

Self-Enforcing Federalism

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ABSTRACT

How are constitutional rules sustained? The general problem concerns how to structure the political game so that all the players – elected officials, the military, economic actors, and citizens – have incentives to respect the rules. In this paper, we investigate this problem in the context of how the institutions of federalism are sustained. A central design problem of federalism is how to create institutions that at once grant the central government enough authority to provide central goods and police the sub-units, but not so much that it usurps all of public authority. Using a game theoretic model of institutional choice, we show that, to survive, federal structures must be *self-enforcing*: the center and the states must have incentives to fulfill their obligations within the limits of federal bargains. Our model investigates the tradeoffs among the benefits from central goods provision, the ability of the center to impose penalties for non-compliance, and the costs of states to exit. We also show that federal constitutions can act as coordinating devices or focal solutions that allow the units to coordinate on trigger strategies in order to police the center. We apply our approach to a range of federations, including the United States under the Articles and the Constitution, modern China, and Russia.

1. Introduction

How are constitutional rules sustained? Although a long normative tradition exists about various aspects constitutionalism, a positive literature on this topic is only just emerging.¹ The general problem concerns how to structure the political game so that all the players – elected officials, the military, economic actors, and citizens – have incentives to respect the rules.

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¹See, for example, Fearon (2000), Hardin (1989), Ordeshook (1992), Przeworski (1991, ch 2, 2000), Weingast (1997b).

In this paper, we investigate this problem in the context of how the institutions of federalism are sustained. Although federations differ on many dimensions, all face the *two fundamental dilemmas of federalism*:

Dilemma 1: What prevents the national government from destroying federalism by over-awing its constituent units?

Dilemma 2: What prevents the constituent units from undermining federalism by free-riding and other forms of failure to cooperate?

To survive, a federal system must resolve both dilemmas.² This requires that the rules defining a federation be self-enforcing for political officials at all levels of government. A theory of the appearance and survival of a federation must therefore analyze the incentives of political officials to abide by the rules. To be a self-enforcing equilibrium, a federation requires a delicate balance between these two dilemmas.

Resolving the two dilemmas is problematic because they imply a *fundamental tradeoff*: solving one dilemma exacerbates the other. Too weak a national government will exhibit free-riding and insulated, "dukedom" economies. Or worse, it will disintegrate. With a national government too strong, a federation typically fails because the national government compromises state independence, extracting rents from the states and hindering interstate competition that underpins the positive economic effects of federalism. Reflecting this tradeoff, several theorists emphasize federalism's instability (Riker 1964, Bednar 1996).

Three rich streams of the literature relate to the two fundamental dilemmas of federalism.³ The first and largest stream studies the problem of state shirking and common pool problems from sub-national governments. The settings vary dramatically, including demand for federal spending; budgets,

² By *federalism* we follow Riker (1964): a federal system has a hierarchical governmental structure in which level of government has some autonomy. We use the terms "stability" and "survival" to indicate whether a federal system be sustained as an *equilibrium*.

³ These three literatures focus on aspects of endogenous federalism. In addition, there is a much larger literature on the effects of federalism, dominated by the economists (such as Oates 1972, Rubinfeld 1987, Tiebout 1956). There is also a political science literature on the effects of federalism on various problems, such as ethnic conflict (see Lijphart 1984, ch10), budget deficits (Rodden 1999, 2000), Poterba and von Hagen 2000), and corruption (Treisman 1999).

state borrowing, soft budget constraints, and deficits; and voting.⁴ The focus on the common pool problem tends to emphasize the second dilemma of federalism, the failure of “too much” decentralization. These scholars show that, without a strong center, common pool problems produce third-best or even worse outcomes. As we argue below, however, while highlighting one of the two central federal problems, it is quite literally only half the story.

The second stream of literature examines the first fundamental dilemma, the problem of national government aggrandizement. Bednar (1998a, 1998b) and Riker (1964), for example, examine how central governments tend to expand their powers over time. Weingast (1995) examines how a central authority can use a “divide and conquer” strategy to transgress its authority without reprisal (see also Treisman 2000). Ordeshook and Chen (1994) study the problem of how a central government can be prevented from usurping all public authority. As with the first stream of the literature, however, this literature analyzes half the problem as it ignores the critical role of centralized power to prevent common pool problems.

Finally, a third stream of the literature has begun to examine the joint problem, albeit in very specific contexts. Riker (1964), Garman, Haggard, and Willis (1999), and Ordehsook and Shvetsova (1997) emphasize the role the party system plays in solving the joint problems. In this view, the need to cooperate to win elections drives politicians at both the national and subnational levels to respect one another’s interests. Bednar, Eskridge and Ferejohn (1999) conclude that although judicial institutions tend to police the subnational governments, they are less effective in policing national government aggrandizement. Although these papers recognize the problem we discuss here, we complement them by generalizing their examination of *specific* institutions in developing a generic model.

To understand how successful federal systems simultaneously resolve the two dilemmas, and thus provide for their stability, we begin with the rationales for constructing federal systems. Broadly speaking, federalism is motivated by opportunities to capture gains from hierarchy. An agglomeration of independent states, called *bottom-up* federalism, typically seeks opportunities to capture gains from exchange and cooperation (e.g., the European Union and the United States). Federal systems can also be promulgated by a centralized state that decentralizes. These *top-down* federations are typically motivated either by the exigencies of secession in a non-federal state or by the central unit’s desire

⁴See, e.g., Bednar (1998a, 1998b), Blanchard and Shleifer (2000), Cremer and Palfrey (1999), Inman and Fitts (1990), Inman and Rubinfeld (1997), Jones, Sanguinetti and Tomassi (1999), McKinnon (1997), Persson and Tabelinni (1996, 1996), Poterba and von Hagen (2000), Rodden (1999, 2000), and Sanguinetti (1995).

to reap gains from specialization and decentralization (e.g., the world-wide trend toward decentralization in the 1990s).

The first question about bottom-up federalism concerns why these systems need a central structure at all. As the first stream of literature emphasizes, the answer is that participating states want central goods, yet each has an incentive to *shirk* or “free-ride.” Moreover, imperfect information about shirking exacerbates these problems, since it is harder to sanction states if others cannot identify those that shirk (Green and Porter 1984; Persson and Tabellini 1994; Bednar 1996; Milgrom, North, and Weingast 1990). A primary solution provides the center with policing authority so it can act as a central monitor in the hierarchical structure.

If the central government is a faithful agent of the states, then federalism poses no design puzzles. States would grant as many resources as the federal government needed for the optimal provision of central goods and to prevent shirking. National governments have their own interests, however. Granting resources and powers to the central government enables it to usurp state authority and extract resources — that is, to overawe the states in Riker’s (1964) term. Indeed, the more institutional and economic power the center has to carry out its delegated tasks, the greater will be the potential for *encroachment* on state sovereignty and authority.

The fundamental tradeoff represents the central design puzzle of federalism. The example of defense makes clear the tradeoff: giving the national government greater resources allows appropriate defense against external threats; but increasing central resources also makes it harder for the states to resist encroachments by the center. If the choice of institutional authority for all levels of government is not *self-enforcing*, the federation will ultimately fail.

In this paper, we develop a model showing how the two dilemmas operate *simultaneously*. We present a repeated game that captures the nature of federal arrangements. By endogenizing federal authority, state participation and shirking, and limits on the federal government, we derive a set of sufficient conditions for a self-enforcing federal system.

Our work contributes to a new and growing literature which Gibbons and Rutten (1996) call the new “equilibrium institutionalists.”⁵ Scholars in this tradition observe that, for constitutional features to endure, political officials must have an incentive to abide by them. All the features of representative governments impose limits on the behavior government officials, including institutions

⁵ See, e.g., Bednar (1996, 1998a), Calvert (1996), Gibbons and Rutten (1996), Greif (1997, 2000), Greif, Milgrom, and Weingast (1994), Milgrom, North, and Weingast (1989), and Weingast (1997b).

— such as democratic elections, separation of powers, federalism— and citizen rights — such as the right to vote, to own property, and to free expression. For these institutions and rights to exist in practice, officials must have incentives to honor them. A major omission in the political science literatures on democracy and constitutions is that scholars fail to analyze how the institutions and rights of representative government are sustained. The obvious problem around the world of political officials compromising democratic rules and citizen rights implies that we need a theory explaining the circumstances that lead officials to honor the rules.

In this paper, we develop a model of self-enforcing federalism that solves the twin dilemmas. In Section 2, we develop a two-stage model of a set of states endeavoring to capture some gains from cooperation. In the first stage the states must collectively choose a set of arrangements to define how the federation will operate. In the second stage, the states and the center interact on an on-going basis within the framework they have erected.

In Section 3, we investigate when institutions can create an equilibrium in which the states and center do not overreach their intended purposes. The analysis shows that if both the penalties imposed for shirking are high enough and the probability of being detected are sufficient, then shirking can be prevented and the gains from cooperation potentially realized. However, unlike in the previous literature on the common pool problem, the model also illustrates that once created, the central government is not a faithful, welfare maximizing agent of the states. It has incentives to capture rents. We show that this behavior restricts the set of possible arrangements under which the federation can be sustained.

In Section 4, we take up the question of the institutional design of federalism. Our model studies both grants of central authority and the choice of trigger strategies to be played in the *RG*. The choice of trigger strategies reflects the question of whether states can *coordinate* on a punishment regime to police the center, thus ensuring maximal benefits returned to the states. This framework generates several interesting results. First, we show how coordinating devices, such as constitutions, can serve to minimize efficiency losses and maximize the return of rents to the states. Second, rent extracted by the center is increasing in states' exit costs: if it is costly for states to leave, their options are limited, as is their ability to obtain rents.

In Section 5, we illustrate our results by exploring problems from actual federations. We consider four cases: the problems in the United States under the Articles of Confederation, the nullification crisis during the first Jackson administration, the problems facing modern Chinese

federalism, and the development of post-Communist Russian federalism. The cases illustrate both the tradeoffs described in the paper, including how various federations have attempted to resolve them.

