

The Theory of Democracy and Permanent Minorities in Southeastern Europe

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Over the evolution of democratic theory, various scholars have defined and conceptualized “democracy” in different ways. In fact, whenever one reads a work of democratic theory it is necessary to first define what the author means by “democracy” before proceeding to a more in-depth discussion of the merits of the argument. With this in mind, the goal of this study is twofold. First, I seek to examine the existing democratic theory literature as it pertains to minority rights; especially cases of permanent national minorities and how they are incorporated—or not—into the larger state polity. Then, I attempt to reconcile the specific policy recommendations of these theories into one major conceptual model.

Essentially, in newly democratizing plural societies there is a tendency by majority groups to suppress minority groups. This is done for a variety of reasons which will be discussed at length later. However, the essential fear by majority cohorts is that geographically-concentrated minority groups will take advantage of the shock of democratization by pushing for secession and self-determination. Therefore, in many cases harsh repression is used to maintain the country’s territorial integrity. In this study, I contend that such responses are not only costly to the minority groups involved—and offensive to notions of democratic pluralism—but are also not in the rational-choice interests of the majority group, either. Rather, I propose a theoretical model for such societies which will both prevent secessionist movements, while still protecting minority rights and adhering to the fundamental principles of democratic theory. In other words, it is theoretically possible to reach a pareto-optimal solution for both sides, even in these difficult national environments. This model was arrived at through a process of theoretic induction, and is fundamentally bolstered by Downsian notions of rational-choice (Downs 1957).

Given that framework, however, this study is rather limited in its generalizability. I chose to utilize the case study method and focus on two major countries in Southeastern Europe with sizable permanent minority groups—Romania and Bulgaria. I chose these two countries for a variety of reasons. First, they are both newly democratized plural societies within the last fifteen years. Second, the two countries were geographically-proximate to each other. Third, both countries bordered Yugoslavia—a nation which witnessed several bloody secessionist movements on the part of its national minorities, and brutal oppression by the dominant Serbian ethnicity. Lastly, the permanent minorities of both countries are comprised of ethnics from bordering countries. For example, the largest minority group in Romania is Hungarian; the largest minority group in Bulgaria is Turkish. Therefore, the threat—or perceived threat—of secession or annexation by these groups is heightened. In choosing these countries, I was essentially employing the “most similar systems” approach.

However, despite the limited scope of the study—and the limited generalizability that can be inferred from an *N* of 2—this method did help me to devise a theoretical framework/model which can be applied to a much larger universe of countries. As a result, future research projects could utilize this model to conduct regional—or even continental—studies of majority-minority relations in newly democratizing polities. Such larger-*N* studies could then greatly increase the overall generalizability of my hypotheses.

Theoretical Foundations

Before I begin my cross-national analysis, it is necessary to first examine some of the major works of democratic scholarship pertaining to minority rights.

Robert Dahl

In his analysis of democratic systems, Robert Dahl (1989) views majoritarianism as the foundation, and therefore enumerates four major arguments in favor of majoritarian governance: it maximizes self-determination, it is the necessary consequence of practical requirements, it is more likely to produce correct decisions, and it maximizes utility (Dahl 1989). Although majoritarianism focuses—by definition—on the will of the majority, all of these arguments also touch on minority rights. Moreover, when analyzed carefully from the perspective of permanent minorities, there are several problems with a strictly majoritarian system of government.

For example, the first argument holds that majoritarianism is beneficial because it maximizes self-determination. Specifically, majoritarianism will produce outcomes that the majority of the polity will approve of. However, if permanent minority groups are present in the society than they never have a chance to get their preferred policy outcomes enacted. In response to this, some theorists have suggested the institution of supermajority requirements. Dahl strongly opposes this remedy, however, because it would give minority groups a *de facto* veto over policy outcomes that a majority of the polity prefer (Dahl 1989). Thus, it would lessen self-determination by placing greater power in the hands of a minority of citizens at the expense of the majority of citizens.

