

Intractable Concepts and Conflicts: Evaluating power sharing agreements in Africa

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July 23, 2013

Power sharing has been attempted Angola, Comoros Islands, Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Liberia, Mali, Somalia, South Africa and Sudan. Kenya, Madagascar, and Zimbabwe have also implemented power sharing arrangements as means of managing post-electoral violence. The logic of power sharing is built on the notion that through designing institutions composed of elite coalitions, proportional representation, group autonomy, and minority vetoes conflict can be effectively managed. This logic is built upon pervasive essentialist conceptions of identity which can over determine the way in which ethnicity is a salient organizing force within states. Evaluating the historical development of the state and identity in Africa shows that assumptions about ethnicity, and the assumptions behind institutional engineering, ignore the complexities of power relations and societal dynamics. This obscures the relationship between political and civilian actors, and denies their agency to be proponents of both peace and war. Looking outside these assumptions it is clear that power sharing has not operated as it was intended across the continent and the implementation of such agreements can exacerbate the exclusion of various groups within a country.

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Introduction

Ideas of ethnicity and identity play an essential role in forming the assumptions underpinning theories of institutional design in the field of peace building. Different conceptions of identity frame models designed to build peaceful, sustainable institutions. For some, ethnic identity is socially constructed and susceptible to change and manipulation; for others ethnicity is innate and intractable. These viewpoints suggest drastically different means to form a peaceful democratic society: theories of power sharing and consociation argue that the realities of ethnic conflict necessitate creating institutions that can manage the separate affairs of ethnic groups within the same territorial boundaries; theories of integration and social transformation argue that through institutional mechanisms, constructive political identities can emerge to transform ethnic antagonism into a productive democratic discourse.

In practice, power sharing has been included in many peace agreements. The perceived success of power sharing has led international mediators, who play a central role in peace negotiations, to conclude that power sharing was an effective formula for ending intra-state violence (Cheeseman 2011, 336-337). In comparison to the impact of civil war in both human and economic terms, the benefits of unity government seem to dwarf potential costs and the promotion of the model was met with little resistance (Cheeseman 2011, 336-337).

While these theories exist for the same purpose – finding a means to create peaceful societies – they begin from different assumptions about identity and form intractable positions about seemingly intractable conflicts. However, the divide between these theories and their underpinning assumptions about identity has been crossed in instances of conflict and peace building in Africa. The nature of identity in these societies is debated. Considering how

ethnicity is expressed in African in cases where power sharing has been implemented provides an opportunity to re-examine whether assumptions of identity and ethnicity are still relevant to the opposing theories of institutional design and peace building that they inform

The purpose of this paper is to consider the implications of implementing power sharing in vastly different countries. In particular, given the focus the model of power sharing places on ethnicity as a determinant of conflict, this paper will consider how power sharing impacts the expression and mobilization of identity; questioning the assumption that power sharing can promote stability by building an inclusive model of democracy. This paper will work towards this purpose by considering the theoretical basis on which the support for a critique of power sharing is built to demonstrate that there is a distinct focus on essentialist understandings of ethnicity. In addition, there is a distinct focus on the ability of the state to have a meaningful impact on the way individual citizens express their identity. These two assumptions will be unpacked empirically first, by considering how identities have been contested and constructed in relation to the evolution of African states; and second, by evaluating the level of relevance ethnicity has to determining political outcomes in Africa. This analysis will show that in Africa differing levels of state strength, differing relationships between state and society, and differing expressions of ethnicity across the continent affect the potential for power sharing to work the way it is intended.

In reality, power sharing is a contested and negotiated institutional structure crafted through both the international community and country elites that has varied inputs and outcomes, bearing little resemblance to its theoretical foundations. The importance of comparing this reality to the assumptions that inform the model is to understand the way theoretical assumptions

underpinning 'technologies of peace' can persuasively preclude the consideration of alternative views of African states and the expression of ethnicity within Africa.

Theoretical Development of Power Sharing

Theories of power sharing have not been confined to academic debates. Politicians have refined, innovated and reinvented power sharing institutions and practices in Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Lebanon much before the concept of modelled in academic literature. Since being modelled however, the debate over power sharing crosses between policy makers and academics and has developed as power sharing experiments are tried. This section will map out the development of the theory of power sharing to show how the concept has come to focus on ethnicity from a particular perspective and on power sharing as a tool for mitigating conflict in divided societies.

The idea of power sharing as outlined by Lijphart is tied to particular conceptions of peace, democracy and ethnicity (Lijphart 2008). Power sharing, termed consociationalism at the time, was initially formulated by Lijphart in 1969 as an "empirical theory of comparative politics" to explain "the political stability of a number of smaller European democracies" (Lijphart 1977, 1). Lijphart worked from the premise that political stability depends on moderation, and moderation in turn depends on the existence of moderate, cross-cutting societal cleavage (Lijphart 2008, 28). Cross cutting cleavages incentivise political elites to seek consensus across different groups in society, promoting moderation (Lijphart 2008, 28). In contrast, according to this theory of political stability where society is divided by sharp cleavages with no or few overlapping memberships, there is little incentive for politicians to appeal to moderate segments of the population (Lijphart 2008, 28). Lijphart sought to understand why despite having societal cleavages Austria, Belgium, Switzerland and the Netherlands did not

exhibit instability (Lijphart 2008, 28). He noted that within these countries political elites cooperated and were able to achieve “a degree of political stability quite out of proportion to [their] social homogeneity” (Lijphart 2008, 28). Lijphart proceeded from these observations to outline the characteristics that allowed these countries to be stable and democratic. This system which he called first, consociationalism and later, power sharing is built upon four pillars: elite cooperation through a grand coalition, group autonomy, proportionality and minority veto (Lijphart 2008, 44-50).

Although Lijphart’s model began as an empirical observation of a non-majoritarian democratic model, it gradually evolved to become a more normative concept, and a policy prescription for ‘divided’ societies. In the 1970’s Lijphart began to describe the normative potential of power sharing, “recommending it as the best type of democracy for divided societies” (Bogaards 2000, 395). However he still maintained that power sharing was a diminished subtype of democracy: “a type of political system that lacks certain attributes, the inclusion of which would make it a fully-fledged democracy” (Bogaards 2000, 400). In the 1980’s Lijphart drew from Robert Dahl’s classification of the West European consociational democracies as polyarchies and wrote *Power Sharing in South Africa* – a “forceful plea for the adoption of consociational democracy in a democratic South Africa” (Bogaards 2000, p. 400). Beginning with *Power Sharing in South Africa*, Lijphart used power sharing as a synonym for consociational democracy and argued that multi-ethnic democracy could only be based on power sharing (Bogaards 2000, 415).

