SECESSION AND SURVIVAL:
NATIONS, STATES AND VIOLENT CONFLICT

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Political Science
in the Graduate School of
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2009
ABSTRACT

(Political Science)

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Secession is a watershed event not only for the new state that is created and the old state that is dissolved, but also for neighboring states, proximate ethno-political groups and major powers. This project examines the problem of violent secessionist conflict and addresses an important debate at the intersection of comparative and international politics about the conditions under which secession is a peaceful solution to ethnic conflict. It demonstrates that secession is rarely a solution to ethnic conflict, does not assure the protection of remaining minorities and produces new forms of violence. To explain why some secessions produce peace, while others generate violence, the project develops a theoretical model of the conditions that produce internally coherent, stable and peaceful post-secessionist states rather than recursive secession (i.e., secession from a new secessionist state) or interstate disputes between the rump and secessionist state. Theoretically, the analysis reveals a curvilinear relationship between ethno-territorial heterogeneity and conflict, explains disparate findings in the literature on ethnic conflict and conclusively links ethnic structure and violence. The project also contributes to the literature on secessionist violence, and civil war more generally, by linking intrastate and interstate causes, showing that what is frequently thought of as a domestic phenomenon is in fact mostly a phenomenon of international politics. Drawing upon original data, methodological advances at the interface of statistics, computer science and probability theory, and qualitative methods such as elite interviews and archival research, the project offers a comprehensive, comparative and contextual treatment of secession and violence.
To life
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List of Abbreviations

AO: Autonomous Oblast
ASSR: Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
BMA: Bayesian Model Averaging
CIS: Commonwealth of Independent States
CART: Classification and Regression Trees
CIPDD: Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development
COW: Correlates of War Project
CRAN: The Comprehensive R Archive Network
ECI: the ethnic concentration index
ELF: Ethnolinguistic fractionalization index
ENP: The Effective Number of Parties
EU: European Union
EVO TE: the percentage of the vote obtained by ethnic parties
GFSIS: Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies
GLM: Generalized Linear Model
GMT: Greenwich Mean Time
HET: Ethno-Territorial Heterogeneity Index
ICB: International Crisis Behavior
IDP: Internally Displaced Persons
ICTY: International Criminal Trials for Yugoslavia
JNA: Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija (Yugoslav Army)
KFOR: Kosovo Force
KLA (UCK): Kosovo Liberation Army
KLDC: Kullback Leibler Divergence Criterion
MAP: (NATO) Membership Action Plan
MECE: Mutually Exclusive Completely Exhaustive
MID: Militarized Interstate Dispute
ML: Maximum Likelihood
NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO: Non-governmental organization
OOB: Out of Bag Error Rate
OSCE: Organisation for Security Cooperation in Europe
PREG: Political Relevant Ethnic Groups
PRIO: Peace Research Institute Oslo
RF/RSF: Random Forests/Random Survival Forests
RSK: Republika Srpska Krajina
SADR: Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic
SFRY: Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
SVM: Support Vector Machines
TRNC: Turkish Republic of North Cyprus
UN: United Nations
UNMIK: UN Mission in Kosovo
UNOMIG: UN Observer Mission in Georgia
UNSC: United Nations Security Council
US: United States
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soon to be dusty dedication.
Chapter 1

Why and How to Study Secessionist Conflict

Should I Stay or Should I Go?
If I Go There Will Be Trouble
If I Stay It Will Be Double
So You Gotta Let Me Know
Should I Stay or Should I Go?

—The Clash—

1.1 Why Study Secession

Simultaneously destroying and creating order, secession is a watershed event marked by significant political change: the rise and fall of regional and global powers, new patterns of international and domestic alliances, and sudden opportunities for states and groups to improve or defend their relative positions. Secessionist conflicts account for the deaths of tens of millions, not to mention the rape, torture, and disfigurement of millions more. Secession is at the core of political conflict in

country after country, afflicting both the developing and the developed world. In fact, according to one estimate, no more than twenty-five member states of the 196 member United Nations can claim to be free of such conflicts.

Studying secession and conflict around the globe is a sobering experience. Although secession has long been a staple of the interstate system, recent secessions, for example, in Abkhazia, East Timor, Eritrea, Kosovo, Somaliland, South Ossetia and the tremors from the disintegration of three federal republics - the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia - have brought renewed attention. Over the past two centuries, dozens of secessions have occurred in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and Oceania. All told, the last two centuries witnessed the emergence of five to six dozen de facto and de jure independent secessionist states. Although many of these turned out well - i.e., established peaceful and prosperous states - a significant proportion did not. This study examines why. In particular, it asks: why do some secessions produce peace and order, while others lead to violence and instability?