The arguments against “maximizing utility” follow a similar logic. However, in this case Dahl makes a huge assumption. Dahl assumes that majorities are fluid (Dahl 1989). Therefore, he is essentially arguing that issue-by-issue different groups will be in the majority and different groups would be in the minority (Dahl 1989). Ergo, any possible disempowerment that minority group members feel will be evenly distributed across the entire populous (Dahl 1989). This is a huge assumption which is not supported by real-world facts. In many plural societies—

especially highly polarized ones—race/ethnicity/religion is the dominant cleavage within the country. All issues are viewed through the perspective of these differences, and consequently this division will give rise to block voting. In those instances, whichever group is larger will almost always achieve its desired policy outcomes, while the smaller group will almost never be successful.

Also, when evaluating the argument that majoritarianism is the most likely method to produce correct decisions, what is the “correct” decision? “Correct” decision-making is really a normative judgment. Unless there is complete agreement, there will always be dissenters who feel that the policy enacted was not “correct” but was “wrong”. Therefore, a clear distinction should be made between “policy decision favored by a majority” and “correct decision”. Very often state policies—such as the repression of minority languages or religions—could be favored by a majority, but are certainly not “correct” (especially from the minority standpoint).

Lastly, Dahl talks about the nature of democracy and the use of coercion. He makes the axiomatic argument that all governments—even democracies—must possess an element of coercion in order to succeed (Dahl 1989). If coercion is not present at some level, then society lives in anarchy. So, Dahl suggests that democratic governments should use their coercive power in the furtherance of other democratic ideals (Dahl 1989). Specifically, democracies should use coercion to curtail freedom only to ensure that the rights of other citizens are not being violated (Dahl 1989). I will revisit this argument later when discussing the theoretical perspective of Amartya Sen.

Arend Lijphart

In contrast to Dahl, Arend Lijphart sees the solution to majority tyranny as a consociational democratic system. Overall, consociational democracy has four main

characteristics. “The first and most important element is government by a grand coalition of the political leaders of all significant segments of the plural society....The other three basic elements of consociational democracy are 1) the mutual veto or “concurrent majority” rule, which serves as an additional protection of vital minority interests, 2) proportionality as the principal standard of political representation, civil service appointments, and the allocation of public funds, and 3) a high degree of autonomy for each segment to run its own internal affairs” (Lijphart 1977, 25).

These three concepts are very closely related. First, minority groups must have a role in the decision-making process (grand coalition). This often takes the form of certain cabinet portfolios. Second, they must be represented proportionally to their percentages in the population (PR). Finally, they must be able to veto any majority-favored position that specifically affects their interests (minority veto). Lijphart argues that such systems are far superior to majoritarianism in ensuring the fairness and stability of a nation. Specifically, he says, “In a political system with clearly separate and potentially hostile population segments, virtually all decisions are perceived as entailing high stakes, and strict majority rule places a strain on the unity and peace of the system” (Lijphart 1977, 28). Therefore, it would logically follow that the formation of grand coalitions and the use of PR would be acceptable alternatives (Lijphart 1977; Lijphart 1999). These arrangements also have the benefit of being largely congruent with overall democratic theory.

However, Lijphart goes much farther than Dahl in advocating the creation of mechanisms to ensure that minority interests could never be infringed upon—even by the largest of majorities. In advocating a minority veto, Lijphart argues that, “Participation in a grand coalition offers important political protection for minority segments, but no absolute and foolproof protection. Decisions have to be made in grand coalitions, and when these are reached by

majority vote, [although the minority is present] it may nevertheless be outvoted by the majority” (Lijphart 1977, 36). Therefore, a minority veto is needed to ensure that the vital interests of national minorities are always protected (Lijphart 1977). Dahl would completely disagree with this approach. Allowing minority groups to thwart the will of the majority is unacceptable based upon Dahl’s conception of democratic theory. This would be true even if the minority was relatively large. However, when a minority group only makes up 1-5% of the population, allowing them to veto the will of 95-99% of the rest of the country is even more offensive. I will return to this debate later in my analysis, and offer a compromise solution which could potentially satisfy both Dahl and Lijphart.

