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SEPARATION VS. RE-INTEGRATION OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES DIVIDED BY ETHNIC CONFLICT

Does ethnic heterogeneity prevent or facilitate peace in local post-conflict communities? Large-n cross-case study of the Post-Yugoslav region.

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ABSTRACT

The primary aim of the research is to uncover possible causal links between different levels and patterns of ethnic heterogeneity and inter-ethnic relations on the local level using a large-N sample of post-conflict areas of the Post-Yugoslav region. Competing theoretical arguments on relation between ethnic heterogeneity and prospects for peace after an ethnic conflict will be tested within a sample of 119 post-conflict ethnically mixed municipalities throughout the region. While the causal logic of *separationalist* arguments of conflict resolution assumes negative effect of ethnic heterogeneity on the quality of inter-ethnic relations, competing *integrationist* assumptions conversely suggest that heterogeneity facilitates peace. The research will test the suggested contradictory links between ethnic heterogeneity and post-conflict peace by using mixed methods approach and combining quantitative large-N test with medium-N and small-N qualitative methods. The relation between ethnic heterogeneity as the explanatory variable and inter-ethnic political cooperation as the dependent variable will be first investigated through bivariate quantitative methods looking for correlations between the two phenomena. Subsequently, theoretically relevant subset of cases will be included into qualitatively designed comparative study based on QCA method to uncover possible necessity and sufficiency of particular levels of ethnic heterogeneity for post-conflict cooperation. Finally, more in-depth qualitative study based on process tracing method will be conducted within small-N sample of *crucial cases* to uncover effective causal mechanisms. Through triangulation of different types of data and methods of their analysis, potential links from post-conflict ethnic demography to prospects for peace on the local level will be comprehensively investigated and causal mechanism acting behind them uncovered and explained.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ethnic conflicts are still burning around the world. From Central Africa, through Middle East, Caucasus and Central Asia, up to European periphery, different groups are fighting for power over areas of ethnic diversity. Meanwhile, both scholars and practitioners of conflict resolution are still searching for durable solutions that would halt the inter-communal violence and bring peace to internally divided societies. In situations where states are hit by ethnic war, suggested peace frameworks usually range from partitioning the country into ethnically homogenous units, through autonomous or federalist arrangements to re-integration of the country and its society. Is partition of Syria, Iraq or Afganistan the only solution to protracted ethno-religious wars, as some suggest? Would federalization of Macedonia or partition of Kosovo bring stability to the volatile Post-Yugoslav space? Or, conversely, should once partitioned territories and societies of Cyprus, Nagorno Karabkh or Bosnia be peacefully reintegrated? These and similar questions can be easily applied to most of ongoing and latent ethnic conflicts in the world. Recent history of ethnic conflict presents us with voluminous yet inconclusive empirical evidence on the issue. Since the rise of modern nationalism in 18th century, the world has witnessed dozens of cases of ethnically heterogeneous states hit by internal strife, leading to different outcomes with varying durability. From more or less successful reintegrations of societies, through federalist and autonomous solutions, *de facto* and *de iure* partitions of contested territories, up to one-side victories and suppressions of defeated groups. This ambiguous empirical record of ethnic conflicts and their varying outcomes brings us to the fundamental question for both theory and practice of ethnic conflict resolution: Under which conditions can once belligerent ethnic groups live together peacefully after experiencing a violent conflict?

As a result of rapid spread of ethnic conflicts in early 1990s, the question has attracted much of scholar attention within theoretical and empirical research. During last two decades, debate around the issue has developed along a continuum between two theoretical poles - *separationist* perspective on one hand and *integrationist* on the other. While advocates of separationist solutions call for political partitions of contested territories and/or physical separations of hostile groups, integrationists defend the liberal assumption that re-integration of communities divided by ethnic conflict is not only desirable but also feasible.

The central question of the whole debate is that of causal link from ethnic diversity to ethnic conflict and peace. In this regard, record of presented theoretical arguments is extensive, yet largely inconclusive. Scholars from different disciplines have presented contradictory theoretical assumptions and empirical evidence on causal link from particular levels and patterns of ethnic heterogeneity to prospects for peace. While advocates of partitionist approaches generally warn that ethnic heterogeneity increases the risk of conflict and prevent a durable peace to be achieved, integrationist oppose them by their argument of accommodating effect of ethnic heterogeneity. With competing theoretical arguments and inconclusive empirical evidence, the debate goes on unresolved.

The research project presented in this paper intends to contribute to this ongoing and highly relevant debate by conducting an innovative empirical test of competing theoretical arguments on the local level within the Balkans region. The primary aim of the research is to uncover causal links from different levels and patterns of ethnic heterogeneity to peace on the local level of analysis within a large-n sample of 119 post-conflict municipalities in the Post-Yugoslav space. The paper further proceeds as follows: First, the research agenda is defined and set into broader empirical and theoretical context. For this purpose, empirical trends of ethnic conflict and its resolution and related theoretical debate between separationist and integrationist strategies are discussed. Subsequently, competing theoretical arguments focused specifically on link between ethnic heterogeneity and ethnic conflict and peace are presented and further developed into hypotheses that will be tested within the research. In the second part, methodological framework of the intended research is presented, departing from identification and conceptualization of core variables, discussing level and unit of analysis and population and samples of cases under consideration. Then, methods of data collection and data analysis are presented. Finally, main limits and potential contribution of the research are discussed.

2. SITUATING THE RESEARCH AGENDA

2.1. ETHNIC CONFLICT AND ITS RESOLUTION: EMPIRICAL TRENDS

Without any exaggeration, modern history can be interpreted as an era of the *nation state* and *nationalism*. Since the 19th century, old fashioned multi-ethnic empires, modern colonial realms and multi-national socialist federations, all one after other split apart into ethnically homogenous nation states. Shifts of political frontiers in Europe, Africa or Asia during the 20th century and rising number of states clearly illustrate the process of territorial fragmentation of multi-national realms into smaller national units. Consequently, this transformation of the international system was accompanied by a great record of ethno-territorial conflict (Wimmer and Min 2006). While the modernization theory presumed the opposite, ethnic conflict proliferated in the world through the post-Second World War decades and its importance was even to rise in the end of the 20th century (Ellingsen 2000; Fox 2004). Since 1945, internal wars, majority of them ethno-territorial, outweighed the traditional form of interstate conflict and their incidence, duration and intensity have continually risen (Scherrer 1994; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Cederman et al. 2010). Many expected the end of the Cold War to bring stability and peace into the international system or the infamous *End of history*, yet the world in fact witnessed a rapid increase of both incidence and intensity of local conflicts in 1990s. From the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes, through Central Asia and the Caucasus, up to the Balkans, internal and regional conflicts, most of them ethnically framed, escalated into the spiral of intercommunal violence (Gurr 1994; Druckman and Stern 2000; Wallensteen 2011). Again, old multi-ethnic entities were partitioned, populations separated and new nation states have arisen from these conflicts (Brown 2001; Wolff 2007).

