

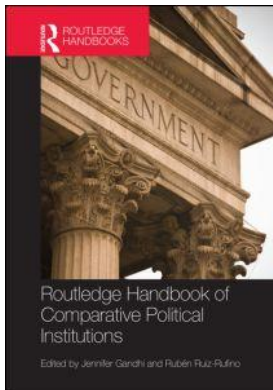
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ETHNICITY AND ELECTIONS

*Rubén Ruiz-Rufino*¹**Introduction**

Ethnicity, broadly defined as the fragmentation of a society along linguistic or religious cleavages, has been used by scholars to explain a large variety of questions ranging from inequality (Alesina and Glaeser 2004) or economic growth (Birmir and Waguespack 2011) to electoral success (Chandra 2007). However, a large bulk of the literature on ethnicity is devoted to explaining the relationship between models of institutional design and political stability (Elkins and Sides 2007; Fearon and Laitin 2003). The, as yet, unfinished academic debate on this question discusses whether ethnically accommodating institutions, like proportional representation electoral systems (PR), parliamentary systems or federalism reduces or not ethnic tensions (Lijphart 1977, 1991; Horowitz 1985).

The consequences of holding elections in divided societies are not yet sufficiently explored. Elections, as procedures regulated by institutions that appoint power holders (see Svulik, Chapter 6), can be both peaceful mechanisms to solve conflicts or events that trigger social unrest. Consider the following two examples. Ghana has been holding competitive elections since 1992 and two alternations in power have been observed to date. Ethnically speaking, roughly half of the country belongs to the majority Akan group while the remaining 50 percent belong to other different ethnic groups. In 2012, the presidential race was decided by an electoral difference less than 3 percent of the votes. The opposition leader, Akufo-Addo, challenged the presidential election results alleging electoral fraud. Akufo-Addo's allegation was first investigated by the Electoral Commission and later by the Ghanaian Supreme Court and in both cases the fraud allegation was rejected. As a result of such verdicts, Akufo-Addo accepted his defeat. In Kenya 2007, on the other hand, violence spread across the country when elections results were announced and supporters of opposition candidate Raila Odinga—mostly from the Luo and Kalenjin minorities—attacked supporters of the incumbent president Mwai Kibaki, from the Kikuyu ethnic group. The violence originated after Kibaki declared himself victor of an election that was perceived as fraudulent by the voters as well as by international organizations, such as the EU, who were monitoring this electoral process (Cheeseman 2008).² Other examples where ethnicity and fraudulent elections went hand in hand include Sri Lanka³ (2002), Rwanda⁴ (2003) and Ivory Coast⁵ (2010).

These two examples illustrate how elections, and the institutions that regulate them, can play a central role in explaining the political stability of ethnically divided societies. Sometimes institutions facilitate cooperation among groups, but only if they are able to create an atmosphere of trust (see Clark and Gandhi, Chapter 3). When institutions are biased towards a particular ethnicity or impose grievances to vulnerable groups, then coordination is harder and agitation can be expected. In this chapter, I broadly discuss this question by focusing on the role of elections. To do so, I first analyze the conditions that explain ethnic coordination and the consequences that can be observed in case of coordination or lack of it. I then move to discuss the role of institutions in explaining conflict. Finally, I discuss the role of elections as a mechanism to promote stability but also trigger conflict. In this section, I offer tentative hypotheses about the relationship between ethnicity and electoral fraud, a question still to be fully explored in the literature. The chapter concludes with some general reflections and further questions for research.

Ethnicity and cooperation

Are conflicts, particularly violent ones like civil wars, more likely to be observed in ethnically diverse societies than in homogenous ones? One could think heterogeneous societies are characterized, primarily, by divergent preferences, hence paving the way for conflict. The examples are numerous. Think, for example, about which language to use at school with respect for religious beliefs, or the conditions to form an ethnically-based political party. In democracies where policies are adopted following some majority rule, the contrast can be more striking. In homogenous societies, the policy space is normally decided along ideological lines. In heterogeneous societies, however, such policy space needs to incorporate an ethnic dimension. This makes preference convergence more complicated. In the case of non-democracies, the contrast between winners and losers can be even more pronounced if the autocrat belongs to a particular ethnic group that rivals other existing groups within the country. In these situations, autocrats could impose severe grievances on rival groups in order to consolidate the dominant position of their own ethnic group. In these scenarios, therefore, one should expect more tension and unrest as the level of ethnic fragmentation increases.

Lack of cooperation among different groups may be a relevant mechanism to understand the origin of conflict. Suppose a classic prisoner's dilemma (PD) game, where two groups can cooperate or defect. If groups cooperate, they both obtain an outcome that is Pareto optimum. If both groups defect, then, they obtain a sub-optimal outcome. When the game is played only once, each group is better off defecting than cooperating. The situation may change, however, if the game is played repeatedly. In this case, two types of outcomes may be observed. On the one hand, defecting may be an equilibrium if there are no conditions enforcing cooperation. On the other hand, however, cooperation may be imposed if groups are confident that no one will defect if the other cooperates. Such cooperation may be enforced by rules previously agreed upon by groups whereby defectors may be punished.

