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Explaining Minority-State Bargaining in Multinational States

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Executive Summary

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 military 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? The United States, moreover, is likely to revisit these problems in the future, given the Bush administration's commitment to democracy promotion—a commitment that will, given the preponderance of culturally diverse states in the international system, necessarily involve continuing engagement in multinational settings.

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; *why* minority leaders embrace such different political agendas. Some, of course, take the radical step of demanding either states of their own or, less commonly, merger with a neighboring state. However, more common are two other options: accepting the status quo or seeking changes, such as greater cultural and political autonomy for their communities and/or expanded representation of their group in central-level political institutions.

Minority-state interactions, in short, vary—across country, within country, and over time. The purpose of this article is to explore the reasons behind such variations. I will do so by comparing bargaining between central leaders and leaders of minority communities from 1989 to 2003 in three postcommunist states: Georgia (and the regions of Abkhazia, Adjara and southern Ossetia), Russia (and the regions of Chechnya, Dagestan and Tatarstan) and Serbia-Montenegro (and the subunits of Kosovo, Montenegro and Vojvodina).

The countries selected for this study, therefore, present a puzzle that helps us tease out some reasons why bargaining between the center and minority regions takes on different dynamics in multi-cultural state settings. The common circumstances of these states would all seem to predispose them to secessionist challenges from their subunits—which is one reason why all three feature at least one secessionist region. Secession remains, nonetheless, the exception, not the rule.

Secessionist Politics¹

Specialists in both comparative and international politics have devoted considerable attention to secessionist movements. Scholarly preoccupation with this topic is not surprising. The vast majority of states in the international system are culturally heterogeneous, with many minorities in these settings featuring all or many of the attributes that are widely-thought to politicize diversity. These features include territorial concentration of minority communities, high correlations among socio-economic resources, political influence and cultural cleavages, a history of tensions among cultural communities, political and economic institutions that highlight differences and block interaction across cultural divides, location of minorities on the perimeters of the state, and the existence of co-nationals in neighboring states (Horowitz, 1985; Brubaker, 1996; Bunce, 1999b; Toft, 2003; Barany, 2002; Varshney, 2002; and, for summaries of this literature, Bunce, 2005a, b; Woodward, 2005)

What also seems to politicize diversity are three other conditions well-represented around the globe—weak states, poverty, and authoritarian or hybrid regimes (mixing democratic and authoritarian elements) under pressure to liberalize (Beissinger, 2002; Bunce, 1999b; Conversi, 1993; Siegle, Weinstein and Halperin, 2004; Sambanis and Zinn, 2004; Eizinstat, Porter and Weinstein, 2005). In all these cases, the consequences are similar: inter-group distrust, limited capacity of the center to induce inter-group cooperation, and temptations for neighboring states to intervene and some domestic groups to “go it alone” (see, for example, Seidman, 2002).

International stability also 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

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seek either membership in neighboring states or states of their own. In either case, the usual consequence is violent conflict between minorities and the state. This is largely 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.”

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 dimension. This is not so much because these conflicts originated in such tensions as because once started, as a result of struggles for power among elites, violent conflict has a pronounced tendency in diverse contexts to play out along cultural lines (see Gagnon, 2004; Bunce, 2005a, 2005b). 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; Zisk, 2004).

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democracy promotion—a commitment that will, given the preponderance of culturally diverse states in the international system, necessarily involve continuing engagement in multinational settings.

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, *why* minority leaders embrace such different political agendas. Some, of course, take the radical step of demanding either states of their own or, less commonly, merger with a neighboring state. However, more common are two other options: accepting the status quo or seeking changes, such as greater cultural and political autonomy for their communities and/or expanded representation of their group in central-level political institutions. In both of these cases, state borders remain intact—though the pursuit of change often generates tensions between the state and minority communities (see, for example, Csergo, 2000).

Further complicating these three scenarios are two other considerations. One is that minorities sharing the very same characteristics, noted earlier, that would seem to predispose them to secession often pursue more moderate agendas. This is even the case when other groups within the same state and exhibiting the same profile take more radical steps. A second consideration is that the same minority can accept the status quo at one time, then pursue either moderate change or even secession from the state at a different time. (see, for example, Evangelista, 2003; McGarry and O’Leary, 2002).

Minority-state interactions, in short, vary—across country, within country, and over time. The purpose of this article is to explore the reasons behind such variations. I will do so by comparing bargaining between central leaders and leaders of minority communities from 1989 to 2003² in three postcommunist states: Georgia (and the regions of Abkhazia, Adjara and southern Ossetia), Russia (and the regions of Chechnya, Dagestan and Tatarstan)³ and Serbia-Montenegro (and the subunits of Kosovo, Montenegro and Vojvodina).⁴

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.

