Abstract: Many comparative scholars argue that deliberation has little or no role to play in managing deep national, ethnic, or linguistic divisions. In their view, seeking compromise across deep divides should be the exclusive preserve of political elites, since ordinary people will tend to be highly insecure and hence lack the capacity to deliberate meaningfully across deep divides. In this chapter, we want to consider, and indeed defend, the claim that deliberation has a vital role to play in deeply divided societies—not just in terms of shaping relationships between competing political elites, but also between elites and the ordinary citizens they claim to represent. To substantiate this argument, we draw on and contribute to a growing body of literature on deliberative consociation and deliberative democracy in divided societies that seeks to examine whether deliberation can help ethnic groups in conflict to deal democratically with their divisions.

Keywords: Deliberative democracy; divided societies; ethnic outbidding; deliberative consociation; citizen deliberation

Chapter 47

Deliberation in Deeply Divided Societies

Ian O'Flynn and Didier Caluwaerts

There are many reasons why democracy is difficult in societies deeply divided along ethnic lines.[1] But of those reasons, one of the most troubling is outbidding—ethnic divisions tend to produce ethnic parties each of which seeks to portray itself as the true defender of the group while at the same time portraying its rivals as weak or as selling out. Claim and counterclaim result in an "ethnic auction" that leads even moderate parties to adopt an increasingly hard-line stance, which in turn makes compromise across ethnic lines all the harder to secure (Barry 1975, 505; Gormley-Heenan and MacGinty 2008; Horowitz 1985, 349–60; Rabushka and Shepsle, 1972, 86). What generally goes unnoticed, however, is that outbidding can occur only if voters generally like their politics as hard-line or uncompromising as possible (e.g. because they think that other groups will be more fearful of them) or if they are so fearful of what other groups might do to them that ethnic parties can easily play upon their insecurities (e.g. because they are in a minority and feel that they might be overrun). Neither assumption must inevitably hold. But if either does hold, the prospects for democracy will be severely diminished.

In response, comparative scholars have spent a great deal of time examining how different electoral systems affect the incentives ethnic parties face and, as part of that, the ways in which different electoral systems make outbidding more or less rewarding.[2] Yet while the choice of one electoral system over others can have a profound effect on the prospects for democracy, there is obviously more to democracy than elections and the parties that contest them. Accordingly, in this chapter, we want to consider, and indeed

defend, the claim that deliberation also has a vital role to play—not just in terms of shaping relationships between ethnic parties, but between ethnic parties and the ordinary citizens they seek to represent. Of course, we do not think that deliberation is a panacea. But nor do we think that deliberation is simply wishful thinking, as one prominent comparative scholar has opined (O'Leary 2005, 10).

In making this argument, we draw on and contribute to a small but growing body of literature that seeks to examine how, when, and where deliberation can help ethnic groups in conflict to deal democratically with their divisions. More specifically, the chapter begins by considering how a concern for deliberation might shape the power-sharing institutions within which ethnic parties have to work. Yet while the comparative literature has much to say about institutions and parties, it has relatively little say about ordinary citizens—in particular, about their role in reducing the scope for outbidding. Granted, to presuppose that citizens can have such a role is to presuppose that deliberation between citizens is actually possible in divided societies. In the second section, we therefore consider some recent experiments that seek to test the scope for deliberation among citizens from different ethnic groups. As we will see, ordinary citizens are able to discuss divisive issues rationally and respectfully and, moreover, demonstrate an openness towards changing their minds on these issues. Admittedly, experiments of this sort merely prove that, under the right conditions, citizens can meaningfully deliberate together. What they do not prove is that deliberation between citizens can influence or even "tame" the behavior of ethnic parties and elites, especially when it comes to outbidding. In the final section, we therefore highlight two recent proposals for creating influence of this sort. At the time of writing, it is an open question

as to how much traction, if any, these proposals will eventually gain. But that, in itself, suggests further important questions for deliberative scholars to pursue.