First decades of the 21st century did not bring any fundamental change in this trend. Despite partial decline of overall incidence of ethnic conflicts in the world, new ethno-territorial struggles emerged while some old-new were reignited (see Cederman, Gleditsch, and Wucherpfennig 2014). From European periphery, through the Middle East up to Central Africa or Central Asia, areas of cultural diversity have been again hit by ethno-religious wars in first two decades of 21st century. According to Vogt et al. (2015), there were 25 active

violent conflicts based on ethnic claims located in 15 states in 2013. Dozens of others have remained frozen yet not conclusively solved, including many on the European periphery (see Conflict Barometer 2016). The lasting empirical trend is clear: despite opposite expectations of modernizing society, ethnic conflict has remained a constant category of modern history in ethnically diverse areas.

Witnessing the rapid spread of ethnic conflicts and their destabilizing effects, the world has been trying to find durable solutions that could stop the inter-communal violence and return peace to internally divided countries. Through the history, the emerging international community has changed its stance towards resolution of ethnic conflicts, shifting from traditional, passive partitionist approach towards more active integrative policies. After the massive rise of modern ethno-nationalism, most ethnic struggles were resolved through partition of territories and separation of their populations (Ther 2001; Wimmer and Min 2006). Until the late 20th century, the world has witnessed dozens of such scenarios. Partitions of territories accompanied by population transfers, regardless if voluntary or forced, were often considered not only as legitimate yet also legal and appropriate solution to an ethnic conflict (Adelman and Barkan 2011). Well-known cases of population exchange between Greece and Turkey or Pakistan and India, expulsions of Germans from the Eastern Europe or acceptance of ethnic partition of Cyprus and Israel/Palestine illustrate the historically prevailing approach (Kaufmann 1998; Ther and Siljak 2001). On the contrary, there had been rather few cases of successful reintegration of diverse societies divided by internal strife until the late 20th century.

However, the international approach changed sharply on the eve of 20th century. With the end of the Cold War and the outbreak of new internal conflicts throughout the world, ethnic wars became central point of interest for both scholars and practitioners in the field of conflict resolution. While ethnic conflicts were burning around the world, quest for feasible and durable solutions to ethnic conflicts intensified and new approaches of conflict management were being developed and tested on the ground. Importantly for political and theoretical underpinnings of new approaches to conflict resolution, the end of the Cold War was widely interpreted as an ultimate victory of liberal and universalist ideas and as such brought new moral imperatives into the world politics in general and conflict resolution in

particular (Mason and Meernik 2005; Sorenson and Wood 2005; Caplan 2006; Ramsbotham et al. 2011). Based on the victorious ideas of democracy and cooperation, new agenda was set within the field of conflict resolution seeking for integrative and inclusive solutions to violent conflicts and introducing new strategies of liberal peace-building (Boutros-Ghali 1992).

This brought the conflict resolution theory and conflict reality on the ground into a situation of mutual contradiction. The violent history of nation-state building was still going on in its old manner with ethnic cleansings and partitions taking place from Vukovar to Nagorno-Karabakh. Meanwhile, both scholars and politicians, facing the challenge of escalation of ethnic wars across the world, were desperately seeking for new integrative solutions. Confronted with first major failures of such inclusive approaches to ethnic wars in Bosnia or Rwanda, some of more realist-profiled scholars stepped back and presented controversial arguments and recommendations that inclined to less peaceful and integrative solutions to ethnic conflicts (Mearsheimer 1993; Mearsheimer and Van Evera 1995; Kaufmann 1996; Pape 1997; Luttwak 1999). In response, more liberally grounded advocates of inclusive approaches came with their counter-argumentation advocating and improving integrative solutions (Kumar 1997; Sambanis 2000; Fearon 2004b). Thus, during last two decades, a living debate has developed around the issue along a continuum between two principal approaches: realist-rooted *partitionist* perspective on one hand and liberal *integrationist* on the other.

2.2. SEPARATION VS. INTEGRATION DEBATE

Since 1990s, the debate on appropriate solutions to ethnic conflict has developed along the continuum between two extreme arguments grounded in different theoretical paradigms. First of them can be called *integrationist* and is based on general assumption of (neo-)liberalism that cooperation can outweigh conflict even in anarchic system as the common interests prevail over security concerns. The second approach would then be labelled *separationist* or *partitionist* and has its groundings in the contrary assumptions of (neo-)realist tradition which considers conflict and self-help as the primary elements of international relations. While integrationists interpret the post-conflict settings in terms of non-zero sum game and consider inter-ethnic cooperation as both possible and desired, the

separationists rather see the post-conflict period as zero-sum continuation of the previous conflict and emphasize the necessity for physical and/or political division of belligerent communities.

The debate that has developed along the continuum between these two most pronounced arguments is touching many fundamental issues of the conflict resolution and has so far offered full scale of different strategies and instruments, usually situated somewhere between extreme poles. As such, the separation vs. integration debate is framing the overall debate on conflict resolution strategies and is over-arching more specific debates, such as that on post-conflict institutional settlements (*consociationalism vs. centripetalism*, Lijphart 1977; Horowitz 1985) or on ethnic diversity management (*managing vs. eliminating* ethnic differences, McGarry and O'Leary 1993).

The roots of the integrationist argumentation can be tracked back to Horowitz's (1984) centripetal argument for *accommodation* within ethnically divided societies or even to the *contact theory* of conflict resolution developed empirically in psychology by Allport (1954). While differing in the suggested effective causal mechanisms, its proponents commonly argue that any forms of ethnic separation actually deepen and replicate the conflict attitudes and that only inter-group contact and integration can bring stable peace. The proposed causal mechanism is based on assumption that different forms of inter-ethnic contact, from politics through economy to every-day life, create a cross-ethnic social capital and that emerging cross-cutting cleavages and common interests effectively prevent recurrence of the inter-group conflict (Byman 1997; M. Pickering 2006; Jenne 2010; Rydgren and Sofi 2011).

The rival separationist argument developed in response to international failures to prevent and stop mass ethnic killings in early 1990s. In 1996, the international community was still shocked by the images of recent atrocities in Rwanda or Bosnia and its own inability to halt it. In that delicate moment, Kaufmann (1996; 1998) formulated clearly the core of the separationist argument in his daring thesis about necessity of ethnic separation for sustaining stable peace after ethnic conflict. Departing from empirical record of post-WW2 ethnic conflicts, Kaufmann argues that atrocities and nationalist rhetoric accompanying the

conflict produce deep inter-ethnic security dilemma which prevents de-escalation of the even after cessation of hostilities. Once the conflict intensity threshold is reached, the only way to reduce the inter-ethnic security dilemma is physical separation of ethnic groups into defensible territorial units (Posen 1993; Roe 2004).

Since late 1990s, the debate separation vs. integration has even intensified together with empirical developments in the field of ethnic conflict resolution (for more comprehensive overview of the debate, see Downes 2001; O'Leary 2006, 2011; Pischedda 2008; Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2009; Licklider and Bloom 2013). While some scholars (Downes 2001; Carment and Rowlands 2004; Roe 2004; Chapman and Roeder 2007) developed further the separation argument, others opposed it from more integrationist positions and advocated alternative conflict resolution strategies (Byman 1997; Kumar 1997; Walter 1997; Kuperman 2004; Laitin 2004; Jenne 2009). Along the theoretical discussion, application of different conflict resolution strategies to different cases has been discussed (Byman 1997, 2015; Totten 2015; Downes 2001, 2004; Joseph and O'Hanlon 2007). Furthermore, competing arguments have been subject to empirical tests conducted within large-n datasets and bringing largely ambiguous results (Mason and Fett 1996; Sambanis 2000; Johnson 2008; Ayres 2000; Kuperman 2004; Laitin 2004). Despite the extensive scholar attention, the debate has remained unresolved.

