

## 2 Exclusion and Violence during Democratic Transitions

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Why do clashes between groups occur in some places during political transitions in multiethnic settings and not in others? What explains the return to peace in some contexts and extended violence in others? Existing accounts have focused on the importance of political actors' strategic interests during power shifts, state capacity, and structural factors such as inequality and grievances between groups. These accounts, however, have highlighted political actors' scramble and strategic maneuvers at the national level. As such, they cannot address why some areas within a country remained peaceful when some others erupted in violence during a political transition.

This chapter develops a theory of how local political exclusion drives ethnic riots in multiethnic countries during political transition. I start by defining key terms and describing the unique characteristics of countries in transition. I discuss existing accounts of the onset of ethnic riots and their limitations in explaining why ethnic rioting rises and subsequently declines during political transitions in multiethnic countries. I argue that ethnic riots in democratizing countries are driven by local elites' demands for inclusion in local politics. This deployment of ethnic riots as a form of political engagement is particularly prevalent in weakly institutionalized multiethnic settings, where institutions are less reliable and where available local networks tend to be ethnic based. Once a group's demands for inclusion have been met and violence has served its purpose, rioting will decline. I derive a set of observable implications and hypotheses to be examined in the subsequent empirical chapters.

### **Key Terms**

#### *Ethnic Riots*

In this book, I do not attempt to explain all kinds of identity-related violence, let alone all political violence, but only ethnic riots during a country's democratic transition. In line with other constructivists who

view ethnic identity as fluid and malleable (Barth 1969; Hobsbawm 1996), I define ethnic identity as a subjective sense of belonging to a group based on a perception of commonly shared, descent-based attributes.<sup>1</sup> Like Chandra (2006); Posner (2005), I use the terms *ethnic* and *ethnicity* as broad umbrella terms that include various dimensions of ascriptive identities such as religion, ethnicity, tribe, and language.<sup>2</sup>

Horowitz (2001) defined ethnic riots as “intense, sudden, though not necessarily wholly unplanned lethal attack by civilian members of one ethnic group on civilian members of another ethnic group, the victims chosen because of their group membership.”<sup>3</sup> Clashes between Hindus and Muslims in India, Christians and Muslims in northern Nigeria, or Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda and Burundi, along with the anti-Chinese violence of 1969 in Malaysia and the Tulsa race riots in 1921 in the United States, are examples of ethnic riots.

Based on this definition, many incidents of violence do not qualify as ethnic riots. Although local ethnic grievances contributed to some instances of violence in 1965–1966 in Indonesia, the anti-communist killings in Indonesia in these years were not ethnic riots because the victims were generally targeted due to their supposed ideological leanings, not their ethnic affiliations.<sup>4</sup> I also exclude mob violence

<sup>1</sup> For a thorough review of what ethnic identity is and is not, see Chandra (2012b).

<sup>2</sup> This practice of using the terms *ethnic* and *ethnicity* as a big umbrella category for all kinds of ascriptive identities is common in the ethnic politics. For example, Chandra (2004) wrote, “I take the term ‘ethnic group’ to refer to the nominal members of an ascriptive category such as race, language, caste, tribe, or religion” (Chandra 2004, 2). Similarly, Donald Horowitz stated that “ethnicity easily embraces groups differentiated by color, language, and religion; it covers tribes, races, nationalities, and castes” (Horowitz 1985, 53). Rothchild (1997); Birnir (2007); Kasfir (1979); and Posner (2005) adopted a similarly broad approach. The aggregation of ethnicity and religion under the umbrella term *ethnic* is not empirically useful in some cases. McCauley (2017) and Sidel (2006), for example, have analyzed religious violence as a completely separate category from other kinds of identity-related violence.

<sup>3</sup> Although much has been written on ethnic riots, there is surprisingly little disagreement over what constitutes an ethnic riot. Other definitions are largely consistent with Horowitz (2001), although their particular emphases may vary slightly. Brass (1997) defines an ethnic riot as “an event involving a large number of massed persons from opposing ethnic groups engaged in assaults on persons, lives, and property.” Though he does not specify cutoffs for what counts as a large number of persons, other social scientists also define riots as necessarily involving large crowds (Olzak and Shanahan 1996; Wilkinson 2009; Rude 1981). Because there is no specified upper bound for the size of groups engaged in rioting, this definition can encompass genocidal violence, as long as the victims are targeted on the basis of their ethnic identification. Wilkinson (2004) emphasizes the non-state identity of the individuals engaged in violence and excludes riots against the police or any other state apparatus.

<sup>4</sup> In some instances, however, individuals were targeted over various community-level grievances, apart from their membership in communist organizations (Robinson 1995).

against one individual (e.g., street justice or lynchings) unless the incident was triggered by an ethnicity-related offense or led to a bigger clash between ethnic groups. Violence by an individual against a large group, such as terrorism or sniper shootings, is also not part of an ethnic riot unless it occurred within the context of prior ethnocommunal violence.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, incidents that directly involve state security personnel as a party engaged in violence are excluded, since these clashes do not occur between two groups of civilians divided along ethnic lines. For this reason, civil wars; secessionist violence; police violence; mass mobilizations and demonstrations criticizing government policies; and nationalist mobilizations against a ruling government are excluded. However, incidents of violence carried out by civilian individuals at the behest of state-affiliated actors who deliberately incite ethnic hatred, mobilize crowds, and allow initial trigger events to escalate would fall into this category. In these cases, the individuals directly involved and engaged in the act of violence are civilians, even though they may have been responding to prompting, sponsorship, and coordination from within the government.

In the broader literature, scholars have used the terms *communal*, *racial*, *religious*, *ethnonationalist*, and *ethnocommunal* clashes to refer to ethnic riots. Some distinguish between ethnocommunal and communal events, using the latter term for clashes that are not ethnically motivated (Tajima 2014). I follow the same practice. Since ethnocommunal violence is the category of interest in my study, I use the terms *riots*, *violence*, and *ethnocommunal violence* interchangeably.

### *Political Exclusion*

Broadly, political exclusion refers to the institutional barriers to participation, representation, and access to political and economic resources faced by a specific group within a state. The specific manifestations of political exclusion can vary, however.

The crudest form of political exclusion is the denial of citizenship and access to the rights and protection that citizens generally enjoy, such as the right to vote or to a fair trial (Chatty, Mansour, and Yassin 2013). The ethnic Rohingyas in Myanmar, for example, lack the right to vote and have repeatedly been driven from their homes, forced into ghettos without any provision of basic services, or killed.

<sup>5</sup> Targeted sniper shootings in Poso, Central Sulawesi, where ongoing clashes between Christians and Muslims occurred from 1998 through 2007, would fall under the category of violence analyzed in this book because they sharpened divisions and arguably prolonged the violence (Sidel 2006).

The Romas in Macedonia have similarly been denied citizenship unless they were legally residing in Macedonia when Yugoslavia collapsed and had applied for naturalization within one year of the state's dissolution. Many of the 54,000 officially registered Romas in Macedonia still carry identification cards designating them as foreigners, lack birth certificates, and cannot access many state services as a result (UNHCR 2017).

Beyond the basic issue of citizenship, political exclusion can also refer to the lack of representation of a subset of a country's population in the political system (Wimmer 2002; Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010; Gurr 2000; Asal et al. 2016). Political representation is an important manifestation of inclusion because diverse groups have distinct positions, experiences, and perspectives (Young 2000), and because having their voices at the table in policymaking processes should help to prevent the further perpetuation of structural inequalities (Williams 1998; Mansbridge 1999; Kymlicka 1995). Scholars have distinguished between symbolic and substantive representation. Symbolic representation refers to simply placing people affiliated with marginalized groups in government positions, whereas substantive representation implies enabling representatives of marginalized groups to advocate for policies and decisions that would benefit those whom they claim to represent (Pitkin 1967; Htun 2016). For instance, the introduction of quotas for female politicians in many Latin American countries has increased the number of women in politics, but many elected female officials do not necessarily advocate for policies on behalf of women (Htun 2016). In this framework, women could be symbolically represented yet still substantively excluded. Among the various categories of a country's population, empirical studies have focused mostly on the political representation of groups organized along ethnic (Reilly 2001; Cederman, Wimmer, and Min 2010), gender (Shair-Rosenfield 2012; Arriola and Johnson 2014), and class (Carnes 2016) lines.

