Informal Institutions Matter: Elite Bargain Explanations of Ethnic Conflict Onset

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Abstract:

A bargaining game between elite groups has the potential to explain a macro phenomena such as a civil war. Fearon (1995) explores the rationalist explanations of war, in which credible commitments and information asymmetries explain the triggering of conflicts internationally. This paper argues that horizontally unequal elites bargain for (re)distribution of political participation, economic assets and social services through formal and informal institutions in order to expand their shares. The presence of cleavages and grievances amongst groups are enhanced when exclusion through inefficient redistribution takes place; therefore, a bargain failure with the potential to activate violent means, implies a disagreement amongst the elites over the allocation of resources to different societal groups. By conducting fsQCA the theory will show that bargains fail in presence of information asymmetries and non-credible commitments, which can be analysed in: the formal structures as the state itself and, the informal structures as neopatrimonial networks.

Key Words: Ethnic conflict, horizontal inequalities, elites, redistribution, informal institutions

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1

1. Introduction

A bargaining game between elite groups has the potential to explain a macro phenomena such as a civil war. Conflict can be understood as the product of a bargain failure between discriminated -powerless, downgraded or underrepresented- (Cederman, et al., 2010) elite groups and powerful –monopoly, dominant- elites in repetitive bargains for redistribution of political participation, economic assets and social services. Political exclusion and economic inequality as dimensions of horizontal inequality have been recognized as a robust cause of ethnic conflict onset (Cederman, et al., 2010) (Ostby, 2008) (Ostby, et al., 2009) (Besacon, 2005) (Baldwin & Huber, 2010) (Alesina & Papaioannou, forthcoming) (Stewart, 2002). Within these models the state is understood as an organisation of organisations (Boix, 2008; North et al., 2009) which is captured to different degrees by different ethnic groups (Cederman et al. 2009). Elite groups within power hold decision-making power to allocate and redistribute assets and participation. Thus, although these findings remain as strong hypotheses in explaining ethnic conflict onset, they fail to recognize the relevance of informal institutions such as patronage networks as viable and legitimate channels of redistribution.

Patronage networks operate as key channels of distribution amongst pre-modern societies. It represents the classical form of organization and redistribution which, when challenged with modernization through processes of decolonization or the formation of a nation-state, instead of disappearing has adapted to accommodate changes in the broader political context. This way of organization did not disappear but instead it was preserved as informal institutions. Its influence over the formal structures of the state is staggering in most of the developing world[1], and thus its relevance and study has somehow been neglected. The study of informal institutions in the form of patronage networks is of utmost importance as it does not idealize politics in the third world[2], but instead, it recognizes the shortcomings and aims to establish ways in which these flaws can be used for better results, such as aiding to control violence.

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[1] For example, in terms of: political participation: votes, preference or exclusion of ethnicities and distribution of public goods.

[2] Most of the studies and policy recommendations in terms of conflict and development have been to reform the state expecting illusory results. However, the reality of how politics is conducted, how resources are redistributed has been completely ignored. Furthermore, in terms of corruption policy recommendations and reforms expect to achieve results for which the formal structure simply does not have the maturity for. Reaching maturity is a process, as Douglas North has pointed out; the gradual passing from Limited Access orders to Open Access orders (North, et al., 2009)

Furthermore, it has been widely accepted that illiberal democracies or hybrid regimes are the type of regime with the highest rate of conflict onset (Regan & Bell, 2009) (Goldstone, 2010) (Hegre, 2001) (Vreeland, 2008). Within illiberal democratic regimes there is a great deal of informality playing behind the scenes. Because illiberal democracies do not function as full democracies, the institutions in place are unable to cope with the demands and obligations of a democracy. This characteristic further allows for alternative institutions to persist and evolve, the fragility of rule enforcement further favors the proliferation of informal institutions; hence, informal institutions are not always operating in conflicting direction to formal ones (Helmke & Levistky, 2004). I understand regime types as a spectrum in which there is a differentiated balance between formal and informal institutions which is also dependent on the type of the regime. Therefore, elites constantly bargain for redistribution within both types of institutional frameworks. If there is inefficient redistribution through either of the institutional frameworks, ethnic conflict is more likely to happen, particularly in hybrid regimes.

Additionally, conflict can be understood as a product of a bargain failure. A great deal of academic research on domestic conflict onset has focused attention solely on structural explanations: exclusion, economic inequality, cultural discrimination. Thus, structures are the product of agency decision-making which in turn is a product of bargaining between elite groups. In this regard, one has to ask: why do bargains between elite groups fail?. According to the rationalist explanations of war (Fearon, 1995), bargains tend to fail in the presence of information asymmetries and non-credible commitments, resembling inefficient distribution which can be captured within both formal and informal channels of distribution and applied to the domestic context.

The present paper is an attempt to provide a structural and agency explanation of ethnic conflict onset which effectively incorporates the full spectrum of institutions. In fact, a political analysis of conflict onset must contain insights into patronage networks; they represent a legitimate channel of supply which has the potential to produce (in)equality in the distribution encouraging the use of violence, furthermore, distribution undertaken informally denotes a hidden side of the transaction spectrum that might provide answers as to why some societies rebel while others do not in contexts of political exclusion. Additionally, it also affects the trust and quality of information perceived by each side of the bargain. The paper contributes to the general debate by highlighting the relevance of informality in either controlling or enhancing violence as well as providing an agency –structure two level theory.

In this vein, I use fsQCA (Fuzzy Qualitative Comparative Analysis) to provide a comparison of 9 cases of conflict onset vs. 13 cases of conflict avoidance which firstly, shows the significance of patronage networks in both: perpetuating economic and political exclusion by further restraining patronage distribution only to those included (cases of conflict onset) and, controlling violence by keeping the patrons content (cases of conflict avoidance); and secondly, it demonstrates how information asymmetries and non-credibility of the commitments between the parties can conduct a bargain into failure. For the 21 cases analysed, structural results show that ethnic conflict onset is a product of political exclusion *and* inefficiency in the distribution through either formal *or* informal institutions, contrary to what has commonly said, informality does play a role in creating conflict if the patronage networks are closed to different ethnic groups. Additionally, whilst evaluating information asymmetries and credible commitments as agency mechanisms, results show that when elites fail to provide credible commitments violence is the preferred course of action to achieve ends. Additionally, the presence of information asymmetries as coming from the patrons and perceived by the elites in power, affect the willingness of them to redistribute informally and encourage them to exclude.

The article proceeds as follows: first, a brief summary of ethnic theories of conflict onset; second, a presentation of the elite bargaining model of ethnic conflict onset analysing structural and agent conditions and formal and informal institutions. Third, an introduction to fsQCA as the selected method of analysis, containing: calibration, selection of thresholds and operationalisation of the structural and agency conditions. Fourth, results and analysis of necessary and sufficient conditions, and different paths leading to the same outcome. Finally, conclusions and future areas of research.

2. Theories of Ethnic conflict onset

Research is divided amongst primordialist and modernist theories (Blattman & Miguel, 2010; Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Blimes, 2006; Schneider & Wiesehoimeier, 2008). Primordialists stress the importance of cultural biological similarities amongst individuals which affect the psychological nature of ethnicity. On the other hand, modernists' arguments highlight the influence economic modernisation and the development of the modern nation-state have had in shaping identity patterns amongst the population (Blattman & Miguel, 2010). As Blimes (2006) points out, ethnicity can also be understood as cleavages that have been formed due to historical events. Modernists, instrumentalists and constructivists focus on the same idea:

ethnicity being a product of economic and political change across 200-500 years (Fearon & Laitin, 2003, p. 76).

Horowitz (1985) explains the relation of ethnicity to civil wars by proposing it as a monotonic relationship, in which at high degrees of homogeneity civil war is less likely as well as in highly heterogeneous societies. Homogeneity is self-explanatory: there are no cleavages amongst the population meaning that there is an overall cohesion and fewer chances of grievances amongst groups. On the other hand, heterogeneity decreases the likelihood of civil war because high heterogeneity as high fragmentation, impedes collective action.

