

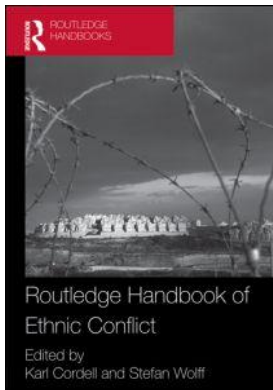
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### **Ethnic accommodation in unitary states**

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## 21 Ethnic accommodation in unitary states

*Frans Schrijver*

The unitary state is the most prevalent state system worldwide, and just like federal states, many of the world's unitary states are places of ethnic conflict. We can connect the common distinction of state systems between unitary and federal states (Elazar, 1997) with ethnic conflicts in two ways: in the first place, it provides a context, a state structure as arena in which ethnic conflicts are fought and solutions are introduced. Ethnic conflicts are located somewhere, and whether they are located in unitary or federal states matters; difference in state structures influence the actors in the conflict. Second, the distinction between unitary and federal is part of the accommodation of ethnic conflict itself. Federalism is not just a context, but is itself an instrument of pacification and managing ethnic difference (McGarry and O'Leary, 1994). And, arguably, also the unitary state has been used as instrument in response to ethnic conflicts and tensions. Particular historical examples of unitary states have been specifically designed to create national unity and end ethnic conflict by merging rival ethnic identities into one homogenous state identity. The French republic, with its state organisation as 'instruments of unity' (Lacoste, 1997) aimed at standardisation and uniformity as introduced after the 1789 revolution, is perhaps the most well known example of the unitary state as instrument of ethnic homogeneity. However, to regard all unitary states as such would be a simplification, and unitary states can be contexts for the recognition and accommodation of ethnic differences too.

This chapter discusses ethnic accommodation within unitary state structures, and therefore does not pay attention to those modes of ethnic conflict regulation that go beyond the unitary state, like federalisation or secession. A unitary state can be a starting point for those policies, but both do not regulate ethnic conflict *within* the unitary state. This chapter also does not discuss more crudely coercive tactics of dealing with ethnic difference like genocide or mass population transfer. While they have been historically applied in unitary states, they certainly do not *accommodate* ethnic difference.

Ethnicity is a concept used widely throughout the social sciences, but it is also one of the hardest to define, with lively debates over its meaning (Hale, 2004). In contrast to essentialist and primordialist (e.g. Shils, 1957; Geertz, 1967) views on ethnicity, this chapter builds on the understanding that ethnicity is not a natural aspect of humanity but constructed, situational, context-dependent and contested (Barth, 1969; Nagel, 1994). It is particularly that contested nature of ethnicity and ethnic identification and recognition that is related to those situations that are meant with 'ethnic conflict'. Individuals may have a range of groups they belong to (Gore, 1984), several of which can be defined as 'ethnic groups'. Sometimes these ethnic identities can overlap, but in

contexts of ethnic conflict identification with both groups in conflict with each other becomes mutually exclusive.

In a context of ethnic conflict ethnicity is relational as well; ethnic groups identify themselves as such not alone but in relation to one another, distinguishing themselves from other ethnic groups. But, just as much as the distinction from other groups is central to the existence of ethnicity, ethnic groups should not be regarded as homogenous. Not every member of an ethnic group feels loyalties or a sense of belonging to that group to the same extent, not every member has the same ideas about what it is that distinguishes the group from other groups, not every member has the same view on the history or the political and cultural future of the group, and not every member is to the same degree mobilised in ethnic conflicts.

