Introduction

1.1 Introduction

When is ethnicity mobilized in political contestation? How about religion? Across the world, the answers to these questions seemingly vary across time and space. For example, scholars largely agree that Pakistan was founded on the idea of a “secular” Muslim cultural and/or ethno-national identity as opposed to a religious Islamic identity.\(^1\) However, the success of this attempt at secular nation-building is debatable because, after independence, the country was plagued by ethnic separatism, with Bangladesh seceding in 1971, and the Baloch insurgency only recently abating (Akbar, 2015; Shah, 2016). More insidiously, some argue that, in the new millennium, Pakistani primary identity in political mobilization has shifted, and that it “has emerged as a center for global jihad” (Bajoria, 2011: 5) in a conflict increasingly cast as a battle over religion.

On another continent, in Africa, since Milton Obote (an ethnic Langi and a Northerner)\(^2\) led Uganda’s movement for independence in 1962, ethnic and regional identity mobilization largely dominated Ugandan politics (Atkinson, 1994; Tom, 2006). Obote was overthrown by Idi Amin (an ethnic Kakwa and Lugbara, also a Northerner) who set about purging the military of Langi (and Acholi) until Obote returned to power. Obote himself was later replaced by an Acholi general Tito Lutwa Okello who, in turn, was ousted by Yoweri Museveni (a Bahima and a South-westerner) (Green, 2009). However, in the late 1980s, Alice Lakwena and Joseph Kony (both Acholi Northerners),

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\(^1\) While the words of Pakistan’s founding father Muhammad Ali Jinnah have been used to justify both religious and secular interpretations of the state, the idea of the two-nation state is predominantly considered a secular cultural idea (Cohen, 2004; Varshney, 2008).

\(^2\) Obote was supported by the Acholi and he favored them as further discussed in Chapter 5.
mobilized a religious identity in a civil war that cost the country thousands of lives and unimaginable horrors (Allen, 1991; Behrend, 1999; Neethling, 2013; Ofcansky, 2018).

Further to the South East, Indonesia’s recent history is replete with both ethnic and religious conflicts (Bertrand, 2008; Harsono, 2019; Schulze, 2017). However, in 2019, Indonesia’s voters – close to 200 million of them – peacefully chose among roughly 245,000 candidates running for more than 20,000 national and local legislative seats across the country (BBC, 2019). Even so, the elections were increasingly marked by mobilization of identity, especially religion. For example, the incumbent President Joko Widodo, who in 2014 ran a staunchly secular campaign (The Economist, 2019), picked Ma’ruf Amin, the supreme leader and chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council, and reportedly “the country’s most senior Islamic cleric” as his running mate in the 2019 election (Aditya and Abraham, 2019).

In all of these countries across peaceful electoral settings and more violent political contestation, political actors variously mobilize ethnicity and religion. Fluidity in mobilization of ethnic and religious political identities extends well beyond these countries. For instance, while most civil wars are fought between ethnic groups (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Denny and Walter, 2014), in the last half a century “religious civil wars have increased relative to non-religious civil wars” (Toft et al., 2011; Mason and Mitchell, 2016: 153). Religion also exerts a strong influence across multiple domains of more conventional electoral politics (Grzymala-Busse, 2012), where ethnicity is commonly mobilized (Lijphart, 1977; Posner, 2005; Birnir, 2007; Birnir and Satana, 2013; Flesken, 2018).

What determines which is mobilized in political contestation, be it peaceful or violent? Addressing this question, the literatures on (shared) cleavages and the Minimum Winning Coalition (MWC) suggest that contentious identity contestation is increasingly likely when cleavages are segmented (for instance, when competing groups have different ethnic and/or religious identities), and that the identity groups mobilized are the ones that will form the smallest possible winning coalitions.

However, in contrast to the literature on cross-cutting (shared) cleavages, which predicts the greatest contention where identities are fully segmented, most identity conflicts in the world are between ethnic groups that share the same religion (Satana et al., 2013; Fox, 2016; Svensson and Nilsson, 2018). Furthermore, on the contrary to the MWC literature, which would predict preponderance of, and stability among identity-based MWCs, MWCs are

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3 The preliminary presidential results sparked some short-lived riots (Suhartono and Victor, 2019) but the election itself was by and large very peaceful and orderly (Kahfi, 2019).

4 As we discuss further in the cases of Uganda, Nepal, Indonesia, and Turkey, multiple other cleavages, including but not limited to region, class, and migratory status, play a part in mobilization. For reasons discussed later in this chapter, we focus on ethnicity and religion in this book but acknowledge that our theory likely pertains to other cleavage types as well.

5 See also Fox (2013).
1.1 Introduction

actually not the most common types of ethnic coalitions (Bormann, 2019). The incongruences between predictions of the theory and the real-world observations are puzzling and remain under-explored in the literature.

To address these puzzles, we build on the literature about political demography, which draws special attention to the role of group size in political contestation (Weiner and Teitelbaum, 2001; Goldstone et al., 2011). While the current literature primarily focuses on segmented identities, the theory of Alternatives in Mobilization we propose in this book suggests that variation in relative group size and intersection of cleavages help explain the above and potentially other conundrums in the mobilization of identity, across transgressive and contained political settings. A formalization of this argument yields multiple testable implications including the hypothesis of the Challenger’s Winning Coalition (CWC). Where demographic conditions allow, our hypothesis posits that members of large minority identity groups that are left out of or under-represented through identity-based MWCs will seek access by redefining the axes of the identity competition to mobilize a potentially oversized CWC of an alternate identity, which is shared with the majority. In this book, we test this conjecture cross-nationally on identity mobilization in civil war and explore the mechanisms of this proposition across violent conflict in the cases of Pakistan, Uganda, Nepal, and Turkey. Finally, we examine whether the CWC hypothesis can be extended to a peaceful electoral setting in one of the most ethn-religiously heterogeneous countries in the world, Indonesia.

Importantly, the CWC implication does not contradict the idea of the conflict-mitigating effect of cross-cutting (shared) cleavages or the notion of majority leaders seeking to form an MWC. In contrast, the CWC hypothesis tested in this book refines the argument about the effect of shared identities to suggest that, conditional on the identity group’s relative size, shared secondary cleavages mitigate or motivate conflict. Similarly, the CWC hypothesis builds on the premise of the MWC numbers game but further articulates when the assumptions of the MWC do not hold, conditional on demography, where and which minority CWC is more likely to mount a credible identity challenge to the MWC. Thus, the CWC implication accounts for why MWCs are sometimes unstable and short-lived.

Much is at stake in correctly explaining identity mobilization in contentious politics across the world. Specifically, most civil wars are fought between ethnic groups (Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Denny and Walter, 2014), and religious wars are on the rise (Toft et al., 2011; Mason and Mitchell, 2016: 153). Success of peace-building depends on the accurate understanding of identity mobilization. For instance, substantial resources are spent on institution building, primarily of the power-sharing type, to resolve conflict and build peaceful post-conflict polities. However, it remains unclear whether these institutions are effective and under what conditions they reduce the likelihood of war

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6 See also Fox (2013).
recurrence (Sambanis, 2020). Without properly delineating the incentives for identity group mobilization, it is unlikely that this institutional puzzle ever gets resolved. Similarly, in electoral politics across the world, the representation of identity groups is variously sought because legislatures make policy and their makeup communicates the extent to which democratic politics are inclusive (Piscopo and Wylie, 2020), or suppressed in a controversial effort to decrease identity-based electoral contestation (Moroff and Basedau, 2010). Regardless of which view one takes, and aims to either suppress or encourage identity representation, it is difficult to fulfill either without a better understanding of identity mobilization.

