Must Pluri-national Federations Fail?

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Must Pluri-national Federations Fail?

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ABSTRACT This article questions the widely held assumption that pluri-national federations are likely to break down or break apart. It shows that the case against pluri-national federalism needs to be substantively qualified, and then outlines the conditions that facilitate successful pluri-national federations. The argument is preliminary in nature, but suggests a more balanced and nuanced account of the durability of pluri-national federations than is associated with either its critics or its arch-supporters.

Introduction

There is a widespread view among scholars and statesmen that pluri-national federations are unstable and likely to break apart.[1] There is also considerable evidence to support this view. What Jack Snyder calls 'ethnic federalism' has a 'terrible track record' (Snyder, 2000, p. 327). Many federations have broken up while others have arguably been held together by foreign intervention or military dictatorship. It also seems reasonably clear that federalism provides some opportunities to secessionists that unitary states do not, notably co-sovereign territorially defined units of government; and yet, we believe, and will argue in this paper, that the case against federalism is greatly exaggerated. Much of it is based on majoritarian bias, spurious arguments and misleading comparisons. Rather than concluding that pluri-national federations are bound to fail, we argue that they can succeed under certain conditions, and that the choice in many cases is between pluri-national federal democracy and no democracy at all, or no (single) state.

The Prosecution's Case

Federations that are commonly described as multinational or pluri-national (by their friends) and ethno-federal (by their critics) have broken down, or have failed to remain democratic, throughout the communist world, and throughout the post-colonial world. The federations of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia disintegrated during their respective transitions to democracy. Of all the states in the former communist bloc of Eastern Europe, as several critics have pointed out, it was only the federations that irretrievably broke apart, and all of them did. They also experienced the most violent

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transitions. The latest terminal case is Serbia and Montenegro, which broke up in 2006 when Montenegrins voted for independence in a referendum. Bosnia-Herzegovina, remodelled as a pluri-national federation at Dayton in 1995, appears to be held together by international force. Some make the same claim about contemporary Iraq.

In the post-colonial world pluri-national or pluri-ethnic federations have failed, or failed to be successfully established, in the Caribbean, notably in the West Indies Federation. Even the miniature federation of St Kitts-Nevis recently faced the prospect of break-up (Premdas, 1998). Pluri-national or pluri-ethnic federations have failed in sub-Saharan Africa, in Francophone West and Equatorial Africa, in British East Africa (Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika) and in British Central Africa (Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland), or have failed to remain durably democratic (Nigeria and Tanzania). The break-up of the Nigerian federation between 1966 and 1969 was prevented only after a secessionist conflict that caused about a million deaths. In the Arabic-speaking world, only the United Arab Emirates has survived as a federation, but it is neither pluri-national nor democratic. The Mali and the Ethiopian federations in independent Africa broke up too, while the Cameroons experienced forced unitarism after a federal beginning. In Asia there have been federative failures in Indochina, in Burma, in Pakistan (the secession of Bangladesh), and in the union of Malaya (the secession (or expulsion) of Singapore). In short, new pluri-national federations appear not to work as conflict-regulating devices—even where they allow a degree of minority self-government. They have broken down, or failed to be durably democratic, throughout Asia, Africa and the Caribbean. India, if it counts, stands out as the major exception in Asia. Even in the UK, which is not a federation, but where Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales were given autonomy a decade ago, Scotland has a secessionist government committed to a referendum on independence by 2011, and Sinn Féin jointly runs a power-sharing government in Northern Ireland hoping that the experience is part of a transition to a unified Ireland.

It also seems clear that pluri-national federations make it easier for groups to secede should they want to do so. Federalism provides a territorially defined and concentrated nationality or ethnicity with political and bureaucratic resources that it can use to launch a bid for independence. Regional parties, including secessionist parties, typically do better in regional elections than they do in state-wide elections. Regional governments tend to blame their central counterparts for whatever ails them, contributing to an intergovernmental politics of division. Secession necessarily takes place within a recognized territory, and that is one attribute that distinguishes it from partition (O'Leary, 2005, 2007a). Pluri-national federations implicitly suggest the principle that the accommodated groups represent 'peoples' who might then be entitled to rights of self-determination under international law. It is far more likely, as the Badinter Commission on the Former Yugoslavia confirmed, that the international community would recognize a bid for independence from a federal unit rather than from a community that lacks such a unit. All of the full constituent units of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia that broke away are now uncontroversially recognized as independent states, whereas breakaway regions that lacked this status, such as South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Trans-Dniestria, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Kosovo, have either not been recognized, or have been recognized only by the states that sponsored their secession, or, as in Kosovo's case, by less than a quarter of the world's states.

This track record has produced persistent prescriptive counsel against pluri-national federalism. The counsel comes from two different perspectives. First, the contemporary

heirs of France's Jacobins think that political recognition of multiple nations or ethnic communities institutionalizes and reinforces divisions, endangers national/state unity and leads, ultimately, to state break-up. Their preferred response to diversity is a strong unitary state for a single people with individual rights. This unitarist view is held throughout the world. It was the orthodoxy in Great Britain until 1997, particularly among Conservatives. Most ex-colonies in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean shun federalism as an obstacle to economic development, political stability and state unity. Post-colonial state-builders' antipathy to federalism is now matched among the intellectuals and governing elites of Eastern Europe, who regard it as a recipe for disaster, given the Czechoslovakian, Yugoslavian and Soviet experiences. Federalism is their 'f' word. Several Eastern European states have moved in the opposite direction in recent years, replacing pluri-national federations with what Brubaker calls 'nationalizing' states, i.e. states that are tightly centralized, controlled by their dominant national community, and intent on the homogenization of deviant identities (Brubaker, 1996). International governmental organizations, such as the OSCE and the Council of Europe, while prepared to endorse cultural rights for minorities, are less clearly supportive of pluri-national federalism, unless groups are in a strong enough position to fight for it (Kymlicka, 2001). Ironically, the Jacobin argument that federalism is incompatible with nation-building is shared by 'hard-line' nationalists trapped inside states controlled by other nations. They concur that nation and state should be congruent, although they disagree on the appropriate boundaries. This has been the position of Quebec's *Parti Quebecois*, particularly the faction around the ex-premier Jacques Parizeau, and of Basque Nationalists in Herri Batasuna. It was also the view, until very recently, of the Turkish Cypriot leadership. Such nationalists seek independence as unitary, sovereign and indivisible nation-states, although some are prepared to consider confederation.[2]

Second, pluri-national federalism is opposed by significant sections of the American academy and policy-making elite. Generally, American academics, unlike Jacobins, have little difficulty with federalism as a tool for managing diverse populations. The American founding myth is of self-governing colonies that won independence from empire. Many Americans therefore reject the strong state favoured by French republicans and praise federalism precisely because it diffuses power to multiple points. They think federalism protects liberalism and enhances markets (Riker, 1982; Weingast, 1997). Americans insisted on a federation for post-war Germany, because they were convinced it would make a resurgence of fascism less likely; but America's makers and its celebrants have generally taken the position that federalism should be national rather than pluri-national in character.[3] As the USA expanded southwestward from its original largely homogeneous (except for African slaves) 13 colonies, it was decided that no territory would receive statehood unless minorities were outnumbered by White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) (Glazer, 1983). In consequence, the US federation shows 'little coincidence between ethnic groups and state boundaries' (Glazer, 1983, p. 276; Beer, 1983). Institutional differences aside, the goal of American federalism was the same as that of French Jacobinism, to construct a single people out of many, *e pluribus unum*. The American civil war, driven by Southern exceptionalism, generated a profound fear of sectionalism, which has arguably made most US political scientists into unconscious heirs of Lincoln when asked to think about pluri-national federations.

