

Extended Abstract

A large body of scholarship establishes that ethno-political struggles in deeply divided societies threaten democratic stability. A principal feature of ethnic party systems is the prominence of ethnic political parties as key mobilizing agents. Considerations of ethnic identification and affiliation become salient in political organization and mobilization. Another defining feature of ethnic party systems is that public resources are allocated and distributed based on rules of patronage and neopatrimonialism that extend and deepen ethnic group boundaries. One key process conducive to democratic instability during ethno-political struggles is known as the “ethnic outbidding effect.” This process explains how intra-ethnic divisions – namely divisions between ethnic political parties that are competing for the support of the same ethnic group – drives ethnic political parties to take up extremist positions against outgroups to gain ingroup political support. Outgroup members are then pushed to take up extremist positions themselves. Thus, ethnic divisions gain salience and polarization ensues. Eventually, this process leads to the breakdown of competitive politics.

However, recent studies argue that that is not always the case. Even in a political environment where ethnic cleavages are politicized, under certain conditions, intra-ethnic divisions can in fact maintain democratic stability, harbor more competitive politics, and engender an environment where political parties prioritize programmatic appeals. Ethnic political parties can counteract an outbidding war through a process of “ethnic underbidding.” Underbidding is an effort by political elites to undermine ethnic polarization by implementing programmatic policies and appeals that then reduce the salience of ethnicity in political conflicts. But why and when do ethnic political parties take that route? First, I argue that ethnic elites are more likely to pursue underbidding when popular segments of the population, especially those belonging to their constituency, mobilize across ethnic lines. Such mobilizations make cross-cutting cleavages more politically salient. Second, internal struggles within ethnic parties can embolden moderate segments within

their ranks that aid in sidelining radical segments. The internal dynamics and internal organizational structures of ethnic political parties are largely overlooked by studies on ethnic party behavior. These conditions point to the role of party constituencies and lower party cadre in shaping party strategies and elite behavior.

Post-independence Lebanon can be categorized as a key case that locates the strategies and mechanisms through which ethnic political parties can sustain programmatic appeals. The 1960s period was preceded by an episode of ethnic violence in the summer of 1958 which ended with a political settlement. The 1958 crisis was a critical antecedent to the development of heightened intraethnic elite competition among Christian political parties. Studies on the dynamics of the crisis have solely concerned themselves with inter-ethnic conflict and rarely with the crisis's intra-ethnic dimensions. Recent studies have redirected that focus to argue that intra-ethnic competition made the ending of the 1958 crisis attainable. However, the 1958 political settlement also brought with it intraethnic divisions. The 1958 settlement opened the political field to a new Christian paramilitary organization called the Kataeb Party, in addition to some leftist political players. The new challenger Christian political party, the Lebanese Kataeb party, ascended onto the political scene. The party was a right-wing, and ultra-nationalist and ideological mass political party that largely appealed to a Christian Maronite Lebanese constituency. But the Kataeb played a significant role in advancing programmatic and accommodative social reform policies in the 1960s. Between 1958 and 1974, the country enjoyed a period of relative democratic stability with notable levels of popular mobilization and state capacity building. Using newspaper archives, personal archives, and life-history interviews, this article explores the dynamics of Lebanon's ethnic politics in a period of transition between 1958-1961 and the changeable behavior of ethnic political parties.

To chart the dynamics of ethnic politics of that era, I rely on data drawn from a total of five private and party-owned Lebanese newspapers: the Arabic daily newspaper *An Nahar*, the English daily *The Daily Star*, the daily newspaper that was owned by prime minister Abdullah Al-Yafi called *Al Siassa*, the weekly periodical owned by the leftists Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) *Al Anbaa*, and the daily newspaper of the rightist Christian Kataeb Party, *Al Amal*. Drawing on multiple newspapers helps to address problems of

underrepresentation, fact-checking, and cross-referencing in political event reporting. The roster of privately-owned Lebanese newspapers had a wide readership and robust distribution networks across Middle Eastern and Arab countries. As for party newspapers, they appeal to isolated electoral markets. I use those newspapers as a reflection of political party positions on policy disputes, framing of those disputes, practices of electoral campaigning, and communication across rival party newspapers. These newspapers include full transcripts of press conferences, public statements, and parliamentary debates, as well as opinion pieces and editorials written by party leaders, ideologues, and party intelligentsia. Archival materials also include voter registers, electoral lists, and election results. Archival information on parliament and ministries includes ministerial legal decrees, and government circulars.

In addition, I was able to access a personal archive of a member of the Christian Kataeb party, Ibrahim Najjar. Najjar was part of an internal reformist movement represented by the Kataeb Student Service (or SEK). This movement pushed the party towards more social democratic positions on policy planning and sought to integrate democratic practices within the party's organizational hierarchy. I was also able to access the personal archives of another key Kataeb party member, Maurice Gemayel, who was the Brother-in-law of the idealized Kataeb party leader at the time, Pierre Gemayel. Maurice Gemayel was seen as a rival to Pierre Gemayel and a "spiritual guide" to the reformist SEK within the party. During the summers of 2018 and 2019, I conducted life-history interviews with the owner of the personal archive, Ibrahim Najjar, as well as other life-history interviews with three founding members of the SEK (Mounir Al Hajj, Karim Pakraoduni, and Joseph Najjar).

Institutionalist perspectives on democratic politics in ethnically divided societies have long debated how particular powersharing designs and mechanisms of conciliation can mitigate ethnic conflict. There are two predominantly prescribed powersharing models: the consociational one and integrationist one. However, beyond an institutionalist approach, it now seems that the explanatory power of formal democratic institutions for ensuring powersharing behavior is not sufficient. Institutional arguments have little to say about the substantive alignments that rally citizens around rival contenders, or the strategic appeals made by leading politicians in each camp. Along this vein, this paper demonstrates how popular

mobilization and internal ethnic party struggles can embolden moderating segments within ethnic parties that, in turn, create integrative powersharing practices (i.e., arenas of bargaining, multiethnic coalition building, and elite accommodation). This article shows that such practices can establish an environment of ethnic politics that is not so different from normal competitive democratic politics; in which case ethnic parties become involved not only in securing particularistic goods and appealing to their ethnic voters but also in securing public goods and making programmatic appeals. This process engenders a “political center ground” that features a convergence of interests between rivals. An ethnic underbidding view demonstrates intraethnic elite divisions can counteract, rather than exacerbate, the outbidding effect. When faced with cross-cutting appeals and internal ethnic party struggles, an ethnic party is more likely to redefine its particularistic ethnic interests into more inclusive policies in hope that more inclusive and accommodating positions would counter-intuitively bolster ethnic support and outrun co-ethnic rivals. Ethnic elites are propelled to appeal to the median voter of their ethnic group as a way of outrunning their coethnic competitors. To demonstrate this argument, I focus on two policy battles which ensued in state institutions and led to many protests: one is the policy battle around the distribution of appointment among public sector employees and reforming the state bureaucracy; the second is the policy battle around reforming the legal profession and the higher education sector. Both battles were resolved through inclusive and accommodative strategies that included both programmatic and particularistic policies.