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Ethnicity, migration, and statehood in Post-Cold War Europe

Rogers Brubaker

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Among the most salient and politically charged issues of the last two decades in Europe have been questions of ethnicity, migration, and statehood. These closely interlinked issues have figured centrally in political, cultural, and social transformations throughout the continent. In eastern Europe, they are often understood to be linked in a vicious circle. States founded on ethnicity – and understood as the states of and for particular ethnocultural nations – are seen as engendering violent conflict and forced migration. Ethnic cleansing has come to epitomize this diabolical intertwining of ethnicity, migration, and statehood. In western Europe, by contrast, some observers have seen a more benign intertwining. The post-national erosion of sovereign statehood, on this view, has produced a continent-wide space for free migration and has allowed previously suppressed ethnoregional cultures to flourish. Darker accounts, to be sure, stress migration from outside Europe, which is seen as generating unwanted ethnic pluralism, reactively ethnicized understandings of nationhood, and pressures for a renationalization of the state (or for a state-like – and perhaps nation-like – “fortress Europe” that would keep outsiders at bay). While none of these accounts is particularly nuanced, each points to the importance of the intertwined themes of ethnicity, migration, and statehood, and together they suggest that these issues can be configured in quite different ways. In this essay, I seek to specify persisting differences in the way these questions are posed in different parts of Europe, yet to avoid the often caricatured oversimplified east-west contrasts that inform many accounts of contemporary Europe.
Almost all European societies, like most societies world-wide, are ethnically heterogeneous, but that heterogeneity takes sharply differing forms. In order to reveal crucial differences in the configuration – the genesis, form, and political consequences – of ethnic heterogeneity in Europe, I distinguish two ways in which ethnic heterogeneity can be socially organized and politically expressed. The first I call “immigrant ethnicity” and the second, “territorial nationality.”

On the first model, characteristic mainly of western Europe, ethnic groups arise through migration and are generally territorially dispersed. On the second model, characteristic of east-central and eastern Europe, ethnic groups are indigenous (or at least make claims to be so); they are in many cases generated by the movement of borders across people, rather than that of people across borders; and they are generally territorially concentrated. Their members are ordinarily citizens of the country in which they reside, yet they often identify culturally and sometimes politically with a neighbouring “kin” or “homeland” state, to which they see themselves as “belonging” by shared ethnicity or culture but not by legal citizenship (Brubaker, 1996). Lastly, and crucially, they define themselves in national terms. They see themselves as belonging not simply to a distinct ethnic group but to a distinct nation or nationality that differs from the nation or nationality of their fellow citizens. In this second model, then, ethnicity takes the form of nationality, and ethnic heterogeneity is “coded” as national heterogeneity. This territorial ethnicity-cum-nationality is very different from immigration-engendered polyethnicity. Using the same term – “ethnicity” or “ethnic minorities” – to designate both can be misleading.

The political claims that can be made in the name of ethnicity differ sharply in the two cases. Immigrant ethnicity evokes a politics of anti-discrimination, civic inclusion, and “soft multiculturalism” (claims to recognition, resources, and sometimes special immunities and exemptions). Territorial nationality involves claims for national self-determination, for symbolic recognition as a state-bearing nation rather than as a mere “minority,” for extensive language rights, for territorial autonomy or even full independence, and sometimes for rapprochement with a neighbouring “kin” or “homeland” state.

Clearly, the claims of territorial nationality can threaten the basic nature of the state in a way that the claims of immigrant ethnicity generally do not. When ethnic claims become national claims, based on putative territorial nationhood and nationality, they become more fundamental, and potentially more threatening, precisely because they raise what Linz and Stepan (1996) have called the “stateness” problem – the problem of the integrity and boundaries of the state.

In east-central Europe, ethnicity speaks this potentially explosive language of nationality. Nationality or nationhood, in turn, is understood as based on ethnicity (language, culture, a vague sense of shared descent, and so on), rather than as in the putatively civic model of nationhood – on political citizenship. One might say that ethnicity is nationalized, while nationality and nationhood are ethnicized. In western Europe, in contrast, after decades of heavy labour migration and subsequent family reunification, public attention has focused on immigrant ethnicity, while ethnic claims have not generally been framed as national claims.

