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EXPLAINING ETHNIC POLARIZATION OVER ATTITUDES TOWARDS MINORITY RIGHTS IN EASTERN EUROPE: A MULTILEVEL APPROACH

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Abstract

This paper examines divisions between majority and minority ethnic groups over attitudes towards minority rights in thirteen East European societies using national sample surveys undertaken in the mid-1990s. It examines the effectiveness of competing explanations of ethnic polarization in attitudes towards minority rights, and regional and cross-national differences in such polarization. These explanations include 'insecurity', 'perceived threat', 'social differences', and 'social distance'. Using multilevel models we find that indicators of 'social distance' inter-marriage and social interaction account most effectively for ethnic polarization. However, regional and cross-national variations in polarization between majority and minority groups are explained most effectively by cultural linguistic and religious differences. These findings accord with research in the West indicating the importance of cultural differences as a source of ethnic polarization, while offering little support for theories focusing on economic and structural factors or the size of minority groups.

1.   Introduction[1]

Ethnic problems in many East European states are both long-standing and have been given renewed vigor following the removal of communist authority structures. In Eastern Europe, ethnic heterogeneity is the norm rather than the exception. One might therefore expect that majority and minority ethnic groups will differ with respect to their acceptance of the value of inclusive principles of citizenship. They are also likely to differ in their level of tolerance for political and social difference see, for example, Diamond and Plattner 1994; Stepan 1994; Bremmer 1994; McIntosh *et al.* 1995; Evans 1998. Most of all, they can be expected to differ in their willingness to accord rights to other ethnic groups; what a minority demands, the majority may wish to prevent. Many former-communist democracies thus have the *potential* for ethnic polarization at a level that could weaken collective community action, provoke intergroup antagonism, and undermine the capacity of the state to manage conflicts of interest - as events over the last decade in the Balkans have demonstrated.

The extent to which this potential exists varies considerably between countries in Eastern Europe. Although all these countries are undergoing a transition from authoritarian states with command economies to some variant of free market democracy, they vary considerably in their past experiences and current states of ethnic relations and in the conditions which might facilitate or inhibit the presence of more or less harmonious intergroup relations. Eastern Europe thus provides an important context in which to investigate the factors which may influence the extent of intergroup polarization and to test the efficacy of social scientific theories of such polarization.

Analyzing the sources of polarization over minority rights between ethnic groups in Eastern Europe does not only provide a testing ground for social theories. The sources of ethnic polarization can be expected to influence the political manageability of ethnic relations

and by extension the likelihood of stable democracy Diamond and Plattner 1994; Lipset 1994; Linz and Stepan 1996. If, for example, differences between groups are the result of recent experiences of a potentially changing nature, such as the considerable economic problems associated with transition, these differences may be much more amenable to amelioration through internal policy-making or external intervention by bodies such as the European Union or the International Monetary Fund. Where ethnic differences are not reducible to such contingencies and result instead from long-standing intergroup antipathy they may present much more intractable political difficulties.

In the light of these considerations, the aim of this paper is, first, to investigate the extent of differences in attitudes towards the politically sensitive question of minority rights among different ethnic groups in East European societies; and second, to test social scientific explanations of the extent of these attitudinal differences. The data analyzed are taken from national surveys of the populations of all former-Communist countries under Soviet influence in Eastern Europe. We do not therefore include the former Yugoslavia.

The analysis has two features which distinguish it from much previous research into attitudes towards minority rights. Firstly, we employ multilevel modeling techniques which allow the simultaneous estimation of both *individual* variation over attitudes towards minority rights and *regional and national* variation in such attitudes see also Quillian 1995. Using these models we examine the contribution of contextual factors independent of measures of individuals' circumstances and experiences. Secondly, we focus on the attitudes of members of minority groups as well as those of the majority. This allows greater insight into the potential for ethnic differences to be translated into political divisions *between* majority and minority groups.

We want to emphasize that in this article it is not our intention to use the *specific* historical context of the countries of Eastern Europe as an explanation of levels of ethnic polarization. Rather, we shall derive hypotheses about ethnic polarization over minority rights

in Eastern Europe from *general* social science theories. In the concluding section of the article, we shall consider country-specific explanations of national differences that cannot be explained by these social science theories.

2. Explanations of ethnic polarization over attitudes towards minority rights

There have been numerous examinations of ethnic relations in Eastern Europe. Many of these have been narrative accounts of either a historical or a contemporary character and have tended to focus on the behavior of dominant ethnic groups towards minorities Bujaski, 1995; Cuthbertson and Leibowitz 1993; Jowitt 1992; Khazanov 1995; Park 1994 or have examined the situation of formerly ascendant minority groups and their reactions to their changed status and treatment at the hands of dominant ethnic majorities since the demise of communist control Brubaker 1995; Crowther 1997; Kosto 1996; Laitin 1995; Stepan 1994. What is clear from these accounts is that if we want to understand the sources of ethnic polarization and by extension its political implications it is not sufficient simply to examine whether majority groups hold positive or negative attitudes towards minority rights, we need also to account for the views of minority groups. In other words, it is important to consider the factors that might account for both a the degree of majority tolerance of minorities and b the degree of minority opposition expressed to the majority view. The latter is significant because ethnic differences are most likely to be translated into political issues when minorities have clear differences in opinion from majorities. If, for example, minorities and majorities agree on the need for education in the dominant language, the issue is unlikely to provide a basis for political mobilization among the minority.

The outcome of interest is, therefore, ethnic *polarization* rather than just majority group prejudice. Much of the social science literature on differences in attitudes between ethnic groups concerns the sources of negative attitudes towards minority groups among majorities. However, these theories can also be extended to provide specifications of the conditions under which minorities accept or oppose the opinions of majorities. In the empirical analysis we shall test the effectiveness of the following four explanations for polarization over minority rights in Eastern Europe: insecurity; perceived threat; social differences; and social distance.

1. *Insecurity* has often been associated with scapegoating of ethnic or racial minorities by majorities. This can reflect some form of psychological displacement usually specified in terms of a frustration-aggression model Dollard *et al.* 1939, or the operation of rational self-interest in the competition for scarce resources Sherif 1966. In the uncertainty and hardship associated with the transition to a market economy in Eastern Europe, we might expect insecurity to have particular significance. Conversely, the presence of security, whether economic or otherwise, might reduce majority group opposition to minority group rights. The presence of insecurity among the minority can also be expected to increase the emphasis given to minority rights by members of minority groups.