Hence, the principle question of the debate is still open: can once belligerent ethnic groups live together peacefully again after an ethnic conflict? Undoubtedly, such question is not purely theoretical as it poses direct policy implications for the practice of conflict resolution. Both camps have used the inconclusive empirical record of ethnic conflict outcomes to support their arguments. Truly, the empirical record of results of different approaches is mixed globally as well as in the regional context of the Balkans.¹ Attempted re-integration of societies in Zimbabwe or Northern Ireland and de iure or de facto partitions of contested territories in Sudan, Georgia or Eritrea alike show ambivalent results in regard to the durability and quality of the achieved peace. Turning to the Balkans, the region has witnessed integrationist post-conflict strategies in Macedonia or Croatia as well as (semi-

¹ See Licklider (1993, 1995), Mason and Fett (1996), Walter (1997), Mason (2009) or Kaufmann (1996) for more comprehensive overview of recorded civil war outcomes.

)separationist approaches in Bosnia and Kosovo, all of them commonly producing rather uncertain outcomes.

With no definite theoretical or empirical answer, the debate continues until today, holding not only scholar but also high political relevance. Both paradigms have not only ambitions, yet also real opportunities to influence the processes of conflict resolution. Recently, in situations where states are internally divided by ethnic war, suggested peace frameworks still range from partition of the country into ethnically homogenous units, through autonomous or federalist arrangements to re-integration of the country and its society. Debates between the different approaches can be hard and long as the recent cases of quests for the sustainable solution for Syria, Iraq, Ukraine, Sudan or persisting tensions in the Balkans show.² Apparently, the separation-integration debate is still alive.

This research aims to contribute into this debate with empirically testing the central theoretical assumptions standing behind the most pronounced approaches on one hand, and shifting the focus to meso-level of local communities on the other. To do so, the research will attempt to uncover and investigate possible links between ethnic heterogeneity and inter-ethnic relations within the sample of 119 post-conflict multi-ethnic local communities in the Post-Yugoslav region.

2.3. THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

It is evident from the above presented brief overview of the *separation vs. integration* debate that both competing arguments consider ethnic demography as a crucial variable that strongly determines prospects for peace and conflict in divided societies. Yet, the assumed causal effect of demography on peace is completely contradictory in their argumentation. According to their logic, separationists assume that peace can be sustained and inter-ethnic relations restored only if the belligerent groups are sufficiently territorially separated from each other into mostly homogenous units (Johnson 2008). On the contrary,

² For the ongoing discussion of possible conflict resolution strategies including both partitions and re-integrations see Groarke (2016), Paasche and Gunter (2016), Mitton (2016), Byman (2015), Selcen (2015) or Radin (2014) on the Syrian case; Totten (2015) and Arango (2016) on Iraq; Wilson (2016), Wade (2015), Oklopčić (2015) or Motyl (2014) on Ukraine; German (2016), Venhovens (2016) or Gerrits and Bader (2016) on Georgia; Medani (2011) on Sudan; or Less (2017) and Mujanović (2017) on old-new tensions in the Balkans.

integrationists' logic suggests that peaceful inter-ethnic relations will be more easily restored and sustained in ethnically diverse settings (Byman 1997).

Hence, one of the central questions of the whole debate is that of link from ethnic heterogeneity to conflict and peace. In last two decades, scholars coming mainly from the field conflict and peace studies devoted extensive attention to the link between ethnic demography and inter-ethnic relations, trying to capture possible correlations and causations between the two phenomena. Scholars have investigated and empirically tested effect of different patterns and levels of ethnic diversity on different phases of ethnic conflict, from its onset, through intensity and dynamics, to its termination and post-conflict peacebuilding. Despite great attention devoted to the issue, existing state of art remains largely inconclusive and presents contradictory theoretical assumptions and even mutually conflicting results of their empirical tests. It is neither possible nor desirable within the limited scope of this paper to cover the voluminous debate comprehensively, so only main schools of thought and their central arguments will be presented. More complex overviews of the debate were presented among others by Bates (2008), Bleaney and Dimico (2009) or Ellingsen (2000).

The whole search for causal link between ethnic heterogeneity and quality of inter-ethnic relations was ignited by robust findings acquired in the field of development economy that proved negative relation between levels of ethnic diversity and economic performance and public policies (Alesina et al. 1997; Easterly and Levine 1997). Departing from these empirically supported findings, many scholars developed theories of link from ethnic diversity to ethnic conflict and tested them empirically. However, both their assumptions and empirical findings have extremely diverged. Some scholars consistently assumed and proved that ethnic diversity increases risk of ethnic conflict (or conversely decreases inter-ethnic peace), yet through different causal mechanisms (Vanhanen 1999; Blimes 2006). The elementary principle of their logic is based on assumption that ethnic diversity as such weakens societal cohesion and cleave common interest of the society as whole into particular interests of single ethnic groups. Negative effect of ethnic diversity on inter-ethnic peace was also confirmed by several empirical studies (Hegre 2001; Schneider and Wiesehomeier 2006). Looking on duration and termination rather than onset or incidence of

ethnic conflict, several studies found positive relation between ethnic diversity and duration of violent conflict and its resistance to mediated termination (Collier et al. 2001; Elbadawi and Sambanis 2000; Fearon 2004a). Contrary to all these findings, other scholars presented empirically grounded arguments on opposite effect of ethnic diversity on inter-ethnic relations. Horowitz (1985) argued that the more diverse a society is, the more intensive is the rational incentive for all groups to find common interest. Furthermore, situated between the two main arguments on positive vs. negative effect of ethnic diversity, Collier and Hoefler (2002) presented an argument on negative effect of intermediate level of ethnic diversity on inter-ethnic peace as it produces ethnic dominance, which was confirmed by empirical tests by Bates (2008) and Ellingsen (2000). However, several empirical large-n studies disproved any correlation or even causation between ethnic diversity and ethnic conflict (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Hegre and Sambanis 2006; Wimmer et al. 2009).

Among those who found no link between simple diversity and conflict, some scholars shifted their attention towards more specific dimensions and patterns of ethnic structure and power relations they produce. Montalvo and Reynal-Querol (2002, 2005) investigated the link between ethnic polarization and inter-ethnic relations and found a direct link from high levels of polarization to inter-ethnic conflict. According to them, inter-ethnic conflict is most likely if there are two similarly strong groups or when slight majority faces strong majority, since the coordination costs of the groups for conflict are at their lowest (see also Horowitz 1985 and Collier and Hoeffler 1998). Nevertheless, Esteban and Ray (1999) challenged this assumption in their own empirical study and found that intermediate level of polarization rather than high polarization are the risk factor for ethnic conflict, since stakes are at their highest.

