Merging Together or Drifting Apart? Revisiting Political Legitimacy Issues in Cyprus, Moldova, and Bosnia and Herzegovina

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One way to approach conflict management is to use a four-dimensional political legitimacy criterion, which could set the agenda for enhancing peace prospects in Cyprus, Moldova and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Here the argument is that through measuring the internal legitimacy of conflicting parties and then comparing and contrasting the given empirical values on the scales of cohesion/security and democracy/performance, we may be able to distinguish conflicting pairs either “merging together” or “drifting apart”, depending on how the secessionist entities position themselves vis-à-vis their parent states. Empirical facts on the ground tell us that Cyprus may have the biggest chances of reunification, whereas Moldova’s perspective looks meagre. The BiH, which has preserved its territorial integrity, faces real secessionist challenges, given the illegitimacy of the state and a manifest dissatisfaction with systemic deficiencies.

The state-area functions as a unit area in friendly or unfriendly relations with other state-areas and other outside areas, relations that may be classified as territorial, economic, political, or strategic. We may construct a system for the study of state-areas, a system that must be sufficiently flexible to be bent to the differences that distinguish each state-area from all others, but which may enable students to work cumulatively, to build upon what has been produced by previous students.

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INTRODUCTION

A call for a functional approach in political geography with a focus on centrifugal and centripetal processes, and which was made by a prominent American geographer Richard Hartshorne more than sixty years ago, is somewhat topical also today. Perhaps there is no surprise that regional differences may easily fuel secessionist movements, which threaten the territorial integrity of states. The same is true for centrally induced nationalism, which aims at binding different regions together under the common state idea. What deserves more attention, however, is closely related to the post-conflict settlements, which are usually externally imposed and often tend to ignore the legitimacy levels of conflicting parties. Legitimacy gap per se may become indicative of predicting merging together or drifting apart of regions, which used to be (or still are) constitutive parts of the state.

Federalist restructuring, as a form of power-sharing, is among the mainstream forms of conflict resolution used today in response to threats of secession or rebuilding of nations, granting subunits shared sovereignty. However, in many cases the externally imposed federal constitution has contributed to formal territorial reintegration while granting the status de jure that unrecognised entities already enjoy de facto. This may point to the fact that power-sharing helps to maintain states-within-states because it does not pay any attention to internal legitimacy aspects. What usually follows is a formation of territorial administrative structures which lack democratic governance and/or do not represent the will of sovereign people. In the view of Lynch, “The baseline context for power-sharing is that of democracy, where by definition political actors agree to work within a system of institutionalised uncertainty that is made acceptable by the recognition of all of the rules of the game and of a shared sense of destiny”.

The ongoing secessionist conflicts in Cyprus and Moldova involve influential external players and have been frozen for decades because various federalisation plans have contributed very little to peace-making and territorial reintegration. This also seems to be relevant in Bosnia, where the architects of Dayton succeeded in securing a settlement, but largely failed in creating a single multi-ethnic country with functioning state structures and a sovereign power to govern it. Whether internal legitimacy aspects become even more instrumental to separate conflicting parties and to justify secessionist claims depends on the relative weight these aspects have gained in particular post-conflict settings. Generally speaking, legitimacy can bring along empowerment and prioritise secession over power-sharing. Alternatively, the parent states may have gains in offering a sufficiently attractive model in terms of good governance and economic development for the seceding entity to agree on a compromise formula.

In case of the Cyprus conflict, the attractive model for the Turkish Cypriot community was supposedly EU membership. Moreover, here the
maximum convergence in domestic political regimes between the entities over the degree of democratisation seemed to be one of the favouring conditions of conflict settlement in Cyprus. Yet, the Cyprus conflict is mostly a security conflict for both communities. While the Greek Cypriot community fears Turkey’s presence on the island, the Turkish Cypriot community fears domination by the larger Greek Cypriot community. This also explains Tocci’s pessimistic note according to which “several salient factors suggest that an all-encompassing reunification of the two communities would be unworkable”.8 One may even argue that the issues of replacement of the Turkish immigrant population as well as the withdrawal of the Turkish troops decisively affected the outcome of the referendum conducted in the Greek part of the island in 2004. Apparently the Greek Cypriots felt they had no reason to believe in security guarantees provided by the Annan Plan and safeguarded by the UN.9

As for the Moldova case, many analysts have considered the conflict with the Transnistria (TMR) as “the most solvable”10 and “slowly edging towards a permanent solution”.11 Here a particular identity was not the driving force behind the outbreak of the conflict.12 Rather one should focus more on contemporary politics and economics, which may unexpectedly demonstrate the eagerness of the TMR business community to give up the idea of separate statehood if there were favourable conditions available.13 Although violent, this conflict did not feature massive bloodshed or ethnic cleansing; it is widely believed that the solution will be found in the federalisation of the country under the conditions of reliable guaranties from Russia, Ukraine and the OSCE.14 Is TMR really “the weakest example of de facto sovereignty and the one least likely to survive”, as suggested by Bahcheli et al.?15 Would regime change be a sufficient driving force for TMR “to rejoin the rest of Moldova in a Europeanising direction from a weakened bargaining position” as anticipated by Vahl and Emerson?26 No matter what, the conflict is sustained because Moldova does not provide the necessary attractiveness in political and economic terms. Transnistrian authorities have also been able to secure living standards and to provide minimum social welfare for the region’s population, which serves as a critical pillar of the regime’s support, especially among the older generation.17

In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), concrete developments and progress have usually come about through external pressure rather than domestic will and consensus. In Belloni’s view, any local variation of society not in conformity with the broader precepts of liberal peace has been ignored throughout the peace process.18 Although some experts and practitioners have shown recent developments in a positive light, with minor discrepancies pointing to the political immaturity of the electorate or overtly nationalistic elite19, the majority of the country’s citizens, belonging to two of the three constituent peoples, still contest the BiH as a united state.20 The majority of the Serb population feels reluctant to engage in Bosnian state-building. The president of
the Republika Srpska (RS), Milorad Dodik, has frequently called for his region to secede from Bosnia. He views Bosnia as a “virtual, pointless country”. Likewise, parts of the Croat population either support irredentism towards Croatia or the establishment of their own political entity in Bosnia. Most of the Bosniaks instead demand a new and more centralised constitution to replace the Dayton Accords. They support civic state and nation-building, which would abolish the RS, considered as a bitter remembrance of the war.