A third form of political exclusion concerns government policies that influence a group's ability to attain economic, political, and social resources. A group may possess citizenship and voting rights but still be victimized by exclusionary policies that influence its members' well-being. Mylonas (2012, 22), for example, defines exclusionary policies as "policies that aim at the physical removal of a non-core group from the host state (or specific areas of it)." Exclusionary policies can be as severe as population exchange, segregation, internal displacement, or genocide. But actions of lesser severity can still deny a group access to economic, political, and social resources. The ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, for example, are by law considered citizens, though up until

2006 they were categorized as citizens of foreign descent (*WNI keturunan asing*), distinct from indigenous Indonesians (*WNI asli*). Up until 2000, Chinese languages, religion, and schools were banned. It took another six years before a new citizenship law was passed, removing the prior requirements for Chinese Indonesians to go through additional legal steps to affirm their Indonesian citizenship (Chandra 2012a). Similarly, African Americans in some northern US states held voting rights as early as the 1840s, but they risked endangering their lives if they actually tried to exercise this right (Tocqueville 1988).

In such situations, political exclusion usually accompanies social exclusion, by which a particular group is granted a lower social status. In the case of many women, descendants of Africans, and indigenous people in Latin America, political exclusion reinforces and reflects the groups' already inferior social status (Htun 2016). Notably, however, it does not necessarily imply subordination in every sphere; in some cases, in fact, ethnic groups may be excluded politically because they are perceived as superior in other spheres. Examples of market-dominant and yet politically excluded ethnic minorities in Southeast Asia fit this category (Chua 2003; Glaeser 2005).

In this book, I use the term *political exclusion* to refer to situations where an ethnic group lacks meaningful representation in local politics and has little or no hope of placing group members in important positions in local government.

### *Demands*

Violent mobilizations during political transitions in countries around the world have articulated all kinds of demands, ranging from a complete overhaul of the political system to demands for greater redistribution. The People Power movement in the Philippines that upended Ferdinand Marcos' autocratic rule, for example, was a broad-based movement seeking the establishment of an electoral democracy. South Korea's democratic transition in June 1987 followed weeks of riots against the party nomination of Roh Tae-woo for the presidency, the deaths of university students, and demands for direct presidential elections (Lee 2018). Protesters in South Africa's New Defiance Campaign and general strike in 1989 pushed to abolish apartheid (Teorell 2010). Indonesia's own transition to democracy in 1998 was preceded by months of student protests against rising fuel prices and demands to remove Soeharto. All these demands sought major changes in the institutionalized political arrangements.

Another frequently expressed demand during political transitions is for redistribution of resources, typically for the benefit of those

who are economically disadvantaged or their representatives. This category and demands for political reforms are, of course, not always mutually exclusive. In fact, seminal theories of regime change have modeled democratization as the outcome of distributive conflicts between different socioeconomic groups. Boix (2003), for example, has suggested that democratization occurs when inequality is low and when elites have less incentive to repress the poor's demands for greater redistribution. Similarly, Acemoglu and Robinson (2006) have argued that countries are more likely to transition to democracy when they are at intermediate levels of inequality, where the poor would be sufficiently aggrieved to mobilize demands for redistribution but the elites would not be so threatened by potential losses in the new regime as to repress these demands. Even skeptics of this theory, such as Haggard and Kaufman (2012), have found that distributive conflict was present in more than 50% of all democratic transitions from 1980 to 2000. As one illustration, Mali's democratic transition in 1992 began with economic grievances and urban protests against structural adjustment measures (Haggard, Kaufman, and Teo 2016). Mass mobilizations protesting against pervasive corruption also preceded electoral reforms in Kenya in 1997 (Ndegwa 1998). Albania's economic collapse in 1990 prompted hundreds of thousands of protesters to demand elections and wage increases (Biberaj 1999).

Although many books on violent mobilizations during political transitions have focused on national-level demands for a massive overhaul of the country's political system and significant redistribution of resources, this book considers a different category of demands, revolving around access to local politics. It examines the incentives and concerns of local bureaucrats, civil servants, party activists, religious leaders, and community figures in districts and municipalities. While democratic transition was happening at the national level and politicians were wheeling and dealing to protect their interests under the new government, local actors in districts and municipalities were concerned about protecting their interests and ensuring access to the spoils of the state. In practice, these demands may be manifested in a push for a co-ethnic executive leader, a new political party, or a legal recognition of economic and political control of traditional communities among others.

### *Transition to Democracy*

This book examines the onset of ethnic riots in multiethnic countries undergoing a transition to democracy. The study of democratization has spawned numerous books and captured scholars' attention, particularly

during democracy's "third wave" in the 1990s as many post-communist countries transitioned to democracies. Although some have argued that the transition paradigm is now outdated (Carothers 2002), it is still useful to distinguish countries in political transition from their more mature and stable counterparts. In this book, a transition to democracy, or democratization, is defined as a process that starts with the ouster of an authoritarian regime and ends with the consolidation of democracy.

The point at which democracy is considered consolidated has been a subject of many years of scholarly debate. Some have advocated a multidimensional approach to measuring consolidation (Linz and Stepan 1996; Abulai and Crawford 2010; Schedler 2001), while others have proposed a simple longevity threshold to separate unconsolidated from consolidated democracies (Huntington 1991). Broadly, democracy is considered consolidated when it is "the only game in town" and its legitimacy is widely accepted by the country's political actors (Linz and Stepan 1996, 5). Linz and Stepan (1996, 5–6) clarified further that democracy is consolidated when "no significant political groups seriously attempt to overthrow the democratic regime or secede from the state," when "the overwhelming majority of the people believe that any further political change must emerge from within the parameters of democratic formulas," and when political actors "become subjected to, and habituated to, the resolution of conflict within the specific laws, procedures and institutions sanctioned by the new democratic process." Carothers (2002, 7) similarly described consolidation as "a slow but purposeful process in which democratic forms are transformed into democratic substance through the reform of state institutions, the regularization of elections, the strengthening of civil society, and the overall habituation of the society into the new democratic 'rules of the game.'" In practice, this broader and more holistic understanding of democratic consolidation has been operationalized by various indices that capture the multiple dimensions in their empirical analyses (Schneider and Schmitter 2004).

Another alternative approach uses a test or threshold to determine when a democracy is consolidated. For example, Huntington (1991) focused on the legitimacy of elections among political actors and offered the now-famous *two-turnover* test, according to which a democracy is consolidated only "if the party or group that takes power in the initial election at the time of transition loses a subsequent election and turns over power to those election winners, and if those election winners then peacefully turn over power to winners of a later election" (Huntington 1991, 267). Another alternative is the longevity threshold, which defines democracy as consolidated when twenty years with regular competitive

elections have passed (Beetham 1994). Gasiorowski and Power (1998) set a twelve-year threshold after transition as a marker for democratic consolidation. But this test-based approach is also insensitive to contexts (Schedler 2001) and captures only a very narrow aspect of consolidation (Abulai and Crawford 2010). It does not provide any information about the quality of elections; outbursts of protests and violence; the presence of electoral malpractice; or non-electoral dimensions of consolidation, such as constitutional arrangements or the legitimacy of democracy. Recognizing that no approach is perfect, I have adopted the *two-turnover* test to identify the point at which democracy is consolidated.