There are, of course, important exceptions to this pattern on both sides. In much of east-central Europe, there are fundamental issues associated with the large, socially stigmatized, spatially segregated, and in part economically marginalized Gypsy or Roma population. These issues are sui generis and cannot be neatly subsumed under our usual conceptual rubrics. Depending on how Roma are represented by others, and how they represent themselves, they can be conceived as an ethnic group, a national group, a caste, or a social underclass (Vermersch, 2003).

In western Europe, in contrast, ethnicity sometimes involves claims to territorial nationality or nationhood, and the politics of ethnicity then becomes a politics of national autonomy and self-determination. This is true above all in Spain, Belgium, and Britain, all of them multinational (and not simply multi-ethnic) polities. There is also the interestingly ambiguous case of Italy, where the Northern League sometimes claims that northern Italy, or Padania, is a distinct nation. Only in the case of Northern Ireland – the western European case most similar to the classic national conflicts of central and eastern Europe – is a cross-border “kin” state or ethnic homeland involved in any significant way. As a result – and notwithstanding the political violence associated with Irish, Basque, and Corsican nationalist movements – this type of ethnonationalist politics is less threatening to states than the characteristic eastern European configuration.

A further crossover, blurring the sharp outlines of the east–west distinction, is that just as ethnicity is nationalized – understood as nationality – in some western European as well as in most east-central
European cases, so too nationality and nationhood may be ethnicized in western as well as in eastern Europe. And this is true not only for ethnoregional nationalisms. In response to growing Muslim and non-European immigrant populations, national self-understandings have also been ethnicized, to some degree, even in the so-called state-nations of northern and western Europe, in countries with traditionally state-framed understandings of nationhood.

Ethnicity in east-central Europe, I have suggested, often takes a specifically national – and nationalist – form. Yet despite this potentially explosive configuration, and despite the resurgence of nationalism that accompanied the collapse of communist regimes, ethnic violence has been less widespread, ethnic mobilization less strong, and ethnic identity less pervasively significant than is ordinarily assumed. Having made a good part of my professional living recently of ethnicity and nationalism in eastern Europe, I have no interest in minimizing their significance. In general, however, I think that discussions of the region are overly ethnicized and that an exaggerated focus on ethnicity and nationalist risks crowding out other, often more important theoretical and practical perspectives.

Of the ghastly violence in Yugoslavia and parts of the former Soviet Union we need no reminder. But as Tom Nairn (1995, 91–2) put it, even though one would certainly not want to make light of these terrible conflicts, one should also beware of “making dark” of them. One should resist the temptation to see eastern Europe as a whole as a seething cauldron of nationalist politics and ethnic conflict, on the verge of boiling over into violence and ethnic cleansing; and one should keep the violence that has occurred in perspective.

Ethnonationalist violence has been limited to a relatively small part of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union – overwhelmingly concentrated in Yugoslavia, Transcaucasia, and the North Caucasus. One should remember, moreover, the violence that has not occurred, the dogs that have not barked. In this perspective, what is striking is the relatively, peaceful character of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Consider, for example, the 25 million Russians stranded as minorities in nationalizing successor states by the breakup of the Soviet Union. Many analysts – myself included, in the early 1990s – thought that at least some of these Russians would be the flashpoints of ethnonational conflict and violence. Yet outside the self-proclaimed “Dniester Republic” in Moldova, successor-state Russians have been neither the objects nor the perpetrators of nationalist violence (Laitin, 1998, chap. 12; Melvin, 1998; Braun, 2000).

What about ethnic and nationalist mobilization? Here too there is a case-selection bias at work. We pay attention to the spectacular moments of high mobilization – the human chain across the Baltic republics, the great crowds that filled the main squares of Yerevan, Tbilisi, Berlin, Prague, and other cities in 1988–90. But these have been the exception, not the rule. Moments of high mobilization have been few and ephemeral. Even where “nation” was a galvanizing category at one moment, it was not at the next. On the whole, especially since 1990, people have remained in their homes, not taken to the streets. In conspicuous contrast to interwar east-central Europe, demobilization and political passivity, rather than fevered mobilization, have prevailed. Much has been written on the strength of nationalist movements in the former Soviet Union; not enough on their comparative weakness.