I.2 THE LITERATURE

One of the predominant answers to the question of what determines which cleavage is mobilized in political contestation is offered by the literature on segmented and cross-cutting (shared) cleavages. Specifically, “[a] near-canonical claim among observers comparing politics across highly-divided societies is that the degree to which cleavages are ‘crosscutting’ constitutes a critical stabilizing feature of those political systems” (Gordon et al., 2015). In other words, underlying demographic configurations condition between which identities political challenges are more likely to materialize. When at least some identities are shared (or cross-cut), for instance in Switzerland, where the French and Italians are both predominantly Roman Catholic, greater stability ensues. In contrast, when identities are segmented, as in Sri Lanka where the Sinhalese are mostly Buddhist but Tamils are predominantly Hindu, instability is more likely through political identity challenges, such as majority outbidding. The notion that shared identities stabilize political systems and that segmented identities invite more identity competition cuts across contained electoral politics where shared identities are thought to reduce zero-sum contestations (Lipset, 1981; Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Lijphart, 1977, 1999), and transgressive politics of violence where segmented cleavages are considered to facilitate recruitment for violent ends (Selway, 2011b; Gordon et al., 2015; Siroky and Hechter, 2016).

7 We return to this subject in Chapter 6 in the context of Indonesia’s electoral politics.

8 Majority outbidding here refers to the scenario where in competition for allegiances of the majority identity rank and file, the leadership of majority factions outbids each other in targeting a segmented minority. The case of Sri Lanka is commonly considered a classic case of majority outbidding (Horowitz, 1985). In turn, Toft (2013) describes a classic case of religious outbidding in Sudan.

9 The increased conflict propensity of segmented ethno-religious groups has been tested cross-nationally (Ellingsen, 2005; Basedau et al., 2011; Selway, 2011b; Stewart, 2012; Toft, 2013; Sweijs et al., 2015). Moreover, the literature on horizontal inequalities shows that identity is not the only re-enforcing cleavage that increases conflict potential between segmented groups – so do economic inequalities (Stewart, 2008; Brown, 2008; Stewart et al., 2009; Ostby, 2008; Cederman et al., 2011). Indeed, Baldwin and Huber (2010) suggest economics are more
A complimentary answer in the literature, focusing on the question of which identity is mobilized within a country draws on Riker’s idea of coalition size, which stipulates that in competition over finite resources “participants create coalitions just as large as they believe will ensure winning and no larger” (Riker, 1962: 32). Applied to ethnic politics, the MWC theory has helped explain how and why competition for scarce resources takes on ethnic characteristics (Bates, 1983a), how ethnic parties win elections (Chandra, 2004), the onset of ethnic civil war (Choi and Kim, 2018), and why divergent identities are mobilized across different institutional settings (Posner, 2005, 2017).

Furthermore, holding institutions constant, scholars have theorized the conditions favoring change from one identity MWC to the next. For instance, Chandra (2012) posits that underlying demographics, as constrained by institutions, produce a given number of identity groups of minimum winning size. These scholars argue that this underlying demographic condition determines whether a change in the identity composition of the MWC is possible within a given system. In contrast, focusing on alliances in civil war, Fotini (2012) argues that identity does not drive coalition formation. Instead, she posits that variation in the balance of group-relative power and intra-group fractionalization induces shifts between coalitions and that identity is often used in a post hoc justification of shifting allegiances. Thus, both accounts pre-suppose that underlying demographic identity configurations make mobilization of identity possible. However, they also suggest that, in a given setting, identity-based challenges to the status quo are either exogenously brought to the forefront by changing power balance (Fotini, 2012) or initiated among any of multiple possible contenders (Chandra, 2012).

important – at least to public goods provision – than are cultural differences. While all of the above scholarship focuses on group politics, the behavioral psychology literature focusing on American politics also supports, at the individual level, the ideas about the increased potential for contestation resulting from segmentation and reduced contestation with cross-cuttingness (in this literature referred to respectively as low or high social identity complexity; Roccas and Brewer, 2002). Among other things, this literature points to a relationship between self-perception of belonging to highly segmented groups and lower out-group tolerance (Brewer and Pierce, 2005). More recently, Mason (2018) suggests an endogenous sorting mechanism where political parties pick up identity platforms, which in turn, induce sorting constituencies into increasingly polarized blocks based on multiple identity dimensions – contributing to the current polarization in American politics.

10 Similarly, selectorate theory clarifies how authoritarian leaders secure a minimum winning coalition (Bueno de Mesquita, 2003).

11 The literature using the idea of the MWC to explain outcomes pertaining to ethnic politics extends to multiple other outcomes including, for example, the distribution of clientelistic benefits (Fearon, 1999), and the amount of political aid a country receives (Bormann et al., 2017).

12 Thus, in both accounts, the relationship of underlying identities to challenger mobilization is inconclusive with respect to predicting which identities get mobilized and/or superimposed in competition between the status quo coalition and the challengers mobilizing an alternate identity.
1.2.1 The Puzzles

We observe that much conflict occurs within cultural traditions between similar religious groups that differ in sect or school only, and not between religious families (Fox, 2002, 2004b; Tusicsny, 2004; Gartzke and Gleditsch, 2006; Toft, 2007; Akbaba and Taydas, 2011; Birnir and Satana, 2013; Satana et al., 2013; Fox, 2016; Gleditsch and Rudolfsen, 2016; Svensson and Nilsson, 2018). Furthermore, in contention with both the logic of the MWC and the literature about cross-cutting (shared) cleavages, recent empirical analyses suggest that oversized ethnic coalitions are actually more common than are MWCs, and that coalitions comprised of cross-cut ethnic groups are less stable than their more unified counterparts (Bormann, 2019).

It seems, therefore, that in the study of identity politics a number of issues remain unresolved. For instance, it is not at all clear that cross-cutting or shared cleavages deter political competition between identity groups in the way commonly postulated in the literature. Furthermore, while the MWC argument plausibly explains some cases of coalition formation, it also appears that MWCs may not be the most common, stable, or long-lived coalitions in identity politics. These observations present intriguing puzzles and, if correct, suggest some important questions moving forward including: Which identities are mobilized in political contestation and in what types of coalitions? These are the main questions that motivate this project.

