

The Makeup and Breakup of Ethnofederal States: Why Russia Survives Where the USSR Fell

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Why do some ethnofederal states survive while others collapse? The puzzle is particularly stark in the case of the former Soviet Union: the multiethnic Russian Federation has managed to survive intact the transition from totalitarian rule, whereas the multiethnic USSR disintegrated. The critical distinction between the USSR and Russia lies in the design of ethnofederal institutions. The USSR contained a core ethnic region, the “Russian Republic,” a single region with a far greater population than any other in the union. This core ethnic region facilitated dual sovereignty, exacerbated the security fears of minority-group regions, and promoted the “imagining” of a Russia independent of the larger Soviet state. In place of a single core ethnic region, the Russian Federation contains 57 separate provinces. This feature of institutional design has given Russia’s central government important capacities to thwart the kind of centrifugal forces that brought down the USSR. This holds important lessons for policy makers crafting federal institutions in other multiethnic countries.

Why has the multiethnic Russian Federation survived intact the transition from totalitarian rule, whereas the multiethnic USSR that preceded it dramatically disintegrated less than three years after its maiden competitive elections? While Russia was just one of 15 constituent parts of the Soviet Union in 1991, its post-Soviet incarnation strongly resembled the late USSR in that as of mid-2004 it contained some 32 ethnically defined regions covering a total of 53 percent of the country’s territory. Furthermore, as the largest part of the USSR, Russia also experienced the same severe socioeconomic crises that accompanied the Soviet Union’s transition from communist rule. This puzzle is all the more striking since the other federal states that emerged from communist dictatorships between 1989 and 1991 also

broke apart—Czechoslovakia peacefully and Yugoslavia with devastating violence.¹ Indeed, many observers in 1991 and the first few years afterwards *did* expect the Russian Federation to break up along ethnic lines, just as the USSR had done.² Some perceived a single process of “ethnic disintegration” that would not stop with the 15 union republics of the USSR but would overwhelm Russia and its minority-designated subunits as well. Chechnya was widely expected to be the norm, not the exception. Yet Russia has survived as a state for more than a decade after Gorbachev’s resignation in December 1991.

The answer to this puzzle has important implications for social scientists and policy makers alike. Ethnofederalism, a federal political system in which component regions are intentionally associated with specific ethnic categories, has frequently been recommended by policy makers as a way to reconcile democracy and ethnic difference.³ Many of the world’s most geopolitically important states—including Canada, India, Nigeria, and Russia—have adopted ethnofederal structures. China and Pakistan, while not democracies, also have nascent ethnofederal structures. The Soviet Union’s demise and the nearly simultaneous breakups of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia led many to suspect ethnofederalism itself as the cause, since in each case dissolution occurred almost immediately after the establishment of ethnofederal systems.⁴ This is a worrying possibility indeed: are current and nascent ethnofederal states sitting on an institutional time bomb, a set of political structures that inevitably heats up ethnic tensions until they explode? Thus, while a loose ethnofederal system was

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adopted for troubled Bosnia with the Dayton Accords, many in the international community have shied away from calls for ethnofederal solutions to the state-building problems facing Afghanistan and Iraq in the wake of the “war on terrorism.”⁵

Social scientists remain divided. Some, usually focusing on cases like Czechoslovakia, the Nigerian First Republic, the USSR, and Yugoslavia, have highlighted ethnofederalism’s state-dissolving potential.⁶ Others, usually calling attention to such countries as India, Switzerland, and Spain, dwell more on what they see as ethnofederalism’s capacity to support democracy in divided societies.⁷ A few have advanced explanations for variation, but none purport to have solved the puzzle entirely.⁸ In this regard, the Russia-USSR comparison may be particularly revealing of broad patterns; the cultural, political, social, and economic contexts of the two cases are so similar that we can rule out a wide range of hypotheses.

I argue that the critical distinction between the USSR and Russia lies in the design of ethnofederal institutions. The USSR featured a core ethnic region, the “Russian Republic”⁹—a single ethnofederal region that was clearly dominant in terms of population, containing a majority of the union’s citizens. Core ethnic regions tend to promote state breakup because they facilitate dual sovereignty, exacerbate the security fears of minority-group regions, and promote the “imagining” of core-group identifications independent of the federation. For the USSR, this proved a deadly combination. In Russia, on the other hand, there is no core ethnic region. While ethnic Russians constitute a majority of the country’s population, they have no single region that they dominate but are instead divided into 57 provinces that coexist with the 32 regions designated as ethnic minority homelands as of mid-2004. This design has given Russia’s central govern-



ment great institutional capacity to cope with the centrifugal forces that can be associated both with ethnicity and federalism.

The Puzzle of Russia’s Survival

Researchers have put forth a wide variety of case-specific explanations as to why Russia survives where the USSR disintegrated. A brief review highlights these factors:

- *Levels of regional autonomy.* Valerie Bunce, Mikhail Alexseev, Gail Lapidus, and Edward Walker have suggested that Russia is more survival-prone because its ethnic regions (called “republics” and “autonomous regions/districts”) were endowed with fewer

institutional resources and formal rights than were the 15 Soviet “union republics” that became independent states in 1991. Alfred Stepan, however, posits that nearly the reverse might be true, that Russia may have survived precisely because the *dispersion* of power in Russia created vested interests in the emerging federal order.¹⁰

- *Ideology.* Stephen Hanson argues that the USSR, unlike Russia, was indelibly tainted by the discredited ideology of Marxism-Leninism, thereby (a) leading Gorbachev (still an adherent to this ideology) to fail to take the ethnic problem seriously; (b) uniting “ethnic” and “civic” nationalists against the Soviet regime; (c) making conceptually possible a distinction between “Russia” and the ideologically defined USSR, facilitating a Russian secession; and (d) encouraging anticommunist Western states to support separatist movements, albeit not always fully or openly.¹¹
- *Payoffs.* A number of scholars have argued that Russia has managed to hang together thanks in part to an explicit policy of either rewarding loyal regions, paying off troublemaking regions, or undermining inter-regional cooperation by buying off strategically placed provinces through economic transfers or special bilateral treaties.¹² The USSR had no such policies.¹³
- *Foreign borders.* Lapidus and Walker have noted that a higher share of the USSR’s constituent ethnic minority regions than Russia’s had foreign borders.¹⁴
- *Size of minority populations.* Lapidus and Walker also observe that 85 percent of Russia’s population is ethnically Russian, which, they argue, makes secession less likely in Russia than it was in the USSR, where just over 50 percent of citizens were Russian. They point out that non-Russians make up a majority in only 5 of Russia’s current 21 ethnic republics.¹⁵
- *History of independence.* Several analysts have pointed out that some Soviet republics (the three Baltic states) had been independent states during the twentieth century.¹⁶ Among Russia’s republics, only Tuva was a separate state for close to the same amount of time, also between the two world wars.
- *Patterns of economic development.* Henry Hale and Rein Taagepera cite economics as one of many factors differentiating Russia from the USSR. Russia’s ethnic minority regions have tended to be less economically developed, on the whole, than were the most important ethnic regions of the USSR (notably Ukraine).¹⁷

While these analyses highlight important differences between Russia and the USSR and have implications for state survival and collapse, all but Hanson’s locate their explanations in factors determining the level of *demand* for independence or autonomy on the part of ethnic minority regional governments. The explanations virtually all

boil down to a claim that the level of minority-region demand for state collapse (as expressed through desires for independence) was higher in the USSR than it has been in Russia. Such explanations may be *part* of the answer we seek, since it is hard to imagine the Soviet state breaking apart if all of its component units had been fully committed to its maintenance.