Deliberative Consociation

Consociation is the dominant institutional approach to managing conflict in societies deeply divided along ethnic lines (Lijphart 1977, 2008).[3] In a consociation, the leaders of the different ethnic parties come together to form a grand governing coalition for the sake of maintaining political stability. Yet while elite cooperation is the most obvious feature of consociation, it has three further defining characteristics: proportionality (especially in the electoral system but also right across the public administration), mutual vetoes (to ensure that, for example, majorities cannot dominate minorities within the grand governing coalition), and segmental autonomy (to enable each group to govern itself on matters of exclusive concern to it). It is important to note, however, that consociation is not a model of democracy per se. Its four defining features can, in fact, be instituted in different ways, depending on what one takes the political equality of democracy to entail (O'Flynn 2010, 573). Otherwise put, actual consociations can be criticized not just in terms of their failure to deliver political stability, but also because of their failure to live up to one's preferred democratic ideals.

In recent years, a small number of theorists have argued that consociations should be designed through a deliberative lens or with deliberative principles in mind (e.g. Drake and McCulloch 2011; O'Flynn 2006; 2010; 2017; Steiner 2009; Steiner et al. 2004, 8–15; but see Dryzek 2005; Hayward 2014). Hence, the term "deliberative consociation" (O'Flynn 2010). One way of appreciating the importance of that case is to consider the charge that consociation has uncertain implications for moderation (Horowitz 2003).

Consociations tend to be highly inclusive institutions. But since that means that the grand governing coalition is likely to contain parties from many different points on the political spectrum, deadlock can easily become the norm. Moderate parties may wish to compromise, but they will also know that hard-line rivals from within their own ethnic group are likely to decry any concessions as betrayals. Moderates may conclude, therefore, that their own survival (electoral or physical) depends on their not giving ground.

In short, the trouble is that while consociations may be inclusive, and while inclusion may be important from a democratic point of view, it may result in precisely the sort of outbidding that we described in our introductory remarks. Of course, deadlock is not inevitable (Mitchell, Evans, and O'Leary 2009). The fact that power is shared means that all sides have a stake in the political system and hence a genuine incentive to preserve that system. Yet the weight of evidence clearly suggests that consociations are prone to deadlock. To take one striking example, following the 2010 Belgian general election, the various parties struggled for 541 days to form a government (Deschouwer and Van Parijs 2013, 112). At one point or another, Bosnia, Burundi, Lebanon, and Northern Ireland have each been similarly deadlocked.

Deliberative consociation promises to help. While the topic is extremely broad, the following points indicate how a deliberative consociation might reduce the scope for outbidding and other, similar problems that have their roots in ethnic parties and ethnic voting.

Grand governing coalition

Any serious discussion of consociation must address the question of government formation. In some cases, seats in government are reserved for particular ethnic groups (as in the case of the Bosnian House of Peoples) whereas in other cases seats are automatically allocated to parties in proportion to the seats they hold in parliament (as in the case of the Northern Ireland Executive). In other words, grand governing coalitions can be either "pre-determined" or "self-determining" (Lijphart 1995; O'Leary 2005). Either way, however, ethnic parties will have no particular incentive to care about how they are perceived by those outside the group. All that matters is how they are perceived by those within the group, since that is where their votes will predominantly come from.

By contrast, deliberative consociation requires a formation process which encourages or obliges parties on all sides of the ethnic divide to listen seriously to one another and weigh competing arguments about which policies the coalition ought to pursue (or "programme for government," as it is usually termed) on their merits. One way in which this might be achieved is by making government formation depend on voluntary agreement rather than on automatic appointment, with government ministers having to secure weighted majority support from across the parliament before taking office (Wilson and Wilford 2003). Prospective coalition partners from across the ethnic divide might engage in a fair deal of bargaining behind the scenes, as they jockey for position within the executive. But, just like any other coalition, they will also know that they will eventually have to work together in order to preserve the system. Just as importantly, since any cracks or weaknesses will be exploited by their respective (i.e., intra-group) rivals, ministers have the strongest possible incentive to present a united front and defend their decisions broadly.[4]

PR electoral systems

Proportional representation electoral systems come in different shapes and forms. Some consociational scholars favor party-list PR on the grounds that it "can encourage the formation and maintenance of strong and cohesive political parties" (Lijphart 2004, 101). Since political leaders get to determine who ranks where on the list, they can exercise tremendous control over party members. Yet although party cohesion may be necessary to stability, the fact that voters can only vote for one party means that voting will almost inevitably break down along group lines. But since, once again, that means that parties need only be concerned about how they are perceived by their own ethnic group, outbidding remains a likely outcome.

