

Is this possible? Fiji's 1997 constitution was widely hailed as a document intended to foster intra-ethnic cooperation through the use of electoral rules associated with centripetalism. This worked quite well in some ways. Former Fijian coup leader Sitiveni Rabuka and Indian politician Jai Ram Reddy forged a credible preelectoral coalition, suggesting that the system did produce some incentives for ethnic elites to reach across communal divides. All of this proved rather academic, however, when the Rabuka-Reddy coalition was wholly decimated at the polls and an Indo-Fijian party was swept into office. Less than a year later, this government would be overthrown in a civilian putsch whose leaders echoed the exclusivist claims of the *taukei* and turned a blind eye to the heinous violations documented by Trnka.

Fiji's persistent troubles have provided a stage for some important discussions about the nature and potential of electoral design as a tool for conflict mitigation, but several dynamics tend to be swept under the rug. First, as both Trnka and Bandarage imply, electoral democracy is unlikely to generate incentives for peace if the majority of members of at least one ethnic group truly believe that they are the only community with the right to rule. Such myths of ethnic election are incredibly powerful and can turn virtually any election, and especially highly competitive elections, into a crucible for extremism. Secondly, and to the credit of those espousing centripetalist arguments, Fiji's 1997 constitution is less a study in the limitations of the "alternative vote" and more a study of how marginal changes to electoral systems can serve to utterly denude any of the potential incentives for ethnic cooperation. In Fiji, this included the retention of communal seats for specific ethnic communities (a very anticentripetalist idea) and constitutional provisions that guaranteed any party earning at least 10% of the vote a position in the government, thus ensuring that smaller extremist parties had a legitimate chance of either heading up the opposition or perhaps even controlling ministerial portfolios. This suggests that however well intentioned, ethnic elites with a hand in the process of electoral system design will still try to "tinker" with the new rules to insulate their position *ex ante*. While this is understandable, it may well be the case that it undermines any effort to make democracy work in bipolar states.

Taken together, the three books tend to confirm the perception that bipolar states are likely to experience a higher degree of political instability than other types of diverse societies. Consistent with some of the core themes advanced by Reilly, it is scarcely surprising that countries such as Papua New Guinea and Tanzania—two states with immense ethno-linguistic diversity—have forged relatively peaceful democracies using electoral systems with highly majoritarian characteristics, while states like Fiji and Sri Lanka have roundly failed to reduce ethnic tensions through democratic institutions, where ethnic chau-

vinism has tended to increase most demonstrably during tight electoral contests (such as Fiji's 1977 elections when Fijian politician Sakeasi Butadroka demanded that all Indo-Fijians be repatriated to India). As Bandarage's study of Sri Lanka so amply demonstrates, the myriad opportunities for extremist action are enabled not merely by mistrust but also by the machinations of elites within particular ethnic communities. Echoing a point made with some force by Reilly, Bandarage emphasizes the complex web of incentives that compel ethnic elites to craft their more strident claims along purely exclusivist lines.

Beyond this, the "conversation" among the three books reflects the perpetual tensions between the illiberal demands generated by persistent myths of ethnic hierarchy, on the one hand, and the need for democracies to incorporate the full array of citizen preferences and experiences, on the other. As Trnka's analysis so ably suggests, such democratic incorporation is very difficult to accomplish in the immediate wake of violent ethnic upheavals. We are thus compelled to ask not merely "how" to build democracy but, perhaps more significantly, whether and why we should attempt this, and to what particular ends, in severely divided societies?

The Robust Federation: Principles of Design.

By Jenna Bednar. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 242p.

\$85.00 cloth, \$24.99 paper.

doi:10.1017/S1537592709992027

— Michael McGuire, *Indiana University*

The design of federations has long occupied the minds of scholars and statesmen. As federalism becomes increasingly widespread as a means for providing heterogeneous peoples with a system of self-governance, the federal problem—how to prevent the respective governments from pursuing their own self-interest at the expense of the common good—remains. *The Robust Federation* sets out to tackle this dilemma by showing how the proper institutional framework can efficiently restrain this opportunism, and is largely successful at doing so. At once a historical treatise, a federalism primer, and an application of formal theory, this book provides a comprehensive analysis of the way in which institutions *complement* each other, turning on its head the persistent perspective that it is *competition* between institutions that prevents policy transgressions in federal systems.

