

**MANAGING DIVERSITY AND SUSTAINING
DEMOCRACY:**

Ethnofederal versus Unitary States in the Postsocialist World

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Executive Summary

There are few if any cases of a successful transition from civil war to democracy with federal institutions. This makes it hard to draw conclusions about how the institutional design of the state affects both inter-ethnic relations and the introduction and consolidation of democratic politics. In this report, we address this relationship in a different context and draw insights for the dilemma of power-sharing. In particular, we compare a group of new states that are ethnically diverse, but that diverge from one another in three ways: the design of the state (unitary versus ethnofederal), relations between majorities and minorities, and the introduction and course of democratic politics.

Background: Democracy and Diversity

The Western historical ideal of one state, one nation is the exception, not the rule for new democracies. At the same time, the capacity of new democracies to emulate the Western historical practice of a rationalizing state bent on constructing a homogeneous nation has contracted sharply since the French, for example, carried out their nationalizing mission in the nineteenth century. This is largely because of differences in developmental sequencing. To return to the French case: the modern version of nations and nationalism made its debut after the state was consolidated and both before and on behalf of democracy. By contrast, outside the West (and even in the “south” of the West) nationalist consciousness preceded statehood and, indeed, was foundational for state formation. At the same time, the introduction of democracy did not usually follow state-building. Instead, the struggle for democracy often accompanied the establishment of state sovereignty.

One important consequence of these contrasting sequences was that majorities versus minorities in these new states and new democracies have interpreted the Western experience—that is, the idea of the nation-state—in eminently logical, but nonetheless diametrically opposed ways. For majorities, the self-serving understanding has often been that each state should have one nation. Thus, with statehood comes the responsibility, quickly seized by representatives of the numerically dominant nation, to homogenize the national community in their own image, a process often characterized as nation-building. This is invariably at the cost of alienating minority populations.

By contrast, for minorities, the common interpretation of the Western model, and one that is again relatively self-serving, is that each nation should have its own state (Csergo 2000). These competing variations on the Western theme of the nation-state place majorities and

minorities on a collision course. They also remind us of a more general point. Since the rise of nations and nationalism, ethnic, religious and linguistic conflicts have usually been built into the state enterprise. This seems to be particularly the case under two common conditions: when the nations making up the state are geographically-concentrated (Horowitz 1985; Bunce 1999b; Saideman, et al. 2002), and when democracy and the state are new and simultaneous political projects. The key issue, then, is really one of management; that is, whether under such adverse circumstances compromises can be forged that maintain the integrity of both democracy and the state (see, especially, Karklins 2000).

Two other considerations have contributed to the escalation of inter-ethnic conflict in new democracies and new states.¹ One is that states outside the West often lack the administrative capacity to construct single nations within their borders and face considerable resistance from minorities when they attempt to pretend otherwise. The irony of the situation is inescapable. Competing national identities weaken new states, at least potentially, yet they often serve as the rationale for governments in power to pursue homogenization of the nation. This is all the more likely to happen when the nationalist movement that led to independence defined the nation in ethnic terms and failed to embrace the full diversity of the public.

Second, the fate of nations, democracy and the state are closely intertwined. If membership in the nation is contested, then the state is necessarily weakened. This is because the nation serves as *the* major mechanism by which states extract compliance. Without such compliance, states forfeit the spatial monopoly over authority that the very notion of a state requires (Herbst 2000). In addition, weak states—or states that fail to define and defend borders

and project authority within those borders—cannot guarantee what democracy requires: civil liberties and political rights, accountable and transparent government, and rule of law, with laws applied consistently across time, space and circumstances (see Bunce 2001a, 2001b).

What can then follow is one of several scenarios. Violence can break out within secessionist regions, given competition among local elites and growing insecurity among local populations not belonging to the dominant regional group. What can also happen is that elites representing the majority can decide to punish minorities through political exclusion and violence, and they can decide, more generally, to use what is simultaneously a crisis of space and authority to suspend the democratic rules of the game. It is far from accidental, then, that in heterogeneous national settings, especially in the early stages of democratization and state-building, three problems often go together: weak states, minority rebellions, and democratic breakdown (see, especially, Gurr 2000: 83, 151; Hartzell et al. 2001; Rothchild 2002; Saideman et al. 2002; Herbst 2000; but see Suberu 2001 for a different view, based on the Nigerian case).

Often, however, is not always. Some new, multinational democracies have managed to maintain the integrity of the state, promote peaceful resolution of inter-ethnic conflicts, and stay the democratic course. This even seems to occur when the state is new. What factors, therefore, seem to facilitate the sustainability of democracy and the state, when both are new, populations diverse, and minorities large and geographically-concentrated? In short, how can democracy survive and prosper in what are by all accounts unusually hostile political circumstances? (see, especially, Karklins 2000)

The purpose of this report is to provide a preliminary answer to this question. We will do so by assessing how the institutional design of the state affects inter-ethnic relations and, with that, the course of democracy. Specifically, we will focus on the effects of one key institutional

choice confronting divided societies undergoing democratization—whether the state should be unitary or ethnofederal in form.

A unitary state has indivisible sovereignty. By contrast, like all federal systems, ethnofederalism features: (1) territorially-defined subunits; (2) dual sovereignty, where the center and the subunits each have their own spheres of responsibility (see Aslund 1999; Dent 1995); (3) a relationship between the center and the subunits that combines autonomy and coordination, rather than the unitary practice of subordination (Stepan 1999, 2000; MacPherson, 1994).

What is distinctive about ethnofederalism, however, is that many, if not all of the subunits are composed of (and understood to represent) geographically concentrated minority communities (see Verney 1995; Stepan 1999, 2000; Easterly 2001; Simeon and Conway 2000; Mastny 2000). To provide some examples of these two options: Israel, Estonia and Peru, along with virtually all of Latin America, are unitary states, whereas India, the Russian Federation, Spain, Belgium, and Nigeria are ethnofederations.

While most scholars agree that state design is critical (but see Bunce, 1997; Easter, 1997) they diverge in how they see its relationship to inter-ethnic relations and democracy (see, for example, Lijphart 1977, 1990b, 1996; Saideman 1998; Stepan 1999, 2000; Horowitz 1985; MacPherson 1994; Smith 1995; Simeon and Conway 2001; Roeder 2000, 2001a, 2001b; Weingast 1998; Bednar et al. 1999; Williams 1995; Murphy 1995; and the introduction to this volume by Roeder and Rothchild). On the one hand, it has been argued that ethnofederalism has the benefits of legitimating difference and empowering minority communities.

As a result, ethnofederalism is thought to generate trust and provide minorities with a stake in both democracy and the state. In this way, the security dilemma, so common in multi-ethnic systems, is eased (see Posen 1993; Fearon 1998). At the same time, ethnofederalism

provides a reasonable solution to a second problem characteristic of federalist systems: a center bent on expanding its powers and thereby compromising the federalist project.

In multi-ethnic contexts, therefore, ethnofederalism may counter two temptations—of minorities to defect and majorities to dominate (see Lijphart 1990b; Bednar et al. 1999; Weingast 1998). For precisely these reasons, then, scholars have written in relatively favorable terms about ethnofederalism in the Indian, Spanish, South African and Canadian cases (Gagnon and Laforest 1994; Corbridge 1995; Guibernau 1995; Lijphart 1996; Bajpai 1997; Sen 1999; Stepan 1999).