From a deliberative perspective, the Single Transferable Vote (STV) form of PR is a far more attractive option (James 2004, 164–7, 172–6). STV is a preferential system that operates in multimember constituencies. As such, voters vote for candidates rather than for parties; they also get to rank the candidates in order of their preference (Taagepera and Shugart 1989, 27). While voters may rank candidates from their own ethnic group first, it is at least possible for them to place candidates from another ethnic group somewhere lower down the ballot. In marginal seats, lower-order preferences may make a real difference to a candidate's chances of success. As such, STV offers candidates an incentive to broaden their appeal and hence to couch their arguments in terms that anyone could accept.

Mutual vetoes

On the face of it, mutual vetoes have an important role to play in maintaining political stability—knowing that their special interests are protected can give groups the

confidence to engage politically with one another (Lijphart 1977, 36–7). Yet instead of giving groups the confidence to pull together, it seems equally likely that vetoes may instead result in deadlock. With this worry in mind, Anna Drake and Allison McCulloch (2011, 396) suggest that (a) vetoes should be restricted to decisions that stand to affect a group's vital interests and (b) the group in question should be responsible for justifying why this is so. It matters, however, not just how vetoes are exercised but where. Many deliberative democrats argue that deliberation should be conducted in full public view. Yet as Jon Elster (1998) points out, publicity can also make it hard for political leaders to back down from a position once they have stated it openly. Hence, it may actually be better to make decisions behind closed doors.

In this same spirit, there is a good case for arguing that vetoes should be placed not in the parliament but within the decision procedures of the grand governing coalition, to be used behind closed doors (but see Steiner et al. 2004, 120). Doing so would allow ministers from one side of the ethnic divide to veto decisions proposed by ministers from the other side. This much will be widely known. Accordingly, when a minister finally goes public with a decision, the justification that he or she provides will have to be couched in terms that are accessible to everybody and could in principle be accepted by anyone. Otherwise, the members of the other ethnic group will be bound to ask why their ministers did not veto the decision. Sine that might easily lead to outbidding, the incentive to deliberate will be clear.

Segmental autonomy

Segmental autonomy has an important role to play in managing ethnic conflicts. Since it gives groups the authority to govern their own internal affairs, especially in the areas of

education and culture, it can help them to maintain their own distinct identity. Moreover, since it delegates a certain level of power and resources to the political leaders of those groups, it encourages them to support the political system as a whole (Lijphart 2004, 97). The worry, however, is that segmental autonomy may also encourage groups to think of themselves as living in separate worlds, which reinforces demands for autonomy (Erk 2009).

The more that segmental autonomy locks ordinary citizens into the groups to which they happen to belong (e.g. by compelling them to send their children to a certain type of school or to speak a certain language), the fewer the chances they will have to engage with others in society or, indeed, to challenge group assumptions from within. Yet in principle the more that citizens can treat segmental autonomy as a voluntary matter, the more comfortable they may feel about looking beyond the boundaries of their own ethnic group. Since that also means that those on the outside may have greater opportunities to see or hear what is going on within the group, the pool of arguments to which everyone is exposed enlarges accordingly.

Unfortunately, matters are not as straightforward as all of this suggests. In theory, a well-designed deliberative consociation may be sufficient to deal with fundamental problems such as outbidding. But in reality there will usually be a great deal that can go wrong. A grand governing coalition designed with deliberative principles in mind might deny hardliners the place in government that they would otherwise have under an automatic formation process. But in response they might simply seek to "spoil" the institutions from outside (Stedman 1997). In marginal seats, STV may encourage candidates to take a broader view. Yet where groups are geographically concentrated,

those seats will simply not exist. Placing vetoes behind closed doors may encourage a sense of collective responsibility. But that will only happen if the parties can reach collective agreements in the first place (see Hayward 2014). Finally, voluntary segmental autonomy may facilitate conversations among citizens from different ethnic groups. Yet the fact that those same citizens are likely to have spent their entire lives within their own communities may mean that they lack the requisite capacities.

