Playing For Keeps:
Power-Sharing in Civil Conflict Settlement and Durable Peace

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Abstract

In the complex process of civil conflict settlement, power sharing is often employed to mitigate tensions between opposing groups and balance the power. However, given the number of recurring civil conflicts in various regions, one must wonder just how effective power-sharing is in achieving durable peace. This paper explores the conditions under which power-sharing has the most success. Here, I theorize that local power-sharing, when implemented alongside or as part of national power-sharing, increases the durability of peace. Local power-sharing reinforces the same commitment mechanisms and incentives that are crucial to the success of power-sharing arrangements at the national level. This study proposes a cross-national analysis of local power-sharing, using a Cox proportional hazards model, including 34 observations from 1990 to 2015. Should the research be supported, a greater subnational emphasis in negotiated settlements may lower the likelihood of conflict recurrence. Moreover, societies with high ethnic diversity and historically clientelistic governance systems may benefit the most from local power-sharing.

Introduction

Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where ethnic tensions between Hutus and Tutsis have culminated in fighting between the Congolese and nonstate actors (Center for Preventive Action, 2025), has made finding a method of sustainable peace especially pertinent. In 2020, a peace agreement in the DRC between the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) and the Common Front for the Congo (FCC) collapsed just a year after its signing (Gavin, 2020), plunging the country back into civil war. The since-abandoned settlement stipulated that presidential control go to the UDPS and parliamentary power and governorships be allocated to the FCC (Gavin, 2020). However, this wasn't the DRC's first attempt at peace. In 2002, the end of the conflict in East Congo brought power-sharing through the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement, and in 2009, the GOMA agreement brought another power-sharing system to the state (Norman & Mikhael, 2019; Dumas, 2025). None of these attempts yielded peace.

What's puzzling is that other post-colonialist countries in the same region, which also faced civil conflict stemming from ethnic divisions, *have* been able to broker more durable peace. In Nigeria, following the Biafran civil war, the state entered a power-sharing arrangement focusing on decentralization, which, despite some civil tensions, has been maintained since the 1970s (Orji, 2008). Similarly, Burundi, a neighboring state to the DRC whose civil conflict also stemmed from Hutu-Tutsi divisions, has also maintained peace since 2008, following the full implementation of its 2004 power-sharing agreement (Falch & Becker, 2008; Joshi, Quinn & Regan, 2015). So what explains this variation? Why do power-sharing agreements facilitate more durable peace in some cases, but not others?

Scholars have discussed several reasons for the varied outcomes of power-sharing mechanisms. Some suggest that the kind of representation chosen in power-sharing, which affects the mechanisms of governance used, can determine if violence will return (Cammett & Malesky, 2012). Others have argued that regions with deep-seated ethnic cleavages are more challenged in shared governance due to the politicization of these divisions (Seaver, 2000), which leads to conflict renewal. Mehler (2008) argues that power-sharing agreements often neglect local civilian input, which can contribute to their breakdown—a theory that remains underexplored due to the literature's predominant focus on the national level. Successful power-sharing, where prolonged peace has endured, is rare, and the mechanisms for its success are not yet fully understood.

This paper aims to answer the question: When do power-sharing agreements following civil conflict create durable peace? This paper contributes to the conflict literature by narrowing the theoretical gap in understanding when power-sharing implementation works. The following sections cover the current power-sharing literature, my theory of power-sharing success, a research design proposal, and, finally, policy contributions and areas for future research.

Literature Review

With the rise of ethnic and religious civil conflict, mediators have frequently turned to power-sharing mechanisms within negotiated settlements. Power sharing can be understood as conditions defining how state decisions are divided amongst groups (Hartzell & Hoddie, 2019). However, scholars have not been unified in understanding power-sharing's ability to create lasting peace. Regarding power-sharing design, some scholars find that agreements that constrain and decentralize institutional power, through greater representation of constituencies and federalism, reduce civil conflict onset (Gates et al., 2016; Lijphart, 1969; Walter, 1999). However, Jarstad & Nilsson (2008) find that only agreements designed for military and territorial power-sharing increase settlement durability.

