LIBERALIZATION AND ETHNIC ENTREPRENEURS IN THE SOVIET SUCCESSOR STATES

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The twentieth century began and ends with an explosion of claims to national self-determination and with conflict among ethnic groups. At the epicenter of this global tremor in the late twentieth century is the contested sovereignty of newly self-proclaimed states such as Abkhazia, Transdniestria, and Chechnya. While the mythology of these new states and much research in the social sciences and humanities focus on the identities and hatreds that saturate societies, the most important policy problem confronting the global community concerns the behavior of the leaders of these states that claim to be sovereign and of the states that contest this.

The surge of ethnic conflict at the end of the twentieth century is concentrated disproportionately in states that were formerly ruled by Communist parties and particularly in the Soviet and Yugoslav successor states. The occurrence of this ethnic conflict at the same time these societies are making a transition away from communism has shaken many preconceived notions—in particular, notions about the relationship between liberalization and ethnic conflict. The prevailing, perhaps naive, view of liberalizing societies had been one in which ethnic conflicts declined in significance: the process of liberalization enmeshes individuals in a web of cross-cutting social interdependencies that ultimately eclipses particularistic and potentially monopolistic claims such as ethnicity.

Events in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe have led some to question the existence of a *negative* causal connection between liberalization and ethnic conflict or at least to question whether the relationship between liberalization and ethnic conflict is monotonic; the intermediate stages of liberalization might actually produce a temporary rise in ethnic conflicts before they decline. I

find that liberalization, with its weakening of the state and the potential reallocation of social resources which it portends, is a permissive but not necessarily causal factor (either positive or negative) in explaining the increasing politicization of identity in the former Soviet Union. Post-Soviet ethnic conflict has less to do with the transition to a liberal economy and the weakening of the state in its relationship to society than with the shifting balance of power within the state. At the center of this conflict is the competition among post-Soviet politicians fighting over the division of the Soviet state and manipulating certain institutions of ethnofederalism to their advantage. The social actors involved in this intra-institutional struggle may have benefitted from liberalization, but they are in many ways the antithesis of liberal; moreover, the strategies of politicians to manipulate these institutions for personal advantage make future transition to liberal societies even less likely.

Specifically this paper develops three assertions about ethnic politics in the Soviet successor states. First, in nearly all instances the ethnic conflicts that have drawn the attention of the global community focus on conflicts among political entrepreneurs *within* the administrative apparatus of the successor states. The most severe ethnic confrontations—those that are most violent, widespread, and sustained—have resulted from acts of regional officials challenging the political leaders of the central governments of successor states; conspicuous examples include the civil war between the governments of Abkhazia and Georgia, the confrontation between the governments of Crimea and Ukraine, and the recent war between Chechnya and Russia. Second, these regional officials have tended to press agendas that focus on instrumental concerns associated with control over the state apparatus and its resources. Specifically the agendas of these officials seek to manipulate the mechanisms of regional government to ensure their own political survival. Third, insofar as liberalization has played a role in this confrontation, it has been a secondary cause, but it has nonetheless intensified ethnic conflicts by strengthening the power of these officials relative to the central governments, reinforcing the motivation of these officials to confront the center, and strengthening their hand within their own regions.

WHAT IS TO BE EXPLAINED?

The major ethnic conflicts within the Soviet successor states have involved confrontations between the governments of regional administrations and one of the fifteen successor state governments. The centrality of these regional governments to ethnic conflicts since the breakup of the Soviet Union is underscored by a simple comparison of the proportion of different types of interethnic relationships that have experienced violence or a major crisis. In the fifteen successor states there are over 1,300 dyads that could potentially erupt in interethnic conflict.[1] Of these dyads, 119 are hierarchical dyads between the titular nationality of a successor state and the major ethnic groups within that state; 23 of these are institutionalized in a form of ethnofederal administration such as an autonomous *oblast* or republic. As Table 1 shows, ethnofederal dyads were 17 times more likely to lead to armed conflict than other hierarchical dyads and over 217 times more likely than all other dyads. Ethnofederal dyads were 7 times more likely to lead to a major crisis than other hierarchical dyads and over 94 times more likely than all other dyads.

The cases of armed conflict include the wars between the governments of Georgia and the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast, Georgia and the Abkhaz Autonomous Republic, Azerbaijan and the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast, and Russia and the Chechen Republic. One major crisis that has not yet resulted in war-

Table 1

Probability of Significant Ethnic Conflict by Type of Interethnic Relationship, 1992–94
(Percent)

	Ethno-Federal Dyads	Other Hierarchical Dyads	All Other Dyads
Armed conflicts	17.4	1.0	0.08
Major crises	21.7	3.1	0.23
{Number of dyads]	(N=23)	(N=96)	(N=1,285)

fare pits Ukraine against the government of the Crimean Autonomous Republic (Solchanyk 1994: 50–59). The cases where these conflicts do not pit formally organized federal units are equally important in pointing up the centrality of local leaders within the state apparatus to ethnic mobilization. In the conflict between Transdniestria and Moldova the leader of the autonomy drive of the former has been the chairman of the Tiraspol city soviet N. A. Smirnov with the backing of Russia's 14th Army (King 1993). In the conflict between Estonia's titular nationality and the Russian minority, the city administrations of Narva and Sillamae play central roles (e.g., *Izvestiia,* 20 July 1993).[2]

Within the Russian Federation itself the list of conflicts between the central state and the leaders of its republics, autonomous oblasts, and autonomous *okrugs* includes the most important ethnic crises:

- Chechnya. The crisis began in late 1991, when the government of President Dzhokhar Dudaev proclaimed the republic's secession from the Russian Federation.
- Tatarstan. The government of President Mintimer Shaimiev has spearheaded a campaign claiming sovereignty and a special treaty relationship with the Russian Federation based on mutual delegation of powers (e.g., *Nezavisimaia gazeta,* 24 June 1993).
- Sakha (Yakutia). The government of President Mikhail Nikolaev claims economic but not political sovereignty within the Russian Federation.
- Ingushetia. The government of President Ruslan Aushev, recognized by the Russian government, pressed the republic's claim to sovereignty from Chechnya and then, without Russia's support, pressed an irregular military campaign against the North Ossetian Republic to claim territory in the Prigorodnyi *raion.*

