Ethnic Territorial Autonomies as Complex Institutional Systems: 
Institutionalizing Ethnic Peace 

Petr Panov* Andrei Semenov** 
*Perm State National Research University 
**Center for Comparative History and Politics 

September 3, 2016 

Paper prepared for the presentation at the WINIR Conference on “Institutions and Human Behavior”, Boston, MA, USA 

This work was supported by the Russian Science Foundation under Grant №15-18-00034. 

Abstract 

The paper seeks to establish the relations between specific institutional features of ethnic territorial autonomy and its pacifying effects. The heated debate on the political effects of territorial autonomy arrangements and its ability to pacify, contain, and dissolve ethnic conflicts has entered a new phase in the last decade: the proponents of power-sharing approach have argued that allowing ethnic groups to participate in decision-making process and endowing them with limited self-governance would change their preferences and behavior. On the opposite side, critiques believe that power-sharing mechanisms reinforce detached ethnic identity, hence, preventing conflict settlement. Grounding on institutional approach, this paper assumes an ethnic territorial autonomy as complex and dynamic institutional arrangements for power-sharing with multiple institutional arenas and policy domains. Since it is crucial to disaggregate autonomies into more observable units of analysis, the original dataset on world ethnic territorial autonomies has been developed to compare effects of autonomies’ institutional features on ethnic groups' propensity for conflict. While the preliminary results confirm that there is no ‘perfect’ institutional design to pacify every ethnic group, we are able to demonstrate that specific institutional settings like federalism, central power-sharing, and upper chamber in national legislature, increasing the number of veto-players, might help ethnic autonomy elites to secure their position vis-a-vis central government and constituency. At the same time, sustainability of ethnic autonomous regimes depends on the extent to which they conform to the context; autonomous institutional arrangements should be flexible to the extent allowing actors to adapt institutional rules to changing environment. 

Keywords: ethnic conflict, ethnic regional autonomy, institutional theory, veto players
Introduction

Ethnic groups have been persistently involved in all sorts of conflicts, consequently, ethnically divided societies struggle to accommodate their demands. Granting territorial autonomy to particular ethnic group is a widely used instrument of power-sharing, which empowers the group with the legally recognised means of co-decision regarding the groups' needs and demands. Therefore, ethnic regional autonomy (ERA) can be considered as a complex institutional system where self-governance of an ethnic group within the circumscribed territory is guaranteed by formal and mutually binding institutional agreements.

Ted Gurr in his 1994 ISA presidential address notes that "[n]egotiated regional autonomy has proved to be an effective antidote for ethnonational wars of secession in Western and Third World states" (Gurr 1994: 366). However, the ever-growing literature on ethnic conflicts, civil wars, and self-determination disputes remains divided on this issue. Among the most fervent critics are: Valerie Bunce, who argued that Soviet ethnofederalism while being "on paper" for quite a long period subsequently became a "subversive institution" following the popular mobilisation of late 1980s; Svante Cornell, whose study of South Caucasian republics indicates the importance of formal autonomy status in national mobilisation; and Phillip Roeder, the well-known advocate of "power-divided" model of governance. Erin Jenne using the quantitative analysis of determinants of self-determination claims also concludes that "minority autonomy serves as a poor remedy for internal conflict" (Jenne 2006: 28-29). The major reason underpinning the ineffectiveness of ERA arrangements is the belief that ERA reinforces ethnic identity, hence, "freezes" the conflict and prevents the creation of cross-cutting identities.

In this paper we argue that it is the particularities of institutional design, not the ERA per se, which is important in sustaining ethnic peace. Our newly assembled database on world's ethnic territorial autonomies shows great variation in ERAs institutional features. Using the empirics from the database and the veto players theory we develop our argument about the differential impact of institutional characteristics of ERA on ethnic peace in a given country. The paper is structured as follows: we start with the literature review regarding the links between ERA and propensity of ethnic groups to rebel and show that current research is mostly favorable of autonomy arrangements as pacifying instruments; then we present the institutional theory of ERA, particularly focusing on the veto players theory; we proceed with the description of our data on ERAs; finally, we present some preliminary findings of empirical analysis.

Ethnic territorial autonomy as pacifying tool: current state of debates

The point of departure for the debates on the usefulness of ERA is vast and proliferating literature on the nature of ethnic conflicts. Started with Gurr's "Minorities at risk" (MAR) project and relative deprivation theory, Lejphart's "consocial democracy" model, and Horowitz's psychological theory of ethnic
conflict, which complements the first two, the discussion concerning the best means to accommodate ethnic demands unfolded into the numerous attempts to prove that concessions on behalf of the sovereign state might alleviate (or not) ethnic grievances. The two camps (pro-autonomy and against) apart from substantial claims also differs in the preferred techniques of analysis. Proponents of autonomy rely on both qualitative and the large-N cross-sectional quantitative analysis (but see Jenne 2006), while those arguing against ERA usually conduct case-study or small-N comparison research.

Let us start from the opponents' camp. Major evidence for the doubts in efficiency of territorial power-sharing arrangements draws upon the post-Soviet experience. Violent dissolution of Yugoslavia, ethnic and national conflicts in former USSR, and Czechoslovakia divorce all have been associated with explicit ethnofederal structures (Bunce 1999, Jenne 2007). Bunce states that “the nation and federalism, when the boundaries of the first correlate with the boundaries of the second, seems to be combination that contributes significantly to strong pressure for autonomy, if not flirtation with outright independence” (Bunce 1999: 138).

Institutional resources, preexisting leadership and political boundaries, and opening of political opportunity structure (say, exogenous shock or weakening of the central government) greatly increase the propensity to secede (Bunce 1999: 139-140). In a similar fashion, Jenne examines a number of cases of ethnic minorities mobilisation in ex-communist countries and concludes that institutional opportunity structure (“transient political environment that emerges, often unexpectedly, to alter the balance of power between the minority and the center”), though temporally limited, may have lasting and detrimental effects on the state's unity (Jenne 2007: 17).