In what follows, we challenge this last assumption. We do so for one very good reason. As we noted in our introductory remarks, outbidding assumes either (a) that ordinary citizens are more hard-line than the parties that claim to represent them or (b) that ordinary citizens are vulnerable to ethnic parties willing to play the ethnic card for the sake of their own aggrandizement. But if neither assumption were to hold—if ethnic voters were actually (a) less extreme and (b) more balanced in their views—the threat that outbidding poses to democracy might correspondingly decline. If that could be shown to be the case, then many of the other concerns and contingencies attaching to deliberative consociation might also fall away.

Deliberation among Diametrically Opposed Citizens

Comparative scholars tend to reduce democratic politics in divided societies to elite bargaining (Horowitz 1985). As such, they tend to see little point in encouraging citizens to deliberate across ethnic lines. Indeed, from the outset, consociational theory has assumed that if political stability is to be maintained, citizens should simply defer to their respective leaders in matters of collective decision-making (e.g. Lijphart 1975, 111). Involving citizens might make a complicated situation even more difficult to handle—a

cacophony of different voices and opinions, both frightened and ill-informed, is unlikely to aid the cause of either compromise or political stability (e.g. O'Leary 2005, 10).

The question arises, therefore, as to whether this scepticism is warranted—do ordinary citizens really lack the capacity for deliberation? Even if it were possible to get citizens on opposing sides in the same room, would they really listen with an open mind? Or would they simply become more entrenched in their prior views? In recent years, there has been a surge of research documenting the possibility of, and favorable conditions for, citizen deliberation in divided societies. More specifically, the methodological innovations that paralleled the increased use of deliberative mini-publics made it possible for the first time to validly and reliably test the capacity for such deliberation.

In one of the first studies of the potential for citizen deliberation across deep divides, Caluwaerts (2012) finds that discussion on polarizing political issues does not have to exacerbate political conflict. Instead, his findings indicate that the quality of deliberation in inter-group—and, specifically in Belgium, multilingual—settings is actually better than that in ethnolinguistically homogeneous groups. Citizens do not retreat to their ethnolinguistic enclaves, but actively engage with the other side. The limits of deliberation thus extend much further than comparative scholars are wont to acknowledge. Moreover, Caluwaerts not only focuses on the effect of group composition, but also on the favorable conditions for deliberation in divided groups. He concludes that imposing supermajority or unanimity rules in deliberative settings fosters high-quality deliberation, no matter what the group composition. Deliberation thus creates

transformative opportunities to turn adversarial discourses into more moderate forms of communication (see also Bächtiger and Gerber 2014).

These findings parallel the results from a deliberative experiment conducted in Colombia in 2008. Unlike in Belgium, Colombia has no problems of multilingualism, but it does have a long history of armed conflict and physical violence. Despite these differences, however, the Colombian case suggests that "highly deliberative behavior could be expected, even in contexts of deep hostility and serious disagreement" (Orozco and Ugarriza 2014, 79). In a more recent study, however, Ugarriza and Nussio (2015) are somewhat more pessimistic about the potential for citizen deliberation in divided societies, and contend that deliberation in situations of protracted violence has to be preceded by efforts at increasing inter-group trust. Deliberation can therefore work, but only if a necessary threshold of inter-group trust is already met.

In the same study, Ugarriza and Nussio (2015) identify four main drivers for good deliberation in contexts of deep division: institutions such as decision-making rules (Caluwaerts and Deschouwer 2014; Mansbridge 1983; Ugarriza 2012); psychological factors such as cognitive biases and strong emotions (Dickson, Hafer, and Landa 2007); ecological characteristics of the deliberative setting such as the physical location, hot versus cold deliberative settings, etc. (Fung 2003); and socio-demographics such as gender and education.

These experiments focus primarily on the *process* of deliberation, and find that the levels of moderation that genuine deliberation might be thought to presuppose are not beyond the realms of possibility, even when the discussions deal with "mutually contradictory assertions of identity" (Dryzek 2005, 219). However, some studies have

gone one step further, by focusing on the possible *effects* of deliberation between diametrically opposed groups. There is a long tradition of thinking that deliberation has directional effects, i.e. that it leads to the adoption and incorporation of more collectivistic and cosmopolitan perspectives, and to less nationalistic orientations (Gastil, Bacci, and Dollinger 2010). However, for a long time the question remained as to whether these effects would also manifest themselves in high-conflict settings, or whether deliberation on divisive issues would only act as a catalyst for further polarization (Dessel, Rogge, and Garlington 2006; Grönlund, Herne, and Setälä 2015; Sunstein 2002, 2009; Vasilev 2013).