In limiting the scope of argument to countries transitioning to democracy, I do not address political transitions or authoritarian breakdowns generally. Democratizing countries are a small subset of these groups. A number of recent works on authoritarian collapses use the ouster of an authoritarian incumbent as the starting point of the political breakdown (Brownlee 2009). However, an autocrat's ouster may lead to a variety of outcomes. Some have argued that it must not be automatically conflated with democratization, since in many instances it represents mere moments of autocratic weakness that are quickly corrected and not any greater demand for democracy. Levitsky and Way (2015) have pointed out that historically, most authoritarian breakdowns have not led to democratization.<sup>6</sup> Some states, such as Great Britain, transitioned smoothly to consolidated democracies (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006). Egypt and Jordan, on the other hand, quickly relapsed into authoritarianism (Diamond 2008).<sup>7</sup> Moreover, some countries have remained stuck in a hybrid mix of democracy and autocracy, having democratic trappings but suffering from illiberal practices.<sup>8</sup> Even mature democracies may exhibit some features typically associated with authoritarianism.<sup>9</sup> For this reason, I refrain from using *authoritarian collapse* or *authoritarian breakdown* to label the group of cases to which my argument is applicable.

<sup>6</sup> Epstein et al. (2006); Przeworski et al. (2000); Tilly (2007) contested the notion that consolidation is automatic. Svobik (2014) provided an empirical examination of when and why certain transitional countries overcome the threat of authoritarian reversal and become consolidated.

<sup>7</sup> This description of recently transitioned democracies as "rolling back" into authoritarianism has been criticized by some who claim that these transitions were instead "moments of extraordinary incumbent weakness" and not meaningful movement toward democracy (Levitsky and Way 2015, 50).

<sup>8</sup> In the literature, these states have been referred to as semidemocratic, hybrid, competitive authoritarian, illiberal democracy, or partly free (Levitsky and Way 2002).

<sup>9</sup> For instance, Slater and Way (2017) have identified traits in the 2016 US presidential election that are common in elections in competitive authoritarian countries.



This approach also examines a relatively narrow temporal range. Although some scholars have started their analysis with the ouster of the incumbent, others have gone further back to the point of the country's liberalization. Tajima (2014), for example, began his analysis of Indonesia's authoritarian collapse at 1996, when the country began to liberalize. Ziblatt (2017) traced the adoption of democracy in Great Britain to the strong political party organization that the British Conservative Party had built over decades before the 1884 Reform Act, which many consider the turning point for British democratization. Though the incremental opening of a political system through various liberalizing policies shapes the opportunities and constraints available to political actors, it does not heighten uncertainties, distributive conflicts, and incentives for political mobilization as radically as the involuntary end of an autocrat's rule would, since political actors would expect the status quo to continue into the foreseeable future. As such, my analysis places the starting point of transition at the ouster of the incumbent. To avoid repetitiveness, I refer to transitioning or democratizing countries interchangeably, as well as to new or young democracies.

### **Existing Explanations of Ethnocommunal Violence**

Existing explanations of ethnocommunal violence fall into several categories. The primordial view prioritizes the importance of ethnic diversity as the source of conflict between groups. According to this view, ethnicity matters simply because it is a "given" of society. Human beings are evolutionarily predisposed to view themselves as belonging to particular ethnic groups and are naturally inclined to favor fellow members of their group (van de Berghe 1981). Because of this ethnic nepotism, ethnically diverse societies are inevitably rife with tension, since individuals from different ethnic groups will take political, economic, and social actions based on a concern to favor their kin (Vanhanen 1999). This line of reasoning, however, has largely fallen out of favor. Empirically, the same pairs of ethnic groups may be peaceful in some times and places and at war elsewhere (Posner 2004). Furthermore, most interethnic relations are peaceful (Fearon and Laitin 1996), and many clashes have involved groups with a relatively short history of contact (Varshney 2009).

The second category of explanations of ethnic riots focuses on structural factors such as inequality between groups and competition for material resources. Gurr (1993), for example, argued that relative deprivation – the gap between what the material resources group has

and what it thinks it deserves – drives discontentment and mobilizes people to rebel and protest against their governments. Olzak (1992) has argued that competition over jobs and public housing leads to clashes between groups. US race riots in the 1960s have been attributed to resentment and fears among whites that blacks were moving into white neighborhoods in large numbers and taking over their jobs (Spilerman 1976). In a study of countries in sub-Saharan Africa from 1990 through 2008, Fjelde and Ostby (2014) found that countries with higher levels of inequality (both vertical and horizontal) were more prone to violent communal conflicts. Similarly, a recent county-level study found that ethnic violence in the Xinjiang region of China was associated with horizontal inequality between the Han majority and the largest ethnic minority group (Cao et al. 2018). With regard to Indonesia, Tadjoeeddin (2013) found that ethnic riots were concentrated in districts with a larger population of people with high levels of education but lower income levels, suggesting that these individuals may be disgruntled over their inability to achieve their aspirations.

Beyond inequality in access to material resources, numerous works have stressed the impact of political representation and inclusion on violence. Aristotle's *Politics* declared that "men . . . cause revolutions when they are not allowed to share honors and if they are unjustly or insolently treated" (Aristotle 1944, 1316b). To maintain a peaceful polity, Aristotle (1944, 1308a) suggested treating those "outside the constitution well" and "bringing their leading men into the constitution." Niccolò Machiavelli echoed this idea and posited that when there are no laws in the republic to allow disgruntled people to articulate their grievances, "extra legal methods will be employed and without doubt these will have much worse consequences than legal ones" (Machiavelli 1531, 102). More recently, Lijphart (1977) argued that a "grand coalition" between important ethnic groups is necessary to maintain a peaceful plural polity. In his proposed consociational democracy, all ethnic groups are proportionately represented in the grand coalition, each group has mutual veto in decision-making, and each group enjoys a high degree of freedom to govern their affairs. In Lebanon from 1943 through 1975, he noted, the key groups were represented in a grand coalition of officeholders: "a Maronite president, a Sunni prime minister, a Shiite chairman of the legislature, and a Greek Orthodox deputy chairman and deputy prime minister" (Lijphart 1977, 148). Birnir (2007) has similarly demonstrated the importance of political inclusion for ethnic groups' peaceful electoral engagement. Legislative access, she argued, is what accounts for the peaceful political engagement of Turks in Bulgaria, Hungarians in Romania, and Catalans in Spain, and conversely for the

violent mobilization of the Basques in Spain and the Tamils in Sri Lanka. When ethnic groups are unrepresented and excluded from formal politics, Birnir claimed, they will look for alternative means to voice their demands. Regime and party system stability in a plural setting, she stated, depends on the representation of ethnic political factions in politics. Cederman, Wimmer, and Min (2010) have made the same point from a different angle. Their cross-national analysis of all politically relevant ethnic groups from 1946 through 2005 showed that countries with politically excluded ethnic groups had a greater likelihood of civil war. Ethnic groups tend to fight when they are excluded from the highest political offices in the land.

The third group of explanations of ethnocommunal violence has focused on how local elites politicize identity-based loyalties for strategic and political purposes. Scholars in this camp treat ethnic groups as unitary, mobilizable coalitions organized to achieve common political, economic, and social goals (Bates 1983; Young 1976; Rabushka and Shepsle 1972). From this perspective, ethnic identity and diversity in and of themselves do not produce conflict; rather, conflict emerges when ethnic identity is politicized in such a way that whether one belongs to a particular group determines access to political and economic resources. In other words, in a multiethnic setting, some ethnic identities may be politically relevant, whereas others may not. The salience of ethnic identities is neither automatic nor fixed but is socially constructed and can be manipulated for instrumental reasons (Posner 2005).

One area that has received significant attention in the literature is how politicians strategically manipulate identity-based loyalties to their benefit through ethnic appeals and priming around elections. Examining incidents of Hindu–Muslim riots in India, Wilkinson (2004) argued that they were driven by local elites' electoral incentives. In anticipation of a competitive election, at the town level, politicians manipulated ethnic loyalties and fomented riots to prime members of their ethnic group to vote along ethnic lines, thereby helping their candidates to gain election. In this manner, ethnic riots function as a campaign tool that solidifies a coalition and mobilizes voters to support candidates from their ethnic group. Once riots have erupted, however, the relevant state governments can choose either to quell them decisively or to allow them to escalate. At the state level, Wilkinson (2004) further argued that the use of force to quell anti-minority violence depends on whether the incumbent government needs support from minority voters to win a competitive election.