According to Smith what distinguishes federations is not necessarily their level of decentralisation, but that in federations regional autonomy is protected by the constitution (1995, p. 7). Unitary states may be decentralised but lack that constitutional guarantee. This means that the *degree* of decentralisation is not necessarily what distinguishes federations from unitary states. When we consider federalism as a method of ethnic conflict accommodation, that step is often placed on an 'autonomy continuum', with increasing levels of decentralisation between complete centralism and secession (Paddison, 1983). On such a continuum federations are normally placed between a regionalised or decentralised unitary state and a confederation. This implies that federations allow more regional autonomy than decentralised unitary states. But because the unique distinguishing feature of a federation is its constitutional guarantee of regional autonomy, and not the degree or nature of autonomy, that is not always the case. For instance, the Basque Country and Scotland have high degrees of autonomous regional policy-making powers within a unitary state (Spain and the United Kingdom respectively), without having the constitutional guarantee of that autonomy that a federation would give.

The division between federal and unitary states is not fixed, and states can move from one category to the other. Historical examples abound of confederations and federations that moved towards more centralisation (e.g. the Republic of the United Netherlands evolving into a unitary republic and then a kingdom after 1795) (Elazar, 1982). More recently shifts in the opposite direction of decentralisation are more prevalent. Sometimes such shifts are slow step-by-step processes of decentralisation, positioning states 'in between' a unitary state and a federation. Spain for example has been described as being in a process of 'federalisation' since the death of its dictator Francisco Franco in 1975, with the incremental introduction of regional autonomies partially constitutionally recognised (Moreno, 2001).

Finally, although in most federations the whole state territory is divided into sub-state regions, federal states, provinces or *Länder*, that is not necessarily the case. In some situations only part of the country is federalised, while the rest has remained a unitary state, creating a situation of asymmetrical autonomy (Keating, 1998). Unitary states can be decentralised asymmetrically too, with political or cultural regional autonomy applied to only a part of the state's territory. This is for instance the case if particular arrangements to facilitate and stimulate a regional language only apply to the region where that language is historically spoken. Asymmetrical decentralisation is very common, especially in reaction to demands of ethnic groups and as a method to accommodate ethnic conflict.

### **Regionalised unitary states**

In unitary states regionalisation (Loughlin, 1993) – the devolution of decision making powers to regional authorities – is one of the most common ways to accommodate ethnic conflict, applying territorial autonomy principles similar to federalisation. Especially when an ethnic minority group lives concentrated in one particular area, has historical connections to that territory (for instance an era of independence), and claims regional autonomy or independence, regionalisation is a prevalent solution. Often regional devolution is considered a compromise solution, falling short of federalisation or secession, but giving an ethnic minority more say over its territory than centralisation. The general drift of those who propose regionalisation from a central government perspective as an effective reaction to claims by separatists is formulated by Bogdanor (1999, p. 194) writing, rather cynically, that ‘it might well be that the best way to strengthen national unity is to give way to them a little as to better to disharm them’. For example, in Britain, New Labour’s 1997 general election manifesto defended its proposal for devolution stating that ‘the Union will be strengthened and the threat of separatism removed’ (Labour Party, 1997). Similarly, in 1981 French Minister of the Interior Gaston Defferre defended President Mitterand’s proposal for regionalisation claiming that ‘The regionalisation will maintain the national unity. ... If we give all the French regions the statute that the Parti Socialiste proposes, the majority of the regional demands will be satisfied. That will calm down the situation in the regions concerned’ (cited in Huguenin and Martinat, 1998, p. 22, author’s translation). Such propositions are based on the idea that most people who might otherwise support separatism will be satisfied with a compromise that offers regional autonomy and the recognition of regional distinctiveness. But even if some ethnic movements or political parties aim for full independence, the majority of the ethnic group they claim to represent or the regional population as a whole may not want to go as far. In such cases regional devolution may be an attractive way to accommodate the demands of a regionally concentrated ethnic minority, and isolate extremists (e.g. Gurr, 1993; McGarry and O’Leary, 1994; Rudolph and Thomson, 1985).

