The Causes and Consequences of Ethnic Power-Sharing

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Abstract

What are the causes and what are the consequences of ethnic power-sharing? Existing research generally agrees that ethnic coalitions decrease the likelihood of civil war. However, most scholars of power-sharing claim that political elites from different ethnic groups rarely form coalitions and that these coalitions are inherently unstable unless so-called power-sharing institutions provide incentives for cooperation. Since most studies of power-sharing do not measure coalitions directly, it remains unclear how accurate these claims are. This thesis complements existing research by adopting a theoretical and empirical approach that explicitly centers on elite behavior. Using global data on the government access of ethnic elites, the thesis explores what type of coalitions these actors form and how long their power-sharing pacts endure. Exploiting the variation in the ethnic composition of governments, this thesis also contributes novel insights to the study of democratization and civil war. More specifically, the empirical results indicate that ethnic elites frequently form oversized coalitions because they fear future defections by their co-ethnics and violent revolutions by members of excluded ethnic groups. Accordingly, ethnic coalitions are less stable than mono-ethnic governments. There is only limited evidence that so-called power-sharing institutions influence these dynamics. Since ethnic coalitions are usually unstable and elites face higher risks when they lose power in dictatorships, large elite coalitions are more likely to embrace democratization in order to lower their personal risks. For the same reasons, ethnic coalitions stabilize democratic regimes. Finally, this thesis finds that ethnic coalitions mainly reduce the risk of territorial civil war but neither have a positive nor a negative effect on conflicts over government power.

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It cannot be stressed enough that (...) behavior within the institution – not just the institution in isolation – determines whether institutions are outcome-consequential, or, as is more often uttered, whether institutions matter.

– Diermeier and Krehbiel (2003, 127)

The main message of this study is that ethnic elite behavior is crucial to the understanding of the causes and consequences of power-sharing, that is, the coalition between political elites in the executive of a state. Existing research on power-sharing puts too much emphasis on formal institutions and neglects agency, particularly in its empirical applications. However, behavior mediates or even diverts the effect of institutions on other outcomes as Diermeier’s and Krehbiel’s quote indicates. Ignoring it leads to incomplete conclusions about why leaders of ethnic groups cooperate in power-sharing coalitions, how long their cooperation lasts, and what consequences this cooperation has for outcomes such as democracy and civil war risk. This summary of my PhD thesis has three goals. First, it reviews the main theoretical arguments and empirical results of this study, and, in doing so, identifies its limitations and strengths. Second, it explores the consequences of this study for future research on power-sharing and various other subfields of comparative politics and international relations. Third and finally, it outlines the lessons of this analysis for policy makers.

Theoretical Argument and Main Findings

This thesis explores the causes and consequences of ethnic power-sharing by consciously adopting a behavioral framework that builds on three propositions about the preferences and constraints of ethnic elites:

$P_1$ : Ethnic elites aim to maximize their relative influence within the state.

$P_2$ : Ethnic elites possess incomplete information about the precise balance of power.

$P_3$ : Ethnic elites in the government require sufficient support from the population to avoid being replaced by rival elites from other groups.
My theoretical arguments build on these propositions by combining them into testable hypotheses in order to answer four research questions. With respect to the causes of power-sharing, I first explore whether ethnic elites form mono-ethnic or power-sharing governments, and second, how long different ethnic power constellations in the executive endure. Regarding the consequences of power-sharing, my third research question asks how ethnic coalitions affect democratization and democratic survival. Fourth, I investigate the influence of ethnic coalitions on civil wars over territory and government power.

Especially in those parts of the thesis that discuss the causes of ethnic power-sharing, I directly compare the behavioral approach of this work to the prevalent formal institutional explanations of power-sharing. Most studies on power-sharing subscribe to my first behavioral assumption and claim that elites are unlikely to coalesce in the absence of institutions that protect them against future defections. Yet, the positive effect on power-sharing behavior that existing studies ascribe to formal institutions such as proportional electoral rules, parliamentary systems, and authoritarian parliaments or parties is merely theoretically postulated and not subject to empirical testing.\(^1\) In fact, I argue that most existing research on formal power-sharing institutions suffers from conceptual stretching when equating PR electoral rules and authoritarian parties with power-sharing in their quantitative analyses. There are multiple states in which formal power-sharing institutions have clearly no effect on power-sharing. Figure 1 illustrates the mismatch between formal institutions and actual ethnic power-sharing coalitions. In 2008, only a minority of states do not employ at least one set of formal rules which presumably promote power-sharing. Most democracies (white background) either have an electoral system with PR rules or a parliamentary form of government (striped),\(^2\) and there is hardly any autocracy (dark grey background) that does not have a ruling party or legislative chamber (striped).\(^3\)

\(^{1}\)Lijphart (2002); Horowitz (2002); Gandhi and Przeworski (2007); Magaloni (2008); Boix and Svolik (2013) are some of the studies that link formal institutions to elite power-sharing in the executive. Not all of these authors focus primarily on ethnic coalitions; but they do not exclude them either. For a critique of the authoritarian literature on power-sharing, see Pepinsky (2014).