When cooperation is absent, the provision of public goods, for example, may be undermined. Alesina *et al.* (1999) show how cities' expenditures on public goods—like education, water sanitation or roads—negatively correlate with ethnic fragmentation. The more ethnically fragmented a city, the less likely it is to enjoy public goods. Alesina and his collaborators use three different datasets from US cities, metropolitan areas and counties to show empirical confirmation for these claims. To explain this finding, the authors elaborate an argument using a voter's utility on tax spending. Under a context of high ethnic fragmentation, voters are resistant to increase taxation if public spending aims to provide public goods to members from

ethnic minorities. When this happens, members of the majority group prefer a lower level of public goods. Two reasons explain this finding; first divergent views may exist about which public good to produce; second, the larger the number of groups using a particular public good, the lower the utility obtained by each group. These non-mutually exclusive reasons would explain why in this context, members of the largest ethnic group would prefer to support private initiatives.

In the US, the decreasing utility obtained by members of the white majority when asked to contribute to welfare-programs enjoyed mostly by the black minority constitute one dimension of what Alesina and Glaeser (2004) denominate the “American exceptionalism.” This particular effect of ethnic fragmentation plays an important role in the explanation provided by these scholars in understanding differences in income and poverty levels between Europe and the US. In fact, the difference in racial fractionalization alone explains half of the difference in levels of redistribution between Europe and the US. Again, their argument is based on the lack of cooperation between different racial groups.

How exactly does ethnic diversity undermine the provisions of public goods? Using experimental data from an urban slum in Kampala, Uganda, Habyarimana and his collaborators (2007) test three different mechanisms in order to answer this question. The first, a preference mechanism, is based on how distinct features of particular ethnic groups shape preferences for particular types of public goods. Different preferences would imply a “diversity of tastes,” which could fuel conflict and result in under-provision of public goods. The second mechanism, technology, is based on the conditions available for co-ethnics only to promote collective action. For example, homogenous groups may be significantly effective in providing public goods as they share a large pool of cultural resources like language and common standards of understanding. The third type of mechanism, strategy, is based on the idea that members of communities behave differently depending on mutual social interactions implying that cooperation exists only among co-ethnics. Public goods are produced when this mechanism is considered because of the capacity of the community to punish co-ethnics who do not cooperate.

Habyarimana *et al.* (2007) find no support for preference mechanisms. They find that providing public goods is not related to either sharing a preference for such particular good, or by having different values regarding welfare improvement between co-ethnics and members of other groups. What seems to explain the provision of common goods are, above all, the strategy and technology mechanisms. Under the observance of such rules enforcing cooperation, public goods are well provisioned. Here, cooperation can be understood in various forms. Firstly, co-ethnics cooperate if they know of effective institutions that credibly punish defection. Secondly, collective action in homogenous ethnic groups is effective when there are rules policing defection.

Creating conditions that increase cooperation between and within groups reduces the level of conflict. As Fearon and Laitin (1996) show using data from Africa, ethnic violence is, in fact, rare. This finding is also consistent with Fearon and Laitin (2003) where they analyze the causes of civil wars. Here, they conclude that not only is violence a rare phenomenon, but also that ethnicity does not account *per se* for a significant increase in the probability of observing such conflict. So, an interesting question remains about what explains peaceful cohabitation among different groups.

At the theoretical level, Fearon and Laitin (1996) develop two distinct explanations that would explain peaceful co-existence among different groups, which use the conditions of group cooperation as the core of these mechanisms. Using, again, a prisoner’s dilemma game, the emphasis remains on the conditions that promote only cooperation in a repeated PD game. Cooperation emerges in situations where trust exists, and this trust is based on the reputation of

actors. If actors build a reputation of respecting agreements, trust increases and hence conditions for cooperation are met.

Information plays a key role in building up trust. Cooperation between co-ethnics can be explained by accessing information about defectors. Ethnic groups are characterized by creating high levels of social networks, which decrease the cost of information (see Lauth, Chapter 5), and by using those channels, defectors can be identified and punished. In the case of interactions between different groups an asymmetry of such information exists where defectors of one group cannot be easily identified by members of the other group. So, how does cooperation emerge in this context of information asymmetry? The first mechanism is based on a spiral equilibrium. Suppose that a member of group A defects. When this happens, members of group B hold all members of group A accountable by punishing them. This reaction would produce an escalation of conflict resulting in the break-up of intergroup relations. Anticipating the expected loss of breaking up intergroup relations, is what would explain cooperation even in the case of individual defection.

