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Ethnic Minority Rule and Prospects for Violent Conflicts

A contribution to research exploring power transition theory and
failed democratization processes

Øystein Bøhler

Student number 215988

Supervisor

Pål Hermond Bakka

Master thesis

Department of Comparative Politics

Faculty of Social Science

UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

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Author: Øystein Bøhler

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Abstract

In our age of democratization, ethnic minority rule is regarded as one of the least legitimate form of governance. Authoritarian regimes headed by ethnic minorities are thus targeted by promoters of democracy attempting to ignite transitions of power. However, power transitions are characterized by periods of political instability, which, if allowed to turn violent, may thwart well-intended democratic incentives. This thesis explores the nature of ethnic minority rule, and subsequently, discusses the potential of the onset of violent conflict caused due to this distinctive form of governance.

The thesis is conducted by means of literature review, initially, by giving an account of ethnic conflict theory, followed by a description of ethnic minority rule and the prevalence of such. This account constitutes a solid foundation on which I seek to base my principal discussion of the extent to which ethnic minority regimes represent an increased risk of violent outbreak when threatened by power transition. I conduct the discussion by combining recognized theories with more recent empirical findings.

Although well regarded theories seem to support a positive relation between ethnic minority rule and violent conflict onset, the relation is not, per se, supported by empirical studies. Rather than giving explicit support to the hypothesis in question, my thesis suggests a significant relation between the relative size of the ethnic group in power and the excluded “rest”. The findings assume more conflict outbreaks, characterized by higher intensity, as the size of the ethnic group in power decreases. My thesis further highlights distinctive characteristics of both the ruling elite and the excluded party which causes increased risks of violent outbreaks. In this regard, the most significant features appear to be related to the level of cohesion and experiences of resent loss of power amongst the excluded party.

In the final chapter I relate my findings to the practical work of policy makers and democracy promoters, encouraging further efforts to increase the size of ruling coalitions.

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1 Introduction

Some regime transitions succeed and lead to democratization; others fail dramatically and cause extensive human suffering and death. Whereas much literature covers specific features of the processes taking place during democratic transitions (O'Donnell 1986; Skaar 1999; Carothers 2002 etc.), I choose to target one specific subset of regimes in order to analyze their propensity to resort to violence when threatened by transition. Transitions involve high level of uncertainty as the positions of old elites must be challenged in order to introduce a democratic system of governance (O'Donnell 1986: 3-5). Accordingly, my thesis relates to the regrettable circumstances where democratic transitions turn bad and cause violent outbreaks and civil conflicts rather than democracy. Hence, my thesis is a contribution to research exploring power transition theory. The entities forming my subset encompass authoritarian regimes headed by an ethnic minority. By presenting an analysis highlighting these regimes, I wish to address one of several factors which may cause transition processes to fail due to civil conflict outbreaks. During my analysis I argue that the extent to which this subset of regimes represents increased risk of civil conflict is relevant to our perception of how a potential democratic transition may play out in states with the given characteristics.

1.1 Ethnic minority rule

The factor of ethnicity is increasingly subjected to attention from researchers of conflict science, some even claiming that we are in the age of ethno-nationalist conflicts (Wimmer et al 2009). In the wake of this assumption, it has been suggested that the ethnic composition of the ruling party may be of importance to the occurrence of violent conflicts. In the following I wish to present an analysis considering minority rule and the occurrence of violent conflicts.

Ethnic minority rule takes place when an ethnic group representing a demographic minority dominates the political, economic or cultural power of the state. Such regimes may appear unproblematic in itself, however, the phrase «minority rule» is not likely to evoke particularly good feelings; after all, it was precisely this phrase which was used to categorize the deeply racist and illegitimate apartheid regime of South Africa. It was called “the white minority rule”. The western ideal of “the nation” perceives the nation as a numerical majority, formed

by people who share various fundamental attributes of culture, be it ethnicity, language religion or shared descent. Minorities, in this perspective, are perceived as weaker groups entitled to various measures of protection by the majority. Due to this comprehension of the ideal nation, minority rule may be perceived as an illogical breach to the natural order and thereby a source of much evil. Indeed, various aspects of minority rule are hardly compatible with democratic values. Western promoters of democratization would deem minority regimes as illegitimate due to, amongst others, lack of equal suffrage. After all, democratic legitimacy of governance lies in the will of the people, and when the politics of the ruling minority contradicts the mandate of the majority, the composition of the regime may very well turn into a destabilizing factor. However, minority rule may also provide democratic values, such as protection of minority groups and promotion of equality amongst citizens. In certain contexts, where societies are characterized by deep ethnic divisions, minority rule may be accounted for as a stabilizing factor (Horowitz 1993: 29).

While some scholars argue that minority rule does not represent increased risk of violence, others claim that certain features characterizing these regimes, and possible circumstances in which their politics plays out, may result in an increased risk of violent outbreaks. This debate has led me to the construction of the following hypothesis:

H1: Authoritarian regimes, rooted in an ethnic minority, represent an increased risk of violent civil conflicts compared to authoritarian regimes not rooted in an ethnic minority.

1.2 Defining the analysis

How I choose to delimit my analysis is largely determined by the constraints applied by the targeted literature, and given delimitations of significance will be addressed parallel to the citation of the studies. Nevertheless, an account for certain delimitations related to the scope of my analysis are required in the initial phase.

Regimes

As it follows from my hypothesis, I will compare *authoritarian* regimes, by such I refer to all regimes not defined as democracies by the Polity IV data set. The Polity IV index rates states

from -10 to 10, according to level of democratization. States rated below 5 is considered non-democratic by the Polity IV index (Marshall et al 2002). This exclusion of democracies is due to the different political dynamics which is found in democracies versus autocracies. In respect to minority rule, democracies seem to have weak, but adverse effects on the level of violence compared to authoritarian minority regimes (Heger and Salehyen 2007). Studies further show that democracies in general experience fewer violent outbreaks than do autocracies, and in situations where conflicts do occur, they seem develop less violently. In fact, rather than economy or military strength, the variable of democracy seems to be most strongly correlated with less deadly conflicts and battle related deaths (Lacina 2006). Due to these substantial differences, I find it appropriate to delimit the analysis to regard only authoritarian regimes in order to avoid comparing apples to pears.

Minority rule

Minority rule refers to an ethnic minority group which totals less than 50 % of the demographic share of a state, but yet holds overwhelming political, economic or cultural power. The group may either rule another ethnic majority group, or it may rule subordinated minority groups which all together constitutes the majority.

Ethnic group

A modern definition of *ethnic group* was first defined by the sociologist Max Weber (1920), and has later been refined by Hutchinson and Smith (1996: 6). The definition states that an ethnic group is:

“(...) a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more element of a common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity”

Horowitz (1985; 52) holds that this myth by no means must be based in reality, however the individuals of the group must share a common understanding of that their contemporary distinctiveness is a product of the their collective ancestry. This definition, or close derivatives of it, has formed the bases for the empirical studies referred to in this thesis.

Violent outbreaks

Violent outbreaks refer to situations where human lives are lost, and where the regime is involved, either as the abuser or abused. This includes conflicts which take place between two warring parties, related to separatism or coup of state power. It further involves a regime's

violent repression or mass killings against a seemingly passive population. The definition excludes violent occurrences where the regime does not play an active part, and conflicts causing less than 25 battle related deaths.

2 Methodology

2.1 Literature review

The hypothesis in question will be examined by the means of a literature review. Whereas previous research encompass contextual analyses and theories related to the phenomenon of minority rule, more recent research has explored the empirical relation between minority rule and a possible rise in the level of violent outbreaks. By performing a literature review I wish to combine those theories with recent empirical findings in an attempt to offer a holistic comprehension of the phenomenon and its relation to violence.

In researching the validity of my hypothesis I have performed a literature search to map the most relevant studies on the matter. Thus, the validity of my thesis is determined by my ability to find relevant studies, and to use the arguments they provide correctly. Consequently, I realize that my arguments are vulnerable to methodological weaknesses and errors in the literature I choose to cite. However, I have strived to account for such errors by citing reputable researchers and literature published in well-established journals. In the following chapter, I wish to answer the questions of *why* I choose to study the given subject, *what* I have done, and *how* I have reached my arguments and conclusions.

2.2 Ethnic conflict

Research processing ethnic conflict covers a broad specter of scientific disciplines; amongst them are philosophy, economy, history, social science and political science. The amount of research literature conducted in attempts to shed light on the topic vastly exceeds the prospect of my thesis. However, an analysis of ethnic minority rule will require basic insights into ethnic conflict theory. Scholars initially analyzing the linkage between ethnic cleavage and conflict did so from a sociological perspective, mainly by examining the composition of ethnic groups (Horowitz 1985: 95). Despite the long traditions of research on ethnicity, it was not until the 1970s that scholars started to take interest in investigating possibilities of characterizing majorities by ethnicity, and that a politically dominant group could be represented by a minority (e.g. Schermerhorn 1970). Later, political scientists started to

explore the phenomenon by comparing interethnic relations to international relations. Although similarities could be found, Horowitz stated that theorizing ethnic conflict upon theories of international conflict would be to base one unknown theory upon another (Horowitz 1985; 95). Hence, Horowitz claimed that a more complex model for understanding ethnic conflict was needed. However, scientists have not yet agreed upon a satisfactory theoretical explanation for ethnic conflict. Some researchers hold that ethnic conflict cannot have common explanations as it is a principally cultural conflict, and thus needs individual explanations (Vanhanen 1999). Nevertheless, scholars have produced numerous methods designed to categorize the various theories of ethnic conflict, arguing that the complexity of the matter requires a combination of theories. For the purpose of analyzing conflict related to minority rule, I wish to draw upon the approach of Haklai (2000). Haklai categorizes the theories of ethnic conflict in three perspectives; the cultural, the modernistic, and the psychological approach. Such broad perspective is desirable as ethnic conflicts are highly complex, and a single approach will most often prove insufficient. Hence, I wish to pursue the threefold approach, based on Haklai's model, in my account for ethnic conflict theory.

2.2.1 The threefold approach

By analyzing societies' or certain group's affiliations to its ethnic origins, we may be able to determine whether the cultural, the modernistic or the psychological approach will serve us best in understanding the context in which a violent outbreak may occur. The understanding of this context is of absolute necessity as it will allow us to further investigate possible violent-promoting factors identified through the recent empirical research conducted in the last decade. I will thus discuss the characteristics related to the three different types of ethnic affiliations, which are believed to increase the risk of violence, and further, the form and severity of the violence which we may expect.