\(^{2}\)By 2008, only Australia and Papua New Guinea run their elections under the Alternative Vote, the electoral system that Horowitz (2004) singles out as effective in bringing about inter-ethnic coalitions in ethnically divided societies.

\(^{3}\)The maps were generated with the help of the CShapes dataset by Weidmann, Kuse and Gleditsch (2010).
Figure 1: Power-sharing institutions in 2008 (top) and ethnic power-sharing in 2009 (bottom).

(a) Authoritarian and democratic powers-sharing institutions in 2008. Dictatorships in grey, power-sharing-institutions striped. Data from Bormann and Golder (2013) and Cheibub, Gandhi and Vreeland (2010).

Given the hypothesized link between institutions and power-sharing in the existing literature, it is surprising that these so-called power-sharing institutions do not predict the presence or absence of power-sharing coalitions between elites from at least two different ethnic groups in 2009 very well. Figure 1b displays all independent states with more than 500,000 inhabitants in which ethnicity is a politically relevant cleavage and reveals a number of both Type-I and Type-II errors. Despite the presence of power-sharing institutions, ethnic government coalitions are absent in large parts of Eurasia and Latin America. Put differently, power-sharing institutions overpredict the presence of ethnic coalitions in these regions (Type-I error). What is more, ethnic elites have formed coalitions in Bolivia, the United States, and several countries in West Africa although the formal institutions that the literature identifies as necessary for power-sharing are lacking in these cases (Type-II error).

Of course, the apparent mismatch uncovered by Figure 1 might be explained by a number of different reasons. The temporally restricted snapshot certainly misses long-term dynamics, and it is possible that institutional rules need more time to influence the behavior of political elites. Moreover, the excluded groups in Eurasia and Latin America might be very small. At the same time, the coalitions in Africa and other states could constitute the barest minimum-winning arrangements possible as suggested by the pessimist view on power-sharing. As a result, the states governed by ethnic coalitions might be far more exclusionary overall than the seemingly restrictive mono-ethnic regimes. Finally, the prevalent understanding of power-sharing might not refer to inter-ethnic coalitions at all but to other political distinctions such as class or ideology. However, my theoretical arguments and empirical findings suggest that the snapshot captured in Figure 1 is representative of a more systematic pattern. Formal institutions have only a limited effect on ethnic elite behavior. Instead, ethnic elites are quite likely to form power-sharing coalitions regardless of the formal institutional environment than is commonly assumed. In the following, I will outline the arguments underlying these claims in more detail and discuss each of the four research questions asked in my thesis.
The Formation of Ethnic Coalitions

The main answer to my first research question, whether or not ethnic elites opt for inter-ethnic coalitions or mono-ethnic rule, is that ethnic elites are quite likely to form power-sharing coalitions based on a desire for power, their fear of losing it, and the uncertainty about their own strength. Recall that these are the three propositions that characterize ethnic elites in my theoretical framework. Building on the first and third of the proposition, my theory predicts that most governments are likely to include elites from ethnic groups that represent a majority of the population. By also considering the second theoretical proposition, it refines the previous hypothesis: since ethnic elites are uncertain about the true distribution of power, they predominantly form oversized coalitions in anticipation of future defections. Both expectations run against the pessimistic approach to power-sharing that predicts minimum-winning coalitions, or worse, the hegemonic rule of leaders from ethnic minorities.\(^4\)

Returning to the theoretical proposition that ethnic elites aim to maximize their own power, I derive two additional hypotheses. The first expects that ethnic elites aim to keep the number of rival elites in the coalition at a minimum. Instead of excluding leaders from any other ethnic group, political elites exclude those leaders with whom they share fewer ethnic identity markers. In analogy to Axelrod’s minimum-connected-winning coalitions that is based on ideological congruence, ethnic leaders try to form coalitions that are ethnically congruent.\(^5\) They do so because they want to preempt loyalty switches by a subset of their supporters to leaders from excluded ethnic groups with whom these supporters share compatible identity markers. By internalizing cross-cutting cleavages into the coalition, supporter switches only shift power within the government and do not endanger future access to government positions of the affected elites.

