

**STATUS QUO, REFORMIST OR SECESSIONIST
POLITICS:**

Explaining Minority Behavior in Multinational States

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TITLE VIII PROGRAM

Project Information*

Principal Investigator: Valerie Bunce
Council Contract Number: 819-03g
Date: July 13, 2004

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* The work leading to this report was supported in part by contract or grant funds provided by the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, funds which were made available by the U.S. Department of State under Title VIII (The Soviet-East European Research and Training Act of 1983, as amended). The analysis and interpretations contained herein are those of the author.

Executive Summary

Minority groups have adopted one of three positions when interacting with their governments. One stance has been to accept the status quo, and another has been to press for moderate changes, such as increased cultural and political autonomy. A third position is more radical—to demand a state of their own. The purpose of this paper is to account for these differences in minority political objectives by comparing center-regional bargaining within four postcommunist ethnofederal states: Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabagh), Georgia (Southern Ossetia, Abkhazia and Adjara), Russia (Chechnya, Dagestan and Tatarstan) and Serbia-Montenegro (Kosovo, Montenegro and Vojvodina). Two factors emerge as critical. The first is the outcome of regional struggles for political power between the nationalists and the communists. The other is whether international actors provide support to the minority region. Put succinctly: the more powerful the nationalists at the local level and the greater their international support, the more radical regional political demands and the more willing the center is to use military force.

The Importance of Minority Politics¹

Specialists in both comparative and international politics have devoted considerable attention to minority politics—for example, such issues as identity formation, the rise of nationalist movements, institutional design in divided societies, the politics of secession, the causes of inter-ethnic strife, and peace-making after civil wars. Scholarly preoccupation with such topics is not surprising. The vast majority of states in the international system are multinational and/or multi-religious, with many minorities in these settings sharing attributes that are widely-thought to politicize diversity—for instance, territorial concentration of minority communities, a high correlation between socio-economic resources and national identities, location of minorities on the perimeters of the state, and the existence of co-nationals in neighboring states (Horowitz, 1985; Brubaker, 1996; Bunce, 1999; Toft, 2003; Barany, 2002; Varsnhney, 2002) What also seems to politicize diversity are two other conditions well-represented around the globe—weak states and authoritarian regimes undergoing political liberalization (Beissinger, 2002; Bunce, 1999; Conversi, 1993).

Second, international stability rests in part on unchanging state boundaries—an argument that has been used, for example, to explain the “long peace” in Europe (at least its western half) during the Cold War (Gaddis, 1986). Such stability is necessarily threatened when minorities seek either membership in a neighboring state or a state of their own. In either case, the usual consequence is violent conflict between minorities and the state. Indeed, most wars since 1945 (and not just since the end of the Cold War—see Fearon and Laitin, 2003) have been internal, rather than inter-state, with most of the former featuring an ethnic, linguistic and/or religious

¹ I thank Milt Esman, Erin Jenne, Karrie Koesel, Jay Lyall, Jonas Pontusson, Sid Tarrow, and Ekkart Zimmerman for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. In addition, I thank the National Council for East European and Eurasian Research for their support of this project.

dimension. In addition, such wars are, in comparison with conflicts between states, unusually long-lasting and unusually resistant to durable settlement (Walter, 2002; Hartzell, 1999; Hartzell, et.al., 2001).

Finally, minority politics has become a central issue for American foreign policy. Over the past decade, the United States has intervened in a number of multinational states. While the reasons behind American involvement in Bosnia, Serbia-Montenegro, Afghanistan and Iraq, together with smaller-scale engagements in Liberia and Haiti, have varied, the dilemmas posed by these interventions for American foreign policy-makers have been remarkably similar—and similarly intractable. How can viable states and democracies be constructed in multinational settings where inter-group trust is low, a history of democracy is virtually non-existent, and national minorities are shared among neighboring states, with most of those states weak and most of their regimes either authoritarian or hybrids of democracy and dictatorship? The United States, moreover, is likely to revisit these problems in the future—not just because *all* of the interventions since 1995 have fallen short of their goals, but also because it is precisely the kinds of settings represented by Bosnia, Iraq and the like that seem to provide an optimal breeding ground, as well as refuge, for terrorists.

The Puzzle of Minority-State Relations

Scholarly interest in minority politics, therefore, is both ample and understandable. It is, therefore, puzzling that all of this attention has failed to produce a compelling answer to what is perhaps the most fundamental question about minority political behavior; that is, *why* minorities embrace such different political agendas.

While some minorities accept the status quo, others seek moderate changes, such as greater cultural and political autonomy and/or expanded representation in central-level political institutions. In both cases, state borders remain intact—though the pursuit of change often generates tensions between the state and minority communities. This leads to a third option—when minorities take the radical step of challenging existing state borders by demanding a state of their own. Secessionist demands usually lead to internal wars, in large measure because of the peculiar calculus of states. As Ruth McVey (1984: 13) has summarized: “The nation-state clings above all to territory; one of its paradoxes is that, for all its stress on the people as its basis, it will give up population, but not land.”

Further complicating these three scenarios are two other considerations. One is that minorities sharing the same state and, indeed, even sharing a number of other similarities that would seem to predispose them to like behavior, pursue, nonetheless, quite different political agendas. Another is that the same minority in time one can accept the status quo and in time two pursue either moderate change or even secession from the state (see, for example, Evangelista, 2003; McGarry and O’Leary, 2002). Minority-state interactions, in short, vary—not just across country, but also within country and over time.

Most studies of minority-state relations, however, have tended to ignore these variations and to produce explanations, as a result, that are either flawed or of limited applicability. In particular, studies of minority interactions with the state feature several problems. One is that some studies tend to focus on only one dynamic—usually secession (see, for example, Kaufman, 2001). This is a problem, not just because secession is exceptional (like revolutions, which have also generated perhaps more theories than cases), but also because the absence of variation in the dependent variable clutters causality.

Some studies, of course, have addressed these deficiencies by comparing inter-ethnic cooperation versus conflict (see Evangelista, 2003; Fearon and Laitin, 1996; Cornell, 2001c, 2002; Toft, 2003). While illuminating, these studies tend to focus on two of the three dynamics discussed above. In doing so, they tend to reduce minority positions to a dichotomous choice, thereby excluding either one extreme, such as the absence of demands for change, or the middle ground of pressing for moderate change.

Moreover, some of these studies treat states as the unit of analysis, when the key issue is what happens locally—an issue that is particularly important in states where there are multiple minorities and where these minorities pursue different political agendas (see, for example, Fearon and Laitin, 2003; and for critiques of the state focus, Varshney, 2002; Wilkinson, 2001; Medrano, 1995; Guibernau, 1995). Finally, few studies are designed to take into account what can be termed the “triple variation” in minority preferences; that is, not just differences within and across countries, but also over time.

The Design of this Study

The purpose of this paper is to develop an explanation of variations—within and across countries and over time—in what minority leaders want from their states. In particular, I will compare the political demands since 1992² of nine minority regions located within three postcommunist states: Georgia (Abkhazia, Adjara and southern Ossetia), Russia (Chechnya, Dagestan and Tatarstan)³ and Serbia-Montenegro (Kosovo, Montenegro and Vojvodina).⁴

² I chose this date, because it constitutes the first full year of independence. However, in the analysis that follows, I will bring in dynamics that predate 1992 for the obvious reason that interactions between the center and minority regions were strongly influenced by interactions during the Soviet period—particularly (but not solely) during the Gorbachev era in the Soviet case and after the death of Tito in Yugoslavia.