Insecurity is specified in economic and political terms:

a. Economic insecurity. The existence of economic insecurity has received the most attention in research on scapegoating of ethnic or racial minorities. To the degree that economic experiences and expectations differ across countries Duch 1995; Evans and Whitefield 1995, we might expect majority groups and minority groups to vary in their attitudes towards minority rights. Positive economic experiences and expectations are predicted to result in lower levels of polarization over minority rights.

b. Political insecurity. A second way in which insecurity may influence the tendency to scapegoat minorities is through the perceived failure of the new democratic political systems in Eastern Europe to represent citizens' interests. As with the economy, to the degree that levels of satisfaction with the workings of the political system vary cross-nationally Evans and Whitefield 1995; Rose *et al.* 1998, we might also expect both the majority group members and the minority group members of these countries to vary in their attitudes towards minority rights. Positive appraisals of the political system are predicted to result in lower levels of polarization over minority rights.

2. *Perceived threat.* LeVine and Campbell 1972, Sullivan *et al.* 1981 and Quillian 1995 among others have emphasized the role of perceived threat from minorities in

accentuating negative reactions from majorities Fossett and Kiecolt 1989. This can be interpreted simply in terms of objective factors such as the size of the minority presence in a country Blalock 1967 or, more subjectively, in terms of perceptions of threat and conflict between ethnic groups Blumer 1958.

a. Size of minority. The larger the size of the minority group, the higher the level of polarization over minority rights.

b. Perceptions of conflict. The more likely ethnic conflict is perceived to be, the higher the level of ethnic polarization over minority rights.

3. *Social differences.* Social psychological research into intergroup relations and prejudice has focused on social characteristics that correlate with, but do not necessarily define, ethnic group membership. The extent of similarity between the cultures and lifestyles of majority and minority groups is argued to explain in part the extent of their attitudinal polarization. In countries where majority and minority groups have similar languages, religions, and socioeconomic status, majorities are likely to express less empathy with minority concerns and conversely, the demands for distinctive provision of rights by minorities will be weakened, while if these characteristics do not overlap, ethnic differences and divisions will be far less easily overcome. Thus in Ukraine, for example, the relatively moderate linguistic and cultural divisions between Russians and Ukrainians might serve to reduce the extent of ethnic divisions Bremmer 1994 compared with countries such as Estonia, where the linguistic dissimilarity and the lack of a historically shared culture between ethnic Estonians and Russians provides grounds for continued ethnic distinctiveness Kirch and Kirch 1995; Raun 1991.

Two types of social differences can be distinguished:

a. Cultural differences. Greater linguistic differences between majority and minority groups will produce higher levels of ethnic polarization over minority rights.

b. Structural differences. Greater socioeconomic distinctiveness between majority and minority groups will produce higher levels of polarization over minority rights Hechter 1978.

4. *Social distance.* Finally, we consider what we might call 'the residue of history': the extent to which, *above and beyond* the factors listed above, ethnic groups are polarized in terms of the social distance between them. Past relations between groups are likely to condition future relations between them. There is, in other words, a form of path dependency in ethnic relations which results in the inheritance of more or less enmity. To be convincing as an explanation of ethnic polarization, however, such inherited antipathy should be operationalized rather than just inferred from its assumed consequences – that is, the observation of polarization itself. The residue of history might be expressed in various ways, such as the lack of inter-marriage; or the lack of cross-ethnic social interaction. Of course, cross-national variations in levels of inter-marriage and cross-ethnic social interaction are likely to reflect the factors described above – particularly cultural distinctiveness and relative sizes of the ethnic groups. However, if *in addition* to these factors there is any further historically-based source of ethnic divisions, then measures of social distance should have additional net effects on ethnic political polarization. We therefore propose the following hypothesis: Greater levels of social distance between majority and minority groups will produce higher levels of ethnic polarization over minority rights.

Which of the above explanations account for the degree of attitudinal polarization over minority rights between ethnic groups? To what extent can we account for country differences in such polarization? The rest of this paper seeks to investigate these issues empirically via analysis of data derived from national probability surveys directed by the first author between 1993 and 1996 details of these surveys are given in the Appendix.

3.   Testing the explanations: levels of analysis

The above explanations can be operationalized at different levels. For example, we can examine whether *individual members* of ethnic minorities have different opinions about minority rights from the majority if they do not speak the majority language. In this case we refer to polarization at *the ethnic group level*. We can also examine whether in a country there is more polarization over minority rights if a smaller proportion of the minority speak the majority language. In this case we refer to polarization at *the country level*. However, at the level of countries, testing several explanations with only a small number of countries causes statistical problems. In our case, the number of possible explanatory variables almost equals the number of countries in the analysis. To solve this problem we divided the countries, where possible, into regions.

Dividing countries into regions has the additional advantage of testing some hypotheses in a better way. In many countries ethnic minorities are not spread across the country evenly but are concentrated in certain regions. For instance, the Russian minority in Estonia and Latvia reside mostly in the larger cities and the border areas next to Russia Bakker 1998. The hypothesis that there is more ethnic polarization when the ethnic minority is larger can thus be tested more precisely at the level of regions within countries the *regional level*. The degree of geographical concentration of ethnic minorities is also relevant for indicators of social distance. We therefore believe it is better to examine the ethnic composition of regions within countries rather than the ethnic compositions of the countries themselves. After we test the hypotheses at the regional level we return to differences in polarization between countries. At that point we account for unexplained levels of polarization over minority rights by referring to the specifics of the national historical context.

In the next section of the paper we present evidence about differences among ethnic groups by country on a scale measuring more or less support for minority rights. We then present a series of analyses that seek to account statistically for differences in the extent of polarization in attitudes towards minority rights at three levels:

1. At the *ethnic group level*: indicated by the extent of polarization between majority and minority groups over support for ethnic rights.

2. At the *regional level*: indicated by the variation between regions in the extent of polarization between majority and minority groups over support for ethnic rights. This allows examination of contextual effects for size of ethnic group within regions, extent of intergroup marriage within regions, structural and cultural differences between majority and minority groups within regions to be estimated.