A careful assessment of this question brings into sharp relief the theoretical and policy issues at stake. At the same time, it underscores the broader debate over possible solutions to ethnic conflict of which it is a part. An assortment of


3The northern Israelite tribes’ secession from the ‘larger Davidian kingdom’ soon after King Solomon passed (circa 933 B.C.E.) is typically regarded as one of the first recorded secessions. The word secession, however, is derived from the Latin secessio: (nominative = secessio). The past participle stem of secedere is ‘secede,’ from se - ‘apart’ and cedere ‘to go’ (cede).

sophisticated techniques designed to encourage ethnic accommodation have been proposed; these are discussed extensively elsewhere. Beyond the debate between advocates of various accommodation techniques and policies, other scholars have criticized the very idea of seeking accommodation among the antagonists, suggesting that not only may it be futile, but that it is likely to be counterproductive.

Where groups are territorially concentrated, these scholars argue, it may be that efforts focused on creating two separate, but stable, states could be more successful at reducing conflict. In effect, creating a clean cut between the ill-disposed parties,
drawing new borders and transferring populations if necessary, may be the most productive avenue forward.

Sceptics of creating new states to solve ethnic problems in existing states argue that ‘secession is almost never an answer to such problems ... and is likely to make them worse.’ These arguments have produced a debate in the theoretical literature and a pressing concern in policy circles over whether, and if so when, secession is a sensible solution to internal disputes - especially those of an ethno-territorial character - and when it is merely a prompt for subsequent conflict. This project advances that debate by assessing the aftermath of all de jure and de facto states created through secession.

The backbone of the dispute is the claim that secession or partition would result in more homogeneous states and such states, it is argued, would be less prone to ethnic conflict. Sceptics of secession as a solution to ethnic conflicts contest the premise of homogeneous post-secessionist states. Independence, they hold, would still tend to create new heterogeneity, even if the old heterogeneity was removed, by increasing the salience of sub-group cleavages— since ethnic identity is not fixed, but contextual. Secession also tends to shift the balance of power among and within ethnic groups, both in the new state and the old one, forcing each of the groups to reconsider its position, its alliances and its interests in the new situation. Secession,

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which almost always makes ethnicity a salient political issue, can exacerbate challenges associated with the transfer of power, despite the absence of violent conflict, compounding problems of governance with those of separatism.

Even if secession may not be a generally applicable solution to ethnic conflict, it might nevertheless be appropriate in certain cases when homogeneity can be envisioned and the very real benefits which secession promises have a reasonable chance of materializing. Since a world of homogeneous states is not in the offing, the issue is to determine when and how distinct ethnic groups can peacefully co-exist in one state and when parting ways is the most peaceful path forward; in effect, the question is when and why some secessions result in outcomes that leave both parties better off, while at other times the act of secession is only a prompt for further militarized action.

If true, secession would merely reorder, rather than resolve, ethnic conflict. Reordering can occur downward, creating new violent secessionist conflicts from the new states (e.g., Abkhazia and South Ossetia from Georgia, or Puntland and Maakhir from Somaliland); or upward, by escalating tensions to the interstate level (e.g., Eritrea and Ethiopia, or Greece and Turkey). Both would be bad, but beyond that we lack a theory guiding our expectations of when to expect such outcomes to be more or less likely after secessions.

The aim of this dissertation, then, is to develop that kind of theory and to examine it empirically. Building upon previous theoretical and empirical work on intrastate and interstate conflict, the dissertation seeks, on the one hand, to un-

derstand in depth politically relevant cases, and on the other hand to develop ‘a comprehensive set of generalizations that fits all the material and into which new material can be fitted’. The ubiquity of secession in all corners of the world and in all time periods calls for a comparative analysis, while the idiosyncracies of particular secessions call for caution. The analysis must perform this delicate balancing act, accounting for variation in violence after secession, theoretically and empirically, describing recurring patterns, and, within reason, making probabilistic forecasts that hold cross-nationally and over time and that would aid scholars and policymakers in developing robust solutions.

The topic of secession and conflict is politically and theoretically important. The large literature on this topic and abundant foreign policy debate about US policy in the Balkans, the Caucuses, the Horn of Africa, South East and Northeast Asia are indicative of its contemporary relevance. As a world power, the US must keep close watch on ethnic conflicts and secessionist movements around the globe.

