

Territorial cleavages and political mobilization

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MAIN AIMS AND QUESTIONS

Get insights into

- The sociopolitical context and conditions of success of constitutional transitions
- why and how territorial cleavages and interests are mobilized and minority or subnational leaders put forward demands for autonomy, recognition or representation, special arrangements or even self-determination in the constitutional agenda.
- What factors might account for variations in cleavage mobilization and minority leader preferences?

Literature sources

we look at the literature on

- Democratization, transitions to democracy and the role of elites and social movements
- Minority politics, ethnic politics and conflict
- Democratization and ethnic relations

Relevant aspects of democratization and constitutional transitions for political mobilization

- **Democratization as “critical juncture”** when previous institutions weakened or replaced, new opportunities or uncertainties for territorially concentrated ethnic groups (Bertrand 2004)
- **Opening of the political arena**; formerly marginalized or suppressed groups have the opportunity to mobilize and organize. New actors and movements occupy the public space and old ones normally transform or disappear.
- **Ethnic or territorially concentrated groups make claims** for protection, representation, or special status before supporting a new political regime. Boundaries of ethnic identities maybe redefined by elites or populations.
- **New political competition over constituencies and resources** producing “winners” and “losers”. Losers may try to change the results by non-democratic means and violence. likely to become spoilers.

Social heterogeneity of societies and mobilization of cleavages during democratization

- relevant when politicized, mobilized, and organized. Politicization, mobilization, and organization transform heterogeneity into cleavages.
- three types of cleavages. Often overlap, cumulate or cross-cut through different identities

Types of cleavages

- **Interest-based cleavages** related to the control over, and the distribution of, resources, and are typical for class conflicts. easiest to resolve
- **Ideology-based cleavages** relate to comprehensive doctrines which spell out proper and desirable values, rights, and duties
- **Identity-based cleavages** related to ethnic identity. “ethnic” groups could mean racial or linguistic groups or all ascriptive group identities – race, language, religion, tribe, or caste –

Main factors affecting mobilization and demands: Four groups.

- **Characteristics of the state**, the regime, the elites and the majority nation
- **Characteristics of subunits and minorities:** demographic, cultural, economic, geopolitical and history
- **Elite strategies and short-term developments:** timing and the role of political leadership and the organization of parties
- **External pressures and constraints.**

Characteristics of the state, the regime, the elites and the majority nation

Certain kinds of state settings and regimes more supportive of the development of mobilization or different autonomist or secessionist minorities

- **type and characteristics of the former regime** and institutional legacies from the pre-transition period (Linz & Stepan).
 - A highly repressive military dictatorship with hardly any room for political dialogue vs. one-party states
- **State capacity** e. g. the army may be united and loyal or neither. Weak states more prone to conflict and mobilization. Well-established states, more prepared to accommodate minorities on some levels
- **Territorial organization**: ethnofederal, new, and weak more prone to conflict;
- **Degree of fragmentation and coherence of elites** ability to include former rulers or at least pact with them. Unresolved competition for power amongst different factions.
- **Characteristics of the majority nation**, whether the majority pursues an assimilationist agenda, whether the majority, because of its size or other considerations, is insecure and therefore jealous of its powers and suspicious of minority demands. (security dilemma)

Characteristics of subunits and minorities: demographic, cultural, economic, geopolitical and history

minorities will mobilize more and have more radical agendas, if they are

- **large and geographically concentrated**; a distinct regional minority facing a hostile majority, or a number of territorially distinct populations seeking autonomy.
- **have strong identities,**
- **have large diasporas in neighboring states;**
- **Have access to their own institutions and substantial representation in local political institutions;**
- Are **richer or poorer** than the majority (with differences exacerbated by economic liberalization); **Have natural resource wealth (e.g. oil)**
- Have a **history of independent statehood** or conflictual relations with the majority to reflect their specificity
- There is a **history of past discrimination** (cultural, economic, political) and a history of conflict, insurgency or violence. Transitions after (civil) wars face stronger threats, normally from former violent actors that have to be disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated in the new setting
- **the existence of an educated middle class** as a basis of a functioning democratic civil society

Elite strategies and short-term developments: timing and the role of political leadership and the organization of parties

elites may decide to play “the ethnic card” or mobilize other cleavages or none on the basis of the expected payoffs of such a strategy.

- **Whether mobilizing ethnicity prove electorally rewarding** for elites. Institutions set the tier of political competition and the electoral formulas to win seats, while the social cleavages set a menu of potential support blocs.
- **the relative size and combinability of various social divisions for elites** a critical factor (Piombo). will mobilize social groups—regional, ethnic, interest, confessional, and so on—depending on the number of votes each group can potentially deliver. mobilization most likely when elites consider it a winning strategy.
- Where politicians and political parties **seek national power**, they must craft electoral support coalitions that are large enough to win significant shares of the national vote. Where they **seek localized power**, smaller coalitions can suffice.
- **The development and strength of opposition parties.** (Lebas 2011) two factors.
 - strong parties those that borrow the resources and organization of pre-existing institutional structures, especially those that span ethnic and regional cleavages.
 - Secondly, opposition elites are more likely to maintain the cohesion of their parties and the commitment of activists when they use strategies and appeals that escalate conflict and reorient social boundaries around the lines of partisan affiliation.
- **The sequence of democratizing procedures.** where local and regional elections take place before national elections, this might have negative effects.
- **The type of local or regional politics and alliances or coalitions** formed in each region; whether the ideological composition of coalitions governing the center threaten the political security of coalitions governing the regions;
- Whether the transition has **undermined economic performance**, whether the **costs are nationally-differentiated.**

External pressures and constraints

international actors can promote mobilization and advance minority demands and help avert violence

- Demands for change can be influenced **by contagion or diffusion** of political developments in neighboring countries
- **Powerful neighboring states, superpowers, strong international organizations**, and even NGOs play important roles in mobilization.
- Whether **outside powers have a major interest** in the constitutional restructuring of the country? **International organizations and NGOs** contribute to the diffusion of norms
- **Whether minorities had trans-border affiliations** with other ethnic populations in neighboring countries
- **Whether are supported in their projects by rhetoric and weapons** provided by outside actors;