With the implementation of the model in South Africa, former Yugoslavia, and in Northern Ireland the concept and the criticisms of the model have evolved. In South Africa, during the transition to inclusive democracy the National Party promoted power sharing as a

means to protect minority rights while the African National Congress argued in favour of majoritarianism to avoid elevating “ethnicity to the status of the primary organizing principle of political life for society” (Bogaards 2007, 165). The resulting 1993 constitution reflected a compromise between the two parties and a form of power sharing was temporarily adopted. The case spurred much debate over the effect each model would have on society. Horowitz, framed the debate on power sharing to focus on whether it created the necessary incentives to transform conflict within society. He maintained that power sharing agreements are “more likely the product of resolved struggles or of relatively moderate cleavages” and that they are “inapt to mitigate conflict in severely divided societies” (Horowitz 1985, 256). This critique has been central to the school of ‘integrationists’ who argue that identity is malleable and can be transformed with the right institutional incentives (Horowitz 1985; Taylor 1992).

The implementation of power sharing in former Yugoslavia through the Dayton Accords spurred debate about the liberal nature of power sharing arrangements. In the Dayton Accords, groups were accommodated according to ascriptive criteria such as ethnicity or religion effectively institutionalizing group identities (Finlay 2012, 26). The criticisms of this model led proponents of power sharing to consider a revised, liberal model that accounting for the various ways identity can be experienced and expressed. This theoretical revision was put into practice in the ‘liberal’ power sharing that is associated with the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland. A liberal power sharing agreement is intended to leave the question of who shares power up to voters: group members self-identify and are not constrained into rigid identity categories (O’Leary 2005). This model prioritizes ethno-nationalism, but is more flexible to allow for both the accommodation and potentially the transformation of identities.

The debates prompted by the cases continue on as power sharing is implemented in various countries (Cheeseman 2011; Curtis 2013; Jarstad 2009; Lemarchand 2006; LeVan 2010; Mehler 2008; Mehler and Tull 2005; Spears 2002, 1005; Tendi and Cheeseman 2010). In Africa alone, some form of inclusive government has been attempted in Angola, Comoros Islands, Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Liberia, Mali, Somalia, South Africa and Sudan. Kenya, Madagascar, and Zimbabwe have also implemented power sharing arrangements as means of managing post-electoral violence.

Despite more the recent liberal conception of power sharing, the core assumption it makes have remained unchanged: ethnicity can be a cause of conflict and must be accommodated in order to prevent further violence and conflict. The compatibility of the model to the multitude of countries it has been implemented is widely questioned in contemporary literature (Cheeseman 2011; Curtis 2013; Jarstad 2009, Lemarchand 2006; LeVan 2010; Mehler 2008, 2009; Mehler and Tull 2005; Spears 2002, 2005; Tendi and Cheeseman 2010;). Lijphart's classic cases Belguim, Switzerland, Lebanon and Cyprus were all states where linguistic and religions differences were frozen over a long time. These cases are dissimilar to the issues of "acute crisis management" in Africa where there are more "diffuse conflict constellations" (Mehler 2008, p. 14). However, the support for power sharing as the best solution for severe crisis on the continent extends in particular to the United Nations, which after years of promoting the model in various attempts at mediation and agreement negotiations, has created a senior advisor on power sharing as part of a stand-by team located in the mediation support union of the department of political affairs.

Bogaards has argued, in this vein, that theories of power-sharing have shifted from Lijphart's original study as an empirical outline into normative prescriptions for action that promotes first, a pessimistic view of human nature second, a nationalist idealism about diverse versus homogenous states, and third an endorsement of liberal interventionism (Bogaards 2000). Brubaker calls this type of analysis and policy prescription the "architectonic illusion" based on the idea that the right "grand architecture and the right territorial and institutional framework, can satisfy nationalist demands, quench nationalist passions and thereby resolve national conflicts (Brubaker 1998, p. 273). Such an approach inevitably underestimates the importance of distribution of power and the use of force, external powers, and the role of politics for managing conflict (Dixon 2012, p. 111). The extensive use of power sharing as a tool of peace building points at the importance of evaluating the model as a policy tool and better understanding the assumptions that inform the model and its proponents as politicians, academics, and policy makers.

The concept of power sharing, as demonstrated, has evolved from describing the democratic institution in Western Europe for managing sub-groups within society to a concept that is instrumental in the design of peace processes. Since being outlined by Lijphart, power sharing now describes a range of institutions that can promote the liberal expression of the multiple identities within each individual or can freeze identities institutionally to mitigate violence and provide stability and security for the population. Indeed, if there is a common technology of peace, "its self-styled 'engineers' are consociationalists" (Finlay 2010, 1).

Themes

Three themes are particularly relevant to understanding the theoretical foundations of the power sharing model: peace building, democracy and ethnicity. The development of the field of

peace building helps to explain how the concept of power sharing evolved from a typology into a normative prescription and into a ‘common technology of peace’ included in almost every contemporary peace negotiation. Lijphart’s conception of democracy forms the foundation of his whole model of power sharing because it questions whether substantive democracy is possible in divided societies where groups may be at risk of social and political exclusion. Tied to this notion is an essentialist conception of identity that maintains that groups within societies are largely fixed and remain relatively unchanged over time. With this conception of democracy and ethnicity, power sharing has become a widely prescribed model for conflict mitigation.

Peace building

The idea that conflict could have solutions rather than winners or losers is a “quintessentially modern idea” which has only been recently applied to intra-state conflicts (Finlay 2012, p.1). Generally, this delay is attributed to the Cold War when the international community was more concerned with the possibility of world war rather than the outcome of civil wars. Since the end of the Cold War, it is much more common for third-party mediators to intervene in the name of liberal internationalism. Third party peace-makers including UN agencies, neutral states and non-governmental organizations have promoted the idea that conflicts can be resolved or at least managed (Finlay 2011, p. 1). There also is a general sharing of best-practices which suggests that a set of techniques for peace-making is emerging; the result is that peace agreements across conflicts have similar arrangements for accommodating the competing demands of warring parties (Finlay 2011, p. 1). As several authors note, the promotion of the model of power-sharing is often linked to support from the international community and the United Nations (UN)(Cheeseman 2011; Curtis 2013; Jarstad 2009; Lemarchand 2006; LeVan 2010; Mehler 2008, 2009; Mehler and Tull 2005; Spears 2002,2005;

Tendi and Cheeseman 2010). LeVan argues that this is part of a trend in foreign aid and democracy promotion that is focused on building political institutions (LeVan 2010, p. 31). Tull and Mehler argue that Western government face conflict pressures to 'do something' in the face of violent conflict but also have a reluctance to become involved in African conflicts in particular after experiences in Somalia and Rwanda (Tull and Mehler 2005, p. 390). Since being used as a tool that has been applauded in Burundi and South Africa, in particular, the international community eagerly supported its use in Kenya where electoral violence rather than civil war was the issue the international community was trying to mitigate. It has evolved therefore from the model carefully explicated by Lijphart to one that is a go-to instrument.

