

# *Politics of Peace-making: A Veto Player Approach to Civil Conflict Termination in the Philippines and Sri Lanka*

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This thesis poses a question on why some civil conflicts are more difficult to end than others. To answer this question, the existing civil conflict literature tends to focus on military factors such as relative military strength and rebel dynamics. What remains underexplored is how government dynamics affect the civil conflict duration and its outcomes. Their impacts should loom larger in countries that simultaneously undergo civil conflict and electoral competition. Building on the “veto player” approach, this thesis looks into how the relationship among government actors and their incentives affect conflict-ending policy of a chief executive. In doing so, it employs both qualitative and quantitative analyses to test and examine how and when government veto players are likely to support or oppose the executive’s conflict-ending policy, affecting an outcome of peace negotiations. The structure of the thesis is as follows.

Chapter 1 first presents a puzzle that this thesis explores. Then, by focusing on four strands of existing civil conflict literature — disaggregated rebel factors, institutional characteristics of government, impacts of political dynamics on negotiated settlement, and post-conflict institutional building and political actors — it points out that a few existing studies have looked into the impacts of government dynamics on civil conflict termination. Because civil conflict involves the government, which often includes multiple political institutions, and rebel group(s), we can expect that dynamics within the government side will affect when and how a civil conflict ends. Lastly, this chapter presents the structure of this thesis.

Chapter 2 begins with presenting the body of the veto player literature which provides a useful analytical framework to analyze how and why government dynamics affect policy outcomes including civil conflict termination. In the existing literature, scholars tend to treat policy considerations as the central determinant of whether veto players accept or reject a newly proposed policy. Besides policy considerations, this thesis argues that electoral prospects also play a central role in affecting veto player’s response toward policy change. Particularly, in policy areas in which many people prefer achieving a policy goal to the status quo and, thereby, differences in a policy position among people tend to be small, I argue that electoral calculations affect prospects of government veto players for retaining office and their response to policy change from the status quo. Policy on civil conflict termination can be considered as such policy areas in which many people prefer ending civil conflict to its continuation, thus making

differences in policy preference small. In this kind of policy areas, electoral prospects should come into play to account for whether veto players support/oppose conflict-ending policy proposed by a chief executive.

Chapter 2 also develops the arguments on the effect of government veto players on different types of civil conflict outcomes. It argues that government veto players should be influential on negotiated settlements because this type of conflict outcome involves political processes that determine the extent to which state resources/authority are to be decentralized to marginalized groups. They generally have veto power over such decentralization processes. In contrast, government veto players should not be influential on government/rebel military victory and other outcomes as much as they are on negotiated settlement because these outcomes do not involve political processes of decentralization.

Chapter 3 quantitatively tests the theoretical expectations on the effect of government veto players on civil conflict duration and its outcomes by conducting survival analyses. I test whether conflicts are longer when there are more veto players by employing Cox proportional hazards model. To test the effect of government veto players on the different types of civil conflict outcomes, I conducted competing risks analyses. I find empirical evince for the theoretical implications: Civil conflicts are more likely to drag on and less likely to end through negotiated settlement when more government veto players exist. Also, I find insignificant statistical correlation between government veto players and military victory by the government or rebel group(s). These results hold when I control for the types of civil conflicts, the number of rebel groups, international interventions, and access to natural resources.

What quantitative analysis cannot tell is why and how government veto players affect civil conflict termination, particularly through negotiated settlements. A lack of cross-national data on public support to the executive and peace negotiations constrains us from quantitatively testing the theoretical implication on whether government veto players respond to how much public support the executive's peace policy gains and, in turn, affect outcomes of peace negotiations. To complement the unavailability of cross-national data and to examine causal mechanisms underlying the theoretical arguments developed in Chapter 2, I will conduct case studies on conflict-ending processes in the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

Chapter 4 deals with the peace processes under the Arroyo (2001–10) and Aquino (2010–16) administrations in the Philippines. The two presidents sought a political solution to the civil conflict but with different outcomes: Peace-seeking attempts fell through under the Arroyo administration, while the Aquino administration reached the comprehensive peace agreement in 2014. To explain why the outcomes differ, this chapter discusses that changes in the level of support to the presidents affected electoral calculations of government veto players, the Senate,

and their response toward peace negotiations. Consequently, the response of government veto players affected the outcomes of the peace processes under Arroyo and Aquino.

Chapter 5 deals with Sri Lanka. What is unique about the case of Sri Lanka is that it involves both peace-making attempts and military victory by the government. Thus, it allows us to simultaneously examine how government veto players affect peace negotiations and government victory. Although the Wickremesinghe's UNP government (2001–04) sought a negotiated settlement of the civil conflict, it could not achieve the policy goal due to the exercise of veto power by an institutional veto player, President Kumaratunga. What was behind her action was the declining support to Wickremesinghe-led peace negotiations and the expanding support to a chauvinistic political party that vehemently opposed Wickremesinghe's policy. The subsequent president, Rajapaksa, maintained the peace negotiation framework in the early phase of his administration and shifted conflict-ending policy toward a military approach afterward. The Rajapaksa administration had a partisan government veto player who had harshly criticized a negotiated solution to the civil conflict. Its presence in the government put constraints on a scope of negotiating agenda that the Rajapaksa administration could deal with in peace negotiations. At the same time, it played little role in shifting Rajapaksa's policy orientation toward a military solution. To account for Rajapaksa's shift toward a military approach, military factors come into play.

Chapter 6 concludes this thesis. It revisits the main argument and findings in this thesis and presents contributions that it can offer to the existing civil conflict literature. This dissertation shows that we need to abandon the dominant view that the government side is unitary and look beyond regime characteristics of democracy/non-democracy to expand our understanding of when and how civil conflict is likely to end and how the government side affects conflict-ending processes. By shedding light on government dynamics, it reveals that some political actors have an ability and incentives to constrain a political leader (chief executive) from unilaterally pursuing conflict-ending policy and their attitude is affected by prospects on their future electoral survival. Yet, more research should be done to investigate how electoral prospects fit or improve the existing veto player theory. I have not discussed conditions under which political actors (veto players) choose vote-seeking strategy over policy considerations in more general settings and how electoral prospects affect the three theoretical perspectives (the number, congruence, and cohesion) of Tsebelis (1995, 2002). These points are left for future work.