There is no unambiguous evidence that regionalisation (or federalisation, for that matter) in itself pacifies an ethnic conflict, either in the long or the short term. In Northern Ireland the introduction of a directly elected regional Northern Irish Assembly was part of the 1998 Belfast Agreement and the relatively successful peace process. In contrast, the establishment of the Basque Country as ‘autonomous community’ in 1979 did not pacify the conflict even in the short term. ETA did not accept the compromise solution and decided to continue its bombing campaign more or less unchanged. This shows that regionalisation as instrument of ethnic conflict resolution needs to comply with certain conditions, such as full involvement and agreement of all major actors, to be successful in the short term.

Whether regionalisation pacifies ethnic conflicts in the long run is even more questionable. While regional autonomy does introduce institutions that facilitate the democratic discussion of grievances and peaceful expression of political claims, those regional institutions can also function as a platform for the deepening of ethnic cleavages. Van der Wusten and Knippenberg (2001) have stressed the recursive dimension of ethnic conflicts, where one stage or ‘episode’ of the conflict ends with institutional rearrangement and repositioning of relevant actors, but also with a new political agenda for a next round of ethnic politics. In that light regionalisation, like any

instrument of ethnic conflict accommodation, can be seen as the outcome of a cycle of ethnic conflict. However, the outcome of one cycle also shapes the starting conditions of a new round of ethnic conflict. Especially the introduction of regional autonomy provides a regional ethnic minority with opportunities to emphasise ethnic distinction and mobilise support for further claims for autonomy or full independence (Schrijver, 2005, 2006). This refers to the institutionalisation process of a region (Paasi, 1991), and the importance of the presence of regional institutions for the development of ethno-regional consciousness.

Discussing the accommodation of ethnic conflict, Juan José Linz comments that 'federalism might create a temporary stability, a framework in which further demands can be articulated and additional rights can be granted, but it is unlikely to be a once and for all stable, durable solution' (1997, p. 22). This would apply even more to a half-way solution as regionalisation. Regionalisation changes political infrastructures, providing regional ethnic movements with a base from which to challenge the central government and put forth further claims (Máiz, 2003). It is much easier for regionally concentrated ethnic groups to get elected, form part of a government, and use this to mobilise support at the regional than at state level. In the United Kingdom devolution has offered the SNP in Scotland and Plaid Cymru in Wales opportunities to take on governing responsibilities at regional level and become more respectable, established political parties. However, those new political opportunities, and especially the possibility to become a mainstream political party at regional level, does inspire a moderation of the movement as well (Schrijver, 2006). In order to profit from the opportunities offered by regional elections, and appeal to more voters, ethnic movements often moderate their main aims, and aim to distance themselves from extremists. This suggests that regionalisation perhaps is no way to end a conflict, but at least channel it into a continuation by democratic means and with more moderate claims. Apart from its effectiveness as conflict resolution instrument, there is a moral case to be made for regionalisation (and federalisation) in a democracy, if a clear majority of the region's population is in favour, expressed in a regional referendum.

Finally, it should be noted that regionalisation is not always about ethnic difference and the accommodation of the territorial demands of ethnic minorities. That has been the perspective here, but there are many other possible motivations for regionalisation, ranging from local administration efficiency, obstacles against totalitarianism, and the influence of supranational organisations to central government budget cuts and reactions to global economic restructuring (Sharpe, 1993; Bullmann, 1997; Macleod and Jones, 2007).

### **Consociational democracy and state-wide power sharing**

Regionalisation (and federalisation) recognises the link between ethnic group and territory, but not all ethnic conflict is about claims to regional territories, and not all ethnic groups live concentrated in a particular 'homeland'. An instrument of ethnic conflict accommodation allowing non-territorial forms of autonomy and power sharing between ethnic groups is consociationalism (Lijphart, 1969, 1977), discussed elsewhere in this volume, which is often applied to the state as a whole, not just a particular region associated with an ethnic minority.

