



10-1-2016

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Recommended Citation

CHE, AFA'ANWI MA'ABO (2016) "Democratization, Parliamentary Power, and Belligerency: A Quantitative Analysis," *Peace and Conflict Studies*: Vol. 23 : No. 2 , Article 5.

DOI: 10.46743/1082-7307/2016.1356

Available at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/pcs/vol23/iss2/5>

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Abstract

Research linking democratization, institutional strength, and war prescribes the construction of strong central government institutions prior to mass elections as a prime mechanism for mitigating the danger of international belligerency associated with democratization. However, institutional analysis of the democratization – war linkage skews institutional strength measures in favour of the executive, overlooking the other arms of government. Drawing on Côte d'Ivoire's 2010 – 2011 internationalized post-election civil conflict, which was largely engendered by excessive executive powers and limited legislative leverage, this paper quantitatively evaluates the effect state legislatures bear on the democratization – war linkage. The evaluations yield at least some evidence for the postulated influence of state legislatures. Thus, whilst heeding extant scholarly recommendations for strengthening state institutions, foreign policies promoting liberal democracy should ensure the ultimate institutional configuration of power in aspirant democracies favours parliaments over executives for more auspicious outcomes.

Keywords: *democratization, institutional strength, parliament, conflict, Côte d'Ivoire*

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Democratization, Parliamentary Power, and Belligerency: A Quantitative Analysis

Afa'anwi Ma'abo Che

Exterminating armed conflicts and wars remains one of the greatest challenges to social science scholars and policy makers. The prospect of preventing battle-related deaths, injuries, infrastructural damages, disruption of basic amenities, human displacements, food shortages, and malnutrition render the quest for peace ubiquitously noble. The last quarter of the twentieth century witnessed remarkable progress in peace research, with almost a universal consensus reached on what became known as the Democratic Peace Theory (DPT), that, democracies almost never fight each other (Doyle, 1983; Weede, 1984; Russett, 1995). So strong was the evidence in the theory's support that it was hailed an empirical law (Levy, 1988). Going by the DPT, it is to be expected that spreading and preserving democracy world-wide would induce global peace. Accordingly, several major democratic state leaders have advocated the spread of democracy globally and committed part of their foreign policies towards global democratization.

For instance, Margaret Thatcher, a former British Prime Minister, asserted during her visit to Czechoslovakia in 1990 that, "if we can create a great area of democracy...that would give us the best guarantee of all for security—because democracies don't go to war with one another" (Sheehan, 2005, p. 32). Thatcher was substantively echoed by a former U.S. president, Bill Clinton, who declared in his 1994 State of the Union address that, "ultimately, the best strategy to ensure our security and to build a durable peace is to support...democracy elsewhere. Democracies don't attack each other" (Sheehan, 2005, p. 32). Most recently, another ex-U.S. president, George W. Bush, in making a case for the democratization of the Middle East, posited that, "the reason why I'm so strong on democracy is democracies don't go to war with each other...I've got great faith in democracies to promote peace" (The White House, 2004). Even the European Security Strategy stipulates that the best guarantee for international security is a world of well governed democratic states (Cooper, 2003, p. 165).

Towards the close of the twentieth century, some scholars, specifically Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder, controversially observed and argued that, rather than reducing wars and guaranteeing peace, the process of building democracy (democratization) increases war propensity. Recent waves of democratic protests and autocratic repressions have triggered civil wars and threatened, or yielded, militarized interventions in Syria, Libya, and Côte d'Ivoire, revitalizing Mansfield and Snyder's democratization and (intra/inter-state) war linkage. Mansfield and Snyder (1995a; 1995b; 1996) initially endorsed the democratic peace

thesis, but portrayed the path to democracy as prone to diversionary war derailments by threatened autocratic incumbents resisting democratic change.

Reacting to criticisms either problematizing their research design (Enterline, 1996; Thompson & Tucker, 1997a; 1997b) or mounting contrasting evidence that democratization averts violence (Wolf, 1996; Ward & Gleditsch, 1998; 2000), Mansfield and Snyder (2002; 2005a; 2005b; 2007; 2008; including Snyder, 2000; 2004) refined their design and incorporated *institutional strength* as the source of variations in the war propensities of democratizing states: the stronger a democratizer's governmental institutions, the greater its capacity to effectively manage increased popular participation in politics and to control elite rivalry in ways that mitigate risks of hostilities. The authors' newer research finds incompletely democratizing states (transitioning from autocracy to mixed or anocratic regimes) to be more war-prone than complete democratizers (culminating in coherent democracy), principally because of the predominance of weak/incoherent democratic institutions in the former category.

By policy implication, democracy-building "should be accompanied by efforts to mould strong, centralized institutions" (Mansfield & Snyder, 2002, p. 334). Renowned international relations scholars, including Samuel Huntington, Fareed Zakaria, Thomas Carothers, Joshua Cohen, Allan Stam and Cindy Skach, have explicitly endorsed Mansfield and Snyder's latter work (2005a, back cover) as a foreign policy instructive text on peaceful democratization. Further popularizing the authors' work is the publicity it has garnered from prominent international media such as the New York Times, Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, and National Public Radio (Narang & Nelson, 2009, p. 358).

Critically, however, Mansfield and Snyder's research design overemphasizes the impact of the chief executive on foreign policy outcomes. Specifically, the authors derive measures of institutional strength from an index, *DomConcentration*, which gauges the concentration of power in central governments. But almost all six component indicators of institutional strength focus on the executive, overlooking the other branches of government. This marginalization of the other arms of government is problematic at two levels: at the empirical level, it misses the influence or constraints the legislature and the judiciary might wield over executive foreign policy decision making; at the policy level, strengthening the executive without concurrent amplification of the other branches potentially has the danger of counterproductively inducing unchecked diversionary belligerency by powerful incumbents seeking to sustain political survival through rash foreign adventures.