2. A Model of Bottom-up Federalism

In this section we propose a model of a federalism and institutional choice. Recall the central features we wish to capture: an ongoing, stable federation must be one which *repeatedly* solves the two fundamental tradeoffs; there are benefits to *scale* in a federation; there is *heterogeneity* among the subunits; there can exist *costs for exiting* from the federation; that states have a *collective* incentive for participation, but an *individual* incentive to shirk; that all players want to maximize their *lifetime rents*; and that *monitoring is imperfect*.

To model these characteristics, we posit two stages to the complete game. The first stage is called the *institutional game (IG)* in which the institutions of the federation are determined. The second stage is the *repeated game (RG)* in which the players interact repeatedly given the institutions determined in the *IG*. Our strategy, therefore, as shown in Figure 2.1 is to first solve the characteristics of the federal equilibrium *given* the institutions of the federation, and then to understand what types of institutions will be adopted given a set of states that aim to establish a central government. In the second stage, institutions will determine the participation and contributions by the states and production of central goods and monitoring strategy of the center. In the first stage, the states will coordinate on choices of institutional authority of the center and trigger strategies.

We first describe the *RG* and then the *IG*. The *RG* is the infinite repetition of the following stage game. The *RG* has $N + 1$ players, n states indexed by $i = 1, \dots, N$, and a *central government* called C . The sequence of moves is shown in Figure 2.2. First, the states choose one of three actions $A = \{C, S, E\}$ for contribute, shirk, and exit. If a state chooses C , it *contributes* one unit to the center. If a state chooses S , it chooses to *shirk* and contributes zero. If a state chooses E , it also contributes nothing and chooses to *exit* or secede from the federal system. The indicator variable $k_i = \mathbf{1}$ if a state contributes and 0 if it does not. We designate a state's choice of exiting or not by the indicator variable s_i , which equals 1 if the state chooses to exit and zero otherwise. If a state chooses to exit, then it also incurs a cost, which is a function of the center's institutional authority granted in the *IG*, $c_i(z)$, where we use z to denote the institutional authority of the central government. We assume that the $c_i(z)$'s are ordered in z ; technically, if for any z , $c_i(z) > c_j(z)$, then $c_i(z) > c_j(z) \forall z$. We also define

the average cost function $\bar{c}(z) = \frac{1}{n} \sum_i c_i(z)$. Finally, exiting means that the state no longer participates in the game, incurring no costs or benefits in later stages.

The second step in the stage game is that a non-strategic player reveals shirkers with probability q . Those players revealed to be shirking are indicated by a value of 1 of the indicator variable l_i . All players observe only the vector $\mathbf{l} = (l_1, l_2, \dots, l_N)$, so potentially, some shirkers go undetected by the center and sub-units.⁶

The third move in the game is made by C , the central government. C chooses a *payment vector* $\mathbf{x} = (x_1, x_2, \dots, x_N)$, which is the amount of payments made to each sub-unit.⁷ The payments to the sub-units are modified by a production transformation technology $\theta(n, z)$. We make two assumptions about the character of this function. First, to capture the notion of increasing but diminishing returns to scale, we assume that $\theta(n, z)$ is a concave, increasing function of n , so $\theta(0, z) = 1, \theta(n, z)_n > 0, \theta(n, z)_{nn} \leq 0$. Second, to reflect the fact that stronger centers can better provide certain goods⁸, we assume that $\theta(n, z)$ is an increasing, concave function in z . In particular, we assume $\theta(n, 0) = 1, \theta(n, z)_z > 0, \theta(n, z)_{zz} \leq 0$.

C also chooses a *punishment or extraction strategy* $\mathbf{m} = (m_1, m_2, \dots, m_N)$, which is a vector of indicators indicating if an additional fee $f(z)$ will be levied against each sub-unit i , where

$$f(z) \geq 0, f'(z) > 0, f''(z) \leq 0.$$

To simplify the analysis, we also assume that the fines are “sufficiently high.” In particular, we assume that for any z , $f(z) > c_N(z)$. This assumption allows C to punish shirkers; but it may also use $f(z)$ to extract rents from the states even when they do not shirk.

⁶ An alternative and reasonable assumption is that q is also endogenous. In this case, there are two possible cases we consider but do not present here. First, q could be a choice in some interval. In this case, it is a dominant strategy for all states to choose the maximum. Second, q could be a function of z . In this case, the choice of the function will depend on the shapes of $q(z)$ and $f(z)$. This case complicates the analysis but yields similar results.

⁷ Note that we assume here that the goods supplied by the center are partially excludable—in other words, the center can discriminate between states. We do this to provide sufficient generality. In fact, many (although not all) of the intuitions gained from the model are only strengthened if we assume a single payment level for all states.

⁸ We use the term “central goods” to define the product of the center since our model allows for both public and non-public goods by the center. As long as the center can provide a good more efficiently (either because of its public nature *or* through scale effects) it will meet the criteria of our model. Thus we provide a general model in which the product of the center can be either provided in a discriminatory or a non-discriminatory fashion. This treatment of the central government's provision of goods being not purely public—in other words, including the possibility of ‘local’ discrimination—is similar to Tomassi (2000).

Finally, payoffs for the stage are determined and the stage ends. The payoffs of the actors are as follows. The utility function for state i is:

$$u_{it} = \begin{cases} (1 - s_{it})[\mathbf{q}(n, z)x_{it} - f(z)m_{it}] - k_{it} - s_{it}c_i(z) & \text{if } s_{is} = 0 \quad \forall s < t \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

This expression says that state i 's utility is the following. First, the state decides whether to remain in the federation ($s_{it}=0$). If so, it receives the amount granted to it by the center, x_{it} , enhanced by the central goods production parameter, $\theta(n, z)$. If the center has assessed state i a fine (so $m_{it}=1$), it must pay the center $f(z)$. Finally, state i just pay its contribution to the center, k_{it} . Second, if instead state i decides to exit ($s_{it}=1$), then it receives no contribution from the center, pays no fine $f(z)$, but must bear an exit cost $c_i(z)$. If a state has previously exited it earns zero in every period forward.

The center has a utility function given by:

$$u_{ct} = \sum_{i \in I_t} k_{it} - (1 - s_{it})[x_{it} - f(z)m_{it}] + s_{it}c_i(z)$$

where $I_t \equiv \{i | s_{is} = 0 \quad \forall s < t\}$. The center receives the sum of contributions from the states (k_i) less the transfer to each state from the benefits, x_{it} , net of any assessed fines $f(z)m_i$ applied to all states still in the federation. It also receives the exit costs from any seceding state, $c_i(z)$.^{9,10}

The repeated payoffs are simply the stage payoffs summed over all the periods that the player is playing discounted by a factor $*$. Thus, the repeated payoffs are:

⁹ We make two observations about the center's payoffs. First, the center collects fines levied against states. In many federations, this is how punishments are meted out. For example, in the European Union's Growth and Stability Pact, member states which are unable to meet deficit requirements must pay fines. Similarly, many federal policies in the United States reduce federal transfers to states that fail to comply with national rules. An alternative formulation that yields substantively similar results allows penalties to be a function of both z and x . Second, we also include benefits to the center when a state exits. The reason is that when the state enters a federal bargain, and carries with it exit costs, its bargaining power upon exit is reduced. In principle, the costs to the state from exiting may greater than the amount transferred to the center—indeed the center might actually also lose so this weight might be negative, but for now we ignore this complication. Our main purpose is to introduce *correlation* between rent extraction by the center and its ability to provide central goods and monitoring. Although we call these “exit costs,” an alternative formulation would restate the propositions in terms of such a correlation and not exit costs. Finally, one might consider what happens when both the states *and* the center incur penalties or costs upon a state's exit. In this case, the equilibrium set is expanded; in other words the maximum amount required to keep the center in will increase. Substantively, this alters the comparative statics on exit costs but captures many of the same basic results we outline below.

¹⁰ The notion of central government's rents is worth considering. These are of three sorts. The first and most obvious is corruption: personal enrichment by national political officials. A second source of rents is that the federal government may establish patronage systems and service to interest groups that gain it political support that can be used against the regions. Third, the center might collude with some group of states to extract rents and redistribute income from another group of states.

$$u_{j\infty} = \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \delta^t u_{jt} \quad j = C, 1, \dots, N.$$

We assume that players choose actions that maximize the expected value of $u_{j\infty}$.

The sequence of moves in the *IG* is described in Figure 2.3. Here, the states confer to choose an institutional design. States make two choices. First, as before, they choose a constitution, embodying a set of rights and responsibilities that gives the sub-national units an opportunity to coordinate on a punishment strategy. We model this as the states choosing a *punishment strategy cutpoint profile* \mathbf{x} . We envision this choice as the embodiment of rights and responsibilities in a constitutional document which gives the sub-national units an opportunity to coordinate on a punishment strategy. Second, the states choose the parameter z , which is an argument in the exit cost functions $c_i(\mathbf{z})$, the fines that can be levied $f(\mathbf{z})$, and the center's production transformation function $\theta(n, \mathbf{z})$ in the repeated game. Further, at this stage, any state can choose not to participate, if the choices make the sub-national unit worse off than under no cooperative agreement.

This structure represents *bottom-up federalism*: the states are designing rules to sustain cooperation. Specifically, states can both choose to participate and set the institutional standards by some preference aggregation rule in which no single player is decisive.

3. Federalism as an Ongoing Concern

To solve this game, we use the equilibrium concept of *subgame perfection*. In this context, that means players are playing optimal strategies at each point for every point forward. In implementing subgame perfection, we use backward induction, solving first the *RG* and then, conditional on the results from that solution, we solve the *IG*. In this section, we assume that both the size, denoted by n , and institutions, denoted by x and z , of the federation are fixed, and solve for the equilibrium of the *RG*. Notably, *within* the *RG*, we cannot use backward induction, since the game has a positive probability of continuing at every point. Instead, we try to characterize classes of equilibria by positing the equilibrium strategies of the players and testing whether those strategies are optimal, given the other players' strategies.