³ The regions selected for both Serbia-Montenegro and Georgia are the only ethnically-defined subunits within these two ethnofederations. In the case of Russia, I selected three minority regions, each of which has identical

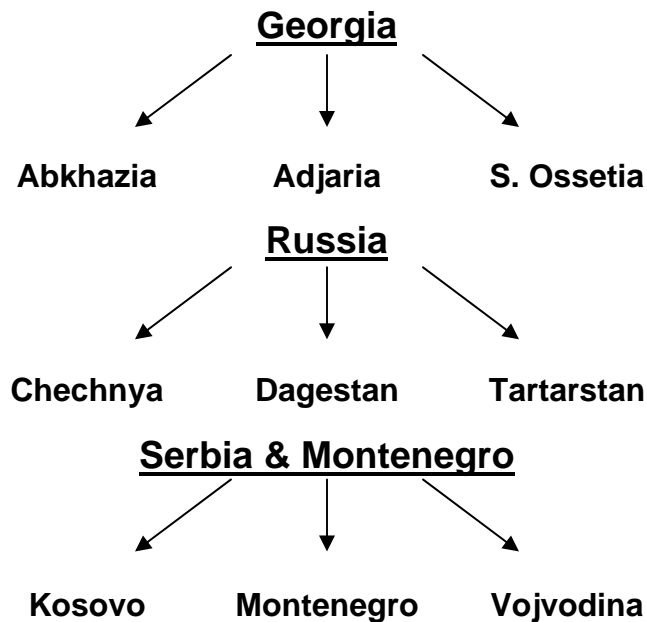
These three countries and these nine regions (see Figure 1) were chosen for several reasons. First, these three states share a number of commonalities, including, for example, a communist past; recent establishment as sovereign states; contested transitions from dictatorship to democracy; a majority nation; multiple minority communities combining differences from the majority in language, religion and/or ethnicity; economic decline (even before civil war); and nationally-differentiated incomes per capita. Finally, Georgia, Russia and Serbia-Montenegro are ethnofederal states; that is, federations where subunits are constructed for the purpose of representing specific minority communities. Indeed, prior to independence in 1991, all three of these states were ethnofederal republics within the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia.⁵

administrative status in the federation and each of which represents one type of minority-state dynamic as detailed in the discussion that follows. While there are many examples of “cats that didn’t meow” in the Russian Federation, the case of Dagestan seemed to be an unusually important one, given its proximity to Chechnya and its many similarities with that rebellious republic, including extraordinary poverty and Islamic religious identity. Dagestan is also of interest, because it is the only case in the postcommunist region of a consociational polity.

⁴ The analysis that follows will also bring in, where helpful for analytical purposes, a fourth case from the region: Azerbaijan. While this state shares a number of similarities with the other three, including ethnofederalism, it was not treated in a systematic way because it features only one minority-defined subunit.

⁵ What we find, in short, is a long legacy of ethnofederalism that spans communism and postcommunism and the transition from a republic to independent statehood. Having ethnofederal institutions in place prior to short-term and dramatic changes in politics, such as regime and state transition, is critical for our purposes, because these institutions have already set the stage in many respects for secessionist politics—for instance, by constructing strong regional identities, providing minorities with both leadership and organization, building potential states, and generating a history (often acrimonious) of center-regional bargaining. Moreover, in such a context, the only way to expand existing regional autonomy in response to increased minority demands during a time of political transition is either moving towards a confederal state or granting independence—two options that threaten state interests. By contrast, the political sequence followed by Spain and India—two states that became ethnofederal following the transition to democracy in the first case and the transition to both democracy and statehood in the second—is much less likely to encourage secessionist movements. This is because minorities lack the resources and resentments of ethnofederal histories and because the center, in the midst of political change, can court minorities by expanding autonomy, but without undermining the state. For minorities, moreover, this expanded autonomy represents a distinct improvement over the past. This contrast between the burdens of ethnofederal legacies versus the benefits of introducing ethnofederalism into a unitary state context is also relevant to inter-ethnic relations in the postcommunist region. Those new states that faced secessionist demands, but were not ethnofederal at the time, such as Ukraine and Moldova, have been far more successful than their ethnofederal counterparts in devising workable solutions to center-periphery conflicts—solutions that included, for example, introducing ethnofederal elements into their unitary states (see Bunce and Watts, 2002).

Figure 1
Ethnofederations and Regional Subunits



Ethnofederalism, together with many of the other shared characteristics noted above, is widely-thought by many analysts to be factors unusually conducive to the rise of secessionist movements (see, for example, Horowitz, 1985; Bunce, 1999b; Varshney, 2001, 2002; Gorenburg, 2003; Croissant, 1998; Petersen, 2001; Amelin, 2001; Cornell, 2001a, 2001c, 2002; Barany, 2002; Csergo, 2000; Melvin, 2000; ICG, 2001; Roeder, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2002; Roeder and Rothchild, 2003). The countries selected for this study, therefore, present a puzzle. Their common circumstances would all seem to predispose them to secessionist challenges (which is one reason why all three have at least one secessionist region), but secession remains, nonetheless, the exception, not the rule.

These states also feature some contrasts—again in areas that are deemed important for minority political behavior. For example, the Russians are more dominant in percentage terms than either the Georgians or especially the Serbs; both Russia and Serbia, but not Georgia, served

as the center of the old federations (though this was expressed in different institutional ways) and functioned, therefore, as the obvious target of nationalist mobilization as the state dissolved; and Georgians, far more than either Serbs or Russians, mounted a large and sustained nationalist challenge to the old communist state. Just as important are the variations among minority regions. Thus, the nine regions vary with respect to the size and geographical concentration of the titular nation; location within the state and the presence or absence of a diaspora community; their language, religion, and/or ethnicity as compared to the majority; economic development relative to the state average; and historical experiences, such as prior statehood and patterns of cooperation and conflict with the center (see, for example, Bunce, 1999; Toft, 2003; Barany, 2002; Horowitz, 1985).

Of particular interest in this study, however, is a final area of divergence—in the dependent variable, or the preferences of regional political leaders.⁶ A survey of these minority regions reveals three types of regional preferences.⁷ One such dynamic is accepting prevailing political practices—which I term *status quo politics*. The reasons why minorities go along with the status quo are variable, ranging from satisfaction with existing arrangements to the absence of opportunities for change—for example, where the state is highly repressive, thereby

⁶ I am assuming here that the key issue is the preferences of minority leaders, not their followers. As a number of studies have suggested, it is not just that bargaining between the state and minority regions is between the leaders of each side (see, for example, Bunce, 1999; Hechter, 1992), but also that what minority leaders demand—and how states respond—has far more to do with elite concerns about power, money and policy than with either their reading of what their followers and allies want or any commitment they might voice about representing their constituencies. Moreover, in at least some cases, the assumption that, because there are nationalist leaders, there must be a nationalist movement, can be misguided—an observation that reminds us once again of the importance of leaders, rather than “followers” (see Gagnon, 2005, forthcoming).

⁷ In the cases of interest in this study, the preferences of minority leaders seem to produce rather predictable political dynamics between the center and the regions. Thus, the status quo option produces cooperation; a reformist agenda produces compromise; and secessionist demands produce (less surprisingly) violent conflict. Once I extend this study to other parts of the world (such as Indonesia and Ethiopia), however, this convenient connection between minority preferences and bargaining dynamics with the center may very well dissolve, thereby producing a more complicated analysis that requires looking at three issues: minority preferences; central preferences; and bargaining dynamics.

constraining both popular mobilization and the rise of less moderate local leaders; where the center is united, thereby offering limited room (or allies) for political maneuver; or where minority leaders cannot count on international support for change. Not surprisingly, a status quo position is associated with peaceful relations between the center and the region. In this study, the status quo scenario captures regional-center dynamics in Dagestan; Montenegro (1992-1997); and Vojvodina (1992-2000) (on these cases, see Chenciner, 1997; Devic, 2001; Jenne, 2003; Kisriev, 2000; Kerchov, et.al., 1990; “The Situation,” 2000; Walker, 2001; Ware and Kisriev, 1999, 2001; Ware, et.al, 2003; Stroschein, 2003).⁸

A second situation is where regional leaders demand significant changes, while nonetheless accepting the existing borders of the state. These changes can include the establishment of greater economic and political autonomy, and they can include (though this was less evident in the postcommunist cases, excepting Montenegro 1997-2002) increased representation of the titular nation at the center of the state. In our cases, these demands had a common consequence: relatively tense bargaining that threatened at times to escalate into the much more radical proposition of local sovereignty (but with sovereignty defined in ways that fell short, nonetheless, of a call for independence). I term this dynamic *reform*, because in every case there were demands for modest and sometime significant changes, but within the parameters of existing state borders. The cases that fit this characterization include Adjaria,⁹ Montenegro (1997-2002), Vojvodina (2000-2003) and Tatarstan (see Guiliano, 2000; Graney, 1998, 1999;

⁸ The placement of Vojvodina from 1992-2000 in this category is somewhat debatable, since one can discern from 1990-1993 growing political support for increased regional autonomy (Jenne, 2003). However, in contrast to Jenne, I read the demands during this period (as opposed to what developed, beginning in 2000) as largely concerned with restoring the autonomy that had been in place from 1974 to the Serbian takeover of Vojvodina in 1999. I do not see them, therefore, as either unprecedented or at involving significant changes (see devic, 2001). In addition, I see significantly greater continuity than does Jenne in the constraints on politics in Vojvodina from 1992 through the fall, 2000.