To contribute towards mitigating this marginalization, the armed conflict participations of democratizing states are herein articulated as fundamentally contingent, at least in part, on the strength of the legislature vis-à-vis the executive. In theory, powerful parliaments can restrict the diversionary conflict proclivities of democratizing states by, for instance, refusing to fund military operations, or more extremely, by revising state laws to curb executive military powers, including powers to wage wars. To assess the hypothesized influence of parliaments on democratizing states' conflict propensities, this article further conducts a binary logistic regression assessment covering the immediate post-Cold War period packed with *third wave* democratization processes that are not covered in most extant democratization and war studies. At least some empirical support is found for the postulated negative correlation between parliamentary strength and democratizer belligerency. Hence, whilst heeding to Mansfield and Snyder's call for strong central institutions to accompany democratization, foreign policies promoting democracy for peace need to ensure the institutional balance of power favours parliaments over executives.

Apart from its bearing on foreign policy, this study illuminates current empirical controversy on democratization, institutional strength, and inter-state belligerency. While Mansfield and Snyder (2002; 2005a; 2005b) depict incompletely democratizing states with weak institutions as more susceptible to wars than other regime-types, a recent re-evaluation by Narang and Nelson (2009) does not find corroborative evidence. Rather, the latter study finds "a dearth of observations where incomplete democratizers with weak institutions participated in war" (p. 357). Thus, it posits: "incomplete democratizers with weak institutions are no more likely to go to war than other types of states" (p. 368). Spanning the 1990s explicitly acknowledged by Mansfield and Snyder (2002) as a "decade of [...] democratization" (p. 297), but not covered by either pair of scholars on either side of the extant empirical divide, another re-evaluation (Che, 2014, p. 3) finds only *feeble* evidence in support of Mansfield and Snyder's thesis.

By turning attention to legislatures, away from extant focus on executives, in measurements of institutional strength, and by focusing on militarized interstate disputes (MIDs) instead of full scale wars often used to gauge democratizer belligerency, this article ventilates the new empirical controversy on democratization and inter-state belligerency with fresh perspectives. As already noted, the empirical evaluation herein evinces parliamentary strength differences as impactful on democratizers' (non)involvement in MIDs. This indicates empirical support for Mansfield and Snyder's thesis linking democratization, institutional strength, and war whilst undermining Narang and Nelson's antithesis.

Proceeding in three parts, this paper begins with a review of Côte d'Ivoire's 2010-2011 internal and internationalized post-election militarized crisis as emblematic of the dangers of holding transitional elections without effective legislative protection of public courts and electoral commissions from executive manipulation. The review inspires and justifies broader cross-country analysis of the proposed relationship between legislative strength and democratizer belligerency. Concurrently, the review debunks received wisdom linking Côte d'Ivoire's judiciary and electoral commission to the country's international crisis as overly simplistic, and assesses the extent to which conflict-predicting variables other than legislative strength contributed to the outbreak of Côte d'Ivoire's 2010-2011 militarized crisis.

Next, the paper postulates how the most powerful parliaments can exert constraints on foreign policy decision making on military force usage by the chief executive. Through the theoretical outline, parliamentary strength is projected as a relevant condition determining democratizing states' participation, or non-participation, in armed international conflicts. Throughout this article, parliamentary strength/power specifically relates to the extent of leverage exercised by the legislature over the executive arm of government.

Finally, the article outlines its empirical evaluative design, and reports associated empirical results and their policy implication. The evaluation of the linkage between parliamentary strength and democratizer belligerency employs logistic regression analysis, controlling for the effects of other major belligerency determinants (democratization degree, ethnopolitical polarization, trade dependency, and national material capabilities), some of which are reflected in discussions of the instructive Ivorian case study. The scope of the evaluation covers all post-Cold War democratizers from 1989 – 2010 (N = 425), with a monadic (democratizer-year) unit of analysis used.

Reviewing the Institutional Sources of Côte d'Ivoire's 2010-2011 Post-election Crisis

When Mansfield and Snyder (2002) first analysed the relevance of institutional strength to the democratization – war linkage, they concluded by explicitly advocating “the formation of impartial courts and election commissions” as part of their prescription for averting the dangers of democratization (p. 334). However, as with other specific normative institutional reform recommendations constituting their prescriptive package, the authors failed to argue the association implied between the judiciary, elections, and risks of violence. Building on Côte d'Ivoire's 2010-2011 post-election crisis, a group of democratization and war scholars (Cederman, Gleditsch, & Hug, 2013) cleared the above gap with a large-n study linking elections and incentives for armed [ethnic] civil violence. Aligned with prevailing

perceptions of Côte d'Ivoire's recent crisis, Cederman, Gleditsch, and Hug accentuate the Ivorian Constitutional Council's partiality—for then-incumbent state leader Laurent Gbagbo—as the institutional source of incentives for the country's 2010-2011 violent crisis (p. 391).

This section reconstructs the Constitutional Council's prejudice as a product of excessive executive power, presaged and facilitated by limited legislative leverage over the executive. The reconstruction substantiates the rationale for quantitative tests of the postulated linkage between parliamentary power and democratizer belligerency. Accordingly, efforts are made to ensure the reconstruction simulates a mini-case study of the hypothesized impact of parliamentary strength on democratizer belligerency, with details of Côte d'Ivoire's 2010-2011 exhibition of international belligerency provided. To render the Ivorian review more consistent with subsequent quantitative logistic regression analysis incorporating control variables, this section concludes with a reflection on the extent to which two key foreign belligerency predictor variables (democratization degree and ethnopolitical polarization) other than parliamentary strength might have contributed to the outbreak of Côte d'Ivoire's internationalized crisis.