Cornell in his 2002 paper characterises “the ethnic group – center” as “diagonal” (“horizontal” refers to interstate contention, “vertical”- to center-periphery), since it implies partial transfer of sovereignty to the group, hence, establishes the ground for secessionism in the future: raises group cohesiveness and readiness for action, creates institutions facilitating collective actions (Cornell 2002: 252). In other words, autonomy endows the ethnic group with the necessary resources to break free from the mother state: instruments for boundary control, state institutions, leadership, media, group identity, and even external support. Cornell proves his argument on the set of cases from post-Soviet Georgia, in which three out of five had autonomous status since 1920s (Abhazia, South Ossethia, Adjara), while the remaining two (Armenians in Javahetiya and Azeris in the south of Georgia) never had. Comparing prerequisites for conflict among five cases, he highlights that Armenians in Javahetiya shared the same features like South Ossethians and Abhazians but the autonomy. Adjara case seemed to falsify his hypothesis, however, Cornell responds by mentioning that there was no ethnic component in this region. Beyond the scope of his analysis, the Adjara strongman's Aslan Abashidze rebellion against the central government in 2004 after the Rose Revolution in Georgia could buttress the main argument, but the generalisation from these five cases still looked doubtful.
Roeder hits directly on the issue of the pacifying effects of ethofederal arrangements that from his point of view are similar to ERA: “Rather than capturing the benefits of simple federalism in an ethnically plural society, ethnofederalism shapes the agenda of politics and distributes power in ways that increase the likelihood of escalating challenges to the common-state from alternative nation-state projects” (Roeder 2009: 204). He identifies five problems in the ethnofederal arrangements: focus on temporal compromise rather than enduring institutions, disregard of “greed and grievances” embedded in institutions, little consideration to “the ways in which these institutions structure … identities, capabilities and opportunities for escalating conflict over competing nation-state projects in the next round”, blind eye concerning predatory politics of the ERA government, finally, the danger of being trapped between the perils of centralisation and dissolution (Roeder 2009: 208). In short, ethnofederal and autonomy arrangements lock in the ethnic group within the jurisdiction of a circumscribed territory, therefore, entails a recurring propensity of this territory to secede, which in turn causes (not alleviates) tensions between minority and central government. In his later writings, Roeder also emphasizes that ”segmentation” may undermine democratisation projects including the prospects for minority rights protection, thus, the normative arguments for decentralisation along ethnic lines should be reconsidered as well (Roeder 2013).

The proponents’ camp is more populous and includes both research based on collection of case-studies (Anderson 2016, Benedikter 2007, Ghai 2000, Ghai and Woodman 2013, Nordquist et al. 1998, Salat et al. 2014, Weller and Wolff 2005) and large-N statistical analysis. There are normative and empirical grounds for defending autonomy arrangements or alike with the former directing to international and regional legal frameworks protecting minority rights and the ability of ERAs to preserve the territorial integrity of host states. In this paper we are more interested in empirical testing of the hypothesis that autonomy can sustain ethnic peace in a given country. Taking aside the voluminous studies of the determinants and conditions for autonomy demands (e.g. Sambanis and Milanovich 2014), the efficiency of different tactics (Shaykhutdinov 2010), and factors facilitating/inhibiting ethnic violence (e.g. Fearon and Latin 2003, Svensson and Lindgren 2011), several state-of-the-art studies have been done to reveal the capacity of ERAs to contain violence.

Two papers require special attention: Cederman et al. (2015) article “Autonomy in the Shadow of Conflict” and Siroky and Cuffe's “Lost Autonomy”. In the former the core thesis is twofold: inclusive institutions (including territorial autonomy) have expected pacifying effects on ethnic tensions, however, their efficiency is conditioned by the timing – if the inclusive institutions are introduced before the onset of conflict their effect is much higher. But even afterwards the concessions on behalf of the central government might help to, though to a much less degree. They note that both governmental and territorial power-sharing mechanisms are required to sustain the balance between ethnic minority and government. The empirical test is based on Ethnic-Power Relations dataset (EPR) developed in ETH Zurich, which covers “politically relevant” ethnic groups in the world from 1945 to 2009. The test shows that “the conflict-reducing impact of full inclusion through
central power sharing is especially strong, but regional autonomy also has a pacifying effect vis-a`-vis exclusion” (Cederman et al. 2015: 362), the latter being sensitive to the context: autonomy becomes less robust in securing peace “in situation which have seen a history of violent conflict” unless it is not combined with other power-sharing mechanisms (Ibid. 363). In the situations with history of violence, “regional autonomy is likely to be “too little, too late.” It is too little because only full inclusion through power sharing at the central level reduces conflict propensity significantly; and it is too late since regional autonomy could be effective, but only if offered in a timely, preventive fashion before group-government relations turn violent” (368).

These results are complemented by Siroky and Cuffe analysis of autonomy withdrawal. Their general idea is that in order to be mobilised, ethnic group(s) should have incentives and capacities. Somehow rendering the arguments that ERA constitutes an important resource for mobilisation, Siroky and Cuffe hypothesise that the withdrawal of this resource gives the ground for incentives/grievances. Combining EPR and MAR data and adding additional dimensions they regress the 4-item MAR separatism scale on the autonomy status (without, with, or lost autonomy) and a host of controls. Their analysis shows that a “tangible loss of autonomy is a nontrivial issue, and is robustly associated with separatism” and “that autonomous groups are not significantly more likely than groups that have never been autonomous to become separatists, but groups that lost autonomy are twice as likely to pursue secession, compared with currently autonomous and never autonomous groups” (Siroky and Cuffe 2014: 22-23). In other words, the withdrawal of autonomy from a given group significantly increases group’s propensity to fight.

To recap this section, those favoring autonomy as a pacifying tool seem to gain more analytical and empirical leverage over their opponents: despite the serious concerns that territorial power-sharing arrangements endow ethnic groups with the tools to foster their identity and even continue the struggle for independence, rigorous empirical testing while not falsifying directly such claims, proves the usefulness of territorial arrangements in alleviating at least some ethnic grievances. Moreover, once given and then taken back, the autonomy often turns into such a tool for mobilisation. However, it is necessary to point here that ERAs are not only capable of enabling, but due to its nature as institutional arrangements constrains policy choices and modes of actions, hence, at least in theory, creating the incentives to sustain peaceful status quo. In order to tackle this issue, one needs to look inside the “black box” of autonomy and discover the particular institutional features, which might be helpful in sustaining the balance between ethnic group and central government. In the next section we outline a partial model we believe is suitable for such a purpose.

**Institutional theory of ethnic territorial autonomy**

At the core of the institutional theory is the idea that institutions, regardless how defined, matter, that is institutions influence / order interests, course of actions, or even preferences of actors. Apart from the crucial debates on the origins, content, and purpose of institutions, we follow the general line of the institutional theory,
which posits that institutions arise as a result of credible contracts between individual and collective actors that have necessary capacities and resources to make such agreements. Ethnic regional autonomies are complex institutional arrangements that regulate the relations between territorially concentrated ethnic group (usually elites) and central government. Derivatives from other arrangements, which affect territorial (“horizontal”) divisions of power like federalism, ERAs may differ in the scale of given discretions, depth of co-decision on the matters of national policy, quantity and quality of arenas, where interactions take place.

Existing institutional studies of ethnic autonomies mostly cover the questions of why and under what conditions regional autonomies for ethnic groups are established. Or, in institutional theory vernacular, how the actors involved in bargaining over a particular ethnic group's status overcome collective decision problems and manage to credibly commit to a new status quo. Our aim deviates from the stream of research: assuming that the overall pacifying effect of ERA is sufficiently anchored in both empirical and theoretical studies, we want to understand the particularities of ERA as an institutional arrangement and develop an institutional theory of ethnic territorial autonomy. In other words, we attempt to go further and investigate how separate institutional features of ERAs contribute (or not) to this. Following the logics of Diermeier and Krehbel and their definition of political institutions as “a set of contextual features in a collective choice setting that defines constraints on, and opportunities for, individual behavior in the setting” (2003: 125), “contextual features of the decision-making setting that the researcher regards as essential to understanding how political actors behave in pursuit of their goals” (2003: 127), we are looking for the theory that explains what are incentives and constraints on behavior of political actors associated with an institution.