Lastly, Lijphart makes the extraordinary claim that societies will be more tolerant of difference if difference is preserved, and replicated in the political system. For example, he says that “One aspect of the definition of a plural society is that the representative organizations of the society follow segmental cleavages. This means that segmental autonomy increases the plural nature of an already plural society....It is the nature of consociational democracy, at least initially, to make plural societies more thoroughly plural. Its approach is not to abolish or weaken segmental cleavages but to recognize them explicitly and to turn the segments into constructive elements of a stable democracy” (Lijphart 1977, 41-42). I contend that while this may be beneficial in the short-run, in the long-run such systems will only exacerbate inter-group tensions and hostility. Marilyn Brewer’s (1999) arguments tend to support this hypothesis.

Marilynn Brewer

In her article, “Social Identity, Group Loyalty and Intergroup Conflict”, Marilyn Brewer describes the two main theories of group identity originally advanced by William Graham Sumner in his 1906 book, *Folkways*. The first theory—and most significant—holds that humans

naturally organize themselves into “in-groups” and “out-groups” (Brewer 1999, 68). This might seem anathema to our modern sensibilities concerning egalitarianism; however throughout most of human history this theory seems both highly plausible and utilitarian. Moreover, all subsequent theories of inter-ethnic conflict seem to flow from this basic premise. For example, Sumner’s second (corollary) theory is that humans come to assume that their group has the right point-of-view, and that the points-of-view of all other groups should be judged by that standard (Brewer 1999, 68). Therefore, the concept of “in-group” versus “out-group” tensions has a great deal of explanatory power when examining instances of ethnic conflict—such as in the former Yugoslavia. However, this then leads to the questions of how humans organized themselves into “in-groups” and “out-groups” in the first place?

According to Brewer, human evolutionary history and the need for interdependence both played key roles in the development of these classifications. Brewer’s theory of social identity revolves around the notion of human interdependence, and the degree to which people are or are not differentiated from groups. The interdependence theory arises out of her study of evolutionary tendencies, and the notion of differentiation arises out of psychological studies. According to Brewer, “as a species we have selected cooperation rather than strength and social learning rather than instinct. This result is...human beings have obligatory interdependence” (Brewer 1999, 74). In other words, in order to survive throughout our evolutionary history, humans needed the help, cooperation, and protection of other people—hence, our tendency to fall into groups.

Further, Brewer then examines the psychological mechanisms of group identity and individual differentiation which determine the relative balance of our personality (on a scale from completely individualistic to total identification with a larger group). These are

countervailing forces which pull humans in different directions. “On the one hand, we have developed organized structures that require a built-in cooperative altruistic concern for others. But, on the other hand, indiscriminate cooperation is also not functional...if obligatory interdependence is extended too far...the benefits of cooperation are spread thin, and individuals as a whole will find themselves giving more than receiving” (Brewer 1999, 76). Therefore, the basic paradigm that Brewer sets forth is that, “As inclusiveness increases, the differentiation motive kicks in, creating a reaction of experiencing anxiety about being too immersed and of seeking greater individuation. But, as that differentiation increases, the need for inclusion is aroused, also experienced as a sense of anxiety, a fear of exclusion and isolation, and a seeking for more assimilation” (Brewer 1999, 79). These are the essential psychological arguments for the formation of “in-groups” and “out-groups”. The type of extreme nationalist, ethnocentric phenomena that we are concerned about usually occur as the result of shocks to the society, such as rapid democratization.

Many scholars contend that the best remedy for this type of behavior is to take advantage of “dual identifications”. By getting people to focus on their similarities—i.e. getting people who might consider each other as members of the “out-group” to see each other as common members of the “in-group”—we are able to get people to cooperate, trust each other, and reduce the potential for conflict. This seems fairly congruent with the philosophy of “Rational Cosmopolitanism”, which seeks to have all human beings identify as “citizens of the world” as opposed to parochial members of their own discrete factions (Gilbert 2000, 80). However, practically speaking, a focus on “dual identifications” seems completely unworkable in severely ethnically polarized and distrustful polities. This is especially true when differences are perpetuated through the governmental system, in the manner prescribed by Lijphart.

Amartya Sen

Amartya Sen (1999) is essentially making an economic argument about freedom; however his arguments have great import for the study of minority rights. Sen contends that rights and freedoms are essentially different things. Rights are a necessary condition for freedom, but not a sufficient condition. For example, one can have the right to live wherever they want, but if they lack financial resources they will not have the freedom to do so. Similarly, if permanent minority groups technically have the right to legal equality, but they are so disadvantaged that they cannot exercise those rights, then they lack freedom. Moreover, in some countries—such as Romania and Bulgaria—the government makes assurances of equality, but then enacts legislation which inhibits equality. Thus, the freedom of permanent national minorities is severely constrained.

