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**Institutional Conflict Settlement in Divided Societies:
The Role of Subgroup Identities in
Self-Government Arrangements**

Alexander De Juan

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Abstract

Institutions can contribute to regulating interethnic conflict; however, in many cases they fail to bring about lasting peace. The paper argues that their negligence of intraethnic factors accounts for some of this failure. Ethnic groups are often treated as unitary actors even though most consist of various linguistic, tribal or religious subgroups. This internal heterogeneity is often obscured by overarching collective ethnic identities that are fostered by interethnic conflict. However, when such interethnic conflict is settled, these subgroup differences may come back to the fore. This "resurgence" can lead to subgroup conflict about the political and economic resources provided through intergroup institutional settlements. Such conflict can in turn undermine the peace-making effect of intergroup arrangements. Different subgroup identity constellations make such destructive effects more or less likely. The paper focuses on self-government provisions in the aftermath of violent interethnic conflict and argues that lasting intergroup arrangements are especially challenging when they involve "contested" ethnic groups.

Keywords: identity, ethnic conflict, institutions, self-government, subgroups, intraethnic

Dr. Alexander De Juan

is a political scientist and research fellow at the GIGA Institute of Middle East Studies. He is a member of GIGA Research Programme 2 "Violence and Security."

Contact: <dejuan@giga-hamburg.de>

Website: <http://staff.en.giga-hamburg.de/dejuan>

Institutional Conflict Settlement in Divided Societies: The Role of Subgroup Identities in Self-Government Arrangements

Alexander De Juan

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1 Introduction

Our understanding of what constitutes a relevant identity group and a politically relevant intergroup constellation is strongly influenced by current or past identity conflicts. Thus, our attention focuses on Arabs and ethnic Africans in Darfur, on Muslim "Moros" and Christians in Mindanao, or on Shia and Sunnis in Iraq. Understandably, efforts to bring peace to these societies focus on the settlement of the respective intergroup conflicts. However, what consequences does intergroup settlement entail for intragroup relations between the African Masalit, Zaghawa and Fur; among the Moro Tausug, Maranao and Maguindanao; or between the Sunni Shammar and Jubburi? Intergroup conflict might hide ethnic or religious differ-

ences between such subgroups. Similarly, intergroup conflict resolution might bring these differences back to the fore and trigger subgroup dynamics that are rarely taken into consideration in the analysis of ethnic conflict and institutional settlements.

A growing body of academic work focuses on the role of institutions in regulating conflicts in societies that are marked by socially and politically salient ethnic differences.[1] There seems to be an understanding that in such "divided societies" institutions matter in the addressing of interethnic relations. Specific institutional arrangements are seen to increase or lower the risk of violent interethnic conflict (e.g., Horowitz 1985; Lijphart 1977; Ellingsen 2000; Gurr 1993; Easterly 2001). However, the findings of statistical and qualitative studies are inconclusive when it comes to the question of what kind of institutions effectively contribute to peace. Specific institutional arrangements appear to lower the risk of interethnic violence in some cases. However, they also seem to have no effect on the maintenance or creation of peace, and possibly even a negative impact, in other cases (Brancati 2006; Mehler 2009; Saideman et al. 2002).

In this paper I argue that the insufficient consideration of subgroup dynamics and constellations has contributed to the inconclusiveness of the research to date. In analyzing the role of institutions in interethnic conflict, most studies focus on the characteristics of specific institutional designs or on intergroup constellations, neglecting the internal characteristics of the groups whose interrelations these institutions are to regulate. Ethnic groups are thus treated as unitary actors with specific singular interests. This approach, however, does not consider the possibility that the same institutional arrangements will have different effects on different ethnic groups depending on the latter's specific intraethnic characteristics.

Subgroup identities are essential in this respect. Most ethnic groups are not internally homogenous. Rather, they comprise various subgroups with different religions, languages or customs. Such subgroup differences are often hidden by salient intergroup conflicts, yet they may also resurface when intergroup conflict has been settled. Subgroups have two potentially competing aims: maximizing their ethnic group's position with regard to other ethnic groups and maximizing their intragroup position with regard to other subgroups. The first aim fosters collective action on the part of various subgroups to achieve a favorable intergroup arrangement. However, the latter aim can lead to intragroup conflict, which might in turn influence the prospects of a meaningful intergroup settlement. Different subgroup identity constellations make it more or less likely that subgroup conflicts will undermine intergroup institutional arrangements and foster subgroup violence; the risks are especially great in contested, as opposed to fragmented and dominated, groups.

The paper is structured as follows: I establish the framework of my argument by briefly outlining some relevant elements of the debate on the role of institutions in divided societies and on the role of ethnic identities in conflict. In the remainder of the article I elaborate on

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1   See Wolff (2010) and Basedau (2011) for an overview of current research on the role of institutions in divided societies.

how various subgroup identity constellations might impact institutions' effects on interethnic relations, focusing on the provision of self-government to ethnic groups. The final section summarizes my theses.

2   The Role of Institutions in Interethnic Conflicts

Many violent conflicts are fought between the members of different ethnic groups (e.g., Gurr 1993; Horowitz 1985). Ethnicity allows for the clear differentiation of ingroups and outgroups, facilitating mobilization to collective action (Fearon and Laitin 1996). Thus, in divided societies it is strategically promising for competing political elites to rally support on the basis of ethnic political agendas. Such exclusive political agitation will likely trigger analogous reactions from other ethnic groups, potentially sparking an intergroup spiral of ethnic radicalization. From a more structuralist perspective, it can be argued that situations of intrastate ethnic diversity in weak or collapsed states can have much in common with the security dilemma in the international arena: uncertainty and fear regarding other groups' political dominance motivate ethnic groups to accumulate political power and resources to safeguard their own (material) security and well-being. Interethnic competition for power may escalate and ultimately result in (preemptive) violence between ethnic groups (Kaufmann 1996; Posen 1993; Saideman et al. 2002; Tang 2011).