² I selected these dates because they begin with the unraveling of the Soviet and Yugoslav states and their communist regimes (processes which, of course, began much earlier, but which by the late 1980s substantially increased both pressures and possibilities related to reconsideration of center-regional relations) and end with another round of regime change—in a decidedly more democratic direction in Georgia (2003) and Serbia-Montenegro (2000), but in a more authoritarian direction in Putin’s Russia (the indications of which became more clear-cut by 2003—see, especially, Fish, 2005). The recent changes in the political landscape of these countries (though more incremental in Russia) has fundamentally changed the context of bargaining. For example, just as Adjara is now in the process of re-incorporation into Georgia with the fall of Abashidze, so the international community has set in motion a process to proceed slowly towards statehood for Kosovo (International Commission, 2005).

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 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 geographical proximity to Chechnya and its many similarities with that rebellious republic, including extraordinary poverty and diversity. 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 instructive for analytical purposes, a fourth country 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—Nagorno-Karabagh, a heavily Armenian enclave. In addition, the anomalous case of Montenegro should be noted. In contrast to the other eight regions in this study, Montenegro was not a subunit nested within a republic during communism, but, rather, a constituent republic of the Yugoslav Federation that, in contrast to the other four republics, remained connected with Serbia throughout the Yugoslav wars of secession.

Finally, Georgia, Russia and Serbia-Montenegro are ethnofederal states; that is, federations where constituent subunits are constructed for the purpose of representing specific minority communities (though this is not the case for all of the “subjects” of the Russian Federation). Indeed, prior to independence in 1991, all three of these states were ethnofederal republics within the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia.⁵ Ethnofederalism is understood by many analysts to be conducive to secession, especially when regimes are in transition from dictatorship to more liberalized polities (see, for example, Horowitz, 1985; Bunce, 1999b; Varshney, 2001, 2002; Gorenburg, 2003; Croissant, 1998; Petersen, 2001; Amelin, 2001; Cornell, 2001a, 2001c, 2002; Barany, 2002; Melvin, 2000; ICG, 2001; Roeder, 1998, 2000, 2005; Gerring and Thacker, 2005; Bunce and Watts, 2005, Bunce, 2005a, 2005b; more generally, Roeder and Rothchild, 2005). This association is not limited to developments that took place in postcommunist Eurasia in the early 1990s when Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia dissolved into their republican components. In one recent study of state creation since the Napoleonic Wars, by far the most common source of states was the division of segmented parent polities, such as empires, ethnofederations and consociational configurations, where political institutions had both defined and coincided with cultural divides (Roeder, 2005b).

⁵ What we find, in short, are ethnofederal structures that span 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 (see Bunce and Watts, 2005).

The countries selected for this study, therefore, present a puzzle that helps us tease out some reasons why bargaining between the center and minority regions takes on different dynamics in multi-cultural state settings. The common circumstances of these states would all seem to predispose them to secessionist challenges from their subunits—which is one reason why all three feature at least one secessionist region. 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 old communist federations (though this was expressed in different institutional ways); and the Georgians stand out as having the longest history of challenging the state.

Just as important are the variations among minority regions. Thus, the nine regions differ from one another 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. They also differ in terms of 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 divergence in the dependent variable. To echo our earlier distinction, a survey of these three countries from 1989 to 2003 reveals three types of center-regional bargaining regimes.⁶ One is where local elites accept prevailing political

⁶ By using such terms as bargaining regimes, episodes or dynamics, I am defining the dependent variable as variations in clustered interactions between minority and central leaders, with clustering understood in three ways: 1) as an interactive process in which the behaviors of both sides reflect their bargaining with one another; 2) as a predictable process in the sense that certain behaviors on each side tend to go together (as the subsequent discussion

practices—which I term *status quo politics*. There are many reasons why minority leaders go along with the status quo, ranging from satisfaction with existing arrangements to the absence of opportunities for change. The state may be highly repressive, thereby constraining both popular mobilization and the rise of less moderate local leaders (though repression can increase the potential for radicalization). Where the center is united, there is limited room (or allies) for political maneuver. Finally, minority leaders cannot count on international support for change.

Not surprisingly, a status quo position is associated with high levels of cooperation between central and regional elites. In this study, the status quo scenario captures regional-center dynamics in Dagestan; Montenegro (1989-1997); and Vojvodina (1989-2000) (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; Jenne, 2003, 2004).⁷

makes clear), and; 3) as a temporal process in the sense that bargaining dynamics can lock in over time, thereby reproducing the same regime, but they can also divide into discrete periods when the character of inter-elite bargaining changes in important ways. In emphasizing interactions between central and local leaders, I am leaving out such influences as the preferences of minority communities and of the particular constituencies of leaders, as well as the struggle for power within the center and the regions. The logic here is as follows. First, 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, 1999b; Hechter, 1992), but also that what minority leaders demand—and how states respond—has far more to do with elite concerns on each side about power, money and policy than with either their reading of what constituents want or any necessary commitment to true representation of constituency interests (if that could even be deciphered). Indeed, there can be substantial gaps between elites and publics in national communities—as we saw, for example, in the break-up of Czechoslovakia (Wolchik, 1994) and, working in the opposite direction, in Macedonia (Pickering, 2005). Second, 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, 2004). Finally, as the conclusions to this study indicate, inter-elite competition, especially within the regions, is in fact an important consideration, but one that is best addressed as an issue shaping bargaining dynamics.