Evidence from elsewhere supports this argument as well. Drawing on the Afrobarometer surveys of 35,000 respondents in 10 countries from 1999 through 2004, Eifert, Miguel, and Posner (2010) have found that proximity to election increases the likelihood that survey respondents will express views along ethnic lines. In the runup to the 1992 elections in Kenya, clashes between ethnic Kalenjins who backed the incumbent president, Daniel arap Moi, and non-Kalenjins were designed to intimidate voters into supporting Moi's party, Kenya African National Union (KANU) (Bekoe and Burchard 2017). In Nigeria, Collier and Vicente (2014) conducted an experimental study and found that voters were less likely to participate in elections when they thought they would be targeted with violence. Similarly, in a study based on newly declassified data from Afghanistan, Condra et al. (2018) demonstrated that insurgent attacks around elections reduced voter turnout, thereby highlighting another possible motivation for pre-election violence.

These explanations, however, are broadly about clashes between groups and the initiation of violence due to structural inequalities. They are not strictly about violence in countries in transition. With regard to violence during power shifts specifically, a fourth group of explanations focuses on the weakening of state security capacity. Posen (1993) argued that the temporary weakening of state security capacity during political transition in ethnically diverse settings heightens uncertainties and produces an ethnic security dilemma. Ethnic groups, now deprived of a strong state presence to guarantee their safety, arm themselves in anticipation of attacks from other groups. As each group arms itself, it alarms the other group, and tensions escalate until clashes erupt. In this view, peace is restored only when the state can enforce order again. Tajima (2014) expanded the focus to encompass non-state and informal security capacity, contending that communal riots are more common in villages with greater mismatches between informal and formal security institutions. When the state's security capacity is constrained during a political transition, communities whose informal security institutions have lower capacity struggled to respond to trigger events. In Tajima's view, violence will eventually decline and peace will return when the local communities have sufficiently improved their capacity to respond to trigger events.

Other than security capacity, the maneuvers of political entrepreneurs to secure control over political and economic resources have also been identified as a factor that drives violence during political transition. Snyder (2000) argued that in the context of democratic transitions, which

allow for significant shifts in power configurations and the allocation of resources, politicians in ethnically diverse settings may find it useful to mobilize ethnonationalist sentiments to maintain their power. Gagnon (1994/1995) analyzed ethnic violence in Serbia, describing it as deliberately engineered by political actors who fomented violence for their personal gains.

Experts on Indonesia have also used this lens to explain violence during the country's democratic transition. Bertrand (2004, 3) claims that the country's democratic transition was a "critical juncture in Indonesia's post-independent history during which institutional transformation opened up channels to renegotiate the elements of the national model: the role of Islam in political institutions, the relative importance of the central and regional governments, the access and representation of ethnic groups in the state's institutions, as well as the definition and meaning of the Indonesian 'nation.'" In his view, at these crucial points of renegotiation of the national model, groups feel threatened and "seek to position themselves either to protect past gains, favorable definitions of national models, or institutions that provide them with protection and representation. Other groups fear that they will be subjected to discrimination or exclusion" (Bertrand 2004, 4–5). For Bertrand, ethnic and nationalist violence during Indonesia's democratic transition was a by-product of this renegotiation and shifts in political configuration at the national level.

In his analysis of riots, pogroms, and jihad from 1995 to 2005 in Indonesia, Sidel (2006, 210) argued that the "modalities of religious violence in Indonesia – its timing, location, forms, targets, protagonists, and processes of mobilization – have been decisively shaped by the broad constellation of religious authority in the country and by the possibility of articulating claims to represent (in both senses of the term) Islam in the world's most populous majority-Muslim nation-state." Whereas the late 1980s and the 1990s saw the ascendancy of those who claimed to represent Islam in Indonesia, the early 2000s brought "the eclipse and evisceration of the Islamic project in the country" in the form of the victory of Soeharto's opposition party, the Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan (PDIP) in the elections of June 1999 and its allocation of one-third of its seats in parliament to non-Muslim representatives (Sidel 2006, 210–211). In Sidel's view, religious violence during Indonesia's democratic transition was an expression of the anxieties of religious communities (and those who claimed to represent them) about a reversal of fortunes under the new government.

Whereas these scholars have focused on shifts and power struggles at the national level, others have carefully considered local factors

and dynamics as determinants of violence. Their works have typically focused on either power struggles at the local level or the perceptions and experiences of participants in violence. van Klinken (2007) analyzed the interests and actions of elites in small towns in Indonesia's outer island provinces. Relying on extensive field research in West Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, Central Sulawesi, Maluku, and North Maluku, van Klinken indicated that given the dependence of small-town local economies on the state, filling local government positions with fellow ethnic group members who would allocate state resources back to their ethnic community was an important priority. He claimed that the onset of political liberalization after Soeharto's ouster raised the stakes of elections. As local elites mobilized their ethnic communities to help them win elections, violence erupted. In explaining anti-Madurese violence in West Kalimantan, Davidson (2008) argued that the mobilization of violence against migrant Madurese in West Kalimantan solidified the ethnic Malay community in anticipation of competitive local elections in the province. Duncan (2013) and Al Qurtuby (2016), on the other hand, focused on the religious nature of violence in Maluku and North Maluku and showed that despite the rhetoric and framing of the violence as a political conflict by local and national elites, the rank-and-file fighters experienced the clashes as primarily a *religious* war between Christians and Muslims.

These various arguments have identified possible reasons why riots and instability may proliferate during political transition as the country's national model, constellation of power, and groups' access to resources are renegotiated. However, most of these studies have studied either national-level actors and events or a very small number of local cases.

The focus on national dynamics and actors alone is insufficient, since these should influence the entire country uniformly, but not all parts of a transitioning country experience violence. Why would events in Jakarta mobilize violence between Christians and Muslims in Poso, in the province of Central Sulawesi, but not in the neighboring district of Morowali? Presumably, the reversal of status that threatened Muslims' control over resources in Jakarta should also influence the political opportunities of Muslims everywhere in Indonesia (Davidson 2008).

Studies that examine a narrower number of cases offer very rich details on each case, but it remains to be seen whether the arguments made based on the limited cases can be generalized and applied to account for the geographical and temporal variation of ethnic riots within a country in transition. To attain a broader picture, one must take into consideration the conditions in not just the most violent areas

of a transitioning country but also the regions that had relatively little or no violence during political transition.

### Characteristics of Countries in Transition

Countries in transition exhibit a unique set of characteristics that distinguish them from established democracies and autocracies. First, they are weakly institutionalized. Scartascini and Tommasi (2012, 788) defined institutionalization as the degree to which formal political institutions “are indeed the places where societal actors focus their energies when trying to influence policy.” In their framework, political actors in well-institutionalized countries view bargaining in the legislature, courts, and councils, as well as election campaigns, as opportunities to promote particular agendas. Political actors in less institutionalized countries, on the other hand, engage in informal political activities such as demonstrating and burning tires on the streets to articulate their preferences (Scartascini and Tommasi 2012). Acemoglu, Robinson, and Verdier (2004, 163) described *strongly institutionalized polities* (a term taken from Robert Powell) as countries where “formal political institutions, such as the constitution, the structure of the legislature, or electoral rules, place constraints on the behavior of politicians and political elites, and directly influence political outcomes.” In contrast, in *weakly institutionalized polities*, “formal institutions neither place significant restrictions on politicians’ actions nor make them accountable to citizens” (Acemoglu, Robinson, and Verdier 2004, 163). Other scholars have used the term *weakly institutionalized* to refer to countries that are emerging from conflict (Salehyan and Linebarger 2015), have high levels of civil conflict (Besley and Persson 2009), or are ethnically divided. This broad use of the term reflects a lack of clarity and consensus on the dynamics of political institutionalization, although there is some recognition in the literature that institutionalization is equivalent to having strong political institutions.