3. At the *country level*: indicated by the variation between countries in the extent of polarization between majority and minority groups over support for ethnic rights. This allows a consideration of the possibility that countries have an effect on levels of ethnic polarization that cannot be interpreted in terms of their regional and individual-level characteristics.

4.   Describing patterns of ethnic polarization over attitudes towards minority rights

4.1   Measuring ethnic polarization

Ethnic polarization is operationalized as the difference between the positions taken by members of the ethnic majority and members of ethnic minorities on issues concerning minority rights. As membership of an ethnic group can be difficult to establish on 'objective' grounds, we use respondents' self-definitions to allocate them to majority or minority groups. Majority group membership is indicated by self-definition as a member of the titular majority in each country. Minority group membership is self-definition as any other group. In practice, this means that most minority group responses refer to one specific ethnic group in each country that forms clearly the largest minority. Thus the Bulgarian minority is composed primarily of Turkish speakers; in Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Moldova, and Ukraine the minority population is primarily Russian-speaking; the main minority group in the Czech Republic is Slovak; and both Romania and Slovakia have well-established Hungarian minorities. The exceptions to this tendency are Lithuania, where there are two clearly-defined and similarly-sized minority groups - Poles and Russians - and Russia, where the minority population is

relatively heterogeneous. Hungary (that is, Gypsies, Germans), and Poland (that is, Germans, Ukrainians) have only very small minority populations. Analyses which omit the smaller ethnic groups and examine only the attitudes of the largest minority in each country produce results substantively equivalent to those presented below.

Attitudes towards minority rights are operationalized through a series of survey questions designed to capture key aspects of mass attitudes towards the representation and equal treatment of ethnic minorities. The attitudes are measured using 5-point response scales to assess agreement and disagreement with the following propositions:

'Minority ethnic groups in [respondent's country] should have far more rights than they do now'

'All minority ethnic groups in this country should have to be taught in [respondent's country's dominant language]'

'Everyone who lives in [respondent's country] should have the right to become a citizen regardless of their ethnic origins'

'The ethnic group a person belongs to should not influence the benefits they can get from the state'

The first item above is the most general in content, referring explicitly to minority rights but not specifying any particular area of contention. The other items complement this general theme by addressing more specific issues. Thus the question of majority language use in schools is an important question in divided societies and historically has been a source of contention in many Eastern European societies. Both of the other questions - referring to citizenship rights and state benefits - have become politically salient in recent years as post-communist governments have attempted to construct constitutions defining who is entitled to full citizenship and the rules for the allocation of property and other resources formerly controlled by the state Linz and Stepan 1996; Elster, Offe and Preuss 1998.

Answers to these questions are inter-correlated, which indicates that they tap into the same underlying orientation towards minority rights. Responses are summed and divided by

the number of items to form a Likert scale of attitudes towards minority rights with a range from one to five Cronbach alpha = 0.52 for the pooled dataset. Three of the items are worded in a positive direction – agreement equals a pro-rights answer - whereas the item on language in school is not. Predictably, given what we know about the effects of response biases for questions of this sort Schuman and Presser 1981; Evans and Heath 1995, levels of Pearson correlation between the three positively-worded items and the language in school item were low 0.29, 0.09 and 0.10 respectively. The latter was nevertheless retained in the scale even though its presence reduced the overall level of internal consistency, because the use of minority languages in schooling is an important issue that has historically been a source of contention between majority and minority groups in most countries in the region. It also gives the scale some degree of balance with respect to direction of question wording. This helps to limit the likelihood of bias resulting from acquiescence effects and thus has beneficial consequences for validity see Schuman and Presser 1981; Heath, Evans and Martin 1994.

4.2 The observed cross-national pattern of majority-minority polarization over attitudes towards minority rights

Table 1 shows the mean scores on the scale of attitudes towards minority rights held by the main ethnic groups in the 13 countries surveyed. It also presents the extent of ethnic polarization, which is the difference in mean scores between the majority and minority groups in each country. Finally, countries are ranked by their extent of ethnic polarization.

Table 1. *Ethnic polarization in Eastern Europe: mean score on minority rights scale by majority and minority group N=22,137*

	Support for minority rights			
	Majority	Minority	Polarization	Rank order
Estonia	2.67	4.24	1.57	1
Latvia	2.77	3.84	1.07	2
Slovakia	2.84	3.86	1.02	3
Romania	3.15	3.97	0.82	4

Lithuania	3.10	3.91	0.81	5
Moldova	3.23	3.89	0.66	6
Bulgaria	2.83	3.37	0.54	7
Czech Rep.	2.73	3.21	0.48	8
Hungary	3.17	3.60	0.43	9
Russia	3.28	3.68	0.40	10
Poland	3.13	3.44	0.31	11
Ukraine	3.57	3.85	0.28	12
Belarus	3.47	3.74	0.27	13

Unsurprisingly, in all of these countries ethnic minorities are more pro-minority rights than are majorities. There is nevertheless a clear hierarchy of country differences in the extent of polarization between the attitudes of majority and minority groups. Estonia is the most polarized of these societies - ethnic Estonians and the predominantly Russian-speaking minority are distinctive in the extent to which they differ in their support for minority rights. The next most polarized society is the other Baltic State with a substantial Russian-speaking minority - Latvia, although it can be seen that the Slovak majority and the mainly Hungarian-speaking minority in Slovakia display a similar degree of disparity in their attitudes. Romania is another ethnically-divided central European society containing a Hungarian minority as a result of the Treaty of Versailles and it displays a similar level of polarization over minority rights. As does Lithuania, which has a smaller and less homogeneous minority population than the two more-polarized Baltic countries. The relatively ethnically homogeneous Central European states - Poland, Czech Republic, and Hungary - display moderate levels of polarization. The least polarized societies are Ukraine and Belarus, both countries with substantial Russian minorities.

Thus even this simple description of the distribution of attitudes towards minority rights by majority/minority status points to the conclusion that one simple answer to a motivating question of this study - that size of the minority will be crucial for generating polarization over minority rights - is unlikely to be confirmed. Any firm conclusions, however, will need to rest on the systematic multivariate analysis of competing explanations of ethnic polarization that follows.