The paper aims to analyse comparatively the post-conflict reintegration perspectives in Cyprus, Moldova, and BiH while using political legitimacy as a conceptual framework for further guidance of comprehensive settlements usually accompanied by territorial reconfigurations. Here the argument is that through measuring the internal legitimacy of conflicting parties and then comparing and contrasting the given empirical values on the scales of cohesion/security and democracy/performance, we may be able to distinguish conflicting pairs either ‘merging together’ or ‘drifting apart’, depending on how the secessionist entities position themselves vis-à-vis their parent states. The paper begins with theoretical outlines while identifying, describing and justifying four measures of internal legitimacy. Thereafter, the methodological considerations regarding the conduct of individual surveys, construction of indices and computation of standard scores are brought forth. The following sections review the study results in the given post-conflict situations and conclude with an assessment about the territorial reintegration perspectives. Although the Cyprus conflict has always been portrayed as a clash of incompatible identities and the Moldova-Transnistria dispute has been represented as a simple elitist rivalry where ethnicity plays a secondary role, thus giving a reconciliatory perspective primarily to Moldova, empirical facts on the ground tell us the opposite. The BiH, which has preserved its territorial integrity, faces real secessionist challenges given the illegitimacy of the state and a manifest dissatisfaction with systemic deficiencies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In an edited volume on individual African states and their disintegration and restoration of legitimate authority, William Zartman argues in favour of existing order: “One has only to make it work, using it as a framework for adequate attention to the concerns of its citizens and the responsibility of sovereignty, rather than experimenting with smaller units, possibly more homogeneous but less broadly based and less stable”. In other words, when state collapse prescribes instrumental devices to put things back together, legitimacy considerations remain crucially important in the backup and restoration of statehood. According to Hansen, political legitimacy is one of the crucial factors for the success of the peace process.
also explains why there is a need to introduce power-sharing perspectives into the general political legitimacy framework.

More precisely, one may predict a causal relationship between self-determination goals and security arrangements as well as between perceived regime type and people’s confidence in their regimes’ institutional set-up and performance. While liberal processes can validate ‘democratic legitimacy’, ‘performance legitimacy’ can be derived from government effectiveness in fulfilling core state functions such as security/territorial integrity and improvements in living standards. Similarly, Call and Cousens maintain that “state legitimacy can be generated through securing of borders and delivery of core services”. The peace process in terms of the ‘merging together’ of conflicting parties is thus conditioned by the relative cohesion of the ‘self’, the degree to which security is provided and to the extent the people’s expectations match the recorded regime performance.

Kostovicova refers to a wider theoretical challenge, which includes “the issue of sites where legitimacy is generated, grounds on which it is founded, and the process by which it is produced and contested”. Legitimacy is all about “the acceptance of a governing regime as correct, appropriate and/or right”. This takes us from the ‘input-oriented’ legitimacy, based on a sense of identity and community, to the ‘output-oriented’ legitimacy, based on the capacity to solve problems. “Without a minimum degree of legitimacy, states have difficulty functioning; and loss of legitimacy in the eyes of some segment of the population is an important contributor to state failure.”

Just as legitimacy concerns certain standards for justification of a particular polity, it is also heavily influenced by, or almost a function of, the performance of the regime. This also goes to Diamond, who considers legitimacy as an outcome of causal factors, thus combining historical legacy with the comparative values of regime systems, as well as regime performance with regime efficacy, and regime conformity with political aspirations. According to Wellman, any population should have the right to self-government and that government is legitimate only with the consent of the people. In this way, legitimacy calls into dispute the claims and counter-claims to integrative measures of any political authority.

Yet legitimacy is not all in one piece but instead comprises a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Because of the conceptual ambiguity and empirical evidence, legitimacy remains “a regulatory ideal, not a fixed point on a scale” and there seems to be “no magic line to draw between decisions or regimes that are clearly legitimate or illegitimate” and hence capable of power-sharing. Moreover, multifaceted sources of legitimacy coexist and interact: none of them can themselves legitimise political power, and no particular hierarchy is involved. Gilley defines legitimacy as a concept that admits degrees of “rightfully holding and exercising political power” and that represents a continuous variable. Similar lines of reasoning are offered by Weatherford, who considers legitimacy as “too unwieldy and complex a
concept to be grappled in a frontal assault, and virtually all the empirical literature follows the tactic of breaking it into component parts.”

What could those measurable component parts of legitimacy that define the course of conflict settlement be? The paper builds on the four elements characterising internal legitimacy – the political community (cohesion), threats to the political community (security), perceptions of ideal regime principles (democracy), and finally, evaluations of the performance of the current regime in order to figure out whether discrepancies in legitimacy levels support territorial reintegration or political divorce.

A political community is characterised by cohesiveness. It is usually understood as the existence of a self or a demos with a shared identity, without which the obligation to accept collective decisions will be contested. Governance is a legitimate act only after those who command and those who obey express the identity of society and have agreed with one another about those values that politics makes its objective to promote.

Democratic legitimacy is derived from the regime principles which represent the values of the democratic political system and reflect justifications grounded in beliefs. The basic principles of democratic regimes are commonly understood to include such values as freedom, participation, tolerance and moderation, respect for legal-institutional rights, and the rule of law. Democratic procedures involve, at the minimum, public control and political equality.

Regime performance is understood as satisfaction with both the ends and outcomes of governance and is reflected in acts of consent or recognition. Every political regime, which seeks to prove the right to govern, has to satisfy the needs of the members of the community: moral, efficient and just governance; economic development; education and health services. It has to show up in confidence ratings which characterise people’s consent of authorities and institutions.

Security is the level of protection against supposed danger. That condition derives from a structural relationship (vulnerability, distance, insulation, protection) to threats in the environment. The defence of community interests ensures that the general conditions for group survival will prevail over the right to govern. Security is also central to state legitimacy because it makes the production of other sources of legitimacy possible, including ensuring basic health and education services, sustaining livelihoods and economic activity, and establishing democratic elections and the rule of law.