Sen also makes an interesting argument regarding “absolute” freedom. He contends that democratic countries should allow as much freedom as possible while still remaining within the constraints of the system (Sen 1999). It has already been established by Dahl (1969) that every non-anarchist society needs some basic level of coercion. Therefore, total freedom is not possible within the constraints of any government. As such, Sen is arguing for the next best alternative; democratic societies should provide as much freedom as theoretically possible within the aforementioned constraints. The way to achieve these results is by the usage of state power to curtail freedom only to ensure that the rights of other citizens are not being violated. Essentially, this is the same argument that Dahl makes about minimalist democracy (Dahl 1989).

Theoretical Model & Implications

Essentially, I envision a continuum stretching from extremely weak government at one end to extremely strong government at the other. Since the majority-minority relationship is

always asymmetrical (i.e. the majority always has more agency in dealing with the minorities, and the reverse is never true), this continuum is based upon the rational-choice assumptions of the leaders of the ethnic majority. I contend that, in most instances, these leaders will gravitate towards the right side of the spectrum (stronger government). Their calculation is essentially that weak governments will lead to secessionist movements, because the central government is practically powerless to maintain the nation's territorial integrity. Since a collapsing state and multiple secessionist movements are detrimental to the overall state, majorities will logically want to avoid this outcome. Hence, the establishment of stronger government is always privileged over the establishment of weaker government. Up until this point, this seems entirely rational. However, one must take into account the wider and the longer-term implications of such a policy.

Repression is costly to every member of a society. Obviously, permanent minority groups suffer the most as the result of state-sanctioned oppression. However, the majority (which majority leaders claim to represent) also suffers as well. First of all, the financial cost of repression is always much higher than the financial cost of freedom. Newly democratizing states need all of the financial capital available in order to affect a smooth transition. So, spending government money to maintain repressive policies directed at small minority groups is simply not cost-effective. Second, there are major long-term economic effects of such policies that are detrimental to the entire society. An example of this can be found in Romania. A lack of financial capital combined with a lack of social capital (which is the result in polarized politics) leads to long-term economic stagnation. Business cannot operate well under conditions where there is instability/tension, a total lack of trust, and a dearth of human capital. Therefore, by choosing repression, nations—including the majority ethnic groups—are condemning

themselves to decades of economic inertia. Ergo, it is not in the majority leaders' rational-choice interest to implement oppressive public policies.

A corollary reason for this assertion is that there may exist a hidden feedback loop. In other words, from the perspective of the minority groups, harsh repression may lead to secessionist movements. Rationally speaking, if minorities have nothing to lose and their situation can only be improved by seceding, then it would be in their rational-choice interest to do so. Therefore, in seeking to avoid secession through the formation of a strong central state and the use of repressive agents, the majority leaders may be provoking the very outcome that they most seek to avoid. By choosing repression, majorities may end up with their least optimal solution—a violent struggle for secession.

Conversely, it is not in the majority leaders' rational-choice interest to form such a weak government that geographically-concentrated minority groups could easily secede. Therefore, logic would dictate that there must be an equilibrium point somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. The minority also possesses a centrally-located equilibrium point, however the exact position of this point is context-dependent. This is where consociational democracy plays a role. According to Lijphart, "consociational democracy entails the cooperation by segmental leaders in spite of the deep cleavages separating the segments. This requires that the leaders feel at least some commitment to the maintenance of the unity of the country as well as commitment to democratic practices. They must also have a willingness to engage in cooperative efforts with the leaders of other segments in a spirit of moderation and compromise. At the same time, they must retain the support and loyalty of their own followers" (Lijphart 1977, 53). This is not an easy task, but I contend that a pareto-optimal solution could be achieved by this type of "bargaining method".

More than anything else, the majority wants stability and the preservation of the country's territorial integrity. Conversely, the minority wants substantive freedoms (especially in the areas of language, religion, education, etc.) and a real voice in the political process. Both of these goals can be accomplished without either repression or secession.