Finally, I highlight the importance of incumbency in the formation of new governments. Once ethnic elites have acquired government power, they are very likely to be included in future governments for two reasons. Either they belong to a dominant ethno-nation such as Turks in Turkey or the English in the United Kingdom, or they use the coercive power of


the state to defend their position which is crucial to their well-being and income. I evaluate these four hypotheses with the help of a methodological framework that allows me to model the choice process between all possible ethnic power constellations in the executive. The empirical analysis yields support for all four hypotheses but finds little evidence in favor of the prevalent institutional explanations. Ethnic coalitions form with almost equal probability in democracies and dictatorships as well as under different electoral rules.

The Durability of Ethnic Coalitions

In order to answer how long different ethnic power constellations in the executive endure, my argument draws directly on the theoretical arguments that inform whether or not elites form coalitions. Unlike institutional explanations of power-sharing that link coalitions to more durable governments,\(^6\) I hypothesize that ethnic coalitions are more likely to fail than mono-ethnic governments. Two characteristics of ethnic coalitions in particular contribute to their shorter survival times. First, as the ethnic coalition approaches grand coalition status, my first theoretical proposition implies that distributive conflicts between members of the coalition become more pressing. In turn, they frequently result in the expulsion of some members. Second, the more ethnic cleavages a coalition includes, the more overlap with excluded groups likely exists, and the more probable loyalty switches to excluded leaders with shared ethnic backgrounds become that lead to a reconfiguration in the membership to the coalition.

At the same time, there is at least one benefit to admitting more members to a coalition. By representing a larger share of the population than less inclusive or mono-ethnic governments, power-sharing coalitions should become more resistant to outside challenges. My final hypothesis with regard to coalition duration addresses temporal variation in the stability of power-sharing coalitions. Conceptualizing the cooperation of elites from multiple ethnic groups inside the executive as a repeated prisoner dilemma’s game, the last part of my theoretical argument predicts that ethnic coalitions should become more stable over time. After repeated interactions, elites from different ethnic groups learn to trust each other and their supporters become content with the benefits of

\(^6\)See, for example, Boix and Svolik (2013).
My empirical analysis tests these hypotheses with the help of event-history models that are appropriate for estimating time-to-failure outcomes such as the time until a government constellation breaks down. The analyses again reveal broad support for my theoretical conjectures but find little evidence in favor of institutional theories of power-sharing. Out of four different institutions that are commonly linked to power-sharing, only legislatures in authoritarian regimes seem to have a stabilizing effect on the ethnic composition of the government. However, this effect becomes weaker and even less certain once variables that proxy power-sharing behavior are entered into the respective models.

Surprisingly, my analysis uncovers that majoritarian electoral rules are strongly related to the expansion of ethnic coalitions. My explanation for this curious result is that the disproportional effects majoritarian systems have on small shifts in voter preferences make elites so uncertain about their power position that they build even larger coalitions.

Ethnic Coalitions and Democracy

The key results so far are that ethnic coalitions are likely to be oversized and unstable – in particular, when they are young. In the third part of my thesis, I set out to evaluate the implications of these findings for democratization and democratic survival. I begin with the observation that the consequences of losing power are on average far worse for elites in dictatorships than in democracies. Due to their insecure position in ethnic coalitions, most elites prefer the opposition benches of democratic rule to the brutish character of authoritarian regimes. In particular, majority coalitions among ethnic elites do not need to fear losses in future elections, and often survive democratic transitions. This effect grows stronger as governments become more inclusive.

The same reasons that compel ethnic elites to transition to democracy also make them protect democratic rule once it is achieved. Thus, more inclusive power-sharing coalitions also increase the survival of democracy. Minority regimes are perceived as particularly unjust if they formally uphold the equality norms of democracy. Regimes

7By these I mean parliamentary systems and PR electoral rules in democracy as well as authoritarian parties and parliaments.
that only grant democracy to a severely curtailed and ethnically defined demos such as Rhodesia/Zimbabwe or Pakistan before 1970 face a high risk of civil war and democratic failure. Moreover, ethnic elites are disappointed with the democratic process if their expulsion from government office is recent, but irreversible. Therefore, the expulsion of ethnic elites from the government coalition increases the likelihood of democratic failure.

Using two alternative definitions of democratization and investigating three alternative ways of democratic failure,\(^8\) I find support for all hypotheses but one. While there is some evidence that ethnic coalitions in general increase the chances of democratization relative to mono-ethnic regimes, majority coalitions explain most of the variation in democratic transitions. The findings of this part also question the institutional explanation of power-sharing. Recall that students of authoritarian regimes argue that institutions such as parties and legislatures strengthen dictatorships because they ensure power-sharing between the ruling elites.\(^9\) Although the results indicate that party-based dictatorships are less likely to democratize than personalist and military regimes, this finding does not weaken the positive effect of power-sharing coalitions on democratization.