With regard to consociationalism, of crucial importance is the co-operation between elites representing all segments of society. For his concept of consociational democracy

Lijphart clearly drew on the system of *verzuiling* ('pillarisation') in his native country, the Netherlands (Knippenberg, 1999). During much of the twentieth century Dutch politics, and society in general, were characterised by coalition-building, negotiation, and co-operation at elite level of those representing deeply divided segments ('pillars') of society. However, it should be noted that in Lijphart's example of the Netherlands these different segments of society were not generally recognised as different ethnic groups, but based on ideological and religious cleavages (Protestant, Catholic, Socialist and Liberal). Arguably, therefore, Lijphart's concept of consociationalism was at its core not a system of ethnic conflict accommodation, but introduced as an alternative model of representative democracy, in contrast to other models of democracy (e.g. the Westminster model), designed to deal with pluralism in a very broad sense.

But Lijphart (1977) did argue the applicability of consociationalism to societies where ethnic conflict was an issue, using case studies of Belgium, Lebanon and Malaysia. Since then consociational power sharing has found a prominent place in ethnic conflict resolution literature. Consociationalism has been applied in unitary states such as Burundi (Lemarchand, 2007), and in regions within unitary states like Northern Ireland (McGarry and O'Leary, 2004) and South Tyrol (Wolff, 2008; Markusse, 1996). As instrument of ethnic conflict accommodation consociationalism differs markedly from assimilationist approaches. As Donald Horowitz (1985) writes, consociationalism assumes 'that it is necessary for ethnically divided states to live with ethnic cleavages rather than wish them away' (p. 569). Consociationalism is based on the presence of institutions that secure the distinctiveness and internal autonomy of segments of society, and give all segments access to decision-making at the centre. And whereas territorial autonomy approaches (federalisation or regionalisation) leave the door open for secession (and arguable create the geographical infrastructure for partition), consociationalism aims for an enduring solution of power sharing at state level and within existing state boundaries. This aim for a stable democracy in a plural society is on the one hand achieved through the facilitation of sub-societies with their own institutions (political parties, newspapers, schools, sports clubs, etc.), and on the other hand top-down ethnic conflict accommodation through elite cooperation. Proportional representation ensures that the connection between a grand coalition at elite level and the segments of society at grassroots level is not lost, and each segment and their leaders have access to power at the nation-state level.

Despite significant criticism of consociationalism's effectiveness (Horowitz, 1985; Deschouwer, 1994; Barry, 1975) it remains one of the most advocated models of democratic regulation of ethnic conflict. However, most concrete cases where its application has been noted more recently (see McGarry and O'Leary, 2006 on Northern Ireland, Caspersen, 2004 on Bosnia and Herzegovina and Wilson, 2003 on Sri Lanka) are regarded adapted versions of consociationalism or hybrids with other models, and have diverged from Lijphart's original. Consociationalism involves the establishment of institutions that guarantee internal autonomy for each constituent group. Those institutions are organised mostly territorially in federations and in regionalised unitary states. However, consociationalism also requires non-territorial power-sharing mechanisms among elites, which can exist at state level in federations (e.g. Belgium, Deschouwer, 2006), but just as well in unitary states like Lijphart's original example, the Netherlands. In some unitary states this may involve consociational arrangements without territorial segmentation, for instance through the political, cultural and social pillarisation and radical electoral proportional representation of the Netherlands, or

the prescribed balance between Hutu and Tutsi representation in the central and local government of Burundi (Lemarchand, 2007). However, the territorial segmentation and consociational institutionalisation in federations and regionalised unitary states may provide more stability than non-territorial consociationalism. Many consociational arrangements in unitary states have not survived beyond temporary, transitional or post-conflict settlements (e.g. South Africa, Lebanon, Rwanda, Colombia).

### **Democracies with ethnic majority dominance**

While consociationalism is built around co-operation and compromise resulting from proportionality and access to power of all ethnic groups in a state, there are many democratic systems where one ethnic group dominates one or more others, coined 'ethnic democracies' (Smith 1996; Smooha 1990; Smooha and Hanf 1992). Ethnic democracies give individual citizens access to political and civil rights, but preserve collective political and cultural rights to the dominant ethnic majority. This applies to multi-ethnic democracies where state institutions do not constitute a neutral set of rules but are controlled by one of the constituent ethnic groups. In some cases this situation can persist for a long time, with far-reaching institutionalisation of the ethnic dominance over the state.

