The Ethnopolitical Dynamics of Elections

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Introduction

Elections are a key element in any political process because of their rule-legitimating function. They are, therefore, frequently used instruments at different levels of the political process (from local government to presidential elections) and in most types of political systems (from democracies to single-party totalitarian systems). In democratic and democratizing systems in particular, elections serve a variety of different purposes in addition to legitimating rule, including providing an institution for the expression of the popular will and providing mechanisms for peaceful change in government.

In multiethnic societies,[1] elections have critical implications for the way in which the political process is conducted, precisely because they are about choice.[2] At a very basic level, the acceptability of elections as way of (democratic) politics is at stake. Unless elections are perceived as having the potential of resulting in post-election institutions and politics that are broadly representative of the interests of a range of political actors, they are unlikely to be widely accepted among political elites and their constituencies (especially those that sense exclusion and discrimination) and are therefore unlikely to contribute to the establishment and/or preservation of non-violent, democratic political processes. This is closely related to a second dimension of acceptability, namely to that of the electoral system according to which elections are to be conducted. If electoral systems are adopted that predictably lead to the exclusion or gross under-representation of certain groups, these groups have little incentive to legitimate such elections and their outcomes by participating in them. By the same token, even if elections as such and the

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[1] By multiethnic societies I mean societies in which at least two different ethnic groups coexist and in which ethnicity and/or ethnic group membership are politically relevant. For the purposes of this paper, I do not distinguish further as to the character of such societies (ranked/unranked, divided/deeply divided, etc.).
[2] This is not to say that elections have lesser implications in ethnically more homogeneous societies.

rules according to which they are held are acceptable, this does not necessarily foreshadow a peaceful and stable democratic process in the aftermath. If the conduct of elections is flawed, if vote-rigging and intimidation occur, or if the outcome of elections is influenced in any other unfair way, elections will hardly pave the way towards establishing or maintaining a democratic process.

These negative case scenarios are meant merely as illustrations of what can potentially go wrong with elections, but not as a general deterrent against them. Elections play a crucial role in multiethnic societies both as potential catalysts of conflict and as mechanisms contributing to conflict termination, democratization, and sustainable, peaceful, democratic political processes. With these considerations in mind, this paper will examine the factors that contribute to elections in multiethnic societies resulting in stable and inclusive (or widely representative) political institutions. First, I look at different types of context in which elections are conducted – conflict termination, democratization, and full or consolidated democracy. Then I examine different aspects of elections themselves – election systems, campaigns, conduct and results – before offering some general conclusions about electoral and post-electoral politics in multiethnic societies. To begin with, I explore the concepts of stability and inclusiveness in multiethnic societies as the key objectives for elections to contribute to.

Stability and Inclusiveness in Multiethnic Societies

For the purpose of this paper, I define stability as the capacity of a system of political institutions to command authority, pass and implement legislation, maintain public order and security, and respond to changes in public opinion (cf. Reynolds and Sisk 1998: 22). Inclusiveness is the degree to which different branches of government (legislature, executive, judiciary, and civil service) reflect the population diversity within the society they are elected and/or appointed to govern.[3]

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[3] Inclusiveness and stability in my usage are broadly similar or equivalent to what others might describe as institutional legitimacy or policy. I am grateful to Shale Horowitz for pointing this out to me.

Figure 1 uses these two categories – stability and inclusiveness – to characterize four different types of political process that can be conceived of in multiethnic societies.[4] Quadrant A (stable and inclusive political process) is obviously the most desirable one. Institutional designs that correspond with it are power-sharing systems of either the Lijphartian or Horowitzian kind (i.e., consociational or integrative power-sharing), federalism and other forms of territorial autonomy designed to accommodate regionally concentrated ethnic groups. Here, different ethnic groups and their elites have accepted the relevant institutional set-up as a viable and beneficial arrangement to deal with a wide range of political issues that concern all of them more or less equally. Examples include Belgium and Mauritius (power-sharing), Switzerland and Canada (federalism), Spain and Italy (different degrees of territorial autonomy/asymmetric federalism).

Quadrant B (stable but exclusive political process) is a state of affairs described by Lustick as control regime: one or more weaker ethnic groups are dominated by a stronger one (or a coalition of stronger ones). Stability is achieved through domination; the political process is democratic only insofar as it relates to the dominant groups, as is or was the case in French Algeria, Israel, and Northern Ireland under the old Stormont system before 1972 (cf. Lustick 1980, 1993).