**Ethnic Coalitions and Civil War**

The final empirical part of this thesis investigates the effects of power-sharing coalitions on the risk of domestic conflict. It addresses two critiques of power-sharing, namely that ethnic coalitions lead to infighting, and that the inclusion of elites from one group into a power-sharing coalition leads to more civil wars with ethnic groups that are still excluded. First, I argue that governments are most vulnerable to violent challenges in the initial years of their tenure when uncertainty about the distribution of power is at its peak. As governments defeat external challengers and elites inside the coalition learn to trust each other, the risk of civil war decreases.\(^10\)

When governments are too weak to resist external challenges in these early years they can accommodate their rivals by inviting them into a coalition. While this strat-

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\(^8\)These three alternatives are coups, civil wars, and peaceful declines.

\(^9\)Cf. Geddes (2003); Wright and Escriba-Folch (2012).

\(^10\)Recall the trust-building mechanism achieved through repeated cooperation discussed above in the context of coalition duration.
egy increases the risk of governmental civil war for equally matched groups, it successfully addresses the grievances of elites from smaller groups that commonly fight for self-determination. It therefore decreases the risk of territorial civil war. If a government grants power-sharing to elites from another ethnic group, it does not only address the motivations of these elites but also increases the fighting capacity of the government by adding personnel and expertise from the newly included group. My empirical analysis indicate that this increase in fighting capacity deters outside challengers and strongly reduces the risk of governmental civil war. As the government grows stronger by including more groups, excluded elites cannot directly rebel against the center any longer. Instead they aim for self-determination and fight far away from the capital where the government’s influence is smaller. However, once the ruling coalition includes more and more groups from the periphery of the state, it even deters territorial uprisings. Overall, inclusive power-sharing coalitions do not affect the risk of governmental civil wars because they deter outside challengers while risking more infighting. At the same time, more inclusive coalitions decrease the risk of territorial civil wars.

Methodological Weaknesses and Strengths

The methodological strategy that I employ in this thesis – that is, the statistical analysis of large-N data – aims at the discovery of broad patterns and generally applicable results but has two drawbacks. First, it does not yield rich information on causal mechanisms that case study research and field work provide. Second, the approach lacks the strengths of quasi-experimental research designs that unequivocally identify causal effects. Nevertheless, I believe that the results of this thesis are valid and complement existing research. In the following, I briefly discuss the strengths and weaknesses of my research design in light of qualitative and causality-driven points of view.

With respect to mechanisms, my research design that operationalizes elite behavior offers a more detailed description of the causal chain than institutional studies that discuss elite behavior theoretically and proxy power-sharing coalitions with institutional dummies empirically. Moreover, my empirical analyses go beyond existing research by carefully distinguishing multiple aspects of power-sharing coalitions such as their degree
of diversity, their inclusiveness, and their popular support. Last but not least, some of my empirical analyses build on insights from detailed historical case study research such as Slater’s “strong-state democratization” mechanism that I build on to argue why multi-ethnic coalitions are more likely to democratize.\footnote{Slater (2012); Slater and Wong (2013).}

With respect to causality, it is clear that discussing the plausibility of my theoretical claims and lagged explanatory variables does not remove all doubts about reverse causation and spurious correlations. Two recent studies alleviate these concerns though. Regarding the empirical relationship between power-sharing and civil war, they demonstrate that the endogeneity in the relationship between ethnic coalitions and civil war risk leads naive statistical estimators to under- rather than overestimate the positive effect of power-sharing. The reason is that elites in the government attempt to prevent civil war by inviting the most likely rebels into the government. As a result, power-sharing between different ethnic groups frequently breaks down.\footnote{Wucherpfennig (2011); Wucherpfennig, Hunziker and Cederman (2013).} However, this does not mean that coalitions do not improve the chances for peace. Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug liken power-sharing coalitions to hospitals to illustrate why endogeneity hides the positive outcomes of power-sharing: Just because “more people are ill in hospitals than elsewhere,” does not mean that hospitals are “a threat against the patients’ health.”\footnote{Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug (2013).}

There is another reason that makes me confident that the positive correlations identified in in this thesis do not constitute spurious results. The research design of this thesis deduced multiple conjectures and tested them in a variety of empirical contexts. The fact that the different facets of the theory received confirmation across these different tests increases my confidence that the basic logic of the argument is correct and that the empirical findings are not merely the result of chance.

**Implications for Future Research**

Having reviewed the central arguments and findings of this thesis, I now turn to their repercussions for different research programs in comparative politics and international

\footnote{11Slater (2012); Slater and Wong (2013).}
\footnote{12Wucherpfennig (2011); Wucherpfennig, Hunziker and Cederman (2013).}
\footnote{13Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug (2013).}
relations. The lessons of this thesis have the highest relevance for the literature on power-sharing in both democracies and dictatorships. Additionally, the results of this thesis speak to the study of government formation in parliamentary democracies, theories of ethnic politics, analyses of democratization and democratic consolidation, and finally, conflict research.