Ethnic democracy is a form of what has been called hegemonic control (Lustick, 1979; McGarry and O'Leary 1994), which also applies to authoritarian, imperial and partially democratic societies. Historically, ethnic control by a hegemonic group has been the most common way of dealing with ethnic and cultural plurality. The suppression of ethnic minorities (and sometimes majorities) through coercion or threats of coercion has been commonplace, achieving varying degrees of stability. However, the combination of democratisation and the advance of the Age of Nationalism meant other solutions replaced durable ethnic hegemony as system of choice. On the one hand, nationalism and the idea that state and nation should coincide resulted in attempts to eradicate ethnic plurality, through instruments ranging from assimilation to genocide. On the other hand, in other contexts individual and collective civil and political rights of liberal democracy introduced opportunities for ethnic minorities to gain (limited) access to power or political and cultural autonomy. Still, hegemonic control has retained a presence, especially in non-democratic or partially democratic states. South Africa between 1948 and 1990 was a clear example of ethnic hegemonic control, with full access to democracy, citizenship and civil rights restricted to a white minority.

In states where the principles of liberal democracy apply to the whole population, ethnic minority control like in South Africa under apartheid is much rarer. A functioning democracy tends to either give minorities some access to power or to establish majority rule. The latter means that a majority ethnic group controlling the state institutions with limited influence for one or more minority ethnic groups is rather common in democratic societies. For instance, in Israel (Smooha 1990) a Jewish majority has dominance over an Arab minority, in post-communist Estonia (Pettai and Hallik 2002) the Estonian majority allows limited influence for an ethnic Russian minority, while in relatively recent history there were clear situations of majority ethnic control in functioning democracies in Northern Ireland, the southern United States, and of aboriginal populations in Canada, Australia and the United States. In such situations of ethnic democracy the dominance of one group is institutionalised, and the dominant

ethnic group gains power disproportionate to its size. This is in contrast to consociationalism, where proportionality is a key element in maintaining a power balance between the different segments of society. The most well documented case of ethnic democracy is Israel, where Arabs with Israeli citizenship can vote in elections but enjoy restricted political and social rights in practice, for instance through the exclusion of political parties that negate the principle that ‘the State of Israel is the state of the Jewish people’ and through the exemption of Israeli Arabs from mandatory military service, thereby excluding them from the social rights tied to the symbolic importance of military service (Peled, 1992).

The dominance of one group in ethnic democracies is reflected in a control of political decision-making, monopolisation of positions in government, and the establishment of a structure of governance favourable to the leading ethnic group. But it is also manifested through incorporation of *de facto* ethnic inequality in unwritten rules, and through a monopolisation of state symbols by one ethnic group. That is the case when for instance the language, religion, cultural symbols such as national holidays, and national aspirations of the hegemonic ethnic group also become those of the state as a whole, with little room for the national ambitions or iconography of minority ethnic groups at state level. Take for instance the adoption of Estonian as the only official language of Estonia and of the initially restrictive language requirements for naturalisation and electoral candidates, despite the presence of a substantial Russian minority (Pettai and Hallik, 2002). This institutionalisation of ethnic dominance can create a situation where the *de jure* existing political rights and civil liberties of a liberal democracy covering the whole population become restricted *de facto* for ethnic minority groups.