Others find that settlements designed to incorporate political, military, economic, *and* territorial power-sharing decrease the likelihood of conflict recurrence (Hartzell & Hoddie, 2007; Hartzell & Hoddie, 2015). Combining structural components such as long-term political and security reforms, as well as short-term monitoring and renegotiation provisions, has also been found to increase peace stability following settlement (Badran, 2014). Finally, in some studies, agreements with provisions for peacekeeping presence, which should increase defection costs, are found to produce the best outcomes (Mattes & Savun, 2009; Walter, 1999). However, others suggest that the utility of peacekeeping in power sharing is lowered when a majority group is at the negotiating table (Nomikos, 2021).

The power-sharing literature has also focused on the targets of power-sharing. Conflict is resolved based on credible agreements between parties, which are achieved by combating insecurities and employing costly signaling (Fearon, 2004; Walter, 1999). Power-sharing reduces these insecurities by eliminating a monopoly of power by one group (Hartzell & Hoddie, 2007). Essentially, distributing power across groups allows for checks on potentially harmful actions of the opposition (Hartzell & Hoodie, 2015). For instance, power-sharing that targets political institutions reduces the elite influence of one party, reducing the odds of repression and conflict resumption (Gates et al., 2016; Hartzell & Hoodie, 2019). Additionally, power-sharing that targets militaries may require rebels to demobilize or require the integration of troops, which imposes a costly signal of commitment on both sides (Hoddie & Hartzell, 2003; Jarstad & Nilsson, 2008; Walter, 1999).

Power-sharing agreements typically target primary warring parties, the group in control of the government, and the opposition group(s) that pose the biggest threat. For instance, the Angola civil war (1975-2002) witnessed several peace agreements that were struck between the de facto governing group, the Ambundu people's MPLA, and the primary opposition group, the Ovimbundu people's UNITA, the largest ethnic group in the country (Shutvet, 2022). This occurred even though other groups representing smaller identity groups like the Cambindas and Bakongo, such as the FLEC and the FNLA (Toulemonde, 2022; Shuvet, 2022), also participated in the conflict and carried separate goals. Thus, the order of power-sharing presents additional problems like exclusion amid inclusion (EAI), where smaller groups posing a lesser threat relative to others are overlooked in conflict settlement (Juon, 2020). While some scholars find that inclusive power-sharing reduces conflict with previously excluded groups (Bormann et al.,

2019), others find that power-sharing can create more inequalities for minority groups outside of the primary warring parties (Juon, 2020).

Still, given both the merits and limitations of power-sharing, we observe a puzzling variation in outcomes. Lebanon has maintained its political power-sharing (confessionalism), re-established with the 1989 Taif agreement (Bennet, 2013), since the 1990s without a return to war, and Burundi has seen extended peace since the Arusha Accords and the integration of political and military power-sharing (Nantulya, 2015). Yet, Myanmar, which established power-sharing in its 2008 constitution between the National League for Democracy (NLD) and the military, continues to face agreement breakdown and conflict (Ratcliffe, 2022). Similarly, the Central African Republic has experienced the breakdown of several political and military power-sharing settlements over a decade (Petrini, 2021). So what explains this variation? Two things are apparent in the power-sharing literature: 1) subnational power-sharing is understudied, as most scholars focus on national-level agreements, and 2) informal, or socially enforced, characteristics of power-sharing are often ignored.

Some scholars suggest that subnational power-sharing is insignificant due to national elites' political influence (Simons et al., 2013), though these findings have not been tested systematically, reducing some generalizability. Bunte & Vinson (2016) find that local power-sharing provisions, through informal social contracts or formal division of power, reduce tensions between groups by pacifying antagonistic elite rhetoric and reducing threat perceptions between groups. This study, conducted on six districts across three African countries, provides the foundation for my research. Grievance-based insurgencies often emerge outside of the national center (Fearon & Laitin, 2003), and the power-sharing literature can benefit from a broader understanding of how local adoption of power-sharing agreements may complement national settlements. Additionally, some states operate through informal governance, like clientelism, which affects de facto power-sharing despite de jure establishment (Hale, 2011). Discrepancies in the rule of law can also shape grievances, and understanding whether local power-sharing can mitigate informal challenges is important for future policy.