Specific institutions are said to reduce the likelihood that ethnic divisions end in destructive rivalries and interethnic violence.[2] The academic debate proposes that institutions have various potentially constructive effects in this respect: they are believed to foster interethnic cooperation (e.g., Horowitz 1985; Reilly 2001), provide for multiple majorities and thus prevent the accumulation of power by single ethnic groups (Roeder 2011), or provide equal political access to various ethnic groups (Lijphart 1977). Others argue that partition and full self-determination is the only viable solution to interethnic conflict (e.g., Kaufmann 1996). Empirical studies on the impact of institutional arrangements are inconclusive. Specific electoral systems, horizontal or vertical power-sharing arrangements, presidential or parliamentary systems might contribute to peaceful interethnic relations in some cases but exert no proven positive effects in others (e.g., Brancati 2006; Cohen 1997; Gerring et al. 2005; Saideman et al. 2002; Schneider and Wiesehomeier 2008). Institutions most likely exert different effects depending on the particular contextual conditions. Thus, a more differentiated analysis might contribute to a more accurate picture of the potential and limits of various institutions (Basedau 2011). In the same vein, I argue that the consideration of subgroup characteristics can contribute to a better understanding of the varying effects of institutions in divided societies.

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2   As is the case in most literature on the role of institutions in conflicts, I am referring here to formal state institutions only (e.g., Horowitz 1985; Lijphart 1977; Sisk 1996).

Most current analyses treat ethnic groups as unitary actors without considering factors and dynamics at the subgroup level in their theory building and testing. This means, however, that a crucial level of interaction is obscured (e.g., Kalyvas 2003). Only recently have studies begun to deal explicitly with subgroup factors. Some focus on the role of these factors in subgroup relations. Warren and Troy (2011) analyze the causes of large-scale intraethnic conflict and find that the size of ethnic groups matters: the larger an ethnic minority group is, the more likely it is to experience intragroup divisions. On the other hand, states devote more resources to buying off or suppressing conflicts within larger groups to safeguard stability. Thus, violent intraethnic conflict is most likely to occur within medium-sized minority groups. Other analyses focus on the role of subgroup factors in intergroup relations. Case studies demonstrate that intraethnic conflict may lead to the escalation of interethnic conflict: elites within ethnic groups might resort to confrontational ethnic agendas and political programs when their political power is threatened internally, thereby fostering intergroup ethnic conflict (Deng 1995; Prunier 1995). Similarly, political competition within ethnic groups can motivate elites to "play the ethnic card" in order to gain support against their political rivals, thus triggering the spirals of radicalization mentioned above (Caspersen 2008; Hislope 1996; Mitchell et al. 2009). Others argue that intraethnic conflict might in fact have a positive effect on interethnic rivalries as it might move attention away from ethnic conflict and provide incentives for cooperation across ethnic lines (Horowitz 1985; Sisk 1996). A third strand of the literature looks at the effects of intergroup relations on subgroup factors. Various studies argue that intergroup conflict may foster subgroup cohesion, cooperation and collective action (e.g., Gurr 1993). McLauclin and Pearlman (2012), on the other hand, find that government repression might, under specific circumstances, in fact reduce cooperation among the members of ethnic movements. Finally, other studies deal with the more complex interplay of subgroup and intergroup dynamics. Kalyvas (2008) analyzes identity shifts and ethnic defection in civil wars: states facing ethnic rebellion might try to introduce "qualifiers" of ethnic identities, such as loyalty to the central state, with the result that factions of ethnic groups ally with the state against their co-ethnics. Staniland (2012) finds that ethnic defection can be fostered by subgroup rivalries. Competition between insurgent groups may lead to what he calls "fratricidal flipping." To consolidate their power, these groups might opt for intra-insurgent violence and side with their formerly common enemies. Cunningham et al. (2012) argue that competition between different factions within ethnic groups influences their conflict behavior: the more fragmented an ethnic group, the more instances of violence against the state and among co-ethnic factions. Tang (2011) finds that specific intragroup and intergroup constellations of moderate and radical elites influence the risk that a security dilemma will emerge, which in turn increases the risk that violent conflict will break out between ethnic groups.

Although these studies and analyses emphasize the role of intragroup dynamics, they all have one of the following shortcomings with regard to this paper's research question: Some

acknowledge the role of subgroup dynamics but do not undertake systematic analysis and theory building with regard to the impact of subgroup factors on intergroup relations. Others emphasize the crucial role of identities at the intergroup level but do not consider similar factors at the subgroup level. Finally, whereas some studies point out the role of intragroup dynamics in intergroup relations, they do not analyze how subgroup characteristics might influence the impact of specific institutional arrangements.

Drawing on the findings of these studies, I wish to elaborate on the thesis that subgroup identities can have a notable influence on specific institutions' impact on interethnic relations.[3] To do this, I focus on one specific aspect of institutional engineering, namely, the provision of self-government to ethnic minority groups. While the above-mentioned approaches to the institutional regulation of ethnic conflict can be neatly differentiated in theory, most actual conflict resolution attempts combine various mechanisms drawn from all institutional approaches. Furthermore, when it comes to the settlement of ethnic conflicts, most institutional arrangements entail some kind of self-government provision (Wolff 2010). Its frequent usage makes this kind of institutional arrangement particularly relevant, and its inclusion here allows for more diverse empirical observations. I thus focus on the effects of those intergroup settlements that provide decision-making power, ranging from decentralization and autonomy arrangements to de facto partition, to ethnic groups.[4] Although the following observations can be applied to ethnic conflicts in general, I specifically concentrate on interethnic institutional arrangements aiming to end violent conflicts.

3   Ethnic Group and Subgroup Identities

Ethnic groups can be defined as those groups whose members differentiate themselves from other groups based on religion, culture, or appearance; they may include nationalities, tribes, races or castes. Membership in such groups is determined through self- and outside ascription, mainly on the basis of actual or imagined descent (Chandra 2012; Fearon 2003; Horowitz 1985). Most ethnic groups are not homogenous and are subdivided according to other ethnic traits: nationalities might be subdivided into various tribal or regional groups, which might be subdivided again according to different clans and so on. Thus, in many cases, what is perceived as an ethnic identity might in fact constitute only one among various layers of (ethnic) identities (Nagel 1994).

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3   In this paper I am focusing on one specific disaggregation of ethnic groups: the differentiation of various subgroup identities. However, further disaggregation might be possible and helpful in understanding the role of institutions in ethnic conflicts – for example, a differentiation between elites, organizations and "the masses" in ethnic groups.