For the purposes here, we are particularly interested in the conditions under which cooperation can be sustained as an equilibrium. Cooperative equilibria are defined as those in which, on the equilibrium path, all states choose *C* in every stage, and the center provides the equilibrium level of

central goods in every stage. Following the solution concept outlined above, we consider the parameter space under which cooperative equilibria can be sustained for a punishment strategy commonly referred to as *grim trigger (GT)*:

DEFINITION 1. A player i plays a **grim trigger strategy (GT)** in each stage if:

- (i) on the equilibrium path, all states contribute, the center pays the equilibrium profile \mathbf{x}^* , and the center fines a state if and only if it is revealed a shirker;
- (ii) off the equilibrium path, if in the previous period, the center pays state i $x_i < x_i^*$ or fines any state not revealed to be shirking, all states will exit; if any state exits, the center will set $\mathbf{x}=0$ and $\mathbf{m}=1$.

The grim trigger strategy says that, if ever a player deviates from the cooperative equilibrium, all players irrevocably enter a defection stage. Under grimtrigger, the players will cooperate only as long as all the other players have always cooperated.

We analyze the equilibria under *GT* for two reasons. First, *GT* is suitable because it is the most extreme form of punishment that is still subgame perfect. That it is subgame perfect with complete information is straightforward: the punishment strategies are, for this game, simply Nash-reversion strategies, which means that they are subgame perfect off the equilibrium path (Morrow 1994). In this sense, grim trigger is a *test case*, to establish necessary condition for cooperation to be a Nash equilibrium. If cooperation cannot be sustained under a grim trigger punishment strategy, it is unsustainable under any feasible strategy. Second, the results that follow can be shown to hold for sufficiently long, finite punishments (as shown Bendor and Mookherjee 1987; see also Gibbons 1992). While analytically more convenient, *GT* yields substantively similar results to any other strategy in this class.¹¹

In Proposition 1, we characterize the set of *GT* equilibria for the *RG* (all proofs appear in Appendix 1).

¹¹ It is important to note one proviso, however. While this approach to characterizing equilibria can be justified for our purposes here, it ignores an important consideration. By using grim, Nash-reversion strategies, this begs the question of why states cooperate in the punishments of others, even if the states are not harmed themselves. While this is certainly a central question to the design of federal institutions, we reserve it for other work.

PROPOSITION 1. Fix δ, z, q, n . If $f(z)q > 1$, and $\theta(n, z) > 1$, then there exist GT equilibria in which:

- (i) $x_i^* \geq \frac{1 - c_i(z)(1 - \delta)}{\theta(n, z)} = x_i^{I^*} \forall i$
- (ii) $\frac{1}{n} \sum_i x_i^* \leq \delta - (f(z) + \delta \bar{c}(z))(1 - \delta) = x^{U^*}$
- (iii) states contribute in every period,
- (iv) and center fines only shirkers.¹²

PROOF. In appendix.

Proposition 1 provides the following insights into the ongoing dynamic between the center and the states. First the condition $f(z)q > 1$ says that the expected fines from shirking exceed the cost of contributing, so all states will contribute. Notice that because the parameters $f(z)$ and q are exogenous at this stage, either all states shirk or none do. This assumption thus defines a necessary condition for a stable federation: *the center must be given a strong enough hand to detect and punish potential shirkers.*¹³ In addition, the condition implies that the constraint is more stringent as q becomes smaller. The reason is that, the lower is q , the higher must be z so that $f(z)q$ exceeds 1. This provides another prediction of the model: if we consider the ceding of jurisdiction authority to the center, *grants of authority to the center are most likely to be sustainable in areas in which monitoring is relatively easy.*

Second, the condition $\theta(n, z) > 1$ about the central goods parameter implies that *there must be sufficient gains from exchange to motivate a stable federation.* The logic, however, is different from models of decentralized cooperation in which the benefit stream alone must to prevent individual states from shirking. In this case, the benefits have to be sufficiently large in order to gain a surplus that prevents the center from a one-time appropriation of all contributions.

¹² Note that here we consider only “Nash reversion” strategies off the equilibrium path. As has been noted in other contexts, this is not necessarily “renegotiation proof” (in fact, in this case, the strategies are *not* renegotiation proof). Although we use ‘grim’ reversion strategies here, in this case, it is straightforward to construct such renegotiation-proof Nash equilibrium strategies in which there are discrete punishment periods in which the deviator participates in her own punishment. This adds a layer of complexity (i.e. introducing *T-period* punishments as an argument in the upper bound above) which we do not wish to complicate the analysis with here, since substantively, the results are largely the same. To see that this game conforms to a more general class of games in which the existence of grim-strategy equilibria implies the existence of a more restricted set of cooperative RPNE, see Bendor and Mookherjee (1987); Fudenberg and Tirole (1991, chapter 5); Gibbons (1992).

¹³ In a later section, we consider what happens when this ability to punish is at once correlated with the ability to obtain central goods benefits *and* an endogenous choice.

Third, as shown in Figure 3.1, as long as conditions (i) and (ii) are met, the federation is a stable equilibrium. The first condition says that every state must prefer to the rents it receives from the center, $x_i 2(n, z)$, to exiting. Thus, the minimum amount required to provide an incentive for a state to remain in the federation falls as the exit costs rise. The second condition (ii) states that the center must not be asked to return so much to the states, *in toto*, that it instead prefers to collect all the contributions, k_i , for itself, even though such action will lead to mass exit. Consider the center's calculus: in equilibrium, the center collects contributions from all of the states. Its choice is between taking all the contributions in the current period for itself, and losing all future payments, or continuing to receive an ongoing payment from each state. Condition (ii) states that for the center to be sufficiently motivated, it must pay out at most $n x^U$ in each period, or it will appropriate all of the contributions for itself and fine all states, causing a breakdown in the federal structure.

Taken together, the two conditions mean that the set of equilibria depends on x^U and x^L , the average upper and lower bounds on the amounts returned to the states by the center, where $\frac{1}{n} \sum_i x_i^{L*} = x^L$ (see figure 3.1). When $x^U > x^L$, there is a potential surplus to be divided between the players. This condition also implies that a *multiplicity of equilibria* exists. Further, without more structure, it is not possible to say which equilibrium will prevail, a situation common in repeated games. Indeed, if the surplus, $S = n(x^U - x^L)$, is positive, then any allocation of S that satisfies condition (i) is an equilibrium. Figure 3.2 illustrates this point.¹⁴

For example, three possible equilibrium profiles \mathbf{x} include (1) the allocation of the surplus equally among the states (i.e. $\frac{S}{N}$ to each of the state); (2) the allocation of all of the surplus S to a subset of the units; or (3) the allocation of all of the surplus to the center. In the knife-edge case, $x^U = x^L$, exactly one profile \mathbf{x} can be sustained as an equilibrium: each subunit gets precisely its minimum amount x_i^{L*} in order to provide an incentive for it to stay in the federation, with the center keeping the remainder. Finally, if $x^U < x^L$, then *no equilibrium exists*. In particular, there is no profile \mathbf{x} which can at once keep all of the states in and provide the center with sufficient incentive not to deviate, to "take the money and run". In this case, federalism is impossible to sustain.

¹⁴ It is worth noting that this result extends in part from the fact that we analyze a set of equilibrium strategies in which all states are induced to punish the center even if the center transgresses or defects against only a subset of states. We take this approach for the reasons given above, allowing us to focus not on the multiplicity of deviations that might take place but instead on the minimal conditions necessary for cooperation. That said, our model is well suited to studying problems of coordination among states in punishments (see Bendor and Mookerjee 1987; Weingast 1997b) which we reserve for later work. In Appendix 2, we provide an analysis of these issues.

Fourth, if the costs of exiting are sufficiently high, the states have an incentive to remain in the federation, although the center does not pass on all of the rents to the sub-units. This indicates that *exit costs can shift economic and institutional authority from the states to the center*. Both the upper and lower bounds on x_i^* are decreasing as exit costs increase. States will exit only if the center starts extracting *more rents* than the exit costs. As long as the center provides a positive value to the states, the states will remain in the federation. In sum, when the benefits are sufficiently large in relation to the exit costs, a stable federation can be sustained.

Fifth, using Proposition 1, it is possible to examine what factors affect the *size* of the equilibrium set with respect to the exogenous parameters.¹⁵ With respect to the discount factor as the players value the future more, more profiles can be sustained in equilibrium (i.e. $\frac{\partial S}{\partial \delta} > 0$, all proofs of these results are shown in the Appendix 1). This result is consistent with the folk theorem for repeated games, for as players value the future more, punishments in future rounds become more severe. The surplus or equilibrium set is also increasing in the productivity of the center (i.e. $\frac{\partial S}{\partial \theta} > 0$). Here because there are more rents to distribute for a given level of contributions, there is more freedom (or surplus) which can meet the incentive constraints set by each of the actors. Alternatively, as the penalties which the center can impose increase, the size of the surplus decreases (i.e. $\frac{\partial S}{\partial f} < 0$). The reason for this is that while f does not affect the lower bound required to keep a state in, it transfers rents to the center, pushing down the upper bound on payments necessary to keep the center cooperative. Thus, as f increases, the allowable surplus decreases. Finally, the size of the equilibrium set with respect to the average exit costs is ambiguous.¹⁶ As shown in the appendix, increasing average exit costs decreases *both* the lower and upper bounds on x_i^* . If the lower bound falls faster than the upper bound, then the size of the surplus increases, otherwise it decreases. Thus, while increasing exit costs shifts rents to the center, given that an equilibrium still exists, it can also make an equilibrium unobtainable.

Sixth, the *heterogeneity* in the states' cost functions means that the minimum level required to keep each state in the federation together differs across states. For those states that have a large cost of exiting, the minimum the center will have to pay to induce them to continue in the federation is lower. This opens up the potential in some equilibria for the center to *price discriminate*.

¹⁵ Here we mean how large is the surplus and therefore the set of possible equilibria.

¹⁶ Specifically, it is increasing iff $\delta > \frac{1}{\theta}$.

