1 Introduction

Does power sharing bring peace? Policy makers around the world certainly appear to agree. Whether instituted as shared governmental power at the central level or territorially through autonomy arrangements, power sharing is becoming an increasingly common way of governing multiethnic states. Since the end of the Cold War, such provisions have become an important ingredient of an emerging global accommodative regime that helps prevent and resolve ethnic conflict (Gurr, 2000a). International actors, including the United Nations and regional organizations such as the European Union, routinely rely on power sharing in order to implement a peaceful political order during and after interventions (McCulloch and McEnvoy, 2018). Such efforts have triggered a veritable surge of inclusive governance in sub-Saharan Africa, where virtually all post-conflict agreements after the end of the Cold War feature provisions of this type (Mehler, 2009; Spears, 2013).

Various success stories around the world have bolstered the trend toward increased reliance on power sharing. South Africa is often mentioned as a particularly striking case of successful stabilization of a deeply divided society (Wantchekon, 2000; Cheeseman, 2011; Gloppen, Forthcoming). It is difficult to imagine how the entrenched discrimination imposed by the apartheid system could otherwise have been overcome. Already in the 1980s, political scientists proposed power sharing as a constitutional pathway to peace (Lijphart, 1985b), and the South African case has subsequently been held up as a model for conflict resolution in Africa (e.g., Wantchekon, 2000). The conflict between the Republicans and the Unionists in Northern Ireland constitutes another case that seemed nearly insoluble even to proponents of power-sharing arrangements (McGarry and O’Leary, 2004). The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 showed, however, a way toward reconciliation (Taylor, 2011; McEvoy, 2014, 61ff).1 Aceh offers yet another highly

1 Unfortunately, Britain’s leaving the European Union threatens to undermine the compromise, which in the worst case could cause violent conflict to recur.
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visible example of a seemingly endless conflict that was brought to an end through an inclusive compromise. In this case, shared power at the regional level helped keep the peace (Wennmann and Krause, 2009; Stepan, 2013). In addition, other countries, such as Switzerland and Belgium, have made preventive use of governmental and territorial power-sharing arrangements,\(^2\) thus avoiding damaging political violence even before it got the chance to break out.

Yet, other cases provide evidence that power sharing offers no guarantee against recurrent violent conflict. Indeed, the list of failed experiments of shared rule between ethnic groups that did experience the onset of civil war is long. For example, power sharing was attempted in Cyprus from independence in 1960 but collapsed in December 1963 and has thereafter never been reimplemented despite repeated attempts (McGarry, 2017). The Arusha Accords tried to stabilize Rwanda by bringing all parties to one table, but this experiment failed spectacularly with the eruption of the genocide in the spring of 1994 (Prunier, 1995; Falch, Rudolfsen and Becker, Forthcoming). More recently, South Sudan’s brief experience of shared power came to an abrupt end shortly after the country became independent in 2011, when the interethnic governing coalition fell apart and civil war broke out (Roessler, 2016). The disintegration of communist states after the end of the Cold War, most notably those of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, also illustrates that territorial power sharing can produce intense violent conflict and human suffering. In the eyes of many observers, this experience has given ethnic federalism a bad name more generally (Bunce, 1999; Snyder, 2000; Roeder, 2009). There are also instances where shared executive power served to bring peace to conflict-torn places after previous false starts, although the current state of peace remains quite fragile, as illustrated by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi and Lebanon (Butenschøn, Stiansen and Vollan, 2015).

Given this mixed record, it is perhaps not surprising that scholars disagree about whether power sharing actually reduces conflict despite strong support among policy makers. Inspired by Arend Lijphart’s (1969, 1977) pioneering theoretical work on “consociationalism,” some scholars argue that power-sharing institutions, both within the central government and through autonomy arrangements, reduce conflict by lowering the stakes and reducing grievances (see, e.g., Gurr, 2000;\(^2\)

\(^2\) The territorial power-sharing arrangement in Switzerland was a concession of the victors in the short civil war of 1847, while the governmental power-sharing arrangements took decades to be put in place (Steiner, 1974).
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Lijphart, 2002; Norris, 2008; McGarry and O'Leary, 2009). Other researchers are much more critical of Lijphart's initial theoretical vision and its concrete implementations (see, e.g., Horowitz, 1985; Rothchild and Roeder, 2005b). Their criticism is based on the idea that shared power, whether centrally or regionally implemented, tends to deepen ethnic cleavages and render the task of governing even more difficult than in the absence of such accommodative institutions.