Prior to the war in Chechnya, the Russian Federation's major "ethnic" crises of 1992–94 included the confrontation in the constitutional drafting bodies between representatives of the republics and the central leadership over apportionment of powers in the new basic law and federal treaty; the decision of republic governments such as Chechnya, Tatarstan, and Bashkortostan to withhold revenues collected on their territory; and the boycott of the constitutional referendum by the leaders of Chechnya and Tatarstan and resistance

from the leaders of the Komi, Khakass, Udmurt, and Ingush homelands.[3]

It should be noted that throughout the post-Communist world, those states organized along ethnofederal lines have experienced the most serious ethnic crises. Among Soviet successor states this has reached the level of warfare in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the Russian Federation—three of the five successor states that contained ethnofederal administrations. Among East European states secessionism and division have destroyed the two states organized as ethnofederations—the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

ETHNIC STRATEGIES OF REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

What explains this close correspondence between the most intense ethnic conflict and the institutions of ethnofederalism? More specifically, why have leaders of ethnic homelands within the Soviet successor states been so quick to play the "ethnic card" during the transition from communism—that is, why have so many advanced claims for expanded regional prerogatives in decision-making predicated on the unique rights of the titular ethnic group within that region? In this section I will argue that the institution of ethnofederalism created in the Communist era encouraged leaders within the homelands to create ethnic machines. In the successor states many leaders of regional governments have turned to ethnic strategies as a way to save these machines and to improve the chances of their own survival in a rapidly changing political environment.

SOVIET FEDERALISM AND THE CREATION OF ETHNIC MACHINES

These federal institutions are the product of the Bolsheviks' attempt to accommodate the homelands of many minorities within a common state ruled by the Communist Party.[4] The Bolsheviks came to power with a public commitment to recognize language-based ethnic groups within a federal state. This socialist federation, in the formulation of the *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia* (Great Soviet Encyclopedia), "differs radically from the bourgeois federa-

tion," for the former is "the state form for solving the national question . . . [and] is based on the national-territorial principle" (1977, vol. 27, p. 255). The territorial administrative structure of the Soviet state recognized ethnic homelands as union republics, autonomous republics, autonomous oblasts, and autonomous okrugs alongside the oblasts (provinces) and raions (rural districts) of normal administration.[5]

Within each homeland the Soviet regime cultivated a new Communist cadre drawn from the local ethnic group. This policy of indigenization (*korenizatsiia*) sought to tie the minorities to the Soviet regime by populating the political and administrative posts of party and state in these territories with cadres drawn from the homeland's titular ethnic group. In 1920 the People's Commissar of Nationality Affairs, Joseph Stalin, explained that to make Soviet power "near and dear" to the minorities would require

> that all Soviet organs in the border regions . . . should as far as possible be recruited from the local people acquainted with the manner of life, habits, customs, and language of the native population; [and] that all the best people from the local masses should be drawn into these institutions (Stalin 1953: 370–71).

These policies provided opportunities for nationalities representing over 93 percent of the non-Russian population to create ethnically distinct political elites within formally autonomous homelands. In most homelands, this led to proportionate overrepresentation of the titular nationality in party and state leadership posts. By the 1980s this extended well beyond the most visible posts, such as each homeland's party first secretary, chairman of its Presidium, and chairman of its Council of Ministers, to include lower levels of administration and sensitive posts such as internal security (Hodnett 1978: 101–3, 377–78; Jones and Grupp 1984: 159–184).

Insofar as anyone within the homeland had access, this cadre monopolized the mobilizational resources essential to sustained, large-scale political action. The means of communications, particularly the indigenous-language press and broadcast media, were monopolized through the homeland institutions controlled by this cadre. Access to meeting places, such as auditoriums and public squares within the homeland, was at the discretion of this cadre. Public acts could avoid violent suppression only with the cadre's

approval. Thus with rare exception, this cadre alone determined when the ethnic groups would be mobilized politically.

Within the homelands this cadre was also assigned the task of creating a new official and monopolistic cultural elite. To create a new culture that was national in form but socialist in content, these indigenous cadres were responsible for recruiting and training an ethnic intelligentsia to write their history, compose their ballads, and teach their children. These policies sought to limit professional and material rewards to the indigenous elite within official institutions and to deny these rewards to all who remained outside the official institutions. The homeland cadres presided over a dense network of parallel institutions that controlled all aspects of professional life.[6] Research of significance to the ethnic group and its homeland was controlled by indigenous academies of sciences and universities. Creative professionals such as writers, artists, or architects who sought to disseminate their work under the cultural monopoly of the regime were required to join the official unions of the homeland for their respective professions. This official intelligentsia was assigned a monopoly over the public expression of ethnic identity—that is, it alone was permitted to define the ethnic markers that distinguish the nationality in politics. These markers were then central to communicating the socialist message in national cultural forms and propagandizing populations being brought into the modern sector.

A major consequence of these policies over the long term was the creation of an ethnic machine within many homelands. The cadres controlled the most valuable material resource of the Soviet system—entry into the intelligentsia. Indigenization opened career opportunities throughout the administrative apparatus of the homeland. Affirmative action expanded mobility opportunities for those aspiring to positions within the professional strata and intelligentsia. The creation of universities and academies of sciences in many homelands dramatically expanded not only the number of trained professionals within ethnic groups, but also the number of professional positions reserved for the minorities, often elevating titular nationalities to privileged positions in higher education and professional employment within their homelands. By the 1980s these included the first secretary of the homeland's union of writers, president of its academy of sciences, rectors of its principal universities, and most openings in the homeland's most prestigious edu-

cational institutions (Hodnett 1978; Jones and Grupp 1984). For example, whereas Georgians constituted 67 percent of their republic's population in 1970 (and approximately the same proportion of the college-age cohort), they constituted 83 percent of the student body of the republic's institutions of higher education (Parsons 1982: 554). Similarly, although Moldovans constituted under two-thirds of the total population of their republic in the mid-1980s, they were at least 80 percent of the student body in the law and business schools of Kishinev State University, the republic's leading educational institution. Commenting on the rapid upward mobility of the Uzbek population within their republic, Lubin contends that the Central Asians "tend to hire 'their own' first" (1981: 283). The indigenous cadres used these highly valuable positions to create a loyal clientele and an ethnic political machine filled with loyal retainers.