However, there are equally persuasive arguments against ethnofederalism. The key insight here is that there is a fine line between legitimating difference and undermining commonality (see, especially, MacPherson 1994; Bunce 1999b; Roeder 2001a, 2000; Karklins 2000; Hicks 1978). It is by now received wisdom that nations are constructed and identities are fluid. By drawing tight linkages among the nation, territory and political power, ethnofederalism can lock in differences and identities. This can limit interaction and prevent cooperation among communities, given the absence of common identities, political projects and economic activities (see Varshney 2001). Such arrangements can also give minorities the institutional resources and leadership they need to press for independence—a position all the easier to embrace, given the plausible impact of ethnofederalism on group isolation, inter-group distrust and heightened competition among local elites unable to build careers outside their region and in search, therefore, of local issues they can use to mobilize support and outflank their competitors (see Horowitz 1985; Roeder 2001b).

Finally, the center can weaken in two ways. Local leaders may be encouraged to engage in ethnic outbidding in order to expand their power. Central-level leaders, representing the majority nation and resentful of the gap between large numbers and limited representation, may

be encouraged to expand their power by using violence against minorities and suspending the democratic experiment (see, especially, Bunce 1999b on the Yugoslav case).

At the very least, then, ethnofederalism can be understood as a way station to, if not the cause of a decline in the quality of democratic politics and the territorial integrity of the state. This line of argument has been used, for example, to critique ethnofederalism in Belgium and Canada (see Martiniello 1995, 1998; Murphy 1995; Williams 1995; Simeon and Conway 2001). It has also received empirical support in comparative studies of dictatorships as well as some new democracies (see Bunce 2002a, 1999b; Treisman 1997) and in one statistical analysis focusing on the causes of increasing levels of inter-ethnic violence in heterogeneous systems (see Roeder 2000). To turn an earlier conclusion on its head: critics of ethnofederalism argue that, particularly given its consequences for the state, and the preferences and resources of majorities and minorities, ethnofederalism can push minorities out, encourage majorities to be aggressive, and construct a state that serves as a mere bystander to both developments.

Approach

Our study brings comparative evidence to bear on this debate by examining the relationship between the design of the state and the course of democratization in post communist Eurasia. This region is ideally suited for such an assessment. First, it is composed of a large number of new democracies of varying quality and durability. Second, the domestic context of democratization in the post communist region could not be more inhospitable, given: (1) large and territorially-concentrated minorities of these states; (2) the absence in virtually every case of a well-established democratic tradition; (3) the simultaneous construction of democracy, the state

and capitalism, a process that is both historically-unprecedented and inherently de-stabilizing, and; (4) significant economic decline in at least the early years of the transition to capitalism (see, especially, Bunce 1999a, 2002b).

Finally, the countries that make up post communist Eurasia exhibit similarities and differences that are particularly helpful for assessing whether and, if so, how the design of the state influences the course of democratization. On the one hand, all of these countries share a communist past and, as already noted, recent and unusually prolonged economic stress and an authoritarian tradition that predates the communist era. These similarities reinforce the earlier claim that we are dealing with unusually improbable democracies; they also hold constant some plausible factors that could account for democratic performance.

On the other hand, the regimes in this region show enormous variation—across country *and* over time—with respect to a host of factors – for example, democratic performance, the design of the state, level of economic development, the size of minority groups, and relations between majority and minority communities during and after the collapse of socialism and three of the area’s states (for the importance of these factors, see Horowitz 1985; Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub and Limongi 1996).

We begin the analysis by comparing the thirteen post communist regimes that represent the intersection among three sets of particular interest to us in this study: new states that are also new democracies and that feature in addition sizeable and territorially-concentrated minority populations.² The purpose of this comparison is to assess, at the most general level, whether the design of the state is associated in any systematic way with variations in majority-minority relations and the quality of democratic life.

Correlations are one thing, however, and causality another. In the remainder of this chapter, we explore the causal linkages between state design and democratic performance in divided societies. We do so, first, by assessing whether some other factors, just as plausible as state design, might account for the patterns we have uncovered. They do not. We then compare two cases drawn from our original group of thirteen regimes that represent the extremes: Estonia, a unitary state, and Georgia, an ethnofederation. They are extreme because their minority populations are unusually large and unusually distinctive with respect to language, ethnicity *and* religion (see Rothchild 1985; Fox 1997; Golz 2001; Gorenburg 1999). At least some of these states' minority groups are shared with neighboring states (see Kaufman 2001; Roeder 2000); and state formation followed in both instances the mobilization of large nationalist movements, dominated by the majority nation.

Despite these similarities, however, in Estonia, majority-minority relations have been peaceful and the quality of democracy has improved over time. By contrast, Georgia has witnessed war, de-democratization, and the disintegration of a unified political and economic space (see, especially, King 2001a, 2001b) – problems that have remained to a large extent even after the fall of Shevardnadze in late 2003 and the rise of a seemingly more democratic government.

Our macro and our more detailed comparisons lead to the following conclusions. First, when communist party hegemony and the state were unraveling, the ethnofederal republics were more likely than their unitary counterparts to feature growing conflicts between majority and minority populations. Second, once these republics became states, the contrasts between the unitary and the ethnofederal approaches continued. Thus, the ethnofederal states were far more likely to be weak; to feature violent conflicts between majority and minority communities; and to

experience a decline in the quality of democratic governance. Third, while it seems to be advantageous for new states (in this region at least) to inherit a unitary rather than an ethnofederal structure, adding ethnofederal features to a unitary system can be helpful in improving strained majority-minority relations and in sustaining democratic governance – as the cases of Ukraine and Moldova suggest.

Finally, while there are good reasons to doubt the advisability of beginning democratization with an ethnofederal state in place, it does not then follow that the unitary approach constitutes an ideal solution to democratic governance in divided societies. Its success depends upon whether it is combined with some other key characteristics, such as guarantees of minority rights and cultural autonomy, and separation of powers and proportionality in electoral systems. It is precisely this formulation that seems to provide (in the post communist context at least) the most workable solution to the three problems built into political projects that combine new states, new democracies and diverse populations: keeping minorities in the state, constraining majorities (but not to the point where they are tempted to violate democratic norms), and building a capable state that creates incentives for inter-ethnic cooperation and supports democratic governance.

General Patterns

In Table 3.1, we present a comparison of our thirteen cases with respect to: (1) the design of the state (and the constitutional order); (2) the national composition of the population; (3) state capacity; (4) the development of secessionist movements; (5) levels of violence; and (6) democratization over time. Several patterns emerge in this table.

First, despite their similarities, these regimes evidence nonetheless a clear contrast with respect to the strength of the state. While *all* of the ethnofederations are weak states, virtually all of the unitary states are, objectively and by comparison, relatively strong (with the Kyrgyz Republic an exception). More detailed studies of each of these cases point to a clear reason for this contrast (see, for example, Barbarosie 2001; Cerovic 2001; Crowther 1997a, 1997b; Derluguian 1998, 2001a, 2001b; Lieven 1998, 2001; Lapidus 1998; Pula 2001; Skvortsova 1998; Solchanyk 1994).