None of these minority demand factors, however, suffice by themselves or in combination because none captures the actual mechanism by which the USSR broke up. As leading specialists on the Soviet collapse have documented extensively and with little controversy, the Soviet Union fell only after the core Russian Republic conspired with two of the 14 ethnic minority union republics to dissolve the union.¹⁸ Theories of ethnic *minority* separatism cannot fully explain the collapse of the USSR, therefore, since it was the core region that made the decisive union-destroying move and then lent it sufficient force to be effective. Moreover, many minority Soviet regions, such as Belarus and the Central Asian republics, did not desire the union’s collapse; they acceded to the idea only after the Russian Republic had essentially thrust it upon them. Even Ukraine, Russia’s key coconspirator in undoing the union, had been seen by most experts prior to 1990 as a relatively prounion region;¹⁹ it declared sovereignty only *after* the Russian Republic did so.²⁰ This *active, even primary*, Russian role in the destruction of the Soviet Union thus confounds the “minority demand” explanations and indicates that a majority-focused theory is likely to be more consistent with actual events. Indeed, many of the aforementioned theories assume that ethnic Russians tend to be a force for union, not dissolution—contrary to the facts of the Soviet case. Thus while it might make sense at first glance to attribute Russia’s survival to the fact that ethnic Russians constitute a far larger share of the overall union population as well as that of individual minority-designated regions in the Russian Federation than in the USSR, that begs the question: If “Russians” generally act as a union-preserving force, then why did “Russia” drive the final stake through the heart of the USSR?

The only one of the above explanations to capture core-region antiunion activity, Hanson’s, is also insufficient by itself. While it is highly plausible that Gorbachev’s adherence to Marxist-Leninist ideology led him to pursue inept nationality policies, and that delegitimized Marxist ideology facilitated Russian opposition to the central government, there is no reason why such factors would not simply *weaken* the Soviet regime or lead to a more run-of-the-mill regime change instead of destroying the whole union state.

A new theory need not invalidate other theories to displace them as the primary explanation of an event. Rather, such a theory might be more fundamental than other theories, in essence explaining why the other theories are correct in a way that also accounts for additional observed

events. These events might be outcomes in other case countries or a wide range of important and directly relevant behavior within the original case countries. Such a theory might also represent an advance by being more parsimonious than others. My theory does not deny the strongest “minority demand” explanations; rather, it points to simple institutional design features that account for differences in core-group behaviors that, in turn, explain why the factors cited by other theorists had the effects that these theorists have attributed to them. My explanation thus accounts not only for the bare facts of Russia’s survival in the face of the USSR’s breakup, but also for a wide range of activity on the part of core-group (Russian) representatives that previously published theories fail to explicate satisfactorily.

Core Ethnic Regions and the Breakup of Ethnofederal States

Ethnofederal systems with a core ethnic region tend to create a higher risk of state breakup than do those without one for three main reasons:²¹

1. *Dual power.* Core ethnic regions can constitute a rival center of power capable of destabilizing the union state.
2. *Security fears.* Core ethnic regions can generate or exacerbate perceived security threats in minority regions.
3. *Community imagining.* Core ethnic regions can promote the identity-based conceptualization of a core-group political existence separate from the union state.

Social scientists have long noted that “dual power” tends to beget revolution.²² When a second center of power makes a claim to sovereignty that rivals that of the state over its people, and when that rival center is not immediately quashed, the state faces a danger of collapse. In ethnofederal systems that unite the demographically dominant ethnic group in a single core ethnic region, that core region is a natural, preformed, and powerful potential rival claimant to the sovereignty of the state. When this dominant ethnic group is instead divided into multiple regions, its members face important barriers to engaging in collective action that could pose a dual-power threat to state survival.

A core ethnic region is also likely to generate significant security fears among minority ethnofederal regions. Such a region, which can be expected to have more narrowly group-oriented interests than the central government, is likely to be perceived by minority-region groups as having disproportionate potential influence over the central government. Core ethnic regions tend also to be seen to have the capacity to take unilateral actions that can both threaten minority-group regions directly and undermine central

government efforts to accommodate their interests. Breaking up a core ethnic region assuages these fears by bringing to the fore cross-regional differences of interest within the core group and by creating barriers to core-group collective action aimed at influencing the central government or directly harming ethnic-minority regional interests.

Finally, when a core ethnic region exists, it becomes much easier for members of that community (as well as outsiders) to imagine the existence of a separate “ethnic” state coinciding with those boundaries and their associated institutions.²³ Dividing up a core ethnic region, on the contrary, denies political entrepreneurs key institutional resources that stretch across the territory, thereby greatly complicating the process of constructing an identification limited to the set of core-group regions. In this latter case, political entrepreneurs also face an enormous task in creating entirely new “central” institutions for any newly independent core group state.

This argument immediately confronts us with the challenge of counterfactual reasoning. All attempts to assert causality rest on counterfactual claims; to say “A caused B” is usually to say that if one had removed A and had held *everything* else constant, B would not have occurred.²⁴ While we can never “re-run history” to test such a claim, we gain leverage by comparing cases that are similar in environmental factors, allowing us to come as close as possible to a controlled experiment. In this light, the Russian and Soviet cases provide leverage on the above argument because they control for so many environmental factors, including geography, culture, and historical and transitional context, while presenting variation in the key factor of interest: the USSR contained a core ethnic region, whereas Russia did not.²⁵ The combined facts that the USSR collapsed and Russia has survived, then, are suggestive indeed. This observation alone, however, is not more than suggestive because, while the situation is *highly* controlled, it is not *perfectly* controlled.

The comparison between these two countries becomes compelling, however, if we can show not only that the ultimate outcomes of interest correspond with the theoretical argument, but also that myriad details in the flow of observable events in these two countries match hypotheses derived from the theoretical argument.²⁶ It is thus important to formulate expectations about what *else* we should see happening in these two ethnofederal states if the causal claim is correct. One important subset of such hypotheses is defined by the three causal mechanisms described above: dual power, security fears, and community imagining. Others include implications of these hypothesized mechanisms that can be seen as consistent or inconsistent with observable events. To begin thinking more systematically about such tests, it is helpful not only to recognize that a counterfactual claim is involved, but also to break it down into case-specific counterfactual components. These, in turn, can spawn concrete important

hypotheses that can then be tested. The theory sketched above implies the following case-specific counterfactual propositions:

- Had the Russian Republic of the USSR been broken up into a large number of smaller units, the USSR would have been less likely to collapse.
- If the Russian Federation itself contained a single republic representing ethnic Russians in place of the 57 “nonethnic” regions (here simply called “oblasts”)²⁷ that it actually has had, Russia would be much less stable and more likely to have collapsed.