Caluwaerts and Reuchamps's (2014) study of two deliberative events tackles this issue. Building on Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis, their conclusion is that inter-group deliberation—even in very "hot" deliberative settings, discussing polarizing political issues—is able to foster more positive inter-group attitudes. More especially, inter-group deliberation potentiates a democratic process that leads to mutual respect and the acknowledgement of the validity of others' claims, indicating that ordinary citizens' views on divisive issues may be less intractably conflicting than expected. Similar results were found in Northern Ireland, where Catholics came to see Protestants as more open to reason and trustworthier, and Protestants came to see Catholics as more open to reason, after deliberating together about the vexed question of how best to reform Northern Ireland's troubled education system (Luskin et al. 2014). These findings echo the results from earlier studies, conducted on campuses in the United States, on inter-group dialogue on the Middle East. These ealier studies found that dialogue between American Arab and American Jewish students fostered mutual respect (Norman 1992) and led them to

"recognise multiple perspectives, and to clarify their own beliefs and identities" (Khuri 2004, 244).

It remains the case, however, the conditions for such attitudinal changes are much stricter in divided societies than in more normal societies. Indeed, one might be tempted to assume that citizen deliberation in divided societies can only work on non-contentious issues. Yet studies have shown that transformative opportunities present themselves only when "conflict issues and needs, mutual and exclusive perceptions of justice, and a shared vision of the future" are discussed (Abu-Nimer 2004, 418). Thus, in line with agonistic assumptions (Mouffe 1999), merely discussing non-pressing issues cannot be expected to yield any immediate benefits for inter-group relations. This is contrary to the commonly held assumption that the most controversial issues should be discussed last in peace negotiations or treated as the exclusive preserve of group leaders.

Another important condition is that all groups should be regarded equally. That is, there cannot be any power differences or status inequalities between the different participants in the deliberations. This condition was first developed by Allport in 1954 but it remains valid to this day. To take a fairly clear example, Abu-Nimer (2004) discusses an instance where deliberation in Israel between Arab and Jewish participants was conducted solely in Hebrew, meaning that one of the groups had to adapt to the other group's language. This symbolically indicated that one of the groups involved purportedly had a higher status, which hindered the discussion and lowered the openness of the Arab participants to other views (Abu-Nimer 2004, 412). Treating all groups equally in terms of status is therefore a necessary condition for generating positive deliberative effects. For this reason, Caluwaerts (2012) over-recruited French-speaking

participants in his Belgian experiment in order to avoid having an imbalanced group composition of six Dutch speakers versus four French speakers.

Despite the generally positive appreciation of the effects of inter-group deliberation on attitude change towards a more moderate, mutually receptive perspective, other studies do find some polarization effects. For instance, contrary to the above, Wojcieszak (2012) finds that people with strong attitudes and opinions who take part in deliberations in divided societies become *more* polarized in their opinions and *more* prejudiced in their feelings towards others when discussing divisive issues. These findings directly contradict Hodson's findings, which indicate that "[c]ontact works well, if not best, among those higher on prejudice-prone individual-difference variables" (Hodson 2011, 155). While we should therefore be cautious or circumspect in drawing conclusions about the potential for deliberation in divided societies, the balance of evidence to date suggests that ordinary citizens have the capacity to deliberate—and moderate—across group lines. However, it is true that more research is needed to determine under which circumstances citizens can realize their deliberative potential in high-conflict settings.

Citizens and Leaders in the Study of Deliberation in Divided Societies

Even though these experimental findings are, on balance, encouraging, their broader implications for resolving deep divisions reamin unclear. Despite a growing academic literature on deliberation under the most adverse of circumstances, very little work has hitherto been done to study the long-term effects of deliberative experiences on inter-group relations; nor have the macro-social effects of inter-group mini-publics been

assessed. For instance, does the organization of deliberative mini-publics in high-conflict settings produce ripple effects across the wider public sphere? How do the positive effects of inter-group dialogue spread among those who were not around the deliberation table? Would democracy in divided societies benefit from these safe spaces of deliberative opposition? And to what extent can self-interest and group interests be accommodated deliberatively in divided societies? These questions remain as yet unanswered.