Côte d'Ivoire's Conflict-Plagued Democratization Process

Prior to reviewing the institutional link between democratization and the recent crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, a regime characterization of that country as democratizing warrants explication. Upon gaining independence from colonial rule in 1960, Côte d'Ivoire, like several other sub-Saharan African states, came under one-party dictatorship. Transition from that dictatorship to competitive multi-party democracy commenced with the organization of multi-party and multi-candidate presidential elections in 1990. However, Côte d'Ivoire and sub-Saharan Africa's drive to democracy since the early 1990s is marked by “profound flaws, rollbacks or setbacks.” Through the infamous ethnopolitical exclusionary doctrine of *Ivoirité*, second generation economic immigrants such as current state president Alassane Ouattara, though born in Côte d'Ivoire, were considered not to be “true Ivorians” due to their parents' immigrant status and were systematically barred from contesting (and voting in) the presidential elections of 1995 and 2000 (Bovcon, 2009, p.2).

Exclusionary politics of belonging metamorphosed to a protracted civil war in 2002, splitting the country between a rebel-held, mainly Muslim North and a government-controlled, chiefly Christian South. Peace negotiations resulting in the Linas-Macoussis (2003), Accra II and III (2003; 2004), Pretoria (2005), and Ouagadougou (2007) political agreements sought (at least in part) to broaden political participation and induce a more

inclusive, competitive and comprehensive form of democracy in Côte d'Ivoire. Based on the peace agreements, Ouattara was permitted to run for presidential elections and a more inclusive electoral roll was compiled through a new citizenship identification process involving "mobile court hearings" (Mehler, Melber, & Van Walraven, 2008, p. 81).

The 2010-2011 Militarized International Dispute in Retrospect

Designed to culminate transition—coded -88 (*planned transition*) on the Polity IV index—from exclusionary, belligerent and incoherent democratic politics to inclusive, peaceful and coherent democracy, preparations for post-war elections between 2007 and 2009 failed to forestall violence following the presidential polls of 2010. Côte d'Ivoire relapsed to violence after incumbent Gbagbo, "with the help of the Constitutional Council" (Cederman, Gleditsch, & Hug, 2013, p. 391), refused to relinquish power despite the country's Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) declaring Ouattara winner. International intervention by French and U.N. peacekeeping forces to defend the CEI's U.N.-certified verdict, and to protect civilians, resulted in an international militarized dispute between the foreign forces and Gbagbo's military.

From day one at the helm, Gbagbo exhibited total commitment toward keeping power in ways not unanticipated by political survival theorists, most evidently in his tendencies to invoke *Ivoirité* against Northerners and settler immigrants, and to brutally repress rebellions. Unwilling to relinquish power, Gbagbo defiantly insisted he won the November 2010 presidential run-off and refused to cede power even after foreign powers endorsed his challenger. Keen to promote democracy by upholding CEI's verdict, various international leaders pressed Gbagbo to quit. For instance, then-French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, described Ouattara's victory as "uncontestable and certain" (Bax & Monnier, 2010). U.S. president, Barack Obama, warned, "the international community would hold those who act to thwart the democratic process and the will of the electorate accountable for their actions" (Bax & Monnier, 2010). Gbagbo's defiance pushed the West African regional organization (ECOWAS) to suspend Côte d'Ivoire from the bloc. International calls for Gbagbo to relinquish power appeared futile as Gbagbo continued to hang-on (BBC News, 2010).

Gbagbo's regime became increasingly hostile towards foreign powers, especially France. As observed by Piccolino (2012), the regime sought to neutralize U.N. and French threats to his political survival by whipping up anti-colonial nationalist sentiments. Gbagbo's belligerent nationalist campaign was a diversionary survival strategy designed to revive his domestic popularity and mobilize mass support for his regime. Blé Goudé, then-Minister of Youth and Employment, peculiarly served as Gbagbo's *Street General*, mobilizing Young

Patriots to condemn French presence in the country. Toward the end of 2010, Gbagbo contumaciously ordered foreign peacekeepers to depart, and Interior Minister Guiricoulou followed on to intimidate: “if against our will, they [the U.N.] want to keep this force in our country, we won’t co-operate with them” (BBC News, 2010). Between January and April 2011, perhaps hoping obdurate defiance would earn him at least a consociational deal, Gbagbo’s military, Forces Armées de Côte d’Ivoire (FACI), unleashed hideous violence against Ouattara supporters and against foreign forces (Straus, 2011). However, as noted by Straus, inhumane acts were also committed by the pro-Ouattara insurgent Forces Nouvelles (HRW, 2011), renamed Forces Républicaines de Côte d’Ivoire (FRCI) following Ouattara’s election victory.

Instead of departing as ordered in 2010, the U.N. passed Resolution 1962 (December 2010) extending its peacekeeping mandate in Côte d’Ivoire. Additionally, the U.N. fortified its forces via a series of other Security Council Resolutions. In January 2011, the Council adopted Resolution 1967 deploying 2,000 military personnel to bolster the UN’s operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) whilst stressing its authorization to the Secretary General’s Special Representative “to use all necessary means to carry out UNOCI’s mandate, including protection of civilians” (article 8). Even before the passing of Resolution 1967, the Council had sanctioned an increase in UNOCI’s forces from 8,650 to 9,150 (Resolution 1942, September 2010). Also, it had authorized prior to the presidential elections run-off a temporal transfer from the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to UNOCI of up to three battalions of ground soldiers and an aviation unit composed of two military helicopters (Resolution 1951, November 2010). On its part, France boosted la force Licorne with an additional 300 contingents (Laing, 2011).

Armed power rivalry between FACI forces and FRCI rebels remained deadlocked until April 2011 when UNOCI and Licorne air assaults on FACI bases in Abidjan crushed Gbagbo’s military resilience. Unable to counter the foreign military assaults, several FACI soldiers defected from Gbagbo’s desperate survival struggle, leaving only about 1,000 die-hard warriors (Rice, 2011) to resist Licorne helicopter onslaughts on the presidential palace. French air strikes overpowered Gbagbo’s remaining FACI loyalists at the presidential residence and paved the way for his arrest by FRCI rebels on April 11, 2011, terminating Gbagbo’s decade-long strong hold on power.

