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Fontana, Giuditta

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Giuditta Fontana

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Institutional Designs to Manage Ethnic Diversity in Conflict-Affected States: Conceptual, Methodological and Empirical Innovations

Giuditta Fontana

University of Birmingham

Sharing Power, Securing Peace? Ethnic Inclusion and Civil War, by Lars Cederman, Simon Hug, and Julian Wucherpfenning, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. 300. £74.99. ISBN: 9781108418140

Power Sharing and Democracy in Post-Civil War States: The Art of the Possible, by Caroline A. Hartzell and Matthew Hoddie, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp.276. £75.00. ISBN: 1108478034

Diversity, Violence and Recognition: How Recognizing Ethnic Identity Promotes Peace, by Elisabeth King and Cyrus Samii, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp.240. £79.00. ISBN: 9780197509456

Academic and policy debates on the best approach to manage diversity in conflict-affected places continue, fueled by persistent tensions in deeply divided societies, including the failure of Northern Ireland's parties to form an Executive, the debates among Bosnia and Herzegovina's Entities, and the implosion of Lebanon's institutions. The three volumes reviewed here represent the latest contribution to our understanding of institutional approaches to accommodate diversity in conflict-affected places and beyond. Produced by three sets of scholars with an impressive track record of theoretically relevant and empirically rich engagement with power sharing, these three volumes set out to challenge a growing pessimism on the potential for inclusive and representative institutions allow for stable war-to-peace transition.

In *Sharing Power, Securing Peace? Ethnic Inclusion and Civil War*, Lars Cederman, Simon Hug and Julian Wucherpfenning present a comprehensive, large-scale analysis of societies which experienced and avoided civil war worldwide. Following a vast engagement with much of the civil war literature from the 1990s, the authors identify the core cause of civil conflict in "horizontal inequality in the form of political exclusion of ethnic groups" (Cederman et al., 2022, 25). On this basis, they identify power sharing, here defined as representation in the central executive or the regional delegation of "partial executive power," as addressing horizontal inequalities. They analyze patterns in the adoption of power sharing worldwide and demonstrate that power sharing is effective not only in securing peace, but also in preventing conflict in ethnically diverse contexts.

Power Sharing and Democracy in Post-Civil War States: The Art of the Possible, by Caroline A. Hartzell and Matthew Hoddie, is the visible product of decades of engagement

CONTACT Giuditta Fontana g.fontana@bham.ac.uk Department of Political Science and International Studies, Muirhead Tower, University of Birmingham, B15 2TT Birmingham, UK.

with the theoretical and empirical literature on power sharing. Challenging criticisms of power sharing as hampering democratic development in post-conflict states,[1] the authors take us back to its roots as a type of (perhaps minimal) democracy and "address the sense of pessimism that now exists regarding the political future of countries emerging from civil war" (Hartzell and Hoddie, 2020, 6). They consider the medium- and long-term impact of power sharing in countries that experienced civil wars between 1945 and 2006. Through a variety of statistical models, they suggest that power sharing helps solve conflicts and fosters democratic practices in the long term.

Finally, *Diversity, Violence and Recognition* by Elisabeth King and Cyrus Samii combines quantitative and qualitative methods to reflect on approaches to ethnic recognition and on their long-term impact. Observing the diametrically opposed recognition strategies of Rwanda and Burundi, they ask: "Under what conditions do governments manage internal violent conflicts by formally recognizing different ethnic identities? Moreover, what are the implications for peace?" (King and Samii, 2020, 4). The authors identify instances of recognition across different policy areas, including the executive, legislative, civil service, security sector, justice, education, and language. In contrast with the other two studies, which focus on average effects, King and Samii bring context back into focus and underscore—through a qualitative research component—that the adoption of ethnic recognition, and its ultimate impact, is conditional on the ethnic power consideration in each state.[2]

Taken together, these three studies capture fundamental advances in our conceptual, methodological and empirical engagement with the challenges faced by conflict-affected societies worldwide.

Overlapping concepts

These three studies have a lot in common: They all agree that ethnic identities are socially constructed and their salience may vary over time and place. They also agree that their socially constructed nature does not make ethnic identities any less real. They all embrace constitutional engineering as a way of managing these identities and their potentially antagonistic expressions in deeply divided societies. They also express an urgent need to think more deeply about different institutional approaches to manage diversity and their short- and long-term impact. However, they differ in a fundamental respect: their definition of key concepts, including the concept of power sharing, underscoring continuing debates on the nature and purpose of inclusive institutions in deeply divided places.