2.2.2 Ethnic minority rule

Research exploring the phenomenon of ethnic minority rule as a conflict variable has traditionally focused on ethnic white minority rule in formerly colonized African states. Extensive qualitative research has thus been conducted on cases like South Africa, Rhodesia and Zimbabwe (Toit 1995). These regimes, however, are considered an extension of colonial rule, and will therefore not be included in the scope this analysis. With some notable exceptions, it seems like researchers have until recently largely overlooked the consequences

of dominant minorities in conflict. However, Haklai (2000) has conducted a conceptual analysis of ethnic minority rule, built on research materials available prior to 1997. In conceptualizing minority rules, Haklai surveys a set of preconditions necessary for a minority group to appear, seek political power and, ultimately, maintain its leading position. These required preconditions constitute the context in which the minority group governs, and thus proves to be determining factors for the risk of violent outbreaks. Haklai holds that minority rule does not appear randomly, and that they will not appear without the presence of the given preconditions. This conceptual comprehension will serve as the basis for my understanding of minority rule. Whereas Haklai outlines the concept of minority rule, I wish to investigate the extent to which the phenomenon increases the risk of armed conflict and violence. As conflict theory allows us to categorize different sorts of ethnic affiliations, and subsequently identify possible violence-promoting aspects of the given categories, we may also use Haklai's preconditions for minority rule, in conjunction with the new empirical research to identify features likely to increase the risk of violence.

2.2.3 Recent empirical research

Minority rule as a conflict variable was not subjected to empirical analyses before the 21st Century, after the conclusion of Haklai's analysis. However, within the last decade, numerous studies have been made available, presenting different aspects of statistical correlations between minority rule and the appearance of various forms of violence. The perspectives, as well as the findings, seem to differ. Such variations may be due to differences in the encoding of data, or varying angles of approach. By discussing these new finding in light of Haklai's conceptual understanding of minority rule, I wish to offer a more holistic picture allowing us to recognize the situations characterized by increased risk of violence, and further, what sorts of violence we may expect. The issues subjected to recent empirical studies address both minority rule controlling a subordinated majority, and minority rule where there are no majority groups, but rather a set of minorities which together constitutes the majority. It further explores the risks of civil war, armed conflicts, genocides and the severity of such.

The variety in perspectives and findings in the literature will help me to offer a more complete discussion regarding the validity of my hypothesis. However, at the same time, it requires conscious considerations with respect to the selection of literature. All findings referred to in this thesis are well documented and published by well-established journals. The selection of

literature is primarily confined by the wording of my hypothesis, and by the limitations provided in my definition of terms.

Minority rule over a majority is a rare event, causing substantial challenges to the reliability of the statistical inferences (Fearon 2007). Nevertheless, by implementing the available findings in well-established theories, I hope to minimize the impact of statistical weaknesses. Additionally, quantitative research investigating minority rule where there is no majority group enjoys a much larger set of entities, making the findings less vulnerable to statistical fallacies. However, the concept of an ethnic minority ruling a distinct ethnic majority group differs from an ethnic minority ruling a collection of other minority groups. Hence, the two forms of ethnic minority rule will consequently be kept apart during my discussion.

2.3 Hermeneutical reflections

As I wish to perform my research based on available literature, I find it appropriate to reflect upon the possible bias related to my personal comprehension of the matter and how this may affect my interpretation of the cited literature. Such process of text interpretation may be referred to as “hermeneutics”. The understanding of modern hermeneutics is most famously defined by Hans-Georg Gadamer, in his principal work “Wahrheit und Methode” (1960). In his work, Gadamer confronts the 1800s hermeneutics, which claimed that one could gain insight of objective truth by following a specific methodological approach. He claims that as we are conditioned by history, there is no objective or unbiased truth. Hence, Gadamer strongly opposes the belief that scientific method is a guarantee for truth. However, this does not imply that methodology is not important, but rather that we ought to acknowledge the limits to what scientific research may be able to achieve. In my research I base my analysis on various written texts in an effort to get closer to a better understanding of the issue. In doing so, I am aware that I will not reach absolute truth, as the literature I choose to analyze is subjected to the authors’ interpretation of reality, and subsequently, as my understanding of the same literature is conditioned by my personal interpretation. Nevertheless, also central to Gadamer’s opposition is the positive aspect of a researcher’s bias. He claims that the very same bias which makes it impossible to gain absolute truth is, in fact, a precondition to develop further insights. As I write, I will always explain what I do not know with basis in what I do know (Gadamer 1960, reproduced by Lægveid and Skorgen 2001: 115-134). Hence

my bias constitutes a necessary horizon of understanding on which I may base further knowledge. I can hardly reflect over other researchers' bias, however, what I can do, is to shed light on my own. By doing so, I wish to increase the transparency of the hermeneutical processes taking place as I conduct my research.

2.4 The choice of topic and personal preferences

In the article «Syria: Prospects for Transition from Minority to Majority Rule», Professor Mark N. Katz suggests that one of the key factors for Syria to end up in the current situation of mass violence, is the regimes affiliation to a minority group, namely the Alawites. He claims that “(...)in a country with a dictatorship rooted in an ethnic and/or religious minority, the transition from minority authoritarian to either democratic or majoritarian authoritarian rule upends the existing pattern of ethnic/religious dominance (...). Ruling minorities, then, are especially reluctant to allow transition to majority rule for fear that they will lose everything (...)” (Katz 2012).

I find this factor highly interesting and relevant in explaining why the revolution in Syria turned into a full scale civil war, whereas the authoritarian rulers of Tunisia and Egypt relatively quickly acquiesced to the downfall of their respective regimes. However, Katz did not refer to theory or empirical data in order to back his argument. This made me curious about whether it could be found any general pattern of correlation between minority rule and violent outbreaks. After performing an initiative search in the available literature, I found various studies taking different perspectives, and thus reaching different conclusions. However, I did not succeed in finding secondary literature reviewing findings of the rich empirical research conducted the last decade.

The initial reason leading me to form the given hypothesis was my genuine interest in Syrian politics due to my personal experiences from the country prior to the ongoing war. I was fascinated by the minority dominated regime's ability to execute close to total control over its citizens, to the extent that I believed the regime would continue its rule for the foreseeable future. My assumptions were proven dramatically wrong as the country fell into an increasingly brutal war. Thus, my personal interests and experiences related to the authoritarian Syrian regime inspired me to form my hypothesis. However, the same

experiences may cause biased preconceptions, which in turn may affect my ability to search for literature, and interpret it in fully objective manners. Still, my concern is to conduct my thesis, and present my arguments in the most balanced and objective manner.

2.5 Disposition

In the following chapter, I wish to offer a theoretical framework, conceptualizing ethnic conflict and ethnic minority rule. In doing so, I will initially present different approaches in which we may understand *ethnic conflict*. Subsequently, I will present a set of preconditions necessary for an ethnic minority rule to appear and sustain its dominant position. The latter section will also contain a list of examples and a presentation of the current and future positions of these regimes. Chapter 4 offers a discussion linking theories presented in the foregoing chapter of contextual analyses with more recent hypothesis of the phenomenon and its potential violence-promoting qualities. In Chapter 5 I present empirical findings related to the principal hypotheses discussed in Chapter 3 and 4. Chapter 6 will offer a conclusion, answering my initial hypothesis, and position my thesis in practical terms.

3 Theoretical frameworks

3.1 Mapping the context of ethnic conflict

In order to present a holistic discussion related to the risk of violent outbreaks under ethnic minority regimes, a conceptual analysis of “ethnic conflict” and “minority rule” is required. “Ethnicity” as a conflict variable has been subjected to much research. This research has produced numerous theories and different methods to classify them, mostly aiming to explain how certain groups develop distinct identities and how these identities may affect societies to become ethnically salient and thus mobilize more political, and potentially, more violent conflicts. For the purpose of minority rule analysis, I wish to rely upon the three fold classification of ethnic conflict theories by Haklai’s (2000). Haklai classifies theories explaining ethnic affiliation according to cultural, modernist and psychological approaches. These approaches form the conditions under which a minority may establish self-awareness, claim political power, and eventually rule an entire country. Thus, comprehension of these approaches is necessary to understand the context and potential for violent outbreaks taking place due to the presence of ethnic minority rule. However, ethnic conflict is often times a complex phenomenon, calling for different combinations of the given approaches. Consequently, the implementation of one single approach does not necessarily imply disqualification of others.

3.1.1 Cultural approach

Advocates of the cultural approach claim that shared culture, be it language, religion, historical myths or physical features, constitute the main source for the establishment of common identities. Referring to this perspective, Harff and Gurr (2004: 96) talks of “primordialism”, as it addresses deep social, historical and genetic aspects to explain ethnic affiliations. Ethnic conflicts, according to the cultural approach, appear in societies where certain cultures are threatened as a result of contact with others. The approach implies that cultural affiliation represents the driving motor of ethnic conflicts, predicting more conflicts in culturally heterogeneous societies, as opposed to homogeneous societies. In line with this approach, Gellner (1983) elaborates on the idea of nationalism, claiming that the political and the national borders should coincide. In most cases this is not the reality as most state borders

concludes more than one ethnical group. Gellner warns against such heterogeneous states, claiming that the presence of multiple potential nations causes the group in power to strive for ethnic homogeneity, which may only be achieved by killing, expelling or assimilating members of the other groups. The unwillingness of members of these remaining groups to suffer such fates raises the tension within heterogeneous states. Gellner further holds that a situation where a minority has political power over a majority constitutes an outstandingly intolerant breach to political propriety for conscious members of the majority (Gellner 1983: 1-2). This assumption, however, was rejected by Fearon and Leitin (2003), who, by constructing a cultural fractionalization index based on language, suggests that multicultural societies do not cause more conflicts than their homogeneous counterparts. The approach is further criticized for not taking into account the possible variations of intensity concerning the individuals' affiliation to their group (Eller and Coughan 1993). Nevertheless, cultural aspects of ethnicity undoubtedly holds a role at times in identifying aspects of ethnic conflicts, and should therefore not be ignored (Haklai 2000).

3.1.2 Modernist approach

The modernistic approach holds that current ethnic divisions are products of instrumental incentives carried out by elites aiming to improve their competitive positions related to economic and political power (Haklai 2000). Harff and Gurr (2004: 96) hold that according to this perspective, cultural identity is invoked by political entrepreneurs merely as a means to attain the desired materialistic benefits. Ethnic conflicts may, according to Haklai, appear as a consequence of these power struggles related to economic and political power, rather than protection of ones kin or cultural particularities. The strength of this approach lies in its ability to see identity as a non-constant matter as the understanding involves less rigid social structures, and less problematic transitions for individuals wanting to move between existing ethnic groups. Consequently, the degree of individual salience to a group depends on the leaders' ability to engage with, and mobilize the targeted population (Haklai 2000). However, Horowitz (1985: 134) criticizes the approach for focusing too much on rational incentives and thus underestimating the people's emotional attachments to their ethnic origins.

3.1.3 Psychological approach

The third approach may be understood as a modification of the latter, only added to it an emotional dimension. Hence, the psychological approach emphasizes the individuals'

emotional attachment to a certain group as the determining factor for ethnic group memberships (Haklai 2000). Harff and Gurr (2004: 97) uses the term “Constructivist interpretation” for the same approach, as it explains ethnic groups as socially constructed entities which are shaped and reshaped over time. However, the construction is passed on through generations and may be reinforced when exposed to repression and conflict. This implies a rather enduring social structure based on shared historical memory which is not easily malleable. Haklai further suggests that the approach implies a positive relation between the extent to which the group is discriminated against and the intensity level of group salience. When specific groups are subjected to discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, the identity of the targeted group, and the individual affiliations towards this, tends to increase in strength. Haklai predicts that stronger group identities may cause lower threshold for members to subordinate personal preferences for the benefits of the group. Further, as the repression increases, the more likely it is that members will act on the basis of the need for self-esteem rather than material goods, causing more violent outlooks with the presence of repression and strong ethnic salience.