In countries moving from autocracy to democracy, opposition political parties may be so organizationally weak that they cannot effectively communicate information to voters (Tavits 2012), pay for expensive media and grassroots campaigns (Bartolini 2000; Grzymala-Busse 2002), or maintain a local presence (Geser 1999) that would help them succeed in the first democratic elections. The strength of political parties has important implications for whether a meaningful electoral competition and checks and balances on the chief executive can be accomplished (Kapstein and Converse 2008). In Tunisia in 2011 and the Philippines in 1986, for example, support for removing the autocratic

regime was extremely broad, but the opposition movements in both countries lacked meaningful political organizations (Babatunde 2015). In addition, bureaucratic and police institutions are usually weak in times of transition (Migdal 1988). The weakened state security capacity allows illicit acts that otherwise would be severely penalized to go unchecked (Tajima 2014; Posen 1993). And since political institutions have less capacity, citizens are less likely to engage with and rely on them to communicate their demands or to push for specific policies.

The second characteristic that differentiates countries in transition from their stable counterparts is that political competition focuses on reform of the political system itself. After the collapse of communist regimes in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, for example, incoming new regimes sought to reform the state apparatus through privatization and decentralization (Suleiman 1999). After the 1986 People Power movement in the Philippines deposed President Ferdinand Marcos, his successor Corazon Aquino took immediate steps to ratify a new constitution that protected freedom of the press. Moreover, new democracies often introduce political and economic practices that change how decisions are made and who makes them. For example, many new democracies adopt a new constitution (Ordeshook 1997; Sunstein 2001), adopt a new electoral system (Shin 2015; Moser and Scheiner 2012), and implement decentralization (Treisman 2007). Although reforms and shifts in citizens' access to state resources also occur in mature democracies, the scale, intensity, and pace of reforms are usually much more tempered (Keefer 2007).

Third, many new democracies emerge from authoritarian rule plagued by poverty and gaping inequality. On average, countries that transitioned to democracy between 1960 and 2004 had approximately 20% of its population living on less than one dollar a day. The median per capita income for these countries was \$850 in 2005 US dollars (Kapstein and Converse 2008). Thus, new governments must confront the additional burden of alleviating poverty quickly, with whatever resources they have.<sup>10</sup>

The fourth characteristic of countries in transition follows from the previous ones: distributive demands are usually very intense in this setting. Typically, a country undergoing transition has two types of groups, associated with either the *ancien regime* or its rising

<sup>10</sup> By comparison, mature democracies such as the United States, Canada, and Australia have had less than 5% of their population living in absolute poverty for at least the past two decades (Ravallion 2016). Mongolia, with a poverty rate of 30% and over 20 years of full democracy, is one of the few instances of both mature democracy and a high poverty rate.



rivals.<sup>11</sup> Both those who had power in the prior regime and those excluded from the old government will want to secure their interests in the new government (Haggard and Kaufman 1995; Albertus and Menaldo 2013; Ziblatt 2006). For the previously excluded, the period of transition presents an opportunity to renegotiate their position and to demand a better arrangement in the new government. Meanwhile, the beneficiaries of the old regime seek to protect their interests and ensure that they will not suffer severe losses in the new government.

Although distributive conflicts occur in non-transitioning countries as well, they are so intense and prevalent during political transitions that scholars have commonly described the adoption of democracy as an equilibrium outcome of the strategic considerations of conflicting groups (Boix 2003), or as a “pact” reached by conflicting groups (Stephan 1986).

Taken together, these initial conditions shape the constraints and opportunities available for individuals living in new democracies, and they produce strategic interactions that are unique to these settings (Haggard and Kaufman 1999). These characteristics differ considerably from those of mature democracies. In elaborating my core argument, I will show exactly how these distinctive characteristics matter in generating riots in new democracies.

### My Argument

We have seen that countries undergoing political transition, relative to mature democracies, are often weak, are subject to drastic reforms, and disproportionately disadvantage those who are politically excluded. Given these starting conditions, individuals resort to non-institutional forms of political participation to impress their demands on the state.

To illustrate the strategies and considerations of disgruntled excluded groups in democratizing contexts, I extend Hirschman (1970)’s framework of exit, voice, and loyalty, which he used to explain individual responses to organizational decline. When a firm’s performance deteriorates, Hirschman argued, individuals associated with the firm have three possible responses. They can *voice* their complaints and demand corrections to stop the decline, *exit* the organization by joining another

<sup>11</sup> In the literature, the *ancien regime* has been defined along various political and economic dimensions: landed elites (Bates and Lien 1985), those with mobile capital (Boix 2003), or the bourgeoisie (Moore 1966), for example. The previously excluded who demand greater redistribution may include the poor (Acemoglu and Robinson 2006), the middle class (Ansell and Samuels 2014), or the working class (Ansell and Samuels 2014), among others.

company or buying products from a different provider, or express *loyalty* to the organization by suffering the decline in silence.<sup>12</sup>

For Hirschman, voice, exit, and loyalty are not independent of each other, and which specific strategy individuals choose will depend on the elasticity of their demand and on the costliness and anticipated effectiveness of each strategy. Voice tends to be the action of choice when exit is too costly and difficult: "The voice option is the only way in which dissatisfied customers or members can react whenever the exit option is unavailable" (Hirschman 1970, 33). Conversely, "the presence of the exit alternative can therefore tend to atrophy the development of the art of voice" (Hirschman 1970, 43). For example, Hirschman elaborates, political asylum for dissidents, strategically and generously granted by a number of Latin American governments, could be seen as "conspiracy in restraint of voice" to reduce dissidents' likelihood to protest (Hirschman 1970, 61). For Hirschman, voice is a "residual of exit" – an option adopted when exit is difficult (Hirschman 1970, 30).

Loyalty mediates one's elasticity of demand and the calculation of costs and rewards associated with voice and exit (Hirschman 1970, 77). People's loyalty to their family, tribe, church, or state, for example, may reduce their willingness to exit these institutions despite institutional decay and unfavorable circumstances. In these contexts, exit may be unthinkable. Consequently, when exit options are blocked, the "principal way for the individual member to register his dissatisfaction with the way things are going in these organizations is normally to make his voice heard in some fashion" (Hirschman 1970, 76). The effectiveness of a loyalist's voice, however, depends on a credible threat of exit (Hirschman 1970, 83). In the context of party politics, voice would be effective to elicit party responsiveness when there are "very few parties, whose distance from each other is wide but not unbridgeable. In this situation, exit remains possible, but the decision to exit will not be taken lightheartedly" (Hirschman 1970, 84).

Although he recognized that exit and voice are not mutually exclusive, Hirschman believed that in a large number of organizations, one or the

<sup>12</sup> Hirschman defined exit as customers ceasing their patronage of the firm or members leaving the organization. Voice was described as "any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs, whether through individual or collective petition to the management directly in charge, through appeal to a higher authority with the intention of forcing a change in management, or through various types of actions and protests, including those that are meant to mobilize public opinion" (Hirschman 1970, 30). In practice, voice can be made manifest by a wide array of actions: writing letters to the editors, signing petitions, voting, filing a complaint, protesting, or waging armed rebellions. Loyalty is described as "a special attachment to an organization" (Hirschman 1970, 77).

other option dominates. In a market economy, for example, switching from one company to another is relatively low cost, and disappointed clients may not consider protesting to be worth the trouble. Exit is thus the standard response in a free market where many competing firms offer the same service. In a political community where institutionalized processes for articulating grievances exist, voice is the typical response.

