

Federalism and Territorial Cleavages

Ugo M. Amoretti

The term *nation-state* implies the fusion of states and nations. Though the idea of the nation-state has become commonplace in the contemporary world, states have rarely been homogeneous political organizations of a single people. More often, states have been the home of two or more identity groups, not always standing on equal footing and rarely incorporated voluntarily within the state's boundaries. Virtually everywhere, states have been built by coercive means such as annexations and military conquests, and their rulers have attributed, de jure or de facto, a different status to dominant and minority groups. This situation has not changed much over time. Though some minorities have been either assimilated or eliminated, others have resisted both processes. Moreover, new identity groups sometimes emerge and changes in borders and migrations have further increased the heterogeneity of state populations. As a result of all these trends, states that have a homogeneous *demos* and hence qualify for the nation-state label are extremely rare. One or more minorities inhabit almost all states (Connor 1994).

Within a state's territory, a minority group may be concentrated in specific regions, where it is a majority or a plurality, or it may be more evenly distributed across the territory of the state, representing a minority everywhere. Whereas this second scenario constitutes a case of "local intermingling" (Van Evera 1994), the first one is at the basis

of territorial cleavages. A territorial cleavage exists when a self-conscious minority is concentrated in a specific area of a state's territory. The differences distinguishing this minority may include social, economic, ethnic, or cultural features. What matters is that the minority and the majority perceive themselves as collectively different and therefore deserving of some kind of different treatment.

The presence of minorities—whether concentrated or intermingled—does not necessarily lead to conflict. However, comparative evidence shows that conflict is much more likely to emerge when minorities are territorially concentrated. Disputes over the degree of autonomy that the territory inhabited by a minority group should enjoy are surely one of the most important and potentially difficult policy challenges facing the world community at the dawn of the new millennium. They involve tens of millions of people around the world, and their consequences, as exemplified by the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, are often unmatched by most other kinds of political divisions.

The broad objective of this collection of essays is to assess why some territorial cleavages are more easily accommodated than others. In our effort to explain variations in successful accommodation across states we are especially interested in examining whether this goal is facilitated by federal state structures, though we analyze a broad range of possible explanatory variables.

For our purposes, the term *accommodation* refers to the capacity of states to contain conflict within the mechanisms and procedures embedded in existing institutional arrangements. Accommodation has three dimensions. First and foremost, it involves minimizing violence and extrainstitutional mobilization. Second, it involves minimizing alienation or hostility toward the state itself and, relatedly, separatist party support. Whereas regional parties can easily be seen as positive contributors to accommodation, separatist parties are an indication that accommodation has fallen short. Finally, a third dimension concerns respect for minority civil and political rights. States might eliminate minority-led violence and separatist parties through outright coercion, but such a strategy would not meet the democratic standards that we consider essential for a successful accommodation of territorial cleavages.

This introduction begins by presenting the historical evolution of territorial cleavages. It then discusses the relevance of territorial cleavages to political life today, relating the project's hypotheses to the social science literature. The final section gives an overview of the volume's essays.

The Historical Evolution of Territorial Cleavages

The existence of territorial cleavages derives from the way contemporary states and the contemporary state system formed over time. To recall the well-known Weberian

definition, states are political organizations characterized by a "monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force in the territory they control" (Weber 1958 [1919], 78). Today, virtually the whole world is partitioned into states. Yet, throughout most of human history this has not been the case. States appeared only at a certain point and often coexisted with other political entities such as empires, principalities, and city-states.

Before the emergence of the individual countries we are now familiar with, sovereignty was enormously fragmented and states were far from being the world's largest and most powerful political organizations. Other ways to organize political power have long represented viable alternatives. In certain areas, such as Africa, these alternatives have been prevalent until relatively recent times (Herbst 2000, 35–57). Even in Europe, where the state as organizational structure originated, and where its oldest prototypes are located, state-building processes have been long and complicated. Several of our chapters illustrate that the process of state formation and reformation is still taking place.

There are large differences in the paths of development followed by states in different times and places. Outside Europe, most contemporary states originated as a consequence of decolonization. In Europe, the birth and the success of the modern state were marked by rulers' efforts to extend the range of population, territory, and resources over which they exerted power. Virtually all European rulers devoted themselves to these tasks for centuries. Although, depending on the conditions of the surrounding environment, they could rely on alternative strategies in order to build states, most of the time state building meant war and its preparation (Tilly 1990, 28). In the long run, states that lost wars contracted or simply ceased to exist, whereas those with the strongest coercive powers prospered.