REGIME CHANGE AND THE THREAT TO REGIONAL ETHNIC MACHINES

The ethnic machines were designed to support politicians and their strategies within the administrative politics of the Soviet polity. That is, politicians developed these machines in the context of authoritarian (nondemocratic) politics—not to deliver votes from the local electorate since such votes could not remove or save local leaders. Nonetheless, these machines gave local leaders the power to inflict costs on those who could remove them—their superiors in the union republic and all-union party leaderships. These costs included scuttling implementation of the policies of the center since the indigenous cadres and intelligentsia were the local extensions of Soviet administration. These costs included the ability to mobilize protest and even unrest within the region. The center could not easily replace an entire ethnic machine since the policy of indigenization was predicated on the monopolistic role of the official elite and the suppression of alternative ethnic elites. Central intervention might require calling in Russians to reconstruct the indigenous political elite. For example, when Mikhail Gorbachev sought to uproot the extensive (and unacceptably corrupt) Kazakh machine created by Dinmukhamed Kunaev, he had to appoint Gennadi Kolbin as first secretary of Kazakhstan; one consequence was days of demonstrations and riots in the streets of Alma-Ata by Kazakhs.

Because these machines developed within an authoritarian polity, control over the homeland administration by the indigenous cadre was guaranteed by Moscow and the ethnic machines did not need to deliver votes in elections. As a consequence, cadres and machines who controlled a homeland could limit their constituencies to a minority of the homeland population. Indeed as Table 2 shows, in twenty-seven of thirty-five autonomous republics, autonomous oblasts, and autonomous okrugs, the senior titular nationality was a minority in the homeland's population. For example, in Abkhazia, with Moscow's support against Georgian resistance, Abkhazes, who constituted 17.8 percent of the population, held half of the city and raion party first secretaries and two-thirds of the republic's ministers and miraculously "won" 41 percent of the seats in the republic's parliament or Supreme Soviet (Dale 1993: 49).

Two threats have shaken these ethnic machines in the late Soviet and post-Soviet periods. The first was the threat of democratization under Gorbachev, and the second was the loss of their patrons in Moscow following the breakup of the Soviet Union. These changes in political regimes elicited defensive responses from many leaders of ethnic homelands. The responses were conditioned by the nature of the regime changes and the implications of these changes for the political survival of the ethnic cadres and their ethnic machines. Indeed the following three propositions describe the pattern of responses in the successor states:[7]

> *[1] A regional leader's decision to play the ethnic card is constrained by the structure of accountability and support from the regional leader's principals.*

Five post-Soviet scenarios can be arrayed along a continuum according to whether they have been more likely to lead a regional leader to play the ethnic card and whether they have tended to lead to more extreme demands for expanded regional decision-making prerogatives predicated on the unique rights of the titular ethnic group within the region:

- First, where regional leaders are still appointed by central officials and continue to enjoy support from those officials—and where attempts to mobilize independent support within the ethnic community are likely to erode that central support—regional politi-

Table 2

Major Titular Nationality as Proportion of Homeland Population, 1979
(Percent)

	Proportion		Proportion
Autonomous Republics		*Autonomous Oblasts*	
Abkhaz	17.1	Adygei	21.4
Bashkir	24.3	Gorno-Altai	29.2
Buryat	23.0	Jewish	5.4
Chechen-Ingush	47.8 (Chechens)	Khakass	11.5
Chuvash	68.4	Karachai-Cherkess	28.2 (Karachais)
Dagestani	24.5 (Avars)	Nagorno-Karabakh	75.9 (Armenians)
Kabardino-Balkar	45.0 (Kabardinians)	South Ossetian	66.4
Kalmyk	41.5	*Autonomous Okrugs*	
Karakalpak	31.1	Agyn Buryat	52.0
Karelian	11.1	Chukchi	9.0
Komi	25.4	Evenki	20.3
Mari	43.5	Khanti-Mansi	3.2
Mordvinian	34.2	Komi-Permyak	61.4
North Ossetian	50.5	Koryak	22.6
Tatar	47.6	Nenets	12.8
Tuvinian	60.5	Taimyr	16.5
Udmurt	32.1	Ust-Ordyn Buryat	34.4
Yakut	36.9	Yamalo-Nenets	16.0

Sources: Russia (1985, 1986). Excluded from this count are Ajaria, Gorno-Badakhshan, and Nakhichevan, which were homelands for subdivisions of the larger ethnic group of the republic.

cians have tended to eschew the ethnic card. In these situations attempts to play the ethnic card shorten a regional leader's tenure, so such attempts are deterred. For example, stable authoritarian regimes, such as Islam Karimov's autocracy in Uzbekistan, have maintained the hierarchical Soviet-era administrative apparatus; in an environment such as this, governments of homelands like the Karakalpak Republic within Uzbekistan have little incentive to play a strong ethnic hand (Harris 1994: 196).

- Second, in an interesting variant of the first situation, appointees can prolong their tenure of office by building support within their region; these regional officials have an incentive to engage in some mobilization of support without losing sight of their ultimate accountability to the central state leaders. In these situations (an example cited above in this essay would be the late Soviet system) leaders hope to build a regional constituency that can impose costs on the central leadership and deter some central actions to remove them. For example, in Kazakhstan regional leaders of provinces with a Russian majority have had to keep an eye on Almaty when championing Russian rights and regional autonomy because President Nursultan Nazarbaev can remove those who go too far.
- Third, where regional officials are elected regionally or depend in some other way on regional support for their continuation in office, and that constituency is multiethnic, they tend to engage in moderate efforts to mobilize support within the titular ethnic community. These leaders are cross-pressured: On the one hand, regional leaders use the ethnic card to cement loyalties within their own ethnic group but risk losing members of the coalition constituency that supports them in office; on the other hand, failure to play the ethnic card risks losing significant parts of the titular ethnic group to competing ethnic entrepreneurs in the region. Such cross-pressured regional leaders are likely to choose compromise strategies. For example, in Ukraine "the elected organs of local government in eastern and southern *oblasti* have exercised caution in their relations with the central authority in Kiev, officially distancing themselves from the maximalist demands of regionalist movements, while supporting the overall aim of greater autonomy" (Solchanyk 1994: 60). The Donetsk oblast soviet in particular has pressed for a form of loose federation

and for recognition of Russian as a state language of Ukraine but has not endorsed the calls for separatism coming from several Russian movements in the oblast.

