resistance, appropriation of ethnic organizations’ discourse, and also heavy-handed repression as a means of deterrence.

Finally, the quantitative results are somewhat ambivalent regarding the effect of intra-ethnic divisions. There is no linear effect of my variable of linguistic and religious group fragmentation on the occurrence of empowerment but instead a distinct influence on each of the gradual steps from discrimination towards autonomy or inclusion. The qualitative analyses show that although linguistic and (to a lesser extent) religious divisions – often expressing historical rivalries between sub-groups – have been important factors in both Guatemala and Ecuador, they are only one of several intra-ethnic fault lines debilitating ethnic mobilization besides, for instance, ideological divisions or – in the case of Ecuador –
the fissures provoked by distribution battles. Hence, the empirical results lend moderate support to hypothesis H3b, in the sense that the concept of intra-ethnic cleavages goes clearly beyond the operationalization used in the quantitative analyses of this study.

Ethnic mobilization and increased equality in ranked ethnic systems do not come at the cost of heightened conflict or instability. According to the quantitative analyses, there is no systematic connection between ethnic parties (and ethnic civil society organizations in Latin America) and any kind of civil conflict or institutional upheavals. This clearly confirms hypothesis H2b. A closer analysis of the trajectory of Latin America’s strongest and most militant ethnic movement, the indigenous movement in Ecuador, that coincided with the ousting of three elected presidents, reveals that on the one hand, such political instability has always been a characterizing feature of this country – with or without ethnic mobilization –, and that on the other hand, there is no clear causal link between ethnic organizations and the fall of these political leaders. While the opposition to them came from all ethnic groups, the decisive force in their ousting was the non-indigenous military command.

There is however a systematic link between ethnic mobilization and the level of peaceful ethnic protest at both the global and regional level, as well as in the case of Ecuador in particular. While this points at the capacity of ethnic organizations to organize political collective action, it reaffirms the notion that this collective action is most likely to be of peaceful nature in ranked systems. The clientelistic co-option of both the (historically thin) elite and the ordinary population of marginalized groups, and the usually high degree of economic interdependence – factors that can be observed in both Guatemala and Ecuador – are clear symptoms of the “equilibrium of inequality” that militates against ethnic violence. Moreover, the lack of an ethno-nationally minded bourgeoisie within the colonized (or historically oppressed) groups has also given ethnic mobilization in ranked ethnic systems a different face.

Based on these results, we are now ready to give a condensed answer to the core research question of this study about the consequences of ethnic mobilization. Ethnic mobilization in
ranked ethnic systems – multi-ethnic societies divided between a dominant European(-descendant) group and subordinated “racial others” – does not increase the risk of conflict but rather reduces historical inequalities. In contrast, in unranked ethnic systems – multi-ethnic societies divided by different ethnic cleavages, such as language or religion – ethnic mobilization exacerbates the existing competition, compromising ethnic equality, and increasing the risk of violent conflict. These are the two faces of ethnic mobilization. But how does the effect of ethnic organizations play out concretely?

Agents of Collective Action: The Role of Ethnic Parties and other Ethnic Organizations

Moving from the structural relationships to the actor-centered part of the argument and the causal mechanisms underlying these relationships brings us to the question: what are the causal effects of ethnic organizations? First, ethnic organizations powerfully shape individuals’ identities and interests along ethnic lines and, by aggregating them, structure political conflicts along ethnic group boundaries, eclipsing other potentially relevant cleavages. In the case of Côte d’Ivoire, for instance, the recruitment strategies of all three ethnic parties (and certain ethnic youth movements) institutionalized the existing ethno-political cleavages, making them both more salient at the political macro level and less easy to transcend at the level of individuals. Likewise, particularly during the 1990s in both Ecuador and Guatemala, ethnic organizations have transformed ethnicity into the most relevant political cleavage, by aggregating the identities and interests of discriminated individuals and molding them into powerful ethnic group movements, which have advanced these ethnic demands through targeted lobbying vis-à-vis the state institutions. Particularly in Ecuador, the indigenous movement has achieved to determine the political agenda of the country since the 1990s, forcing state institutions and other political parties to at least
rhetorically adapt to their demands.\textsuperscript{3} Hence, the interest aggregation function of ethnic organizations has played a crucial role in these three cases.