Democracy

Lijphart's conceived of power sharing as primarily a tool of bringing democracy to diverse societies rather than one of peace-building. His argument is built upon the assertion that majoritarian systems in fragmented societies will result in undemocratic results. Within a majoritarian system where there are fluid, and cross cutting identities the parties in parliament change often and a range of views and interests are included. However, since political parties in divided societies diverge, people are more likely to vote along ethnic lines and parties representing minorities are unlikely to be able to find representation. This creates conditions of long-term exclusion which render it first, undemocratic and second, risky as a system that might encourage civil strife. He argued that for countries such as Lebanon in 1985, the choice was not between majoritarian democracy and consociationalism but rather between consociational democracy or "no democracy at all" (Lijphart 2008, p.13). Lijphart's argument for power-sharing arrangements is also one in promotion of democracy. Underpinning Lijphart's analysis on power-sharing is rejection of a procedural conception of majoritarian democracy involving

the competition and contestation of elections. Lijphart's assertion is that although consociational arrangements may not be majoritarian, they are still democratic because they protect minorities from the 'tyranny of the majority' which can effectively exclude groups from being participants in the government. He argues that inclusion offers a form of substantive democracy based on widespread participation and representation. Unconvinced by Lijphart's rebuttal, many critics of power sharing have made normative arguments about the nature of power-sharing as an undemocratic system (LeVan 2010; Levitt 2012; Cole 2013). The debates about power-sharing within the context of democracy therefore focus primarily on arguing about the nature of democracy and its merits outside majoritarian conceptions.

Ethnicity

At the core of Lijphart's model of power sharing and the international community's advocacy for the model is the assumption that conflict is a result of a heterogeneous population. Depending on how ethnicity is conceptualized from an essentialist, instrumentalist or constructivist perspective, the model of power sharing and its potential to manage or transform conflict is called into question. The school of thinkers that support power-sharing measures generally object to being characterized as proponents of an essentialist view of ethnicity. However, their support for power-sharing as a tool of peace-building is premised upon the assumption that antagonist identities are not easily transformed and thus have to be institutionally accommodated in order to ensure that they are not mobilized violently (Lijphart 2008; O'Leary 2005; McGarry and O'Leary 2009). Instrumentalists have developed an equally theoretical critique of power sharing arguing that since ethnicity is negotiated and contingent, institutional designs that promote integration and moderation rather than separation can effectively transform conflicting identities (Horowitz 1985; Taylor 2009). Both these

assumptions are called into question by a constructivist account of ethnicity that advocates for understanding the context in which identities are constructed. Exploring these conceptions of identity highlights how much theories of institutional design rely on theoretical assumptions about the nature of identity,

Essentialist Views

Essentialist views of ethnicity have been particularly salient as a means of understanding identity in Africa at both the level of the international community and within African states. Colonial processes and subsequently, the practices of the international community have demonstrated a commitment to essentialist understandings of identity through the promotion of the model of power sharing.

An essentialist view of ethnicity in Africa originates from a theoretical tradition but also from the legacy of colonialism. As a general concept, the idea of essentialism implies that any given entity can be defined and measured; in reference to ethnicity, essentialism implies that there are fixed traits among a group. An essentialist understanding of ethnicity, therefore, can seek to demarcate groups based on what Geertz refers to as ‘givens: “kin connections, speaking a particular dialect of language and following particular social practices” (Lentz 1995,307). This understanding of ethnicity, however, covers a wide range of characterizations. During colonization in various regions, ethnicity was characterized in an essentialist manner by Europeans acting under the assumption that ethnic groups were static communities representing a pre-modern era (Berman 1998, 305). Thus, from this perspective, ethnicity was defined according to what appeared to the colonizers to be distinctly ‘traditional.’

Within the essentialist understanding of ethnicity, there is a spectrum of characterizations. Lentz argues that essentialist conceptions of ethnicity generally emphasize the

significance of “primordial ties and a given common history (ancestry), culture and language” (Lentz 1995, 305). Lentz references an extreme essentialist model by Van Den Berghe which asserts that ethnicity can be demarcated by “biologically evolved mechanisms of pursuing self-interests” (Lentz 1995, 305). While this characterization has been largely rejected by social scientists, Lentz notes that the idea that ethnicity is a “basic group identity which all members inherit at birth” satisfying the need for belonging is similar to that of Van Den Berghe but is stated differently and is widely accepted (Lentz 1995, 305). Although postulates about the “a-priori given-ness” of ethnicity have been generally refuted by empirical studies, such essentialist approaches have proven “extraordinarily tenacious” (Lentz 1995, 307).

The essentialist characterization has been important to understanding ethnicity in Africa because of the salience of this perspective during the colonial era. Berman notes that the ideology and culture of nationalism in Europe informed the way colonizers thought about ethnicity (Berman 1998, 318). In the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century, nationalism expressed a “conservative and romantic anti-modernism through invented neo-traditions of national history and culture rich in symbol and ceremony” (Berman 1998, 318). Berman argues that this ideology, coupled with efforts by colonizers to more easily administrate regions, generated understandings of African tribes as ancient communities where behaviour was governed by traditional customs (Berman 1998, 320). Europeans, thinking ‘ethnically’ influenced how languages, for example, were recorded and standardized as well as how colonies were organized and administered. During colonization, the discourses about ethnicity that shaped and informed administrative decisions as well as research and missionary efforts were largely essentialist.

The essentialist understandings of ethnicity in Africa, indeed, reflected European conceptions of Africa as a ‘traditional’ place. Beyond the characterizations generated in the colonial era, however, the essentialist understanding generally perceives ethnicity as a categorical ‘given’ in which individuals have little agency to determine the boundaries of their own identity. This perspective not only perpetuates an ahistorical understanding of ethnicity but also makes assumptions more generally about individuals and communities based on the European historical experience of ethnic nations. On the less biologically contingent side of the essentialist spectrum, however, is an important understanding that ethnicity is “deeply affective and emotional” and thus, different from other formulations of political identity (Berman 1998, 309).

The support for power sharing is one example where the assumption that ethnic groups are fixed has led power sharing to be described as the ‘realist’ and ‘empirically grounded’ peace building model (O’Leary 2005, 8). Brendan O’Leary, maintains that supporting power sharing is being rational and realistic about the prospects for peace in ‘divided’ societies. Supporters of power-sharing he argues “believe that certain collective identities, especially those based on nationality, ethnicity, language, and religion, are generally fairly durable once formed (O’Leary, 2005, 8). He tempers this statement by adding that this does not imply that there are primordial or that they necessarily generate antagonism. Such an approach therefore, argues that power-sharing is necessary in countries where ethnic boundaries are fixed and are antagonistic. This view is supported by Lemarchand who maintains that in appropriate circumstances where there has been conflict and antagonistic relations, power sharing is preferable to secession or partition, or letting a conflict burn itself out at a great cost to human life (Lemarchand 2006, 2).

