

Report of the Examination of the Doctoral Degree Dissertation

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2. Summary of the Dissertation

The present dissertation poses two central research questions. First, why are some civil conflicts more difficult to end than others? Second, how do political actors affect civil conflict duration and outcomes? The dissertation answers these questions by combining quantitative analyses and qualitative in-depth case studies. The contents of the chapters are summarized below.

Chapter 1 starts with the presentation of the two central research questions (section 1.1) and the definitions of key concepts employed in the dissertation, such as civil conflict termination and the types of civil conflict outcomes, political actors relevant to civil conflict termination, and government veto players (section 1.2). This chapter then conducts a literature review on a large pool of civil conflict studies, pointing out that previous research tends to regard the government as unitary and focus on macro institutional characteristics or

international involvements to account for how and when a civil conflict is likely to end, and such a simplified view of the government cannot fully capture dynamics among political actors and electoral concerns that influence their response to war-ending attempts (section 1.3). This chapter concludes with the discussion of the overall research design of the dissertation and the outline of the chapters that follow (section 1.4).

Chapter 2 presents the overall theoretical framework of the dissertation. This chapter begins with a review of the veto player literature (section 2.1) and points out that, although the veto player theory has been applied to various policy fields, it has not been applied to the government side when it comes to civil conflict studies (section 2.2). This chapter then develops an original theoretical framework to apply the veto player theory on the government side in the context of civil conflict termination, proposing two theoretical claims. First, one can expect that civil conflict termination becomes more difficult, and thus the civil conflict duration becomes longer, when there are more veto players, when policy positions of veto players are more distant, and when veto players are more cohesive. Second, the effect of government veto players is expected to be different across types of civil conflict outcomes. The author argues that, while government veto players should be influential on negotiated settlements because this type of conflict outcome involves political processes, government veto players should not be influential on government/rebel military victory and other outcomes because these types of conflict outcome do not involve political processes in which government veto players can exert their veto power (section 2.3). Finally, the author points out that it is usually assumed that veto players are pure-policy seekers but such an assumption is too strong, given the existence of diverse motivations of the political actors. The author argues that electoral prospects should also matter in the policy area such as civil conflict termination and that the level of public support to the chief executive or peace negotiations is a crucial factor that affects the government veto players (section 2.4).

Chapter 3 conducts quantitative analyses to test the hypotheses drawn from the theoretical discussion developed in Chapter 2. The first section overviews the theoretical arguments and draws two hypotheses as follows: **H1**. The more government veto players that exist, the longer civil conflict will be; **H2**. The more government veto players that exist, the longer it will take to end civil conflict through negotiated settlement (section 3.1). This chapter then presents the research design of the quantitative analyses, such as the operationalization of the dependent variables, independent variables and control variables, and the choice of estimation methods (section 3.2). The following section discusses the results

and findings of the quantitative analyses (section 3.3) and concludes that both of the hypotheses are empirically supported by the analyses of the data.

Chapter 4 conducts a case study on war-ending processes in the Philippines, with the focus on the different outcomes under the Arroyo (2001–10) and Aquino (2010–16) administrations (failure of peace negotiations under Arroyo and the success of peace negotiations under Aquino). After presenting a set of questions addressed in this chapter (section 4.1), this chapter begins with the presentation of empirical implications by summarizing theoretical arguments developed in Chapter 2 and identifies government veto players in the case of Philippines by describing its political system (section 4.2). It then presents the brief overview of the cases of Mindanao peace processes under the two administrations (section 4.3). The fourth section looks into some factors other than the electoral prospects and the government veto players, such as the existence of multiple Islamic rebel groups, economic conditions, international involvement and the contents of the peace agreements, in order to demonstrate that none of these factors can explain the varying outcomes under the two administrations (section 4.4). The author then examines the behaviors and practices of the major government actors to demonstrate that the President is oriented toward national issues, and that the representatives in the House (Lower Chamber of the Congress) pay more attention to the local policy and tend to be dependent on Presidents for the distribution of tangible resources but the Senate members are more oriented towards national issues and have a stronger incentive to exert their veto power and tend to be responsive to presidential popularity (section 4.5). Finally, the subsequent section examines the response of the Senate on the peace process under Arroyo and Aquino and argues that the Senate decided to exert its veto over the peace agreement concluded by Arroyo because of her declining popularity (caused by the revelations of her electoral fraud), while it did not do so against Aquino, who was enjoying high level of public support. In a nutshell, changes in the level of support to the presidents affected electoral calculations of government veto players and their response toward peace negotiations, which in turn affected the outcomes of the peace processes under two presidents.

