

**Separatist Struggles and Center-Region Relations  
in Chechnya, Punjab, and Québec**

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**Abstract**

Since the end of World War II, the most common type of conflict in the international system has been conflicts within rather than between or among states. In many of these conflicts, the warring parties are central governments and ethnic or regional groups in pursuit of greater autonomy. In response to these trends, scholars have theorized (and state leaders have tried out) different ways for containing conflicts in internally divided states. A growing body of research is investigating the merits of federalism or decentralization as “peace-preserving.” I follow on these debates by arguing that, while decentralized governance may indeed be peace-preserving at times, these institutions’ success varies depending on the specific characteristics of the societies they govern, particularly their ethnic composition and wealth. Empirically, this paper examines three cases of conflictual center-region relations—Chechnya’s relationship to Moscow in Russia, Punjab’s relationship to Delhi in India, and Québec’s relationship to Ottawa in Canada.

Why have some states better been able to withstand separatist pressures than others? This is the broad question motivating this study. Since the end of World War II, the most common type of conflict in the international system has been struggles within, rather than between, states (Sarkees et al. 2005; Harbom and Wallensteen 2005). Many of these conflicts have been waged between central governments and ethnic or regional groups seeking increased autonomy or independence for their group and the territory they inhabit (Marshall and Gurr 2005). This study is about the diverse capacity of states, in particular decentralized states, to prevent these kinds of struggles.

One of the tools that central governments have turned to as a means to contain intrastate conflicts, particularly nationalist or separatist conflicts, is decentralized governance, federalism, or regional autonomy arrangements of some sort. In 1998, the Good Friday Agreement, which included provisions of a devolved Northern Ireland assembly within the United Kingdom, was a significant step towards ending 30 years of fighting—“the Troubles”—between forces for (primarily Protestants) and against (primarily Catholics) British rule. In 2005, another 30-year long conflict moved towards peace when the Indonesian government and the separatist Islamist Free Aceh Movement signed an accord in which the rebels agreed to give up their armed struggle in return for the right to establish a form of regional self-government within the Indonesian state. Just a couple of months later, the Iraqi government ratified a draft constitution that emphasized the federal nature of the state as a means to accommodate its different ethnic and religious groups. In more culturally homogenous societies, governments have pursued federalism as a means to address regional conflict, as in Colombia, or decentralized existing federations to accommodate sharp regional differences, as in Brazil. Indeed, the popularity of such decentralization measures is evident in debates about how to contain conflicts in countries as different as Afghanistan, Bosnia, Cyprus, Nigeria, South Africa, Spain, and Sri Lanka.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, while both policy-makers and scholars have come to pay attention to the “curing” or “peace-preserving” merits of decentralization or federalism (e.g. Bermeo 2002), others see it more as a “curse.” Federalism is, for example, considered part of the explanation for the conflict in Nigeria’s Niger Delta

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of peace settlements including provisions of decentralization, see Hoddie and Hartzell (2005).

(Suberu 2001; 2004), as well as the break-up of the former Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia (e.g. Bunce 1999). How to reconcile these divergent views? Moreover, given the divergent record of conflict across federal states, can we really say anything conclusive about whether decentralization or federalism is peace-preserving? Not only is there variation among federal states—take as examples the relatively peaceful Canadian federation versus the more conflict-ridden Russian one—but also within federal states. Russia, for instance, has largely peaceful relations with most of its 85 regions but does poorly in maintaining peace with Chechnya and a handful of other regions. Thinking about decentralization in cure or curse term does not take us very far in investigating these differences.

Therefore, I am not asking *whether* decentralized or federal states are a better fit than unitary states to contain conflicts. Rather, I ask, *what are the conditions under which* decentralization can help contribute to peace? For instance, does fiscal autonomy in a rich region have the same effect as fiscal autonomy in a poor region? In this study, I explore such conditional relationships. While researchers have rightfully investigated the decentralized/centralized distinction, there has been little systematic attention to decentralization's diverse capacity to ameliorate—or exacerbate—regional and ethnic cleavages.<sup>2</sup>

Recognizing that there is no one-size-fits-all decentralized or federal solution to conflicts in divided states, I maintain that, while federalism or decentralization may indeed be peace-preserving at times, these institutions' "success" varies depending on specific characteristics of the societies in which they are implemented. That is, while institutions governing center-region relations affect intrastate conflicts, they do not do so in uniform ways across diverse societies. In particular, a society's ethnic composition and distribution of wealth affect how decentralized governance can help preserve intrastate peace by conditioning mobilization. Whether the conflict stays within the boundaries of non-violent political bargaining depends on the political relationship between central and regional elites.

I examine three case studies of conflictual center-region relations—Chechnya in Russia, Punjab in India, and Québec in Canada. In each of these regions, the majority of the population are members of

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<sup>2</sup> This is a research agenda put forth in Amoretti and Bermeo (2004) and furthered by Hale (2004); Sambanis and Milanovic (2004); Brancati (2006).

an ethnic group that is a minority in the federation as a whole—the Chechens in Chechnya, the Sikhs in Punjab, and the *Québécois* in Québec—and has a history of resistance to central government control. Indeed, in none of these cases are the regional governments signatories to the constitution that, among other things, governs center-region relations in the federation. Each of these regions could be carved out for independent statehood, yet they have followed different trajectories in their pursuit of autonomy. Moscow’s relationship to Chechnya has been tense since the Chechen government under President Dzhokhar Dudayev declared independence in 1991. In 1994, when the Russian army first entered Grozny, the Chechen capital, the conflict turned into a bloody civil war. More than a decade earlier, Delhi’s relationship to Punjab appeared equally troublesome. In 1984, recently revived Punjabi Sikh demands for greater autonomy turned into a nine-year violent center-province conflict when the government in Delhi responded with military force. While in many ways similar to the Chechen conflict, the “Punjab crisis” differed in that the provincial government, under the Akali Dal, demanded only greater autonomy within the borders of the Indian state. In Québec, in 1995 the “sovereignists,” as heads of the provincial government under the banner of the *Parti québécois*, came close to winning a referendum calling for secession. Unlike the Chechen and Punjab cases, however, the separatist agenda in Québec has been voiced nearly without any violent confrontations with the center. How can the workings of the federal institutions in Russia, India, and Canada help explain these different conflict trajectories—violent separatism in pursuit of independence in Chechnya, on-and-off violent separatism in pursuit of greater autonomy in Punjab, and peaceful separatism in pursuit of independence in Québec?

Key to these different trajectories, I argue, are a) the ways in which institutions governing center-region relations have affected, and been affected by, societal traits of these regions, providing for different grievances and assessments about the merits of staying put in the state, and b) the degree to which there are factors present that aid center-region negotiation and, thus, peaceful accommodation.

Before proceeding, let me make a brief note on definitions. According to Riker’s classic definition, “A constitution is federal if (1) two levels of government rule the same land and people, (2) each level has at least one area of action in which it is autonomous, and (3) there is some guarantee (even

though merely a statement in the constitution) of the autonomy of each government in its own sphere” (1964, 11). Arguments about federalism’s effect on intrastate conflict may be applied equally well to states with decentralized governance structures but that are not considered federal, and I will use the terms ‘federalism’ and ‘decentralization’ interchangeably.<sup>3</sup> In this study, I focus primarily on policy (or decision-making) decentralization, which comes close to Riker’s definition of federalism and “exists if at least one subnational tier of government has exclusive authority to make decisions on at least one policy issue” (Treisman 2007, 24), and fiscal decentralization, which refers to decision-making decentralization of issues of taxation and expenditures, and/or a division of tax revenues where subnational governments account for a large share of public revenues or spending (ibid., 25-26). The level of government below the central—or, as it is also referred to, ‘federal’ or ‘national’—level in federal and decentralized states goes by different names. In India, they are referred to as ‘states.’ In Canada, they are referred to as ‘provinces,’ and in Russia, ‘regions’ or ‘subjects.’ This level of governance is often referred to as the ‘subnational’ level, but a more correct term is ‘substate,’ as neither the state, nor its regions are necessarily nations. I typically use the term ‘regional’ groups and actors to refer to subnational challengers.

As the case studies show, the central government can also control the regions in ways that do not nicely fall into the categories of policy and fiscal decentralization, and I think it is useful to be open for a view of institutions that encompass “the formal and informal procedures, routines, norms, and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy” (Hall and Taylor 1996, 938). These institutions are part of what we think about as the state; hence the argument here about decentralization and center-region institutions’ peace-preserving effects belong under a broader research agenda of how states affect—and are affected by—the societies they govern (e.g. Migdal 2001).

### **The Literature: “Peace-Preserving” Federalism and Optimal Institutional Design?**

In the conflict literature, decentralization measures have received mixed reviews. A number of scholars have come to view decentralized governance, regional autonomy, or federalism as useful

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<sup>3</sup> For further discussion of definitions, see Treisman (2007, 21-27).

strategies for managing conflicts between central governments and ethnic groups or regions of the state. Bächtiger and Steiner (2004, 34-35), for example, point to how the Swiss federal arrangements have helped meet religious and linguistic groups' demands for autonomy over policy areas such as education, religion, and language, thus alleviating cultural grievances. Likewise, Brass (1974) and Kohli (2004) argue that federalism in India, by embracing the country's linguistic diversity, has helped hold this vast and heterogeneous state together. The advantage of decentralization is the combination of shared rule with self rule, which serves as a compromise between regional groups in separatist pursuit and the central government of the state, which is unlikely to give up territory or power.

Bermeo (2002) finds that both democratic and non-democratic federal states do better than unitary states in terms of defusing armed rebellion and reducing political and economic discrimination, as well as political, economic, and cultural grievances—hence her concept of “peace-preserving” federalism. These findings echo others in suggesting that decentralized governance reduces the incidence of nationalist conflict by funneling ethnic collective action into forms of protest within the bounds of “normal” politics (Gurr 2000; Hechter 2000; Stepan 2001; Saideman et al. 2002). Likewise, Lijphart (1990) points to regional autonomy as part of successful power-sharing. To these federal advantages one can add the checks that federal institutions provide on the central government (Weingast 1998)—a significant concern of regional minorities fearful of being swept aside by national majorities (Lake and Rothchild 1996). Unifying much of this research on “peace-preserving” federalism is a sense that federal institutional engineering offers the prospect of reducing conflict around territorial cleavages—be they based on social, economic, ethnic, or cultural features (Amoretti and Bermeo 2004).<sup>4</sup> Sambanis and Zinn (2006) show that self-determination movements are likely to turn to violence in reaction to state strategies that limit their autonomy, although once a group has turned to violence, granting greater autonomy is not necessarily going to have a conflict-dampening effect.

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<sup>4</sup> Though much of this research is focused on the capacity of federalism to address distinctly ethnic tensions, a substantial body of work has linked decentralized governance with peace in otherwise divided societies. In Russia in the 1990s, for example, federalism became a means to manage regional demands from non-ethnic as well as ethnic regions. Many of the 42 bilateral power-sharing agreements Yeltsin signed with regional elites in the 1990s were agreements with non-ethnic regions over fiscal and economic matters.

Yet while this branch of the literature has pointed to federalism or autonomy arrangements as a cure for internal conflicts, others have argued that such institutions instead may be more of a curse for intrastate peace and stability. Decentralization might offer regional groups the opportunity to mobilize resources and a network of institutions through which to mobilize—a dynamic observed in both ethnically homogenous and heterogeneous societies. According to Eaton (2006), for example, decentralization in Colombia has served to increase financing for rebels, further eroded the capacity of the central government, and contributed to the creation of “parallel states” on the ideological left and right within the country. A number of scholars suggest these problems are particularly acute in ethnically divided societies. Many see the ethno-federal structures of the Soviet Union as key to understanding its demise (Roeder 1991; Suny 1993; Brubaker 1996; Bunce 1999). The Soviet Union, writes Suny, was an “incubator of new nations” (1993, 87) that helped form the nationalist movements that eventually killed it. Likewise, Bunce argues that the federal structures of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia contributed to those states’ collapse. Combined with economic decline and state repression, the ethno-federal structures promoted subnational consciousness. Moreover, the federal systems encouraged shifts in power from the center to the periphery, which provided the nationalist challengers with resources for mobilization. The result was breakdown along regional lines.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to this longstanding debate about the capacity of federalism to prevent conflict, recent research shows similar divisions with regard to decentralization in post-conflict settings (Hoddie and Hartzell 2005; Lake and Rothchild 2005; Chapman and Roeder 2007). That is, whether there are any long-term benefits of decentralized post-conflict institutional arrangements is unclear.

This study picks up on the debate about peace-preserving federalism. Rather than asking whether federalism or decentralization contributes to intrastate peace, however, my approach is to explore the conditions under which these institutions can be peace-preserving. This shift of focus is important for two

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<sup>5</sup> Others have found that a high degree of regional autonomy has been positively correlated with separatism in Russia in the 1990s (Treisman 1997; Hale 2000). It is along similar lines Snyder (2000) argues that federalism (or power-sharing) does not represent a means to contain nationalist conflict, as such institutions lock in elite-driven hostile ethnic identities.

reasons. First, as the pro and con debate stands, it is indeterminate: Both sides make theoretically sound claims, backed up with empirical evidence. Second, as already noted, this debate does not shed much light on the divergent track record of conflict in federal states. Indeed, the main lesson from the diverging views on federalism and conflict is that there is no single federal formula for peace in divided societies.

While the conflict literature has made insufficiently nuanced claims about the conditions under which decentralized institutional arrangements are likely to contribute to intrastate peace, so has the federalism literature in its tendency to prescribe some sort of optimal design principle independent of the social, economic, and cultural characteristics of any given society. Hechter (2000), for example, argues that containing nationalist conflict requires the right balance of fiscal decentralization—not too much and not too little. While the regions need to have enough fiscal autonomy to carry out the tasks assigned to them under the division of power between tiers of government, the central government needs to retain an income base sufficient to cover centrally defined tasks and potential transfers. Hence the trick is to find the perfect balance between decentralization and centralization: “If too little decentralization causes rebellion, then too much is likely to engender fragmentation” (2000, 152). Filippov et al. (2004) propose a strong national, or state-wide, party system as a means to promote stability in federal states. The authors recognize that implementation of any political institutions requires careful consideration of how those institutions may interact with other institutions and their economic and/or cultural environment. However, the authors focus on institutions, maintaining that even though the “supergame” of norms, conventions, and culture matters, it “lies outside the realm of conscious design so that we can focus on formal rules and the question of whether choices exist that encourage federal stability regardless of culture” (2004, 161). My contention is that institutions’ cultural and economic context cannot be set aside.

Indeed, given the tremendous diversity of issues facing any given country, it is impossible to prescribe *a priori* the distribution of powers between national and regional governments in any given case (Sharma 1953). In this regard two issues are prominent. First, the appropriate design principles are certain to vary depending on the ends one seeks. The institutions ideally suited for regional fiscal discipline may be different from those that foster peace in a divided society. Second, the institutions likely to foster peace

are dependent on the challenges facing a given state. While one set of institutions might promote peace in one country, they might do just the opposite in another with different underlying cultural and economic characteristics.