The conflict onset literature focuses on this point, explaining conflict onset by using fractionalisation indexes. Fearon and Laitin (2003) find that fractionalisation does not explain conflict onset; in fact they conclude that it is the contextual conditions (like GDP per capita) that encourage people to fight, not their ethnic lines. Their results show that amongst the poorest countries in which civil war is more frequent, ethnicity seems not to be predominant as a driver of conflict as there is a higher degree of homogeneity within these countries. Also, they find that moving across a per capita income spectrum regardless of ethnic heterogeneity; is the indicator that alters the odds of civil war. Pairing these conclusions, they suggest that the production of violence is a result of conditions that favour insurgency rather than grievance-based motivations. In a similar vein Schneider & Wiesehoimeier (2008) argue that at high levels of heterogeneity collective action might be hard to achieve. A highly fractionalized society will indicate a higher number of veto players. Therefore, collective action becomes a problem as there is no common ground for agreements on a forthcoming coordinated action.

Elligsen (2000) however, argues that heterogeneity substantially increases the possibility of conflict, thus results emphasise that the likelihood increases for small scale conflicts, and to a lesser degree for civil wars; Hegre & Sambanis (2006) also conclude this. Additionally, Lujala, et al. (2005) suggest that the looting of secondary diamonds as a means of finance for insurgents positively affects the incidence of civil war, and the diamond effect holds depending on the level of fractionalisation.

Reynal-Querol (2005) and also Bahvnani & Miodownik (2009) highlight that it is polarisation as opposed to fractionalisation that can transform existing tensions into armed actions. Therefore, a second body of literature explores the effect that polarisation instead of fractionalisation can have on civil war. Reynal-Querol (2005) examines this relation in highly heterogeneous countries with respect to religion. She argues that religion as a differentiating

feature of heterogeneity increases the likelihood of conflicts; this is because religious differences are harder to negotiate (Reynal-Querol, 2002, p. 32). Additionally, the relationship is stronger if the tensions are amongst animist religions.

Furthermore, Bahvnani & Miodownik (2009) develops a model to measure ethnic salience and ethnic polarisation, concluding that ethnic polarisation can explain the incidence of conflict onset. The effect however is dependent or moderated by the degree of ethnic salience. These conclusions can be related to what Fearon (1995) referred to as indivisible stakes: religious matters are difficult to negotiate; in cases where there is a strong religious dominance of one religion over the others tensions might arise as there is no room for claims or for expanding the redistribution (or even recognition) of certain rights. Thus, (Borman, et al., 2015) contradict this argument finding that linguistic cleavages have a stronger effect than religious cleavages. Therefore, civil wars are more likely to be fought across linguistic differences product of heterogeneity rather than across religious cleavages, questioning in fact, the 'indivisible stakes' argument.

Other studies have focused instead on ethnic dominance. Collier and Hoeffler (2004) stress that proneness to civil war increases in societies in which there is a particular dominance of one group in relation to another. Hegre's & Sambanis' (2006) sensitivity analysis further confirms this. Additionally, Regan & Bell (2009) argue that heterogeneity in countries where "the largest ethnic group constitutes half of the population" are twice as much vulnerable to civil war. Still there is no agreement amongst the literature as (Reynal-Querol, 2002; Montalvo & Reynal-Querol, 2005) contradict this theoretical statement, arguing that dominant groups are able to deter political violence, therefore, dominance is expected to lower the chances of civil war instead of enhancing them.

Although cleavages among the society seem to be an important predictor of civil war, it is not the heterogeneity, polarisation, fractionalisation or dominance of ethnic groups per se what causes conflict onset. Recent theories focusing attention on the elites and the ethnic composition at the level of the state have proven more robust results in explaining the relationship of ethnicity to conflict onset. These theories conclude that the onset of conflicts can be explained by the exclusion of relevant ethnic groups from central power (Cederman et al. 2010; Wimmer et al., 2009). While robust in conclusions, these studies do not take into account informal institutions as redistribution instruments, in which inclusion can be achieved through patronage networks. In conflict prone countries it is likely that patronage networks function more efficiently than state formal institutions when providing public jobs or public

goods. Therefore, informal institutions are a crucial point of reference when analysing exclusion and horizontal inequalities.

Whilst attempting to understand the complexity and the determinants of ethnic conflict onset and the potential opportunities to prevent it in conflict prone societies such as hybrid regimes / illiberal democracies, I am proposing an elite bargaining model of ethnic conflict onset. Elites are the ultimate decision-makers and holders of power, they redistribute and constantly bargain for redistribution; therefore, bargains that fail might conduct groups into conflict, representing disagreement over the allocation of resources.

3. An elite bargaining model of ethnic conflict onset - two level theory.

As stated by Kalyvas (2007), armed conflicts are complex multilayered events. The manifestation of violence is better understood as an outcome developed through a series of events that when present mingle as sufficient or necessary conditions; creating an opportunity for contentious collective action. In an elite bargaining model of ethnic conflict onset, the structured outcome results from the process of decision-making and from the institutional framework in place. This provides us with two levels of analysis which are systematically related to each other. The structural level or basic level and the agent or secondary level (Goertz & Mahoney, 2005; Schneider & Wagemann, 2006).

I define an elite bargain as: a relationship of power in which privileges, rights and assets are distributed amongst organisations in representation of contending groups. In this regard, bargaining depends both on the rules of the game and on the actor's personal interest. Actors are both rule followers and self-interested beings (Knight, 1992). Elite groups or organisations are interested in expanding their shares and keeping in power, whereas patrons and their constituencies or clienteles are interested in being part of the spoils and increasing their shares. The rules of the game are commanded by both formal and informal institutions which are understood as (re)distribution instruments (Knight, 1992; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010) which can also facilitate coordination amongst actors (Korf, 2003).

In this regard, the structural level represents the institutional framework in place which is both formal and informal, and the secondary or agency level that represents a bargaining game between groups.

The structural level

Generally, one can find two types of institutional frameworks in any given regime. Firstly, we can refer to formal institutions. Formal institutions correspond to the visible structure of the regime that represents the legal-rational organisation of the state through which it operates. In concrete, institutions are constrains that structure political, economic and social interactions (North, 1990). Therefore, institutions are rules, forms, procedures that have the ability to shape behaviour amongst people. Formality means legality, accountability and third party enforcement, the state has the capacity and the instrument to produce formal written rules and enforce them. However, the way in which these rules are imposed and enforced depends on the type of the regime.

Secondly, functioning parallel to formal institutions we have informal institutions. Informal institutions emerge from human interaction and customs. Human beings used to administer and redistribute assets, privileges and rights through an informal network that recognises authority, virtue and hierarchy. Informal institutions are: "socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels" (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004, p. 3). Informal institutions such as patronage networks represent a system in which personal relationships are the means of communication and redistribution. Agents recognise and usually do not question the authority of the patrons who redistribute not based on merit, but on sympathy and self-interest. The recognition of virtue legitimizes the hierarchical chain. Dating back to premodern forms of organization and traditional tribe/clan organization and administration of power, patrons redistribute and make decisions based on their recognized knowledge and status. This traditional form of organization could not be extinguished by the imposition of modern systems such as the creation of the nation-state through processes of decolonization in the developing world. The abrupt transition into a modern state only meant that the natural process onto which societies are meant to become open access orders was nothing less than forced. This lead to the preservation of patronage politics as informal institutions under modern regimes[3].

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[3] Perhaps an excellent example of formalisation of informal institutions as patronage networks is India and the establishment of Local *Panchayats. Panchayats* are the lower level of decentralisation in Indian federal states. Upon decolonisation there was a significant bid to *formalise* patronage networks in the form of *Panchayats.* It is, to my knowledge, the only example of recognition of chief politics with the aim of incorporating this way of organisation in the formal structures of the modern state.

Patronage networks as informal institutions represent a fundamental part of how politics are practiced. In this regard, these networks and coalitions concede or deny access to valuable resources; such controlled trade to a selective elite coalition group manages the problem of violence. Whenever a broad coalition of different elites such as in the negative cases: Bolivia, Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, amongst others is redistributing rents along the coalition, it enables credible commitments amongst the groups, which in turn, supports the regime, aids them in performing their functions and refrain them from using violence. Contrary to this, whenever the coalition is exclusive and informal distribution is curtailed to just a few such as the cases of: Senegal, Thailand, and India in the northeastern region, amongst others; violence is more likely to erupt.