My theoretical and systematic analysis of the local-level power-sharing aims to add understanding to the variability of durable peace following a power-sharing settlement. The subsequent sections will explore the theory of when and why local power-sharing complements national settlements, followed by a research design proposal for testing my hypotheses, and finally, policy recommendations and contributions.

Theory and Hypotheses

The settlement stage of civil conflict occurs once information asymmetries about a group's likelihood of success are revealed; even so, power-sharing agreements are constructed to reduce uncertainties and commitment issues (Fearon, 2004; Walter, 1999). Based on bargaining theory, power-sharing provisions that require high-cost concessions from warring sides establish peace by making commitment more likely (Walter, 1999). Several forms of power-sharing are

considered costly enough to be effective in negotiated settlements. Military and territorial power-sharing are costly because of the required forfeiture of strategic combat positions and sovereignty (Jarstad & Nilsson, 2008). While some theorists suggest military and territorial power sharing are the most promising for peace (Jarstad & Nilsson, 2008), the collapse of South Sudan's 2015 agreement, prioritizing military integration, suggests this is not always the case (Sarkar, 2024).

My theory centers on political power-sharing because of its ability to be implemented on multiple levels and the degree of inclusivity it provides compared to other methods. Political power-sharing (PPS) occurs when the executive, legislative, and civil service are constructed to ensure that opposing groups share control (Mattes & Savun, 2009). PPS is costly because both groups would prefer complete control, and must agree to a shared system of checks and balances instead. For example, in Burundi, the Hutus and Tutsis share power through two representative vice presidents, and a cabinet proportional to the number of Hutus and Tutsis in the country (Hoddie & Hartzell, 2015). Still, variation in power-sharing's precipitation of peace can be observed in the breakdown of the DRC's PPS across several agreements (Norman & Mikhael, 2019). So, what explains why, in some cases, power-sharing agreements are still ineffective?

Two common themes within the previous literature may explain this puzzle. First, the power-sharing literature has a strong emphasis on the national level. Scholars often present power-sharing agreements as settlements between the central warring parties and examine power-sharing mechanisms at the national level. Second, power-sharing theories frequently overlook the informal considerations of politics. In countries where institutions are weak, which is the case for many states facing repetitive civil conflict, corruption takes the place of the rule of law (Spears, 2013). As a result, politics may manifest as an exchange of punishments and rewards for specific groups and individuals (Hale, 2011). Agreements that insist on restructuring institutions to ensure the peaceful maintenance of power may become obsolete when clientelism is prevalent.

Focusing on the importance of the local level, there are three reasons why subnational power-sharing provisions are especially pertinent. First, local communities are where a majority of citizens feel the effects of civil war. Rebel groups often recruit locally (Sambanis, 2004), and civilians are more likely to be enticed to join rebel organizations when peace settlements fail to address their grievances. Additionally, civilians are frequent casualties of intrastate conflict (Council on Foreign Relations, 2024), making local communities ground zero for conflict. Second, local leaders are better able to oversee the integration of power-sharing mechanisms than national ones, due to their proximity to interest groups. Third, and most importantly, local communities are likely to have different ethnic or religious compositions compared to national-level estimates reflected in central agreements. For instance, the Nigerian population is majority Yoruba, Hausa, and Igbo, though in the North Central territory of the Republic, citizens are majority Hausa-Fulani (PBS News Hour, 2007). Moreover, a majority of civil conflicts have taken place in regions where countries have multiple ethnic groups (Okafor, 2024), yet the warring parties may be representative of only a few.