As a product of these three approaches, Haklai (2000) offers a definition of the term “ethnic group” as “(...) *sets of individuals who share a sense of common identity based on a collective historical experience and often accompanied by distinctive cultural or physical characteristics*”.

As Haklai (2000), Haff and Gurr (2004: 97) stresses that the given approaches are not mutually excluding factors, rather, the different perspectives function as complementary aspects of ethnic political actions. The cultural approach may provide insights related to the intensity and persistence of ethnic conflicts, whereas the modernistic approach account for the significance of the group’s material interests. The physiological approach ties these two approaches together by explaining how ethnic identities are constructed and what affects the salience of ethnic identities. However, in analyzing strategies to map ethnic affiliations, one should refrain from conceiving ethnicity as the only foundation on which a politically relevant group may be established. Ethnicity is merely one amongst many other bases on which social groups may be founded (Kaufmann 2004: 40). Nevertheless, the persistence and strength in ethnic affiliations may seem like appealing features to political entrepreneurs relying on loyal supporters in their pursuit for political and economic power. Hence the significance of ethnicity in conflict theory. On the other hand, according to the so called “Greed-and-

opportunity” school, the use of ethnicity as a proxy to gather strength and legitimize violence when the real motives are material goods, does not qualify as being an “ethnic conflict” (Kaufmann and Haklai 2008). Accordingly, the greed-and-opportunity-school discounts ethnicity as a relevant factor in explaining armed conflicts (Wimmer et al 2009).

3.2 Mapping ethnic minority regimes

How researchers choose to define ethnic minority rule to a large extent determines the outcomes of their statistical analysis related to the topic, hence, the choices of definition may be part of the reason why the literature offers somewhat differing results with regards to the level of conflict within the given regimes. The common way of determining the ethnic affiliations of a regime, is simply by analyzing the ethnicity of the head of state, be it the president, prime minister or king. This may seem like an oversimplification, as the method would fail to account for possible coalition partners or other power holders of the regime (Fearon et al 2007). It may further seem directly misleading, as the formal heads of state may in fact not always be the leader in reality. Russia, headed by Dmitrij Medvedev until the presidential elections of 2012, provides an example where this is the case. However, to empirically account for the composition of governments would result in greater inaccuracies, as the power associated with the various ministerial posts will vary across time and states. In other words, it is not certain that the Jordanian Minister of the Interior enjoys the same powers as his Israeli colleague, or the post may not even exist, as in Norway. Whereas the ministerial powers may vary, the position held by the heads of state is believed to remain more constant (Goemans et al 2009). Moreover, the leaders, with only few exceptions, belong to the ethnic group which is considered the politically most powerful group of the country (Fearon 2007). Fearon further states that sources of error, as mentioned above, appear to be unusual if we choose to exclude democratic regimes. Hence, the ethnicity of regimes is usually coded according to the leaders’ affiliations, rather than the composition of state institutions.

According to Fearon (et al 2007), between 20 and 30% of the regimes included in a research covering 161 countries between 1945 and 1999 was coded as governed by a leader affiliated to a group other than the majority. However, Fearon’s estimation includes all heads of states, without considering regime types and the extent to which the ethnicity of the minority group in power is in fact politically relevant. According to Kaufmann and Haklai (2008), the political relevance of ethnic groups varies, and thus must be accounted for. Further, the

regime type is also of significance, as governments in democratic regimes are based on a system of power sharing rather than centralized power, leaving less executive power in the hands of the leader. Consequently, I question whether it is appropriate to include democracies in a data set coding states according to the ethnic affiliations of the head of state.

In order to provide a sense of the political position of ethnic minority regimes in modern history, I have put together a table illustrating the prevalence of such regimes. Table 1 presents ethnic minority groups holding state power in non-democratic regimes where ethnicity is coded as politically relevant. The table is based on the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset (Cederman et al 2009 b), which offers a list of 733 politically relevant ethnic groups in 155 sovereign states from 1946 to 2005. The dataset further considers the relevance and access to political power of each of the given groups. Ethnicity is coded according to “(...) a subjectively experienced sense of commonality based on a belief in common ancestry and shared culture” (Cederman et al 2009 a). This coding is in line with what Haklai (2000) refer to as the Cultural Approach.

In producing the table of examples, I wish to focus on what Gurr (2000: 18) refers to as “dominant minorities”. Gurr defines this as culturally distinct peoples enjoying preponderance of both political and economic power. In the EPR dataset, the groups are coded as “dominant” or “monopoly”; hence, the regimes coded as “power sharing regimes” are excluded. In constructing the Table, I have included only regimes headed by an ethnic group representing less than 50% of the population. With the given delimitations, we count 69 regimes, spread over 30 countries. 56 of which were rated as below 5 by the Polity IV democracy index at a given time during the reign. Regimes considered as direct extensions of colonial rule, such as the regimes of Apartheid and Rhodesia, are excluded. Note; an ethnic group in power is considered a minority if it is represented by less than 50% of the population. This, however, does not necessarily imply the existence of a majority group representing over 50% of the population. Hence, a minority regime may not always rule a subordinated majority. Amongst the 56 regimes mentioned above, only 15 are minority regimes which rule an ethnic majority group. Minority regimes holding less than 50% of the population, but still holds the largest share of the population are also excluded (14 regimes). The given delimitations leave us with a total of 42 ethnic minority regimes listed in Table 1.

The Mainland Chinese group, representing only 14% of the population in Taiwan, ruled the Taiwanese majority group, representing 84% of the population. According to EPR, ethnicity was relevant and the regime scored well below 5 in the Polity IV democracy index from the seizure of power in 1949 till democracy was introduced in 1992 (Marshall and Jaggers 2011) Thus, the regime could have been coded as a minority ruling a majority. However, the regime is coded by EPR as a “power sharing regime”, rather than one of “absolute power”, and is consequently excluded from my list of examples.

In Liberia the Americano-Liberians group consisted of liberated American slaves who established an oppressive regime after their return to Africa. The group accounted for only 2% of the Liberian population, and there was a majority group present, listed by the EPR as “Indigenous Peoples”, representing the remaining 98% of the population. Although the Americano-Liberian rule was not a colony serving a colonial power, it was facilitated by a foreign power (CIA 2013 a) and is consequently excluded from my list of examples.

Table 1: A global selection of ethnic minority regimes

Name of state	From	To	Ethnic group in Power	Size %	status	Largest group	Size %	Status
Angola	1975	2002	Mbundu-Mestico	0,26	MONOPOLY	Ovimbundu-Ovambo	0,38	DISCRIMINATED
Angola	2003	2005	Mbundu-Mestico	0,26	DOMINANT	Ovimbundu-Ovambo	0,38	POWERLESS
Bahrain	1971	2009	Sunni Arabs	0,3	MONOPOLY	Shi'a Arabs	0,7	DISCRIMINATED
Bolivia	1946	1952	Bolivians	0,35	MONOPOLY	Quechua	0,37	DISCRIMINATED
Bolivia	1953	2005	Bolivians	0,35	DOMINANT	Quechua	0,37	REGIONAL AUTONOMY
Burundi	1966	1988	Tutsi	0,14	DOMINANT	Hutu	0,85	DISCRIMINATED
Burundi	1994	2001	Tutsi	0,14	DOMINANT	Hutu	0,85	POWERLESS
Central African Republic	1960	1965	Riverine groups (Mbaka, Yakoma, Banziri etc.)	0,145	DOMINANT	Indigenous Peoples	0,83	POWERLESS
Central African Republic	1970	1981	Riverine groups (Mbaka, Yakoma, Banziri etc.)	0,145	DOMINANT	Indigenous Peoples	0,83	POWERLESS
Chad	1960	1975	Sara	0,24	DOMINANT	Muslim Sahel groups	0,27	POWERLESS
Congo	1972	1976	Mbochi	0,12	DOMINANT	Indigenous Peoples	0,13	POWERLESS
Ethiopia	1946	1951	Amhara	0,25	DOMINANT	Oroma	0,4	DISCRIMINATED
Ethiopia	1952	1990	Amhara	0,25	DOMINANT	Oroma	0,4	DISCRIMINATED
Ethiopia	1991	1991	Amhara	0,25	DOMINANT	Oroma	0,4	DISCRIMINATED
Gabon	1963	1967	Estuary Fang	0,1	DOMINANT	Indigenous Peoples	0,24	IRRELEVANT
Guinea	1986	2005	Susu	0,2	DOMINANT	Peul	0,4	POWERLESS
Guinea-Bissau	1974	1980	Cape Verdean	0,02	DOMINANT	Balanta	0,3	POWERLESS
Iraq	1964	1975	Sunni Arabs	0,19	MONOPOLY	Shi'a Arabs	0,63	POWERLESS
Iraq	1976	1990	Sunni Arabs	0,19	MONOPOLY	Shi'a Arabs	0,63	POWERLESS
Iraq	1991	2002	Sunni Arabs	0,19	MONOPOLY	Shi'a Arabs	0,63	DISCRIMINATED
Jordan	1946	2005	Arabs	0,4	MONOPOLY	Palestinians	0,58	DISCRIMINATED
Liberia	1981	1989	Krahn (Guere)	0,05	DOMINANT	Kpelle (Guerze)	0,21	IRRELEVANT
Nepal	1946	1950	Rana/Thakuri	0,05	MONOPOLY	Madhesi	0,31	POWERLESS
Niger	1960	1989	Djerma-Songhai	0,22	DOMINANT	Hausa	0,56	POWERLESS
Niger	1990	1990	Djerma-Songhai	0,22	DOMINANT	Hausa	0,56	POWERLESS
Niger	1996	1999	Djerma-Songhai	0,22	DOMINANT	Hausa	0,56	POWERLESS
Peru	1946	1969	Peruvians	0,425	MONOPOLY	Quechua	0,46	DISCRIMINATED
Peru	1970	2005	Peruvians	0,425	DOMINANT	Quechua	0,46	REGIONAL AUTONOMY
Rwanda	1995	2000	Tutsi	0,15	DOMINANT	Hutu	0,84	DISCRIMINATED
Rwanda	2001	2005	Tutsi	0,15	DOMINANT	Hutu	0,84	POWERLESS
Sierra Leone	1964	1967	Mende	0,3	DOMINANT	Northern Groups (Temne, Limba)	0,38	POWERLESS
Sudan	1956	1971	Shaygiyya, Ja'aliyyin and Danagla (Arab)	0,15	DOMINANT	Other Arab groups	0,25	POWERLESS
Sudan	1972	1982	Shaygiyya, Ja'aliyyin and Danagla (Arab)	0,15	DOMINANT	Other Arab groups	0,25	POWERLESS
Sudan	1983	2002	Shaygiyya, Ja'aliyyin and Danagla (Arab)	0,15	DOMINANT	Other Arab groups	0,25	POWERLESS
Sudan	2003	2005	Shaygiyya, Ja'aliyyin and Danagla (Arab)	0,15	DOMINANT	Other Arab groups	0,25	POWERLESS
Syria	1970	2005	Alawi	0,12	DOMINANT	Sunni Arabs	0,62	POWERLESS
Togo	1967	1990	Kabré (and related groups)	0,27	DOMINANT	Ewe (and related groups)	0,44	POWERLESS
Togo	1992	2005	Kabré (and related groups)	0,27	DOMINANT	Ewe (and related groups)	0,44	POWERLESS
Uganda	1974	1979	Kakwa-Nubian	0,031	DOMINANT	South-Westerners (Ankole, Banyoro, Toro, Banyarwanda)	0,2	DISCRIMINATED
Uganda	1972	1973	Far North-West Nile (Kakwa-Nubian, Madi, Lugbara, Alur)	0,079	DOMINANT	Indigenous Peoples	0,2	POWERLESS
Uganda	1966	1969	Northerners (Langi, Acholi, Madi, Kakwa-Nubian, Lugbara, Alur)	0,173	DOMINANT	Indigenous Peoples	0,2	POWERLESS
Uganda	1980	1985	Northerners (Langi, Acholi, Teso)	0,18	DOMINANT	Indigenous Peoples	0,2	POWERLESS