By testing hypotheses that stem from these propositions, we gain more confidence that the logic of the theory explains the important contrast between the fates of the USSR and the Russian Federation.²⁸

The USSR

In this section I demonstrate that the Russian Republic, the USSR’s core ethnic region, was causally involved in the collapse of the USSR. Critically, however, I also show that the actions by which this core ethnic region subverted the union would not have been union-threatening had they been attempted by a divided set of Russian regions (oblasts) without a unifying “Russian” institutional structure (a claim that becomes even stronger in the subsequent case study of the Russian Federation, which approximates such a condition). Specifically, had the Russian Republic been broken up into a number of Russian regions, then the union state would have been less likely to be threatened by issues of dual power, security threats, and community imagining:

- *Dual power.* Gorbachev’s hard-line opponents, perceiving less of a threat to Soviet and Communist authority, would have been less likely to attempt the August 1991 putsch. Had a coup been deemed necessary, it would have been more likely to succeed, preserving the union, without a united Russian Republic to resist it.
- *Security threats.* It would have been easier for Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to avert the union-breaking secession of key restive republics (notably Ukraine) through accommodation, while staving off the threat of a hard-liner coup. Key republics would also have been more likely to agree to a reconstituted USSR after August 1991.
- *Community imagining.* Russia’s leader, Boris Yeltsin, would have had a harder time creating a vision of an independent Russia that could threaten to supplant the USSR.

While Russian Republic actions are widely held responsible for ultimately bringing down the USSR, they were intended not to destroy the union but rather to restruc-

ture it in a way that would benefit Russia. The USSR had “disadvantaged” Russia in key ways in an effort not to frighten away other nationalities whose support Soviet leaders considered important.²⁹ Russia, unlike the other union republics, thus lacked its own distinct branch of the Communist Party, had no academy of sciences, and wanted for other key Soviet institutions. Most significantly, however, reliable analyses based on market valuation of transfers show that Russia was a net *donor* to the rest of the union despite the other republics’ claims of exploitation, primarily because it supplied oil and gas to them at far-below-market prices.³⁰ This subsidization allowed the Kremlin to transfer wealth to the least developed Central Asian republics, producing a rapid rise in development there relative to bordering countries like Afghanistan. Much of Yeltsin’s activity as Russian Republic leader can be understood as an attempt to permanently rectify this disparity between Russia’s dominance in population and territory and its perceived disadvantages in terms of economic policy.

The critical reform that launched the Russian Republic on its challenge to Soviet sovereignty was the introduction of republic-level elections in March 1990. This voting suddenly rendered Russian leaders accountable to their own population rather than to the Communist Party leadership (which, as noted, lacked a separate Russian Republic organization). The newly elected Russian parliament, led by Yeltsin, adopted measures designed to replace the authority of Soviet institutions with its own on the republic’s territory. On June 12, 1990, the Russian Congress issued a “declaration of sovereignty” that claimed all resources in the republic and stated that Russian laws would take precedence over any contradictory Soviet ones.³¹ This document was not the result of Yeltsin’s personality or combative character—instead it stemmed from real incentives facing Russian leaders of the kind noted above. Yeltsin himself had only narrowly been elected leader of the Russian parliament the previous month, and even then on a third ballot; he was not in a position to ram through legislation that lacked broad support. In fact, it was Yeltsin’s conservative Communist predecessor as Russian leader, Vitaly Vorotnikov, who proposed the first draft sovereignty declaration to the parliament. Vorotnikov declared that Russia could only hope to thrive if it had the real attributes of independence, albeit still in the framework of the USSR.³²

The declaration of “Russian” sovereignty and the holding of Russian elections, as well as later actions that accompanied the sovereignty drive, were critical elements in forging a Russian identity separate from that of the USSR.³³ Yeltsin aggressively adopted and adapted non-Soviet symbols of Russia in his campaigns and official actions as head of the Russian Republic.³⁴ John Dunlop has described the change in Russia, noting that as late as 1989 a Russian nationalist writer and member of the Soviet parliament, Valentin Rasputin, had attracted attention by exclaiming

at one session of the legislature, “Perhaps it is Russia which should leave the Union”:

These words had been uttered carpingly, and their intention had been to underline the absurdity of such a development. One year later, Russia had declared its sovereignty and a separate political existence for Russia no longer seemed such an absurdity.³⁵

Meanwhile, the spring 1990 elections had given nationalists a new voice in other union republics. Gorbachev responded by proposing a new “Union Treaty”—the foundational treaty that constituted the USSR. While Gorbachev proved willing to go to great lengths to appease the minority-group republics, he found himself constantly hampered in these union-saving efforts by the majority-group republic, Russia. Russia initially demanded that the republics negotiate this treaty among themselves, without interference from the central government. Its leaders wanted to relegate to the union such responsibilities as defense, energy, transportation, and communications infrastructure.³⁶ Russia produced its own plan of economic reform, the 500-Day Plan, which notably called for giving a great deal more autonomy to the republics than Gorbachev wanted to give.³⁷ When Gorbachev rejected this, the Russian leadership sought to present Gorbachev with a *fait accompli*, attempting to leave the Soviet “center” no choice but to let the republics administer economic reform themselves. In the process, Russia largely destroyed the Soviet banking system and provided a credible challenge to Soviet property rights over economic resources on Russian territory.³⁸ This undercut Gorbachev’s ability to effect transfers to or from restive minority republics, hamstringing him in his union-saving efforts and undermining the credibility of his promises. The fact that “Russia” was a single, immense administrative unit rather than a plethora of uncoordinated regions made such large-scale Russian moves possible and Russian threats credible and damaging to the authority of central institutions.

The Russian Republic played its most union-destructive role during and after the attempted coup of August 1991. Hard-liners were motivated to attempt a coup in part by the vision of Gorbachev ceding power to Yeltsin’s Russia, which they saw as an institutional challenge to the USSR. Justifying his actions after joining the failed putsch, Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov cited myriad examples of the Russian Republic’s destructive behavior and the challenge that the republic, by virtue of its size and economic power, posed to USSR institutions. Not only did the Russian Republic undermine the Soviet government’s economic authority by, for example, destroying the country’s financial infrastructure, but “talk was about the replacement of the Soviet government with the Russian one on all questions.”³⁹ Likewise, Anatoly Lukianov, widely held to be the behind-the-scenes mastermind of the putsch, argues that Russia’s declaration of sovereignty put the USSR decisively on the road to collapse.⁴⁰ Western ana-

lysts have also noted that such a declaration from the country’s largest republic dramatically reduced the risks for other republics in declaring their sovereignty, thereby triggering a series of acts known collectively as the “parade of sovereignties.”⁴¹ Under Yeltsin, Russia was also using its institutional resources to pressure Gorbachev to take harsher measures against hard-liners, making it more difficult for Gorbachev to pursue his trademark delicate political maneuverings,⁴² designed to reform the system without either losing the faith of reformers or provoking hard-liners into attempting to remove him.