During the communist era, when these states were still republics within Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia, the internal boundaries of the ethnofederal republics had the effects of building strong national identities within each ethno/geographical/administrative subunit; of providing majorities and minorities with both their own leadership and significant institutional resources; and of segmenting cultural, political, social and economic interactions along ethno-administrative lines.

The ultimate effect was to generate conflicts between two groups within these republics that subsequently became new states: a titular nation, such as the Georgians, committed to expanding its autonomy from the central state (the Soviet Union) and its control over those minority regions such as Abkhazia within its political jurisdiction versus these minority regions allied with the central state against the titular nation of the ethnofederal republic. What we find, in short, is growing political, social, economic and cultural differentiation of increasingly resourceful groups along ethno-spatial lines, combined with insecure majorities and minorities. When the communist regime and state weakened, two developments ensued: majorities sought

their own state and a new regime they would dominate, and minorities, fearing the loss of protection by the larger integral state and the exclusivist nationalism of the successor majority, demanded autonomy and when the majority resisted, a regime and state of their own.³

Thus, just as the Czechoslovak, Yugoslav and Soviet ethnofederations unwittingly, but systematically built nations together with regimes- and states-in-the-making in each of their republics, so precisely the same dynamics, also unplanned, but just as spatially- and politically-disruptive, were repeated *within* those republics that were, like these three states, ethnofederal in form. Once the regime weakened, this process spelled the end of the Czechoslovak, Yugoslav, and Soviet states, all of which divided along republican lines (even when, as in most cases, “national lines” were different).

At the same time, similar dynamics took place within the ethnofederal republics that achieved independence as a consequence of state dissolution. These successor states were, as a consequence, weaker than their unitary counterparts. What the new, ethnofederal states lacked, in particular, was a consensus about membership in the nation; about the boundaries of the state; and about the ideological complexion of the new regime. Politics, in short, was at once ideologically-, ethnically- and spatially-contested within these ethnically-defined federations (see, especially, Pula 2001 on the case of Kosova). As a consequence, the ethnofederal successor states found it very hard to command popular allegiance; to build an integrated economic space; to control their borders; and to create a unified legal order. In a time of regime transition, therefore, the costs of ethnofederalism translated quickly and easily into the dismemberment of both ethnofederal states and republics.

A second conclusion that we can draw from Table 3.1 is that minority-based secessionist movements have arisen in both unitary and ethnofederal states, during and after the processes of state disintegration. For example, just as South Ossetia and Abkhazia left Georgia, Chechnya and Tatarstan declared independence within the Russian Federation, and Montenegro and Kosova did the same within Serbia-Montenegro, so similar dynamics have taken place within some of the unitary states in our group—most notably, Ukraine, Moldova, Bosnia largely because of external forces, and very recently, Macedonia (see Friedman 1996 and Rossos 2000 for helpful historical insights into Macedonia).

However, these similarities should not obscure two important distinctions. One is that such demands have been far more common for ethnofederal states. Indeed, *all* of the ethnofederations have had to contend with such demands, whereas this situation is far less common in the unitary state context. This is despite the fact that minorities within these states are no different than minorities in unitary states with respect to their size and geographical concentration; how much they differ from the majority (whether language, ethnicity, religion, or all of the three); and their relative levels of economic and social development.

The other distinction has to do with violence. Majority-minority interactions in ethnofederal states are far more likely to be violent than in unitary states. Here, it is important to recognize that: (1) violence usually occurs because the majority, having rejected out of hand relatively moderate demands on the part of the minority, then responds violently to their subsequently escalating demands for independence, and (2) the contrast in violence holds up, even when we focus solely on those minorities within both state contexts that demand independence. We can see the contrast here of the behavior of the Moldovan and Ukrainian

governments in reaction to the demands of their Russian minorities versus the behavior of the Georgian and Serbian governments in reaction to the call for independence by the Abkhazes and the Kosovar Albanians, respectively.

We can now turn to the final column in Table 3.1, where we summarize patterns of democratization over time. Once again, there is a clear contrast between the unitary and the ethnofederal states. Summarized in numerical terms: the average Freedom House scores for the unitary states is 2.9; 5.2 for the ethnofederations; and 3.7 for the mixed cases of Moldova and Ukraine. Simply put, then: the new democracies in the unitary states have been of higher quality and have been far more likely to improve over time than the new democracies in ethnofederal state contexts.

At the same time, the unitary states that have faced serious secessionist challenges and that have responded, in every case, by expanding the linguistic, educational, and political autonomy of the dissenting regions, while scoring lower on the democratic scale than other unitary states, nonetheless exhibit stronger democratic performance than their ethnofederal counterparts (all of which have faced similar demands, but have responded in very different ways).⁴

We can now weave together the conclusions we have drawn from Table 3.1. What emerge in this Table are two stories. The first, which describes the ethnofederal states of Georgia, Azerbaijan, Serbia-Montenegro, and Russia, is one that combines a weak state, secessionist regions, violence between the center and at least some of the secessionist regions, and, finally, checkered democratic performance. The other story, which describes the unitary

states, features greater state capacity, less propensity of minority regions to demand independence, much less likelihood of violent confrontations between the state and minority regions, and transitions to democracy that began early and that were sustained.

Here, there are two exceptions: the Kyrgyz Republic and Macedonia (which had evidenced improving democratic performance, including greater political inclusion and representation of the Albanian minority, until developments outside the state in 2000-2001 produced violent conflicts). Moldova and Ukraine, the “mixed” cases on Table 3.1, provide additional support for the contrast we have drawn between the ethnofederal and unitary states. Both were unitary states, but, unlike Estonia, Latvia, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Slovakia, faced powerful secessionist movements when communism and the state were disintegrating (see D’Anieri 1997 on Ukraine; also see Rubin 1998 for helpful insights). However, in contrast to the ethnofederal republics that also became states and that also faced such problems, the leaders of Moldova and Ukraine responded to the concerns of their unhappy minorities by granting substantial, territorially-based autonomy.

Moreover, there are indications that similar responses are in the making in Macedonia, along with Slovakia—the latter a case where there had been significant discrimination against the Hungarian minority that had produced, not surprisingly, considerable discontent. What this suggests is a more general point. Unitary states may or may not face rebellious minorities, and these conflicts may or may not become violent—though both developments are less likely than in the ethnofederal context. However, if such conditions materialize, the leaders of unitary states seem to be more willing and able to broker the situation in ways that enhance cooperation between majority and minority communities.

Counter Causal Claims

It could be countered, however, that the conclusions we have drawn from Table 3.1 are suspect, because other factors, aside from state design, may be causing the contrasts among these thirteen countries. In response, we would argue the following. First, we remind the reader that the design of this study has eliminated certain factors from the equation— for example, all of the cases in Table 3.1 are similar with respect to the age of the state and democracy; economic performance is poor overall within the region; and we have limited our study to those cases where minority populations are relatively sizeable and, in most cases, geographically-concentrated. Second, the patterns exhibited in Table 3.1 allow us to eliminate some other alternative explanations—in particular, level of economic development and the constitutional design of the regime.

However, this does leave us with three potential problems, all of which shift our attention from state design to other factors that either “caused” state design or accompanied it. First, might ethnofederalism be a response to what are, by the comparative standards of the region, unusually large minority populations that are geographically-concentrated? Second, might the decision to establish an ethnofederation be a reaction to a history of ethnic conflicts—an argument prompted by, say, the decision to create an ethnofederation in Czechoslovakia in response to Slovak mobilization in 1967-1968? Finally, it is possible that the negative consequences we attribute to ethnofederalism are not inherent in the institution itself, but rather a response by majorities to take back the power they have been unfairly denied during state socialism.