⁷ The placement of Vojvodina from 1989-2000 in this category is somewhat debatable, since one can discern increased political support regional autonomy from 1990-1993 (Jenne, 2003, 2004) and, beginning in 1996, when opposition forces did well in local elections. However, I nonetheless read the demands during this period (as opposed to what developed, beginning in 2000) in two ways—as lacking a clear commitment to significant autonomy and as largely concerned with restoring the degree of autonomy that had been in place from 1974 to the Serbian elite takeover of this province in 1989. I do not see these demands, therefore, as either unprecedented or as involving significant changes (see Devic, 2001).

A second situation is where regional leaders demand significant changes, while nonetheless reassuring the center that they accept the existing borders of the state. This is, admittedly, a broad category, with proposed changes encompassing a wide range of possibilities, including the establishment of some or a significant amount of economic, political and cultural autonomy even to the point of claiming local sovereignty (as with Tatarstan in particular). In our cases, these demands were associated with relatively similar behavior on the part of the center—resistance to change that led to relatively tense bargaining that in all instances took place. Nonetheless, there was an understanding that regions would remain within the boundaries of the state. Because these kinds of bargaining episodes fall in between the extremes of the minority leaders accepting the status quo and demanding secession and of full cooperation and violent conflict between the center and the regions full-scale conflict, I term this dynamic *reform*. The cases that fit this characterization include Montenegro (1997-2003), Vojvodina (2000-2003), Kosovo (1989-1997)⁸ and both Adjara and Tatarstan throughout the entire period (see Guiliano, 2000; Graney, 1998, 1999; 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 bargaining leads local minority leaders to reject state authority over their region and to take the gamble of leaving the state—usually to form their own state, but at times (as with Kosovo at certain points with respect to Albania and

⁸ The Kosovo case is hard to categorize. There were significant variations over time in Serbian repression, and the Albanian opposition in Kosovo, especially following Tito’s military intervention in the province in the early 1980s, grew in size, but was ideologically fragmented, with a more moderate public opposition (though less so after the American bombing campaign of 1999) and, especially given leakage of arms from Albania in 1997 and the American bombing two years later, an underground guerilla movement seeking independence or union with Albania (see, for example, Pula, 2001 and Jenne, 2003, 2004). A further complication, though one similar to Chechnya, is the unusually long history of Kosovo resistance to the Yugoslav state, beginning with its very formation after World War I. With some trepidation, therefore, I have placed Kosovo in the reform group from 1989-1997 and the secessionist group from 1997-2003.

Nagorno-Karabagh for 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 (thus far at least) has been that no new states have come into existence—though all of these regions feature most of the defining characteristics of statehood, save international recognition (Lynch, 2004; King, 2001).

The unwillingness of the international community to recognize these proto-states is hardly surprising. Since World War II, international powers have resisted recognizing states formed from popular rebellions, and in more recent years they have tolerated semi-sovereignty in preference to the even less appealing alternatives of brokering center-regional conflicts or providing international precedents for successful succession by according full-scale sovereignty (see Marshall and Gurr, 2003: 29; Krasner, 2004; also see Lynch, 2004). The cases here include Abkhazia, Chechnya, Southern Ossetia, and Nagorno-Karabagh for the entire period and Kosovo, particularly beginning in 1997 (see Billingsley, 1997; Cornell, 2001a,b,c; King, 2001a; Chironaya, 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, 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; International Commission on the Balkans, 2005).

The distinctions among these bargaining episodes are summarized in Table 1. They have two important implications. First, they provide greater precision to the question at hand by defining our task as one of differentiating some sources of this three-fold distinction. Second,

the differences among the status quo, reform, and secession bargaining scenarios can be arrayed on a scale from less to more. From the perspective of minority leaders, the demands range from no change to moderate change to challenging state borders, and from the perspective of the center, from cooperation to contestation to aggressive intervention. The ordinal nature of these categories helps discipline the analysis, by encouraging us to see explanatory factors that can also be expressed in ordinal terms.

Hypotheses

What factors might account for variations in minority leader preferences? The literature on minority politics can be divided into three 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 are poor; and that are mountainous (see Bunce, 1999a, 1999b; Beissinger, 2002; Roeder, 2002; Toft, 2003; Cornell, 2001a, 2001c; Fearon and Laitin, 2003; Woodward, 2005). 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 may lay some groundwork for minority mobilization. These include whether the majority embraces an assimilationist agenda and whether minorities are large relative to the majority, thereby tempting minorities to press their case and majorities to feel vulnerable. Also important is whether relations between majorities and minorities take on the logic of a security dilemma (Posen, 1993; Lake and

Rothchild, 1996; Fearon, 1998). This occurs 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 minority leaders will have more radical agendas, if communities 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. Other factors include if they are richer or poorer than the majority; if minority leaders are closed out of political power at the center; and if regions 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 expanded political competition at the center and the regions; whether minorities have lost or gained external allies in the processes of both state dissolution and the formation of a new state. Other developments include 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. A radical course is also more likely 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 perceive that they have been unfairly taxed in the process (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, increased economic stress, 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.⁹

States and Majority Nations

The variance in minority leader demands over time and across regions within the same state (as highlighted in Table 1) suggests, of course, that both similarities and differences among our states and majority nations will not be helpful in differentiating among our three bargaining regimes. That recognized, however, it is still useful to summarize these factors, if only because they are prominent in many analyses. In Table 2, I have done so.