Seventh, in terms of total social welfare, *all allocations are not equal*. Define social welfare as the sum of benefits to all parties. Then we can calculate the social welfare in the following way. In equilibrium, a typical state gets $\theta(n,z)x_i^* - 1$ and the center gets $n - \sum_i x_i^*$ in each period. Thus, the per-period total welfare is $\theta(n,z) - 1 \sum_i x_i^*$. Because $\theta(n,z) > 1$, this term is strictly positive in equilibrium. Further, social welfare is *increasing in* $\sum_i x_i^*$, the amount returned to the states. The reason is that the production technology benefit only accrues if C supplies central goods. Each unit which the center collects but does not return to the states represents as a public good represents an opportunity cost in public benefits forgone. Thus, any allocation in which condition (ii) does not hold as an equality represents a dead-weight loss to society.

Finally, consider the shirking punishment strategies. Because the center gets utility from fines, it has an incentive to fine all states, whether shirking or not. In the one-shot game, the center will fine all states. But in repeated play the states can counterbalance this incentive. Extractions by the center provide states with an incentive to deviate (shirk). The states can thus credibly punish the center if it fines non-shirkers. This implies that, given the benefits from ongoing cooperation with the states, the center will not extract “inappropriate fines.”

4. Endogenous Institutions

As noted above, if the states do not have a coordination device, then it is impossible for the analyst to say which of the multiplicity of equilibria will arise in the RG . Equilibria in which the states force the center to take minimal rents and equilibria in which the center appropriates all of the rents—resulting in no improvement in social welfare—are equally tenable. For bottom-up federalism, states’ inability to *coordinate* on a punishment strategy mean that the division of rents is indeterminate. Institutions, however, provide part of the way out of this quandary. In bottom-up federalism, the states have a say in the design of federal institutions and hence in federal performance.

In this section, we use the results from the previous section to solve the institutional game, IG . States erecting a bottom-up federalism will “look down the tree” at the RG and will choose institutions that are efficient. Recall in the IG , the states do three things. First, they choose an equilibrium profile of triggers \mathbf{x} that determines the minimum level of central returns to each state to avoid triggering a punishment phase. The division of potential surplus rents is unidentified in the

model specified thus far. In order to pin these down, we use a simple Nash bargaining framework in which each state has a certain amount of *pre-play bargaining power*, in order to determine the division of rents. Thus, we designate the vector $\alpha = (\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \dots, \alpha_N)$ as a vector of individual bargaining weights, where $\alpha_i \geq 0 \forall i$ and $\sum \alpha_i = 1$. Second, states collectively choose the level of institutional authority z to grant the center.¹⁷ This choice reflects a fundamental trade-off in federalism. Assuming that the states can motivate the center to return a significant part of the payments to themselves, then a higher z means a higher θ , yielding larger benefits per unit for the states. Yet a higher z also increases the exit costs and the potential fines, meaning that the center can extract more rents from the states. Third, just as states have an option to exit at every stage of the *RG*, in the *IG*, states have the option of *not entering* the *RG*.

We use the following solution concept. We characterize the set of equilibria such that: first, all states must want to participate, given a *cooperative GT* equilibrium exists to the *RG* which is established by the first two assumptions in the proposition below; and second, the choice of the equilibrium is Pareto efficient among the states.

Using this solution concept, we have the following result:

PROPOSITION 2. Fix n and assume there exists a z such that:

$$(A1) \quad \delta - (f(z) + \bar{c}(z))(1 - \delta) \geq \frac{1}{\theta(n, z)}$$

$$(A2) \quad f(z)q \geq 1$$

Then a *GT* equilibrium exists that has the following *IG* equilibrium properties:

$$(i) \quad \mathbf{x}_i^* = (1 - \alpha_i n) \frac{1}{\theta(z^*)} + \alpha_i n (\delta - (f(z^*) + \bar{c}(z^*))(1 - \delta))$$

$$(ii) \quad \mathbf{z}^* \text{ solves } \frac{\theta_z}{\theta} = \frac{(f_z + \delta \bar{c}_z)(1 - \delta)}{\delta - (f + \delta \bar{c})(1 - \delta)} \text{ and has a unique solution}$$

$$(iii) \quad \text{all states participate.}^{18}$$

PROOF. In appendix.

¹⁷ This concept means that, conditional on the existence of an equilibrium to the *RG*, we characterize the core of (\mathbf{x}, z) .

¹⁸ Note, in condition (ii) we use the convention of subscripts of endogenous variables to indicate the first derivative with respect to that variable. We also suppress the arguments of the functions in condition (ii) for expositional simplicity.

Proposition 2 yields a series of important implications about an equilibrium federation. First, in a federation, a *constitution may act as a focal point that defines the limits on central authority*. A set of decentralized states face a coordination problem: if the definition of central transgression is unarticulated, then states may fail to coordinate on their punishments of the center, ultimately causing the federation to unravel. The choice of a set of cutpoints that trigger punishments can overcome this coordination problem. When erected prior to playing the federalism game, a constitution can serve as a focal, coordinating device by determining precisely what constitutes central encroachments (see Chen and Ordeshook 1994; Hardin 1989; and Weingast 1997b).

Second, all states have one interest in common: they want to maximize the size of the surplus to be distributed among themselves. *States will therefore choose a punishment strategy, x , that provides the center with the minimal level of rents in order for it to cooperate*. This implies that they capture the remainder of the rents for themselves collectively; that is, $\sum_i x_i^* = nx^{u*}$. The opportunity to establish focal strategies gives an institutional advantage to the states over the center. This is precisely the role that can be played by a clear delimitation of federal authority and responsibility and states' rights in a constitution (Weingast 1997b).

Third, making participation endogenous to the federal bargain *increases the states' lower bound of acceptance of a federal bargain* from the earlier game. Whereas before, high exit cost states would *continue* in a federation even if their payoffs were less than their contribution, here states will not *enter* the federation if the equilibrium payoffs are not at least as high as they could obtain in the absence of the federation. This means the lower bound on any states payoffs goes from x_i^L to $\frac{1}{\theta(z^*)}$. To see this, note that a state outside the federation earns zero in each round. At a minimum, therefore, a state will enter the federation only if its equilibrium stage game payoff $\theta(z^*)x_i^* - 1 \geq 0$. Figure 4.1 illustrates this result. Fixing z^* according to (ii) in Proposition 2, the average payoff to the states will be the minimum required to provide the center with the incentive to stick to the federal bargain, denoted by $x^{u*} = \delta - (f(z) + \bar{c}(z))(1 - \delta)$. Without a participation constraint, the minimum any single state can receive in equilibrium is $x_i^{L*} = \frac{1 - \bar{c}(z)(1 - \delta)}{\theta(z)}$, represented in the figure by the heavy solid line. With the participation constraint, however, every state must receive at least $\frac{1}{\theta(z^*)}$ represented by the heavy dashed line.

This contrast highlights an important feature of federal institution building. *Ex post* there can be significant differences between states vulnerability to rent extraction, due in our model primarily to heterogenous exit costs. Adding a participation constraint allows states with higher exit costs to

reduce the potential for ex post opportunism through ex ante bargaining over the institutions. Unlike in the *RG*, in which participation was fixed, each state's minimum return here is identical.

Further, the result means that a *federation is even harder to sustain* than implied by the results of the previous section.¹⁹ Before, as long as the minimum required to meet the center's cooperation incentive averaged the same as the lower bounds on the ex post requirement for the states, cooperation could be sustained as an equilibrium. Adding institutional choice means that x^{σ^*} must be much higher: strictly greater than the maximum $x_i^{L^*}$.²⁰

Fourth, result (ii) above *highlights the central tradeoff in a federal system*. The choice of z is the result of a maximization problem for the states. States have a common interest in a strong center: as the center becomes stronger (reflected on the left hand side of the equality), the shirking problem is more easily solved *and* the center's ability to provide central goods increases. Yet a strong center is also able to appropriate a greater portion of the transfers. The solution to this problem is to equate these two at the margin: set z so that the marginal benefits from the center's prevention of shirking and central goods provision equal the marginal costs of increased rent extraction.

Notice that in a bottom-up federations, the choice of z does not involve a distributive conflict: all the states have a common incentive to maximize the surplus in our model, each garnering a fixed proportion. Further, the assumptions of Proposition 2 imply that the solution z^* is a unique optimum. Put another way, the parameters δ, c, f , and q , imply a unique set of institutions for each federation.

Finally, the model yields predictions about the nature of the central institutional authority as a function of the parameters and functions in the model. By implicitly differentiating result (ii) in Proposition 2, we have that z^* is *decreasing in average exit costs* (all proofs in Appendix 1). This leads to a significant prediction to the model: in bottom-up federations in which the *ex post* costs of exit are high we should expect to see weaker institutions, a lower provision of central goods, and less social welfare. Similarly, just as average exit costs shift rents toward the center, so do fines. This again creates a disincentive, all other things equal, for the states to cede more institutional authority to the center. This, in other words means z^* is *decreasing in the ability of the center to impose penalties*. Finally, z^* is *decreasing in the productivity of the center, and therefore decreasing in*

¹⁹ By "harder" we mean in the sense that the parameter space over which a cooperative outcome can be maintained is smaller.

²⁰ To see this simply note that $\frac{1}{\theta(z)} > \frac{1 - c_i(z)(1 - \delta)}{\theta(z)} \forall i$ since $c_i(z) > 0 \forall i$.

n. Here the logic is slightly different even though the outcome is the same: because the center can better produce central goods, there is no need to cede as much control to the center all things equal.

5. Applying the Model

The models presented above yield a number of predictions about how federations will be designed, how rents will be divided, and when they will be stable, sustainable institutions. In this section, we apply our approach to three cases — the development of the American Constitution from the Articles of Confederation, the Nullification Crisis a generation later, and the development of modern Chinese federalism over the last twenty years and post-Communist Russian federalism. Although the cases do not constitute conclusive evidence, all demonstrate the plausibility of the theoretical results and point to some future extensions.

5.1 American Federalism: From Articles of Confederation to Constitution

Nearly all the major turning points in American history can be studied from the perspective of federalism. Federalism is central element to the revolutionary crisis, the debates over the Constitution, the Civil War, Reconstruction and its end, the New Deal, and the rise of regulatory state in the 1960s and 1970s.