Going beyond the pure statistical demography, many authors focus on spatial dimension of ethnic heterogeneity. In contrast to demographic understanding of heterogeneity that can only capture the overall ethnic structure of the population, the spatial conceptualization uncovers actual distribution of ethnic groups within a territory. The spatial dimension of heterogeneity thus characterizes to what extent members of different groups actually live separated or intermingled. Similarly to demographic dimension of heterogeneity, the research on link from spatial dimension of ethnic heterogeneity to ethnic conflict and peace

has produced contradictory arguments and findings. From the extreme separationist perspective, Kaufmann (1996), in accordance with Posen (1993), argued that ethnic intermingling (i.e. high levels of ethnic heterogeneity) increases the risk of conflict as it produces inter-group security dilemma. For Kaufmann, the effective causal mechanism lies in the distrust and hatred that developed in the previous ethnic conflict. Thus, he assumes that ethno-territorial separation is necessary for stable peace to be achieved after ethnic conflict. For Posen, the inter-ethnic security dilemma occurs specifically in delicate situations of state power dissolution that effectively create anarchical structure and increase the role of group-based self-help. Furthermore, Bleaney and Dimico (2009) argue that usually uneven distribution of ethnic groups within the territory of state leads to local polarization and escalation of conflicts. Looking at micro dynamics of local communities, Putnam (2007) argues that in ethnically inter-mingled societies, individuals tend to 'hunker down' due to inter-ethnic barriers that lead to weaker inter-group social trust and solidarity.

On the contrary, advocates of rather integrationist approaches to ethnic conflict resolution suggest completely reverse effect of the ethnic intermingling on inter-ethnic relations. While the effective causal mechanisms differ depending on the primary level and actor of analysis, they all assume positive affect of ethnic intermingling as it creates more incentives for inter-ethnic cooperation and produces common interests. Back in 1950s, Allport (1954), focusing on individual's behaviour, developed his resonant *contact hypothesis* which assumes that direct contact between members of different groups under equal conditions weakens prejudices and facilitates cooperation (see also Uslaner 2006; Van der Meer and Tolsma 2014). Advocates of social capital theory focus more on the structure of inter-ethnic relations and argue that more shared space creates more cross-cutting links and inter-group social capital that weakens the conflict (see Semenas 2014 for broader discussion). Similarly to them, yet speaking from more rational-choice positions, authors focusing on common interests assume that more ethnic intermingling makes cooperation a vital interest of opposing groups as more heterogeneity prevents domination of one group and facilitates inter-group coalitions (Horowitz 1985; Byman 1997).

The above presented brief overview of competing theoretical arguments clearly captures the inconclusiveness of the debate on link between ethnic heterogeneity and inter-ethnic

relations. Despite their solid theoretical groundings and elaborated empirical tests, none of presented arguments have offered convincing findings and most of the theories have been both proved and disproved in other empirical studies. To address the inconclusiveness of the existing state of art, this research will empirically test implications of competing theoretical arguments on the local level using a large-N sample of post-conflict multi-ethnic municipalities in the Post-Yugoslav space.

3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. HYPOTHESES TO BE TESTED

Hypothesis to be tested on the local level in the Post-Yugoslav region are developed directly from the above presented competing theoretical arguments. However, their formulation requires more than simple logical translation of assumed link from ethnic heterogeneity to inter-ethnic peace and conflict into testable formulations. Two important conceptual considerations need to be taken into account when formulating hypotheses.

First, presented theoretical arguments need to be transformed into post-conflict settings. As noted above, scholars investigating the link from ethnic heterogeneity to inter-ethnic peace and conflict focus on different stages of conflict (de)-escalation curve: from conflict onset, through intensity, dynamics and duration, up to its termination and post-conflict peace. Since the focus of this research will be on long-term post-conflict developments, all tested causal mechanism need to be first reconsidered and their applicability for post-conflict settings assessed. Second, tested causal mechanisms need to be shifted to local level of analysis. Most of the works presented in previous section were based on macro- or micro-level of analysis, mostly using state/nation or individual as their primary unit of analysis. In contrast to these prevailing perspectives, this research will shift the focus towards largely understudied meso-level of analysis and use municipalities as units of analysis and local ethnic communities as main actors. While this shift is applied to bring new insight into the local dynamics of ethnic relations, it also poses conceptual challenges on developing locally-oriented hypotheses from theories formulated on macro- or micro-level. Hence, for all tested causal mechanisms, their applicability on the meso-level needs to be considered.

Working hypotheses are formulated as follows. First, general hypothesis is directly developed from the central question of the separation-integration debate, as presented above:

H_a: *Ethnic heterogeneity prevents peace after ethnic conflict* (separationist perspective).

H_b: *Ethnic heterogeneity facilitates peace after ethnic conflict* (integrationist perspective).

Subsequently, more specific hypotheses are developed from the general hypothesis in direct link to differing theoretical arguments on link from specific dimensions, levels and patterns of ethnic heterogeneity to prospects for peace after ethnic conflict. These hypotheses are presented in the following table according to suggested link between dimension (column) and level (row) of heterogeneity.

	DIVERSITY	POLARIZATION	TERRITORIALITY
HIGH	<p>-> CONFLICT (Vanhanen 1999, Blimes 2006)</p> <p>-> PEACE (Horowitz 1985)</p>	<p>-> CONFLICT (Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2002)</p> <p>-> PEACE (Esteban and Ray 1999)</p>	<p>-> CONFLICT (Posen 1993)</p> <p>-> PEACE (Horowitz 1985)</p>
MEDIUM	<p>-> CONFLICT (Collier and Hoeffler 2002)</p>	<p>-> CONFLICT (Esteban and Ray 1999)</p>	
LOW		<p>-> PEACE (Esteban and Ray 1999)</p>	<p>-> CONFLICT (Allport 1954)</p> <p>-> PEACE (Kaufmann 1996)</p>

Table 1: Competing theoretical assumptions on causal link from different levels and dimensions of ethnic heterogeneity to conflict and peace.

3.2. VARIABLES

Since all hypotheses are formulated in a bivariate form, only one explanatory and one dependent variable will be included into the tested model. Besides these, potential effects of other theoretically relevant control variables will be also examined.

3.2.1. INDEPENDENT VARIABLE: ETHNIC HETEROGENEITY

Both separationists and integrationists emphasize the role that ethnic diversity plays in post-conflict settings. While the former consider it as the primary obstacle for inter-ethnic stability, the latter argue it actually facilitates inter-ethnic peace. Furthermore, other authors emphasize causal effect of specific levels and patterns of ethnic heterogeneity on ethnic conflict and peace, such as ethnic polarization or ethnic dominance.

As explained in section 2.3, authors working on relation between heterogeneity and conflict understand the heterogeneity in different ways. While most of the scholars conceptualize it in pure demographic manner, others focus on more complex spatial distribution of ethnic groups within the territory. From the demographic perspective, many authors have focused on role of ethnic diversity measured through level of fractionalization or pure number of ethnic communities (Vanhanen 1999; Fearon and Laitin 2003). Others employed conceptually more complex measure of ethnic polarization capturing power relations between relevant ethnic groups (Montalvo and Reynal-Querol 2002; Schneider and Wiesehomeier 2006). Going beyond pure demographic statistics, other authors studying the link from ethnic heterogeneity to peace and conflict focus on the spatial dimension of ethnic heterogeneity, looking at pattern of distribution of ethnic groups within the territory. With respect to all these approaches, for the purpose of this research the ethnic heterogeneity as independent variable will be conceptualized into two-dimensional model distinguishing between demographic and spatial dimension.