In doing so, we use one of the most conspicuous in political science versions of the institutional approach that is ‘veto-players theory’ by George Tsebelis. He considers politics through the prism of the opposition between policy change and policy status quo. In order to change policy, certain actors have to agree to the proposed change. Thus, the main idea of the theory is to define which these special actors are. They are defines as veto-players (VP) - “individual and collective actors whose agreement is necessary for a change of the status quo” (Tsebelis 2002: 19). Each veto player has relatively definite preferences concerning policy issues, which allows representing his / her ideal point in n-dimensional policy space relative to the existing status quo. Hence, configuration of VPs affects the set of outcomes that can replace the status-quo – the size of the winset of the status-quo. “Adding one veto-player may have significant effects on the size of the winset of the status quo” (Tsebelis 2000:447). That is to say that generally, the increasing the number of VPs results in the increasing the likelihood of maintaining the status quo.

A high degree of generalization of veto-players theory allows scholars to apply this approach to variety of research issues. Indeed, it is possible to explain any policy change, if we can define a) the status quo on the issue; b) a set of veto players; c) their preferences concerning the issue. Furthermore, Tsebelis provides us with some rules which allow identifying veto players. They can be divided into two groups.
Firstly, veto-players are partially derived from institutional arrangements of policy decision-making. Such institutional features as governmental system (presidential versus parliamentarian), structure of both executive and legislative bodies and so forth result in definite number of ‘institutional veto players’, i.e. “individual or collective veto players specified by the constitution” (Tsebelis 2002: 79). The second group is ‘partisan veto players’ “who are generated inside institutional veto players by the political game” (Tsebelis 2002: 79). Thus, there may be some VPs within coalition government as it is composed by some actors whose agreement is required for a decision-making that is a change of the status quo. Hence, according veto players approach, the number of veto players and policy / ideological distance between them are the primary factors influencing policy stability / change.

Also it has to be noted that institutions matter in the formation of actors’ preferences. If both sides were in a possession of full information regarding the intentions and capabilities of their counterparts, the disputes were either non-existent or short-lived. But because of “bounded rationality” of actors, that is, their inability to calculate precisely their chances to win, both sides engage in the transactions with each other to assess the mobilizational potential of a given ethnic group, on the hand, and propensity of central government to use force against the autonomy, on the other. The process of autonomisation is treated here as a “collective action” problem (Ostrom 1997) on two levels: first, the relevant ethnic group has to coordinate its members in pursuit of autonomy; second, the group's representative have to bargain with the central government regarding the rules and content of autonomisation. Henry Hale (2008) argues that in this context secession is a strategy rather than preference: ethnic groups would be better of in a union with larger state unless this union is exploitative and reluctant to use violence against rebels. Therefore, settlements that are able to foster credible commitment of the central government to non-exploitative policy might serve better as a balancing tool. Elinor Ostrom's studies provide several features of such settlements, namely, if they can generate trust and reciprocity among participants, if they enable face-to-face communication, and if they rely on the actor's reputation (Ostrom 1997). Having an upper chamber with representatives from the regions and power-sharing mechanisms in central government can facilitate communication with representatives of ethnic group and build necessary trust and reciprocity. Likewise, some institutions might help to retain the status quo by simultaneously reducing uncertainty about groups' future in a given union rendering it to “risks” (see Hale 2008, especially Chapters 3-4 on this issue) and raising the costs of changing status quo.

As was mentioned before, the existing research is divided concerning the effects of political institutions on ethnic conflict management. Most studies refer to general institutional characteristics of a given polity like democracy, rule of law, and constitutional entrenchment of minority protection norms as necessary ingredients of stable ERA (Benedicter 2009, Yash Ghai and Woodman 2013). Federalism and its specific form – ethnofederacy – often dubbed as “the worst form of institutional arrangement”, though empirical analysis confirms that vis-a-vis alternatives it performs quiet well as a pacifying tool (see Anderson 2014, Anderson 2016).
Veto-players received much less attention. Approximating our topic, Cunningham (2006) found that the number of VPs is associated with civil war duration (the higher the number – the longer the war). He proposes four mechanisms explaining this relationship: more VPs imply smaller bargaining range (“winset”) of acceptable agreements, larger informational asymmetry, the incentive to hold out from agreement, and rising instability of alliances. On the other hand, drawing upon the MAR 1985-1998 data Saideman et al. (2002) found that institutions of proportional representation and federalism (both associated with higher number of VPs) reduce the occurrence of ethnic violence.

Similarly important results can be found in the recent book by Kathleen Cunningham “Inside the Politics of Self-Determination” (2015), where she looks closer into the question of the influence of internal divides within the state and groups seeking self-determination. In an impressive attempt to cover the self-determination disputes on the timespan of 1960-2005, she makes a strong argument that the number of veto-players in government and the number of factions in self-determination movement both affect the course of bargaining and its outcomes. She finds that moderately divided states (with average number of veto-players) are “better able to bargain over self-determination because they can make credible promises, and are not so internally divided that decision-making becomes deadlocked” (Cunningham 2015:6). Likewise, more divided SD groups are more likely to get accommodated. This argument is built upon the data on the number of veto-players from the Database of Political Institutions and Cunningham's records of concessions to self-determination groups. Binary cross-section time-series logistic regression is used with concessions as a dependent variable and state veto-players (both exact number and its square) and number (logged) of self-determination groups as major independent variables.

Consequently, veto-players approach has been already used in the study of ethnic conflicts and achieving a compromise between governments and self-determination groups including autonomy as one of possible point of compromise. In other words, it concerns the explaining creation of institutions – “why some institutional features come into existence” (Diermeier and Krehbel, 2003: 130). We apply the same logic to the other issue and are interested in pacifying effects of already existing autonomies. This is the other type of institutionalist study which concerns institutional effects, not the creation of institutions.

It has to be stressed that we don’t consider pacifying effect of autonomous regime as something like an absolute stability in inter-ethnic relations. The basic idea is that ethnic autonomy is an institutional complex aiming to achieve and maintain a balance between the claims of a certain ethnic group to self-determination and the principle of territorial integrity of the state. Inasmuch as such a balance is achieved, autonomy has a pacifying effect. Nevertheless, a balance is a dynamic, not static phenomenon. Since the preferences and resources of actors involved in inter-ethnic and inter-governmental interactions change, a balance is possible to be maintained only if adequate responses to legitimate claims of actors have been given. In particular, autonomous arrangements may change for the maintenance of a balance.
At the same time, it is essentially important for the balance that this change has to be made on the basis of mutual negotiations using legitimate procedure, i.e. in the framework of exiting institutional arrangements. In this sense a balance is opposed to the conflict as the latter is defined by Conflict Barometer Project of Heidelberg University: “A political conflict is a positional difference, regarding values relevant to a society—the conflict items—between at least two decisive and directly involved actors, which is being carried out using observable and interrelated conflict measures that lie outside established regulatory procedures and threaten core state functions, the international order, or hold out the prospect to do so” (Conflict Barometer Dataset 2014). Thus, in this sense conflicts can be considered as an indicator of misbalancing inter-ethnic relations.