- Fourth, where regional leaders are elected regionally or depend in some other way on regional support for their continuation in office but they do not enjoy extensive support outside the titular nationality of the region, they are more likely to undertake strong efforts to mobilize support within the ethnic community. Where the titular nationality constitutes a majority (or near majority) of the region's population, such as the Tatars in Tatarstan, regional leaders may rely on democratic elections (or nearly democratic elections) to sustain their governments and may tolerate a form of inclusive politics that grants political rights to other ethnic groups. Where the titular nationality is itself a small minority, these leaders must often rely on nondemocratic practices to sustain themselves and may turn to exclusionary policies that reserve key political posts to the titular nationality. For example, by resisting fair elections the leadership of the Chukchi autonomous okrug has maintained its hold on local power despite the 93 percent majority of its population that is not Chukchi. In Buryatia nationalist groups have urged revisions of the electoral laws and constitution to guarantee Buryat control of the parliament and presidency (*Trud,* 25 September 1992). In Khakassia the Association of the People of Khakassia "Tun," fearing the 79 percent Russian majority in the republic, urged revisions of the constitution to guarantee the Khakass at least half of the seats in one house of parliament and the posts of president, prime minister, and minister of culture (*Izvestiia,* 20 December 1991).
- Fifth, where regional leaders depend upon central support to sustain them in office and central leaders seek to remove them, regional leaders are likely to exert maximal effort to mobilize their ethnic communities. For example, following President Zviad Gamsakhurdia's threat to the existence of both South Ossetia and Abkhazia (with a threat to expel the entire Ossetian population), the governments of each responded with a call to arms and civil war against the central government of Georgia.

Thus the foremost constraint on (1) the regional leaders' assessment of the value of the ethnic card to their own survival and (2) their opportunity to act upon that assessment is the rules of ac-

countability. That is, the first-order constraint in each regional leader's decision to play the ethnic card is the nature of their principal—who can pose a credible threat to remove the regional leader.[8] Other constraints, such as the demographic composition of the region, are secondary; these are important only in some subset of principal-agent relations. None of this implies that all politicians will choose strategies congruent with the rules of accountability (all relationships were presented above in probabilistic language, such as "tend to"), but those who choose incongruent strategies tend to be selected out.

The rules of accountability can be characterized most simply as *centralized* accountability (in which regional leaders are appointed and removed by central leaders) and *decentralized* accountability (in which regional leaders can be removed by constituents within the region itself). In purest form these might be considered two hypothetical end-points on a single continuum. These affect the *motivation* of regional authorities to play the ethnic card. Under centralized accountability post-Soviet regional leaders have used the ethnic card to stay the hand of central leaders who might consider removing them (by increasing the costs to the central leaders of removing the regional leaders) or to support an attempt to escape the control of threatening central authorities entirely. Under decentralized accountability post-Soviet regional leaders have used the ethnic card when they see the ethnic machine and exclusionary citizenship as better guarantors of their survival than multiethnic support. Democracy and divided central governments (decentralized variant) have afforded the greatest *opportunities* for ethnic entrepreneurs. The Estonian republic, the Russian deadlock between president and Congress of Peoples' Deputies, and the civil war in the capital of Tajikistan, for example, have each given regional or local political entrepeneurs opportunities to play the ethnic card.

[2] Changes over time in a regime's rules of accountability for regional leaders have been reflected in changes in their ethnic strategies.

Indeed the evolution of the Soviet regime prior to its collapse illustrates how these changes in accountability elicited changes in the behavior of regional officials. When regional leaders were dependent on central appointment for their tenure of office (the centralized variant is a stylized description of the game under Stalin),

ethnic mobilization to build independent bases of support brought swift purges from the center and so was relatively uncommon. In the late Brezhnev administration and until the introduction of competitive elections under Gorbachev, regional leaders could use popular support to impose some costs on the central leadership and so became more widespread. Since 1990, where political competition has been permitted, the election of regional leaders by regional constituencies (decentralized variant) has elicited still more ethnic entrepreneurship.

The most important manifestation of this elicited change was the rapid shift in strategies of the leaders of union republics and other ethnic homelands during the demise of the Soviet state. The official entrepreneurs in many of these ethnic communities, who at the time of the demise of the Soviet Union became the most ardent nationalists demanding independence and promoting the interests of their ethnic communities, were previously loyal servants of the Soviet state and Communist Party; previously many of these same entrepreneurs had been the keys that ensured the continued subordination of their ethnic communities to Moscow. Consider a still more improbable case: after Tajikistan's President Nabiev agreed in late May 1992 to form a coalition government with democratic, nationalist, and Islamic parties, some of his former hard-line Communist supporters began to press ethnic agendas in order to assert the independence of their regions from the control of the central government that they saw as threatening their continued rule. In Leninabad oblast, the hard-liners threatened to secede from Tajikistan and join the autocratic regime of Uzbekistan, legitimating their plans with the claim that a high proportion of the region's population was Uzbek (Russian TV, 15 May 1992).[9]

Conversely, institutional changes that reduce the value of the ethnic card have elicited a reversal of these ethnic strategies. Following Russia's presidential coup and constitutional referendum in late 1993, the shift of power toward the center and the clear willingness of the Russian president to hold regional leaders accountable for any threats to the unity of the Russian Federation led many of the latter to moderate their ethnic claims on the center.

[3] Where ethnofederal administration gives regional leaders playing the ethnic card a greater chance of survival, even a nonminority regional

leader may play the ethnic card and seek recognition of the region as a federally constituted ethnic homeland.