Related to this first point is the propaganda and agenda setting power of these organizations which also contributes to the hardening of ethnic group boundaries. This mechanism has been of less relevance in the Latin American cases than in Côte d’Ivoire. In modern mass politics, the public agenda is driven by the media, which in ranked societies are usually controlled by the traditional elite and which often suppress, or at least select and manipulate, the voices of the marginalized groups. This is the case, above all, in Guatemala. In Ecuador, where ethnic mobilization has been stronger and discrimination less severe, access to the mainstream media has been somewhat greater. In Côte d’Ivoire, the inflammatory propaganda of ethnic organizations – both political parties and partisan newspapers – has had a particularly powerful effect, exacerbating ethnic divisions and stimulating hatreds.

Third, we can see clear evidence for the capacity of ethnic organizations to orchestrate collective action through mass mobilization in both ranked and unranked ethnic systems. Strong ethnic organizations provide the necessary link between elites and the rank and file of the population that allows the organization of marches, protests or even military mobilization. While such actions of mass mobilization, and the political pressure created thereby, have played an important role in both Guatemala and Ecuador, the comparison between the two cases – and especially within Ecuador between the indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian movements – clearly reveals that the force of this mobilization crucially depends on the strength of the organizations.

While for the reasons discussed above this collective action is usually peaceful in ranked societies, it often provokes violent outcomes in the competitive environment of unranked systems – whether these be incidents of low-level violence during election times, or outright civil conflict under conditions of widespread popular grievances. There are various glaring examples of how ethnic parties have stirred violent mass mobilization in Sub-Saharan Africa,

\textsuperscript{3} Interviews with political party leader, 2013-4-22-I; and indigenous parliamentarian, 2013-4-23-II.
in such bloody conflicts as in Congo-Brazzaville, Angola, Burundi, and Ethiopia. In Côte d’Ivoire, ethnic parties and militant youth movements did not only spur a spiral of political and communal violence, but they were also crucial actors in the set-up of the ethnic rebellion by recruiting and indoctrinating fighters, and upholding popular support through propaganda.

Fourth and finally, ethnic parties in particular are decisive when it comes to ethnic groups’ access to political power, serving as instruments to capture and defend state power. This is by itself of course not a particularly innovative insight but it does have somewhat more far-reaching implications. In the case of ranked ethnic systems, the Guatemalan example confirms the finding of the statistical analyses that although ethnic civil society organizations have been important drivers of emancipation, overall the chances of historically marginalized groups of achieving political empowerment are significantly lower – and increasingly so – without a strong, autonomous ethnic party. Ecuador’s indigenous movement has clearly benefitted from Pachakutik’s electoral successes at the local and regional levels, from the access to the legislative process provided by the party, and also from a certain unifying effect, as Pachakutik achieved to unite most relevant indigenous forces within a single electoral vehicle. Hence, indigenous achievements have been greater in Ecuador, leading to a more equal (or less unequal) distribution of political power than in Guatemala.

In the competitive environment of unranked systems, ethnic parties provide a comparative advantage in the struggle over political hegemony. Ethnic groups that are represented by strong ethnic parties may attain and conserve a tight grip on political power, leading to temporary regimes of one-group dominance. Obvious examples are certainly the FPR-backed Tutsi dominance in post-genocide Rwanda, the rise of the Mende to political dominance in Sierra Leone in 2002, the Isaas-dominated RPP one-party regime in Djibouti during the 1980s, which eventually resulted in the outbreak of the Afar rebellion in 1991, and the restoration of Isaas-dominance in 2003 after winning an absolute electoral victory.

Apart from this monopolization mechanism, ethnic party mobilization may also lead to a process of outbidding initiated by a radical ethnic party, such as the FPI in Côte d’Ivoire from
the early 1990s onwards, leading to the political exclusion of other ethnic groups. Importantly, such regimes of ethnic dominance and/or exclusion are often at the roots of ethnic grievances which are critical for the outbreak of full-blown ethnic conflicts, especially when excluded groups also possess the organizational capacity to mobilize.

In contrast, the case study of Gabon illustrates how strong trans-ethnic organizations exert the opposite effect of promoting ethnic inclusion and peace. By integrating elites from different ethnic groups and their political interests, they diminish the degree of group competition in unranked systems. Moreover, their appeals for national unity vis-à-vis the rank-and-file population reduce the potential of communal violence or militant mobilization by specific groups. Finally, the trans-ethnic composition of political organizations guarantees that no matter which side wins the upper hand in a given election or in a particular political dispute, all ethnic groups will be included in the winning coalition, which prevents ethnic grievances and the onset of large-scale ethnic conflict.