In an ethnic democracy – in contrast to non-democratic or partially democratic forms of ethnic hegemonic control – there are democratic procedures in place for ethnic minorities to negotiate better terms of coexistence. However, a situation of ethnic democracy can only survive through a strict interpretation of democracy as majority rule with little minority influence. Although this raises questions of injustice, some have advocated ethnic control as a relatively stable settlement for ethnic conflicts. Ian Lustick argues that ‘certain forms of control may be preferable to the chaos and bloodshed that might be the only alternatives’ in ‘particular situations and for limited periods of time’ (1979, p. 344). Whether it is indeed possible in a democracy to introduce ethnic control for a limited amount of time is doubtful, considering that it might be tempting for the majority ethnic group to cling to its hegemonic position as long as possible. In reality what is introduced as temporary solution can easily turn into a stable and permanent settlement, as retreating from the status quo into a solution requiring more compromise might become less and less appealing to the dominant majority. Apart from that, proponents of consociationalism, federalisation or regionalisation would argue that very rarely are ‘chaos and bloodshed’ truly the only alternatives to hegemonic control.

### **Assimilation and the quest for national unity**

The instruments of ethnic conflict accommodation discussed above work under the assumption that the most effective way to deal with ethnic conflict is by facilitating existing ethnic differences, or at least acknowledge them. In contrast, assimilation policies aim to eradicate ethnic differences in society, to take away the basis for ethnic conflict. Assimilation is a process whereby an ethnic group gives up the cultural identity



and sense of belonging that distinguish it from other groups (Gordon, 1964), and adopts those either of another ethnic group or of a newly created transcendent ethnic identity. This mostly is the outcome of unequal power relations and often involves some form of coercion. It should, however, be distinguished from other methods that aim to do away with existing ethnic differences by making ethnic minorities 'disappear', such as genocide, ethnic cleansing or population transfer.

Assimilation as used here is a form of social integration, and both have been mostly discussed in relation to immigration. The particulars of ethnic conflict related to immigrants are briefly touched upon below, but assimilation has been widely applied to deal with non-immigrant ethnic minorities as well. The merger of several ethnic groups into an overarching national identity, often modelled on that of a dominant group, has been common in historical processes of nation-building. The classic example of France, and the nineteenth-century process of turning 'peasants into Frenchmen' described by Weber (1976), demonstrates that in the long run assimilation can be rather successful. With the exception of parts of Corsica, the French Republic managed to assimilate most of its many constituent regional identities into one French nation. However, any success achieved through assimilation policies should be set against the coercion that is needed to make groups give up their identity. French unity was not achieved without force, just as the Russification of non-Russian parts of the Soviet Union could be achieved only by violent means.

Often assimilation through coercion is counterproductive, because it is exactly the threat of the disappearance of a minority culture that makes ethnic minorities rebel and causes ethnic conflict. The use of force against an established ethnic group in order to force them to abandon their way of life can provide references and memories to be used in the mobilisation of resistance for generations afterwards. Take for example sympathy for the Basque separatist organisation ETA among significant sections of the population, partly as result of the attempts in Spain under Franco to oppress Basque cultural distinctiveness (Lecours, 2008). In Iraq, attempts to eradicate a Kurdish cultural identity, using brute force, have been similarly unsuccessful (O'Leary and Salih, 2006).

Social integration policies can be more benign, often aiming to take away obstacles to interaction between ethnic groups and reducing socioeconomic inequalities along ethnic lines that can go hand in hand with ethnic segregation. Assimilation goes further, aiming to make cultural differences within a society disappear, or fuse different cultures into one common culture. Because changing a person's culture, way of life and group identification takes time, assimilation is always a long process, mostly taking several generations of intermarriage and nation-building. It requires consistent efforts of what Michael Billig (1995) has called 'banal nationalism', the constant and habitual production and reproduction of nations in everyday life. As Billig writes, 'for such daily reproductions to occur, one might hypothesise that a whole complex of beliefs, assumptions, habits, representations and practices must also be reproduced' (1995, p. 6). This 'banal' reproduction of nationalism applies to the everyday maintenance of existing nations and their populations, but also certainly to the process of assimilation of minority ethnic groups into a national majority culture.