5. Modeling ethnic polarization in attitudes towards minority rights

5.1   The creation of the region variable

In most countries a part of the sampling procedure involved stratified selection by region. However, in Bulgaria there was no information about region. Also, because Poland Hungary and the Czech Republic have so few minorities among their populations (see Table 1), these three countries were treated as one region – otherwise, we could not estimate the dependent variable, ethnic polarization over minority rights. In the final analysis, therefore, we used 59 regions from the following countries: Belarus 7; Bulgaria 1; Czech Republic 1; Estonia 5; Hungary 1; Latvia 5; Lithuania 6; Moldova 4; Poland 1; Romania 4; Russia 10; Slovakia 4; Ukraine 10. Regional level variables are estimated for each of the above regions. After selecting respondents with valid answers to all relevant questions, 22,137 individual-level cases were retained in the analysis.

5.2   Operationalization of the independent variables

The hypotheses specified in section 2 are tested by operationalizing the following concepts:

1. Insecurity *was measured in two ways:*

a. Economic insecurity is estimated from measures of personal and societal economic experience over the past five years and expectations for the next five years combined into a 4-item scale.

Economic experience and expectations were measured using four questions, answers to which were combined to form a scale:

'Compared with <u>five years ago</u>, has your household's standard of living fallen a great deal, fallen a little, stayed about the same, risen a little, or has it risen a lot?' 'And looking ahead over the <u>next five years</u>, do you think that your household's standard of living will fall a great deal from its <u>current</u> level, fall a little, stay about the same as it is now, rise a little, or rise a lot from its current level?'

Each of these questions was also asked with reference to 'the country as a whole'. Cronbach's alpha for the 4-item scale was 0.72.

b. Political insecurity is measured with a 7-item scale of respondents' degree of expressed political efficacy with respect to the workings of the political system in their country: 'People like me have no say in what the government does'; 'Elected officials don't care much what people like me think'; 'On the whole, what governments do in this country reflects the wishes of ordinary people' reversed; 'There is no point in voting because the government can't make any difference'; 'The government acts for the benefit of the majority in society' reversed; 'Everyone has an influence on the election of the government' reversed.

Respondents were also asked: 'How would you evaluate the <u>actual practice</u> of democracy here in respondent's country so far?'

2. Perceived threat is measured as a *the size of minority* measured as percentage of the population within a region; and b by *perceptions of conflict* as measured by answers to the following question: 'Do you think there is bound to be conflict between the members of the different ethnic groups in [*country*] today, or do you think they can get along without conflict?'

3. Social differences between ethnic groups are assessed as follows:

a. Cultural differences were measured by:

A regional-level measure of majority language acquisition reported by minorities compared to language acquisition of majority members.

A measure of denominational membership among minorities and majorities. This included all major denominations in each country with a residual 'other' category.

A regional-level measure of the extent of denominational differences using the index of dissimilarity. This is the percentage of the population within regions that would need to 'change' their religious denomination in order to make the religious composition of the majority and the minority exactly the same.

b. Structural differences. Ethnic differences in social class composition and educational attainment are assessed using the following indicators:

Social class is measured using a self-report question devised in consultation with East European social scientists and evaluated in pilot studies. Five class categories were presented to respondents: 'entrepreneurs', 'managers and administrators', 'intelligentsia', 'manual worker' and 'peasant', along with a residual 'no class' option.

Educational qualifications are measured using three categories: none and primary qualifications, middle range and vocational, degree and higher degree.

Regional-level indices were constructed using the 'index of dissimilarity' of ethnic differences in social class and educational composition. As with religion, these derive from the proportion of the population that would have to change classes or educational groups in order to make the profiles of the ethnic groups identical.

4. Social distance is operationalized by two measures:

Marital homogamy. We included a variable indicating whether or not individuals were married; if they were married we made a distinction between people in ethnically

homogeneous marriages and people in heterogeneous marriages. The log odds of being in a mixed marriage versus a homogeneous marriage were also calculated at the regional-level. Log odds ratios were used here to control for differences in the sizes of minority groups.

Cross-ethnic interaction. Whether or not respondents reported discussing political issues with members of a different ethnic group. This was measured using answers to the following question: 'Please think of the two people you discuss politics with most often, apart from your spouse.' Accompanied by further probes into the ethnicity of any person or persons mentioned.

In addition, we include age and gender as control variables.

5.3   Testing the hypotheses

In the models we regress the ethnic rights scale onto indicators of the explanations. The strategy adopted in the analysis is to account for country differences in ethnic polarization by controlling for other differences between them Przeworski and Teune 1970; Evans and Whitefield 1995, provide a recent example in the Eastern European context. More precisely, the aim is to explain statistically the observed differences between ethnic groups in levels of support for ethnic rights in terms of compositional differences between majority and minority groups measured at the individual level and contextual effects estimated at the level of regions within countries. This is done by first entering a dummy variable representing the effect of being in a particular ethnic group into the model and then adding potential explanatory variables. Many of these variables are entered as interactions with ethnicity, as their effects are expected to vary by majority/minority status.

If these explanatory variables account for the observed differences between ethnic groups, then their addition to the model should reduce differences between ethnic groups while controling for the other explanatory variables. This would be indicated by a reduction in the size of the coefficient for the ethnicity dummy variable. If these explanatory variables account for observed differences in ethnic polarization between regions, then they also reduce

the variance of the ethnicity effect between regions. The net result of effects at both of these levels is to reduce differences between countries in the extent of polarization over minority rights between majority and minority groups.

We analyze the pooled cross-national dataset as a hierarchical structure of individuals nested within regions within countries. Neglecting this hierarchical structure would lead to an underestimation of the standard errors of the coefficients, which might lead to the inference that effects are significant when they are not Woodhouse *et al.* 1993. Table 2 presents the country-level averages of the regional-level measures.