Hartzell and Hoddie and Cederman, Hug and Wucherpfenning explicitly refer to power sharing in their title. Interestingly, both studies acknowledge the (qualitative) scholarly consensus on (consociational) power sharing as ensuring the representation and participation of formerly warring groups through institutional designs that provide for executive power sharing, autonomy, veto rights and proportionality.[3] However, they both somewhat depart from it.

Hartzell and Hoddie's analysis is anchored on a definition of power sharing as "measures [that] distribute various elements of state power – political, military, territorial, and economic – among rival groups with the goal of enhancing security by ensuring that no single collectivity controls all the levels of state power" (Hartzell and Hoddie, 2020, 8).

Cederman, Hug and Wucherpfenning depart even more fundamentally from the existing qualitative literature and define power sharing as "inclusive practices affecting ethnic groups, either by giving them influence of the state's executive or over regional decision-making" (representation in the central executive or the regional delegation of "partial executive power") (Cederman et al., 2022, 25).

These definitions speak to numerous large-n studies, but risk diluting the concept of power sharing to the point of rendering it unrecognizable and functionally indistinguishable from coalition government.[4] A clearer statement that Cederman et al. focus specifically on coalition government and on territorial autonomy (rather than on power sharing) would not detract from the value of their study, but place it in conversation with other works that examine specific components of broader power sharing pacts, and evaluate their impact.[5]

In contrast, King and Samii focus on the "higher level concept" of ethnic recognition. They convincingly claim that employing a higher-level concept allows their findings to "travel" more effectively (King and Samii, 2020, 8). Recognition is here meant as "public and explicit references to ethnic groups in state institutions" (King and Samii, 2020, 5).

This divergence underscores the urgency for both researchers and policymakers to reflect more systematically on core concepts, including power sharing, recognition, and inclusion, and ideally come to a consensus on their definition and on the appropriate context for their use.

Methodological advancements

All three works present substantial methodological advancements. Cederman, Hug and Wucherpfenning's monumental study uses an impressive array of methodological tools and original data to provide robust evidence in support of the hypotheses, and systematically tests alternative explanations. The analysis is particularly innovative in three respects. First, with its consideration of both conflict-affected and non-conflict-affected places, this book sheds unprecedented light on the conflict-preventive effect of power sharing but also on the fundamentally different nature of civil war occurrence and recurrence. Whilst some research on civil war recurrence is emerging,[6] this phenomenon is too often overlooked in large-scale quantitative studies. Second, the book focuses on both *de jure* provisions and the practices of power sharing, departing from most of the quantitative literature. Third, in critically reflecting on why certain groups may be included in power sharing arrangements, Cederman, Hug and Wucherpfenning identify the endogeneity of some power sharing institutions. Whist these issues have been examined in the qualitative literature, including in studies of "others" in power sharing,[7] they are often overlooked in large-n studies.

Hartzell and Hoddie's study is particularly innovative in its disaggregation of the concept of democracy into electoral (minimal); liberal; and egalitarian. This speaks to increasing calls to consider the quality of institutions in studies of post-conflict institutional design both by quantitative scholars such as Cederman et al., but also, and perhaps more importantly, by qualitative scholars working on Lebanon, Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina and other states whose power sharing institutions are experiencing crises.[8]

Finally, King and Samii's study is innovative in its expert combination of multiple research methods to produce convincing and robust explanations for real world phenomena. Their two-step research design combines large-scale statistical analysis of an original dataset of peace agreements, constitutions, legislation and practice in conflict-affected contexts worldwide with qualitative case studies. In keeping with the best practice standards for multi-method research, King and Samii consider both well predicted cases (Burundi and Rwanda) and a deviant case (Ethiopia). This well-composed book illustrates the benefit of multi-method research to detect broad patterns and test general theories before unpacking causal processes through case studies. King and Samii exemplify increasing initiatives to bridge the division between qualitative and quantitative research cultures in the field.

Intellectual contributions

All three books present some major contributions to the academic study of institutional approaches to managing diversity. King and Samii's most significant finding has to do with the complex and interactive relationship between ethnic recognition and the ethnic power configuration in conflict-affected states. They tease out two effects of recognition: assuring effects "which mitigate mistrust across ethnic cleavages" and mobilization effects, where "ethnic recognition licenses and potentially facilitates mass mobilization along ethnic lines" (King and Samii, 2020, 11). Due to the conflicting pressures of these effects, the authors convincingly show that leaders from majority and plurality backgrounds are more likely to recognize other ethnic groups. They also prove that recognition is especially beneficial to peace and stability under plurality rule (King and Samii, 2020, 11). As Raffoul[9] points out in this journal, these findings speak to long-standing debates over elite agency in plural societies.