⁹ 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 bargaining dynamics, nonetheless encourage minority leaders to seek change and state leaders to resist them, sometimes to the point of violence. 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 characteristics that no doubt increase the likelihood of the secession scenario. Controlling for such factors as the rise of new states as a result of secessionist politics at the republican level and the existence within those states of territorially-concentrated minorities, who have access to substantial institutional resources and who face a more uncertain political environment, 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.

Thus, 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, we fail to gain insights into why bargaining between minority leaders and the state follow different trajectories.

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 in Russia at the time of state formation, 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, even with the turbulent politics of the 1990s and the evident weakening of the Russian state during that entire decade (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 short of distinguishing among our three bargaining regimes.

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. Just as importantly, 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. For most of the period of concern in this article, therefore, they occupy the opposite ends of the bargaining continuum.

However, before we dismiss this factor, we need to look at the opposite situation; that is, where the titular nation in the region is a definite 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 dissolution of the Yugoslav state), 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. At the very least, then, it can be suggested that subunits within ethnofederations with ample representation of their titular nation, in combination with other influences, such as regime and state transition, increase the likelihood of secessionist politics.¹⁰

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 their leaders play on public resentments about

¹⁰ 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.

subsidizing 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).

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 and Ingushetia) 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, Woodward, 2005, Bunce, 2005a on other cases).

A variety of cultural arguments also seem limited in their differentiating power. In particular, there is little explanatory value if one examines 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 recently established its southwestern dialect of Serbian as the official language and re-established 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, neither demographic, economic, nor cultural variables are very helpful in differentiating among our three types of center-regional bargaining dynamics.

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, though with the interesting proviso that, of all the examples of the reform scenario, bargaining between Tatar leaders and Moscow has come closest to going down the path of secession.

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 in one case 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. By contrast, Tatarstan has been part of Russia for hundreds of years. Both of these cases, however, share the commonality of moving back and forth between reform and secession. 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.

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 none of the secessionist regions were states in the past. Indeed, the only region with such a history is Montenegro.

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 of the parent state (or Moscow for the Soviet Union and Belgrade for Yugoslavia) was allied with the subunit against the republic, with the result that any weakening of the center would strengthen the republic and threaten 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 Soviet Union with respect to Georgia and Yugoslavia with respect to Kosovo. For example, 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 in the 1980s in particular by expanded cultural rights, educational opportunities, economic subsidies and Albanian representation in political posts. The political leadership of Serbia 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 attached to Serbia. 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 within the republics lost their protector—while gaining an enemy. 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.¹¹

All that said, however, this line of argument seems to be less useful when we bring in other cases. 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, where ethnic machines, as in Tatarstan as well, were well-developed (see Roeder, 2005b).

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.

¹¹ 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 both in Serbia and its component parts—has been ignored (see Gagnon, 2004).

This argument, for 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.

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 republican and central-level leadership 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 Abkhazia 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 our variations in bargaining regimes.

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. This is particularly true if they faced the unhappy prospect 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 Roger 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). 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 the parent state 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.

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 dynamics—continued power, until 2000, of the ex-communists in

Serbia (though the opposition made important strides in the 1996 elections), 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 nationalist, non-communists in Georgia, followed by a mixture of the two groups, once Shevardnadze returned to power (which was followed in 2003 by the rise to power of the Georgian democratic opposition). Not surprisingly, these differences in struggles among nationalists, liberals and communists (and combinations among these groups) 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 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, 2004; Laitin, 1999; Hechter, 1992; Bunce and Watts, 2005). Here, we can note, for example: 1) Russian support of Abkhaz and southern Ossetian secessionists; 2) Albanian support of Kosovar Albanians (though partially passive, as with leakage of arms across a common border, beginning in 1997), coupled with a similar leakage from Bosnia after the Dayton Peace Accords and the supportive messages provided by the NATO bombing campaign in 1999; 3) support from a variety of quarters outside Russia for the Chechens; and, finally, 4) Armenia's involvement, beginning during the Gorbachev era, in the secessionist politics of Nagorno-Karabakh and the important role as well of Russia in this conflict, including military occupation (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 local political environment, Djukanovic reached out to the West—which was only too glad to respond, since Djukanovic was seen as someone who could undermine the political power of Milosevic.