Conclusions

What are the broader implications of these results for the academic research on ethnic mobilization and ethnic conflict? Most of the standard academic literature on ethnic politics has emphasized the negative consequences of ethnic mobilization on both the functioning of democracy and the prospects of peace (Horowitz, 1985; Rabushka & Shepsle, 1972; Reilly, 2006; Rothchild, 2004; Wimmer, 1997; Young, 1976). The results of the present study suggest that these assumptions are only partly correct; the effect depends very much on the type of multi-ethnic society at hand. In unranked ethnic systems, characterized by the competitive relations between a priori equal groups, ethnic mobilization revealed to have the negative effects generally attributed to it.

In contrast, in ranked ethnic systems, characterized by historically determined patterns of ethnic dominance and subordination, ethnic mobilization does not have the same dangerous
consequences, but on the contrary facilitates the reduction of entrenched inter-group inequalities. This finding helps systematize and generalize the evidence from previous works on ethnic mobilization in such countries, which – largely focusing on specific cases or world regions – showed ethnic mobilization of historically marginalized groups to have a positive impact on ethnic equality (Barany, 1998; Becker, 2011; Hooker, 2005; Madrid, 2012, pp. 175-178; Marable, 2007; Tuck, 2010; Van Cott, 2000; Vermeersch, 2006; Yashar, 2005). The results of the present study clearly reveal that there is a more general, globally valid causal pattern underlying these different findings.

At the same time, the study contradicts the critical voices about the alleged dangers of ethnic mobilization in these countries (Huntington, 2004; Olmos, 2003; Radu, 2005; Schlesinger Jr., 1992). In this sense, it also qualifies the claims made in large parts of the standard literature on ethnic politics. As stated above, the effect of ethnic mobilization very much depends on the type of multi-ethnic society.

A multitude of empirical studies has convincingly demonstrated that ethnic inequalities perceived as grievances increase the risk of ethnic conflict (Birnir, 2007; Cederman, Gleditsch, & Buhaug, 2013; Cederman, et al., 2011; Cederman, et al., 2010; Gurr, 2000; Gurr, Harff, Marshall, & Scarritt, 1993; Østby, 2008; Stewart, 2008b; Wimmer, Cederman, & Min, 2009; Wucherpfennig, et al., 2012). Yet, this research tells us much less about the mobilizational processes in between these two variables, i.e. how ethnic organizations and their elites translate grievances into violent or peaceful collective action. This study has provided a more systematic focus on the role of ethnic organizations, and the mechanisms by which they influence the stipulated outcomes, such as peace, conflict, and equality, backed by systematic empirical results from both large-n analyses and case studies. By focusing on ethnic parties and civil society organizations as the political representatives of ethnic groups, this approach also avoids the risk of reifying mere social categories (Brubaker, 2004).
The empirical results again help to generalize existing evidence from numerous case studies on the role of different ethnic organizations in places as diverse as India, Rwanda, Ecuador, Hungary, the USA, and Western Europe (Barany, 1998; Becker, 2011; Gordin, 2002; Marable, 2007; Mijeski & Beck, 2011; Straus, 2012; Van Cott, 2005; Varshney, 2001; Vermeersch, 2006). We have seen that in principle, ethnic organizations perform the same functions in both types of multi-ethnic societies identified in this study. However, due to the very distinct ethno-political constellations, the outcomes vary dramatically. Moreover, by treating civil society organizations and political parties as different expressions of the same basic phenomenon, the study has also attempted to bridge existing divides between different disciplines of research which so far have mostly focused on either electoral or non-electoral ethnic mobilization.4

Finally, the results about the conflict-reducing effect of trans-ethnic organizations in unranked ethnic systems add to recent research on what has been termed “consociational parties” (Bogaards, 2005). They show that these types of political organizations may assume a very important role for the preservation of peace in unranked multi-ethnic societies. Hence, the trans-ethnic cooperation envisioned by the classic consociationalist literature (Lijphart, 1977, 2004) may be even more fruitful if it takes place within parties and other organizations instead of between them.