In addition, the institutional platform provided by the Russian Republic’s authority, as well as the legitimacy conferred by the republic’s direct presidential elections in June 1991, allowed Yeltsin to mobilize resistance to the coup and effectively split the Soviet military, ultimately fatally incapacitating the USSR.⁴³ Immediately after receiving news of the coup on August 19, Yeltsin issued an appeal “To the Citizens of Russia,” branding the coup illegal and calling on local organs to follow the Russian (rather than the Soviet) Constitution and Russian presidential decrees. He mobilized anticoup forces in and around the Russian “White House” (then seat of the Russian Republic government), issuing decrees and appeals to take control of all units of the army, the KGB, the Interior Ministry and Defense Ministry on Russian territory and to call on military servicemen and officers to obey the new Russian military leader, General Kobets.⁴⁴ He also managed to get radio airtime and to issue an appeal through one of the USSR’s largest newspapers, *Izvestiia*.⁴⁵

These efforts, credible coming only from a core republic leader, failed to produce a nationwide strike. But they had sufficient success to subvert the coup and to split the Soviet military. The coup-plotters quickly recognized that their success would hinge on defeating Yeltsin’s Russian base of resistance. They drafted a plan, Operation Thunder, to storm the White House, now surrounded by tens of thousands of pro-Yeltsin protesters.⁴⁶ Yeltsin’s challenge led key parts of the military, Interior troops, and even crack units of the KGB to disobey (or even preempt) central orders to seize Yeltsin and to attack the resisting Russians. One top military commander, General Aleksandr Lebed, even advised Yeltsin that he should claim control of the whole Soviet army in Russia rather than promote “insubordination” by calling on soldiers to disobey the coup-plotters—a legitimation strategy simply unavailable to an oblast leader, however prominent.⁴⁷ While few of the disobedient officers appeared to submit themselves to Yeltsin’s complete control, their defection from the central Soviet command structure undermined the institutional coherence of the Soviet state, since there was no longer anyone who could control the whole Soviet military. While Russia repealed most of these coup-time decrees on September 9, 1991, the damage to coercive union authority had been done.⁴⁸

Not only did the Russian Republic create a fatal situation of dual power and forge identification with a Russia that was distinct from Soviet structures, but its leadership also issued inflammatory statements and took steps that threatened Ukraine, accelerating the latter's move to secede, which ultimately triggered the final dissolution of the USSR. The August coup confirmed Ukrainian fears that Gorbachev's promises of security and equality were not reliable. As Ukrainian president Leonid Kravchuk made clear in his memoirs, there was no guarantee that hard-liners might regroup and force a more successful crackdown in the future.⁴⁹ While the coup had given Ukraine the opportunity it needed to secede, by incapacitating the Soviet military, Ukraine chose not to declare immediate independence. Instead, it made such a declaration contingent on a referendum to be held on December 1 of that year.

While Yeltsin had previously backed other republics' sovereignty drives as a way to wrest power from Gorbachev, his waxing and Gorbachev's waning exacerbated Ukrainian worries. Boosted by new power realities and the moral authority deriving from Yeltsin's heroic stand, Russia's representatives dominated the temporary institutions set up to govern the USSR. To take the most prominent example, Yeltsin's prime minister, Ivan Silaev, became head of the new provisional government. While Ukraine's president could not rely on the weakened Gorbachev, these events gave him cause to trust the seemingly unpredictable and volatile Yeltsin even less. Thus, at a press conference on August 30, 1991, Kravchuk called attention to the post-putsch "euphoria" in Russia and the attendant "exaggeration of the merits of some one individual or one people." He pointedly questioned whether the Russian-dominated transitional structures could "defend the interests of other republics."⁵⁰ Furthermore, two days after Ukraine called a referendum on independence, Yeltsin's press secretary and then his vice president threatened to make territorial claims if Ukraine followed through on secession.⁵¹ Ukraine's leaders used these incidents to build support for a proindependence referendum vote.⁵² Kravchuk regarded Yeltsin's Russia as an imperialist threat in its own right, a threat only temporarily sidetracked by its struggle with the Soviet central government.⁵³ Had there been many small regions in place of the Russian Republic at the time, "Russia" would not have had the institutional means to take over union functions in the way that it did, effectively cutting out other republics and providing grist for their separatist mills. Moreover, territorial claims voiced by leaders of even several small regions would not have posed nearly the same threat to Ukraine as those coming from a core Russian Republic that might have had the capability of soon reuniting the union military under its wing and that certainly had considerable other national mobilization resources at its disposal.

Finally, it was the Russian Republic that made the final choice not to try to preserve a "rump USSR"

even after Ukraine had seceded. When Ukraine did declare independence in its December 1, 1991, referendum, a "severely pruned" Soviet Union could still have been saved. Central Asian leaders, led by Kazakh Republic leader Nursultan Nazarbaev, continued to call for a union and, indeed, pressed for tighter integration even after the USSR dissolved. But Russia, in a last-ditch effort to salvage some form of voluntary union with Ukraine, opted instead to join with Ukraine and Belarus to found the nebulous and nonbinding Commonwealth of Independent States, effectively establishing the complete independence of all 15 former Soviet republics, whether they wanted it or not. Given the controversial nature of this decision and the conservative nature of many Russian regional leaders at the time, it is extremely unlikely that a large number of Russian oblast chiefs could have coordinated agreement on this act; such a group would also certainly not have been able to lend it the effect of finality that the Russian Republic's authority bestowed.

Overall, then, examination of the events leading to the Soviet collapse strongly suggests that the existence of a unified Russian core republic was critical to the USSR's dissolution. The Russian Republic, by virtue of its institutional resources and authority, sapped Soviet state capacity and constrained Gorbachev's autonomy in forging a workable new federal arrangement while staving off would-be rebels on both the left and right. The Russian Republic's institutional unity enabled Yeltsin to eat away at Soviet structures, successfully challenge Gorbachev's legitimacy, undermine Gorbachev's political balancing act with hard-liners, split Soviet military and police structures, frighten Ukraine away from a restructured union after the August coup, and prevent the formation of a rump Soviet Union once Ukraine had seceded. Yeltsin also proved able to forge a Russian identity distinct from that of the USSR, in part by defining it against an ideologically "tainted" Soviet Union, as Hanson argues.⁵⁴ It is highly unlikely that any of this would have occurred with such success had there been only a collection of oblasts in place of the Russian Republic. This will become even clearer when we consider the post-Soviet Russian Federation, which *does* contain a group of oblasts in place of a "Russian Republic" and which has been much more stable, despite facing otherwise very similar pressures.

The Russian Federation

We can, of course, point simply to the fact of Russian survival and contrast it with the Soviet collapse to show that these cases are consistent with the theory elaborated above. Indeed, the Russian Federation lacks a core ethnic region; instead, it consists of 32 minority ethnic regions (republics, autonomous districts, and autonomous regions) together with its 57 Russian-dominated oblasts.⁵⁵ But to

further lock in the causal claim, I cite strong evidence for the following hypotheses:

- *Dual power.* Had a core ethnic region united Russians in the Russian Federation, it would have challenged Yeltsin's authority in the same way that the Russian Republic had challenged Gorbachev's rule. Such a challenge to federal authority would probably have been more effective than any challenges that have in fact occurred.
- *Security threats.* Had a core ethnic region existed, it would probably have represented more narrowly "Russian" interests than the federal government did and would have been perceived to pose a much greater threat to minority region populations than did the separately expressed views of 57 oblast leaders. Moreover, without Russia's institutional division of the core group into many regions, Russia's presidents would have found it much more difficult to employ both accommodative tactics toward key minority regions and divide-and-conquer methods vis-à-vis oblasts so as to address potentially threatening minority-region security concerns.
- *Community imagining.* With a core ethnic region in place of Russia's 57 oblasts, Russia would have been much more likely to experience a challenge to the vision of territorial Russian identity propagated by both Yeltsin and his successor, Vladimir Putin, a challenge in the form of an identification with the narrower particular territory that the oblasts now occupy, excluding the ethnic minority republics.