However, in the fall of 2000, the Serbian opposition, led by Otpor, a youth movement, toppled Milosevic and the possibility of a democratic and peaceful Serbia presented itself—a possibility that seemed all the more likely, given the liberalization of Croatian politics following the death of Tadjman and the 1999 elections. 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 new Serbian government, by opening up the question of border changes (including Kosovo), and by creating a group 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 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.¹²

What the Montenegrin story suggests is that international pressures and support can either radicalize or moderate what minority leaders demand—the latter by defending existing state borders, even in a context of semi-sovereignty (Krasner, 2004). Indeed, both American and more generally Western policy towards Russia and the Chechen crisis provides a case in point (Evangelista, 2003; Sedelmeier, 2005). 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, especially in more authoritarian political settings and in tacit alliance 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 for greater autonomy at the least and secession at the extreme, though admittedly not as sizeable and consistent as for the secession cases, was also present in one of the status quo cases (the Forum-led government in Hungary and its support of Vojvodina in the early 1990s) and periodically in two of the reform cases: Adjara (Turkey) and Montenegro (or the West from 1997-2000). A closer look at these examples points us to two possible refinements of the claim about the importance of external support.

¹² In this sense, while I have coded Montenegro as a case that moved from cooperation to reform, a plausible reading might go further and 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. In the spring, 2007, the future of the Serbian and Montenegrin union is scheduled to be reassessed. A key issue will be whether the European Union, after the constitutional setback of the summer, 2005, will be in a position to offer credible inducements to Montenegro to remain in the same state as Serbia—inducements that in the earlier accession cases in eastern Europe (though of a different sort) were helpful in stabilizing and deepening democracy (Vachudova, 2005). Moreover, three factors work against shared statehood: the constitutional chaos of the con federation; divided Montenegrin public opinion on statehood; and Serbian public willingness to let Montenegro go.

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 the existence 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 issue appears to be the presence of guerilla war conditions, including rough terrain and small, armed groups (Fearon and Laitin, 2003).¹³ 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), by the Albanians (as in Kosovo, beginning in 1997) and by various groups in Chechnya. By contrast, such access seems to have been absent in our status quo and reformist categories—even when, for the latter, as with Montenegro from 1997-2000, the international community supported challenges to Belgrade’s authority.

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 encouraging a radicalization of demands—whether that means in the particular regional context moving leaders from a status quo orientation to reform (as with Vojvodina from 2000-2003 and Montenegro from 1997-2000) or from a reform position to one involving secessionist goals (as with Kosovo, beginning in 1997, but especially beginning in 1999).¹⁴ The issue, in short, is the point of

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ As already noted, international engagement can also be in the direction of encouraging a downshifting of minority elite demands—which is precisely what we see following the civic revolutions in Serbia in 2000 and Georgia in 2003. The more general point, however, remains. International actors can provide incentives to shift local demands. However, as the Montenegrin case illuminates, the boundary between reform and secession is easily violated, and secessionist politics is far more sticky than the alternatives.

political departure. This insight focuses our attention on local politics and political competition. It is this issue that leads us to the final column in Table 5: the variable outcomes of local struggles for power among communists, members of the liberal opposition, and nationalists.

Local Politics

The dissolution of the Soviet and Yugoslav states and regimes from 1989-1991 produced struggles for power in Georgia, Serbia and Russia and in their ethnically-defined subunits among three groups: the communists, the liberal opposition and the nationalists. As already noted, in our three republics that became states, there were three outcomes.

In Georgia, the communists lost to the hard-line nationalists, who then lost to a composite group spanning nationalists and communists. In 2003 a fragmented liberal opposition finally united to come to power. In Serbia, the communists, facing pressures to incorporate the nationalist agenda, did so to stay in power and thereby succeeded, as in Georgia, in demobilizing the liberal opposition. Beginning in 1996 with some important victories of Zajedno in the local elections, the communist hold on power began to weaken. In 2000, the communists lost power—though to a broad-based and eventually fractious coalition containing nationalists and liberals. In Russia, the communists split between hard-liners and liberals, with the result of an uneasy coalition that spanned nationalists, liberals and ex-communists.

In none of these cases, it is important to recognize, did the liberal opposition dominate—though they came closest in the Yeltsin years in Russia. This is largely because nested ethnofederalism—or the ethnofederal republics of Serbia, Georgia and Russia within their parent ethnofederal states—had the effect, given spatially-defined resources and resentments, of squeezing out the liberals in the struggles between nationalists and communists. The weakness of

the liberal opposition in all three states is important, because the best predictor of democratization in the postcommunist region as a whole is a strong victory of the liberal opposition in the first competitive elections (Bunce, 1999a).

Also important is another relationship. A focus on the twenty-two new states in the postcommunist region reveals that democratic outcomes materialized quickly only where nationalist movements formed at the end of communism--rather than, say, earlier or not at all. All of these late-forming movements were hybrids, merging nationalists and the liberal opposition and sometimes even communists who had defected to the liberals and the nationalists. This is, for example, the distinctive story of the Baltic States and Slovenia. In all the other cases, either nationalists or communists dominated, or communists became nationalists, with the common result that the liberal opposition was fragmented and demobilized (Bunce, 2003).