Furthermore, highly heterogeneous societies increase the odds of misalignment between national-settlement power distribution and local population demographics. Often, because national agreements focus on primary warring parties, ethnic minorities may be ignored entirely. For instance, Myanmar consists of hundreds of ethnic groups, though most political power is maintained by ethnic Burmans (Maizland, 2022). Myanmar continues to face civil conflict, and when national PPS agreements take place between one group and the state, other identity groups are usually excluded (Maizland, 2022). While some minority parties may be included in national PPS through proportional representation in a legislature, this inclusion may be seen as tokenistic when accounting for the size of the majorities (Fraenkel, 2020), especially in political systems where representation is proportional to the overall population. However, when power-sharing is reflected locally and nationally, identity group members can more easily voice their concerns, and leaders at both levels can better advocate for their interest groups, thus maintaining support.

Local-level power-sharing enhances the mechanisms associated with incentives to commit and the costs of reneging. The first portion of my theory suggests that local power-sharing (LPS) can reduce conflict recurrence by increasing the costs of reneging and improving confidence in the national power-sharing agreements. Pulling from Bunte & Vinson's (2016) examination of LPS in Nigeria, I conceptualize LPS as a subnational division of authority where the primary warring parties, or the majority groups within the subnational jurisdiction, control the local executive[1]. National settlement divides power between the primary warring parties: the group in control of the government and the strongest rebel opposition. These groups may represent the dominant groups involved in conflict, though the state may have other minority groups that are reflected in the composition of localities. Power sharing at the local level still splits power between primary warring groups and majorities, but also includes a proportional representative council. This gives minority groups more power locally to address grievances than they would be guaranteed at the national level. The local system also reinforces the power division of primary warring groups.

For example, in Nigeria, the two majority religious groups share the local executive by electing a chairman from the majority group and a deputy chairman from the second majority, with both running on the same ballot. Additionally, local councils or legislatures are controlled with representation proportional to the community population. This parallels some national forms of power sharing, as demonstrated by Burundi's cabinet system (Hoddie & Hartzell, 2015). These local councils make minority groups' influence more prominent, due to the smaller scale. This increased inclusion through LPS can reduce attempts to spoil peace by the nationally excluded groups.

Groups outside of the national settlement process have incentives to spoil peace through overt violence or covert deals with apprehensive members of primary negotiating parties (Stedman, 1997). Outside spoilers may be motivated by a lack of recognition or grievances over the power-sharing deal, which may obstruct their goals (Stedman, 1997). LPS can offer greater

[1] This means that at the local level, if the primary warring parties are not the majorities at the district level, then the majority parties within that subnational district share the executive.

opportunities for recognition and influence for groups excluded from national settlement or who have limited roles in national settlement. LPS also reduces the odds of those smaller identity group members viewing their leaders as sellouts when signing peace agreements that grant little power nationally (Fraenkel, 2020).

Some scholars suggest that the increased inclusivity that power-sharing provides can hinder peace. For instance, Cunningham (2006) finds that when more veto players must be included in a negotiated settlement, conflict is more likely to persist because of incentives to spoil agreements in the hope of gaining a better deal. However, Cunningham (2006) describes a veto player as a group that can single-handedly continue the conflict. Primary groups, who could unilaterally continue conflict, still receive the best deal through control over the national executive, and depending on local ethnic/religious composition, the local executive as well. However, minority groups are assumed to lack the power to continue conflict because of their exclusion from national settlement, and the power they are given through the local council is likely greater than what is guaranteed federally. Moreover, should non-primary groups be a majority locally, they are still granted executive power sub-nationally. As a result, the incentive to renege or spoil peace is lowered.

Additionally, I rely on two assumptions to support this local-level theory. First, the majority groups and their leaders prefer to maintain power. Power-sharing agreements are usually decided after the conflict begins, meaning leaders have more information about the likelihood of success. Leaders then sign agreements when they are unwilling to continue fighting. LPS increases confidence in national power-sharing settlements because of the multi-level implementation, reinforcing the commitment to peace. This raises the cost of resuming conflict, as it becomes less certain that reneging will result in greater gains in power than both the national and local agreements have established. Moreover, uncertainty is minimized by the ability of opposing groups to check one another.