1.2.2 Scope, Assumptions, and Terms

Scope

Comprehensive mapping of how political incentives change for mobilization of identity coalitions, as all cleavage combinations vary in size and intersection, is outside the scope of this study – if even possible. Our goals are more modest. Specifically, within the study of identity cleavages the empirical scope of our study principally pertains to ethnicity and religion, though the case analyses in Chapters 5 and 6 pinpoint other identity cleavages that matter for mobilization, at least in the cases we examine. We acknowledge that multiple identity cleavages other than ethnicity and religion exist, as do many more political cleavages of other types. Furthermore, all types of cleavages – identity and beyond – are segmented or shared in innumerable different ways. In this book, we focus empirically on two variants of cleavage interaction: groups

13 Changing mobilization incentives associated with the extensive variation resulting from interaction of all cleavage types delineates the research agenda within which our inquiry fits - and our theory is developed with this in mind. However, the empirical scope of this study is far more circumscribed.

14 Identity cleavages not specifically discussed in this book include, for example, gender.

15 Other types of cleavages include class, native/migrant status, urban/rural dwelling, or political party cleavages, among others.
that are segmented on one or more dimensions, and groups that are segmented on one cleavage but share a second identity.

To be clear, the theory of *Alternatives in Mobilization* proposed in Chapter 3 is agnostic with respect to cleavage type, and can possibly be extended to account for other cleavage types and far greater complexity in cleavage interactions that lend themselves to mobilization. Other cleavage configurations may also be more relevant in the study of political outcomes that are not considered in this study. However, the empirical focus here on the demographics of segmented and shared ethnic and religious cleavage combinations is motivated by the literatures on cleavage intersection and the MWC as outlined above. In this scholarship, the demographics of shared or segmented ethnic and religious cleavage combinations feature prominently in electoral and conflict mobilization – but in ways that the above puzzles suggest – remain unexplained. Our general theoretical contribution consists of refining the role that demographics of segmented and shared cleavages play in mobilization for power within the state. In turn, the general theoretical contribution overlaps with the more specific contribution we hope to make, which is a better understanding of the role ethnicity and religion play in political conflict.

Finally, the scope of our inquiry is limited to exploring the incentives of actors that seek to alter power within the state in a way that grants them greater access to the spoils of office, within unaltered state boundaries. Identity is mobilized for multiple other purposes, including secession. However, the mobilization logic of secession possibly differs from the logic that drives groups to seek greater access within unaltered state boundaries. Rothchild (1983) divides these two types of claims respectively into internal, negotiable claims for re-distribution and external demands that are non-negotiable for the state. While external demands may often be disaggregated into negotiable claims for re-distribution (Rothchild, 1983), the process and consequences are sufficiently distinct to suggest that generalizing across the two types should be done with caution. This is an especially pertinent concern with respect to incentives for the mechanisms of identity bonding and bridging between majorities and minorities that are discussed further in Chapter 3. Therefore, explaining the logic of identity mobilization for purposes of secession is outside the scope of our study though we acknowledge that groups may pursue multiple objectives at the same time. 16

**Assumptions**

To address the rationale for cleavage mobilization as conditioned by demographics and sharing or segmentation of identity among groups, we adopt some

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16 On this topic, see also Mason and Mitchell (2016). To be clear, we do account for secessionist movements in our empirical analysis, but the theory pertains to the logic of identity mobilization within unaltered state boundaries.
common assumptions from the literature. We assume that when excluded from access to power, a demand and/or opportunity for mobilization (voice) arises among the political actors in our story (Hirschman, 1970). Furthermore, we assume that identity – both ethnicity and religion – is a common and useful heuristics for such mobilization.

It is also assumed here that in a pursuit to secure voice by way of an increase in political power for their group, sincere and/or instrumental political entrepreneurs recognize the opportunity to define and mobilize the emerging interest group, and to proclaim themselves leaders of the group (Brass, 1991; Chandra, 2004; van der Veen and Laitin, 2012; Huang, 2020).

Moreover, as is well established in the literature, in deciding whether to follow a political leader proposing a particular political strategy, individuals are anything but naive and manipulated. In contrast, multiple scholars argue that ethnic voters, for example, cast their ballot for ethnic parties because they believe the party is likely to succeed (Chandra, 2004) and will represent their policy preferences (Birnir, 2007). Similarly, in conflict situations, Fearon and Laitin (2000: 846) conclude that when information permits, “followers often are not so much following as pursuing their own local or personal agendas.” Therefore, we assume that when recruited – especially for potentially violent ends – individuals are agents in shaping political outcomes as they decide whether to support a political entrepreneur’s proposed strategy based on whether it suits their own personal agenda. On this point it bears reiterating that beyond seeking greater access to resources, we make no assumptions about individual motives. For example, a devout individual may seek access to resources for reasons that further her faith, another may use religion for access to resources for purposes of public or private goods provision, and a third may seek access to resources for personal consumption. All of these goals are consistent with the mobilization logic we suggest in our theory of Alternatives in Mobilization.

17 As explained by Wimmer (2013), we assume this demand and/or opportunity materializes for identity groups in much the same way as it does for other types of interest groups, where lack of access consolidates individuals as a group with a common interest. Furthermore, we assume that while the opportunity for mobilization is created by a lack of voice, demand may precipitate or follow entrepreneurial leadership’s definition of group interests.

18 Some classic examples that either explain why and how identity is used as a heuristic for mobilization or use examples of identity as heuristics for mobilization include Bates (1983a); Olzak (1983, 1992, 2006); Young (1976); Tarrow (2011); Tilly (1978); Gurr (1970, 1993a); Lipset and Rokkan (1967); Jelen and Wilcox (2002). This literature is vast. For recent overviews on mobilization of ethnicity see, for example, Fearon (2008); Vermeersch (2012); Cunningham and Lee (2016). On the mobilization of religion, see Birnir and Overos (2019).

19 We adopt this assumption with the understanding that the precise reasons politicians wish to secure political power vary (Riker, 1986).

20 Others have shown the same, specifically with respect to civil war (Kalyvas, 2006, 2009).
1.2 The Literature

In other words, mobilization of identity is attractive to political actors – leaders and followers alike – for instrumental (Bates, 1974, 1983b; Chandra, 2005; Posner, 2005; Huang, 2020), sincere (or emotive) (Petersen, 2002), and symbolic reasons (Kaufman, 2001).21

When mobilized, we assume these political actors seek representation of their interests through the governing structures that determine the allocation of resources (Bates, 1983a). Furthermore, we follow the literature in assuming that, all else being equal, political actors generally would prefer to be represented by an MWC because it maximizes the political power of the actors’ group while minimizing the division of political benefits. This is an important assumption because it allows us to articulate an example against which other types of coalitions can be compared so that we may gain a better understanding of when and why the MWC might not be an actor’s preferred, or even a possible, vehicle for access. However, we also reckon political actors have a preference for access over minimum winning access. Thus, in a situation of great uncertainty, or when political actors believe the MWC only gives them tenuous access, a political actor will choose access over minimum winning access, even if that requires the construction of an oversized coalition.