The problem is also important from a humanitarian perspective. Secessionist conflicts account for the suffering of millions of individuals. The problem of secession is significant well beyond the confines of any one academic discipline and

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directly concerns US policy as new secessions continue to emerge, posing difficult decisions for internationally engaged states such as the United States. The problem of secession and conflict merit a comprehensive approach - this effort should be focused, in my view, on three related objectives: (1) assessing the sources of secessionist state conflict behavior within and across its borders, (2) evaluating the short and long term consequences of secession for further internal and external conflict, and (3) developing a statistical model of secessionist state behavior that could fit new data as they become available. Achieving these objectives, even in part, would improve the position of scholars and policymakers to identify and encourage secessions that are likely to create stable, peaceful and prosperous states, while discouraging ones that are not, by anticipating foreseeable failures; in effect, creating an early warning system for violent secessionist conflict.

The project is original at a number of levels. At the broadest level, the dissertation is the first to systematically examine the consequences of all secessions over such a broad temporal and spatial scope. The temporal and spatial domain of the project covers all de jure and de facto secessions since the beginning of the nineteenth century, starting with Greece and Belgium, to the beginning of the twentieth century, Norway and Panama, and moving forward to the turn of the twenty-first century, East Timor, Montenegro and Kosovo.

The project is also unique in considering both recognized secessionist states, such as Bangladesh, Eritrea, and Tajikistan, and de facto secessionist states, such as Abkhazia, Somaliland, and North Cyprus. The reason for doing so is that these polities satisfy the basic definition of stateness, which includes territorial control and basic governance. Intuitively, these cases are clearly relevant to resolving the debate
over secession’s consequences. Most of these cases are, in fact, indistinguishable from UN members, and possess presidents, parliaments, constitutions, currencies, postal systems, stamps, flags, anthems, coats of arms and, of course, police and military forces. Recognition as a strict criteria for inclusion in the universe of cases to examine is far from de rigueur and, indeed, may be pernicious because of the bias among recognized states and international organization against recognizing secessionists, which can translate into a bias in the empirical analysis and in policy debate over secession.

The project also represents a rare effort to combine intrastate and interstate variables, and to systematically theorize, conceptualize and operationalize both dimensions. At the intrastate level, the project focus its effort on the role of ethno-territorial heterogeneity, and significantly advances a debate about its relationship with conflict by specifying the logic that links ethnic structures and violent conflict and by devising a new metric more closely comports with the theoretical and case study literature, and redressed important problems identified with current metrics used in the literature. All else equal, I reason that post-secessionist states, and probably states more generally, with ethnic structures composed of a few small groups (modest heterogeneity) are significantly more likely than those comprised of many small groups (fractionalized) or those composed of one overwhelming majority group (homogeneity) to experience subsequent violent conflict. Theoretically, this implies a curvilinear relationship between ethno-territorial heterogeneity and conflict. Empirically, it helps to explain disparate findings in the literature on ethnic conflict and to conclusively link ethnic structure and violent conflict.

Ethnicity is a concept that is widely cited in the theoretical and empirical lit-
erature, and a feature of the political landscape that figures prominently in both qualitative and quantitative studies in comparative and international politics. Despite its prominence, the relationship between ethnic heterogeneity and conflict is rife with disagreement: some studies claim that there is a strong linear relationship, others argue for a nonlinear relationship; still others suggest that there is no ‘significant’ relationship at all.\(^\text{[14]}\)

Quantitative assessments have relied almost without exception upon various versions of the Simpson index (e.g., ELF and PREG). Needless to say, this index is not the only means to measure ethnic heterogeneity and it may not the best one for all purposes. It has the distinct advantage of being widely available, however, and has therefore been widely used in the literature. But the measure of such an important concept should not be a matter of convenience, or so too will the results. Treating fractionalization, diversity, heterogeneity, dominance, evenness, fragmentation as if they were all measures of the same concept, ethnic diversity, is bound to produce peculiar findings.

Which of these concepts of ethnicity is related to ethnic conflict? According to a large body of theory on violent internal conflict, it is not ethnic ‘fractionalization’ (a large number of small, splintered groups, e.g., Tanzania, Dagestan) that should be associated with conflict, but ethnic ‘heterogeneity’ (a small number of large, internally cohesive groups, e.g., Iraq, Bosnia). There is a lot of evidence and the-

ory suggesting that ELF is not the appropriate measure of the theoretical concept that is so widely cited in the literature. Although discontent with ELF is high, alternatives are still few and far between (Chandra and Wilkinson 2007; Posner 2004; Esteban and Ray 2008.). Until that changes, and new measures that match particular theories are created, progress on this front will be slow.