Although scholars of power sharing are largely careful not to rely on essentialist assumptions, the perception that conflicts are primarily ethnic is persistent and evident in the way in which a diversity of cases have implemented power sharing agreements. In many ways, power sharing as an appealing institution for international peace builders reflects an insidious commitment to thinking ‘ethnically’ about African politics.

Instrumental views

The instrumentalist perspective conceives of ethnicity as a vehicle for social competition (Young 1986, 450). Ethnicity, from this viewpoint, does not exist in and of itself but is “political, contingent, situational and circumstantial” (Young 1986, 450). This perspective implies that struggle and conflict are central to and necessary for ethnicity (Young 1986, 450). This focus became salient, according to with the introduction of political party competition that provided incentives for groups to mobilize through ethnic communities, giving credence to instrumentalist views (Young 1986, 448). Berman argues similarly that instrumentalist analyses have emerged out of disillusionment among scholars with the character of post-independence politics (Berman 1998, 309).

The instrumentalist framework found credence in the 1960’s when scholars began replacing essentialist characterizations of the ‘tribe’ with discourse about ‘ethnicity’ (Young 1986, 445). Scholars engaged in this shift sought a more systematic theory of ethnicity. For example, Wallerstein articulated an instrumentalist approach to explain the modern context of urban ethnicity by suggesting that urban identities were malleable given that they lacked the “prescriptive force of the rural tribe” (Young 1986, 445). According to Wallerstein, urban life made it possible for African societies to reject more ‘traditional’ understandings of ethnicity allowing the state to successfully promote nationalist sentiments (Young 1986, 445). Further

attempts to develop a comprehensive understanding of ethnicity within the instrumental tradition were made through the logic of rational-choice theory. Bates argued that ethnic groups were ‘winning coalitions’ that formed as part of “rational efforts to secure benefits created by the forces of modernization” (Young 1986, 448).

The instrumentalist lens presents a ‘decontextualized present’ to explain the ways in which ethnicity is expressed and mobilized (Berman 1998, 309). Instrumentalist approaches are criticized in this respect for ignoring ethnicity as affective and beyond material calculations. The instrumentalist lens, however, can be compelling. Tull and Mehler’s analysis of various power-sharing agreements has led them to argue that power-sharing agreements create a degree of predictability for political ambitious entrepreneurs who are ready and willing to use the opportunity to pursue material resources. In the case of failing to secure a military victory, they argue that with the popularity of power-sharing agreements, insurgents can reasonably expect to receive parcels of state power in return for peace (Tull and Mehler 2005, 394).

While the study by Tull and Mehler was largely based on empirical studies of how power sharing agreements emerged in various countries and what their effect was at the theoretical level, instrumentalism has informed normative conceptions of conflict mitigation that oppose the concept of power sharing. For example, Donald Horowitz, with an instrumentalist view of ethnicity argues that proportional representation rather than power sharing would incentivise groups to form crosscutting cleavages, antagonist ethnic identities can transform into moderate, pluralistic groups (Horowitz 1985). He makes this assumption across various cases based primarily on the belief that identity is primarily flexible, contested and negotiated. Horowitz argues for an ‘integrationist’ approach which argues that by institutionalizing groups as separate

and distinctive, power sharing treats groups as monolithic wholes and runs the risk of deepening divisions (Horowitz 1985).

Similar to the essentialist approaches, instrumentalist views vary widely in the degree to which they assume that ethnicity can be manipulated and transformed by elites and ethnic entrepreneurs. However, this perspective is pervasive in critiques of the power-sharing model.

Constructivist Approach

The constructivist approach is often characterized as a means of bridging essentialist and instrumentalist views of ethnicity. This approach is argued to negotiate the two sides by acknowledging the material motivations for ethnic mobilization but also recognizing the ways in which ethnicity is deeply experienced by those who believe they belong to a particular community.

The constructivist approach asserts that ethnicities are not fixed but are constructed under specific historical and political circumstances (Lentz 1995, 305). This approach not only provides an alternative view of ethnicity in Africa based on a historical understanding of the developing of ethnic identities, but also provides a way to understand how ethnicity is contested. Constructivist approaches acknowledge ethnicity as both a cultural identity and a “discourse which arranges collective memory as a basis for political action” (Berman 1998, 312). Berman argues that before an ethnic collective can mobilize for material gains or other reasons there must be work of intellectual construction that imagines and invents histories, language, and culture; such work transfers the “emotional power of kinship and home” to larger communities (Berman 1998, 312). With this approach, one can consider both the long-term roots and the short-term triggers for ethnic mobilization; importantly however, such analysis, grounded in the belief that

identities are unfixed, maintains that behind ethnic unity and mobilization is a process of negotiations that continually redefine the politics of ethnicity (Berman 1998, 12).

The exploration of ethnicity as socially constructed gained legitimacy from research into the colonial and pre-colonial era that began to challenge the notion that Africa was always organized by tribal divisions. Indeed, research that analyzed ethnicity without imposing a frame of European understandings of ethnic identity have demonstrated the impossibility of producing a universal theory of ethnicity that would give credence to purely instrumental or essentialist approaches (Lentz 1995, 323). Lentz argues that such research has helped make it clear that the “processes of creating ethnic identity are historically and regionally specific; thus ethnicity can only be studied in historical perspective (Lentz 1995, 323). This historically analysis has illuminated the ways in which the study of ethnicity has been undertaken through a primordial lens or recently, with works assume that all conflict in Africa is economically motivated, an instrumentalist lens.

The constructivist lens presents an alternative means of examining the power-sharing versus social transformation dichotomy that is often characterized as solely between essentialists and instrumentalists. While the debate between essentialists and instrumentalists over power-sharing is based upon different conceptions of how political change happens and the extent to which it is possible, Dixon argues that a constructivist approach to this analysis creates room for considering the complexities and particularities of conflict situations (Dixon 2012, 107). By focusing on assessing the constraints and opportunities that face actors and will shape negotiations, a constructivist analysis can account for different contexts where the prospects for societal transformation may be different.

Considered in isolation, essentialist and instrumentalist theories of ethnicity provide ahistorical, decontextualized conceptions of identity. Moreover, these conceptions of identity are divorced from the actions of individuals – asserting that whether people subscribe to a particular conception of identity or not, it is in their nature of act according to these models. By assuming that the outcome of a particular institutional design flows in a linear matter from state to individuals and back, these theoretical conceptions paper over processes of negotiation and contestation that characterize the relationship between communities and the state. Challenging these assumptions therefore is an exercise in considering the processes and relationships that fill in the space between institutional design and institutional implementation.

Challenging Theoretical Assumptions

Generating an empirical understanding of how ethnicity is expressed and mobilized is important for reviewing the spread of power sharing agreements across the continent and for developing a critical policy discourse around the idea of power sharing. Three considerations are particularly important in evaluating agreements: first, the relevance of ethnicity as a determinant of communal behaviour; second, the degree to which power sharing is actually implemented by those who participate in agreements; and third, whether power sharing can lead to a “territorially uniform and locally meaningful peace process” (Mehler 2009, 7). These considerations provide a map for empirically evaluating the implementation of power sharing in Africa. This paper will reflect on these questions to consider what power sharing does in countries where political identities are varied and complex, and where the relationship between elites and the population is weak; considering how assumptions about ethnicity and the state preclude considerations about the various ways that identity can be expressed within a country and among people.