To demonstrate this, I establish below that the Russian Federation's oblasts, since the collapse of the USSR and particularly in the 1990s, have challenged the post-Soviet Russian Federation in many of the same ways as the Russian Republic once did the USSR. There have even been significant attempts to unite oblast forces. Nevertheless, for want of coordination, these challenges have not posed a real threat to the Russian Federation. Moreover, the federal government has proven adept at exploiting the collective action problems described earlier in a classic example of "divide and rule." That is, the institutional division of the core ethnic group gave the Russian Federation's central leadership autonomy to respond effectively to ethnic challenges either by accommodation or by coercion—autonomy that the USSR's Gorbachev could only envy.

Initially, just as Yeltsin's Russian Republic sought to rectify a situation in which it was subsidizing other union republics under the Soviet regime, so too did oblast leaders of the Russian Federation argue during the 1990s and beyond that they were getting the short end of the federal stick relative to the ethnically defined republics.⁵⁶ Republics were said to have been given unfair economic advantages and more political autonomy and power than the oblasts. Thus Yegor Stroeve, then both the head of the execu-

tive branch of Orel Oblast and chairman of the Federation Council, which until 2001 contained all Russian provincial leaders, repeatedly spoke out during his tenure against these "double standards" for Russian regions, admonishing that the Constitution guarantees equal rights to all regions. He declared that "all peoples should get what they deserve, what they have earned, and not gain at each other's expense."⁵⁷ Some oblasts even took this complaint to the point of declaring themselves "republics" or claiming "sovereignty" as had the ethnic republics during the late Soviet period. The most notable such attempt was the drive by Sverdlovsk Oblast to declare itself the "Urals Republic" in 1993.⁵⁸

Individual oblasts, like the Russian Republic in the USSR, also frequently challenged the authority of the Kremlin in a wide range of policy areas in the 1990s. While these challenges sometimes were meant to fill voids created by central inaction on crises like wage arrears or social welfare, often the oblasts just did what they wanted regardless of federal authority.⁵⁹ A number of regions also called for Yeltsin to resign or be impeached, much as Yeltsin himself had periodically done under Gorbachev.⁶⁰ A leading Russian newspaper estimated that as much as 30 percent of all regional legislation, including that regulating property rights, tax, and customs policies, was in violation of federal law as of 2000.⁶¹

Such episodes peaked during crises, as in August 1998, when a financial collapse caused Russia's gross domestic product to shrink 18 percent in just two months, forcing a protracted political crisis at the center that included the resignation of the prime minister.⁶² Strongly reminiscent of Yeltsin's efforts to bring the Russian economy under Russian Republic control in the late Soviet economic crisis, many oblasts were prompted by the August 1998 crisis to impose local price restrictions, institute controls on the "export" of goods outside their territories, and even introduce crude forms of currency.⁶³ The leader of Sverdlovsk, one of Russia's largest regions, reported considering adoption of a Urals "franc" to serve as local money in the wake of August 1998.⁶⁴ In September 1998, while the economy was still in decline, Russia's Ministry of Finance noted that over 60 of Russia's 89 regions had adopted their own austerity measures.⁶⁵

While these actions, as well as efforts to turn oblasts into republics, were seen as threats to central control, the fact that the oblasts were divided meant that there was no immediate threat to federation rule as a whole. That is, there was no credible alternative to the central government as a provider of the nationwide goods and services that these regions wanted but felt they were not getting in sufficient measure from Kremlin authorities. Had a core Russian ethnic region existed in the Russian Federation, it is not hard to imagine that it might have directly challenged the authority of the federal government, especially in a crisis.

In fact, these oblasts did attempt to act collectively to redress perceived wrongs during the 1990s. An early attempt to unite oblast leaders (here called “governors” for simplicity’s sake) to lobby for their own interests was the “Union of Governors” formed after the USSR’s collapse. It got some lip service from Yeltsin’s government and may have had a role in encouraging Yeltsin to adopt a constitution in 1993 that appeared to establish the legal equality of republics and oblasts.⁶⁶ The Yeltsin Constitution even created an upper house of parliament, the Federation Council, explicitly to represent regional interests. After holding elections for Federation Council seats, the law was amended so that regional leaders themselves, along with the chairs of their regions’ legislatures, were automatically members of this organ. However, heads of republics and oblasts frequently divided over issues of center-periphery relations in this body.⁶⁷ Sverdlovsk Oblast, which attempted to transform itself into the Urals Republic, at one point went even further and brought neighboring oblasts together to form the United Urals Republic.⁶⁸

For the most part, however, oblast leaders found the barriers to collective action too great. One reason for this failure to unite involved the active policies of central authorities. Throughout the 1990s the Russian government sought to preserve the federation, in part, through some combination of buying off troublesome regions and rewarding loyal ones through transfers of resources.⁶⁹ The Kremlin’s effort to conclude “bilateral treaties” with individual republics and oblasts was particularly important as a means of striking specialized deals to preserve the federation, a strategy Yeltsin himself has credited with helping preserve the federation.⁷⁰ Between February 1992 and 2001, Russia’s central governments concluded 42 such bilateral treaties and some 200 related “agreements,” many with oblasts as well as with ethnic republics.⁷¹ Each treaty represents a tailor-made delimitation of powers, resources, and obligations between center and region, and Moscow used them skillfully to defuse potential collective regional threats to its authority and policies, even if this sometimes meant sanctioning constitutional violations. For example, the strategic use of bilateral agreements managed to undermine the United Urals Republic project by “buying off” Orenburg Oblast and to ensure that Krasnodar would not use the chaos on its Chechnya border to threaten central authority.⁷² Thus, not surprisingly, regional leaders who might have aspired to unite the Russian regions, such as 1996–2001 Federation Council chairman and Orel governor Yegor Stroeve, spoke out against bilateral treaties in principle, although few regions appeared willing to refuse a lucrative payoff when offered by central authorities.⁷³ Yeltsin was also able to exploit the division of Russian territory into oblasts through electoral politics by supporting a key governor’s reelection bid (for example, Stroeve’s) in order to encourage that governor not to “bandwagon” around other gov-

ernors who might be attempting to block important central initiatives such as economic reforms.⁷⁴

In addition, carving out the oblasts that now exist in the Russian Federation created a wide range of particularist economic and political interests that have frequently been at odds with one another. Often these internal conflicts have overpowered attempts to forge common stands on nationwide issues, providing yet another barrier to Russian-region collective action that could potentially challenge the Russian Federation.⁷⁵ One cleavage has involved large, economically powerful regions that have been net donors to the federal budget and those that have been net recipients.⁷⁶ For example, strong regions blocked a bill in 1997 that would have bolstered the Federation Council and instead approved a much weaker law in 1999.⁷⁷ When political entrepreneurs competed to form powerful “governors’ blocs” for the 1999 Russian parliamentary elections (with an eye to the 2000 presidential contest), none succeeded in attracting even close to all governors. All major attempts contained both republics and oblasts since the basis for cooperation involved issues like federal transfer policies, autonomy, and even personal or business ties. Indeed, the Yeltsin government had, through bilateral treaties and transfer payments, successfully broken potential coalitions of oblasts that could challenge its authority by actively changing some of their positions (and hence interests) in union structures. Had these oblasts already been united in a core Russian Republic, the expression of “oblast” interests would not have been so severely hampered by subgroup disagreements on other issues.