First, demographic dimension is intended to capture ethnic structure of the population of the unit as whole. Second, spatial dimension attempts to identify patterns of distribution of different ethnic groups and their members within the territory of the unit. For any unit of analysis, values for both of these dimensions of ethnic heterogeneity can be stated, hence there are different categories of ethnic heterogeneity. Specific levels of ethnic diversity and polarization on the unit-level can be accompanied by different patterns of ethnic distribution within the unit. The demographic dimension will be operationalized using standard statistical methods for measuring ethnic heterogeneity: calculations of ethnic fractionalization (Taylor and Hudson 1970) and ethnic polarization (Montalvo and Reynal-

Querol 2005). While the former expresses the diversity of population as such, the latter shows how close is the structure of society to bipolar setting.

While values for demographic dimension can be easily counted from the census data, the level of ethnic heterogeneity in the spatial dimension is more complex. For this purpose, continuum between full physical separation and maximal intermingling will be applied. Based on disaggregated demographic data on ethnic structure of population, level of separation and intermingling within the territory of the unit will be estimated.

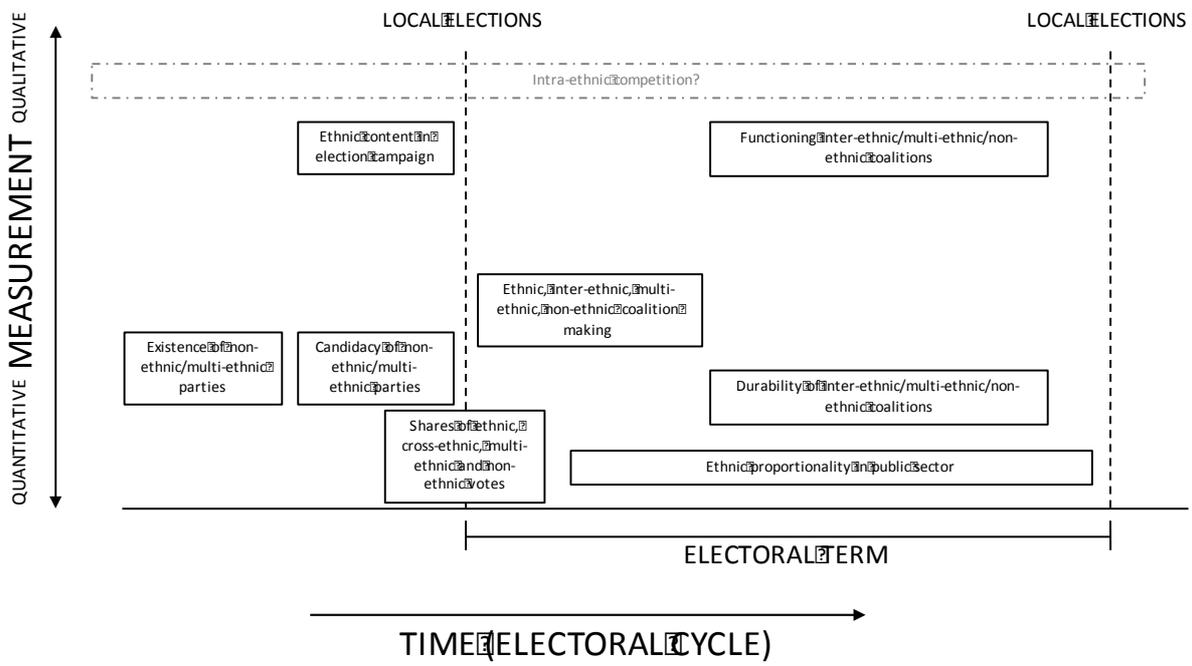
3.2.2. DEPENDENT VARIABLE: INTER-ETHNIC PEACE

Conceptualization, operationalization and measurement of the dependent variable is much more challenging due to multi-dimensional character of the investigated outcome. Measuring peace has proved to be one of the biggest challenges within the field of peace research in last decades (Call and Cousens 2008). While most large-n studies (such as Collier and Hoeffler 2004; Johnson 2008; Sambanis 2000) employed minimalist standard of negative peace (i.e. absence of violence), some authors attempted to go beyond the negative definition of peace and develop conceptualizations and measurement tools for more broad definition of positive peace (Paris 2004; Leib 2016; Hartzell 2014; Doyle and Sambanis 2006).

This research will apply, in line with Goldstein (1992), indirect measure of peace through the concept of cooperation. Cooperation as a phenomenon and process will be understood as conceptual antithesis of conflict. Accepting this conceptual continuum between conflict and cooperation, we can indirectly measure the level of peace achieved after ethnic conflict. Reasons for this indirect conceptualization and measurement rest in the feasible operationalization of the investigated outcome. In contrast to the fluid concept of peace, which has been proved to be hardly observable and measurable, cooperation is an actual process with direct and observable implications that can be recorded through data. Inter-ethnic cooperation can take different forms in various spheres, ranging from politics through economic relations to wider societal and cultural ties. While acknowledging the importance of all of these dimensions, this research will focus solely on the political dimension of cooperation. Reasons for this reduction of investigated reality are mostly practical, yet conceptually justified. Local political arenas are clearly defined by their institutional designs

which makes them methodologically more easily approachable than other more fluid dimension of cooperation. Conceptually, I assume that local politics through its representative principle aggregates interests of local communities and as such indicates the overall state of local inter-ethnic cooperation and conflict.

Hence, the research will use various empirical evidence to investigate to what extent is the local politics ethnicized and/or ethnically exclusive, i.e. organized along the ethnic cleavage, on one hand, and to what degree do political processes cross-cut the ethnic division. Specific indicators of the intensity of inter-ethnic cooperation are developed along the longitudinal phases of the electoral cycle. Thus, the focus of the research will be on ties between and across ethnic communities in different stages of the political process: from existence of relevant political parties, through their participation and performance in elections to postelection coalition-making and actual governance. Specific indicators of inter-ethnic cooperation are presented in the following figure, ordered within the timeline of the electoral cycle (horizontal axis) and situated according to their prospective qualitative or quantitative measurement (vertical axis).



3.2.3. INTERVENING VARIABLES

While the parsimonious character of both separationist and integrationist argument allows us to test the direct relation between ethnic heterogeneity as independent and level of inter-ethnic cooperation as dependent variable, it is necessary to be aware of the possible equifinality of investigated processes and multi-causal character of observed outcome. Therefore, the possible effect of other intervening mechanisms on the the inter-ethnic cooperation will be controlled through both quantitative and qualitative stage of the research. For this purpose, various control variables that can be assumed to affect the relation between ethnic heterogeneity and inter-ethnic cooperation will be included in the tested model. These control variables can be sorted into three categories according to the temporal frame of their emergence and influence. Structural factors are rather given and as such are largely stable in time and exogenous to the investigated processes. In contrast to that, conflict-related factors developed during the time of the conflict and their effect can be assumed to be important for the post-conflict processes, yet decreasing in time after the cessation of the conflict. Finally, post-conflict factors are directly related to the investigated causal links and their possible effects need to be carefully controlled.

INTERVENING VARIABLE	STRUCTURAL	CONFLICT-RELATED	POST-CONFLICT
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · urban/rural · centre/periphery · economic resources · geopolitical value · proximity to kin state · presence of other ethnic groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · conflict intensity · conflict outcome · impact on demography 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · time from last conflict · international presence and mediation · results of refugee return

Table 2: Prospective intervening variables according to the timeframe of their effect.