America's experience with federalism has informed an interesting contemporary argument on how federalism can be used to manage divisions in ethnically heterogeneous

societies. Donald Horowitz (1985, chapters 14 and 15) and Daniel Elazar (1994, p. 168), building on earlier work by S.M. Lipset (1960),[4] have suggested that federations can be partly designed to prevent ethnic minorities from becoming local provincial majorities. The strategic thinking here is to weaken potentially competing nationalisms: federalism's territorial merits are said to lie in the fact that it can be used as an instrument to prevent local majoritarianism (with its attendant risks of local tyrannies of the majority, or of secessionist incentives). The provincial borders of the federated units on this argument should be designed on 'balance of power' principles—proliferating, where possible, the points of power away from one focal centre, encouraging intra-ethnic divisions, and creating incentives for inter-ethnic cooperation (by designing provinces without majorities), and for alignments based on non-ethnic interests. This logic has been recommended most recently for Iraq by American, Iraqi Arab and German academics (Brancati, 2004; Wimmer, 2003; Makiya, 2002).[5] It received a sympathetic ear from the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority, which governed Iraq from 2003 to 2004. Its supporters recommend the rejection of what they call 'ethno-federalism', and what we call pluri-national federalism.

Reflecting these sentiments, a number of prominent American academics have argued that the break-up of the former communist federations and the accompanying chaos can be traced squarely to 'ethno-federal' structures (Brubaker, 1996; Bunce, 1999; Leff, 1998; Roeder, 1991; Roeder, 2007; Snyder, 2000). Rogers Brubaker argued that the Soviet regime went to 'remarkable lengths, long before glasnost and perestroika, to institutionalize both territorial nationhood and ethnocultural nationality as basic *cognitive* and social categories'. Once political space began to expand under Gorbachev, these categories quickly came to 'structure political perception, inform political rhetoric, and organize political action' (Brubaker, 1996, p. 9, our italics). Jack Snyder similarly maintains that 'ethnofederalism tends to heighten and politicize ethnic consciousness, *creating* self-conscious intelligentsia and the organizational structures of an ethnic state in waiting' (Snyder, 2000, p. 327, our italics). The implication of these accounts is that (at least some of) these divisive identities did not exist before the Soviet Union federated, and would not have come into play had it not federated. What is worse, Snyder argues, the communist elites had choices. Their decision to adopt federalism was often 'needless', and not a response to irresistible nationalist pressures (Snyder, 2000, p. 327). Snyder notes that only the communist federations broke up and 'nationalist violence happened *only* where ... ethnofederal institutions channelled political activity along ethnic lines (USSR and Yugoslavia)' (2000, p. 252, our italics). In the most recent and comprehensive representation of this American tradition, Phil Roeder, one of the US's leading experts on Soviet federalism, asks 'where do nation-states come from?'. The answer is that they emerge from previously self-governing federal units (Roeder, 2007). The blunt lesson of these analyses is that 'ethnofederalism' can and should be avoided everywhere.

Assessing the Track Record of Pluri-national Federations

It would be most unwise, in light of the evidence, to argue that pluri-national federalism is a panacea for nationally heterogeneous territories. However, the case against pluri-national federalism is by no means as compelling as its supporters think. In this paper, which represents a preliminary examination of the evidence, we show that the 'failed' track record of pluri-national federalism needs to be qualified in five important ways. We then outline a number of conditions that facilitate successful pluri-national federation.

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The first and most obvious weakness in the case against pluri-national federations is that the major federal failures were, to a significant extent, sham or pseudo-federations. These cases are therefore 'false negatives'. This is true of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Nigeria. In several cases, the failed federations were forced together. Thereafter, there was neither self-rule nor shared rule. The constitutional division of powers and the rule of law were often ignored in practice and they were not authentically representative (i.e. democratic). There was, therefore, no possibility of genuine dialogue, never mind cooperation, among the different national communities involved. In sum, these states had weak or no overarching identities to begin with, and no democratic mechanism for developing them. The Soviet Union can be seen as the most prominent case of pseudo-federalism. Territorially it consisted of those remnants of the Tsarist Empire that the Red Army was able to subjugate after the October Revolution, plus those countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Moldova) it conquered as a result of the Ribbentrop–Molotov pact and its victory in the Second World War. Although its state structure was formally federated from the beginning, real power lay in the tightly centralized Communist Party (the CPSU), which operated according to the principle of 'democratic centralism' (Lieven & McGarry, 1993). The Union Republics were therefore not autonomous in practice. Their legislatures (the Soviets), though in theory elected by local populations, were in fact rubber-stamp bodies, nominated by the CPSU. Key institutions, including the army and police, were controlled by Moscow. No effective judicial review existed to decide on the division of rights and functional spheres between the centre and the republics. Yugoslavia was more decentralized than the Soviet Union or Czechoslovakia, at least after reforms in the late 1960s, but it was no less undemocratic, and was held together by the League of Communists.

The colonial federations arose from colonies arbitrarily consolidated by white imperialists. Even the decision to federate at independence was made in some cases by the departing metropolitan rather than the colony's indigenous elites. Nigeria's original three-unit federation, which collapsed in the mid-1960s, was 'bequeathed' by the vacating British (Suberu, 2001, p. 4). The Cameroons federation was a construct of British and French colonialists (particularly the latter), who wanted to preserve the dual personality they thought they had created (Elazar, 1987, p. 240). The Cameroons were converted into a unitary state by military strongmen soon after independence, whereas Nigeria has been ruled by centralizing military dictators for more than two-thirds of its post-independence history—and its presidential contenders in recent times have all been ex-generals. Even under democratic conditions, Nigeria is so centralized that it has been described as a 'hollow federation' and 'a unitary state in federal guise' (Suberu & Diamond, 2000, p. 8).[6] Corruption and abuse of power are so pervasive that the rule of law can hardly be said to exist (Suberu, 2001).[7] A third tier of 'federation' based on strong local governments has been imposed in Nigeria, arguably with the goal of weakening the second tier.