The inclusive, but unstable political systems in quadrant C are normally characterized by an inability of political elites to form durable governments that command sufficient support within the legislature to deliver substantive policies to the benefit of the whole society, rather than specific clienteles. In such systems, there is usually a mismatch between institutions (e.g., electoral system and design of government branches) or between institutions and the political agendas of elites that are working within them (inclusion/integration-orientated institutions vs. exclusion/separation-orientated elites). Northern Ireland and Bosnia-Herzegovina are the two examples that spring immediately

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[4] Given the way in which I define multiethnic societies for the purposes of this paper, integration/assimilation are not considered relevant types of institutional design here. In addition, minority rights systems are not treated as types of institutional design in themselves, but as complementing, to varying degrees, stable and/or inclusive institutional designs.

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to mind in this context as transitional systems and/or failing/failed power-sharing systems.

Finally, quadrant D represents the least desirable situation in a multiethnic, or for that matter any otherwise diverse society: an unstable and exclusive political process on the brink of violence or already beyond it. Many ethnic conflicts in the last decade, for example in the former Soviet Union and the Balkans, lapsed into violence when institutional instability combined with attempts by majority ethnic groups to assert control of institutions, thereby effectively excluding (i.e., denying access) minorities from meaningful participation in public life.

Obviously, the four quadrants are ideal types, and there are numerous shades of grey in the 'border areas'. The important point I want to make, however, has less to do with the quadrants themselves and more with cases moving from one quadrant into another and the catalyst function that elections might play in this process. Figures 2 and 3 indicate potential directions in which political processes in multiethnic societies might evolve. Moves between quadrants A and C and between quadrants B and D (i.e., between stability and instability without a change in the degree of inclusion/exclusion) can be caused by a variety of factors, such as changes in the demographic balance (due to higher/lower birth rates and/or immigration and emigration), changes in the power balance (shifting internal and external alliances, intervention by third parties, etc.), and other structural changes (e.g., in the electoral system or the design of governmental institutions).

Movements between quadrants A and B and between quadrants C and D (i.e., between different degrees of inclusion/exclusion without affecting the overall stability of the political system in question) are most likely to be caused by conscious choices made at the elite level. That is to say, while instability is hardly a reasonable political goal in itself (even though it can appear beneficial as a tactic in a more comprehensive and longer-

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term political strategy) and thus unlikely to be pursued deliberately, inclusion and exclusion may seem rational political choices for elites at different junctures of political and social development. Moves between A and B, for example, may be contemplated by elites when the alternative to maintain a given degree of inclusion/exclusion would be descent into instability: power-sharing may seem less daunting a prospect than civil war (B→A is preferable over B→D, the South African and Northern Irish examples), while assuming control may seem more appropriate in the eyes of some compared to maintaining an inclusive, yet apparently increasingly unstable system (A→B is preferable over A→C, with several qualifications, the Yugoslav example). Movements between A and B and C and D also reflect a greater concern for group-specific, rather than wider social interests. Movements from A to B are meant to preserve overall stability, albeit at the price of excluding one or more ethnic groups from meaningful political participation, whereas the reverse move (B→A) is also meant to preserve stability, but at the price of extending access to a previously excluded group. For moves between C and D it is reasonable to assume that the aim is not a different kind of instability, but that the ultimate agenda of political elites is to achieve either exclusive or inclusive stability. For moves from D to C, it is likely that several attempts to achieve a stable and exclusive regime have failed and that a strategic choice has therefore been made with the aim of achieving stability via opening public institutions to broader participation (D→B impossible, therefore D→C with the aim of eventually moving C→A, with some qualifications the Macedonian example). In contrast, for moves from C to D the assumption is that inclusive stability is either impossible or that inclusion is politically undesirable and that there is a reasonable chance that stability can eventually be achieved through control (C→A impossible or undesirable, therefore C→D with a view to eventually also moving D→B, the Chechen example).

Two qualifications of this are necessary: first, in reality the described moves are unlikely to be 'straight', i.e., a move between A and B, for example, is unlikely to maintain the exact same degree of stability; second, triangular moves are more likely to be intended

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as diagonal ones, i.e., a move from D to C to A, for example will accept that inclusion does not immediately bring stability, but the rational of the entire move will be to achieve such inclusive stability, hence it will figure in any political agenda as a move from D to A.