Tracing the historical trajectory of ethnicity and institutions

Tracing the historical development of the African state demonstrates the way in which over time, ethnicity and identity have been highly relevant to state institutions; in particular, identities have been constructed in relation to the structures of power at the state level with reference to concepts of state development in the west. Moreover, state institutions have evolved to manage the expression of identity. Following this relationship between states and identity from independence to present shows that institutional design and the promotion of a common unifying identity has been an important consideration for various countries. Following this historical trajectory would suggest that power sharing could be another iteration of the relationship between state and society in shaping communal identities. Rather than shaping identity, however, it appears that power sharing institutions are a reflection of the limited reach that African states have to affect local levels of authority and suppress insurgent movements and thus, managed the mobilization and expression of identity.

Examining the development of identity in Africa outside instrumentalist and essentialist assumptions shows that “the boundaries of self-identification have constantly mutated in line with the shifting configurations of space and power” (Nugent 2008, 922). In particular, a constructivist perspective can be used to trace the linkages between the evolution of African states and the expression of identity.

In the colonial era, three common themes of state and identity were pervasive: racial otherness, territorial designation, and the creation of legible cultural categories (Young 2012, p. 292). Each of these factors allowed Western states to pursue colonization and subsequently played a role in shaping the post-colonial African state. In particular, the legacy of colonial administration can be found in the ways in which elites and leaders carried ideas of racial

otherness, territorial designation and cultural categories into the period of independence. Nugent explains that the colonial thesis that Africans were born into “tribes” that were rooted in a timeless past, although not completely accurate, outlines a process that has left historical “stretch marks” that are evident to this day (Nugent 2008, 922). Young argues that Africans internalized each of these categorizations and transformed them into a discourse of “solidarity, pan-africanism, territorial nationalism, and ethnic community” (Young 2012, 292). African countries, therefore, embarked on decolonization with these themes as context for state- and nation-building as they gained independence.

In this context, the idea of the ‘normative’ state is important for understanding the development of African political institutions. Young describes the normative state as “an internationally dominant abstracted concept of the appropriate institutions forms, doctrines, and functions of a sovereign state” (Young 2012, 52). The notion of a development gap to be closed in the modern age, he argues, implied a “magnetic tug from idealized external models that purported to fulfill the vision of a life more abundant (Young 2012, 52). In this context, as the internationally community evolved in notions of what constituted a successful state, African states evolved.

During the post-independence period the conception of a state was, and largely still is, wrapped up with the idea that a state has a unitary identity conceived through the nation. Nationalism as a global force, Young argues, evolved in Africa with ideas of anticolonial revolt and the doctrine of self-determination. The struggle for self-determination was viewed as the doctrinal foundation for independence and in this process it was believed that “inhabitants of a colonial territory [would become] a people” (Young 2012, 308). However, once independence

was achieved the anticolonial foundation of states quickly receded into the background, and the “legitimation of the newly conquered institutions of rule became paramount” (Young 2012, 308).

The common conceptions of what nationhood means – historical narrative, shared culture and language, and shared religion – were not necessarily available as building blocks for the leaders of African states to achieve the level of unity suspected to create a viable state. Indeed, according to the international doctrine of nation-hood, if a state fell short of corresponding to a recognizable version of nationhood, then they were summoned to improve themselves (Young 2012, 309). A state was expected to be “one and indivisible” (Young 2012, 307). Without an easy means to produce homogeneity among the population, governments and leaders focused on territorial identity, defining the nation through the projection of cultural neutrality. Young notes, that states in Africa used a number of resources to cultivate a culturally neutral national identity: school curriculums, the iconography of currency, stamps and flags; ubiquitous presidential portraits; and national sports teams, all communicated a message of state presence and promoted attachment to the new nation. Ethnicity was viewed as legitimate within a purely cultural and private context apart from discourses of statehood (Young 2012, 312). Many states banned the formation of ethnically-articulated political parties in the independence period as a means of reinforcing the territorial nation as paramount in the state. The first ban on particularistic parties in an independent African state was adopted by Nkrumah of Ghana in the 1960s. Since then over twenty-one African countries have, at one time, instituted bans. Nationalism was also expressed through the promotion of one-party states. Nyerere propagated the idea of one party democracy asserting that “where this is one party, and that party is defined with the nation as a whole, the foundations of democracy are firmer than then can ever be where you have two or more parties,

each representing only a section of the community.” (Bogaards 2007, 178) In many countries, one group or coalition monopolized power in the name of promoting nation-hood.

During this time, many scholars argue nationalist projects effectively entrenched ideas of unity and nationhood among populations. Herbert Weiss argues that in the Congo, for example, the identification of the Congolese with the Congolese nation has become stronger despite “predatory leaders, years of war and political fragmentation, devastating poverty, ethnic and linguistic diversity and the virtual collapse of state services (Young 2012, 306). Surveys conducted across the Congo produced widespread agreement with the statement “the unity of Congo is more important than the interests of any particular group or ethnicity” (Young 2012, 306). In addition, in a series of Afrobarometer surveys across Africa in the late 1990s and early 2000s, 94% of those surveyed agreed with similar notions in their own countries (compared with 91% in Latin America as the next highest international comparison) (Young 2012, 306). Young notes that across Africa in the 1990s during periods of conflict, virtually all insurgents groups chose names for their parties that invoked the nation: the Sudan’s People’s Liberation Movement, The Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone, and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, for example.

Although examples of nationalist sentiments may still be salient, these identities do not preclude other expressions of identity. Indeed, communal identity can be situational and multilayered. Young argues that generally, many every day social encounters are devoid of ethnic content: the “activation of ethnic consciousness requires a context in which an outcome is perceived as determined by communal motivations” (Young 2012, 232). In particular, multiparty politics and democratization is often argued to have heightened ethnic and regional divisions that were “intensified and consolidated under colonialism, but blurred under one-party rule” (Osei-

Hywedie 2000, 1). Frahm argues that since the wave of democratization swept across the continent in the 1990's a "new nationalism" has emerged that has placed a significant part in reactivating ethnicity as ruling elites manipulate ethnicity to remain in power (Frahm 2012, 25). In this context "government by the people requires a definition of the people and thus raises issues of identity" (Frahm 2012, 25).