Implicating the Legislature in Côte d’Ivoire’s Crisis

Admittedly, the Constitutional Council’s biased decision to overturn CEI’s verdict ensured an outbreak of violence in the absence of alternative neutral electoral dispute

arbitration avenues. Critically, however, the Council's bias was hardly an independent initiative of the judiciary. Rather, in hindsight, it was an inevitable consequence of legislative failures to curb excessive executive powers and ensure effective independence for the CEI and the judiciary. Constitutionally, and presumably conscious of the normative governance principle of checks and balances, Côte d'Ivoire's unicameral legislature (the National Assembly) shares powers of judicial appointments with the chief executive. The National Assembly has a role in the appointment of members of the Constitutional Council (see the Ivorian Constitution adopted in 2000, art. 89), the Superior Council of the Magistrature (art. 105), and the High Court (art. 108). In practice, however, as noted in Fish and Kroenig's (2009) global survey of national legislatures, the National Assembly has limited powers (with a parliamentary power score of 0.38/1) (pp. 169-173), and "does not play a part in judicial appointments" (p. 169). The National Assembly's weakness, partially marked by its passivity in judicial appointments, enables a leeway for unilateral presidential manipulation of the judiciary. Gbagbo ostensibly exploited this leeway by stuffing the judiciary, especially the Constitutional Council, with staunch loyalists, orchestrating judicial prejudice (U.S. Department of State, 2004).

Accordingly, Gbagbo's longstanding political ally, personal friend and academic colleague, Paul N'dre, whilst heading the Constitutional Council, ostensibly faced partisan pressure to nullify, and even overturn, CEI's verdict without judicial verification of electoral malpractice allegations. After all, as noted by one *New York Times* Ivorian interviewee, when "you put your friend at the head of an institution, you know what the result is going to be" (Nossiter, 2010). Lack of legislative protection for CEI's nominally exclusive powers to proclaim election results only served to *legitimise* N'dre's pro-Gbagbo partiality, mindful of the Constitutional Council's constitutionally embedded election results' proclamation powers. Retrospectively, had Côte d'Ivoire's legislature ensured exclusive proclamation powers for CEI, and had it insulated the judiciary from executive manipulation, it could have averted the country's 2010-2011 crisis and related international intervention. Côte d'Ivoire's experience illustrates the primacy of parliamentary power in institutional analysis of the conflict propensities of democratizing states.

Incomplete Democratization, Ethnopolitical Polarization, and Côte d'Ivoire's Crisis

Whilst associating Côte d'Ivoire's weak parliament with the country's 2010-2011 crisis, it is imperative to assess the extent to which other conflict-predicting factors might have affected the outbreak of the crisis. Assessing the possible contribution of other determinants of foreign belligerency to the crisis would provide robustness checks vis-à-vis

the asserted connection between parliamentary strength and the crisis, whilst clarifying the rationale for incorporating control variables in subsequent evaluative quantitative analysis. Of the several correlates of armed conflict identified by realists and liberal institutionalists, two are most prominently related to the varying conflict behaviour of democratizing states, namely level or *degree of democratization* (Mansfield & Snyder, 2002; 2005a; 2005b) and *ethnopolitical polarization* (Che, 2014).

Degree of democratization. Mansfield and Snyder (2002; 2005a; 2005b) depict incompletely democratizing states with weak institutions as being more conflict-prone than completely democratizing ones with strong political institutions. The various institutional constraints (including separation of powers, uncensored media outlets, and political accountability) that engender discreet foreign policies and a separate peace among democracies also yield lower levels of belligerency for transitions culminating in coherent democracy (Mansfield & Snyder, 2002, pp.300–301). Côte d'Ivoire's democratic reform programme instituted in 2007 as part of the country's peace-building agreements following its earlier mentioned civil war of 2002 led to the organisation of presidential elections in 2010, but did not produce coherent democracy. In addition to allegations of voting irregularities and contestations of vote counts by Gbagbo and Ouattara, political power remained concentrated with the executive, the print and audio-visual media remained intensely censored (RSF, 2011), and in the absence of an assertive legislature and an autonomous judiciary, there were hardly any constraints on the executive.

Testament to its incipient democratization status, Côte d'Ivoire, following the adoption of its peace- and democracy-building programme in 2007 (coded -88 on the *Polity IV* index), attained only an incoherent democratic *polity* score (+4) by 2011 (based on Mansfield and Snyder's [2002, p.313; 2005a, p.79] regime change measurement criteria) when the country's crisis escalated to international violence involving U.N. and French forces. *Freedom House*, another liberal democracy index, continued to rate Côte d'Ivoire as *Not Free* between 2007 and 2011. Weak democratic institutional constraints on Gbagbo presumably provided the former leader and his close collaborators incentives to discount the CEI's verdict and to whip up anti-French nationalist sentiments (BBC News, 2010), spiralling the country into armed conflict with France. However, it was the failure of the country's National Assembly to bestow the CEI with election result proclamation powers and to institute diverse institutional checks on executive authority that provided the foundation for weak democratic institutional constraints and for the 2010-2011 crisis in Côte d'Ivoire.

Ethnopolitical polarization. Deep division or polarization between ethnic groups controlling power and those marginalized or excluded from it also increases the danger of a democratizer becoming involved in civil and diversionary foreign conflicts (Mousseau, 2001; Che, 2014). Polarization spurs grievances and provides incentives for the authority and legitimacy of the government and its institutions to be challenged by excluded and discriminated groups. The exclusionary doctrine of *Ivoirité* mentioned earlier effectively polarized Côte d'Ivoire between Ouattara (barred from participating in elections under the xenophobic doctrine) and his supporters in the rebel-held, predominantly Muslim North on the one hand, and Gbagbo's regime and its loyalists in the chiefly Christian South on the other.