Among the more interesting twists in the behavior of regional leaders is that Russian leaders of Russian-dominated regions within the larger Russian-dominated state have begun acting much like minority regional leaders—where their survival can be improved by the ethnic card. Indeed the leader of the breakup of the Soviet Union was not one of the minority leaders, but Boris Yeltsin, leading the Russian state. Within Russia itself, many ethnic conflicts are being invented on the spur of the moment with no cultural differences to account for them. For example, leaders of Arkhangelsk oblast, oblasts in the Urals, and Krasnoyarsk *krai* have demanded recognition as ethnic communities, even though their communities are composed principally of Russians, many of whom have only recently moved to these regions. The leaders of Krasnoyarsk krai have attempted a number of curious "ethnic" ploys, proposing that their province be elevated to the status of an Enisei Republic (*Izvestiia,* 22 and 28 October 1991), that their province be "annexed" as a homeland by the minuscule Evenki minority contained within it, and that their province be joined with other members of the so-called "Siberian people" in a Siberian Republic (*Sibirskaia gazeta,* 23–24 June 1992; *Rossiiskaia gazeta,* 17 November 1992; *Radio Rossii,* 24 March 1992; *Izvestiia,* 27 March 1992).[10]

AGENDAS OF REGIONAL ETHNIC MACHINES

Playing the ethnic card often means seeking the means to sustain the ethnic machine that keeps a regional leader in office. As a consequence, even though the ethnic agendas of regional leaders have included both expressive and material issues, they tend to give primary emphasis to acquiring the means to dispense material and career payoffs to their loyal followers. This is particularly true in their confrontations with the central authorities that have been most likely to lead to severe conflict. The following two propositions describe the agendas that have defined the ethnic card:

[4] In order to expand the resources available for ethnic entrepreneurship, regional leaders tend to emphasize issues that shift control over resources from the central state to the regional administration.

In the confrontation with the central state the ethnic agendas of regional leaders tend to stress instrumental concerns that focus on revenue-capturing opportunities. That is, regional leaders tend to focus the ethnic agenda on those objectives that will expand the resources at their control and so give them the wherewithal for selective incentives to maintain themselves in power. For example, top on the list of demands from republics in drafting the Federal Treaty was regional control over land and natural resources. The treaty, signed in March 1992, provided that "the land, minerals, water, flora, and fauna" on the territory of each republic belongs to the people living in that territory (ITAR-TASS, 14 March 1992; *Izvestiia*, 1 April 1992). Tolz observes that the demands of Sakha's (Yakutia) leadership "is a good illustration of a region of the Russian Federation that wants more autonomy for purely economic, rather than [nationalist] reasons . . . control over profits from diamond mining and production is behind the republic's campaign for more rights" (1993: 7).

In order to maximize their entrepreneurial opportunities, regional leaders tend to prefer those redistributive policies (between center and region) that expand their own discretion in the use of revenues. When confronted with alternative policies carrying similar monetary value for the region, regional leaders tend to prefer those that give them greater discretion in the distribution of funds and so greater opportunity to distribute selective incentives (see Bates 1981: 5). Thus regional leaders have pressed particularly hard for retention of taxes collected in their regions; this increases their discretion in disbursing funds and selecting those who are to be rewarded. Regional leaders have opposed the old system of sending all taxes to the center for reallocation through centrally controlled bureaucracies operating directly in the regions; this bypassed regional leaders and deprived them of support-building opportunities. In addition, regional leaders have demanded ownership of local productive assets, preferring this to equivalent or even greater subventions from the center.

Concern with preserving ethnic machines has meant that the ethnic agendas of regional leaders tend to give precedence to the

needs of the part of the ethnic community residing within the region over the needs of the larger ethnic community. The agendas of regional leaders often poorly serve the needs of the ethnic community as a whole in whose name the agenda is advanced. In many instances, a significant portion of the ethnic community, which lives outside "its" region, is excluded from the benefits of the new ethnic politics; indeed the welfare of the co-ethnics outside the region may even suffer if they become victimized in retaliation for the actions taken by the region. For example, two-thirds of Russia's Tatars live outside Tatarstan, and the leadership of that republic has been criticized for its limited concern for their oppressed brethren outside the republic's borders. In Moldova, as Socor notes,

> More than two-thirds of Moldova's Russians (and the same proportion of its Ukrainians) live on the right bank of the Dniester outside the area seized by the left bank insurgents since the beginning of the year. These large concentrations of Russians and partially Russified Ukrainians neither supported the left bank insurgents nor (except for the nearly defunct communist Interfront) backed up the charges by left bank Russians and Moscow that Moldova had been violating the rights of the "Russian-speaking" population (1993: 15).

Despite its claim to represent the prerogatives of Moldova's Slavic population, the Transdniestrian leadership has apparently expended far less energy to build support among the country's right-bank Russians than among the non-Russians residing on the left bank.

> *[5] The regional leader's agenda on center-to-region redistribution is constrained by the resource base of the region.*

Claims to autonomy come more forcefully from those regional leaders who sit atop valuable resource bases—examples are Sakha and Tatarstan. A survey in *Rossiiskaia gazeta* (17 November 1992) showed that popular and elite support for autonomy was stronger in regions of greater natural wealth; support was significantly lower where the homeland economy was heavily dependent on subsidies from the center (also see *Kommersant,* 16–23 March 1992). For example, leaders of the Tuva republic have resisted demands of the Tuvinian Popular Front for a referendum on independence: "The

overwhelming majority of deputies not in favor pointed out that 90% of Tuva's budget consisted of subsidies from Moscow. None of Tuva's leaders supported the republic's secession from the Russian Federation" (*Izvestiia*, 18 September 1992).

CONSEQUENCES OF LIBERALIZATION

The process of transforming a command economy in the Soviet successor states—not to be confused with the ethnic consequences of a fully developed market economy—has influenced the processes of ethnic entrepreneurship described in the previous section in at least two ways. First, liberalization has led to the disintegration of centralized ownership of productive assets and has provided many new opportunities for regional officials to seize those assets that will generate appropriable rents. Second, liberalization has weakened many institutions that compete with the regional officials for loyalties and has left regional officials in a stronger position to build loyal constituencies by dispensing appropriated rents. As a consequence, the process of liberalization has actually strengthened the hand of the homeland leaders. It must be reiterated, however, that these influences are secondary to the influence of changes in the rules of accountability described in the previous section. The evidence for the influences of economic liberalization is relatively sparse and the causal connection more speculative.