A second mechanism that could explain inter-ethnic cooperation is based on an in-group policing equilibrium. The dynamics of this mechanism are based on the confidence that group A members have on group B's capacity to punish their own defectors. Since members of group A (or B) know that individual defecting behavior will be punished, they ignore transgressions and continue to cooperate.

To explain cooperation, or the lack of it, institutions may matter. Ethnicity may explain why public goods are undermined in the US but the nature of institutions may also play a role. In fact, a combination of high levels of ethnic fragmentation and majoritarian institutions seems to be a convincing mechanism to understand differences in redistribution (Alesina *et al.* 2001). Birnir and Waguespack (2011) show that institutions providing the inclusion of mobilized ethnic groups promote economic growth. Indeed, including ethnic groups in the policymaking process has several positive properties that foster growth. Firstly, citizens' preferences are better represented; and secondly, inclusion of ethnic groups increases the overall quality of policies precisely by having different preferences included. Finally, by increasing the number of veto players, policy stability increases.

The role of political institutions is, however, better perceived when explaining ethnic conflict. There is a rich and ongoing debate about how ethnic political accommodation can be used to understand conflict among ethnically diverse countries.

Ethnicity and political accommodation

In 1977, Arend Lijphart published his famous book *Democracy in Plural Societies* where he explained a fundamental question in empirical theory of democracy: how political stability would be achieved in ethnically divided societies. Lijphart's starting point was a reaction against the empirical and theoretical findings put forward by pluralist scholars like Lipset (1960) who explained why democracy in the US was never challenged. In a nutshell, Lipset argued that the success of US democracy was the combination of a society organized around crosscutting cleavages—people feel identified with different interests—and majoritarian institutions. Crosscutting cleavages generated political moderation and partisan division; majoritarian institutions, like the use of single-member districts using FPTP, facilitated alternation in power. The combined effect of these factors allowed political losers to have the expectation of becoming a political winner in a reasonable period of time. Hence, democracy became an equilibrium which explained its own survival (Przeworski 1991).

Lijphart challenged this view by arguing that in multi-ethnic societies neither cleavage would be crosscutting nor majoritarian institutions would generate alternation in power of rival

options. On the contrary, ethnically heterogeneous societies are characterized by having mutually reinforcing cleavages that increase the cost of creating cooperative mechanisms between different groups. Furthermore, in societies where a dominant group exists, majoritarian institutions exacerbate that superiority and ethnic minorities have little opportunity to participate effectively in the decision-making process. In a scenario like this, democracy would not be a centripetal mechanism as expected by Lipset but rather a centrifugal one.

The only way to reduce the risk of political instability in divided societies is, according to Lijphart, to adopt a consociational democracy. This model of democracy seeks “to share, diffuse, separate, divide, decentralize and limit power” (Lijphart 1977: 168) and it is articulated around four main features: grand coalition, autonomy, proportionality and mutual veto (Lijphart 2000). In terms of constitutional design, Lijphartian consociational democracies are characterized by using large electoral district magnitudes with proportional electoral formulas, parliamentary systems, a federalist territorial organisation, and grand-coalition decision-making arrangements. This power-sharing institutional setting would allow all groups to be equal partners in the decision-making process and that, Lijphart hypothesized, would increase the levels of political stability. The effects of consensus democracy in general, and of power-sharing institutions, in particular, have been empirically tested in relation to democratic outcomes and political stability.

Anderson and Guillory (1997) used different institutional arrangements to explain variation in the levels of satisfaction with democracy. After analyzing survey data from 11 European countries, they found that political losers—voters whose party did not win—were, on average, less satisfied than political winners—voters of the ruling party. However, institutions are important in that those political losers who lived in a consensus democracy were more satisfied with the way democracy worked than political losers living in a majoritarian democracy. For Anderson and Guillory (1997), power-sharing institutions such as PR and coalition governments, offered electoral losers the opportunity to more actively engage in politics. As a consequence, satisfaction with democracy for these political groups increased. A similar result is found by Ruiz-Rufino (2013) in relation with ethnic minorities from seven post-communist countries. In ethnically divided new democracies, institutions are also important to understand levels of satisfaction with democracy. Ethnic minorities living in countries with greater access to the decision-making processes have higher satisfaction with democracy than excluded minorities. In particular, if ethnic groups can articulate their preferences through a political party in a parliamentary system, then, the perceived level of satisfaction is increased. Electoral proportionality is also important but not as fully expected by Lijphart: ethnic minorities whose parties are small will be more satisfied with democracy under PR than under majoritarian electoral systems. However, as a political party wins support, then, satisfaction with democracy increases as proportionality decreases.