Political struggles in the subunits, not surprisingly, also played out among nationalists, liberals and communists. In these contexts, three kinds of situations materialized. One was where the communists were able to continue their political hegemony, 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 (up to 2000, though, as already noted, this began to change in

1996). What is also striking in these cases is the considerable cooperation between local communists and the new center—for example, Russia and Dagestan, and Serbia at various points in 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 and to limit the region's demands on the center for greater autonomy. This was even the case for Adjara prior to the Rose Revolution of 2003, where a local communist confronted first a nationalist leader at the center and then an ex-communist.¹⁵ What all this suggests is that variations in politics at the center over time and across country were less important for subsequent developments than whether leaders of localities pressed for change or settled for the status quo.

The second variant of political struggle in the regions at the end of state socialism was where the communists confronted a strong nationalist movement, competed with them for local power, eventually succeeded to varying degrees in fending off the nationalist challenge. In all of the reform cases, communists managed to weaken the liberals substantially and 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 local sovereignty and support of cultural, political and economic autonomy. Leaders in this political context, such as Shaimiev in Tatarstan, Abashidze of Adjara and Djukanovic in Montenegro, were the familiar communists who for political

¹⁵ 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, was 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 the recalcitrant regions into the Georgian state. For Abashidze, it is precisely the pressure to democratize that made local autonomy even more attractive—and necessary for the continuation of his micro-dictatorship.

reasons talked a nationalist line and where liberals had some influence (as in Montenegro), a democratic line as well.

The final scenario is what happened in the secessionist cases. Here, the communists invariably lost to the nationalists. The leaders of the nationalist groups, lacking much external opposition, emerged from internal struggles with the nationalist movement facing both institutional disarray with the collapse of local communist rule. Facing threatening actions by the center, they pursued a radical course of action.

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. What invariably transpired was an attack by the center on the recalcitrant region. This revealed a dynamic that spoke not just to the center's commitment to maintaining borders and local stability at all costs, the divisions of the liberal opposition, and the fluidity of power at the center, but also the difficulties involved in pursuing bilateral bargaining with a subunit in political turmoil.

Conclusions and Questions

The purpose of this paper has been to compare the internal politics of Georgia, Russia and Serbia-Montenegro in order to answer a key question about interactions between the leaders of the state and minority communities. The question is what explains variations—over time, across country, and within countries-- in three types of bargaining regimes, which can be arrayed in ordinal fashion according to the degree of change sought by minority leaders and the extent to state hostility to these demands?

The first is a status quo scenario, wherein no changes are sought and where center-regional relations are cooperative. The second is a reform scenario, where minority leaders seek some and sometimes substantial autonomy, the state resists and bargaining becomes more conflictual. Finally, there is the secession dynamic, where minority leaders contest state borders and the state uses violence to prevent them from leading their region out of the state.

After evaluating a number of plausible factors that were good candidates for helping us differentiate among these three dynamics, several factors stood out in particular. The first was international support extended to local leaders in support of particular goals. Thus, in all of the secession cases we see provision of weaponry, and we also see a correlation between the international engagement and changes in minority leader demands.

Second, the outcomes of political struggles in the regions were also critical. Here, what seems to matter is the relative strength of the communists versus the nationalists at the local level (with a third group of players, the liberal opposition, usually fragmented and demobilized for much of the time period of interest in this study). Put simply: the stronger the communists in local politics and the weaker the nationalists, the more likely local leaders pursue little or moderate change in the relationship between the locality and the center.

Where the nationalists defeat the communists, however, is where we find the secessionist scenario. This argument seems to hold, moreover, across regions, states and time. For example, just as secessionist regions invariably feature a decisive victory of the nationalists over the communists (as was the case early on in Chechnya in Russia, but not in Dagestan or Tatarstan, and in Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia in Georgia, but not in Adjara), so a decline over time in the hegemony of the communists in Montenegro, Vojvodina and Kosovo—or what can be

termed increasingly competitive politics-- is associated with escalation of minority leader demands for change.

In Georgia, Russia and Serbia-Montenegro, therefore, secessionist demands coupled with aggressive responses by the center seem to occur when nationalists are firmly in power; reformist demands when communists remain in power but only after stealing some thunder from the nationalists and sometimes from the liberals (especially in Montenegro and Vojvodina); and acceptance of the status quo when local communists face weak liberal and nationalist oppositions. Certain factors increase the likelihood of secession, such as regime transition, ethnofederalism, large and geographically compact minorities, and the transfer of weaponry to local groups. But a key and usually overlooked factor in secession is the outcome of political struggles at the local level among liberals, nationalists and communists. This factor, moreover, is distinctive in helping to account for other center-regional dynamics, such as cooperation and non-violent contention.