At the beginning of this thesis is the following puzzle: Why do institutions – that various research programs associate with power-sharing – not predict the presence or absence of ethnic coalitions very well? I argue that one explanation for this empirical mismatch might be conceptual stretching in existing studies of power-sharing in authoritarian and democratic regimes. In contrast to the expectations by the pessimistic approach to power-sharing, this thesis finds that oversized coalitions between ethnic elites are the most common type of government. Ethnic leaders form these coalitions regardless of the institutional context, and the effects of ethnic coalitions run counter to the expectations of institutional theories of power-sharing: Ethnic coalitions shorten rather than lengthen the life expectancy of governments and they increase rather than decrease the likelihood of democratization.

There are three reasons that might explain the discrepancy between the findings in the existing literature on power-sharing and those of my thesis: First, institutional theories of power-sharing might not apply to ethnic coalitions but explain pacts between politicians who are divided by ideological cleavages or more rudimentary political factions. Second, the effect of institutions such as PR electoral rules, parliamentary democracies, authoritarian parties, and legislatures may be conditional on contextual factors. Third, these institutions might actually affect outcomes such as regime stability, democratization, and conflict but through another mechanism than power-sharing. Regarding the first point, I draw on the extensive literature on nationalism and ethnic politics to show that ethnicity is a globally relevant cleavage that has been central to the political outlook and behavior of citizens and elites since the French Revolution. Moreover, researchers such as Lijphart and Horowitz who propose that particular institutions cause power-sharing themselves suggest that these institutions should affect the behavior of leaders from different ethnic

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14Slater (2010, 10–11) argues that the fundamental unit of politics is the faction.
Finally, my argument has been informed by theories on government formation in the parliamentary democracies of Western Europe. Clearly, ethnicity is not the most important political cleavage in these political systems, and yet some of the basic theoretical mechanisms of this literature apply to ethnically deeply divided societies in many other parts of the world.

For these reasons, I embrace Ordeshook’s and Shvetsova’s conclusion that in studying “the influence of institutions on outcomes, we should consider the possibility that similar institutions in different social contexts yield different outcome.” Put differently, this thesis finds that the effect institutions have on elite behavior is highly context-dependent. Other researchers such as Sartori or Levitsky and Way spell out the conditions under which particular institutions such as electoral rules or authoritarian parties induce elite coalitions more clearly than I can. Still, scholars such as Norris, who investigates the effects of PR rules and parliamentary systems on democracy, take little note of these arguments and unconditionally recommend power-sharing institutions: “[S]ocieties which are deeply divided, whether by identities based on religion, language, region/nationality, ethnicity or race should consider adopting power-sharing arrangements in democratic constitutional settlements.” Although Boix and Svolik admit that the effects of parties and legislatures on authoritarian power-sharing is context-dependent, they disagree with the conclusions of this thesis when they provide this unequivocal summary of their findings: “We show that these institutions lead to more stable ruling coalitions in dictatorships.” While I do not want to dismiss the relevance of formal institutions for various outcomes other than power-sharing, the results of this thesis question whether formal institutional rules do induce elites to form coalitions.

Rather than affecting power-sharing, the power of institutions might lie in an alter-

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17Ordeshook and Shvetsova (1994, 100).
18Sartori (1997); Levitsky and Way (2012). Also refer to Ordeshook and Shvetsova (1994).
19Norris (2008, 4).
20Boix and Svolik (2013, 315).
21Other outcomes include the economic or social performance of regimes. See Lijphart (1999) and Gandhi (2008).
native causal mechanism. After all, I find that authoritarian parties do decrease the likelihood of democratization relative to military and personal regimes as Geddes and others predict.\textsuperscript{22} At the same time, my results indicate that ethnic majority coalitions improve the chances of democratic transitions. In other words, it is unlikely that authoritarian parties prevent democratization because they promote and strengthen elite power-sharing pacts. Instead Smith offers an alternative explanation that identifies the effect of authoritarian parties on autocratic stability as a by-product of successful capacity- and state-building in the early years of a state's existence.\textsuperscript{23} In a careful study of six authoritarian regimes in Southeast Asia, Slater reaches a conclusion similar to Smith's which he links back to elite behavior in general:

\textit{It is . . . crucial to escape the Huntingtonian trap of focusing our analytic attentions on ruling parties alone, and to inquire into how authoritarian regimes' founding struggles shape the cohesiveness and capacity of military and state institutions as well, through their causal effect on elite collective action.}\textsuperscript{24}

The findings of this thesis, then, sympathize with scholars that link the presence of formal institutions to outcomes such as regime stability or conflict via increased state capacity. This interpretation is usually advanced by scholars who employ qualitative and history-oriented research designs that pay detailed attention to contextual factors and variations within institutional categories.\textsuperscript{25} Analogously, this thesis focuses on variation within institutional contexts with respect to power-sharing behavior. Future quantitative studies of power-sharing should distinguish variations in capacity and elite behavior within institutions more carefully.