Second, I assume civilians prefer to avoid future conflict. Civilians feel the effects of civil conflict through recruitment and casualties. National power-sharing agreements may not address the majority of civilian grievances, especially in highly heterogeneous societies. LPS increases opportunities to address grievances, reducing the utility of conflict. Split executives also assure opposing groups of their power to check overzealous opponents. Moreover, political power-sharing at the local level makes reneging more costly for groups that are guaranteed power, and decreases the desirability of conflict.

H1: Local-level political power-sharing reduces conflict recurrence.

H1a: The conflict-reducing effect of local-level political power-sharing is stronger in highly heterogeneous states.

Regarding informal politics, many states that are prone to civil conflict also face clientelistic environments. Clientelistic societies may struggle under formal national

power-sharing agreements, which delegate most power to a single executive. With only legislative and judicial checks on this individual, a single executive allows a pyramid of clientelism to persist (Hale, 2011). However, as Hale (2011) suggests, when power-sharing settlements delegate power to two executives from different groups, in addition to incorporating proportional representation in the legislature and judiciary, clientelism can morph into something democracy-adjacent. When societal groups no longer feel pressure to defer to a single executive's group, but must balance between multiple groups, competition ensues. As a result, formally excluded groups may find opportunities to address grievances by manipulating the rivalry between the multiple heads of the clientelistic pyramid, which minimizes the risk of conflict recurrence.

This division of the executive can have an even stronger effect at the local level, where the provision of resources and political participation is felt more by civilians. When local power-sharing stipulates competition between executives and allows for proportional representation, there are more avenues for acquiring resources and privileges. This decreases the likelihood of spoiling peace for both primary and non-primary groups. This leads me to my last hypothesis:

H1b: The conflict-reducing effect of local-level political power-sharing is stronger in clientelistic states.

Research Design

To study how the inclusion of local power-sharing in national civil conflict settlements affects peace duration, I will use a sample of conflicts and subsequent peace settlements from 1990 to 2015. This time frame fits the availability of data for the datasets I employ. The unit of analysis for this study will be conflict-year because settlements may take place between more than two actors. A conflict-year analysis accounts for power sharing at the local level, which involves parties outside of primary warring groups.

Using the UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset v.3 (Kreutz, 2010), which codes for all armed conflict dyads from 1946-2020 and their means of termination. The UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset is suited for evaluating peace duration because it codes for start and end dates of conflict, whether the outcome includes a peace agreement, and includes a binary variable for conflict recurrence, which will determine peace duration. The UCDP Conflict Termination Dataset also codes for intensity level, with minor intensity recorded as 25-900 battle-related deaths in a year, and high intensity coded as 1,000 battle-related deaths in a year. After subsetting the data to include only intrastate conflicts that end with a settlement, the resulting time frame consists of 34 conflict observations from 1990 to 2015.

Data on the political power-sharing settlements will be drawn from the PA-X Peace Agreements Database (Bell et al., 2024), which lists 2,055 peace agreements from 1990 to 2024. I will use the "PpsSt" variable, a binary variable coding for state-level political power-sharing,

and the "PpsSub" variable, a binary variable coding for the presence of subnational power-sharing in peace agreements. I will also take data from the PA-X Local dataset (Bell & Badanjak, 2019), which includes text data on agreements made in local communities following conflict and is matched to the PA-X general dataset. To overlap both the PA-X dataset and the UCDP Conflict Termination dataset, I will take the country and nonstate group(s) signing the agreement, and the year from the PA-X data, and match this with the UCDP conflict data. Once the UCDP data is subsetted to be aligned with the PA-X data, I will also match the PA-X local data with the UCDP and PA-X data according to year, country, and group.

The theory presented in this paper stipulates that local power sharing in peace settlements leads to more durable peace in highly heterogeneous and clientelistic societies. To measure heterogeneity in my sample, I will use Cederman et al.'s (2010) updated Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) core dataset, which codes all politically relevant ethnic groups in every country from 1946 to 2021. Because civil conflict can stem from religious cleavages, I will also use the Religious and State Round 3 dataset (RAS3) from Bar-Ilan University, which codes for religious political parties in 183 countries from 1990 to 2014 (Fox, 2017). I will use both datasets to categorize countries into high, medium, and low heterogeneity based on ethnicity and religion across my study's sample. To measure clientelism, I will employ the V-Dem dataset and use two variables: the clientelism index (v2xnp_client) and the regime corruption index (v2xnp_regcorr), which both scale from 0 to 1, with lower scores indicating low clientelism or corruption (Coppedge et al., 2025). These variables will be used to rank my sample of countries from low, medium, and high levels of clientelism.