There is, moreover, a kind of optical illusion involved in the view from afar. From a distance, one risks taking too seriously the claims made by ethnonational entrepreneurs – who have indeed proliferated as ethnic modes of claims-making have become more legitimate – and not asking to what extent they really speak for those in whose name they claim to speak. One should not forget that people do not necessarily respond particularly energetically or warmly to the nationalist utterances of politicians who claim to speak for them.

Since the mid-1990s, I have been conducting fieldwork in the Transylvanian town of Cluj, where a bitterly nationalist local politics pits majority Romanian against minority Hungarian claims. Yet there has been virtually no nationalist mobilization by ordinary people, and most remain indifferent to the endless cycles of nationalist talk. This has made palpable for me the loose coupling, or lack of congruence, between nationalist politics – which seems to run in a sphere of its own, unmoored from its putative constituencies – and everyday life. And there are many parallels elsewhere in the region. The general political passivity of Russians in Soviet successor states, for example, has been striking, despite various attempts to mobilize them.

Forty years ago, sociologist Dennis Wrong (1961) criticized Parsonian functionalism for its “oversocialized conception of man.” Much social analysis today is informed by what might be called an overethnized conception of history, politics, and social interaction. This comes from treating ethnicity and nationality in substantialist terms, as entities, as
substantial, enduring, internally homogeneous and externally bounded collectivities. Despite theoretical work stressing the constructed, imagined, even invented nature of ethnic and national “communities,” groupist language maintains a tenacious hold in the study of ethnicity and nationalism, curiously mirroring its tenacious hold in the practice of ethnic and nationalist politics. Ethnicity and nationalism need to be understood as particular ways of talking about and experiencing the social world and as particular ways of framing political claims, not as real boundaries inscribed in the nature of things. At some places and times, these ways of talking about the social world and of making political claims have deep resonance and powerfully shape how people think and talk and act in everyday life, as well as how they understand and act on their political interests. At other times and places, the language of ethnicity and nationalism deployed by political entrepreneurs falls on deaf or simply indifferent ears. Ethnic and national groupness is a variable, emergent property that may “happen” — as E.P. Thompson (1963) famously said of class — at particular moments. Or it may not happen — and often does not happen — even when and where political rhetoric places great weight on ethnicity and nationality.7

This is not a merely theoretical point. The unreflectively groupist language that prevails in journalism, politics, and much social research — the habit of speaking without qualification of Hungarians and Romanians, or Serbs and Albanians, or Russians and Estonians as if they were sharply bounded, internally homogeneous “groups” — not only weakens social analysis but undermines the possibilities for liberal politics in the region.

MIGRATION

Like ethnicity — and in part, of course, in connection with ethnicity — migration too has become a central issue throughout Europe. But just as patterns of politicized ethnicity differ, so too do patterns of migration. First, and most obviously, the problematics of migration in western Europe have focused on immigration, especially from outside the region,8 while in eastern Europe questions of migration have been, in the first instance, about emigration — seen both as a problem (for the state, in so far as it involves the disproportionate outmigration of highly educated or skilled younger people) and as a solution (for individuals, in so far as temporary work abroad or permanent emigration offers a means of coping with economic dislocation or getting ahead; for the state, in that it generates remittances; or for nationalists, if it removes or weakens “unwanted” communities).

As a corollary of this basic difference, migration has been experientially marginal in western Europe. After long years of invisibility, migrants — and their distinctive cultural practices — have become conspicuously visible and central to everyday experience in many western European cities and towns. But migration itself — even in former countries of emigration such as Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain — is something that others do. In eastern Europe, by contrast, migration has become experientially central, figuring pervasively in the way ordinary people think and talk about their plans, strategies, dreams, and hopes.