Central to our models is the tradeoff between federal power to provide central goods and prevent shirking on the one hand and power to encroach on state sovereignty on the other. If this balance is not struck properly, a federation will stray from the course intended. If the center's power is too great, the federation will fail because there will be over-extraction by the national government; if the center is too weak, a federation will fail because the center will under provide central goods, states will shirk and create common pool problems, and the federation will break down; finally, if the states fear that the center will abuse its power to provide central goods, they may fail to grant the center sufficient powers or fail to cooperate with the center, again causing the federal system to fail. All three problems apply to the development and evolution of American federalism.

The principal criticism of the Articles of Confederation by Federalist leaders was that the national government had insufficient institutional power to supply critical central goods, primarily defense against British and European security threats, but also the maintenance of public economic structures, such as a common market and a common, stable currency. One of the core debates between

the Federalists and Anti-Federalists concerned how to provide these goods.²¹ The Federalists believed that the national government should be granted strong taxation powers in order to have resources to achieve these ends (Kaplanoff 1991, Morgan 1977, ch 9). Some Anti-Federalists admitted a concern about the under supply of central goods. Nonetheless, most Anti-Federalists felt that the Federalist ‘solution’ — granting the national government strong taxation and monetary powers — presented too great a risk of predation.²²

In terms of our model, this debate concerned different views about how to tradeoff the center’s powers to provide central goods and the risk of encroachment by the national government. Federalists wanted to raise the national government’s institutional powers (raise z) so that the national government could prevent shirking (raise $f(z)$) and provide higher levels of central goods (raise $Z(n, z)$). Anti-Federalists argued that nothing inherent in the grant of additional power to national government would prevent it from abusing that power (i.e., using $f(z)$ to extract rents rather than punishing states for shirking).

Under the Articles of Confederation, the Anti-Federalists’ political power allowed them to maintain the balance in their favor. For example, although Congress passed defense bills, it could not raise money to finance these measures. Instead the national government had to depend on the states to raise taxes to finance national legislation. But as our models highlight, because the center had insufficient enforcement powers ($f(z)$), many states refused to contribute (Kaplanoff 1991, Middlekauff 1982). Put simply, state shirking hindered national defense.²³ Similarly, control of currency was also impossible. Rhode Island, for example, refused to discontinue its practice of “over supplying” and thus devaluing currency and hindering the center’s ability to maintain economic property and asset values elsewhere (cite). Further, some states hindered the development of a common market by establishing internal trade barriers, which had *not* been characteristic under British colonial rule. All three national public goods — adequate security, a sound currency, and the common

²¹ As Hamilton outlined in *Federalist No. 23*: “The principal purposes to be answered by union are these—the common defense of members; the preservation of the public peace, as well against internal convulsions as external attacks; the regulation of commerce with other nations and between the States; the superintendence of our intercourse, political and commercial, with foreign countries.” (Hamilton, Madison and Jay 1961: 153)

²²As Rakove (1996, 146) emphasizes, the Anti-Federalists “favored lines of attack evoked customary Whiggish fears of concentrated power and the specter of a potent central authority absorbing the residual powers of the state governments.

²³It is worth recalling that the Federalists opened their famous debates with an extended discussion of the problems of national defense under the Articles (Hamilton, Madison and Jay 1961, *Federalist Nos. 2-5*). Although these are not nearly as widely cited as those focusing on institutions, it is no accident that the Federalists opened with this topic (see Riker 1987).

market— suffered because of state free-riding in the face of the common pool problem: many shirked, thus under-providing national central goods ($Z(n,z)$).

To resolve the under supply of central goods, the Federalists consistently proposed to grant the national government taxation authority. The Anti-Federalists successfully opposed these initiatives, however. Consistent with the model, they argued that granting the national government sufficient means to punish shirkers ($f(z)$) would mean loss of control over the national government and hence a loss of liberty. In other words, they worried that the national government would abuse its powers to extract rents.

The veto structure of decisionmaking under the Articles — in which single states could block passage of national programs — implied that the national government had insufficient power to provide goods and enforce contributions. Our model also suggests that one of the main problems with the Articles was that they did not clearly define the limits of federal authority. The Federalists' proposal to grant the national government additional taxation power failed to create limits on how far this power could be taken. Fearing predation, Anti-Federalists blocked Federalist initiatives to increase national power, the resulting in an ineffectual federation from 1781 to 1789 (Middlekauff 1982, ch 23; Morgan 1977, ch 9).

The genius of the Federalists in creating the new Constitution was in the way they resolved this dilemma through institutional rules. Per our model, the Constitution first granted the national government sufficient power to provide the critical national central goods of national defense, common markets and common currency. Second, it created limits on the national government, thus constraining the national government's use of $f(z)$.

Limits on the national government took several forms. First, the Constitution contained a series of explicit limits on the national government: the national government had solely enumerated powers, with all other policy jurisdictions reserved for the states; the separation of powers system made it hard for extremists to take control of the national apparatus, so that “ambition would check ambition” (see Madison, *Federalist No. 46*, 1961: 294-300). This system was reinforced by having an institution, the Senate, which would represent the each states directly. Similarly, the Supreme Court was established with the authority to enforce these rules.²⁴ Second, the debates during the Revolutionary crisis and over the Constitution helped forge a consensus about how to limit the national government.²⁵ In terms

²⁴As Bednar, et. al. (1995) show, the Court was better at policing the states than the national government.

²⁵Rakove, Rutten, and Weingast (2000) make this point; see also Rakove (1996) and Wood (1969).

of our model, the Constitution set limits on the national government by creating a coordination device about trigger strategies. If the national government over-stepped these limits, states would threaten to secede.²⁶ In *Federalist No. 46*, Madison (1961: 298) made explicit reference to the coordination the constitution would provide to prevent central aggrandizement. “But ambitious encroachments of the federal government on the authority of the State governments would not excite the opposition of a single State, or a few States only,” he stated. “They would be signals of general alarm. Every government would espouse the common cause. A correspondence would be opened. Plans of resistance would be concerted. One spirit would animate and conduct the whole.”

To illustrate the use of these trigger strategies, consider the controversies raised under the Federalist President, John Adams, and his Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton. Federalists sought to expand the national government powers in controversial ways, notably to promote economic development (Elkins and McKittrick 1993, ch 7). And yet, in the late years of the eighteenth century, the Federalist’s popularity waned. The Adams administration reacted with, among other things, the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798. These acts in part attempted to suppress its political opposition, including the jailing of opposition newspaper editors — behavior we tend to associate more with modern Latin American states than the United States.

In combination, these policies and behavior prompted a political backlash. Many Federalist supporters switched sides to support the opposition, allowing Thomas Jefferson to become president in the election of 1800. Indeed, the Federalist’s behavior not only helped fostered the development of an opposition party, but to spring-board it into power for twenty years (Wood 1992). The consensus lasted another generation, made the limits on government *self-enforcing*: politicians avoided violating widely-held precepts, since such violations would risk officials’ political futures (Weingast 1997a).

5.2 The Nullification Crisis (1828-1833)

Although the nullification crisis unfolded during the first Administration of President Andrew Jackson (1829-1833), it had its roots in the demise of the previous consensus established with Jefferson’s election in 1800.²⁷ As with the controversy over creating the American Constitution, that

²⁶As Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., (1922) showed, citizens in every state discussed secession at one point prior to the Civil War.

²⁷This section reports on research in collaboration with Douglas Grob.

surrounding nullification focused on the appropriate bounds, both upper and lower, on national government power.

To understand the genesis of the nullification crisis, we begin with the crisis over the admission of Missouri in 1819-1820, which demonstrated that the previous consensus had collapsed. The crisis began when Southerners, then the more dominant section, sought to admit an additional slave state, Missouri, without any free state to balance²⁸. Many Northerners feared that the loss of balance would allow Southerners to dominate the national government at their expense. Northerners feared Southern use of national power to extract rents from them; in terms of the model, this reflected a fear over the inappropriate use of $f(z)$.

Northerners reacted by attacking Southerners where they were most vulnerable — slavery: they amended the legislation to admit Missouri in the House of Representatives, where they held a majority. The amendments prohibited the further importation of slaves and provided for a gradual emancipation of slaves already resident in Missouri. These provisions failed the Senate, where the South held a veto, and a crisis ensued.

The crisis demonstrated to many Southerners that their “property and institutions”— particularly through national encroachments on slavery and economic tariff policies — were not safe within the Union. They believed that, if given the power, opportunistic Northerners would attack slavery as a means of breaking apart majority coalitions and of extracting benefits from Southerners (cite). John C. Calhoun, an ardent nationalist in the early years of the second decade of the nineteenth century, became the major proponent of states’ rights beginning in the 1820s.

In short, both sections had reason to fear the other’s control of the national government. Without a veto over national policymaking, each was vulnerable to encroachment by the other.

The Missouri Compromise of 1820 resolved the crisis with three components: immediately, it balanced the admission of Missouri by carving off the northern counties of Massachusetts to establish the free state of Maine; for the long term, it established the 30/36’ line, which divided up the remaining national territories between North and South, free and slave; finally, it established that states would be admitted in pairs (Meinig 1992, Weingast 1997a). As under the Articles of Confederation, the fundamental concern of politicians was how to design mechanisms that would allow continued operation of effective national government, but would prevent encroachment on state and local politics.

²⁸Moore (1953) provides the standard history of this controversy.

Establishing sectional balance was a minimal condition to provide national stability. As each section feared the other's control over the national government (i.e., the other's unconstrained use of $f(z)$), a veto over national legislation allowed them to constrain the national government's powers and hence abuse of $f(z)$.

Despite the balance rule, many radical Southerners still feared the designs of the North.²⁹ During the first Jackson administration, radical Southerners, such as Calhoun in South Carolina, proposed a new check on national authority known as the nullification doctrine. Using a variant of proposals offered by Jefferson and Madison during the Adams's administration in response to the Alien and Sedition Acts, nullifiers argued that a state could interpret and defend the Constitution on its own, affording it the power to "nullify" or set aside national legislation within their borders. Calhoun further claimed that the Constitution was not a "forever pact," but a compact among sovereign states that could exit. The nullification doctrine meant that states could pick and choose which national legislation they would become law within that state. In its most clear manifestation, South Carolina responded to the dispute over tariffs during this period by nullifying the national law.