This project provides the theoretical motivation for a new measure (HET, see Table below), develops its logic mathematically, generates data for a broad set of countries, regions and years, and offers a variety of empirical applications relevant to the study of civil war. One of the main advantages of the new measure of ethnic heterogeneity is that it comports more closely to the theoretical literature on ethnic conflict. Unlike the Simpson index, on which ELF is based, it also takes into account the relative proportions of the group sizes. Furthermore, randomly selected comparisons are meaningful at a qualitative level to country and regional experts (Table 1). In contrast to ELF, which is an increasing function of the number of groups, disparate distributions do not yield the same index value. The new measure is mathematically elegant, flexible and meaningful. In short, HET addresses a number of criticisms that have been launched at extant measures and allows for mathematically and substantively meaningful cross-national and time-series comparisons to be made.

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Table 1: An Empirical Comparison
This internal dimension and demand side is then coupled to the new state’s international environment, the supply side, which is too often bracketed in studies of intrastate conflict, and here special attention is devoted to neighboring states. In particular, I develop a new classification of third party interveners, formalizing a plausible set of assumptions about their interests and empirically examining the impact of their involvement on the escalation of latent tensions and the probability of violent conflict in post-secessionist states.

Figure 1.1: Three Ideal Ethno-Demographic Structures
It is surprising that external actors have not been more systematically incorporated into ethnic conflict research, but it reflects the overwhelming tendency in the literature to assume that, since civil wars occur within states, their causes are located within states. As I show, secessionist conflict is in fact a problem of international politics, an issue not confined its either its causes or consequences to secessionist regions inside states. Take the recent war over South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Speaking with members of Saakashvili’s and Shevardnadze’s cabinet, discussion always veered toward the role of Russia. Take the recent secession of Kosovo, where not a single actor involved, whether elite or layman, urban or rural, would deny the role of the neighboring states and major powers, the United States, Serbia, Russia, Macedonia and Albania. External actors figure prominently in most ethnic civil wars, over two-thirds according to my count; the prospect of their involvement significantly alters the expectations of all other actors. When support is significant, it frequently tips the balance of power in favor of one actor at the expense of the others. A typical civil war data set includes characteristics of the country, the local landscape, the inter-group history and the rebel group, but typically stops short of including characteristics of actors across the border, even though such actors frequently determine the course of the conflict. Indeed, external actors play such a large role in some civil wars that the very distinction between civil and interstate wars becomes blurred. This project theorizes the roles that they may assume and the mechanisms through which they influence the expectations of the key actors, the course of action each pursues, and thereby the probability that violence ensues. I discuss, unpack and extend this argument in the following chapter.
The research strategy is embodied in an original master data set that contains detailed information about each secession since the early 1800s, its internal composition, its external environment and its historical development. These data are analyzed with a number of powerful statistical techniques appropriate for the particular kinds of messy data problems involved. These quantitative tools are complemented with large qualitative portions of the project, which includes a clustered case study (Chapter 4) of the Western Balkans and a sub-national analysis (Chapter 5) of a focal country in the southern Caucuses, Georgia. These chapters develop arguments that follow from the theory and bring archival evidence and elite interviews from research trips to the Caucasus, Balkans and Central Europe to evaluate the general theoretical claims in context, taking into account the stake-holders involved, their interests, passions and perceptions.

The project proceeds in five steps, the first theoretical and the latter empirical. Chapter 2 develops a theory of secessionist conflict, focusing on a form of violent conflict that is usually unexpected, or ignored if anticipated, by the participants prior to secession—recursive secessionist violence—a violent attempt to secede from the new secessionist state, a form of matrioshka secession which is less infrequent and more bloody than has been generally acknowledged. Chapter 3 represents a mezzanine between the theory and the empirical sections, discussing current practice in measuring a key independent variable—ethnic heterogeneity—a practice which I suggest has led us in the wrong direction and resulted in unnecessary confusion. I introduce a new metric of ethnic heterogeneity that more closely comports with theoretical and empirical intuitions about real cases, and then use the new measure to reevaluate a prominent empirical result in the literature, and related theoretical
claim about the relationship between heterogeneity and conflict. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are empirical: the first presents a quantitative analysis of variation in violence in the aftermath of all secessions since the early 1800s and the latter two present detailed analysis of two regions: (5) the western Balkans and (6) the southern Caucasus. Chapter 7 briefly recapitulates the broad outlines of the project, summarizing its primary findings, noting the relevance for policy, and mapping out directions for future research.
Chapter 2

Theory of Secessionist Conflict

Analysts have long recognized a conflict at the core of the international system between two basic concepts—territorial integrity and self-determination—both of which are enshrined in various international treaties. Sovereign states consistently claim the former, whereas ethnic groups increasingly assert the latter. These prerogatives compete—in part, because it is not exactly clear who is entitled to claim these rights and what precisely these rights confer. As a result, the competing demands are periodically reconciled through violence.