Perhaps the single most important observation in considering this relationship is that during this period of economic liberalization, regional officials with ethnic agendas tend to crowd out or dominate the alternatives within their respective regions. That is, regional officials playing the ethnic card tend to eclipse alternative political entrepreneurs from "above" who seek to build loyalties in the region to the larger state, political entrepreneurs "within" the ethnic community who seek to challenge the leadership of regional officials, and political entrepreneurs "alongside" the ethnic community who offer alternative particularistic communities as foci for loyalties. Regional officials tend to attract followers from nonethnic entrepreneurs, such as class entrepreneurs who seek to weld transethnic alliances of workers, or from alternative ethnic entrepreneurs who

press different agendas. Indeed the success of the regional officials forces others in the region and ethnic community to identify themselves principally in relationship to the agenda of these officials. Many bandwagon, joining the larger movement or at least shaping their agendas to correspond to that of the officials; others reshape their agendas as explicit alternatives to that of these officials. Either way, the regional entrepreneur-officials become the focal point around which others define themselves and their own agendas. In this section I will offer a stylized description of how economic liberalization has contributed to this phenomenon of "crowding out" the alternatives in each region by the regional officials of the Soviet successor states.

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION: COMPETITION AMONG POLITICAL ENTREPRENEURS

Regional officials compete with other political entrepreneurs for support within the population by offering programs of collective action that often benefit individuals with some markers but not others. Entrepreneurs compete with one another not only by appealing to different individuals, but often by appealing to the same individuals on the basis of the same or different markers. These competing programs identify aggregates of markers that define the ethnic community in different ways and that offer alternatives to ethnicity (such as class or gender) as the basis for collective action.

A microcosmic illustration of the competition among alternative programs of mobilization can be found in Dagestan—a multiethnic republic located on Russia's border with Azerbaijan. The peoples of this republic are the targets of competing political entrepreneurs who offer at least five different bases for mobilization. Ethnic entrepreneurs who seek to mobilize individual groups such as the Kumyk, Lezgins, and Nogai compete with entrepreneurs who seek to mobilize the so-called "peoples of Dagestan" as one. Still others, such as the Confederation of the Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus, seek to bind all so-called "mountain peoples" in a North Caucasus federal republic. All three of these compete with entrepreneurs offering Islamic, interethnic programs of collective action, on the one hand, and with those who attempt to cultivate an identity as peoples of Russia (*Rossiiane*), on the other (Ormrod 1993: 463–66, 469–71).

In the process of mobilizing followers into collective action, ethnic entrepreneurs compete for supporters' time and resources; it is important to stress that the objective is not simply to win supporters' loyalties and build identities, but also to gain a tangible commitment of future resources.[11] Ethnic entrepreneurs compete for these constituents by offering both expressive and material incentives to potential followers.[12] The expressive agendas may simply raise symbolic issues such as a national flag, emblem, or city names, but may involve broader promises of imagined communities (Anderson 1991: 6, 67–82). Material incentives often entail offers of special access to scarce resources such as government jobs or state expenditures. These are frequently redistributive, shifting material resources among social groups such as ethnic groups.

LIBERALIZATION AND THE ADVANTAGES OF REGIONAL LEADERS

In this competition, regional officials have tended to attract more followers than alternative political entrepreneurs and to crowd out their competitors within the region because their posts give them resources unavailable to others. Liberalization of the post-Soviet economies has tended to increase this advantage. Specifically, in a competition among political entrepreneurs where all seek similar commitments of time and resources from followers and make equally attractive expressive and material *promises,* rational potential followers are more likely to invest time and resources in political entrepreneurs who offer (1) higher likelihood of success in fulfilling their promises, (2) greater selective material incentives to joiners, and (3) lower transaction costs of joining. In each of these three conditions influencing success, regional officials have had an advantage. Liberalization increases this advantage by creating new opportunities to capture rents that can in turn be used by regional leaders to lower the transaction costs and to raise the selective benefits to supporters (Tullock 1967; Krueger 1974; Tollison 1982).[13]

[6] In the competition among ethnic entrepreneurs, regional officials have tended to enjoy an advantage because their competitors can usually offer only expressive incentives.

In the competition among post-Soviet political entrepreneurs expressive incentives have been trumped by material incentives due to three characteristics of the former. First, expressive incentives have been more easily coopted or matched by competitors than material benefits in a bidding process of ethnic "me-too-ism," while material benefits have not been so easily matched (except at the level of promises).[14] The alacrity with which former Communist Party first secretaries embrace the symbols of their ethnic competitors is indeed dazzling: Eduard Shevardnadze has reportedly converted to Orthodox Christianity and "greets visitors seated beneath an icon" (Clogg 1994: 4). Boris Yeltsin similarly uses the symbols of Orthodoxy and tsardom to fulfill the expressive expectations of many Russians. Thus ethnic entrepreneurs out of power are often frustrated when the regional leaders "steal" their expressive issues. Where regional leaders have embraced the symbolism of the ethnic community, such as renaming the region and its cities or proclaiming an official state language, they have deprived their competition of important issues (Hyman 1993: 294).

Second, the authors of imagined communities who gain adherents do not necessarily take these away from others; they often simply profit from the remarkably expansive human imagination, which can grow to embrace ever more people. In other words, in the competition among post-Soviet political entrepreneurs the process of identity formation is not always zero-sum, while the process of gaining commitments of time and resources is more nearly so. Communities such as believers, co-nationals, sisters and brothers, and others often coexist in the imagination and more have been added as individuals' intellectual horizons expand. Yet the decisive objective in the competition among post-Soviet political entrepreneurs is to induce individuals to reallocate portions of their time and resources from other purposes, and individuals' time and resources are not so expansive as their imaginations; tangible commitments to new causes must often come at the expense of other purposes. Thus ethnic entrepreneurs out of power who succeed in winning converts to their imagined communities have not always found that this identity leads to collective action in competition with the regional leaders. For example, as some observers (e.g., Hyman 1993: 296–98; Rumer 1993: 93) note, despite the rise of Islamic and pan-Turkic consciousness in Central Asia, these do not seriously rival the state as a basis

for collective action in politics. In this volume, Georgi Derluguian discusses why linguistic rather than religious appeals to ethnic identity have proven far more successful since the Soviet Union began.