State building may be defined as a process of territorial expansion and consolidation, through which, if successful, a core area turns into a state. Because of the wide diversities among adjacent peoples, the formation of states often resulted in the extension of the same rule over heterogeneous populations living in territories originally beyond the state builders' control—a process that sowed the seeds of territorial cleavages. This happened in Europe as well as in its former colonies, where decolonization frequently led to artificial boundaries drawn without paying attention to the territorial distribution of identity groups.

Rulers engaged in the formation of a state generally delegated the administration of newly acquired territories to local patrons and notables, who enjoyed substantial autonomy in exchange for part of the revenue they extracted from local populations. Initially, state building was largely a process of territorial aggrandizement paired by the simple subordination of the inhabitants of the newly acquired territories who, in turn,

normally lacked the resources to mobilize. With time, however, the broadening scope of state activity favored the emergence of sizable bureaucracies that assisted sovereigns in moving toward a more direct administration of their territories. Along with demanding taxes and the conscription of their subject populations to feed and fill standing armies, rulers' activities began to include new tasks, such as the provision of basic public services carried out by the emerging administrative apparatuses.

Sovereigns could consider the territorial segmentation and the heterogeneity of their states' population an asset to the extent that it enhanced the costs of collective action and, therefore, reduced the probability of large-scale rebellions. However, heterogeneity also represented an obstacle because it made it harder to extend a standardized administration across the whole territory. In a homogeneous context, the same administrative tools could have been employed everywhere—something obviously much more difficult in a heterogeneous setting. In order to overcome the problems posed by heterogeneity and consolidate their states, rulers generally worked to increase the cultural significance of borders by trying, with different degrees of success, to impose common languages, religions, and identities on their subjects. This homogenizing effort, commonly known as nation building, represented a watershed in modern state development, as it corresponded with a shift from an old-fashioned strategy of pure subordination to one of assimilation, aimed at transforming the *state* into a *nation-state* (Rokkan 1973). Even if the origins of nation-building processes are debatable, these efforts reached their zenith only after the French Revolution (Weber 1977).

Whereas state-building processes created territorial cleavages by incorporating diverse peoples under the same rule, nation-building policies induced their political mobilization and, thus, conflict. Standardizing strategies, in fact, promoted nationalism, both as identification of the majority people with "their" state and as resistance of the distinct minority groups to the "alien" state's demands for uniformity and integration.

Homogenizing efforts produced different outcomes in different places. Where minority identities were not very distinctive, the result was a considerable degree of assimilation. Elsewhere, where they were stronger, minority groups managed to better resist homogenization and, at least partially, keep their own particular characteristics, sometimes gaining a degree of political autonomy, depending on how their resource endowment compared to that of the central government.

The efforts of standardization triggered the processes of national integration and territorial separation. Yet, the contemporary constellation of intrastate territorial divisions is not just a legacy of century-old processes that led to the formation and the consolidation of the modern state. More recent developments, such as industrialization, the expanding role assumed by the government over time, the interaction of

old territorial differences with other cleavages, the rise of supranational institutions, as well as economic globalization, all contributed to remodel patterns of territorial divisions.

Industrialization affected territorial divisions in two ways. On the one hand, by tending to reward areas enjoying natural positional advantages rather than areas surrounding state capitals, it created unprecedented tensions between new economic centers and the established political cores (Keating 1998, 22–23). On the other hand, by creating a large urban proletariat and making capital-labor relations a key social and political issue, it contributed to set states' political agendas more on class than territorial matters, thus downplaying territorial divisions and favoring their temporary political eclipse.

The escalating role of the state produced one of its major effects on territorial cleavages through the creation and expansion of educational programs. Often conceived only in the core-area language, these programs proved to be key in promoting linguistic standardization and, therefore, forging a new "national" identity. As mentioned above, this drive for linguistic homogeneity proved to be highly controversial in several countries, often contributing to mobilization around resistance to assimilation.

The creation and the development of welfare, on the contrary, affected territorial cleavages by improving, with economic modernization and political development, the quality of life of large sectors of the masses, allowing citizens once concerned almost exclusively with economic questions to gradually focus on different, postmaterialist issues, including territorial identities (Inglehart 1977, 234–43). This new attention to postmaterialist issues has contributed to both the resurgence of old identities that had been kept at the margin since the process of industrialization was set in motion, and to the creation of new ones.