The failed communist and post-colonial federations were additionally burdened by economic systems that eventually proved incapable of providing a reasonable or growing standard of living for their citizens. In each case, this caused resentment, not least among concentrated nationalities in relatively enterprising regions of the state that saw their inclusion in the federation as detrimental to their welfare. It was therefore

hardly surprising that when the communist planning system became discredited and collapsed in the late 1980s it produced a legitimacy crisis.

Implausible Counter-factuals

The case against pluri-national federalism also rests on implausible counterfactuals. Critics of pluri-national federations implausibly claim that it was unnecessary to accommodate diversity through such devices, and that there were democratic civic or unitarist or one-nation alternatives that would have worked better. Once this test is probed the critics' position looks less credible. The decision to create both the Soviet and Yugoslav federations was taken in the midst of bitter civil wars and external invasions, when parts of both states had seceded (Connor, 1984, p. 198; Woodward, 1995, p. 30). The decision was regarded as essential for restoring unity and luring breakaway regions back into the state. In both cases, socialist internationalists, who were not ideologically committed to pluri-national federalism, took the decision. Before he assumed power, Lenin had expressed his vehement opposition to federalism and his clear preference for unitary structures.[8] He and Stalin had to re-dress themselves in Austro-Marxist clothes. Tito, before taking power, appeared to be a conventional Leninist. If federalism was unnecessary, as Roeder and Snyder suggest, we must conclude that both Lenin and Tito were extraordinarily incompetent decision-makers.[9]

It seems equally implausible to contend that some states would have stood a better chance of consolidation and democratic development if they had been unitary. While some have argued that Nigeria's divisions at the time of independence reflected British divide-and-rule strategies, few think that the state could have been (or could be) held together without some form of decentralized or federal structure.[10] When an Ibo leader, General Ironsi, tried to convert Nigeria into a unitary state in 1966, it led quickly to his downfall. Even though the Nigerian federation witnessed a failed and bloody bid for secession in Biafra (1967–1970), the victors were careful to retain federation as a political form, albeit reformed, and not pluri-national, and with new internal boundaries.

One reason to doubt the feasibility of mono-nation-building strategies as an alternative to pluri-national federation in deeply diverse states is that such strategies have not been particularly successful when they have been applied under apparently more propitious circumstances. Turkey still faces a large dissident Kurdish minority despite eight decades of highly coercive 'Kemalist' nation-building. British nation-building within a tightly centralized union at the centre of a global empire could not prevent the breakaway of Ireland in 1921 (McGarry, 2001; O'Leary & McGarry, 2009).[11] Irish nationalists mobilized successfully without the advantages of their own self-governing institutions. They were able to establish democratic legitimacy by winning the overwhelming majority of Ireland's parliamentary seats at Westminster in every election between 1885 and 1918. This is a clear refutation of Roeder's thesis: Ireland became a nation-state because of thwarted autonomy, not because it had autonomy. The UK's civic and unitary state proved incapable of preventing a nationalist rebellion in Northern Ireland after 1969, or of preventing the resurgence of Scottish and Welsh nationalism. The threat of Scottish nationalism to the UK's unity preceded the recent concession of devolution, and explains why devolution was necessary (McGarry, forthcoming). Even the homeland of Jacobinism where peasants were made into Frenchmen in the nineteenth century has been unable to erode Corsican nationalism. The failure of unitarist or national federalist forms of civic nationalism

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may help explain why many Western European democracies, including Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Spain and the UK, are now more disposed towards decentralized autonomy regimes or full pluri-national federalism.

Wrong Historical Causation

Critics of pluri-national federalism get the historical causation story wrong. It is arguably not pluri-national federations that caused instability and break-up, but attempts to unitarize them. To an important extent, secession and violence in the territory of many failed federations followed directly from attempts by certain groups to centralize these federations, i.e. to a move away from the spirit of pluri-national federalism. Yugoslavia's break-up, including the *de facto* breakaway of Kosovo, followed successive Serbian-dominated moves against the autonomy of Yugoslavia's other republics. The Soviet Union may well have broken up anyway, but it is worth noting that its disintegration occurred in 1991 after an abortive hard-line Communist coup that sought to repudiate Gorbachev's acceptance of genuine federal self-government. Violence has also been caused by the centre's unwillingness to permit secession. One can argue that federal constitutions with procedural and negotiable secession rules might have avoided violence better, and might even have prevented secession. There was no violence in Czechoslovakia because mutual secession was agreed.

Just as the break-up of the communist federations was exacerbated by the ambitions of centralists, much the same can be said of the violence that arose almost immediately in their still heterogeneous, but now unitary, successor states. The wars and conflicts that broke out in Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, the South Ossetian and Abkhazian regions of Georgia, and the Trans-Dniestrian and Gagauzian regions of Moldova, were all influenced by the majoritarian policies of the dominant groups in the respective states. The newly independent Croatian regime adopted a flag that resembled that of the war-time Croatian Ustashe regime that had committed genocide against the Serbs, and moved to disarm Serbian policemen in the Krajina. They thereby enraged the Serbs in the new state (Hayden, 1992). Newly independent Georgia abolished the autonomous status of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in 1990 and 1992, respectively (Kolsto in Kymlicka, 2001, p. 207). In one scholar's view, the abolition of South Ossetia's autonomy 'immediately unleashed a civil war' (*ibid.*, p. 207). Civil war in Abkhazia followed 1 month after its autonomy was ended. The Trans-Dniestrian rebellion was based on a 'reactive nationalism', mobilized in response to nationalizing policies by the Moldovan state (Chinn & Roper, 1995).[12] These conflicts were similar to those in the Kurdistan region of Iraq after 1974, Eritrea from the mid-1970s, or the Basque region of Spain under Franco, i.e. they were reactions to centralization or broken promises of autonomy.[13] It is unreasonable simply to attribute these conflicts to the legacy of pluri-national federalism.[14]

There is a directly related defence of pluri-national federalism. Collapses in many cases were caused by insufficient implementation of pluri-national federal principles. In many cases, post-communist violence resulted from the *lack* of congruency between federal units and ethnic boundaries, i.e. a more consistent application of pluri-national federal principles may have resulted in less violence. Slovenia's secession from Yugoslavia was relatively peaceful, because it was homogeneous. The 'velvet divorce' in Czechoslovakia was facilitated because there were few Czechs in Slovakia and few Slovaks in the

Czech lands.[15] War started in Croatia in 1991 largely because Croatia had a significant Serb population that wanted to stay in Yugoslavia, and it spread to Bosnia because that republic had Croats and Serbs who also wanted to be linked to their respective ethnic kin. These groups were aided and abetted by Serbia and Croatia, respectively. Bosnia, the most multiethnic republic, was perhaps destined to be the most difficult.[16] In 2001, violent conflict broke out in Macedonia, whose significant Albanian minority resented the dominance of Slavs. War between Armenia and Azerbaijan, which started before the USSR's dissolution, was largely fought over the inclusion of an Armenian ethnic enclave (Nagorno-Karabakh) in the latter. In Georgia, two conflicts broke out, between Georgians and South Ossetians cut off by Georgia's secession from their kin in North Ossetia (within Russia), and between Georgians and Abkhazians, who had traditionally been close to Russia and baulked at being included in what they saw as a Georgian state. The only other two cases of violence were in Moldova: in the Trans-Dniestrian region where Ukrainians and Russians resented their inclusion in Moldova, and in the region of Gagauzia, where the majority Turkic population rejected Moldovan nationalization and feared the country's unification with Romania.

