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Introduction

1.1 INTRODUCTION

When is ethnicity mobilized in political contestation? How about religion? Across the world, the answers to these questions seemingly vary across time and space. For example, scholars largely agree that Pakistan was founded on the idea of a "secular" Muslim cultural and/or ethno-national identity as opposed to a religious Islamic identity.[1] However, the success of this attempt at secular nation-building is debatable because, after independence, the country was plagued by ethnic separatism, with Bangladesh seceding in 1971, and the Baloch insurgency only recently abating (Akbar, 2015; Shah, 2016). More insidiously, some argue that, in the new millennium, Pakistani primary identity in political mobilization has shifted, and that it "has emerged as a center for global jihad" (Bajoria, 2011: 5) in a conflict increasingly cast as a battle over religion.

On another continent, in Africa, since Milton Obote (an ethnic Langi and a Northerner)[2] led Uganda's movement for independence in 1962, ethnic and regional identity mobilization largely dominated Ugandan politics (Atkinson, 1994; Tom, 2006). Obote was overthrown by Idi Amin (an ethnic Kakwa and Lugbara, also a Northerner) who set about purging the military of Langi (and Acholi) until Obote returned to power. Obote himself was later replaced by an Acholi general Tito Lutwa Okello who, in turn, was ousted by Yoweri Museveni (a Bahima and a South-westerner) (Green, 2009). However, in the late 1980s, Alice Lakwena and Joseph Kony (both Acholi Northerners),

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[1] While the words of Pakistan's founding father Muhammad Ali Jinnah have been used to justify both religious and secular interpretations of the state, the idea of the two-nation state is predominantly considered a secular cultural idea (Cohen, 2004; Varshney, 2008).

[2] Obote was supported by the Acholi and he favored them as further discussed in Chapter 5.

mobilized a religious identity in a civil war that cost the country thousands of lives and unimaginable horrors (Allen, 1991; Behrend, 1999; Neethling, 2013; Ofcansky, 2018).

Further to the South East, Indonesia's recent history is replete with both ethnic and religious conflicts (Bertrand, 2008; Harsono, 2019; Schulze, 2017). However, in 2019, Indonesia's voters – close to 200 million of them – peacefully chose among roughly 245,000 candidates running for more than 20,000 national and local legislative seats across the country (BBC, 2019).[3] Even so, the elections were increasingly marked by mobilization of identity, especially religion. For example, the incumbent President Joko Widodo, who in 2014 ran a staunchly secular campaign (The Economist, 2019), picked Ma'ruf Amin, the supreme leader and chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council, and reportedly "the country's most senior Islamic cleric" as his running mate in the 2019 election (Aditya and Abraham, 2019).

In all of these countries across peaceful electoral settings and more violent political contestation, political actors variously mobilize ethnicity and religion.[4] Fluidity in mobilization of ethnic and religious political identities extends well beyond these countries. For instance, while most civil wars are fought between ethnic groups (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Denny and Walter, 2014), in the last half a century "religious civil wars have increased relative to non-religious civil wars" (Toft et al., 2011; Mason and Mitchell, 2016: 153).[5] Religion also exerts a strong influence across multiple domains of more conventional electoral politics (Grzymala-Busse, 2012), where ethnicity is commonly mobilized (Lijphart, 1977; Posner, 2005; Birnir, 2007; Birnir and Satana, 2013; Flesken, 2018).

What determines which is mobilized in political contestation, be it peaceful or violent? Addressing this question, the literatures on (shared) cleavages and the Minimum Winning Coalition (MWC) suggest that contentious identity contestation is increasingly likely when cleavages are segmented (for instance, when competing groups have different ethnic and/or religious identities), and that the identity groups mobilized are the ones that will form the smallest possible winning coalitions.

However, in contrast to the literature on cross-cutting (shared) cleavages, which predicts the greatest contention where identities are fully segmented, most identity conflicts in the world are between ethnic groups that share the same religion (Satana et al., 2013; Fox, 2016; Svensson and Nilsson, 2018). Furthermore, on the contrary to the MWC literature, which would predict preponderance of, and stability among identity-based MWCs, MWCs are

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[3] The preliminary presidential results sparked some short-lived riots (Suhartono and Victor, 2019) but the election itself was by and large very peaceful and orderly (Kahfi, 2019).