For the purpose of presenting a list of ethnic minority regimes between 1946 and 2005, I choose primarily to use the EPR dataset of Cederman, Min and Wimmer. The dataset includes politically relevant ethnic groups in all 155 sovereign states with a population of at least one million and a surface area of at least five thousand square kilometer as of 2005. Outlined regimes are minorities ruling over

an ethnic majority group. All states scoring above 5 in the Polity IV democracy index at all times during reign is excluded (13 regimes).

3.3 Future prospects for ethnic minority regimes

As noted by Haklai (2000), Fearon (2007), and others, ethnic minority rule represents an increasingly rare event in the global political landscape of our time. Researchers hold that ethnic minority regimes contradict the global trend, suggesting that the world is in transition from dominant ethnic minorities to dominant ethnic majorities. Kaufmann and Haklai (2008) attribute the downfalls of numerous ethnic minority regimes to the global pressure for democratization which involves increased support for the principle of popular sovereignty and nationalism. They argue that contrary to the majoritarian politics of democracies, the overall focus of an ethnic minority regime is to reduce the circle of power as much as possible in order to maximize their personal benefits. Kaufmann and Haklai perceive these two philosophies as incompatible, and argue that the global trend of democratization outperforms and causes the downfall of ethnic minority regimes. Returning to Table 1, we find only 3 currently functioning ethnic minority regimes ruling subordinated majority groups. These are the Tutsi rule of Rwanda, the Arab rule of Jordan, and finally the still persisting Alawi rule of Syria. Assuming that the given arguments account for the entire truth, one would be entitled to question the relevance of my research question as it would have implied the absence of entities within a relatively short period of time. However, increased international pressure for democratization has not only produced fully democratic regimes, rather, it has also caused the prevalence of so called semi-democracies and failed democracies (Horowitz 1993). Such regimes are, according to Horowitz (1993), in danger of forming the basis for a new generation of authoritarian minority regimes. Horowitz builds his concern on that these regimes are at risk of arranging democratic elections in societies which lack both fundamental democratic institutions and principles. Under such conditions, fully democratic processes may cause undemocratic results of exclusion and tyranny. Democratic processes conducted under the given conditions may be used by political entrepreneurs to consolidate the position of a dominant ethnic minority, or even facilitated its seizure of power. Consequently, in spite of the decline in the number of ethnic minority regimes, pointed out by Kaufmann and Haklai, we should not dismiss the phenomena as a potential conflict variable also in the foreseeable future.

3.4 Contextual understanding of minority rule

Haklai (2000) base his contextual analysis of ethnic minority regimes on minority groups ruling a majority. He analyses and compares the Alawi rule of Syria, the Sunni rule of Iraq and the Tutsi rule of Burundi to shed light on similarities and differences which may provide us with deeper understanding of the nature of this phenomenon. Despite the rare appearance of such incidences, Haklai argues that his analysis may provide a useful analytical framework, suitable to assist us in explaining general tendencies related to minority regimes. The most significant characteristics of a minority regime, is that a demographically inferior group rules a larger group. I therefore choose to refer to the Haklai's work, even though my definition is not restricted to minority regimes ruling over a majority. I believe that his findings may contribute positively in shedding light also on situations where minority groups rule over other minorities, as long as the minority in power is not the demographically largest group of the state.

In the following section I will discuss the three sets of conditions which, according to Haklai (2000), are fundamental to the appearance of minority regimes. The first set of conditions relates to factors that cause minorities to develop self-awareness and distinguish themselves from remaining community members. The second set relates to conditions liable to motivate the group to seek political power as well as actually facilitating their seizure of power. The third and final set addresses the conditions which seem necessary for dominant minorities to maintaining their position of power. Understanding the context which allows these regimes to appear is important. Generally, as it may help researchers predict the success of a power seeking minority group in a given situation, and more specifically for my research, as it will allow us to recognize the situations in which we may expect these regimes to respond more violently.

3.4.1 Prevalence of group consciousness

Prevalence of self-awareness amongst members of minority groups occurs when certain conditions provokes feelings towards the majority as “the others”, and a hence creates an “us versus them” mentality. Haklai (2000) identifies four interconnected factors which are believed to facilitate this first set of conditions. First, a set of individuals must share an understanding of a distinctive historical heritage and identify themselves with common myths. Second, this set of individuals must believe that their historical heritage have given them

distinctive cultural or physical characteristics, features suitable to distinguish them from other groups of the society. Third, these individuals must further share a common understanding that they have been, or are still, subjected to repression by groups which are not compatible with their own. Haklai claims that with the presence of the latter, the individuals' sense of self-awareness will increasingly be linked to the identity of the group. Finally, these three factors combined, may cause a stronger "us against them" mentality, which subsequently is likely to strengthen the group's self-awareness.

However central for the prevalence of an ethnic group, Max Weber states that this collective understanding of shared historical memory is merely "a subjective belief" in a "common descent (...) whether or not an objective blood relationship exists" (reproduced by Horowitz, 1985: 53). Hence, Horowitz refers to this historical memory as "The myth of collective origins". Moreover, what determine the intensity of self-awareness within a group is the changes related to the relative position of the group, rather than its actual position (Horowitz 1985: 196-201). By such, Horowitz implies the importance of competition in ethnic conflict theory. Competition amongst groups strengthens ethnic divisions, and hereby the "us against them" mentality (Haklai 2000). Haklai further mentions the degree to which the group is geographically concentrated and separated from the rest of the society as another factor central to the prevalence of self-awareness and group salience. This element is linked to the level of persecution and repression. Severe repression often causes individuals to isolate themselves in rural areas characterized by rough terrain where they live in close communities in order to feel safe from the oppressing groups. Establishment of such ethnically homogeneous societies, isolated due to the fear of "the others", substantiates the emergence of salient group identification and cohesive minorities (Haklai 2000).

The most recent scientific explanation for the appearance of salient group identification is the social identity theory. This theory builds on the assumption of an embedded fundamental desire of human beings to achieve positive self-esteem, a desire motivating two sociocognitive processes; first, a need to categorize individuals into mutually excluding social groups, second; a need to emphasize norms and stereotypes favoring the group of which they belong, and disfavors "the others" (Hecher and Okamoto 2001). An increased self-awareness of individual and group mentality may consequently cause what Gurr (1993) refer to as "cohesive minorities", meaning situations where most of the group members are willing to subordinate their personal preferences in order to cooperate for a common goal (Gurr 1993;

84, reproduced by Haklai 2000). As subsequently will be subjected to discussion, the level of cohesiveness within an ethnic group is an important factor with regards to the level of violence the individual members of the group are willing to use to sustain their regime.

3.4.2 Seeking and attaining political power

According to Haklai there are certain conditions which seem to stimulate cohesive minority groups to seek, and in some cases, successfully seize state power. To a large extent, Haklai relates these factors to the historical memory of the group, which he claims is a significant factor in explaining ethnic conflicts. Ethnic groups with a history of lost greatness may be motivated to retain by force the power they believe was once rightfully theirs. Further, groups with a history of endured repression may legitimize their seizure of power to hinder further repression (Haklai 2000). Repression constitutes powerful motivations for seeking political power, however, solid motivation alone is hardly enough for a power seeking minority group to actually seize state power. Control over certain central state institutions, preferably the military, is a precondition for a minority group wanting to seize state power. However, minority groups seldom enjoy such access, and thus fall short of the necessary means to take power. For this to happen, the minority group is dependent on external factors. A country's colonial history may offer the necessary alterations of traditional power relations (Haklai 2000).

With some exceptions, differences between local ethnic groups were muted under colonial rule. This was due to a common struggle against an external enemy. Often times it was not before the withdrawal of the colonial power that ethnical differences become salient and riots broke out due to the determination of future social positions (Horowitz 1985: 4).

Nevertheless, at occasions colonizers had reasons to fear uprisings from hostile populations. In order to maintain stability, they exercised heavy divide-and-rule tactics which often times favored certain minority groups over majorities. Such discrimination of ethnic majorities was carried out as members of minority groups were perceived as being more loyal to its foreign masters than did members of the majority. Due to the minority's poor positions prior to colonization, it was assumed that they had less to gain from a possible colonial downfall. These minorities were thus offered administrative education and leading positions in centralized state institutions, most importantly within the army (Kaufmann and Haklai 2008). Hence, following the withdrawal of the colonial powers, most of the leading positions in the

state administration and bureaucratic experience were at the hands of members of the favored minority. This form of favoritism led to a superior social status and wide access to state power despite disproportional demographic representation. Some of these favored minorities managed to retain dominance and seize state power after independence. In fact, only three out of the 22 states listed in Table 1, namely Nepal, Ethiopia and Iran, has *not* been previously colonized. According to Kaufman and Haklai (2008), most modern ethnic minority regimes gained their position due to colonization. However, the positions of these minorities were merely built on colonial legacy, which has caused major issues with regards to their ability to legitimize their rule. As will be discussed below, the insecurity caused by the lack of legitimacy seems to represent a significant source to violent outbreaks in minority regimes.