The Lack of a Staatsvolk

Although it is true that *only* federations broke apart in communist Eastern Europe, this glosses over the more basic fact that the states that broke apart were also the most nationally diverse states—and that in turn explains why they were federations in the first place.[17] In the Soviet Union, Russians had a bare majority of the total population (51%), whereas in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, the largest groups, the Czechs and Serbs, had 63% and 39%, respectively. In none of the communist unitary states, by contrast, did the entire population of minorities constitute more than 17%. The largest single minority group was the Turks of Bulgaria, with a little over 8% of the population. It makes at least as much sense to argue that the instability of the communist federations resulted from their national diversity as from their pluri-national federal institutions. Their extreme diversity helps to explain why Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union fragmented, as opposed to producing one or two secessions, and this in turn facilitated international recognition of the new states. In other research O'Leary has shown that many of the world's stable and durably democratic majoritarian federations have been so because they have a dominant people, or Staatsvolk (O'Leary, 2001). Although lacking a Staatsvolk does not guarantee political instability in a federation, it makes it more likely. Where there is no Staatsvolk, O'Leary suggests, consociational devices may prove necessary to stabilize the federation.

The USA, built around a historically dominant nationality, has proved more democratically stable than Nigeria—which lacks a clearly dominant people. A similar comparison suggests why the Russian Federation is more stable and secession-proof, thus far, than the Soviet Union. Russians have a majority of 81.5% in the Russian Federation. The unitary states of Eastern Europe may have held together, in other words, not because they were not federations, but because each of them has dominant communities (see Table 1). Conversely, it is not at all certain that if, counterfactually, Yugoslavia had been a unitary state when it democratized, it would have stayed together. Ireland was able to organize and fight for secession from the much less diverse but unitary UK after the first universal male suffrage elections were held in 1918.

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Sources: CIA World for Bulgaria, Albani frd/cs/cshome.html nations.htm.

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Table 1. The largest community's proportion of the population in the communist states of Eastern Europe

Communist federations	Largest community	Percentage of population
Yugoslavia	Serbs	38.9
Soviet Union	Russians	51.0
Czechoslovakia	Czechs	63.0
Communist unitary states		
Bulgaria	Bulgarians	83.0
Albania	Albanians	95.0
Romania	Romanians	89.5
Hungary	Hungarians	89.9
Poland	Poles	97.6

Sources: CIA World Factbook 2001, http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html (information for Bulgaria, Albania, Romania, Hungary, Poland); Library of Congress Country Studies, http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/cshome.html#toc; Library of Congress Country Studies; http://www.kakarigi.net/homeland/maps/nations.htm.

Successful Pluri-national Federations

It is simply wrong to claim, as Snyder and others do, that pluri-national federations are unworkable. Canada has survived as a federation since 1867, adding Newfoundland to its territory in 1949, i.e. almost exactly as long as the period since the American civil war ended the US's de-centralized federation. Canada is often ignored by American critics of pluri-national federalism in spite of its proximity to, and close ties with, the USA. Alternatively, it is dismissed as another example of federal failure, because it narrowly escaped break-up following Quebec's referendum on sovereignty in 1995;[18] but Canada's brush with break-up, like the disintegration of the former communist states and the separatist violence that has occurred in their successor states, was linked to a centralizing move away from pluri-national federalist principles. Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau had introduced two major changes to the Canadian constitution in 1982 that weakened Quebec's powers. The first was a new Canada-wide Charter of Rights, which gave federal justices the right to strike down provincial (and federal) acts. The second was a formal constitutional amendment formula that ended Quebec's informal veto over constitutional change. When English Canada refused in the late 1980s to agree to a package of measures aimed at conciliating Quebec, support for secession reached unprecedented heights, paving the way for the close referendum result in 1995. Secession is not on the short-term agenda in Quebec. It has a federalist provincial government, and the issue of secession was barely raised there during Canada's federal election in October 2008.

The world's largest democracy, India, also has some characteristics of pluri-national federalism, particularly after its decision, taken in the 1950s, to redraw its internal federal boundaries along ethno-linguistic lines. Strangely, India's success is explained away by Snyder (2000, pp. 287–296) on the grounds that its central authorities refused to recognize ethnicity. In fact, India has refused to recognize religion, not ethnicity, as the basis of state formation—which helps to explain India's difficulties in Kashmir and the Punjab. When India has had severe violence, especially in Punjab and Kashmir, it has usually been a result of centralizing decisions (Singh, 1993). Belgium, Spain and the UK have also all adopted institutions based on pluri-national federalist principles,

without yet threatening their state's territorial integrity. This does not mean that any of these states are as stable or united as those that are more nationally homogeneous, but it does seem in tension with the assumption that they are bound to fail.

These five qualifications question the assumption that pluri-national federalism cannot succeed. Our next task is to enquire into the conditions that make success more or less likely. Our arguments here are preliminary, but we hope they are seen as suggestive, and they establish an alternative research agenda.

Explaining Success and Failure

Most of the conditions that facilitate, but do not guarantee, successful pluri-national federations are implicit in the preceding discussion. Here we spell them out.

The Presence of a Staatsvolk

As Table 2 shows, national federations are more stable than pluri-national federations. The latter are more likely to fail or break-up. The reason is straightforward: national

Table 2. National and multinational or multiethnic federations

National federations	Duration	Multinational or multiethnic federations	Duration
Argentina	1853–	Belgium	1993–
Australia	1901–	Bosnia-Hercegovina	1995–
Austria	1920–	Burma	1948–
Brazil	1891–	Cameroon	1961–1972
Germany	1949–	Canada	1867–
Mexico	1917–	Czechoslovakia	1968–1992
United Arab Emirates	1971–	Ethiopian-Eritrean Federation	1952–1962
USA	1789–	Ethiopia	1992–
Venezuela	1960–[a]	India	1947(50)–
		Malaya	1957–1963
		Malaysia	1963–
		Mali	1960–1960
		Nigeria	1960–
		Pakistan[b]	1947–1971
		Pakistan	1971–
		Russia	1993–
		Soviet Union	1918–1991
		St Kitts-Nevis	1983–
		Switzerland	1848–
		West Indies Federation	1958–1962
		Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)	1992–2003[c]
		Yugoslavia (Communist)	1953–1992

[a]Venezuela abolished its Senate in 1999.
[b]Pakistan (before the secession of Bangladesh).
[c]The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) was transformed into the confederal union of Serbia and Montenegro in February 2003, and dissolved into the two separate states of Serbia and Montenegro in June 2006.