This argument, however, brings one question to the fore. Is it in fact tautological to argue that secessionist demands materialize when nationalists dominate minority regions? I think not—for several reasons. First, how the communists fared in their struggle with the nationalists does not just explain secessionist scenarios; it also differentiates in ordinal fashion between status quo and reformist politics. For these two dynamics, the claim of a tautological argument is far less compelling.

For example, there is no particular reason to assume that communists continuing in power at the local level during regime and state transition would necessarily embrace the status quo. Such actions would be particularly surprising, if the communists were weak or out of power at the center (as was the case, respectively, in Russia and Georgia). At the same time, there is no

particular reason to assume that communists winning easily or with difficulty would necessarily act in different ways when interacting with the center. One could anticipate, for instance, that just as clear communist dominance would limit demands on the state for change, so would a bare victory over the nationalists—the latter because the communists, being more vulnerable politically, might seek the support of the center to keep the nationalists weak.

In addition, comparative studies of nationalism and nationalist movements remind us that nationalists can be liberal or illiberal, supportive of state boundaries or antagonistic to them—not to mention all the gradations that lie in between these extremes. Like all social movements, therefore, 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, ideologies, identification of threats to the nation, and, therefore, their goals (see, especially, Deegan-Krause, 2004). Moreover, as noted earlier, nationalist leaders do not always have nationalist followers, and nationalist leaders are often concerned primarily with using nationalist issues to maintain political power. When combined, these arguments remind us that the victory of local nationalists in our cases would not necessarily predict the rise of secessionist political agendas.

That recognized, however, regional nationalists in these contexts would be unusually prone to pursue a radical course. The leaders of Russia, Georgia and Serbia-Montenegro, after all, had been secessionist themselves and had played a central role in dismantling their parent states. In this sense, local leaders were just following their lead—as one might expect in states that were “nested ethnofederations.”

Moreover, new states are nervous states and therefore unusually jealous of their territory. Their leaders are quick to use combative language and military force to maintain their borders—

as we saw, of course, in Georgia, Serbia and Russia. Aggressive centers, in turn, empower local radicals, while encouraging an escalation of local demands. This dynamic is particularly likely in the settings of interest in this paper, given the impact of ethnofederalism on building strong identities, isolating nations from each other, and providing these nations with virtually all the trappings of a state, including institutions, borders and leaders. What I am suggesting here is that nationalist leaders in the regions found it very easy to embrace a secessionist agenda in part because of the impact of ethnofederalism and in part because central-level leaders, themselves responding to ethnofederalism, engaged in aggressive behaviors that pushed local leaders in a secessionist direction.

Nationalist agendas, therefore, translated easily and quickly into secessionist agendas—and in the process squeezed out other alternatives, such as liberal nationalism or, for that matter, liberalism. It is not accidental, therefore, that there is a clear correlation in our cases between the relative power of the communists versus the nationalists, on the one hand, and the trajectory of center-regional bargaining, on the other. It is also not accidental that democratization in the twenty-seven postcommunist successor states has faced the greatest obstacles in two settings—where the liberals lost (as they initially did in most states in postcommunist Eurasia) and where new states inherited ethnofederalism from their communist past (Bunce, 1999a; Bunce and Watts, 2005; but see Wilkinson, 2004 on the impact of competition in multi-ethnic democracies).

Figure 1

Ethnofederations and Regional Subunits

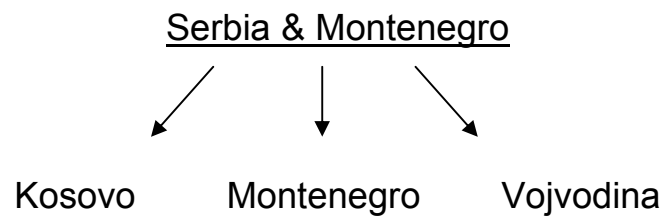
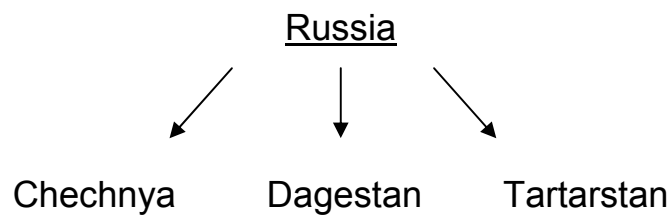
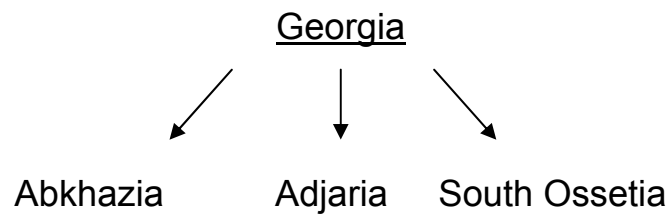


Table 2

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
Territorially Compact Minorities	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mobilization Against Former State ^a	Yes	Yes	Yes
Regional Variation in Income	Large	Large	Large
Timing of Mobilization ^b	Early	Late	Middle
Size of Dominant Nation	86%	82%	63%
Center/Periphery of Former State	Periphery	Center	Center
Diaspora of Dominant nation?	Small	Large	Large
History of Resistance? ^c	Yes	No	No
Prior Independence? ^d	Yes	No	Yes
Communists Maintain Power?	No	Mixed	Yes
Majority Religion	Christian	Christian	Christian
Minorities of Other Religions	Yes	Yes	Yes

^a 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, 1990).