Thus, the most legitimate source of power-sharing may be considered to be representative of those who follow, given that there is an agreement about the ends of conflict management (self-determination, individual rights, communal security) and that there are procedures to reflect consent to decisions or regimes. That said, ‘merging together’ or ‘drifting apart’ depends to a large extent on the experience of different groups within the conflicting
pairs, and on the capacity of a parent state and secessionist entity to provide security.

**METHODOLOGY**

This paper takes on an empirical approach to internal legitimacy affecting the conflict resolution on the ground. With its focus on the grass roots, it is concerned with people’s perceptions and beliefs in three post-conflict settings where secessionist entities have managed to preserve separateness from their parent states. It relies on six public opinion surveys conducted in Cyprus, Moldova and the BiH (April–June 2009), and addressed legitimacy issues in four different spheres: cohesion, security, democracy and performance. It utilises composite measures that summarised several specific observations and represented legitimacy dimensions more generally, thus comparing and contrasting the degree of internal political legitimacy both in parent states and secessionist entities. Finally, based on these indices it introduces standard scores that demonstrate how much particular cases deviate from the ‘norm’ without defining assumptions of normality. This deviation becomes a ‘relative distance’ to identify and address the legitimacy gap within those selected cases.

**Surveys**

A total of 3,657 *face-to-face interviews* were carried out simultaneously in three countries and six entities. Due to the fact that there is no accurate and reliable population data available in all these countries (except Cyprus), the survey used the *de facto population* thus also including some of the Turkish male immigrant labour force in the Northern Cyprus (TRNC) and excluding those Moldovans who are part of that 20 percent of the population temporarily working abroad. Needless to say, there has been no population census in the BiH since 1991 and the TMR’s official data sources do not inspire trust. Population displacement and the right to return have been a more critical issue now in the BiH than anywhere else.

It is true that relying on surveys from these ethnically cleansed and newly populated settlements of the TRNC or the RS in order to evaluate issues of legitimacy conceals the stories of those forced from their homes earlier. If we took the status quo ante as the basis on which to evaluate the present situation, any imaginable solution to the predicament of these regions would probably include the return of those persons, including Greek Cypriots to Northern Cyprus, and Bosniaks to the RS. If, however, we focused on what the possible and feasible solutions to the status quo were, it is very unlikely that the status quo ante could be restored (Turkish Cypriot enclaves in a unified 1974 Cyprus, or a multi-ethnic Bosnia in the federal
1991 Yugoslavia). Therefore, this paper focuses only on the current populations of these territories, reflecting the specifics of the selected entity without entirely corresponding to ‘official’ population statistics.

Identical surveys were conducted in local languages (Greek, Turkish, Romanian, Russian, Serbo-Croatian) by experienced interviewers. The list of questions (61) included items designed to measure four distinct dimensions of legitimacy, drawing on the World Values Survey, Eurobarometer, and New Democracy Barometer questionnaires. These questions are derived from contemporary theories of liberal-democratic legitimacy, highlighted identity and security matters and requested confidence evaluations in a list of institutions. Respondents were asked to assess the regime’s correspondence to liberal-democratic standards of legitimacy such as democracy, shared identity and effective performance.

Indexing

A survey respondent’s score on an index of one of the four legitimacy dimensions was determined by the specific responses given to several questionnaire items, each of which provided some indication of that particular aspect of legitimacy. Several indicators were summarised in a single numerical score. To assign equal weight for each indicator, different scores were recoded in the 0–1 scale (e.g., while the original scale was from 1 to 4, the new one is 0, 0.33, 0.67, 1). For instance, a question that inquired about people’s confidence in religious institutions could receive the following response measured in an ordinal scale: “a great deal of confidence” (1 point), “quite a lot of confidence” (0.67 points), “not very much confidence” (0.33 points), or “none at all” (0 points). A specific challenge was posed by the need for recoding some nominal variables as ordinal. For instance, in case of the question, “With which of the following do you most closely identify yourself?” which supposedly measures the variation of identification with the state of residence or ‘non-state’ actors that can be placed on the continuum of statelessness, it was justified to assign one point both to the answer categories ‘with TRNC/TMR/RS’ in the secessionist entity and ‘with Cyprus/Moldova/BiH’ in the parent state. Identification ‘with ethnic community’ (0.67 scale points) ranked higher than alignment with ‘patron state’ (0.33 points). 0-value was assigned to opposite cases of code 1 (i.e., in case the TRNC respondents preferred to identify with Republic of Cyprus and vice versa).

Indicators making up four different indices were the following:

**Cohesion index** (range 0–6) comprised of self-identification (1 – with the parent state or secessionist entity; 0 – opposite side or “non-parent” foreign country); identification with locality (1 – strongly agree, 0 – disagree in the parent state; the rotated scale applies in the secessionist
entity); willingness to fight for the country (1 – yes; 0 – no; binary variable); respondent’s place of birth (1 – current place of residence (parent state/secessionist entity); 0 – some other country); respondent’s citizenship (1 – parent state/secessionist entity only; 0 – some other country only); preference for the future settlement in the region (for secessionist entity: 1 – independence; 0 – reintegration: for the parent state the rotated scale applies).

**Security index** (range 0–4) comprised of trust on people (1 – most people can be trusted; 0 – need to be very careful; binary variable); threat from “the other” community (1 – no threat; 0 – big threat); threat from “the other” community’s foreign patron (1 – no threat; 0 – big threat); threat from the patron state (1 – big threat; 0 – no threat).

**Democracy index** (range 0–6) comprised of preferred political system (1 – complete democracy; 0 – complete dictatorship); characteristics of democracy: religious authorities interpret the laws; the army takes over when government is incompetent (1 – not at all an essential characteristic of democracy; 0 – an essential characteristic of democracy); civil rights protect people’s liberty against oppression; there are multiple political parties that compete for power and/or office (1 – an essential characteristic of democracy; 0 – not at all an essential characteristic of democracy); regime preference (1 – democracy is preferable to any other kind of government; 0 – under some circumstances, an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one).

**Performance index** (range 0–6) comprised of regime assessment (1 – complete democracy; 0 – complete dictatorship); satisfaction with the present state of the economy and health services (1 – extremely satisfied; 0 – extremely dissatisfied); improvement of living standards compared to the opposite side (1 – definitely; 0 – definitely not); confidence: state institutions and religious institutions (1 – a great deal; 0 – none at all).