Following these ideas, elite groups and patrons bargain for redistribution of economic assets, political participation and social services through both formal and informal institutions. We part from the idea that ethnic groups are horizontally unequal in reference to each other. At the level of the elites, the degree of distribution to each group is likely to reflect inequalities at the national level (Lindemann, 2008); therefore, it is possible to capture group grievances by analysing the inequality in the distribution within both institutional frameworks at the level of the elites: a top-down model.

In accordance to previous research findings (Hegre et al., 2001; Regan & Bell, 2009; Goldstone et al., 2010), I agree with the statements proving that illiberal democratic regimes - hybrid regimes- are likely to present a higher rate of conflict onset in comparison to other type of regimes. If evaluated on a type of regime spectrum, autocracies have heavy machinery to repress and efficiently control the redistribution chains; on the other side, democracies are highly stable regimes in which the provision of public goods is effective, there is a protection of civil rights and freedoms are respected (Wegenast, 2013). In this regard, illiberal democracies present a mixture of both features; a mix of regimes which both invites to protest and rebellion but also facilitates repression (Hegre et al., 2001). These characteristics are associated with higher probability of conflict onset. Consequently, hybrid regimes represent the formal rules of the game within this model. Illiberal democracies are the unit of analysis in this theory.

Neopatrimonial type of domination (Erdmann & Engel, 2007) represents the informal structures in this model. Patronage networks result from the bargaining of different groups commanded by personal relations with particularistic interests. The criteria for redistributing is selective, allocated by sympathy rather than by merit. In this regard, patronage networks

resemble the pre-established societal rules of the game in which personal relations are the most important feature[4].

Within ethnic conflict research it is expected that groups will sympathise with their ethnic lineage, they are expected to redistribute predominantly to their own ethnic lineage. This will affect (in)equality in the distribution as depicted by which of the groups are included or excluded from decision-making and from the distribution of spoils. As mentioned earlier, informal institutions play a central role in distributing, denying their analysis basically ignores the praxis and reality of the societies of interest. Consequently, informality takes a central role within the present argument.

As the essence of horizontal inequalities can be captured by evaluating the inequality of the distribution within both formal and informal channels, a highly unequal distribution of social services and economic assets amongst groups is likely to be paired with political exclusion which is likely to lead to conflict onset. In this regard, exclusion is thought to be a necessary condition for conflict to be triggered. According to (Cederman, et al., 2010) (Stewart, 2002) groups that are excluded from decision-making are likely to rebel due to their discrimination and lack of power when it comes to deciding where and how resources are allocated.

However, it is problematic to infer conflict out of just evaluating exclusion from formal state structures, or even by just looking at the degree of formal distribution. As mentioned earlier informal institutions are a core foundation of relationships amongst groups in illiberal democratic regimes. Informality and the degree of distribution carried though informal channels give us a picture of the cohesion of society, informality always plays its role behind the scenes. Therefore, there might be cases in which there is exclusion from central power but nonetheless wealth is redistributed amongst groups though patronage networks, which might keep them content not to fight, for example the case of the Malay Muslims in Thailand under the government of general Prem Tinsulanonda (1980-88). In this regard, by solely evaluating formal inclusion we are missing much of what drives political behaviour.

Following research on patronage (Chabal & Daloz, 2010; Chandra, 2007; De Waal, 2009; LeBillon, 2001; Murshed, 2002) it is assumed that it can have a positive or a negative effect. If the patronage network is closed and only benefits a few groups in power then it is expected to trigger conflict; in other words, groups which are excluded from central power and are discriminated in the distribution of assets, privileges and rights through patronal distribution

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[4] "It is not who you are but who you know"

are more likely to become violent. A closed patronage line means non-sharing of spoils across groups and in some instances non-distribution of spoils ethnically, violence can erupt when discriminated groups are aware of the inequality in the spoils or when they are denied access to them (Arriola, 2009). As opposed, patronage can be beneficial when the spoils are shared and distributed amongst the different ethnic groups and within the ethnic group. The patrons have therefore the power to either mobilize their constituencies or clienteles if so they wish, as well as, provide rewards amongst sympathizers if they are to be kept content and not rebel.

Within the present model three structural conditions will be evaluated, exclusion for central power, inequality in the formal distribution through legal state means, and inequality in the distribution through informal means in the form of patronage networks. In this regard, the relationship of formal and informal distribution and exclusion is expected to be equifinal and alluding to conjunctural causation (Goertz & Mahoney, 2005). Some countries do not go to war under favorable conditions (Bolivia, Ghana, Paraguay) while others do go to war under unfavorable conditions (Mali, Senegal). Inequality in the formal and/or informal distribution operates as SUIN condition[5].

This leads us to a first hypothesis:

H1. When there is inefficiency in the redistribution of political participation, economic assets and social services AND there is exclusion from central power, it is likely that violence will erupt.

The secondary level - the agents

The second level is linked by a causal relationship to the primary level. The secondary level conditions are causes of causes which explain why there is disagreement over the allocation of resources. Furthermore, it is possible to understand the agent causes as mechanisms of the structures (Goertz & Mahoney, 2005). Most explanations of conflict onset rely heavily on structural factors which provide causal depth, however, these explanations fall short in explaining the causal link between distant structural causes and the outcome.

Within the present model, both exclusion from decision-making at the state level and inequality in the formal and informal distribution are a product of a bargain failure; a failure which in the

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[5] SUIN conditions: Sufficient but unnecessary part of a configuration that is insufficient in itself but necessary for the outcome.

bigger picture, drives the desire for using violence as a means of action. The presence of information asymmetries or non-credible commitments, understood as agency mechanisms explains why bargains fail, working as causes of causes. However, these agent mechanisms may produce the outcome in a given context but not in others, signifying that the presence/absence of both information asymmetries and credible commitments are expected to be equifinal.

Elite ethnic groups as actors are expected to be self-interested; groups already included in the distribution network are expected to favour their ethnic lineage and campaign for the needs of their own group. The product of an elite bargain can result in either inclusion of contending groups or exclusion from the redistribution structures; which ultimately means the exacerbation of horizontal inequalities if exclusion and/or inefficient redistribution takes place.

Armed conflict as an outcome represents a bargain that failed. Groups will rationally prefer to cooperate because challenging is costlier than exchanging benefits (Wucherpfennig, 2009: North et al. 2009) the presence and physical use of violence is expected to be the last resort as it's cost and organization are significantly high[6]. In this regard, it is also expected for a series of bargains to be undertaken before the use of violence, thus, the length of the bargains can be different from case to case. Comparatively for example, the bargains conducted between the Thai government and the Malay groups in the South of Thailand took a short period before the use of violence, whereas in the Indian Bodo case It took a long set of bargains before the Bodos decided to use violence as a means. Bargains fail because the parties are unable to agree on a settlement that both sides prefer to war. The lack of trust in the promises within a bargain or the accuracy in the information received act as conflict enabling conditions and causes of causes, working as mechanisms that can explain why, in some instances, bargains fail.

In this regard, following Fearon (1995) rationalist explanations of war, it is shown that conflict can be a product of a rational miscalculation of the actors. Fearon's model uses information asymmetries and credible commitments to explain war onset in the international context. Thus, these same mechanisms might be able to explain why bargains fail in the domestic context (Walter, 2009). It is expected that the presence of non-credible commitments and asymmetries

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[6] The costs are significantly high on both sides. On the side of the challenging group the loss of life is significant as these armies most of the time are not prepared (training, weapon availability etc) to fight a fully-fledged national army. On contrast, the costs for the state are those of loss of life but also audience costs. Furthermore, because the regime is thought to be illiberal democratic the international or external audience costs are thought to be higher than if the regime was an autocracy. Additionally, the costs of organisation for the group is high as well.

in the information displayed could conduct to a bargain failure. In particular, lack of trust and misleading information will drive groups into rejecting or avoiding bargain demands. An evaluation of the agencies' decision-making process entails analysing the process of communication of information and also the expectations upon the contender group. This will enable us to understand why bargains between elite groups fail in agency terms.