The governing structures to which actors seek access need not be democratic (Schumpeter, 1992). Social movement theory explains how identity coalitions come into existence outside formal governing structures as “a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity” (Diani, 1992). Consequently, we expect identity is mobilized for access across regime types – even where formal channels are unavailable (Diani, 1992; Diani and Eyerman, 1992; Tilly, 1993). Furthermore, in line with the literature on social movements22 the argument proposed here is neither exclusively an argument of supply or demand. In contrast, social mobilization is conceived as a political process involving both. Lack of access for identity groups generates an opportunity (explicit or latent demand) for voice that is recognized by political leaders who then call for mobilization of

21 Kaufman posits that “political choices based on emotion and in response to symbols” (Kaufman, 2001: 29) is a better explanation of violent ethnic mobilization than are rationalist explanations. In our view the literature seems to support both notions. Similarly, in their discussion of the marketplace of religion, Stark and Finke are very clear that as opposed to “vulgar materialism,” “faith and doctrine are central to our efforts to construct a model of the behavior of religious firms within a religious economy” (Stark and Finke, 2002: 32). In other words, a discussion of incentives in no way negates the importance of symbolism, including religious symbolism.

22 See also, Wimmer’s (2013: 111) discussion of the recent application of a “multilevel process theory” across the social sciences.
the identity group (supply). If that call resonates with followers – for a variety of reasons as explained before – contentious identity mobilization materializes. The contribution made here is to pinpoint which identities are more likely mobilized in this process.

Finally, we follow social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979, 1986) in that we treat divergent identity cleavages (ethnicity and religion in this book) as if they are comparable with respect to mobilization. The usefulness of this assumption is limited in predicting individual policy preferences within a given political environment (McCauley, 2014), as we discuss in greater detail below. However, overall similarities between mobilization of ethnicity (Vermeersch, 2012) and the mobilization of religion (Birnir and Overos, 2019) across divergent political outcomes support this assumption as a reasonable starting point.

**Terms**

Before outlining our argument, defining and clarifying some of the main terms of our inquiry, as they are used throughout this monograph, is helpful. Starting with the outcome, we are interested in examining the variation in the mobilization of identity types, empirically ethnicity and religion, in contentious politics. As explained earlier in this chapter, we assume excluded political actors seek access to governing structures that determine the allocation of resources (Hirschman, 1970; Bates, 1983a). These resources can be economic, related to security, symbolic, or any other type of resource that the state controls or has significant influence over. Thus, we define **political mobilization** as a process of activating a social movement for political ends (Tilly, 1978, 2004), and more specifically as “actors’ attempt to influence the existing distribution of power” by way of interest formation, community building, and by employing available means of action (Nedelmann, 1987: 181). The means of action, in turn, is contentious politics.

To define **contentious politics** we rely on McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly’s definition of “[episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when a) at least one government is an object of claims, ... and b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants]” (McAdam et al., 2001: 5). Our definition is slightly more narrow than theirs as we are not attempting to explain claims made by the government. Furthermore, relating claim-making to identity we follow Wimmer (2013: 109) who posits that an “Actor will choose those strategies and levels of ethnic distinction that will best support their claims to prestige, moral worth, and political power.”

Like McAdam et al. (2001), we are interested in both **transgressive** and **contained** political contention. Respectively, these refer to collective claim-making using “means that are either unprecedented or forbidden within the regime in question” (McAdam et al., 2001: 8), such as civil war, and claims made through well-established means of claim-making such as elections. The claim-making of interest here can occur at various levels of formal or informal
administration, including the national level and any sub-national levels where
distribution of resources is vested in local authorities.

The identities of empirical interest in this book are ethnic and religious iden-
tities, though other types of identities – especially region, class, and migrant
identity – also surface in the discussion of particular cases in Chapters 5 and 6.
In thinking about identities, we find Brady and Kaplan’s description of identity
helpful. They describe social identity as a function of “The basic cognitive
processes of self-categorization and self-schematization (Turner, 1985; Markus,
1977) [that] combine[s] with social interaction (Tajfel, 1978; Burke and Reitzes,
1981) to produce intersubjective agreement that (almost) every person can be
placed in one of the categories (A,B,...,Z). These categories are described in
terms of some easily perceived attributes X (e.g. language, race, or religion)
such that the attributes can be used for classification (Laitin and Chandra,
2002). Moreover people attach themselves to these groups (Brewer, 2001)”
(Brady and Kaplan, 2009: 34).23

Consistent with this way of thinking about identity, we join a long line of
constructivists that posit identity groups are constructed and fluid (Barth, 1969;
Berger, 1967; Fearon and Laitin, 2000; Chandra, 2012), and malleable (Laitin,
1986; Stark and Finke, 2002; Posner, 2005) for political ends. Malleability of
identity here refers to the idea that individuals are simultaneously endowed
with several identity attributes and that each of these attributes can be imbued
with greater or lesser salience under given political circumstances and political
leadership. For example, an individual’s identity repertoire may include gender,
race, ethnicity, religion, and several sub-sections of each of these categories.24
This does not suggest identities are ephemeral or trivial. To the contrary, Wim-
mer (2013) explains that ethnic social boundaries are continually strategically
negotiated as a result of distribution of power and interests, the reach of
social networks, and the institutional setup that incentivize particular types
of boundary making. In turn, the longevity of established boundaries depends
on “the degree of power inequality and the reach of the consensus” about
mutually beneficial exchanges and interests in society (Wimmer, 2013: 101),
in some cases producing great fluidity and in others more static boundaries.

The crucial component in our theory is political demography, defined as
the “study of the size, composition, and distribution of population in relation
to both government and politics” (Weiner, 1971: 579). Because our inquiry
centers on the interaction between groups that hold power and those that seek
greater access to power by way of identity mobilization, it is important to
clarify that when majority identity groups constitute less than 50 percent of the

23 We alternatively refer to identities as cleavages because an identity is used to cleave and sort
members as belonging to either an in-group or out-group. While the above description refers
to identity in general, we discuss the operationalization of ethnicity and religion further in
Chapter 2.

24 For an overview of various definitions of ethnic identity in the literature, see Chandra (2012).
population, the common term denoting relative size for all identity groups is plurality. However, throughout this book we use the term *majority* in a slightly different way to denote the ruling group, and *minority* to denote the identity group not holding power and thus seeking access, even when both identity groups technically constitute a demographic plurality.  

Finally, the vocabulary of identity cleavage intersection and overlap is reelingly varied across texts. Amongst the many possibilities, when referring to the intersection of cleavages we have chosen to use the terms *segmented* and *shared*. When discussing identity groups that are segmented along one or more identity cleavages, we mean groups that do not have an identity or identities in common. For example, Christian Dayaks and Muslim Malay in Indonesia are segmented on both ethnicity and religion. In contrast, Muslim Javanese and Muslim Sundanese Indonesians are segmented by ethnicity but share a religion. We discuss other common terms – especially the term of *cross-cutting (shared) identity* – and how they relate to our definition further in Chapter 3.

### 1.3 THE ARGUMENT

#### 1.3.1 Alternatives in Mobilization: Demography of Identity as an Explanatory Variable

Identity outbidding among segmented groups and the MWC are very reasonable starting points for predicting which identities will be mobilized in politics. However, because identity groups are constructed, fluid (Barth, 1969; Berger, 1967; Fearing and Laitin, 2000; Chandra, 2012) and malleable (Laitin, 1986; Stark and Finke, 2002; Posner, 2005) for political ends, the core argument in this book presupposes that leaders of minorities that are targeted in majority outbidding or that do not gain access via the MWC will subsequently (or simultaneously) seek ways to re-define the relevant identity for political competition in ways that stave off targeting and afford access. Therefore, our principal proposition is that identity demographics influence the form minority challenges to the status quo take. Specifically, we argue that minority group size relative to the majority and the configuration of identity cleavage sharing

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25 In a select few cases the political “majority” as we use the term may even be a demographic “minority” as the term is only used to refer to numbers. We further discuss such groups in Chapter 2.