Lijphart’s contribution to an empirical theory of democracy has been mostly tested, however, in relation with political stability and ethnic conflict. Saideman *et al.* (2002) use the Minorities at Risk dataset (MAR)⁶ to conclude that PR significantly reduces ethnic violence. A similar finding was also obtained by Cohen (1997) using a different sample. Reynal-Querol (2002) analyses 138 countries in the period between 1960 and 1995 to investigate the causes of ethnic civil wars. This analysis shows that consensus democracies reduce the spells of wars because these regimes offer institutional incentives to peacefully accommodate all ethnic groups. Finally, Alonso and Ruiz-Rufino (2007) argue that political institutions reduce the levels of ethnic conflict if, and only if, they incorporate the voice of ethnic minorities into the decision-making process. It is not enough to provide political representation if their voice in parliament is not effective. Ethnic minorities become moderate if their political parties actively participate in elaborating the different policies of the country. In other words, the combination of political representation with a parliamentary system reduces the probability that an ethnic minority will revolt against the state.

The main criticism of Lijphart's consensus democracy comes from Horowitz (1985, 1993, 2002). Donald Horowitz questions Lijphart's assumption that in multi-ethnic societies, stability is better achieved when ethnicity cleavages remain active rather than trying to diffuse them. Furthermore, for consociationalism to work, elites must play an active role in containing conflict. This implies a second assumption: the interest of all ethnic elites to reach agreements in order to pursue accommodation, but these premises do not accurately reflect the actual working of divided societies (Horowitz 1985). Why would leaders of majority groups cooperate in those scenarios where they can control all major political instances? The solution Horowitz offers is to establish power-sharing institutions where ethnic cleavages are not clustered. Accordingly, he rejects both PR and parliamentary systems as the optimum institutions to promote political stability in ethnically heterogeneous societies. PR is rejected on the grounds that it may increase intraethnic competition allowing the success of ethnic radical parties. In this sense, PR would have the unintended centrifugal effect of moving political competition away from the median voter to the extremes. Presidential systems are preferred to parliamentary systems because a single political figure chosen with the support of various groups is a more efficient way to accommodate groups than grand coalition cabinets resulting from parliamentary systems.⁷

A number of empirical studies have supported Horowitz's claims. Reilly (2002, 2001) has defended empirically and theoretically the virtues of the Alternative Vote (AV) in opposition to the use of PR. The main finding is that AV reduces the saliency of ethnicity by forcing selected candidates to get support from members of various ethnic groups. As a consequence a more moderate ethnic position is achieved as illustrated by the successful stories of Fiji and Papua New Guinea. The empirical evidence supporting presidential systems as an alternative to parliamentary systems is also mixed. Cheibub and Limongi (2002) found that the survival of regimes was not only dependent on whether a country was parliamentary or presidential but in how the whole decision-making process is designed. Saideman *et al.* (2002) do not find parliamentary/presidential systems statistically significant, although presidential systems seemed to reduce ethnic conflict more than parliamentary ones. Finally, Pippa Norris (2008) concludes that presidential systems are more associated with political instability than parliamentary democracies.

Federalism has also been seen by consociational scholars as an institutional mechanism that could ameliorate ethnic tensions. However, solid empirical evidence shows the opposite effect. The relationship between decentralization and ethnic conflict and secessionism has been broadly investigated by Dawn Brancati (2006, 2009). Her research concludes that there is a general effect of decentralization on reducing ethnic rebellions in decentralized countries. However, if regional parties are strong, then ethnic conflict may increase since these parties use decentralized political structures to reinforce ethnic cleavages and polarization.

This literature, however, overlooks the relationship between elections and political stability. It has been argued that elections are important since they are conducive to self-government (Przeworski 2010) but it has also been noticed that a relevant number of elections have been rigged in the last decades (Kelley 2012). The conditions to understand how elections, in a context of ethnic diversity, contribute to imposing peace or to triggering conflict are not fully clear. This question is the focus of the next section.

Ethnicity and elections

As discussed in the previous section, a pivotal issue within the Lijphart-Horowitz debate is how electoral rules account for variations in the level of conflict in divided societies. Elections, when they are competitive, seem to be effective mechanisms to solve conflicts in divided societies. Political competition and periodic elections maintain civil peace by allowing alternation in

power of rival groups. It is the expectation of winning in the future that prevents today's electoral losers from revolting (Przeworski 1991, 2005, 2011). One way to look at how elections serve to resolve conflict is by looking at the effect of electoral rules and also the conditions that establish the creation of political parties in ethnically divided societies. This is termed a procedural mechanism.

Using novel approaches, recent research explores the factors that explain why competitive elections increase political stability. John Huber (2012) investigates to what extent the use of PR actually favors ethnic politicization. According to Lijphart, PR promotes ethnic politicization since ethnic groups have the opportunity to vote for seat-winning ethnic political parties. To test this idea, Huber develops four measures of *ethnicization* based on two dimensions: polarization-fragmentation and group-based with party-based perspectives. The result is four indicators of ethnic electoral behavior used to test the effect of PR in 43 countries. In all different models, the effect of PR is negative. Or, alternatively, elections that use proportional rules decrease the level of ethnic politicization. There are two explanations to understand why this occurs.