4   Thus, I am focusing on the so-called "consociational" approach to institution-building in divided societies rather than on institutions that reflect the recommendations of power-dividing and centripetalist approaches (see Basedau 2011; Wolff 2010).

If one aims to identify ethnic groups in a given country setting, one tends to focus on the ethnic identity layer that seems to be the most salient at the time of definition. However, relations between different layers of identity may change as a result of external circumstances (Gurr 1993; Kalyvas 2003; Le Vine 1997). As Chandra (2012) puts it: Individuals have "repertoires" of ethnic identities that constitute potential group memberships based on descent. A specific identity is "activated" when the individual claims it or is assigned it. Activation or deactivation can be influenced by changes in the individual's social or political world. Such processes can be observed in many divided societies:

Often, specific ethnic identity markers gain in importance through interaction with other ethnic groups. Shared experiences of discrimination and repression foster the shared identification of distinct identity groups and may "activate" an overarching identity that supersedes more narrow ethnic markers (Gurr 1993). Such an overarching identity is often fostered by elites who are trying to emphasize internal cohesion and intergroup differences in order to mobilize group members (Fearon and Laitin 1996; Nagel 1994). The "Pahari" (hill people) in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, the Oromo in Ethiopia and the Naga in India offer examples of such integration processes. The first group consists of various distinct tribes with different languages and customs. It was their common opposition to the government of Bangladesh that fostered the development of a collective identity. Local elites stressed the notion of the "Jumma people" being distinct from the Bengali majority. "Jhum" refers to the common livelihood, shifting cultivation, of the various ethnic subgroups. Political and rebel organizations used this collective identity marker to rally support among various subgroups and mobilize collective action with the aim of common self-government (Uddin 2008). A comparable process can be observed in Ethiopia, where rebels have been fighting for the establishment of "Oromia," an independent nation of the Oromo people. Interestingly, no common sense of Oromo nationality existed before the late twentieth century. The "ethnogenesis" of various clans and subclans into one common national identity was the product of years of common struggle against marginalization and repression at the hands of the Ethiopian central government. Today, rebel groups emphasize the notion of a common history and nation for the purpose of mobilization (Keller 1995). Similarly, the Naga group in India is actually composed of 16 tribes, as well as various subtribes, with distinct customs, traditions and languages (Kotwal 2000; Misra 1978). The common identity evolved only under British colonial rule and was mainly defined in terms of the group's perceived "otherness" relative to the rest of India and the Indian government. It gained in importance when the group's initial aspirations to self-rule were denied and suppressed. The shared aim of self-determination and the existence of a common adversary strengthened a national Naga consciousness and allowed for the first collective action of the Naga within a single organization (Bhaumik 2007).

Studies analyzing interethnic relations generally focus on such politically active (collective) identity groups. Similarly, institutional arrangements intended to regulate violent con-

flicts generally consider these groups' claims. However, if ethnic conflict can have integrative effects on various smaller identity groups, ethnic conflict settlement agreements and measures might have comparable disintegrative consequences. Ethnic "subgroup" identities may be reactivated, gaining in importance when shared threats vanish. The boundaries of ethnic outgroups might be redrawn more narrowly: intergroup differentiation may shift to an emphasis on the differences between the various subgroups. Such processes have been observed in Iraq, Darfur and Timor-Leste. Soon after the fall of the Baath in Iraq, violent conflict erupted among Sunnis and Shiites. Elites fomented sectarian strife with the aim of mobilizing support and securing access to political power. However, as soon as the interconfessional division of power had been roughly defined, even more narrow identities emerged and gained in importance. Tribal loyalties and interclan rivalries that had been obscured during the height of confessional fighting reemerged as virulent social and political categories (Jabar 2011). In many cases, these narrow markers have never ceased to be the main layers of identity. They have not been "deactivated" but have merely been hidden by the broader identity cleavages. In such cases, an intergroup settlement does not lead to the resurgence of subgroup affiliations but rather to their renewed political appearance. For instance, the conflict in Darfur has mainly been perceived and understood as a conflict between ethnic Arabs and Africans. However, allegiances to local tribes have always remained the main basis of people's identification. In the run-up to the peace negotiations in 2005 and 2006, the internal fragmentation of the "Darfuris" became apparent: the movement split along various tribal lines, with different groups fighting for the same interethnic cause but rallying support among differing tribes (Flint 2010; Tanner and Tubiana 2007). Finally, when Timor-Leste became an independent state in 2002, subgroup identities slowly reemerged. The people's common identification as East Timorese had gained in importance in the aftermath of the Indonesian invasion in 1975. Shared repression, suffering and opposition effectively contributed to the forging of an overarching identity. As a consequence, traditional local antagonisms were masked by a dominant interethnic differentiation (Borgerhoff 2006; Kammen 2010). However, since the settlement of the intergroup conflict and Timor-Leste's independence, elites have been trying to capitalize on subgroup identity markers. People from the easternmost regions of Timor-Leste have commonly been referred to as Fikaru, and people in the west as Kaladi. The elites have been trying to use these regional labels to mobilize support in local power struggles (Kammen 2010).

Such integration and disintegration processes are not exclusive or neatly sequenced. Subgroup identities do not vanish due to intergroup conflict. Likewise, ethnic groups do not automatically fall apart when intergroup conflict appears to have been resolved. However, the common identification of various subgroups will tend to be stronger in virulent interethnic conflict. Subgroup identification will tend to become more visible and politically relevant when intergroup conflict has been resolved.

4 The Role of Subgroup Identities in Self-Government Arrangements

Institutional arrangements intended to end interethnic conflict focus on the respective inter-group relations. They aim to accommodate the demands expressed by the identity groups involved – for example, by providing these groups with access to political power and self-government. However, as discussed above, such an intergroup settlement may result in sub-group identities coming back to the fore. Simultaneously, different subgroup objectives might become apparent. Subgroups may have shared interests with regard to the intergroup conflict and its institutional settlement, yet they may also have competing interests with regard to the subgroup relations within the framework of the intergroup arrangement. Focusing on subgroup organizational fragmentation rather than identity fragmentation, Cunningham et al. (2012: 71) call these dynamics "dual contests in self-determination disputes."