What does all this mean for the role of elections in multiethnic societies? First, it means that elections (and electoral systems) can be instruments of change in relation to levels of stability and degrees of inclusion (see Figure 3). Even though it is unlikely that elections alone will facilitate change, they are important, deliberately chosen elements in a wider political agenda. Second, change in levels of stability and degrees of inclusion can also occur as an unintended consequence of elections (and electoral systems). Thus, not all moves between the four quadrants outlined above are always intentional: ethnopolitics becoming more exclusive can be part of a deliberate strategy of one ethnic group to move towards a control regime (e.g., by changing the electoral formula, redrawing constituency boundaries, etc.), but it can also be a consequence of changes in the demographic balance in a particular region or a society as a whole (particular related to migration patterns). Demographic pressure, real or imagined, can also lead to increasing instability as it may contribute to greater levels of polarization and radicalization among different ethnic groups. Similar developments can be caused by resource conflicts (e.g., the discovery of oil in one region of a country inhabited by one ethnic group but not another) and intraethnic party competition (hardliners vs. moderates). By the same token, sudden, unintended inclusiveness may pose problems for the stability of government institutions in a situation in which these institutions, or society as a whole, are ill-equipped to deal with the prospect of coalition government.

The Context of Elections

At different times, societies are characterized by the salience of different policy issues. It is my contention that the salience of specific issues (ethnic, ideological, local, national, economic, environmental, social, etc.) potentially has a direct bearing on the outcome of

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elections in multiethnic societies. In other words, the success of electoral engineering is dependent, to some extent, on what issues dominate local and central-state politics and how these issues are portrayed in election campaigns. It is therefore important to be aware of the concrete context in which elections are to be conducted when assessing the usefulness and potential effectiveness of electoral engineering in addition to the more technical aspects of electoral demography.

Conflict Termination and Democratization

'The choice of appropriate democratic institutions - forms of devolution or autonomy, *electoral system design*, legislative bodies, judicial structures, and so on - designed and developed through fair and honest negotiation processes, are vital ingredients in building an enduring and peaceful settlement to even the most intractable conflict' (Harris and Reilly 1998: ch. 1; my emphasis). The holding of elections are often considered as a key criterion for democracy and democratization, and consequently many recent peace agreements aimed at ending civil wars and low-level violent conflict include relevant provisions to this end, which then often take on added significance as founding elections of a new post-conflict political system. This has been the case in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1995), Kosovo (1999) and Northern Ireland (1998), to name just a few recent European examples. Apart from ending a conflict, these peace agreements thus aim to establish democratic forms of governance and/or improve existing political systems, both with a view towards greater stability and inclusiveness. There are two major obstacles in relation to these closely connected objectives. The first one is to encourage elites of conflict groups to give up violence as a means to pursue political power and rely on exclusively democratic means (including elections). The second one is how to deal with the wider legacy of a conflict in terms of the political culture it has created, the structures of civil society (or lack thereof) and a range of other dimensions normally necessary for sustaining democratic political processes. From a broader perspective, the issue is simply this: at a time when demands and expectations are high, the capacity of institutions and individuals to deliver is limited at best. While international assistance can

go some way to address capacity issues, implementation (in the sense of translating a peace agreement into long-term practice) is essentially a task that can only be performed from within the society in question.

The ideal scenario for a post-conflict election, thus is to move straight from a situation of instability and exclusiveness (quadrant D) to one of stability and inclusiveness (quadrant A), thereby addressing issues of uncertainty, mistrust and fear and overcoming the social and institutional legacy of the previous conflict era. This is most often reflected in complex electoral formulas and institutional structures to assure all former conflict parties that they do indeed have a fair chance of seeing their interests represented and their concerns addressed in new democratic power structures. However, recent evidence from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and Northern Ireland, among others, suggests that inclusive instability (quadrant C) or exclusive stability (quadrant B) are far more likely interim, if not long-term outcomes. The reasons for this are, for the most part, either the unwillingness or inability of elites to cooperate within new democratic structures (persisting mistrust, security dilemmas, intragroup out-bidders, spoilers, outside pressures, etc.) and/or the mismatch between political institutions and communal aspirations (ill-suited electoral systems, institutions favouring genuine power-sharing vs. a desire of communities to separate, etc.). The consequences of the failure of elections to move straight from conflict to stable and inclusive democracy are obvious: a political system is 'established' that is unsatisfactory for at least one conflict group, thus making a relapse into violence (Northern Ireland) or a sustained international peace-keeping presence (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo) more likely.