In contrast to the arguments that consider federalism from a comparative perspective, area specialists are more inclined to argue that there is no single federal formula and, as a consequence, abandon attempts at coming up with generalizable hypotheses. On the Swiss experience, Bächtiger and Steiner note that, “No single formula can be handed over to the political engineer. The mix of factors and particularly the intertwining of formal and informal institutions cannot be easily transferred to another setting” (2004, 48). While accepting that it is problematic to prescribe a blueprint of decentralization for vastly different states and societies, I suggest that it is possible to think of generalizable propositions by considering the ways in which these institutions interact with the societies they govern. We know, from the conflict literature, that both ethnicity and distribution of wealth are likely to affect separatist conflicts. Hence, important steps in assessing decentralization’s peace-preserving capacity include theorizing, testing, and tracing the ways in which specific institutions work *in conjunction* with these societal traits. The next section lays out this argument.

### **The Argument: State, Society, and Separatism**

Separatist conflicts are here seen as struggles involving the central government, the government or leaders of separatist a region or group, and the population in the separatist region. These struggles can revolve around demands that radically challenge the integrity and idea of the state, such as independence, decentralization of security, or decentralization of taxation,<sup>6</sup> or they can revolve around demands that may be equally important to the group but that less radically challenges the state, such as greater cultural autonomy. Besides these differences in goals, the means can vary. Some separatist struggles are fought violently, while others are fought through referenda, political protests, elections, and other forms of

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<sup>6</sup> Given standard definitions or notions of the state, these are functions that define what it means to be a state (Weber 1958; Levi 1988).

conventional politics.

I maintain that policy and fiscal autonomy in conjunction with ethnicity and wealth shape separatist mobilization by affecting the regional population's grievances and their assessments of the value of remaining part of the state. The regional population's allegiance to regional versus central elites is, as such, influenced by how institutions governing center-region relations respond to societal traits of the region. To the degree that center-region institutions allow separatist leaders to blame the central government for the population's day-to-day problems, the easier these leaders can garner popular support for separatist goals. Whether the conflict stays within the boundaries of non-violent politics depends on the availability of channels for negotiation between elites, particularly between central and regional elites.

An argument that explores decentralization's impact on separatist conflicts needs to begin by considering why the population in any given region would want to leave the state. The assumption here is that the regional population's separatist inclinations are initially shaped by ethnicity and wealth.

Most people would probably like the chance to express themselves in their own language, celebrate their religious holidays, and feel free from discrimination and persecution based on their culture, religion, language, race, and other ethnic "markers." Indeed, a long-standing literature points to the role of ethnicity as a cause or driving force of intrastate conflicts. While some argue that ethnicity contributes to conflict due to long-standing hatreds (Kaplan 1993) or resentment towards ethnic groups other than one's own (Petersen 2002), others suggest that fear may make ethnic groups resort to violence as a means to protect their existence (Horowitz 1985, 175-84; Posen 1993; Lake and Rothchild 1996). Some point to group discrimination as a motivating factor for ethnic conflict (Gurr 2000), while others maintain that political leaders may stir up hostility among different ethnic groups ("play the ethnic card") in order to keep or acquire power (Gagnon 1994/95), using myths and symbols to justify such hostility (Kaufman 2001). Scholars in the social psychology vein, particularly those drawing on social identity theory (cf. Brown 2000; Hewstone and Greenland 2000), maintain that ethnic conflicts rest on individuals' tendency to favor their own group (Horowitz 1985). Regardless of the specific mechanisms, in nearly all cases, ethnicity is hypothesized to help solve the collective action problems associated with mass mobilization,

particularly when ethnic groups see themselves as distinct from the majority group(s) in the state and are territorially concentrated in a region they consider to be their homeland (Toft 2003).

Arguments of a more materialist nature, in contrast, posit that it is not identities but unequal access to resources and wealth that cause conflict. Income inequalities may create economic grievances on the part of the poorer party (Muller and Seligson 1987). In Gurr's (1970) classic formulation, collective disadvantages and relative deprivation are at the heart of violent political mobilization. While departing from the relative deprivation mechanism, Gurr (2000) later argues that ethnic minority group discrimination, including economic discrimination, contributes to conflict. Similarly, Hechter (1975) suggests that the cultural division of labor and economic inequalities between ethnic groups in a state contributes to distinct ethnic identities and resistance to political integration by the less advantaged group. Others have maintained that a particularly wealthy region or group in an unequal society may find subsidizing the rest of the country burdensome and hope to improve its economic lot by escaping via secession or, at least, loosening the ties with the center—itsself likely to promote conflict (e.g. Gourevitch 1979; Bolton and Roland 1997; Alesina et al. 2000; Sambanis and Milanovic 2004).<sup>7</sup> Thus, redistributive demands can come from either rich or poor regions as people want to be materially safe and able to prosper, and would like not to be unjustly deprived of their wealth.

These aspirations of the regional population, likely to engender separatist sentiments, can either be mitigated or exacerbated by political institutions of the state. The state can shape people's economic well-being and opportunity to express their identities and, as such, engender anti-state collective action, particularly if it is seen as responsible for the problems people face in their everyday lives (Goodwin 2001).<sup>8</sup> In particular, institutions governing center-region relations can, pending on how they respond to ethnicity and wealth, shape the perceived legitimacy of the state by affecting people's *grievances* and

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<sup>7</sup> Recent large-n studies of civil war (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Collier and Hoeffler 2004) find no support for the proposition that inequality contributes to conflict. The problem with these findings, however, is that the empirical measure for inequality is Gini coefficients, which measure inequality at an individual level, while the theoretical arguments concern inter-group (or inter-regional) inequality.

<sup>8</sup> The social movement literature on framing suggests that specific blame attribution regarding who is responsible for people's grievances, as well as specific recipes for what to do about those grievances, aids collective action (e.g. Snow and Benford 1992; McAdam et al. 1996; Javeline 2003).

*assessments about the value* of staying put in the state. That is, these institutions shape the regional population's relationship to both the regional and the central government. Note that the approach here does not privilege so-called grievance-based explanations over cost-benefit approaches, or vice-versa.<sup>9</sup> Rather, the task is to consider how institution-society configurations affect each of these motivations.

Federalism or decentralization can also strengthen subnational identities and resources for mobilization. Indeed, an important argument among those opposed to such institutional arrangements is the possibility that autonomy arrangements enhance subnational identities (e.g. Roeder 1991; Chapman and Roeder 2007) and possibly weaken attachments to the state as a whole (e.g. Elkins and Sides 2007). Similarly, decentralized governance can provide regional elites with resources for mobilization (Bunce 1999), including encouraging the formation of regional or ethnic-based parties, both of which are considered destabilizing for a country (Horowitz 1985; Brancati 2006). The social movement literature that underpins such arguments about collective identities and resource mobilization, however, takes as its starting point that there are grievances and rationales for mobilization—motives, so to speak. That is, strong subnational identities or attachments per se are not considered causes of conflicts; rather, strong collective identities can facilitate mobilization when paired with grievances that, some argue, can be manipulated by elites or attributed to the center. Similarly, resource mobilization alone is unlikely to cause conflict, but in the presence of grievances or negative assessments about staying put, it helps facilitate collective action. The focus in this study is to identify the different ways in which institutions affect grievances and rationales by responding to certain societal traits.

Let me now turn to the specifics of these state-society interactions. Building on the federalism literature, the institutions I focus on are *policy autonomy* (the degree to which regional governments make policy decisions) and *fiscal autonomy* (the degree to which regional governments fund their own public good provision). These institutions, in conjunction with ethnicity and wealth, shape separatist

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<sup>9</sup> While some large-n studies of civil war have attempted to make clear distinctions between grievance-based explanations and explanations more in the cost-benefit vein (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Collier and Hoeffler 2004), this approach has been challenged. Once these statistical studies are supplemented with case studies, it becomes clear that the distinction between so-called grievance and greed-based explanations are “shades of the same problem” (Sambanis 2004, 260).

mobilization. Whether such mobilization stays within the boundaries of non-violent political bargaining hinges on the relationship between elites, both central and regional elites and among regional elites themselves. Put differently, the political route through which demands are negotiated enables institutional solutions to contribute to peace. The federalism literature has identified one such mechanism, namely *party ties across tiers of government*, which is the third institution at the center of this study.

### *Policy Autonomy and Ethnicity*

Drawing on the classic fiscal federalism literature (Tiebout 1956; Oates 1972), Hechter (2000) argues that federal institutions can contain nationalist conflicts if they allow ethnic groups policy-making capacity over issues central to their recognition, such as language, education, religion, and culture. Local provision of public goods that are valued by only segments of the population is “superior because it increases the likelihood that the right mix of goods will be produced—that mix which is most consistent with the distinctive values of the national group” (2000, 143). Likewise, Gurr suggests that the optimal strategy to prevent national groups from mobilizing in pursuit of increased autonomy is to “give such peoples the means—legal, political, and material—to protect and promote their cultural practices in those regions and spheres of life where they matter to group members” (2000, 165). Underpinning these arguments is the notion that policy autonomy in the cultural sphere, which I refer to as ethnic policy autonomy, can contain popular grievances based on ethnic discrimination and/or enhance the benefits of remaining part of the state, making it more difficult for regional elites to play the ethnic card.

There are two conditional aspects to consider, both of which are related to ethnicity. Recommendations about ethnic policy autonomy as a means to contain nationalist conflicts seem to assume that the conflict is about ethnic matters. Moreover, such recommendations also appear to assume that the basis for solidarity or mobilization across different ethnic groups is similar. I question both of these assumptions.

First, in some nationalist conflicts, the master cleavage is not (only) about ethnicity. In Québec and Scotland, for example, the separatist struggles have come to revolve around social policies (Béland

and Lecours 2005). The question, then, is when is mobilization about “typical” ethnic markers, such as language, culture, and shared history and memories? When are ethno-national goals at the center of the mobilization effort? While this study does not provide a full answer to these questions, it suggests that demographics can foster separatist movements that do not revolve around typical ethnic traits, which in turn has implications for the peace-preserving effects of ethnic policy autonomy. If, as in many separatist conflicts, the struggle is in the name of a region and not only an ethnic group, the ethnic composition of that region conditions the kind of policy autonomy that can help preserve peace. Assuming that a separatist challenger is a stronger challenger when the separatists are in control of the regional government or supported by a large share of the regional population, to the degree that ethnicity is insufficient to create a winning coalition or critical mass in the region, elites are unlikely to try to mobilize people based on ethnicity alone. As such, ethnic policy autonomy might be insufficient or unimportant for containing separatist tendencies. Whether ethnicity is sufficient to establish a winning coalition in the region depends largely on the ethnic group’s share of the regional population (Posner 2004): The smaller the share of a region’s population is made up of a single ethnic minority group (and the more ethnically heterogeneous the region is), the less likely separatist elites in the region are to mobilize people around ethnicity alone.<sup>10</sup> In turn, the less likely ethnic policy autonomy matters for preventing or containing separatist tendencies.<sup>11</sup>

Second, while it is important to consider whether ethnicity is used to mobilize people, it is equally important to consider how ethnicity is used to mobilize people. Arguments about the “subversive” nature of ethno-federalism—decentralization along ethnic lines—are based on how these institutions politicize an ethnic identity dimension, such as language in the Soviet Union (Bunce 1999). But the fact that

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<sup>10</sup> Moreover, members from the ethnic minority group may be unlikely to support a mobilization effort that revolves solely around ethnicity if they believe that their group is too small to have an influence (cf. Chandra 2006, 86-92). It may also be the case that if a region’s population is ethnically heterogeneous, centralized policies regarding ethnic matters may be the more peace-preserving option, as that would better ensure equality between the different groups within the region and, thus, reduce the likelihood of conflict between or among the groups.

<sup>11</sup> In regions without democratic competition, the importance of forming a winning coalition might be less important, but even in such regions, the larger the share of the regional population supporting the separatist cause, the stronger the challenge to the state. Thus, even in non-democratic regions, separatist elites may seek to mobilize people around non-ethnic issues if the ethnic group only makes up a small share of the region’s population.

language is institutionalized in this manner does not necessarily explain how ethnicity is used to mobilize people, particularly whether it encourages moderate demands, such as greater autonomy, or more radical demands, such as independence. I suggest that to the degree that the state is or has been considered a threat to the existence of the ethnic group, ethnic mobilization is likely to take on a radical form.<sup>12</sup>

If there is a history of state repression or violence, the ethnic group may not be as concerned about institutions that allow policy autonomy over education and culture. Rather, the concern is about checking the center (Weingast 1998; Lake and Rothchild 1996) and ensuring the group's physical safety (cf. Petersen 2002, 68). Thus, it is reasonable to expect that if a history of a threatening center is key to mobilize an ethnic group, the group may want control over issues that help protect its physical security, including defense. However, given that the monopoly of the use of violence is integral to what it means to be a state, defense is a state function that the center most probably is unwilling to decentralize. Similarly, if the center is seen as a threat to the physical security of an ethnic group, it is likely easier for separatist leaders to rally the population around the most extreme type of separatist demands, independence, which is a demand that most central governments are unwilling to give in to.<sup>13</sup> Thus, policy autonomy with respect to typical ethnic concerns may be an insufficient peace-preserving means if people are mobilized based on fear of a threatening center.

### *Fiscal Autonomy and Wealth*

While decentralization can help contain intrastate conflicts if the regions are granted policy autonomy over issues central to minority group's recognition or safety, such autonomy means little or nothing in the absence of money to spend on decentralized priorities. If regional preferences about, for

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<sup>12</sup> Thus while the Soviet state institutionalized ethno-linguistic origin as a legitimate way for organizing the state, it was the Soviet state's repressive strategies towards some of these ethnic groups that helped form ethnic polarization between these ethnic groups and the state.

<sup>13</sup> It is also plausible that mobilization around fear of the center makes people more risk acceptant and willing to engage in violent behavior than mobilization around promoting a group's status. See prospect theory on operating in the domain of losses versus the domain of gains (Levy 1997). This was nicely put by the Russian sociologist Emil Pain, who suggested that if it is fear that drives mobilization, the means are arms. If it is about culture, the means are pens and pencils (personal communication, Moscow, May 30, 2005).

example, language, schools, and social policies deviate from those in the rest of the country, the capacity to act on those preferences is limited if regional governments are unable to finance the relevant programs. Regional governments can either raise revenues on its own to cover most of the expenses for these tasks (through taxes, user fees, and loans), or it can rely on transfers from the center (loans and grants). The peace-preserving potential of these options, however, is likely conditional on any given region's wealth.

On one hand, if a region is relatively resource-poor, reliance on its own source revenues will probably impair its ability to implement policies rather than empower it, fueling both grievances related to the lack of public goods provision and a sense that the region is not receiving its fair share from the central government. To the degree that the state's social control rests with delivering "strategies of survival" to its citizens (Migdal 1988, 26), in relatively poor regions, central transfers are probably the more peace-preserving option. On the other hand, relatively resource-rich regions can afford to fund public goods provision from its own revenues. The population in such regions is unlikely to want to finance the state's poorer regions and are, therefore, likely to prefer fiscal autonomy, which also enables policy autonomy.<sup>14</sup> These expectations are summarized in the table below.