The legitimacy of a regime may be claimed on grounds other than the fairly modern principle of demographic representatively. It may be claimed on the basis of dynastic succession, the grace of God, civilizational progress, or indigenouness, referring to the question of “who were here first?” (Horowitz 1993). However, efforts to legitimize minority regimes has fallen short amongst scholars, holding minority regimes as the least legitimate form of governance (Cederman 2010). Due to the poor foundation of legitimacy, minority regimes are dependent on strong mobilization amongst its members, and an authoritarian leadership that is able to successfully repress the remaining population. This, to a large extent, depends on the leader’s ability to mobilize and keep the group cohesive by appealing to their ethnicity (Haklai 2000). The leader’s tactical skills with respect to balance the proportion of included and excluded individuals is of high relevance in this regard. Leaders relying on a narrow support base are able to offer higher private benefits for their members, and hence increase their motivation to support the regime at high costs. A narrow support base further makes it easier for the regime to minimize what Heger describes as the problem of free-riders, supporters receiving private benefits during peace, but jumping the ship when their loyalty is required (Heger 2007). Narrow inclusion, however, will cause vast exclusion. According to collective action theory, prevalence of larger groups cause group dynamics leading to increased motivation amongst members to rebel. Nevertheless, despite demographic superiority, the excluded group is dependent on organizational capacity to rebel against the state army. In this regard, resource mobilizing theory predicts better prospects for larger groups to attain both the necessary manpower and resources needed to carry out revolts (Cederman 2010).

Hence, the minority group is absolutely dependent on weak cooperation and internal discord within the majority group. Such internal power struggles may ease the majority's attention towards the minority group when it is still in opposition, and hinder the trend related to the collective action theory (Haklai 2000). This may create the necessary window of opportunity for minority group leaders to challenge and attain state power.

As state borders seldom reflect the geographical presence of ethnic groups, the minority group seeking state control may also be empowered by an ethnic kin dominating a neighboring state (Gurr 2000: 91).

3.4.3 Maintaining minority rule

Once a minority has established group consciousness, and successfully attained state power, certain factors are necessary to ensure the continuation of the rule. According to Haklai, a highly authoritarian government structure is the most significant factor in this regard. As the ruling group is demographically inferior to those excluded, they are not likely to benefit from political, economic or social competition on equal terms. Thus, the regime must take control over all aspects of society, and subsequently oppress any attempts by to organize opposition by the excluded groups in order to eliminate otherwise threatening competition. In sustaining the required control, the regime is dependent on dominance over central state institutions, most significantly, the army. By dominating the army, the regime may militarily control all political institutions and exercise virtually unrestrained force to repress its opposition (Haklai 2000).

Even though the regime is dependent on its repressive apparatus, extensive use of violence may thwart strategic interests of the regime. To ensure stability, the regime needs to gain legitimacy to rule. In order to do so, it must blur the differences between its own ethnic group and the remaining population. This may include promotion of supra-communal ideologies and a unifying culture. In doing so, the regime ensure its political position, however, at the expense of their distinct cultural identity which initially caused the prevalence of their group consciousness. Nevertheless, unifying ideologies plays a crucial role in building credibility as they proclaim their wish to serve the entire nation regardless of ethnic origins. Violence targeting specific ethnic groups is likely to contradict such unifying strategies (Haklai 2000). After all, it is the loss of relative power which causes grievances within the excluded parties

which may cause them to oppose the dominant ethnicity (Horowitz 1985). Hence, unifying ideologies are promoted to minimize the majority's perception of that the power is lost to an alien regime, but rather that it remains in the hands of the people. Contrarily, the regime may also choose to promote excluding ideologies, favoring only the ethnic group in power. The choice of ideology is based on how the regime may best manipulate and control the excluded masses, and mobilize their supporters (Kaufmann and Haklai 2008). By also controlling the economy, the regime may strategically favor the excluded majority to hinder revolt, as meeting some of their material needs may decrease material motives to oppose. By giving up some of the economic control, the regime strives to hamper the ability of the excluded groups to mobilize effectively, whereas violent assaults and economic repression would increase the "us against them" mentality amongst the opposition (Haklai 2000).

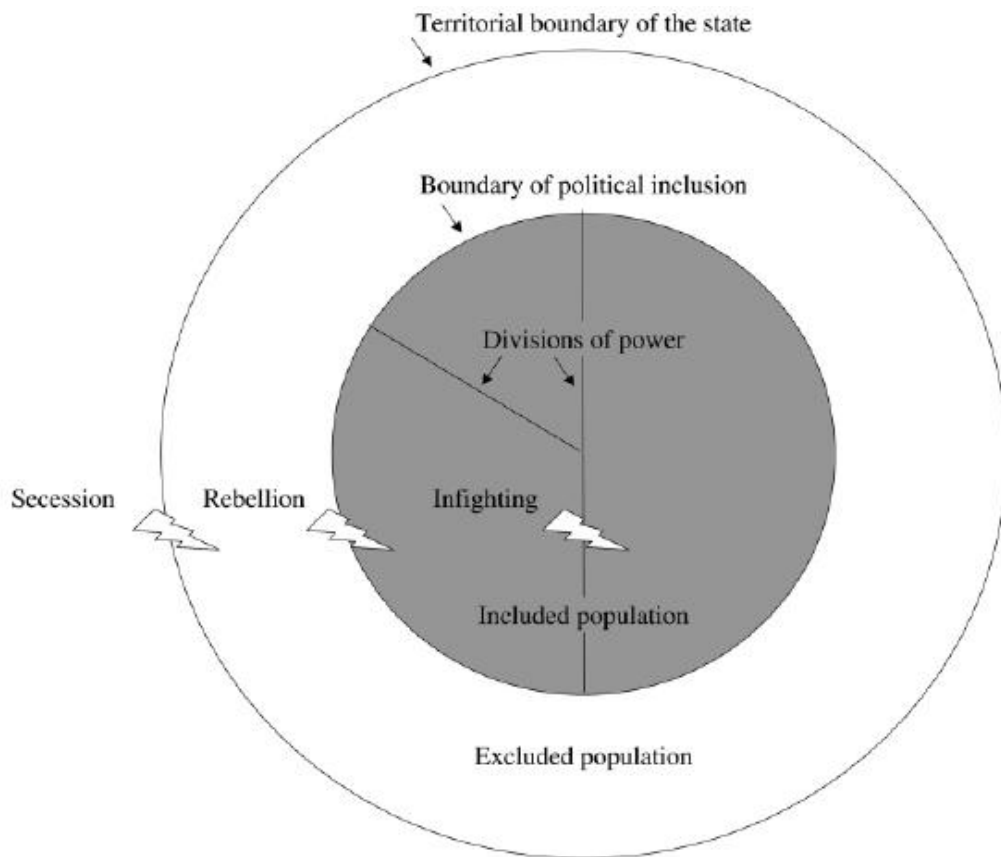
Thus, the maintaining of minority rule is dependent on a divided opposition incapable of presenting any realistic alternative (Haklai 2000). However, following the seizure of state power, the minority enjoys better prospects of influencing external conditions favorable to the endurance of its position. Holding this position, the regime is likely to establish a credible enemy, threatening the existence of the identity promoted by the chosen ideology. The enemy does not need to pose an actual threat to the security of the population, but it must evoke enough fear amongst the people to move their focus away from the fact that they are ruled by an alien minority (Kaufmann and Haklai 2008). The Alawi regime of Syria promoted a pan-Arabic ideology, labeling Kurds as outsiders and Israel as the enemy, a strategy much similar to the ideology promoted by the Iraqis under Saddam Hussein. As for my own experience of Syria, I noticed an intrusive focus by the authorities on the Israeli threat, and the Kurds not being part of the Arab society. Hence, the authorities proclaimed virtually all attempts of opposition against the regime as anti-Arab and pro-Israeli, and claimed recognition for protecting the interests of the its people due to its repression of Kurds.

In the following chapter I wish to discuss the appearance of violent outbreaks in minority regimes by comparing hypothesis and theories of which many of them are empirically tested. The size of the included and excluded party is of great importance to the stability of a minority regime, and will thus be the focus of the discussion. Issues of how we may expect the source of group consciousness, the leader's tactical choices, and the issue of legitimacy to affect the appearance of conflict outbreaks will be addressed during this discussion.

4 Critical analyses on theories linking coalition size and violent outbreaks

With few exceptions, empirical research seem to support a positive relation between ethnic minority rule and increased risk of violent outbreaks, creating consensus amongst researchers of conflict science that the phenomenon is to be treated as a violence promoting variable. However, it does not seem possible to claim a clear theoretical link between minority rule and appearance of violent outbreaks per se. Hence, the controversy rather relates to the question of which characteristics of the phenomenon and the context in which it appears is the cause of the putative increased aggressiveness. In the following I wish to elaborate on the possible advantages and disadvantages related to exclusionary policies which seem to cause distinct boundaries between the individuals included in the regime, and those excluded from it. As I use the term “included”, I refer to the individuals of whom the regime considers as part of their leading coalition. This involves both the individual members of the authorities, and all those belonging to the regime’s support base. The distinction between these two groups may be diffuse. The definition of “included” does not imply the absence of internal discords and boundaries. However, the most important distinction to the regime is between anyone considered included and “the others”. The others are hereby referred to as the “excluded”. Tilly (1978, reproduced by Wimmer et al 2009) constructed a polity model illustrating these demographical groupings and the boundaries that keep them apart. The illustration involves three types of boundaries, all of which may become the focus of an ethnopolitical conflict, either in the form of “rebellion” by excluded elements or “infighting” amongst the included parties.

Figure 1: *Ethnopolitical constellations and boundaries constituting potential lines of conflict.*



Source: Wimmer 2009, pp. 322.

Initially I will discuss the theories related to policies of narrow inclusion and how this may affect the level of violence. Naturally, narrow inclusion causes broad exclusion which will be the focus of the second part of the discussion. The theories presented in this chapter will subsequently be compared to the empirical in the following section.

4.1 Issues related to restrictive policies of inclusion

Ethnic minority regimes are characterized by sharp distinctions between members of dominant ethnic groups included in power positions, and those who find themselves excluded from all positions of power. The number of individuals considered as part of the included group is partially limited by the size of the dominant ethnic group, and partially by the leaders' preferences of formation. Hence, the given demographic size of the ethnic groups

given in Table 1 may not reflect the accurate size of the included group in reality. Looking at the example of Syria, the table suggests that the Alawitts, representing 14% of the population, constitutes the included group of the regime. However, due to the leadership's formation preferences, not all Alawitts are included in the group of beneficiaries, and not all of those included are in fact Alawitts (Goldsmith 2012).

4.1.1 Presentation of size balance

The leadership of a minority regime is by definition not dependent on the majority of the people for support. Nevertheless, it is dependent on a support base large enough to ensure confidence in that it is able to defend the persistence of the regime by force. And, at the same time, small enough so that the regime may manage to supply sufficient incentives to ensure the level of loyalty required for the supporters to actually fight for them in times of despair (Heger and Salehyan 2007). Hence, the regime and its supporters are dependent on a mutually profitable relationship. By offering only a selection of the population private benefits, the leadership may afford to buy off the political support needed to maintain its dominant position despite obvious demographic inferiority. Such tactics are not unique to leaders of authoritarian minority regimes, to varying extent, this applies to all regimes. However, what separates minority regimes from the remaining is the distinct lack of legitimacy due to the limited group of beneficiaries receiving disproportionately large benefits (Heger and Salehyan 2007). A minimal support base is favorable as it involves a shorter list of recipients and thus reduces the government expenses. Even though such policies entitle a smaller proportion of the population to take part in the national wealth, a minimum number of included individuals are also preferable to the supporters as it maximizes their individual proceeds. Subsequently, to the authorities this pays out as increased loyalty amongst its supporters as their benefits of membership increases.