Table 2. *Country-level averages for contextual variables measured at the regional level N=59*

	Size of minority %	Language acquisition	Ethnic Homogamy log-odds	Religious Differences[1]
Belarus	23.8	57.5	0.58	3.99
Bulgaria	15.6	88.1	2.90	10.3
Czech Rep.	3.6	92.5	1.18	1.16
Estonia	36.2	36.2	1.93	6.53
Hungary	3.1	95.0	2.52	2.57
Latvia	39.5	57.3	1.26	9.26
Lithuania	20.1	79.5	1.53	6.09
Moldova	29.2	48.5	1.35	1.63
Poland	2.5	97.9	2.51	2.51
Romania	14.5	84.7	1.80	11.9
Russia	10.7	96.7	0.73	5.25
Slovakia	14.4	70.4	1.94	2.07
Ukraine	27.5	65.1	0.83	2.88

[1] Index of dissimilarity

Multilevel models or 'random coefficient models' have been developed to analyze data with a hierarchical structure Bryk and Raudenbush, 1992. These models have frequently been applied in educational research, and more recently have also been used to analyze voting behavior Jones, Johnston and Pattie, 1992; Nieuwbeerta, 1995; Need 1997 and prejudice against minorities Quillian 1995. Here we use a hierarchical model in which the respondents are nested within the 59 regions in the 13 countries in our sample. The following equations summarize the general model employed:

$$1 \quad Y_{ij} = \beta_{0ij} X_0 + \beta_{1ij} X_1 + \beta X_{ij} + \beta X_{j} + e_{0ij}$$

In this equation, e_{0ij} is the departure from the predicted score for the *i*-th respondent's actual score on the rights scale. It is commonly referred to as residual. The dependent variable Y attitudes towards minority rights is explained with an intercept β_0, an effect β_{1ij} indicating the difference between ethnic majority and minority X_1 and of other variables X_{ij} varying

between persons and between regions and X_j varying between regions. Whenever an item has two subscripts, *ij*, it varies from person to person within a region. When it has only one subscript, *j*, we indicate that it varies only between regions and not between persons within regions. An example of a variable that only varies between regions is the size of the ethnic minority. We also allow the intercept term β_{0ij} to vary between regions. This is shown in equation 2:

$$2 \quad \beta_{0ij} = \beta_0 + u_{oj}$$

U_j indicates the departure for the *j*-th region's intercept from the overall value. It is a level 2 residual and is the same for all respondents in region *j*.

Similarly, we then allow the effect of ethnic β_{1j} group to vary between regions. Equation 3 formalizes this:

$$3 \quad B_{1j} = \beta_1 + u_{1j}$$

We assume that, being at different levels, uj and e_{ij} are uncorrelated and we further make the assumption that they have a normal distribution, so that their variances σ^2_u and σ^2_e can be estimated. Equations 1 through 3 can be rewritten into one equation, the effects of which we estimate. To estimate these effects we have used the interactive package MlwiN Goldstein *et al.*, 1998.

5.4   Results

Table 3 presents the final models selected. Model 1 is the null model: it includes only a constant and random variation between and within regions. The average score on the minority rights scale is 3.46, this varies significantly between persons and also although less

between regions: 0.09/0.50+0.09*100%=15.3% of the total variance in attitudes towards minority rights is between regions.

Table 3. *Parameter estimates from a multilevel analysis of support for minority rights N1=22137; N2=59; significant effects in bold*

	MODEL 1	MODEL 2	MODEL 3	MODEL 4
Constant	3.46 0.04	3.62 0.03	3.59 0.03	3.58 0.03
INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS				
ETHNIC POLARIZATION				
Ethnic majority ref		-	-	-
Ethnic minority		**0.59 0.05**	**0.52 0.05**	**0.49 0.05**
INSECURITY				
Negative expectations economy			-0.01 0.01	-0.01 0.01
Political efficacy			**0.05 0.01**	**0.05 0.01**
Political efficacy * ethnicity			**0.19 0.02**	**0.18 0.02**
PERCEIVED THREAT				
Likelihood of ethnic conflict			**-0.12 0.01**	**-0.12 0.01**
Social differences				
EDUCATION				
Low education ref			-	-
Medium education			-0.01 0.01	-0.01 0.01
High education			**0.07 0.02**	**0.07 0.02**
SOCIAL CLASS				
Manual workers			-0.01 0.01	-0.01 0.01
Entrepreneurs			-0.03 0.02	-0.03 0.02
Managers and administrators			0.03 0.02	0.03 0.02
Intelligentsia			-0.01 0.02	-0.01 0.02
Peasants			**-0.05 0.02**	**-0.05 0.02**
None of these ref			-	-
RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION				
Not religious ref			-	-
Orthodox			-0.01 0.01	-0.01 0.01
Catholic			**-0.05 0.02**	**-0.05 0.02**
Muslim			**0.17 0.06**	**0.18 0.06**
Protestant			**-0.06 0.02**	**-0.06 0.02**
Other religion			0.02 0.03	0.02 0.03
GENDER				
Male ref			-	-
Female			0.01 0.01	0.01 0.01
Age*10			0.06 0.03	-0.01 0.00
Social distance				
Extent of ethnic inter-marriage				
Not married ref			-	-
Homogeneous marriage			0.01 0.01	0.01 0.01
Heterogeneous marriage			**0.04 0.02**	**0.04 0.02**
Discuss political issues with member of minority			**0.13 0.01**	**0.13 0.01**
REGIONAL-LEVEL CHARACTERISTICS				
Language acquisition				**-0.00 0.00**
Language acquisition * ethnicity				**-0.01 0.00**
Religious differences				**-0.02 0.01**
Religious differences * ethnicity				**0.03 0.02**
Variance components				
REGIONAL LEVEL				
Constant	**0.09 0.02**	**0.04 0.01**	**0.04 0.01**	**0.03 0.01**
Ethnic group		**0.16 0.03**	**0.15 0.03**	**0.13 0.03**
Constant/ethnic group		**-0.03 0.01**	**-0.02 0.01**	**-0.02 0.01**
INDIVIDUAL LEVEL				
Constant	**0.50 0.05**	**0.41 0.00**	**0.40 0.00**	**0.40 0.00**

In model 2 the effect of ethnicity is allowed to vary between regions. This model is called a 'random slope' model. We see that the ethnic minority score on attitudes towards minority rights scale is significantly higher than that of the majority. Because the variance of this effect between regions is substantial and significant 0.16 with a standard error of 0.03 we can conclude that the difference between majority and minority groups in support for minority rights varies significantly between regions.

As argued above, we not only want to explain differences in attitudes towards minority rights between majority and minority ethnic groups but also to explain why differences differ across regions and countries. The extent to which polarization between ethnic groups is explained can be seen by comparing the coefficients for 'ethnic minority' in model 3 with those in the previous models. To assess how much of the variation in ethnic polarization between regions is explained, we examine the proportional reduction in the variance of the 'ethnic group' effect which is shown in the bottom section of Table 3.