These arguments are not persuasive. First, the size of the minority population does not predict the structure of the state. For example, the average size of the minority population is 31.5 per cent in the unitary cases; 27.9 percent in the ethnofederations; and 31.4 percent in the mixed

cases of Moldova and Ukraine. Second, there is ample evidence to support the argument that the decision during the communist period to create some ethnofederal republics within the Soviet and Yugoslav federations—republics that in all cases subsequently became the ethnofederations listed on Table 3. 1—was based upon a variety of considerations, the least important of which was a history of inter-ethnic conflict and one of the most important of which was building institutional constraints on potentially hard-to-control republican-based majorities (see Bunce 1999b; also see Pula 2001; Cerovic 2001).

For example, Soviet leadership was concerned about their ability to control Georgia (a worry that began in the tsarist period) and decided to constrain Georgian nationalism by investing economically and politically in Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Adjara. Similarly, Tito had the same concerns about Serbia in particular and therefore created the autonomous republics of Kosovo and Vojvodina (both of which, with the implementation of the 1974 Constitution, received upgraded political status, which lasted until the late 1980s when Milosevic ended their political autonomy). One can also note, in this connection, that the decision to ethno-federalize Czechoslovakia after 1968 was not simply a response to fears concerning the dangers of Slovak nationalism.

Indeed, this decision seems to have been in large measure a mechanism used by hard-line communist leaders in Czechoslovakia and Moscow to constrain the population in the Czech lands, which had mobilized in large numbers in support of pluralizing the communist order. Thus, to stabilize the communist system (and the Soviet bloc), political leaders in Moscow and in Czechoslovakia catered to Slovak concerns, thereby forging an alliance among Moscow, hard-line domestic communists, and Slovak society.

This alliance also had economic consequences, given the remarkable narrowing, beginning in 1969, of the economic gap between the once much richer Czech Republic and Slovakia. When communism departed from the scene twenty years later, it did so with Czechs more committed than their Slovak counterparts to its end and to rapid economic and political liberalization. The leadership of the two halves of the country embracing different and, ultimately, irreconcilable visions of the future structure of the state, the polity, and the economy (Wolchik 1994; Bunce 1999b).

As with the other ethnofederal experiments during communism, then, the policy of using party and state institutions to divide and conquer was in some sense successful. But tying together the fate of the regime and the state, ethnofederalism extended the life of both, while guaranteeing that the end of the former would be accompanied by the disintegration of the latter.

At the same time, there is little evidence to support the interpretation that ethnofederation of republics (as of states) was a response to the existence of well-defined national identities (though some were in place at the time); a history of minority grievances against the majority; or long-established patterns of majority-minority conflicts. Indeed, what is striking about the decision to introduce ethnofederalism at the state and republican levels in the communist world is not what preceded it, but, rather, what followed: the construction of strong, geographically-based national identities that often became potent political and economic forces because they were joined with considerable institutional resources; because they simultaneously segmented and nationalized the polity and the economy; and because they produced competing, spatially- and nationally-defined preferences regarding the state and regime. Ethnofederalism, in short, created multiple and competing regimes- and states-in-the-making. It is far from accidental, then, that all three communist ethno-federations broke up along republican

lines; and that geographically-concentrated minorities with institutional identities and resources were far more likely to mobilize against the communist federations than minorities without such identities and resources (see, especially, Barany 2002). Such institutional designations became, in turn, a relatively good predictor of whether minorities would mobilize against the new states that formed in the wake of state disintegration (see Bunce 1999b; Beissinger 2002; Treisman 1997).

Finally, our argument must respond to the charge that ethnofederalism itself is not inherently flawed, but that it was biased in the communist context in ways that tempted aggrieved parties, once politics became more malleable, to seek a reallocation of benefits. The problem with such a claim is that the “true” balance of power is probably impossible to determine and in any case is constantly shifting as demographic patterns, economic relations, and other elements of the balance change. Both sides usually feel aggrieved, and such grievances can be exploited by ethnic entrepreneurs in periods of crisis.

This is particularly the case when grievances are joined with resources—the latter the “gift” of ethnofederalism. Grievances in fact are rarely enough to cause conflict. The province of Kosova before the collapse of Yugoslavia provides one example. During the 1980s, many Serbs resented the fact that Serbia was the only republic of Yugoslavia partitioned by autonomous regions (Kosova and Vojvodina), while Kosovar Albanians overwhelmingly wanted Kosova to enjoy equal status as a constituent republic of Yugoslavia. No reallocation of political influence would have satisfied both groups.

It would seem reasonable to conclude, therefore, that in the post communist area at least, the design of the state seems to have important consequences for the course of democracy in divided societies. But this leaves an important question. How does the design of the state affect

the preferences of and interactions between majority and minority communities, and how do these dynamics shape, in turn, the evolution of democratic politics? To answer this question, we now move to a comparison of political dynamics in Georgia and Estonia from the communist period through the first decade of independence.

The Case of Georgia

During the Soviet period, several critical developments gave a distinctive stamp to Georgian nationalist politics. One was the decision by the Bolsheviks in 1922 to create an ethnofederal state, with Georgia becoming in 1936 one of its constituent republics. Like most of the other republics, Georgia was a diverse region in ethnic, religious, and linguistic terms, particularly along its perimeters. Georgians comprised about seventy percent of the population and the remainder was divided among Georgian Muslims (who won autonomy, but limited rights with the reintegration of the state under Soviet rule), Abkhazes, Ossetians, Adjarians, Armenians, Greeks, and Jews.

In 1921 and 1922, Abkhazia (where Georgians were easily the plurality) and South Ossetia (a region which had Ossetians as a majority) were given the statuses of a Republic and an Autonomous Region, respectively. Adjaria became an Autonomous Region as well. Thus, during the Soviet period Georgia, like the Russian Republic, was itself an ethnofederation nested within a larger ethnofederation—though powers accorded to union republics were greater than those accorded to other ethnically-defined units located within those republics.

These different powers, however, should not obscure an important point. Like the republics within the Soviet Union, administrative units within Georgia were given the political, social, and cultural institutions, the administrative boundaries, and the local leadership to forge

strong identities and to construct claims to becoming potentially sovereign units within the republic (Bunce 1999b). Indeed, in the case of Abkhazia in particular, one can trace the rise, with Moscow's help, of what can only be termed an ethnic machine that privileged the small group of Abkhazes over the much larger group of Georgians within the region (see Derluigian 1998; 1999; 2001a; 2001b).

The administrative shifts in Georgia were accompanied during the Stalinist period and after by repeated changes, more generally, in Soviet policies toward minorities. For example, the Soviet leadership introduced and then cancelled minority schools, made decisions to give minorities their own alphabets in some cases and the alphabets of the majority within their republic in other cases, and kept changing their minds about their commitments to Russification versus encouragement of minority identities at the republican level and below (see Slezkine 1994).

All of this played havoc with the identities, the expectations, the resources, and the security of all those groups that made up the Soviet Union. This included the titular nations of the republics, the minorities that had administrative identities, albeit not republican, but that easily perceived the benefits of an upgrade; and the minorities that did not have a formal administrative home, but that might have had one once and that surely wanted one in the future. Put differently, the security dilemma was present and nested before the break-up of the Soviet Union (see, more generally, Fearon 1998; Posen 1993).