TABLE 1  
EXPECTATIONS ABOUT FISCAL AUTONOMY AND REGIONAL WEALTH

	Fiscal autonomy high	Fiscal autonomy low
Relatively rich region	Separatist mobilization unlikely	Separatist mobilization likely
Relatively poor region	Separatist mobilization likely	Separatist mobilization unlikely

If one takes into consideration the possibility of uneven distribution of any given region's wealth, a qualification of this argument is in place.<sup>15</sup> If wealth in a resource-poor region is concentrated in the hands of a few elites, central transfers may reduce the likelihood of the elites pursuing independence, but

<sup>14</sup> Also rich regions may seek to take advantage of central transfers (Treisman 2001; Gimpelson and Treisman 2002). However, because regions with a strong tax base are likely to be financing poor provinces through transfers, it is reasonable to expect these regions to favor decentralized taxation as a means to fund region-level tasks.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Horowitz's (1985) distinction between "backwards" and "advanced" groups within "backwards" and "advanced" regions.

it might do nothing to address the grievances of the population more generally. It might even encourage mass-mobilization against the regional government, and not the central government. Likewise, if wealth in a resource-rich region is concentrated in the hands of a few, it may very well be that fiscal autonomy does little to enhance policy autonomy and public goods provision for the region's population overall.

### *Party and Institutional Ties*

The potential for violent separatist conflict is probably higher the more people are dissatisfied with the status quo and see few benefits of staying put in the state. In that respect, violence is a degree of conflict—the more intense the conflict, the more likely it is to turn violent. A growing body of work, however, maintains that violence is not merely a “self-explanatory outgrowth” of conflict (Brubaker and Laitin 1998, 426). According to this view, violence has dynamics of its own, separate from the causes of the conflict it grows out.

Violence, some argue, might be more likely in states weakened in their capacity to rule its people and territory (e.g. Skocpol 1979; Fearon and Laitin 2003), although others point out that violence might rather be a response to demonstrated state strength, particularly indiscriminate repression (e.g. Lichbach 1987; Rasler 1996; Goodwin 2001). Whereas discriminate repression can successfully eliminate challengers, indiscriminate repression can facilitate violence by generating emotions that convince people to turn to violence (Petersen 2002), or radicalizing the more militant members of a movement while convincing the moderates that peaceful protest is no longer a fruitful option (della Porta 1996). Movements may also radicalize and turn violent in the absence of more routine channels for voicing their demands (della Porta 1996; Tarrow 1998; Goodwin 2001). In this view, whatever the aspirations of the actors both in the regions and at the center, whether the conflict can be fought without bloodshed rests with the political process through which the state and its substate challengers—be they ethnic, regional, economic, or social groups—negotiate with one another. The federalism literature suggests a specific institutional channel for peaceful intergovernmental negotiation, namely political party ties.

Beginning with Riker (1964), an influential branch of the federalism literature has focused on the

role of political parties. Political parties, argues Stepan (2001), are the glue that holds federations, particularly multiethnic and otherwise internally divided federations, together.<sup>16</sup> According to Filippov et al. (2004), strong national, or state-wide, parties with regional branches, which they refer to as “integrated” or “federal-friendly” parties, are likely to create incentives for both national and regional politicians to cooperate with one another. In particular, if the electoral fortunes of politicians at the regional level depend on the party’s success at the national level, and national politicians need the help of regional politicians to win elections, the bargaining process in federations is more likely to be institutionalized and highly divisive issues are kept off the bargaining table—as both national and regional politicians have an interest in the party’s success.<sup>17</sup> I would expect that regional politicians of the same party or coalition that rules at the national level are less likely to push for separatist demands than regions not governed by the nationally-governing party or coalition. Moreover, I would expect national-level politicians to be particularly attentive to its copartisan allies in the regions, as hurting their electoral fortunes would mean hurting the national executive’s own electoral fortunes.

There is one important caveat to this proposition, related to the study’s overall emphasis on conditional effects. Research on India (Khemani 2001), the United States (Ansolabehere and Snyder 2004), and Argentina (Jones et al. 2000) suggests that national parties at the center often target transfers to regional copartisans at the expense of regions governed by opposition parties. Thus, to the degree that a region that is ethnically distinct from the center is *not* part of the nationally governing party or coalition, it may be further isolated from the center, which may adversely affect the chances of peaceful center-region bargaining. In contrast, when ethnic regions are included in national governing parties and coalitions, the central government has a direct electoral interest in accommodating these regions’ interests and thereby fostering peace. The expectations with respect to party ties are summarized in the table below.

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<sup>16</sup> On the flipside, Horowitz (1985) warns that local ethnic parties deepen ethnic cleavages, and Brancati (2006) suggests that regional parties increase the chances of secessionist conflicts.

<sup>17</sup> In a different context, Boone (2003) argues that the more the rural elites depend on the state, the chances for cooperation between rural elites and the center are bigger. The key is dependence.

TABLE 2  
EXPECTATIONS ABOUT COPARTISANSHIP AND ETHNIC COPARTISANSHIP

	Copartisanship across regions	No copartisanship across regions
Ethnic regions copartisan of the center	Separatist violence unlikely	Separatist violence unlikely
Ethnic regions not copartisan of the center	Separatist violence likely	Separatist violence possible (cf. Filippov et al. 2004)

Importantly, while the federalism literature's argument is about "federal friendly" political parties, which are considered a self-reinforcing mechanism (Filippov et al. 2004, 163-64), one can conceive of an institutionalized intergovernmental bargaining process more broadly, to encompass other channels that ease negotiation. While not self-reinforcing, shared histories or backgrounds among regional and national policy-makers (Horowitz 1985, 565-66), patronage networks (George 2005), or regular intergovernmental meetings can ease negotiation and make violence a less attractive route.

As became apparent when researching the case studies in this book, intergovernmental negotiation is complicated if the separatist elites in a region are divided among themselves. Indeed, a growing body of research is suggesting that violence in conflict rests with divisions in separatist movements. Groups in a fragmented movement may seek to "outbid" one another in order to appear as the leader, as such propelling a radicalization of strategies and goals (e.g. Fearon and Laitin 2000). Alternatively, fragmentation might leave the movement without a disciplining leadership that can integrate its behavior and keep spoilers in check (Pearlman 2007), leading to by intra-movement conflict (Lawrence 2007), which complicates the movement's bargaining with the central government as these actors cannot credibly commit to peace (Cunningham 2006). I revisit this issue in the conclusion.

In sum, policy and fiscal autonomy, conditional on any given region's ethnic composition and wealth, are likely to shape separatist mobilization by affecting both people's grievances and their assessments about the value of remaining part of the state. The turn to violence is not only a result of the

intensity of grievances and unfavorable cost-benefit calculations, but the degree to which there are channels that allow regional and central elites to negotiate with one another. These expectations are summarized in the table below. Once the peaceful route fail, a violence-begets-violence cycle often sets in, in particular, as noted above, if the government turns to indiscriminate use of force.

TABLE 3  
SUMMARY OF EXPECTATIONS

	Policy and fiscal autonomy respond to societal traits	Policy and fiscal autonomy do not respond to societal traits
Factors enabling center-region bargaining	Separatist mobilization unlikely; violent separatist conflict unlikely	Separatist mobilization likely; violent separatist conflict unlikely
Absence of factors enabling center-region bargaining	Separatist mobilization unlikely; violent separatist conflict unlikely but possible	Separatist mobilization likely; violent separatist conflict likely

### Research Design

This study is part of a larger project that combines a statistical study (see Bakke and Wibbels 2006) with a comparative analysis of three in-depth case studies—the separatist struggles in Chechnya, Punjab, and Québec. This combination of large-n and small-n enables me to assess general relationships between institutions, societal traits, and conflict, as well as pay close attention to how context affects the working of institutions. The purpose of this paper is to explore the dynamics that cannot be captured in a statistical analysis. Case-oriented research is particularly useful for identifying how conjunctural causation works—how one independent variable’s impact on the dependent variable depends on other independent variables (e.g. Ragin 2004; George and Bennett 2005)—which is at the heart of this study. The main question that guides this paper, therefore, is a *how* questions: How do institutions affect political and violent mobilization? Answering this question requires linking the macro and micro-levels through process tracing. In particular, it is important to try to assess the ways in which regional actors perceive grievances and costs and benefits of staying put—and how they act on them.

The cases I focus on are conflicts between the center and an ethnically distinct region in three decentralized states. While a key policy-relevant question of this research is how decentralization can help establish peace in post-conflict societies, answering that question requires a better understanding of how such institutions affect conflict in already decentralized states.

In choosing the case studies, note that I could not rely on the often-applied Mill's method of difference or agreement, as one of the criteria of that approach is the absence of interaction effects, which are precisely the kinds of effects I want to understand in this study. So, instead, I chose the cases based on the following considerations. First, I wanted the study to be a broad comparative analysis and, therefore, opted to focus on cases in different parts of the world. The empirical studies in the literature on decentralization and intrastate conflict (or state breakdown) consist primarily of cross-country large-n analyses (e.g. Bermeo 2002; Hale 2004; Sambanis and Milanovic 2004; Brancati 2006), large-analyses within one country (e.g. Hale 2000; Treisman 1997; 2001; Roeder 2007), comparative case studies within one country or countries considered similar (e.g. Bunce 1999; Van Houten 2004), or single case studies (e.g. Suberu 2001; Aalen 2002; Ahuja and Varshney 2005; Amoretti and Bermeo 2004). Few studies have sought to comparatively assess the same variables across cases in different countries (an exception is Aléman and Treisman 2005). Besides providing me with comparative leverage, by comparing conflicts in different countries, I avoid the potential problem of within-country diffusion, which may occur in the more conventional research design of comparing conflicts within a country. In such comparisons, it is likely that mobilization and center-region interactions in one region may affect the extent of such mobilization and interactions in other regions.

Second, the case selection is intended to ensure variation on the dependent variable, both over time and across regions. Note that the dependent variable, separatist conflict, is about separatist mobilization as well as strategies of separatist mobilization—violence or not. While selecting cases on the dependent variables has been subject to much methodological debate, in this case, I considered it the best option. The purpose of the case studies is not to test competing hypotheses against each other, but to assess the dynamics that underpin the proposed hypotheses about the ways in which institutional and

societal traits interact. By choosing the cases on the dependent variable, I am able to select cases that exhibit variation on both aspects of the dependent variable—violent separatism in pursuit of independence in Chechnya, on-and-off violent separatism in pursuit of greater autonomy in Punjab, and peaceful separatism in pursuit of independence in Québec.<sup>18</sup> This kind of variation in terms of mobilization (goals) and violence (means), summarized in the table below, allows me to consider the nuances of how societal traits and institutions interact.

TABLE 4  
CONFLICT IN CHECHNYA, PUNJAB, AND QUÉBEC

	Demands at the center of mobilization	Center-region violence
Chechnya	The Chechen government declares independence in 1991.	Violent from 1994 to 1996 and from 1999 to 2005 (although still some violence today).
Punjab	Akali Dal calls for a Punjabi-speaking Punjab in the Indian union in the 1960s. Granted in 1966.  Akali Dal calls for greater autonomy for Punjab from 1973, while militant groups call for independence from 1986. The Akali Dal and more separatist group still exist today but do not actively pursue greater autonomy.	No violence in the Punjabi Suba movements in the 1960s, but violence from 1984 to 1993.
Québec	The Parti québécois calls for sovereignty-association from the 1960s.	With the exception of the October Crisis of 1970, no major violent incidents.

I use a combination of secondary and primary sources, including interviews and background meetings with politicians, activist, public officials, journalists, human rights activists, and scholars in the three countries. While in Québec, I had the opportunity to make sure I interviewed both younger and older representatives in the sovereignty movement, “hard-liners” and “soft-liners,” men and women, although my sample of respondents is not random and representative. In researching the Chechen and Punjabi cases, I did not have the opportunity to carry out as many formal interviews or have as diverse a representation, and my strategy for meeting people to talk to was a “snowball sample” strategy. This

<sup>18</sup> According to King, Keohane, and Verba, who generally advise against selecting cases on the dependent variable, doing so is acceptable as long as the cases display variation on the outcome to be explained (1994, 147-49).

strategy introduces numerous biases, so I cannot and do not use my field work materials to make grand, general claims. Rather, combined with secondary sources (there is a significant body of literature on each of these conflicts), public opinion surveys, newspaper clippings, and historical documents, I use my meetings and interviews to gain a better understanding of each of these conflicts.

### **Introducing the Cases**

**Chechnya.** As in most of the other ethnically-defined republics in Russia at the time, in November 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) issued a declaration of sovereignty. While the Supreme Soviet under chairman Doku Zavgayev initially supported the emerging nationalist movement, led by the Chechen National Congress, that movement soon grew too radical for the established leadership. By June 1991, the radical branch of the nationalist movement had come to dominate, calling for political sovereignty and the ouster of the local Supreme Soviet. Under the leadership of Dudayev, a Chechen who had served as a Soviet Air Force general, the nationalist movement grew. Its struggle to overthrow the communist-led Supreme Soviet is known as the Chechen Revolution of 1990-1991, which culminated in the election of Dudayev as president in and his declaration of Chechen independence on November 1, 1991.

After nearly three years of failed negotiations between the leaders in Moscow and Grozny, as well as several attempts by Moscow to forcibly remove the Chechen president from power by arming his opposition, on November 30, 1994, Yeltsin sanctioned the use of military force. The official catalyst for the invasion was the “criminal” Chechen regime and its increased threat to Russian citizens as hijackings and kidnappings of civilians in Chechnya’s border regions began to take place in the summer of 1994.

In the final days of December 1994, Russian troops stormed Grozny. The troops were met with fierce resistance from the Chechen fighters, but massive air strikes gave the Russians the upper hand as the city fell into ruins. By March 1995, the Russian forces controlled Grozny. About 27,000 civilians had

lost their lives.<sup>19</sup> The Chechen fighters retreated to the mountains in the south, from where they continued guerrilla campaigns that proved far more difficult to combat than the policy-makers in the Kremlin had expected. In August 1996, the Russian troops withdrew, and the Chechens emerged as the victors—albeit in the presence of a massive civilian death toll and material destruction. The victory was partial and short-lived.<sup>20</sup> In September 1999, the Russian army again entered Chechnya in response to Chechen-led attacks into neighboring Dagestan in early August. Over the next few years, the conflict appeared to carry over to or encourage conflicts in other regions of the North Caucasus. While the Russian Defense Minister last February declared that Moscow had succeeded in its latest war in Chechnya, there are still news reports about violent clashes and kidnappings.