⁹ Recent changes in Georgia, however, may mean that Adjaria may be changing categories from reform to secession.

Kaplan, 1998; Isaev, 1998; Sagitova, 2001; Kondrashov, 2000; Derluguian, 1998, 2001c; Suny, 1999a; Cerovic, 2001; Simic, 1997; “Politicheskii landshaft, “ 1996).

The final alternative is *secession*. This is where local minority leaders attempt to leave the state—usually to form their own state, but at times (as with Kosovo at certain points and Nagorno-Karabagh in Azerbaijan) to join a neighboring state. In every one of these cases, not surprisingly, the result was a war between the center and forces representing the minority region.

In all of these situations, however, the result was that no new states came into being—a hardly surprising outcome, given the unwillingness of the international community, in these situations as well as in most others since World War II, to recognize new states formed from popular rebellion (see Marshall and Gurr, 2003: 29). At the same time, however, these rebellious regions have not been re-integrated as yet into their original states—an outcome that reflects in large measure the willingness of both central and local leaders to exploit political and economic segmentation (King, 2001).¹⁰ The cases here include Abkhazia, Chechnya, Kosovo and southern Ossetia, together with Nagorno-Karabagh in Azerbaijan (see Billingsley, 1997; Cornell, 2001 a,b,c; King, 2001a; Chrvonaya, 1994; Suny, 1999a, 1999b, 1994; Stefes, 2002; Lieven, 2000, 2001; Dale, 1993, 1996; Derluguian, 2001a, 2001b; Garb, 1998; Goltz, 2001; Jones, 1997; Fuller and Parish, 1997; Lapidus, 1998, 1999; Lieven, 1998; Evangelista, 2003; Croissant, 1998; Musabekov, 2001; Papazian, 2001; Saroyan, 1990, 1999; Suny and Laitin, 2002; Duijzings,

¹⁰ They benefited, one can argue, from precedent, given the ability of two erstwhile foes, Milosevic and Tudjman, to do the same when dealing with Bosnia.

2000; Juda, 1999; Pula, 2001; Gagnon, 2001, 2003, 2005; Malcolm, 1998; Prifti, 1999; Ula, 2001; Rupnik, 2000; Vickers, 1998, 2001; Poulton and Vickers, 1997; Kosovo's Final Status, 2002).¹¹

These distinctions, which are summarized in Table 1, have two important implications. First, they provide greater precision to the question at hand. The goal of this study, therefore, is to differentiate among status quo, reformist and secessionist minority political dynamics. Second, these three options can be arrayed on a scale from less to more; that is, from no demands for change in minority relations with the state to moderate demands to the extreme position of contesting state borders.¹² The ordinal nature of these categories is analytically useful, because it makes explanation both more difficult and more subtle. It is more difficult, because we cannot follow the common practice in comparative case analysis of locating causality in the presence or absence of certain factors. It is more subtle, because ordinal outcomes are best explained by variables that can also be expressed in an ordinal way; that is, in terms of less and more.

¹¹ Kosovo presents more variation than the other cases. One can detect, for example, a more moderate period from 1993-1997 (Jenne, 2003). However, my reading is that Serbian repression, which was particularly marked from 1993-1997, masked what was widespread and growing support for independence—support which had begun to develop in the early 1980s. Here, I have been influenced by the analysis of Besnik Pula (2001) and by developments in Kosovo following Tito's death and prior to the dissolution of the Yugoslav state.

¹² Just as interesting, though falling outside the parameters of this study, is another contrast that can also be arrayed on a continuum from less to more—in this case, from less to more conflict with the state.

Table 1
Variance in Subunit-Center Bargaining
(1992 - 2002)

<u>STATUS QUO</u> ¹³	<u>REFORM</u> ¹⁴	<u>SECESSION</u> ¹⁵
Dagestan	Adjaria	Abkhazia
Montenegro (1992-1997)	Montenegro (1997-2002)	Chechnya
Vojvodina (1992-2000)	Vojvodina (2000-2003)	Kosovo
	Tatarstan	S. Ossetia

Hypotheses

What factors might account for variations in minority leader preferences? We can begin to answer this question by dividing the literature on minority politics into three explanatory families. The first targets characteristics of the state, the regime and the majority nation. Here, it can be suggested that certain kinds of state settings are more supportive of the development of secessionist minorities—for example, states that are ethnofederal, new, and weak; that have thin dominant nations that are combined with large minority populations with strong identities; and that are mountainous (see Bunce, 1999; Beissinger, 2002; Roeder, 2002; Toft, 2003; Cornell, 2001a, 2001c; Fearon and Laitin, 2003).

On the regime side, a key issue seems to be the weakening of authoritarian rule and the likely rise, as a consequence, of both opportunities for political change and political competition (Bunce, 1999; Conversi, 1993). At the same time, certain characteristics of the majority nation

¹³ Where the subunit leader accepts the existing center-regional relationship. The state is not in question.

¹⁴ Where the subunit leader demands significant and unprecedented political/cultural/economic autonomy (including sovereignty claims in some cases). The state is not in question.

¹⁵ Where the subunit leader declares independence.

may lay some groundwork for minority mobilization—whether the majority embraces an assimilationist agenda and whether they interpret their small numbers as reason for fearing minority empowerment. In many ways, the argument here is a variant on the security dilemma (Posen, 1993; Lake and Rothchild, 1996; Fearon, 1998). Where majorities are mobilized, but insecure, minorities follow suit, with each side adopting more radical positions in pursuit of an ever more elusive security.

A second family of arguments shifts our attention from the state to characteristics of subunits. Here, there are a host of demographic, cultural, economic, geopolitical and historical factors. For example, it has been suggested that minorities will have more radical agendas, if they are large and geographically concentrated; if they have large diasporas in neighboring states; if they have strong identities, access to their own institutions and substantial representation in local political institutions; if they are richer or poorer than the majority; and if they have a history of independent statehood or conflictual relations with the majority (see, for instance, Barany, 2002; Bunce, 1999; Brubaker, 1996; Jenne, 2003; Toft, 2003; Cornell, 2001a, 2001c; Beissinger, 2002; Horowitz, 1985).

The final group of causes concentrates on short-term developments—though recognizing in most cases that these are joined with some long-term factors that together increase the likelihood of certain political scenarios. Such developments include outcomes of the struggle for power at the center and in the regions; whether minorities have lost or gained external allies in the processes of both state dissolution and the formation of a new state; and whether the transition to both a more liberal political order and statehood has undermined economic performance, especially when the costs are nationally-differentiated.

Thus, minorities are more likely to pursue a radical course when there is a misfit between the ideological composition of coalitions governing at the center and in the regions; when minorities have been abandoned by their former protectors and, at the same time, are supported in their projects by rhetoric and weapons provided by outside actors; and when the economy of the state collapses and minorities in particular suffer the consequences (see, for instance, Horowitz, 1994; Jenne, 2003; Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Bunce, 1999; Jenne, 2003; Hechter, 1992; Csergo, 2000; Suny, 1994, 1999a, 1999b; McGarry and O’Leary, 2002; Petersen, 2002; Hartzell, et.al., 2001; Gurr, 2000; Gorenburg, 1999, 2003; Hanson, 1999; Fearon, 1998; Laitin, 1999).

When combined, these and other arguments about the effects of short-term political and economic change share a common claim. With high stakes, more malleable politics, insecure majorities and fearful minorities, the stage is set for radicalization of both minorities and majorities—and not necessarily in that sequence and certainly not in isolation from one another.

Before we turn to an assessment of these alternative explanations, one cautionary note is in order. There is little doubt that certain factors, while failing to explain variations in minority leader demands, nonetheless should be understood as encouraging minority leaders to seek change. Indeed, the very logic of selecting Georgia, Serbia-Montenegro and Russia for this study was premised on two arguments—most obviously, that these cases allow us to control for a variety of causes, and, less obviously, that they share a number of characteristics, most of which increase the likelihood of reformist demands at the least and secessionist demands at the most. Controlling for such factors as territorially-concentrated minorities, who have access to substantial institutional resources and who operate in a fluid political context, therefore, does not

eliminate them as causal candidates so much as help us isolate some variables that may, under these enabling conditions, nudge minority leaders in particular directions.¹⁶

State-Level Similarities and Differences

On Table 1, I have provided a summary of plausible causal factors related to the first group of explanations; that is, characteristics of the state and their dominant nations. Because of variations in minority preferences and minority-state bargaining both over time and within our three states, however, these factors, while in many cases enhancing the prospects for minority dissatisfaction and reduced cooperation between the state and minority communities, cannot by themselves differentiate among our trajectories.