3.3. LEVEL AND UNIT OF ANALYSIS

While there have been conducted several cross-case large-n empirical tests of the competing arguments within the field of peace research, most of them were based on the state-level of analysis (Mason and Fett 1996; Ayres 2000; Sambanis 2000; Laitin 2004; Kuperman 2004) or micro-level of individuals' attitudes (Andrighetto et al. 2012; Mironova and Whitt 2014). In contrast to that, this research will shift the focus to the meso-level of post-conflict dynamics investigating relations between local ethnic communities. This shift is in line with recent conceptual and methodological developments within the theory of conflict resolution as well

as the practice of peace-building. In the last two decades, both study of peace and peace-building strategies have undergone its 'local turn' (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013; Chadwick et al. 2013). The global conflict environment changed rapidly after the end of the Cold War as traditional inter-state conflicts vanished, while the incidence and intensity of intra-state conflicts rapidly increased (Fearon and Laitin 2003). Many scholars, both from the quantitative and the qualitative camp, have responded to the changing nature of violent conflict by shifting their focus from the once dominant state-level towards the largely understudied local-level. As Weidmann et al. (2010, 1) clearly noted: „*Whether qualitative or quantitative, contemporary civil-war studies have a tendency to over-aggregate empirical evidence. In order to open the black box of the state, it is necessary to pinpoint the location of key conflict parties.*”

Conceptually, the local focus can provide better understanding of causal mechanisms acting behind the general picture of conflict and peace (Buhaug and Rød 2006). Hence, it brings the opportunity for established theories to be retested and refined in the different context of local level and new arguments on locally-acting causal mechanisms to be developed. Besides the conceptual turn, local level of analysis also offers an interesting space in methodological terms as it allows to work with much larger samples than the clearly limited state-level. The local turn has been most visible within the quantitative branch of peace research where states have been frequently replaced with micro-regions as primary units of analysis and, instead of country-level data, disaggregated geo-referenced local data have been used (Dorussen and Raleigh 2009; Raleigh et al. 2010; Eck 2012; Sundberg and Melander 2013). Furthermore, the shift to the local level is grounded in the assumption that in contrast to the escalation moves in the conflict, the de-escalation process in general and peace-building process in particular are in principle much more tied to the local level social structures and processes (Humphreys and Weinstein 2007; Ringdal et al. 2007; Dyrstad et al. 2011).

Post-Yugoslav region can serve as a model area for such a locally focused research. It consists of different post-conflict environments that went through different conflict and post-conflict processes, leading to differing outcomes. Thus, while it can be easily divided into comparable local units, it also presents sufficient variance of respective explanatory and dependent variables. These features make the region suitable for large-N exploratory

comparative research or theory testing. Though, this opportunity remains largely unexploited. While there are some inspiring pioneer quantitative works on local level conflict dynamics in Bosnia (Slack and Doyon 2001; Costalli and Moro 2012; Costalli 2014) and post-conflict developments in Macedonia (Ringdal et al. 2007; Dyrstad et al. 2011), the field generally remains understudied. Despite appropriate structural features, any cross-regional analysis is still missing. This research will attempt to help to fill this conceptual and empirical gap.

The primary unit of the analysis will be local community, i.e. distinct segment of the society delineated by geographic boundaries. This rather vague concept will be operationalized in territorial manner using the *municipality* administrative unit. In the regional context of Post-Yugoslav space, municipalities are self-governed entities and represent the lowest level of socio-political organization. Territorially, municipalities usually comprise one central urban settlement and its adjacent and functionally tied surroundings. Within the municipalities as units of analysis, local ethnic communities will be considered as primary actors of investigated processes.

3.4. POPULATION AND SAMPLE OF CASES

For the purpose of the research, the population of cases consists of all *post-conflict ethnically mixed* municipalities in the Post-Yugoslav region. These criteria imply that all municipalities of the region that were directly hit by a violent conflict since 1990 and are settled by different ethnic groups will be included into the scope of the research.

The regional focus on the Post-Yugoslav region is intentional and based on the methodological considerations as this area presents great variation on the values of both independent and dependent variables within structurally comparable environments. Once being highly intermingled prior to the turbulent 1990s, the region went through general process of ethnic un-mixing resulting from the ethnic conflicts during the breakup of Yugoslavia (Campbell 1999; Hayden 1996; Mulaj 2008; Mojzes 2011). Nonetheless, this process was largely driven by local conflict dynamics that led to different outcomes in otherwise structurally similar areas. Hence, while some once intermingled areas were ethnically cleansed and local communities fully separated, in other places coexistence and

intermingling was preserved throughout the war era. Furthermore, many areas have gone through specific demographic developments during the post-conflict years resulting both from refugee returns and new displacements, thus further changing local levels of ethnic separation and intermingling (Harvey 2006; Toal and Dahlman 2011).

In regard to the dependent variable, the intensity of inter-ethnic cooperation, we can identify wide variation across the region as well. In some areas that suffered intensively from the conflict in 1990s, such as Bosnian town of Brčko, rural area of Petrovac or Kosovar mountain area of Štrpce, once belligerent ethnic groups are succeeding in peaceful coexistence and cooperation (ICG 2009; Sadiković 2016; Moore 2013). On the contrary, inter-ethnic tensions accompanied by occasional violence have persisted in other places, as cases of Kosovar Mitrovica, Croatian Vukovar or Bosnian Mostar show (Burema 2012; Kasic and Byrne 2009; Björkdahl 2011).

The precise selection criteria for selection of post-conflict and ethnically mixed municipalities are defined as follows:

- *Post-conflict* = substantial part of the territory of municipality was directly hit by interethnic violence during the previous conflict in any form (direct fighting/one-sided violence/forced movements of population)
- *Ethnically mixed* = at least two ethnic groups involved in previous local ethnic conflict count for more than 10% of the present local population and together represent more than 50% of it.

These criteria imply that all municipalities of the region that were directly hit by a violent conflict since 1990 and opposing ethnic groups settle them today in relevant number will be included into the scope of the research. By applying this rule, municipalities involved in different conflicts and now belonging to different state structures will be included. The research will cover 119 *post-conflict ethnically mixed* municipalities in total. Geographically, these areas range from central and eastern Croatia, through all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Preshevo valley in southern Serbia up to northern Macedonia.

Municipalities matching these parameters are distributed across various states and post-conflict ethnic dyads/triads, as the following table and map indicate.

STATE	Croat-Serb	Bosniak-Serb	Bosniak-Croat	Bosniak-Croat-Serb	Albanian-Serb	Albanian-Macedonian	TOTAL
Croatia	54	-	-	1	-	-	55
BaH	5	23	18	3	-	-	49
Kosovo	-	-	-	-	6	-	6
Serbia	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Macedonia	-	-	-	-	-	7	7
TOTAL	59	23	18	4	8	7	119