These indices measure legitimate grounds for a political community, its survival and viability, widely acknowledged regime principles and procedures, and consent, respectively. This paper argues that the prospects for reconciliation and power-sharing in these divided states depend crucially on the relative distance of legitimacy levels measured in standard scores and manifested in the scales of cohesion/security and democracy/performance.

**Standard Scores**

A standard score shows by how many standard deviations the observation is above or below the arithmetic mean of a given group of cases. We may be able to distinguish conflicting pairs either ‘merging together’ or ‘drifting apart’, depending on how the secessionist entities are positioned vis-à-vis their parent states (see Table 1). The four-dimensional political legitimacy
criterion is a useful tool for assessing peace prospects in post-conflict settings such as Cyprus, Moldova and the BiH.

To graphically illustrate the legitimacy differences in the six regions under survey, two-dimensional plots based on the index pairs (cohesion vs. security and democracy vs. performance) in regions were computed (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). The plots represent the standard scores ($z$) for the given entities that have been calculated by subtracting the cross-regional mean ($\mu$) from the given regional mean ($x$) and dividing this value with the standard deviation of the cross-regional mean ($\sigma$). This sets the cross-regional mean as an empirical anchor point separating the cases along the specific dimension, as cases above the mean get a positive value and below it, negative.

$$z = \frac{x - \mu}{\sigma}$$

| TABLE 1 | Index values and standard scores for secessionist entities and their parent states |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|       | FBiH | RS  | Moldova | TMR  | Cyprus | TRNC  |
| Cohesion (0–6) | Index | 4.87 | 3.53 | 5.21 | 3.12 | 5.05 | 4.40 |
|            | $z$  | 0.59 | −0.97 | 0.99 | −1.45 | 0.80 | 0.04 |
| Security (0–4) | Index | 2.40 | 2.21 | 2.53 | 1.92 | 1.77 | 1.97 |
|            | $z$  | 0.90 | 0.27 | 1.34 | −0.74 | −1.21 | −0.56 |
| Democracy (0–6) | Index | 4.20 | 4.73 | 3.90 | 4.09 | 4.91 | 4.89 |
|            | $z$  | −0.57 | 0.63 | −1.25 | −0.82 | 1.03 | 0.99 |
| Performance (0–6) | Index | 2.07 | 2.84 | 2.65 | 2.33 | 3.89 | 2.74 |
|            | $z$  | −1.09 | 0.14 | −0.16 | −0.68 | 1.82 | −0.02 |

FIGURE 1 Standardised variables: Security vs. cohesion (political community).
Issues of political legitimacy are extremely important for aspiring federations aiming to reintegrate de facto states. Parent states such as the Republic of Cyprus (RoCYP), the Republic of Moldova (RoMOL), and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) frequently aim to entice territorial reintegration by fostering political legitimacy at the centre. Meanwhile, secessionist entities such as the Northern Cyprus (TRNC), Transnistria (TMR), and the Republika Srpska (RS) attempt to foster political legitimacy in the periphery aiming either to sustain a de facto partition or reunify with the parent state on their own terms. Contrary to what Zartman presupposed, experimenting with smaller units may outweigh reintegration where the survival of an ethnic group comes first in line; regime performance is fully approved and justified as long as the provisions of the main tasks are fulfilled. According to Caspersen, the secessionist entities “may not be able to provide generous public services, or even adequate ones, but this is less of a problem if the same is true for the parent state... legitimacy can stem from the initial victory and the ethno-nationalist goal”. Be that as it may, political legitimacy is an important mechanism in negotiating federal/power-sharing transitions or proclaiming independent statehood as it could sway moderates and international support in one’s own direction.
Cohesion/Security

As people are the only legitimate source of power, attachment to the nation is measured by items tapping a sense of belonging to the community, such as ethnic identity and citizenship, as well as patriotism as far as people sacrificing their lives. Presumably, people who are born in the given entity share the same identity, are also citizens of their country and express their willingness to defend their country if needed. In terms of security, defence of community interests may prevail over the right to govern in many post-conflict societies thus making it an important variable in the study of political legitimacy. Hence, security index measures both conditions for group survival and ability to cooperate. Presumably, people belonging to the same group are expected to trust each other, consume the security provided by the patron state/international community and in return feel no threat from their neighbouring communities. Both vulnerability and insecurity affect the way a political community/demos constitutes the “self”, and prefers to govern its subordinates. Driven from this logic, Figure 1 demonstrates a two-dimensional plot – cohesion vs. security – based on the standardised scores of computed indices while emphasising the relative distance between the conflicting pairs. We could argue that the bigger the relative distance between the conflicting pairs in the cohesion/security nexus, the less likely prospects for integration.

Relatively Secure and Coherent Political Communities: Moldova and FBiH

It appears that due to partition and solid international standing, parent states have become nationalising states where most of the population have grown with the territory, and have strong state affiliation and/or local identity. According to our survey results, this is also the case with Moldova where civic nationalism prevails – 74.8 percent of the respondents preferred to identify foremost with the Republic of Moldova, where most of the people have Moldovan citizenship (96.3 percent), and where the reintegration of ‘lost territories’ has been defined as the utmost goal since the end of the 1992 war – 69 percent of the respondents preferred reintegration. Where Moldova clearly differs from the FBiH is the stronger patriotic mood, willingness to fight for the country (70.5 percent in RoMOL vs 53.7 percent in FBiH) and a more secured environment. Strangely enough, Moldova also represents a deviation from the ‘norm’ since its patronising country Romania (22.8 percent) is considered a bigger threat than the Transnistrians’ patron state, which is Russia (14.3 percent).