From the outset, Jenna Bednar bases her design approach on the concern that governments in a federal system can exploit the union for their own gain. This ubiquitous weakness in the federal architecture can lead to what she refers to as "noncompliance and inappropriateness. Governments may fail to respect another's authority; this opportunism throws the federation off balance, depleting its potential, perhaps even destroying the union" (p. 3). She compares the federal division of authority to a game of

tennis between the national and state governments. She writes that at times, “one may try to gain advantage over the other. . . . [A]t times one government will find it advantageous to skirt the rules or even exploit another for its private consideration, perhaps in service to its constituents. Shots to the corner are difficult to defend, as are serves that skim too closely to the net” (p. 97). She continues the metaphor by asserting that “referees are needed to decide if the shots adhere to the rules of play” (p. 97).

While colorful, this description of federalism and its application is not entirely novel. This concept of opportunism was recently expressed by Timothy Conlan when he referred to American federalism as opportunistic: a system that allows, even encourages, actors in the system to pursue their immediate interests with little regard for the institutional or collective consequences (“From Cooperative to Opportunistic Federalism: Reflections on the Half-Century Anniversary of the Commission on Intergovernmental Relations,” *Public Administration Review* 66 [September/October 2006]: 663–76). What is unique about Bednar’s argument is her observation that the institutional safeguards in a federal system are in fact too *weak* to curb such opportunism, and that short of intergovernmental retaliation (which is inefficient, even primitive), structural, popular, political, and judicial safeguards, in and of themselves, do not provide the proper “coverage” to inhibit or stop federal encroachment and states’ shirking and burden shifting (p. 134). In a robust federation, one that is strong, flexible, and able to withstand internal errors—one that meets its potential—all three types of transgressions are covered, but only from the *network* of safeguards. It is not enough to expect, for example, popular control of the government to provide a sufficient protective measure against the undesirable consequences of states shifting the burden of governing onto other states. Bednar argues that although a mild safeguard may improve compliance, it is only effective when a sufficiently severe safeguard is also present. Popular safeguards, in this case, “underperform.”

This last point provides the essence of her models of complementarity and redundancy: Mild, auxiliary safeguards (political, structural, and judicial), while quick-reacting, inflict only mild punishment, and so they must complement more severe safeguards, such as intergovernmental retaliation. By itself, each safeguard has flaws in its punishment capacity, but an inefficient punishment could be supplemented by a complementary mechanism, thus moving the federation toward optimal performance. The components of the institutional framework supporting a federation thus are interdependent. A federal system will resist opportunism when there is redundancy in each function. Multiple mechanisms solve the federal problem.

The book is predominantly a theoretical tool both for diagnosing the shortcomings of federalism and for con-

structing a federation that is strong and adaptive. Bednar summarizes her model in the last chapter by concluding with a set of constitutional design principles, such as “pay attention to full scope; don’t ignore any transgression type” and “build the system of safeguards with varying tolerances to condone mild transgressions but disallow more significant transgressions; all experimentation is subject to punishment” (p. 216). To her credit, the model of complementarity is dynamic; she does, at least implicitly, account for the fact that new policies emerge, “reforms” are undertaken, elections usher in new approaches to federalism, and sometimes events dictate entirely new prescriptions. She also admits that “on paper, it is possible to derive the efficient threshold and punishment combination” but that “real safeguards are not simple if-then rules” (p. 170). However, the book lacks a sufficient number of real world examples that would enable the model to come to life. Her methods do allow us to understand in the abstract the downfalls and possibilities of federalism, but these design principles, as presented, remain just that: principles as opposed to applicable building blocks.

The Robust Federation is a well-written, ambitious, and expertly structured book. Expanding on the federal problem with a rhetorical style and clarity of argument that does justice to Madison and the other original federalism designers, Bednar relegates her quantitative analyses to mathematical appendices at the end of chapters 3, 4, and 6, where she adeptly employs the tools of game theory to demonstrate her model. Most chapters include a “lessons learned” conclusion, and her logic flows seamlessly from one chapter to the next. This book should be required reading for those scholars who study federalism or who advocate federalism as a mechanism for governing societies comprised of multiple ethnicities, regions, or religions. While the question of whether to federate is not answered by the book, the argument demonstrates that, once employed, a robust federalism is possible.

The French Fifth Republic at Fifty: Beyond

Stereotypes. Edited by Sylvain Brouard, Andrew M. Appleton, and Amy G. Mazur. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. 297p. \$85.00.

Governing and Governance in France. By Alistair Cole. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 249p. \$86.00 cloth, \$28.00 paper.

doi:10.1017/S1537592709992520

— Sophie Meunier, *Princeton University*

The American media rarely report news about France unless it is sensationalistic and upholds Gallic stereotypes: French foreign policy determined to make the United States fail! France engulfed in religious riots! France outraged at decision to open McDonald’s in the Louvre museum! This news usually confirms two long-held clichés about French politics: its exceptionalism and its resistance to change. Indeed, many recent political developments in France could