In order to more carefully treat elite behavior, students of power-sharing institutions might gain inspiration from the comparative analysis of government formation in parliamentary democracies and its formal models of coalition formation.\textsuperscript{26} Some researchers have begun to move in this direction but there is more room for collaboration between

\textsuperscript{22}Geddes (2003); Magaloni (2008); Wright and Escriba-Folch (2012).
\textsuperscript{23}Smith (2005).
\textsuperscript{24}Slater (2010, 278).
\textsuperscript{25}See, for example, Slater (2010), Levitsky and Way (2012).
\textsuperscript{26}Laver (1998) reviews this field.
students of coalition formation in parliamentary democracies and those who focus on power-sharing in other parts of the world.\textsuperscript{27} Conversely, the subfield of government formation in parliamentary democracies might profit from paying attention to a more diverse set of empirical cases. This thesis shows that theoretical arguments developed in the context of Western European parliaments can inform coalition dynamics between ethnic elites in a global comparison. Since Western European democracies tend to be ethnically homogeneous, it would be interesting to test more specific arguments about the link between ethnic groups and partisan coalitions in non-European democracies, for example, in South Asia. Some studies have already collected data on the link between ethnic groups and political parties, but so far these efforts do not pay much attention to government coalitions.\textsuperscript{28} Eventually, such data collection projects could help to go beyond the insights of this thesis. Given that ethnic elites are uncertain about the true balance of power between different ethnic groups, do they form multiethnic parties, or governmental coalitions between mono-ethnic parties? Moreover, do defections along cross-cutting cleavages occur on the individual voter level or within legislatures? Brass, for example, advances the elite-defection explanation in a case study of Northern Indian state legislatures.\textsuperscript{29} In contrast, recent research by Posner focuses on the voter level in his theory of ethnic defections along cross-cutting cleavages in Africa.\textsuperscript{30}

Posner’s study points to another subfield for which the results of this thesis are relevant, namely the study of ethnic politics. The large number and size of ethnic coalitions that exist around the world as well as the increasing stability of ethnic coalitions over time reject a primordialist understanding of ethnicity. The frequency of ethnic elite cooperation speaks against theories of ancient hatreds or civilizational conflict by scholars such as Huntington or Kaufman.\textsuperscript{31} To the contrary, this thesis consciously adopts an instrumentalist and constructivist conceptualization of ethnicity. By showing that cleav-

\textsuperscript{27}Driscoll (2012) analyses coalition formation between warlords in the aftermath of the civil war in Tajikistan. Christia (2012) studies alliance formation between rebel groups during the civil wars in Afghanistan and Bosnia.

\textsuperscript{28}Brancati (2006); Birnir (2006); Vogt (2013).

\textsuperscript{29}Brass (1968).

\textsuperscript{30}Posner (2005).

age constellations matter for the formation of ethnic coalitions and their breakdown, this thesis provides evidence for constructivist theories that highlight the interaction between identity repertoires of individuals and political incentives set by the state. Posner and others argue that individuals switch their allegiance between ethnic groups with whom they share identity markers in order to gain access to state patronage, or to exclude other individuals from having access to these benefits. However, studies such as Posner’s restrict their attention to voter behavior but neglect the strategic interaction between political elites and voters. This thesis provides evidence that ethnic elites aim to internalize cross-cutting cleavages into the government coalition to avoid losing power when supporter switches occur. Recall that that ethnic elites do not simply aim to reduce the number of other ethnic groups in the government in order to maximize their own influence. Instead, they strive to minimize the number of ethnic cleavages that cross-cut the government coalition and that are potentially shared with excluded groups. Thus, analogous to Axelrod’s minimum-connected-winning coalition, ethnic elites form coalitions with representatives of those groups with whom they share ethnic identity markers in order to limit supporter switches to rivals inside the coalition. If those supporter switches occur, elites lose some power to their coalition partner but retain government access. Future research should pay more attention to the interactions between elites and masses in forming winning coalitions. Thus, another benefit of building datasets that link political parties to particular ethnic groups is to integrate research on changes in the ethnic landscape with analyses of changes in party systems. Such a research program would go beyond the static connection between ethnic cleavages and party systems suggested by Lipset and Rokkan nearly five decades ago.