Within western Europe, migration has of course become more free with the enlargement of the European Union (EU), the (delayed) introduction of free movement for citizens of new EU member states, the abolition of internal frontiers within the Schengen zone, and the general weakening of national citizenship as an instrument of social closure. In much of eastern Europe, migration has become less free, in certain respects, as political space has contracted; as borders, visas, and new citizenships have been introduced; and as the initially open door with which Western countries welcomed migrants fleeing collapsing communist regimes quickly closed. In other respects, to be sure, migration possibilities there have expanded. Notably, citizens of most east-central European countries no longer require visas to travel to EU/Schengen countries. This does not, of course, grant them the right to work, and even after the eastward enlargement of the EU in 2004, existing member states will be permitted to limit labour migration from new member states for a transitional period of up to seven years. But the ability to travel without the hurdles and indignities of having to seek a visa nonetheless marks a significant improvement for citizens of these countries (and also, of course, makes it easier to work without documents).

In western Europe — to highlight a final stark dimension of difference — migration involves mixing and generates new forms and degrees of ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious heterogeneity, together with the new challenges to national self-understanding, and the new forms of politicized ethnicity sketched above. In eastern Europe, much migration — not only in the last fifteen years, but over the last century — has involved unmixing, reducing rather than increasing heterogeneity (Brubaker, 1995). This is notoriously the case, of course, for the infamous instances of forced migration — starting with the Balkan wars at beginning of the
20th century, via the massive displacements during and after the Second World War, to the Balkan wars at century’s close — that have come to be known as “ethnic cleansing” (Naimark, 2001; Mann, forthcoming). But it is also the case for quieter, less dramatic forms of ethnic unmixing, involving, for example, the migration of Germans from Poland, Russia, and the former Soviet Union to Germany; of Hungarians from Romania, Yugoslavia, Ukraine, and Slovakia to Hungary; of Russians from various Soviet successor states to Russia; and of Jews from the former Soviet Union to Israel (Brubaker, 1998; Joppke, forthcoming).9

Of course, patterns of migration are a great deal more complicated than this. “Western Europe” and “Eastern Europe” are not single places but differentiated series of places, differently positioned — for economic, political, and geographic reasons — with respect to migration flows. Consider just one example. In the more prosperous east-central European countries — especially Poland,10 the Czech Republic,11 Hungary,12 and Slovenia — emigration pressures are weaker, while labour migration from points further east, and requests for political asylum from Asian and African as well as eastern European countries, have emerged as significant issues. In this respect, these countries may be following in the path of Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece, which made the transition from emigration to immigration countries during the last quarter-century.

More than a decade after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it is worth keeping in mind the migration that has not occurred from — and within — eastern Europe. In 1990, experts warned of an “exodus,” a “human deluge,”13 an “invasion” of “hungry hordes,” a “mass migration on a scale unseen since World War II,”14 a “flood of desperate people,” amounting to a modern-day Völkerwanderung, akin, in the words of Peter Jankowitsch, cl. ir of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Austrian parliament, to that in which “the Germanic people[s] moved west and destroyed the Roman Empire.” “How many Poles will stay in Poland?” Jankowitsch asked rhetorically. “How many Romanians will stay in Romania?”15 Plenty, it turned out. Sizeable though westward migration has undoubtedly been in the experience and — even more so — in the social imagination of ordinary citizens of eastern Europe, its magnitude, for western countries, has remained modest. In the “frontline” states of Germany and Austria, such migration has been much more significant, but even there its rhythms have been measured, not cataclysmic.

Around the same time, haunted by the Yugoslav refugee crisis, analysts envisioned convulsive episodes of forced or politically induced mi-

gration on a much vaster scale, pointing with special concern, in this context too, to the 25 million Russians outside Russia. Yet while many Russians have left Central Asia and Kazakhstan, the migration has been comparatively orderly, and the large majority of Kazakhstani Russians have chosen so far to remain in Kazakhstan.

STATEHOOD

My final cluster of themes concerns the state. The restructuring of the state has been a major issue throughout Europe. But in this domain, too, questions have been posed in very different ways in different parts of Europe.