26 The core idea in this book that political mobilization is better understood as a function of the multiple identity groups that an individual belongs to, and the position of those identities in the hierarchy of power, owes an intellectual debt to the literature on inter-sectionalism (Collins and Bilge, 2016: 2). However, other than distinguishing between political majority and minority groups we do not theorize how intersecting vectors of power and oppression, across different contexts, differentially intervene in the mobilization dynamics that we propose. Consequently, we do not use the term inter-sectionalism but rather refer to the intersection of cleavages and acknowledge the intellectual origin and possibilities for future study.
1.3 The Argument

and segmentation incentivize minority leaders’ choice of identity mobilization strategies. We refer to this argument as Alternatives in Mobilization to highlight the fact that group leaders and followers have a choice as to which cleavage is mobilized and how.

The study of political demography is already burgeoning and has substantially enriched our understanding of cleavage politics (Goldstone et al., 2011). For example, this literature supports the conjecture that communal group-mobilized quest for group representation often pits a new interest group against the status quo, and conflict at times ensues (Weiner and Teitelbaum, 2001). However, heretofore, existing studies primarily focus on the political demography of segmented groups or a single identity group over time (Goldstone et al., 2011), or examine the identity and absolute size of pivotal and/or majority groups, as discussed further in Chapter 3. In contrast, the argument proposed in this book directs attention to the demography of minority relative size and cleavage intersection with the majority. This refinement, in turn, helps explain the observed variation in mobilization of minority ethnic and religious identity in challenges to majority, and in majority outbidding and the stability of the MWC.

A Testable Implication: The Challenger’s Winning Coalition

Chapter 3 formalizes the argument that relative minority group size and the configuration of underlying identity cleavages incentivize minority (and majority) leaders to pursue varying identity mobilization strategies. The formalization generates multiple testable implications, one of which is the Challenger’s Winning Coalition (CWC).

The CWC submits that relatively large minority groups segmented from a majority on identity A and excluded from an MWC founded around identity A will seek to mobilize a shared identity B to challenge the status quo MWC. In the context of ethnicity and religion, the idea is that leaders of large ethnic groups that are left out of, or underrepresented through, the majority’s ethnic MWCs will seek to redefine the axes of identity competition to center on shared religion in a mobilization of an oversized CWC that affords them access. In other words, relatively large ethnic minorities may discern in a religious cleavage shared between the minority and the majority an opportunity to construct a new CWC by way of religious bonding, by bridging the majority/minority ethnic divide.27 In doing so the objective of minority leaders is to recruit sufficient number of members from the majority rank and file that the new CWC gains access and the ethnic minority leadership is to some degree insulated from majority leader challenges for the leadership of the shared religion.

27 Putnam (1995) distinguishes bonding from bridging social capital, respectively referring to socializing within and across cleavages. See also Paik and Navarre-Jackson (2011) on religion as a bonding social capital.
Ethnic minority leaders of the CWC can be expected to have reasonable hopes of success in recruiting members of the ethnic majority, at least from the rank and file, away from the MWC for two reasons. First, the greater distribution of material resources among a smaller group, which is a presumed stabilizer of preferences for the MWC, is more variable and in less competitive environments, sometimes more paltry than previously presumed (Corstange, 2018). Thus, it is plausible to expect that under-served members of the MWCs may be persuaded to join alternate coalitions. Second, emotive (Petersen, 2002) and symbolic identity rewards are of great importance for many political actors (Kaufman, 2001). The distribution of emotive and symbolic rewards is also not subject to the same constraints as material rewards, and may even be more credible when promised by leaders of an oversized coalition such as the CWC than by leaders of an MWC.

In turn, the reason the CWC challenge is expected to be led by large minority groups is that only leaders of relatively large ethnic minorities can reasonably anticipate success in leveraging their shared identity to recruit for mobilization enough co-religious supporters across ethnic lines to mount a credible challenge to the ruling majority. Furthermore, only leaders of relatively large ethnic minorities can reasonably expect to retain control of a coalition centered on religion mobilized across ethnic groups. This is especially important because minority leadership of the shared identity may be challenged by majority leaders in the event that the CWC is successful in reorienting identity competition from the segmenting identity to the shared identity.

Thus, consistent with the recent literature on MWC identity mobilization (Chandra and Boulet, 2012; Posner, 2005, 2017), the CWC suggests that minority choice to engage in an alternate mobilization of the shared identity is also a numbers game.28 However, the numbers game suggested by the CWC differs from accounts of the MWC in some important ways. First, the CWC is led by the largest or one of the largest minorities rather than the majority or pivotal group that constitutes the core of the MWC. Second, it is the demographic majority/minority balance on the first cleavage and the sharing of the second identity that drive excluded minority decisions in mobilization, whereas absolute membership in the segmented identity group mobilized by the majority is what drives the strategy about the majority/pivotal group MWC.

Subsequent chapters then put to test the CWC across transgressive and contained political settings. Finally, as discussed in Chapter 3, the demographic variation within each type of cleavage configuration (segmented or shared) returns multiple additional testable implications that are not explored in this

28 It bears emphasizing that the terminology “numbers game” does not preclude sincere preferences. Instead, the idea is that the underlying population numbers make certain mobilization strategies viable, regardless of whether the choice to mobilize is motivated by sincere preferences or instrumentality.
book. Indeed, it is the central conclusion of this book that mobilization resulting from unexplored demographic variation among groups that share or are segmented by identity likely helps explain multiple puzzles across non-violent and violent outcomes in identity politics, suggesting an exciting new research agenda.

1.4 Empirical Contributions

1.4.1 The New A-Religion Data and Case Analyses

The methodological objectives of the book are to provide evidentiary support for both the internal and external validity of our argument and especially for the testable implication of the CWC. To this end, we combine quantitative cross-national statistical testing with qualitative case narratives across cases (Pakistan, Uganda, Nepal, and Turkey) and within a case (Indonesia).

To test the generalizability of our theory cross-nationally, we build on the new sample frame of 1202 socially relevant ethnic groups from the All Minorities at Risk (AMAR) data (Birnir et al., 2015, 2018), which we have coded for religion. In the new A-Religion data set, in every country and for every majority-minority pair, in addition to group religion, we have also coded information about which ethnic groups share and which are separated by religion. The cross-national analysis in Chapter 4 tests the group-level effect of the interaction of group relative size and the extent to which religion is shared on the probability of mobilization of religion in transgressive politics. The dependent variable operationalizes religious mobilization as minority religious claim-making, coded in the Religion and Armed Conflict (RELAC) data (Svensson and Nilsson, 2018) for the civil conflicts in the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP). Robust results strongly support our argument: approaching numerical parity increases the likelihood of minority religious claim-making in a civil war between ethnic majority and ethnic minority groups that share a religion.