What requires a special reference here is the identity of Moldovans who, in spite of the common language, which is Romanian, claim to form a distinct group deserving its own state. Hypothetically, Romania may claim
Moldova (and thus giving up the claim on the TMR) on grounds of ethnic state-building and/or historical justice (denouncing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939); Moldova could (and in some politicians’ view, ought to) lay claim on parts of Romania under the header ‘Moldovan state reunification’.50 Although civic nation-building is in progress, the majority of Moldovans rejected the reunification with Romania in the 1994 referendum, and the Chisinau government still does not control sovereignty over the TMR and has only limited control over Gagauz territorial autonomy. Every Moldovan (not only ethnic Moldovans, but all descendants of those who were Romanian citizens on 28 June 1940) has the right to apply for a Romanian passport.51 Given a total Moldova population of only around 3.2 million (excluding the TMR), around 800,000 people have started the application process in addition to those estimated 600,000 Moldovans who already work abroad.52 Despite the historical connections (de facto Moldova territory belonged to Romania in 1918–40), the two countries have been unable even to reach agreement on a basic bilateral treaty. At the same time, Moldova has ambiguous relations with Russia. On the one hand, Russia has been accused of giving support to the secessionist entity on the left bank of Dniester; on the other hand, Russia has been seen as a key to conflict settlement in the TMR.

The FBiH represents an integrative factor in post-conflict nation-building. Most of the Bosniaks (and Bosnian Croats to a lesser extent) demand a constitutional reform to replace the Dayton Accords (82.4 percent of respondents supported gradual integration of both entities into BiH as a unified state). They support civic state and nation-building, which would abolish the RS, considered as an entity achieved by ethnic cleansing. However, our survey revealed that the FBiH only has a limited capacity to make it so, especially given that “cultural renewal based upon the values of co-existence has failed to take root in the BiH”53, and extreme decentralisation has suppressed patriotism and kept secessionist demands still vocal in the RS.

At the same time, our survey showed noticeable attachment to the respective territory and low inter-entity mobility rates. According to Ó Tuathail and Dahlman, “Some determined returnee groups were organising themselves to return, but they were often met with violence, intimidation, coercion, and official obstructionism”.54 Ethnic cleansing and internally displaced people from the beginning of the 1990s have homogenised the population structure considerably. Data collected by Ó Tuathail and Dahlman suggests that the FBiH today is 72 percent Bosniak, 22 percent Croat, and almost 5 percent Serb, versus the pre-war composition of 52 percent Bosniak, 19 percent Croat, and 20 percent Serb.55 Memories of the Bosnian War (1992–1995) still linger, as what FBiH residents distrust the most is not the external environment, including neighbouring Serbia (24.1 percent) and the international community (8 percent), but the dominant group of the
other entity, with 39.7 percent seeing the Bosnian Serbs as being a substantial – or some sort of – threat. Although the FBiH may be relatively secure and coherent, the leading role of integrating defence structures has been somewhat deficient: the Ministry of Defence was founded only in 2004 and the Armed Forces of the BiH were unified into a single entity in 2005. Furthermore, the international community has agreed to provide Bosnia’s security with EUFOR Althea as a military deployment with 2,500 troops on the ground.56

RELATIVELY INSECURE AND COHERENT POLITICAL COMMUNITIES: CYPRUS AND TRNC

Secessionist entities may also have equally strong identification with their polity and allegiance towards their respective homeland, but other features may vary to a great extent. For instance, based on survey results Turkish Cypriots demonstrate their patriotism with strong local identification (81 percent) and, in the case of the TRNC, willingness to fight for their country (88.5 percent). At the same time only 2/3 of its population may be considered as ‘indigenous’ and there is a significant portion of the population with TRNC and Turkish citizenship (28.0 percent). The second official census, carried out in 2006, revealed the population of the TRNC to be 265,000, including a large number of non-citizens: students, guest workers and temporary residents, which stood at 78,000 people.57

The Turkish Cypriot government today governs 37.5 percent of the island’s territory and approximately 20 percent of the population. The TRNC has an indigenous 9,000-man Turkish Cypriot Security Force (TCSF) and an estimated 30,000 regular troops of the Turkish Army (under the name of Cyprus Turkish Peace Force) providing Turkish Cypriots’ security.58 This outnumbers the Greek Cypriot National Guard of 12,000 troops, which is supplemented by the small Greek military contingent on the island.59 The UK has retained absolute sovereignty over two enclaves, totalling 3 percent of the island’s territory, which contain the military bases of Akrotiri and Dhekelia. Finally, another 3 percent constitutes a ‘no man’s land’, which is a buffer zone separating the conflicting parties.

Despite the Turkish military presence on the northern part of island, and sovereignty and legitimacy deficit on the southern part of island, internationally recognised Cyprus authorities have been backed by several UN Security Council resolutions to resume status quo ante.60 Since 2004, the Greek-populated south has enjoyed EU membership and veto rights over all matters (even symbolic ones) that may come close to implying recognition of the TRNC. Hence lifting the EU trade embargo on the north or opening Ercan International Airport are matters requiring the sovereign consent of the Greek-Cypriot member state, consent that is regularly denied by Cyprus within the EU.
According to the latest estimate, the number of people residing in Cyprus (excluding the TRNC) was around 766,000 in 2005. In addition to this, Cyprus was home to 80,000 foreign permanent residents and about 10,000–30,000 illegal immigrants currently living in the south of the island. Unexpectedly, Cyprus lacks sufficient integrative forces to move towards reconciliation. Whereas Cyprus respondents were committed to federalising the state (27.6 percent) or to reintegrating Turkish Cypriots into the unitary state (24.8 percent), the status quo option still scored above them with 39.7 percent of respondents preferring no change at all. What makes Cyprus and the TRNC insecure is the asymmetry of security perceptions. According to the survey results, Turkey is seen as a major security threat by Cyprus respondents (84.6 percent) whereas Turkish Cypriots (59.5 percent) consider Greek Cypriots as threatening their survival.

Relatively Secure but Divided Political Community: RS

The RS today is the successor of the de facto state that existed in 1992–1995, the one that was not dissolved by the Dayton Accords but instead got frozen in the form of ‘semi-independent entity’ for Bosnian Serbs. Due to ethnic cleansing, this secessionist entity has become predominantly Serb versus the pre-war composition of 54 percent Serb, 29 percent Bosniak, and 9 percent Croat. Its constitution in fact reads in many respects as that of a recognised state, declaring that the RS would be a “unique and indivisible constitutional and legal entity, which independently performs its constituent, legislative, executive and judicial functions”. Fearful of being outnumbered and marginalised in the centralised state of the BiH based on purely civic values, Bosnian Serbs seek preservation of the loose federal structure (and in particular of the RS’s status) as a guarantee for their political survival.