That said, however, it is still useful to work through these factors, if only briefly. As Table 2 suggests, the first eight factors are common to Georgia, Russia and Serbia-Montenegro, whereas the remaining factors differentiate among these states. In all cases, however, the conclusion is the same. Whether we look at commonalities, such as regime transition, territorially compact minorities, and regional variation in income, or at differences, such as the existence of a majority nation's diaspora, the size and religion of the majority, the timing of nationalist mobilization, or an historical precedent of statehood, they fail to provide insights into what we want to know: why minority leaders put forward different demands on the state.

¹⁶ At the same time, it cannot be assumed that there is only one road to each of these dynamics—especially given the limited number of cases addressed in this study.

Table 2
Competing Explanations: State-Level and Majority Variables

	<u>GEORGIA</u>	<u>RUSSIA</u>	<u>SERBIA-MONTENEGRO</u>
Ethnofederation	Yes	Yes	Yes
State Socialist Legacy	Yes	Yes	Yes
New State	Yes	Yes	Yes
Regime Transition	Yes	Yes	Yes
State Capacity	Low	Low	Low
Teritorially Compact Minorities	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mobilization Against Former State¹⁷	Yes	Yes	Yes
Regional Variation In Income	Large	Large	Large
Timing of Mobilization¹⁸	Early	Late	Middle
Size of Dominant Nation	68%	82%	63%
Center/Periphery of Former State	Periphery	Center	Center
Diaspora of Dominant Nation?	Small	Large	Large
History of Resistance?¹⁹	Yes	No	No
Prior Independence?²⁰	Yes	No	Yes
Communists Maintain Power?	No	Mixed	Yes
Majority Religion	Christian	Christian	Christian
Muslim Minorities	Yes	Yes	Yes

Just as striking is the seeming unimportance of a factor absent from Table 2. Russia is the only country in the postcommunist region that has an inclusive definition of citizenship in its constitution—which reflects, in part, the absence of an aggressive and assimilationist nationalism

¹⁷ The distinction here is between those republics within Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union that exhibited nationalist mobilization against the state versus those that did not (see Beissinger, 2002; Bunce, 1999).

¹⁸ Early refers to nationalist mobilization during the communist era; middle refers to mobilization during the 1980s; and late refers to mobilization during the disintegration of communist party hegemony. For Serbia-Montenegro, the focus is on Serbia, though with the recognition that protests in the early 1980s were both liberal and nationalist and primarily the former (see Gagnon, 2005, forthcoming).

¹⁹ The key issue here is whether the state, then republic, resisted incorporation into the Soviet or Yugoslav state.

²⁰ Of course, Georgian independence was short-lived (a reaction to the Bolshevik revolution), whereas Serbian independence was much longer in duration.

in Russia, as opposed to, say, Georgia (see Brudny, 1998, 2001). However, this has not made Russia distinctive in its relationship to its regions—though it is interesting to note that a much larger percentage of Russia’s minority regions are cooperative with the center and that, after the turbulent politics of the first half of the 1990s and the evident weakening of the Russian state during that entire decade, Moscow’s relations with its administrative “subjects” has tended to improve, in part because Putin has reduced room for local maneuver (see Lysenko, 1998; Koslov, 1998; Lanina and Chirikova, 1999; but see Stoner-Weiss, 2004).

Let us now turn to a more likely set of candidates: the characteristics of subunits. Once again, however, a number of plausible explanations fall to the wayside.

Demographic, Economic and Cultural Perspectives

In Tables 3 and 4, I compare the regions of interest according to a variety of variables. Let us turn, first, to demographic considerations. If the relative size of the minority within the subunit were critical, with the assumption that larger minorities are more likely to rebel than smaller ones, then we should see similar scenarios for Vojvodina and Abkhazia—two republics in Serbia-Montenegro and Georgia, respectively, where the titular nation is in fact unusually small (less than twenty percent of the subunit’s population at the time of transition) in comparison with the other republics in our group, and, just as importantly, where the largest nation within the republic is the majority nation of the state (with Serbs an absolute majority within Vojvodina and Georgians, until the war, comprising nearly a majority in Abkhazia). However, Vojvodina is an example of status quo politics (though it moves eventually into the reform camp), whereas Abkhazia is an example of secession. They occupy, in short, the opposite ends of the bargaining continuum.

Table 3
Competing Explanations: Subunit Focus (Demographic and Cultural Variables)

	<u>MINORITY SIZE</u>	<u>RELATIVE WEALTH OF REGION</u>	<u>RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCE</u>	<u>LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCE</u>	<u>ETHNIC DIFFERENCE</u>	<u>DIASPORA</u>	<u>MAJORITY IN NEIGHBORING STATE</u>
Dagestan	Moderate*	Poor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Montenegro (1992-1997)	Large	Slightly below	No	No	No	Small	No
Vovjvodina (1992-2000)	Small	Rich	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adjaria	Large	Rich	Yes	No	No	No	No
Montenegro (1997-2002)	Large	Slightly below	No	No	Yes	Small	No
Vojvodina (2000-2002)	Small	Rich	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tatarstan	Medium	Rich	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No**
Abkhazia	Small	Rich	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Chechyna	Large	Poor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Kosovo	Large	Poor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nagorno-Karabakh	Large	Similar	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
S. Ossetia	Large	Rich	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No**
*Dagestan is unusually diverse. Avartsi, the largest group, is 28%; Dargintsi - 16.3%; Russians - 12.5%; and Dezginy - 12.2%.							
**In Tatarstan, Tatars are a majority in the neighboring subunit, Bashkortostan. Tartars are also the largest minority in the Russian Federation and are quite dispersed. Ossets have a neighboring subunit, N. Ossetia in the Russian Federation.							

Table 4
Competing Explanations: Geopolitical and Historical Features of Subunits

	<u>GEOPOLITICAL LOCATION</u> ^a	<u>VIOLENCE IN INCORPORATION</u> ^b	<u>PRIOR STATEHOOD</u> ^c	<u>SUBUNIT ALLIANCE</u> ^d	<u>INSTITUTIONAL STATUS IN FORMER STATE</u> ^e	<u>LOCAL REPRESENTATION</u> ^f
Dagestan	Perimeter	Yes	No	No	Changed (-)	Medium
Montenegro (1992-1997)	Perimeter	No	Yes	No	Stable	Medium
Vojvodina (1992-2000)	Perimeter	No	No	No	Changed (+)	Low / Medium
Adjara	Perimeter	Yes	No	No	Stable	Medium
Montenegro (1997-2002)	Perimeter	No	Yes	No	Stable	Medium
Vojvodina (2000-2002)	Perimeter	No	No	No	Changed (+)	Low
Tatarstan	Enclosed	Yes	Yes	No	Stable	Medium
Abkhazia	Perimeter	Yes	No	Yes	Changed (-)	High
Chechnya	Perimeter	Yes	No	No	Changed (-)	Low
Kosovo	Perimeter	Yes	No	No	Changed (+)	Low/Medium
Nagorno-Karabakh	Close to Perimeter	Yes	No	Yes	Changed (+)	Medium
S. Ossetia	Close to Perimeter	No	No	Yes	Changed (+)	Medium
^a The argument here is that subunits on the border of the state are more likely to secede.						
^b The argument here is that early resistance provides a basis for later secession.						
^c The argument here is that prior statehood provides a basis for secession.						
^d The argument here is that, when the center of the former state allies with the subunit against the republic, that subunit is more likely to secede.						
^e All of these subunits had administrative identity during the communist period. However, their rankings in some cases changed. The argument is that change is critical, with upgraded status “tempting” statehood and downgraded status producing resentment.						
^f The concern here is the degree to which the titular nation in the subunit was well represented in political and economic posts within the subunit during the communist period.						

However, before we dismiss this factor, we need to look at the opposite situation; that is, where the titular nation is a clear majority. Here, we find three of our four conflict cases; that is, Kosovo (where Albanians were approximately eighty percent of the population prior to the war), Chechnya (where Chechens comprised seventy percent of the population—a situation that is quite unusual for the ethnically-defined Russian republics, regions and oblasts), and southern Ossetia (where Ossets are sixty-six percent of the population). In addition, this pattern is repeated in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh within Azerbaijan, where Armenians comprised about seventy-five percent of the population before the outbreak of war.