[4] As we discuss further in the cases of Uganda, Nepal, Indonesia, and Turkey, multiple other cleavages, including but not limited to region, class, and migratory status, play a part in mobilization. For reasons discussed later in this chapter, we focus on ethnicity and religion in this book but acknowledge that our theory likely pertains to other cleavage types as well.

[5] See also Fox (2013).

actually not the most common types of ethnic coalitions (Bormann, 2019). The incongruences between predictions of the theory and the real-world observations are puzzling and remain under-explored in the literature.

To address these puzzles, we build on the literature about political demography, which draws special attention to the role of group size in political contestation (Weiner and Teitelbaum, 2001; Goldstone et al., 2011). While the current literature primarily focuses on segmented identities, the theory of *Alternatives in Mobilization* we propose in this book suggests that variation in *relative* group size and *intersection* of cleavages help explain the above and potentially other conundrums in the mobilization of identity, across transgressive and contained political settings. A formalization of this argument yields multiple testable implications including the hypothesis of the *Challenger's Winning Coalition (CWC)*. Where demographic conditions allow, our hypothesis posits that members of large minority identity groups that are left out of or under-represented through identity-based MWCs will seek access by redefining the axes of the identity competition to mobilize a potentially oversized CWC of an alternate identity, which is shared with the majority. In this book, we test this conjecture cross-nationally on identity mobilization in civil war and explore the mechanisms of this proposition across violent conflict in the cases of Pakistan, Uganda, Nepal, and Turkey. Finally, we examine whether the CWC hypothesis can be extended to a peaceful electoral setting in one of the most ethno-religiously heterogeneous countries in the world, Indonesia.

Importantly, the CWC implication does not contradict the idea of the conflict-mitigating effect of cross-cutting (shared) cleavages or the notion of majority leaders seeking to form an MWC. In contrast, the CWC hypothesis tested in this book refines the argument about the effect of shared identities to suggest that, conditional on the identity group's relative size, shared secondary cleavages *mitigate* or *motivate* conflict. Similarly, the CWC hypothesis builds on the premise of the MWC numbers game but further articulates when the assumptions of the MWC do not hold, conditional on demography, where and which minority CWC is more likely to mount a credible identity challenge to the MWC. Thus, the CWC implication accounts for why MWCs are sometimes unstable and short-lived.

Much is at stake in correctly explaining identity mobilization in contentious politics across the world. Specifically, most civil wars are fought between ethnic groups (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Denny and Walter, 2014), and religious wars are on the rise (Toft et al., 2011; Mason and Mitchell, 2016: 153).[6] Success of peace-building depends on the accurate understanding of identity mobilization. For instance, substantial resources are spent on institution building, primarily of the power-sharing type, to resolve conflict and build peaceful post-conflict polities. However, it remains unclear whether these institutions are effective and under what conditions they reduce the likelihood of war

[6] See also Fox (2013).

recurrence (Sambanis, 2020). Without properly delineating the incentives for identity group mobilization, it is unlikely that this institutional puzzle ever gets resolved. Similarly, in electoral politics across the world, the representation of identity groups is variously sought because legislatures make policy and their makeup communicates the extent to which democratic politics are inclusive (Piscopo and Wylie, 2020), or suppressed in a controversial effort to decrease identity-based electoral contestation (Moroff and Basedau, 2010).[7] Regardless of which view one takes, and aims to either suppress or encourage identity representation, it is difficult to fulfill either without a better understanding of identity mobilization.