Variables

My dependent variable will be peace durability. I borrow Jarstad & Nilsson's (2008) definition of the number of years that signatories of peace agreements are at peace following the agreement or the likelihood that conflict resumes between those warring parties. My main independent variable (IV1) is local power-sharing agreements that are in succession to or are included in national power-sharing settlements. Local power sharing is defined as subnational agreements where local executive power is shared between primary conflicting parties or local majorities, and a proportional council representative of the community is included. Proportional council representation is observed when at least two election seats are reserved for groups within the community (Bell & Badanjak, 2019).

I have two other interacting independent variables of high heterogeneity (IV2) and high clientelism (IV3), which I expect to strengthen the effect of local power-sharing on peace duration. I define highly heterogeneous societies as countries where there is a 70% chance that two randomly selected people are from different ethnic or religious groups (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). The EPR dataset details all ethnic groups and their group size, as a percentage, for each country (Vogt et al., 2023). I will calculate the measure for heterogeneity by squaring each group size for a given country, adding them together, and subtracting this from 1, which will reveal the percentage of likelihood that two randomly chosen people in a given country are from different ethnic groups. A similar approach will be used for the RAS3 dataset on religious diversity. I

define highly clientelistic societies as those that operate on a system of rewards and punishments for specific groups instead of the rule of law (Hale, 2011). The V-Dem dataset uses a scale for their clientelism variable "v2xnp_client" (0 to 1), which I will use to categorize countries with a score of 0.6 or higher as highly clientelistic.

Controls

I plan to control for conflict duration using the UCDP start and end dates, given that longer conflicts reveal more information, which can reduce the risk of recurring violence (Walter, 2004). Meanwhile, shorter conflicts may reveal less information on capabilities, resulting in conflict recurrence (Walter, 2004). I also plan to control for conflict intensity because high-intensity conflicts may increase the risk of renewed conflict due to both parties having exhausted their resources (Walter, 2004). Controls for the type of conflict will be included using the PA-X data, considering that conflicts over territory may have different effects on recurrence based on the level of issue indivisibility. Often, peace settlements include provisions for peacekeeping, and to ensure that peace duration is not driven primarily by third-party presence, I will also control for peacekeeping using UN data.

I will also control for regime type using the Polity scores from the V-Dem dataset. I assume that the regime type before settlement implementation or at the time of implementation can affect the duration of agreements because of variations in institutionalization. In addition, controls for poverty levels, through the World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI), will be included to account for grievance-based incentives to contribute to violence. I will also control for the average state population, using the World Bank's WDI, because highly populated areas may experience greater competition, which can contribute to recurring violence (Bunte & Vinson, 2016). Finally, I will control for education because higher education rates may contribute to low conflict recurrence due to a more rational response to ethnoreligious tensions (Bunte & Vinson, 2016), or better access to legitimate channels for addressing grievances.

Statistical Method

To test my hypotheses, I will use a Cox-proportional hazard model, a common method for peace duration research (Jarstad & Nilsson, 2008). This model will be employed because my outcome, peace duration measured in years, is a time-to-event variable, measuring the time until conflict recurs (Abd ElHafeez et al., 2021). Because some of my observations may have no recurrence and are thus not fully observed, the data may be right-censored (Gelman et al., 2020, pp. 333, 459), which the Cox model accounts for. Additionally, rather than continuous variable coefficients, Cox reports the hazard of occurrence or the likelihood of conflict resuming (Gelman et al., 2020, pp. 333, 459). My statistical analysis will include 4 models. Model 1 will show the effect of national and local political power-sharing provisions on peace duration (H1). Model 2 will test hypothesis 1a, adding the interaction effect of local power-sharing in highly heterogeneous societies. Model 3 will test hypothesis 1b, adding the interaction of local power-sharing in highly clientelistic societies. Finally, model 4 will show all four variables and their effect on peace duration for robustness. Model 1 will exclude controls to demonstrate the main effect of my primary independent variable, and all subsequent models will include controls.