federations are generally nationally homogeneous, or virtually so. However, O'Leary's (2001) data show that the relative stability of *pluri-national* federations is also related to the demographic preponderance of the largest national community, i.e. the extent to which it constitutes a Staatsvolk. A Staatsvolk can feel secure—and live with the concessions attached to pluri-national federation and, *ceteris paribus*, has the demographic strength and resources to resist secessionism by minority nationalities. Pluri-national federations without dominant nationalities are more likely to be unstable, face secessionism, or break up, because minorities are more likely to think they can prevail (O'Leary, 2001). The same argument implies that Nigeria and a future European federation will, *ceteris paribus*, be relatively unstable, as neither possesses a dominant people. What must be considered in our '*ceteris paribus*' clause? We hypothesize as follows:

- Pluri-national federations without a Staatsvolk, if they are to survive as democratic entities, must develop consociational practices that protect the interests of all the encompassed national and ethnic communities with the capacity to break away (see below).
- The existence of a Staatsvolk, or the existence of consociational practices, will not themselves assure the stabilization of a pluri-national democratic federation, though they will separately or conjointly increase its survival prospects. A Staatsvolk has to behave appropriately to maintain stability, i.e. it must not approve of or be complicit in the maltreatment of minority nations.
- Other conducive external and internal political, economic and social relationships may decide the fate of a pluri-national federation. The character of pluri-national power-sharing, whether a national minority has backing from a powerful neighboring state and whether its region is on the border of the federation, will assuredly matter, as will the democratic and legal character of the federation, its mode of formation and its prosperity.

The Federation's National Communities Should Not Only Have Self-government, There Should Also be Consociational Government at the Centre

When federalism is defended as a method of conflict regulation, the emphasis is usually on how it can provide multiple nationalities with guaranteed powers of territorial self-government. Sometimes it is also argued that a virtue of federalism is that it avoids the 'winner takes all' outcome associated with Westminster-type regimes: a group that is excluded at the centre may be able to console itself with regional power.[19] However, federalism is about 'shared-rule' as well as 'self-rule', and the relevant constituent entities and peoples are likely to want a federal government that represents them, that is inclusive and, indeed, consociational. National minorities excluded from the federal government will have a reduced stake in the federation and the federal government will be less inclined to promote their interests. It is not surprising, then, that all of the durably democratic pluri-national federations have practised consociational forms of democracy within the federal government. Such arrangements involve four features: cross-community executive power-sharing, proportional representation of groups throughout the state sector (including the police and judiciary), ethnic autonomy in culture (especially in religion or language) and formal or informal minority-veto rights (Lijphart, 1977). Consocational practices within the federal government are relatively undisputed in the case of Canada, Switzerland and Belgium (see Noel, 1993; Steiner, 1989; Hooghe, 1993), and Lijphart has recently claimed that India had effective consociational traits during its most stable period under

Nehru (Lijphart, 1996; Adeney, 2002). In the period between Congress's decline and its recent re-emergence, India was governed by a broad multi-party coalition representing its diversity. Even if India has not been consociational in the particular respect of having cross-community executive power-sharing in New Delhi, it has usually had descriptively diverse representation of religious, ethnic and linguistic groups in the cabinet and civil service.

We can see the importance of consociational organization in the federal government in the case of many of the failed federations, where centrifugal pressures were often exacerbated by deeply unrepresentative federal governments. In Pakistan, before the secession of Bangladesh, a crucial federal agency, the army, was dominated by the Punjabis of the West (Nasr, 2001). This was also a serious problem in Yugoslavia, where the army, one of the most important federal institutions (absorbing two-thirds of the federal budget), was dominated by Serb officers, many of whom shared Milosevic's vision of a recentralized state. The Yugoslav Federal Council, the most important political institution and one based on (non-democratic) consociational principles, was subject from the late 1980s to an undisguised take-over by Serbian politicians. After having suspended the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina, the Serbia–Montenegro alliance gained control of four of the Federal Council's eight seats, plunging the federation into crisis. The Soviet Union broke up after an abortive take-over of the central government by conservatives opposed to decentralization. The episode undermined Gorbachev's willingness to reorganize the federation in ways that would have given the republics more self-government *and* better representation in Moscow. The breakdown of the Nigerian federation in 1966–1970, which included anti-Ibo violence in the northern Hausa region and the bloody Biafran war of secession, arose after a coup, which led to the centre being dominated by Ibo officers, and a counter-coup, in which these officers were overthrown (Suberu, 2001).[20] Much of Nigeria's post-1970 conflict, including sectarian warfare between Muslims and Christians and the rise of violent separatism in the oil-rich Delta area, can be traced to the lack of inclusiveness at the centre (Suberu & Diamond, 2000, pp. 6–7, 13).[21] The breakdown of the West Indies Federation was linked to Jamaicans' lack of representation and influence at the centre, and in the case of the federation of Nyasaland, Northern and Southern Rhodesia, it was black Africans who were under-represented (Watts, 1999, p. 111).

These reflections suggest that it will not be sufficient for the Nigerian, Ethiopian and Pakistani federations or any prospective Iraqi federation to practise democracy. Past evidence suggests they will need to adopt and maintain consociational governance at the federal centre.[22] It also suggests that calls to have a fully-fledged European federation, with the classic bicameral arrangements of the USA, to address the so-called democratic deficit in the European Union, will fail *unless* such calls are accompanied by strong commitments to consociational devices. Consociational governance would imply strong mechanisms to ensure the inclusive and effective representation of all the nationalities of the European Union in its core executive institutions, proportionate representation of its nationalities in its public bureaucracies and legal institutions, national autonomy in all cultural matters deemed of profound cultural significance (e.g. language, religion, education) and, last but not least, national vetoes to protect national communities from being out-voted through majoritarian rules. Many of the current consociational and confederal features of the EU, which some federalists want to weaken or temper in their pursuit of formal federation, are, in fact, in our view, required to ensure the EU's prospects as a pluri-national democratic federation.

As federal regions are also usually ethnically heterogeneous, it is helpful to have consociational practices in mixed regions. This may address the criticism that giving self-government to territorially compact national minorities allows them to victimize local minorities, and may promote both intra-regional stability and good inter-regional–central relations. Particularly when a regional minority is part of the state-wide majority, its accommodation through power-sharing makes central intervention or retaliation, and a corresponding decline in centre–region relations, less likely.[23]

This argument about the importance of accommodation through consociational devices is different from a widely cited proposal put forward by Linz and Stepan (1992). They put their faith in the ability of federation-wide political parties to win support from all groups, to balance majority and minority concerns, and to build what Linz calls '*bundestreue*', an overarching loyalty to the federation (Linz, 1997). In their view, the key reason for the disintegration of the Yugoslav and Soviet federations was that the first democratic elections were held in the republics rather than the state (whereas in post-Franco Spain it was the other way around). In Yugoslavia, this sequencing allegedly gave divisive republican elites the resources and space to promote break-up, and obstructed the organization of federation-wide parties with an interest in holding the state together. Had federal elections been held first, federation-wide parties would have been able to act as unifying forces.