Bargaining outcomes depend on which party makes the first move. Therefore, signaling and the forthcoming assessment of trust or information displayed are evaluated by the receptor, who forges a judgement and acts accordingly. In this regard, when evaluating information asymmetries and credible commitments it is relevant to take into account the source of the signal, this means that both information asymmetries and credible commitments must be evaluated from each source.

In terms of credible commitments the receptor evaluates trust. If the signaling comes from the elite to the patrons, then the patrons and their constituencies or clienteles will evaluate commitment in terms of reputation, record and past transactions. However, commitment is strategic. Politicians know what kind of promises they can make in order to persuade blocks of voters (Keefer & Vlaicu, 2007). They know which promises will be credible and which can lead to a least credible result. Nonetheless, voters and patrons are constantly evaluating commitment and will only deliver their part of the deal if they feel they are going to truly be compensated.

On the other hand, if the first move comes from the group claiming (re)distribution then it is the elites who evaluate credible commitments. For this matter, elites will evaluate past transactions in order to find out if they can trust the group: first, not to mobilise if the claim is denied and second, if they are going to deliver promises which come in the form of votes, security and political support (Muller, 2007). The absence of credible commitments would imply a bigger potential for a bargain failure.

The forging of trust and mistrust is a dynamic process in which different transactions increase or decrease its degree. For example, trust can be bought by proclaiming populist policies, hence this moment of trust can also be disabled when the group realizes the status quo remains the same. For example, the rise of Thaksin Shinawatra and his populist policies in Thailand's elections 2001, soon enough the Malays realized the 1 million bath program was benefiting the elite the most, instead of the poor population (Doner, 2009). On the other hand, trust coming from the groups signifies the provision of security and political support, if the group remains dormant or violently inactive for a period of time, this can increase the degree

13

of trust that the elites have, up until violence whether strategically or not is triggered once again. Thailand represents a good example of this, the lack of violence during the General Prem Tinsulanonda period 1980-88 increased the trust the government had on the Malays, up until the satus quo changed and the levels of trust decreased.

Information asymmetries within this model are understood not only as the projection of misleading or false information in regards of the true will to fight and the capacity to do so (Fearon, 1995); but also as the quality of the channels for reproducing that information (Schultz, 1999; Lewis & Schultz, 2003). Let us remember that the unit of analysis is illiberal democracies. This type of regime is considered to be less informed that old or more solid democracies (Hegre, 2003, North, 2009). If patrons and their constituencies are unable to be well informed, then they lack means to evaluate information affecting their judgement. Also, this variant is important to be taken into account in a domestic model of conflict onset, means of communication and language policies as a feature of ethnic differences is a significant aspect of potential sources of grievance (Borman, et al., 2015). Language and furthermore media in local/autochthonous language is key in analyzing information asymmetries as captured by the patrons and groups. Furthermore, in some instances it is not only whether the language is official or not[7], but also whether there is private media in the local language to deliver and analyze messages as spoken by the dominant elite. In addition to this, most of the population in some instances would not speak the national/official language; therefore, the role played by news media (TV, radio and newspapers) is crucial in delivering a message to the masses, especially if the movement is diffuse and with no visible leadership: as in the case of Thailand.

Therefore, it is not just true will to fight and capacity that matters but also how the information reaches the receptor (Lewis & Schultz, 2003). The source of the information displayed by the elite to the patrons can be misrepresented due to the channel of communication. In this regard, availability of information in the group's language, availability of radio stations and newspapers are all features than can give a clear picture of the dissemination of information.

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[7] As (Borman, et al., 2015) point out, some of the reasons for officially not recognising different languages is costs. The example given is that of the Europena Union in which significant amounts of money are put towards transalations and recognising the totality of the languages spoken within the Union. Additionally, the source of linguistic discrimination perpetuates to other areas, having an official language means that ethnic group members should learn that language to be able to be part of the bureaucracy jobs. Thus, despite the great incidence of this element in perceived grievances the influence of private sources of information is also remarkably relevant.

The less informed the group is, or the more difficult the access to information the more asymmetries in the discourse.

Consequently, we are in light of two further hypotheses:

H2. The lack of trust through the presence of non-credible commitments by the bargaining actors will lead to rejection of the demands for the allocation of resources

H3. The presence of information asymmetries in a bargain for the allocation of resources and assets will lead a bargain into failure.

3. Methodology and Data

A set-theoretic methods approach has been selected in order to allow causal complexity analysis. fsQCA understands the level of membership in each set by scoring degrees of membership between 0 and 1. Membership scores over 0.5 reflect presence of the condition being 0.5 the crossover point. The aim is to evaluate which cases in the sample show presence of the causal condition, and how strong that condition is in explaining the outcome. As the theoretical model shows, both structural and agency conditions are evaluated, therefore Schneider and Wagemann's (2006) proposed two level QCA is the variant applied to this model.

Selection of cases

Following research results in regards of type of regime, the universe of cases represents all those countries between 1980 and 2012 that classify as illiberal democracies using the Varieties of Democracy data[8]. The strength of this new database resides in providing measures of both de facto and de jure level of democracy. Most of the civil war and armed conflict onset research which analyse the type of regime do so by evaluating the Polity IV scores which only take into account de jure indicators of democracy level. Furthermore, the Polity IV scores have proven non robust in the classification of certain regimes[9]. In this regard,

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[8] Variable used; Liberal Democracy index. Available at: https://v-dem.net/en/analysis/analysis/ . Published March 2015.
[9] For example, Colombia for the period from 1953 to 1974 is coded as a democracy Polity2 score of 7). However, during this period an agreement between the elites representing the two main parties - conservatives and liberals- is in place to alternate in power but further excluding the legal participation of any other political parties -communist parties for example like PACOCOL-. Therefore, this situation does not reflect a democracy as broadly understood. South Africa under apartheid is another example of misclassification.

the selection of the universe of cases was undertaken by choosing those countries with a measure of democracy between 0.25 and 0.75 in the V-dem Liberal democratic index[10].

A set-theoretic approach implies the selection of a sample of cases rather than the use of the universe. QCA methodology relies in qualitative analysis and in case based knowledge, therefore the cases were selected in terms of fitness, data availability and suitability for comparison (Goertz & Mahoney, 2004; Schneider and Wagemann, 2007). As the outcome measures need to be fuzzy the final selection of ethnic conflict onset cases are those who have information available for battle related deaths[11]. QCA relies on John Stuart Mill's comparative method; the selection of the cases therefore, relies on both Battle related death data availability and most different system design; being random but obeying most different system design rules. I aim therefore to understand what was sufficiently common among these cases to produce a political event like an armed conflict, which is in itself essentially similar across cases. I also take into account negative cases which can help to understand the causal logic driving the positive cases (Schneider and Wagemann, 2006). They provide variety and a negative performance towards the outcome of interest. The negative cases where chosen by evaluating the plausibility of violence erupting in accordance to ethnic cleavages (Goertz & Mahoney, 2004). The final sample contains 9 positive cases and 12 negative cases. For the positive cases, I use a ten year period pre-conflict baseline in order to evaluate how the conditions played before the war began.