Yet, according to the survey results, the RS seems to be internally divided in two particular aspects. First, about half of its citizens show allegiance towards both national and entity citizenship (the BiH and the RS, respectively) and some 40.4 percent associate only with entity-level political structures. It also appeared that Bosnian Serbs identified themselves ‘very strongly’ or ‘strongly’ with the RS (90.1 percent) and the Serb nation (77.6 percent) against identification with the BiH (59.8 percent) and Bosnian people (25.5 percent). Second, the largest segment of the population (37.6 percent) is not for full independence but for status quo, meaning support for the Dayton Accords. At the same time the secessionist camp with 26.5 percent of the support rate for full independence, and with an additional 9.8 percent of respondents backing the union with Serbia, illustrate the split between those who would like things to remain as they are, or to proceed with radical shifts towards separation.

Whereas the FBiH and the RS possess security in almost equal terms, the inhabitants of the RS still distrust other people regardless of their group
belonging (94.6 percent) and feel more insecure due to perceived external threats (as of the international community 37.7 percent) than their counterparts in the FBiH (as of Serbia 24.1 percent). RS residents have high trust levels in the police (69.4 percent) and low in the military sphere (36.5 percent) whereas for the FBiH residents it is the opposite; trust levels in the police are lower (42.4 percent) than in the military (50.8 percent). However, when combined with the differing trust levels in power structures one can conclude that people in the RS and the FBiH perceive the effectiveness of the Bosnian state in dealing with potential threats in their own distinct way without much common ground.

**Relatively Insecure and Divided Political Community: TMR**

The area east of the Dniester River accounts for 12 percent of Moldova’s territory, and 17 percent of its population. Only seven villages located on the left bank are administrated by Moldova, the rest being under the control of the TMR. On the west bank, the city of Bender/Tighina and six villages are controlled by the TMR. According to the 2004 census carried out on the left bank, the population (555,000 people) is divided in three almost equally sized groups: Moldovans constituted 31.9 percent, Russians 30.4 percent, and Ukrainians 28.8 percent.66 Our survey results show that the proportion of the population in favour of unification with Russia exceeds the number of those who identify themselves with the patron state, are Russian Federation citizens, or belong to the Russian ethnicity. Therefore, it seems natural that identification with the patron and the wish for unification are closely interconnected.

The Transnistrian people have nothing common with a geographical notion such as ‘Moldova’ (only 24.9 percent identified with it) nor do they know exactly which country they have to fight for in case of war (consent rate of 45.6 percent). Conversely, most of them (53.0 percent) prefer the TMR joining the Russian Federation. About 1/3 of them are born outside of the region, 41.2 percent identify themselves with Russia and possess both local and Russian Federation citizenship (40.8 percent). Among the other de facto states to claim legitimacy within its political community, the TMR has the least ambitions to establish itself as a ‘normal’ state. In 2006 there was a referendum on whether the TMR should conclusively break away from Moldova and join the Russian Federation. The result was astonishing: 97.2 percent of the respondents were in favour of unification with Russia.67

According to the estimates, some 1,500 Russian soldiers (including also 385 Russian peace-keepers in the Joint Control Commission) are still stationed in the TMR.68 When it comes to the TMR’s own defence forces, then the figures remain between 5,000 and 7,500 men.69 At the same time, group insecurity tends to prevail too much in the TMR (66.4 percent of respondents feel threatened by Romanian-speaking Moldovans), despite the fact that this
secessionist entity has been upgraded from previous minority status and enjoys the protection of its patron state Russia. Insecurity is also manifested in relations with Romania, which was considered as an external threat by 62.7 percent of the respondents.

Democracy/Performance

The democracy index reflects regime principles and procedures adopted by political systems. Principles such as civil rights protect people’s liberty against oppression, or that there are multiple political parties that compete for power and office, are clearly in contrast with those views allowing religious authorities to interpret the laws, and the army to seize power. Presumably, people who would like to have a democratic political system, rule out all the other circumstances giving an opening for authoritarian government and stand firmly for democratic principles and procedures. The performance index is supposed to measure variations in political systems’ functions as opposed to the ideal. Every political regime is supposed to stand for the high confidence ratings that characterise the people’s consent for authorities and institutions. We could argue that the bigger the relative distance between the conflicting pairs in the democracy/performance nexus, the more perspectives the peace process may foresee (see Figure 2). Reintegration is more likely to occur when the legitimacy gap between the conflicting pairs is wide enough and in favour of the parent state.

RELATIVELY PERFORMING DEMOCRACIES: CYPRUS AND RS

Cyprus is an electoral democracy; suffrage is universal, and elections are free and fair. Corruption is not a significant problem. Freedom of speech and religion are constitutionally guaranteed, generally respected and protected in practice. According to the Freedom House rankings Cyprus, and political rights and civic liberties alike score highly, thus receiving the maximum points (1).70 The Economist’s Intelligence Unit classifies Cyprus as a flawed democracy and positions it 39th in the world.71 The Human Development Report ranks Cyprus as a country with very high human development (32nd in the world),72 the World Bank considers Cyprus as a high income economy, and the quality-of-life index from The Economist’s Intelligence Unit, which combines material well-being, low employment rates, political liberties, stable family life and avoidance of the breakdown of the community places it 23rd in the world.73

Our own composed index underlines the deep divide between a democratic and well-performing Cyprus and the rest while leaving all the other examined cases far behind. Here in Cyprus, 95.6 percent of the respondents consider democracy as an ideal political system; they appreciate political pluralism, civil rights protection, and disapprove of military interventions
in the political sphere. Cyprus represents a deviation from the ‘norm’ only where the issue of religious authorities’ involvement in political life and legislation may pose a question (28.1 percent of the respondents did not see a problem in it). Greek Cypriots are satisfied with the economic situation and public services (51.9 percent); they trust state institutions (56.7 percent), and are hopeful in terms of future developments: 98.2 percent of respondents estimate better living standards in the future compared to the TRNC.