This reasoning is, however, questionable. State-wide parties may well do *better* in state-wide elections than in regional elections, but there is no guarantee, or even likelihood, that they will do *well* at any level in societies with noticeable national divisions. In the UK's first democratic elections, in the mid-1880s, the overwhelming majority of Irish seats were won by Irish nationalists.[24] The fact that they were elected in state-wide elections, as opposed to regional elections, does not appear to have coloured their view of the UK, or their ability to secede from it, and they won despite the presence of competitors from state-wide parties. Czechoslovakia's first democratic elections, which involved concurrent state-wide and regional elections, did not produce any state-wide parties at the state-wide (federal) elections other than the discredited communists, who won 23 of the country's 150 seats. Even they subsequently divided into Czech and Slovak factions. All of the other parties that won seats were based on the Czech, Slovak, or Hungarian populations (Leff, 1998, p. 98). Perhaps this political party fragmentation into ethnonational blocs was due, as Leff claims, to the simultaneity of elections at both levels (*ibid.*, p. 97), i.e. to the fact that the federal election was not held in advance.

How, then, are we to explain the first democratic election returns in the *unitary* states of Eastern Europe, where there were no regional elections? In these cases, party support still broke down almost exactly along ethnonational lines (see Table 3), with little evidence of integrative vote-pooling activities by either party elites or voters. These results are difficult to square with Linz and Stepan's assumption that Yugoslav state-wide elections would have produced strong Yugoslav state-wide parties, unless one is to assume that Yugoslavia was a good deal less divided than its neighbours. Given that it was one of the Eastern Europe states whose major communities had butchered each other within living memory (1941–1945), this assumption is implausible. This comparative evidence suggests that state-wide elections in Yugoslavia would have resulted in elections that reflected its national divisions. Hoping for state-wide parties to hold Yugoslavia together was probably wishful thinking. Stability would have required successful bargaining among the different minority nationalist parties on a new consociational and confederal constitution. Such bargaining as there was on this agenda did not succeed.

Table 3. Support for minority political parties in the first post-communist elections in the unitary states of Eastern Europe

State/year of election	Minority/proportion of state's population	Support for minority party as a proportion of votes cast
Bulgaria/1990	Turks 8.5	6.0[a]
Romania/1990	Magyars 7.8	7.2
Poland/1991[b]	Germans 1	1.2

[a]The 1990 election was to elect a constitutional assembly. The first parliamentary elections took place in 1991. The Turkish minority party, the Movement for Human Rights and Freedom, won 7.5% on this occasion.
[b]These were the first parliamentary elections. Presidential elections were held in 1990.
Sources: Centre for the Study of Public Policy: Mass Behaviour in New Democracies, available at: http://www.cspp.strath.ac.uk/index.html?bulgelec.html; the University of Essex's Project on Political Transformation and the Electoral Process in Post-Communist Europe, available at: http://www.essex.ac.uk/elections/; Elections in Central and Eastern Europe, available at: http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/electer/pl_er_nl.htm#pl91.

Authentic (Democratic) Pluri-national Federations Are More Likely to be Successful than Pseudo-(undemocratic) Federations

An authentic pluri-national federation is democratic. It allows the representatives of its respective national communities to engage in dialogue and open bargaining about their interests, grievances and aspirations. Such democratic dialogue is a prerequisite for the development of cooperative practices. Democratic pluri-national federalism may help to preclude the systematic transgression of individual and group rights. It can prevent minority nationalist elites from exaggerating support for their preferences (Linz, 1997). An authentic pluri-national federation is also based on the rule of law, law that recognizes national, ethnic, or communal rights, a constitutional division of powers, and legal powers that approach those of impartial umpires. There is not yet an example of an established democratic pluri-national federation failing (though the number of cases is small), although there are, as we have seen, numerous examples of democratizing federations that have not worked. The evidence, limited as it is, suggests that we should not automatically assume that Canada, Switzerland, Spain, or India will go the way of the flawed communist or post-colonial federations. Belgium is an interesting case—we shall see whether it shows the limits of pluri-national federation.

'Voluntary' or 'Holding Together' Pluri-national Federations Are More Likely to Endure under Democratic Conditions than those that are Coercively Constructed after Modern Social Mobilizations

Stepan distinguishes between three types of pluri-national federation:

- those that voluntarily come together from distinct polities/colonies, such as the Swiss and Canadian federations;
- those that are created from unitary states in an attempt to 'hold' the polity together, such as Belgium, and, one might argue, India;
- those that are forced together (or 'put' together) by a dominant group, such as the Soviet Union (Stepan, 2001).[25]

Federations that are consensually established as a result of elite bargaining, whether of the holding or voluntary variety, are more likely to be considered as legitimate by their citizens and more likely to survive than those that result from coercion. A foundational act of cooperation is also more likely than one of coercion to promote traditions of accommodation. Canada's success is owed in part to the fact that it originated in 1867 from a compact between Anglophone and Francophone elites led by John A. MacDonald and George Etienne Cartier. The Swiss federation was also the result of different groups agreeing to 'con-federate'. Although the Spanish and Belgian federations emerged from unitary states, they too were based on agreement between representative elites. India, which stands out as one of the few post-colonial federal success stories, is also one of the few where indigenous elites took the decision to federate by themselves—albeit reluctantly, and albeit after prior British tutelage (Adeney, 2002). Most of the failed federations, on the other hand, were put together without the consent of the relevant nationalities.[26] This does not augur well for Bosnia-Herzegovina, which exists as a federation because of the internationally imposed Dayton Accords. On the other hand, it suggests that predictions of the break-up of the emergent Iraqi federation are premature. A bargain on Iraq's federation has been struck by political elites representing two of its three communities and an overwhelming majority of its population, while the prospects for winning support from the third community, Sunni Arabs, is not as bleak as it once was (O'Leary, 2009).

Prosperous Pluri-national Federations or those with Agreed Regimes for Managing Resources Are More Likely to Endure

Walker Connor has correctly counselled us against exaggerating the importance of materialism when questions of national identity are at stake. Prosperity should not be considered a sufficient or even a necessary condition (as the example of India shows) for holding a pluri-national federation together (Connor, 1994, pp. 145–164). Nonetheless, *ceteris paribus*, prosperity—and agreed regimes for distributing wealth—may matter. The plight of the communist federations and post-colonial federations was plainly exacerbated by their inability to provide materially for their citizens and by the discrediting of communist central planning. In the Ukraine and the Baltic republics, even Russians voted for the break-up of the USSR. In both Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, the catalyst for break-up was necessary economic reforms, and the charge was led by those republics (Slovenia and Croatia and the Baltic republics) that had the most to gain materially from going it alone. Czechoslovakia's break-up was partly centred on the divergent economic interests of its two units, on the reluctance of the Czechs to be held back by relatively poor Slovaks, and on the resentment this caused among the latter. Nigeria has experienced severe conflicts over the redistribution of revenues from its oil resources. Similar questions, including *who* should be responsible for distributing revenues, are crucial in Iraq (O'Leary, 2007b). It needs no belabouring of the obvious to observe that distributive fiscal and expenditure issues are the meat and drink of political controversy in multiple federations.