In model 3, we aim to explain ethnic polarization in support for minority rights by controlling for compositional differences between majority and minority groups. Since we only control for individual-level variables, we expect only a small amount of the differences between regions to be explained. Table 3 shows this, the variance of the ethnicity effect decreases only from 0.16 to 0.15. As we predicted that the effects of certain variables would interact with majority/minority status, we estimated interaction terms between ethnicity and the following independent variables: 'discusses political issues with member of minority', 'likelihood of ethnic conflict', 'political efficacy', and 'negative expectations of the economy'. For ease of interpretation we have subtracted the mean from all interval-level variables.

Model 3 contains many significant effects on attitudes towards minority rights. As our interest is not in these effects on the dependent variable but instead concerns their impact on the size of the ethnicity effect we shall only briefly summarize these findings.

First, there is no significant effect of economic expectations – whether specified as a main effect or in interaction with ethnicity. However, respondents with a higher level of

political efficacy are more likely to support minority rights. This effect is stronger for members of minority groups than it is for members of the majority. Respondents who believe that there is 'bound to be conflict' between ethnic groups in their country are more likely to oppose minority rights. This effect is the same for members of minority groups and members of the majority. Higher educated respondents are also more supportive of minority rights than are those with basic levels of education. The effects of social class are weak, only peasants differ significantly from the 'no class' reference category. The main effects of religious denomination are more substantial: Catholics and Protestants are less likely, and Muslims are more likely, to support minority rights than are the non-religious. Respondents in cross-ethnic marriages are more supportive of minority rights than are unmarried respondents and those married to co-ethnics. There is no interaction with majority/minority status. Respondents who discuss politics with someone from the minority group are more likely to support minority rights. Neither age nor gender have significant effects.

However, more important for our purposes than the significant effects of these characteristics, is the impact that controlling for them has on the size of the ethnicity effect. The inclusion of the individual-level variables in model 3 removes approximately 12% a decrease of 0.07 from 0.59 of the ethnicity effect as a result of compositional differences between majority and minority groups. (In Table 4 below, we examine more precisely which variables account for this reduction).

Finally, model 4 includes, in addition, the effects of the regional-level variables. The procedure followed in this case was to add to model 3 each of the regional-level variables and the interaction of these variables with ethnicity. Each of these variables size of minority, extent of majority language acquisition by minority, religious, class and educational distributions together with their interaction with ethnicity was modeled separately because of the restricted number of regions 59. The significant variables were then retained in model 4.

The results of this model show clearly that regional variations in cultural differences between majority and minority ethnic groups have significant effects on regional variations in ethnic polarization and substantially reduce the between-regions variance in ethnic

polarization: The higher the level of majority language acquisition among minority group members, the smaller the extent of polarization over minority rights; and the larger the religious difference between ethnic groups in a region, the larger the extent of polarization between them over minority rights. In regions with smaller religious differences there is less ethnic polarization.

The other effects that were significant in model 3 remain much the same.

Next, Table 4 provides information on which variables are 'doing the work' of accounting for ethnic polarization. In this table we only present selected effects from Table 3: these are the effect of ethnicity and the variance components. These effects are presented for each of five relevant models. Each of these models, 2a-2e, drops different subsets of the independent variables from model 3 in Table 3.

Table 4. *Parameter estimates from a multilevel analysis of support for minority rights, effects of selected models from Table 3 compared with others N1=22,137; N2=59*

	MODEL 1	MODEL 2	MODEL 2A	MODEL 2B	MODEL 2C	MODEL 2D	MODEL 2E	MODEL 3	MODEL 4
ETHNIC POLARIZATION									
Ethnic majority	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ethnic minority	-	0.59 0.05	0.52 0.05	0.53 0.05	0.52 0.05	0.53 0.05	0.56 0.05	0.52 0.05	0.49 0.05
VARIANCE COMPONENTS									
Regional-level									
Constant	0.09 0.02	0.04 0.01	0.04 0.01	0.04 0.01	0.04 0.01	0.04 0.01	0.04 0.01	0.04 0.01	0.03 0.01
Ethnic group		0.16 0.03	0.15 0.03	0.15 0.03	0.15 0.03	0.15 0.03	0.16 0.03	0.15 0.03	0.13 0.03
Constant/ethnic group		-0.03 0.01	-0.02 0.01	-0.02 0.01	-0.02 0.01	-0.03 0.01	-0.02 0.01	-0.02 0.01	-0.02 0.01
Individual level									
Constant	0.50 0.05	0.41 0.00	0.40 0.00	0.40 0.00	0.40 0.00	0.40 0.00	0.40 0.00	0.40 0.00	0.40 0.00

Model specification:

Model 1:	constants
Model 2:	model 1 + effect of ethnicity varying between regions
Model 2a:	model 3 - economic insecurity
Model 2b:	model 3 - political insecurity
Model 2c:	model 3 - perceived threat
Model 2d:	model 3 - social differences
Model 2e:	model 3 - social distance
Model 3:	model 2 + economic insecurity, political insecurity, perceived threat, social differences and social distance

Model 4:   model 3 + regional-level characteristics.

It can be seen that the measures of social distance left out of model 2e have by far the largest impact on ethnic polarization. The effect of ethnicity changes from 0.52 to 0.56 after deleting measures of social distance; the change is much smaller after deleting other independent variables.

Further reductions in the level of ethnic polarization can be observed by comparing the coefficient for ethnic polarization in model 3 with that in model 4. The addition of regional-level variation in majority language acquisition by minority ethnic groups and of religious differences between majority and minority ethnic groups reduces the effect of ethnicity from 0.52 to 0.49. Table 4 also informs us about the extent to which we have explained differences in ethnic polarization between regions. The between-region variance of the effect of ethnicity in model 2 was 0.16: adding the variables measured at the individual level only reduces the between-regions variance of the effect of ethnicity to 0.15. Adding the regional level characteristics further reduces the between-regions variance of the effect of ethnicity to 0.13.

5.5   *Returning to examine country-level differences*

The final step in the analysis is to move up from the regional level to the country level and examine whether in addition to the individual-level and regional-level characteristics, country-level measures of the contextual explanatory variables can account for ethnic polarization over minority rights. We measured the contextual variables for each of the thirteen countries in the analysis. Given this small number these estimates are less likely to be robust than are those from the individual-level and regional-level analyses and any potentially significant relationships are likely to be difficult to detect. Nevertheless, we examined the zero-order correlations between the explanatory variables and ethnic polarization at the country level. The only substantial correlation with ethnic polarization is found for the size of the minority in a country r=0.42, but given the small number of observations even this is not

significant @ P=0.05. To check that the independent variables may none the less have an impact, each of the country-level variables was also added to model 4 in Table 3. Again, no country-level effects approached statistical significance.