Through the process of integrating in the global economy, and undergoing processes of liberalization and democratization, African states became less able to maintain cohesion and stability between ethnic groups. The focus of states, in terms of integrating into the global economy, was to develop into modern economies and governments. Through the 1970s until the present doctrines of market supremacy promoted by international institutions and internalized by states greatly reduced the state capacity that post-independence states had accumulated. Over this period, the reach of states was greatly reduced so that in places the state became much less relevant to people's lives. In the post-cold war era, the incidence of intra-state conflict also increased significantly. Across the number of countries that were experiencing violence, Young notes that the most common factor to nearly all cases was the "weakening fabric of stateness" demonstrated by the inability of states to cope with initially small uprisings (Young 2002, 550).

All these circumstances contributed to power sharing being viewed as a viable means of dealing with the non-state actors challenging states for power and influence. As a tool of inclusion it promises to contain spoilers and mitigate grievances among the population by providing them with access to democratic representation. However, the weakening state inhibits the ability for a power sharing agreement to perform its function since it requires members of an elite coalition to represent cohesive, demarcated blocks of the population and concurrently, prevent state level issues from provoking conflict at the local level.

Evaluating the relevance and effectiveness of power sharing agreements: making the empirical connection

Reflecting on the historical development of African states counters many of the assumptions that power sharing is premised upon. First, in developing unified national identity, African states have been very successful at depicting ethnicity as lower form of communal identity compared with nationalism; however, at various levels and at different times ethnicity can become an important means for mobilization. Second, the limited reach of some African governments into the structures of power within local communities calls into question the efficacy of implementing power sharing agreements. Whether an agreement can alter core power relations and informal structures of authority depends on the relationship between the state and the population and the interests of elites in supporting peace and stability.

In Lijphart's formulation of power sharing, the relationship between elites and the population is how power sharing acts as a tool of conflict mitigation. He argues that in order for power sharing to be successful, elites have to cooperate between themselves while managing their respective cohesive blocs (Lijphart 2008). This kind of political organization necessitates connections that run between elites and the population that would allow them to effectively represent and control their respective groups. The context of weakening ties between local levels of organization and authority and the state suggests that this assumption may be inapplicable in many countries.

Generating an empirical understanding of how ethnicity is expressed and mobilized is clearly important for reviewing the spread of power-sharing agreements across the continent and developing a critical policy discourse around the idea of power sharing. Mehler, looking outside the restricted framework of the assumptions underpinning power-sharing, argues that three

considerations merit deeper reflection in order to better understand the mechanics of power-sharing agreements: First, Mehler argues the nature of power sharing agreements points to the fact that ethnicity is not a factor that determines the structure of power sharing institutions. Political and military power-sharing are the most prominent dimension of power-sharing and territorial elements in power-sharing are rare (Mehler 2009, 5). This is notable given the frequent assumption that African civil wars are ethno-regional in essence, which would necessitate territorial devices to deal with the main underlying problem (Mehler 2009, 5) This absence, he argues, requires examining whether the assumption is wrong or whether the institutional ingenuity to generate appropriate agreements is missing (Mehler 2009, 5). Second, Mehler questions the extent or degree of power sharing that is either included in the agreement or is actually practiced. For example, Zimbabwe's Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Murambara of one wing of the once oppositional Movement of Democratic Change is quoted as saying "you can see that we are not in full control. We are not exactly in charge..." (Mehler 2009, 6). This example demonstrates the role African leaders play in determining how a power sharing agreement will operate and how transformative it will be. If leaders are unwilling to cede power and influence it is unlikely that a power sharing agreement will produce a fully functioning inclusive democracy. The last two aspects he highlights are related to the previous two. He notes that among understandings of power-sharing the assumption of most literature is that the sharing of national power leads to "territorially uniform and locally meaningful peace process" (Mehler 2009, 7). Whether power-sharing at the elite level has any effect on local processes of governance and authority however has not been studied empirically. He asks the question "Who is defining the constitutive parts of the polity? Who is defining their group boundaries? Who is entitled to speak for such a community?" (Mehler 2009, 38).

Evaluating Ethnicity

While the context of each case is different much evidence has pointed to the fact that across countries in Africa assumptions about the organization of identity are misinformed. Within the model of power-sharing it is assumed that political parties and their leaders are legitimate representatives of their respective populations. Voting and party formation are assumed to be a mere function of ethnic demography that therefore requires managing. However, research into political parties and elections has shown that societal cleavages rarely translate directly into electoral politics. Phillip Keefer analyses this assumption testing whether ethnicity is the most salient dimension of political competition; he test whether ethnic groups disproportionately favour one party over another and whether ethnic groups express partisan preference more than members of other groups. Using data from Afrobarometer surveys conducted in 16 countries, Keefer showed that respondents from clustered ethnic groups (which only represented 25% of respondents) are not substantially more likely to express a partisan preference than respondents from non-clustered parties (Keefer 2010, 2). A largely fraction of respondents, moreover, indicated that they are “not close to any party” but showed that other determinents of partisan preference such as vote buying were more relevant determinants of electoral mobilization (Keefer 2010, 2). Moreover, the mushrooming of dominant parties in many highly ethnically heterogeneous countries that have won vast absolute majorities is in sharp contrast with the respective ethnic composition of many of these countries (Basedau and Stroh 2012, 7). Moreover, ethnic affiliation is likely to evolve depending on different time points. Eifert, Miguel and Posner show that respondents to Afrobarometer surveys were 1.8% more likely to identify themselves ethnically rather than other social categorizations for every month closer to a competitive election (Keefer 2010).

In addition, the concept that ethnicity is organized into cohesive, fixed blocs has been questioned by Erdmann who argues that the conception that African parties were ‘mass parties’ based on the European mass party model failed to cope with African realities. Political scientists were blinded by the claims of party politicians of the level of support they enjoyed within their respective communities. Within this research a “mass or a mobilization momentum has been mistaken for a mass or mobilizational nature of parties” (Erdmann 2007, 11). He argues that ultimately, there is no clear cut pattern of how ethnicity affects and structures party formation. This analysis can only be undertaken in historical perspective, taking the particular contingencies of each case into account. Ignoring informal political in this context results in “descriptive impoverishment” generating inadequate understanding of how political parties operate and consequently, how electoral systems could work to mitigate conflict.

The analysis provided by Erdmann and Keefer demonstrates that there is no distinctive relationship between elites and the population that is premised on ethnic organization. Ethnicity is neither salient as a determinant of elections nor is it salient as a determinant of party formation. From this perspective, the model of power sharing would not be feasible given that ethnicity would not be a viable organizing structure to determine what actors to include in an agreement and which populations can be afforded representation and autonomy. This would suggest that it since the relationship between state and society is not organized by ethnicity it is necessary to consider how state society relationships are organized to consider the effect of the implementation of power sharing agreements.