In practice, the nullification doctrine would have had two effects. First, it would have undermined the Constitution. Granting each state a veto over national policy within their borders would have crippled the national government's powers. In terms of the model, had nullification been upheld, it would have meant the dissolution of American federalism. It implied eliminating the national government's ability to impose and police standards and hence to police shirking. The result would have been free-riding and breakdown of American federalism. Second, nullification would have drastically lowered state exit costs: indeed, its titular purpose was to allow costless exit.

Southern incentives reflect those studied in the model. Nullification sought to lower z . For radical southerners, this provided two benefits. First, it would reduce both the national government's ability to impose costs (i.e., lower $f(z)$). Any policies directly hostile to slaveholders could be nullified. Second, nullification lowered exit costs (falling $c(z)$), allowing southerners the ability to escape a Union captured by a hostile and aggressive North. Unfortunately for most Americans, lowering z would also lower the national government's ability to provide central goods, that is, it would reduce $2(n, z)$.

²⁹ Standard sources on nullification include: Ellis (1987) and Freehling (1966); see also Freehling (1990, chs 14-15).

Our model also illuminates the means by which Jackson and his political advisor and organizational genius, Martin Van Buren, defeated the nullifiers. Jackson helped forge a near national consensus over a new approach to states' rights. The new approach held that the national government had virtually no role in regulating the economy, except through taxation to provide enumerated central goods and monetary policy. The advantage to Southerners was obvious: an absence of any mechanism allowing the national government to interfere with slavery. Many Northerners who also feared an overweening, remote national government, though in smaller proportion to Southerners, supported Jackson's move.

Jackson's veto in the controversy over renewing the charter of the Second Bank of the United States illustrates this claim. Jackson's famous veto message went well beyond the specifics of the Bank controversy to create one of the defining documents of the Jacksonian Democrats. This event is important for two reasons. First, Jackson had to use his veto because sufficient Jacksonians joined the opposition to pass the renewal. Second, the veto message articulated the new approach of states' rights in a way that limits the power of the national government. The approach sought not only to allow states the freedom over their property and institutions, but to deny the federal government any powers over economy that might be used as a precedent to grant that government power over slavery. Jacksonians had to oppose the Bank because they denied the federal government the authority to intervene in the economy. Third, in terms of the model, the new approach to states' rights helped forge a new consensus about the limits on national authority and hence trigger strategies to engage against potential encroachment by the national government.

The new consensus over states' rights helped create new, self-enforcing limits on the national government. It also gave the Democratic party a comparative advantage in electoral competition in the South, while allowing it to be competitive in the North. This had two related effects. First, it enabled Democrats to become the hegemonic party during the era, dominating politics from the election of Jackson to that of Lincoln. As table 5.1 reveals, Democrats held united control of the national government in 8 of the 16 Congresses between the election of Jackson and Lincoln; their political opponents, the Whigs, did so in only one of 16 Congress. National policy therefore had a decided Democratic cast during this era. Try as they might to develop support for greater national promotion of the economy, Whigs could never muster sufficient electoral support. Second, as long as these doctrines maintained the Democrats' dominant electoral position, they had no incentive to alter them. The Democrats' hegemony combined with the near national consensus on states' rights to protect

most Southerners and many Northerners, and conditioned the ability of national, election-seeking politicians to encroach on state sovereignty.

Although not all of this pattern could have been foreseen in 1833 during the nullification crisis, Van Buren and Jackson's solution gave Southerners almost everything they wanted, except for the radical tool of nullification. In the political equilibrium for the next generation, this tool proved unnecessary. The Jackson-Van Buren approach simultaneously averted the crisis by defeating nullification, created a new, hegemonic party, provided the basis for self-enforcing limits on the national government, and thus preserved a stable federation.

Unfortunately, this consensus was to fall apart a generation later, but we leave that tale for another time (see, however, Weingast 1997a for a discussion of how the federalism of Jackson during the second party system broke down in the 1850s).

5.3 Modern China (with a brief comparison to Russia)

Mao's death in 1976 left China in disarray. The cultural revolution had been an economic and political disaster. Further, Mao's death created a succession crisis. The latter was resolved in 1978 when Deng Xiaoping emerged as China's new leader. Deng sought to solve China's economic problems through market reform.

Potential problems of predation and opportunism were a major impediment to the central government's fostering markets. Deng addressed these problems through several strategies. First, reform was gradual, beginning with experiments that were expanded if successful and abandoned if not. Second, Deng began with agrarian reform, abandoning the disastrous collectivist system. By turning land, equipment, and other capital over to the peasants, Deng created several hundred million peasant constituents favoring reform. The result was a significant boost in peasant incomes and in total production (cites). Third, economic reform was accompanied by striking political reform. Although the Communist Party of China (CCP) retained its lock on national power, the central government devolved considerable power to lower governments. This new system of federalism granted considerable autonomy and power to the provinces and lower governments (Oi 1993, Montinola, Qian and Weingast 1995).

Agrarian reform contributed to the central government's commitment to economic reform in three ways. First, it created a huge, pro-reform constituency. Second, this could be undone only at the price of massive violence against the peasantry. Third, it demonstrated to others that the central government's new initiative were not tentative.

By the mid-1980s, China sought to extend its reform to industry and commerce. Here too, the problem of central government predation and opportunism loomed as a large impediment, since fears of such encroachment would vastly increase the uncertainty related to capitalist investments. The central government sought to limit the possibilities of predation and opportunism in several ways. First, it devolved considerable power to the lower governments. Central to this devolution were new fiscal powers (Oksenberg and Tong 1991). Local governments, not the national government, collected taxes, forwarding the national government an agreed amount and keeping the residual. Local governments were also granted regulatory authority over the economies. These governments, not the national government, became the locus of decision-making over rules governing production and exchange. Finally, the national government slowly dismantled its planning and spy apparatus.

These institutional changes had several effects. The new fiscal powers allowed lower governments to act as residual claimants for locally generated tax revenue. Because they could keep most or all tax revenue beyond a certain amount, lower governments had strong incentives to foster local economic prosperity. Economic growth would benefit local citizens and local governments, not just the national government. Although not all local governments initially followed this path, several on the south coast did so aggressively, particularly Guangdong province. As Guangdong's impressive success became apparent, other provinces and localities began to imitate it (Montinola, Qian, and Weingast 1995).

At the same time, fiscal reform also limited the national government's resources in unforeseen ways, making it the poor relative to its political obligations (e.g., its welfare obligations associated with the SOEs) (see Bahl and Wallich 1992 and Wong 1991). Importantly, fiscal stress further limited the central government's ability to encroach on the provinces.

The dismantling of the planning and spy apparatus also reduced the threat of encroachment. As economists emphasize with respect to the socialist planning system, the central government's information enhanced its ability to encroach and implied an inability to commit to non-interference (Milgrom and Roberts 1990) — e.g., not to raise quotas (Laffont and Tirole 1988); not to subsidize, creating the so-called soft budget constraint (Dewatripont and Makin 1995; generally, see Riordan and Aghion and Tirole). Dismantling the central government's information systems reduced its ability to extract from lower governments and firms. Indeed, the Chinese have a phrase reflecting this, “storing wealth in enterprises”.

We interpret China's policies for creating economic reform as including political reform that created a new system of top-down federalism. By granting the provinces and lower governments new

powers, China created a set of political actors with incentives to resist national encroachments on lower government power. All governments had incentives to resist.

Events after the bloody suppression of the Tiananmen Square demonstrations illustrate this point. This period witnessed the anti-reformists' strongest moment of power within the central government during the entire reform period (1978-present). At this time, China's Premier, Li Peng, sought to undo the fiscal system and provincial autonomy. A similar move had occurred on two previous occasions under Mao; both were successful. But in 1989, at a meeting of governors of the provinces, the governor of Guangdong province said no (Shirk 1993). Because so many provincial governors sided with Guangdong's governor, Li Peng backed down. China's new system of federalism survived its biggest challenge. As our model suggests, the trigger-strategy threat of non-cooperation by the provinces proved central to policing the center's willingness to adhere to the federation's rules.

Implications of the model

The model helps interpret these events. From the beginning, the central government represented the principal impediment to fostering a market economy. Under the Chinese socialist system, the central government's institutions were geared toward command and control, not the market. Hence the first steps in market reform were to reduce the reach of government.

In terms of the model, China lowered z , the institutional power of the central government. This had several simultaneous effects. First, it lowered the ability of the central government to punish lower governments, i.e., $f(z)$ declined. By design, this meant that the center could no longer force lower governments to tow the party line. It also meant that the center had less power to prevent common pool problems by lower governments. As a consequence, several provinces encroached on the common market by raising internal trade barriers. Finally, lowering z lowered $2(z,n)$, the ability of the central government to provide national public goods. In the beginning, this loss was potential, not actual. The reason is that the central government was not providing the necessary public goods to support a market, so reducing its powers did not lower these public goods. As suggested, several provinces used their new freedom to foster market growth.

The model also helps interpret China's current problems. The CCP's refusal to place restrictions on its control over the national government means it has been unwilling to allow constraints that would inhibit its ability to encroach on the market in the future — the potential for abuse of $f(z)$ remains. Hence the central government remains relatively weak, including constraints on its ability to provide public goods. Although many analysts call for solving this problem by

increasing the center's powers, our approach suggests that this alone will not solve the problem. The dual dilemmas of federalism imply that a country cannot simply resolve one problem — e.g., the center's weakness — without simultaneously addressing the other problem — preventing the center's abuse of its additional powers.

Finally, our model helps interpret the events following Tiananmen Square. The provinces' resistance to the center's attempt to reduce their fiscal independence in part helped create a focal point trigger strategy limiting the center's ability to encroach on this aspect of reform. Per our theory, in the face of the collective resistance of the provinces, the center backed down.