1.2 THE LITERATURE

One of the predominant answers to the question of what determines which cleavage is mobilized in political contestation is offered by the literature on segmented and cross-cutting (shared) cleavages. Specifically, "[a] near-canonical claim among observers comparing politics across highly-divided societies is that the degree to [which cleavages] are 'crosscutting' constitutes a critical stabilizing feature of those political systems" (Gordon et al., 2015). In other words, underlying demographic configurations condition between which identities political challenges are more likely to materialize. When at least some identities are shared (or cross-cut), for instance in Switzerland, where the French and Italians are both predominantly Roman Catholic, greater stability ensues. In contrast, when identities are segmented, as in Sri Lanka where the Sinhalese are mostly Buddhist but Tamils are predominantly Hindu, instability is more likely through political identity challenges, such as majority outbidding.[8] The notion that shared identities stabilize political systems and that segmented identities invite more identity competition cuts across contained electoral politics where shared identities are thought to reduce zero-sum contestations (Lipset, 1981; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Lijphart, 1977, 1999), and transgressive politics of violence where segmented cleavages are considered to facilitate recruitment for violent ends (Selway, 2011b; Gordon et al., 2015; Siroky and Hechter, 2016).[9]

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[7] We return to this subject in Chapter 6 in the context of Indonesia's electoral politics.

[8] Majority outbidding here refers to the scenario where in competition for allegiances of the majority identity rank and file, the leadership of majority factions outbids each other in targeting a segmented minority. The case of Sri Lanka is commonly considered a classic case of majority outbidding (Horowitz, 1985). In turn, Toft (2013) describes a classic case of religious outbidding in Sudan.

[9] The increased conflict propensity of segmented ethno-religious groups has been tested cross-nationally (Ellingsen, 2005; Basedau et al., 2011; Selway, 2011b; Stewart, 2012; Toft, 2013; Sweijs et al., 2015). Moreover, the literature on horizontal inequalities shows that identity is not the only re-enforcing cleavage that increases conflict potential between segmented groups – so do economic inequalities (Stewart, 2008; Brown, 2008; Stewart et al., 2009; Ostby, 2008; Cederman et al., 2011). Indeed, Baldwin and Huber (2010) suggest economics are more

A complimentary answer in the literature, focusing on the question of which identity is mobilized within a country draws on Riker's idea of coalition size, which stipulates that in competition over finite resources "participants create coalitions just as large as they believe will ensure winning and no larger" (Riker, 1962: 32).[10] Applied to ethnic politics, the MWC theory has helped explain how and why competition for scarce resources takes on ethnic characteristics (Bates, 1983a), how ethnic parties win elections (Chandra, 2004), the onset of ethnic civil war (Choi and Kim, 2018), and why divergent identities are mobilized across different institutional settings (Posner, 2005, 2017).[11]

Furthermore, holding institutions constant, scholars have theorized the conditions favoring change from one identity MWC to the next. For instance, Chandra (2012) posits that underlying demographics, as constrained by institutions, produce a given number of identity groups of minimum winning size. These scholars argue that this underlying demographic condition determines whether a change in the identity composition of the MWC is possible within a given system. In contrast, focusing on alliances in civil war, Fotini (2012) argues that identity does not drive coalition formation. Instead, she posits that variation in the balance of group-relative power and intra-group fractionalization induces shifts between coalitions and that identity is often used in a *post hoc* justification of shifting allegiances. Thus, both accounts pre-suppose that underlying demographic identity configurations make mobilization of identity possible. However, they also suggest that, in a given setting, identity-based challenges to the status quo are either exogenously brought to the forefront by changing power balance (Fotini, 2012) or initiated among any of multiple possible contenders (Chandra, 2012).[12]

important – at least to public goods provision – than are cultural differences. While all of the above scholarship focuses on group politics, the behavioral psychology literature focusing on American politics also supports, at the individual level, the ideas about the increased potential for contestation resulting from segmentation and reduced contestation with cross-cuttingness (in this literature referred to respectively as low or high social identity complexity; Roccas and Brewer, 2002). Among other things, this literature points to a relationship between self-perception of belonging to highly segmented groups and lower out-group tolerance (Brewer and Pierce, 2005). More recently, Mason (2018) suggests an endogenous sorting mechanism where political parties pick up identity platforms, which in turn, induce sorting constituencies into increasingly polarized blocks based on multiple identity dimensions – contributing to the current polarization in American politics.

[10] Similarly, selectorate theory clarifies how authoritarian leaders secure a minimum winning coalition (Bueno de Mesquita, 2003).