As regards interethnic conflict, various ethnic subgroups face the same threats and have the same objectives: maximizing security, political power and material resources in opposition to their common ethnic rival. Thus, virulent interethnic conflict promotes collective action for a common cause: preventing or reducing the dominance of other ethnic groups and increasing political self-determination. Subgroups commonly strive for intergroup arrangements that allow for a maximum level of self-government for their ethnic group. However, once the common goal seems to have been achieved, the likelihood of conflict over the distribution of the jointly achieved power and/or resources increases (Azam 2001; Garfinkel 2004). The devolution of political power to heterogeneous ethnic groups will raise the question of whom power will actually be transferred to. Linguistic, cultural or religious factions might fear discrimination and security threats emanating from other subgroups. Thus, each will try to maximize its individual share of political power and material resources within self-government arrangements.

Therefore, the more the intergroup conflict appears to have been addressed, the more subgroup identities and different subgroup interests gain in importance. As a consequence, subgroup competition and conflict can evolve with regard to the benefits provided to the ethnic group through a specific self-government arrangement. Such conflicts can shape sub-group behavior towards the state and other subgroups (Cunningham et al. 2012; Staniland 2012). This antagonistic behavior, in turn, can undermine the benefits of institutional inter-group arrangements, either by eroding the intergroup settlements and thus causing renewed interethnic violence (external instability) or by causing large-scale subgroup violence (internal instability):[5]

Subgroups appraise interethnic institutional arrangements according to two criteria: their contribution to maximizing both

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5 Certainly, subgroup conflicts are not confined to identity cleavages. They may also relate to other issues, such as political ideologies. However, subgroup splits will tend to emerge in accordance with different subgroup identities. The reasons for this correspond to those already briefly outlined for ethnic conflicts in general.

1) the group's position in intergroup relations and

2) the subgroup's position in subgroup relations.

If an arrangement is found to be favorable with respect to the first aim but not to the latter, it might be defied. Those subgroups that feel disadvantaged within the realm of self-government might come to the conclusion that the collectively achieved institutional arrangement does not improve their position in absolute terms: threats and discrimination might be reduced at the intergroup level; however, increased subgroup competition and conflict may nurture fears that repression will be reproduced at the subgroup level. Similarly, individual elites may mobilize subgroup support against any interethnic settlement that (seemingly) disadvantages them with respect to their access to political power and economic resources under self-government. This can undermine intergroup peace in two ways: Some subgroups might defy a specific institutional arrangement while others accept it, leading to partial interethnic peace. In other instances institutional arrangements may break down altogether.

Subgroup rivalry doesn't just influence the stability of intergroup arrangements. Conflicts over access to political decision-making and self-government provisions might also escalate into violence between various subgroups. Self-government provides elites and ethnic groups with political and economic opportunities such as territorial power-sharing and wealth-sharing arrangements. The subgroups and their respective elites may try to capture control over these resources, which will lead to increased competition between them. The same dynamics that can often be observed in interethnic relations might then lead to violent subgroup conflict: a security dilemma might emerge and result in (preemptive) subgroup violence. Similarly, elites might try to mobilize support based on radical agendas that emphasize subgroup differences, thereby triggering the mutual radicalization of various subgroups (Warren and Troy 2011). Thus, self-government might contribute to the regulation of interethnic conflict but trigger subgroup violence.

The risk that subgroup conflicts will undermine the external or internal stability of intergroup arrangements is influenced by subgroup identity constellations and proportions. These determine the internal power relations among various subgroups, as well as subgroup motives and potential. Drawing on analyses of civil war onset and interethnic conflicts (e.g., Collier 2001; Ellingsen 2000; Reynal-Querol 2002; Schneider and Wiesehomeier 2008), I differentiate between three constellations: Fragmented groups consist of various small subgroups with no single group able to take over a dominant position within the ethnic group and its self-government. Dominated groups have one subgroup that holds an absolute majority within the respective group. The sheer size of this subgroup ensures that no other subgroup can effectively challenge its dominance within the realm of self-government. Finally, contested

groups comprise either two or more equally large subgroups or one dominant group that does not hold an a absolute majority.[6]

As argued above, ethnic identities are not static and may consist of multiple layers. The same holds true for subgroup identities. Thus, various identity categories and constellations may become salient in the aftermath of intergroup settlements – depending on the interplay of the historical, social and political contexts and elite engagement. This makes it difficult to predict whether a specific ethnic group will come to be fragmented, dominated or contested. Thus, rather than referring to a fixed group characteristic, the categorization refers to identity categories and constellations that actually become reapparent in the run-up to intergroup settlements. These constellations will most likely shape subgroup conflict and determine its impact on the interethnic arrangements.

There can be no doubt that quantitative identity constellations cannot tell the full story. Qualitative aspects such as the institutional design of the self-government arrangement (for example, the electoral system) as well as actual qualitative power relations will play a prominent role in influencing subgroup behavior and conflict (Cederman et al. 2010). Nonetheless, I assume that identity constellations can influence the general likelihood that subgroup conflicts that have destructive effects on the external or internal stability of intergroup arrangements will emerge. Rather than showing that these constellations are more or less important than other factors, I want to illustrate that previously neglected subgroup differences can have important impacts on intergroup arrangements. I argue that the risks resulting from subgroup conflicts after intergroup settlements are greater for contested ethnic groups than for fragmented and dominated ones: subgroup conflicts involving at least one group that is strong enough to claim a dominant position within the self-government arrangement but not strong enough to prevent any other subgroups (or subgroup coalitions) from challenging its dominance have the greatest risk of leading to a breakdown in the external or internal stability of intergroup settlements.

In the remainder of the paper I illustrate these theses. I provide examples that indicate how the factors and dynamics described above can play an important role when it comes to interethnic settlements that involve self-government provisions. More specifically, I illustrate

1) that intergroup settlements can foster subgroup conflict along subgroup identity cleavages,

2) that these conflicts will have different effects for different subgroup identity constellations, and

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6   Most analyses of the role of ethnic diversity juxtapose fractionalization, dominance and polarization. The latter refers to states with two or more equally strong groups. However, the concept of "polarization" does not adequately capture situations with one strong group (not constituting an absolute majority) and various small subgroups. Such a constellation may have similar effects to those of actual polarization. The existence of one strong group increases smaller groups' motivation to build coalitions, thereby leading to de facto polarization, with two strong rivals pitted against each other.