^b Early refers to nationalist mobilization before the 1980s; 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 Belgrade in the early 1980s were both liberal and nationalist and primarily the former (see Gagnon, 2005).

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

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

Table 3

Competing Explanations of Subunit Behavior Divided into Status Quo, Reform and Secessionist Demands: 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 (1989-1997)	Large	Slightly below	No	No	No	Small	No
Vojvodina (1989-2000)	Small	Rich	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Adjaria	Large	Rich	Yes	No	No	No	No
Kosovo (1989-1997)	Large	Poor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Montenegro (1997-2003)	Large	Slightly below	No	No	Yes	Small	No
Vojvodina (2000-2003)	Small	Rich	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tatarstan	Medium	Rich	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No**
Abkhazia	Small	Rich	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Chechnya	Large	Poor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Kosovo (1997-2003)	Large	Poor	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nagoro-Karabakh	Large	Similar	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
South Ossetia	Large	Rich	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No**

* Dagestan is unusually diverse. Avartsi, the largest group, is 28% of the population; Dargintsi – 16.3%; Russians – 12.5%; and Dezginy – 12.2%

** In Tatarstan, Tartars 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, North Ossetia in the Russian Federation composed of the same nation

Table 4

**Competing Explanations of Subunit Behavior Divided into Status Quo, Reform and Secessionist Demands:
Geopolitical and Historical Features**

	<u>Geopolitical Location^a</u>	<u>Violence in Incorporation^b</u>	<u>Prior Statehood^c</u>	<u>Subunit Alliance^d</u>	<u>Institutional Status in Former State^e</u>	<u>Local Representation^f</u>
Dagestan	Perimeter	Yes	No	No	Changed (-)	Medium
Montenegro (1989-1997)	Perimeter	No	Yes	No	Stable	Medium
Vojvodina (1989-2000)	Perimeter	No	No	No	Changed (+)	Low/Medium
Adjara	Perimeter	Yes	No	No	Stable	Medium
Kosovo (1989-1997)	Perimeter	Yes	No	No	Changed (+)	Low/Medium
Montenegro (1997-2003)	Perimeter	No	Yes	No	Stable	Medium
Vojvodina (2000-2003)	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 (1997-2003)	Perimeter	Yes	No	No	Changed (+)	Low/Medium
Nagorno-Karabakh	Close to Perimeter	Yes	No	Yes	Changed (+)	Medium
South 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 here 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.

Table 5

Competing Explanations: Political and Military Factors During Transition

	<u>Nationalist Movements in Republics^a</u>	<u>Communists Retain Power in New State^b</u>	<u>International Support for Autonomy/Secession^c</u>	<u>Communists Retain Power in Region?^d</u>
Dagestan	Yes/Late	Divided & Dominant	No	Yes
Montenegro (1989-1997)	Yes/Early	Divided & Dominant	No	Yes
Vojvodina (1989-2000)	Yes/Early	Yes, But Less from 1997-2000	No	Yes
Adjaria	Yes/Early	No	No	Competitive
Kosovo (1989-1997)	Yes/Early	Yes	Yes*	Competitive
Montenegro (1997-2003)	Yes/Early	No	Yes, then No	Competitive
Vojvodina (2000-2003)	Yes/Early	No	No	Competitive
Tartarstan	Yes/Late	Divided	No	Competitive
Abkhazia	Yes/Early	No	Yes**	No
Chechnya	Yes/Late	Divided	No**	No
Kosovo (1997-2003)	Yes/Early	Yes/No (2000)	Yes**	No
Nagorno-Karabakh	Yes/Very Late	Yes	Yes**	No
South Ossetia	Yes/Early	No	Yes**	No

^a 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 a more exclusivist and illiberal nationalism which in turn pushed the subunit to rebel.

^b There are three possibilities here: divided power among liberals and communists (Russia); dominance of communists (Azerbaijan, Serbia & Montenegro up to 2000, though less so in 1997-2000); and defeat of the communists followed by a mixed communist/nationalist alliance (in Georgia to 2003), and liberals and nationalists (Serbia-Montenegro, 2000-2003)

^c International support can be purposive or accidental (for example, Russian support of South Ossetia and Abkhazia vs. leakage of armaments from Albania to Kosovo), and intervention can be of a regional power (Russia) or of 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 competition between the two dominated political developments in the subunit during the specified period. However, in Adjaria and Tartarstan (in the middle category or reform) communist power was more significant.

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