Comparison with Russia

Like China, Russia has a weak center.³⁰ As part of its efforts to initiate a market economy, Russia too had to dismantle the planning apparatus and its wide range of polices designed to monitor and control the economy. In terms of the model, this implied a reduction of z . This in turn implied a reduction in $f(z)$ and $2(z,n)$, the ability to punish regions and the ability to provide national public goods.

Many analysts view the problem in Russia as too weak a center (Blanchard and Shleifer 2000, Treisman 2000; see also Solnick 1998). According to this view, the regions have too much power and have thwarted the center's efforts at economic reform. In terms of the model, the regions have created a common pool problem, and the center is too weak to police effectively the regions. In this view, the regions are a principal problem in preventing economic reform. The answer to this problem, according to Blanchard and Shleifer, is to increase the institutional power of the center. Doing so will allow it to police the regions.

Our approach provides a somewhat different perspective. Blanchard and Shleifer's proposal is much like the Federalist's initial proposals under the Articles: too weak a center implied, in their eyes, a need to increase the center's powers. Yet the Federalists' attempts to do so failed. As noted above, the reason is that increasing the center's powers also increased the potential for the center's abuse. As a consequence, the states resisted.

As described above, the Federalists solved this dilemma by inventing a series of institutional constraints on the center's exercise of its powers. By limiting the ability to abuse $f(z)$, the Federalists convince pivotal Anti-Federalist citizens to support the new Constitution.

³⁰This subsection draws on our recent work in XXXX..

Our analysis suggests that Blanchard and Shleifer focuses on only one of the dual dilemmas of federalism (XXXX). Further, they may have the wrong interpretation of the phenomenon they study. Take as given their analysis that the regions' behavior is one of the central impediment in reform. This behavior could be because the regions are simply bad. But it could also be in part because the regions fear abuse of power by the center. In the face of a center unwilling or unable to erect constraints on its abuse of its power, one of the few strategies available to the regions is to resist the center's power.

In terms of the model, Blanchard and Shleifer are right in that too weak a center – too low z – implies that the center has too little power to police common pool problems. But granting the center more power alone – increasing z – also allows the center to abuse its power.

Our approach thus suggests that Russia is more likely to solve its problems if, at the same time it increases the center's powers, it also builds institutional constraints on its ability to abuse its new powers. Addressing both of the dual dilemmas simultaneously is more likely to get the regions to go along than addressing only the weak center alone.

6. Conclusions

We began our study with the two fundamental dilemmas of federalism: too strong a center risks overwhelming a federation by acting opportunistically and extracting too many rents; too weak a center risks a federation's collapse due to free-riding and insufficient provision of public goods. The twin dilemmas make stable federalism problematic, in part because they imply a tradeoff in the structure of a federation. Institutions designed to address one of the dilemmas exacerbates the other. To be stable, federalism requires a delicate balance of central government powers combined with mechanisms for limiting the center's opportunism.

This paper develops a model of self-enforcing federalism, showing how stable federations solve the two fundamental dilemmas of federalism. Our models yields a series of results. First, for a federation to overcome the shirking problem, the center must have sufficient monitoring resources and penalizing capacity to punish shirkers. Second, to police the center's tendency to overawe the states, states must *coordinate* on punishment strategies, perhaps chosen at the constitutional or design stage of a federation. Appropriately designed punishment strategies limit the center's ability to extract resources from the states, increase the provision of public goods, and result in higher public welfare. Third, *exit costs* shifts rents to the center. As a state's cost of exiting increases, its threat to exit

becomes less credible. This increases the bargaining power of the center against the state, and shifts some of the rents to the center. Fourth, the benefits from federalism must be sufficiently large so that both the center will not “take the money and run,” expropriating all contributions, and the states will be better off. Finally, in choosing the optimal amount of institutional power granted to the center, designers can effectively resolve the two dilemmas. This resolution leads to a level of public goods provision that is less than would be socially desirable. An inappropriate level of institutional power granted the center is destabilizing.

An important feature of our approach is that states’ ability to coordinate is critical to resolving the dilemma of central government encroachment and opportunism. The creation of a constitution, for example, serves to construct a focal point coordinating state reactions against a central government that seeks to violate the rules. Thus, as many observers of federalism suggest, there might appear to be a “culture of federalism” helping sustain successful federations (Elazar 1987, 192-97). We differ with these scholars over one critical point. They typically see culture as exogenous: only those federal states with such a culture survive. Our approach instead suggests that this culture is endogenous, a product of the design stage. The two episodes described in the United States’ history — the creation of the Constitution and the redefinition of states’ rights under Andrew Jackson during the nullification controversy — both exhibit the construction of a set of consensus agreements about the limits on the national government and on state shirking. In this view, the construction of a coordination device helps create a “federal culture” and sustain a federation.

Our approach also suggests an important difference between top-down and bottom-up federations. As Stepan (1998) emphasizes, top-down federalism includes much of the recent trend toward decentralization. Although space does not allow an extended discussion, our model yields several important results about top-down federations. A federation designed by the center is likely to leave the center with a greater share of the rents than a bottom-up federation. The reason concerns who holds agenda power. In bottom-up federalism, the constituent states design the federation and will attempt to choose institutions that capture the rents for themselves. In top-down federalism, the center controls the design and will bias institutions in favor of its interests.

This perspective on top-down federalism yields a comparative statics result, which applies to the recent literature on the break up of nations (Alesina and Spolaore 1997, Alesina, Spolaore, and Wacziarg 2000). Consider a top-down federation in which the center has designed the institutions to maximize its share of the rent. This implies that the marginal state is indifferent between remaining or exiting the federation. Next, suppose that exit costs fall, so that the marginal state now has an incentive

to exit. In response, the center is likely to adjust the costs and benefits of federalism so that the marginal state will remain in the federation.

Alesina et al. study the growth of international trade, suggesting that, by providing a substitute for the scale benefits of a large country, growing international trade lowers exit costs for regions in federations. They predict that this will lead to the break up of nations. We disagree, observing that Alesina et. al. ignore the endogenous reaction of the center. In response to falling exit costs, the center is likely to increase the benefits to marginal regions, for example, by increasing authority to the states. Thus our prediction is that, in response to growing international trade and lower costs of exit, heterogeneous countries should decentralize.

In Section 5, we demonstrated both the strengths and weaknesses of our theoretical results through the examination of a series of cases: the failure of federalism in the United States under the Articles of Confederation and how the Constitution resolved the twin dilemmas of federalism; the reappearance of these problems during the nullification crisis; growing decentralization in China; and the failure to solve these problems in other large federations, such as Argentina, Mexico, and Russia. In all of the cases, the potential to gain the benefits from cooperation and public goods provision was traded against the difficulties of shirking and encroachment. Per our predictions, the successful cases — the United States and to some extent China — resolve the twin dilemmas in accord with our model: creating a clear delineation central power while granting the center the power to police shirkers. The failed federations — Argentina, Mexico, and Russia — have failed to counterbalance central authority.

Our paper contributes to the growing literature on “equilibrium institutions” (Calvert 1992 and Gibbons and Rutten 1996). This approach holds that, to be sustained, all features of representative government must be self-enforcing in the sense that political officials have incentives to abide by them. This logic includes sustaining political institutions — such as, elections, separation of powers, and federalism — and various rights — such as the right to hold property, to religious freedom, and to form free associations. Our approach to federalism demonstrates the power of such a perspective. Using the formal tools of rational choice institutionalism, we focus attention on the specific trade-offs and requirements of stable federal institutional arrangements. To survive, the federal institutions must be self-enforcing for political officials at all levels of government.

More generally, for students of constitutions and democratic institutions, we use the case of federalism to demonstrate how to study a neglected aspect of constitutions. The vast majority of the literature examining constitutional institutions takes these rules as exogenous. In contrast, the new

literature on equilibrium institutions takes these institutions as endogenous and seeks to explain the factors underpinning their survival. By taking the approach that constitutions should be studied as self-enforcing equilibria, we have demonstrated not only the force of such documents but also their rationales.

APPENDIX 1: PROOFS OF PROPOSITIONS STATED IN TEXT

Proof of Proposition 1. Consider first a typical state i 's cooperative strategy in equilibrium. Consider first the payoff to shirking versus cooperating. The payoff it will earn for shirking for one period will be $\theta(n,z)x_i - 1$. Its payoff for contributing will be $\theta(n,z)x_i - f(z)q$. Solving for these two conditions implies that a player will contribute over shirk iff $f(z)q > 1$. Now consider when it will contribute versus exit. If it exits its payoff will be $-c_i(z)$. If it contributes its expected payoff will be $\sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \delta^t (\theta(n,z)x_i - 1) = \frac{(\theta(n,z)x_i - 1)}{1 - \delta}$. Thus, a player will cooperate rather than exit iff $x_i \geq \frac{1 - c_i(z)(1 - \delta)}{\theta(n,z)}$. Now consider the equilibrium strategy of the center. It is straightforward to show that given the equilibrium strategy of the states, the center's dominant strategy is to play $x_i = 0 \forall i$ and $m_i = 1 \forall i$. Thus the payoff to deviating for the center is $\sum_{i=1}^n f(z) + \delta c_i(z) + 1 = n(1 + f(z) + \bar{c}(z))$. Its expected payoff to not deviating is $\sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \delta^t \sum_i (1 - x_i) = \frac{1}{1 - \delta}$. This in turn implies that the center will stay on the equilibrium path if $\frac{1}{n} \sum_i x_i \leq \delta - (1 - \delta)(f(z) + \bar{c})$. To determine enforcement off the equilibrium path, consider first the Nash equilibrium in the stage game. As noted the center's dominant strategy is $x_i = 0 \forall i$ and $m_i = 1 \forall i$. Note also that given the center's optimal strategy, the states will always prefer shirking to contributing, since $-(1 - f(z)) < -f(z)$. Now consider the state's choice of exiting versus shirking. A state will prefer to exit over shirk in the stage game iff $-c_i(z) > -f(z) \rightarrow c_i(z) \leq f(z)$, which is true by assumption. Thus, since the off-path equilibrium strategies are reversion to the Nash equilibrium, enforcement is subgame perfect.