Table 1. Selected cases

Positive cases	Negative Cases
Mali 2007 – Northern Mali Tuareg Rebellion	Argentina 1983-2012
India 1994 – Bodoland ethnic conflicy	Bolivia 1985 - 2012
Niger 1995 – First Tuareg Conflict	Ghana 1993 - 2012
India 1997 – Tripura ethnic conflict	Madagascar 1992 - 2000
Niger 2007 – Second Tuareg conflict	Namibia 1990 - 2012
India 2009 – Manipur separatist conflict	Nicaragua 1990 - 2008
India 2000 – Nagaland Separatist conflict	Tanzania 1996 - 2006

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[10] 0.25-0.75 was chosen because differences in regimes tend to be open ended rather than sharp cutting edges.
[11] For calculating battle related deaths (BRD) the BRD UCDP database was used for the period 1989-2010. Thus, for covering period before 1989 I used the US Department of state Human rights reports. Avaialable at: http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=crhrp

Thailand 2003 – Malay Muslim insurrection	Zambia 1992 - 2012
Senegal 1990 – Casamance Conflict	Benin 1992 - 2012
	Paraguay 1993 - 2012
	Malawi 1995 - 2003
	Taiwan 1997 - 2012

3.1 Operationalisation and calibration of data

As most of the data is interval-scale data I am able to use the direct method of calibration by using the "calibrate" function in the fsQCA software (Ragin & Davey, 2014). The usage of this direct method improves the quality of the fuzzy measures (Ragin, 2008). In order to define the degrees of membership in each condition it is needed to define the full membership score (1), the full non membership score (0) and the crossover point (0.5). The crossover point was selected by using the media for the continuous variables. It is important to highlight that it is not recommended to use the media for selecting the crossover point, as this selection should be done qualitatively. However, the data for the structural conditions and most of the agency conditions does not vary very much from case to case. In this regard, the most unbiased way of addressing membership or non-membership is to use the media. When the upper and lower scores were far from range from the overall sample then they were excluded when assessing the media for establishing the crossover point. This is done in order to maintain the uniformity of the data. The calibrated scores and operationalisation for all the conditions are presented in the following table:

STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS					
Condition	Label	Description	Operationalisation	Source	Calibration
N1. Unequal formal distribution	FORMAL DISTRIBUTION	Aims to capture the scope of distribution along different ethnic groups through formal institutions.	Education equality, health equality and Representation of disadvantaged groups	V-dem (March 2015)	Continuous variables, crossover point media
N2. Unequal informal distribution	INFORMAL DISTRIBUTION	Aims to capture the scope of distribution along different ethnic groups through patronage networks	Executive embezzlement, public sector theft*	V-dem (March 2015)	Continuous variables, crossover point media
N3. Exclusion	EXCLUSION	Measure of de facto inclusion of ethnic groups in the executive power.	Exclusion categories: discriminates groups, powerless groups, regional autonomy or separatist. Inclusion categories: Junior partner, Senior partner, dominant group or monopoly of group	Ethnic power Relations dataset	Discriminated or powerless = 1, Discriminated or powerless plus regional autonomy (or separatist claims) = 0.8, discriminated or powerless NOT seeking political power = 0.6, junior partner = 0.3 , senior partner = 0.2, dominant or monopoly = 0
Y. Conflict onset	ONSET	onset is measured by a 25 battle related deaths per year	minimum threshold for categorizing as conflict 25 battle related deaths**	UCDP Battle related deaths database; armed conflict onset database; US department of state human rights reports.	crossover point 24
AGENCY CONDITIONS					
N4. Credible commitments elite to the patrons	CC e-p	Aims at capturing the degree of trustworthiness the ethic group has on their elected leaders	Trust in goverment or president	Afro, Latin and Asian Barometers and WVS	Survey responses range from "not at all" to "a great deal". This was consequently calibrated to unify the responses in a range from 0 to 1. (national)
N5. Credible commitments patrons to elite	CC p-e	Aims at capturing the likeliness that patrons and their constituencies are to be trusted with providing security and political support	Number of protests per year***	GDELT Project	Number or protests / number of years, crossover point media (subnational)
N6. Information asymmetry elite to patron	Infoasymm e-p	Aims at capturing the degree of information asymmetry in terms of language and channels of communication	No data available	No data available	No data available

N7. Information asymmetry patron to elite	Infoasymm p-e	aims at capturing the degree of information asymmetry in the information displayed by the patrons.	Number of terror attacks per year	GTD Global terrorism database	Value = number of terror attacks*number of victims More than 200=1 ; 0=1 ; 2-5=0.9 ; 130-190 = 0.8 ; 6-10=0.4 ; 11-25=0.3 ; 30-100=0.2 (this according to the distribution within the selected sample) (sub-national)

* Executive embezzlement and Public sector theft variables are likely to reflect a bad corruption and/or patronage prototype which increases inequality in the distribution.
** I am using data from both UCPD Battle Related Deaths database (1980-2010) and the US Department of State Human Rights Reports. If the data differ then the deaths were averaged.
*** A qualitative assessment of the data was done to include only ethnic related protests.

4. Results

Within the analysis of the structures, 8 possible combinations of conditions resulted. A frequency cutoff of 1 was used to select the relevant paths and a 0.75 consistency threshold was selected. According to these criteria, 8 configurations of conditions resulted as sufficient combinations for the outcome. I use the intermediate solution for analysing the results. In this regard, the overall configurational analysis presents a consistency of 0.72 and a coverage of 0.70, this means that 70% of the selected cases are covered within either of the paths[12]. The solution formula is as follows[13]:

(1) ETHNIC CONFLICT ONSET =   EXCLUSION * (formal distribution + informal distribution)

Most of the positive cases show a presence of EXCLUSION *and* either formal or informal inequality in the distribution; as a matter of fact none of the cases reports presence of exclusion *and* absence of both formal and informal distribution. This means that as expected, the relationship at the structural level is equifinal in which some countries go to war under favourable conditions (Thailand, Niger) but also under unfavourable ones (Mali, Senegal).

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[12] If the measures for onset are changed to just differentiate between civil wars and armed conflicts coding: 0.75 armed conflicts and 1 civil wars the results still hold, with an overall coverage of 0.74 and consistency of 0.79.
[13] CAPS LOCK means presence of the condition. As opposed lower case means absence of the condition.

Within the solution EXCLUSION*informal distribution the cases with greater than 0.5 membership are Thailand03, Niger07, Niger95 and India03. Whereas within the path EXCLUSION*formal distribution the cases with more than 0.5 memberships scores are India00, India03, India97 and India94.

As most of the cases fall within the path of unequal formal distribution*EXCLUSION which resembles inequality in the distribution of social services and political participation, the coverage score is 0.65 (65% of the cases) with a consistency of 0.75. The informal path which resembles closed patronage line * EXCLUSION, presents a coverage of 59% of the cases and a consistency score of 0.70.

Hereof, the results from the truth table analysis of the structural conditions and the solution paths further confirm findings by Cederman et al., (2010); Wimmer, (2009) in regards of the significance of political EXCLUSION of ethnic groups and the likelihood of conflict onset. These findings support the theoretical claim that when relevant groups are excluded from power and decision-making it is likely that a conflict will be triggered. As mentioned earlier, it is expected that the degree of informal and formal distribution would also affect the possibility of triggering the onset of a conflict. According to these results, it is possible to infer that EXCLUSION works as a necessary condition but operates as a INUS conditions within the structural set, a INUS condition is a causal condition that is an insufficient but necessary part of a causal recipe which is in itself unnecessary but sufficient for the outcome to happen. For this sample of cases, EXCLUSION does not explain conflict on its own because it is not a simple cause which causes conflict but a combination of conditions: conjunctural causation. The event of exclusion and the inequality in the distribution in either formal or informal channels jointly together produce conflict onset; rather than one single condition in isolation; different conjunctions prove to lead to the same outcome.

Structural results should not be interpreted as robust results on their own within a two level QCA model (Schneider and Wagemann, 2006). Nonetheless, it is shown here that inequality in the distribution to different ethnic lines is relevant when triggering or preventing violence. The channels of distribution are relevant too, as opposed to the regular arguments which depict formal inequality as a potential cause of conflict, it is shown here that inequality as perceived and as reproduced through informal channels of distribution is also a significant factor in stimulating the decision to use violence. The accumulation of wealth in the hands of the executive and the illegal appropriation of public funds by those elites within power in the

state is a significant condition in triggering conflict. Conversely, in those instances in which appropriation is distributed along the different ethnic elite groups within the state (Namibia, Zambia, Bolivia, Tanzania) or in those instances in which although groups are not per se included within state power but yet receive funds redistributed informally (Argentina, Nicaragua) show proof of conflict avoidance via informal means.

As Horowitz states, the composition of the power structure and civil service is "an important indicator of whom owns the country as well as of how groups are doing in the struggle for worth" (cited in ***). It is true that a picture of the public sphere in terms of access to (mainly) executive jobs, shows the reality of discrimination and exclusion of groups. Although, this is the ultimate effect or the most notorious event or conclusion of such discrimination, still the complexity of the processes along the structures implies there is much more than that. In this regard, the fact that members of an ethnicity are represented in parliament or in government itself is viewed as an official recognition of this group (japan report find source! p. 32). However, this does not necessarily mean that resources are not reaching discriminated groups through other channels. Yet, even if the groups are fully excluded they can receive distribution via state policies or patronage. This exemplifies conjunctural causation. There are cases in which grieved groups are excluded yet certain degree of distribution whether formal or informal also influences their decision not to fight (Paraguay, Bolivia). It is beyond the single fact of exclusion what drives groups into violence, there are more layers of analysis over that this broad but accurate conclusion.