First, in single-member districts, the probability of success of an ethnic party is small if the ethnic constituency is geographically dispersed. In this case, voters may coordinate and opt for one of the catch-all large parties, and by doing so, ethnic claims earn visibility. If an ethnic minority is, however, not geographically concentrated and is large enough then politicization occurs simply because of the success of the corresponding ethnic party. This logic does not seem to work under PR. According to Huber, PR allows the success of various ethnic parties calling at the same ethnic constituency. If this happens then the intensity of ethnic claims may diminish. So while proportional rules accommodate ethnic parties into the decision-making process, they also decrease the polarization of ethnic political behavior. These empirical findings are surprising. Using Huber's own words:

Ironically, this implies that if one accepts the Horowitz argument that the goal should be to depoliticise ethnicity in elections, one should adopt the electoral institutions advocated by Lijphart.

(Huber 2012:1000)

Some scholars have argued that ethnic politicization may destabilize democracy by producing an outbidding effect (Rabushka and Shepsle 1972; Horowitz 1985). Such an effect occurs when the activation of a particular ethnic group materializes in creating an ethnic party that in turn triggers the creation of other different ethnic parties. Given that different ethnic groups may have different preferences, an increase in the number of ethnic parties may endanger democratic stability. Under this scenario, elections may not serve to solve conflict but, contrarily, to increase it.

Kanchan Chandra (2005) shows how increasing the number of ethnic parties does not necessarily lead to an outbidding effect. On the contrary, it is precisely when the formation of different ethnic parties along different ethnic dimensions is allowed that conflict is minimized and political stability enhanced. Chandra illustrates her theory by studying ethnic politics in India and concludes that political institutions regulating party formation do matter. Restrictive institutions that only allow the formation of parties along one single ethnic dimension, such as language, may promote greater instability than institutions that allow the formation of parties along different dimensions.

There is, at least, a second mechanism linking elections with political stability: the competitive mechanism. In some contexts, voters may use competitive elections to maximize their level of welfare regardless of their ethnic affiliation. When this is the case, elections might work as

catalysts of bad policies and alternation in power would simply imply punishing incumbents for wrong-doings. Take again the case of Ghana. Since 1992, this Sub-Saharan country has held six competitive elections and has experienced two alternations in power. The largest ethnic group in Ghana, the Akan, represents about 49 percent of the population. The remaining 51 percent is split among several other groups including the influential Ewe minority group (13 percent). Despite having had ethnic tensions in the past, Ghana is now considered a well-functioning democracy in Africa where ethnic rivalries, if any, are resolved by ballot boxes.

In fact, ethnicity does not seem to be a key component in understanding voting behavior in Ghana. As Ichino and Nathan (2013) show, being loyal to one's own ethnic party is not always the case, especially in rural areas. If a member of a particular ethnic group lives in a rural area where a large majority belong to a different group, such a member is likely to vote for the party supporting the largest group rather than voting for their own party. This is so because voters favor the provision of public goods—such as roads—over voting along ethnic lines. In urban areas, however, this type of behavior is not observed. So, at least in Ghanaian rural areas, elections can work as mechanisms that enhance coordination among different groups and reduce ethnic tensions.

Ethnicity is, however, not completely irrelevant in Ghanaian electoral politics. On legal grounds, the 1992 Constitution of Ghana only recognizes those political parties that have a “national character” and where membership is not based on “ethnic, religious, regional or other sectional divisions” (art.55.4). In practice, however, it is assumed that the two major parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), receive support from different, and historically rival, ethnic groups. While the NPP is supported by the largest ethnic group (Akan), the NDC electoral bases come from the Ewe minority. Such support is, however, not unconditional during election period. Hoffman and Long (2013) investigate the extent ethnicity was a key factor to explain party identification during the 2008 presidential elections. Using their own exit-poll survey, they concluded that ethnicity cannot explain voting behavior *per se*. To understand the electoral success of a Ghanaian party during the 2008 presidential election, one also needs to take into account its performance during office tenure. If such a party were successful in delivering essential services like health and education, then, voters rewarded it regardless of their ethnic identification.

The examples borrowed from Ghana, serve to show how elections work as substitutes of violence when they are credible and generate results that are accepted by all contending parties. When these conditions are met, ethnicity does not play a large role in destabilization.

This situation, however, may reverse if election outcomes are contested and not accepted by some of the parties. When this happens, political instability may erupt and ethnicity may fuel violence. This claim finds some empirical support. Using the NELDA dataset compiled by Hyde and Marinov (2012), the relationship between post-electoral violence and allegations of fraud can be explored. About 14 percent of the 3,000 elections analyzed by Hyde and Marinov resulted in some form of post-electoral conflict. Such conflict ranged from popular protests to riots and, in 60 percent of the cases, the government used some form of violence against demonstrators.