However, the biggest challenge in the study of deliberation in divided societies is bridging the gap between citizens and elites. After all, the reduction of tension between citizens through deliberation might potentially affect elite behavior in the longer term. As we noted above, parties can only play the ethnic card when citizens are susceptible to polarization. The empirical results discussed in the previous section show that citizens are capable of ethnic moderation through deliberation—albeit under the most favorable of circumstances. Consequently the spread of deliberative principles and practices throughout the entire political system could fundamentally alter the electoral incentives for ethnic outbidders.

There are, however, two conflicting hypotheses on this issue. On the on hand, one could hypothesize that deliberation between diametrically opposed groups has the potential to "tame" polarizing party leaders, but this will only work when citizens and leaders are somehow institutionally connected. To date, only two of these linkage mechanisms have been identified. The first one is the proposed federal electoral district in Belgium (Deschouwer and Van Parijs 2013). Presently, Belgian political parties only field candidates on one side of the linguistic border, which means that there is no

electoral incentive for parties to reach out to the other ethnolinguistic group. A nationwide electoral district could force party leaders to enter into a dialogue with leaders from the other linguistic group, which in turn might bring a halt to the disintegrative tendencies of Belgian politics. Interestingly, some Belgian opinion makers and politicians openly embraced this idea, and the proposal gained political momentum, albeit briefly. The other linkage mechanism has recently been proposed by John Garry (2016). In this proposal, contentious issues that Northern Ireland's grand governing coalition failed to resolve could instead be devolved to a Citizens' Assembly. Perhaps unsurprisingly, while about half the elected politicians surveyed said that an assembly of this sort would result in proposals that were good for Northern Ireland as a whole, zero per cent thought that a final decision should be left to such a body to decide (Garry 2016, 5).

These two ways of connecting the parties and citizens assume that moderation among the general public could incentivize moderation among political elites. The opposite argument, however, would be that the risk of polarization is such that ordinary people are themselves likely to deliberate well only if parties set the right example. Conflict management should thus be initiated from the top before it trickles down to the mass level. This argument resonates to some extent with traditional elite theories in that the impetus for solving ethnic conflicts remains with the leaders of the different ethnic groups. However, it differs from these theories in that it still acknowledges that citizens might also contribute to processes of conflict mitigation. After all, traditional elite theories posit that citizens should remain passive if the conflict is to be managed or resolved, but this hypothesis assumes that citizens can play a constructive role as long as group leaders lead the way in accommodating conflict.

These arguments remain speculative, and either hypothesis on the direction of the moderating relationship, whether from party leaders down or from ordinary citizens up, at this time remains little more than conjecture. In all likelihood the effect could well be recursive, with the spirit of elite accommodation in institutional settings and the spirit of citizen deliberation at the mass level mutually reinforcing each other. Despite this current scholarly void, the prospects for answering these questions are favorable. After all, the growing literature on deliberative systems (Dryzek 2011; Mansbridge et al. 2013; Niemeyer 2014) has the potential to shed light on the transmission of deliberative norms throughout even the most divided of political systems. By focusing on the interaction between different institutional and societal sites of deliberation, the deliberative systems approach could map instances of enclave deliberation as well as inter-group deliberation in divided societies. It could even do so in a dynamic way by exploring how changes in the institutional infrastructure of a country (e.g. the freeing of the courts from governmental interference) affect the processes of discursive engagement in the broader public sphere, and how the emergence of new sites for citizen deliberation (e.g. the emergence a more open and diverse press) alter the institutional status quo. As we have said, ideas of this sort remain speculative. However, the fact that deeply divided societies generate some of the most pressing problems that we face today means that the imperative to pursue those ideas is both urgent and patently clear.

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[1] We use the term "ethnic" in its now widely accepted sense of embracing any ascriptive identity regarded as a natural boundary marker between members of different groups, defined inter alia terms of race, language, religion, culture, or nationality.

[2] For an overview, see Diamond and Plattner 2006.

[3] Consociation's main rival is the centripetal or incentives-based approach (Horowitz 1985; 2014; Reilly 2001). For a deliberative perspective on this rivalry, see O'Flynn 2007.

[4] For further discussion, see O'Flynn 2010, 584–5; cf. Drake and McCulloch 2011, 385.