The most striking difference would seem to be this: while the reorganization of political space in western Europe has pointed — at least in anticipation — beyond the nation-state, the spectacular post-Cold War reconfiguration of central and eastern Europe has involved a move back to the nation-state. Apart from unified Germany, of the twenty-two successor states to the multinational Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and binational Czechoslovakia, all but three expressly understand themselves as nation-states — i.e., as the states of and for the particular nations whose names they bear (and the three exceptions — the Russian Federation, rump Yugoslavia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina — are themselves closely linked to particular nations). If western Europe is entering a post-national age, the political context for much of eastern Europe is post-multinational. Just as the great Habsburg, Romanov, and Ottoman empires crumbled at the beginning of the “short 20th-century,” leaving an array of nationally defined successor states, so too, at the close of the century, multinational states have again fragmented into sets of soi-disant nation-states.

Yet this view requires qualification, and not only because the massive eastern enlargement of the EU that will officially occur on 1 May 2004 blurs the west-east distinction. More fundamentally, the EU does not represent a linear or unambiguous move “beyond the nation-state” to a supranational form of political authority. As Milward (1992) argues, the initially limited moves towards supranational authority worked — and were intended — to restore and strengthen the authority of the nation-state. What has been occurring is a complex unbundling and redistribution — upwards, downwards, and in various oblique directions — of previously tightly bundled powers and competencies. The resultant “multi-level” or even “neo-medieval” polity does not look much like a
supranational super-state: an oft-quoted remark describes the EU as an “economic giant, a political dwarf, and a military worm.” Events of the last decade, notwithstanding the Treaty of Maastricht and the announced formation of a common security and defence policy, have done little to undermine that view.

Although there is no clear move beyond the nation-state, the classical model of unitary, centralized, sovereign statehood, in which all authority derives from a single central point, no longer describes political reality. Authority has been reconfigured, and competencies have been unbundled and redistributed – not only to the EU (itself a set of institutions and authorities, not a single entity), but also to other international organizations and to sub-national polities and jurisdictions. This raises fundamental questions about the changing nature of statehood and political authority.

Granted that the EU is not very state-like at present, how might it become more state-like in the future? What attributes historically associated with statehood might it come to acquire? What does its development imply about the statehood – or, following J.P. Nettl (1968), the “stateness” – of existing states? Are they becoming less state-like as they give up conventional sovereign powers, such as control over borders and over monetary and fiscal policy?

Once we revise our understanding of statehood to allow for the unbundling and sharing of powers and competencies previously monopolized by a single sovereign centre of authority, then questions of stateness also arise for lower-level polities emerging within federalizing or otherwise decentralizing states. To what extent do more or less autonomous but non-sovereign polities such as Catalonia, Flanders, and Scotland take on attributes of stateness as they gain new and often quite considerable powers and competencies, even while remaining parts of larger, more embracing states? This is a familiar issue in the literature on federalism, but that literature has been quite separate from the historical and political sociological literature on the development of the modern state. The latter has defined the modern state as centralized and sovereign – as monopolizing the means of coercion within a particular territory, in Weber’s classic formulation – and has cast the story of its development in teleological form, involving the progressive appropriation of previously dispersed powers by a single centre. This perspective has marginalized the experience of federal states. Their very existence is something of an anomaly; they are by definition not very state-like.

The complex unbundling and redistribution of powers and competencies, in short, are forcing a fundamental rethinking of the very notion of “the state.” The notion may prove too heavily encumbered by the political theory of sovereignty and its monist, unitarist connotations to be of much analytical use in conceptualizing the complex, multi-level polity that is emerging.

In eastern Europe, questions of statehood and stateness are posed in quite different terms. There is, in the first place, the sheer proliferation of new states in the region. Almost all of them, as noted above, have defined and constituted themselves as sovereign nation-states, drawing on highly institutionalized – if outdated – rhetorics and models of sovereignty and nationhood (Meyer, 1987). These institutionalized “performances” of sovereign nation-statehood do not represent an unambiguous move “back to the nation-state.” Almost all the new states are involved, in one way or another, in processes of regional integration, notably as members or candidate members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and/or the EU on the one hand and the Commonwealth of Independent States on the other. Yet the invocations of sovereignty and nationhood are not mere rhetoric. There is a real tension between the model of sovereign nation-statehood and that of supranational integration; the latter does not automatically trump the former. The model of sovereign nation-statehood remains normatively more robust in eastern than in western Europe and has its attractions not only for newly constituted states but also for those newly freed from the Soviet economic and security embrace. Although referenda have shown overwhelming support for EU membership in most candidate states, the outcome remains in doubt, as of this writing, in Estonia, where a June 2003 poll showed voters evenly divided. As the leader of the Estonian anti-EU movement put it, to join the EU would be to move “from one union to another” (Smith, 2001).