Broadening the focus beyond conflict-affected states, Cederman, Hug and Wucherpfenning's study demonstrates that power sharing practices are remarkably effective in both securing peace and in preventing conflict. They explain this through two effects of inclusion in central and local institutions. First, Cederman, Hug and Wucherpfenning suggest that inclusion makes it harder for rebel groups to make a case for violent mobilization ("grievance-reducing logic"). Borrowing King and Samii's terminology, inclusion would prevent the mobilization effect. Second, Cederman, Hug and Wucherpfenning propose that inclusion helps to build trust after conflict through a "confidence-building logic" (Cederman et al., 2022, 27–29), which closely mirrors King and Samii's assurance effect. Thus, Cederman, Hug and Wucherpfenning establish conclusively that the inclusion of ethnic groups in state institutions leads to peace. In fact, by considering pre-conflict settings, Cederman, Hug and Wucherpfenning also show that growing adoption of power sharing explains the global decline of ethnic civil wars in the last three decades.

Hartzell and Hoddie similarly demonstrate that power sharing institutions help facilitate peace and minimal democracy after civil war by ensuring survival and security to rival groups. Nodding to Lijphart's early work on democracy in plural societies, their analysis tackles remaining questions on the long-term impact of power sharing, which have previously been explored theoretically and qualitatively.[10] Moving beyond their previous emphasis on the short-term impact of power sharing (5 years post accord), they start addressing calls for considering the whole lifecycle of power sharing institutions.[11] On this basis, they go on to suggest that in the long-term power sharing nurtures the "underpinnings and habits of democracy and encourage the peaceful resolution of conflicts" (Hartzell and Hoddie, 11). Thus, they show that states that adopted extensive power sharing after civil war were more likely to embrace "electoral, liberal and egalitarian democracy" (Hartzell and Hoddie, 2020, 124). This beneficial effect would result first from "democratization from above… as governments are transformed from instruments of oppression in the hands of a single community to entities that are increasingly constrained by the rule of law" (Hartzell and Hoddie, 2020, 17). Second, it would reflect "democratization from below" as a new distribution in access to power and/or to resources would empower "formerly marginalized groups" (Hartzell and Hoddie, 2020, 17). The authors themselves nuance their optimistic claims by admitting that the statistical effects of power sharing on all outcomes are small and sometimes subject to a significant time-lag (Hartzell and Hoddie, 2020, 202). This ambiguous effect may be due to the fundamentally different impact of liberal and corporate power sharing upon democracy, which has been qualitatively theorized as well as empirically proven.[12]

Taken together, these three volumes alert us to the importance of considering ethnic power considerations when analyzing the adoption, configuration and impact of inclusive

institutions in conflict-affected states and beyond. They also identify three complementary ways in which inclusive institutions may foster peace and even prevent conflict in plural societies. First, inclusive institutions may pave the way to a (minimally democratic) agreement by providing security for previously warrying groups. Second, inclusive institutions may reassure groups of their future relevance in the state (alternatively conceptualized as "assuring effects," "confidence-building logic" or "democratization from above"). Third, inclusive institutions may help redress the grievances motivating conflict and remove incentives for rebellion ("grievance-reducing logic" or "democratization from below").

Policy implications

The three volumes reviewed here have profound implications for policymakers and practitioners engaged in constitutional engineering in conflict-affected societies and beyond. Three main lessons stand out:

First, King and Samii identify a "paradox of recognition" (King and Samii, 2020, 14). They demonstrate that ethnic recognition may help reduce the political salience of ethnicity while non-recognition may enhance its political salience. Perhaps most crucial for practitioners, they show that *de jure* recognition is often associated with the implementation of inclusive policies (King and Samii, 2020, 14). This suggests that embedding recognition in peace accords and constitutions may be a useful first step to ensure that inclusive practices are implemented in conflict-affected societies. Tempering the optimism of the other volumes, King and Samii alert us to a potentially detrimental effect of recognition: the fact that, as a double-edged sword, recognition can be employed by Machiavellian elites for the purpose of divide and rule (King and Samii, 2020, 165). Thus, it is essential for practitioners to identify the potential outworkings of recognition on ethnic power dynamics before supporting specific policies in individual conflict-affected societies.