In summarizing Hirschman's formulation, some have described exit and voice as ultimately in "a seesaw relationship: where one is predominant we expect a decline in the other" (Dowding and John 2012, 405).<sup>13</sup> This framework has been applied to a wide range of circumstances, from migration (Okamoto and Wilkes 2008; Adnanes 2004) to political parties and public policy (Dowding and John 2012). To this day, Hirschman's book remains one of the most impactful books in the academy.<sup>14</sup>

Hirschman's framework is helpful in explaining and predicting local ethnic groups' likely actions during a political transition in a weakly institutionalized setting. As discussed earlier, a period of political transition is rife with distributive demands, as both incumbent elites and rising challengers strive to secure their interests in the new government. In Hirschman's parlance, both incumbent elites and rising challengers face three possible courses of actions during political transition. First, they can remain passive and accept the status quo (loyalty in Hirschman's framework). Second, they can articulate their grievances and demands for political reforms, hoping that the new government will accommodate them (voice). Finally, they can exit their home districts and municipalities to the extent that they find their home environment intolerable, seeking alternative settings where they would enjoy a more favorable arrangement. Hirschman's original framework suggests that voice should increase when there is a reasonable expectation that it would be effective, when loyalty is strong, and when exit options are either unthinkable or extremely costly.

I contend that violence is a manifestation of voice during political transition to the extent that local actors can mobilize some networks to generate violence and perceive that their exclusion from office cannot be ameliorated otherwise. When local actors risk being excluded in the new government and when they can mobilize an existing network, they will use violence to signal their mobilizational capacity and to strengthen their demands for inclusion.

<sup>13</sup> Other extensions of Hirschman's work, however, have focused on the complementary relationship between exit and voice. See Pfaff and Kim (2003), for example.

<sup>14</sup> As a crude indicator, keying in the search term *exit, voice and loyalty* on Google Scholar on December 17, 2019, produced 159,000 results. Dowding and John (2012) did a similar search in 2011 and reported finding 13,600 entries.

In new democracies, results of the first few elections after a transition indicate the likely political configuration in the new government. In a well-institutionalized electoral democracy, citizens normally articulate their preferences and demands through voting. In countries that have very recently transitioned from authoritarianism, political institutions are usually weak and ineffective in articulating and aggregating the demands of those previously excluded from the regime. Opposition political parties, for example, may not have sufficient presence and capacity to mount a meaningful challenge in elections. The prior electoral rules may have been written to protect the interests of the former ruling regime and to preclude competition.

In this context, initial election results immediately after the autocrat's ouster communicate not only voters' preferences but also information about the likely configuration of the new government. To the extent that initial elections are competitive in a recently transitioned country, previously excluded groups may believe that electoral competition, turnover in leadership, and ultimately political inclusion are now realistic possibilities. On the other hand, if early elections remain uncompetitive and dominated by people associated with the former ruling regime, they signify continued regime entrenchment, indicating that excluded actors will likely remain barred from meaningful representation in local government despite pro-democratic reforms at the national level. Wright's (2008) cross-country analysis of the stability of 92 new democracies since 1946, for example, showed that new democracies that restrict political competition in initial elections are more prone to civil conflict, presumably because potential challengers do not foresee the possibility of gaining power through formal political means.

Given the costs of participating in violence, especially for regime outsiders who presumably have less access to state resources, one might wonder why excluded actors would use violence to leverage their demands during political transitions. In fact, models of war in the international relations literature suggest that rising challengers would typically maintain peace with a hegemon because war is so costly (Fearon 1995; Powell 1996). If war erupts, it will most likely be initiated by a hegemon seeking to arrest the challengers. Applying this logic to subnational actors, one would expect that excluded actors will not want to initiate violence.

Outside of the context of interstate wars, substantial empirical evidence similarly suggests that incumbent elites will be the ones turning to violence, to repress rising opposition (Gupta, Singh, and Sprague 1993; Moore 1998, 2000). Ruling elites' control over the state's security apparatus enables them to use violence to their benefit. By targeting dissidents with violence, authorities effectively increase the

costs associated with participating in mass mobilizations against the state (Carey 2006). Empirical examples of incumbent elites' use of violence to stymie democratic movements abound, from Tiananmen Square to Bashar al-Assad's crackdown on democracy supporters in Egypt and Syria in 2011 (Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds 2015). Indeed, many studies have analyzed incumbents' use of repression in the face of challenges to their power (Tilly 1978; Lichbach 1987; Moore 1998; Carey 2006; Rudbeck, Mukherjee, and Nelson 2016; Wilson and Akhtar 2019).

Incumbent elites may also turn to violence during political transition as a response to perceived threats. The waves of violence against the Muslim Rohingyas during Myanmar's protracted political transition is one such example. In the run-up to the 2015 election, the country's first national election since 1990, anti-Rohingya sentiment and violence intensified as prominent Buddhist monks affiliated with the military and the military-affiliated Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) campaigned against the "Muslim threat" to Myanmar's demographic balance, culture, and politics. By portraying the opposition figure Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party, which had enjoyed Rohingya electoral support throughout the 1990s when Suu Kyi was under house arrest (Ellis-Petersen 2018), as "pro-Muslim" (ICG 2017, 14), many Buddhist nationalists actively encouraged voters to support candidates who would protect their interests in the 2015 election.

Shortly after the NLD's landslide victory in the 2015 national election and the inauguration of Suu Kyi's coalition government in 2016, the military launched operations in the Rakhine state in 2017 that effectively displaced over 750,000 people and killed thousands of Rohingyas (Simons and Beech 2019). When Suu Kyi appeared before the International Court of Justice in The Hague in December 2019, she denied accusations of genocide, refrained from criticizing the military generals who sit on her cabinet, and, instead, criticized the international community for failing to understand the matter (Simons and Beech 2019). Suu Kyi claimed that the military operations were a response to Rohingya insurgent violence, which began with the insurgent group's attacks on Border Police Guard bases (ICG 2017). The violence against the Rohingyas in Myanmar illustrates that the *ancien regime* can stir up violence not only to undermine challengers prior to an important election but also to further justify their control of key positions even after losing an election.

Despite the obvious costs of weaker challengers provoking violence against ruling elites, history is replete with examples of such

mobilizations. The Bougainville Revolutionary Army launched a secessionist campaign in late 1988, despite initially being severely outnumbered and outgunned by the Australia-backed Papua New Guinea Defence Force (Rotheroe 1998). In the early days of the secessionist struggle, the residents of the island were “a ragtag bunch of guerrillas armed with catapults, bows and arrows” (Rotheroe 1998). Many ousters of powerful autocrats around the globe were also initiated by opposition groups, with little to no protection from the state military and security personnel. The October Revolution of 2000 that removed Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic began as a peaceful demonstration that culminated a week later with hundreds of thousands of protesters storming the parliament and burning the building (BBC 2010). The Color Revolutions and the Arab Spring protests, despite subsequent disappointments (Haring and Cecire 2013; Brownlee, Masoud, and Reynolds 2013), began with small groups of individuals articulating their grievances in spite of the authorities’ repressive capacities. How do we explain these cases wherein the weaker challengers mobilize violence against ruling powers? Control over state resources and state security capacity cannot account for them, as challengers usually have no access to these and are under-resourced and outnumbered by comparison.

My theory offers an explanation for this. I argue that such violence can be expected during a political transition when formal political channels fail to usher in the accommodation desired by excluded local actors and when local networks can be readily mobilized to unleash violence. In ethnically diverse, weakly institutionalized contexts, ethnic groups provide a convenient vehicle for mobilization, for many reasons. Shared social networks within an ethnic group help in-group members to locate each other, coordinate, and sanction non-cooperative behavior (Miguel and Gugerty 2005; Habyarimana et al. 2007). In-group members may have a common political goal (Bates 1973). Individuals belonging to the same groups may also share a set of technology (e.g., language, values, customs) that make coordination easier (Hardin 1995; Spolaore and Wacziarg 2009). Ethnic groups often have traditional leaders who enjoy their co-ethnics’ respect and trust (Baldwin 2016; Swidler 2013), along with traditional institutions with organizational hierarchy and rules, committed members, and regular events and gatherings that cultivate loyalty and norms within the group and facilitate the recruitment of members who can be deployed for specific goals.