In studying the consequences of ethnic coalitions, this thesis makes contributions to two additional disciplinary subfields; the study of democratization and democratic survival on the one hand, and the conflict research on the other. Beginning with democracy, the primary contribution of this thesis is to go beyond anonymous and unitary conceptualiza-

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tions of elites that are common in influential models of democratization.\textsuperscript{34} Future research should similarly heed the advice of Ziblatt who states that “[i]dentifying the coalitional underpinnings of democratic reform is a crucial area of research.”\textsuperscript{35} More specifically, it would be fruitful to explore the differences between ad-hoc coalitions in the transition period that are at the center of transition theorists such as O’Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead, and highly-institutionalized ethnic coalitions that exist for a long time before democratization as the ones described by Slater.\textsuperscript{36} Moreover, additional efforts should be made to integrate the insights about ethnic coalitions from this thesis with studies on coalitions across other political faultlines such as class.\textsuperscript{37} With respect to democratic survival, this study suggests different ways by which democracies can revert back to authoritarian regimes – that is, peaceful reversions, coups, and civil wars – and found that various explanatory factors exclusively influence one of these failure types. While this approach is now common practice in studies of authoritarian regime failure, future research should more carefully distinguish the different sources of danger to democratic survival.

Finally, this thesis contributes to the field of conflict research by exploring more carefully the impact of the ethnic composition of the government on the likelihood of civil war. Research on civil war onset and resolution usually focuses on the dyadic interaction between a unified government and one rebel organization. Taking a step forward, Cunningham and Walter explore the reaction of governments to multiple rebellions, and Gallagher Cunningham studies divided self-determination movements.\textsuperscript{38} However, all of these studies still consider the government to be a uniform actor. Future research should follow Lacina in studying the links of potential rebels to the government prior to conflict outbreak.\textsuperscript{39} In this thesis, I take a more dynamic approach and demonstrate that the addition of new members to the power-sharing coalition improves the government’s fighting capacity. Furthermore, a government that concedes power-sharing effectively ad-

\textsuperscript{34}Boix (2003); Acemoglu and Robinson (2006).
\textsuperscript{35}Ziblatt (2006, 326).
\textsuperscript{36}O’Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead (1986); Slater (2012); Slater and Wong (2013).
\textsuperscript{37}Collier (1999), for example, studies the role of the working class in democratic transitions in Western Europe and Latin America.
\textsuperscript{38}Cunningham (2006); Walter (2006, 2009b); Gallagher Cunningham (2011, 2013).
\textsuperscript{39}Lacina (2013).
addresses the grievances of excluded elites from less powerful groups. However, my results also indicate that power-sharing between two large and equally powerful ethnic groups neither contributes to peace nor to conflict. It simply moves the risk of conflict between one included and one excluded group into the governing coalition. Additional research is needed to determine when the commitment problem between members of government is most dangerous to ethnic cooperation and what additional mechanisms can prevent conflict even in these polarized settings.

Lessons for Policy

Besides having repercussions for research, the insights of this thesis provide lessons for policy makers. Most importantly, my empirical findings underline the positive influence of power-sharing coalitions on democracy and peace. At the same time, my results provide both encouraging and discomforting news to policy makers. On the positive side, political elites form cross-ethnic coalitions far more frequently than is commonly assumed, and these power-sharing pacts grow more stable over time. On the negative side, my results question the effectiveness of a number of institutional rules as the central approach to solve inter-ethnic conflict and bring about democracy. To complicate matters further this thesis suggests that oversized coalitions are not due to the good will of elites but are the result of their uncertainty about the future distribution of power. However, existing research implies that this uncertainty increases the likelihood of civil war, too.\footnote{Walter (2009a, 248–251).}

The conflict literature tends to evaluate the effectiveness of power-sharing in preventing intrastate war from two points of view. Political economists dismiss ethnic grievances as valid explanation of civil war, and focus exclusively on opportunity factors such as state weakness and difficult terrain that enable rebellions. This opportunity-cost perspective suggests that improvements in the fighting capacity of the state and third-party interventions that guarantee security are the most useful antidote to civil war.\footnote{Walter (2002); Fearon and Laitin (2003); Collier and Hoeffler (2004). Mack (2002, 522) explains how theoretical opportunity-cost arguments might affect policy makers.} If the opportunity-cost explanation of civil war were correct, power-sharing would not help to
solve civil wars because it merely address grievances. Responding to these views, Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug put grievances back at the center of explanations of civil war.\footnote{Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug (2013).} Accordingly, they conclude that “wherever possible, challengers of the current political order should be encouraged to participate in the regime’s politics by being granted . . . different types of power-sharing arrangements.”\footnote{Ibid. (226).}