Proof of comparative statics in the RG. Note first that $x^{U*} = \delta - (f(z) + \delta \bar{c}(z))(1 - \delta)$, $x^{L*} = \frac{1 - \bar{c}(z)(1 - \delta)}{\theta}$ and $S = x^{U*} - x^{L*}$. This implies the following: (i) $\frac{\partial x^{U*}}{\partial \bar{c}} = -\delta(1 - \delta) < 0$ and $\frac{\partial x^{L*}}{\partial \bar{c}} = \frac{(1 - \delta)}{\theta} < 0$; (ii) $\frac{\partial S}{\partial f} = -(1 - \delta) < 0$. Substituting the expressions for x^{U*}

and x^{L*} , this simplifies to $\frac{\partial S}{\partial \theta} = \frac{(\theta-1)x^{\sigma*} + \theta x^{L*}}{\theta^2} > 0$ since $\theta > 1$; (iv)
 $\frac{\partial S}{\partial \bar{c}} = \frac{(1-\delta)(1-\theta\delta)}{\theta} \rightarrow \frac{\partial S}{\partial \bar{c}} > 0 \leftrightarrow \delta > \frac{1}{\theta}$.

Proof of Proposition 2. Note first that assumptions (A1) and (A2) guarantee that an equilibrium to the RG exists. Now consider a typical state i 's participation constraint. A state will participate iff her equilibrium stage payoff is greater than zero which implies $\theta(n,z)x_i^* - 1 \geq 0 \rightarrow x_i^* \geq \frac{1}{\theta(n,z)}$. This implies that each state will receive $\frac{1}{\theta(n,z)} + \alpha_i S$. If we solve for each state i 's preference for S , we have $\max_{S_i} \frac{1}{\theta(n,z)} + \alpha_i S$ subject to $S \geq 0$ which implies $x^{\sigma*} = \delta - (f(z) + \delta \bar{c}(z))(1-\delta)$. Solving for x_i^* , we have $x_i^* = \frac{1}{\theta(n,z)} + \alpha_i n [\delta - (f(z) + \delta \bar{c}(z))(1-\delta) - \frac{1}{\theta(n,z)}]$ which is part (i) of the proposition. To find the optimal z for a given state i , we must maximize the sum of the discounted equilibrium payoff, which implies a state's optimal z can be obtained by maximizing the sum of its stage payoff. Taking

$$\max_z (\theta(n,z)x_i^* - 1) = \max_z \left[\theta(n,z) \left(\frac{1}{\theta(n,z)} + \alpha_i n [\delta - (f(z) + \delta \bar{c}(z))(1-\delta) - \frac{1}{\theta(n,z)}] \right) - 1 \right] \quad (A1)$$

we have the condition

$$\alpha_i n (\theta_z(n,z) (\delta - (f(z) + \delta \bar{c}(z))(1-\delta)) - \theta(n,z) (f'_z(z) + \delta \bar{c}'_z(z))(1-\delta)) = 0 \quad (A2)$$

which implies that for player i , z_i^* solves

$$\frac{\theta_z}{\theta} = \frac{(f'_z + \bar{c}'_z)(1-\delta)}{\delta - (f + \bar{c})(1-\delta)}. \quad (A3)$$

The second order condition of (A1) is

$$\theta_{zz} (\delta - (f + \bar{c})(1-\delta)) - 2\theta_z (f'_z + \bar{c}'_z)(1-\delta) - \theta (f''_{zz} + \delta \bar{c}''_{zz})(1-\delta). \quad (A4)$$

Since $1 > \delta > 0, \theta > 0, \theta_z > 0, \theta_{zz} < 0, f \geq 0, f'_z > 0, f''_{zz} > 0, \bar{c} \geq 0, \bar{c}'_z > 0, \bar{c}''_{zz} > 0$ by assumption, and $\delta - (f + \bar{c})(1-\delta) > 0$ by Proposition 2.A1, then z_i^* is a maximum. Since (A3) is independent of i , it means that $\forall i, j, z_i^* = z_j^*$, which implies that all players have a common optimum or z^* is obtained by solving (A2).

Proof of comparative statics on z^ .* Rewriting (A3), let $F = \theta_z(\delta - (f + \delta\bar{c})(1 - \delta)) - \theta(f_z + \delta\bar{c}_z)(1 - \delta)$. By the implicit function theorem and (A4), for any parameter w , we have the general result that $sign[\frac{\partial z^*}{\partial w}] = sign[\frac{\partial F}{\partial w}]$. Thus, we have: (i) $sign[\frac{\partial z^*}{\partial \delta}] = sign[-\theta_z \delta(1 - \delta)] \rightarrow \frac{\partial z^*}{\partial \delta} < 0$; (ii) $sign[\frac{\partial z^*}{\partial \theta}] = sign[-(f_z + \delta\bar{c}_z)(1 - \delta)] \rightarrow \frac{\partial z^*}{\partial \theta} < 0$; (iii) $sign[\frac{\partial z^*}{\partial f}] = sign[-\theta_z(1 - \delta)] \rightarrow \frac{\partial z^*}{\partial f} < 0$.

APPENDIX 2: A NOTE ON INCENTIVES FOR COORDINATED PUNISHMENTS

As we note, our focus here is on the ‘best’ case for punishments to create self-enforcing, cooperative federations. Although we reserve the analysis of coordination problems for later work, to provide some indication of how the states might have incentives to coordinate, we sketch some indicative results here.

Suppose the center induces a state j to exit in period $t-1$. Since S is the surplus under the fully cooperative equilibrium (or, alternatively, $n(x^{u^*} - x^{l^*})$), then let S_{-j} indicate the surplus without j . Solving for $S_{-j} - S$ we have that $S_{-j} > S$ iff

$$\theta\theta_{-j}(1 - \delta)(\bar{c}_{-j} - \bar{c}) + (\theta_{-j} - \theta) + (\theta\bar{c}_{-j} - \theta_{-j}\bar{c})(1 - \delta) \geq 0 \quad (A1)$$

where the subscripted terms indicate the values in the reduced federation and the non-subscripted terms the values in the full federation. Using this result, we can turn to an examination of when the reduced federation will be sustainable given the previous equilibrium conditions. To meet this criterion, both the states and the center are made no worse off (and therefore have strong incentives to enforce the previous bargain) under the reduced federation versus the full federation. This is a minimal but illuminating condition of punishment coordination.

(A1) contains two effects on the size of the surplus. On the one hand, the surplus decreases in the smaller federation from decreased scale, in other words since $\theta(n-1, z) < \theta(n, z)$. Second, the surplus increases if exit costs of the eliminated state are *higher* than the average exit costs of the full federation, since exit costs decrease the surplus. If the second effect is dominated by the first effect then the surplus increases (i.e. $S_{-j} > S$). If the first dominates the second *or* if the exit costs of j are *lower* than the average exit costs in the full federation, then the surplus decreases (i.e. $S_{-j} < S$).

This suggests three interesting cases to examine. Consider first two cases in which $s_{-j} < s$. If $s_{-j} - \sum_{i \neq j} x_i^* < 0$, then there is *no profile* of sustainable, or incentive compatible, payouts such that the both the states can remain rent neutral and the center will not continue to unravel the federation. Here, the size of the existing payouts is sufficiently close to the boundary of the constraint the center puts on the size of the payouts (in other words the upper limit on average payouts x^{**}), that the decrease in the surplus is greater than the “excess rent” paid to the center. A second possibility is that $s_{-j} - \sum_{i \neq j} x_i^* > 0$ when. In this case, the center will take the action if and only if its rents from excluding the incremental state are sufficiently low. In other words, if

$$f + c_j + 1 + \sum_{t=1}^{\infty} \delta^t (s_{-j} - \sum_{i \neq j} x_i^*) \geq \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \delta^t (s - \sum_i x_i^*)$$

Next, note that the right hand side can be decomposed into its components $\sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \delta^t (s_{-j} - \sum_{i \neq j} x_i^*) + \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \delta^t (1 - x_j^*)$, which yields the result that the center will be better off iff

$$x_j^* \geq \delta - (1 - \delta)(f + c_j). \tag{A2}$$

(A2) captures the intuition that if the ongoing rent the center earns is sufficiently large (in other words if its equilibrium payoff to that state is relatively low), it will prefer to keep that state in. If on the other hand, the payout to that state is large relative to what the center can earn by a one-period deviation forcing state j to exit, it will have an incentive to force that state out. In this sense, therefore, (A2) states that if a state is getting a large rent relative to its exit costs, then the center will be able to gain while leaving the other states rent neutral. This implies that adding the chance for the center to selectively punish will force a “fairness” on the sustainable divisions in which the stronger (or lowest exit cost) states will get the highest rent relative to the weaker (higher exit cost) states.

If the surplus under the reduced federation is larger than under the full federation the center has a strong incentive to eliminate the state. If the incremental surplus can be captured by the center, each of the remaining states can remain rent-neutral. In this case, the center is strictly better off by inducing one state to leave and moving toward a higher rent position for itself. This points to an approach to identifying “equilibrium federations”—in other words, given the characteristics of the states, how will states sort themselves into appropriate institutional arrangements—which we undertake elsewhere.

Table 5.1: Democratic Hegemony over National Elections, 1828-60.

Year	Congress	House	Senate	President
<u>Second party system:</u>				
1829-31	21	D	D	D
1831-33	22	D	D	D
1833-35	23	D	W	D
1835-37	24	D	D	D
1837-39	25	D	D	D
1839-41	26	D	D	D
1841-43	27	W	W	W
1843-45	28	D	W	W
1845-47	29	D	D	D
1847-49	30	W	D	D
1849-51	31	D	D	W
<u>The 1850s:</u>				
1851-53	32	D	D	W
1853-55	33	D	D	D
1855-57	34	W	D	D
1857-59	35	D	D	D
1859-61	36	W ¹	D	D

Source: Austin (1986), Burnham (1955), and Martis (1990)

Notes: D = Jacksonians and Democrats

W = Whigs/oppositions/Free Soilers/Republicans

* No party holds a majority, but a Republican elected speaker.

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