Finally, it is interesting to note that virtually all of the minority-defined republics and oblasts in the Russian Federation—with the glaring exception of Chechnya—feature minority representation of the titular minorities. At the very least, then, it can be suggested that, while minority size does not guarantee conflict (as Abkhazia reminds us) and while it may be only sheer chutzpah for social scientists to use the term, “guarantee,” large minorities, in combination with other influences, such as ethnofederalism and regime transition, may increase the likelihood of secessionist politics.²¹

Economic differences, however, fail to have any clear relationship with minority leader preferences. It has been argued, on the one hand, that richer republics or regions are more likely to defect from the state—largely because they have subsidized other units within the state and because they are well-positioned to construct a viable state. On the other hand, it has been suggested that poorer areas attribute their condition to exploitation and, at the very least, have a longstanding set of grievances against the center (see Horowitz, 1985, 1994; Medrano, 1995; and Jenne, 2003 on both perspectives).

²¹ However, the cases of both Adjara and Montenegro, where majorities are also sizeable, cast some doubt on this argument—albeit with the important amendment that in both cases ethnic borders between the majority and the minority are far more porous than in our other cases.

However, the economic development of the republic relative to the state as a whole does not predict behavior in our cases. For example, to focus on the conflict dyads, Chechnya and Kosovo are unusually poor, whereas Abkhazia and southern Ossetia, by the standards of their states, are unusually rich. Similarly, in the compromise cases, Tatarstan and Adjara are above their state average, whereas Montenegro is somewhat below the state average. Finally, while Vojvodina is the richest part of Serbia-Montenegro, Dagestan is (along with Chechnya) the poorest republic within the Russian Federation. The failure of economic factors to explain our patterns, however, is not surprising, given their limited role in explaining, earlier, inter-republican variations in nationalist mobilization in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia from 1986-1992 (Bunce, 1999b; Beissinger, 2002; but see Aspinall, 2002; King, 2002; Young, 1997 on other cases).

A variety of cultural arguments also seem limited in their differentiating power—in particular, the degree of difference between the majority and the minority with respect to language, ethnicity and religion; whether the minority has a significant diaspora population; and whether the minority is a majority in a neighboring state (Brubaker, 1998; Laitin, 1999a, 1999b; Fox, 1997; Lake and Rothchild, 1998). For example, the titular nation in both Kosovo and Tatarstan (as in Abkhazia, Chechnya, Dagestan, and Vojvodina) is different from the state's majority nation in language and religion, yet secession emerges in the first case and reform in the second.

Moreover, the remaining cases exhibit no clear pattern. In southern Ossetia, the key distinction is language; in Adjara it is religion; and in Montenegro it is neither language nor religion—though under the banner of autonomy, Montenegro did recently establish its

southwestern dialect of Serbian as the official language and re-establish a Montenegrin Orthodox Church, which had been eliminated in 1920 in deference to the Serbian Orthodox Church.

At the same time, while southern Ossetia, Kosovo and Chechnya (all secessionist cases) have significant diasporas outside the republic, as does Nagorno-Karabakh, the same is also the case for Dagestan—an example of status quo politics-- and Tatarstan—an example of reform. Indeed, in the final case, the diaspora is unusually large. Tatars are the largest minority within Russia; only twenty-five percent of all Tatars live in Tatarstan; and, even more striking, more than a million Tatars (more than in Tatarstan) reside in neighboring Bashkortostan, where they significantly outnumber the titular nation, the Bashkirs.

Finally, representation as a majority in a neighboring state or republic within that neighboring state does not help us differentiate between the cases of Kosovo (Albania) and southern Ossetia (northern Ossetia in Russia) versus Vojvodina (Hungary). Thus, just as with the demographic and economic variables, so the cultural variables are not very helpful in differentiating among our three types of minority leader preferences.

Geopolitical and Historical Considerations

It has been argued that regions are far more likely to secede when they are located on the periphery of the state (see Table 4). This is a common observation, for example, in comparative studies of the Russian Federation (see, especially, the analyses in Alexseev, 1999; Graney, 1998; McAuley, 1997). What is striking about our cases, however, is that, while all five secessionist regions are located on the borders of the state (though with corridors in many cases populated by either the majority, or, as with Nagorno-Karabakh, another minority, the Kurds), the same is also

true of an additional four cases. Tatarstan is the one geographically-isolated region in our group—a location that no doubt tempered demands in this specific case, but that lacks broader applicability.

On Table 4, I have also assessed several historical factors, predating the state socialist period, that might explain the differences among our cases (though if they do, they open up the problem of how such factors managed to be influential over long periods of time). The first variable is the timing of incorporation into the state. Here, the extremes are represented by Montenegro, which joined also independent Serbia in forming, along with some imperial remnants of both the Habsburg and the Ottoman empires, the Yugoslav state at the end of World War I and Tatarstan, which has been part of Russia for hundreds of years. Both of these cases are examples of the reform scenario. Another plausible factor is whether incorporation into the state was violent or peaceful. In our cases, there are only two peaceful examples—Vojvodina and Montenegro. By contrast, *all* the remaining regions were violent—though both Kosovo and especially Chechnya were unusually so, with resistance continuing on and off through both the pre-communist and communist eras. Thus, there seems to be no strong correlation between this factor and subsequent bargaining dynamics.

Yet another factor is whether the republic was once a state—an argument that has been used to explain both the early appearance of Baltic protests during the Gorbachev period and the strong commitment of the Baltic peoples to independent statehood. The problem here is that there are only two examples of independent statehood in our group: Tatarstan (albeit with different boundaries) and Montenegro. What is puzzling about this pattern is that statehood should, in theory, predict secession, not reformist, let alone status quo politics.

Historical Factors During the Socialist Era

It is far easier to construct a causal argument, if we focus on more recent historical developments—in our case, political developments during the communist period. Here, four factors emerge as plausible ways to distinguish among our cases. One is whether the center was allied with the subunit against the republic, with the result that any weakening of the center and any strengthening of the republic would be viewed as threatening by the subunit. This, plus an aggressive nationalism on the part of the dominant nation, has been analyzed as a problem of credible commitment (see Fearon, 1998). This argument seems to have some explanatory power in the case of the Yugoslav dissolution and in two of the cases of concern here—Georgia and Serbia-Montenegro.

For example, it is evident that during the Soviet period, Moscow, ever-concerned about Georgian nationalism, allied with Abkhazia and southern Ossetia against Georgia. At the same time, while Tito was alive, unrest in Kosovo, while suppressed militarily (though less violently than was the case after Tito died) was followed by expanded cultural rights, educational opportunities, economic subsidies and Albanian representation in political posts. The Serbian political leadership considered this threatening, which in some ways was precisely Tito's goal, not just when introducing these policies, but also in fashioning the 1974 Constitution, which enhanced the power of Kosovo close to the level of a republic, as opposed to a province. Indeed, Tito had also used other pretexts, such as the rise of Croatian nationalism in the early 1970s, to discipline the Serbs and thereby limit their power as the largest of the Yugoslav nations and as the group most over-represented in the officer corps of the Yugoslav National Army and the Secret Police.

When Tito died in 1980 and later in the decade, when both the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia began to unravel, these regions lost their protector—while gaining an enemy, or Serbia and Georgia, respectively. Many Serbs and Georgians were resentful, given the perception that their nation had been discriminated against while the minority region had been favored. At the same time, the leaders of these two new states, Milosevic and Gamsakhurdia, were quite powerful, because of statehood and because they played successfully to resentments among Serbian and Georgian elites and intellectuals.²²

All that said, however, this line of argument seems to be less useful for the Russian case. Chechnya had no protector and, indeed, resisted Moscow's control, whether during Russian or Soviet imperial times. Moreover, powerful political and economic posts within this republic went to the Russians—even though they were a minority of the population. This was in sharp contrast to Abkhazia and southern Ossetia in particular.