However, peace-building agreements in the aftermath of the 2002 civil war substantially mitigated polarization in the Ivorian polity, with Ouattara allowed to run for presidential elections and a much broader electoral roll compiled, while relying on a new, more inclusive citizenship identification process (Mehler, Melber, & Van Walraven, 2008, p. 81). Hence, the Ethnic Power Relations index used in some studies (including Che, 2014) to measure ethnopolitical polarization observes an absence of polarization in Côte d'Ivoire in the years immediately preceding the 2010-2011 crisis, with no ethnic group recorded as either dominating political power or being systematically excluded from it.

Of the possible sources of Côte d'Ivoire's 2010-2011 internationalized post-election crisis discussed above, limited legislative leverage over executive action appears pivotal. Though the country was democratizing incipiently with weak institutions in general and an associated risk of diversionary belligerency (Mansfield & Snyder, 2002; 2005a), it was the National Assembly's weakness and failure to effectively separate powers between the different arms of government that ensured institutions were generally weak, with limited constraints on the chief executive. Also, though weak, the country's state institutions, including the elections management body CEI, harboured undisputed legitimacy on the eve of the 2010 elections. As already noted, the 2002 civil war sharply divided the country between a rebel-held, Muslim North and a government-controlled, Christian South. However, several peace agreements in the aftermath of the civil war mitigated ethnopolitical polarization and culminated in the holding of the 2010 elections. Côte d'Ivoire's 2010-2011 internationalized civil conflict was, at least in part, a function of excessive executive powers and limited legislative leverage.

How Parliaments Potentially Impact Democratizing Executives'

External Diversionary Incentives

Parliamentary impact on (election-related) civil conflict onset in transitional democracies is, as demonstrated by the Ivorian case, dependent on legislative protection for autonomous judicial and electoral institutions. However, vis-à-vis diversionary international belligerency, there is presumably greater potential for a more direct parliamentary impact. This provides a stronger premise for empirical evaluations linking democratization, parliamentary power, and inter-state conflicts, as opposed to evaluations focused on intra-state conflicts. Prior to the empirical analysis, an outline of prominent parliamentary powers that permit direct leverage over democratizing executives' external diversionary conflict decision-making is imperative.

Six typical (but not universal) parliamentary powers potentially impacting executives' external diversionary proclivities immediately come to mind, namely: 1) powers to regulate appointments to top administrative positions, especially cabinet portfolios bearing on foreign relations and state defence management; 2) powers to summon and investigate executive officials; 3) powers to select and impeach the chief executive/commander-in-chief of the armed forces; 4) powers to (dis)approve proposed executive budgets and monitor executive spending; 5) powers to declare wars and sanction executive calls for foreign military actions that do not necessarily amount to full-scale wars; and most prominently, and 6) powers to enact and revise constitutional laws regulating all the above powers, though constitutional amendments may be subject to executive approval (as in Belarus, Cameroon, and Oman) or popular approval via referendums (as in Algeria, Guinea, and Paraguay). Fish and Kroenig (2009) provide a comprehensive outline of typical parliamentary powers over the executive, alongside empirical country studies.

These classical parliamentary powers are commonly acknowledged as veritable indicators of (parliamentary-based) executive constraints in major datasets measuring such constraints, including the Parliamentary Powers Index (Fish & Kroenig, 2009), the Polity Index (Marshall & Jaggers, 2002, pp. 23–24), and the Political Constraints Index (Henisz, 2002). However, as noted earlier, the effect of parliamentary constraints (or the absence thereof) on diversionary-motivated democratizing executives remains empirically unverified. It is assumed here that strong parliaments (inducing strong executive constraints) can effectively stall or avert unpopular executive diversionary military expeditions and can ultimately hold venturesome executives accountable. In states undergoing democratic transition, strong parliaments imply curbed executive capacities to belligerently seek foreign

policy victories and procure prestige to sustain political survival. Contrastingly, weak parliaments (inducing weak executive constraints) permit a leeway for unilateral executive externalisations whilst ensuring reckless state leaders can avoid public accountability. In transitional democracies, weak parliaments imply increased incentives for chief executives to boost leadership survival through diversionary militarized conflicts. Thus, it is hypothesized:

Democratizing states with weak parliaments are more likely to engage in MIDs than democratizers with strong parliaments.

Research Design

To assess the hypothesized effect of parliamentary strength on democratizing states' conflict propensities, a binary logistic regression is executed for all democratizers (N = 425) in the post-Cold War period whilst controlling for the effects of other possible predictors of democratizer belligerency (degree of democratization, ethnopolitical polarization, trade dependency, and national material capabilities). The (democratizer) country-year constitutes the unit of analysis with measurements of democratization mimicking Mansfield and Snyder's (2002, p. 313; 2005a, p. 79) criteria, but executed over five-year periods ending with each year covered in the study (1989–2010). The independent variable, parliamentary strength of democratizers, is gauged from Henisz's (2002) Political Constraint Index. The dependent variable, democratizers' conflict propensities, is measured from MID (as opposed to full-scale wars) participations, with the temporal scope of the study focusing on the post-Cold War period (1989–2010) packed with democratization cases that are not covered in extant democratization and war studies.

The scope of existing institutional studies of the democratization—belligerency nexus (Mansfield & Snyder, 2002; 2005a; Narang & Nelson, 2009) does not exceed 1992, covering only the pre-Cold and Cold War epochs marked by imperialistic ambitions in the global North, anti-colonial resentment in the South and a clash of ideologies between the East and the West, all of which stoked wars. While wars occurred frequently prior to the end of the Cold War, democracy and democratizing states were limited, proliferating only after the Soviet Union collapsed (Salih, 2001, p. 4). Thus, by focusing on the post-Cold War era, this study extends the temporal scope of institutional studies of democratization and war, and allows for a richer and global sample of 'third wave' democratizers against which to conduct the empirical analysis of interest.

Dependent Variable

Extant studies of the democratization—belligerency nexus (including Mansfield and Snyder's prominent works) predominantly focus on war as their dependent variable.