Third, expressive incentives have been less effective at eliciting commitments of individual effort because they are more likely to entail public goods—at least for members of the ethnic community. Expressive agendas, such as language legislation, often cannot exclude individual members of the ethnic community who do not support the cause. Smart prospective members of the community are likely to free ride rather than allocate time and resources to the cause (Olson 1965).[15] The Soviet successor states have spawned countless associations that have offered solely expressive incentives, and these have largely remained on the periphery of politics, unable to gain commitments of time and resources from the ethnic community they target.

[7] In the competition among ethnic entrepreneurs, regional officials have tended to enjoy an advantage because they can offer greater material incentives.

When political entrepreneurs make equally attractive promises and equal demands for time and resources, rational individuals are more likely to allocate time and resources to causes that in addition offer selective material incentives in exchange for support.[16] That is, in this competition to get individuals to reallocate their time and resources, those political entrepreneurs who only create imagined communities are likely to fail when competing with entrepreneurs offering selective material rewards on top of their own imagined communities. Post-Soviet regional officials have tended to prevail over their competitors when they have been able to convert the local state apparatus into a giant patronage-distributing mechanism, packed jobs in the regional administrative apparatus with their loyal followers, and converted local offices of the state into mechanisms for close contact with their supporters. The importance of material incentives in building and maintaining support is illustrated by the case of the Dniester Republic in eastern Moldova. Socor (1993: 15) asks why it enjoys such strong support from its population, while the majority of Russians and Ukrainians in the other parts of Moldova seem to be relatively indifferent. The answer appears to be the massive selective incentives offered to its supporters within its ter-

ritory: the Dniester Republic continues to maintain salaries, social benefits, and military pay at high levels, despite the collapse of the local economy. Moreover, this patronage has apparently also won the loyalty of part (perhaps even a majority) of Transdniestria's Moldovan population as well.[17]

In rare circumstances, competitors outside the state have the assets to provide extensive material incentives and have challenged the regional leaders. An illustration of this unusual circumstance is the successful candidacy of Kirsan Iliumzhinov for the presidency of Kalmykia. Drawing on his own enormous wealth (and perhaps the financial backing of the Yeltsin government), he personally subsidized milk and bread prices in the capital (Elista) during the campaign, lavished enormous payments on his followers, and promised $100 to each citizen from his personal fortune (ITAR-TASS, 22 February 1993; *Izvestiia,* 13 April 1993). Normally private citizens have not been able to offer such incentives, and the regional leaders who control the state apparatus have had an advantage in offering selective incentives to followers.

In addition, regional leaders have enjoyed an advantage over their competitors in their ability to minimize the transaction costs for individuals who receive these benefits. In the political realm collective action is constrained by the costs of organizing and joining (Moe 1984; McCubbins and Sullivan 1987).[18] In post-Soviet politics these transaction costs include the time and resources spent by potential followers simply locating and contacting alternative political entrepreneurs (time and resources that could otherwise be given to the political entrepreneurs) and the time and resources spent by the political entrepreneurs attempting to identify followers (time and resources that could be spent buying their support). Regional officials have relied on the deep and broad reach of regional administration to make their ethnic machines (like the Soviet regime before it) the most accessible ethnic organization in the region. Moreover, many regional officials have used the coercive powers of regional governments to erect obstacles to the activities of their competitors and so raise the transaction costs associated with offering commitments of time and resources to their causes.

[8] The process of economic liberalization has strengthened the advantage of regional officials by increasing the demand for their material benefits and weakening alternative providers of these.

The process of dismantling the Soviet command economy has brought a depression that makes the resources dispensed by the regional state administration ever more valuable: potential followers offer greater commitments of their own time and resources to acquire these. For example, the flocking of unemployed youths to back their regional leaders in showdowns with the central authorities is a common phenomenon. Economic liberalization in the Soviet successor states has weakened centrally controlled institutions far more than regional administrations; some of the rise of ethnopolitics in the post-Soviet period is a consequence of the collapse of alternative sources of these material rewards. For example, the rise of regional officials has been aided by the weakening of class entrepreneurs. Soviet-era trade unions, which dispensed enormous social benefits to employees, had the opportunity to build a loyal clientele, but privatization of the economy, particularly the privatization of housing, and the collapse of the social safety net have in many instances reduced the set of resources that trade unions could dispense as selective incentives. During the transition—conditions that differ markedly from those of a fully developed market economy—older, Soviet-era institutions that used to dispense material benefits, such as ministries and so-called "public organizations," have declined more rapidly than new post-Soviet sources have emerged. For example, independent trade unions have relatively few selective benefits to offer their followers. In short, a major consequence of liberalization of the totalitarian regime is to break up alternative centers of patronage at the same time the economic depression has increased the demand for such material benefits. Where regional administration is a strong building block of the state, the transition from totalitarianism has increased the influence of regional ethnic entrepreneurs. In a mob of political dwarves, even the political entrepreneur of modest stature appears to be a giant.

CONCLUSION

This essay has addressed an issue which is at the heart of this volume: while developed market economies may be associated with low levels of ethnic conflict, the initiation of the transition to market economics from various forms of state welfarism at the end of the twentieth century has been associated with extremely violent ethnic conflict. I have argued that in the Soviet successor states this association is real but secondary and coincidental to the major cause of the recent rise of ethnic conflict—the fight among officials within the successor state administrations over the division of decision-making authority. Economic liberalization has added additional spoils over which to fight and has given regional officials new advantages in their competition with central authorities and alternative political entrepreneurs. Nonetheless, the influence of economic liberalization on this ethnic conflict should be understood in the context of the attempt of regional officials to survive in a rapidly changing political environment by playing the ethnic card.

The relationship between economic liberalization and ethnic conflict is of course not unidirectional, and in the long term the latter may come to limit the former. Indeed the analysis in this essay suggests that the political uses of economic liberalization by regional officials may prevent the consolidation of market economies in the Soviet successor states; while the acts of regional leaders speed along the disintegration of central control over the economy, these acts also concentrate control over productive assets in the hands of politicians at the regional level. We may see one integrated command economy replaced by many smaller mercantilist economies with strong patronage-based welfare policies. Ironically post-Soviet ethnic politics may prove to be the death of the very economic liberalization that nourished it.