A second factor, which highlights institutional resources as well as favorable or unfavorable comparisons with other groups sharing the republic and later state, is *where* the subunits were located within the institutional hierarchy of the ethnofederal communist states. Two lines of argument can be suggested here. One is that nations without institutional status and nations with institutional status, but lower in the hierarchy, are less likely to demand independent statehood and, instead, press for higher status and/or greater autonomy. This argument, for

²² The Serbian case is more complex, not just because Milosevic was a communist, whereas Gamsakhurdia was an intellectual defying the party, but also because Milosevic in fact represented a position mid way between the extremes of rejecting a nationalist agenda (as did his predecessor, mentor and eventual victim, Stambolic), and embracing an aggressive, if not fascist nationalist agenda (Seselj). Moreover, the nationalist following of Milosevic has been exaggerated, whereas his success in demobilizing the liberal opposition—a key to his consolidation of political power—has been ignored (see Gagnon, 2005, forthcoming).

example, helps explain patterns of secession at the end of the communist era, when the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia unraveled, and, later, in the successor state of the Russian Federation (see Bunce, 1999b; Beissinger, 2002; Treisman, 1997; Barany, 2002).

At the same time, however, it can be argued that having the highest category within the federation—for example, republican as opposed to provincial status within Yugoslavia—might tempt local leaders to carry their autonomy one step further. If we look at Table 4, however, we do not find a clear pattern. All nine of our regions, of course, had institutional identity during communism—which suggests that such identities and institutional resources are better understood as helpful, but far from sufficient conditions for mobilization against the state. The behavior of the Russian minority in the Crimea in Ukraine and in Moldova also points to the limits of a purely institutional account (though it is striking how important Russian state support was for these revolts and, in comparison with our other cases, how easily and quickly these crises were resolved—see Bunce and Watts, 2002).

At the same time, the propensity of minorities to rebel does not correlate with their position in the administrative hierarchy of the communist era. For example, Montenegro is the only case of republican status during the communist period, and Abkhazia, Vojvodina and Kosovo were all of lower status than the remaining cases in our group (although how one reads both Vojvodina and Kosovo is complicated by how one interprets the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution).

A related factor is whether there were changes during the communist period in administrative status. Given the importance of such status for cultural rights, political power and access to economic resources, all of which were critical for bargaining with both the republic and

the center before 1991 and, after that, with the new state, it can be suggested that a downgrading of such status would correlate with subsequent mobilization against the successor state.

However, this hypothesis does not hold. While the status of Montenegro remained constant (as did Nagorno-Karabakh) and the status of both Abkazia and Chechnya were downgraded (which prompted in both cases considerable lobbying at the center to return to the earlier designation), the status of Kosovo, Vojvodina, and southern Ossetia were upgraded over the course of communist rule. Again, the cases do not array themselves in a pattern that would account for variable minority leader preferences.

Finally, there is the question of representation and power. It was commonly asserted by the communist party leaders of the Soviet and Yugoslav ethnofederations that the administrative design of the state existed in order to promote representation of minorities in important political and economic posts. However, the commitment to “korenizatsiia” (nativization of cadres) varied over time, across country and within country.

For example, in the post-Stalinist era in the Soviet Union, it became common practice for the first secretaries of the republic to come from the titular nation. By contrast, following the crisis in Croatia in the early 1970s in Yugoslavia, the representation of Croats within the Croatian political leadership declined significantly—to the advantage of the Serbs. The Serbs were also over-represented, as noted earlier, in the Secret Police and the Yugoslav National Army. Similarly, in the Soviet Union, the upper reaches of the party apparatus and the military were dominated by Russians.

There are good reasons to posit that representation of the subunit’s titular nation in important economic and political posts during the communist era would shape the subsequent behavior of the subunit when both the regime and the state unraveled. One can imagine, in

particular, two contrasting lines of argument. On the one hand, it can be suggested that under-representation would generate accumulated grievances, especially if the beneficiaries of this asymmetry were from the republic's titular nation and especially if this asymmetry were built upon a history of long term conflict and violent incorporation of the area into the state. On the other hand, over-representation of the minority would produce resentment on the part of other nations within the subunit—a particularly explosive situation if those disadvantaged were from the republic's titular nation.

Moreover, such over-representation would have another consequence that could, logically, lead to conflict. The titular nation of the subunit—and its leaders in particular—would have substantial resources for mobilization against the republic, and would be very inclined to do so, if as with state dismemberment, they faced the unhappy prospects of losing their patron and, thus, their privileged position, while being blocked from upward political advancement within the new state. At risk, therefore, was a change in local hierarchies, the importance of which has been examined by Paul Petersen (2002).

The patterns in our data, however, do not support either set of arguments. While the titular nation was over-represented both politically and economically in some of our conflict cases (Abkhazia and southern Ossetia), it was under-represented—indeed, significantly so-- in others (as in Chechnya and in Kosovo, excepting improved representation in the latter during the second half of the 1970s). In addition, whereas in Dagestan and Tatarstan, representation in important economic and political posts during the communist era seems to have come relatively close to the ethnic distribution of the population, in Adjara and Montenegro the titular nation seems to have been somewhat over-represented. In the case of Vojvodina, there is some evidence to suggest that the Hungarian minority was somewhat under-represented in politics, but

over-represented in the economic realm. Indeed, aside from the Slovenes, the Hungarians were the richest ethnic group within Yugoslavia—even richer than the Croats (see Mertus, 1999).

Political Struggles During the Transition

In Table 5, I have listed several factors that focus on political dynamics during the transition from state socialism and to independent statehood. In column one, I compare patterns of nationalist mobilization by the titular nation of the republic. It is striking how in all three of our states, the weakening of their former states was accompanied by the rise of nationalist elites at the republican level—a pattern that cannot be generalized for all the republics that made up Yugoslavia or the Soviet Union.

Indeed, it is fair to argue that Georgian, Russian and Serbian leaders played a key role in the dissolution of these two states. The first secessionist constitution in Yugoslavia, for instance, was passed not in Slovenia or Croatia, but, rather, in Serbia—Milosevic’s rhetorical support for the Yugoslav state notwithstanding. However, if our interest is with explaining variation within states, the comparisons in column one provide little purchase.

The same can be said, moreover, if we shift our attention from the rise of majority nationalism in the republics to the rise of minority nationalism in the regions. It is true that national identities and an agenda of reducing external control over the region were both early developments in all of the secessionist cases. For example, in 1964 and 1965, the leaders of Nagorno-Karabakh sent a petition to Khrushchev and Brezhnev, respectively, criticizing Azerbaijani rule and requesting a merger with Armenia. However, the remaining cases of status quo and reformist demands fail to arrange themselves in a systematic way, once we focus on temporal patterns in the development of nationalist protest.

Table 5
Competing Explanations: Political and Military Factors during Transition

	NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS IN REPUBLICS ^a	COMMUNISTS RETAIN POWER IN NEW STATE ^b	INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR AUTONOMY/SECESSION ^c	COMMUNISTS RETAIN POWER IN REGION? ^d
Dagestan	Yes/ Late	Divided	No	Yes
Montenegro (1992-1997)	Yes/Early	Yes	No	Yes
Vojvodina (1992-2000)	Yes/Early	Yes	No	Yes
Adjaria	Yes/Early	No	No	Coalition
Montenegro (2000-2002)	Yes/Early	Yes/No (2000)	Yes*	Coalition
Vojvodina (2000-2002)	Yes/Early	No	No	Coalition
Tatarstan	Yes/Late	Divided	No	Coalition
Abkhazia	Yes/Early	No	Yes**	No
Chechnya	Yes/Late	Divided	No**	No
Kosovo	Yes/Early	Yes/No (2000)	Yes**	No
Nagorno-Karabakh	Yes/Very Late	Yes	Yes**	No
S. Ossetia	Yes/Early	No	Yes**	No
¹ The question here is whether the republic's titular nation (Russians, Georgians, and Serbs) mobilized against the larger state (the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia) and, if so, before or during state dissolution. The assumption is that earlier mobilizations produce more exclusivist nationalism which in turn pushes the subunit to rebel.				
^b There are 3 possibilities here: divided power among liberals and communists (Russia); dominance of communists (Azerbaijan, Serbia & Montenegro up to 2000); and defeat of the communists (Georgia, Serbia & Montenegro, 2000-present).				
^c International support can be purposive or accidental (for example, Russian support of S. Ossetia and Abkhazia vs. leakage of armaments from Albania to Kosovo), and intervention can be of a regional power (Russia) or the international community (as in the Montenegro case) Those with one asterisk seek autonomy; those with two asterisks seek secession.				
^d The question here is whether the communists, the nationalist opposition or a coalition between the two dominated political developments in the subunit during and after regime and state disintegration.				

