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Sherrill Stroschein's *Ethnic Struggle, Coexistence, and Democratization in Eastern Europe* is the most significant comparative work on peaceful minority mobilization in post-Communist Europe to be published in the last two decades. It is a richly conceptualized study that moves the scholarship on ethnic contestation forward in significant ways. First, Stroschein develops a persuasive argument about the "co-determined" relationship between masses and elites in ethnic mobilization, which challenges the most influential approaches in this field. Second, she demonstrates that peaceful ethnic mobilization can strengthen democratization in societies where political competition involves conflicting ethnic claims. Third, the book fills a significant lacuna in the literature on ethno-cultural contestations in cities – which is an important focus of research in the broader literature on ethnic and racial contention, yet it has received little attention in the post-Communist context. Cities have long been primary sites of interethnic conflict and negotiation, yet much of the scholarship has focused on state-level politics. There is a small literature on contestation in urban settings, but it consists mostly of single case studies or collections of case studies. Structured comparative studies are rare, although they promise to provide much needed insight into the dynamics of ethnic contention. Stroschein's book is ahead of the curve also in this respect.

Moreover, Stroschein raises the bar for empirically derived theorizing about ethnic conflict – by not only conceptualizing ethno-cultural contestation as a relational and interactive process but also (quite literally) "walking the walk" to study it systematically as such a process. It is a rare achievement to conduct extensive comparative research without collaborators, using four different local languages that belong to three different language families (Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak, and Ukrainian) to study two decades of ethnic mobilization in nine cities situated in three states (Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine), involving six ethnic groups. Stroschein spent significant periods of time in her sites repeatedly over many years, with an extraordinary openness and respect for the "subjects" of her study. She went into the field with an open mind, and has gained a thorough understanding of the significance of issues of contention, as well as of diverse and evolving majority and minority positions on those issues, by observing and listening to what people made of ethnicity – without a normative scholarly agenda against ethnic contention or a desire to see ethnicity "privatized" rather than expressed in collective action. She designed her analytical framework based on what she found "on the ground." Thus, the analysis in this book is richly supported with evidence derived through a combination of qualitative research methods including significant elements of political ethnography. The primary method of analysis is an innovative event analysis, which traces the temporal dynamics of contention and moderation between majority and minority actors as well as between elites and masses, and is itself a significant contribution to the field. In what follows, I will comment on the broader significance of the arguments emerging from the book.

Demonstrating the link between elite and mass interests in collective "ethnic" claims

The question of whether political elites are the primary "drivers" of ethnic mobilization has been a prominent focus of scholarly debate in ethnicity and nationalism studies. One influential line of thought is that collective ethnic claims are articulated by political elites who frame issues in ethnic terms and mobilize people into action (Snyder 2000). Another

influential argument is that, although political elites in most states pursue nationalist policies through competing ethnic claims, in reality these political battles are removed from people's everyday lives, where ethnicity happens (and matters) differently from what transpires from nationalist politics (Brubaker et al. 2008). Although numerous scholars have challenged these arguments, pointing out that masses are not easily manipulated, and that ethnic claims articulated by elites in many cases have a great deal of legitimacy among masses, systematic studies of what elite–mass interaction means for ethnic mobilization are scarce. Important questions remain open: How exactly are collective claims articulated, changed, and pursued in a process of interaction between elites and non-elites? When does mobilization lead to moderation or accommodation in an interactive process, and when does it generate violent events with the potential to significantly alter the conditions for future reconciliation?

Stroschein's book addresses these questions head on. She persuasively demonstrates that (a) ordinary people engaged in various forms of "extra-institutional politics" (involving protest and other forms of mobilization) play a crucial role in articulating and arguing collective claims (14–15) and (b) the most significant collective goals expressed in public protest match the claims presented by political elites in their negotiations in formal institutions. In other words, claims emerge in a "co-determined process" in which ethnic mobilization and policy formation are intertwined (68–69). These findings challenge both elite-centered approaches to ethnic mobilization, which are arguably still predominant among political scientists, and the claim that political contestations between nationalist majority and minority elites have little to do with everyday ethnicity as ordinary people experience it in their lives. Stroschein helps to fill a major gap in the literature by offering an account of how ethno-national claims are generated, argued, and negotiated in multiple fields in an interactive process involving elites and non-elites.

Offering an account of peaceful "extra-institutional" contention as helpful for democratization in societies with competing ethnic claims

Another significant argument emerging from Stroschein's book is that sustained and peaceful "extra-institutional" mobilization advances democratization in societies where political competition involves competing ethnic claims, and where formal institutions provide limited opportunities for deliberation about such claims. The logic of argument can be summarized in the following sequence: (1) Democratization is a long and complex process that requires broad-based acceptance of democratic institutions and norms. (2) Public engagement in various events of collective action – such as demonstrations, celebrations, meetings, boycotts, petitions, and other forms of public contention (256) – provide opportunities for people to express and debate collective interests, inform each other and "the other side," and generally to engage in collective forms of deliberation that help members of the society to learn about democracy and also about each other's positions across ethnic boundaries (3). Sustained protest routinizes disputes and moderates policy outcomes. People figure out through public contention (and trial-and-error) what it is possible to achieve in the institutional framework in which they live, and they change their positions accordingly. This account is valuable not only for scholars of democratization and ethnic politics but also for public officials and community leaders in democratic states where ethno-cultural claims are salient and divisive. In such settings, an alternative sequence of developments might lead from the repression of ethnic contention to violent outbursts of ethnic conflict, which invariably creates painful collective memories that in turn alter the conditions for future consensus-building.