**Punjab.** The Punjabi *Suba* agitation of the 1960s was a quest for a separate Punjabi-speaking homeland. While the rest of India's major ethno-linguistic groups were granted their "own" states within the federation with the States Reorganization Act in 1956, Delhi refused to give in to the Punjabi Sikhs' demands for a Punjabi-speaking state until 1966, when Punjab was divided into present-day Haryana and Punjab. While the reorganization carved out a majority-Punjabi speaking state in which Sikhs dominated, it left several questions unresolved. First, the reorganization excluded the city that had served as the capital of greater Punjab, Chandigarh, transforming it into a federally-governed territory that was to serve as the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana. Second, the reorganization stipulated that the centre regulate how much of the water from three of Punjab's five rivers were to go to Punjab and its neighbors. In addition, several Punjabi-speaking areas were left out of the new state. These issues, particularly the river water question, contributed to the conflict that emerged in the 1970s.

In 1973, the major Sikh political party, the Akali Dal, issued the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (ASR), requesting that India become a "real" federation where the states be granted autonomy over all government functions except defense, foreign relations, currency, railways, and communications. While

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<sup>19</sup> Gall and de Waal (1998), citing estimates from the Russian human rights organizations Memorial.

<sup>20</sup> Although the Khasavyurt agreement (signed by the chief Chechen field commander, Aslan Maskhadov, and the Russian Special Envoy to Chechnya, the former general Alexander Lebed) promised that Russian-Chechen relations be based on international law, it left Chechnya's status undecided until 2001.

the demands based on the ASR, formulated as 12 policy resolutions in 1978, could all have been met within the boundaries of the Indian federation, Punjab ended up in violent confrontation with the centre. In the early-1980s, separatist militant groups emerged and began to use Sikh temples as sanctuaries, which resulted in Operation Bluestar—or, as it is also known, the Golden Temple Massacre. On 6 June 1984, the Indian army stormed the Golden Temple at Amritsar, which is Sikhism’s holiest temple, killing hundreds, including innocent bystanders. The attack set off a series of violent events that intensified the conflict. Between 1981 and 1993, 10,000-25,000 people were killed in riots and counterinsurgency operations, most of them civilians and Sikh militants (Singh, 2000: 164). Since 1992-1993, however, life in Punjab has returned to “normal,” occasionally interrupted by deadly clashes.

**Québec.** Like in Punjab and Chechnya, Québec’s quest for independence has a long history, stemming from the British conquest of New France in 1759. In contrast to the struggle of the Sikhs and Chechens, however, Quebecers have fought their struggle almost entirely through non-violent means. Yet, among these three regions, it is perhaps Québec that has come the closest to becoming an independent state. Québec’s government has twice, in 1980 and 1995, called a referendum asking the province’s population whether it wants Québec to become a sovereign state with an association or partnership with the rest of Canada. While the 1980 referendum was a clear victory for the “no” side, known as the “federalists,” the 1995 referendum brought Canada to a near breaking point. Only 54,288 votes stood between the winning “no” side from the “yes” side, the “sovereignists” spearheaded by *Parti québécois* (PQ), which had emerged under the leadership of René Lévesque in 1968. While the support for sovereignty dwindled after the 1995 referendum, ten years later, in 2005, polls showed that support for sovereignty in the province had surged to an all-time high. Yet, in the March 2007 provincial elections, the PQ had its worst performance since it first came to power in 1976.

The sovereignty struggle in Québec has been a relatively peaceful one. From 1963 to 1970, however, a radical group called the *Front de libération du Québec* (FLQ) was responsible for a number of bombings and bank robberies in Montréal. In October 1970, the FLQ kidnapped a British diplomat, James Cross, and kidnapped and killed Québec’s Minister of Labor, Pierre Laporte. In response, the Canadian

government enacted the War Measures Act, and, during a few weeks in the fall of 1970, Montréal resembled an occupied city, where the army carried out raids to detain suspected terrorists. These events, known as the October Crisis, marked the climax of violence in Québec's sovereignty movement, and neither the FLQ nor any other violent separatist group has played an important role in Québec since.

## **Empirical Analysis**

### *Ethnicity and Policy Autonomy*

I suggest that the peace-preserving potential of ethnic policy autonomy is conditional on ethnicity in two ways. First, if, as in many separatist conflicts, the demands are raised in the name of an ethnically distinct region, as opposed to an ethnically distinct group, the further the region is from being a homogenous ethnic minority region, regional politicians are less likely to justify separatism based on explicitly ethnic reasons. As a result, the less likely that ethnic policy-autonomy matters for peace-preservation. Second, the kind of ties around which ethnic mobilization occurs is likely to influence the degree to which the separatist demands are radical, which, in turn, affects degree to which policy autonomy can be peace-preserving, as some demands are more easily accommodated than others.

Looking at the first issue, the Punjab case is instructive. Religion, memories of past struggles, and language form three pillars of Sikh identity (Brass, 1974). Sikhism grew out of Hinduism more than 500 years ago, but not until the turn of the 19th century did Sikh identity emphasize Sikh separateness. Central to this identity are memories of struggles tied to the territory of Punjab. Added to these pillars of religion and historical memories is language. Between 1921 and 1961, language and religious identity became congruent in Punjab, as Hindus increasingly declared Hindi as their mother tongue, and Sikhs, Punjabi.<sup>21</sup>

The Punjabi *Suba* agitation in the 1960s was a campaign in the name of the Punjabi Sikhs as a group and called for the group to be granted its own state in the federation. At the time, the Sikhs constituted about 35 percent of greater Punjab's population, while the majority was Hindus. Spearheaded

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<sup>21</sup> Spoken Hindi and Punjabi are not incomprehensible to one another, but the script is different: Hindi is written in Devanagari script, and Punjabi, in Gurmukhi. While many Hindus speak Punjabi, they typically use the Devanagari script.

by the Akali Dal, the Sikhs' proposal for a separate state was based on language, although it highlighted that a Punjabi-speaking state would satisfy the Sikh community (Sharma 1969, 192).<sup>22</sup> The Akalis emphasized that of all the official languages in the constitution, only Punjabi was left without a state of its own after the 1056 reorganization. Moreover, as linguistic identity was tied to religious identity, the rejection was considered discrimination of the Sikhs as a religious group as well. According to the Akali leader Sant Fateh Singh, "If non-Sikhs had owned Punjabi as mother tongue, then the rulers of India would have seen no objection in establishing a Punjabi state" (quoted in Brass 1974, 325-26). The Punjabi *Suba* agitation ended in 1966 when Punjab was divided into Punjabi-speaking (and Sikh-majority) Punjab and Hindi-speaking (and Hindu-majority) Haryana. To the major faction of the Akali Dal, the 1966 Punjab Reorganization Act largely met concerns about language and almost put an end to ethno-linguistic conflict with the centre (Puri 1999). The Punjabi *Suba* agitation shows that when the struggle was waged in the name of the Punjabi Sikhs *as a group*, it was about explicitly ethnic reasons, related to the lack of policy autonomy for the ethnic group. While not formally giving in to a religious demand, the linguistically-based reorganization in 1966 also granted the Sikhs a Sikh-majority state.

In contrast to the Punjabi *Suba* agitation, in the 1970s and 1980s, when the Akalis again mobilized the Punjabi Sikhs, the struggle, while still about the Sikhs, was *in the name of the region*, the state of Punjab. At the time, Punjab was a majority Sikh state (about 60 percent), but close to half of the population was Hindus. Many of the Sikhs' ethnic demands had been met with the 1966 reorganization, although there were remaining issues, including Punjabi-speaking areas left out of the new state. Moreover, the years following the granting of the Punjabi *Suba* witnessed a centralizing tendency across India. In 1978, for example, several policy areas were moved from the state list to the concurrent list, including education, giving the centre the power to make decisions regarding textbooks and curricula. Among the Akalis, this move was seen as yet another strategy of Delhi to limit the expression of Sikh culture, history, and religion (e.g. Singh, 1994: 153; Government of Punjab, 1998). However, these ethnic

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<sup>22</sup> Akali opponents, however, claimed that the Punjabi *Suba* request was really about a majority-Sikh homeland (Sarhadi 1970, 198-242). The history of the demand points to its religious basis—the Sikhs' concern about being dominated by another religious group (Brass 1974, 320; Grewal 1990, 173).

concerns, while certainly part of the Akalis' struggle, were not at the forefront.

Indeed, the struggle emerging in the 1970s was primarily justified based on economic reasons, some of them a consequence of the 1966 reorganization. The Akalis' demands were about "real" federalism, an end to the center's control of Punjab's river waters, and better procurement prices and more subsidies for the state's farmers. Granted, these issues were of greater concern to the state's Sikh population than the Hindu population, as the Sikhs dominated the agricultural sector (e.g. D'Souza 1985). However, the Akalis, knowing that the state in whose name they were fighting was only barely a Sikh-majority state—and that they would need a coalition partner if they were to rule the state (Brass 1991, ch. 5)—did not fight a struggle restricted to the Sikhs. Their election manifestos from 1967 played down religious concerns and focused on secular, economic, and political programs that would matter for the population overall (Puri 1999, 448-50).

As such, appeasing the Akalis' demands was not about policy autonomy over areas that we typically think about as central to minority group's recognition. In fact, the only demands that the center gave in to during negotiations in the early-1980s were those related specifically to the Sikh community (Brass 1991, 203), and such concessions turned out to be insufficient. In contrast, the accord negotiated between Punjab's Akali-led government and Delhi in 1985 included provisions of the transfer of Chandigarh and the Punjabi-speaking areas in Haryana, as well as a promise that the river water issue would be presented to a tribunal. The accord, which was well-received in Punjab, further referred the Akalis' call for "real" federalism to a commission on center-state relations.<sup>23</sup> The point here is that this accord was not a document only about ethnic concerns; it was a document about center-state relations and economic matters that affected Punjab's population overall.

Unlike the Akalis, the militant groups that emerged in the 1980s were waging a battle in the name of the Sikhs and not the Punjab state. In the early-1980s, the militant leader Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale voiced concerns about the fate of Sikh religious traditions, while some of the militant

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<sup>23</sup> The accord was never fully implemented as Punjab's chief minister was assassinated by the militants, whereupon the central government did not follow up on its promises.

groups that emerged later in the decade were more outspoken in their quest for creating a Sikh state, Khalistan, and implementing a religious code of conduct (e.g. Tully and Jacob 1985; Judge 2005). For these militants, the goal was a religious independent state; the policy autonomy granted to the Sikhs by way of having their own state in the federation was insufficient.

In sum, the Punjabi *Suba* movement and the militant movement in the 1980s show that where the struggle was waged in the name of the Punjabi Sikhs alone, separatism was explicitly about ethnic reasons. In contrast, where, as in the case of the Akalis' campaign emerging in the 1970s, the struggle was waged in the name of the entire Punjab state, which was only barely a Sikh-majority state, separatism was not about policy autonomy that exclusively focused on the Sikhs.

Québec and Chechnya are, much more than Punjab, clear ethnic minority regions. About 80 percent of Québec's population is Francophone, while nearly 70 percent of Chechnya's population in the early-1990s was Chechens. As such, I would expect the struggle in these regions to be more dominated by demands justified based on reasons explicitly linked to the ethnic group.

Until the 1990s, when the PQ decided that it ought to try to capture the vote of the growing immigrant population, the struggle revolved around ethno-linguistic concerns and, closely tied to that, the socio-economic status of the Francophone population. Already in 1956, the Québec-appointed Tremblay Commission recommended that the provinces be granted greater autonomy, particularly in the spheres of education and culture. Similarly, in the 1960s, important developments of the province's Quiet Revolution, which was a period of major social change, was the establishment of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs in 1961 and the establishment of the Ministry of Education in 1964 (e.g. McRoberts and Posgate 1981). Among the first movements founded around the idea of Québec independence, such as the *Rassemblement pour l'indépendance nationale* (RIN), which emerged in 1960, the language question was the key motivator. Between 1967 and 1969, the streets of Montréal were filled with demonstrators mobilized around *la question linguistique*, and a number of organizations were devoted to promoting French unilingualism (see Levine 1990, ch. 4). In this environment of social upheaval, the PQ, under René Lévesque, emerged around the idea of "sovereignty-association," envisioning Québec as a sovereign

state in a close association with Canada.<sup>24</sup> To Lévesque, sovereignty was not an end in itself but a means for the *Québécois* to “live as ourselves, as we should live, in our own language and according to our own ways” (Lévesque 1977, 15). While the sovereignty movement is still alive, both observers and activists agree that the key concerns in this struggle were met with Bill 101 in 1977, which made French the province’s official language. Bill 101, *Charte de la langue française*, has gradually resolved some of the grievances related to language, such as the threat of Francophone *minorisation* in Montréal’s public schools, and has contributed to the *francisation* of business. For most Francophone Quebecers, Bill 101 has enabled them to work in French, and it has contributed to a narrowing in the income gap between Francophones and Anglophones (Levine 1990, chs. 8 and 9). Indeed, the success of the bill made it increasingly harder for the PQ to argue that improvements were possible only outside the federation.

As Québec society has changed, however, to include a more ethnically diverse population, there appears to have been a switch towards pro-sovereignty arguments focused more on non-ethnic issues, particularly social policies. Béland and Lecours (2003) argue that in the 1990s, the sovereignty movement, in an attempt to broaden its appeal to the province’s growing immigrant population and remove itself from a rhetoric of ethnic nationalism focusing on the Francophone population,<sup>25</sup> turned to social policies as a convenient issue around which to mobilize, as such policies affect people’s everyday lives. Thus “policies on income support, day-care, higher education and drug insurance have been integrated, alongside language, into the nationalist discourse as they are said to exemplify the distinctiveness of the Québec nation” (2003, 10). In my conversations with sovereigntists in 2005, many emphasized that the sovereignty movement today is no longer about ethnic issues related to language or the socio-economic status of the Francophone population, as these were largely resolved with the Quiet Revolution and Bill 101. According to one activist in his 20s, he never thought about language as *the* issue. Rather, the movement is more about different values in Québec and the rest of Canada, although

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<sup>24</sup> Neither in the 1980 nor in the 1995 referendum was the question posed to Québec population yes or no to independence, but about sovereignty coupled with an association or partnership with Canada.

<sup>25</sup> The authors note that such a move became particularly important after the 1995 referendum and PQ premier Jacque Parizeau’s damaging comment that the referendum was lost due to the “ethnic vote,” by which he referred to the vote of the province’s growing immigrant population.

language is one of the main reasons why Québec and the rest of Canada grew apart.<sup>26</sup> Among some sovereigntists, a key motivation is the building of a social project that can serve as an example for others, built on the notion that while Québec is changing in a progressive direction, the rest of Canada is not.<sup>27</sup> There was also great awareness that the sovereignty movement needed to be recast on principles that did not exclusively focus on the Francophones, to capture the support of the immigrant population.<sup>28</sup>

This shift in justifying the movement's demands is consistent with the proposed hypothesis, as Québec slowly but gradually has become the home of a sizable immigrant population.<sup>29</sup> However, the province is still overwhelmingly Francophone, and there are groups within the sovereignty movement that find the PQ's embrace of social policies to be a move in the wrong direction. To the sovereigntists who call themselves "conservative" or "hard-line" nationalists, the PQ has gone too far in a social democratic direction, and there is a great worry that the party is, for that reason, losing voters to the *Action démocratique du Québec* (ADQ), which is a party to the right of the PQ, calling for greater Québec autonomy within the Canadian federation. The "hard-line" nationalists argue that the mainstream of the PQ is misunderstanding what the sovereignty quest is all about. To them, the movement should continue to be about the French Canadian majority in Québec.<sup>30</sup>

As in Québec, in Chechnya the separatist struggle had revolved around reasons more explicitly linked to the ethnic group—although, as I turn to next, ethnic mobilization was not so much about preserving or promoting a common language and culture, as in Québec, but rather about protecting the physical safety of the group. The cases examined here suggests that figuring out which policy-areas to decentralize if policy autonomy is to work as a peace-preserving means, requires that one considers the degree to which the region is a homogenous ethnic region. Where ethnicity is sufficient for forming a

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<sup>26</sup> Personal communication, Montréal, August 8, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Personal communication, representative of the *Bloc québécois* (BQ) youth wing, Montréal, September 15, 2005.