According to our survey, the RS ranks much higher in terms of democracy and performance indices than internationally recognised Moldova. It has remarkably higher confidence level to institutions (47.4 percent) and consent about public services comparing with that of the FBiH figures (28.0 percent vs. 8.4 percent). The RS residents have a stronger desire for democratic governance (perhaps reflecting the opposition to the Office of High Representative governance) and have a picture that corresponds more to the standard textbook understanding of what does and does not constitute a democratic political order. The question “Where would you like your political system to be?” received ‘democratic approval’ in the RS by 88.1 percent and in the FBiH by 66.1 percent of the respondents.

Although our standard scores enable the RS to be placed on equal standing with Cyprus one should bear in mind that rhetorical commitment to democracy does not necessarily give the most accurate picture from the ground. The International Crises Group has noticed that some opposition leaders often complain about the government-controlled media, or that opposition voices do not reach the electorate, or even that civil society is dangerously weak and controlled by the authorities in the RS. At the same time, Serbs almost universally attribute infrastructure development and greater job opportunities to the RS’s existence: they “can live off wartime rations of oil and flour as long as they are protecting the RS . . . Few take a critical look at the entity’s origins and the terrible fate of former non-Serb residents”. Even stronger and more vocal concern is voiced by some analysts who refer to “the noticeable lack of will amongst local and communal decision-makers to create the conditions necessary for refugees to return to their areas”.

RELATIVELY UNDERPERFORMING DEMOCRACY: TRNC

According to the Freedom House democracy rankings, the unrecognised TRNC is doing relatively well. It has been considered a free society with sufficient political freedoms and civic liberties, comparable to the Greek Cypriot community: elections in the TRNC are free and fair, freedom of the media is generally respected, the rights of freedom of assembly and association are respected, the judiciary is independent, and trials generally meet international standards of fairness. The economic boom (2003–2008) with generous
Turkish financial aid has decreased the economic gap between north and south by about half.78

Our survey also revealed that TRNC respondents prefer democratic governance (88.6 percent); approve of political pluralism (81.6 percent) and civil rights (80.8 percent), and disapprove of military (59.6 percent) or religious (76.2) intervention in politics. Although the TRNC belongs to the democratic world it has major shortcomings in performance. This manifests in strong criticism of how public goods are delivered. Turkish Cypriots are dissatisfied in economic development (60.8 percent), and critical of the quality of provided health services (56.2 percent disapproved). They are also relatively sceptical of the possibility that the TRNC may offer better chances for improving living standards in future than does Cyprus (44.1 percent of respondents disapproved).

RELATIVELY UNDERPERFORMING NON-DEMOCRACIES: FBiH, MOLDOVA AND TMR

*Freedom House* qualifies both the BiH and Moldova as partly free countries (political rights/civic liberties score: 3–4).79 *The Economist’s Intelligence Unit* (2010) classifies Moldova as a flawed democracy and positions it in 65th, contrary to the BiH, which is a hybrid regime and places 94th in the world.80 The *Human Development Report* ranks the BiH as a country with high (76th) and Moldova with medium human development (117th in the world);81 the *World Bank* considers the BiH as an upper-middle income economy and Moldova as a lower-middle income economy. In terms of life quality, both these countries figure in the 90s...82 In addition to these striking similarities, there is at least one aspect that makes the BiH (and especially the FBiH) different from Moldova: “a growing consensus that international experts and bureaucrats can better govern a country than politicians accountable to the people who have to live with the consequences of their policymaking.”83

In the parent states’ camp, Moldova and the FBiH score much lower than Cyprus because of their poor indications of democracy. Yet striking differences appear in the BiH where in comparison to the RS, FBiH respondents allow the army to take power when government is incompetent (42.4 percent), and tend to see authoritarian regimes more often as an ideal political system (21.6 percent). The fact that Moldova demonstrates a higher confidence rate on religious institutions (76.6 percent) is not merely explained by the fact that Moldovans are more religious than Greek Cypriots and Bosniaks/Bosnian Croats but also because of the general dissatisfaction with other institutions’ poor records in improving the social and economic conditions of the country. Perhaps one could view this principled mistrust of the state as a political institution as a common feature of political life in Moldova since the end of 1980s.84 The same can also easily be said for the FBiH where most of the people disapprove of dysfunctional state institutions
and its corrupted civil servants. In general, as the BiH government becomes remote and unresponsive, there is a lack of public support for the institutions, which lends support to ad hoc and shadow institutions.\textsuperscript{85}

According to the \textit{Freedom House} democracy rankings, the TMR with its authoritarian governance and very limited freedoms is not a free society.\textsuperscript{86} It points to the obvious systemic weaknesses such as restricted opposition, limited freedom of assembly, state-controlled media, and claims all the presidential and parliamentary elections held since 1992 to be neither free nor fair, although they have never been monitored due to their implicit illegality. Although the authorities might choose to allow a substantial degree of pluralist electoral competition under a watchful eye this does not increase the regime legitimacy in the liberal democratic point of view.\textsuperscript{87} Yet, ordinary people should be more than satisfied with the core services that the authorities provide more generously than in Moldova.\textsuperscript{88} The TMR receives annual financial support from Russia in the value of USD 25 million, which aims at ensuring higher pensions, as well as improving the conditions at schools, nursery schools, hospitals and other institutions.\textsuperscript{89} Moreover, the TMR is living over its expenses, which has resulted in an enormous gas debt of USD 2.5 billion, exceeding thus the GDP of the TMR by more than three times.\textsuperscript{90}

The survey results confirm authoritarian regime preferences in the TMR; however, most of the respondents seem to be reluctant in recognising its law enforcement structures and political establishment, and thus diverges from the other two secessionist cases for its very critical stand on the manifest socio-economic situation. The TMR presents the lowest support level to political institutions (38.2 percent) and is overtly critical of the economic situation (79.6 percent) and health services (75.3 percent of the respondents dissatisfied). Even if Chisinau sees democratisation as a conditional part of reaching an agreement on peaceful reintegration,\textsuperscript{91} Moldova is not doing much better either, both in terms of democratic legitimacy and performance. After all, the TMR respondents were much more confident about the better living standards in the future and that compared to the situation in Moldova (62.3 percent), than their counterpart in Moldova, who assessed their own capabilities as a 50:50 chance.