The limits of extra-institutional politics

Although Stroschein's book recognizes the significance of formal politics in several statements, the intense focus on extra-institutional politics comes with a risk of overstating the transformative power of minority protest in highly centralized states. There is broad agreement in the literature that political participation is determined by the institutional context. Comparative scholarship also indicates that centralized states provide significantly fewer institutional opportunities for citizen mobilization (Vráblíková 2014). The states included in Stroschein's study are highly centralized. Political decisions about minority accommodation are made in state centers. The policy changes that resulted in greater minority accommodation in Romania and Slovakia were directly negotiated by majority and minority political elites in electoral and parliamentary politics, specifically when Hungarian minority parties were included in governing coalitions toward the end of the 1990s, and in the context of these governments' effort to satisfy conditions for EU accession. The question of how public protest (indirectly) influenced these policy changes is very difficult to answer. The book demonstrates that the claims for which Hungarian minority elites negotiated in state parliaments were also claimed on the ground, and it also provides evidence that in many cases public protest preceded elite action. The question remains, however, whether minority protest was a significant "trigger" in the policy decisions that resulted from direct elite negotiations. One way of demonstrating the impact would be to show that ethnic majority politicians who made decisions about policy liberalization were as strongly influenced by their awareness of public discontent as they were by the terms of negotiations with minority leaders (which focused specifically on those policy changes) as well as by the requirements of EU accession. Clearly, both forms of minority activism worked toward collective claims, and the strength of public protest reinforced the efforts of consensual minority politicians to persuade consensual majority decision-makers about the need for greater accommodation.

Similarly, the questions of whether minority activism in extra-institutional politics moderates ethnic contention and what moderation means for minority accommodation remain highly salient and difficult to answer. As all cases included are examples of non-violent contention for moderate goals (when compared to minority claims in other regions, including west European democracies), the scale between moderation and radicalism is limited. In fact, the absence of violence and the moderation of minority claims has been the norm in Central and Eastern Europe (outside of the former Yugoslavia), regardless of significant variation in minority mobilization. Cross-regional comparisons between the cases included in this study and Russian-speaking minorities in the Baltic states, for instance, suggest that the willingness of state elites to adopt accommodative minority policy is more easily associated with the ability of minority politicians to negotiate concessions in formal institutions than with public activism in extra-institutional politics. These cases also indicate that the effectiveness of protest is limited in democracies where formal institutions of highly centralized government were established more than two decades ago. Stroschein's study is significant also for compelling us to look further into the question of what moderation and extra-institutional politics mean for minority accommodation in different institutional settings.

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This highly original book offers an account of ethnic politics that runs counter to the common view of ethnic minorities and majorities in the new democracies of Eastern Europe. In this view, ethnic groups form political blocs in continuous conflict with each other that are kept in check by the presence of strong state institutions, such as consociational or power sharing arrangements. Stroschein flips this picture on its head. Examining ethnic minority Hungarians in three states undergoing a transition from Communist rule in the 1990s – Slovakia, Romania, and Ukraine – Stroschein argues that though the logic of democratic elections permanently excluded Hungarians from holding top elected office, over time they reduced their confrontation with titular ethnic groups and became peacefully incorporated into their states. Intriguingly, this did not happen through minority submission and quiet acceptance.

Instead, the democratic institutions (elections) that excluded Hungarian minorities spurred them to engage in contentious politics outside the formal system, in a series of mass protests. Contention "produced a public de facto deliberative process" (3), which served to make group policy preferences as well as the limits of acceptable behavior utterly transparent to both sides. As a result, over time, Hungarians moderated their stance on issues such as language rights, regional autonomy, and naming rights of streets and monuments. Moreover, ethnic majorities in these states also changed their behavior in response to Hungarian mobilization – becoming more accepting of minority demands on certain issues. Thus, contention and the deliberative process, Stroschein argues, often leads to policy concessions by the nationalizing state. She describes these processes in Romania and Slovakia, and contrasts these cases with the lack of contention among Hungarians in Ukraine. In Ukraine, the state's liberal laws toward minorities meant that Hungarians there did not engage in protest, which ultimately encouraged the Ukrainian state to promulgate nationalizing policies by the late 1990s.

Stroschein's argument challenges that of conditionality – that European Union (EU) membership induced titular majorities in the former Soviet states to modify exclusionary policies toward ethnic minorities. External pressure from the EU did not, for example, produce the liberalization of language laws in Slovakia and Romania. If EU conditionality were a determinative factor, we would have observed increasingly liberal language laws promulgated in a linear way over time, she argues (185). Instead, language laws in these states followed a pendulum trajectory toward and away from openness toward minorities. Policy debates over language correlated with a wave of contention over language issues.

In addition, the book demonstrates that even groups that have engaged in violent conflict can realize a cooperative, peaceful present. Stroschein examines the Romanian city of Târgu Mureș, where a violent riot took place among Romanians and Hungarians in the