Rather than accepting the status quo of exclusion in the new government, local actors opt for mobilizing violence along ethnic lines

when they believe they can convincingly communicate to the central government both the urgency of their demands and their ability to pose a credible threat to the new government’s stability if those demands are ignored. The authorities, fearing a further spread of violence that could weaken their position in the new government, may respond favorably by either encouraging political competition or allowing multiplication of positions to accommodate the increase in political players in the new regime. Once demands for greater political inclusion have been met and local actors enjoy a better representation in local politics, the violence has served its purpose and will decline. In signaling this mobilizational capacity and impressing upon the central government the urgency of accommodation, ethnic riots advance the push for political inclusion and establish the status of previously ignored groups in the new government.

In sum, the turn to ethnocommunal violence as a tool of political engagement during power shifts depends on the effectiveness of formal political institutions (such as elections) to accommodate a group’s demands and the presence of readily mobilizable local networks of individuals who can conduct violence to leverage political actors’ demands. When local networks can be mobilized and local political actors appear destined for exclusion in the new regime, violence becomes an effective weapon to signal groups’ mobilizational capacity and to press for greater accommodation.

Figure 2.1 offers a visual presentation of the overall argument.

Aside from articulating their grievances, to the extent that exit options are available, excluded local ethnic groups can also push for the right

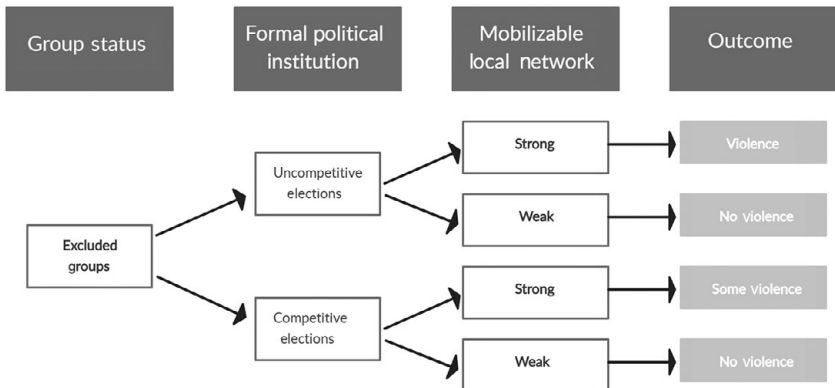


Figure 2.1 Diagram of the argument

to exit their politically exclusive home district or municipality. When an existing district is split into separate units, the number of seats and government positions is multiplied, while the size of the population within each new unit declines. In addition, a previously excluded group may represent a higher proportion or even a majority of the population in the new, smaller government unit. These changes give the group a greater chance of electoral success. Whether excluded ethnic groups in transitioning countries choose the strategy of voice or exit, violence during political transition will eventually decline once they attain important positions in their local government.

Although violence is often provoked by falling elites, rising challengers may also turn to violence during power shifts when certain conditions apply. I elaborate on these conditions in the following section.

### Observable Implications

What does this theory of ethnic riots as a tool for articulating grievances in weakly institutionalized settings imply for the pattern of riot activity? My argument treats ethnic riots as a form of voice pushing for representation in the face of continued political exclusion from local governments. Where local political actors perceive that they will be excluded in the new government despite democratic transition at the national level, they will turn to local networks to mobilize violence as a means of pressing the authorities to accommodate them. In ethnically diverse settings, these networks are often ethnic in nature.

This argument has implications for both when and where violence occurs in multiethnic countries undergoing political transitions. Table 2.1 captures the basic expectations.

Political exclusion would aggrieve any local elites, but only in districts with an ethnically diverse population would this grievance then take on an ethnic turn. An ethnically homogeneous district, on the other hand, would offer little opportunity for enterprising local elites to politicize identities within a short time frame and incite violence. But ethnic heterogeneity alone does not predict violence. A second essential

Table 2.1. *Expectations of the argument*

		Ethnic heterogeneity?	
		<i>Diverse</i>	<i>Homogeneous</i>
Political exclusion?	<i>Low</i>	No	No
	<i>High</i>	Riot	No



variable, political exclusion, is needed to motivate local ethnic leaders to turn to their ethnic networks for support as they demand inclusion in the new government.

The theory treats ethnic riots as strategic and political tools, not as automatic by-products of ethnic diversity. Ethnically diverse areas are not necessarily more prone to violence. Rather, ethnic identity must be politicized by exclusion along ethnic lines before it will produce outbursts of violence.

This claim of a non-relationship between ethnic diversity and violence, independent of political exclusion as a conditioning factor, produces the following testable hypotheses on the relationship between local ethnic diversity and violence.

**Hypothesis 1:** *Administrative units that are ethnically diverse but not politically exclusionary should be no more prone to violence than more ethnically homogeneous units.*

**Hypothesis 2:** *Historically, in the course of Indonesia's political development, the extent of intergroup clashes should rise and fall in tandem with policies that exclude ethnic groups.*

Given imperfect information and uncertainties surrounding groups' political status in the new government, initial election results provide cues on the likely ensuing political configuration in the new government. When initial election results after the collapse of an authoritarian regime suggest continued entrenchment of the former regime, we can expect the excluded ethnic groups to voice their discontent by mobilizing violence or to exit their administrative unit and seek to carve out a separate unit for themselves where they would be better represented. Therefore, administrative units that remain dominated by people affiliated with the former regime's ruling party should be more prone to violence and to district boundary revisions. This prediction generates two testable hypotheses on the association between political exclusion, district splits, and riots.

**Hypothesis 3:** *Electorally uncompetitive, ethnically diverse administrative units should have higher levels of ethnic rioting than other administrative units in transitioning countries.*

**Hypothesis 4:** *Administrative units where the former ruling party remains dominant in the initial elections are more prone to riots than those where challenger parties perform better in elections.*

Although my theory bears some resemblance to Wilkinson's (2004) logic regarding local elites in India who manipulated ethnic loyalties

and generated violence for electoral gain, the implications are directly opposite. As in Wilkinson's argument, my framework also maintains that local elites set the agenda and mobilize ethnic sentiments, with the goal of placing members of their group in important elected positions. The similarity ends there, however. My argument differs in that political competitiveness is indicative of a country's openness and access to state power. Election results that indicate continued dominance by those affiliated with the incumbents in the prior regime suggest the half-hearted nature of supposed reforms and presage continued exclusion for some actors. This conceptualization of electoral competitiveness as a sign of more inclusion in the future has direct implications for the timing of riots. Because riots represent expressions of frustration with exclusion signaled in early election results, there should be more violence *after* elections than beforehand in the initial years after the ouster of an incumbent autocrat.

In Wilkinson's framework, on the other hand, riots are "brutal and effective forms of campaign expenditure, designed by politicians to solidify ethnic majorities and diminish the importance of other politically relevant identities – especially in marginal constituencies and among pivotal groups of undecided voters – *in the run up to elections*" (Wilkinson and Haid 2009, emphasis added). In this logic, ethnic riots would be more common before competitive elections, not afterward, because ethnic riots mobilize would-be supporters and harden their loyalty to co-ethnic candidates.

Of course, this prediction should be understood in terms of propensity, not in absolute terms. I am not arguing that incidents of violence between groups separated along ethnic lines will never happen before a competitive election in an ethnically diverse district in a transitioning country. Just as falling incumbents may provoke violence to deter the escalation of challenges to their rule, it is also possible that either ruling elites who view themselves as potential losers in the new regime or previously excluded political actors would provoke violence to signal their mobilizational capacity in advance of elections. In this framework, falling elites can be seen as expecting to be barred from the new government once the challengers gain power. They, too, can rely on violence to assert themselves and ensure that their concerns are heard.

Nonetheless, I argue that the use of violence as a form of voice to leverage demands would tend to happen after formal political institutions (i.e., elections) have been shown to be ineffective in aggregating political actors' demands favorably. In other words, although political actors may choose to launch their campaign of violence prior to elections to signal their demands during a political transition, my theory would

suggest that they would tend to do so after disappointing elections. For scholars of conflict, this book's theory echoes the insights from recent works that have shown why, despite the costliness of conflict, weaker political actors may challenge more powerful ones in the interest of improving their access to resources (Monteiro and Debs 2019).