However, this is problematic as many democratizing states are small states without the military, economic, or technological capability to engage in warfare, but they do threaten, display and actually use less severe military force (Enterline, 1996, p. 185). Hence, this study uses MID (as against wars) to gauge belligerency, thereby checking against the exclusion of non-major powers with limited war capabilities from the research.

Democratizing states become involved in conflicts either as diversionary initiators or targets of attacks from opportunistic adversaries seeking to take advantage of the fierce elite rivalry and belligerent nationalist politics that plague democratizers (Mansfield & Snyder, 2002; 2005a). Accordingly, this empirical section operationalizes the dependent variable as participation in at least one MID—as initiator or target—that started in the end-year of the five-year interval over which democratization is measured. Gauging MID participation, *MIDPART*, from only one year of the democratization measurement interval, rather than the entire five-year measurement interval, guarantees at least some statistical independence between observations of democratization and belligerency. *MIDPART* data is derived from the Correlates of War (COW) project's MID-level dataset on MID participants, version 4.1 (Palmer et al., 2015). The last year coded in this latest COW version of MID data is 2010. Hence, the post-Cold War temporal scope of this study ends in 2010. *MIDPART* takes the value one (1) for democratizers that were participants in at least one MID that began in the last year of the five-year democratic regime change measurement interval and zero (0) otherwise.

Independent Variable

Since the hypothesis of interest concerns only democratizing states, the empirical assessment evaluates democratizers exclusively. Initial quantitative studies propounding (Mansfield & Snyder, 1995a; 1995b; 1996) and challenging (e.g. Ward & Gleditsch, 1998; 2000) the democratization – war nexus plausibly assess the conflict behaviour of both democratizers and non-democratizers to determine if democratizers are disproportionately conflict-prone. In response to criticisms of their democratization – war linkage, Mansfield and Snyder (2002; 2005a) clarify conditions under which democratization is likely to increase incentives for international belligerency, accentuating the risk of democratizing incipiently with weak institutions. However, as noted earlier, this revised thesis, which explains the different conflict propensities of democratizers as a function of disparate degrees of democratization, has been challenged by Narang and Nelson (2009, p.357) who find ‘a dearth’ of supportive evidence. To contribute toward clarifying this newer controversy concerning democratizing states solely, the current assessment of the effect of parliamentary

strength on the varying MID proclivities of democratizing states examines only democratizing states, excluding all non-democratizers from the research design.

Hence, before measuring the independent variable (parliamentary strength of democratizers), it is imperative to first identify all democratizers in the period under study. Democratizing states, *DEMZ*, are coded one (1) if over a five-year period ($t_1 - t_6$) ending in each year under study (1989–2010), their polity scores (as captured in the *Polity IV* index) changed from an autocratic value (< -6) to either an anocratic (ranging from -6 to $+6$) or democratic one ($> +6$), or from an anocratic score to a democratic one. All other observations, that is, stable and autocratizing regimes, are coded zero (0) under *DEMZ*. The procedure for coding democratizing states here simulates the Mansfield and Snyder (2002, p. 313; 2005a, p. 79) commonly-used criteria, although the codes are derived from the more recent *Polity IV* index (Marshall, Gurr, & Jaggers, 2014). The *Polity* index assesses the democratic and autocratic characteristics of authority in all independent countries with a population greater than 500,000. *Polity* scores are captured on a 21-point scale ranging from -10 (*most autocratic*) to $+10$ (*most democratic*), with the composite score determined by the following component indicators: openness of executive recruitment, constraints on executive authority, and popular political participation. While using the *Polity IV* index to measure democratic regime change, this study's first data entry observation for each state gauges democratization between 1984 and 1989, and MID participation in 1989. Upon identifying all democratizers and eliminating all non-democratizers from the data entry sheet, the research proceeds to measure the independent variable, parliamentary power of democratizers.

To gauge parliamentary strength, this work jettisons Fish and Kroenig's (2009) Parliamentary Powers Index (PPI)—frequently used in quantitative studies involving parliamentary analysis—for Henisz's (2002) Political Constraint Index (POLCONIII). Post-2002 measurements of parliamentary strength are derived from the updated version of POLCONIII (2013 release). Consistent with the reasoning linking parliamentary strength, democratization and belligerency, POLCONIII measures parliamentary power specifically from the extent of executive constraints induced by the national legislature (*EXCONIII_L*). Using a simple spatial model of political interaction, POLCONIII rates legislative constraints on the executive as minimal or absent (scoring 0) in the absence of a legislature. Each additional legislative institution (chamber) controlled by a political party different from the one(s) controlling other branches of government has a positive but diminishing effect on the total level of constraints on executive capacity to alter government policy. POLCONIII

yields a maximum score (1) where policy preferences within the legislature are homogenous but diametrically opposed to those of the executive. The index deduces the policy preferences of the executive and legislative arms of government from the policy positions of the political parties that dominate the different branches of government. By incorporating (intra- and inter-) institutional configurations of policy preferences in its calculations, POLCONIII, unlike the PPI index, plausibly demonstrates sensitivity to a major potential source of temporal variations in legislative leverage. Testament to this, POLCONIII scores are temporally fluid (changing over time), not absolute or fixed.

While POLCONIII measures parliamentary strength solely in terms of degree of legislative leverage over the executive, PPI is overly aggregative, with component elements covering up to 32 items, only nine of which specifically captures legislative sway over the executive. Calculations of aggregate PPI scores attach equal value to all 32 survey items, irrespective of survey categories. This problematically implies that a legislature with more *check marks* under institutional resources (covering items like number of parliamentary sessions, personal secretaries and nonsecretarial staff) than under institutional sway (incorporating items as powers to monitor, interpolate, investigate, and impeach/replace executive officials) is rated as equally powerful as another legislature with reversed numbers of affirmative indicators under the distinct survey categories.