Current patterns of intrastate territorial divisions have been also influenced by their interplay with other cleavages, such as those emerging from the industrialization process: urban versus agrarian interests and capital versus labor. Peasant discontent, maybe because of its ties with the land and local ownership, frequently assumed a clearly defined territorial form, thus contributing to restructure territorial cleavages. The same can be said for the urban labor movement, which was often local in its origins and achieved a statewide dimension only gradually. While it was committed to the universalistic and internationalist doctrines of proletarian solidarity and class struggle, the labor movement also influenced territorial relationships, contributing to the development of specific identities in areas of early industrialization (Keating 1998, 24–25).

In Western Europe, territorial cleavages have also been affected by their interaction with the religious differences introduced by the Reformation. In Catholic countries, the Church and its followers had to face the opposition of liberal and anticlerical groups.

This opposition frequently assumed a territorial dimension, since the anticlericals were often centralist and used state institutions to challenge the Church, which, in turn, assumed the defense of local traditions and played them against the central authorities. On the other hand, in various Protestant countries, fundamentalist groups broke away from their own church, and since the fundamentalists tended to be stronger in peripheral areas, this division over religious matters tended to assume a territorial dimension as well (Keating 1998, 25).

If the anarchy and perpetual warfare of the international arena have long contributed to dampen intrastate territorial divisions, more recent trends such as the emergent role of supranational institutions and economic globalization have produced contrasting effects. The development of supranational institutions, such as the European Union (EU), is providing territorial minorities with new constraints and opportunities. Since tasks gradually acquired by supranational institutions include matters of direct interest for territorial minorities, their growing scope alters traditional center-periphery dynamics, with consequences that are still uncertain. Globalization changes center-periphery dynamics too. As market forces become less linked with states and more connected with international organizations and particular enterprises, the nature of the relationship between territories and central authorities is bound to change (Türsan 1998, 1–16).

The Relevance of Territorial Cleavages Today

Shaped by a complex mix of long-term and short-term influences, territorial cleavages are one of the main causes of conflict in today's world. Following the end of World War II, they have been increasingly mobilized, turning into a powerful source of turmoil that has modified the political landscape in all of the world's regions. Like other sociopolitical phenomena, territorial cleavages seem to acquire salience in waves and, after their political eclipse during the centralizing trends of the 1940s and 1950s, they entered an upward trend during the 1960s. The centrality of territorial cleavages as a source of conflict, nonetheless, has produced different consequences in the advanced industrial societies and the rest of the world. In the developed West, despite the presence of territorially based minorities in most countries, conflicts have been less bloody and deadly than elsewhere. Excluding conflicts related to Northern Ireland, the Basque Country, and—to a lesser extent—Corsica, territorial cleavages have generally been managed peacefully, channeling political action and participation through the conventional avenues provided by democratic institutions (Newman 1996, 1–9). In the less institutionalized, unstable political regimes of the former communist and developing countries, the mobilization of territorial diversities has instead led to very different out-

comes. Often based on ascriptive features, territorial cleavages have given way to deadly and bloody confrontations where, to quote Donald Horowitz (1985, 684), “ties of blood” have produced “rivers of blood.” The growing numbers of these armed conflicts reached an unprecedented high in the early 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet bloc, and its future evolution is far from being easily predictable (Gurr 2000, 281–88; Wallensteen and Sollenberg 2001).

The contemporary relevance of territorial conflict is best understood through some simple facts. Between 1989 and 2000, 111 armed conflicts—33 of which were still ongoing in 2000—took place in 74 different locations. While only 7 of them were interstate, a full 104 were fought between the inhabitants of a single state. Out of these 104 internal conflicts, 46.6 percent were ideological and 53.4 percent concerned territory instead (Wallensteen and Sollenberg 2001). In other words, disputes over controlling part of the territory of a certain state are the prevalent source of conflict in today's world.

Most of these armed conflicts occurred in Africa and the former Soviet bloc. Only two of them took place in the advanced industrial societies, namely, in the Basque Country and Northern Ireland. As various scholars have already stressed, the outcomes generated by the mobilization of territorial cleavages tend to be less severe in the developed West than elsewhere. Among the developing and former communist countries, the mobilization of dissatisfaction with the state and its borders often generates a considerable amount of violence. In the advanced industrial societies, where economies are developed and democracy is consolidated, it is normally contained within the mechanisms set up by the institutional system. Economic and welfare development make unconventional strategies and non-negotiable stands less attractive than in developing and former communist countries (Young 1994, 222–23; Dion 1996). By providing strong incentives to channel people's dissatisfaction with the state and its borders into the electoral arena, consolidated democratic institutions work in the same direction (Newman 1996, 9).

Among Western democracies, the salience of territorial cleavages is therefore better appreciated by looking at conventional forms of political activity such as those involving political parties. There were approximately fifty ethnic parties in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries as of 1997 and virtually all of these had a territorial constituency (Lane, McKay, and Newton 1997, 139).