[11] The literature using the idea of the MWC to explain outcomes pertaining to ethnic politics extends to multiple other outcomes including, for example, the distribution of clientelistic benefits (Fearon, 1999), and the amount of political aid a country receives (Bormann et al., 2017).

[12] Thus, in both accounts, the relationship of underlying identities to challenger mobilization is inconclusive with respect to predicting which identities get mobilized and/or superimposed in competition between the status quo coalition and the challengers mobilizing an alternate identity.

1.2.1 The Puzzles

We observe that much conflict occurs within cultural traditions between similar religious groups that differ in sect or school only, and not between religious families (Fox, 2002, 2004b; Tusicisny, 2004; Gartzke and Gleditsch, 2006; Toft, 2007; Akbaba and Taydas, 2011; Birnir and Satana, 2013; Satana et al., 2013; Fox, 2016; Gleditsch and Rudolfsen, 2016; Svensson and Nilsson, 2018). Furthermore, in contention with both the logic of the MWC and the literature about cross-cutting (shared) cleavages, recent empirical analyses suggest that oversized ethnic coalitions are actually more common than are MWCs, and that coalitions comprised of cross-cut ethnic groups are less stable than their more unified counterparts (Bormann, 2019).

It seems, therefore, that in the study of identity politics a number of issues remain unresolved. For instance, it is not at all clear that cross-cutting or shared cleavages deter political competition between identity groups in the way commonly postulated in the literature. Furthermore, while the MWC argument plausibly explains some cases of coalition formation, it also appears that MWCs may not be the most common, stable, or long-lived coalitions in identity politics. These observations present intriguing puzzles and, if correct, suggest some important questions moving forward including: Which identities are mobilized in political contestation and in what types of coalitions? These are the main questions that motivate this project.

1.2.2 Scope, Assumptions, and Terms

Scope
Comprehensive mapping of how political incentives change for mobilization of identity coalitions, as all cleavage combinations vary in size and intersection, is outside the scope of this study – if even possible.[13] Our goals are more modest. Specifically, within the study of identity cleavages the empirical scope of our study principally pertains to ethnicity and religion, though the case analyses in Chapters 5 and 6 pinpoint other identity cleavages that matter for mobilization, at least in the cases we examine. We acknowledge that multiple identity cleavages other than ethnicity and religion exist,[14] as do many more political cleavages of other types.[15] Furthermore, all types of cleavages – identity and beyond – are segmented or shared in innumerable different ways. In this book, we focus empirically on two variants of cleavage interaction: *groups*

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[13] Changing mobilization incentives associated with the extensive variation resulting from inter-action of all cleavage types delineates the research agenda within which our inquiry fits - and our theory is developed with this in mind. However, the empirical scope of this study is far more circumscribed.

[14] Identity cleavages not specifically discussed in this book include, for example, gender.

[15] Other types of cleavages include class, native/migrant status, urban/rural dwelling, or political party cleavages, among others.

that are segmented on one or more dimensions, and *groups that are segmented on one cleavage but share a second identity.*

To be clear, the theory of *Alternatives in Mobilization* proposed in Chapter 3 is agnostic with respect to cleavage type, and can possibly be extended to account for other cleavage types and far greater complexity in cleavage interactions that lend themselves to mobilization. Other cleavage configurations may also be more relevant in the study of political outcomes that are not considered in this study. However, the empirical focus here on the demographics of segmented and shared ethnic and religious cleavage combinations is motivated by the literatures on cleavage intersection and the MWC as outlined above. In this scholarship, the demographics of shared or segmented ethnic and religious cleavage combinations feature prominently in electoral and conflict mobilization – but in ways that the above puzzles suggest – remain under-explained. Our general theoretical contribution consists of refining the role that demographics of segmented and shared cleavages play in mobilization for power within the state. In turn, the general theoretical contribution overlaps with the more specific contribution we hope to make, which is a better understanding of the role ethnicity and religion play in political conflict.