Bulgaria attempted to achieve this goal through constitutional engineering. However, extreme contradictions in the document ended up negating any salutary benefits that those provisions may have provided. Had Bulgaria not been influenced by nationalist sentiments, perhaps Bulgarian majority-minority relations would be more sanguine. Constitutionalism and the Rule of Law are key elements in consolidating democracy (Linz & Stepan 1996, also see Janulewicz 2004). There needs to be set boundaries within which political activities can occur. By ensuring basic minority rights in the constitution, principles of majoritarianism are not violated because 1) the nation as a whole must accept the constitution, and 2) theories of majoritarianism can only work within a bounded space governed by the rule of law. Therefore, once minority rights are in the constitution, they are part of that bounded space and rule of law. Ergo, they do not violate democratic theory. From a rational-choice perspective, this means that the minority is gaining something without any substantial affect on the majority. Hence, this model does not depict a zero-sum game.

Also, by protecting minority rights in the constitution, the society is also reducing the saliency of ethnic issues in ordinary politics. If ethnic issues are not political, then various ethnic groups can focus on other issues—not as closely identified with their own identities—and therefore form cross-cutting cleavages with members of other groups. This would be a very positive achievement according to Brewer's (1999) theories of group identification.

In addition to constitutional engineering, however, there are many other possible solutions. For example, proportional representation (PR) allows minority groups greater representation in government than they would receive under a first-past-the-post electoral system, but still allows majorities the power of majority status. Thus, the interests of both minorities and majorities are satisfied. Also, a similar argument could be made for the use of grand coalitions. The use of a minority veto would not be acceptable in this context, however, because it would violate the majoritarian principles of democratic theory and it would give minority groups far too much power over majority groups or coalitions. However, if these two policies—PR and grand coalitions—were implemented along with constitutionally-granted guarantees of minority rights, then a minority veto would not be necessary. Also, the need for secession would not be necessary, either. By allowing minority groups some measure of political power, majority groups can reduce the possible benefits secession would provide and increase the possible costs that could be incurred. Therefore, a majority could actually engineer a scenario whereby it would be in the rational-choice interests of the minority to remain within the polity.

This combined with some government initiatives to promote trust and the building of positive social capital, could result in a pareto-optimal solution in the middle of the spectrum for both parties. If any changes were made to the system, one of the two groups would suffer. Just like Dahl's (1989) conception of minimalist democracy and Sen's (1999) conception of achieving the "maximum amount of freedom within the constraints of the system", the solution to this model could provide similar results.

The Case of Romania

In this context, Romania provides an interesting case study. When Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu was removed from power in 1989, there was much optimism among all groups in Romania that conditions would improve. This perception was bolstered by the very conciliatory promises and policies that the new government was promoting vis-à-vis permanent minority groups. For example, “On 5 January 1990, a declaration on the status of the national minorities in Romania was released by NSF [National Salvation Front] which raised hopes that concrete steps would be taken to deal with minority concerns and undo much of the damage of the Ceausescu period....Individual and collective rights were to be enshrined in the new constitution of the country, and the declaration also promised that a ministry of national minorities’ would be created to “provide the appropriate institutional framework for the exercise of the minorities major rights, the use of their mother tongues, the promotion of national culture and the safeguarding of ethnic identity” (Gallagher 1995, 76).

Furthermore, federalism and semi-autonomous sub-national units—a method favored by Lijphart—were also used to advance these ideals. For example, “on 4 January 1990, a decree law on local government had laid down that in areas of Romania inhabited by ethnic minorities, decisions of the local state would be made known to citizens in their own language as well as Romanian” (Gallagher 1995, 76). These reforms were chiefly targeted to the large Hungarian minority living in Transylvania. National statistics for the ethnic makeup of Romania are presented below:

Table 1. Ethnic Group Percentages in Romania (1992)

Romanian	89.50%
Hungarian	7.10%
Roma	1.80%
German	0.50%
Ukrainian	0.30%
Russian-Lipovan	0.20%
Turkish	0.10%
Serb	0.10%
Tartar	0.10%
Slovak	0.10%

Source: Minorities in Europe—Hungarians in Romania (<http://www.minority2000.net/Gr-75/t84gb.htm>).