Finally, as we have seen, several individual-level and regional-level explanatory variables affect ethnic polarization over minority rights. Now we examine to what extent these factors have accounted for the observed differences in ethnic polarization between Eastern European countries. Table 5 compares the predicted values for minority rights support derived from each of the models presented in Table 3 with the observed values shown in Table 1. Thus the predictions in model 1 are those derived from model 1 in Table 3. This estimates the average score on the minority rights scale. Therefore it predicts the same value on the dependent variable for the majority and for the minority and as there is no variation between regions the predicted value is the same in all countries. In model 2 in Table 3 we also include a parameter for ethnicity: therefore predictions based on this model give different scores on the dependent variable for majority and minority ethnic groups. However, we do not include any variables that can explain differences between regions. Therefore the same value is predicted for each of the countries. In model 3 we add the individual-level explanatory variables to model 2. Finally, in model 4 we also add regional-level explanatory variables.

To evaluate how well the predicted polarization in each of the models approximates the observed values, the bottom row of Table 5 presents the 'mean absolute error in polarization'. This figure is calculated from the differences whether plus or minus between the observed scores on the minority rights scale and the predicted scores summed over countries divided by the number of countries. We can see from this that, on average, model 4 best predicts ethnic polarization over support for minority rights. This is indicated by the sum of the error being closest to 0 in model 4. In other words, in this model the predictions come closest to the actual score on ethnic polarization - although it does not predict the attitudes of minority members and majority members equally well in all countries. In Moldova, Poland and Russia, for example, the model predicts ethnic polarization reasonably well. But predictions based on the model do not fit as well in Estonia and Slovakia. This is unsurprising

given that we model ethnic polarization for all countries simultaneously, and to begin with Estonia and Slovakia had particularly high levels of polarization.

Table 5. *Ethnic polarization in Eastern Europe: mean score and predicted scores on right scale ethnic polarization in bold*

	Rights scale	Prediction based on model 1	Prediction based on model 2	Prediction based on model 3	Prediction based on model 4	N
Belarus						
❖ Majority	3.47	3.58	3.33	3.36	3.39	862
❖ Minority	3.74	3.58	3.82	3.91	3.99	269
	0.27	**0.00**	**0.49**	**0.55**	**0.60**	
Bulgaria						
❖ Majority	2.83	3.58	3.33	3.33	3.16	1476
❖ Minority	3.37	3.58	3.82	3.96	3.88	273
	0.54	**0.00**	**0.49**	**0.63**	**0.72**	
Czech Rep.						
❖ Majority	2.73	3.58	3.33	3.31	3.46	1411
❖ Minority	3.21	3.58	3.82	3.79	3.69	52
	0.48	**0.00**	**0.49**	**0.48**	**0.23**	
Estonia						
❖ Majority	2.67	3.58	3.33	3.31	3.25	1257
❖ Minority	4.24	3.58	3.82	3.91	4.16	713
	1.57	**0.00**	**0.49**	**0.60**	**0.91**	
Hungary						
❖ Majority	3.17	3.58	3.33	3.28	3.39	1237
❖ Minority	3.60	3.58	3.82	3.79	3.68	40
	0.43	**0.00**	**0.49**	**0.51**	**0.29**	
Latvia						
❖ Majority	2.77	3.58	3.33	3.31	3.17	1205
❖ Minority	3.84	3.58	3.82	3.91	4.00	787
	1.07	**0.00**	**0.49**	**0.60**	**0.83**	
Lithuania						
❖ Majority	3.10	3.58	3.33	3.31	3.27	1599
❖ Minority	3.91	3.58	3.82	3.86	3.87	401
	0.81	**0.00**	**0.49**	**0.55**	**0.60**	
Moldova						
❖ Majority	3.23	3.58	3.33	3.30	3.41	1152
❖ Minority	3.89	3.58	3.82	3.89	4.05	476
	0.66	**0.00**	**0.49**	**0.59**	**0.64**	
Poland						
❖ Majority	3.13	3.58	3.33	3.27	3.38	1574
❖ Minority	3.44	3.58	3.82	3.76	3.63	40
	0.31	**0.00**	**0.49**	**0.49**	**0.25**	
Romania						
❖ Majority	3.15	3.58	3.33	3.30	3.08	1331
❖ Minority	3.97	3.58	3.82	3.77	3.70	224
	0.82	**0.00**	**0.49**	**0.47**	**0.62**	
Russia						
❖ Majority	3.28	3.58	3.33	3.32	3.34	1648
❖ Minority	3.68	3.58	3.82	3.93	3.81	198
	0.40	**0.00**	**0.49**	**0.61**	**0.47**	
Slovakia						
❖ Majority	2.84	3.58	3.33	3.28	3.39	1253
❖ Minority	3.86	3.58	3.82	3.84	3.86	211
	1.02	**0.00**	**0.49**	**0.56**	**0.47**	
Ukraine						
❖ Majority	3.57	3.58	3.33	3.33	3.40	1789
❖ Minority	3.85	3.58	3.82	3.91	4.00	679
	0.28	**0.00**	**0.49**	**0.58**	**0.60**	
Mean absolute 'error' in polarization		**0.666**	**0.294**	**0.286**	**0.248**	

6.   Conclusions

We have seen that ethnic polarization between majority and minority groups is explained most effectively by social distance, as indicated by the extent of ethnic inter-marriage and social interaction.   In addition, cultural differences, as indicated by variations in the extent of majority language acquisition by minority groups and group differences in religion between regions, account for a significant proportion of the regional variation in the extent of polarization. Regions with minorities who speak the titular language of a country have less polarization between ethnic groups in attitudes towards minority rights. Similarly, regions where ethnic groups share religious affiliation experience less polarization. These findings accord with research in the West indicating the importance of cultural differences as a source of racial and anti-immigrant prejudice (see Pettigrew 1998) while giving no support to rival theories of ethnic polarization which focus on economic factors, structural differences and similarities, minority group and perceived threat of ethnic conflict.