### **Ethnic conflict and immigration**

The different ways in which ethnic conflict is accommodated in unitary states discussed above mostly deals with long-established groups that often claim a territory within the

state as their homeland. Examples would be the Basques, Québécois, Kurds or Hutus. But the discussion of assimilation as a response to ethnic conflict already showed that in public and academic debates concepts like ‘ethnicity’ and ‘minority’ are also associated with immigrants. And just like ‘native’ ethnic groups can get into conflict with each other, there can be tensions between a native ethnic majority and immigrant ethnic minorities. In both cases there can be a similar connection between ethnicity and access to political power, and claims for political and cultural autonomy from both national minorities and immigrants.

Regarding political or cultural claims of both types of ethnic minority as a threat to national unity, in many cases hegemonic state actors tend to treat national minorities and immigrants in a broadly similar way. In France for instance both the claims for cultural autonomy of national minorities like the Bretons and Corsicans and of immigrant minorities are denied with reference to risks of ‘communautarisme’ (Schnapper, 2004), submitting the individual members of a group to the norms of a cultural minority community. According to this logic, the state should be culturally neutral, and any recognition of minorities (both native and immigrant) and facilitation of their culture would diverge from that neutrality. However, one could question whether the state can indeed be neutral through a strict application of Western liberal democracy, and in practice this restriction of recognition of cultural expression is applied much less strictly to the dominant majority.

In contrast, some, like the political philosopher Will Kymlicka, argue for differential treatment of immigrants and national minorities, suggesting that while the formation of an autonomous societal culture is viable for territorially concentrated national minorities, this is not appropriate for immigrant groups, who ‘lack the territorial concentration or historical institutions needed to sustain a vibrant societal culture’ (Kymlicka, 2001, p. 54; see also Kymlicka, 1995).

The debate over whether or not claims of national minorities should be met with the same state response as those of immigrant minorities reaches a particular level of complexity in the case of immigration into the territories of national minorities (Carens, 2000; Zapata-Barrero, 2007). Territories like Quebec, Catalonia, Flanders and Scotland are not only the regions or ‘homelands’ of ethnic minorities within their respective states, but also increasingly places of immigration. In those situations an established ethnic conflict can be further complicated, with the ethnic minority at state level (Catalans, Flemish, etc.) turned into an ethnic majority at regional level, facing a choice of responses to immigrant ethnic minorities themselves. In federal states this may involve far-reaching choices over immigration policy, but in unitary states this will mostly be limited to minor adaptations of state-wide immigration policies. Take for instance the arrangement in federal Canada that allows the government of Quebec to apply its own immigration selection criteria, and recruit immigrants from French-speaking countries, compared to the introduction in the unitary United Kingdom of the option for immigrants in Wales to take citizenship tests in Welsh.

## **Conclusion**

The enormous variation of unitary states worldwide means that it is impossible to distinguish a single type of response to ethnic conflict chosen by unitary states. It is true that the ideal-type unitary state emphasises the importance of the protection of the unity of the state, its territory, and its single and homogeneous nation, and views ethnic

conflict and claims of ethnic minorities as a threat to that unity. It follows that the stereotypical unitary state response to ethnic conflict and difference is one of assimilation, with the elimination of ethnic difference as objective, or accommodation from a perspective of 'damage control'. But, although some states come close to that ideal type, the ethnically and nationally completely homogeneous state does not exist. Some unitary states have followed pluralist policies that provide ethnic minorities with a far-reaching degree of autonomy, whereas some of the most brutal policies aimed at the eradication of ethnic difference have been used in federal states.

Ethnic conflict has produced two sovereign states and new members of the United Nations in the twenty-first century at the time of writing: Montenegro and Timor-Leste. Both are unitary states, as is the overwhelming majority of new independent states that emerged from the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. The choice for a unitary state system often reflects a desire to maintain, or establish, national unity after gaining independence. However, many of those states that were born out of ethnic conflict are in turn confronted with ethnic minorities within their own borders and the need to formulate policies in response to their political and cultural claims. These situations offer fruitful case studies for the further exploration of the dynamics and tensions of dealing with plurality in unitary states.

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