A long history of geopolitical vulnerability, the brief experience with statehood, Soviet investment in Georgian institutions, isolation from Moscow, and fears of losing hard-won autonomy translated in the late Soviet period into a nationalism in Georgia that was exclusivist and illiberal. What was also critical was that in Abkhazia in particular, the dominance of the

titular nation, a dominance supported by Moscow, fed into the construction of Georgian nationalism as a double-pronged sentiment—against Moscow and for the protection of the sizeable Georgian population within Abkhazia. The Ossetians and the Abkhazes, armed with their own leaders, their own quota system in most jobs, and their own educational institutions and media, were fearful of losing what little autonomy they had. They worried about how distant Moscow, the protector of their ethnic machines had become. As such responded to Georgian nationalism by mounting parallel and competitive nationalist movements of their own that sought independence from the independence-seeking but assimilationist-minded Georgians.

All of this came to a head in 1988, when Abkhaz communists sent a letter of complaint to the Nineteenth party conference and when Georgians, concerned about discrimination against them at home and within the Federation, took to the streets in huge numbers. The Georgian communists then responded by inviting in Soviet troops—an action that polarized Georgian dissidents, led to subsequent protests by the majority and the minorities, and culminated in the March 1990 declaration of sovereignty by the Georgian Supreme Soviet (with formal sovereignty declared in April 1991). The defeat of the Georgian Communist Party in the 1990 elections followed (in which minorities either supported the Party or boycotted the elections). In mid-1991, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, a radical Georgian nationalist committed to authoritarian politics, withdrawal of minority rights, and violent reconstitution of the state, was elected president. War broke out and he was overthrown by a coup d'état in January 1992—less than a year after he was elected.

In March 1992, Eduard Shevardnadze returned to a Georgia in the midst of war, having lost the state where he had served as Prime Minister. Following his return there was precious little improvement in the Georgian situation, despite Georgian admission to the Council of

Europe in 1997. Shevardnadze's decision to call on Russian military help to stabilize the country created a difficult situation, especially given Georgia's proximity to other danger zones, such as Chechnya and Nagorno-Karabakh. It was also difficult for Shevardnadze to reconcile independence from the Soviet Union and Georgian nationalism with a Russian military presence.

Georgia may rank third on a per capita basis in receipt of American aid, but the fact remains that Georgia today is neither a state nor a democracy. Corruption still reigns (Transparency International ranks Georgia eighty-fourth out of ninety nine countries); the Georgian economy is about one-third the size it was at the beginning of the 1990s; about twenty percent of the country remains outside the control of the center; and South Ossetia and Abkhazia have their own armies, customs posts, flags, currency (the ruble), school systems, and even time zones.

On the democratic side of the ledger, Shevardnadze stayed in power for more than a decade through corrupt elections which, in the late fall, 2003, finally produced a massive protest that forced him to hand over power to Mikheil Saakashvili (see, especially, King 2001a, 2001b; Lieven 2001; Jones 1997; Goltz 2001; Garb 1998). Whether Saakashvili will succeed in building democracy and reconstituting the Georgian state is questionable, though he has succeeded in bringing one region – Adjara - back to the fold. Similar developments within Serbia-Montenegro from the fall, 2000 to the victory of Boris Tadic in the Presidential election of June, 2004, have produced the same scenario: a seeming shift from authoritarian to democratic politics that enhances the prospects for the consolidation of democracy and a reconstitution of the state.

The Case of Estonia

Estonia shared with Georgia many similarities during the Soviet era. Both featured above-average levels of educational and occupational achievement (Roeder 1991). They both had cultural institutions under the control of the titular ethnic group and administrative boundaries that largely corresponded to the territory occupied by the titular ethnic group. There was substantial representation in both countries of the titular ethnicity in elite positions (although non-Russified ethnic Estonians never had access to the highest levels of power until well into *glasnost*). Each country had large ethnic minorities, distinguished by language and religion. Yet Georgia descended into civil war with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, while Estonia shows every sign of having weathered the transition successfully and integrating with Europe.

The critical difference lies in their institutions at the point of departure as independent states: Estonia was a unitary republic within the USSR, while Georgia was a federation “nested” within the Soviet federation. When the Soviet Union broke apart, Estonia’s ethnic minorities—primarily ethnic Russians—had no indigenous political structures or cultural institutions on which to base resistance to the nationalizing project of the Estonians. While many of the ethnic Russians of Estonia felt threatened by the country’s independence, radical actions were isolated and sporadic. Over time, the perception that Estonians had of the possible threat posed by resident Russians began to fade, and with it receded much of the worst of Estonian nationalist politics (see Kaplan 1998; Kalsto and Tsilevich 1997; Cichok 1999; Hulburt 2000; Laitin 1998; Melvin 2000; Park 1994; Raun 1997a, 1997b).

Before its incorporation into the Soviet Union, Estonia had enjoyed a long period of relative ethnic homogeneity (Raun 1997a, 335-6), a much shorter time as a sovereign country, and a yet briefer existence as a democracy. In part due to exceptionally high levels of literacy,

however, Estonians had developed a strong national consciousness before its annexation by the USSR (Raun 1997b, 407). This sense of national identity survived both sustained Russification efforts by Moscow and the demographic catastrophes of World War II and Stalinization in which the ethnic Estonian proportion of the republic's population declined from nearly 90 percent in 1934 to just over 60 percent by 1989 (Raun 1997a, 336). As the preceding discussions suggested, Soviet ethnofederal structures were critical in maintaining Estonian identity and ultimately in fostering the resistance movements that would flourish under *glasnost* (Steen 2000, 83; Raun 1997b, 411-2).

By the 1980s the Estonian sense of cultural distinctiveness began to grow into open resistance. One of the opening salvos in this movement was the "Letter of the Forty" in 1980 in which intellectuals openly addressed issues of ethnic conflict and Estonian cultural identity. Within the political space that *glasnost* subsequently opened, Estonians began to protest Soviet environmental abuses (Kionka and Vetik 1996, 137). By 1988 explicitly political organizations outside of the Communist Party of Estonia (CPE) began to appear, such as the Popular Front of Estonia and Estonian National Independence Party (ENIP).

Equally as important were changes within the CPE itself. By the end of the year the Estonian Supreme Soviet had unanimously passed a declaration of sovereignty. Thus, the "nativization" of the CPE and the capture of ethnofederal resources by indigenous elites proved critical to the transition to independence. Significantly, ethnic Russians within Estonia had no such resources within the republic, given its unitary design.

Moreover, the ethnic Russians were also unable to access such resources in their home republic, the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic, because this republic, in contrast to the other fourteen within the Soviet federation, was denied its own political, cultural, and social

institutions (see Bunce 1999b; Zevelev 2001; Brudny 1998, 2001). Indigenous Russian resistance to the Estonian independence movement was organized by the “Intermovement” (International Movement of Workers of the ESSR), a Soviet state-sponsored, factory-based movement that purportedly represented the ethnic Russians and other Russophones of Estonia. Ultimately the Intermovement proved inadequate to organizing opposition to independence.