Thus, the question arises how the configuration of veto players, which is partially a result of political institutions, influences on such a dynamic balance. Theoretically, we can admit two contradictory inferences.

On the one hand, the increasing the number of VPs has stabilizing effect provided that both central government and regional autonomous representatives are included in a set of VPs. Generally, in a situation with higher number of VPs, the perceived risks of changing the status quo is low because of the smaller of the winset and higher costs of any action to build a coalition for change. It means that no change in ethnic autonomy regime is possible without agreement of the actors involved. This encourages actors to find a compromise and, as a consequence, pacifies interethnic relations. Therefore, our primary hypothesis is straightforward:

**H1. The higher the number of veto-players on national level is, the less probable the conflict between the government and ethnic autonomy to occur.**

On the other hand, high number of VPs may have the opposite consequences. In the situation, when changing actors’ preferences need adequate response, i.e. some rearrangements in autonomy regime, high number of VPs impedes necessary change. It might lead to a gridlock and can push actors to come outside institutional arenas pursuing change in autonomous regime. As a result, inter-ethnic conflict and misbalancing autonomous regime occur. Therefore, there is a good reason to draw the counter-hypothesis:

**CH1. The higher the number of veto-players on national level is, the more probable the conflict between the central government and ethnic autonomy to occur.**

Let us give a couple of the examples for the illustration. The first is Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), whose institutional arrangements are based on the famous Dayton Agreement. 28 of 42 seats of BiH’s House of Representatives are allocated from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and 14 seats from the Republika Srpska. The upper house of BiH’s parliament is also formed on the basis of ‘entity representation’ as well as ethnic representation: 10 from FBiH (5 Bosnian and 5 Croats) and 5 from Republika Srpska (Serbs). Furthermore, the government is composed so that two-
thirds of the ministers are from FBiH and one-third is from Republika Srpska. Each of the minister has two deputies from two other ethnic groups them himself. The same ethnic formula of the allocation of government position is used on regional level, in separate entities. Thus, the government of FBiH consists of 16 ministers: 8 Bosnyaks, 5 Croats, and 3 Serbs. Similarly, 16 seats in the government of Republika Srpska are allocated between 8 Serbs, 5 Bosnyaks, and 3 Croats. Thus, BiH is a clear example with high number of VPs stemming from very specific institutional arrangements. Bahtić-Kunrath (2011) argues that in Bosnia and Herzegovina “entity voting” is used primarily by Serbska Republic in order to maintain the existing level of autonomy, even if legislation does not affect the actual range of discretions.

The other example, Belgium is a well-known case of political systems with very strong political cleavages which are based on the combination of ideological and ethno-political distinctions. It results in that both national and regional governments are quite complex multi-party coalitions. Consequently, any constitutional change requires agreement of high number of VPs. Belgium endured five constitutional reforms in 1980-2001; however each of them has just complicated decision-making process and increased the number of VPs. Not surprising, no reforms have been carried out since 2001. High number of VPs might be one of the reasons why it is in 2000s when supporters of further of automisation radicalized. Such Flemish party as Flemish Block (later Flemish Interests) become influential political actors and received up to one quarter of the votes in elections. Other parties decided to make ‘the cordon sanitaire’ against Flemish Block blocking it from any executive power. However, this did not mitigate the tensions in relations between national government and Flemish community.

So, how does the high number of VPs in both these cases effect on inter-ethnic relations, specifically on the relations between the central government and ethnic regional units? While it is unlikely to have an unambiguous answer to this question, there are some evidences of contradictory effects. Thus, according Conflict Barometer monitoring, the intensity of the conflict in BiH has being slightly decreased in recent years, whereas in Belgium it is in the middle of 2000s when the conflict started.

Next, discussing the issue of stability of ethnic regional autonomies, we should take into account that they vary in their age. While most of cases are fairly institutionalized autonomous regimes (Canadian Quebec, Malaysian Sarawak and Sabah, Russian national republics, etc.), some of ERAs have emerged recently. Thus, for example, Aceh (Indonesia) was granted autonomy just in 2005 after 29 years of war for self-determination. Democratic transition in post-Suharto Indonesia, catastrophic Indian Ocean earthquake in 2004, international mediation – all of these in the combination makes it possible to sign a peace agreement between Free Aceh Movement and Indonesian central government. It led to stop armed conflict and start the process of institutionalization of Aceh autonomy. However, institutionalization is clearly very hard and very long process. At present, Aceh autonomous arrangements should not be considered as status quo. It is undoubtedly that Aceh and other similar cases are much more accorded to the logic of emerging autonomy, i.e. bargaining
over expected compromise that was exposed by David E. Cunningham (2006) and Kathleen Cunningham (2015). In other words, here there is also the problem of the creation of institutions, not only the problem of institutional effects.

Consequently, while in well-institutionalized (‘older’) autonomies we can expect higher commitment to institutional mechanisms of resolving conflicts, in under-institutionalized (‘younger’) autonomies certain institutions can lock-in the vicious cycle of extra-institutional contention. It means that the higher number of veto-players in young autonomies can undermine the process of reconciliation, especially in post-conflict societies and increases the conflicts. Thus, in Aceh case the process of autonomy institutionalization is likely to be hampered by a fairly complicated political process on national level. As Indonesian party system is fragmented, no party has an absolute majority in the parliament, and different coalition governments replaced each other. As a result, a fairly high number of VPs can be considered as one of the reason of on-going conflict though the conflict does not grow into armed clashes. Hence, our next hypothesis states:

**H2. The age of ERA is negatively associated with the occurrence of conflict.**

Studying pacifying versus conflicting effect of ethnic regional autonomies from the view of veto players approach, we have to list all possible dyads of strategic interactions between relevant political actors and then “state and hold fixed the behavioral postulates for political actors within the collective choice setting to be studied” (Diermeier and Krehbel, 2003: 7). In case of territorial autonomies, the relevant actors include: central government, population of the autonomy at hand, formal authorities of the autonomy, alternative centers of power in the autonomy (e.g. insurgency groups, military, counter-elites), and external actors including kin-groups and international organisations. Important interactions include:

- Central government – Autonomy government (direct interactions, namely, bargaining over rules and conditions);  
- Central government – Alternative centers of power (direct interactions);  
- Central government – Autonomy population (diffuse interactions, e.g. public goods provision)  
- External actors – Central government (direct interactions, sanctions/assistance)  
- External actors – Autonomy government (direct interactions)  
- External actors – Alternative centers of power (direct interactions, e.g. military or financial aid to insurgents);  

In this study the main focus is on the “central government – autonomy government” interactions. The strategic arenas for this interplay are legislative and executive bodies of both national and autonomous levels. Both these actors have distinct preferences concerning autonomous arrangements. The preferences of the central government is to maintain the territorial integrity and to make as few concessions as possible, while the autonomy government’s preferences, on the opposites, imply the continuing process of autonomisation and self-determination in extreme. According veto players approach, the consequences of interactions between
these two key actors with different preferences depend on veto players’ positions
which, as was noted above, are generated by institutional arrangements. That is why
we need to define how autonomous institutional arrangements affect the set of veto
players in legislatures and executives. Specifically, we should identify whether
autonomous actors have VP positions on national level, on the one hand, and whether
national actors have VP positions on autonomous level, on the other hand. In other
words, we need to study mutual penetration of the center and autonomies in decision-
making process. At the same time, we have to take into account that the number of
VPs is also depends on political constellation that can result in increasing number of
VPs in the same institutional rule. Since there may be some VPs in both the camps of
‘central government’ and ‘regional autonomy’, we need examine the composition of a
government in each case so that ‘institutional VPs’ are added by ‘partisan VPs’.

Data: Ethnic Regional Autonomies Database (ERAD)

The data for this research come from Ethnic Regional Autonomies Database
(ERAD) that was created in the framework of research project “Securing a balance in
interethnic relations: regional autonomies, the state integrity and the rights of ethnic
minorities”. In recent decades, when ethno-political studies have been actively
developed, significant number of databases in the field has been developed. Some of
them focus on several ethnic issues in separate countries, for example on ethnic
composition - The Composition of Religious and Ethnic Groups (CREG), Ethnic
Composition Data (PRIO) as well as on ethnic fractionalization (Alesina, Roeder,
Posner, Fearon, Driessen), ethnic polarization (Reynal-Querol), ethnic segregation
(Alesina and Zhuravskaya), ethnic inequality (Alesina, Michalopoulos). The other
group of datasets concentrates on ethnic conflicts - Correlates of War Project; The
Political Instability Task Force (PITF); Major episodes of political violence (MEPV);
UCDP / PRIO Armed conflict datasets. The third group of datasets focuses on ethnic
groups. Besides some influential references on special issues - Atlas Narodov Mira;
Ethnographic Atlas of George Peter Murdock, Ethnologue: Languages of the World,
Minorities at Risk (MAR) and Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) are the most prominent.
In the Also, an important advance is an integration of different datasets. Thus,
ACD2EPR 2014 dataset was created. It links ACD v.4-2014 conflicts to EPR 2014
groups. GROWup is a federated data platform aimed to provide management and
access to disaggregated, integrated, spatially explicit, and user-friendly conflict-
related data.

Nevertheless, none of these datasets concentrates on explicitly regional level.
Although some geo-referenced datasets (UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset; PRIO-
GRID; Geo-referencing of ethnic groups (GREG) and Geo-EPR), which have been
created recently, allow localizing ethnic groups and ethnic conflicts in the space, they
do not focus on administrative division of the countries – sub-national units. The
latter field has yet remained understudied. In this sense the Regional Authority Index
is a unique dataset as it contents the data on sub-national units of 81 countries
concerning the degree of both self-rule and shared-rule. However, it encompasses just
half of the countries it does not concern ethnic issues at all.

In the context, ERAD is a unique dataset in its focus as the unit of observation is neither ethnic group, nor ethnic conflict, but ethnic autonomous region. Although ERAD partially accumulates some relevant data from other datasets mentioned above, it contains dozens of variables which extracted from original sources. ERAD identifies all ethnic regional autonomies (ERAs) around the world, which exist at present or ceased to exist in the beginning of XXI century. Its major purpose is to collect and systematize comprehensive information and supply a large selection of variables on ERAs for all years, 2001-2015. Accordingly, the data are presented in the format ‘autonomy-year’.

Three criteria have been used for the definition of ethnic autonomies. The first is the relevant degree of self-government. On the one hand, following other researchers, we consider territorial autonomy as political, not just administrative autonomy. In other words, autonomous territorial units should have their own popularly elected legislatures with legally defined power in certain spheres (Wolff 2010; Benedikter 2009). On the other hand, we do not consider as autonomies those political entities which actually independent in their internal affairs even if they give up powers in defense and foreign policy (so called associated states) (Lapidoth 1997: 54-55). Also, de-facto states (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabak, Transnistria, Cyprus) and parts of clear failed states (Somali) are not considered as being autonomous as central governments do not control these territories at all.

Institutional asymmetry is the second criterion. As many authors argue, the concept of autonomy should be applied only to those sub-national units which have special arrangements in comparison with other units of the same level of government. (Henders 2010: 14; Yash Ghai, Woodman 2013: 18-19; Lapidoth 1997: 50; Suksi 2011; Benedikter 2009: 9). It has to be stressed that autonomous regime prerequisites preferences, i.e. higher status of a sub-national unit. Therefore asymmetric regions with lower status (dependent territories, etc.) are not considered as autonomies.

Third, we focus on only those territorial autonomies which are ethnically grounded. In ideal-typical sense, territorial autonomy differs from other types of group autonomies (cultural and functional) in that a social group (autonomous entity) is defined by means of just territorial grounds. Thus, for example, it is a usual practice to provide capital territorial units with a special status (Capital Districts). Also, the same status may be given to the units with extraordinary importance for economic, geopolitical and so forth reasons (Azores and Madeira in Portugal, Aghion Oros (Greece), Ceuta, Melilla (Spain), Jeju (South Korea), Galápagos in Ecuador, etc.). However, in most of cases it is ethnicity that is the ground of specificity of the group that enjoys territorial autonomy. “Autonomy is a device to allow ethnic or other groups claiming a distinct identity to exercise direct control over affairs of special concern to them, while allowing the larger entity to exercise those powers which cover common interests” (Yash Ghai 2000: 8).

It is not a surprise as the key idea of territorial autonomy is to manage contradictions and tensions between universalistic national identity and particularistic identities of which it is ethnic identity that is the most significant in the contemporary
world. It has to be stressed that the very idea of asymmetry in the relations between the central government and sub-national units, i.e. granting some preferences to respective sub-national units, strongly corresponds with the purpose of reconciliation of multiple identities. This is especially clear in the case of asymmetric federations. While non-ethnic federations are mostly symmetric (Germany, Austria, the USA, etc.), partial ethno-federations are clearly asymmetric; and they are ‘ethnic units of federations’ which have clearly expressed asymmetric preferences, special status, etc. in comparison with other, ‘standard’ units of federations (Quebec in Canada, Sarawak and Sabah in Malaysia).1

Thus, there is a good reason to distinguish a special class in the universe of territorial autonomies – ‘ethnic territorial autonomies’, where special arrangements (asymmetric preferences in comparison with other units of the same level) of an autonomous unit are connected with the definite ethnic group, i.e. it is the ethnic group that is a ground for these special provisions2. Special position of this group is well defined by the term ‘titular ethnic group’.