Democratization

As the experience of the past decade has shown, the process of transition from authoritarian rule to democracy in multiethnic societies has its own ethnopolitical dynamic. Throughout Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (as well as many countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia), the uncertainties inherent in

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regime change have led in many cases to a resurgence of ethnonationalism, resulting in violence in some cases and heightened tensions in others, but also in successful accommodation and integration of ethnic minorities.

The nature of authoritarian rule puts such political systems very much into quadrant B as relatively stable but exclusive, normally operating a control regime with limited cooptation of minority representatives and/or a model of ethnofederalism along the lines of the Soviet or Yugoslav cases. The nature of such transitions, then, is essentially characterized by the people of a given country repossessing the institutions of their state, i.e., establishing the rule of the demos. In multiethnic societies this involves a number of problematic issues. Recent experience from the Balkans and the former Soviet Union in particular has shown that mobilization along ethnonational lines is a commonly used tool in the overthrow of communist regimes, creating immediate anxieties among members of minority groups as to their fate in a subsequent 'democratic' state. The dissolution of empires, among other things, often leads to problems stemming from internal migration and poses difficult questions about citizenship and (among others, voting) rights for people who suddenly find themselves within the borders of a new state in which they are in a minority position, while majorities see their own position threatened by the presence of what they perceive as foreigners, former colonists and oppressors. In addition, while control regimes, because of their very nature allowed at least for a limited, albeit often not very genuine, representation of minority interests, (majoritarian) democracy in and of itself does not. The legitimate desire of the majority to regain democratic control does often finds itself in conflict with an equally legitimate desire of minorities to have their interests 'adequately' represented within new political structures. These and a range of other issues are often compounded by resource scarcity and a lack of suitably qualified personnel with the capacity to implement social, political and economic reforms that lead to the creation of an institutional environment that is stable and inclusive at the same time.

This ideal scenario of replacing exclusive stability with inclusive stability is often hoped to be achieved by a simple opening of society to genuine democratic participation. However, institutional choices (electoral system, government system, etc.) and broader contextual factors (past and present of interethnic relations, structure of the party system, demographic balances between different groups, settlement patterns) may interact in ways that make this outcome uncertain. Electoral rules and/or election outcomes may be perceived as unfair or as not fairly representing social and political realities. From minorities' points of view, democratization may simply mean replacing one form of control system with another one, while majorities may resent too much of an effort to achieve inclusiveness. In both cases, instability is the likely result, impeding successful democratization in the short term (e.g., Latvia, Estonia, Romania, Bulgaria) or long term (Georgia, Armenia/Azerbaijan, Moldova).

Consolidated Democracy

In consolidated democracies, the ethnopolitical implications of elections are normally less significant than in the context of conflict termination and/or democratization, but they are by no means negligible. Recent experience from Central and Eastern Europe, for example, confirms that while ethnopolitical issues are unlikely to throw countries like Slovakia, Romania or Bulgaria into turmoil or long-term instability, elections (including campaigns and the perception of results) provide both focal points for ethnic violence and opportunities to strengthen the stability and inclusiveness of established political institutions.

Ethnic violence, to the extent that it occurs at all in consolidated multiethnic democracies is more likely to take the form of riots or of clashes between supporters of rival (ethno-) nationalist parties than that of organized, strategic violence used by paramilitary formations and state security forces in more intense violent conflicts or civil wars. As such it is sporadic, mostly localized, and involve fringe groups rather than mainstream

political parties or otherwise organized mainstream groups. However, it should also be borne in mind that recurring election-related ethnic violence at multiple levels of governance can in the long term escalate and lead to a change of the political situation towards greater instability and/or exclusiveness.

Opportunities to strengthen the stability and inclusiveness of established political institutions normally arise from the integration of ethnic (minority) parties in government coalitions (as has been the case, for example in Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania; cf. Brusis 2003), from the integration of minorities into the broader political process by including minority candidates in mainstream/majority party lists, and/or from broadening the appeal of political parties and party coalitions along non-ethnic, ideological or regional lines.