Democratic Republic of Congo

In the case of the DRC, the Global Accord was signed by the main belligerents from the Lusaka accords in 1999 as the basis for a Constitution of the Transitional Government adopted

by referendum in 2003. It was signed by the government the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (RCD), the Mouvement pour la libération du Congo (MLC) – civil society (forces vives), the political opposition, the RCD-Mouvement libération (RCD-ML), RCD-National (RCD-N) and the Mayi-Mayi (in that order). The African Union and the United Nations were signatories. However, by 2002 the dynamics that were present during the Lusaka agreement were no longer salient. Important national political figures and their movements that gained prominence after 1999 including Etienne Tshisekedi and the *Union démocratique pour le progrès social* were excluded as well as other insurgent groups who were later able to derail the process through violence. Lemarchand argues that the power-sharing aspects of the Global Accord were forms of co-optation rather than inclusion given that loyalty to the regime was a primary determinant of participation in the talks and the agreement (Lemarchand 2005, 3). Similarly, Tull and Mehler make the argument that members of the RDC were largely motivated by political and economic aspirations and were therefore eager to take advantage of opportunities to obtain government positions (Tull and Mehler 2005, 378). Their leadership was a function, Tull and Mehler argue, of ‘elite recycling,’ whereby all RDC leaders had served formerly in senior government positions under Mobutu and Kabila (Tull and Mehler 2005, 378). Moreover, they note that the RDC had poor records of governance in the territories they controlled (Tull and Mehler 2005, 379). Since March 2013, tensions in the region have been increasing, leading the Security Council to deploy an intervention brigade within the existing UN peacekeeping force in DRC (MONUSCO) to carry out targeted offensive operations with or without the FARDC, against armed groups that threaten peace in the eastern part of the country (Vogel, July 19 2013). This case, gives credence to the argument that ethnicity is not a salient factor in determining who the relevant actors are in a given power sharing agreement. As such it is not clear that a model of power sharing in this

kind of circumstance can account for who has access to government and whether they represent, democratically, a bloc of particular interests.

Evaluating State Capacity and Core Power Relations

Young notes that in efforts to consider the effect of cultural diversity on political organization, identity politics literature does not

“systematically incorporate state capacity into its analytical vision, focusing instead upon the social pathologies shaping extreme forms of communal mobilization, or searching for policy formulas capable of managing cultural diversity” (Young 2002, p. 536).

Incorporating analysis of the evolution of African states into the study of power sharing renders the assumptions about elite influence and institutional change problematic. Sriram and Zahar argue that the risks associated with power sharing are particularly acute in the context of weak states whose institutions can neither accommodate the grievances of new players nor can effectively manage the emergence of competing interests and groups (Sriram and Zahar 2009). In such circumstances, there are not necessarily incentives that would encourage actors to participate positively and genuinely in power sharing processes.

Sierra Leone.

For example, in the 1999 Lomé Accord in Sierra Leone, The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) had little interest in sustaining a power sharing model. They were included in a number of leadership positions with access to resources and inclusion within state security forces, however they already had attained control over many resources and were uninterested in broader political rule (Sriram and Zahar 2009, 24) In this context, the limited reach of the state meant that access to state power was not an attractive enough incentive to encourage members of the RUF to end conflict.

Rwanda

Similarly, in Rwanda, power was distributed equally in the cabinet between parties to shift the balance of forces in the cabinet to the advantage of the RPF and the moderate Hutu Opposition parties. The extreme Hutu leaders perceived the outcome of the Arusha agreement to be against their interests and began working to co-opt Hutu moderates and develop means of force. These tensions contributed to the fateful decision of Hutu extremists to launch a concerted program of genocide. In the case of Rwanda, Lemarchand notes that among other factors, there was little reason for the elites to cooperate in good faith given their divergent positions, and the atmosphere of serious insecurity. The context of Rwanda, he argues, demonstrates how a peace accord can be civil war by other means given that the parties used the brief halt in fighting to improve their military position (Lemarchand 2006, 6).

Burundi

The case of Burundi demonstrates the inability of power sharing agreements in some cases to alter the relations of power within a state. Burundi is has remained stable and is described as the most successful case on the continent (Lemarchand 2006; Curtis 2013). However, this case demonstrates that it is not obvious that power sharing can effectively alter the core power relations within a country in order to change the dynamics of conflict. Curtis argues that the notion that Burundi has been a successful case of power sharing merely relates to the stability that the country has enjoyed based on state control rather than liberal governance. She argues that Burundian leaders re-appropriated and re-inscribed ideas and strategies of peace building to further their own authority and control. The Burundian case, she argues, shows that power sharing institutions and practices are not the central determinants for future violence and non-violence. Despite the power sharing agreement, in Burundi the nature of the state, she argues, remains the same including the central position of violence and control within in (Curtis 2013, 87). She also makes the argument that the aftermath of the power-sharing agreement

demonstrates the limits of analyses that focus on ethnicity as the cause of conflict and the key to solving conflicts. In Burundi, she argues, the perceived potential of ethnic violence will continue to “serve as a justification for the use of force and authoritarian practices” (Curtis 2013, 91).

Building meaningful peace

Ultimately, the power sharing model can be evaluated based on whether it can effectively mitigate conflict and separate warring parties. As argued above however power sharing is implemented in the context of loosely organized groups and weak state-society relations. In Kenya and Zimbabwe the historical development of state society relations impacts the relevance of the power sharing agreement to processes of peace and democracy.

Kenya and Zimbabwe

The agreements in Kenya and Zimbabwe are cited as evidence that the push for power-sharing has gone far beyond a mechanism for conflict management in deeply divided societies (Cheeseman and Tendi 2010; Cheeseman 2011). In Kenya, the power-sharing agreement came after a disputed election sparked a wave of violence in which 1,000 people were killed and 300,000 were chased from their homes. The Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom at the time, David Miliband, urged the country’s leaders to “agree to a power-sharing Cabinet that will serve Kenyans effectively in order that the country can move forward and start to deal with the underlying issues that fuelled so much of the violence in the post-election period” (Cheeseman and Tendi 2010, 204). The agreement, signed in March 2008, has been described as largely successful for ending violence in Kenya. Similarly, in 2008 in Zimbabwe the ruling party resorted to repression between the first and second round of elections. Robert Mugabe was urged to sign a power-sharing agreement with his opponent Morgan Tsvangirai to avoid further violence and promote more inclusive democracy.

In comparing both countries Cheeseman and Tendi show that power sharing has developed differently in each country due to historical patterns of the largest political parties as well as patterns of civil-military relations and political competition. In Zimbabwe, they note, power-sharing is largely ineffective due to the inability of elites to cooperate given historical trajectories of opposition and antagonism. In particular, Mugabe amassed the support of the military through progressive militarisation of the government and promoted a deeply divisive use of an exclusive ‘patriotic history’ as well as political violence, fostering hostile elite relations (Cheeseman and Tendi 2010, 206). Moreover, the opposition party, Movement for Democratic Change, positioned as the party of ‘victimhood’ further undermined any potential for common ground between the government and the opposition. After signing the agreement to share power, ZANU-PF refused to make space for new political players and effectively implement the agreement, effectively maintaining their control of the country. In Kenya, a history of inclusive single-party rule together with the “complex nature of the conflict” allowed for more intra-elite understanding and trust than in Zimbabwe. Moreover, in Kenya there were no discernible blocs of victims or perpetrators given that members of all the main parties stand accused of being perpetrators. In this circumstance, leaders used unity government to forge alliances and protect their own positions. In both countries, Tendi and Cheeseman make the case that despite differences, the prospects for meaningful reform look equally bleak. While Zimbabwe has demonstrated an example of ‘sham’ power sharing, Kenya has produced a government which is largely unaccountable to the population and to the law. Most recently in Zimbabwe, Mugabe has refused to cooperate with Tsvangirai over the provision of elections. These examples, they argue create conditions resembling the days of the one-party state, where power-sharing can be manipulated to serve incumbents – potentially postponing conflict rather than resolving it.