POLCONIII is not without weaknesses. Most evidently, it uses political identity (party affiliation) as the sole source of (institutional) legislative policy preferences. This disregards the relevance of other potential preference determinants such as education, religion, gender, and wealth, which may not necessarily coincide with party cleavages, particularly vis-à-vis debates on aggressive foreign policies. Even if policy preferences were exclusively based on party identities, there would yet be the challenge of discerning majoritarian preferences for extremely fragmented multiparty parliaments wherein ruling majorities might not be singular parties but coalitions with diverse preferences. Credibly, however, in the absence of data on party fractionalization (within ruling majorities), Henisz (2002) addresses fractionalization problems loosely at the parliamentary level as against the party coalitional level, treating the former as an *imperfect proxy* for the latter.

Control Variables

To ensure robustness in analysis of the hypothesized linkage between parliamentary power and democratizers' varying conflict propensities, a few control variables are added to the baseline regression model. Because trade promotes peace by increasing transnational ties and the opportunity costs of military conflicts (Oneal, Russett, & Berbaum, 2003; McDonald,

2004), I draw on the commercial peace thesis to include *DEPEND_L* as a control variable. *DEPEND_L* measures the dependency of democratizing states on commercial relations from the World Bank's World Development Indicators databank (total trade as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product). The commercial peace thesis expects a negative correlation between *DEPEND_L* and MID propensities: lower levels of dependency on trade should induce lesser constraints on foreign policy, yielding greater MID proclivities. Because the capacity to exercise and resist influence in the international system may increase incentives and opportunities for militarized conflicts, I also control for the material capabilities of democratizing states. The COW project's composite index of national material capabilities, using diverse (demographic, industrial, and military) component indicators, is employed to gauge national capacity, *NACAP_H*, with higher values expected to correlate with greater MID participations.

More prominently associated with determinants of democratizing states' varying conflict propensities are degrees of democratization (incomplete/complete) and ethnopolitical polarization (polarized/non-polarized). The cultural and institutional constraints associated with established democratic states and their separate democratic peace are absent or weak in newly and incompletely democratizing states. Marginal constraints render incompletely democratizing states more conflict-prone than completely democratizing states with enhanced and stronger constraints (Mansfield & Snyder, 2002; 2005a; 2005b). Although some scholars (e.g. Narang & Nelson, 2009) have challenged Mansfield and Snyder's evidence linking democratization degrees, institutional strength, and belligerency, this study, nevertheless, controls for the possibility that incomplete democratization, *INCOMDEZ*, renders a state more conflict-prone. *INCOMDEZ* is a dichotomous variable, coded one (1) if over the five-year intervals used in measuring democratization a democratic regime change is incomplete, with its polity score moving from an autocratic value (< -6) to an anocratic value (-6 to +6). For complete democratic regime changes wherein polity scores move from either autocratic or anocratic to coherent democratic values (> +6), *INCOMDEZ* is coded zero (0).

In ethnopolitically polarized systems, the ethnic exclusionary nature of political institutions provides incentives for the institutions' authority and legitimacy to be challenged by excluded and discriminated ethnic groups—as the Hutu did in Burundi in the post-independence period of Tutsi domination (Uvin, 1999, p. 31). Thus, irrespective of the degree of democratization and strength of institutions, the danger of internal and diversionary international conflicts looms in ethnopolitically polarized democratizers, relative to non-polarized ones. Testament to this argument, Che (2014) has found statistical evidence

projecting ethnopolitical polarization as a superior predictor of democratizers' varying conflict propensities, compared to degree of democratization.

To control for the belligerent danger of democratizing with deep ethnopolitical divisions, the baseline regression model includes an additional dichotomous variable, *ETDEZ*, coded one (1) for ethnopolitically polarized democratizing states and zero (0) for non-polarized democratizers. Measurements of polarization (or the absence thereof) are derived from Vogt et al.'s (2015) updated version of Cederman, Min, and Wimmer's (2010) Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) index. The measurements replicate the criteria used in Che (2014): *ETDEZ* equals one (1) if at least one component ethnic group of the democratizer under observation exercised absolute control of central power or was systematically excluded or discriminated against, as per EPR data for the year immediately preceding the end-year of the five-year democratization measurement interval. On the other hand, *ETDEZ* equals zero (0) if neither absolute domination nor systematic discrimination is detected.

Measurements for polarization are initially executed both for the end-year, and for periods of up to three years prior to the end-year of democratization measurement intervals, but no significant differences in measurement outcomes are noticed. However, the statistical outputs reported in this paper are specifically generated from measurements for the year immediately preceding the end-year of democratization intervals in which MID (non-)participations are observed. Measuring polarization in the year immediately prior to MID (non-)participation credibly ensures that non-overlapping periods are used to gauge democratizer polarization and democratizer MID participation in order to leverage at least some statistical independence between observations of the control and dependent variables.

Data for both the predictor (independent and control) and dependent variables are entered on the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 22. Since the dependent variable (participation in MIDs) is dichotomously measured, the study employs the binary logistic regression procedure on SPSS to evaluate the impact of democratizing states' parliamentary strength (*EXCONIII_L*) on the likelihood of participating in MIDs (*MIDPART*).

Empirical Results

As reported in Table 1 below, the full model containing both the independent variable of interest and the other predictor variables is statistically significant at the significance level of 0.05 or less, $\chi^2(5, N = 425) = 26.48, P = 0.000 < 0.05$, meaning the model is able to differentiate between democratizers that participate in MIDs and those that do not. The model explains between 0.070 (7.1%) to 0.105 (10.5%) of the variance in MID participation as indicated by the Cox and Snell R square and the Nagelkerke R square values respectively

in Table 2. The model correctly classified the MID (non-)participation categories of 76.3% of all democratizing states between 1989 and 2010.