Nevertheless, the question arises how to check and ascertain that special preferences of a sub-national unit are ethnically determined and connected with the definite ethnic group. The problem is that in some cases, the legislation hides such a connection justifying asymmetrical arrangements by anything (regional specificity, political / economic / historical / geographical, etc. reasons) but not ethnicity. Besides, the term ‘titular ethnic group’ is not used everywhere, so that in the regions with high ethnic diversity and ethnic fragmentation it is not easy to define which the group is the ‘titular’.

Some ways can be devised to solve the problem. The first is an inspection of ethnic composition of an autonomous unit in comparison with a country. As it was noted above, it is commonly recognized that autonomy is granted to territorially concentrated ethnic group. Although it is certainly right in a whole, it is not sufficiently clear empirically. Should we count a share of different ethnic groups in the population of the region? Should we count a share of the definite ethnic group?

1 Also, there is a class of full ethnofederations, which consists of four cases. It has to be noted that the term is a fairly conditional since there are non-ethnic units in all these federations: Brussels in Belgium; Brcko district which a neutral, self-governing administrative unit, under the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina; two cities with special status in Ethiopia; and Islamabad Capital Territory in Pakistan. It gives us a good reason, at least formally, to consider all ethnic units of these federations as ethnic territorial autonomy in spite of that it is clearly that these are almost full ethnic as well as mostly symmetric federations (except Pakistan where there are some federal territories with lower status along with four provinces). In these cases, strong ethnic affiliation of the units appears to be more important feature than relatively deficiency of asymmetry.

2 It has to be noted that some scholars prefer to avoid the term of ‘ethnic territorial autonomy’. They argue that the term as such is ambiguous because that in contrast to cultural / functional autonomy, territorial autonomy by definition includes population of different ethnic groups (Benedikter 2009: 10). Nevertheless, we follow those authors who distinguish ‘ethnic territorial autonomies’ as special class territorial autonomies, which are connected with ethnic groups. Such close terms as autonomous ethnic region, ethnically-defined territorial autonomy ethnically based autonomies ethnic autonomy regime are also used in the literature (Anderson 2016; Yash Ghai 2000; Van Cott 2001).
living in the region in total size of this ethnic group in the country? The both versions appear to be reasonable but in both cases we have not definite threshold that would allow us to speak about enough degree of concentration. Furthermore, in many cases with clearly defined ‘titular ethnic group’ the latter is not a majority in the population of autonomous unit; and this contradicts to the concentration criteria. (Tibetans in Tibet Autonomous Region (China) are just 6.3%; Harari in Harari Region (Ethiopia) – 8.2%; Miskito in South Caribbean Autonomous Region (Nicaragua) – approximately 10%; Karelians in Karelia (Russia) – 7%, etc.).

The second way is to rely on the name of the unit. Explicit binding the name to the name of the group (ethnonim) is a good argument in favor of that the unit can be considered as ethnic territorial autonomy. Nevertheless, it is also insufficient indicator as there are many cases of ethnic autonomies without ethnonim in their names (Quebec in Canada; Aosta Valley in Italy; Sarawak and Sabah in Malaysia, etc.). On the other hand, it is possible that ethnonim is a consequence of historical legacies and does not concern current situation at all (Brittany and Normandy in France, for examples).

The third way is based on an access of ethnic group to power. Thus, as it is argued in Ethnic Power Relations project, “for a group to be coded as regionally autonomous, two conditions must be jointly satisfied. First, there must be a meaningful and active regional executive organ… and group representatives must exert actual influence on the decisions of this entity, acting in line with the group’s local interests. The second condition also implies that a given regional entity must have de facto (as opposed to mere de jure) political power” (Vogt at al 2015: 1331). Such an approach appears to be promising; however it is not always clear how we can define whether an ethnic group actually influences on decisions. How can we be sure that a person really represents ethnic group whose member he/she is perceived by an observer? Some additional indicators are required for answering these questions, such as expert evaluations as in EPR project, examination ethno-regional parties (however ethnic parties are prohibited or miss in some countries -Russia, Philippines, Georgia etc.).

The forth way to define ethnic territorial autonomy is based on rather subjective perceptions than any objective indicators - the unit should be defined as a homeland of a respective ethnic group that should be recognized as a distinct nationality (Ganguly and MacDuff 2003: 3-4; Roeder 2014: 93; Gagnon and Keating 2012: P.2-3). The main disadvantage of this way is that the recognition of any sub-national unit as a homeland of the definite ethnic group is not always official (Russian national republics; Italian autonomies, etc.). Moreover, it is a point that is frequently disputed, especially in the case when some ethnic groups aspire to such recognition (Crimean Tatars and Russian in Crimea). Additionally, perceptions concerning ethnic identification of a territorial unit can change over time. (Crimea was obviously ethnic autonomy as a part of Ukraine, but it has evidently lost ethnic ground in the Russian Federation). In these cases, so to say ‘genetic approach’ can be fruitful for the definition of ethnic autonomy. It means that we have to examine what was the initial purpose of the establishment of autonomy (Yash Ghai and Woodman...
There certainly may be variety of purposes, but if one of them concerned ethnicity, such autonomy should by identified as ethnic territorial autonomy. This is a point that is stressed in the definition of ethnic autonomy by Liam Anderson: “With respect to ethnic autonomies that are part of an otherwise unitary state, the requirements for inclusion are that the autonomy was granted on the basis of ethnic identity, and that the autonomy is protected by something more than a normal law that can be overturned by a simple majority” (Anderson 2016: 18).

Another problem in identification of ethnic autonomies stems from the extra complicated nature of ethnicity. In contrast to primordial and essentialist thinking, which consider ethnicity as ‘taken-for-granted’ and acquired through the birth, contemporary theories of ethnicity and ethnic identity understand it as a social organization of cultural differences (Barth 1998). Unlike other social categorizations such as age, gender, profession, and so forth, there is no any special criterion (foundation) for the definition of the boundaries for ethnic categories. As Frederic Barth argued, “we give primary emphasize to the fact that ethnic groups are categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves, and thus have the characteristic of organizing interaction between people” (Barth 1998: 10). That is why, following Max Weber, most scholars define ethnicity as a categorization that is based on belief in ‘common origin’ or ‘common descent’ of group’s members, regardless of what feature provide such a belief (Wimmer 2013: 7; Horowitz 1985: 17-18; Yash Ghai 2000: 4).