**CONCLUSIONS**

In his defence of secession and political self-determination, Wellman argues that “if the state is either unable or unwilling to secure peace and protect rights, then it does not have a valid claim to its territory against another party that is able and willing to perform this function.”\textsuperscript{92} It appears that nowadays the effective control over territory and people as a sufficient test of a government’s legitimacy remains far behind what forms authority and how it treats the population.\textsuperscript{93} Indeed, a remedial approach to secession
Merging Together or Drifting Apart?

(meaning that secession is legitimate but only as a last resort) is gaining more acceptance within the international community, especially in light of Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence⁹⁴. However, the seceding group must also adhere to democratic rights and values in order to claim legitimate authority. The same concerns parent states and their integrative forces, which aim at rendering unity appealing. More often than not, power-sharing is not going to work, if there is no coherent political community, a demos that is a bearer of sovereignty and legitimate authority for governance.

This paper relied on the assumption that political legitimacy is one of the crucial factors for the success of power-sharing. Concomitantly, the most legitimate source of power-sharing may be considered to be representative of those who follow, given that there is an agreement about the ends of conflict management (self-determination, individual rights, communal security) and that there are procedures to reflect consent to decisions or regimes. The peace process in terms of ‘merging together’ of conflicting parties may thus be viewed in terms of the relative cohesion of the self, the degree to which security is provided and to the extent the people’s expectations match recorded regime performance. While measuring the internal legitimacy of conflicting parties and then comparing and contrasting the given empirical values on the scales of cohesion/security and democracy/performance, we were able to identify those pairs ‘merging together’ contrary to those that tended to ‘drift apart’.

The operationalisation involved measurements of standard scores derived from four separate political legitimacy indices. Here a rule applies that the more the relative distance between the conflicting pairs becomes evident in the cohesion/security nexus, the less likely the prospects for reintegration are. Among the three pairs of parent states and secessionist entities, Moldova and the TMR were far off from each other, the FBiH and the RS positioned in the middle ground and Cyprus and the TRNC demonstrated similarities. In terms of democracy/performance, one would have made the opposite conclusions. Namely a well-performing and fully democratic parent state (Cyprus) has more incentive to carry on integrative measures and attract a secessionist entity (TRNC) for reunification. The greater the relative distance here, the more perspectives the peace process may foresee. The outlook seems to be rather pessimistic if a secessionist entity (RS) is more democratically minded and better performing than the parent state (FBIH), or if neither conflicting parties are democratic or perform well (Moldova and the TMR), thus missing the necessary stimulus to change the status quo.

What can be done with the knowledge gained from the political legitimacy study about comparative power-sharing perspectives in the post-conflict settings? Does it somehow reflect the legitimacy of reconciliation/secessionist trends on the ground? Let us consider the Cyprus case, where since 2004 the Turkish Cypriot community has been in a position not only in words but also in deeds to reunify with the Greek Cypriots in a
bi-communal and bi-zonal state. While a legitimate at-face value, this position has also led to a paradoxical situation whereby a formerly seceding party opted for reintegration and reunification (65 percent of the Turkish Cypriots voted in favour), yet their wish remained a dead letter when the proposal was rejected by the majority community in the parent state (76 percent of the Greek Cypriots said ‘No’ to the Annan Plan).

The case of Moldova illustrates the point that the TMR, although pursuing the claims to secession and international recognition through various plebiscites, is not moving closer to the target. The last Transnistrian vote on independence and free association with Russia took place in September 2006 and was claimed null and void by the international community. This was mostly because the TMR regime is far from protecting basic human rights, including fundamental political and civil liberties. Authoritarian environments do not instil confidence about legitimacy on the basis of consent or voluntary acceptance. Last but not least, the Bosnian case resembles a quasi-federation, composed of loosely structured knit-together entities operating under international administration and the watchful eye of foreign troops. Although a unified state in the legal perspective, no one has ever questioned its legitimacy in the eyes of its people or held a referendum for adopting the BiH constitution. If the RS had a referendum now on self-determination – whatever that might mean – would this legitimacy act bring the RS closer to the ‘unsuccessful reunification of Cyprus’ or have the same fate as ‘secession without recognition in Moldova’?

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NOTES


5. D. Lynch, Engaging Eurasia’s Separatist States: Unresolved Conflicts and De Facto States (Washington: US Institute of Peace Press 2004) p. 120.


29. Brinkerhoff (note 26) p. 5.
38. Beetham (note 36)
40. Beetham (note 36)
44. The sample size (N) and sex (F/M in percents): RoCYP (502; 55/45), TRNC (500; 42/58), RoMOL (1144; 55/45), TMR (501; 57/43), FBiH (501; 55/45), RS (509; 47/53).
45. By 2010, 580,000 IDPs had returned to their places of origin, but the rate of return had considerably slowed. Violence in return areas had declined, but discrimination continued to limit returnees’ access to livelihoods and public services (see http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/%E2%80%9C%20http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tiraspol.info%2F%20(10%20December%202011).
46. The surveys were conducted by market research and polling firms: Prism Research (BiH), Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs (Cyprus), Cyprus Social and Economic Research Centre KADEM (TRNC), CBS-AXA (Moldova), NGO Novyi Vek (TMR).
47. The FBiH has been in the position to play an integrative role in Bosnia and Herzegovina and therefore resembles the parent state whereas the RS, although being a semi-independent region within the ‘common state’, has recently revitalised its breakaway attempts and thus may qualify as a secessionist entity.
48. Zartman (note 21)
51. Art. 37 stipulates that “those from whom Romanian citizenship was withdrawn against their will or for other reasons they cannot be blamed for, as well as their descendants also benefit from the dispositions...” because “according to the previous legislation [they] are and remain Romanian citizens” (Art. 36), available at http://www.romanianpassport.co.il/english/romanian-citizenship-law/ (10 December 2011).
52. Romanian officials have reported a surge in the number of Moldovans applying for Romanian citizenship. See at http://soderkoping.org.ua/page12634.html (10 December 2011).


63. Tuathail and Dahlman (note 54).


75. Ibid, p. 5

77. Freedom House (note 69)


79. Freedom House (note 69)

80. The Economist Intelligence Unit (note 70)

81. Human Development Report (note 71)

82. The Economist’s Intelligence Unit (note 72)

83. Chandler (note 3) p. 491


86. Freedom House (note 69)


91. Protsyk (note 16)

92. Wellman (note 32) p. 163