In this regard, it is shown here that the degree of distribution of economic assets, political participation and social services is relevant both in the formal and informal realm. Hence, stimulating distribution through formal institutions in the form of affirmative action policies is a plausible way of controlling violence. The formulation of these type of policies can also increase trust in the elites. Additionally, informal distribution through patronage networks although from a western point of view is seen as detrimental, in young and/or illiberal democracies remains as a valid channel of distribution. Therefore, if patronage is redistributive and the spoils are shared by the different ethnic groups then this distributive relationship serves as an opportunity to further prevent violence. Political inclusion and redistributive appropriation of public funds can help to lessen conflict. Contrary, when excluded and grieved ethnic groups perceive and/or are aware of the distribution of spoils to just some privileged groups then this enhances the potential for violent action. The perception of constant appropriation of funds with an intend to redistribute just amongst those included increases the

possibility of violent action. A clear example of this is the Malay Muslims within the south of Thailand. Analyzing two different periods, the Prem Tinsulanonda period in comparison to the Thaksin Shinawatra period. The perception of personal appropriation of funds within the Shinawatra period with no aim of redistribution pushed the Malay groups into a course of violent actions.

Furthermore, it is relevant to highlight the importance of conjunctural causality. Mali and Senegal illustrate this point. Senegal has made an attempt to include the Diolas in the formal distribution of power during both Senghor and Diouf governments, they hold political representation and therefore are seen as included within the distribution of power. However, the Diolas lack formal distribution as there have been a large number of land expropriations in favor of tourism projects, the local economy also is in control of people from the north of Senegal. Informally, the patronage distribution does not reach or includes Diola people, the Diolas are excluded from the spoils distributed through patronage. Therefore, although Diolas share some sort of power within the government, still distribution is highly unequal.

Furthermore, when negating the outcome to evaluate the negative cases I find that there are instances in which there is political exclusion but good formal and informal distribution and no conflict onset. Thus, the overall results of negating the outcome (consistency 0.82, coverage 0.90) show that conflict avoidance is, structurally, a product of inclusion (consistency score 0.89, raw coverage 0.79), informal distribution (consistency score 0.86, raw coverage 0.60) *or* formal distribution (consistency score 0.89, coverage 0.59). A peaceful trajectory can be achieved through any of the three paths. Consequently, although political exclusion is a fundamental condition for conflict onset, as opposed it is not a fundamental condition for explaining peaceful trajectories. Peaceful trajectories can be explained by instances in which there is no political inclusion but there is redistribution formally or informally, or both (Argentina, Nicaragua, Bolivia). Although groups are not included in the distribution of public jobs still resources have found their way to the ethnic group keeping them content not to fight. The Quechua and Aymara indigenous populations have always been excluded up until the rise to power of Evo Morales in 2006, hence there has not been incidents of armed violence.

Credible commitments and conflict onset

Evaluating the credibility of the commitments, the different paths show that if there is a source of mistrust amongst the groups, then it is likely that a bargain failure will occur. A bargain failure based on mistrust causes groups to restrict the degree of distribution and to exclude the grieved groups from central government power. Credible commitments have the potential to affect the rational decision-making of the actors when bargaining for redistribution, which in turn affects the possibility of conflict onset. The perception of credibility of commitments can be evaluated from each side of the bargain. For the side of the patrons and their constituencies whilst evaluating elite credibility it is likely that the elite will use populist policies to persuade the masses for support. The use of populist policies is strategic however and leaders will tend to promise policies that can be achieved. On the other hand, commitments coming from the patrons can be evaluated by their capacity to control the group not to protest or fight. Within illiberal democratic regimes this is particularly challenging due to the nature of the regime, the use of force is often a more attractive option when faced with a negative response from the counterpart.

The presence of mistrust amongst both parties in the bargain works as a conflict enabling condition that can drive the bargain into failure. In instances in which lack of trust is present the potential for a bargain failure increases, therefore it is more likely that violent conflict can be prevented when there is credibility of the commitments as expressed by both or each one of the parties. It is worth noticing here whether, depending on the context, there is any difference between the source of the commitment. It remains significant to be able to differentiate whether the credibility of the commitment in one source would be more relevant than the other. In other words, whether the credibility of the commitments, or of the promises as spoken by the elites in power is more, or less, significant in producing a bargain failure than the promises presented by the patron and its constituency.

It is also likely that the source of the commitment would have different impacts depending on the context of distribution: whether formal or informal. In this regard, trust is thought to be a fundamental building block of distribution through patronage networks. In essence, elites will not be willing to redistribute informally if there is no guarantee of receiving political support or security from the patron's constituencies; they would not risk attempting to 'buy' if there is no guarantee of receiving support. Furthermore, the elites will fear those resources could possibly

go to the purchase of elements to increase opposition. Also, when patrons do not trust the elites to comply with promises, redistribution through patronage will not take place as there is no interest for the elites to redistribute if there is a lack of affinity with the excluded group.

Credible commitments in the formal context

Analysing the intermediate solution, there is one possible path towards conflict onset. The solution covers a total of 69% of the selected cases with a consistency score of 0.97. The solution formula runs as follows:

(2). CONFLICT ONSET =   ccelite-patron   *   ccpatron-elite   *   formal   distribution   * EXCLUSION

When bargains are conducted for the distribution of assets, social services and political participation and inclusion in public jobs the trustworthiness of the promises made by both actors negotiating is relevant. In this regard, within a formal bargain of redistribution lack of credible commitments acts as mechanism that conducts a bargain into failure, this is illustrated by the cases of India03, India94, india00 and India97. The results for the formal context in regards of positive cases is driven by India and the conflicts in the Northeast region: Tripura, Bodoland, Nagaland and Manipur. Thus, although the unit of analysis reflects the same country, still bargains conducted between the state elites and the grieved groups in each case is remarkably different. In fact, the case of India is of particular interest. Firstly, it reflects the game of different sets of elites: the ethnic elites which are bargaining for inclusion and redistribution, the federal elites which control the assets locally and finally the national elites which are most likely to support the federal elites to maintain order. Secondly, India is the only case in which there has been an attempt to *formalize* patronage networks during the process of decolonization and in general informal politics through the constitution of local *Panchayats.* This is thought to further enhance the impact of credible commitments within the formal context.

Furthermore, the elites in power are expected to treat grieved groups differently, in some cases some groups might represent a bigger threat than others, or might enjoy different

degrees of inclusion or exclusion at decision-making within the state[14]. Therefore, the bargains conducted between the elites and the patrons for each group is substantially different. For example, comparatively for the case of Assamese elites and the Nagas and the Assamese elites and their bargain with the Bodos, the result of both bargains is significantly different. The Nagas were granted more concessions than the Bodos and in a shorter period of time (first autonomy concession for the Nagas 1963 and for the Bodos 2003). Furthermore, the Naga demands were harder and yet being the Bodos more of a soft line demand, concessions were not granted nor partially conceded. This situation also created moral hazard amongst the Bodos which increased their sentiments of discrimination and exclusion product of the concessions made to the Nagas but not to themselves. Thus, despite the Naga concessions or autonomy conceded initially in 1963, still violence broke out in 1992 and 2000 product in fact of increased mistrust between the groups.

Furthermore, for these two examples the credibility of the commitments on the patrons to not mobilise, in other words to provide political support and security is also significant. For example, in the Bodo case, the leadership of the ABSU after repeated failures to negotiate their demands with the Assamese elite opted for civil unrest as their preferred form of action. The period from 1986 up to 1993 saw increased number of protests, hunger strikes, rallies and other sort of repertories of contention which, in the eyes of the Assamese elite only undermined their trust in the ABSU movement which in turn affected their decision to concede. Conversely, despite the Bodo movement being peaceful initially, the Assamese elites decided to repress and constrain the movement which also in turn undermined their credibility to dialogue.