This diversity of institutional frameworks and regional interests, in the absence of an overarching “Russian” core ethnic region, has also undermined any effort to forge an identification with a “core Russia” of only the set of oblasts, excluding the ethnic-minority-designated republics. So powerful has this effect been that I have not encountered a single example of a “Russia” conceptualized as existing in “united oblast” borders. This strongly suggests that such a notion during the 1990s and the first half of the next decade was even more absurd to Russian minds than initially was the idea of “Russia” seceding from the USSR—voiced ironically by Rasputin in the Soviet parliament in 1989. Commentators have suggested that Russia might shed Chechnya or perhaps a few other troublesome regions, but it remains striking that even in the face of Chechnya’s challenge no political entrepreneur has managed to advance prominently the kind of proposal suggested here. Instead, “Russian identity,” when not based on purely “ethnic” criteria, has been conceptualized primarily in terms of the boundaries of the Russian Federation as a whole or perhaps even the USSR,⁷⁸ while in some cases identification with individual oblasts has also been strong.⁷⁹

The tactics of “divide and rule” and the barriers to forging identification with a “united oblast” Russia not only spared Yeltsin the dual power situation that he himself

had created for Gorbachev, but also directly enabled him to reach cooperative agreements with ethnic minority regions (republics) and to reduce the security fears of their leaderships. The oblast complaints noted above were in many cases correct; some republics were getting better “deals” in the union than were many oblasts simply because the republics demanded this special treatment (including resources and autonomy) as the price for restraining separatist activism.⁸⁰ Granting special autonomy to the ethnic minority regions also increased the credibility of central promises to respect republic interests by reducing the institutional capacity of the central government to renege and increasing the institutional capacity of the republics to resist encroachment. By playing one oblast off the other, Yeltsin ensured that a critical mass of oblasts was never able to block these transfers and inequalities as he himself had blocked many of Gorbachev’s union-saving efforts. Strikingly, even given the August 1998 collapse of the country’s financial system, the only republic in post-Soviet Russia to mount a serious separatist challenge has been Chechnya—but Chechnya had already declared its independence in the Soviet period, in November 1991, before Russia had become an independent state capable of pursuing these policies without interference from Soviet central institutions. In any case, Chechnya’s secession attempt has never seriously threatened the breakup of the Russian Federation.⁸¹

All of the aforementioned developments set the stage for the rise of President Vladimir Putin, who shortly after his election in 2000 launched an elaborate series of reforms designed to recentralize power. While Yeltsin’s bilateral treaties and divide-and-conquer methods had averted the collapse of the state, they had many negative side effects, including a highly uneven legal space wherein seemingly every region participated in the federation on different terms. With the threat of national disintegration successfully contained during the tumultuous 1990s, Putin could exploit regional leaders’ collective action problems to gradually roll back much of the *de facto* autonomy enjoyed by the provinces, securing the mutual renunciation of many bilateral treaties and creating a new level of presidential supervision. This latter reform included the appointment of seven new presidential envoys to oversee the work of federal agencies—including such powerful institutions as the prosecutors and police—in seven new federal districts, each of which contained several regions. Putin also cajoled and pressured enough governors to end the practice whereby regional leaders were automatically also members of the Federation Council, thereby eliminating one of the few forums in which regional leaders could easily gather for collective action. His administration has also strategically intervened in gubernatorial elections to eliminate or weaken troublesome governors, often using strong-arm tactics or finding ways to disqualify an opponent on the basis of a technicality. While the Kremlin has not

always won, it has won enough to make most governors think twice about openly opposing central authorities. The fact that there are many such regions and hence many such contests reduces the stakes for the Kremlin considerably in these machinations. It also means that no single challenge to a popular Russian-region leader will generate a nationwide backlash powerful enough to threaten the state.⁸² By 2004 Putin was in position to propose an outright end to gubernatorial elections; instead, the president would appoint such officials subject to ratification by regional legislatures.

Overall, therefore, the evidence is strong that many of the field’s top specialists have been right that strategic federal transfer and treaty policies played a large role in keeping Russia together during the 1990s, setting the stage for further consolidating moves by Putin.⁸³ But in comparative perspective, this policy was only possible because of the particular institutional structure of the Russian Federation, a structure not in place in the USSR. From this comparative vantage point, we can see that Gorbachev was severely constrained in his activity by the constant challenge coming from a unified core ethnic region, the Russian Republic. Gorbachev did not have as many options for strategically placed payoffs as, and faced greater limits in his policy-making scope than, did Yeltsin and Putin in the post-Soviet period. The issues over which the core ethnic group clashed with the central government were essentially the same in the USSR and the Russian Federation—what critically differed was the institutional capacity of the core group to overcome problems of collective action to push for its preferred outcomes independently of the Kremlin. Ironically, it has been the very divided nature of the Russian nation in the Russian Federation that has helped ensure the survival of its “empire,” whereas the institutional unity of the Russian nation in the USSR led to its union’s demise.

Implications

I have argued that the most important reason why Russia has survived through the 1990s whereas the USSR broke apart is that the latter contained a core ethnic region as part of its ethnofederal structure, whereas the former did not. While it remains to determine how well this argument fits global patterns, a survey of some important cases frequently discussed in the literature on federalism and ethnicity is highly suggestive. One ethnic region can be considered “clearly dominant” in population (hence constituting a core ethnic region) if it contains at least 20 percent more of the unionwide population than the next largest region or makes up an outright majority of the country’s population.⁸⁴ By this simple criterion, three of the most widely cited “successes” for ethnofederalism—India, Spain, and Switzerland—lack core ethnic regions.⁸⁵

Moreover, the most commonly identified “failures”—the USSR, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and the Nigerian First Republic—had core ethnic regions.⁸⁶ While the portability of this argument will have to be established through rigorous comparative scholarship, this pattern constitutes a *prima facie* case that the logic highlighted here is important generally.⁸⁷

What are the implications for those considering the likelihood of ethnofederal state survival or collapse? For researchers, I urge a shift from the focus on the behavior of minority ethnic groups; equal attention must be paid to the determinants of the behavior of dominant ethnic groups and their interaction with central federal governments and minority regions. For policy makers and institution designers, recognizing the dangers of a core ethnic region might make ethnofederalism a viable option for divided societies seeking to establish working democracy while maintaining state unity. Although there may be other reasons to favor or oppose ethnofederalism, the research presented here suggests that it should not be ruled out simply due to the bad experience of the USSR and even Yugoslavia and the Nigerian First Republic. What should be ruled out are ethnofederal designs that include core ethnic regions. Furthermore, rather than denying their minorities autonomy and instituting repressive policies for fear of losing their unions, federal authorities might do better to adopt the alternative of “pluralizing” the federal representation of the dominant group.