Dramatic events, such as the secession of East Timor from Indonesia, Eritrea from Ethiopia, Somaliland from Somalia, the disintegration of three federal republics— the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia - and most recently the conflicts in the Caucasus between Georgia and Russia over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, have brought renewed attention to this old problem.

The end of these three ex-communist federations alone produced over 20 new states within the span of a few years, and set in motion a series of new secessionist and irredentist conflicts. Over the twentieth century, dozens of secessions have also occurred in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Western Europe. All told, since the early 19th century, there have been roughly 70 de facto and de jure independent secessionist states.
To offer only a few examples from around the globe: Montenegro and Kosovo seceded from Serbia, Slovakia seceded from Czechoslovakia, Panama seceded from Colombia, Norway seceded from Sweden, Greece seceded from the Ottoman Empire, and the Baltic states seceded from Russia. The list could continue to include all seventy such states, but the point should be apparent: secession is a world-wide phenomenon, a form of state creation that is hardly limited to any particular region of the world or to any specific time period. Needless to say, secession is more common in some places, and some historical junctures, than in others.

Empirically, we now know that roughly one-third of the total set of secessionist cases turned out relatively well—i.e., established peaceful and prosperous states—but the other two-thirds did not. There are numerous reasons for such failure, and it is not within the scope of this project to treat all of them. Chapter 4 provides a descriptive analysis of the relative incidence of various forms of failure, and provides an in depth analysis of one of the fundamental reasons that these new states have failed to deliver on their potential—recursive secession—that is, when sub-state groups in the new state seek secession through violence themselves—which occurs in about one-half of all post-secessionist states. In this chapter, I attempt to sketch an explanation for this variation—that is, to further our understanding of why recursive secessionist violence occurs in some cases, but not in others, and at some times, but not at others. The diagram below depicts the initial split of secessionist region $c$

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1The term ‘recursive secession’ is due to Aleksander Pavkovic, *Creating New States*. Ashgate. 2007. Discussion of this term versus some alternatives, personal correspondence, April 2007. The second major reason is that new secessionist states end up in interstate conflict with the rump state, in effect, escalating a domestic dispute into an international one. These ‘paths to conflict’ need not be mutually exclusive. Post-secessionist states can experience one or the other, both or neither. This chapter focuses upon developing theory for the incidence of ‘recursive secession’, including cases in which this overlaps with ‘escalation’.
from country $d$, post-secessionist state $c$, and the emergence of recursive secessionist
tensions and possible violence within $c$.

For example, among the more infamous cases, the secession of Croatia from the
Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, SFRY, in 1991, triggered an attempt at
recursive secession in the Serb Republic of Krajina from Croatia. Likewise, the
attempt at secession of Bosnia-Herzegovina from the SFRY in 1992 triggered the
ttempts of recursive secession of the Serb Republic and of Herzeg-Bosna from

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{recursive_secession.png}
\caption{Schematic of Recursive Secession}
\end{figure}
Bosnia-Herzegovina, which itself seceded from SFRY. Similarly, Georgian secession from the Soviet Union was soon followed by attempts of secession in Abhkazia, Adjara and South Ossetia. Azerbaijan’s secession stoked the already simmering flames in Nagorno-Karabakh. Transdniestra sought separation from Moldova in the immediate wake of Moldova’s own declaration of independence.²

By contrast, many cases of new secessionist states do not experience further secessionist conflict, even though they have territorially concentrated and often aggrieved minorities, for example, as with the Hungarian minorities in Komarno (Slovakia) or in Vojvodina (Serbia), or Russian minorities in the ‘near-abroad’, especially in Central Asia and in the Baltic states. These examples—and equally important non-examples or negative cases—provide an idea of the phenomenon that I seek to understand and to theorize in this chapter. In general, I seek to understand why some secessions produce peace and order, while others lead to violence and instability, and in particular why some generate recursive secessionist violence, while other avert it.