In the wake of the failed August 1991 Soviet coup d’etat, Estonia gained independence and ethnic Estonian elites began to implement a nationalizing project. The Estonian citizenship law of 1938 was reinstated, transforming nearly all of the ethnic Russian residents of Estonia into non-citizens without voting rights in Estonian national elections. To acquire citizenship applicants had to demonstrate substantial knowledge of Estonian. This was a significant hurdle, considering that in 1992 less than ten percent of Russian residents could speak Estonian fluently, while nearly a third had no appreciable Estonian language skills (Park 1994, 74). Consequently, the new Estonian constitution was adopted and the first parliamentary and presidential elections were effectively held without Russian participation.

Various polls of the population suggest that Russian reaction to the Estonian citizenship and language laws and similar discriminatory legislation has been extremely negative. Indigenous Russian resistance to Estonia’s “ethnic democracy” (to borrow Graham Smith’s term) has nonetheless been sporadic and largely ineffective. There were in practice a variety of political platforms. “Representative Assembly” of Russophone residents was founded in 1993 to press for the rights of disenfranchised residents. More radical politics were concentrated in the Narva city council (Kionka and Vetik 1996, 143; Park 1994, 80-81; Park 1994). While sporadic strikes and demonstrations have also occurred, none of these amounted to a serious challenge.

What accounts for the political weakness of the Russophone community? It should first be noted that a substantial proportion of Estonia's Russian population supported the republic's independence; the referendum on independence was open to all permanent residents of Estonia, and roughly 30 percent of non-Estonian voters voted in favor (Raun 1997b, 415). Resentments among disenfranchised residents were nonetheless very real, and the size and concentration of the Russian community, and particularly its close proximity to Russia—a large, powerful “ethnic patron”—would seem to have made Estonia a likely case for secession.

A number of factors, however, prevented a spiral of ethnic tensions. First, although resources—both in terms of political access and public services—were made available to the Russian minority, opportunities for political empowerment were not concentrated in a particular geographical region as in ethnofederalism. Instead, political representation of the Russophone community was divided between a variety of institutions, both territorial and non-territorial (Melvin 2000).

The first prime minister of independent Estonia, Edgar Savisaar, facilitated the creation of a Representative Assembly in which Russophone organizations could come together to articulate political demands of the Estonian government. Later, President Lennart Meri sponsored a round table to bring together ethnic minorities in a consultative role. Moreover, while the vast majority of ethnic Russians could not vote in the first national elections, non-citizens could cast ballots in the original municipal elections in 1993—although only for candidates moderate enough to be permitted to run for office by the Estonian government.

The plurality of political agendas, the necessity of cooperation with Estonian authorities, and the presence of moderates all worked against the formulation of a single, exclusivist ethnic agenda (Smith and Wilson 1997, 851-2). Moreover, by 1999 an ethnically Russian party became

part of the governing coalition of the Tallinn municipal council. This guaranteed the representation of multiple voices in the Russian community.

Finally, within the unitary framework of Estonia there were considerable pressures towards either assimilation or the creation of hybrid identities among the Russian minority. As already noted, the Russians of Estonia lacked their own distinct cultural institutions, either in Russia or in Estonia. This facilitated the development of both a “Soviet-Russian” and a “Baltic-Russian” identity as far back as the Soviet era (Melvin 2000, 137-9), while weakening the power of an indigenous Russian intelligentsia—the key group in the rise of nationalist protests elsewhere in the region (Smith et al. 1998, 116; Kalsto and Tsilevich 1997).

The relative success of the Estonian transition and its nationalizing project, moreover, suggest that the gradual assimilation of Russian-speakers is the most likely, although hardly inevitable, trajectory of ethnic politics in Estonia (Laitin 1998, 353-9). Because of the relatively mild reaction of the Russian community in Estonia, Estonian elites have come to perceive the Russian residents as relatively non-threatening. According to a series of polls of elites in Estonia conducted by Anton Steen, the proportion of these elites that expected ethnic confrontation to take the form of “violence and rhetoric” dropped from 44 percent in 1994 to 35 percent in 1997, while by 1997 nearly two-thirds expected confrontation to take the form of rhetoric only (Steen 2000, 77). Such attitudes are in large part responsible for the gradual opening of opportunities for political participation to ethnic Russians. By 1997 Estonia became the first new member of the Council of Europe no longer to require special human rights monitoring by the Council (Lofgren 1997, 140).

In short, Estonia appears to have consolidated its transformation into a democratic, sovereign state without the violence that has plagued Georgia and other ethnofederal states. This is despite the fact, moreover, that the majority comprises a smaller percentage of the population in Estonia than in Georgia (a contrast that would be even sharper for Latvia). In the terminology adopted by Roeder and Rothchild in this volume, a variety of “soft guarantees” provided opportunities for political participation to the Russian-speaking minorities and helped to alleviate their grievances, while a lack of “hard guarantees” helped to prevent the empowerment of minority elites with rigid agendas.

Amendments

Our argument to this point, while parsimonious, can hardly account for the full range of variation in all of the ethnically heterogeneous, democratizing states of the post-socialist world. While a unitary structure at the point of departure for regime and state transition appears to be a necessary condition for sustained democratization, three caveats should be mentioned: the timing of the creation of ethnofederal institutions, the strategies adopted by the majority to protect and accommodate minorities, and the international environment of the democratizing state.

First, while inheriting ethnofederalism from a previous authoritarian regime provides an inauspicious beginning for a democratizing state, adopting ethnofederalism in the course of transition may provide sustainable structures for ethnic accommodation. The Moldovan case serves as an important example (see Crowther 1997a, 1997b; Skvortsova 1998; Juska 1999; King 2000; Barbarosie 2001).

Moldova began its transition to sovereignty and democracy with a recent past that was remarkably similar to developments in the ethnofederal republics—for example, politicians pushing for new state language policies that discriminated against minorities and that generated significant protests, attempts to manipulate the structure of the system to serve the interests of the majority, and the rise of a nationalist movement that excluded the Russian and Muslim Gagauz communities. In the early stages of the transition, Moldovan nationalists and elected politicians focused on reunification with Romania—a goal that drove the Gagauz and the Russian minority in Transdnistria in particular to declare independence. This, in turn, led to violence. However, with a change in the government in 1994 came a series of developments that improved both inter-ethnic relations and Moldovan democracy—for example, dropping the demand to join Romania, finally holding a referendum on independence and passing a constitution that guaranteed minority rights and created substantial regional autonomies.

What this discussion of Moldova suggests is that there is a considerable difference between inheriting ethnofederalism and inheriting a unitary state that then moves toward an ethnofederal system in order to promote inter-ethnic peace. What makes this argument all the more compelling are three examples drawn from outside the region. One is Sri Lanka, where a unitary state has been the site of a long civil war between Sinhalese and Tamils. Here, what is striking is the failure of the Sinhalese elite to respond to the demands of the minority by introducing either a full-scale ethnofederal system or ethnofederal elements into a unitary structure (Herring 2001).

As the Moldovan example reminds us, this can be an effective response to minority discontent. It could be suggested, therefore, that the resistance of the Sinhalese leadership to institutional reforms of the state in the direction of power-sharing may have contributed to the

continuation of what has become a long and unusually violent conflict between the Sinhalese government and the Tamil Tigers.