Election Systems, Campaigns, Conduct and Results

The choice of an appropriate election system; the way in which election campaigns are conducted and the results that elections produce; and the way in which these are interpreted by different political actors in a multiethnic society are probably the three most important factors that determine the impact that elections have on the degree of stability and inclusiveness of any post-election political process.[5]

Election Systems

According to Harrop and Miller (1987: 42), three main requirements must be made of any electoral system: to 'make government possible for those at the top and acceptable for those underneath', 'help reduce political frustration and encourage tolerance', and 'not add to the problems that already exist'.

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[5] Other factors that also have an influence include the rules and structures of the party system (i.e., ban on ethnically defined parties, number of parties, state financing of parties, etc.) and elements of political culture (e.g., voter turnout, political awareness, tolerance of diversity).

Election systems, i.e., the way in which voters can express their preference for a party and/or candidate and the way in which votes expressed are converted into seats, play a crucial role in determining election outcomes. An election system includes a number of different aspects, such as:

- an electoral formula (majority systems, PR systems, mixed systems, etc.);

- regulations on assembly size (the number of seats available in the assembly to be elected);

- regulations on district magnitude (the number of seats contested per constituency);

- regulations on voting and ballots (blocked vs. non-blocked lists; open vs. closed lists);

- threshold criteria (minimum share in votes cast to qualify for representation under PR systems; also known as quorum).

While the choice of an electoral formula must not be overemphasized in its capacity to determine election outcomes, it does have clear and measurable consequences, also known as an electoral system's technical effect (cf., e.g., Lijphart 1994; Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Hartmann 2000; Fraenkel and Grofman 2002; Reilly 2001). The debate in the academic literature is split between advocates of stability and advocates of representativeness (in terms of this paper, synonymous with the degree of inclusiveness). In general, majority/plurality electoral formulas are considered to provide greater stability, while PR formulas achieve higher levels of inclusiveness, i.e., reflect better the actual degree of diversity in any given society (cf., e.g., Milnor 1969: 185ff.).[6] Recent trends in electoral reform suggest that different variations of the mixed-member system might be able to combine the advantages of both of these principal electoral formulas by delivering 'disciplined national parties whose individual legislators can be held accountable for their articulation of local interests' (Shugart and Wattenberg 2001:

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[6] The most common electoral systems can be ranked according to proportionality as follows (beginning with the least proportional): multi-member constituency with majority system; single seat plurality; single seat majority (also known as two-round majority); virtual proportional system (mixed-member system); integral proportional system (single constituency proportional system). Cf. Venice Commission (1992).

582). In addition, mixed-member systems allow parties to specialize according to their performance strengths by either focussing on district or list competition/campaigns, and at the same time providing party executives with an opportunity to ensure the presence of legislators who champion local interests and/or provide subject expertise in parliament (*ibid*: 591). While other electoral formulas may be able to deliver similar benefits in some of these areas, they also often introduce new factors of instability into the political process, such as intraparty competition and factionalization (*ibid*).

At the same time, electoral formulas also have certain psychological effects on voters, which in turn shape the prospects of success for particular parties. As electoral formulas reward certain voting behaviours while constraining others, voters may opt to vote tactically, i.e., try to use the technical effects of the electoral system to effect one outcome and/or prevent another (cf. e.g., Hartmann 2000; Venice Commission 2000). For example, if an electoral formula disadvantages smaller parties, voters who may be ideologically closest to such a small party may elect not to 'waste' their vote on it because it has only a limited chance of success, but instead vote for a larger party as their second-best choice or as the 'lesser of two evils'.

This combination of technical and psychological effects also has consequences for the shape of party systems: electoral systems that favour larger parties usually lead to two-party systems, whereas more proportional-orientated voting systems create multiparty systems and assemblies with a stronger likelihood of coalition governments. In the context of multiethnic societies, it is important to bear in mind that factionalization in one or more groups, i.e., the likely split of the group's votes among several parties may effectively exclude the group from effective representation under majority/plurality election systems or turn demographic majorities into electoral minorities.