The electoral performance of territorial parties has obvious implications for party systems and for the composition and workings of democratic governments. In the seven developed countries considered in this volume, the maximum vote won by territorial parties at the national level was 16.4 percent—won by the Belgian territorial parties in the second half of the 1970s (Lane, McKay, and Newton 1997, 153). Yet, these parties do not aim at winning the votes of the whole electorate. Their goal is to

maximize support in the territory they claim to represent, and if we look at their success in their own constituencies (regions, provinces, and so forth), a different picture emerges. Several of them, such as the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* in the Basque Country and the *Convergència i Unió* in Catalonia, have achieved two-digit returns over a long span of time, thus gaining lasting and powerful positions within their home regions (De Winter 1998, 204–47).

Summarizing, territorial cleavages are today's main source of conflict and one of the principal causes of violence in the world. Among the developing and former communist countries, their mobilization often leads to armed conflicts on various scales. In the advanced industrial societies, it is mostly constrained by the institutions of consolidated democratic regimes and therefore channeled toward the electoral arena. Yet, the outcomes of territorial mobilization are not easily predictable on the basis of economic and political development alone. Whereas not all cases of mobilization in the developing and former communist countries have produced violence, a few of those within the realm of the advanced industrial societies have given way to deadly conflicts between terrorist groups and the state. Hence, the potential for conflict from territorial cleavages represents a serious policy challenge throughout the world. A deeper understanding of how territorial cleavages might be better accommodated is of profound practical as well of scholarly importance.

The Project and the Literature

The cases included in our project differ on a range of dimensions but each focuses on the same set of questions and each examines the same set of possible answers.

Our primary research question, as stated above, concerns variations in the accommodation of territorial cleavages. The variations in accommodation experiences are multiple and perplexing. Why, for example, has the United Kingdom's accommodation experience been much less successful than Switzerland's? The United Kingdom has been plagued with decades of armed conflict over the Irish question—plus a massive and ultimately successful movement for territorial devolution in Scotland. Switzerland, by contrast, has managed to accommodate three different linguistic communities and two different religious groups with no violence and virtually no movements for devolution for well over a century. Why, in another part of the world, has Turkey been unable to work out a successful formula for the accommodation of the Kurdish minority while Russia has managed to accommodate the minority in Tartarstan? Given that the Russians and the Tartars are divided by religion and are operating in a relatively new democracy one might have predicted the opposite outcome.

Empirical evidence shows that the accommodation of territorial conflicts is not an easy task. Building peace and democracy in divided countries requires a great effort. Each side needs to compromise. Governments need to acknowledge and support the rights of minority peoples so that they do not mobilize exclusively on the basis of territorial identity and so that feelings of alienation do not become prominent among them. Minority groups need to confine their actions within the channels provided by democratic institutions and accept the state's political authority.

What factors increase the likelihood of successful accommodation? The social science literature offers us a number of appealing hypotheses and these are the foundation of a series of subsidiary research questions addressed in our project. The most important of these hypotheses derives from the literature on federalism.

Federalism's Features and Varieties

The basic feature of a federal system is an institutionalized division of power between a central government and a set of constituent governments—variously denominated as states, regions, provinces, *Länder*, or cantons—in which each level of government has the power to make final decisions in some policy areas but cannot unilaterally modify the federal structure of the state (Riker 1964, 11; 1975, 101; 1993, 508–14; Dahl 1986, 114; Lijphart 1999, 4).

Federalism has other important features such as bicameralism and judicial review. Whereas the legislatures of unitary states may be unicameral or bicameral, all fully federal systems have a bicameral legislature. Though federal bicameralism varies in its organization and effects, it allows the representation of constituent units at the center and, thus, provides an arena in which central and regional authorities can interact (Lijphart 1999, 200–215; Stepan 1997, 29–40).¹ In general, the wider the policy scope of the upper chamber, the stronger the bicameralism and the greater the protection of constituent units.

The importance of judicial review in federal systems is straightforward. Because of the existence of two levels of government, intergovernmental conflicts are endogenous to federations and a supreme arbitral authority to settle disputes over the constitution and intergovernmental relations is needed. In the absence of a constitutional court charged with judicial review, legislatures would judge themselves and the balance of power between federal and constituent units could be drastically altered (Lijphart 1999, 4, 223–30).

Different institutional configurations produce different types of federalism. Federal systems, for example, vary with respect to the concrete powers attributed to each level of government. Though defense and foreign policy are always exclusive to the jurisdic-