3) that the risk of renewed intergroup or intragroup violence will be greater when contested groups are involved.

In many cases subgroup conflicts impact external and internal stability simultaneously. Subgroups that are trying to optimize their subgroup position within a specific self-government arrangement may defy intergroup arrangements and simultaneously employ violent means against their subgroup rivals. However, for the sake of illustration, I will describe the effects of different identity constellations on external and internal stability separately.[7]

4.1 Fragmented Ethnic Groups

Institutional arrangements involving fragmented ethnic groups will seldom erode as a result of unilateral action by individual subgroups. Contrary to Cunningham et al. (2012), I argue that a high degree of ingroup fragmentation leads not to more but rather to less intense competition. All of the rather small subgroups share a strong common interest in realizing and maintaining an intergroup arrangement. The devolution of power reduces the dominance of another ethnic group at the intergroup level without creating new dominance within the realm of the self-government arrangement: no single subgroup has to fear domination and repression by another subgroup. Thus, it is hardly promising for elites to try to mobilize support based on exclusionary ethnic agendas that emphasize threats emanating from other subgroups. Moreover, subgroups' chances of achieving comparably better results by rejecting collective intergroup arrangements and striving for unilateral solutions on a narrower subgroup basis are poor. Their limited size and organizational capacity make unilateral negotiations or violent action against the central government unpromising. Thus, increased subgroup conflict following the implementation of self-government provisions is unlikely to cause single subgroups to quit an intergroup arrangement. If individual subgroups do opt to defy the arrangement, their limited size will prevent any substantial effects on intergroup peace.

One example of such a scenario is provided by the civil war between the Bougainvilleans and the government of Papua New Guinea: The local society of Bougainville is composed of various clans and subclans (Regan 2000, 2008; Böge 2009). Their common ethnic identification as "Bougainvilleans" was strengthened by increasing tension with the central government (Regan 1998, 1999). Separatist sentiments escalated in the 1970s and finally culminated in a full-scale civil war in 1989 (Böge 2009; Regan 2008). Negotiations resulted in a peace agreement, which granted substantial autonomy rights to Bougainville, in 2001 (Böge 2009; Regan 2008; Wolfers 2006). Although subgroup identity conflicts among Bougainvilleans had

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7   I use examples from a specific sample only: ethnic minority "groups" that have been engaged in violent action for self-government in the name of a distinct ethnic identity. "Subgroups" are any ethnic identity groups within the former. These examples are meant to illustrate how subgroup factors may influence intergroup arrangements. Thus, the explanations focus only on the dynamics within single ethnic groups.

played an important role before and even during the conflict, they were overshadowed by the massive intergroup violence and the politicized ethnic antagonism between "Papua New Guineans" and Bougainvilleans (Ghai and Regan 2006). These subgroup differences came back to the fore in the aftermath of the peace agreement. Long-standing rivalries between various clans and subclans reemerged, and tensions and localized conflicts between subgroups increased (May 2003; Regan 1998, 1999). Nevertheless, these issues have not effectively undermined the stability of the intergroup arrangement (Regan 1998, 1999). Most likely, this is due to strong intragroup fragmentation. The Bougainvilleans comprise more than 20 language groups and hundreds of "mini societies" of clans, subclans and families with different customs and traditions (Böge 2009; Regan 2000, 2008). Thus, no single subgroup has had to fear dominance by other subgroups under increased self-governance. Nor has any single subgroup had the necessary capacity to unilaterally challenge the autonomy arrangement and strive for another intergroup settlement. Some small factions have denied the legitimacy of the agreement and the Bougainville government. However, support for these factions has been locally restricted to small subgroups. Their claims do not have a wider appeal to other regions and the various clans and language groups throughout Bougainville (Braithwaite et al. 2010; Regan 1998, 1999; Wolfers 2007).

Similarly, institutional arrangements involving fragmented ethnic groups might increase low-level subgroup violence but will most likely not lead to large-scale violent conflict within ethnic groups. The devolution of decision-making brings political power into the reach of political elites from various small ethnic subgroups and thus contributes to intensifying local-level political competition. However, the potential for large-scale mobilization is limited. The smaller the individual subgroups, the lower the chances that one single group can monopolize access to political power. Any such attempt would likely trigger coalitions among other subgroups that would easily outnumber the ambitious subgroup. Thus, violent subgroup conflict will most likely not evolve from disputes over dominance within the self-government arrangements as such, but rather from local-level distributional disputes among individual subgroups.

The case of the West Papuans against the Indonesian central government provides an example of this: The Indonesian West Papua region has been embroiled in a violent conflict for political self-determination since the 1960s. The West Papuans' claims to self-determination are based on their Melanesian rather than Asian origin, as well as their Christian faith, as compared to mainly Muslim Indonesia (Kivimäki 2006). In 2001 the central government unilaterally passed the so-called "special autonomy law," which provided for the devolution of decision-making responsibility to the region. Although the autonomy movement has always been internally fragmented, the differences between the various subgroups were masked by their common struggle for self-determination. The self-government arrangement has contributed to the resurgence of local-level political tensions between different local tribes (ICG 2011; Kivimäki and Thorning 2002; Timmer 2005). However, subgroup identity constellations

have contributed to preventing major subgroup violence: the Papuan population consists of more than 250 tribal groups (Kivimäki and Thorning 2002); therefore, no single subgroup can possibly hope to realize a dominant position within the semiautonomous region. Nor does any subgroup possess the organizational capacity necessary to stage a massive violent campaign against other tribal groups. Thus, rather than intense conflict over dominance within the semiautonomous region as a whole, there is conflict at the local level between various tribes and local communities. Elites have tried to mobilize support based on tribal agendas in local elections, thus exacerbating subgroup tensions (ICG 2007). Many of them have viewed the national decentralization reforms and the devolution of power as an opportunity to become *tuan di atas tanahnya* (the ruler of one's own country) (Timmer 2007: 470) and thereby gain access to political power and wealth (ICG 2007). They have been driving the establishment of ever-smaller administrative units along tribal lines. On several occasions the resulting amendments to administrative boundaries have sparked local violent clashes between various ethnic subgroups. However, there has been no large-scale subgroup violence (McGibbon 2004; Timmer 2007).

