Call for Papers
Workshop on "Power-Sharing: Empirical and Normative Critiques"
Munk Centre, University of Toronto, 18-19 November 2011

In a previous workshop, the EDG project focused on territorial autonomy, which can be seen as involving the division of powers among central/federal and regional governments. We would now like to examine the sharing of power within central/federal, regional, and local government institutions. The core power-sharing institution is the political executive, but power-sharing arrangements extend also to the legislature, judiciary, and bureaucracy (including the wider public sector, and particularly the security sector). Power-sharing norms and practices may also operate within political parties.

All forms of democratic politics involve some form of power-sharing, but we are interested in arrangements which move beyond simple majority rule towards a more inclusive form of decision-making. Such arrangements may be the result of formal rules, which may be temporary or permanent, or they may be a matter of political conventions. Power-sharing arrangements may also be based on corporate principles, where the communities that benefit from power-sharing are explicitly named (e.g. Bosnia's collective presidency must include a Serb, Bosniak and Croat) or on liberal principles, where ministerial portfolios are distributed according to each party's share of seats in the legislature.

The goal of our workshop is to enhance our understanding of the utility of power-sharing by subjecting power-sharing theory and practice to empirical and normative analysis and criticism.

Our overarching questions are:
- Do power-sharing arrangements enhance stability, peace, and cooperation in divided societies?
- Do they do so in ways that promote justice and democracy?
- Do they do so in ways that promote effective governance?
- How does power-sharing relate to territorial autonomy?

*Empirically*, we are interested in a range of questions:
- What forms do power-sharing arrangements take, and what explains this variation?
- Under what circumstances are power-sharing arrangements likely to be agreed to, and who takes the initiative?
- How resilient are power-sharing arrangements? What explains their success and failure? Are there empirical pre-conditions (e.g. background 'environmental' factors, such as history, culture, demography, neighbourhood, and external intervention) that shape the success and failure of power-sharing?
- Does it matter to success/failure if the parties to power-sharing are based on religious, or linguistic, or ethnic, or national divisions?
- Is power-sharing success or failure related to institutional design (including the rules for executive composition and decision-making, the nature of the electoral system, and whether the executive is parliamentary or presidential or a hybrid)?
- Is the question of who shares power (moderate parties only, or moderate and radical parties) crucial?
- Is the success of power-sharing related to/dependent on how other issues are addressed in a political settlement (such as decentralisation; security sector reform; demobilization, disarmament and re-integration; return of refugees; truth and reconciliation issues).
• Are temporary (transitional) power-sharing provisions better than permanent? Are informal arrangements preferable to formal?
• What are the consequences of power-sharing for efficiency? Does power-sharing prevent effective public policies by contributing to the joint decision trap, gridlock, etc.
• How does power-sharing relate to territorial autonomy? Are they alternative, or complementary and mutually reinforcing, strategies for managing diversity?

Normatively, we are interested in at least the following two issues, but are prepared to consider others:
• Is power-sharing fair? Critics of power-sharing have argued that power-sharing obstructs the politics of class or gender, and therefore makes it more difficult to confront class and gender inequities; or they have argued that power-sharing discriminates against certain ethnic communities, or identity groups (those who are not included in power-sharing arrangements, or included unfairly); or they argue that power-sharing is unfair to majorities (or individuals) as it gives disproportionate say to members of minority communities. Supporters of power-sharing usually respond by arguing that it is arrangements in divided places that do not involve power-sharing that are manifestly unfair; that it is possible to have forms of power-sharing that are not unfair in the way described; or that power-sharing is a prerequisite for a politics of class and gender in divided places, and so on.
• Is power-sharing democratic? Here, critics focus on issues like insufficient democratic participation (elitist politics); a lack of transparency in negotiation processes and decision-making; lack of competitive elections/alternating governments; and weak oppositions/alternating governments. Supporters, by contrast see power-sharing as having significant democratic merit, primarily because of its inclusiveness, and the incentive to compromise.

We welcome paper proposals that focus on any of these empirical or normative themes, including combinations of them. Papers can be focused on single case-studies, comparisons between two or more cases, large-N approaches, or on general theory. We welcome treatments of power-sharing failure as well as success. We're interested in both historical and current experiments in power-sharing, or attempts to negotiate power-sharing. We're also interested in papers on cases where power-sharing has not been seriously considered, as long as the focus is on explaining why this is so. Possible cases include, but are not limited to, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cyprus, Kenya, Iraq, Lebanon, Macedonia, Nepal, Northern Ireland, South Tyrol, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Switzerland.

This workshop is one of a series that has been organized by members of the Ethnicity and Democratic Governance Project. This is a multi-disciplinary, multi-year project funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of the Government of Canada. Its goal is to develop theory, empirical data, and practical knowledge that will foster political harmony and social justice in deeply divided societies. Approximately 39 scholars, along with students and colleagues have been involved in the project’s activities, which include conferences, workshops, student training, and cooperation with partner agencies. The project is based at Queen’s University, Kingston, Canada. The project Director is Professor Bruce Berman, and the Executive Committee membership includes: André Laliberté, Jacques Bertrand, Alain-G Gagnon, John McGarry, Richard Simeon, Will Kymlicka, Avigail Eisenberg and Margaret Moore.

Please send proposals, including a short abstract, to John McGarry (john.mcgarry@queensu.ca) and Richard Simeon (richard.simeon@utoronto.ca) by February 28 2011.