Is violent contestation most common in ethnically divided societies? [Figure 24.1](#) compares the NELDA indicators of post-electoral violence and fraud with ethnic fragmentation as calculated by Fearon (2003).⁸ Post-electoral violence was observed in 182 elections that occurred in countries with an ethnic fragmentation of at least 4. In other words, ethnic fragmentation was important in about 62 percent of the total number of elections where some form of violence was observed. But how exactly could ethnicity be related to a higher probability of rigging elections?

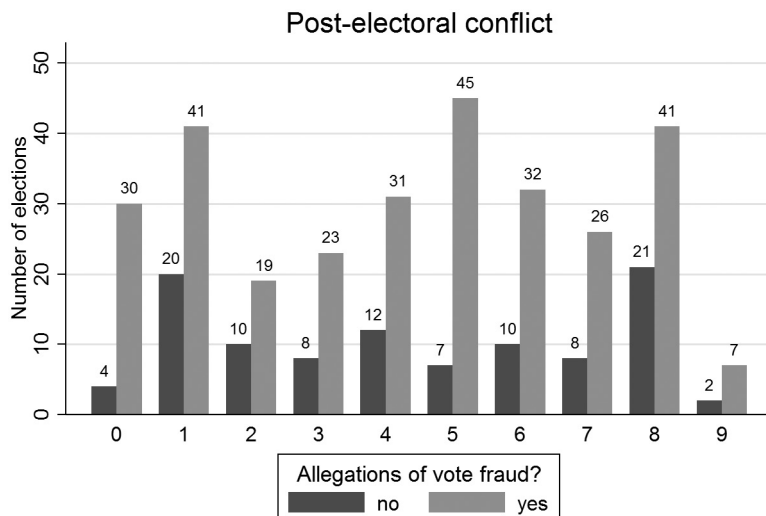


Figure 24.1 Post-electoral conflict, fraud and ethnicity

Sources: NELDA dataset; Fearon (2003)

Trusting elections in ethnically divided societies

If elections, when trusted by all parties, are important mechanisms to prevent conflict, then an interesting question is to see how trust can be achieved. One straightforward mechanism would be the use of transparent rules and procedures fully accepted by all contending parties. New research on electoral integrity shows that rules establishing clear procedures regarding the running and management of elections increase confidence in political institutions (Norris 2014). A second way of increasing trust is to invite third parties to monitor elections. Recent findings from experimental data show that the presence of international electoral monitors increases voters' confidence in elections (Brancati 2013). Electoral observers are, however, not a sufficient condition to expect clean elections. According to the data collected by Judith Kelley (2012) about a third of the elections that were monitored between 1970 and 2007 were considered somehow fraudulent. An immediate question follows this finding: why are some elections rigged while others are not?

Alberto Simpser (2013) theorizes about how some incumbents have incentives to deliberately engage in electoral misconduct. Incumbents with a large level of support would see electoral misconduct as a demonstration of power. This electoral *tour de force* would send a signal to political opponents about the real strength of the incumbent with the intention of discouraging opposition forces. Using historical data from Costa Rica, Lehoucq and Molina (2002) conclude that institutional rules as well as socio-economic conditions are essential explanations for electoral fraud. Using a comparative approach, Sarah Birch (2007) argues that electoral fraud is more likely to be observed in single-member districts (SMD) than in multi-member districts (MMD). Analyzing a sample of countries from Central and Eastern Europe, Birch's logic is developed along two complementing explanations. Firstly, electoral systems using SMD are advantageous to large parties while MMD is not. This bias towards large parties observed in SMD creates a window of opportunity to cheat for seat-maximizers' parties. Secondly, candidates in SMD play a relevant role in the election and, therefore, their capacity and incentives to engage in clientelistic behavior leading to fraud are higher than under MMD.

Electoral misconduct has important political consequences on the party system, turnout and the strategies of the opposition. As Donno and Roussias (2012) show there is a clear relation between electoral fraud and the number of competitors. Incumbents cheating during the pre-electoral period activate a deterrence mechanism which affects both parties and voters. The number of competing parties is significantly reduced and voters are discouraged from voting. Electoral turnout can also be explained by voters' perceptions on the quality of elections. Focusing on Mexico's PRI, Alberto Simpser (2014) shows that attendance at voting stations was higher when voters perceived that the PRI would allow a clean competition. Using data from the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), Sarah Birch (2010) finds that when voters perceive that elections had some form of irregularity, their probability to vote decreased significantly.

Does ethnicity play any role in explaining electoral fraud? Are rigged elections more likely to be observed in countries where there are strong ethnic divisions? As shown in the previous section, elections may be a peaceful substitution for conflict but fraudulent elections may distort this mechanism and thus instability may emerge. In cases where ethnic divisions dominate social and political life, fraudulent elections may turn to violence as the case of Kenya illustrated at the beginning of this chapter. If so, then, the preceding sections open questions still unexplored in the literature: how does the political organization in multi-ethnic societies account for episodes of electoral fraud? Are elections rigged more often in countries where one minority dominates over the rest than in countries where several minorities share power? These are mostly empirical questions but there are theoretical reasons to build an argument around them. One possible way of approaching this question could be as follows.