Chapter 5 conducts a case study on war-ending attempts in Sri Lanka, with the focus on the different outcomes (failure of the peace negotiations under Wickremesinghe and the military victory of the government forces under Rajapaksa). After presenting a set of questions addressed in this chapter (section 5.1), this chapter begins with the presentation of empirical implications by summarizing theoretical arguments developed in Chapter 2 and identifies

government veto players in the case of Sri Lanka by describing its political system (section 5.2). The third section looks into economic, international and rebel/military factors and argues that none of them, except for the defection of the eastern top commander from the LTTE, can explain varying outcomes of failed peace negotiations under Wickremesinghe and government victory under Rajapaksa (section 5.3). The fourth section analyzes the peace-making attempts under the Wickremesinghe's UNP government and argues that electoral concerns can explain why President Kumaratunga exercised her veto power over the peace negotiations led by the Prime Minister Wickremesinghe (section 5.4). Finally, the fifth section analyzes the development under President Rajapaksa and demonstrates that the presence of the hard-liner coalition partner for the ruling party, the JVP, which can be regarded as a partisan government veto player for the Rajapaksa government, put constraints on the scope of the agenda that the Rajapaksa administration could deal with in peace negotiations. However, the existence of the partisan veto player – or lack thereof – had little role in shifting Rajapaksa's policy orientation toward a military solution, which is explained largely by the military factors, especially the military collaboration with the LTTE former commander Karuna.

Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation with a summary of the main arguments and findings as well as the contributions that it can offer to the existing civil conflict literature. This dissertation shows that we need to look beyond regime characteristics and macro institutions to expand our understanding of when and how civil conflict is likely to end and how the government side affects conflict-ending processes.

3. Evaluation of the Dissertation

The committee highly evaluates the original academic contributions made by the present dissertation, namely (1) theoretical innovation, (2) methodologically rigorous and new empirical findings, and (3) theoretically informed explanations on the cases of Philippines and Sri Lanka.

First, the theoretical approach proposed by the present dissertation can be evaluated as innovative, which opens up a new frontier not only in the civil conflict studies but also in the veto player theory. In particular, the argument made by the author on office-seeking assumption as a rationale for decisions made by veto players is innovative, inviting us to reconsider the original theoretical framework proposed by Tsebelis, which was totally based

on the policy-seeking assumption. As the author of the present dissertation points out, such an assumption is unrealistic and too strict to explain political decisions and actions made by veto players, especially in developing nations where the ideological orientations of politicians, parties and voters are often inconsistent. The author raised this issue in an effective manner to propose a new theoretical approach. The committee thus believes that the present dissertation makes an important theoretical contribution not only to the civil conflict literature but also to the larger body of political science literature in general.

Second, the present dissertation successfully conducted methodologically rigorous empirical analyses to provide new evidence on the determinants of civil conflict termination. As the author pointed out, in the existing literature on civil conflict termination, no study has conducted a systematic inquiry to examine the differential effect of government veto players on the different types of civil conflict termination by applying competing risk models. Based on the rigorous empirical analyses, the present dissertation successfully demonstrates that the government veto players do affect the negotiated settlement (make it less likely to happen), but not other types of outcomes such as military victory either by the government forces or by the rebels. These empirical findings are also consistent with the case studies conducted by the author in the subsequent two chapters. Therefore, the committee is certain that the present dissertation adds an important, methodologically rigorous and convincing empirical evidence to the civil conflict literature.