Second, there are the special “stateness” problems – in Linz and Stepan’s sense, not Nettl’s – posed by politicized ethnicity in eastern Europe. As I indicated above, the ethnically framed challenges – or perceived challenges – to the territorial integrity and boundaries of existing states are particularly delicate in eastern Europe, because they often involve cross-border links connecting ethnonational claimants within particular states and a patron state abroad that represents the same ethnocultural nationality.

Third, and most important, although the initially prevailing understanding of post-communist “transition” posited the need to liberate
of patrimonial administration. Today, however, pressures to reform conspicuously corrupt, grossly inefficient state administrations are much weaker. States (and other actors) continue to make war, but war no longer makes states the way it used to. The world-wide club of states includes a large and perhaps increasing number of “quasi-states” (Jackson, 1990) – organizations that are officially recognized and certified internationally as “states” yet fail to do the most elementary things that states are supposed to do, such as maintaining order throughout a given territory. Today, thanks to the reification and sacralization of existing state borders in prevailing international discourse and practice, such quasi-states can continue to exist, irrespective of their abysmal performance, with little threat that they will go out of business. Eastern Europe may not harbour the worst specimens of this lamentable genre, and of course there are great differences within the region. In much of the region, however, the making of the modern state, far from being a completed chapter of history, is a matter of great contemporary urgency.

NOTES

1 As the rich comparative literature on ethnicity makes clear (see, for example, Akzin, 1966; Schmerhorn, 1970; Francis, 1976; Rothschild, 1981; van den Berghe, 1981; and Horowitz, 1985), these are not the only ways in which ethnic heterogeneity can be socially organized and politically expressed. But this distinction does capture a key dimension of variation in the organization and expression of ethnicity in Europe. A broadly similar distinction has been introduced into political theory – especially into discussions of multiculturalism – by Kymlicka, 1995. For an attempt to bring Western political theory to bear on ethnicity in eastern Europe, see Kymlicka, 2001.

2 Even when ethnic groups are concentrated in immigrant neighbourhoods or enclaves, the nature and consequences of such territorial concentration are quite different for immigrant ethnicity and for territorial nationality.

3 Some ethnopolitical or ethnoreligious claims can threaten the state even without involving claims to territorial nationhood – for example, radical Islamicist claims.

4 And just as Gypsies straddle conceptual boundaries, they cross state borders as well. Some of the ugliest episodes of immigration control in the 1990s were driven by efforts to control their unwanted movement.
5 A similar point could be made about western Europe. Substantial literatures address the rise of xenophobic, radical-right, or national-populist parties (for overviews, see Betz, 1994; Betz and Immerfall, 1998) and of anti-immigrant violence (Björn and Witte, 1993). Again, without minimizing the significance of the new right parties, or still less that of the appalling attacks on asylum seekers and other foreigners in Germany and elsewhere, one should not overestimate the strength of xenophobic nationalism in western Europe.

6 From a large literature, see Barth, 1969; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Anderson, 1991; and Jenkins, 1997.

7 For an elaboration of this argument, see Brubaker, 2002.

8 There has been a good deal of concern with intra-EU migration, but mainly in terms of how it articulates with immigration from outside the region, given the need — since abolition of internal frontiers within the Schengen zone — for EU states to harmonize external admissions policies.

9 Even as it involves a reduction in ethnic heterogeneity in the countries of origin, such migrations of ethnic unmixing generate new forms of ethnic or quasi-ethnic heterogeneity in the putative national homelands: ethnic Hungarians from Romania are treated as “Romanians” in Hungary, while Germans and Jews from the former Soviet Union are treated as “Russians” in Germany and Israel. On the ambiguous and contested national identity of ethnic Hungarian migrants to Hungary, see Fox, 2003.