The other two examples are India and Spain, two countries that introduced ethnofederalism only after they had begun their transitions to democracy—India in 1956 and Spain in 1978. (Spain began its transition to democracy as a unitary state; India began independence as an asymmetrical union of states that had been inherited from British rule with boundaries that did not correspond closely to ethnolinguistic borders.) This particular sequence can be beneficial for three reasons.

First, it avoids the costs of inheriting ethnofederalism—for example, the exclusivist nationalism of the majority, a weak state, an "ethnification" of politics (see Kuran 1998), and angry minorities equipped with institutional resources. Second, it reaps at the same time the benefits of ethnofederalism—for example, providing the cultural autonomy and political representation that minorities want and that ties them to the state. Finally, when a unitary state serves as the point of departure, there is greater room for political maneuver. While expanding the autonomy of subunits within an ethnofederation could very well mean ending any prospects for a common identity, political project, and economic system, expansion of such autonomy within a unitary context can build upon existing state capacity to win more support for democracy and the state from minority communities.

Such actions, moreover, create a majority nation that, while less secure in the sense of being required to share power, is more secure in the sense of residing within a more stable democratic order. In this way, the state and democracy are both well-served when unitary states take on ethnofederal features. Indeed, it is precisely for these reasons that the key issue in the

early development of Spanish and Indian federalism was not existing units attempting to leave the state, but, rather, minorities without such units pressing for them in the context of the existing state.⁵

A second amendment to our general argument concerns the sufficiency of unitary systems to promote interethnic peace and democratic continuity. A unitary state, in and of itself, neither guarantees cultural or political rights to minorities, nor necessarily empowers them—though achievement of a full-fledged democratic order guarantees at the least individual rights. Whether unitary states deliver the "minority goods" depends upon a variety of factors separate from the design of the state—for example, whether minorities are well-organized, whether majorities are predatory, whether the government is parliamentary or a separation of powers system (with the latter preferable—see Roeder 1999), and whether political leaders use electoral and administrative systems to limit minority representation and, more generally, to divide and conquer. One has only to note here the cases of Macedonia, Slovakia and Romania, particularly in the early stages of democratization (Csergo 2000).

Having said that, however, it is important to recognize that, while the unitary states we have analyzed could do better with respect to cultural autonomy and political representation of minorities, their record tends to be stronger than their ethnofederal counterparts and, just as importantly, to improve over time. This may reflect differences in nationalist movements and in the degree to which democracy itself is politically contested—differences that, as we argued above, may reflect the historical institutional design of the republic that became a state (and see Abdelal 2001). Put simply, ethnofederal republics, because of their very design, have a high

probability of producing contestation over the nation, the regime-in-the-making, and the boundaries of the state—contestation that necessarily undermines both the state and democracy following independence.

Third, this chapter has treated the consequences of institutional design largely as a function of domestic dynamics, but it is clear that international influences play a role. External factors can exercise either a positive or negative influence, and examples of both dynamics are readily apparent in the postsocialist world. Estonia was blessed with an extraordinarily congenial international environment. Its aspirations to join Western institutions such as the European Union and NATO provided Western states and multilateral organizations such as the OSCE considerable leverage in negotiations with the Estonians over minority rights (see for instance Hurlburt 2000).

At the same time Moscow urged its tiny neighbor to meet certain minimal standards in the treatment of Russophone minorities—diplomatic efforts lent weight by such factors as Estonia's initial dependence on Russian energy supplies and the necessity of negotiating the withdrawal of troops of the former Soviet Union from Estonian soil (Cichock 1999). Also helpful was the manner in which the Soviet Union disintegrated—in particular, Yeltsin's treaties between the Russian Federation and the Baltic republics, Ukraine, and others that exchanged guarantees of Russian minority rights for continued Russian economic and infrastructural support (Bunce 1999b).

Unfortunately, international factors have not always played such a positive role—as one can see, for example, in Russian interventions in Moldova and Ukraine and, repeatedly, in Georgia. The Macedonian case is particularly illustrative of the costs of international interference in domestic politics. This is a polity that, despite enduring interethnic tensions, had managed to

sustain democratic governance and gradual improvement in interethnic relations over the course of a decade in an extremely unpromising international environment. The violence of the past few years, however, has cast some doubt on Macedonia's future.

It is important to recognize, though, that while the ethnic Albanian insurgency in Macedonia has strong domestic roots, it owes a very considerable proportion of its strength to the contribution of trained, well-armed, and highly motivated insurgents based in Kosova (ICG 2001, 5-9). It is unclear how much of a threat the Albanian insurgents would pose in the absence of such support, especially given the prior record of improved inclusion of minorities into Macedonian politics.

In the opinion of some, at least, although the ethnic Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA) "has cleverly tapped into the everyday frustrations shared by the country's one-third ethnic Albanian population, [these grievances] are not generally perceived to be the type of discrimination that drives people to take up arms.... Albanians in Macedonia overwhelmingly support the stated objectives of the Albanian guerillas but disagree with their violent methods. It is striking that few intellectuals or elites seem prepared to join them" (ICG 2001, 5-6).

Conclusion

Our comparison among these new and diverse postsocialist democracies seems to suggest that the presence of ethnofederalism at the point of departure for democracy and statehood generates a number of costs. There are several reasons for this. First, in this regional context at least, ethnofederalism, whether at the level of the state or republics within states, built strong national identities invested with territory and substantial cultural, political, economic and social resources. In this way, ethnofederalism built micro-states and regimes-in-the-making. Second,

ethnofederalism created two games within the Georgian, Serbian, Azerbaijani, and Russian republics. For the institutionally-endowed minority nations (such as the Abkhazians) nested within the republics (like Georgia), the enemy was the republic's titular nation (the Georgians) and the key ally was the center (the Soviet Union). These minorities, in short, were strongly committed to the state and often, therefore, to the regime as well.

By contrast, the leaders of the titular nation sought to maximize their autonomy from the center, while minimizing the autonomy of the minority-based units within their republics. Thus, prior to the end of socialism and the state, ethnofederalism had created—within the Soviet, Yugoslav, and Czechoslovak states and within the ethnofederal republics inside the Soviet and Yugoslav states—well-defined, compartmentalized and competitive identities, resources and political and economic agendas. In practice, this often produced a sequence, wherein nationalist mobilization of the majority, invariably exclusivist, often produced counter mobilizations by institutionally-endowed minorities.

Finally, the weakening of the regime and the state had predictable consequences. The insecurities of majorities and minorities *both* increased. At the same time, the stage was set for conflicts between the center and the republics and between majorities and minorities within the ethnofederal republics. These conflicts were at once ethnic, ideological, and spatial. As a result, the ethnofederal successor states, in direct contrast to their unitary counterparts, were weak; their constituent nations unusually conflictual; and their democratic orders compromised from the very start and fragile over time.

By contrast, while the unitary republics in the region did face at times secessionist pressures during the break-up of the regime and the state, they were far less likely to confront such problems and, when doing so, far more likely to find accommodation with aggrieved

regions and to stay the democratic course. Put simply, then, in a heterogeneous context, unitary states seem to constitute a better investment in democracy; they are far superior in their capacity to avoid violence; and they are more likely to improve over time in their provision of minority rights.

Does it then follow that new democracies that are also new states and that have divided societies should choose a unitary over an ethnofederal system? We do not think that the analysis provided in this chapter leads, necessarily, to such a recommendation. There is little question, of course, that a unitary state seems to be preferable. However, there is some question as to whether such choices are effectively available to states and their leaders, given the power of the institutional past.