Furthermore, a small support base, selected primarily on the basis of ethnicity, makes it easier for the authorities to identify receivers as they distribute the goods, and, in second hand, hold them accountable when their support is required for. Consequently, the authorities may also avoid the appearance of free riders, - individuals who jumps the ship and switch sides as the regime comes under pressure and their loyalty gets tested. However, to the disadvantage of the beneficiaries, narrow inclusion on the basis of ethnicity, also makes them an easy target in the aftermath of a possible transition of power (Heger and Salehyan 2007).

A small support base also seems to increase the costs of being amongst the excluded party. A factor further causing increased loyalty and desire to defend the sitting regime at all costs as the situation indicates great personal loss associated with a possible regime collapse (Mesquita et al 2002: 170). Increased loyalty amongst the included parties in an ethnic minority regime is, however, not a unique characteristic of ethnic minority regimes; rather, it is a descriptive feature of authoritarian regimes as a whole (Heger and Salehyan 2007). A key difference between democracies and authoritarian regimes is in fact that the latter lacks mechanisms to regulate leadership replacements. Thus, the strong loyalty and motivations to defend the sitting regime is largely attributed to the supporters' fundamental fear of a lawless process causing their permanent exclusion or extermination in case of regime transition (Debs and Goemans 2010). Hence, narrow inclusion seems to raise the stakes for both the regime and its support.

Larger support bases, on the other hand, limit the regimes' ability to exercise force. It further threatens its ability to mobilize suppression campaigns against potential opponents due to weakened patron-client relations. The same is applicable to the supporters' privileges of being able to exploit and suppress the excluded elements of the society (Heger and Salehyan 2007).

However, policies of narrow inclusion necessarily lead to larger parts of the population being deprived of power. Experience of recent loss of power is believed to be a powerful conflict promoting variable, and even more so in cases where the loss is attributable to a specific second group (Cederman et al 2010). As previously concluded it is the relative loss of power which carries the most weight with regards to the emergence of self-awareness and need for self-assertion (Horowitz 1985: 195-206). Hence, the majority's relative loss of power to the dominant minority may provoke the majority to organize violent revolts to retain lost power.

4.2 Level of exclusion as a conflict variable

Recent empirical research points to the relative size of the excluded group as one of the most decisive factors in determining the risk of violent outbreaks in minority regimes (Cederman and Girardin 2007; Heger and Salehyan 2007; Cederman et al 2010; Wimmer et al 2009; Harff 2003 etc). These studies suggest that in societies where specific groups of people are

excluded from state power on the basis of ethnic affiliations, we may expect appearance of more violent conflicts of higher intensity. Accordingly, both minority and majority led regimes practicing exclusionary policies are likely to represent an increased risk of political instability and violent conflict. However, the negative effects of exclusion seem to increase in cases where the state is led by an ethnic minority (Cederman and Girardin 2007). As the size of a ruling coalition decreases, both the leaders of the regimes and their supporters appear less restricted in their ability to engage in campaigns of violent repression (Heger and Salehyan 2007). This is in line with previous theories posed by Horowitz (1985) and Gellner (1983). Horowitz claims that dominant ethnic minorities which exclude the majority from state power, compromises the principle of ethnic representation, causing grievances amongst members of the majority. According to Wimmer (et al 2009) such disproportionate representation will weaken the legitimacy of the regime. Depending on the relative size of the excluded majority and its ability to organize an opposition, severe lack of legitimacy may lead to increased risks of violent rebellions.

4.2.1 The ability of the excluded to cause turbulence

Several scholars hold that a regime's propensity to repress the excluded majority increases with the perceived threat which the opposition represents (Harff 2003). Hence, in case of revolts caused by the excluded majority, the ruling minority will find itself in a vulnerable position, and thus, increase its violent repression of the majority. Such repression is part of calculated policies designed to increase the opposition's perception of costs related to attempts of altering current power relations. Such policies based on the objective of creating fear may result in bloody genocides or politicides (Harff 2003). However, in situations where the suppression and deprivation do not serve its purpose, the measure may prove counterproductive and rather become a source of group cohesion amongst the excluded. As previously concluded, common experiences of severe suppression is a decisive element for the emergence of group identity and cohesion. In situations where these features occur within a majority group excluded from state power, we are likely face increased risks of violent outbreaks (Janus 2011). Additionally, in cases where the ruling minority shows signs of weakness, individual members or fractions of the excluded majority may be increasingly tempted to initiate violent revolts against an oppressive regime (Heger and Salehyan 2007). It is possible that a small support base may be interpreted as a weakness amongst the excluded majority, especially as the majority unites and grows more cohesive. Such a mechanism is

supported by Resource Mobilizing Theory, which holds that the larger the excluded group, the more realistic is their ability to challenge the dominant minority. This is due to superior manpower and access to larger a resource pool which may allow the group expand and facilitate the necessary logistics to organize their opposition movement. Access to such resources may alter the excluded individuals' accounts for costs and rewards related to possible attempt to seize state control (McCarty and Zald 1977: 1216). Furthermore, according to the principle of ethnic representation, larger groups enjoy more legitimacy for their claims than do smaller minorities. This principle is valid also in the absence of democratic values and may be an important factor in mobilizing the excluded opposition (Cederman et al 2009 c). The larger the excluded group, the more significant is the violation of the principle of ethnic representation. The moral power of the group's claim grows in strength with the severity of such violations, and thereby plays a divisive role in determining the intensity of a potential conflict between the warring parties (Horowitz 1985: 215).

4.2.2 Whether to include or repress disruptive elements

Furthermore, rational choice theorists claim that in situations where a regime is threatened by excluded elements, it may either choose to accumulate the disruptive elements, or, it may increase their repressing activities to eliminate its contenders. In face of this dilemma, leaders of minority regimes seem more prone to increase repression rather than increase their coalition size by accumulating their opponents (Mesquita et al 2002: 551). After all, increasing the support base would enlarge the group of recipients of private goods, meaning greater governmental expenses and lower individual profits. Consequently, regimes relying on a narrow support base may appear more reluctant to accumulating new elements in fear of losing the support of their loyal supporters and, hence, provoke internal strife and threats of coupe. Rather, we may expect increased repression of the opposition by the regime and its supporters (Heger and Salehyan 2007). This argument, however, is based on the assumption that the authorities cannot afford to distribute sufficient resources to maintain a high standard of living for the entire population. Returning to Table 1, we may suspect Bahrain to actually possess the required resources, and thus be the exception that proves the "rule". Nevertheless, if the support base is relatively large, we may expect more willingness to resolve the situation peacefully, simply by accumulating the disrupting elements into the sitting regime (Heger and Salehyan 2007).

4.2.3 Preliminary conclusion of a linear relation

The given theories support a positive relation between extensive exclusion and violent outbreaks, both in form of conflicts between fighting parties, and unilateral suppression conducted by regime forces or its loyal supporters. This increased aggressiveness is largely attributed to the regime's fear and vulnerability to both internal and external pressure. If the given arguments are valid, we may not only conclude that authoritarian minority regimes represent a violent promoting factor, we may in fact also infer a negative linear relation between the size of ethnic group in power and the level of violent outbreaks. In practical terms, these conclusions would imply higher risks of violence in Syria where the ruling Alawits (12 %) rules the Sunni majority (62%), compared to Jordan, where the larger minority group of Arabs (Bedouins) (40%), rules the Palestinian majority (58 %).

4.2.4 Symmetrically sized groups and violence

However, the linearity of this relation is debated. Some argues that ethnic salience is a stronger predictor of violent conflicts than disproportional representation; holding that more symmetrically sized ethnic groups in societies characterized by low fractionalization index causes increased ethnic polarization and group identity (Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2005). To statistically prove a relation between the level of group salience and violent outbreaks, based on empirical data, would probably not generate credible results as group salience may not be measured in absolute numbers. However, the correlation is tested by an agent-based computational framework, leaving little doubt of positive relations. The study suggests that the risk of violent conflicts actually increases with the size of the dominant minority group, if group salience is fixed and high (Miodownik and Bhavnani 2011). The assumption that the level of hostility between groups will rise in communities characterized by the presence of a distinct ethnic majority and a large ethnic minority is also shared by Horowitz (1985: 40). Nevertheless, it should be noted that Horowitz did not take into account the power relation between the two groups.

These are arguments addressing the relation between the included and excluded parties. However, the size of the included party may also affect the danger of infighting; in situations characterized by broad inclusion, resulting in increased separation of power, we may see internal struggles over spoils of government. Subsequently, this may cause increased risk of destabilization and weak governance (Wimmer et al 2009).

As implied by the forgoing, there are good reasons to suspect that decreasing size of ethnic group in power increases the risk of violent outbreaks. However, the theories are inconsistent and appear to leave more questions than answers as I attempt to expand on the validity of my initial hypothesis. Therefore, in the following I wish to turn to the statistical research conducted on empirical data in order to see if, and to which extent, the theories I have discussed are valid.

5 Empirical findings

Intuitively, it may seem reasonable to make the assumption that regimes ruled by an ethnic minority may represent a greater risk of violent outbreaks due to their narrow base of support and undemocratic shape. A majority of the theories discussed in the preceding chapters also seem to support this view. Nevertheless, assumptions merely based on theories are not always consistent with empirical findings, forcing scientists to constantly be open to new explanatory models, and develop and test new hypothesis. In the following chapter, I wish to discuss the degree to which the given theories are confirmed by statistical analysis. Initially I will review a project examining ethnic minority regimes and civil war onset, without considering more specific variables associated with the ethnic minority regimes. Subsequently, I will discuss findings addressing the extent to which the relative size of the included group is related to higher risk of violent occurrences. Finally, I will present empirical studies testing central preconditions for minority regimes given in previous parts of my thesis.

5.1 Ethnic minority rule and civil war onset

One of the most cited quantitative research works addressing ethnic minority rule as a potential conflict promoting variable is presented in the article “Ethnic minority rule and civil war onset” by Fearon (et al 2007). Fearon uses the Ethnolinguistic Fractionalization (ELF) index to identify ethnic composition, and the dataset from “Introducing Archigos: A Dataset of Political Leaders” to identify the heads of states. The project covers over 160 countries worldwide. Depending on the coding of “whites”/”mestizo” in Latin American countries, Fearon holds that between 20% and 30% of all heads of states between 1945 and 1999 have been from an ethnic minority group. Ethnic minority rule seems to be most common in sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for close to 60% of all country years, and least common in Asia, where the share is just over 7%. With regards to the level of violence, the research only addresses the appearance of “civil war”. On the provision that the results build on rare events, and therefore produces weak and unstable estimations, Fearon concludes that regimes headed by members of ethnic minorities experienced civil war in about 2% of all country years, against 1,5% amongst the remaining regimes (Fearon et al 2007). The results suggest a weak and insignificant relation, contrary to our general assumption. In spite of disagreements

related to the statistical validity of the estimations and definitions of terms, also Cederman and Girardin (2007) reach similar conclusions.