<sup>28</sup> The organization Génération QC, which consists primarily of second-generation *indépendantistes*, has been active in this effort, among other things carrying out a survey of immigrants' attitude to the sovereignty question.

<sup>29</sup> Per the 1986 census, the province's immigrant population was eight percent, but in 2001, it was 10 percent. While two percent is not a drastic increase, the province's immigrant population is growing at a much faster rate than the Canadian-born population (see, for example, <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/research/census2001/quebec/part1.asp>).

<sup>30</sup> Personal communication, Montréal, September 26, October 6, October 31, November 12, 2005.

winning coalition, separatist leaders are likely to mobilize people around explicitly ethnic reasons, and ethnic policy autonomy may help prevent separatist conflict. Where the ethnic composition of a region is not sufficient for forming a winning coalition, separatist leaders are likely to turn to broader issues around which to mobilize the population, and ethnic policy autonomy may not be as important for preserving peace.

Of the three cases examined in this study, only in Chechnya has mobilization exclusively revolved around a threatening center, which also has implications for ethnic policy autonomy as a peace-preserving means. While Chechen society traditionally is a clan-based society, where people's primary ethnic identity has been tied to their clan or extended family, a Chechen identity has developed much out of fear of the central government through violent and repressive encounters, such as the deportations under Stalin in 1944. Indeed, many of the Chechens interviewed for Tishkov's (2004) anthropological study *Chechnya: Life in a War-Torn Society* would bring up the notion of the deportations as genocide (see also Ustinova 2004). Part of this identity is the image of the Chechens as a freedom-loving people prepared to fight to defend their kins and homeland. The Russian ethnographer Sergei Arutiunov notes that Chechens are well-known for their long historical memories, which helps keep alive memories of persecution and deaths and their perpetrators:

For a Chechen, as for every Caucasian, to be a man is to remember the names of seven generations of paternal ancestors: the father, grandfather, great-grandfather and seventh great-grandfather; and not only their names, but the circumstances of their deaths and the places of their tombstones. This constitutes an enormous depth of historic memory, and in many cases the remembered deaths occurred at the hands of Russian soldiers—under Catherine the Great; under Nicholas the First; under Stalin. So for every Chechen, there is a Russian soldier or general who is viewed as evil incarnated, as the devil himself (1995, 16).

He further notes that more than any other group in Russia, the Chechens have suffered at the hands of the policies of central rulers, be those “tsarist colonialists and Stalinist neo-imperialist.”<sup>31</sup> For example, when the time came for the deported peoples of the North Caucasus—the Balkars, the Chechens, the Ingush, the Kalmyks, and the Karachai—to return to their homelands, the greatest difficulty of this “rehabilitation”

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<sup>31</sup> Among all the ethnic groups in Russia, Arutiunov notes that only the Crimean Tatars have suffered as much from central policies. Unlike the deported peoples of the North Caucasus, the Crimean Tatars never returned, as a group, to their homeland.

process was in Chechnya-Ingushetia, where the territory had been heavily colonized by new settlers, making it hard for the Chechens and Ingush to return to their ancestral homes (Nekrich 1978, 146-47).

The identity of collective suffering was key to political mobilization in the early 1990s, as it was relatively easy for political leaders to claim that to end years of suffering and discrimination, the Chechens needed to control their own republic. The central state was a legitimate target. The separatist leadership used these sentiments, frequently raising the possible danger of Russian intervention (Tishkov 2004, 82-83). A Chechen politician and scholar recalled to me that in early 1993, when the Russian government offered Chechnya a bilateral power-sharing agreement similar to the one in Tatarstan, another separatist Russian region, signed in 1994, Dudayev went on television and stated that, although the agreement offered Chechnya a number of rights, the Chechens are still the “bride” in this agreement, while the Russians are the “husband,” indicating that this was an unequal partnership.<sup>32</sup> While it was the case elsewhere in Russia and the Soviet Union, too, that ethnic minorities mobilized in opposition to the Russian-dominated center, what perhaps was particular about Chechnya was that other, more typical ethnic markers played no major role. In a study of Tatar ethnic identity, Rorlich (1999) notes that in addition to Tatar identity developing in opposition to Russian domination, key ethnic markers include Islam and language, and she claims that, “The most striking feature of the Tatar identity debate in the last seven years has been the growing importance attached to language, not only in identity construction and preservation, but in the fulfillment of statehood as well” (1999, 390).

In contrast to nationalist movements elsewhere, as in Tatarstan and Québec, issues concerning language and culture have not been at the center of the Chechen quest for independence<sup>33</sup>—even though Soviet and post-Soviet center-region institutions have limited Chechen policy-making over issues that typically are central to minority group’s recognition.<sup>34</sup> Centralized decision-making regarding the use of

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<sup>32</sup> Personal communication, Moscow, May 26, 2005.

<sup>33</sup> While the Chechen conflict often is seen as part of what Huntington (1993) refers to as the “clash of civilizations,” the emergence of separatism in Chechnya had little or nothing to do with religion (e.g. Wilhelmsen 2004).

<sup>34</sup> While the Soviet state’s repressive practices contributed to creating a Chechen identity, the formal institutions governing center-region relations as they relate to ethnicity and issues typically central to minority groups’ recognition, such as language and culture, were in the early days of the Soviet Union quite accommodating (e.g.

Chechen language in schools fed into a broader picture of discrimination and oppression of the ethnic group but was not among the Chechens' key concerns. The constitution adopted by the Chechens in 1992, for example, was rather about political autonomy in general. Article 1 reads:

Chechen Republic is sovereign democratic legal state created as a result of self-determination of Chechen people. It has the supreme right concerning the territory and national riches; independently determines external and internal policy; adopts the Constitution and laws having leadership in its territory. The state sovereignty of Chechen Republic is indivisible.

This first article and the constitution in general stipulate Chechnya as an independent state—among other things, article 56 says that, “the citizens of Chechen Republic are obliged to protect the country, to have a military service in the structure of Armed Forces of Chechen Republic.”

Moreover, take as an example this Chechen woman I met during the spring of 2005: A widow who left Chechnya when the second war broke out in 1999, she now lived in a small one-bedroom apartment in Moscow with two of her five children. As a teacher and writer, language was of importance to her, but she told me that while a pupil and teacher in Chechnya, she never really minded studying Russian language or studying in Russian—after all, she lived in Russia. To her recollection, there was never any popular movement that pushed for education to be in Chechen. Such concerns were not driving the first war, which, in her view, was whipped up by nationalist leaders referring to memories of lost land and the time in exile.<sup>35</sup>

Today, the violent struggle between Moscow and Chechnya is seen as yet another case of a

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Jaimoukha 2005, 198-203). In the 1920s, the Soviet authorities allowed local institutions to develop and encouraged native language education and expression of regional cultures, even printing books, journals, magazines, newspapers, and music in the various native languages. However, these efforts at boosting native languages and culture began to dwindle in the 1930s. With the deportations (1944-1957), Chechen education was essentially put on hold. Upon their return to Chechnya in 1957, the Chechens sought to restore the republic's education system, but at this point the Soviet education policy hardly allowed any native language education. By 1978, the sole language of instruction was Russian, and only in the countryside did Chechen continue to play a role in schools. By the late 1980s, no Chechen language instruction was available past the second grade, and many Chechens had lost (or never gained) the ability to write in their native tongue, although there was no marked decline in the percentage of Chechens claiming Chechen as their first language (Kaiser 1994, 273-75), and most Chechens still use Chechen in their homes. Post-Soviet developments regarding center-region governance of issues central to minority groups' recognition have not been favorable to matters concerning Chechen language and culture. While the 1993 Russian constitution allows the republics their own state language to be used alongside Russian, and regional and local governments have taken on increased responsibilities of spending on education, in Chechnya, Russian has since 2002 been the sole language of instruction in schools, and in general, control of the curricula has until recently been in the hands of the central government.

<sup>35</sup> Personal communication, Moscow, June 21, 2005.

centralized Russian-dominated state imposing suffering on the Chechen people. One of the Chechens I met with in Moscow, a man in his 30s who was very skeptical when talking about the Chechen Revolution and Dudayev's regime, explained to me that the heart of the Chechen question is that every 50 or 60 years, Russia is out "to get" Chechnya—the tsarist forces, the Bolsheviks, Stalin, and now the current post-Soviet regime.<sup>36</sup>

Neither the Punjabi Sikhs nor the *Québécois* have to such an extent mobilized in opposition to a central government and ethnic majority group that threatens the physical safety of the group, although there have been element of similar arguments among Sikh militants, especially after the Golden Temple Massacre of 1984. As a result, the separatist struggles in Punjab and in Québec have not primarily revolved around being *against* a threatening center but rather about being *for* the protection or promotion of the cultural and economic safety of the ethnic group or region. Most of the Quebecers I met with while doing research in Montréal in 2005 would go out of their way to clarify that the sovereignty struggle is not about any negative feelings towards Canada and Ottawa. While the identity of the Punjabi Sikhs, too, is about collective memories of struggles against central rulers, such memories are only one pillar of Sikh identity, and the two other pillars, religion and language, have been important for mobilization in the Sikhs' struggle. These differences in how past relationships to the center was used in mobilization affected the kinds of demands raised. Indeed, only the Chechens have adopted a constitution that envisions a separate military. While both the separatist leaders in Chechnya and the *Québécois* have called for the region to become an independent state, the PQ's quest has very explicitly been about independence paired with some sort of association or partnership with Canada, and the majority of the province's population has not supported outright independence. For most *Québécois*, it may seem, independence has been a "cure" too extreme to the province's "ills." It may have been easier for Chechen leaders to argue that, actually, independence is an appropriate cure.

In sum, ethnic policy autonomy's peace-preserving potential depends on the concentration of the ethnic population in a region and the types of issues around which the group mobilizes. Where the

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<sup>36</sup> Personal communication, Moscow, June 11, 2005.

separatist quest is in the name of an ethnic group or a region in which that ethnic group clearly dominates, peace-preserving federalism is likely to be about meeting demands very specific to the ethnic group.

Where mobilization takes place around issues that are about protecting an ethnic group's physical safety, as opposed to protecting its culture, peace-preserving federalism is likely to be about meeting demands *beyond* typical issues central to minority group's recognition.

### *Wealth and Fiscal Autonomy*

The second federal institution that I focus on is the intergovernmental fiscal system, particularly the conditions under which fiscal autonomy or fiscal transfers is the peace-preserving option. While relatively poor regions, which may have a difficult time funding public goods out of their own pockets, are likely to welcome fiscal transfers, relatively rich regions are likely to want to hold on to their riches and, as such, prefer fiscal autonomy. Thus, whereas fiscal transfers may be the peace-preserving option in relatively poor regions, fiscal autonomy may be the peace-preserving option in relatively rich regions.

The case of Québec shows how federal fiscal arrangements influence assessments about the value of the federation versus the value of independence in a province that is close to the country's average, although slightly below, when it comes to wealth (income, GDP per capita, and unemployment). Ever since the PQ became a political force, it has had to counter arguments from the federalist side that sovereignty means loss of investments and, in general, economic hardship for Québec. According to the PQ, however, Québec will be better off financially as a country in a partnership with Canada.

Unlike the other provinces, Québec opts to collect its own income tax, and in terms of covering expenditures from its own sources of revenues, it is relatively fiscally autonomous. Yet studies show that Québec has benefited from the federation's equalization program, which aims to redistribute wealth from richer to poorer regions. Calculating who is benefiting and who is not from the federation is a complicated "battle of the balance sheet" question, which has long been a matter of tension across many of the provinces in Canada (Leslie and Simeon 1977). The PQ's position has been that Québec is losing out in the federation, but a number of studies have shown that at least since the late-1960s, Québec is one of the

provinces in the federation that has benefited both from central transfers aimed at equalization and trade linkages among the provinces (e.g. Leslie and Simeon 1977; Economic Council of Canada 1982, 17-22; Mansell and Schlenker 1995; Boadway and Hayashi 2004; Crowley and Winchester 2005). Among Quebecers, resistance to embrace the sovereignty option has, in part, been based on insecurity with respect to the economic viability of independence (Pinard 1992; Meadwell 1993).

In the late-1990s, the terms of the debate about the economic viability of an independent Québec changed, which was due both to changes in fiscal federal relations and changes in Québec society: While changes in fiscal relations between Ottawa and the provinces fueled the notion, among some, that the federation is not offering much to Québec, economic changes in Québec society fueled the notion that Québec can, indeed, make it on its own. In terms of institutional changes, over time, the federal government's contribution to the budgets of the provincial governments via federal cash transfers, which are grants intended to fund a variety of programs and redistribute wealth, has been decreasing. In Québec, federal transfers as share of the province's total revenues were decreasing in the early-1970s, then grew back to 1970 levels in the early 1980s, about 28 percent, only then to decline and reach 16 percent in 2000-2001 (Government of Québec, Commission on Fiscal Imbalance 2001). This trend of declining transfers became a contentious issue in the late-1990s, when the federal government cut transfers under the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) program, while the provinces were spending more on health, social programs, and education.<sup>37</sup> About the same time, the provinces began to note that while they were running budget deficits, the federal government was running a surplus. The provinces took this gap as evidence of a fiscal imbalance, which refers to a mismatch between the expenditure responsibilities and revenues of the different tiers of governments: While responsibilities such as health care, social programs, and education are major and growing expenditure posts for the provinces, the federal government is better able to raise revenues.

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<sup>37</sup> According to the federal government, the provinces, when complaining that the federal government is spending less and less on health care, are conveniently forgetting that in 1977, a number of tax points were transferred to the provinces, which means that they should be able to cover the cuts in transfers by raising their own revenues. Nonetheless, notes McIntosh (2004), the decrease in federal transfers to health care has given the provinces less flexibility, mainly because they have been hesitant to raise provincial taxes (see also St-Hilaire 2005).