4.2 Dominated Ethnic Groups

Institutional arrangements among ethnic groups that are strongly dominated by single subgroups will be stable for the same reasons that those with fragmented groups are: The dominant subgroup has a strong interest in maintaining the arrangement it has negotiated as this arrangement effectively reduces threats stemming from other ethnic groups at the intergroup level. Furthermore, the subgroup's dominance within the realm of self-government will most likely not be challenged. Thus, the dominant group will try to prevent any challenges to the intergroup arrangement. Obviously, subgroup minorities gain less from the access to decision-making power that has been achieved through the intergroup arrangement. They remain ethnic minorities with limited influence on political decision-making and the potential to experience repression at the hands of the dominant ethnic subgroup. Consequently, minority elites may convincingly "play the ethnic card" and mobilize support against the respective intergroup arrangements, emphasizing the threats emanating from the dominant ethnic subgroup. Thus, subgroups might defy an intergroup arrangement in an attempt to realize a separate arrangement for the respective minority. However, these small subgroups' ability to effectively challenge the intraethnic majority is limited. Due to inadequate group strength and organizational capacity, they are hardly in a position to secure a unilateral institutional arrangement with the central government against the will of the subgroup majority.

The violent conflict pitting the Acehnese against the Indonesian central government is a case in point: The Acehnese struggle for self-determination has been portrayed by the insurgent Free Aceh Movement (Gerakan Aceh Merdeka, GAM) as the struggle of a culturally homogeneous nation against Javanese dominance and marginalization. Over the course of

the conflict, a regional identity has evolved among the people of Aceh (Schröter 2010). They comprise nine Suku (ethnic groups or tribes), with the Suku Aceh constituting an approximately 80 percent majority (Schulze 2003). The minority Suku have been part of a common struggle for Acehnese self-government and have been included within the GAM structure (Schröter 2010). However, since the achievement of a peace agreement following the devastating tsunami in 2004, ethnic differences among the Suku have reemerged as potent political categories. The agreement included substantial self-government rights for the people in Aceh. However, subgroup minorities began advocating for the creation of a new province distinct from that of the Acehnese, thus practically defying the intergroup arrangement, which had established a single, semiautonomous Acehnese province (Ehrentraut 2010). Local elites began mobilizing support for the division of Aceh, pointing out the discrimination carried out by the Acehnese majority. These dynamics have not, however, undermined the stability of the intergroup institutional arrangement as such. Considering their limited size, the minorities' bargaining power is low. Thus, the dominant majority has been able to undermine their efforts to lobby the national government for the creation of new provinces (ibid.).

In cases of strong intragroup hegemony, internal stability is also high, for the same reasons as those outlined above. Minority subgroups don't have much to gain from intergroup institutional arrangements: they remain minorities, possibly with marginal access to political power. Their motives for implementing violent strategies against the dominant subgroup might also be the result of fears of renewed discrimination and repression. Such fears may be mobilized by elites within these minority groups. Thus, if defying the intergroup arrangement does not seem to be a promising strategy for increasing the subgroup's access to decision-making (for example, because the central government is unwilling to negotiate a separate agreement), they might opt for violent protest and rebellion against the subgroup majority within the framework of self-government. What prevents risks to internal stability are simply the subgroup power relations. It can be expected that the dominant subgroup will be able to deter challenges stemming from minority groups (e.g., Cunningham and Weidmann 2010). As is the case in fragmented groups, resistance on the part of the latter will most likely not escalate into large-scale violent conflict.

The conflict between the Mizos and the Indian central government provides an example of the stability of intergroup arrangements involving dominated ethnic groups: The Mizo are not a homogenous ethnic group. The term "Mizo" means the "people from the hills," and the group is composed of various tribes that share cultural characteristics but differ linguistically and culturally (Jena and Chakama 2011). The violent uprising of the Mizo started in the 1950s and resulted from their perceived marginalization and cultural discrimination at the hands of the Indian central government (Kumar 2009). The Mizo National Front (MNF) led the fight against the government based on an ethnic agenda aiming for autonomy and, later, the secession of "Mizoram" (Bhaumik 2007; Kumar 2009). The violence ended with the signing of the Mizo Accord in 1986. Following the implementation of the self-government ar-

rangement, more narrowly defined identities gained in importance. However, this did not undermine internal stability (Bhaumik 2007; Goswami 2007), and it was the specific subgroup identity constellations that were crucial in this respect. The Mizo are strongly dominated internally by a single tribe, the Lushai, who make up 70 percent of the Mizo population. The rest of the group is composed of various smaller tribes, with none constituting more than 10 percent of the overall population (Kumar 2009). The Hmar subtribe earlier constituted an integral part of the Mizo identity and the movement for Mizo self-government. However, soon after the intergroup agreement with the Indian government was realized, the Hmar went underground to fight the Mizoram government, protesting against perceived marginalization by the Mizo government and claiming autonomy within the Mizoram state (Hassan 2008). These claims did not, however, result in major intragroup violence as the Hmar lacked the organizational capacity to stage a major war against the subgroup majority. Furthermore, the Lushai majority had a major interest in preserving the intergroup arrangement and diverting any potential risk to its stability. They thus tried to calm Hmar demands for local self-government in order to reduce the risk of a central government intervention that would possibly threaten the intergroup arrangement (Bhaumik 2007; Hassan 2008).

4.3   Contested Ethnic Groups

Among the various subethnic identity constellations, it is those with contested internal hegemony that are most at risk of having self-government systems collapse due to subgroup competition. One or more subgroups may be strong enough to claim a dominant position within the self-government arrangement; however, as no single subgroup holds an absolute majority that will deter challengers, demands for political dominance can trigger resistance from competing subgroups or subgroup coalitions. As soon as one subgroup or subgroup coalition prevails, the value of the institutional arrangement for the other subgroup decreases considerably as it retains de facto political minority status with few advantages compared to the initial intergroup constellation. Thus, the cost of leaving an intergroup arrangement will be low: if the failing contestants feel that the intergroup arrangement does not considerably improve their absolute (inter- and intragroup) position and access to financial and political resources, they might try to realize a new, more favorable arrangement. Contrary to the minorities in dominated groups and the various factions in fragmented ethnic groups, the subgroups in contested ethnic groups are strong enough to have realistic chances of enhancing their access to political power by leaving the current arrangement and attempting to negotiate a new settlement with the central government.