Even so, multiple anecdotal accounts throughout the manuscript illustrate that the precise mechanisms of how religion gets activated in political conflict are highly dependent on context. Therefore, in Chapter 5, we probe the internal validity of our argument through narratives of four cases where religious claims

29 We test some of these implications elsewhere, see for example, Birnir et al. (n.d.).
30 Our case narratives adhere to many of the tenets set out by process tracing, including a standardized structured focused comparison across cases. However, while we discuss the cases in further descriptive detail elsewhere, (see e.g. Satana et al. [2019]), space constraints prevent us from providing sufficient descriptive detail for the cases to qualify as process-traced (George and Bennett, 2005). Furthermore, the cases are not intended to test the hypotheses (Ricks and Liu, 2018), rather they are intended to examine the plausibility of the mechanisms proposed by the theory. Consequently, the terminology we use when describing the qualitative analysis is case narratives.
31 See also Birnir and Satana (2013); Satana et al. (2013).
32 We thank Jonathan Fox for his suggestion of the name. “A” stands for “All.”
are made in civil war between two or more ethnic groups. With internal validity as the objective, the cases were chosen to illustrate the mechanisms across religious doctrine, including Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism. While the logic of our CWC argument is consistent across doctrine with religious mobilization between ethnic groups in all the civil wars examined in this chapter, the case accounts also show how crucial context is to mobilization. Furthermore, the cases drive home the point that while the empirical focus in this book is on ethnicity and religion, across countries multiple other cleavage types play a role or at times are more important than ethnicity and religion in mobilization.

The second case study chapter (Chapter 6) explores the generalizability of CWC to contained political contestation in electoral politics through within-case comparisons across groups in Indonesia. As one of the most ethnoreligiously heterogeneous countries in the world, and administratively an exceedingly complicated case, the political backdrop of Indonesia is useful for parsing out the interactive effect of minority size and mobilization of religion. While the exploration of cases in this chapter is a convenience sample that is far from comprehensive, the evidence shows that CWCs are common and predictable across administrative levels in Indonesia.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, using our data on ethnic group religions in Chapter 2, we describe the ethno-religious landscape of the world cartographically and use the data to suggest answers to some additional puzzles in the literature that remain to be tested. Contrary to the conventional wisdom that envisions most ethnic groups as religious monoliths, A-Religion data illustrate that many ethnic groups are religious pluralists. Furthermore, far more ethnic groups share religion in part or entirely than might be assumed. One of the principal empirical contributions of the book, therefore, includes a more accurate empirical illustration of the complex tapestry of ethnicity and religion in the world.

1.5 Arguments Outside the Scope of this Book

1.5.1 The Onset or Success of Collective Mobilization

The objective of this project is to contribute to the theoretical explanation of why among multiple contenders a given identity is mobilized in contentious politics. Empirically, the aim is to scrutinize why religion and ethnicity are variously mobilized. However, this book does not purport to explain the onset or success of such mobilization.

Let us first think about onset as discussed by Lichbach (1994, 1998) in the context of rebellion, a particularly difficult type of mobilization onset. To paraphrase Mark Lichbach, in a response to Olson (1971), the literature has spent an extraordinary effort on solving the problem of collective action onset. As a consequence, there demonstrably exist at least some two dozen, highly context-dependent, solutions to collective rebellion, though any single
1.5 Arguments Outside the Scope of This Book

solution likely explains only a part of the story. At the same time, the precise timing of the onset of aggregate dissent and particular outbreaks remains unpredictable because of the inevitable randomness of history.\textsuperscript{33} Lichbach (1994: 31) continues to note that, therefore, the interesting challenges that remain are not further solutions to the question of collective action onset but, in contrast, include asking “Why?” certain solutions are adopted as “Why” questions “involve us in the politics of collective dissent.”

In line with Lichbach’s observations, this project does not ask how collective mobilization occurs. Taking our cue from Hirschman (1970), we assume that when groups sharing an identity lack voice, an opportunity for mobilization presents itself. Instead, we ask why mobilizing groups sometimes mobilize ethnicity and other times mobilize religion. This project suggests a general argument to answer this question: group-relative sizes interact with cleavage configurations to make certain types of identity mobilizations more or less likely. It then hones in on one specific type of mobilization strategy, the CWC, where large excluded ethnic minorities that share a religion see in the shared identity an opportunity for alternate identity mobilization.

Turning our attention next to success, this book does not purport to explain the success of a given type of identity mobilization. We assume the objective of mobilization is to increase access to state spoils. How increased access manifests is, however, context dependent and can take many different forms. For example, in an electoral context the election of a group’s representative may be a descriptive measure of success. The passing of group-related policies as promoted by the representative may be a substantive measure of success. Distribution of clientelistic rewards by the elected representative to members of the supporting group is another possible measure of success. Similarly, in a conflict setting, there are many possible measures of success. Success might, for instance, mean that the group assumes political control of the state; thus, the identity, that is the catalyst of the mobilization, finds better representation in existing governing structures, and/or direct distribution of resources to the group is improved, and/or the state makes other concessions that benefit the group, and so on. Overall, this project does not attempt to measure success of mobilization and acknowledges that there is a wide range of possible success and failure outcomes associated with identity mobilization across politics. This topic remains a wide-open area for study.

1.5.2 Identity Groups’ Pursuit of Peaceful versus Violent Strategies in Political Contestation

Scholars have long wondered what factors influence identity group choice between violent and non-violent transgressive political strategies. For example, Gurr’s (1993) analysis suggests that divergent types of group grievances are

\textsuperscript{33} Relying also on authors’ recent conversations with Mark Lichbach.
differentially related to group choice to use violence or non-violent transgressive strategies. In a recent contribution to this literature, Vogt (2019) suggests that historically defined between-group hierarchization and integration condition the transgressive mobilization strategies selected by groups. Scholars have also considered separately the effect of non-violent transgressive political strategies (Stephan and Chenoweth, 2008) on, for example, success of the civil rights movement (McAdam and Tarrow, 2000), and minority claims to autonomy (Shaykhutdinov, 2010).

An equally large literature considers identity-related choice between contained and transgressive strategies (Horowitz, 1985; Birnir, 2007), especially as these choices relate to divergent institutional configurations (Lijphart, 1977, 1984; Horowitz, 1985, 1990; Sisk, 1996; Selway and Templeman, 2012). For example, Fjelde and Höglund (2014) argue that violence is more likely in countries with large excluded ethno-political groups that employ majoritarian institutions because sizeable electoral constituencies represent threats to the incumbent party. Thus, in their account groups’ choice to stay with contained political contestation or employ transgressive strategies of political violence is motivated by the interaction of identity, group size, and institutional configuration.

Our argument does not address identity group choice between contained or transgressive political strategies such as elections or rebellion, respectively. Nor do we purport to explain identity group choices between different transgressive political strategies such as peaceful protest and violent rebellion. In contrast, we explore the demographic incentive structures for mobilizing a given identity, ethnicity, or religion, in particular, holding the choice of strategy (transgressive or contained, or within the transgressive set, peaceful or violent) constant, to the extent that this is empirically possible.