Core ethnic regions are not the whole story. Some ethnofederal states with core ethnic regions, such as Belgium, *have* survived, probably due to complex power-sharing arrangements. Some ethnofederal states without core ethnic regions have avoided state breakup but continue to experience isolated secessionist challenges (as Chechnya poses to Russia). There is also strong evidence that ethnofederalism generally reinforces ethnic difference by institutionalizing it.⁸⁸ Thus even if ethnofederalism without a core ethnic region is adopted, policy makers trying to ensure state unity should implement additional strategies to promote peaceful intergroup relations. These might fall into the categories of institutional crafting,⁸⁹ people-to-people initiatives,⁹⁰ and the development of intercommunal civil society organizations.⁹¹

In this article, I hope to have explicated some conditions under which the best effects of ethnofederalism are more likely to be realized and the most destabilizing dynamics minimized. We may not favor political systems that privilege ethnic over civic or individual identities, but sometimes group politics can not be avoided since ethnically charged conflict has already become rife. While some may advocate partition where the groups involved are territorially concentrated to some degree, partition is a problematic alternative that almost always involves great human cost, since communities are rarely completely segregated and are seldom separated by easily defen-

sible boundaries.⁹² Furthermore, compelling international interests may militate against partition. Many fear that carving an independent Kurdistan out of Iraq, for example, would destabilize the region due to the presence of Kurdish populations in Iran and Turkey, the governments of which strongly oppose Kurdish independence. Ethnofederalism, properly designed, may make it possible to avoid state breakup without outright repression in such a situation.

My thesis also has implications for pressing concrete issues facing policy makers and social scientists today. For example, if Afghanistan’s difficulties continue, and if its leaders opt for a federal solution,⁹³ it may be unwise to create a single region for the plurality Pashtun group alongside regions for other groups (such as Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Hazaras), since such a region could constitute a core ethnic region. Minorities within Iraq, as well as some officials in the Bush administration, have indicated a preference for ethnofederalism as a way to manage ethnic diversity and histories of conflict among regional groups in post-Saddam Iraq.⁹⁴ The example of the USSR, however, speaks against playing to the sympathies of that country’s majority (or near-majority) of Shiite Arabs by carving federal territories with the aim of giving them a single region that would isolate the Sunni group, in which Hussein has his roots. Such a Shiite region could constitute a core ethnic region, which might set in motion many of the problems identified above, if not a more disastrous chain of events akin to those witnessed in Yugoslavia.

Policy makers and world leaders can also gain crucial insight into some likely results of major decisions facing them in Europe and Asia today. The delicate Bosnian confederation, for example, bifurcated between the Serb Republic and the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, seems at risk of breakup when NATO troops withdraw.⁹⁵ My analysis also implies that China (in which the dominant Han Chinese are divided into multiple administrative regions alongside China’s ethnic minority regions) would have a much better chance of surviving democratization intact than did the USSR if it devolved significant democratic authority to these regions, making the country truly federal; a democratic federal China constituted along the present administrative lines is more likely to resemble Russia than the perestroika-era USSR. Furthermore, while institutional theory typically holds that integration projects are more difficult the greater the numbers of states involved, my theory, counterintuitively, suggests an opposing effect for the European Union: the greater the number of its members, the less likely it will be that Germany will behave or be treated like a core ethnic region. And finally, turning back to the case of the Russian Federation, the logic developed here would disabuse President Putin of following Russian nationalist calls to dramatically reduce the number of oblasts since this would make collective action (and

hence a collective challenge to federal sovereignty) on the part of the core Russian ethnic group easier, endangering the federation.⁹⁶ Paradoxically, the unity of such states may well hinge upon sustaining or even augmenting their internal division.

Notes

- 1 Bunce 1998; Bunce 1999; Leff 1999.
- 2 For example, Kapuscinski 1994. Lapidus (1999), Alexseev (1999), and Treisman (1999) cite other examples of such views.
- 3 A federal state is any state with (A) a federal constitution, as specified by Riker (1964) to be “federal if (1) two levels of government rule the same land and people; (2) each level has at least one area of action in which it is autonomous; and (3) there is some guarantee (even though merely a statement in the constitution) of the autonomy of each government in its own sphere” (p. 11); *and* (B) at least enough democracy that the concept of regional autonomy has some meaning, including direct popular election to state organs of the highest level of territorial governance unit below nationwide state organs.
- 4 While the USSR, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia each endured for decades as dictatorships, each was an *ethnofederal* state (see definition in note 3) for just a few years, that is, only after minimal democracy and autonomy were granted to their main provinces in 1989 and 1990.
- 5 Calls for ethnofederalism for Afghanistan can be found in Shahrani 2001 and for Iraq in Rubin 2002 and Slevin 2002.
- 6 On the postcommunist cases, see Brubaker 1996; Bunce 1998; Bunce 1999; Crawford 1998; Laitin 1998; Lapidus 1992; Leff 1999; Roeder 1991, 1999; Slezkine 1994; A. Smith 1992; Suny 1993. On African cases, see Mozaffar and Scarritt 1999; Wamala 1994. On Canada, see Meadwell 1995. For a treatment of important problematic incentives generated by ethnofederalism generally, see Snyder 2000a.
- 7 Brass 1992; Gurr 1993; Kohli 1997; Lijphart 1977, 1995; G. Smith 1995.
- 8 Bunce 1999; Hechter 2000; Horowitz 1985; Jalali and Lipset 1992–93; Kohli 1997; Leff 1999; Lemco 1991; Linz and Stepan 1992, 1996; Watts 1994.
- 9 Formally, this republic was called the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR).
- 10 Bunce 1999; Alexseev 1999; Lapidus and Walker 1995; Stepan 2000.
- 11 Hanson 1999. See also Lapidus 1999 and Alexseev 1999.
- 12 Alexseev 1999; Filippov and Shvetsova 1999; Lapidus 1999; Popov 2002; Solnick 2000; Stoner-Weiss 1999; Treisman 1999.
- 13 Treisman 1999.
- 14 Lapidus 1999; Lapidus and Walker 1995.
- 15 Lapidus 1999; Lapidus and Walker 1995.
- 16 Lapidus 1999, 75–76; Lapidus and Walker 1995.
- 17 Hale and Taagepera 2002.
- 18 Dunlop 1995; Hough 1997; Kotkin 2001; McFaul 2001; Suraska 1998.
- 19 See Subtelny 1994.
- 20 The fact that such a seemingly moderate province as Ukraine could become the most important separatist region in the USSR within a couple of years also warns us not to underestimate the separatist potential of ethnic provinces in the Russian Federation; the ongoing conflict in Chechnya at a minimum suggests that this potential exists.
- 21 For a more elaborate theoretical treatment of these dynamics, see Hale 2004. Other authors have advanced related theses. For example, Lemco (1991) and Watts (1994) note that size disproportionalities matter, but for mostly different reasons than those argued here. Elazar (1987) notes in a sentence that federalism tends not to work well when one region dominates. Horowitz (1985) develops similar logic in his analysis of Nigeria (p. 620), but his theoretical elaboration takes him elsewhere.
- 22 Brinton 1965; Tilly 1975.
- 23 On “community imagining” and its importance for state survival, see Anderson 1991 and Beissinger 2002.
- 24 Fearon 1991; Keohane, King, and Verba 1994. See also Tetlock and Belkin 1996; Elster 1978.
- 25 This, in effect, is the basic method of “most similar” countries discussed by Przeworski and Teune (1982) and later elaborated by Keohane, King, and Verba (1994).
- 26 Expanding the set of countries would also add leverage in testing the hypothesis. For an initial effort in this direction, see Hale 2004.
- 27 For convenience, this term refers to all regions within the Russian Republic and the current Russian Federation without explicit ethnic designations even though other categories (with no substantially different current meaning) are also used: *krais* and the two major cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg.
- 28 This strategy is a variant of what Keohane, King, and Verba (1994) call “making many observations from a few” (pp. 217–18). Accordingly, the empirical discussion that follows does constitute the reporting of a “test,” since it reports not only the originally observed divergence in country outcomes and country measurements on the key independent variable, but also the results of empirical investigation into additional observable implications of the initial hypothesis. See Ross 2003 (citing Daniel Posner).
- 29 Pipes 1964; Slezkine 1994.