The Number and the Size of Units Matter

It is well known among students of federalism that dyadic federations are particularly fragile. Pre-1971 Pakistan, Czechoslovakia, Malaysia-Singapore and Serbia-Montenegro

have all broken up. Even the micro-federation of St Kitts and Nevis has its difficulties, and apart from it there are no 'successful' two-unit federations (Belgium, largely because of the Brussels region, is not a two-unit federation, but a three-region and three-community federation).[27] The reason appears to be that dyadic federations, because of their structure, do not give rise to floating coalitions, but focus conflict along a single axis. This does not augur well for the Cypriots, who, in their latest negotiations, which began in September 2008, appear committed to a 'bi-zonal, bi-communal federation'.

This logic suggests that federations with more than two units are more likely, *ceteris paribus*, to be stable than those with smaller numbers, because they promote a multiple balance of power. The Canadian federation's stability is owed in part to the fact that English-speaking Canada's division into nine provinces means that federal politics does not revolve exclusively around the French–English cleavage, with the centrifugal effects this would have. Instead, Quebec allies with Ontario in defending central Canadian manufacturing and political interests; with Alberta in promoting decentralization within the federation; and with the poorer 'have-not' provinces of Manitoba and the Atlantic (Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island) in defending federal 'equalization' payments.

This does not mean, in our view, that federal stability should be achieved by forcing mobilized national communities to partition their homelands, as critics of ethno-federalism did in Nigeria and have suggested with respect to Kurdistan in Iraq. Such partitions are likely to require coercion, or to be counterproductive. Dominant peoples, as the record shows (Canada, Russia, Spain, the USA), are more likely than minorities to be willing to subdivide into several units, as their desire for collective national self-government is satisfied at the level of the federation itself, but there are no examples of mobilized minorities who have willingly accepted subdivision.

As Henry Hale has relatedly argued, the size of the units also matters (Hale, 2004). He warns against the existence of a 'dual power-structure', which arises when a 'core ethnic region' dominates the federation, with domination occurring, according to Hale, when the core region possesses at least 50% of the federation's population, or 20% more than the second largest region. Such a dual power structure contributed to the break-up of the Soviet Union, and to secession and civil war in late 1960s Nigeria. It also explains instability in Pakistan, where Punjab constitutes a core region, and stability in India, where 445 million Hindi-speakers are distributed across several Indian states (Adeney, 2006). The subtlety in Hale's position is that he maintains it is better for federal stability that the largest nationality be divided—and not the smaller nationalities (as typically preferred by centralists and those who advise them).

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to offer a more balanced and nuanced assessment of the value and durability of pluri-national federations than that put forward by critics of 'ethnofederalism', such as Roeder and Snyder, without falling victim to the blandishments of the most ardent federalists. Democratic federalism did not cause the break-up of the communist states, as these were not authentic democratic (or economically efficient) federations. Not all pluri-national federations have failed. There are also a small number of remarkable success stories. We have tried to identify conditions that are conducive to the success of pluri-national federations. It is important that they be democratic and respect the rule of

law. It helps if they are prosperous. It helps if they came together voluntarily (or have voluntary renewals that enable bygones to be bygones). If federations develop from a unitary state, our arguments suggest that early and generous responses to expressed demands for minority self-government will work better than delayed and grudging responses. The demographic composition of the federation matters: a federation with a dominant ethnonational community is likely to be more stable that one without. The number and size of the federation's units will affect its stability: it is better to have more than two units, and it is far better to divide administratively the dominant nationality than the smaller nationalities. Lastly, federalism is usually not enough: consociational practices, particularly at the level of the federal government, are very important to the success of pluri-national federalism, especially if there is no Staatsvolk.

Those who quite reasonably think that the prospects for pluri-national federations are grim also need to explain why either a unitary state or a centralized, nationalizing federation on the American model would be more likely to win the support of minority nations. Our view is that there is strength in the argument that pluri-national places, i.e. states with sizeable, mobilized nationalities, can be democratic only if they are also based on pluri-national federalist principles. The likeliest alternatives to pluri-national federalism are not civic nationalist harmony but control by one group over another, or disintegration, followed perhaps by the self-interested intervention of neighbouring states or great powers.

Our conclusions should be seen as preliminary. A more comprehensive examination of the conditions that provide for stable pluri-national federations will require substantial additional research.

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Notes

1. The expressions 'pluri-national' and 'multinational' may be treated as synonyms, but there is a formal case for the former expression. A 'pluri-national federation' describes a state in which there are multiple recognized nations, whose respective nationals may be either concentrated or dispersed, and in which individuals may identify with one, more than one, or none of these nations. The prefix 'pluri' helpfully describes cases of 'not one'; that is, it covers both 'two' and 'more', and suggests that national identity or identities may be variable and change in intensity, and that the federation may comprise both conflicting and compatible identities. 'Multinational federation', by contrast, suggests three or more nations, and is more likely to be associated with an essentialist position in which there are thought to be spatially discrete and homogeneously adjacent nations, each of whose members has an equally intense national identity, and no other salient identity.
2. Confusingly, hard-line nationalists sometimes say they support federation when they mean confederation, as in the case of the Turkish Cypriot leader, Rauf Denktash. The Parti Quebecois does not commonly use the term confederation, but offers a synonym, 'sovereignty-association'.
3. For the distinction between national and pluri-national (or multinational) federations, see McGarry & O'Leary (2005).
4. Lipset (1960, pp. 91–92) argued that the main benefit of federalism for divided societies is that it creates cross-cutting cleavages, but only if internal federal boundaries and ethnic boundaries intersect.

Federalism 'increases the opportunity for multiple sources of cleavage by adding regional interests and values to the others which crosscut the social structure'.