Finally, the scope of our inquiry is limited to exploring the incentives of actors that seek to alter power within the state in a way that grants them greater access to the spoils of office, within unaltered state boundaries. Identity is mobilized for multiple other purposes, including secession. However, the mobilization logic of secession possibly differs from the logic that drives groups to seek greater access within unaltered state boundaries. Rothchild (1983) divides these two types of claims respectively into internal, negotiable claims for re-distribution and external demands that are non-negotiable for the state. While external demands may often be disaggregated into negotiable claims for re-distribution (Rothchild, 1983), the process and consequences are sufficiently distinct to suggest that generalizing across the two types should be done with caution. This is an especially pertinent concern with respect to incentives for the mechanisms of identity bonding and bridging between majorities and minorities that are discussed further in Chapter 3. Therefore, explaining the logic of identity mobilization for purposes of secession is outside the scope of our study though we acknowledge that groups may pursue multiple objectives at the same time.[16]

Assumptions
To address the rationale for cleavage mobilization as conditioned by demographics and sharing or segmentation of identity among groups, we adopt some

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[16] On this topic, see also Mason and Mitchell (2016). To be clear, we do account for secessionist movements in our empirical analysis, but the theory pertains to the logic of identity mobilization within unaltered state boundaries.

common assumptions from the literature. We assume that when excluded from access to power, a demand and/or opportunity for mobilization (voice) arises among the political actors in our story (Hirschman, 1970).[17] Furthermore, we assume that identity – both ethnicity and religion – is a common and useful heuristics for such mobilization.[18]

It is also assumed here that in a pursuit to secure voice by way of an increase in political power for their group,[19] sincere and/or instrumental political entrepreneurs recognize the opportunity to define and mobilize the emerging interest group, and to proclaim themselves leaders of the group (Brass, 1991; Chandra, 2004; van der Veen and Laitin, 2012; Huang, 2020).

Moreover, as is well established in the literature, in deciding whether to follow a political leader proposing a particular political strategy, individuals are anything but naive and manipulated. In contrast, multiple scholars argue that ethnic voters, for example, cast their ballot for ethnic parties because they believe the party is likely to succeed (Chandra, 2004) and will represent their policy preferences (Birnir, 2007). Similarly, in conflict situations, Fearon and Laitin (2000: 846) conclude that when information permits, "followers often are not so much following as pursuing their own local or personal agendas."[20] Therefore, we assume that when recruited – especially for potentially violent ends – individuals are agents in shaping political outcomes as they decide whether to support a political entrepreneur's proposed strategy based on whether it suits their own personal agenda. On this point it bears reiterating that beyond seeking greater access to resources, we make no assumptions about individual motives. For example, a devout individual may seek access to resources for reasons that further her faith, another may use religion for access to resources for purposes of public or private goods provision, and a third may seek access to resources for personal consumption. All of these goals are consistent with the mobilization logic we suggest in our theory of Alternatives in Mobilization.

[17] As explained by Wimmer (2013), we assume this demand and/or opportunity materializes for identity groups in much the same way as it does for other types of interest groups, where lack of access consolidates individuals as a group with a common interest. Furthermore, we assume that while the opportunity for mobilization is created by a lack of voice, demand may precipitate or follow entrepreneurial leadership's definition of group interests.

[18] Some classic examples that either explain why and how identity is used as a heuristic for mobilization or use examples of identity as heuristics for mobilization include Bates (1983a); Olzak (1983, 1992, 2006); Young (1976); Tarrow (2011); Tilly (1978); Gurr (1970, 1993a); Lipset and Rokkan (1967); Jelen and Wilcox (2002). This literature is vast. For recent overviews on mobilization of ethnicity see, for example, Fearon (2008); Vermeersch (2012); Cunningham and Lee (2016). On the mobilization of religion, see Birnir and Overos (2019).

[19] We adopt this assumption with the understanding that the precise reasons politicians wish to secure political power vary (Riker, 1986).

[20] Others have shown the same, specifically with respect to civil war (Kalyvas, 2006, 2009).