In this regard, it is shown here than when bargains for formal redistribution and political inclusion take place, the credibility of the commitments in both sides of the bargain is a significant condition which can conduct a bargain into failure. If the parties, out of reputation on the side of the elites in power and lack of credibility in the provision of security and political support on the side of the patrons fail to believe in the credibility of potential deals that can come out of the bargain then the use of violence is the most likely outcome.

Negative cases which present inclusion in the central power and have credibility in the commitments from each side are: Ghana, Tanzania, Namibia and Benin. These countries

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[14] Also as some other theories stating that the elites will fight some groups but not others (***)

therefore, have successfully put into place an agreement in which groups are content and trust each other to exchange demands and offers. Inclusion is likely to be a product of trust amongst the parties. Elites' trust the patrons and their constituencies because they are delivering political support and provision of security. On the other hand, the patrons and their constituencies trust the elite's promises because past transactions have proven successful.

The negation of the outcome shows that there are two possible paths to peaceful trajectories (solution coverage 0.87, consistency 0.96). Firstly, those instances in which there is credibility of the commitments as perceived by the elites in power *and* there is political inclusion[15] (consistency 1, coverage 0.84). The second path to a peaceful trajectory includes those cases in which there is trust in the commitments of the elites in power as perceived by the patrons, there is formal distribution *and* political inclusion (consistency 0.91, coverage 0.39). Political inclusion within the formal context when analyzing trajectories of peace and credibility of the commitments operates as a necessary condition (consistency 0.91). For instances of political inclusion with no formal distribution trust in the patrons is the connecting link. In Malawi, Argentina, Ghana, Zambia, Paraguay and Nicaragua there is credibility of the commitments as communicated by the patrons, these cases are examples in which the patrons did not mobilized the masses and consequently, provided security and political support. This affected the partial or total inclusion in decision-making or power sharing agreements. Secondly, Tanzania, Namibia, Benin are cases in which the trust in the elites by the patrons and their constituencies permitted arrangements of power-sharing and also allowed those groups to achieve certain degree of formal distribution as captured by provision of public goods and equal treatment of different groups.

Despite the lower coverage in this second path, it is remarkable to notice that increased degrees of trust in the elites can forbid patrons from refraining to violence, increasing in turn the degrees of trustworthiness at the time of dialoguing or eventually deciding to give room within the state structures. Conversely, trust in the patrons to provide security and political participation can increase the possibilities of political inclusion but not of formal distribution. In other words, when the elites trust patrons' promises this can conduct elites in power into politically including but not necessarily into formally redistributing.

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[15] Fully or partially. The measures are fuzzy.

Credible commitments in the informal context[16]

There are 2 possible paths towards conflict onset in the evaluation of credible commitments within an informal distribution context. The overall solution covers a total of 70% of the cases and an overall consistency of 0.87. The two possible paths are as follows:

(3). CONFLICT ONSET =   ccelite-patron * informal distribution * EXCLUSION

+

ccelite-patron * ccpatron-elite * EXCLUSION

The first path reports a coverage of 0,37 and a consistency score of 0.81, the second path reports a coverage of 0.61 and has a consistency score of 0.85.

Within the informal context, the decision to constrain patronage and to continue to exclude is influenced by the lack of credible commitments coming from the elite. However, as the relationship is equifinal, the selected cases fall into one or the other path, meaning that both paths are sufficient combination of conditions that lead to the same outcome.

It is noticeable here, that within the second combination of conditions towards conflict onset, inequality in the informal distribution does not come up as relevant, implying that both mechanisms can also solely affect exclusion[17], in other words, lack of trust works also as an exclusion enabling mechanism. Exclusion as mentioned earlier, works as a necessary condition for conflict to erupt, hence the perceived lack of trust in the elite promises and, in turn, the lack of commitment of the patrons to control their constituencies and to provide security influences the decision at the elite level to exclude or to perpetuate exclusion. The cases illustrating this pattern are Thailand03, Niger07, India94 and India97.

In regards of the first path towards conflict onset within an informal context of redistribution, lack of credible commitments in the elites affects both the degree of distribution via patronage networks and exclusion from central power. In this respect, following the selectorate theory

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[16] The cases of Senegal90 and Niger85 had to be dropped from this analysis due to data availability. Thus, this does not impact the overall results.
[17] Causal complexity also implies that the mechanisms can produce the outcome in a given context but not in others. However, the procedures of fsQCA also imply that consistent paths are sufficient combinations of conditions that lead to the outcome.

(de Mesquita, BB. et al. 2005) leaders maintain their coalitions in power by "*taxing* and *spending* in ways that allocate mixes of *public and private goods" (p. 37).* Leaders can sustain loyalty by providing personal and private benefits; in other words, patronage. Because the coalition who brought the leader to power is exclusive then it is possible to efficiently distribute private goods amongst the few, amongst the "included"; thus, resembling a closed patronage line. Leaders buy loyalty from their supporters by distributing patronage to those included, hence, when the size of the coalition is too big or fully inclusionary, then leaders will emphasize the production of public goods because distributing private goods would be too costly. Following this point, it is consistent that lack of trust in the elites coming from the patrons and their clienteles would affect the degree of informal distribution in the form of patronage.

Furthermore, de Mesquita also includes arguments in regards of affinity between the different groups that conform both the coalition in power or the possible challenger's coalitions. Affinities reflect idiosyncratic preferences and they matter in the consolidation of coalitions. In ethnically heterogeneous countries, the driver of coalition formation is indeed ethnicity. From a leader's perspective and according to de Mesquita et al. (2005) affinity can be assessed along three groups. Those about whom it can confidently be said that they feel a strong idiosyncratic attachment to the incumbent (p.61), those who don't and a middle indecisive range. The degree of informal distribution is affected by trust in the elites because the elites already in power will approach to the groups with the more affinity possible. The discriminated groups as the case of the Malay muslims in Thailand, the Tuareg in Niger and the Manipuri in India will comprise the challengers of the government or the opposition; likewise, those who do not trust the elites or have the less affinity will not receive informal distribution in the form of patronage or private goods simply because it is a waste of money or resources for those already in power.

As depicted above, in an informal bargain for redistribution trust in the elite's promises stands out as a more significant condition than trust in the patron's promises whilst affecting conflict onset. Furthermore, decreased credibility can also trigger splintering of movements. Lack of trust in the elite's willingness and capacity to deliver can prevent group's leadership from accepting offers from the elite. Thus, if the leadership does accept elite's proposals yet the movement is not confident in the delivery of concessions then this can encourage splintering. Splintering divides the group between hard-liners and soft-liners, providing greater chances for the hardliners to radicalize an in turn intensify the use of armed violence. A possible

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example of this is India94 and the Bodo movement. In 1977 the leadership of the PTCA (Plain Tribals council of Assam) headed by Charan Narzary and Kumar Basumatary accepted concessions of the Janata Party which was then in power. The movement mistrusted the true intentions of the Assamese elite and thought the demands for a separate state, the state of Udayachal were not going to be met. In fact, Basumatary and Narzary withdrew the demand for Udayachal once in power, this in turn triggered the splintering of the PTCA between the remaining PTCA still in head of Basumatary and Narzary and the PTCA-P (progressive) which decided to use a stronger approach towards bargaining for their demands. The PTCA-P more radical in their actions regarded the soft-line as being effectively bought into the Janata government but with no intention of furthering the redistribution.

The India94 case illustrates how decreased credibility of the commitments, as evaluated by the patrons and communicated by the elite has the potential to affect the distribution of private goods in a exclusive coalition and also how it can encourage the splitering of movements giving rise to more radical movements.

Finally, the negation of the outcomes for the informal context does not provide consistent results, the consistency and coverage scores are to low to be considered as valid.

Information asymmetries and conflict onset

When analysing asymmetries in the information it is likely that the first move is conducted by the groups as a threat display or as a genuine attack. In this regard, the groups are the first to reveal information about capacity and true will to use violence. However, asymmetries in the information can also come from public declarations from the elites. The elites can reveal their will to fight or willingness to bargain by publicly stating their position about the dispute. In this regard, both language policies and availability of sources of information in the ethnicity's native tongue (tv, newspapers and radio) as prospects of good quality information which are remarkable in affecting the creation and perception of information asymmetries (Schultz, 2003). Information is cleaner if there are various sources, if newspapers and TV news are also distributed in the group's language, and if there is room for opposing and criticising the government. It is expected that conflict will erupt if the perception of the grieved groups is one of miscalculation of the true bargaining intentions of the elite. Or conflict can erupt also when elites misinterpret the information displayed by the groups.