1.5.3 What’s in a Name? Religion or Religion, and Religion or Ethnicity

As previously noted, in this book, we follow social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel and Turner, 1979) in that for purposes of mobilization we treat

34 For additional grievance-based explanations of group violent transgressive political strategies see, for example, Horowitz (1985); Wimmer (1997); Stewart (2008); Cederman et al. (2013).

35 The literature on non-violent transgressive strategies that do not focus exclusively on identity groups is burgeoning. For instance, Stephan and Chenoweth (2008) show non-violent strategies win participants legitimacy and widespread support, while neutralizing the opposing security forces. They argue that in contrast violent campaigns are supported by few and serve to justify violent counter-attacks, among other things see also Schock (2005); Sharp et al. (2005); Chenoweth and Stephan (2011); Chenoweth (2020).

36 For a recent piece on public approval of transgressive versus contained choices among different types of rebel groups, see Arves et al. (2019).
1.5 Arguments Outside the Scope of This Book

ethnicity and religion as if they were comparable identities A and B with respect to content. This bears some clarification. First, within the category of ethnicity the idea that divergent ethnic groups are more or less equivalently suited for mobilization is currently not a contested assumption. Furthermore, the available evidence suggests that with respect to mobilization within the category of religions this assumption is warranted. For example, according to Young (1976), all religions potentially serve to provide the individual with continuous reaffirmation of membership while at the same time demarcating the group. Similarly, symbols across religions provide the basis for shared emotional reactions to real and imagined external threats, and call for defense of the faith as sanctioned by the divine (Jelen, 1993; Seul, 1999; Juergensmeyer, 2003). Furthermore, while the research shows organizational capacities of religious institutions matter for political mobilization (Kalyvas, 1996, 2000), it is less clear that such differences distinguish between mobilization across doctrines (Koopmans and Statham, 1999; Koopmans, 2004; Pfaff and Gill, 2006; Fox, 2006; Birnir and Overos, 2019). Consequently, with respect to mobilization we have no reason to believe that one religion differs qualitatively from the next in its capacity to unify members and mobilize them.

Second, and in contrast, emerging literature also contends that with respect to many political outcomes ethnicity and religion may differ substantively from each other. For instance, Brubaker (2015) finds that religiously-based, substantive regulation of public life is distinct. Similarly, McCauley (2014, 2017) argues that political entrepreneurs evoke religion for support of policy issues that differ from issues for which they seek ethnic support. Gerring et al. (2018) posit that while ethno-linguistic diversity increases the prospects of democracy, religious diversity decreases them.

The evidence which shows that each identity evokes distinct political preferences is persuasive and we acknowledge that future research will likely better delineate how ethnicity and religion are distinct. At the same time, we do not believe the evidence suggests one identity engenders political mobilization while the other does not. Rather the differences are possibly in the types of mobilization, such as contained or transgressive, for which each identity is best suited. Consequently, for the sake of simplicity, we feel justified in theoretically treating ethnicity and religion as if they were content comparable for mobilization. However, our empirical chapters also separate examination of different types of mobilization (transgressive, contained) to ensure that we are comparing apples to apples.

37 To be clear, certain ethnic groups may lend themselves more easily to identification by in-and-out group members, or to mobilization for exogenous reasons such as resources. However, aside from such logistical issues the literature currently does not debate endogenous motivators of mobilization between ethnic groups in a way that it does with respect to religions.
Finally, demography is by no means a panacea for explaining all identity mobilization. To the contrary, mobilization especially violent mobilization depends on a multitude of factors other than demography, including identity salience (Isaacs, 2017), group geographic concentration (Toft, 2002, 2003), repression (Davenport, 2014; Nordas, 2014b, 2015), governments’ regulatory involvement (Fox, 2008, 2015, 2016, 2020) or the decision to withhold protection from a population (Wilkinson, 2004), the institutional environment (Posner, 2005, 2017), and triggering events (Mecham, 2017) to name but some of the relevant factors.

This is especially pertinent with respect to the simplifying assumptions that are made such as the idea that ethnic and religious identities are equivalently suited for mobilization. In reality, identity cleavages likely have divergent features and levels of salience that may change over time in a given context and impact how demographic size contributes to political outcomes.39 The case study chapters (Chapters 5 and 6) cast some light on the results of relaxing these simplifying assumptions and reveal that this is probably an especially fruitful venue for further study. At the same time, the focus of this book on the demographics of intersecting identities is an important stepping stone to research that more comprehensively accounts for all the factors that jointly influence identity mobilization. Moreover, this work makes a theoretical contribution to the consideration of identity mobilization as a dynamic process, which may begin with segmented cleavages and the MWC, but continues with overlapping identities of demographically balanced groups and the CWC.

1.6 OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

Following this chapter, Chapter 2 discusses the cross-national data set, A-Religion, coded for the book and uses this data set to speculate about the answers to some common identity puzzles in the literature. Chapter 3 is the main theory chapter, outlining the theory of Alternatives in Mobilization with an emphasis on the implication of the Challenger’s Winning Coalition (CWC). Chapter 4 tests the CWC hypothesis across civil conflicts, while Chapter 5 probes the mechanisms of the logic by way of four case narratives. Chapter 6 examines the CWC in Indonesia’s electoral politics and Chapter 7 concludes. We recount the content of each chapter in some more detail below.

The principal objective of Chapter 2 is to outline a more nuanced view of the complex ethno-religious tapestry of the world made possible by the collection of the A-Religion data set, completed for this project. Thus the chapter describes the distinctly different account of the world that emerged during the coding of

38 For a cross-national overview of repression of religion specifically, see Sarkissian (2015).
39 Chapter 3 addresses the importance of changing social salience of identity.
the religions of the 1202 AMAR data groups. Each ethnic group was coded for every religious family and sect that is adhered to by at least 10 percent of the group’s population. Among other things, these data show that many ethnic groups are far from being religious monoliths. For example, among non-politically dominant ethnic minorities, nearly a third are split between religious families. This includes such disparate groups as the indigenous in Guatemala, many of whom mix Animism with Christianity to varying degrees, and in the United Kingdom the Chinese, some of whom are Buddhist while others are Christian, with a sizeable proportion of the group declaring no adherence to any religion. Similarly, in Indonesia the Ambonese are split between Christianity and Islam, and in Sri Lanka most Tamils are Hindu but some are Christian. The data also code within country the context of religious overlap between every political minority and majority. Interestingly, nearly half of all ethnic minorities overlap partly or fully with the religious family of the political majority in their country. Similarly, many minorities are split between religious sects and several overlap in part or fully with the religious sect of their respective majority. Majorities in turn are themselves sometimes split between religious families and sects, though this is less common. Because pictures often are worth a thousand words, the chapter describes this complex ethno-religious tapestry cartographically and ponders the theoretical implications.

