

CEU Annual Doctoral Conference
20 – 21 April 2015

Abstract

Title:

**“Stuck in a Power-Sharing Moment and You Can’t Move out of It. –
Inquiring into the negative long-term consequences of post-conflict power-sharing agreements and third party mediation.”**

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5 Keywords: civil war, power-sharing, third party mediation, peace, bargaining theory

Sub-disciplinary classification: Comparative Politics

The purpose of this paper is to improve our understanding of the role of power-sharing agreements in ensuring durable peace after civil war. In the last decades, power-sharing agreements have become the dominant approach to successfully facilitate peaceful ends to civil wars. However, with a depressing regularity the same agreements are eventually also at the center of a relapse to war or a malfunctioning political system (e.g. Iraq, Bosnia). In this paper I will argue that much of this shortcoming can be attributed to an inherent “temporal inconsistency”. The same provisions that facilitate the conclusion of agreements in the short run also undermine their stability in the long run.

Drawing on the theoretical framework by Beardsley (2011) and bargaining theory, I argue that third party mediation (e.g. UN, US, EU) leads to agreements which the conflict parties would unlikely have agreed on otherwise. As the pressure of the third parties declines over time, however, the former belligerents will seek to circumvent the agreement (malfunctioning of the political system), or break their commitment (relapse to war). Rather than providing the framework for cooperation, the imposed agreement engenders a continuation of the civil war by other means or a mere postponement of fighting. While the dominant literature focuses heavily on institutional specifications, this paper highlights the origin of agreements as an important factor for the variation in their functioning and provides a conceptual mapping of the issues at stake.