The conflict between the Somalis and the Ethiopian central government serves as an example of the fragility of intergroup arrangements involving contested ethnic groups: Marginalization and resistance have long characterized relations between the Ethiopian central government and the Somali periphery. Violent conflict with the Somali minority erupted at

the end of the 1970s. With the downfall of the military Derg regime in 1987 and in light of continued violent protest by various ethnic groups, a federal system was established. It provided for the recognition of the Somali ethnic identity and a certain degree of devolution of power to the Somalis (Hagmann and Khalif 2008). With the expansion of local self-rule, subgroup competition gained in prominence. Somali communities are fragmented according to various clans and subclans. The Darood is the largest clan family, and the Darood Ogaden clan is estimated to be the largest single clan, consisting of up to 50 percent of Ethiopian Somalis. Non-Ogadeni Darood peoples, such as the Marehan and other clan families including the Dir (Isse), Isaaq, Hawiye, Bantu, and Rahaweyn, also inhabit the Somali Region (Human Rights Watch 2008). Following the devolution of power to this region, interclan conflict intensified and shaped political interaction in the newly formed state. Nearly all local clans established their own political parties. Moreover, the smaller clans formed an organized opposition against the dominant Ogaden clan (Adegehe 2009; Hagmann 2005). With central government support, this coalition of local tribes prevailed politically over the Ogaden. Thus, the value of the intergroup arrangement for this majority subgroup decreased. The large Ogaden clan possessed substantial organizational capacities. This allowed a major faction of the clan to continue the fight against the central government with a more narrow clan-based agenda in the hope of securing a more favorable intergroup arrangement (Abdullahi 2007; Markakis 1996).

The case of the South Sudanese against the Sudanese central government demonstrates that such dynamics do not always emerge in the early phases of intergroup settlements. Institutional arrangements might remain stable for a relatively long time. From the early 1960s, the South Sudanese rebel movement Anya Nya fought against the national regime's policy of marginalization and attempts to Arabize and Islamize Africans in the southern region of the country. The civil war ended with the signing of the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement in 1972 (Shinn 2004). A single southern region with a considerable degree of autonomy was established as a result of the agreement (Badal 1994; Branch and Cherian Mampilly 2005; Shinn 2004). While the provisions for self-government effectively ended the North-South violence, they led to increasing intra-southern tensions, most notably between the Dinka and Nuer tribes and between the Equatorians and the Dinka (Badal 1994; Shinn 2004). The Dinka alone constitute approximately 40 percent of the South Sudanese population; the Nuer make up 20 percent. Equatorians consist of various non-Nilotic tribes that constitute approximately 30 percent of the population in South Sudan (see Young 2006). In an effort to curb Dinka domination and strengthen personal access to political power, Joseph Lagu, a Madi from Equatoria, began to agitate for the redivision of the South into three regions. He rallied support among non-Dinkas, emphasizing subgroup rivalries and cultivating fears with respect to Dinka dominance under the provisions of the Addis Ababa Agreement. As he was not able to prevail over his subgroup rivals politically, he allied with Sudan's president Nimerey, who seized the opportunity to foment divisions among the South Sudanese. Nimery dissolved the regional government structures by presidential decree and established three regions, all of

which were to be led by Joseph Lagu's allies (Branch and Cherian Mampilly 2005; Shinn 2004). The decree violated the Addis Ababa Agreement and was one of the triggers for the resumption of civil war with the North a few months later (Badal 1994; Branch and Cherian Mampilly 2005).

The risk of internal violence will also be higher for contested groups than for those with other subgroup identity constellations. First, and in contrast to the case in fragmented and dominated groups, the "winners" and "losers" in self-government arrangements are not defined to such a great extent through mere subgroup demographics: In fragmented groups, no group has to fear renewed repression by another single subgroup. In dominated groups self-government results in the uncontested hegemony of one single subgroup. In the contested groups, however, one or more groups can hope to achieve political dominance within the self-government arrangement, but no group has sufficient "demographic power" to deter challenges to its dominance from other groups or coalitions of groups. Thus, when quitting the intergroup arrangement does not seem to be a promising way of enhancing the subgroup's absolute position (for example, because the intergroup arrangement has already provided the ethnic groups with far-reaching self-government capacity), it might opt to try to enforce its political dominance against rival subgroups. Compared to fragmented groups and to minorities in dominated groups, the subgroups within contested groups have sufficient organizational capacity to allow for large-scale mobilization, which can lead to intense subgroup violent conflict.

Such subgroup civil war was observed in the aftermath of the violent conflict between the Kurds and the Iraqi central government: When the Kurdish region in northern Iraq became de facto independent in the early 1990s, political conflicts based on subgroup differences between the Kurmanci-speaking North and the Sorani-speaking South of the region escalated into a major civil war. The intra-Kurdish conflicts in Iraq can be traced back to the increasing polarization of two rival factions of political elites, each of whom mobilized support from the two distinct Kurdish regions, which differ in cultural, linguistic and religious (different *tariqas*) terms (van Bruinessen 1994). Conflict between these groups had been a central feature of the Kurdish movement ever since the 1960s. Nonetheless, both subgroups joined forces in a common fight for Kurdish self-determination against the Arab Baath regime. It was after the establishment of the Kurdish Regional Government and the first elections in 1992 that subgroup rivalry reemerged as the principal political and identity fault line, with major violence erupting between these two groups. People from the southern region feared domination by the northern region as the North controlled the former's access and supply lines to neighboring countries. In the northern region a general feeling emerged that they should have acted on behalf of their own subgroup instead of fighting the central government collectively with the Kurds from the South (ibid.). The 1992 elections disappointed both competing elites' hopes for a dominant position and ended up in a 50-50 provisional power-sharing arrangement. These elites then capitalized on the intra-Kurdish antagonism and the mutual

fears and suspicions to mobilize their constituencies to a civil war that began in 1994 and ended up in the division of the autonomous Kurdish region into two quasi-distinct political entities in the North and South (Bengio 2006).