Mehler argues, that local sustainability might be the real test of whether power sharing will effectively contain violence. In Kenya, for example, Mehler notes that no single provision of the power-sharing agreement addressed the local level of security provision in the hardest-hit zones of conflict. Moreover, in few cases where agreements were negotiated was there any effort to ask communities about their sense of issues and the legitimacy of those sitting at negotiation tables (Mehler 2009, 471). In the context of negotiations between warring parties and with the mediation of international actors, rarely do any parties consider the defining group boundaries or the representatives of each community. Indeed, he notes that despite the number of ineffective agreements, and unresolved issues related to understanding how constitutive parts of the community can be defined, power-sharing remains in vogue and top positions in power-sharing governments go to groups represented at the negotiation table – warring parties (Mehler 2009, 471).

Most recently in the Central African Republic, the collapse of the Libreville power-sharing Accord was followed by a coup led by the Seleka rebel coalition. The ousting of President Francois Bozize was condemned by the United Nations and the Africa Union but in a “sign of pragmatism, the United States, France and Chad called on the insurgents to respect a January peace deal creating a unity government” (Aboa and Ngoupana, March 23 2013). Leaders of the rebels have since pledged to name a power-sharing government in a bid to defuse international criticism (Aboa and Ngoupana, March 23 2013).

What do power sharing agreements do?

These cases show that the implementation of power sharing and the inability of such agreements to act as they are intended do is related to the fact that ethnic categories are not fixed entities that could determine of inclusion of parties within power sharing agreements; the level of

state capacity and willingness to pursue peace and stability; and the ability of the agreements to reach beyond the level of elites to great meaningful, territorially uniform peace processes. These cases also suggest that in spite of these failures, there are a number of things that power sharing agreements successfully do. As Cheeseman notes there are a number of benefits of power sharing models that make them acceptable for African governments (Cheeseman 2011, 336-337). Unity governments have typically allowed incumbent presidents to stand in power and in some cases effectively recreated the dynamics of one-party states. Cheeseman and Tendi argue that power sharing in Kenya and Zimbabwe has “turn[ed] back the clock to the days of the one party state and the politics of forced inclusion... rather than create space for reform coalitions” (Cheeseman 2010, 207).

Similarly, Tull and Mehler argue that over the long term, power sharing as a solution that is elite-centered and driven by individual material interests leaves a legacy of strong incentives to turn to arms in order to achieve power or influence. In the process of negotiating agreements, generally only those present at the table can count on being substantively included. In many peace agreements, government and individual rebel movements sign the final document without including civilian parties and other actors (Mehler 2009, 462). Indeed, agreements have the potential to further alienate the relations between the state and the population. LeVan notes that unity governments reduce the ability of voters to punish or reward the performance of politicians, diminishing the accountability of the system. Similarly, Sriram and Zahar, argue that not only will power sharing agreements fail to build peace and democracy but power sharing arrangements tend to result in states that are not responsive to the needs of the citizenry for security in way that may undermine human security and state legitimacy (Sriram and Zahar 2009, 12).

From a gender perspective, Byrne and McCulloch argue that the practice of power sharing is generally excludes the participation of women. They argue that despite the focus on identities in power-sharing literature little attention is paid to the dimensions of difference beyond ethno-nation identities (Byrne and McCulloch 2012, 567). In power sharing agreements where conflict protagonists are the main parties, there tends to be little space for representing women. They give the example of Burundi, where similarly to Curtis, they argue that despite the inclusion of women through a quota system core power relations are untouched. The upper echelons of the major parties are male dominated and there still exists a tendency to see women as illegitimate or token politicians (Byrne and McCulloch 2012, 575)

In many ways as an institution that tends to preserve dominant power structure, exclude civilian participation, and therefore protect the stability of the status quo, power sharing is a very attractive solution to conflict for leaders looking to maintain access to power. In concert with the promotion of the model by the international community, power sharing enables leaders to pursue their interests while championing peace, inclusion and democracy.

Conclusions

Indeed, power sharing does not seem to lead states onto paths of peacefully proportioning access to power, giving groups segmental autonomy, generating democratically based elite relations, and providing minority. Instead the model is bolstered by the assumptions of ethnicity, democracy and peace building. Essentialist and instrumentalist theories of ethnicity provide ahistorical, decontextualized conceptions of identity applying overly deterministic evaluations of the outcomes of institutional design in societies and the outcomes of social heterogeneity. In this analysis the nuances of the actors, the historical relationship between state and society and the preferences and interests of civilians are lost. As the example in the DRC demonstrated, parties

are not formed upon clearly demarcated segments of the population; instead, interests and relations evolve complicating the provision of a static power sharing model.

Moreover, the model is bolstered by conceptions of the state and elites which assumes that that through institutional design, the state can shape the actions of groups within it to incentivise peaceful behaviour. However, in the context of state weakness, these connections are tenuous. As demonstrated Sierra Leone where the governing party did not have the means to prevent the RUF from benefiting from continued conflict. This assumption also hides the fact that with few connections between civilians and the state there are limited accountability regimes for power sharing agreements. In Burundi, this meant that despite the extensive power sharing provisions the core of power relations were largely untouched. Moreover, in Kenya and Zimbabwe, entrenched elite norms empowered by power sharing allowed the state to govern with little recourse to the population. Indeed, by assuming that the outcome of a particular institutional design flows in a linear matter from state to individuals and back, these theoretical conceptions paper over processes of negotiation and contestation that characterize the relationship between communities and the state.

Available empirical research about the implementation of power sharing agreements has shown that power sharing has rarely produced a fully functioning, stable democratic and inclusive system of government. Indeed, Lemarchand has described Africa as a “graveyard” of consociational experiments. Nonetheless, the arrangements are still being promoted as evidenced by recent developments in Central African Republic.

It is clear that analyses that are overly dependent on the theoretical assumptions about ethnicity in Africa or about the state preclude considerations of complexity and nuance that are important

to understanding political processes within states. From this perspective, the practice of peace building and the implementation of power sharing as the 'in vogue' technology of peace is highly influenced by the conception of a 'normative state.' This concept obscures an authentic understanding of political processes.

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