Almost immediately, the government's actions produced a substantial backlash among the majority Romanian population. This phenomenon was especially evident in the areas of education and language policy. The new government decided to create a policy which re-introduced Hungarian-language instruction in the schools. To implement this policy, the government chose to split the existing schools into Romanian-language and Hungarian-language. The immediate result was widespread protests by Romanian students and their parents about the tremendous inconvenience that this "minority policy" was causing them (Gallagher 1995, 79). In addition, university students in Cluj were deeply offended by the return of Hungarian-language instruction, and the decision to reorganize and segregate the school along ethnic and linguistic lines (Gallagher 1995, 79). Unfortunately for the Hungarians, this backlash was the start of a widespread nationalist counter-movement which was able to seize national power.

“Nationalists benefited from the existence of a submissive mentality in which there is a widespread acceptance of the state as a supervisor of individual behavior. The lack of a democratic tradition of resistance to despotism, and the survival of rural-based values which render the individual dependent on group authority, have made sizeable social groups susceptible to the nationalist appeal in Romania” (Gallagher 1995, 238). In this case, majority Romanian ethnics were easy targets for nationalist appeals. This is especially true when one considers the heightened inter-group tensions which arose as a result of the education and language policies. Brewer (1999) would analyze this phenomenon as follows: Because of ethnically-conscious government policies, the saliency of ethnic/linguistic issues was raised. This raises the consciousness of in-group/out-group relations in peoples’ minds. At the same time, majority Romanian ethnics felt that the new policies were putting them at a disadvantage. Therefore, the threat from the “out-group” was increasing. As a result, it is only logical that Romanians would try to preserve their own position vis-à-vis Hungarians, and would do whatever was necessary to ameliorate the growing threat that they posed. Hence, the rise, popularity, and success of the nationalist counter-movement.

Once the nationalists gained power, conditions quickly deteriorated for the Hungarians. Upset about the language policies, fearful that Transylvanian Hungarians would try to secede or form some independent alliance with Hungary, and wanting to assert a strong sense of national (i.e. Romanian) identity, the government began to severely repress its minority population. In the years that followed, “mutual suspicion and sensitivity became more noticeable than receptivity to different points of view and a capacity for dialogue. The climate of suspicion and frenetic competition for limited resources that had grown up under communism created a sense

of social atomization which well-placed officials in the state administration...were able to exploit so as to manage change on their own limited agenda” (Gallagher 1995, 231).

Therefore, in Robert Putnam’s (2000) view these policies resulted in a dramatic decline in social capital. The trust and openness which characterized Romanian society right after Ceausescu’s downfall was replaced with suspicion and fear. Based upon the facts that societies with low social capital are not realizing their full latent potential and are not fully “participatory” in the context of democratic theory, these findings do not bode well for the future of Hungarian majority-minority relations (Putnam 2000).

Lastly, Gallagher (1995) observes that, “Nationalism was necessary for the creation of the Romanian state. But the longer the Romanian elites cling to it as a guiding principle above all others, the more difficult it will be to tackle fundamental problems of political and economic organization which have prevented the state from serving the needs of its citizens” (Gallagher 1995, 241). Here we see a classic example of a civil society (Romanian majority) being unable to transition into an effective, inclusive political society (Linz & Stepan 1996). Nationalism worked as a unifying force to depose Ceausescu (positive civil society), but then it became used as a weapon against Romania’s permanent minorities (negative civil society). As a result, both the bureaucratic and economic structures of the nation are largely ineffective. Since Linz & Stepan (1996) posit five arenas for democratic consolidation: civil society, political society, rule of law, effective bureaucracy, and effective economic society (Linz & Stepan 1996), based upon their criteria Romania does not even meet the test of a “consolidated democracy”. Largely this is the result of their own negative policy choices.