There has been much dispute in Canada about whether there really is a fiscal imbalance, with the PQ being in the forefront claiming that there is one. Indeed, the fiscal imbalance has become, as one of the PQ representatives I met with in 2005 put it, “a new reason for sovereignty.” Québec, he maintained, is a social democratic society with good education, health care, and social housing programs, and the population is willing to pay for these programs. The problem, he argued, is that paired with a lack of federal transfers, the tax share of the provincial governments is not sufficiently large.<sup>38</sup> The PQ’s concern about the fiscal imbalance is shared with the Liberals in the province, as well as the other provincial governments.<sup>39</sup>

At the same time as there has been changes in fiscal relations between Ottawa and the provinces, Québec society has changed. The federalists have consistently argued that Québec needs the rest of Canada for its economic well-being, in particular it needs the markets of the rest of the Canadian provinces.<sup>40</sup> Evidence from the hearings before the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, which was established by the Québec National Assembly after the failure of Meech in 1991 to look into questions regarding Québec’s status, suggests that, indeed, among many supporters of independence, preserving economic ties with Canada was considered necessary (Meadwell 1993). However, since the 1990s, globalization and diminished importance of state borders have made it easier for the PQ to argue that the province can make it on its own. Even prior to the 1995 referendum, the PQ suggested that in order to

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<sup>38</sup> Personal communication, PQ representative in the National Assembly, Québec, November 15, 2005.

<sup>39</sup> In contrast to the other provinces, in Québec, the problem of the fiscal imbalance is not entirely separate from the language question that originally motivated the sovereignty movement, which perhaps makes the fiscal imbalance a more contentious matter in Québec than elsewhere. Although most Quebecers agree that the language question was by and large addressed with Bill 101, over the last few years, there has been a growing concern that the federal government has found ways to undermine the provinces’ jurisdictions in spheres that affect language. Among the sovereigntists I met with in Montréal in 2005, a key concern about the fiscal imbalance is that it allows Ottawa to use its spending power in areas of province-level jurisdiction, particularly education and social policies. The federal spending power refers the policy-making power that comes with the federal government’s financial power. Because of the fiscal imbalance, the provinces are unable to fund their expenditure responsibilities from their own pockets. To assist the provinces, the federal government has increasingly stepped in and started spending money directly on social programs and post-secondary education, which, much like the Akali Dal’s concern with discretionary transfers to Punjab (see below), the sovereigntists see as an intrusion on provincial jurisdiction.

<sup>40</sup> In the 2007 provincial election campaign, the Québec Liberals suggested that if the PQ were to win the elections, it would mean an end to federal transfers, which would hurt the Québec economy (see Ingrid Peritz and Rhéal Séguin, “PQ ‘Delusional,’ Charest Asserts as Race Heats Up: Liberal Leader, Boisclair Square off on Fiscal Risks of Quebec sovereignty,” *The Globe and Mail*, February 26, 2007).

meet the challenges of globalization and take advantage of its benefits, Québec needs to be sovereign (PQ 1994). Both among some scholars and activists in the sovereignty movement, globalization is seen as a chief explanation for the support for sovereignty since the 1990s. According to Lachapelle and Paquin:

Even if the federal government continues to deprive Quebec for its economic resources, by reducing its transfer payments and increasing taxes, the fact that Quebec is one of the more open economies in the world makes Quebec an international trade partner less dependent on the Canadian domestic market. Quebec has become an international actor and has adopted strategies similar to many sub-states entities. New forms of partnership will certainly emerge in the next few years (2003, 14).

Similarly, Courchene (2004) suggests that as Québec's north-south exports have exceeded inter-provincial exports, the province's "economic future is clearly in NAFTA economic space, not Canadian economic space," which reduces the economic costs of looser economic ties with the rest of Canada.<sup>41</sup>

Particularly among young activists in the sovereignty movement—and Québec's youth is more in favor of sovereignty than the province's population as a whole—there is a sense that globalization has eliminated previous generations' fear that an independent Québec would be economically unviable.<sup>42</sup> In the words of a young PQ representative:

My generation, we feel equal to the English people. We're proud that we can compete in the international market and have big industries, proud of our cultural affairs... We have a good quality of life, and we're prouder now than Quebecers were in the 1960s. People are no longer afraid that in the event of a referendum, the money will go to Ontario. In the 1980s, older people were afraid of losing their pensions if Québec separated from Canada. Some old people still worry about this, which could be a card for the federalists.<sup>43</sup>

Indeed the income gap between Anglophones and Francophones in Québec has narrowed (Albouy 2006), and Québec has become more open to international markets.<sup>44</sup> With the language issues that drove the

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<sup>41</sup> For a formal, non-case specific argument in this vein, see Alesina et al. (2000).

<sup>42</sup> For survey data about the attitudes of Québec's youth, which shows that they are more in favor of the sovereignty than the Québec population in general, see the 2006 report "Quebec Youth Support Key Canadian Values," from the Centre for Research and Information in Canada (CRIC), available online at [http://www.cric.ca/pdf\\_re/youth\\_quebec/Quebec\\_youth%20\\_%20backgrounder\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.cric.ca/pdf_re/youth_quebec/Quebec_youth%20_%20backgrounder_ENG.pdf). See also CRIC's "Portraits of Canada 2005: Quebec Highlights," available online [http://www.cric.ca/pdf/cric\\_poll/portraits/portraits\\_2005/eng\\_quebec\\_hl\\_2005.pdf](http://www.cric.ca/pdf/cric_poll/portraits/portraits_2005/eng_quebec_hl_2005.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> Personal communication, Montréal, September 8, 2005.

<sup>44</sup> The province's economy has since the early 1990s become increasingly open and dependent on trade, with the US as the largest international trading partner. The Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (CUSFTA) was implemented in 1989. Prior to 1989, about 16 percent of Québec's GDP was exported to non-Canadian markets (75 percent of those exports went to the US). By 1994, a quarter of the province's GDP was exported (82 percent of which went to the US). In the 1990s, the share of Québec's output going to international markets exceeded the share going to other

sovereignty movement largely resolved, and a Francophone population with economic reasons to be more confident than 30 years ago, the sovereignty movement—perhaps particularly its young members—has turned its attention to new reasons for independence. These new reasons include declining central transfers, the fiscal imbalance, and the federal spending power.

The point here is that Québec, as a province somewhat poorer than the average Canadian province, has generally not called for fiscal autonomy but either more transfers (although transfers without strings attached) or, from the 1960s, the ability to opt out of federal programs *with compensation* from Ottawa (e.g. McRoberts and Posgate 1981). To risk-averse Quebecers, the financial benefits of staying put—and the financial insecurity of leaving—helped put a brake on the support for sovereignty until the 1990s. In the 1990s, decreasing central transfers reduced the benefits of staying put, contributing to a rise in support of sovereignty. At the same time, globalization contributed to a perception that Québec, in a way, was richer than what it looked like and would be able to make it in its own. Indeed, in 2001, the PQ suggested holding a referendum on transferring tax powers from Ottawa to Québec.

In the last few years, the Liberal government in Québec has taken steps towards showing that the new reasons for sovereignty can be met within the federation. In 2003, Premier Jean Charest took the initiative to create a forum for intergovernmental collaboration, the Council of the Federation, which has enabled the provinces to come together and confront Ottawa on the fiscal imbalance. In 2004, Prime Minister Paul Martin (Liberal), the leader of the opposition, Stephen Harper (Conservative), as well as the other premiers agreed to a deal that allowed Québec to receive grants without strings attached—as a way of recognizing Québec’s distinctiveness and avoiding another close call, like the 1995 referendum.<sup>45</sup> Even in PQ circles, the Charest government was praised.<sup>46</sup> In 2006, the Conservatives came to power in Ottawa, not only recognizing the existence of the fiscal imbalance, which had been denied by the

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provinces in the federation (Stevens 1997; Courchene 2004). Some observers note that in terms of trade flows, Québec is more dependent on inter-provincial trade than the other provinces (Duchesne et al. 2003).

<sup>45</sup> See Graham Fraser, “Quebec Pact Recognizes Distinctness, PM Says,” *The Toronto Star*, September 17, 2004. The agreement was not, however, met without opposition in the rest of Canada and among the Trudeau adherents in the Liberal party.

<sup>46</sup> See Hubert Bauch, “Parizeau Gives Charest Thumbs-Up: Obtained Traditional Special Status. Quebec Premier Might Have Inadvertently Advanced Cause of Separation: Ex-PQ leader,” *The Gazette*, September 17, 2004.

Liberals, but also promising to do something about it. In that spirit—and undoubtedly in an attempt to boost the federalist vote in the provincial elections—in early 2007, Prime Minister Harper promised increased and large equalization transfers to the provinces, particularly Québec.

In sum, while declining central transfers and the fiscal imbalance have fueled the PQ's claims that the federation is not benefiting Québec, in the last years, a number of steps have been taken that demonstrate that some of the new reasons for sovereignty can be addressed within the federation. The drop in PQ support in the 2003 and 2007 elections indicates that more Quebecers believe that staying put in the federation is, indeed, an option, although the fact that the ADQ—and its call for autonomy within the federation—emerged as the second largest party also suggests that the status quo is not enough.

While Québec has been a relatively poor province in the Canadian federation, Punjab is a relatively rich state in India. In fact, since the 1960s, Punjab has been one of India's wealthiest states. It has also been one of India's most fiscally autonomous states (Bagchi, 2003: 30). Given the proposition above, this is a peace-preserving combination. So why did separatist demands, many economically motivated, re-emerge in the 1970s?

While the Akali Dal, as I turn to next, criticized the center for jeopardizing the region's wealth, this allegation did not create univocal support for the party. In the state's first three elections after the 1966 reorganization, for example, the Akali Dal, although the leading party, gained less than 30 percent of the popular vote. Nor did the state's Sikh population univocally support the Akalis. The party's main vote base has always been the well-off landowning Sikhs, who overwhelmingly have voted for the Akalis, while lower caste Sikhs have voted for the Congress party (Brass 1991, 225). The struggle fought by the Akalis has primarily reflected the concerns of the landowning Sikhs.

Although Punjab in the 1970s was more fiscally autonomous than any other Indian state, the Akalis pushed for greater autonomy. In 1978, Gurcharan Singh Tohra, an Akali leader, called for more taxation power to the states.<sup>47</sup> The idea was that if the state controlled the income tax, it could better

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<sup>47</sup> See Tohra's speech "Federal Polity—The Question of Autonomy: Its Meaning, Necessity and Framework" (Gopal Singh 1994, 146-57).

manage its economy (see also Government of Punjab 1998, 910-18, 952-55). While such demands can be considered a case of “much wants more” and federalism encouraging separatism, a close look at the demands and the center’s role in Punjab’s economy suggests that the Akalis’ concerns reflected aspects of center-state relations that the population of a rich region might react to per the proposed hypothesis.

In the 1970s, the Akali Dal accused the center of using transfers to control the states. In India, transfers are funneled to the states through three channels, with varying strings attached. Statutory transfers, which are based on the Finance Commission’s recommendations, are formula-based and non-discretionary. Plan transfers, in contrast, come from the Planning Commission, whose recommendations are based on the discretion of the center, although a formula was introduced in 1969. Similarly, assistance to the states for implementation of central or centrally-sponsored programs comes in the form of discretionary transfers through the Planning Commission. Typically, these programs concern policy areas on the state list, and implementation is required. The Akalis reacted against the ways in which the center could use transfers to impede on Punjab’s hard-won autonomy. According to an Akali politician, “What I stress is more economic and financial powers to the states. The justification of the demands is that the yoke of the centre will go” (quoted in Dhami 1975, 30). Similarly, the Akali leader Tohra argued that the Planning Commission “has reduced the states to a beggar-status by doling out grants-in-aid at the discretion of the centre.”<sup>48</sup>

The composition of transfers to the states in the 1970s and 1980s suggests that these complaints were not unfounded. Particularly in the late-1970s, a significant portion of central resources going to Punjab were discretionary grants and loans, which are the kinds of transfers with most strings attached.<sup>49</sup> While regional politicians in other states, too, reacted against such strings, to the Akalis, it looked like no coincidence that the center was tightening its grip on the state just when they had gained a state of their own.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Assessment based on transfer data provided by Jonathan Rodden. While in the late-1970s, discretionary grants and loans on average made up around 65 percent of grants and loans going to the Indian states, the share in Punjab ranged from 78 percent in 1977, to 90 percent in 1978, and 83 percent in 1979.

The Punjab case also demonstrates that concerns about wealth go beyond the workings of the fiscal system, encompassing other features of center-region relations that affect a state's economy. Central control of river waters, centrally controlled agricultural prices, and the lack of central investments in industries precipitated the Akalis' demands that Punjab was not receiving its fair share of revenues from the center.

To understand why these issues mattered to Punjab's population, one must consider the state's economy. With the partition in 1947, the most fertile areas of greater-Punjab went to Pakistan. However, Indian Punjab rapidly turned into India's most prosperous state, and by the 1960s, it was known as the entire country's "bread basket." It topped the list when it came to per capita income and placed towards the bottom in terms of poverty (Brass 1991, 229).

This growth would not have taken place without a state government dedicated to agricultural development and a central government providing infrastructural investments. In fact, in the first two five-year plans (1951-1961), the highest spending priority in Punjab was power and irrigation, largely funded by the center (Bhalla 1995). Similarly, Punjab is widely recognized as the state in India that gained the most from the Green Revolution of the 1960s, which was a period of economic growth driven by agricultural developments and careful government planning and financing. The point here, as it relates to the functioning of the federation, is that in the immediate post-independence period, Punjab was in poor shape, but the central government helped transform it into one of India's success stories, thus providing reasons for remaining part of the federation. Once Punjab became prosperous, segments of the population came to see the center as detrimental to the state's financial well-being. Central control of river waters is a key reason.

The 1966 reorganization stipulated that both irrigation and power from three of Punjab's rivers should be controlled by a board of representatives from each of the states affected by these rivers but under central government supervision. In India, because irrigation and hydro-electric power greatly affect the states' agriculture and industry, these matters are the exclusive jurisdiction of the states. For the center, then, to reserve control over Punjab's rivers was seen as a violation of the new state's autonomy.

According to the Sikh historian G.S. Dhillon (2004, 60-61), the sharing of river waters limited canal irrigation and forced farmers to opt for the more expensive tube-wells. About three-fourths of Punjab's river waters are allocated to other states (Kumar 2005), and while it is difficult to say whether this water rightfully belongs to Punjab, the Akalis have perceived it that way. According to one Akali politician in 1982, the sharing of river water meant that Punjab's wealth was "gifted away to others at the cost of our economy" (quoted in Jafar 1988, 29). This sentiment was not just rhetoric on the part of politicians. Survey data from villages in 1988 indicate that among people's key economic concerns, particularly among small and medium farmers, was canal irrigation.<sup>50</sup> The river water sharing created a sense that Punjab was deprived of its wealth and treated unfairly. In Dhillon's words, "there has been a calculated plan to denude Punjab and its people of its natural wealth and thereby seriously to jeopardize the economic, industrial and agricultural destiny of the State" (2004, 63).