Suppose a country where various ethnic groups must co-exist and one of those groups is clearly dominant with a majoritarian political system adopted. This, as previously discussed, would mean increasing the probability of having a significant part of the population excluded from the decision-making process and consequently also increasing the risk of social unrest and political instability. The leaders of the dominant group may be aware of such risk and may implement various institutional mechanisms to reduce tensions. For example, if dominated groups are geographically concentrated, one way to reduce tension could be to use single-member districts so that those minorities could elect their representative for that particular geographical zone. But it is not clear whether giving minorities access to elect a representative would reduce ethnic tensions in a system with majoritarian institutions. Representatives from "dominated" minorities would soon find their incapacity to participate in the decision-making process and frustration, as a prior step of unrest, would probably emerge. In anticipating this, the dominant group may decide instead to discourage other ethnic groups from further political participation and, following Simpser (2013), use every election to show their strength by engaging in fraudulent acts in districts where a seat could be challenged by different ethnic groups.

Suppose now that a power-sharing institutional setting exists in a country with no dominant ethnic group. In this case, electoral fraud should be harder to implement for various reasons. First, the decision-making process is controlled by various groups that effectively may check each others actions. Committing fraud requires a certain level of resources in order to conceal the illegal nature of the action. In a system where power is shared, separated and diffused among different ethnic groups such acts of secrecy may be difficult. Second, large districts using PR formulae may reduce the incentives to cheat in the elections. As the rich literature on electoral system has shown (Duverger 1954; Rae 1967; Taagepera and Shugart 1989), electoral systems that use SMD generate absolute winners and losers while systems using large district magnitude and PR formula produce relative winners and losers. This redistribute capacity of PR to allocate

seats may function as a mechanism to discourage ruling parties from rigging elections. Ruiz-Rufino (2014) shows that PR works in this direction when analyzing variations of pre-electoral harassment, a form of electoral misconduct. Focusing on the joint effect of proportionality and electoral competition, Ruiz-Rufino finds that only when proportionality is low and the electoral gap between rival parties is at its minimum, are incumbents more likely to engage in harassing the opposition.

Following this logic, electoral fraud should be more likely to be observed in multi-ethnic countries with electoral systems using low district magnitudes and where one of the groups has a politically dominant position, than in countries using PR and where no ethnic group dominates. A rough and impressionistic analysis of the data points in this direction. Figure 24.2 shows the mean district magnitude in democratic parliamentary elections that were declared acceptable by the international community after distinguishing between dominant and power-sharing ethnic groups.⁹

The top left and bottom right scenarios in Figure 24.2 illustrate the theoretical claims made. In both cases, irregular elections occur when on average district magnitudes are small. However, when one ethnic group is dominant and the other group—or groups—do not share political access, electoral fraud is observed 30 percent of the time. If there is no ethnic dominance and all groups share power, fraud is observed only 20 percent of the time. Also, under this particular ethnic power distribution, the average magnitude is much larger compared with a scenario of ethnic dominance. This finding is, naturally, not conclusive and deeper empirical analysis would be required to find confirmation for the explanations displayed. Further theoretical analysis is also required to understand scenarios where one ethnic dominant group co-exists with other groups that have power-sharing capacities. But in any case there are some reasons to think that