Chapter 3 formalizes the theory of Alternatives in Mobilization. Considering the complex picture of ethnic and religious cleavages presented in Chapter 2, this chapter asks how divergent cleavage configurations structure political competition. It suggests that while extremely useful and informative, the literatures on cross-cutting (shared) cleavages and the MWC only scratch the surface of how identity is mobilized in contentious politics. The chapter further argues that demographics interact with divergent cleavage configurations to change incentive structures for mobilization in multiple additional, and, heretofore, unexplored ways. Next, it formally considers some prominent variations induced by demographics and articulates some of the multiple implications for both segmented groups that differ in ethnicity and religion, and for groups that share religion across ethnicity. In particular, the chapter highlights the testable implication of the CWC, that when a large ethnic political minority shares a religious identity with the ethnic majority, that minority can potentially mobilize co-religionists to form a CWC capable of challenging the state. In conclusion, the chapter explains how institutions interact with the testable implications of identity mobilization, setting the stage for the empirical exploration in the remainder of the book.

The remainder of the book endeavors to probe the external and internal validity of the CWC implication across transgressive and contained political settings. To this end, Chapter 4 specifies and tests cross-nationally a group-level implication of CWC in civil war. This implication pinpoints that in ethnic

40 In our coding we also account for syncretic belief systems.
Introduction

Civil war within a country, minority mobilization of religious identity is more likely if the ethnic majority and minority that share a religion are closer to numerical parity. The test of this implication relies on the demographic data in the AMAR data coded for religion through the A-Religion data set, as described earlier in this chapter in conjunction with the RELAC data on religious claim-making, coded by Svensson and Nilsson (2018), of organizations in civil war as recorded in the Uppsala Conflict Data Program’s (UCDP) data on internal conflicts that reach a yearly battle-death threshold of 25. The chapter introduces and describes the A-Religion data in detail and the methods used to test this implication, and consequently interprets the results of the analysis. The analysis shows strong support for the testable hypothesis. Increasing size of large ethnic minorities that share a religion with the majority has a significant and positive effect on the likelihood of religious claim-making in civil war. This result is consistent, across multiple model specifications, and while controlling for previously cited factors of rebellion and intra-state ethnic conflict provided by the literature.

Whereas Chapter 4 examines the external validity of the theory by testing the proposed relationship across cases in which the outcome (religious claim-making) did and did not happen, Chapter 5 delves further into the internal validity of the proposed mechanisms. The chapter achieves this by way of case narratives that “[examine] in detail how ethnic mobilization happened in order to determine whether the mechanisms suggested by [the theory] actually happened” (Kaufman, 2001: 460). Qualitative case analyses generally do not provide a crisp identification strategy but they do allow for a deeper examination of the internal validity of the theory (Laitin, 2002; George and Bennett, 2005). To this end, we stratified by doctrine41 all cases where religious claims have been made and selected three cases (Pakistan, Uganda, and Nepal)42 to examine the proposed mechanisms. Additionally, to vary the dependent variable, we examined one case where, according to the RELAC data, religious claims were not made despite the presence of a large minority that shares religion with the majority. Using a variety of primary and secondary sources, including field research in Turkey, in a focused and structured comparison, we then interrogated these cases to ascertain whether the story as it unfolds across the cases is consistent with the theory proposed. What we found was largely

41 We made the choice to stratify by doctrine because of the attention doctrine has received in the conflict literature. To be clear, the empirical evidence by and large does not support the idea that doctrinal differences associated with religion cause violence in civil war (Fox, 2004b). However, because of the emphasis in the literature and because we frequently get asked this question when presenting this work, it is important to investigate this issue empirically by examining the process we propose across doctrines.

42 Turkey was selected as a convenience case because of authors’ prior knowledge, the other cases were selected ‘randomly’ within Islam and Christianity. In only one Hindu case, Nepal, do minorities make religious claims. Neither of the authors had prior expertise of the remaining three cases, and so country experts were consulted after the narratives were constructed to support the case interpretation.
consistent with the CWC, but this chapter also provided many more insights. For example, multiple alternate identities, other than ethnicity and religion and including region and migrant status, play a role in violent mobilization that centers on religion and – contrary to common assumptions – mobilization sometimes aims to decrease the role of religion in public life. Cases “on” and “off” the dependent variable suggest the state plays an important role in creating space for the mobilization of religion. Furthermore, while there are sound empirical reasons for separately studying transgressive and contained political outcomes, the case of Turkey suggests that jointly considering outcomes across the political space enriches our understanding of group overall strategy for increasing access.

The final substantive Chapter 6, is an in-depth examination of the generalizability of the CWC argument to an electoral setting in Indonesia. In a similarly structured and focused comparison to Chapter 5, we examine ethnic majority/minority relations with an eye to detecting mobilization of shared religion in CWCs. There are two major differences between the case analysis in this chapter and in Chapter 5. First, the structural and institutional factors mitigating the likelihood of contestation by groups vary internally in Indonesia as we examine contestation at divergent levels of administration beginning with the national level and then going on to examine contestation at sub-national levels. Second, whereas three out of the four cases in Chapter 5 were selected on the dependent variable to examine the internal validity of the theory, in Indonesia we did not know a priori whether and then how a CWC would manifest in electoral politics at a given level. Furthermore, politics in contained settings allow for a more clear juxtaposition of the predictions of the MWC and the CWC than is possible in transgressive political settings. The examination of this case is, however, similar to Chapter 5 in that at each administrative level we used primary sources from authors’ field research in Indonesia along with a number of secondary sources, to interrogate the relevant cases as to whether the story as it unfolds across cases is consistent with the CWC argument proposed. This case demonstrates that the CWC is, indeed, useful for predicting minority challenger mobilization strategies in electoral politics. At the same time, as with the other cases examined, Indonesian electoral politics highlight the importance of context and alternate political cleavages, including migration. This case also revealed a number of less expected insights such as how quickly majorities adopt successful minority mobilization strategies of oversized CWCs.

Chapter 7, in conclusion, underscores the key claim of the book that to understand which identity is mobilized in political contestation and how, it is necessary to consider the complex incentives created by underlying demographics – especially as they relate to the interaction of identity cleavages and

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43 See Braithwaite et al.’s (2019) introduction and the other articles in the special issue for the effect of migration in politics, particularly political conflict.
group-relative size. The chapter highlights the principal empirical findings of the book. In sum, the nuanced view presented in this book allows scholars to see beyond the segmentation of divergent ethnic groups that also hold different religious beliefs to discover the potential for contentious mobilization in other cleavage configurations, notably, between divergent ethnic groups that share religious beliefs. We explain and show why among large ethnic minority groups, sharing a religion with the majority increases the likelihood that religious identity is mobilized. This is an especially important finding in the context of our descriptive data, which present that minorities and majorities worldwide often share religions. The chapter also highlights that while the MWC is likely a good starting prediction for identity mobilization, it is far from a static state of affairs – even holding institutions constant. Conditional on demographics, political leaders excluded from the MWC pursue a variety of alternate identity mobilization strategies in an effort to unseat the status quo MWC. Throughout the book, the prevalence of one of those strategies, the CWC, is tested and shown to have substantial explanatory power. Speaking directly to the real-world implications of our findings, this chapter also emphasizes the paramount importance of context. Cleavage configurations and demographics set up incentives for minorities to engage in or abstain from political identity contestation. However, multiple intervening variables influence whether those incentives come to fruition. This book unearths several additional questions for future scholarship, and the chapter concludes with some thoughts about new research directions that draw on the insights of the inquiry presented.