Table 3: Distribution of cases across states and post-conflict dyads

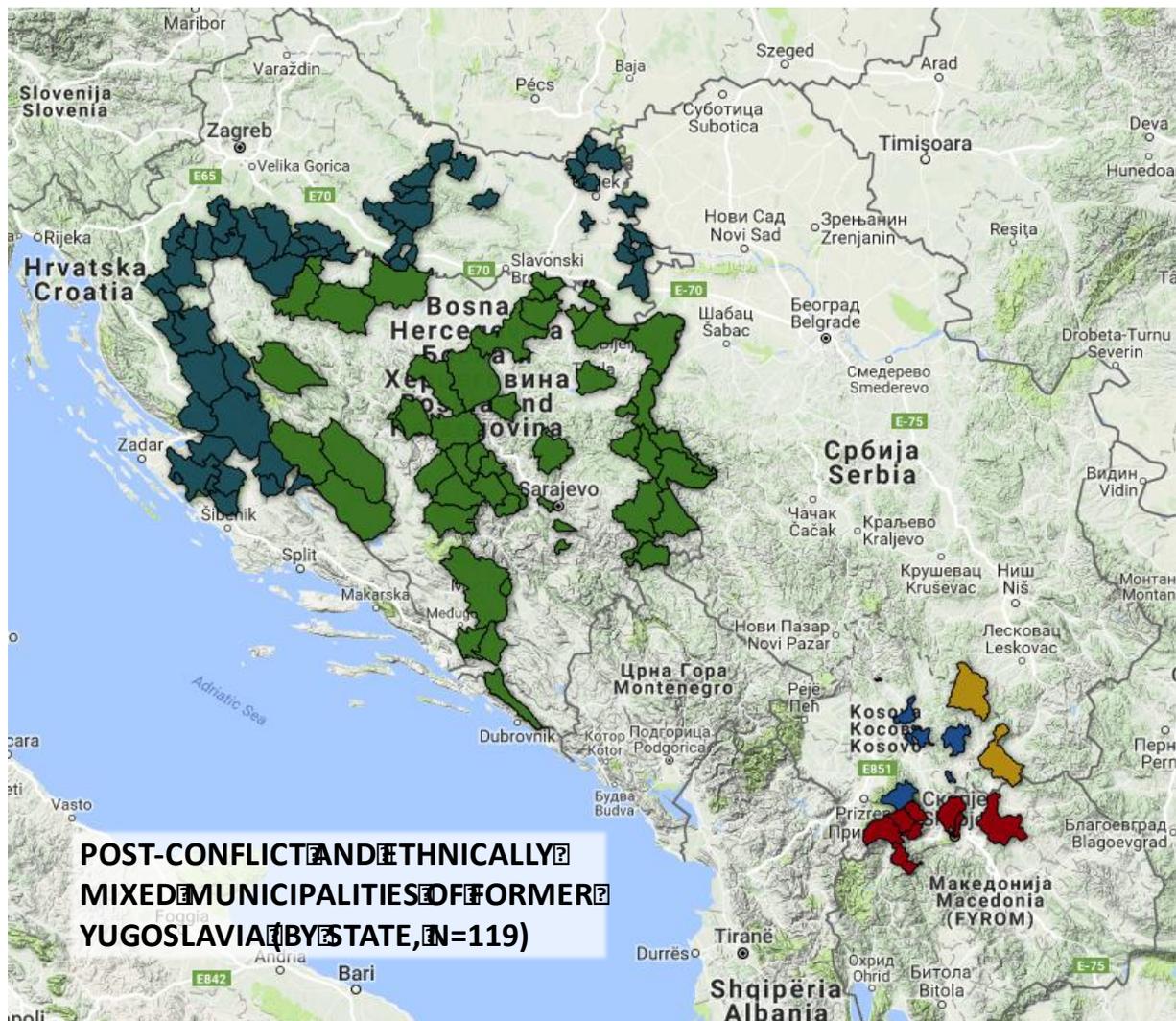


Figure 2: Territorial distribution of cases

The sample of cases under examination will evolve through the research as the methods will move from large-n quantitative analysis through medium-n mixed method study to small-n case study approach. The whole population of cases will be included into the initial quantitative analysis to reach as wide variation of all variables as possible. Being aware of the limited validity and reliability of quantitative tests due to possible flaws resulting from uncertain quality of quantitative data, two qualitatively designed tests will be subsequently performed.

Theoretically relevant and geographically representative medium-n sample of about 40 cases will be included into the mixed-method analysis based on the QCA method (see below). These cases will be selected on two criteria. First, only municipalities that experienced intensive and durable violent inter-ethnic conflict will be included. This step will exclude these cases where the experienced conflict was either very brief or of very low intensity. Thus, more theoretically relevant sample consisting of harder cases for conflict resolution will be compiled. Technically, the selection will be based on distribution of values of variables for conflict duration and conflict intensity within the population. Second, cases belonging to different states, regions and post-conflict dyads will be included into the sample to make it representative for the post-Yugoslav region and increase the generalizability of findings gathered from the subsequent comparative analysis.

Finally, theoretically relevant single cases will be treated within the small-n process-tracing comparative case study. To perform convincing tests of the theoretical arguments, the small-n sample of units will be selected according to the *crucial case principle* using *most likely* cases. Most likely are those cases that fit best to the concepts and assumptions suggested by the theory and as such represent easy test for the argument, since the outcome is supposed to be estimated with high precision (Levy 2008). According to this case selection logic, cases with most-likely values of independent variable for each of the tested causal mechanisms will be selected. Overall, combining large-n, medium-n and small-n samples of cases will set an area for triangulation of different data as well as methods of their analysis.

3.5. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Simultaneously with the changing sample of cases, also the methods of data collection will evolve through the research from quantitative to qualitative as the sample of cases will evolve from large-N to small-N.

3.5.1. LARGE-N: QUANTITATIVE DATA

The large-N analysis will be mostly based on statistical data aggregated on the municipal level that will be acquired from primary sources. For the independent variable, the official demographic data on ethnic composition gathered within the state-organized censuses will be used as a basis for the assessment of the level of ethnic heterogeneity. Due to the widely doubted validity and reliability of the official census data on ethnic structure in most of the examined regions, official figures will be verified and refined through triangulating them with other relevant sources (see Visoka and Gjevori 2013; Musaj 2015). For the dependent variable, publicly available quantitative data such as election data will serve as basis for the assessment of level of inter-ethnic cooperation. Besides, these ready-to-use figures will be supplemented by quantitatively coded qualitative data, such as figures on existence of local inter-ethnic coalitions. Furthermore, conducting large-N survey among leading political representatives of local ethnic communities in all municipalities will be considered, yet its feasibility needs to be taken into account.

3.5.2. MEDIUM-N TO SMALL-N: TRIANGULATION OF QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE

For the medium-N and small-N stage, combination of above presented quantitative and newly collected qualitative data will be employed. Qualitative data will be gathered through field research in selected municipalities based primarily on interviews with local actors - local political elites representing relevant ethnic groups and non-ethnic segments, and representatives of non-governmental sector. Information acquired during the field research will be triangulated with data from other primary and secondary sources, such as NGO reports and local media coverage. As for the independent variable, demographic data will be further refined during the fieldwork as the validity and reliability of the figures will be verified through the interviews with local representatives. To assess the level of inter-ethnic cooperation, semi-structured interviews will serve as the primary source, yet information gathered through them will be verified through other secondary sources. For the medium-N

stage, all types of data will be qualitatively coded and transformed into fuzzy sets for the analysis based on the QCA method (see below).

In general, the ruling principle of the whole data collection process will be triangulation of different sources and types of data that will be used for subsequent analysis.

3.6. METHODS OF ANALYSIS

To perform a convincing test of the suggested link between ethnic heterogeneity and inter-ethnic cooperation and uncover the potential causal mechanism acting behind it, the research will apply mixed methods approach combining descriptive quantitative analysis, QCA and qualitative case studies.