Here, it is important to recall three patterns that were evident in our data. First, institutional legacies tend to stick. Thus, ethnofederal republics invariably became ethnofederal states, and unitary states usually maintained the same structure following independence. Second, some unitary states did add ethnofederal features—in particular, Ukraine, Moldova, Slovakia, and, perhaps in the near future, Macedonia (along with Bosnia, albeit through external intervention). This is a pattern that is also evident in cases outside the region—for example, Nigeria, India, Belgium, and Spain. Third and most importantly, however, there were no cases within the post communist region—and none that we can think of outside the region—where an ethnofederation evolved into a unitary state.

Thus, to argue in support of the advantages of a unitary state for inter-ethnic relations and democracy is not the same thing as recommending that existing ethnofederations become unitary systems. This recommendation does not seem to be realistic, because there are considerable constraints on institutional choice—particularly when the direction proposed is one of moving

from an ethnofederal to a unitary model. But this reminds us of one more reason to prefer—in theory at least—a unitary model. That reason is greater “wobble room” in the future, should the need arise. The fact is that unitary states seem to be more successful not just with respect to both majority-minority relations and democratization. They also seem to be more open to responding in creative institutional ways to the concerns of their majorities and minorities.

ENDNOTES

1 To streamline the discussion in this chapter, we will use the phrase, inter-ethnic conflict, to refer to all those political conflicts that are based on ethnic, linguistic, and/or religious differences. Valerie Bunce would like to thank the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research for support of this project.

2 We left Bosnia out of this analysis, because the current design of the state was imposed by the international community, beginning with the Dayton Accords of 1995. Thus, ethnofederalism in this instance originated in quite different circumstances than our other cases and is affected, moreover, by a host of factors specific to third party enforcement.

3 However, not all minorities having administrative status within ethnofederal systems respond in the same way (Bunce, 2004). All we are suggesting in this discussion is that there is a much greater probability of such behavior in ethnofederal versus unitary republican and state contexts.

4 However, we fully recognize that there are many determinants of democratic performance in the postsocialist region – for example, proximity to Western Europe, economic reform, prior imperial administrative experience, and the development of a strong liberal opposition during the communist period (see Fish 1998; Bunce 1999a, 2002; Kopstein and Reilly 2000; Kitschelt et al. 1999). However, our interest here is with a specific context: new states and new democracies that are also divided societies.

5 There are, however, two caveats to this conclusion. One is that a longer temporal perspective may reveal increasing weakness of the state and segmentation of politics, culture and economics—as the Belgian case, for example, suggests. Second, the Spanish and Indian cases share one characteristic that works against the costs of ethnofederation; that is, a public consensus surrounding democracy.

Table 1: The State, Demography, and Democracy

Country ¹	State Form	Demographics ²	State Capacity ³	Secessionist Movements	Violence	Democratization ⁴
Azerbaijan***	Federal	82.7% Azerbaijani 5.6% Russian 5.6% Armenian	Low-Medium	Yes	High	6.3 – D
Georgia***	Federal	68.8% Georgian 9.0% Armenian 7.4% Russian 5.1% Azerbaijani 3.2% Ossetian 1.9% Abkashian	Low-Medium	Yes	High	4.5 – D
Russia***	Federal	82.6% Russian	Low	Yes	High	4.1 – D
Yugoslavia**	Federal	63% Serb 17% Albanian 5% Montenegrin 3% Hungarian	Low	Yes	High	6.1 – I
Croatia***	Unitary	78.1% Croatian 12.2% Serb	High	Yes	High	4.0 – I
Estonia*	Unitary	65.2% Estonian 28.1% Russian	High	No	No	2.0 – I
Kyrgyz Republic***	Unitary	52.4% Kyrgyz 21.5% Russian 12.9% Uzbek	Low	No	Low	4.9 – D
Latvia*	Unitary	55.7% Latvian 32.3% Russian	High	No	No	2.1 – I
Lithuania**	Unitary	81.4% Lithuanian 8.3% Russian 6.9% Polish	Medium	No	No	1.4 – I
Macedonia*	Unitary	66.5% Macedonian 22.9% Albanian	Medium	No ⁵	Low	3.8 – D
Slovakia*	Unitary	85.6% Slovak 10.5% Hungarian	High	No	No	2.1 – I
Moldova*	Mixed	64.5% Moldovan 13.8% Ukrainian 13.0% Russian 3.5% Gagauzi	Low	Yes	Medium	3.9 – I
Ukraine***	Mixed	72.7% Ukrainian 22.1% Russian	Low	Yes	No	3.5 – D

¹The countries in the table are the only ones in the postcommunist region to meet three conditions: (i) democratizing, (ii) new states, and (iii) presence of one or more sizable minorities which are territorially concentrated and which together constitute at least fifteen percent of the population. The first criterion is based on Freedom House designations, with these countries receiving a score of “free” or “partly free” in at least half of the years since politics were liberalized. For the Yugoslav case (Serbia-Montenegro-Kosova-Vojvodina) we included the rankings for the last two years of the former Yugoslavia along with rankings after the break-up of the state. See www.freedomhouse.org. The third criterion was drawn from studies of each of these cases, along with data provided by the *Europa Yearbook*, 2000. Finally, the asterisks in this column refer to regime structure, with one asterisk a parliamentary system, two mixed presidential-parliamentary, and three presidential. Our thanks to Tim Frye for providing these rankings (the Frye, Hellman, Tucker Political Data Base).

² All ethnic minorities comprising over five percent of the country’s total population are included, as well as select minorities below five percent. All figures are based on the *Europa Yearbook*, which makes use both of official data and occasionally unofficial estimates. The census or survey data for each country was obtained in the following years: Azerbaijan 1989, Czech Republic 1991, Estonia 1999, Georgia 1989, Kyrgyzstan 1989, Latvia 1999, Lithuania 1996, Macedonia 1994 (the proportion of Albanians has increased significantly since 1994, although it is highly contested by how much), Moldova 1989, Russia 1989, Ukraine 1989, Yugoslavia (Serbia-Montenegro) 1991. Note that these figures are often highly contentious; they are included here not as precise representations of the true ethnic composition of the countries listed, but simply as illustrative and largely accurate “snapshots” of the respective countries.

³Our rankings on state capacity are drawn from *Transition Report 1999: Ten Years of Transition* (London: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1999) 24, 116; and Bunce 2002.

⁴These are the average scores on civil liberties and political rights combined, taken from the last three years of Freedom House surveys (to 2000/1). The scores vary from one – meeting all democratic criteria – to seven – no evidence of democratic politics. See www.freedomhouse.org. The letters following the scores stand for recent trends (over the past three years): I for “improvement,” D for “decline,” and S for “stable.” Note that these scores differ somewhat from our selection criteria for inclusion as a case; the selection criteria are based on scores from independence until 2000/1 (see footnote 1 above). Consequently Azerbaijan and Yugoslavia are included, despite the fact that their scores over the past three years classify them as “not free.”

⁵ As of the time of writing, the violence in Macedonia remained relatively low intensity and official demands by the domestic Albanian population were not secessionist. Note as well that, prior to the crisis of 2000-2001, civil liberties and political rights were expanding, as were minority rights.