This book revisits the central debate about the effect of power sharing on conflict by directly drawing on conflict research. While very rich and nuanced in terms of institutional detail, the existing literature on power sharing tends to be much weaker in its assessment of conflict processes. This limitation applies even to studies of peace agreements and conflict resolution more generally. As argued by Wolff and Cordell (2010, 307), most existing theories of conflict resolution are consequences focused, i.e., they seek to explain why certain institutional designs offer the prospect of sustainable peace and stability, while others do not. They do this by offering normative and pragmatic accounts of the desirability and feasibility of particular institutions in divided societies, but these are not always, let alone successfully, grounded in theories of conflict, nor are the assumptions made about the drivers of conflict always fully spelt out. Yet, it is essential to understand the causes of conflict before viable prescriptions for its resolution can be offered.

In other words, in order to understand how to reduce conflict, we need to know its causes. Following in the footsteps of Ted Gurr and other conflict researchers, we adopt this principle explicitly. Our previous work on inequality and conflict has shown that political inequality and exclusion of ethnic groups can cause grievances, which, in turn, increase the risk of civil war (see, e.g., Cederman, Gleditsch and Buhaug, 2013). Inclusion, therefore, should bring peace. Specifically, conflict research of this type tells us that the path to durable peace goes through the reduction of inequality, in particular among ethnic groups.

Obviously, power sharing can also be introduced in order to regulate relations among nonethnic actors, such as ideological movements and political parties that define themselves in ideological terms, rather than in terms of ethnicity. Such cases include institutional efforts to end conflict in Cambodia (Binningsbo, 2013) and Colombia (Zukerman Daly, 2014). In fact, much of the literature addresses more general conditions, such as “plural societies” (Lijphart, 1977) or “deeply divided places” (O’Leary, 2012). Whether explicitly or implicitly, however, most cases referred to revolve around ethnic, rather than nonethnic, divisions. This is hardly surprising because since the end of World War II (WWII), most internal conflicts have been fought along ethnic lines. Furthermore, the
fear of division and violent conflict in multiethnic societies serves as by far the most important motivation for power sharing (see, e.g. Butenschøn, Stiansen and Vollan, 2015).

It needs to be stressed that the type of conflict research that we have used as a starting point is far from uncontroversial (Cederman and Vogt, 2017), and even if its findings hold, there is no guarantee that inclusion can be successfully implemented. As experienced by peacemakers in South Africa and Northern Ireland, reversing decades of exclusion is notoriously difficult, especially if it has been accompanied by widespread and persistent violence. Such circumstances tend to become increasingly irreversible as the corrosive impact of unequal norms and institutions continue to produce resentment and hatred. Equally importantly, it is far from obvious that the incumbent leaders are willing to take the risk of opening up the ruling coalition to potential opponents and former rebels, because there are no ironclad guarantees that such experiments would prevent the incumbents from losing power in the future, and possibly even being exposed to discrimination and violence themselves. For these reasons, it would be foolish to simply extrapolate from previous work on inequality and conflict. All the same, we believe that the simple formula linking inclusion to peace is, in essence, correct. Before reaching any firmer conclusions about the actual impact of power-sharing arrangements on large-scale political violence, however, we need to address a number of issues that have hindered a balanced assessment of this effect in previous research. We do so by considering four difficulties that we believe may stack the deck against our core hypothesis:

- **Practices rather than institutions:** Going beyond recent studies, we analyze the effect of power-sharing practices, rather than that of formal institutions. Instead of seeking an answer in constitutional texts, our approach focuses squarely on actual behavior, whether prescribed by formal institutions or prescribed by informal norms. This is crucial, because there is no guarantee that what has been agreed sur papier will be reflected in a country’s actual power distribution. Peace agreements may or may not be implemented as promised (Walter, 2002; Quinn and Joshi, 2016). In addition, focusing merely on formal institutions misses the important fact that shared power often hinges on informal agreements, as illustrated by consociationalism as practiced in Switzerland and by a number of recent African cases of post-conflict power sharing (Spears, 2013). While taking formal institutions seriously, this book, therefore, relies mostly on behavioral data that capture de facto power access (see Pospieszna and Schneider, 2013). This move is
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Based on our finding that formal power-sharing institutions induce peace by operating through power-sharing practices (see also Bormann et al., 2019). Thus, once the focus shifts from formal institutions to practices, we find that inclusive governance appears to be much more effective as a conflict-reduction method.

- **Full rather than partial samples:** Another limitation afflicting current research relates to the common tendency to restrict the analytical scope to post-war settings and, in some cases, to specific parts of the world. Of course, there is nothing wrong with focusing on such research questions, but the use of post-conflict samples comes at the cost of possibly obscuring the preventive role of power sharing. Clearly, there are many stable countries that have not experienced conflict for a very long time, and this is at least partly thanks to such inclusive institutions. This is one of the main reasons why our empirical analysis covers the entire world, including pre- and post-conflict settings, because otherwise it would be impossible to capture the full impact of power sharing on peace and war. Furthermore, there is an additional reason to trace decision-making even before the first violent conflict breaks out. To see this, we turn to the third weakness of the conventional literature.

- **Considering the endogenous nature of power sharing:** Most existing studies treat power sharing as an exogenous independent variable, whether of the governmental or of the territorial type. Yet, this assumption is clearly misleading, because governments’ decisions to include some groups but not others may reflect anticipated, future conflict. The problem is that institutional choices or accommodating practices by governments cannot be considered as a random treatment. In fact, it stands to reason that governments may be more inclined to include groups that could cause trouble otherwise. But if this is true, then the correlation between power sharing and conflict is affected by governmental decisions made in the shadow of potential conflict rather than by an inherent tendency of power sharing to generate conflict outcomes. By the same naïve logic, we would have to close all hospitals, because after all, death is a much more likely outcome for hospital patients compared to people who are not hospitalized. Yet, again, the link between hospitals and mortality derives from the fact that those who are seriously ill tend to seek hospitalization, while those who are in good health do not. Needless to say, hospitals are nevertheless important and should not be abolished. By the same token, it could well be that power-sharing arrangements are doing a lot of good even though they often cannot fully prevent violence, since in their absence, conflict may have been even more likely. One of the most important
goals of this book is to introduce conceptual reasoning along these lines to the study of power sharing, as well as a set of tools that address such concerns head-on and help us grapple with this difficulty. Indeed, with such corrections, power sharing looks considerably more attractive as a possible solution to ethnic conflict.

- **Interactions between governmental and territorial power sharing**: The power-sharing literature tends to treat shared power within the state's center and between the center and its periphery in separate studies, or to consider them simply as additive elements. We argue that both dimensions should be studied together since territorial power sharing often needs to be supplemented with its governmental counterpart to be truly pacifying. Indeed, in the absence of the latter, decentralization may easily become a slippery slope. While this danger has been a major focus in studies of federalism (Riker, 1964; Filippov, Ordeshook and Shvetsova, 2004; Bednar, 2008), it has rarely been acknowledged in the literature on power sharing (for a notable exception, see McGarry and O’Leary, 2009). Doing so is, however, crucial since focusing on autonomy in isolation from power relations at the center of the state obscures the full conflict-reducing potential of decentralized institutions.

All things considered, when it comes to securing peace, power sharing is considerably better than its (scientific) reputation. While there are clearly situations where it does little to dampen conflict, or may even worsen the situation, on average its pacifying effect is relatively robust. Thus, it is all the more important to identify the conditions under which inclusive practices help stabilize deeply divided societies, and where this is not the case. In this book, we furthermore devote considerable attention to figuring out the types and combinations of power-sharing arrangements that promise to be the most effective. In the end, we reach the conclusion that policy makers have so far been right to prioritize inclusive governance. Yet, ironically, the recent surge in xenophobia and ethnic nationalism indicates that this consensus may be weakening together with the liberal world order as a whole.