However, due to Fearon's delimitation of the dependent variable to "civil war", the results will fall short in taking into account other forms of violence, such as "armed conflicts" causing less than 1000 battle related deaths per year, militarized interstate disputes or wars, and genocides. Further, the selection of states encompasses both democracies and authoritarian regimes, and does not account for the political relevance of the ethnic groups (Fearon et al 2007). The given issues call for further testing of more nuances hypothesis related to my research question.

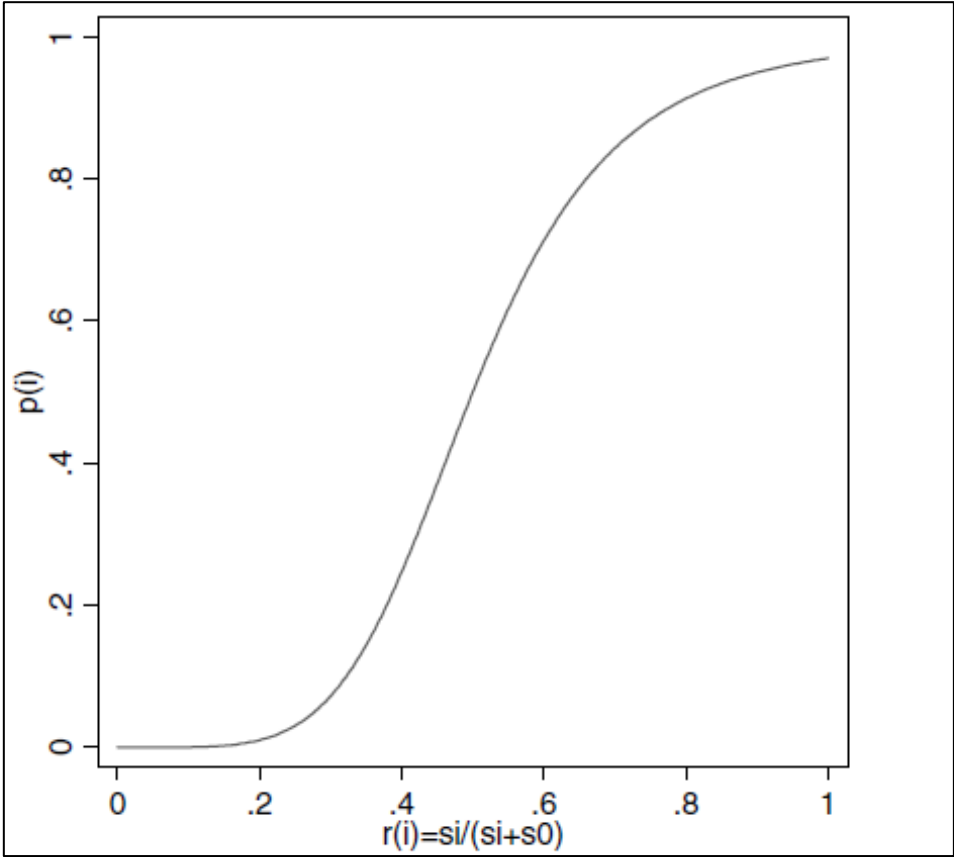
Despite the lack of clear empirical correlations linking ethnic minority rule to conflict onset, fundamental researchers of ethnic conflict theories, such as Gellner (1983) and Horowitz (1985 and 1993), are still widely cited and recognized. It still seems reasonable to hold that ethnic minority may act as a source of increased political tensions; however, this correlation is contingent upon certain characteristics. Derived from the preceding theoretical analysis, two factors seem to stand out. First and foremost, the group size ratio of the included and excluded party, implying increased risk of violence in situations where the ruling minority is small relative to the excluded majority. Second, a cohesive majority group which considers themselves as outsiders, victimized due to ethnicity.

5.2 Group size ratio and armed conflicts

Indeed, there various factors related to mobilization capacity, such as processes of identity formation, and the level of ethnopolitical grievance, which may have significant impact on an equation whose purpose is to indicate the statistical probability of violent conflict onset in a given country. However, to simplify the equation, Cederman (et al 2007) presented a model considering only the demographic approximation of power and its effect on ethnic civil war onset. In doing so, he uses a modified version of Ethno-Linguistic Fractionalization index (ELF) to code the level of ethnic fractionalization. He argues that certain patterns of ethnonationalist configurations are more likely to increase the likelihood of ethnic civil war onsets than do others. According to the empirical analyses of Cederman, a dominant minority increases the probability of ethnic civil war onset, and further, the likelihood rises

significantly with the relative size of the excluded majority group. The estimated effects of exclusionary policies on conflict onset are illustrated by Cederman (et al 2007) as follows;

Figure 2: The dyadic probability of conflict $p(i)$ between marginalized group i and an ethnic group in power.



Source: Cederman et al 2007, pp. 177.

The illustration is a product of regression analysis, based on data restricted to Euroasia and North Africa. The axis $p(i)$ refers to the rational probability of ethnic civil war onset, and $r(i) = s_i / (s_i + s_0)$ refers to the relative size of the excluded group(s). The graph represents the N^* value illustrating conflict onset relative to the size of the excluded group(s). The graph does not indicate which side which is responsible for starting the fight (Cederman 2007: 175-178).

This illustration is simplified, and does not take into account possible ethnic fractionalization within the included or the exclude group. For the sake of simplicity, let us look the example of Burundi as its population basically contains of only two ethnic groups. Returning to the estimates of ethnic group size in Table 1, we may illustrate the Burundi ethnic group configuration as approximately {**0.15** 0.85} prior to 2001. The bold number refers to the

included Tutsi group, whereas the remaining refers to the excluded Hutu group. Using Cederman’s illustration, we may postulate the N^* value of Burundi to be as high as .87.

However, the ELF index has the ability of taking into account the ethnic diversity of a country’s population, not only by stating the number of ethnic groups present, but also by estimating the relative sizes of the different groups relative to the number of groups. In doing so, the ELF index enables us to statistically code a country with group shares of (.25, .25, .25, .25) as more diverse than a country with group shares of (.97, .1, .1, .1), despite the equal number of ethnic groups represented within the country (Fearon et al 2007). Using this function, Cederman (et al 2007) found that an ethnically fragmented excluded group has a negative effect on the likelihood of ethnic civil war. Taking into account the ethnic mobilization theory which emphasizing the level of group cohesion when predicting the excluded group’s ability to oppose, the latter finding may not come as a surprise. Table 2 illustrates the negative effect on the N^* index as the fractionalization of the excluded group increases:

Table 2: *The ELF index, and its effect on the N^* value*

Group Configuration	ELF	$N^*(0.5,5)$
{ 0.5 0.5}	0.5	0.5
{ 0.7 0.3}	0.42	0.072
{ 0.3 0.7}	0.42	0.843
{ 0.3 0.3 0.2 0.2}	0.74	0.716
{ 0.2 0.3 0.3 0.2}	0.74	0.959
{ 0.2 0.2 0.2 0.2 0.2}	0.78	0.937

Note: EGIPs are marked in bold.

Source: Cederman et al 2007, pp. 177.

In presenting these statistical findings, I shall emphasize that the data set used regards only a limited part on the world, and does not account for other well established variables of civil war, such as national history of prior war, GDP per Capita, regime type and income sources.

5.2.1 Level of cohesiveness amongst excluded majority

The level of cohesiveness is not an easily estimated variable. However, Janus (2011) attempted to test the following hypothesis;

H1: Minority rule is destabilizing when the majority is very cohesive.

Janus attempted to determine the level of cohesiveness by stating the following assumption; *less ethnically fractionalized countries provide more cohesive opposition to minority regimes*. Similar to Cederman (et an 2007), Janus used the ELF index to determine ethnic fractionalization, and defined “destabilizing” as civil war onset. He found that ethnic minority rules raises conflict risk by 385% in countries where the majority in opposition is cohesive. The correlation is robust and significant; however, Janus notes that it may be somewhat misleading as countries experiencing ethnic conflicts are likely to also be characterized by other conflict promoting features. Hence, the results of Janus support the relation between ethnic fractionalization and civil war onset presented in Table 2 by Cederman (et an 2007). Janus also found support to his hypothesis suggesting increased risk of ethnic conflict in regimes dominated by a relatively small minority, while he found no support for the theory holding that symmetrically sized groups breeds conflict (Janus 2011).

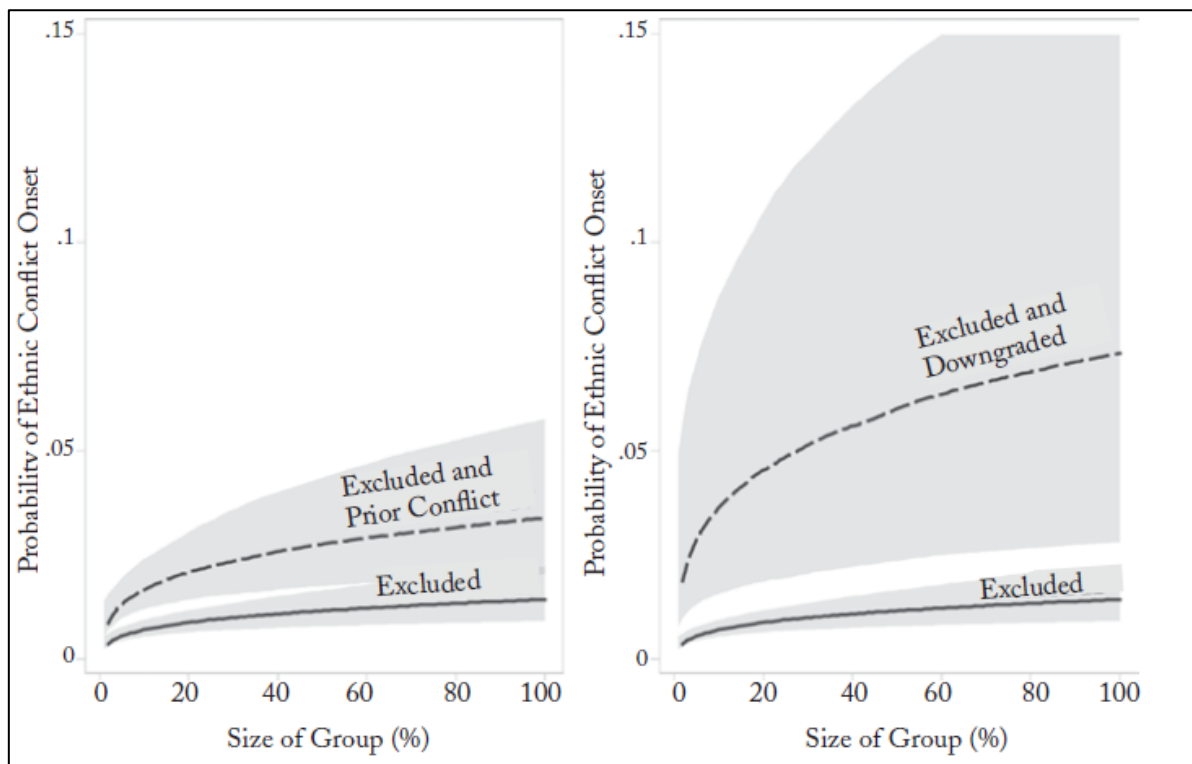
The ELF index is effective in stipulating ethnic fractionalization in clear numbers, and is widely cited by researchers of ethnic conflict science. However, the index is also criticized for its coding rules, causing questionable labeling, such as Syria as under shared Sunni-Alawite control, and Iraq under Sunni control as late as in 2007. The ELF index is further criticized for not taking account for the political relevance of ethnic groups. Taking account for all issues is not feasible in a science as complex as conflict theory, however, by presenting different aspects of my hypothesis in question, I strive to clarify the validity of my thesis.