In other words, mobilization of identity is attractive to political actors – leaders and followers alike – for instrumental (Bates, 1974, 1983b; Chandra, 2005; Posner, 2005; Huang, 2020), sincere (or emotive) (Petersen, 2002), and symbolic reasons (Kaufman, 2001).[21]

When mobilized, we assume these political actors seek representation of their interests through the governing structures that determine the allocation of resources (Bates, 1983a). Furthermore, we follow the literature in assuming that, all else being equal, political actors generally would prefer to be represented by an MWC because it maximizes the political power of the actors' group while minimizing the division of political benefits. This is an important assumption because it allows us to articulate an example against which other types of coalitions can be compared so that we may gain a better understanding of when and why the MWC might not be an actor's preferred, or even a possible, vehicle for access. However, we also reckon political actors have a preference for access over minimum winning access. Thus, in a situation of great uncertainty, or when political actors believe the MWC only gives them tenuous access, a political actor will choose access over minimum winning access, even if that requires the construction of an oversized coalition.

The governing structures to which actors seek access need not be democratic (Schumpeter, 1992). Social movement theory explains how identity coalitions come into existence outside formal governing structures as "a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity" (Diani, 1992). Consequently, we expect identity is mobilized for access across regime types – even where formal channels are unavailable (Diani, 1992; Diani and Eyerman, 1992; Tilly, 1993). Furthermore, in line with the literature on social movements[22] the argument proposed here is neither exclusively an argument of supply or demand. In contrast, social mobilization is conceived as a political process involving both. Lack of access for identity groups generates an opportunity (explicit or latent demand) for voice that is recognized by political leaders who then call for mobilization of

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[21] Kaufman posits that "political choices based on emotion and in response to symbols" (Kaufman, 2001: 29) is a better explanation of violent ethnic mobilization than are rationalist explanations. In our view the literature seems to support both notions. Similarly, in their discussion of the marketplace of religion, Stark and Finke are very clear that as opposed to "vulgar materialism," "faith and doctrine are central to our efforts to construct a model of the behavior of religious firms within a religious economy" (Stark and Finke, 2002: 32). In other words, a discussion of incentives in no way negates the importance of symbolism, including religious symbolism.

[22] See also, Wimmer's (2013: 111) discussion of the recent application of a "multilevel process theory" across the social sciences.

the identity group (supply). If that call resonates with followers – for a variety of reasons as explained before – contentious identity mobilization materializes. The contribution made here is to pinpoint which identities are more likely mobilized in this process.

Finally, we follow social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979, 1986) in that we treat divergent identity cleavages (ethnicity and religion in this book) as if they are comparable with respect to mobilization. The usefulness of this assumption is limited in predicting individual policy preferences within a given political environment (McCauley, 2014), as we discuss in greater detail below. However, overall similarities between mobilization of ethnicity (Vermeersch, 2012) and the mobilization of religion (Birnir and Overos, 2019) across divergent political outcomes support this assumption as a reasonable starting point.

Terms

Before outlining our argument, defining and clarifying some of the main terms of our inquiry, as they are used throughout this monograph, is helpful. Starting with the outcome, we are interested in examining the variation in the mobilization of identity types, empirically ethnicity and religion, in contentious politics. As explained earlier in this chapter, we assume excluded political actors seek access to governing structures that determine the allocation of resources (Hirschman, 1970; Bates, 1983a). These resources can be economic, related to security, symbolic, or any other type of resource that the state controls or has significant influence over. Thus, we define *political mobilization* as a process of activating a social movement for political ends (Tilly, 1978, 2004), and more specifically as "actors' attempt to influence the existing distribution of power" by way of interest formation, community building, and by employing available means of action (Nedelmann, 1987: 181). The means of action, in turn, is contentious politics.

To define *contentious politics* we rely on McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly's definition of "[episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when a) at least one government is an object of claims, … and b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants]" (McAdam et al., 2001: 5). Our definition is slightly more narrow than theirs as we are not attempting to explain claims made by the government. Furthermore, relating claim-making to identity we follow Wimmer (2013: 109) who posits that an "Actor will choose those strategies and levels of ethnic distinction that will best support their claims to prestige, moral worth, and political power."

Like McAdam et al. (2001), we are interested in both *transgressive* and *contained* political contention. Respectively, these refer to collective claim-making using "means that are either unprecedented or forbidden within the regime in question" (McAdam et al., 2001: 8), such as civil war, and claims made through well-established means of claim-making such as elections. The claim-making of interest here can occur at various levels of formal or informal