Limitations

Several limitations to my study need to be addressed. The first is that subnational authority varies across countries, which can impact the comparability of local power-sharing agreements. To address this, I will use both the PA-X standard definitions and conduct robustness checks using other operationalizations of local power sharing. For example, using a count of local power-sharing agreements in a given conflict-year to capture settlement intensity, and limiting agreements to just those that were signed and agreed on to account for the quality or legitimacy of agreements. These checks will help determine the consistency of the observed relationship between local power sharing and peace duration.

There is also the possibility of selection bias. My sample focuses on states that already have a formal national settlement, but the findings may not apply to conflicts resolved without formal settlements. To account for the possibility that some countries may be more likely to adopt local power-sharing following national settlements, I will use matching to compare cases with and without local power-sharing but with a shared likelihood of local power-sharing adoption. Additionally, there could be reverse causality where countries with local power-sharing were already more likely to maintain peace. I address this issue with the controls I have included. There could also be confounding variables like hidden bargaining, which the data does not capture, and may influence the duration of peace. Finally, because the outcome occurs over time, those conflicts that do not recur within the observation period may bias results, though the Cox model accounts for this.

Policy Contributions and Future Research

This study makes several contributions to the power-sharing literature. First, the subnational focus offers insight into how local-level arrangements in conflict settlement can affect post-conflict stability. Second, by employing a cross-national analysis to understand the role of local power-sharing, I add a broader understanding of its effectiveness. The study proposed includes a more generalizable statistical approach to understanding local power-sharing effectiveness. Thirdly, this study explores the conditional effects of local power-sharing in highly heterogeneous and clientelistic states, which may better explain variation in power-sharing outcomes. Moreover, should local power-sharing be found to increase peace duration, identifying which countries are at greater risk of conflict recurrence and which states need local power-sharing provisions will be easier.

Additionally, understanding what conditions make local power-sharing more effective can aid in future policy advising during settlement negotiations. Several policy implications can be taken from this study. For instance, during settlement negotiations, a greater emphasis should be placed on including local actors and governance. This may be especially important in states where conflict stems from grievances among several groups, and when states must prioritize the strongest opposition group(s) in negotiations. Policymakers may also want to increase peacekeeping at the local level and disperse resources across subnational jurisdictions to track

the local implementation of peace agreements. Moreover, increased coordination between the national and subnational levels of governance in conflict settlement should be prioritized. Regarding funding initiatives by donor governments, states should increase support for projects that evaluate the impact of local power sharing on peace maintenance, and tie some reconstruction aid to the implementation of more inclusive and locally focused institutions that reach a diverse range of communities, inside and outside of primary warring parties.

Finally, NGOs should focus on advocating for reforms that begin locally and allow communities to participate in peace implementation. These organizations should also focus on fostering inclusive dialogue between community leaders and marginalized groups to improve the peace process and the likelihood of addressing grievances without conflict. Future research should explore how the timing of local power-sharing implementation affects peace prospects. This study includes local power-sharing established following or during national settlement, but does not test whether reactive local power-sharing is more or less effective. Furthermore, scholars should explore the nuances in local power-sharing by conducting studies that compare the specific methods of power-sharing, like splitting executives or weighting representation based on territory, that may differ by region or country. Understanding how differences in local power-sharing methods affect the duration of peace will also aid in future policy recommendations and mediation.

Finally, the power-sharing literature has not fully explored how decentralization can affect gender disparities. Women are often excluded from negotiations at the national level, though some research finds that when women are included in settlement mediation, the likelihood of peace increases (O'Reilly, Suilleabhain, and Paffenholz, 2015). However, future research should explore the role of women in local power-sharing agreements and agreement implementation.

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