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Ethnicity and Electoral Politics

This book asks what distinguishes peaceful plural democracies from violent ones and what distinguishes violent ethnic groups from peaceful ones within the same democracy. Contrary to conventional wisdom, it suggests that ethnic groups and their political demands are not inherently intransigent and that violence is not a necessary corollary of ethnic politics. The book posits that ethnic identity serves as a stable but flexible information shortcut for political choices, influencing party formation and development in new and maturing democracies. It furthermore argues that political intransigence and violence expressed by some ethnic groups stem from circumstances exogenous to ethnic affiliations. In particular, absolute restrictions on ethnic access to the executive produce conditions under which ethnic group incentive to participate in peaceful electoral politics is eliminated. A number of case studies and statistical analysis of all electoral democracies since 1945 are used to test and support the formal argument.

Jóhanna Kristín Birnir is assistant professor of political science at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York. She received her Ph.D. from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 2001. She has done extensive field research in Eastern Europe and Latin America and has published articles in *Comparative Political Studies*, *Latin American Research Review*, *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *Research Policy*, and *Journal of Engineering and Technology Management*.

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To my boys

Contents

<i>List of Tables and Figures</i>	page ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xiii
1 Introduction: The Ethnic Effect	1
2 Ethnic Attractors	19
3 Ethnic Attractors and Exogenous Constraints	41
4 Ethnic Voting in Romania	60
5 Ethnic Voting and Party System Stability	83
6 Ethnic Politics and Access	114
7 The Ethnic Effect on Regime Stability	148
8 Conclusions	200
<i>Appendix A: The Model (Formal Version)</i>	213
<i>Appendix B: Measurements and Other Methods Issues</i>	225
<i>References</i>	253
<i>Index</i>	273

Tables and Figures

TABLES

3.1 Testable implications: Costs associated with the ethnic voter's electoral choice as determined by ethnic issue salience and representative capabilities of parties	<i>page</i> 51
4.1 Ethnic fractionalization on the fictitious continent Ethnica	68
4.2 Regression results: The relationship between county level volatility and ethnic fractionalization in Romania between the 1992 and 1996 elections	71
4.3 Change in vote share of selected Romanian political parties after the 2000 parliamentary elections	77
4.4 Volatility and fractionalization in selected countries	78
4.5 Average volatilities in new democracies over time	79
5.1 List of new democracies and their volatilities in the first election period	86
5.2 Bivariate correlations between volatility and linguistic, volatility linguistic and racial, and volatility and religious fractionalization indexes in new democracies	88
5.3 Test of the difference in the mean diversity in countries that use plurality electoral systems compared to countries that use either mixed or proportional electoral systems	91
5.4 Summary statistics for variables included in the analysis of the first election period (elections one and two) in new democracies	97

x	<i>Tables and Figures</i>
5.5 Regression: Ethnic fractionalization and volatility in the first election period (elections one and two)	101
5.6 Relationship between ethnic fractionalization and volatility over time	105
5.7 Regression: Ethnic fractionalization and volatility, first three election periods, controlling for Mauritius, Peru, Thailand, Spain, and Lithuania	109
6.1 Acronyms and organizational names used in the chapter	115
6.2 Population numbers in Basque Country, Catalunya, and Galicia	142
7.1 Electoral support for Basque and Catalan parties in Spain and Turkish parties in Bulgaria, with respect to national volatility levels	150
7.2 Regression: Ethnic fractionalization and volatility in new democracies, all elections	153
7.3 Regression: Ethnic fractionalization and volatility in new democracies, all elections	157
7.4 The relationship between ethnic access (through ethnic parties) and protest and violence, and size of the ethnic group in the legislature (leverage) and protest and violence	171
7.5 Cases included in the analysis: By country and group, average time since the group has had access to government through an ethnic or a nonethnic party	177
7.6 Summary statistics: Ethnic access, protest, and violence in all democracies with electorally active ethnic groups since 1945	184
7.7 Regression: Ethnic access, violence, and protest in all democracies with electorally active ethnic groups	186
7.8 Electoral barriers and unmobilized groups	196
A.1 Testable implications: Costs associated with the ethnic voter's (party left) electoral choice as determined by ethnic issue salience and representative capabilities of parties	223
B.1 Case inclusion criteria for a national level test of the relationship between ethnic diversity and vote stability	228
B.2 Electoral democracies excluded for the tests of ethnic electoral behavior in Chapters Four and Seven	228
B.3 Case selection criteria for the test of the effects of ethnic access in Chapter Seven	233

<i>Tables and Figures</i>	xi
B.4 Case selection concerns	234
B.5 Electorally active minorities in democracies that are excluded from the analysis of access in Chapter Seven	236
B.6 Electorally active minorities in democracies that are added for the test of access in Chapter Seven	240
B.7 Cases included in the analysis of access in Chapter Seven (by country and group, average violent rebellion, and peaceful protest)	245
B.8 Missing cases pertaining to summary in Table 7.6 and analysis in Table 7.7	250
FIGURES	
4.1 Percentage of minority Romanians and the ethnic fractionalization index by county	69
4.2 The substantive effect of ethnic fractionalization on county level vote stability in Romania between the 1992 and 1996 elections, excluding Covasna and Harghita	71
4.3 Numbers of votes and minority group members in Romania in 1992	73
4.4 Numbers of votes in 2000 and minority group members in 2002 in Romania	74
4.5 Change in numbers of votes (1992–1996) and minority group members (1992–2002) in Romania	75
4.6 The relationship between volatility and ethnic diversity in democratizing countries since 1945 (first election period)	78
4.7 Ethnic diversity in democratizing countries at the time of first election	80
4.8 Relationship between ethnic diversity and volatility in Eastern Europe (first election period)	81
5.1 Residual plot: Ethnic fractionalization and volatility, first three election periods (elections one through four)	106
5.2 Substantive effect as ethnic fractionalization varies one standard deviation around the mean	110
7.1 Residual plot: Ethnic fractionalization and volatility in new democracies, all elections	155
7.2 Substantive effect as ethnic fractionalization varies one standard deviation around its mean	158

7.3 Substantive effect: Change in predicted probabilities of violence associated with a change of one-half standard deviation around the mean of each independent variable: Time since ethnic group has been in government (Access), GDP growth, GDP per capita, and number of parties with seats in the legislature (Institutions)	192
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xv

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