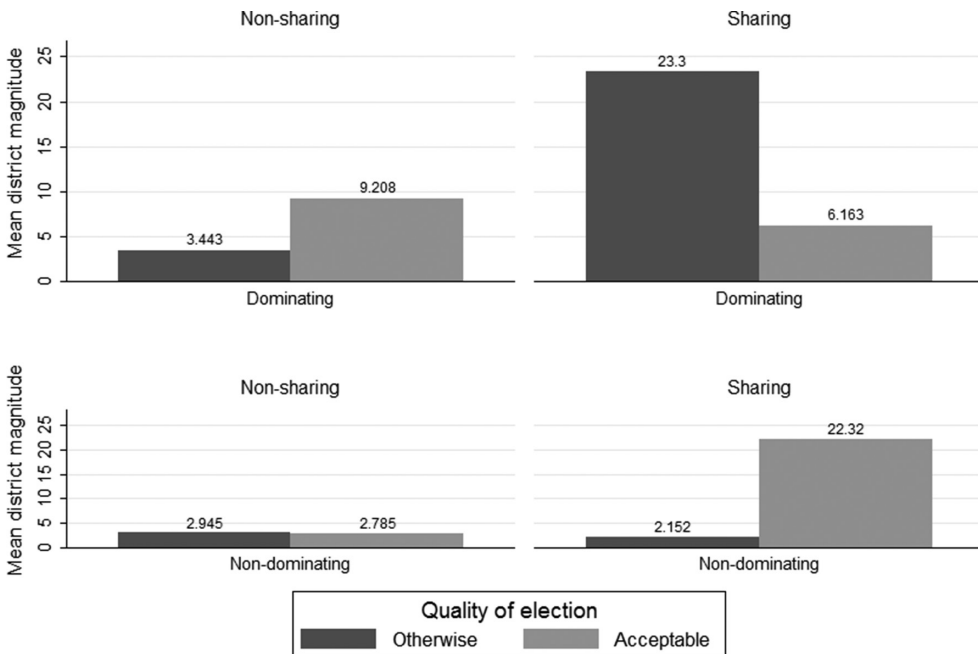


Figure 24.2 Ethnicity, electoral institutions and the quality of elections

Source: EPR dataset; DIEM dataset

ethnicity may play a role in explaining electoral fraud and, hence, expand our knowledge about when elections may be trusted.

Conclusion

This chapter shows how institutions play a central role in understanding political instability in ethnically divided societies. The interaction between the institutional design and the type of ethnic composition is crucial to explain cross-country variations in the level of conflict. Societies where institutions promoting ethnic coordination exist provide better public goods and social peace. The outcome of institutional blueprints to reduce ethnic tensions is, however, not yet clear and particular mechanisms need to be investigated to understand why some ethnic groups decide to revolt. Giving a voice in the parliament, for example, may not be sufficient if such a voice does not play a relevant role in the decision-making process.

If ethnic tensions are mostly derived after arrangements to decide who manages power and resources, focusing on elections may also be useful to understand political stability in countries with high levels of ethnic fragmentation. There are theoretical and empirical reasons to see how elections may be substitutes of bloody conflict. But elections can also trigger conflict if they are rigged and serve to impose the dominance of one ethnic group over another.

Several questions still remain unclear and require future research. For example, there is still not sufficient cross-country evidence on the effect of ballots on stability. As shown, there are theoretical reasons to believe that open ballots may force some level of ethnic coordination which, eventually, may reduce tension. The empirical evidence is, however, limited and the systematic effect of open ballots remains unclear. It is also not completely clear which mechanisms account for electoral fraud in ethnically divided societies. In this chapter, I have sketched some hypotheses based on the political relevance of ethnic groups but further theoretical and empirical research is still needed. Finally, if electoral observation missions really serve to reduce electoral fraud, then one question remains unanswered about whether these missions are more likely observed in ethnically fragmented than in homogenous societies.

Notes

- 1 I am grateful to Jen Gandhi, Christel Koop and Anna Gwiazda for their helpful comments and suggestions on previous versions of this chapter. I also thank Gemma Derrick for her patient reading and edition. All mistakes and errors are exclusively mine.
- 2 http://eeas.europa.eu/eucom/pdf/missions/kenya_2007_final_preliminary_statement.pdf
- 3 <http://aceproject.org/ero-en/regions/asia/LK/sri-lanka-final-report-parliamentary-elections-eu-1>
- 4 www.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2265_03.htm
- 5 www.eucom.eu/files/pressreleases/english/executive-summary-25012010_en.pdf
- 6 Most of the literature that analyses the relationship between ethnic conflict and institutions uses MAR as the main data source. The complete dataset can be accessed at www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/. Robert T. Gurr's work (1993, 1994, 2000) focuses on discussing the nature of the data and the main criticism has come from Fearon and Laitin (2002). For a developed account on the MAR selection problem see Birnir *et al.* (2011).
- 7 A comprehensive summary of Horowitz's critiques to consociational theories can be found in Horowitz (2002). For a good discussion on the Lijphart-Horowitz debate see also Choudhry (2008).
- 8 The ethnic fractionalization index calculated by James Fearon ranges from 0 (complete homogeneity) to 1 (full heterogeneity). To ease interpretation of the graph, this index is recalculated in 10 categories where 0 indicates values between 0 and 0.9999 or 5 indicates values between 5 and 5.9999.
- 9 The data on the quality of elections comes from the DIEM dataset collected by Kelley (2012). This variable indicates whether an election, previously monitored by an independent organization, was declared fully acceptable by such organization or not. In case of not being acceptable, it does not necessarily imply

that there was fraud. It simply indicates that the procedural aspects of the elections were not fully in agreement with international standards. The variables indicating the type of ethnic relations come from the Ethnic Power Relation (EPR) dataset created by Cederman, Min, and Wimmer (see <http://hdl.handle.net/1902.1/11796>). This dataset identifies and classifies relevant ethnic groups in 155 countries in the period between 1946 and 2005. A key idea of the EPR dataset is to define what constitutes a politically relevant ethnic group. According to the authors, an ethnic group is politically relevant if “at least one significant political actor claims to represent the interest in the national political arena, or if members of an ethnic category are systematically and intentionally discriminated against in the domain of politics” (p. 2, “EPR Coding Rules” Cederman, Min, and Wimmer 2009).

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