5.3 Conflict initiating parties and group size ratio

Cederman (et al 2010) combined the EPR dataset with the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflicts Dataset, a global dataset regarding armed conflicts reaching an annual battle death threshold of twenty-five (Gleditsch et al 2002). By doing so, they sought to determine the extent to which the excluded group, as opposed to the included group, initiated violent conflicts. They found significant support to their hypothesis holding that an increase in group size amongst the excluded majority causes increased risk of armed conflicts initiated by the excluded group. They further found an opposite relation within the included group, however much weaker than the first, stipulating more infighting as the size of the included group increases. Both findings confirmed their initial hypothesis. According to their analysis excluded group size, the frequency of conflict increased roughly with the degree of exclusion, and the

correlation was significant at $p < 0.01$. Cederman further found that the level of GDP per Capita was negatively related to the variable of group size ratio, implying that increasing GDP per Capita slows down the negative effects of a large excluded majority (Cederman et al 2010). The explanation for this inference may be attributed to the inability of low income countries, such as Burundi, to either maintain its repressive state apparatus, or to co-opt leaders of the opposition, due to lack of financial resources (Haklai 2000). Bahrain may be an example of a country that actually can afford both, and thereby still manages to keep stability. By such, Cederman (et al 2010) confirmed the theory suggesting a positive relation between excluded group size and conflict onset. However, he also found that the risk turns substantially higher in cases where the excluded groups are exposed to prior conflicts or recent downgrade in power positions. His findings are illustrated graphically as follows, indicating significantly higher risk of violent conflicts fought in the name of excluded groups recently deprived of their position of power:

Figure 3: *The effect of excluded ethnic groups' size on their conflict propensity*



Source: Cederman 2010, pp. 109.

Wimmer (et al 2009) reaches similar results stating that larger groups, excluded on the basis of ethnicity, represents a greater risk of violent outbreaks. This causes him to question the

validity of the theory of “greed-and-opportunity school”, which seem to downgrade the importance of ethnicity as a potent conflict variable. However, rather than dismissing the theory, he argues that ethnicity may be used as an organizational means to reach the materialistic aims given in the “greed-and-opportunity school”. Finally, Wimmer (et al 2009) concludes that when minorities rule, “(...) nothing less than a fundamental rearrangement of the ethnopolitical configurations of power will secure durable peace”.

Accordingly, it seems apparent that greater disparity in group size ratio between the included minority and the excluded majority increases the likelihood of both ethnic conflict and civil war onset. In reaching this preliminary conclusion, the discussion has predominantly regarded oppositional violence onset initiated by the excluded majority, as well as violence caused as a result of the included group’s propensity to repress members of the excluded majority. To further elaborate on these aspects, I wish to draw the attention to the factors affecting the level of severity in these conflicts.

5.4 Group size ratio and level of conflict severity

Conflict science mainly focuses on onset of different categories of conflict rather than the severity of such (Heger and Salehyan 2007). Researchers targeting conflict severity may do this in a various ways, such as by analyzing the conflict duration (Fearon 2004), measuring the refugee flow, or study characteristics of conflicts causing mass killings or genocides (Harff 2003). However, Heger and Salehyan (2007) tested the severity of conflicts by coding battle related deaths during conflicts coded by the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflicts Dataset, holding that this is a more direct way of dealing with the issue of conflict severity. They conclude that rather than being a simple unfortunate by-product of conflicts, the level of violence is determined due to strategic choices made by the ruling elites. These choices are, according to Heger and Salehyan, heavily affected by the relative size of the included and excluded groups. Heger and Salehyan (2007) found that the variable for size of the included group was significant and negative, indicating higher death rates in conflicts involving smaller ruling elites. Their models suggest that as the size of the ruling ethnic group increases from 25% to 50% of the population, the number of battle related deaths decreases by as much as 65%. These numbers relates to authoritarian regimes scoring below 6 at the Polity IV index,

and conditions that other variables related to conflict intensity are held constant. However, the group size variable appears significant also when the dependent variables are accounted for.

5.5 Predicting future violent civil conflicts

Cederman's model, presented above as Figure 2, is a product of empirical data and therefore merely a graphical presentation of historical events, rather than a crystal ball that can predict future contingencies. However, by still keeping in mind the possible weaknesses associated with inferring regulations in the past to future occurrences (Hume, reproduced by Ringdal 2001: 39), I wish to evaluate the predicative effect of Cederman's graph by implementing the three remaining ethnic minority regimes in the Middle East; Jordan Bahrain and Syria. I will do so simply by placing the regimes in the graph according to the data given in the EPR dataset. As Cederman's model was constructed in 2007, subsequent events are not part of the underlying dataset forming the graph. Still persisting minority regimes are therefore suitable entities to evaluate the predicative effect of Cederman's model.

5.5.1 Jordan

The ethnic group configuration of Jordan is approximately $\{0.4 \ 0.6\}$, the bold figure representing the ruling minority of Arab Bedouins, and the remaining refers to the excluded Palestinians. According to Cederman's model this configuration provide an N^* value of approximately .7.

5.5.2 Bahrain

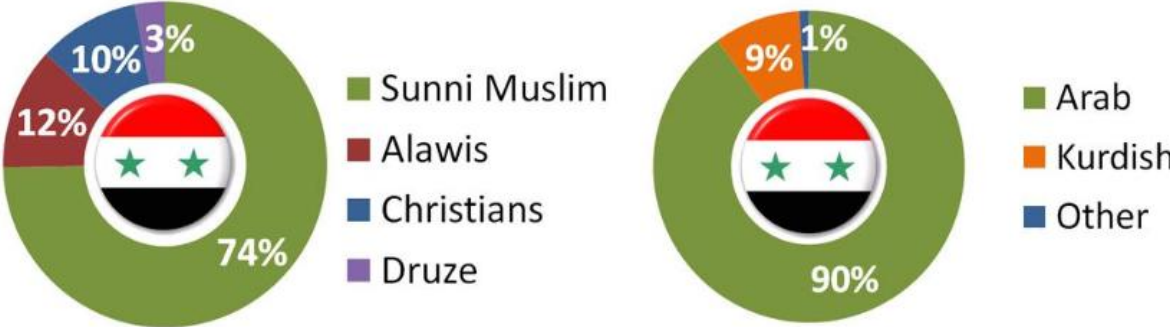
In Bahrain the EPR dataset postulate an ethnic division according to religious affiliations to either Sunni or Shi'a Islam. The ethnic configuration corresponds to $\{0.3 \ 0.7\}$, where the Sunni group represents the dominant minority group, and the Shi'a group constitutes the majority excluded from power. Hence, the N^* value of Bahrain equals .85.

5.5.3 Syria

Syria appears more complex as its ethnic composition is more fractionalized. According to the EPR dataset, the population is divided into the following politically relevant ethnic groups: **Alawi (11%)**, Sunni Arabs (57%), Christians (10%), Kurds (8%), and Druze (3%). This

equals an ethnic configuration of {0.11, 0.57, 0.1, 0.8, 0.3}. However, Syrian politics are not defined along ethnic lines alone; rather, it is played out along ethno-religious lines in order to maximize the profits of the ruling elite (PoliticsHome.com). The late president Hafiz al-Assad entered into political alliances with certain other minority groups in order to secure his dominant position by broadening his support base (Kaufman and Haklai 2008: 752). These policies led to a twofold division, creating an included coalition consisting of Alawi, Christians and Druze, while the remaining groups were excluded (PoliticsHome.com). This resulted in a twofold configuration, which, according to the EPR dataset, would equal the figures {0.24, 0.76}. These figures are supported by The CIA World Factbook (CIA 2013 b), and illustrated by PoliticsHome (PoliticsHome.com):

Figure 4: Syria: Demographic divisions of religion and ethnicity



Source: PoliticsHome, available May 8, 2013 at: <http://www.politicshome.com/uk/article/26901/syria-is-a-much-much-bigger-deal-than-egypt-or-libya.html>

Taking account for the ethno-religious lines along which Syrian politics were defined, we may conclude with an N^* value close to .9.

Referring to Cederman’s model, we may conclude that amongst the three remaining ethnic minority regimes in Middle East, Jordan, with an N^* value of .7, is the least likely country to experience civil war. Looking at the UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset, covering the period from 1946-2011, neither civil war nor armed conflict is registered in Jordan since 2007. Bahrain, scoring an N^* value of .85, is also not registered in the dataset of armed conflict (Gleditsch et al. 2002). However, in April 2012, Al Jazeera reported over 80 deaths due to clashes between Bahraini security forces and civilian protesters (Al Jazeera 2012), a figure qualifying Bahrain for the next year’s version of the UCDP/PRIO dataset. Syria, who gained the highest N^* value of .9, has also by far experienced the most violent conflict. The

UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset has coded the conflict as an “armed conflict”, as opposed to “civil war”, meaning less than 1000 battle related deaths in a given calendar year. However, the figures are from 2011. By now, the conflict is believed to have caused nearly 70.000 deaths (CNN 2013).

6 Conclusion

This brief review shows that Cederman's model actually may have predictive effect. And by such, we have an empirical test supporting the initial hypothesis, holding that ethnic minority regimes are more likely to produce violent conflicts, and, the narrower the ethnic support base of the regime, the greater is the likelihood of violent outbreaks when threats of transition or democratization arises. Hence, this insight suggests that the ethnic basis of a regime, in itself, is a variable that may cause violent conflicts. To policy makers and promoters of democracy this is relevant knowledge as they consider transition processes and possibilities for initiating measures to support democratization in a given country.

As argued in the foregoing, the risk of violent conflict is not merely dependent on whether or not the dominant ethnic group is a minority; rather, it depends on the relative demographic size of the included versus excluded groups of society. These findings should encourage peace builders to promote broader inclusion into the circles of power in regimes characterized by narrow inclusion. In this regard, the most desirable system of governance is democracy as its principle rests on equal rights and political opportunities for all citizens regardless of ethnic affiliations.

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han_egypt_or_libya.html](http://www.politicshome.com/uk/article/26901/syria_is_a_much_much_bigger_deal_than_egypt_or_libya.html)

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