Table 1: Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

		Chi-square	df	Sig.
Step 1	Step	26.482	5	.000
	Block	26.482	5	.000
	Model	26.482	5	.000

Test for Statistical Significance of the Model Containing all Predictor Variables

Table 2: Model Summary

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	375.504 ^a	.070	.105

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 5 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

Degree of Variance in Democratizers' MID Participations Explained by the Model Containing all Predictor Variables

Table 3: Variables in the Model

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
								Lower	Upper
Step 1 ^a	EXCONIII _L	-.090	.718	.016	1	.900	.914	.224	3.731
	DEPEND _L	-.011	.004	5.626	1	.018	.989	.981	.998
	ETDEZ(1)	.639	.276	5.365	1	.021	1.894	1.103	3.251
	INCOMDEZ(1)	.367	.307	1.430	1	.232	1.443	.791	2.633
	NACAP _H	77.467	26.245	8.712	1	.003	4.399	2.011E+11	9.623E+55
	Constant	-1.247	.442	7.967	1	.005	.287		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: EXCONIII_L, DEPEND_L, ETDEZ, INCOMDEZ, NACAP_H.

Logistic Regression Predicting Democratizing States' Likelihood of Participating in MIDs

Column 4 (Wald test) and column 6 (Sig.) in Table 3 respectively report the volume and statistical significance of the contribution of each of the variables in the regression model predicting democratizing states' varying MID propensities. While three of the control variables (trade dependency, ethnopolitical polarization, and material capabilities) each make

a unique statistically significant contribution ($P < 0.05$) to explaining democratizers' varying MID behaviour, degree of democratization and parliamentary power ($P > 0.05$) do not. The absence of a statistically significant relationship between degree of democratization and MID participation contradicts Mansfield and Snyder's (2002; 2005a; 2005b) evidence linking democratization degree, institutional strength, and war. But, it is consistent with Narang and Nelson's (2009) re-evaluation of the democratization – war nexus revealing “a dearth of observations where incomplete democratizers with weak institutions participated in war” (p. 357).

Though substantially relevant, the independent variable of interest, parliamentary strength (*EXCONIII_L*), makes only a marginal and statistically insignificant contribution (Wald = 0.016, $P = 0.900 > 0.05$) to explaining democratizers' varying MID propensities. Nevertheless, at least some support is found for the hypothesized negative correlation between parliamentary power and democratizers' MID vulnerabilities. The B values in column 2 of Table 3 indicate the direction of the relationship between each predictor variable and the dependent variable. The negative coefficient on *EXCONIII_L* ($B = -0.090$) suggests that democratizers with strong parliaments, which record higher *EXCONIII_L* values and induce greater constraints on executive foreign policy decision-making, are less likely to engage in MIDs than democratizers with weak parliaments. Additional support for this negative, albeit statistically insignificant, correlation is provided by *EXCONIII_L*'s odds ratio, which, as reported in column 7 ($\text{Exp}(B) = 0.914$), is less than 1. This implies that the stronger a democratizing state's parliament becomes, the less likely the democratizer is to engage in MIDs: for every reform strengthening legislative constraints on the executive, democratizers become 0.914 times less likely to participate in international military conflicts, controlling for other factors in the model.

Conclusion

Extant institutional analysis of the democratization – belligerency nexus problematically measure institutional strength almost exclusively from the executive, disregarding the other branches of government. Skewed institutional strength measurements in favour of the executive implicitly miss the constraints other arms of government might wield over foreign policy decision-making and dent the quality of extant policy prescriptions for promoting democracy in a less risky manner. Drawing on a review of Côte d'Ivoire's 2010-2011 internationalized post-election crisis as a product of excessive executive powers and limited legislative leverage, this article sought to contribute towards a more robust institutional analysis of the democratization – belligerency linkage by outlining and assessing

the impact national parliaments induce on the propensity of democratizing states to engage in (diversionary) MIDs. A number of typical, but not universal, parliamentary powers, including powers to regulate executive appointments, impeach the chief executive, approve executive and military budgets, wage wars, and to enact and revise state laws, were outlined as bearing substantively important leverage over executive incentives for military externalizations.

Controlling for the effects of other possible determinants of democratizing states' MID propensities (including democratization degree, ethnopolitical polarization, trade dependency, and national material capabilities), the hypothesized impact of parliamentary power on democratizers' MID behaviour was assessed via binary logistic regression analysis on SPSS. The sample of democratizers (N = 425) was drawn from the post-Cold War world packed with *third wave* democratization cases not covered in most institutional studies of the democratization – conflict linkage. Results of the logistic regression reveal at least some support, albeit statistically insignificant, for the hypothesis linking parliamentary strength and democratizers' MID vulnerabilities. The direction of the observed relationship between the independent and dependent variables of interest was negative, with an odds ratio less than one (1): democratizers with weak parliaments (or, as operationalized in this article, parliaments with weak constraints on the executive) participated more frequently in MIDs than democratizers with strong parliaments).

By policy implication, aspiring democracies and newly democratizing states should engineer institutional reforms that do not strengthen state institutions indiscriminately. Though celebrated as a plausible policy-prescriptive text for democratizing for peace in a safe and less risky manner, Mansfield and Snyder's (2002; 2005a; 2005b) proposal for strengthening state institutions prior to mass elections is problematically premised on institutional strength measurements focusing on the executive branch of government. But as Côte d'Ivoire's case study and quantitative analysis in this article suggest, strengthening the executive exclusively or alongside other arms government irrespective of the nature of the pre-existing distribution of power between the executive and the legislature could be counterproductive, raising rather than reducing the danger of MID involvement. The correlation directional evidence in this paper indicates that, when the balance of power favours the legislature over the executive, the likelihood of participating in MIDs is mitigated, all things being equal.

Thus, whilst strengthening government institutions as a mechanism for managing the danger of international belligerency for democratizing states, democracy-promoting and

democracy-building policies should ensure the ultimate institutional configuration of power favours parliaments over executives for more auspicious outcomes. However, given the statistically significant association between most of the control variables in the regression model and democratizers' MID propensities and the statistically insignificant association between parliamentary power and democratizers' MID proclivities, the various control conditions should be addressed alongside reforms strengthening parliamentary constraints on executives in would-be democracies.

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