These comments generally seem to favour PR systems over majority/plurality systems in multiethnic societies, but this presumes the presence of an ethnically divided party

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system, or at least of political parties representing ethnic minority interests. As a consequence, unqualified PR systems are more likely to entrench ethnic divisions as they limit the incentives for parties to seek to appeal to voters beyond their own ethnic group. However, by the same token, PR systems give cross-communal parties a chance to achieve parliamentary representation (as the obstacles to do so are generally lower) and can thus also be said to limit the technical and psychological thresholds for voters to express their desire to move beyond ethnically determined political and electoral processes.

Finally, it needs to be borne in mind that the presence of ethnically-based parties is not always a given and that the representation of minority interests is indeed possible without them. For example, if majority parties support minority members as their candidates, representation of minority interests can be achieved through majority/plurality systems as well. The same is true if minorities are regionally concentrated (i.e., form local majorities in some districts) and politically united (i.e., if their members' votes are not split among several parties). In addition, even where ethnic minority parties exist, their representation in parliament can be assisted by other means than PR: reserved seats (especially for smaller groups), separate electoral rolls (members of different ethnic groups only vote for their own MPs rather than for parliament as a whole), and predetermined (proportional) seat allocations to representatives of different ethnic groups are three common, albeit not unproblematic mechanisms to achieve this (cf. Harris and Reilly 1998: ch. 4).[7]

As for assembly size and district magnitude, the rule of thumb is that the larger the assembly size and the higher the district magnitude, the more representative the assembly as a result. Again, this favours PR systems applied in a single state-wide constituency or in several large, multimember constituencies, or mixed-member systems

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[7] As the Venice Commission (2000) points out, electoral rules on the conversion of votes into seats apply above all to political parties/candidates and not to ethnic groups directly. It is only through the links between these groups and political parties that the rules become relevant and electoral reform may offer a mechanism to achieve greater inclusiveness.

that have the same effect. In multimember districts another factor comes into play – the mechanism by which votes are translated into seats, but these are overall less significant in their impact on overall election outcomes. More importantly, in PR systems, applied thresholds influence the degree of inclusiveness in legislatures. High thresholds often cancel out the benefits of PR systems, making election results sometimes even less representative than if the same election had been conducted under a majority/plurality system (e.g., Turkey's 10% threshold completely distorts election results, allowing parties with about 30% of the vote to obtain more than 50% of the seats).

The choice between blocked/non-blocked lists and open/closed lists determines the ability of voters to 'personalize' their vote. Closed and blocked lists only offer the choice of voting for a pre-determined party list (i.e., the voter votes for a party list on which the ranking of candidates is pre-determined by the party itself). Closed, non-blocked lists allow the voter to rank individual candidates from one party (i.e., they have one vote for a party, but can register a preference as to who they would like to see represent this party in the assembly). Open and non-blocked lists allow voters to cast their votes across party lines and to express their preference for individual candidates on such lists (panachage; used for example in local elections in Poland). In relation to non-blocked lists it is important to bear in mind that while these limit the ability of party executives to determine who represents the party in the assembly, they also increase intraparty competition and can encourage factionalization. By the same token, non-blocked lists introduce an element of accountability into the PR system and improve the relationship between voter and representative (cf. Hartmann 2000; Venice Commission 2000).

Two other issues in relation to election systems are the degree of their complexity and the extent to which voters are familiar with them. Very often in multiethnic societies, election systems reflect the complexity of issues that they are to address, namely to contribute to delivering stable and inclusive government. Unsurprisingly, this implies complex rules and regulations, the practical consequences of which cannot always be

accurately predicted by either their designers (e.g., in Fiji as discussed by Fraenkel and Grofman 2002; more generally, Farrell 2001: 193ff.) or by the voters. This is not an argument against complex electoral systems, but rather a reminder that the introduction of new electoral systems (reforms of existing systems, introduction of new ones after prolonged absence of elections) also requires public information and education campaigns to ensure voters properly understand the mechanics of the election ahead and the consequences of their vote. Familiarity with a given electoral system is an equally double-edged sword: on the one hand, familiarity enables voters to make better informed decisions about how to use their vote, while, on the other hand, it can also mean that sections of the electorate are more likely to distrust results, especially if they have experienced discrimination and disadvantage in the past.