This academic debate is important because the views of political economists have influenced policy makers through Collier’s bestselling monograph “The Bottom Billion” and the widely-read World Development Report on “Conflict, Security and Development” from 2011.\footnote{Bank (2011); Collier (2007).} The report by the World Bank, then, advises policy makers to build institutions that provide security and justice, and thus, lower the opportunities for violence:

\begin{quote}
The research on the stresses and institutional factors associated with risks of violence . . ., country case studies, and consultations with national reformers all point to the importance of prioritizing the institutions that provide citizen security, justice (including control of corruption), and jobs to prevent a recurrence of violence and lay the basis for future reform.\footnote{Bank (2011, 146–147).}
\end{quote}

In response to this recommendation biased in favor of opportunity-cost explanations, Staniland identifies variation in state-building strategies and concludes “that there are many ways of forging stability without creating a counterinsurgent Leviathan.”\footnote{Staniland (2012, 243).} Analogously, the results of this thesis indicate that power-sharing coalitions in the executive do not merely “fix” grievances but also increase the capability of the government. Therefore, policy makers who promote elite compromise can have their cake and eat it, too, at least, in states where territorial challenges are the greatest threat to peace. The finding that ethnic coalitions also promote democratization and democratic survival puts the icing on the cake.

However, ethnic power-sharing does not solve all problems. For one thing, power-sharing coalitions become less effective in keeping the peace, the more inclusive these
coalitions are because the benefits of holding office are shared with too many elites. For another, it is difficult for outsiders to promote ethnic coalitions since conventional institutional interventions do not seem to promote power-sharing. Instead, political elites are most likely to form coalitions when they are uncertain about the distribution of power, but they are also more likely to fight when they are uncertain.\(^{47}\) Mattes and Savun, for example, apply this bargaining logic to post-conflict environments and recommend “uncertainty-reducing” provisions in peace agreements. In other words, they recommend the guaranteed inclusion of former opponents into the government to reduce the risk of civil war recurrence.\(^{48}\) However, this thesis shows that such a strategy is likely to prevent the inclusion of ethnic elites who are barred from the peace negotiations.

One possible solution to this dilemma is to employ multiple strategies at the same time. In order to incentivize ethnic cooperation, the international community should not give preferential treatment to any one side in ethnically divided societies. The premature embrace of Afghan President Hamid Karzai in 2001 and the unwise dismissal of Sunnis from the Iraqi army and bureaucracy in 2003 by the United States and its allies reduced uncertainty about the balance of power in both countries that would have promoted ethnic elite cooperation otherwise. At the same time, more uncertainty about the distribution of power implicates an increase in conflict risk, particularly, in the early years of a new government.\(^{49}\) This is why it is important to decrease the likelihood of fighting by alternative strategies.

One such strategy is to raise the cost of future violence. Mattes and Savun suggest that reducing the influence of external sponsors of violence is an important first step, and stress that cost-increasing interventions must apply equally to all important actors: “Withdrawing foreign forces and preventing the inflow of foreign soldiers and weaponry from neighboring states impose physical constraints on the rebels—and on the government, if the latter is dependent on outside help.”\(^{50}\) International peacekeeping missions

\(^{47}\)Fearon (1995); Walter (2009a).

\(^{48}\)Mattes and Savun (2010, 516–517).

\(^{49}\)Walter (2009a); Mattes and Savun (2010). See Fearon (1995) for the general mechanism. Recall my argument that uncertainty is likely to be high in the early years of a new government.

\(^{50}\)Mattes and Savun (2009, 744). Also see the work by Gleditsch (2007) and Salehyan
organized under the auspices of the United Nations might help to reduce the influence of external providers of weapons and resources for fighting, and discourage violence through policing.\textsuperscript{51}

Even peacekeeping and an existing power-sharing coalition might fail to keep the peace between different ethnic groups as the example of South Sudan at the outset of this thesis demonstrated. A third important intervention mechanism at the disposal of Western donors and international institutions such as the United Nations is to change international norms and incentives. One reason why ethnicity is such a pervasive cleavage is because international norms and organizations reward ethnic appeals, particularly by minority leaders.\textsuperscript{52} However, it is even more important to reward cooperative behavior between elites of different groups. International organizations such as the EU should not only demand “minority” or more generally “group rights” but also pay attention to “group responsibilities.” If foreign aid were to be made conditional not only on the absence of human rights violations but depend on ethnic cooperation, much would be gained. Such a change in foreign policy in Western states and international organizations more generally is certainly not easy, particularly due to unresolved ethnic conflicts in states such as Estonia, Latvia, Spain, and the United Kingdom. However, the benefits of power-sharing described by this thesis justify this additional effort.

\textsuperscript{51}Fortna (2004) and Doyle and Sambanis (2006) provide evidence for the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions.
\textsuperscript{52}See, for example, Jenne (2007).
References


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