10 www.drc.dk/dk/publikationer/boegeropgjec/boeger/safe3rd/poland.html
11 popin.natur.cuni.cz/html/policy/migration.html
12 These three countries (and Slovenia) are “buffers” or “transit” countries between eastern and western Europe.
13 Independent, 29 Nov. 1990.
17 Leading European intellectuals critical of the war in Iraq have called for a “core Europe” capable of serving as a counterweight to American hegemony (Derrida and Habermas, 2003), but as Paul Kennedy (2003) pointed out in reply, there are substantial political and institutional obstacles to this occurring.
18 In certain respects these powers and competencies may be more substantial, and more state-like, than those of the EU.

19 What constitutes a challenge to the territorial integrity of a state is open to dispute. In Romania, for example, the demands made by the ethnic Hungarian party for autonomy are perceived (or at least publicly represented) by much of the Romanian political elite as a threat to the territorial integrity of the state, even though Hungarian minority politicians insist that, while they are challenging the internal structure of the Romanian state (and its constitutional definition as a unitary nation-state), they pose no threat to its territorial integrity.

20 See Stark and Bruszt, 1998, chap. 4, for an analysis and critique of this swing in the intellectual pendulum.

21 Holmes, 1997, was writing before Putin’s accession to the presidency in 2000. Putin has sought to strengthen and centralize the state, notably by recovering powers previously appropriated by regions (Orttung, 2001).

22 Note that powers may be dispersed in two senses: through the formally acknowledged decentralization of power (as in the various agreements that ethnofederal polities within Russia made with Moscow during the 1990s); and through the de facto appropriation by regional or local officials (or even by persons with no official standing, such as some warlords and criminal bosses) of powers formally held by the central state. On the concept of appropriation, Weber’s discussion of patrimonial authority remains pertinent and richly suggestive (1968, 231ff).

23 For the most recent and comprehensive treatment of this theme, see Ertman, 1997.

24 Much warfare in the ex-Second and Third Worlds is carried out not by states, but by an array of quasi- and non-state forces (Fairbanks, 1995). Another, more fundamental reason, as Tilly himself admits, is that, with the gradual “filling-in of the state system,” states have increasingly been made — literally created, and allowed to exist, regardless of their infrastructural strength — chiefly by other states (Tilly, 1975a, 636; 1975b, 46).

25 Much has been made, in the last decade, about the weakening of this tendency; but this confuses the weakening of the model of sovereignty (which has indeed occurred) with the desacralization and de-ification of state borders, which has not. Borders are normatively more permeable, but they remain, in principle, “inviolable,” in the sense of unalterable. Thus in Kosovo, the United States and NATO could claim to be respecting the borders of Yugoslavia even when they challenged Yugoslav sovereignty within those borders. Note that the new states that did emerge from the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia already existed as states within formally federal states and already possessed their own borders, territories, and even (in principle) the right to secede from the wider federal state.
REFERENCES

As late as the beginning of 1997, what is often comically called “international opinion” generally viewed Indonesia as a “success story,” making sustained, even spectacular economic strides under the durable dictatorship of General Suharto. Today, almost four years later, that same international opinion, without missing a step, has largely decided that Indonesia is virtually ungovernable and on the edge of catastrophe. The spectres haunting this opinion are economic collapse, ethnic and religious violence, a totally corrupt judiciary and bureaucratic apparatus, serious separatist movements, an incompetent political class, and a brutalized and internally divided military. In Indonesia itself, the initial euphoria unleashed by the fall of the ageing tyrant in May 1998 and by the holding of remarkably free, fair, and unviolent elections in the summer of 1999, has largely disappeared, and the number of middle-class and intellectual doomsday-prophets has been steadily increasing. For them – rightly, if mostly for the wrong reasons – the central question is the future of their (even the) postcolonial nation-state in the new century. We consider this question by first looking at the more sophisticated arguments of the best-intentioned pessimistic patriots. Then we examine the reasons for optimism. The final section outlines possible parallels with Canada.