With regard to the link between ethnicity, collective grievances and ethnic conflict, this study has provided systematic empirical results about the relationship between different types of ethnic identity and the degree and persistence of ethno-political inequalities. As Mann (2005) has pointed out, the conjunction of ethno-nationalism and democracy is often the source of ethnic oppression and violence. This study has identified a particular ethnic cleavage – the racial difference between European(-descendant) groups and “racial others” – that is particularly prone to create profound and enduring ethnic inequalities. Hence, the European

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4 There are exceptions to this general trend as, for example, Van Cott Van Cott, D. L. (2005). From Movements to Parties in Latin America: The Evolution of Ethnic Politics. New York: Cambridge University Press. and Vermeersch Vermeersch, P. (2006). The Romani Movement: Minority Politics & Ethnic Mobilization in Contemporary Central Europe. New York: Berghahn Books.. However, they are again restricted to specific geographical areas.
racial paradigm (Whitten, 1999) constitutes the ideological fundament of what I have defined, in the terms of Horowitz (1985), as ranked ethnic systems. After two World Wars and the great “waves of democratization” (Huntington, 1991), racist ideologies continue to simmer below the surface of many democratically organized political systems, and to shape the existing political and socio-economic hierarchies.

The distinction between ranked and unranked systems is certainly not new (Blanton, Mason, & Athow, 2001; Hechter, 1978; Horowitz, 1985, pp. 21-36; Mason, 2003). However, while previous works on the topic have described the theoretical characteristics of ranked systems (often focusing on the overlap of class and ethnic boundaries) and applied them to specific cases or world regions, this study has come up with a globally applicable typology of the two types of ethnic systems, based on an explicit, theoretically grounded definition, focusing on political inequalities, and backed by systematic empirical evidence. In this sense, the study has also made a step forward towards overcoming the regional divides in the existing literature on ethnic politics. While there are certainly other important typologies of multi-ethnic societies, the empirical results of this study confirm that the distinction between hierarchically ordered and competitive societies is highly relevant from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

If we envision ethnic politics as playing out in a dyadic relationship between the government and its challengers (Cederman, et al., 2010; Tilly, 1978), this distinction has implications for the understanding of both sides. On the one hand, certain types of ethnic cleavages present in society are more likely to result in ethnic oppression by a historically exclusionary state power than other types, which result in a more equal participation of different ethnic groups in government. At the same time, the higher equality often carries with it an element of competition. Hence, the challenges to the state are different in unranked multi-ethnic societies than in their ranked counterparts. The competition leads to a higher risk of violent conflict while historical oppression is challenged by the more peaceful attempts of emancipation.
Hence, these findings about enduring ethnic inequalities are also of high relevance to the literature on grievances and ethnic conflict (Cederman, et al., 2013; Cederman, et al., 2011; Cederman, et al., 2010; Gurr, 2000; Østby, 2008; Stewart, 2008a) which has usually not distinguished between ranked and unranked ethnic systems. While inequalities between ethnic groups are generally associated with a higher risk of ethnic conflict, as these works have shown, the present study has identified ranked societies as a subset of cases which, due to what I have called an equilibrium of inequality, constitute an exception to this relationship between exclusion and conflict.

Finally, regarding the roots of mobilization, this study has shown that ethnic mobilization is driven by different factors in ranked and unranked systems. However, it has paid less attention to the institutional context and other political factors, such as the party system, which facilitate or curtail this mobilization. Does this omission affect our conclusions about the differential effect of ethnic mobilization?

Two factors speak against that possibility. First, there is no reason to believe that the ethnic raw material in a country – i.e. the type of ethnic cleavage(s) present – has a causal effect on, say, the electoral system – and even less likely is a reverse causal influence. Second, while the institutional context may well affect the degree of ethnic mobilization, especially in the realm of electoral politics (Bogaards, 2003, 2007; Horowitz, 2002; Huber, 2012; Lijphart, 2004; Reilly, 2001; Reynolds, 1995; Rice & Van Cott, 2006), the main focus of this study has been the effect of ethnic mobilization on equality and peace when mobilization occurs. Hence, even if the different levels of ethnic mobilization in the two types of multi-ethnic countries were partly a function of systematic differences in the institutional context, this does not change our conclusions about the relationship between mobilization and our outcomes of interest within each type of multi-ethnic society. Nevertheless, a more systematic look at differences in the institutional context constitutes a promising route for future research.

What are the implications of the results of this study for policy makers? The political prescriptions we can deduce are different for the two types of multi-ethnic societies,
according to the distinct diagnoses of their fundamental problems made above. In the competitive unranked systems, prone to violent ethnic conflict, the focus must be on how to mitigate the ethno-political competition and guarantee peace. In contrast, in the highly unequal ranked societies, our main concern should be the rectification of these historical inequalities. This means that the autonomous and peaceful political mobilization – or interest representation – of historically discriminated groups in the latter type of countries should be promoted or, at least, permitted, whereas in unranked systems, ethnic mobilization should be prevented and instead conditions should be provided that stimulate strong trans-ethnic organizations.