Similarly, because agriculture was so important to Punjab's economy, it was highly dependent on government subsidies, high output prices, and low input costs, which were largely determined by the center through procurement prices. Again, there was a sense among the farmers in Punjab that the government's procurement prices were set too low (Grewal 1990, 212-14), particularly when the Green Revolution began to level in the late-1970s. While Punjabi farmers, on average, were not poor, their wages declined in the first half of the 1970s. Moreover, prices for rice and wheat gradually declined from 1960 to the end of the 1970s (McGuirk and Mundlak 1991, 40). Many of the ASR demands spelled out these concerns of the state's farming population (Gopal Singh 1985). For example, the third resolution from 1978 calls upon the Indian government to "bring about parity between the prices of the agricultural produce and that of the industrial raw materials so that the discrimination against such states that lack these materials may be removed." Again, survey data reveal that these were sentiments that occupied Punjabi villagers.<sup>51</sup> Today, Punjab's Movement Against State Repression seeks to demonstrate that the large number of rural suicides in Punjab since the 1980s is a direct consequence of central policies

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<sup>50</sup> Survey of 234 households, carried out by Pramod Kumar, Institute for Development and Communication, Chandigarh.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

harmful to the state's farmers. Thus, there was—and to a certain degree still is—a sense that, while Punjab was feeding the rest of the country, it was not receiving its fair share in return, which encouraged calls for greater fiscal autonomy.

Likewise, while Punjab's agricultural sector was growing until the early-1980s, the industrial sector lagged behind, fueling the notion that Punjab was losing out. While Punjab in the mid-1960s topped the list of India's states when it came to per capita income and social development, it was bypassed by several states in terms of industrial development (Grewal 1975, 64). Punjab had the capital to develop industries, but the central government was unwilling to provide industrial licenses to the state (Gujral 1985, 48; Bhalla 1995, 103). Moreover, data from 1976 and 1981 show that of the center's investments in the states, Punjab received less than two percent (Maini 2004, 231). Both the Akalis' 1978 resolutions and their agitation campaign in 1982 called for the center to invest in Punjab's industries.

While the Akali supporters, primarily the landowning Sikhs, saw the lack of central investments in Punjab's industries as a justification for greater autonomy, the same trend also boosted recruitment into the militant movement. Due to the small size of Punjab's industrial sector, it did not serve as an alternative source of income for the losers of the Green Revolution, the middle or small peasants. Nor did it provide employment chances for the increasingly educated Sikh youth from the rural landowning class. These groups both formed the recruitment base of the militant movement that emerged in the 1980s (Telford 1992; Pettigrew 1995). Not only were they disillusioned with the central government, but also the Akalis, for doing too little, creating tensions within Punjab.

Let me return to the proposition about the peace-preserving potential of fiscal autonomy in rich versus poor regions. Consistent with expectations, the Sikh struggle in the 1950s-1960s was not based on reasons related to wealth and fiscal relations or about seceding from the Indian union, as Punjab, in a difficult position after partition, was a beneficiary of the center's efforts. Similarly, nor in the 1970s-1980s was the Akalis' struggle about seceding from India. Living in a rich region with significant fiscal autonomy, Punjab's population, while dissatisfied with central intrusions and transfers with strings attached, had reasons to stay put in the federation.

However, the case suggests that concerns about wealth go beyond fiscal arrangements. The Akalis' concern with river waters was essentially about a rich region in which the politically dominant and richest people, the landowning Sikhs, considered the center's actions to diminish their wealth. The same goes for central policies related to agricultural prices, where the Akalis either wanted a better deal from the center or greater autonomy, including the ability for the state government to set prices itself. These are dynamics consistent with my expectations about what a *rich region* might want. As the Green Revolution began to level in the late-1970s, the large landowners worried about their wealth. Indeed, the 1978 resolutions reveal a concern not only with greater autonomy but with getting more from the center, including industrial investments and price parity for agricultural outputs and industrial raw materials. Indeed, the case shows that it is difficult to talk about a state's wealth as if it were unitary. In Punjab, the losers of the Green Revolution saw their grievances as resting with the center in terms of, for example, insufficient subsidies for agricultural inputs, which is consistent with how I would expect a *poor region* to act. The less well-to-do Sikhs also saw their grievances as resting with the Akalis' inability to represent their interests, creating conflicts *within* the state that complicated its interactions with the centre.

Just like the Punjab case shows that concerns about wealth go beyond the federal fiscal system, so does the Chechen case, too, but in the context of a very poor region. Indeed, Chechnya was one of the poorest regions in the USSR and is one of the poorest regions of Russia.

In the Soviet Union, the main source of revenue for local governments was the so-called turnover tax, which was a tax shared upwards in that the revenues were passed on to higher-level governments, which, in turn were in charge of redistributing revenues to balance the budgets of the lower-level units. The local governments' major own source of revenue was profit payments from local enterprises, but in general, the local governments depended on transfers.<sup>52</sup> While both agricultural production and large food processing industries played a significant role in the Chechen economy and could generate income for the

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<sup>52</sup> Ross (1987, 78-79) reports that, in 1974 of all of the RSFSR's ASSRs, *krais*, *oblasts*, and cities, 45 percent covered 20-30 percent of their income from own sources ("secured income"). Only 14 of 73 units covered more than 30 percent of their income from own sources. The "secured income" of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR was 22.5 percent, below the average of 29.8 percent.

local government, the republic had little local industry producing consumer goods, and the manufacturing industry, for example, was unable to meet local demands (Jaimoukha 2005, 99). Thus, profit payments from such local enterprises did probably not make up a significant local revenue base. As a result, the Chechen-Ingush government had a hard time covering local-level responsibilities out of its own pockets: Health and social services were in a dire shape—indeed, the health care system was deemed one of the worst in Russia—and the republic’s infant mortality rate and general mortality rate from infectious and parasitical diseases were far higher than the Russian average. Similarly, the Chechen-Ingush ASSR was among the Russian regions worst fit to provide housing for its citizens, and parts of the republic were suffering from heavy pollution from the oil extracting industries (Dunlop 1998, 87). While all of the autonomous republics and regions of the union republics could cover only a fraction of their expenditures from own sources, it is plausible that it was particularly difficult for the Chechen-Ingush ASSR to cover its own expenditures, as the republic’s major tax base, the oil industry, generated revenues for the central government.<sup>53</sup> That is, somewhat paradoxically, Chechnya was suffering because of its oil industry. Key to the Soviet planned economy was that certain republics and regions specialized in only a few economic tasks. Chechnya’s specialty was oil production, and from the 1920s, the central government invested heavily in the build-up of this industry. Lighter industries, however, were left on the sideline. So while the revenues from the oil industry went to the central government, the expenditure responsibility for cleaning up after the oil industry and providing housing and health rested with the Chechen-Ingush government, whose own revenue sources primarily came from light industry enterprises that were poorly developed—and, in part, these were poorly developed because the republic had oil.

While a large share of local revenues came from the shared turnover tax and other central transfers and grants to cover specific projects or programs, resources also flowed from the center to the union republics and regions via enterprises and ministries’ investments in construction, housing,

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<sup>53</sup> As noted by Tishkov: “Because the republic’s industries were 95 percent affiliated with the USSR’s central government, profits from oil extraction and refineries went directly to the USSR central budget” (2004, 41). He also notes that this was the case in other regions as well, such as Bashkortostan, Tatarstan, and Yakutia/Sakha, suggesting that alone, this does not serve as an explanation for the Chechen conflict.

hospitals, cultural funds, and so on. Due to lack of data, it is unclear how much of central investments happened off-budget.<sup>54</sup> This lack of data also makes it difficult to put a number on the degree to which Chechnya was a loser or winner in terms of central budgetary allocations and investments.<sup>55</sup> According to one estimate, in 1992, the only Russian republics that did not receive net budgetary subsidies were Udmurtia, Chuvashia, and Mordovia (Slider 1994, 252-53). These data also indicate that while Chechnya was a net beneficiary in terms of per capita federal taxes minus federal budget allocations, among the 15 regions that were beneficiaries, Chechnya was among those benefiting the least (*ibid.*). Moreover, there is reason to believe that Chechnya's growing unemployment and poverty in the 1961-1991 period is indicative of the republic not getting its fair share of the federation's economic pie. Given that a large share of central funds to the regions were channeled through ministries and enterprises, the health of Chechnya's major industry, the oil sector, can serve as an indicator of central investments in the region. The deportations had an adverse effect on the oil industry as a number of experienced workers were forced to leave (Dunlop 1998, 74), but production peaked in the early 1970s with nearly 22 million tons extracted. In 1991, however, the Chechen oil industry produced only four million tons oil (Jaimoukha 2005, 97, 102), indicating a major decline in investments. The central government further invested in collective farms, but the fact that wages in the agricultural sector—which primarily employed Chechens and Ingush, not Russians—lagged far behind the rest of the regions suggest that central investments also in this sector were declining (*ibid.*).

Thus, not only did the Chechens have a collective identity in part formed on the basis of the Soviet state's practices, they lived in one of the poorest regions of the Soviet Union, and part of the responsibility for this poverty rested with—and was perceived to rest with—the central government and the communist economic system directed from Moscow (Dunlop 1998, 213; Evangelista 2002, 16). That is, part of the “ill” was the financial aspects of the federal system, which did not do much to offset the republic's poverty. Rather, it was seen as creating poverty, in particular as there was a notion that, had it

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<sup>54</sup> According to one estimate, in the late Soviet period, 65-80 percent of infrastructural projects in the regions came from off-budget funds (Kirkow 1998, 37).

<sup>55</sup> See Bahry (1987, 133) for problems related to data for fiscal relations within the USSR's union republics.

not been for center, Chechnya could have been rich. Thus, the proposed “cure” was greater autonomy or independence. At the elite level, demands included greater autonomy over economic affairs and natural resources, even in the declaration of sovereignty from the Chechen-Ingush ASSR’s Supreme Soviet. In the population more generally, people identifying or identified as the Chechen intelligentsia opposed to Dudayev’s quest for independence still favored economic autonomy from the central government, pointing out that the central government was, in part, responsible for Chechnya’s high unemployment.<sup>56</sup> The separatist leaders played on both the Chechen fear of Russian dominance and the sense of economic discrimination at the hands of the center. While Dudayev frequently referred to “300 years of Russian discrimination,” he also focused on how independence would mean that Chechnya would be free to use its oil wealth to create jobs and prosperity. In President Dudayev’s own words:

Let us remember that in the Chechen Republic there developed a situation that was in clear contradiction with common sense: although possessing vast stores of the highest-quality oil (...) the Chechen Republic is nonetheless the poorest of the former USSR, ranks lowest in social security, has the highest [indicators] for infant mortality, unemployment, environmental pollution, cancer, and tuberculosis. At the same time, the funds coming into the republican budget from the activity of the oil-extracting and processing complexes are unsatisfactorily (not to say offensively) small, which does not allow placing the solution of a single national problem of Chechnya on the agenda (interview from 1992, quoted in Tishkov 2004, 67).

Observers, however, today seem to agree that Dudayev’s vision of Chechnya as a “second Kuwait” was little but utopian as the oil industry in the late 1990s was in decline (Tishkov 2004, 63-68; Dunlop 1998, 124-28), suggesting that the perception of wealth—or future prospects for wealth—may be as important as actual wealth.

In sum, the case studies do lend some support to the proposition that in relatively poor regions, fiscal transfers may be the peace-preserving option, while in relatively rich regions, fiscal autonomy may be the peace-preserving option. However, the cases suggest that focusing only on federal fiscal relations may be too narrow, as the central government also in other, quite significant ways affects a region’s economy. Moreover, consistent with recent research by Giuliano (2006) and Herrera (2005), the case studies suggest that people’s assessments of wealth are not wholly based on objective facts but also

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<sup>56</sup> Personal communication with Chechens identifying as members of the Chechen intelligentsia, Moscow, May 26, June 21, and June 24, 2005.

subjective understandings.

*Party and Institutional Ties between Tiers of Government*

The third institution I focus on to explain peace-preservation in decentralized states is the party ties between tiers of government. I suggest that while policy-making decentralization and fiscal decentralization affect conflict by fueling or even creating grievances directed at the center and assessments about the values of staying put in the federation, the degree to which the conflict turns violent to a certain extent hinges on the presence or absence of factors enabling center-region bargaining. In the federalism literature, recent research has suggested that party ties between tiers of government are the “glue” that holds federations together by giving both regional and national-level politicians incentives to cooperate with one another.

The Chechen case shows how the lack of party (and otherwise institutional or elite) ties between Moscow and Chechnya was one of the reasons why negotiations in 1992-1994 did not lead anywhere. Several scholars have linked separatism and centrifugal tendencies in Russia in the early 1990s to the disintegration of the Communist Party and the failure of any new party to take its place, which severed institutional ties between tiers of government across Russia (Bunce 1999; Filippov et al. 2004). Special to the Chechen case was the revolution and the ensuing power struggles within the republic, which made for an unstable regime (e.g. Derluguian 1999b; Isaenko and Petschauer 2000). With the Chechen Revolution not just political party ties but *all* institutional ties linking the center and the region disappeared. Chechnya was the only region in which the first immediate post-Soviet leader came to power as head of a nationalist movement (Treisman 1997), neither allied with the communists and, thus, part of some old boys’ network nor the emerging democratic movement at the center.<sup>57</sup> This was at a time when the Communist Party at the center was disintegrating, and incentives such as regional party officials’ career

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<sup>57</sup> In contrast, the first post-Soviet leader in Tatarstan, Mintimer Shaimiev, was a former communist leader turned nationalist. Zavgayev, the first secretary of the Communist Party and chairman of the Chechen Supreme Soviet, tried to make a similar turn, but the long-time unpopularity of the local authority structures and Zavgayev’s alleged involvement in the August 1991 coup contributed to his ouster.

pending on being on the good side of the central party bosses mattered less and less. Yet, even in post-Soviet Russia with its weak political parties, into the mid-1990s many regional leaders continued to either be copartisans of the center either by virtue of being appointed by or in some way affiliated with the Russian chief executive; these ties provided perks such as such as media exposure, expertise, and financial aid (Orttung 2000) that helped “glue” the regions to the center. Not so in Chechnya.

Before officially coming to power in late October 1991, the nationalist movement under Dudayev seized control over the other Soviet institution that, besides the Communist Party, typically had played an integrating role by making sure regional leaders did not overstep their boundaries, the KGB headquarters. By November 1991, “all organs of federal authority in Chechnya had already been disbanded” (Pain and Popov, quoted in Dunlop 1998, 116). Thus not only were there no political party ties and no old boys’ *nomenklatura* ties between the Chechen leadership and the central government; there were hardly any representatives of the central government left in the republic. In no other region of Russia did a similar revolution take place.

While the Chechen revolution’s severing of center-region institutional ties by itself complicated any attempts at center-region negotiations, the difficulties that the new Chechen leadership faced locally, once in power, contributed to power divisions within the republic, resulting in a situation where the republic spoke with two heads, leading to non-binding agreements (see Lapidus 1998). In 1992 and 1993, a number of negotiations and meetings took place, but none of the accords went anywhere, in part because the Chechen negotiating parties were rarely allied with the Chechen executive. The undemocratic and dysfunctional political system in Chechnya gave Dudayev a weak hold on power and provided no institutional mechanisms through which disagreements between factions could be resolved. In the spring of 1993, the conflict between the Chechen executive and legislature reached a peak, resulting in violent clashes and Dudayev dissolving both the parliament and the constitutional court. Chechnya continued to be characterized by internal power struggles, and Moscow continued to take advantage of these kinds of divisions by dealing only with the opposition, as such impeding peaceful negotiations between the secessionist Chechen government and the center. In other words, peaceful center-region negotiation were

prevented both by the absence of party—or otherwise institutional—ties between tiers of government, as well as divisions within the region.