This leads to column two on Table 5, where the focus is on the struggle for political power at the center when the Soviet and Yugoslav states and regimes began to dissolve. Here, our three states provide three alternative outcomes—continued power, until recently, of the ex-communists in Serbia, a mixed case in Russia (where victorious forces included both ex-communists and the opposition and where the ex-communists at certain points in the 1990s played a central role in the Parliament), and the rise to power of the nationalist, non-communists in Georgia, followed by a mixture of the two groups, once Shevardnadze returned to power (which has been followed, more recently, by the rise to power of the Georgian opposition). Not surprisingly, these differences in struggles between nationalists and communists are not very helpful for our purposes, because they cannot account for the variable dyadic interactions between these states and their regions.

In the remaining two columns, however, we finally find some factors that seem to go much further in *differentiating* in a systematic way among our three bargaining trajectories. One such factor is the availability of international support for secession (see Jenne, 2003; Laitin, 1999; Hechter, 1992; Bunce and Watts, 2002). Here, we can note, for example, Russian support of Abkhaz and southern Ossetian secessionists; Albanian support of Kosovar Albanians (though partially passive, given leakage of arms across a common border, beginning in 1997), together with the NATO bombing campaign in 1999; support from a variety of quarters outside Russia for the Chechens; and, finally, Armenia's involvement during the Gorbachev era in the secessionist politics of Nagorno-Karabakh and the important role as well of Russia in this conflict, again dating from the Gorbachev era and including Russian peace efforts and a Russian military

occupation (using, it must be noted, largely Armenian soldiers—see Laitin and Suny, 2002). The role of international support can be seen most clearly, however, when we track changes in Montenegro.

While Montenegro, like Vojvodina and Kosovo, was taken over by the Serbian party leadership on the eve of the end of Yugoslavia, groups within Montenegro—despite the deep cultural ties of this republic to Serbia—were divided over their alliance with Serbia. Two issues were of concern—Serbia’s attacks on Bosnia and then Kosovo and the Serbian leadership’s resistance to economic and political reforms.

In 1997, Milo Djukanovic, an ex-communist, was elected president on a platform involving commitment to reform, greater political and economic autonomy from Serbia, and peace within the region. As a means of expanding his own power in a highly competitive political environment, Djukanovic reached out to the West—which was only too glad to respond, since Djukanovic seen as someone who could undermine the political power of Milosevic.

However, in the fall of 2000, the Serbian opposition toppled Milosevic and the possibility of a democratic and peaceful Serbia presented itself—a possibility that seemed all the more likely, given the recent liberalization of Croatian politics. At that point, the West changed its position, encouraging Montenegro to stay within the Yugoslav federation of Serbia, Vojvodina and Kosovo.

From the West’s perspective, the key issue was supporting democratic developments in Serbia and building peace within the region—a peace that would be threatened, it was assumed, by weakening the Serbian government, by opening up the question of border changes (including Kosovo), and by creating a series of small and weak states in the Balkans (as opposed to the ideal of a strong Serbia and Croatia balancing each other). The result was an agreement in the

spring, 2003, forced in effect by the West, that created a new state—Serbia and Montenegro—that was considerably decentralized in both political and economic terms (including a separate currency for Montenegro), but that remained nonetheless—at least in the eyes of the international community-- a single unit.²³

What the Montenegrin story suggests is not just that the West is fickle, depending upon its interests at the moment—a hardly startling observation. It also suggests that international alliances can fuel secession and its opposite—the latter by defending existing state borders. Indeed, Western policy towards Russia and the Chechen crisis provides a case in point (Evangelista, 2003). But perhaps the best example is what has happened to all of the secessionist regions analyzed in this paper; that is, their limbo status and the incentives for majority and minority elites, together with international actors, to perpetuate this peculiar state of affairs.

International support, however, is not as robust an explanation as it might seem. The key problem is that international support was also present in the cases of Adjara (Turkey) and Montenegro (from 1997-2002). A closer look at these examples points us to two possible refinements of the claim about the importance of external support.

One is to focus less on the presence or absence of such support than to assess differences in the access of minority populations to weaponry. This was a key factor explaining why the disintegration of Yugoslavia, but not the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia, was violent—in particular, because of regional militaries and the politicization of the Yugoslav National Army (Bunce, 1999b). This factor has also emerged in other studies of ethnic conflict, where the key

²³ In this sense, while I have coded Montenegro as a case that moved from cooperation to compromise, a more detailed reading might suggest a shift to a secessionist dynamic, beginning in 1997. Moreover, while war did not break out between Serbia and Montenegro, the outcome—or such segmented politics and economics that the state is largely a fiction--resembles our other conflict cases.

issue appears to be the presence of guerilla war conditions, including rough terrain and small, armed groups (Fearon and Laitin, 2003).²⁴

It is striking that *all* of our conflict cases feature the availability of weapons, whether supplied by the Russians (as in Abkhazia and southern Ossetia, along with one case not analyzed here, Transdnestr in Moldova), by the Albanians (as in Kosovo, but not deliberately), or leakage from the Soviet military, as in Chechnya (including the “leakage” of one Soviet general, Dudayev, who served as a nationalist leader of the republic). By contrast, such access seems to have been absent in our status quo and reformist categories.

A second revision is to suggest that the impact of international support may be best understood less as generating regional elite support for secession than as shifting support towards leaders adopting the more radical position—whether that means in the particular regional context leaders supporting greater autonomy (as with Vojvodina from 1990-1993, when the Forum-led government in Hungary flirted with the Hungarian diaspora), significant autonomy (as with Adjara), or outright independence (as with Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and southern Ossetia). The key issue then becomes a matter of explaining the distribution of political sentiments among regional leaders vying for political power. It is this issue that leads us to the final column in Table 5: the variable outcomes of the struggle for power within the regions during the break-up of the regime and state and thereafter.

²⁴ It is helpful to recognize that, while all of our conflict cases feature rough terrain, the same is also true for both Dagestan and Montenegro.

Bingo

There were three kinds of situations that developed in our minority regions as the Georgian, Serbia-Montenegrin and Russian republics made their transition to independent statehood. One was where the communists were able to continue in political power, largely because movements that might counter them—liberal, nationalist or both—were weak and divided. In this situation, minority leaders had no incentives to incorporate either nationalist or democratic issues into their agenda. Moreover, as communists, they were hardly committed to either a nationalist or a liberal project. Ideology, in short, matters, just as do interests. In addition, because of continuity in institutions and personnel, these leaders were also quite powerful. They were, in short, in a good position to keep nationalists and/or liberals at bay.

This political situation describes in fact most of the republics that became states in the Soviet Union. Returning to our cases, it also captures developments in Dagestan, Montenegro (up to 1997), and Vojvodina (especially from 1993 to 2000). What is also striking in these cases is the close alliance between local communists and the new center—for example, Russia and Dagestan and Serbia, on the one hand, and at various points both Montenegro and Vojvodina.

For the center, the most important issue, whether or not communists were also at the helm there, was the ability of the local communists to maintain stability in their region. This was even the case for Adjara, where a local communist confronted first a nationalist leader at the center, then an ex-communist, and now a leader of the liberal opposition.²⁵ What all this

²⁵ It is telling that, of the three types of leaders who have come to power in Georgia since independence, the most threatening one, from the perspective of Abashidze in Adjara, is the current incumbent, Saakashvili, who has considerable public support and who seems to be committed (though only time will tell) to both democratic politics and reintegration of Adjara and other recalcitrant regions into the Georgian state. For Abashidze, it is precisely the pressure to democratize that makes local autonomy even more attractive—and necessary for the continuation of his micro-dictatorship.

suggests is that variations in politics at the center were less important for subsequent developments than political change or continuity in the minority regions.

The second variant of political struggle in the regions at the end and after state socialism—and the one that describes what happened in all of the reform cases-- was where the communists confronted a strong nationalist movement, competed with them for local power, eventually succeeded in fending off the nationalist challenge and, thereby, managed to dominate the local political scene. Here, the communists had the benefit of some continuity in local personnel and institutions, and, for coalitional reasons, had strong incentives to embrace parts of the nationalist agenda—for example, the call for sovereignty and support of cultural, political and economic autonomy. Leaders in this political context, such as Shamiev in Tatarstan, Abashidze of Adjara and Djukanovic in Montenegro, were the familiar communists who for political reasons became nationalists. However, it is important to recognize, surveying the entire postcommunist region, that this dynamic did not always materialize or indeed usually materialize--as the status quo scenario, discussed earlier, reminds us. Moreover, for those communists who changed their “hearts and minds,” the consequence was not always, as is commonly assumed, to embrace illiberal nationalism—as Milan Kucan’s behavior in Slovenia during the breakup of Yugoslavia reminds us.