<u>Election Campaigns</u>

Election campaigns in many ways reflect the nature of interethnic relations and, by the same token, foreshadow the nature of post-election politics. This is particularly the case in multiethnic societies: the higher the stakes, the more likely the campaign will have a polarizing and radicalizing effect on different groups. This is further exacerbated in situations where ethnically-based party systems exist, creating a situation in which elections effectively become censuses and their results predictable. Of particular relevance for this paper is some recent research by Donald Horowitz (2001: 295-308) in which he identifies three patterns of ethnic violence in electoral contests – pre-emptive strikes, break-outs and lock-ins. Pre-emptive strikes are aimed at enhancing a particular community's chances of electoral success, for example by driving out, intimidating or otherwise influencing voters whose vote is assumed to go to a different political party. Pre-emptive strikes therefore accept ascriptive elements of party affiliation, which is in contrast to break-outs where an effort is made to reduce this ascriptive element in order to overcome a particular electoral disadvantage (Horowitz 2001). This often happens in the form of attempts to broaden the base of an existing political party to expand beyond its traditional core ethnic constituency; if this is perceived as threatening by other

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parties and their followers relying on ascriptive elements, violence is a likely result (*ibid*).

Pre-emptive strikes and breakouts are both types of pre-election violence, while lock-ins trigger post-election violence, and are thus more relevant in the context of election results, which I discuss below. Campaign-related violence, and this needs to be emphasized, may be locally contained or more widespread, depending on stakes and demographic distribution of groups. Its likelihood will also depend on the general nature of interethnic relations and the legacy of past campaign conducts.

Another dimension of election campaigns which has a bearing on the degree of inclusiveness and stability of any post-election political process are campaign promises and, more generally speaking, election manifestos. Pre-emptively ruling out certain coalitions or polarizing communities and elites does not bode well for a post-election process in which a stable and inclusive government needs to be formed. Either elites stick to their campaign pledges and the government that emerges in the aftermath of an election is either exclusive and/or unstable, or elites falter on their promises and potentially lose the support of their constituencies, which can then be exploited in turn by hardliners within or outside parliament and/or the governing party. On the other hand, campaigns fought on substantive rather than ethnic issues offer greater promise of post-election political processes that are stable and inclusive, as they allow to form governments based on policy – overlap, rather than convenience or necessity.

Conduct

Similar to campaigns, the conduct of elections often reflects the general state of interethnic relations and can be indicative of the nature of the post-election political process. Taagepera and Shugart (1989) identify a number of 'pathologies': fraud, malapportionment, gerrymander and turnout. The more serious these pathologies, the more they will send a signal to voters and elites that elections will be unfair; that their rivals seek, in the guise of democracy, to obtain or retain control of society and the less likely will those who feel they are at the receiving end of these pathologies be willing to

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accept election results, and more worryingly in the long term, elections and democratic politics in general. On the other hand, proper judicial and administrative processes can go a long way not only to ensure that pathologies are reduced, but also that elections outcomes are accepted, even if they do not reflect each community's/party's aspirations (Lyons 2002; Venice Commission 1991).[8] Thus, while reducing pathologies cannot guarantee fully representative/inclusive assemblies and post-election governments, this process can, however, contribute to a more stable (i.e., acceptable) post-election political process.

Results

Election results, especially the composition of an elected assembly, are particularly important in two ways:

- Are they acceptable to a broad (i.e., multiethnic) majority at least to the extent that political institutions obtain or retain sufficient levels of authority and legitimacy?

- Do they return a legislature and subsequently/simultaneously an executive that can work effectively within the institutional parameters of a given state and society?

On the surface, both of these questions seem to be related primarily to the stability of any post-election political process, but especially in multiethnic societies they inevitably also raise issues of inclusiveness. Election results that do not broadly reflect the diversity of a given society are unlikely to be acceptable to those who do not feel that they are adequately represented. This brings me back to the third pattern of violence in electoral contests identified by Horowitz (2001) – the lock-in situation. He distinguishes pure lock-in, which occurs when elections confirm the continuation of dominant, demographic majorities, from an artificial lock-in. In this latter situation, elections result in a victory of

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[8] For a more detailed discussion of different institutional mechanisms on how to monitor and if necessary enforce the fair conduct, see ODIHR (2001).

the minority (an artificial lock-in caused by a party-political split of the majority or an election system that translates a majority of votes into a minority of seats). Consequently, violence has different points of origin: the minority in case of a pure lock-in, while the violent backlash is likely to come from the majority in cases of artificial lock-in. Neither situation, however, is conducive to stability and inclusiveness.