For Yeltsin and his administration, the failure of negotiations and the seemingly out-of-control situation in Chechnya increasingly looked bad in the rest of Russia. Having faced strong competition from nationalist and antireform parties in the Duma elections and only won seven out of eight gubernatorial elections in 1993,<sup>58</sup> Yeltsin envisioned that a “small and victorious” war in Chechnya could restore the image of a strong Russian state and help him win the 1996 presidential elections. In addition, two of Chechnya’s large neighbor regions, Krasnodar and Stavropol *krais*, put pressure on Moscow to use military force against the republic. Notably, the governors in both of these regions (Nikolai Yegorov and Yevgeny Kuznetsov) were Yeltsin allies.<sup>59</sup> That is, Moscow’s decision to go to war with Chechnya was influenced by the center’s copartisan allies. Similar dynamics play out in the Punjab case, where this conditional aspect of party ties across tiers of government becomes more apparent.

Indeed, I argue that a full understanding of the role of party ties across tiers of government requires that one considers whether ethnic regions are part of those ties. In 1985, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of the Congress party and Punjab’s chief minister, Akali leader Sant Harchand Singh Longowal, reached an agreement, the Punjab Accord, that addressed many of the Akalis’ long-standing concerns. The accord was very promising, but it was never implemented, contributing to the growing violence. According to Kohli (1991, 364-76), Rajiv Gandhi agreed to this accord at a time when the Congress Party at the center was politically secure—he came to power in early 1985 after a massive electoral victory for the Congress Party in 1984. That security, however, changed in December 1985, when the Congress Party lost the elections in the state of Assam, fueling dissatisfaction with Rajiv Gandhi’s leadership within the party. Next up, in June 1986, were elections in Punjab’s neighbor state,

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<sup>58</sup> While Yeltsin could not “win” gubernatorial elections, in the 1993 gubernatorial elections, opposition candidates came to power in seven out of eight (Zlotnick 1997).

<sup>59</sup> Indeed, in 1994, Krasnodar’s governor, Yegorov, became Yeltsin’s Minister of Nationalities and an eager proponent of a military solution in Chechnya. As the difficulties of the Chechen invasion became apparent in 1995, when Chechen rebel leader Shamil Basayev attacked Budennovsk in Stavropol (taking 1,500 hostages at a hospital), both Yegorov and Kuznetsov were dismissed. Yegorov went back to his position as governor in Krasnodar.

Haryana, which had been ruled by a Congress chief minister since 1979 (in fact, since its creation in 1966, Haryana had only in 1977-1979 been ruled by a non-Congress party). Some of the key clauses in the Punjab Accord were popular in Haryana, and Rajiv Gandhi backed out of the Punjab Accord in order for the Congress Party to stay in power in a long-time copartisan-allied state. Similarly, in order to appear tough on the Sikhs ahead of coming elections in Haryana, in May 1987, Rajiv Gandhi put Punjab under central control, President's Rule (Kohli 1991, 374).

Concerns for the Congress Party's popularity in Haryana played a key role in India Gandhi's backing out of negotiations with the Akali Dal in the 1982-1984 period as well, pushing the Akalis towards a more agitational approach, including joining forces with the militant preacher Bhindranwale, to attract the segments of the Sikh population that were already disillusioned with the party (e.g. Brass 1991, 203-204; Kohli 1991, 362). As such, it was easier for the central government to conflate the Akalis' demands for greater autonomy with the militant movement, although after Operation Bluestar, the central government's official explanation was that the attack was not in response to the demand put forward by the Akali Dal "but the maturing of a secessionist and anti-national movement" (*White Paper on Punjab*, reprinted in Grover 1999, vol. 3, 322-56). It is now commonly accepted that the movement "maturing" here is one that the central government played an instrumental role in creating (Tully and Jacob 1985). Notably, the 1982-1984 period *was* a time when Punjab was ruled by a Congress Party. In this case, the Congress Party at the center, while trying to help its copartisan ally in the state by weakening the Akalis, was not making life easier for Congress Chief Minister Darbara Singh. In fact, until 1967, Punjab, like nearly all the other states, was ruled by Congress, which also dominated at the center. In this period, while Punjab's Congress chief ministers reached agreements with the center, such as the Sachar Formula (1949) and the Regional Formula (1956), which went a long way towards meeting Sikh demands, none of these were followed through. In general, it might appear as if the central government under the Congress Party has been more concerned about holding on to or gaining power in states that are likely to bring electoral victory, such as the Hindu-dominated Haryana. In 1966, when the Congress Party at the center gave in to the Akali Dal's long struggle for a Punjabi *Suba*, it did so only after the emergence of a pro-partition

Hindi/Hindu movement in the part of greater Punjab that came to be Haryana, which, unlike the part of greater Punjab that was designated for the new Punjab, was likely to be a Congress stronghold.<sup>60</sup>

Similarly, Kohli (1991, 362) notes about the 1982-1984 period that if the Congress Party had given in to the Akalis' demands, it would have meant a victory for the Akalis and grievances in Haryana, both of which would adversely affect the electoral consequences for Congress (see also Surjeet 1985). Thus, Indira Gandhi, unwilling to let the Akalis ruin the Congress' fortunes in a traditional Congress-stronghold, was not letting Punjab get in the way.

These are clear examples of an ethnically distinct state, Punjab, losing out if it is not allied with the party or coalition ruling at the center, particularly in a context where other states are copartisans of the center. In this case, copartisan ties excluding Punjab precipitated divisions within the state that made violent conflict more likely. Indeed, the failure of the Punjab Accord was the catalyst that made Punjab descend into a violent separatist conflict as it convinced the emerging militant groups, which were already disillusioned with the established political parties, that the Akali Dal was unable to represent their interests and that peaceful negotiations were unlikely to bring about results.

Finally, to what extent does copartisanship help explain the relative peacefulness of the case of Québec? In Québec, the era of "cooperative federalism" in the early 1960s was, in part, a result of copartisan ties between the Liberals in Ottawa and in Québec City. In the 1963-1966 period, Prime Minister Lester Pearson gave in to a number of demands raised by Québec's Liberal government under Jean Lesage. Realizing that the only way to undermine the nascent Québec separatism was to accommodate it, Pearson was willing to give to Québec power over joint federal-province tasks beyond those given to the other provinces, on the condition that the other provinces were given the same opportunity. While the Liberal party in Ottawa in Québec City and in Ottawa already in 1964 began to develop into two very different parties, in the 1963 federal elections, the Liberals under Pearson came to power in Ottawa with a sense of "I owe you" to the Québec Liberals. In the 1958 federal elections, the

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<sup>60</sup> Weiner (1989, 211) also notes that the Congress Party at the center gave in to the Punjabi *Suba* demand because the Akali agitation threatened to erode the position of the Congress Party in the state.

Liberals had been severely beaten, but in Québec, both in the 1960 and 1962 provincial elections, Jean Lesage led the Québec Liberals to a victory. Thus, in Ottawa, the Liberals set their hopes on Lesage winning back Québec in the federal elections as well, and, in 1963, the Liberals returned to power in Ottawa, with the help of 47 (out of 128) seats from Québec. Of the popular vote in the province, 45.6 percent had gone to the Liberals. Thus, not only had the Liberals under Lesage ended 16 years of conservative *Union nationale* dominance at the provincial level, they had helped the Liberals come back strong after their humiliating defeat in 1958. So from the very start, the Pearson government had an interest in keeping the Liberals in power in Québec and felt, to a certain degree, indebted to the Québec Liberals. Moreover, the two politicians knew each other from politics in Ottawa, from the days when Lesage had been a minister in the 1953-1957 Liberal government, and had a relatively close personal relationship.<sup>61</sup> In a biography of Lester Pearson, Stursberg (1978) suggests that Pearson's treatment of Québec did, indeed, rest with the fact that he was dealing with a fellow Liberal government.<sup>62</sup>

To a large extent, the Pearson government's concessions, which were part of Québec's Quiet Revolution, took the steam out of the more radical and separatist parties in the province, such as the *Rassemblement pour l'indépendance nationale* (RIN), which, along with its right-leaning counterpart, the *Ralliement national* (RN), gained only nine percent of the vote in the 1966 provincial elections (Corbett 1967, 148). Indeed, while the 1960s saw the emergence of the FLQ and separatist violence in Québec, the fact that the Lesage government had already managed to gain concessions within the federal system—and another peaceful, but even more separatist party, the PQ, under the leadership of former Liberal MP Lévesque was emerging—contributed to the relative slim support of the FLQ in the province. It is estimated that at the most, the FLQ consisted of some 40-50 active members and had 200-300 sympathizers who were willing to provide financial aid and shelter for the active members. In the population at large, perhaps 2,000-3,000 were passive sympathizers (Pelletier 1971).

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<sup>61</sup> At one point Pearson was even envisioning Lesage as his successor (Stursberg 1978).

<sup>62</sup> In part, Pearson faced a setback in the 1965 federal elections as the Western and Atlantic provinces found that he had paid too little attention to their needs—as opposed to Québec's needs—and that in 1966, when the Liberals lost the elections in Québec, Pearson was “no longer inhibited by having to deal with fellow Liberals in Québec City” (Stursberg 1978, 206).

While copartisanship in the early 1960s contributed to the violent road not taken in Québec, no other time periods of copartisanship between Québec City and Ottawa (in 1970-1976, and 2003-2005) have been characterized by smooth intergovernmental bargaining, mainly because Canadian parties are non-integrated and are, in many cases, copartisans only in name. Indeed, Québec's wing of the Liberal Party had already in 1955 established limited autonomy from the central party organization, but, in 1964, the Québec wing officially separated from the Liberals at the center, forming the *Parti libéral du Québec* (PLQ),<sup>63</sup> which among other things meant that the federal and provincial party staffs were no longer the same (Fitzmaurice 1985, 228). This split further contributed towards the trend of what Filippov et al. (2004, 117-19) call “without bargaining,” by which they refer to federal-provincial bargaining outside the federal center: While key political issues in Canada have been addressed at the so-called first ministers' conferences since the early 1900s, in the 1960s these conferences became more frequent.<sup>64</sup> While there is nothing inherent in such first minister's conferences that would prohibit accommodation of Québec's demands, in the 1990s, public opinion in the rest of Canada made such negotiations problematic (McRoberts 1997). In recent years, however, it looks like Québec's Liberal government has managed to “use” such conferences to gain concession that meet some of Québec's demands. That is, even though Filippov et al. (2004) consider the “without bargaining” in the Canadian federation to be a destabilizing feature, I would suggest that at least it has ensured that that Québec's request for sovereignty not return to violence means by demonstrating that change can happen within the federal framework.

In sum, while the Québec case lends only limited support to the peace-preserving role played by copartisan ties across tiers of government—indeed, key to Québec intergovernmental bargaining has been what Filippov et al. (2004) call “without bargaining,” which is a result of the lack of “federal friendly” parties—the Chechen and Punjab case highlights ways in which lack of copartisanship in regions that are ethnically distinct from the center may impede peaceful intergovernmental bargaining.

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<sup>63</sup> Today, in federal elections, the Liberal candidates in Québec are part of the central Liberal party, *Parti libéral du Canada (Québec)*, while the PLQ fields the provincial candidates.

<sup>64</sup> From 1906 to 2004, only 19 out of 76 took place before 1960. Data on first ministers' conferences from the Canadian Intergovernmental Secretariat, available online at [http://www.scics.gc.ca/pubs/fmp\\_e.pdf](http://www.scics.gc.ca/pubs/fmp_e.pdf).

## Summary and Avenues for Further Research

Since the end of World War II, intrastate conflicts are one of the major threats to peace and stability in the international system, and both scholars and policy makers have set out to figure out what kinds of institutional “fixes” can be done before a conflict turns violent and potentially leads to state failure. Federalism or other forms of decentralized governance, such as regional autonomy arrangements, has come to be considered a promising institutional fix for intrastate conflicts, particularly separatist struggles. The literature on intrastate conflicts, however, gives federalism mixed reviews. While some applaud it as a compromise solution that has the potential to please both national and regional actors, others see it as a slippery-slope leading to conflict and state disintegration. While an important debate, the dichotomous pro or con view of decentralization does not shed much light on the very divergent track record of existing decentralized states in avoiding conflict. Thus, in recent years, scholars have begun to examine the conditions under which decentralization can and cannot help preserve peace. This study seeks to contribute to this debate by putting forth and evaluating across regions in federal states propositions about how the effects of decentralization is conditional on traits of the societies these institutions are meant to govern. I closely examine three conflictual cases of center-region relations: Chechnya’s relationship to Moscow, Punjab’s relationship to India, and Québec’s relationship to Ottawa.

These cases provide empirical support for the proposition that federal institutions are likely to “work” differently pending on ethnic make-up and regional levels of wealth. They also show, however, that intrastate struggles are complicated events involving a number of actors and motives. In particular, there is reason to think that it is not just ethnicity and regional levels of wealth that are societal underpinnings likely to affect the peace-preserving nature of decentralization. Indeed, it may be that not only are *intrastate* relations important, especially between the center and an ethnically distinct region, but internal struggles in the region itself matter for its relationship to the center.

Both the Punjab and the Chechen cases highlight that an important part of the story that explains why these regions ended up in a violent conflict with the central government is about internal divisions

within the regions, which complicated center-region bargaining. The turn to a violent separatist conflict in these cases was, in part, due to a “weak” regional government or party, unable to bridge diverse interests. As highlighted in recent research on the bargaining process in separatist conflicts, an important modification of the argument presented in this study is a consideration of (the consequences of) societal divisions within a region (see Cunningham 2006; Lawrence 2007; Pearlman 2007). In the context of separatist conflicts in federal states, while strong regional or local actors, including strong regional parties, may be destabilizing in that they do push for greater autonomy and limits the central government’s ability to go its way (Brancati 2006), they may help ensure that the struggle takes place through peaceful channels, as they can help unite diverse interests in the region and give the center a negotiation partner that can follow through on an agreement. Essentially, what this modification of the argument suggests is that there is more to societies than ethnicity and wealth. The argument in this study is about how institutions interact with societal traits, but by focusing only on a region’s level of wealth and ethnic composition, the understanding of society may be too narrow. Even local divisions—be they based on clans, castes, economic discrepancies, or intra-region ethnic divisions—affect how institutions governing the relations between the center and the regions “work.” An avenue for further research is to further theorize which societal traits influence the institutionalization of regional challengers and how “weak” versus “strong” challengers affect the bargaining process. The bottom-line, however, is the importance of in-depth knowledge about the societies in which hopes are pinned on federalism or other forms of decentralized governance.

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