Third, the present dissertation successfully conducted a series of in-depth case studies on the cases of Philippines and Sri Lanka, which can be evaluated as an important contribution to the literature on the civil conflict in these two countries. Although there have been many “thick” descriptions of the lengthy civil conflict in these two countries, no previous study has provided a theoretically informed account of the civil conflict outcomes. The comparative analysis of the two peace processes across time in the case of Philippines, with contrasting outcomes and with other control variables being held constant, can be evaluated as a good example of “controlled comparison,” which successfully demonstrated the importance of actions made by the Senate as the key government veto player. The comparison of the two periods in Sri Lanka also makes an important and innovative contribution, pointing to the importance of electoral calculations made by the President Kumaratunga in the context of Sri Lanka’s semi-presidential system of government for the failure of the peace process as well as the importance of a “partisan” veto player for the failure of the peace process that took place in the early phase of the Rajapaksa administration. Furthermore, the case of Rajapaksa

administration in Sri Lanka also provides empirical support for the theoretical arguments made by the author about the lack of influence of government veto players on the military solution to the conflict. Thus, overall, the two case study chapters in the dissertation make an important contribution to the literature on civil conflict in these two countries and skillfully provide empirical support for the theoretical arguments made by the author.

Needless to say, there are also some limitations in the present dissertation, some of which were raised by the committee members during the final oral examination. The two most important issues are discussed in this report, namely, (1) necessity to achieve theoretical and logical rigor in introducing “office-seeking” assumption to the veto player theory, and (2) necessity to further explore, theoretically and empirically, the determinants of decisions and actions made by “office-seeking” veto players.

First, the proposal made by the dissertation to incorporate “office-seeking” motivations into the framework of veto player theory requires further conceptualizations and theory development to achieve theoretical and logical rigor. For example, if we consider both “policy-seeking” and “office-seeking” motivations are important to explain the decisions and actions made by veto players, how are these two motivations related? Are they totally independent from each other, or are they inter-related and affecting each other? How can we formalize the decision-making process of veto players if we incorporate “office-seeking” motivations into the theoretical framework? Should we stick to the dichotomous conceptualization of “veto” as proposed by Tsebelis – “either agree or disagree with the proposal to change the status quo” – or should we consider more continuous conceptualization of attitudes of the veto players, such as “degree of agreement/ disagreement on the proposal to change the status quo”? There are many theoretical or conceptual issues that remain unelaborated in the present dissertation. As the author admits at the end of the dissertation, the author is fully aware of these limitations.

Second, it is necessary to further explore, theoretically and empirically, the determinants of decisions and actions made by “office-seeking” veto players. In the present dissertation, the author focused on one factor – popularity of the chief executive or the peace policy. Obviously, it is probably not the only determinant when we consider “office-seeking” motivations of veto players. Indeed, the case study of the present dissertation already demonstrates that unpopularity of the chief executive led to the usage of veto power by the Senate, but not by the lower chamber of the Congress in the Philippines. There must be other factors that also affect the decision and actions made by “office-seeking” veto players, such as

electoral system, type of party organization and party financing, and so on. This issue was raised during the oral examination of the dissertation, and the author expressed her wish to conduct a further investigation on this issue in the future.

In any case, these limitations of the present dissertation should be understood as future research agenda for the author, and they do not compromise the validity of the arguments made by the author and do not reduce the significance of the research conducted by the author.

4. Conclusion

The present dissertation can be evaluated as an exemplary work in comparative politics, as it cleverly identifies a gap in the literature, proposes a new, innovative theoretical approach, draws a set of testable hypotheses from the theoretical framework, successfully conducts methodologically rigorous empirical analyses to test the hypotheses, and skillfully provides in-depth qualitative evidence based on a solid research design and deep knowledge on the actual cases in two countries. It successfully demonstrates that the government veto players do affect the civil conflict termination, negotiated settlements in particular, because their consent often becomes crucial when the terms of peace agreement are confirmed and implemented under the political system. It also successfully demonstrates that the government veto players, at times or in some settings, act not based on the “policy distances” but on electoral prospects. These arguments and findings make important contributions to the further understanding of the dynamism of civil conflict and will be referred to as a valuable work in the civil conflict studies. For these reasons, the committee highly evaluates the academic achievements of this dissertation and concludes unanimously that the author of the present dissertation deserves a doctoral degree in political science.

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