Second, Cederman, Hug and Wucherpfenning's work settles a long-standing debate on the long-term impact of territorial self-governance. To say it with King and Samii, a 'mobilization effect' of power sharing has been theorized in the past, particularly in relation with provisions for territorial self-governance. However, Cederman, Hug and Wucherpfenning prove conclusively that decentralization does not fuel civil war. In fact, they demonstrate that decentralization is an effective conflict-management and conflict-prevention tool, especially when combined with representation in the central executive. Practitioners can build on this robust evidence in favor of territorial power-sharing to design accords in deeply divided places.

Finally, Hartzell and Hoddie present a vigorous challenge to narratives of a "peace-democracy trade-off," and establish power sharing as the solution to this dilemma. Corroborating decades of theoretical literature and fine-grained case studies, they show empirically that "civil war adversaries who make use of power sharing need not face an immediate choice between securing the peace and constructing democracy" (Hartzell and Hoddie, 2020, 124). Practitioners and policymakers may therefore employ power sharing institutions as a steppingstone to more representative and inclusive politics in post-conflict places. In line with much of the qualitative literature, Hartzell and Hoddie also warn that the beneficial impact of power sharing institutions depends on the extent they are seen as permanent while also being adaptable to changing circumstances (Hartzell and Hoddie, 2020, 201). We may add that it will also depend on whether they adopt a liberal or corporate approach to the sharing of power.

Mapping future research

In the three studies reviewed here, an impressive set of authors think beyond the existing orthodoxy to identify approaches to building peace after civil war or to prevent the very occurrence of violent conflict. They pinpoint the accommodation and management of diversity as key to overcoming or preventing violence in plural societies, and provide a wealth of insights and recommendations for policymakers and scholars active in the field. Taken together, their insights orient future research in three main respects:

First, the three studies depart from fundamentally different definitions of concepts (most obviously, divergent definitions of power sharing in Cederman et al., and Hartzell and Hoddie). This divergence characterizes much of the quantitative literature on power sharing, and questions the coherence and functional utility of the concept of power sharing itself when it comes to large-n studies. King and Samii implicitly suggest a robust way out: They associate power sharing with the four core characteristics of consociationalism, and proceed to investigate a different concept (recognition). To ensure that their findings are meaningful, transferrable and widely applicable, future scholars may adopt similar strategies. On the one hand, it remains crucial to research the shape and impact of consociational power sharing, as embedded in the constitutions of numerous plural societies. It is also incredibly important to examine institutional designs on the corporate-liberal spectrum, and specific elements of power sharing such as coalition governments and group autonomy, without equating them with the entirety of power sharing. A more granular focus may open up space to investigate institutions beyond the executive and legislative, including institutions tasked with culture, education and other issues which have been traditionally overlooked.[13] On the other hand, where the four characteristics of consociational power sharing are not present, scholars may want to employ alternative concepts such as recognition, inclusion or accommodation, and examine their institutional embodiments in diverse societies.[14]

Second, these three volumes present remarkable methodological innovations, which speak to the need to bridge the divide between quantitative and qualitative research cultures in studies of conflict and peace. King and Samii offer a masterful example of how to do so, and underscore the importance of case-specific factors when examining the shape and impact of institutions in conflict-affected contexts. This is somewhat accomplished through Cederman, Hug and Wucherpfenning's innovative actor-based models, which will encourage future scholars to engage in similar analyses through new datasets, including PA-X.[15] The disaggregation of indicators for democracy in Hartzell and Hoddie's book also opens up a badly needed reflection by quantitative scholars on how to capture the quality of institutions in post-conflict societies. Dialogue with qualitative experts who have worked on Lebanon, Burundi, Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina and other conflict-affected contexts may provide valuable insights.

Finally, the three studies are realistic in their acceptance that recognition and power sharing are not a panacea. However, they also underscore that these norms and institutions have the potential to help build security, minimal democracy and space for individuals to express their diverse identities, even in conflict-affected contexts. They also emphasize that elites (both domestic and international) have agency in how institutions are designed, and that their choices during peace negotiations or constitutional conventions may ultimately impact the stability of the post-conflict settlement and its potential to generate minimally democratic practices. It would be interesting to test their findings on novel detailed and in-depth case studies of diverse societies, to evaluate whether concrete lessons can be produced for specific contexts beyond those already examined and with which caveats. Policymakers and practitioners (both local and international) would benefit from such context-specific analyses

while providing support for countries attempting to embed inclusive institutions in their constituent documents and to implement them.