Because riots are essentially an expression of disappointment over election results that signal continued exclusion under the new government, we can expect the following.

**Hypothesis 5:** *There will be a higher level of violence after elections than beforehand.*

Electoral competitiveness in elections during authoritarian rule, however, should have no relationship with levels of ethnic rioting because, unlike in a democratic transition, competitiveness of elections under authoritarian rule would not signal information about the future political configuration after elections. This generates Hypothesis 6 as follows.

**Hypothesis 6:** *Electoral competitiveness is not associated with levels of ethnic rioting during authoritarian rule.*

Another implication is that local elites in politically exclusive districts can be expected to try to engineer violence by reframing trigger events in ethnic terms and by coordinating, funding, and mobilizing violence.

**Hypothesis 7:** *In ethnically diverse and politically exclusive administrative units, local ethnic elites will be more likely to play an active role in reframing, coordinating, and mobilizing ethnic riots.*

I also propose a new understanding of when violence should end. In my framework, violence ends when excluded actors have been accommodated; in Wilkinson's account, riots cease when incumbents win elections and retain power. If violence is a product of local elites' desire to attain positions in local government, then when these demands are met, we can expect the violence to decline. This accommodation of demands can be manifested in several ways. My argument would imply that riot-affected administrative units where elections have become more competitive over time and where turnover in leadership has happened should see a decline in violence.

**Hypothesis 8a:** *Administrative units with prior ethnic riots that have experienced electoral turnover should witness a decline in violence.*

**Hypothesis 8b:** *Administrative units with prior ethnic riots that have experienced an increase in electoral competitiveness should witness a decline in violence.*

Since another way to push for greater inclusion in local government is by exiting exclusive home administrative units and creating new ones, another set of implications derived from this theory concerns the patterns of administrative units' splits.

**Hypothesis 9:** *Administrative units with higher levels of political exclusion should be more likely to split than their counterparts.*

Since the theory expects politically exclusive administrative units to have higher levels of ethnic rioting during political transition, these units should also be more prone to splitting than those that were peaceful.

**Hypothesis 10:** *Administrative units with higher levels of ethnic rioting should be more likely to split than their counterparts*

To the extent that the splitting of administrative units is driven by local elites' desires to carve out a separate unit for themselves, this argument also carries implications for the characteristics of the newly partitioned, children units in conflict-affected areas. We can expect the newly created units to be more ethnically homogeneous than their parents, to have a majority population that is ethnically distinct from that of their parents, and to elect executive leaders of the same ethnic affiliation as the majority population.

**Hypothesis 11a:** *Newly partitioned units in conflict areas should be more ethnically homogeneous than their parent units*

**Hypothesis 11b:** *Newly partitioned units in conflict areas should have a majority population that is ethnically distinct from that of their parent units*

**Hypothesis 11c:** *Newly partitioned units in conflict areas should have more co-ethnic elected leaders after the split than before the split from the parent units*

In the following chapters, I test these hypotheses through both statistical and qualitative analyses.

### Scope Conditions

This book tells a story about groups' strategic calculations during power shifts in plural settings. But I do not anticipate that my argument will hold in all such circumstances. For example, it should only apply to groups that have a reasonable chance of getting their demands accommodated. Participating and mobilizing violence in general is a costly endeavor, incurring the risks of deaths, injuries, and property loss among others. Participation in violence is even costlier for groups not part of the ruling coalition or the dominant group, since they do not control the state security forces and cannot anticipate any protection or

immunity. Even beyond their hope of state security forces' protection, excluded groups may be particularly discouraged from using violence by the impact committing violent acts will have on their relationships with members of the dominant group once the riots have ended. Since violence is costly, groups will only turn to violence when they perceive a reasonable chance of success. In practice, this implies a few additional conditions about the groups, the authorities at which these demands are targeted, and the ordinary individuals whom local political actors would mobilize. I discuss each of these considerations in turn below.

At the group level, this story should apply only to excluded groups that are locally sufficiently large in number that they can become a minimum winning coalition (Posner 2017). If the group is quite small relative to others, and if its mobilization capacity is not great enough to challenge the incumbent electorally, it would be senseless to reveal the group's true extent of electoral support among the population by mobilizing violence. Hence, groups will not start down this path unless they can ultimately become effective political players, either on their own or within a coalition. This condition also implies that groups that participate in a large coalition at the national level but that are numerically very small in a particular local administrative unit will not mobilize locally.

A group's chance of success also depends on the characteristics of its counterpart in the political arena – the authorities. By definition, authorities in transitioning countries are exposed to uncertain situations and potential power shifts. Some authorities may be more receptive and open to demands for change than others. When precedents suggest that the authorities are willing to update their stances and policies in response to groups' political mobilization and demands, political actors will have a stronger basis for believing that their demands will be heeded. Conversely, inflexible authorities who never update their policy stances in response to popular demands will discourage excluded groups from mobilizing violently. In other words, the theory should apply to power shifts in multiethnic settings where the political atmosphere is such that popular demands have a decent chance of success.

Third, the lived experiences of the members of excluded groups must resonate with the narratives of exclusion that local group leaders are articulating to mobilize violence. Despite the strategic logic offered in this book, local elites need the participation of others in their community to launch a campaign of violence. The more their narrative of exclusion matches with the lived realities of ordinary individuals who would

conduct the acts of violence, the more likely it is that local elites will attract supporters for their campaign. Empirically, this implies that mobilization during a political transition will work best if there are already grievances along group lines that can be readily politicized and framed by strategic political actors.

In sum, mobilization of violence by excluded actors is most likely when power shifts in multiethnic settings involve groups that are relatively large, an incumbent government that appears responsive to political mobilization, and individuals whose lived realities resonate with the narrative of exclusion and grievance that local political actors articulate.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced an explanation for why ethnic riots erupt in certain places within a country in transition. Recognizing that such countries are often weakly institutionalized and that some groups may still be disproportionately disadvantaged by existing political institutions, I argue that ethnic rioting is a manifestation of political engagement to press for entry in the new government. Applying Hirschman's framework of exit, voice, and loyalty, I contend that ethnic riots during a political transition function as a group's voice and that the violence will eventually decline when their demand is appeased or, alternatively, when an exit option becomes available through the creation of new administrative units.

I apply a mixed-methods approach, testing the theory's observable implications by using a combination of econometrics, archival work, and comparative case analyses. The book's focus and empirical strategies make several important and new contributions. First, the main dependent variable, ethnic riots, is usually considered separately from the types of political violence typically attributed to political exclusion. Ethnic riots are usually described in the literature as much less intense, shorter in duration, more episodic, and requiring less planning than armed rebellions, civil wars, or secessionist conflicts. In this book, I show that the patterns of ethnic rioting across subnational units in a transitioning country mirror the relationship between political exclusion and armed rebellions globally, in that more exclusive districts and municipalities are more prone to outbreaks of rioting.

Second, although some earlier case studies of specific episodes of ethnocommunal violence in Indonesia have acknowledged local elites' political motivation to generate violence during the country's

democratic transition, this book is the first to provide broad statistical evidence on the relationship between district-level political exclusion and ethnic rioting.

Third, this book differs from earlier works that focused on the importance of electoral incentives in the mobilization of violence before elections. Previous studies of this relationship have been based on analyses of mature democracies with strong political institutions, which usually include strong ethnic political parties. My argument demonstrates that in the absence of strong political institutions or even of explicitly ethnic parties, local elites in ethnically diverse districts and municipalities can still turn to ethnic networks to mobilize violence in support of their demands.

Finally, the broad time range of my data, from 1990 through 2012, allows me to address some constraints that have affected previous empirical studies. Because the data cover 8 years before and 14 years after Soeharto's ouster in 1998, I can demonstrate how Golkar's dominance in Indonesian districts had no impact on rioting during Soeharto's autocratic rule, since there was no expectation of greater inclusion at that time. The post-Soeharto observations in my dataset facilitate the identification of district-specific characteristics associated with the decline of rioting and demonstrate that districts experienced much less violence after they became more politically inclusive.