Similar dynamics have been observed in the conflict between the Isaaq and the Somali central government. The Somali National Movement (SNM) was established in the early 1980s in response to the repression and marginalization of the Isaaq clan in the country's northern region (Jhazbhay 2009). However, soon after Somaliland achieved quasi-independence from the Somali Barre regime, conflict escalated among various Isaaq subgroups and led to violent clashes along subgroup boundaries. The Isaaq clan family is subdivided into six main clans, with the Habar Awal, Habar Gerhajis (especially the Habar Yunis subclan) and Habar Tol Ja'lo being the largest and most influential in Somaliland (Bradbury 2008; Farah and Lewis 1997). Intra-Isaaq conflicts over political dominance and the distribution of wealth emerged soon after Somaliland's declaration of independence (Farah and Lewis 1997). When the newly formed government under President Tuur tried to establish control over the region's heavy weapons, violence erupted between militias from his Habar Yunis tribe and the Habar Tol Ja'lo, leaving 300 dead. In the same year, 1992, the government tried to bring the Berbera port under its control. This move resulted in more violent clashes, again pitting government forces mostly from the president's Habar Yunis against militias associated with the Habar Tol Ja'lo and bringing Somaliland close to a full-fledged civil war (Bradbury 2008). A few years later, major violence erupted again between both groups in a conflict over the monopolization of revenues from the Hargeisa airport; hundreds of thousands of civilians were forced to flee, mainly into neighboring Ethiopia (Lewis 2008). Subgroup conflict led to massive violence, largely because various subgroups (and their respective elites) claimed dominance and defied other subgroups' attempts to access and monopolize economic and political power under self-government. The competing elites were able to draw support from different subgroups that were strong enough to mobilize on a large scale.

5   Summary and Conclusions

Visible ethnic identities often constitute but one among many (ethnic) identity layers. Conflicts can foster the integration of various small identity groups into a common identity framework that is strongly defined in opposition to another ethnic group. Such processes can be strengthened by local elites who promote overarching identity markers in order to mobilize distinct subgroups for a common cause. However, more narrowly defined ethnic identities may be reactivated (or simply uncovered) when external conditions change.

Thus, intergroup institutional settlements may support the resurgence or political reappearance of distinct subgroup identities. First, a crucial binding element decreases in importance when the intergroup conflict is eased. Furthermore, competition over the spoils of the intergroup conflict might emerge between the various subgroups. The devolution of

power might alter subgroups' perception as to who their main competitors for power and wealth are and who constitutes the principal threat to their security. The resulting subgroup conflicts can influence whether or not institutional intergroup arrangements can be sustained without the occurrence of subgroup violence.

The examples outlined above demonstrate that the level of risk that emanates from subgroup identity conflicts depends on the specific subgroup identity constellations. Distinct consequences of subgroup conflict can be observed in ethnic groups with differing subgroup identity constellations:

Ethnic groups that are fragmented or are clearly dominated by single subgroups will be the most likely to have stable intergroup arrangements. The capacity to sabotage intergroup arrangements and stage large-scale subgroup violence, as well as the motivation to do so, is limited. In both cases, most of the subgroups profit significantly from meaningful self-government provisions: Self-government makes the dominant ethnic group a new majority within the realm of power that has been devolved. Similarly, for small subgroups within fragmented ethnic groups, self-government arrangements reduce the dominance of another ethnic group at the intergroup level without producing new dominance within the realm of the self-government arrangement. Thus, in both cases, the majority of the subgroups have much to win from the new situation, without having to face any serious internal challengers. Subgroup violence in fragmented and dominated groups will most likely take the form of local autonomy conflicts that can be addressed through the renewed devolution of power from within the self-government arrangement – as special autonomy rights for subgroup minorities or through internal decentralization. Including such arrangements in the intergroup settlement might help to prevent the escalation of subgroup conflicts in the first place.

Contested groups will more often be unstable. Subgroup conflicts involving at least one group that is strong enough to claim a dominant position within the self-government arrangement but not strong enough to prevent any other subgroups from challenging its dominance have the greatest risk of leading to a breakdown in the external or internal stability of intergroup settlements. Contrary to the case in other identity constellations, the extent to which subgroups benefit and are threatened under self-government arrangements will depend not only on structural subgroup demographics but also on their ability to prevail politically over their subgroup rivals. This raises the stakes of political competition along subgroup lines and increases the risk that intergroup arrangements will erode and major subgroup violence will erupt.

This does not mean that stable intergroup arrangements are not possible under such circumstances. Rather, it indicates the importance of the institutional regulation of subgroup relations. The Kurds in Iraq, the South Sudanese in Sudan and the Isaaq in Somaliland have all been able to ease subgroup conflicts through formal or informal institutional arrangements that have provided various subgroups with access to political decision-making. Thus, intergroup self-government arrangements with contested groups might be more promising when

they include formal intragroup power-sharing agreements. This would most likely make intergroup settlement more challenging, as it would impair the strategy of postponing the distribution of subgroup power and thus bring internal power struggles directly into the intergroup peace negotiations. However, it might increase the sustainability of intergroup agreements and decrease the risk that these stir up new ethnic wars at the subgroup level.

In this paper I have relied on anecdotal evidence from various empirical cases in order to elaborate upon the theses presented above. As a next step, empirical analysis is necessary in order to determine whether these theses can actually help explain the varying success of self-government arrangements in divided societies. Large-n studies might be difficult to undertake, as they would require extensive quantitative information on subgroup identity constellations, which in many cases is not available. Analyses might therefore have to rely on comparative or single-case studies that retroactively trace the effects of subgroup conflicts on intergroup institutional arrangements. In addition to mere demographic identity constellations, such studies might consider qualitative subgroup relations as well as the different intragroup provisions of self-government arrangements (for example, electoral systems, power-sharing arrangements, degrees of decentralization). Finally, I have concentrated here on self-government arrangements only. However, subgroup identity constellations most probably have equally important effects on other institutional arrangements meant to end or prevent violent conflict in divided societies – for instance, electoral systems or horizontal power-sharing. The initial observations presented in this paper demonstrate that it may be worthwhile to more systematically include intraethnic factors and dynamics into analyses of the various approaches to the institutional regulation of ethnic conflicts.

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