However, the acceptability of election results also depends on the conduct of election campaigns and the elections themselves, on the stakes in elections and, more generally speaking, on the state of interethnic relations in a given society. In this context, it is also important to note that the right to vote must not be confused with the right to representation (Grofman et al. 1992: 129f.), and especially not to have one's interests represented by the party one has voted for and/or in that party's anticipated strength.

Electoral and Post-electoral Politics in Multiethnic Societies: Some Conclusions

Electoral and post-electoral politics in multiethnic societies are not only determined by factors exclusively related to the electoral contest. Elections are only one in a much broader spectrum of factors that have an impact on the stability of the political process and more generally on interethnic relations. While the design of the election system, the conduct of electoral campaigns and of the elections themselves, and, of course the results that elections yield and the way in which these results are interpreted and acted upon are significant in shaping electoral and post-electoral politics in multiethnic societies; I want to turn to a more general, context-setting factor first, namely the nature of ethnic politics.

The more the political process in a multiethnic society is framed in ethnic terms (party system, structure of institutions, proportionality of resource allocation, etc.), the more elections take on an ethnic dimension as well. In addition to such formal institutions, norms that exist within individual groups play an important role as they too determine what political actions are possible or impossible for voters and their elites (cf.

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Hulterström 2002). If these norms encourage separation between groups and votes to be cast only within the spectrum of one's own group, formal institutions of ethnic politics are strengthened as well, including the conduct and outcome of elections.[9] This may be a banal observation, but it is important inasmuch as it contextualizes the function and consequences of elections. If a society is deeply divided, if communities refuse to coexist within the same polity, if elites are unwilling or unable to cooperate, no carefully designed electoral system will be able to deliver stable and inclusive post-electoral political processes. 'Electoral riots require elections', is an observation by Donald Horowitz (2001: 308), in other words fragile political institutions in polarized societies are unlikely to be mended by the calling of elections, and stability and inclusiveness may be better served by the postponing of elections in democratic systems or the abandonment of the idea of early elections in democratizing/war-terminating contexts.

By the same token, it is true that elections play a crucial role in influencing political processes in multiethnic societies, and it is one of the central assumptions of this paper that they have catalytic and direct consequences for the degree of stability and inclusiveness that political processes in such societies exhibit. As focal points of potential change, elections (including election campaigns) pose difficult challenges to elites and electorates. These challenges will be felt more acutely the higher the stakes are (or the higher they are constructed). Real or perceived security issues, resource allocation problems and concerns regarding fair and equal/proportional representation can polarize and radicalize electorates and (all or some of) the political parties they are supposed to vote for.

The most important direct consequences of elections are obviously their results. While it is true that the choice of electoral systems and the fine-tuning of specific rules can shape election outcomes, it is ultimately the will of the voter that determines the overall

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[9] It is also important to note that an ethnically-based party system is much more affected by electoral rules than one where non ethnically-based parties predominate (cf. Venice Commission 2000).

composition of assemblies and/or governments (Venice Commission 2000). However, in the same way in which polarization and radicalization are based on choice, especially among political elites, so are post-electoral political processes not foregone conclusions based purely on election results. Parliaments and governments have, and make, choices as to how to conduct politics. Clear, absolute majorities do not have to lead to the neglect of minority interests; multiparty coalition governments do not have to be unstable and to collapse at the first difficult decision.

Apart from the role of elites, another qualification of the direct impact of elections on the stability and inclusiveness of political processes in multiethnic societies is the broader design of political institutions. Recent scholarship and political practice have developed a wide range of power-sharing mechanisms that can be usefully employed in the process of state construction and consolidation in multiethnic societies: consociations, ethnofederalism, territorial autonomy, etc., are all designs that can mitigate electoral outcomes that would otherwise have 'complicated' interethnic relations. Careful institutional design is, therefore, an important component in all efforts to achieve stable and inclusive political processes in multiethnic societies, and as such a useful complement to the design of electoral systems. Ethnopolitics may complicate elections, but it does not make them impossible, nor do elections in multiethnic societies preclude stable and inclusive democratic government – they are, in fact, a necessary condition for it.

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