- 30 Bahry 1991; Hogan 1993; Watson 1994; Dmitrieva 1992.
- 31 Bagramov 1991.
- 32 *Izvestiia*, May 23, 1990, 4; *Izvestiia*, May 24, 1990, 2. On the ambiguity of “sovereignty,” see Walker 2003.
- 33 Linz and Stepan 1996; Szporluk 1992; Tuminez 2000.
- 34 Tuminez 2000.
- 35 Dunlop 1993, 52.
- 36 See, for example, *Vedomosti RSFSR* 1990, no. 4, 81–83; and *Izvestiia*, August 2, 1990, 2.
- 37 *Izvestiia*, 27 August 1990, 3.
- 38 See *Vedomosti RSFSR* 1990, no. 6, 142; Johnson 2000; *Vedomosti RSFSR* 1990, no. 7, 147, 149; *Vedomosti RSFSR* 1990, no. 10, 173–4; *Izvestiia*, 21 August 1990, 2; *Vedomosti RSFSR* 1990, no. 11, 188–89.
- 39 Pavlov 1993, 84. See also 24–26, 79, 83–84, 90–92.
- 40 Informed person, interview with author, April 23, 1993.
- 41 Lapidus 1992; Hale 2000.
- 42 Roeder 1993.
- 43 Taylor 2003.
- 44 Gorshkov and Zhuravlev 1992.
- 45 Remnick 1994, 471.
- 46 Stepankov and Lisov 1992, 160–62.
- 47 Stepankov and Lisov 1992; Gorshkov and Zhuravlev 1992, 111; Yeltsin 1994; Grachev, Pavel. Interview, *Sobesednik*, September 1991, no.36, excerpted in Gorshkov and Zhuravlev 1992, 113–15.
- 48 *Vedomosti RSFSR* 1991, no. 37, 1458.
- 49 Kravchuk 2002, 106.
- 50 Solchanyk 1993, 350–51.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 351–53.
- 52 Masol 1993, 72–74. Vitaly Masol, Ukrainian prime minister during 1987–90, was a member of parliament during these events.
- 53 Kravchuk 2002, 120–21.
- 54 Hanson 1999.
- 55 These numbers refer to the situation prior to late 2004, when a series of planned mergers of a few regions began to come into effect.
- 56 Solnick 2000.
- 57 *RFE/RL Newslines*, September 18, 1997; *RFE/RL Newslines*, July 18, 2001.
- 58 Herrera 2004; Startsev 1999.
- 59 Stoner-Weiss 1999.
- 60 For example, see *RFE/RL Newslines*, July 1, 1998.
- 61 *Reuters* (Moscow), 14 May 2000, Johnson’s Russia List (hereafter JRL).
- 62 *RFE/RL Newslines*, October 20, 1998.
- 63 For details on such actions in Kaliningrad, Kemerovo, Khabarovsk, Krasnodar, Krasnoyarsk, Kursk, Omsk, Samara, Smolensk, Stavropol, Vologda, and Voronezh oblasts, see *RFE/RL Newslines*, September 9, 1998; *Boston Globe*, September 9, 1998; *Boston Globe*, September 10, 1998; *RFE/RL Newslines*, September 8, 1998; *RFE/RL Newslines*, September 22, 1998; *RFE/RL Newslines*, October 26, 1998; and *Wall Street Journal*, October 16, 1998, A1, A11.
- 64 *Interfax-FIA*, October 9, 1998, JRL 2432.
- 65 *RFE/RL Newslines*, September 22, 1998.
- 66 See *RFE/RL [Daily Reports]* 13, 1993.
- 67 Solnick 2000. On the Federation Council more generally, see Remington 2001.
- 68 Herrera 2004; Solnick 2000.
- 69 Treisman 1999; Popov 2002.
- 70 Filippov and Shvetsova 1999; Solnick 2000; Stoner-Weiss 1999. See, for example, *RFE/RL Newslines*, October 31, 1997.
- 71 *Polit.Ru*, June 26, 2001, 13:44.
- 72 Solnick 2000.
- 73 Filippov and Shvetsova 1999; Solnick 2000.
- 74 For an example, see *RFE/RL Newslines*, September 19, 1997.
- 75 For example, see statements by Aleksandr Lebed, then Krasnoyarsk Governor, in *Delovoi Vtornik*, from RIA Novosti, August 18, 1998, JRL 2317.
- 76 For example, some donor regions have sought to coordinate policy in some areas: *RFE/RL Newslines*, October 29, 1997. For one list of which regions these are, see the East-West Institute’s *Russian Regional Report* 4 (20), May 27, 1999.
- 77 Solnick 2000.
- 78 Tuminez 2000.
- 79 Herrera 2004.
- 80 Treisman 1997.
- 81 Evangelista 2002.
- 82 On Putin’s federal reforms, see Reddaway and Ortung 2003 and Reddaway and Ortung 2004, which includes a chapter by the present author on the envoys and elections.
- 83 Filippov and Shvetsova 1999; Solnick 2000; Stoner-Weiss 1999; Treisman 1999.
- 84 Hale (2004) defends and elaborates this operational specification of “core ethnic region,” along with other key concepts. To summarize, the greater the preponderance of the core region, the more the dynamics described above can be expected to operate; 20 percent is an arbitrary threshold that is helpful in demonstrating the point.
- 85 On their “success,” see Brass 1992 (India); Kohli 1997 (India); Leff 1999 (Spain); Lijphart 1996 (India); Linz and Stepan 1992 (Spain); G. Smith 1995, 3 (Switzerland); Snyder 2000b, 274 (India).
- 86 Bunce 1998; Bunce 1999; Crawford 1998; Leff 1999; Roeder 1991; Roeder 1999; Wamala 1994; Horowitz 1985.
- 87 Hale (2004) undertakes a first cut at empirically establishing global patterns.

- 88 Bunce 1999; Crawford 1998; Leff 1999; Meadwell 1995; Roeder 1999; Snyder 2000a.
 89 Horowitz 1993; Lijphart 1995.
 90 Kaufman 2001.
 91 Varshney 2001; Varshney 2002.
 92 One leading advocate of partition in such extreme circumstances is Kaufmann 1996, 1998. An important criticism of partition can be found in Sambanis 2000.
 93 Shahrani 2001.
 94 Rubin 2002; Slevin 2002.
 95 Precise population estimates for Bosnia, however, are elusive.
 96 I am grateful to Rein Taagepera for suggesting this implication.

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