As with credibility of the commitments information asymmetries can also be evaluated as coming from each source. However, due to lack of regional data in regards of number of newspapers in circulation, or TV news in local language or newspapers in local language this mechanism could not be evaluated. Consequently, when testing empirically the information asymmetry argument, it is only possible to test the asymmetry in the information as displayed by the groups but not by the elite. It can be arguable here, that it is possible to use indicators of freedom of speech; thus, it is not per se freedom of information what causes information asymmetries coming from the elites but the quality of the freedom and its diversity[18]. In this regard, in order to evaluate asymmetries in the information as communicated by the elites in power, it is necessary to provide a holistic measure of the media. Some constituencies do not know how to read, therefore they will prefer to analyse the information via radio or tv. Contrary, there also could be some constituencies which do not have access to electricity, television or radio but perhaps they are able to read. This is only to illustrate the relevance of providing a holistic measure of media communication.

Information asymmetries in the formal context

The overall solution coverage reports 73% of the cases with a consistency score of 0.76. The effect of information asymmetries as displayed by the groups when bargaining for formal distribution is not significant. In this regard, when groups negotiate for acquiring or incrementing distribution through formal institutions, information asymmetries are not relevant in the calculation for decision-making.

(4). CONFLICT ONSET =   formal distribution * EXCLUSION

The results for this particular sample reflect that out of the 5 cases of conflict onset only 3 present information asymmetries coming from the groups (India00, India97 India09). The remaining two cases Mali07 and India94 were clear in their willingness to fight (or not to) but in substantial different ways. On the India94 Bodo case, the use of violence was constant and

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[18] Illiberal democracies will tend to respect to a certain degree freedom of speech as a feature of democracy as such, however, apart from this de jure right the quality on which it operates is completely different. Also, the measure would have to be regional as freedoms and quality indeed change in respect of the geographical area of the country, especially when talking about ethnoregional groups.

the attacks were sophisticated. The BdSF[19] incurred in a great variety of repertoires of violence which included bomb attacks, attacks to property, raiding of houses and even sexual violence towards non Bodo women (Hussain, 2000). Thus, contrary on the Mali Tuareg case; the group did not commit attacks during the period of study which in information asymmetry arguments will reflect a clear message to the elites of not willingness to fight. Despite this and India00, India97 and India09 presenting scattered, disconnected cases of sporadic violence for the period of study, which could lead to a misleading interpretation of the true will to fight; this did not affect the elites in power in their decision to continue to politically exclude or restrain formal distribution, further affecting the likelihood of conflict onset.

The lack of, or the constrained redistribution through formal channels and the exclusion from central power are not affected by disruptions in the information. Not is the decision to use violence as a course of action.

However, when negating the outcomes to evaluate the relevance of the mechanisms for the negative cases clear information does play a role (consistency score 0.91, coverage 0.91). A clear peaceful trajectory which refrains from the use of violence to manifest or put forward claims in these cases is rewarded by political inclusion and the avoidance of conflict. However, there are some cases which present sporadic minor violence in the form of violence against civilians like in Benin or Malawi for example. Thus, the violence is so minor that it is not considered a threat to the state and does not affect the bargains between the patrons and the elites in power.

Information asymmetries in the informal context

Information asymmetries do play a fundamental role in triggering conflict when there is inequality in the informal distribution or exclusion of grieved groups as opposed to the formal context. When elites misrepresent the true will to fight and/or capacity to fight by evaluating excluded group attacks it is likely that they will respond with violence, leading to conflict onset. The overall solution covers a total of 54% of the cases with a consistency score of 0.77. There are two different paths that conduct to conflict onset when evaluating asymmetries in the information in an informal context:

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[19] Bodo democratic front. A product of the ABSU.

(5). CONFLICT ONSET =   INFOASYM p-e * informal distribution

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INFOASYM p-e * EXCLUSION

The first path reports coverage of 43% of the cases with a consistency score of 0.78, the second path presents coverage of 43% of the cases and a consistency of 0.75.

When patrons and their constituencies display misleading information concerning their true will to fight and capacity, then elites are likely to retaliate instead of conceding demands, also because they are inclined to control violence. Therefore, conflict is likely to be triggered as the cases of India09, Niger07, Senegal90, Thailand03 and India97 show.

Is it important to notice that the display of a threat can be tactical. Groups can threat the state power in order to intimidate and achieve concession of their claims, hence, if there is no capacity or a true will to fight but the threats are taken seriously by the state then conflict will erupt and the grieved groups are likely to lose. In fact, their bluff comes at a high price because violence might be extensive (Kirschner, 2010) and concessions are not met, as the case of Thailand thoroughly illustrates.

Information asymmetries as displayed by the groups have the potential to affect distribution through patronage networks or exclusion from central power. Elites will constrain the degree of informal distribution through patronage networks if they feel their investment would not pay off. This means that when groups implement a threat display or a bluff the elites in power will likely restrain patronal investment as the patron is not actually providing security if the threat is taken seriously. The elites will also likely constrain patronage distribution because those resources might be used against them instead of buying them support. As opposed, within a formal bargain for redistribution information asymmetries do not play a significant role in restraining the degree of formal distribution. Whether patrons implement real threats or none to show their willingness to fight does not affect the formal aspect of redistribution, this is due perhaps, to the nature of the transaction.

The presence of information asymmetries as coming from the patrons and perceived by the elites is thought to have a greater impact in bargains for informal redistribution (first path) because the resources that come to be redistributed informally pose a greater threat to the ability of groups to use more sophisticated attacks.

Exclusion can also be affected because the means of negotiating for an inclusionary deal are severely affected when information is conducted through violence. In this regard, when information is misinterpreted by the elites they are likely to close or constrain the access to sharing the spoils which in turn motivates the groups to become increasingly violent, mounting the likeliness of conflict onset.

5. Conclusions

Armed conflicts are complex multilayered events; they can be understood as the byproduct of a failed bargaining game between elite groups. Centering attention on grievance based explanations of ethnic conflict onset, it is shown here that inequality in the distribution of economic assets, social services and political participation in addition to exclusion from central power work as conflict enabling conditions. Thus, it has been shown here that inefficient redistribution through informal channels is also relevant when explaining conflict onset.

Illiberal democracies represent the type of regime which is most likely to be affected by conflict. Within this type of regime patronage networks work as a predominant channel of distribution which cannot be ignored when analyzing exclusionary practices of distribution and political participation. As results show, inefficient redistribution via patronage networks is a condition that is present in cases of conflict onset. As opposed, trajectories or peace can also be explained by the use of patronage networks to control violence.

Furthermore, a bargain failure at the agency level most likely is a product of lack of trust and asymmetries in the information within the elite bargain. In particular, it is shown here that the effect of credible commitments is different within each context of distribution. While in a formal bargain for distribution the credibility of the commitments of each side of the bargain is relevant in affecting conflict onset, in an informal context only trust in the elites as perceived by the patrons is relevant. These results are consistent with De Mesquita's selectorate theory in which the more groups are excluded from power, in other words the smaller the size of the coalition in power, the more provision of private goods. This in turn explains lack of credible commitment as perceived by those excluded. Furthermore, cases which reflect good credible commitment coming from the elites are those cases in which the size of the coalition is bigger

which in turn stimulates the provision of public goods (as providing private goods to a big coalition would be too costly).

In terms of information asymmetries, redistribution through formal channels as state institutions is not affected by information asymmetries coming from the groups. Whether the groups have a clear intention to fight or perform attacks as a form of bluff or to pressure the state into conceding, this will not affect the elites in power in their decision to politically exclude or restrain formal distribution. However, elites will not provide patronage if they believe the group is serious about challenging the state because they fear those informally distributed assets could be used against them. In other words, groups that bluff or do not hold the true capacity to fight but the state misrepresents the information are not likely to receive any patronage distribution.

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