The observation that social distance intermarriage, political interaction affects ethnic polarization tells us that individuals who are involved in cross-ethnic interactions and relationships have less polarized opinions about minority rights than do those who are not. That is, minority members will be more in favor of ethnic rights and majority members will be more opposed to them. However, once this personal contact is controlled for, individuals who live in regions where there is on average more intermarriage and interaction do *not* have less polarized opinions than individuals living in regions where social distance is smaller. In other words, the effects of social distance on levels of variation in ethnic polarization is *compositional* rather than *contextual* in form.

Clearly, when considering multivariate models with these many explanatory factors we need to remember that many of the variables used to predict ethnic polarization are themselves inter-related. Moreover, some of these factors can be assumed to causally precede others. In this respect, the social distance indicators might be considered to be endogenous, in that they are conditioned by some of the other independent variables. Nevertheless, the effects of measures of social distance are estimated net of other conditioning factors: social distance

is an aspect of ethnic relations that impacts on ethnic polarization over attitudes towards rights even when insecurity, threat, and structural and cultural difference are taken into account.

Although not comprehensive, our analysis is in many respects particularly well-specified. None the less, there are still marked differences between countries in their predicted and observed levels of ethnic polarization. To account for these discrepancies we can turn to aspects of the histories of particular countries in the region. So, for example, in Estonia - the most polarized of our nations even after fitting the models examined in Table 3 - it is not surprising that the titular ethnicity perceives the large and formerly dominant Russian minority as a specific threat to their newfound national integrity. This threat is likely to be exacerbated by the presence of an extended and still nominally disputed border with Russia, which includes areas where Russian-speakers dominate numerically. In combination with fifty years of military occupation and settlement of ethnic Russians in the country, preceded prior to 1918 by two centuries of Imperial control, we have conditions in which the expression of negative intergroup attitudes and support for exclusionary practices against Russians, including those limiting voting and citizenship rights, is particularly likely to occur. That such successor states are characterized by greater fear of irredentism has been argued before Evans and Whitefield 1993. A similar point applies to Slovakia, which again displays high levels of unexplained polarization between the Slovak majority and their Hungarian-speaking minority. Again, this is a very recently created 'break-away' state, and the history of the region both before and after the Treaty of Versailles, and the presence of Hungary on the new state's southern border, probably serve to accentuate the insecurity of the majority Slovaks.

That history should still count, even when aspects of context and individual experience are taken into account, is not itself remarkable, and is not beyond reasonable interpretation. What the analysis presented here also suggests, however, and this *is* somewhat surprising, is that many of the explanations specified in social scientific discussions of ethnic divisions, and intergroup relations more generally – economic experience, political representation, structural differences, the size of the minority in a region – play no detectable

part in accounting for the degree of ethnic polarization in attitudes towards minority rights in the area of the former communist states of Eastern Europe. Ethnic groups in this region are most polarized when they differ in linguistic and religious character and in their degree of social contact. In other words, to the degree that we can account for ethnic polarization it is in terms of cultural differences between ethnic groups rather than those of an economic, political, or structural nature.

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Appendix: The surveys.

Table A.1 *The Surveys*

	SAMPLING FRAME	SAMPLING	RESPONSE RATE
BELARUS **SUMMER 1993**	adult pop 18+ Housing Offices' residence list of individuals	1. 7 regions 2. 26 settlements 3. local councils 4. individuals from residence lists randomly	Names issued: 1300+650 Achieved sample: 1200
BULGARIA **SUMMER 1993**	adult pop 18+ 1992 census of households	two-step cluster 1. 211 census districts from 42000 2.random:12 households from each	Names issued: 2532 Achieved sample: 1932
CZECH REPUBLIC **SPRING 1994**	adult pop 18+ list of voters from 1992 in sampled localities	1. 8 regions 2. 182 sampling points localities from 13410 3. 2104 addresses, of which: 1681 random list sampling electoral register: 423 random route + 111 quota	Names issued: 2104 Achieved sample: 1409+111
ESTONIA **SUMMER 1993**	adult pop 18+ 1989 census of households	1. 5 regions 2. 15 counties 3. 321 sampling points 4.random-route/household 5.Kish matrix/respondent	Names issued: 2285 Achieved sample: 2029
HUNGARY **SPRING 1994**	adult pop 20+ Central Register of Population 1992	1. 12 counties representing regions 2. 78 sampling points 3. random selection of individuals	Names issued: 1703 Achieved sample: 1314
LATVIA **JANUARY 1996**	adult pop 18+ random route	1. 5 regions 2. 403 sampling points 3. random route with Kish selection procedure	Addresses issued: 2925 Achieved sample: 2000
LITHUANIA **SUMMER 1993**	adult pop 18+ random route rural Register Office address lists urban	1. 5 regions 2. 180 sampling points 3. rural - random route urban - address list	Names/addresses issued: 2982 Achieved sample: 2000
MOLDOVA **WINTER 1995/1996**	adult pop 18+ random route	1. 80 sampling points 2. random route with Kish selection procedure	Names issued: 2734 Achieved sample: 1640
POLAND **SUMMER 1993**	adult pop 18+ Central Register of Individuals	1. 8 regions 2. 4 types of settlements	Names issued: 2040 Achieved sample: 1729
ROMANIA **SUMMER 1993**	adult pop 18+ Electoral Records	1. 4 provinces 2. 4 types of settlements 3. electoral constituencies 126 from 51 settlements	Names issued: 2000 Achieved sample: 1621
RUSSIA **SUMMER 1993**	adult pop 18+ lists of 'privatization vouchers'	1. 10 regions 2. 56 settlements 3. indiv. from list of vouchers	Names issued: 2420 Achieved sample: 2030
SLOVAKIA **SPRING 1994**	adult pop 18+ list of voters from 1992 in sampled localities	1. 4 regions 2. 215 sampling points localities from 4191 3. 2014 addresses of which: 1100 first wave; 914 second wave. Random list sampling electoral register + 68 quota	Names issued: 2014 Achieved sample: 1443+ 68

| UKRAINE SUMMER 1993 | adult pop 18+
Housing Offices' residence list of individuals | 1. 70 urban + 50 rural settlements
2. 7 types only urban - selection proportional to size of pop. in each type | Names issued: 2984
Achieved sample: 2537 |