As it has been argued, in contemporary world “language is the most prominent form of ethnic identification in the autonomies... and in many cases, protecting the language of the group that forms a majority in the areas has been a key aim of the autonomy” (Yash Ghai and Woodman 2013: 477). However, there are many cases when religion, not language determines ethnic lines (Bosnia and Herzegovina). It may be a combination of not only language and religions (some Indian states – Kashmir, Punjab) but also historical heritage, geographic remoteness, physical appearance (race), etc. Also, the question what determine ethnic differentiation is disputed in many cases.

In spite of that a permanent struggle over ethnic categorizations takes place, in most of cases at the moment one can observe a dominant and legitimate social perception of ethnic categories and ethnic boundaries. These are dominant ethnic categorizations (common understanding) which are used in the study. The main idea is that ethnic group is the one that is perceived as an ethnic group by the people, and first of all by the members of the group, more or less conventionally.

As regards ethnic ground of autonomy, in most of cases it is also not hard to identify a titular group. Noticeable, that there can be autonomies with some ‘titular groups’, for example Bosniaks and Croats in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Berta and Gumuz in Benishangul-Gumuz Region (Ethiopia); Kabardians and Balkars in Kabardino-Balkariya; Karachays and Cherkess in Karachaevo-Cherkessiya (Russia). Some problematic cases are those where reasonable doubts exist, whether the group, which preferential arrangements connect with, can be interpreted as an ethnic group. Thus, official Georgian government does
not recognize Adjarians as an ethnic group. Sicilians are also not recognized as a separate ethnic group in Italia. Although both territories enjoy autonomous arrangements, their justifications are contradictory – historical-geographical versus ethnic. In all these cases, we make a choice in favor of a minority group’s interpretation.

In some cases ambiguous interpretations are caused by that the creation of regional autonomies is often a result of the complex reasons, not just ethnically determined. A general rule was used that autonomy is identified as ERA if ethnicity was a substantial factor in its creation. Thus, among 29 states of India, 19 were identified as ethnic autonomies because of that they were the result of a movement toward the creation of the sub-national units on the basis of linguistic boundaries. Such a movement was initiated by The States Reorganisation Act of 1956 and is still ongoing.

It has to be stressed that ERAD focuses on just regional (the first sub-national level of government) autonomies with a population of at least 100 thousand people. Ethnic territorial autonomies of lower that the first levels of the government are not included in the ERAD. Such underpopulated ERAs as Farer and Greenland (Denmark), Aland (Finland), Kuna Yala, Emberá-Wounaan (Panama), Nunavut (Canada) are also not included in the dataset. It makes no sense to include in ERAD those cases when regional autonomies have been granted in recent years (Telangana, a new Indian state founded in 2015; Nepal and South Sudan, which are just in starting point of the creation of ethnic federation). Furthermore, some cases with quite contradictory information concerning (formally) autonomous regions have not included in ERAD: Karakalpakstan Autonomous Republic in Uzbekistan, autonomous province of Gorno-Badakhshan in Tajikistan, some autonomous traditional kingdoms in Uganda, etc.

In most of cases an administrative division of a country is pretty clear, so that it is not hard to distinguish sub-national unites of the first level. However, some cases are fairly complicated due to the deviations from standard administrative divisions. For the detail examination GADM database of Global Administrative Areas and the information from Statiods Project were used. Thus, some ethnic autonomies are created between the first and the second levels of the government (Chittagong Hills in Bangladesh) whereas other autonomies are special administrative units created between the national level and the first sub-national level of government - Iraqi Kurdistan, Vojvodina (Serbia), Zanzibar (Tanzania), South Sudan (Sudan, 2005-2011). While the former does not meet with our criteria, the latter are included in the list of ethnic regional autonomies.

Total number of ethnic regional autonomies is amount of 104. Some of them ceased to exist already (South Sudan separated out Sudan in 2011; Montenegro created its own state in 2006; in the case of Crimea irredentist secession was take place in 2014)\(^3\). Accordingly, the number of observation is 1532. The full list of

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\(^3\) Despite of that the inclusion of the Crimea to Russia in not internationally recognized, de-facto the Crimea is controlled by Russian government; and in this context, the Crimean autonomy evidently lost its ethnic significance.
ethnic regional autonomies included in the ERAD is presented on http://www.polit.psu.ru/autonomies_project.htm.

Variables and Analysis

The set of variables have been drawn from institutional theory of ethnic territorial autonomy and veto-players theoretical approach. Since our main assumption is that the number of veto-players matters, some variables, which reflect the number of VPs, have been developed. Two of them concern institutional sources of the increasing the number of VPs.

1) As federal system of government undoubtedly increases the number of VPs, we include a binary variable ‘federation’. All federations were coded as “1”; all the other countries – “0”.

2) Another institutional arrangement that increase the number of VPs is an upper house of parliament. Binary variable ‘upper house’ is used (“1” means existence of upper house).

Next, as it was noted above, not only institutional rules bur also political constellation influences on the number of veto-players (‘partisan VPs). For that reason we introduce the third independent variable – ‘power-sharing in national government’. This is an ordinal variable that indicates the degree of power-sharing arrangements and takes the value “0” if there are no signs of power-sharing; “1” if a coalition government with ethno-regional parties of the ERA is formed ‘ex post’ elections; “2” if governmental coalitions have become a usual practices; “3” if a creation of governmental coalitions is prescribed constitutionally (‘pure type’ of power-sharing).

Finally, we use so to say ‘summing variable’ – ‘checks’ that reflects the number of VPs directly. The data was extracted from World Bank's Database of Political Institutions.

Our dependent variable should indicate pacifying (balancing) effect of autonomies. As it was noted in theoretical section, pacifying effect is considered through the prism of conflicts, which emerge in relations between the central government and ethnic autonomy. In other words, positive pacifying effect is a lack of the conflicts if we understand them as such actors’ interactions which are going beyond established institutional procedures (Conflict Barometer Dataset 2014). It does not concern just violations and armed actions. Conflict in this sense may be peaceful but dangerous for established political order including autonomous regime. Therefore measuring this variable we cannot rely on such well-known datasets as Correlates of War (COW) or Armed Conflict Dataset (ACD) which register just armed conflicts. As the Conflict Barometer definition of a conflict is likely to be the most relevant for our study, annual monitoring reports of Conflict Barometer were used as a source of information. Dependent binary variable ‘conflict’ was created and coded as “1” if Conflict Barometer registers a conflict in respective unit of observation (autonomy-year) and “0” in all the other cases.

Hence, now it is possible to formulate our working hypothesis:
H1.1. Federal arrangements decrease the probability of conflict.
H1.2. The presence of upper chamber in national parliament with representatives of subnational units is associated with less probability of conflict.
H1.3. Higher degree of power-sharing with the group in national government leads to less probability of conflict.
H1.4. Higher number of ‘checks’ decrease the probability of conflict.

For the testing the second hypothesis (the influence of the degree of institutionalization of autonomies) we introduce as an approximation the variable ‘age’ that is simply the year when the autonomy was established.