The Case of Bulgaria

Bulgaria seemed to follow a similar pattern. At the beginning of the democratization process, there was great hope that the rights of Bulgaria's national minorities (chiefly Turks) would be protected. In fact, the whole notion of pluralism was enshrined several times in the new Bulgarian constitution. For example, in Article 11 it says, "Political life in the Republic of Bulgaria is based on the principle of political pluralism. And, further: No single political party or ideology may be proclaimed or asserted as being that of the state" (Tanchev 1998, 72). Pluralism is also a factor in crafting Article 8, which provided for the separation of powers between legislative, executive, and judicial branches (Tanchev 1998, 72). Moreover, in addition to this generic support for pluralism, minority rights advocates were pleased by Article 54 (1) which specifically stated that a citizen can "develop his own culture in accordance with his ethnic affiliation" (Tanchev 1998, 74). National statistics for the ethnic makeup of Bulgaria are presented below:

Table 2. Ethnic Group Percentages in Bulgaria (1992)

Bulgarian	85.67%
Turkish	9.43%
Roma	3.69%
Russian	0.20%
Armenian	0.16%
Vlakh	0.06%
Karakachan	0.06%
Greek	0.06%
Tartar	0.05%
Jewish	0.04%

Source: Zhelyazkova (1998, 172).

However, even at this early stage, there were signs of concern on behalf of the Bulgarian majority. This led to a series of constitutional inconsistencies, as the drafters sought to avoid the possibility of Turkish secession, or perhaps outright annexation by Turkey. For example, “Article 2 states that Bulgaria is an ‘integral state’, that its ‘territorial integrity shall be inviolable’, and that no ‘autonomous territorial formations’ shall exist” (Tanchev 1998, 73). Thus, through constitutional engineering, Bulgaria has already precluded itself from the option of effective federalism or semi-autonomous sub-national units. This certainly goes against the advice of Lijphart (Lijphart 1977; Lijphart 1999).

Furthermore, even greater inconsistencies arise with respect to language, religion, and political expression. For example, Article 3 declares Bulgarian the official state language (Tanchev 1998, 73). Article 13 declares Eastern Orthodoxy the “traditional religion” of the state (Tanchev 1998, 73). Most controversial of all, Article 11 (4) bans the formation of political parties which are based on “ethnic, racial, or religious” groupings (Tanchev 1998, 73). How can the Bulgarian state claim to value pluralism (as it does in Article 11) and still justify the privileging of one language over another and the privileging of one religion over another? More importantly, how can the Bulgarian state claim to value pluralism when they ban the political expression of that pluralism (in the form of ethnic, racial, or religious political parties)? Such practices certainly do not conform to any conception of true democracy.

Lastly, how can individuals “develop their own culture in accordance with their ethnic affiliation” when foreign languages and religions are made official by the state, when semi-autonomous provinces are constitutionally impossible, and when the formation of ethnic/racial/religious political parties is forbidden? Such an arrangement is very reminiscent of Sen’s (1999) rights-without-freedom thesis. Individuals have a constitutional right to “develop

their culture”, yet every major means of cultural expression is forbidden by the state. They have rights, but they do not have freedoms.

Under such conditions, Turkish Muslims in Bulgaria—while initially enjoying positive benefits from democratization (just like the Hungarians in Romania)—became gradually more repressed. In some cases “pluralist” Bulgarian politicians played upon the fears and stereotypes of the population, in order to gain electoral advantage. Zhelyazkova (1998) even says that “they frequently distort or mythologize the historical facts connected with the Muslim minorities, sometimes with the consequence of undermining their own country’s national security” (Zhelyazkova 1998, 166). In this respect, Bulgarian politicians are using the same tactics found in Romania. They raise the salience of ethnic/religious issues and then use the increased in-group fear to gain greater levels of political support. Ultimately, these tactics lead Bulgaria down the same deleterious path as Romania.

Conclusion

“For democracies to come into being, future political elites will at a minimum have to believe that democracy is the least worst form of government for their societies and for themselves. They will also have to have the skills to bring about the transition to democracy against both radicals and standpatters who inevitably will exist and who persistently will attempt to undermine their efforts” (Huntington 1991, 316). This is the essential challenge of democratization.

In this paper, I have examined the existing democratic theory literature as it pertains to minority rights; especially cases of permanent national minorities and how they are incorporated—or not—into the larger state polity. Then, based upon those theoretical foundations and the specific case studies of Romania and Bulgaria, I constructed a conceptual

model which I believe could be applicable in other settings. Formal modelers and large- N quantitative researchers could both utilize this framework for much broader studies encompassing a much larger universe of countries. Therefore, while I only have an N of 2, I feel that this paper has made a valuable contribution to the discipline.

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