3.6.1. LARGE-N: STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

First, a large-n quantitative study will be conducted on the whole population of cases to identify empirical trends and test the significance of correlation between the level of ethnic heterogeneity and the level of inter-ethnic cooperation suggested by the tested theories. The relation between ethnic heterogeneity and inter-ethnic cooperation will be examined using the basic methods of statistical analysis. In the first phase, purely descriptive analysis will map the distribution of values for independent and dependent variable. Then, potential correlation between independent and dependent variable measured by different indicators will be assessed through bivariate tests based on *difference of means*, *correlation coefficients* and *cross-tabs* depending on the form of the data for particular measure of independent and dependent variable. Depending on the character of the collected data and identified relations between independent and dependent variables, employing of more comprehensive model based on regression analysis and including the control variables will be considered.

3.6.2. MEDIUM-N: QCA

Within the intentionally selected medium-N sample, qualitative comparative analysis, as developed by Ragin (1989, 2000), will be conducted. For this purpose, values of all variables will be qualitatively coded within fuzzy sets defined by theoretically grounded thresholds.

This approach is intended to uncover possible necessity and sufficiency of different levels or patterns of ethnic heterogeneity for inter-ethnic cooperation after an ethnic conflict.

3.6.3. SMALL-N: CASE STUDIES

Finally, small-n sample of crucial most-likely cases selected on values of the independent variable will be further investigated to identify causal mechanisms acting behind the relation between intermingling and cooperation. For this purpose, the method of process tracing will be used. In contrast to conventional quantitative covariational methods that compare values of examined phenomena only on input and output of the process, *process tracing* is based on making inferences based on data collected on multiple points during the analysed process. As such, it allows us to uncover causal mechanisms acting behind the suggested causal link between independent and dependent variable (Bennett and Checkel 2012).

As in previous stages of the research, the ruling principle of data analysis will be triangulation of different methods. By combining the conventional quantitative approach with qualitatively designed comparative analysis (QCA) and in-depth study of crucial cases, the research will not only perform more credible test of the investigated theoretical arguments, but also provide more comprehensive insight into the local post-conflict environment in the Western Balkans. Through integration of findings from mutually independent large-n quantitative and medium-n and small-n qualitative tests, the validity of the contradictory theoretical assumptions will be evaluated with higher significance and effective causal mechanisms will be uncovered.

4. LIMITS VS. CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH

4.1. LIMITS OF THE RESEARCH

Already in this preliminary stage of designing the research, it is apparent that the research will suffer from considerable conceptual and methodological limits. First of them is stemming from limited availability, validity and reliability of the required data. Since the research will be conducted on the local level of municipalities which remains largely understudied within the regional context of the post-Yugoslav space, it can be substantially

limited by unavailability of necessary data as well as their uncertain quality, reliability and validity. For the quantitative part of the data, unavailability of ready-to-use data and low reliability of those available are the most limiting factors. Refining the existing data and their verifying through triangulation is extremely time-consuming. Similarly, creating own quantitative datasets through qualitatively coding is generally very time demanding and poses high uncertainty about the result. Within the qualitative part of the data collection, the most important limit rests in dependence on local elites as sources of data. Besides being often difficult to approach, view offered by them can be intentionally biased. While we can expect local leaders to be potential sources of most valid information, as they are very well informed about all local developments, the reliability of the information actually provided by them within interviews is questionable.

Second set of limit is of conceptual nature. Probably most apparent of them is the conceptualization of the investigated outcome (inter-ethnic peace) through indirect measure of inter-ethnic cooperation and its further limitation to political dimension. Cooperation can be interpreted as exogenous phenomenon to peace-conflict continuum and as such its presence would not exclude presence of conflict, or absence of peace respectively. On the other hand, operationalization and measurement of peace indirectly through cooperation as antithesis of conflict is common within the field and more comprehensive direct conceptualizations of positive peace remain problematic as they are usually too wide and hardly operationalizable (see Webel and Galtung 2007). Another conceptual limit lays in limited generalizability of any findings acquired on the local level within the post-Yugoslav region. Due to micro-level and regional specifics that could be even more pronounced than on the state-level, findings will need to be applied carefully to different geographic settings. Even more importantly, transferring results of the theory testing from local level of analysis back to the state or individual level will need to be done extremely carefully as the effective causal mechanism acting behind identified links can differ on the meso-level.

4.2. INTENDED CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH

Despite above presented limits of the research, the intended study potentially offers great contributions in different fields. Besides being designed in direct link to the prominent

theories of conflict resolution, the research aims at contributing within the empirical and policy areas as well as bring methodological and conceptual novelty into the field.

4.2.1. DESCRIPTION

While the whole research design is developed from and directly linked to the theory, its primary (and also most secure) ambition lays within the field of description. Regardless if any of the theoretical assumptions will be robustly confirmed or disproved, great amount of fresh, original and comparable data on local level inter-ethnic relations in the Post-Yugoslav space will be collected and processed through the research. By doing it, comprehensive evidence on local level post-conflict developments in the Western Balkans region, an area that has remained largely uncharted during last two decades, will be provided. Within the quantitative stage, unique dataset covering political, demographic, socio-economic and conflict-relates features of 119 post-conflict municipalities will be compiled. The dataset will not only collect already available data on one place, but also supplement them with originally coded data on comparatively unmapped socio-political phenomena. Through the qualitative data collection, huge amount of original data from about 100 semi-structured interviews with local representatives will be collected. All of the collected data can serve as a basis for further comparative research on post-conflict developments both within the region and in relation to other post-conflict areas. Hence, the data acquired through the unique large-N study and the field research would become useful source for other scholars' work.

4.2.2. THEORY TESTING

From the theoretical point of view, research has ambition to become an empirically-based contribution to the ongoing debate between *partitionist* and *integrationist* theorists of ethnic conflict resolution. More specifically, the research will perform quantitatively and qualitatively designed tests of prominent theoretical arguments on link from different levels and patterns of ethnic heterogeneity to peace after ethnic conflict on the local level. Through triangulation of different methods ranging from quantitative analysis through QCA to single case studies, tested theoretical assumptions will not only be confirmed or disproved, but also causal mechanisms acting behind them will be uncovered and explained.

4.2.3. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In the field of policy implications, findings of this research are potentially relevant for peacebuilding strategies both within the Post-Yugoslav region as well as in other post-conflict areas. Since the mutual relations among nations in the post-Yugoslav region have generally remained tense both on the nation level as well as in many local communities, findings of the research could help to set guidelines for further direction of the peacebuilding process. Likewise, findings would be of general relevance for structurally similar areas in geographically different post-conflict zones. Thus, the research would contribute to finding an answer to the question relevant for other post-conflict local communities, states and regions in the world: under what demographic conditions can once belligerent ethnic groups succeed in peaceful coexistence, cooperation and reintegration after severe ethnic conflict?

4.2.4. METHODOLOGICAL AND CONCEPTUAL NOVELTY

Last but not least, the research will conceptually and methodologically differ from most of the existing empirical works. First it will innovatively focus on the largely under-studied local level dynamics of ethnic conflict and its resolution instead of on the frequently used state-level. Also, using mixed-method approach and triangulating different methods of data collection and analysis is still rather unique approach for both theory testing and comparative research in general. Finally, the research will investigate the post-conflict processes within long-term perspective that has been often overlooked by mainstream peace research focused predominantly either on dynamics of conflict as such or its immediate termination rather than long-term resolution.

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