5. For the problems with this perspective, especially from a Kurdish perspective, see the essays in O'Leary *et al.* (2005), particularly chapters 1–4.
6. Nigeria's hyper-centralism is a function of Abuja's control of oil revenues, but is also rooted in the 1979 and 1999 constitutions. According to Joye and Igweike, under the new constitution (which largely copies the old one), there 'are few, if any ... areas in which state governments can act independently of the Federal Government' (cited in Suberu & Diamond, 2000, p. 15). The existence of such separate powers is an essential hallmark of federalism.
7. Unitarists often claim that decentralization leads to corruption and inefficiency, but contemporary Nigeria demonstrates that corruption and centralization can go hand in hand. Supporters of anti-corruption reforms in Nigeria argue that this requires 'power and resources [to be] shifted downward, to levels of authority that are closer to the people and more visible' (Diamond, 2001, p. xviii).
8. In 1913, before he had responsibility for governing the Soviet Union, Lenin made clear his contempt for federalism and his preference for unitarism: 'We are in principle against federation. It weakens the economic connection and is inappropriate for a unified state. Do you want to separate? we say, Then go to the devil and cut yourself off altogether ... You don't want to separate? Then, please, don't decide *for me*, don't believe you have the "right" to federation' (italics and grammatical errors in original) (Connor, 1984, p. 217). As Connor notes, Lenin dropped his opposition to federalism upon assuming power to ensure those nations that had seceded 'that reunion would not result in political subservience' (*ibid.*, p. 218). Lenin 'was very much a pragmatist willing to bend his [centralist] principles to the contingencies of the day. During the first years of Soviet power he became convinced that territorial autonomy needed to be granted to the major non-Russian minorities to quell dissent and win them over to the cause of Bolshevism' (Kolsto, cited in Kymlicka, 2001, p. 203).
9. The claim that communist pluri-national federalism 'created' divisions cannot explain easily why strong ethnic identities exist among groups that were not accommodated through federal institutions, such as the Chechens or Crimean Tatars. There is an explanation for this implicit in the arguments of critics of pluri-nationalism federalism. It is that the decision to accommodate some national groups led those excluded to mobilize. We do not reject this empirical explanation outright, but we think the appropriate way to deal with this possibility would have been to accommodate the excluded identity groups, not to refuse to accommodate any of them.
10. 'As the rivalries among these three groups [Yoruba, Ibo, Hausa] crystallized into bitter political struggles during the late colonial period ... it became increasingly clear to all interested observers that only by some form of highly decentralized political arrangements could the main groups be accommodated within a single country' (Suberu, 2001, p. 20).
11. Supporters of civic nationalism might respond that British (or other forms of) civic nationalism was not neutral between the UK's diverse peoples, and that a more genuinely inclusive version of civic nationalism might have worked. This is indeed part of the weakness of civic nationalism. It often reflects the values and interests of the state's dominant national community.
12. As Chinn and Roper (1995) wrote, after elections in 1990, 'those appointed to high level posts were overwhelmingly ethnic Moldovans, leaving minority activists little hope that their interests would be represented in deliberations on key issues'. Moldovans accounted for 69.62 per cent of the entire legislature, but for 83.3 per cent of the leadership. All five of the leading positions in the Supreme Soviet were held by ethic Moldovans, as were 18 of 20 positions in the Moldovan government (Crowther, 1997, p. 338, n10).
13. Eritrea's autonomy, which had been established in 1952, was formally abrogated by the Ethiopian government in 1962.
14. For two general accounts on the relationship between centralization and nationalist rebellions, see Gurr (2000) and Hechter (2000).
15. Interestingly, Czechoslovakia is absent from Snyder's account of the relationship between ethno-federalism and violence.
16. It is useful to remember Bosnia-Herzegovina when considering the argument that cross-cutting republican and ethnic boundaries have conflict-reducing effects.
17. As Watts claims: 'it is not so much because they are federations that countries have been difficult to govern but that it is because they were difficult to govern in the first place that they adopted federation as a form of government' (Watts, 1999, p. 110).
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18. The result of the 1995 referendum on sovereignty was 50.4% against, and 49.6% for. It is not absolutely clear, however, that 49.6% were voting for 'independence'. The question was unclear. Some of those who voted yes appeared to believe that they would continue to be citizens of Canada.
19. 'Federalism reduces conflict by allowing those political forces excluded from power at the top the opportunity to exercise regional power' (Hanf, 1991, p. 43).
20. The Ibo coup led by Major-General Aguiyi-Ironsi in January 1966 was followed by a 'Unification Decree', which moved Nigeria towards a unitary state. The regional and federal public services were combined, to the considerable advantage of the better-educated southerners and the disadvantage of the Hausa. This, and the loss of many northern military leaders in the January coup, set off anti-Ibo violence in the North, and contributed to Ironsi's assassination in July (Suberu, 2001, p. 31).
21. In a country that is divided equally between Muslim and Christian and between North and South, northern Muslims headed all four military governments during 1984–1999. After General Abacha's rise to power in 1993, the head of state, the Chief of Defence staff, the Inspector-General of Police, the Minister of Internal Affairs, the National Security Adviser and the Chief Justice were all Muslims. This sectionalism provoked 'much alarm, alienation, and even paranoia' (Suberu & Diamond, 2000, p. 13). Abacha's northern and Muslim-dominated government trampled on the rights of the minorities in the oil-rich Niger Delta, and executed their leaders, including the novelist Ken Saro-Wiwa.
22. This is particularly important where, as in Nigeria, the lion's share of power is allocated to the centre (Diamond, 2001, p. xvi). An obstacle to the practice of consociationalism in Nigeria is its single person presidential system of government. For details on recent conventions that Nigeria has developed to ensure (imperfectly) representative government at the centre, see Suberu & Diamond (2000, pp. 26–30).
23. The link between intra-unit conflict and conflict between the unit and the rest of the federation can be seen in Canada's experience. In 1987, Canada's federal government introduced a package of constitutional changes aimed at addressing Quebec's concerns over the 1982 patriation of Canada's constitution. The changes had to be ratified by the provinces as well as the federal government, with the final date for ratification set for June 1990. In 1988, Quebec's provincial government refused to accept a Supreme Court ruling that would have allowed the use of English (alongside French) on outdoor signs in the province. English Canada read this as intolerance towards Quebec's Anglophone minority, and that contributed to a mood that prevented the ratification of the federal government's proposals for Quebec. This in turn poisoned relations between Quebec and the rest of Canada, sending support for secession soaring.
24. From 1885, elections in the UK were based on a universal male franchise, and from 1918, a universal franchise.
25. Canada's birth was in fact a hybrid of 'coming together' and 'holding together' processes: on the one hand, it involved the joining together of a number of previously separate British North American colonies; on the other hand, it involved the division of the unitary colony of the 'Two Canadas' into the separate federal units of Ontario and Quebec. As the latter provided the driving force behind the decision to establish a federation, Canada should probably be seen as more of a holding-together federation than one based on coming-together.
26. The importance of voluntary origins for the legitimacy and stability of states, whether federations or unitary states, is often recognized in the rival historiographies of federalists/unionists and separatists, with the former arguing that the federation/union arose voluntarily, while the latter argue it was imposed. Thus, in Canada separatists point to the conquest of 1759 as Canada's starting point and/or argue that the confederation agreement of 1867 was not 'really' voluntary, as Francophone elites did not have a serious alternative of separating. Federalists, on the other hand, point to the key role that Francophone elites had in shaping the federal agreement. Similar debates take place between British unionists and Scottish separatists.
27. The fact that Brussels, historically part of Flanders but dominated by French-speakers, is a separate region helps to explain the survival of Belgium. Flanders would be more likely to secede if it included Brussels.

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