The final scenario is what happened in the secessionist cases. Here, the communists invariably lost to the nationalists, and the leaders of the nationalist groups, lacking much opposition and facing institutional disarray with the collapse of local communist rule, were free to pursue a radical agenda. In Abkhazia, southern Ossetia, Kosovo, Nagorno-Karabakh and Chechnya, politics during the transition became unusually chaotic—a factor hardly helped by the availability of arms in each of these cases and the breakdown of political authority within the

region. Whether the nationalists or the communists maintained power at the center, however, was irrelevant in how these cases developed. What invariably transpired was an attack by the center on the recalcitrant region.

This seems like a relatively strong explanation, because, unlike the role of international support and the availability of weaponry, this line of argument has the distinctive virtue of allowing us to link variations in political outcomes with variations in the extent of change sought by minority leaders. Put succinctly, the more successful the local nationalists were in competing with the communists, the higher the probability that minority leaders would demand significant changes in their region's relationship to the state. This relationship can also be framed in another way: the greater the local political break with the communist past, the greater the propensity of local leaders to embrace local sovereignty. Finally, there is a third way of expressing this relationship that strips the argument of its communist focus. The more competitive local politics, the more prone the minority leaders are to demand greater autonomy, if not independence.

Conclusions and Questions

The purpose of this paper has been to compare minority politics in Georgia, Russia and Serbia-Montenegro in order to answer a key question about minority political behavior. Why do minority leaders vary—within country, over time and across country—in what they want from their multinational states? Three types of minority demands were compared, with the differences based upon the degree of change sought by minority leaders. One scenario is status quo politics. This is where minority leaders accept prevailing practices and where relations with the state, as a

result, are unchanging. Another is where minorities press for significant changes, but not to the point of challenging state boundaries—the reformist scenario. Finally, some minority leaders embrace the radical position of demanding a state of their own.

A number of causal factors were evaluated. While many of these factors play some role, two factors in particular seemed to be unusually helpful in distinguishing among our scenarios of status quo, reformist and secessionist politics. One is the availability of weaponry—a factor that draws a sharp contrast between secessionist politics, on the one hand, and the two remaining categories of minority preferences, on the other. The second factor allowed us to draw more subtle distinctions. This was the outcome of struggles for political power in minority regions. Thus, secession is associated with a clear victory of the nationalists over the communists in the regions; reform with local communists who win over a strong nationalist movement; and status quo politics with the continuation of local communist rule. Put differently, the stronger the communists at the local level, the less radical the political agenda of local minority leaders.

This conclusion, however, brings two questions to the fore. First, it is tautological to argue that secessionist demands materialize when nationalists win political power in minority regions? I think not—for several reasons. First, the causal factor of interest here, or how local communists fared in their struggle with local nationalists, does not just account for secessionist scenarios; it also differentiates between the two remaining scenarios, or status quo versus reformist political preferences. Indeed, once we focus on the latter two categories, we find little support for a tautological claim. There is no compelling reason to assume, for example, that communists winning easily at the local level would behave any differently than communists who had greater difficulty defeating the nationalists. For example, one might expect that, just as easy communist dominance would limit local demands on the state for change, so would a bare

victory over the nationalists—the latter because the communists, being more vulnerable politically, might need the support of the center to keep the nationalists weak. At the same time, one would expect this calculus about appeasing the center versus appeasing local nationalists to vary, depending upon political outcomes at the center. Here, it is important to remember that the reform scenario occurs, whether the communists lose power at the center (as with Adjara in Georgia) or maintain that power (as with Montenegro in Serbia-Montenegro).

If we return to the secessionist cases, moreover, we can counter the tautological interpretation by arguing, from the vantage point of comparative studies of nationalism and nationalist movements, that nationalists do not by any means rush to embrace a radical agenda. Like all social movements, nationalist movements are loose coalitions among people who have some broad agreements, especially in the face of a common enemy, but who vary in their interests and ideologies and, therefore, in their goals. The victory of local nationalists, in short, does not predict necessarily the rise of secessionist political agendas.

That recognized, however, one can argue that regional nationalists in these particular contexts would be very likely to embrace a radical position—which is precisely why we find the association in our cases between nationalist victories and secessionist politics. New states are nervous states. If we add to this other characteristics, such as the fact that these states were carved out of larger states and these states have multiple minority communities, we can conclude with some confidence that these states were—and are—unusually jealous of their territory. The leaders of Georgia, Serbia and Russia, therefore, have found it quite tempting to fear minority unrest, to assume it will spread (along with precedents legitimating autonomy), and to use military force to demobilize minorities and maintain borders. Aggressive centers, in turn, empower local radicals, while encouraging an escalation of local demands. What I am

suggesting here is that nationalist leaders embraced a secessionist agenda in part because central-level leaders pushed them in that direction.

At the same time, however, there were also longer-term factors at work that created, as noted earlier, an unusually supportive environment for the rise of secessionist-minded nationalists. While a number of factors were critical here, perhaps the most important was ethnofederalism and its impact during and after state socialism. Ethnofederalism built strong identities, isolated nations from each other, while encouraging vertical competition among them, and provided these nations (if they had institutional status) with ample cultural and political assets—consequences that materialized not just among the republics that constituted the former Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, but also *within* those republics that were themselves ethnofederal in form.

“Nested ethnofederalism” created “nested (and often nasty) nationalisms” that were particularly conducive, following the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, to the creation of a security dilemma in the ethnofederal successor states, such as Georgia, Serbia-Montenegro and Russia. Thus, localities lost their former central protector, while facing aggressive majority nationalism in the ethnofederal republics that had become states; the majority, in turn, has just played the secession game itself and fears a local replay, while committing itself to aggressive state-building; and each side, as a result, seeks greater security in ways that undermine the security of their “other.”

The point here is that in the particular and perhaps peculiar context of both communism and postcommunism, especially where the institutional setting is “nested ethnofederalisms,” nationalist agendas very easily translate into secessionist agendas—especially since other alternatives, such as liberal nationalism or even liberalism, have been squeezed out. It is not

accidental, therefore, that democratization has faced the greatest obstacles in the postcommunist region in two settings—where the communists stayed in power (as they did in most states in the region, old or new) and in those new and multinational states that inherited ethnofederalism from their communist past.

This leads to the second and final question-- the generalizability of our conclusions. This study confronts a common dilemma in comparative case analysis: controlling for a number of factors helps isolate the causes at work, but it may also limit the reach of the conclusions, because in constructing controlled comparisons, case selection has become quite unrepresentative of the world at large. Put more straight-forwardly: the explanation that has emerged in this study may only be relevant to the postcommunist region—a limitation that would seem to follow necessarily from an argument that focuses on competition between communists and nationalists.

What makes this problem all the more acute are three other considerations—the focus on ethnofederations, a very unusual state form; the seeming dissonance between the role of competition in our cases versus its more positive role in other studies that focus on related (albeit not identical) questions (see Wilkinson, 2001); and the dissonance as well between our explanation and explanations regarding variations in regime trajectories in the postcommunist world. In particular, it is striking that, while communists losing the struggle for political power seems to invest in democratic politics in the postcommunist region, precisely the same factor at the local level seems to disinvest in the state.²⁶

There are several reasons, however, to posit the possibility that the findings reported here may have relevance to other political contexts. One is that, while this study has been littered

²⁶ What this seems to suggest is that the key commonality is the relationship between the outcome of political competition and subsequent change. Just as communists maintaining power invest in regime and boundary continuity, so their loss of power leads to both regime change and border challenges.

(perhaps too liberally) with references to the specifics of the postcommunist experience, the conclusions drawn can be recast in ways that expand generalizability. In particular, there are a number of studies, using different methods and different cases, that also attribute considerable importance to the role of international actors, including their rhetoric and their weaponry. Second, we can re-frame the argument about the struggle for power between communists and nationalists—in two ways. First, it may be that regime transition provides a very different dynamic than more settled political situations. Second, it can be suggested that the greater the competition for political power in minority areas and under conditions of regime change, the higher the probability that minority leaders will embrace a radical political agenda. Whether this larger and one can argue, “de-communized” claim, is accurate will depend, of course, on assessing its validity in contexts outside the postcommunist region.

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