Some control variables have been included in the analysis as they are expected to influence on the conflicts in the relations between the Center and ethnic autonomies. Namely, the population size should be positively associated with the occurrence of conflict, alongside with presence of kin-state, higher degree of ethnic fractionalization and ethnic differences between titular and dominant in the country ethnic groups, and low standard of living. We take logarithm of autonomy’s population. The values of Ethnic fractionalization index were extracted from Alesina at al. (2003). The presence of kin-state of ethnic autonomy was coded in binary manner. For the measurement of difference between titular and dominant in the country ethnic groups two ordinal control variables have been created. On the basis of Ethnologue and Ethnic Power Relations both linguistic and religious distances have been coded. The literature also suggests that democracy is a less conflict-prone regime, thus political regime features (coded on the basis of Polity IV project) was put in control.

First, let us have a look at the data itself. Out of 1532 autonomy-year observations there are 599 (39%) with conflicts. The largest share of conflicts (58.4% of total number) is attributed to Asian countries while two Latin America cases (Nicaragua and Panama) have zero conflict events. Africa account for 12.4 of conflict events in total, but it also is more conflict-prone than Europe/Canada and ex-communist regions (Table 1.).

Table 1. Occurrences of conflicts by region

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Region</th>
<th>No conflict</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% no conflict</th>
<th>% conflict</th>
<th>% no conflict of total</th>
<th>% conflicts of total</th>
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<tr>
<td>West Europe/Canada</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>68.9</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>21.3</td>
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<td>323</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>20.8</td>
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<td>266</td>
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<td>615</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>56.7</td>
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<td>Africa</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>42.3</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>598</td>
<td>1532</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>39</td>
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</table>

Source: estimated on the basis of Conflict Barometer.
Figure 1 presents the frequency of the number of veto-players (measured through ‘checks’) on the national level with the median on 4. The distribution is right-skewed with extreme 17 points value being the highest. The typical case of a country with four veto-players is Canada in 2001-2004 or Phillipines. Extreme values of 17 veto-players can be found in India from 2005 onwards.

![Figure 1. Number of veto-players on the national level (checks) Source: Database on Political Insitutions, 2015.](image1)

In the boxplot on Figure 2, we compare the number of national veto-players conditioned by occurrence and non-occurrence of conflicts. Though the range seems quite similar, the median number for non-conflict conditions is 4 and the distribution is skewed a bit more towards the higher number of veto-players, while for conflict conditions the median number is 3 with the majority concentrated between 1 and the median. A closer look at the veto-player distribution differentiated by region reveals that Asian countries drive the median to four (Figure 3).

![Figure 2. Number of veto-players on the national level (checks) for two conditions. Source: Database on Political Insitutions, 2015.](image2)

![Figure 3. Number of veto-players on the national level by region Source: Database on Political Insitutions, 2015](image3)
We employ two models: binary cross-sectional time-series logistic regression with DV as an occurrence of conflict in a given year in a given autonomy, and Poission regression for aggregated data with DV as number of conflict events. The reason for the former model has theoretical underpinnings: we expect that the effects of institutions might be “glacial”, that is, significant only in a long-run perspective, hence, autonomy-year BCSTS model can be misleading.

The results for BCSTS model is presented in Table 2. Baseline model for H1 (model 1 in Table 2.) shows predicted sign and significance of “checks” variable at the conventional level, however, once accounted for other predictors the number of VPs exhibits a large degree of inconsistency with sign changing to opposite and loss in significance. Testing H2, the “age” variable performs consistent with the theory with negative sign, indicating that the older autonomies are less conflict-prone (models 3 and 4). Federalism (H3) also performs in a predicted manner, though in a full models (11 and 12) fails short of conventional statistical significance. Representation in legislature's upper house (H4) has a predicted sign and significant impact on the outcome at 0.001 level, but changes the sign in a full model. Power-sharing (H5) in national government has predicted sign and high significance in all but the baseline model (model 9).

Among the controls, Polity IV model has an inconsistent impact on the outcome. Population and presence of kin-state is positively and strongly associated with increasing probability of conflict. Higher ethnic fractionalisation once achieving significance covariate with increasing chances of conflicts. Surprisingly, linguistical distance between ethnic group and titular majority consistently decreases chances of conflict, while religion distance does the opposite. And dummy variables for the region indicates lower probability of conflict in ex-communist, African, and Latina American states and higher in Asian compared to Europe/Canada, which is consistent to our general observations above.

Results of Poisson regression on the number of conflict events are in Table 3. Several modifications have been made in this analysis: first, the median of veto-players over the 15 years replaced the number of VPs in a given year; second, we were also able to add economic controls, namely, the share of an ERA in national economy and level of economic development; third, we removed the dummies for regions. This type of regression mostly confirms the BCSTS model: when significant, our DVs impact the outcome in a predicted direction. The exception is the “checks” variable, which in a full model (model 11), in which two other variables of interest change sign and lose significance.
Table 2. Results of binomial cross-sectional time-series logistic regression with occurrence (1) or non-occurrence (0) of conflict as dependent variable. Standard errors below the coefficients.

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Table 3. Results of Poisson regression with the overall number of conflict as dependent variable. Standard errors below the coefficients.
Discussion and conclusions

Overall, we can conclude that indeed there is some ground to assume the importance of institutions in sustaining ethnic peace in a given country. Our analysis of 105 cases of ethnic regional autonomies around the world both in time-series and aggregated fashion show that higher number of veto-players, the duration of autonomy, presence of federalism, upper chamber, and power-sharing in central government contain conflicts related to the status of ethnic groups, however, their combined effects in joint models are not that evident.

Our analysis is definitely vulnerable to the measures we use. For example, our dependent variable is the result of an “expert treatment” by Conflict Barometer rather than empirically evident phenomenon, unlike “hard data” on causalities in armed conflicts or civil war onset. Likewise, the nature of our panel of independent variables implies stability rather than variance over time, hence, giving less analytical leverage. Therefore, one way to improve this analysis and check for robustness of results is to reconfigure both DV and IVs. The other solution is to look for alternative statistical models that can handle this type of data in a more sound way like survival analysis, though, the multiple occurrence of conflict makes it also difficult to employ. There is also a need for a more formalisation of a bargaining process between ERA and central government. Here we assume their preferences as maximising the level of autonomy or retaining as much powers in the center as possible respectively, but the question of possible set of strategies and related equilibrium remains open.

Nevertheless, this study fits well into the growing literature on the importance of territorial arrangements in pacifying rebellious ethnic groups. Institutions are indeed established by humans, therefore, can not be treated as genuinely “exogenous” to behavior. To say this does not deny some lasting effects of institutions on the former: from our analysis we can conclude that over time institutional arrangements can reduce uncertainty and insecurity if they provide enough space for ethnic groups to communicate with and influence the central government's decisions. This balance can be fragile to external shocks since ethnic politics is not the only concern of any government; however, it provides both ethnic groups and their central counterparts to avoid violent contention on both sides.

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