

***Peace by Design*, Dawn Brancati**
Chapter Summaries

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Chapter 1

Why does decentralization reduce ethnic conflict and secessionism more in some countries than in others? This question constitutes the central focus of *Peace by Design*. After presenting the puzzle of the book, Brancati defines political decentralization and lays out the debate between scholars and policy-makers who argue that decentralization intensifies intrastate conflict and those who argue that decentralization reduces it. The author also previews her argument in this chapter, which is that the effect of decentralization hinges on the electoral strength of regional parties. Subsequently, Brancati describes her methodological approach, consisting of three carefully selected cases studies – Czechoslovakia (1989-1993), Spain (1976-present) and India (1947-present) -- and a statistical analysis, examining the effect on decentralization and regional parties on intrastate conflict, and decentralization, in turn, on regional parties.

Chapter 2

Brancati elaborates on her argument in Chapter 2 regarding how the effect of decentralization on intrastate conflict hinges on regional parties. Brancati argues that the negative effects typically associated with decentralization are not an effect of decentralization directly, but that of regional parties. Specifically, she argues that regional parties create regional identities, advocate legislation that is harmful to other regions and regional minorities, and also mobilize groups to engage in ethnic conflict and secessionism and support extremist organizations that engage in these activities. Brancati also establishes in this chapter a number of conditions under which regional parties are likely to stimulate conflict and secessionism, and statewide parties are likely to reduce it. The author further argues that decentralization, in turn, increases the strength of regional parties depending on particular features of decentralization (i.e., the proportion of legislative seats a region possesses, the number of regional legislatures in a country, the upper house election procedures, the sequencing of national and regional elections). Brancati also offers a theoretical discussion in this chapter of the origins of decentralization and regional parties, arguing that neither is a simply a product of the underlying ethno-linguistic, religious,

and territorial differences in a country, but have an independent effect on these differences, and on conflict and secessionism.

Chapter 3

Brancati presents her case study of Czechoslovakia (1989-1993) in Chapter 3. Czechoslovakia's dissolution in 1993 was remarkable because only a few Czechs and Slovaks, and none of the country's major political parties, supported dissolution. Brancati attributes the failure to agree on a new constitution, which led to the country's breakup, to regional parties whose positions on the constitution were seen as unreasonable by parties in the opposing region. Brancati further argues that the dissolution and the strength of regional parties in the country at the time was not a result of the underlying social differences in the country, but the way in which decentralization was structured. In demonstrating her argument, the author shows that although differences between Czechs and Slovaks were greater in the interwar period than in the post-communist period, regional parties had a weaker presence under a centralized system of government. Brancati strengthens her case by showing that although in the post-communist period differences between the two Czech Lands of Bohemia and Moravia were as great as those between Czechs and Slovaks, parties competed in both Czech Lands and incorporated Moravian interests for autonomy into their agendas, thereby, averting the same result as in Slovakia.

Chapter 4

Brancati presents her case study of Spain (1976-present) in Chapter 4. Spain is widely respected as a successful case of decentralization, which has not only avoided conflict among the country's major ethnic groups, but has also held secessionism at bay since Spain's transition to democracy in the late 1970s. Brancati attributes Spain's success to the relatively small presence of regional parties in the country, which have advocated legislation harmful to other regions in India and have supported violent separatist organizations in the country. Brancati attributes the party system to the structure of decentralization in Spain (i.e., the proportion of national legislative seats regions hold individually, the direct election of most of the country's upper house and the appointment of Spain's first regional legislatures based on national level representation). This structure has reduced the incentive for politicians to form regional parties and prevented them from blocking the adoption of a new political system during the transition era as in Czechoslovakia. In teasing out the relationship between decentralization and regional parties, Brancati points out that statewide parties decentralized Spain in the transition period, and that regions with the strongest regional parties in Spain are not necessarily those that are

economically or ethno-linguistic distinct, and that the distinct regions are not necessarily those with strong regional identities.

Chapter 5

Brancati discusses her case study of India (1947-present) in Chapter 5. In India decentralization is neither an unabashed success, as in Spain, nor a resounding failure, as in Czechoslovakia. India has experienced intermittent bouts of conflict in some regions and periods of its history more than in others. Brancati attributes India's mixed track record to the behavior of regional parties in the country and the failure of statewide parties to fully incorporate regional interests into their agenda. In India regional parties have prompted conflict and secessionism by adopting legislation harmful to regional minorities and mobilizing groups to engage in ethnic conflict and secessionism. Regional parties have been confined to the regional level, however, until the 1990s. Statewide parties, and the Congress Party in particular, have not fully or always reduced ethnic conflict and secessionism in India because of certain conditions in the country that reduce their incentive to incorporate the interests of particular regions into their agenda (i.e., the pivotalness – or lack thereof – of certain regions and/or groups within India, the distribution of ethno-linguistic and religious groups throughout the country, the internal organization of statewide parties, as well as the leadership style of particular political leaders in the country). Brancati attributes the shape of India's party system to specific features of decentralization in the country (i.e., the proportion of national legislative seats India's many regions hold individually, the extension of decision-making autonomy to some regions of India and not others, and the election of the upper house entirely by the country's regional legislatures).

Chapter 6

Through statistical analysis, Brancati tests the generalizability of her argument in Chapter 6 regarding the effect of decentralization and regional parties on ethnic conflict and secessionism. The analysis draws on an original dataset, known as the constituency-level elections (CLE) dataset, which provides election results for national (lower and upper house) elections and regional elections from 1945 to 2002 at the constituency-level of government, to measure systematically the electoral strength of regional parties. To measure ethnic conflict and secessionism, Brancati draws on the *Minorities at Risk* dataset (1985-2000), which she corrects for selection bias. The analysis supports Brancati's argument that decentralization diminishes the strength of ethnic conflict and secessionism, while regional parties intensify it, and that the

ability of decentralization to reduce conflict decreases as the electoral strength of regional parties increases. Brancati controls for a number of factors that may affect regional party strength (e.g., ethno-linguistic heterogeneity, economic development, democracy and the executive and electoral system.). Brancati also uses instrumental variable regression in this chapter to disentangle the causal relationships between decentralization, regional parties and ethnic conflict and secessionism.

Chapter 7

Brancati tests the generalizability of her argument in Chapter 7 regarding the effect of decentralization on the electoral strength of regional parties using statistical analysis. The analysis also draws on the CLE dataset. The analysis shows that political decentralization increases the strength of regional parties and that extensive forms of decentralization strengthen regional parties more than limited forms. The analysis also finds that specific features of decentralization strengthen regional parties more than others, such as large regions and non-concurrent national and regional elections. Fiscal decentralization, in contrast, as well as having a large number of regions, has the opposite effect. Brancati controls for a number of factors typically associated with conflict and secessionism (e.g., ethno-linguistic heterogeneity, democracy and the executive and electoral system.). Brancati also uses instrumental variable regression in this chapter to disentangle the causal relationships between decentralization and regional parties.

Chapter 8

Brancati brings together the findings of the three case studies and the statistical analysis in Chapter 8, and offers a forward-looking discussion of how to design political institutions in order to effectively manage intrastate conflict. She also discusses the political and logistical issues involved in implementing such a system, and discusses avenues for future research.