NOTES

1. By my count the total is at least 1,308. This counts all ethnic groups with over 50,000 members and counts each appearance of such ethnic groups in different states as a basis for a separate set of interethnic dyads. The list of armed conflicts is taken from Wallensteen and Axell (1993); that of major crises, from the agendas of the UN Security Council and the Council on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The former was updated to include events in 1994, specifically the Chechen war.
2. For an illustration of the importance of administrative sponsorship, see the difference between the campaigns for autonomy in the Donbass and the Crimea (Solchanyk 1994). For the argument that this reliance on preexisting federal administrations is only a first stage in the course of post-Soviet ethnopolitics, see Szajkowski (1993: 172); note, however, that almost all of Szajkowski's examples are actually drawn from federal administrations.
3. Some analysts have noted the multiethnic character of the leadership of several republics that have been unusually assertive and questioned whether it is appropriate to label this whole phenomenon "ethnic" politics; see Kolstø et al. (1993).
4. I develop the themes of this subsection in greater detail in Roeder (1991).
5. The monographic studies of any number of ethnic groups catalog the endless list of grievances against this or that territorial demarcation; this does not undermine the point I have just made. In light of the poorly demarcated borders of traditional homelands and the competing claims to many lands lying between homelands, it was inevitable that many groups would be aggrieved.
6. See, for example, Loeber (1968: 133–45) and Vakar (1956: 150–51).
7. Each of the propositions in this paper is a *ceteris paribus* statement about modal behavior. I have not attempted to exhaust the constraints on ethnic entrepreneurship, but to offer a conceptual framework in which further propositions could be developed. To be "progressive" such extensions would ask how these other constraints affect the survival prospects of regional officials.
8. For a discussion of this conception of accountability, see Roeder (1994).
9. In Kulyab oblast, hard-liners threatened to create an independent state but did not press a nationalist agenda (ITAR-TASS, 23 May 1992). Similarly, much of the initial organizing of movements for regional autonomy in the Donbass and Novorossiia was inspired by oblast Communist Party leaders who feared losing their positions in an independent Ukraine (*Izvestiia,* 19 September and 16 October 1991).
10. Similarly, the leaders of Transcarpathia oblast in the Ukraine, a region in which Ukrainians constitute 78.4 percent of the population, have used the presence of Hungarian and Ruthenian minorities to justify claims to regional autonomy (Solchanyk 1994: 61–63).

11. The larger model of which this essay is an application distinguishes identity-formation (in which individuals develop an awareness that one's markers tie one to others in a group) and mobilization (in which individuals with common markers join in collective action). It begins from the assertion that the outcomes of attempts at ethnic mobilization are not predetermined by preexisting identities.
12. I should stress that I am not advancing the usual instrumentalist argument that political entrepreneurs offer only material incentives. My larger purpose in the model that lies behind this essay is to help extricate political science from the debate between primordialists and instrumentalists. This debate is a familiar one: primordialists (e.g., Connor 1972, Geertz 1963) focus on the fixed cultural markers of individuals to explain ethnic politics. Instrumentalists (e.g., Glazer and Moynihan 1975) focus on the ethnic choices that individuals make in the political realm. These approaches lead to different predictions about the sorts of issues that should give rise to ethnic conflict, the types of ethnic groups that should emerge, and the agendas that they are likely to press. My project begins from the proposition that from the perspective of political science, this is a sterile debate and that we did ourselves a disservice by importing it into our discipline. As political scientists, we appreciate that both sorts of issues are expressed through politics. To bring ethnic politics into the discipline of political science we need some alternative perspective to give us a rigorous approach.
13. A rent is defined in the technical literature as "a return in excess of a resource owner's opportunity cost" (Tollison 1982: 575) but in more common parlance refers to the amount a monopoly can earn by charging a price above what would have prevailed in a competitive market. Opportunities to capture rents can be artificially contrived by a state that restricts competition with such mechanisms as state-licensed monopolies or restrictive import licenses.
14. As in the case of expressive incentives promises of future material rewards are easily matched and coopted. Since competing entrepreneurs make equally inflated promises about the state of affairs that will follow when their imagined communities are reified, entrepreneurs cannot count on the promise of benefits from an imagined community alone to gain the commitment of time and resources to their cause. In addition, the benefits of imagined communities are often public goods. When faced by competing entrepreneurs offering equally attractive public goods, potential followers must receive some additional incentive to allocate their scarce time and resources to one entrepreneur or the other.
15. As Chong argues in his study of the American civil rights movement, no matter whether one describes these situations as prisoners' dilemmas or assurance games, in collective action, particularly in the initial stages, "the danger is that everyone will stand around waiting for others to pay the heavy start-up costs needed to initiate the process" (1991: 118).

16. This is different from the argument of Hechter, Friedman, and Appelbaum (1982: 421) that collective action will only occur to the degree that free riding is prevented through the production of private rewards and punishments. Indeed individuals can be prevented from free riding by expressive rewards that are positively correlated with belonging (see Wilson 1974, on solidaristic incentives), but *in a competitive environment* those expressive rewards can be matched by other ethnic entrepreneurs. The proposition of Hechter, Friedman, and Appelbaum must be reformulated.
17. According to one Scandinavian investigator, as much as 70 percent of the ethnic Moldovan population within Transdniestria also supports the regional regime (Kolstø et al. 1993: 986).
18. The analysis of transaction costs originated in economics with Coase's (1937) observation that complex production processes involve transactions (exchanges) among owners of various inputs and that alternative forms of organization can make these transactions more or less costly. The importance of transaction costs in ethnic mobilization has been illustrated by the tendency of new movements to mobilize preexisting organizations, much as the U.S. civil rights movement used African-American churches (Oberschall 1973; McAdam 1982; Morris 1984). Transaction costs are also cited as an important reason that organizations are more likely to emerge within rather than across language groups: by facilitating communication among members, a common language lowers transaction costs (Laitin 1986: 11).

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