Notes

1. For example, John Nagle and Mary-Alice C. Clancy, "Consociational Power Sharing: Conflict Regulation or Exacerbation?" in *Shared Society or Benign Apartheid?* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2010).
2. See also Alexandre Wadih Raffoul, "Diversity, Violence, and Recognition: How Recognizing Ethnic Identity Promotes Peace," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 26, no. 3 (2020): 338–40, in this journal.
3. Allison McCulloch and John McGarry, eds., *Power-Sharing. Empirical and Normative Challenges* (London: Routledge, 2017): 109–16, but also Giuditta Fontana, Argyro Kartsonaki, Natascha S Neudorfer, Stefan Wolff, Christalla Yakinthou, Learning from Failure: Tackling War Recurrence in Protracted Peace Processes (2020), https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/iccs/research/projects/learning-from-failure-tackling-war-recurrence-protected-peace-processes.aspx.
4. See, for example, Anne Meng, Jack Paine, and Robert Powell, "Authoritarian Power Sharing: Concepts, Mechanisms, and Strategies," *Annual Review of Political Science* 26, (2023): 1.
5. Including but not limited to Giuditta Fontana, "Mapping the Relationship between Education Reform and Power-Sharing in and after Intrastate Peace Agreements: A Multi-Methods Study," *Journal on Education in Emergencies* 4, no. 1 (2018): 74–113; Christopher McCrudden and Brendan O'Leary, *Courts and Consociations: Human Rights versus Power-Sharing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Allison McCulloch and Stef Vandeginste, "Veto Power and Power-Sharing: Insights from Burundi (2000–2018)," *Democratization* 26, no. 7 (2019): 1176–93; Stefan Wolff, "Complex Power-Sharing and the Centrality of Territorial Self-Governance in Contemporary Conflict Settlements," *Ethnopolitics* 8, no. 1 (2009): 27–45.
6. Most recently, through the project on "Learning from Failure: Tackling War Recurrence in Protracted Peace Processes" at the University of Birmingham, UK. https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/iccs/research/projects/learning-from-failure-tackling-war-recurrence-protected-peace-processes.aspx
7. For example, Timofey Agarin and Allison McCulloch, "How Power-Sharing Includes and Excludes Non-Dominant Communities," *International Political Science Review* 41, no. 1 (2019): 3–14.
8. For example, Tamirace Fakhoury, "Power-Sharing after the Arab Spring? Insights from Lebanon's Political Transition," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 25, no. 1 (2019): 9–26.
9. Raffoul, "Diversity, Violence, and Recognition."
10. Allison McCulloch, "Pathways from Power-Sharing," *Civil Wars* 19, no. 4 (2017): 405–24.
11. Allison McCulloch and Joanne McEvoy, "Understanding Power-Sharing Performance," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 20, no. 2 (2020): 109–16.
12. Andreas Juon and Daniel Bochsler, "The Two Faces of Power-Sharing," *Journal of Peace Research* 59, (2021): 4.
13. Cf. Giuditta Fontana, *Education Policy and Power-Sharing in Post-Conflict Societies* (London: Palgrave, 2016); Dawn Walsh, *Independent Commissions and Contentious Issues in Post-Good Friday Agreement Northern Ireland* (London: Palgrave, 2017).
14. See, for example, Giuditta Fontana and Ilaria Masiero, "Beyond Reassurance: The Reputational Effect of Cultural Reforms in Peace Agreements," Government and Opposition (2022, OnlineFirst). https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/government-and-opposition/article/beyond-reassurance-the-reputational-effect-of-cultural-reforms-in-peace-agreements/AA4030E1C13E06CA0D9B61F9C193F489

15. Christine Bell, Sanja Badanjak, Juline Beaujouan, Tim Epple, Robert Forster, Astrid Jamar, Sean Molloy, Kevin McNicholl, Kathryn Nash, Jan Pospisil, et al., PA-X Peace Agreements Database and Dataset, Version 6 (2022), www.peaceagreements.org.

Notes on contributor

Dr Giuditta Fontana is Associate Professor at the University of Birmingham (UK). She is interested in institutional design, cultural reforms and the configuration of effective peace accords in countries experiencing civil war and conflict. Her work appeared in journals including Government and Opposition. Her monograph, *Education Policy and Power-Sharing in Post-Conflict Societies: Lebanon, Northern Ireland and Macedonia* was published by Palgrave.

ORCID

Giuditta Fontana http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8874-9213