Processes of ethnic mobilization are dynamic and can be influenced in many ways. One instrument is certainly the institutional framework that forms an important part of the “political opportunity structures” for mobilization (Kriesi & Guigni, 1995; McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996; Tarrow, 1998; Tilly, 2004). If we focus on ethnic mobilization in electoral politics – which has turned out to be a more powerful tool in this study – then the electoral system is the key. As Bogaards (2007) has pointed out, the choice of the latter depends on its desired function. Following his typology (Bogaards, 2007, p. 172), this would mean that in ranked ethnic systems, policy makers concerned with institutional designs should allow for (or even encourage) the “translation” of ethnic interests into political cleavages, for example through reserved seats for minorities.

Indeed, existing empirical evidence indicates that certain institutional measures, such as the elimination of spatial registration rules for political parties (Birnir, 2004) or the introduction of majoritarian electoral rules in districts with geographically concentrated minorities (Muñoz-Pogossian, 2008, p. 191; Van Cott, 2005, p. 29), have promoted the autonomous electoral participation of historically marginalized ethnic groups.5 Equally, the very liberal provisions regarding political associations in the new South African constitution allowed for the political

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representation and inclusion of all relevant forces during the transition from racial oppression to multi-ethnic democracy (Kemmerzell, 2010). In summary, the results of this study suggest that the political “visibilization” (Pallares, 2007) of historically oppressed groups is a necessary condition for the rectification of the historical inequalities in ranked ethnic systems. In unranked systems, the preferred strategy should be the “aggregation” of ethnic cleavages. Importantly, the mere prohibition of ethnic parties will in most cases not be enough (or even problematic) (M. Basedau & Moroff, 2011). As we have seen, for example, such bans are employed almost everywhere in Sub-Saharan Africa (Moroff, 2010), yet this does not prevent the emergence of parties that represent specific ethnic groups in a more implicit manner. What are really needed are institutional provisions that promote the emergence of truly trans-ethnic political organizations. However, while different mechanisms have been proposed in the literature, such as the Alternative Vote (AV) system (Horowitz, 2003; Reilly, 2001), two-round majoritarian systems (Reilly, 2001, p. 28), distribution requirements (Bogaards, 2010, pp. 735-737; Horowitz, 1985, pp. 635-638; Reilly, 2006, pp. 820-821), or even constituency pooling (Bogaards, 2003), there is still no clear consensus among scholars on which electoral rules are most effective for this purpose. Hence, the issue of the appropriate institutional design in unranked ethnic systems continues to be a highly relevant topic and an important route for future research.

Another issue that will need to be examined more closely is the existing within-category variation, especially with regard to unranked systems. For instance, religious and linguistic cleavages were lumped together in a single category in this study. However, although the effect of religion on ethno-political inequality is closer to that of language than to the consequences of European racism, it seems that considerable differences still exist between the two first types of cleavages. Examining the precise reasons for and implications of these differences will help us to further improve our knowledge about ethnic mobilization in different types of multi-ethnic countries.
A final open question concerns the dynamics of transformation of ranked societies into unranked systems. The developments in countries such as the USA, Brazil and Bolivia suggest that any such transformation constitutes a slow, long-term process. Due to the extreme demographic situation in South Africa, the transition – once it was initiated – proceeded more quickly in this country, although the marked ethnic inequalities in the socio-economic spheres have not yet disappeared. Liberia and Zimbabwe, for their part, can probably be considered unranked ethnic systems by now.

In the end, no ranked ethnic system is set in stone forever. The Civil Rights Movement in the USA helped abolish the segregation in the south. Civic mobilization by the ANC and other forces brought down the Apartheid state of South Africa. The results of this study suggest that for other historically marginalized ethnic groups in the world, a new political dawn is possible, too. At the same time, we have also seen in this study that the more equal unranked systems are not exempt from the menace of at least temporary ethnic dominance. Oftentimes, this results in bloody civil conflict. Hence, ethnic equality must be the principal aim in both ranked and unranked ethnic systems. Yet, as the examples of Ecuador and Côte d’Ivoire have illustrated, while in the former, ethnic organizations may constitute the instruments to achieve this aim, in the latter they often produce the opposite result of hegemony and ethnic exclusion.
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