I seek to develop a model and generate hypotheses about violent conflict in new secessionist states. To the extent that this effort is successful, I hope to be able to distinguish secessionist states that ‘survive’ from those that ‘fail’ due to recursive secessionist violence—that is, to account for variation in intrastate and interstate violent conflict after secession. In this chapter, I focus upon sketching a theoretical explanation for variation in violence associated with recursive secession. In related chapters, I evaluate the extent to which these theoretical expectations

²Representatives of Pridneistrove, such as Smirnov, argue that they did not secede from Moldova of which they claim never to have been a part. Moldova, they argue, seceded from the Soviet Union, whereas they did not. Author’s interview.
and mechanisms accord with the empirical record, but here I discuss the empirical record merely to illustrate, and not to demonstrate, the general argument. Of course, in explaining recursive secessionist violence I am also able to say something about why secessionist violence occurs in the first place, even though the analysis would require a somewhat different universe of cases to permit valid inference to be made. This latter question is certainly important, but has been the subject of other studies, and is therefore not the primary focus here. That said, the arguments I advance about recursive secessionist violence are also meant to apply, in part or in whole, to related questions that I take up in related projects, including why violent secession occurs in the first instance, why secession sometimes results in interstate conflict, and why it leads to other forms of violent conflict, such as conflicts over the central government.

My empirical approach is catholic and seeks to triangulate results using both qualitative methods (extensive interviews, original archival material and process tracing) and quantitative methods (Bayesian, game-theoretic and algorithmic methods). Before getting ‘dirty with data’, it is important to provide a general theoretical framework into which empirical observations can be fitted. What is needed, I believe, is what Sartori has called ‘data containers,’ categories that ‘own sufficient discriminating power.’

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2.1 Preliminaries

As a matter of definition, secession is ‘an attempt by an ethnic group claiming a homeland to withdraw with its territory from the authority of a larger state of which it is a part’. A secessionist state, as I will use term here, is a state that entered the international system through the process of secession from another recognized state or federation of states.

Secession is not merely an historical curiosity: at least another three dozen groups are, to varying degrees, pursuing secession today. It is not often that one finds a state willing to part with its territory and associated populations without a fight, however. Most scholarly estimates of the number of people killed in secessionist conflicts since the end of World War II range in the millions.

Secession is sometimes seen as a solution, however, even if it is a solution of the last resort. When it is impossible for groups to live together in the same state, secession offers a way out. If the benefits that its proponents claim had a high

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5A secessionist state, in order to be classified as such, need not be fully recognized by other states. Those that are recognized, however, are clearly secessionist states. Incorporating formal recognition into the definition would be problematic, however, since there is considerable bias against recognizing secessionists. The baseline definition of a state is monopoly of instruments of coercion within a defined territory. To this, it is important to add some form of governance since this distinguishes cases that are merely insurgencies from those that intend to establish states. I explore the definitional challenges more fully elsewhere. See: Chapter 1. Why and How to Study Secession.

6See: D.L. Horowitz, op. cit., 1985, p. 589. Also see: ibid., Ch. 6 and pp. 588-92. Exceptions to this general rule include Sweden and the Czech Republic.


probability of accruing, then it is an option that deserves careful consideration. Many of these benefits turn on the assumption that the new state will be more homogeneous than the rump state and therefore can be expected to result in less internal conflict. 

9 As a simple empirical observation, it is true that some post-secessionist states are relatively homogeneous and others are more heterogeneous after secession. In other words, the emergence of a new secessionist state sometimes creates a relatively ‘clean cut’. More often than not, however, new minorities are part of the package: some supported the movement for independence, others opposed it—but both supporters and resistors now face the same reality, the prospect of living in the new state under new, usually ill-specified and weakly-enforced, rules. The accommodation of new minorities that typically accompanies new states are usually little more than an after-thought, a consideration that more frequently comes into play out of necessity—an ‘unexpected’ nuisance to the new nation-state, rather than as a result of ex-ante policy objectives.

As a result, the promised land often appears considerably less than was promised, sometimes so much so that new minorities would prefer fighting their way out (or emigrating) rather than waiting to see what the future will bring. At other times, these groups work within the new political system to pursue additional rights, or to


guarantee those which they have been ‘promised’ in exchange for their support of independence. Whether these groups will mobilize around recursive secession, and the timing of inter-communal violence, remain important and open questions. The answers are elusive, in part, because they depend on the complex configuration of several factors and the strategic interaction of many actors. To explain why, how and when this configuration and interaction will produce peace rather than more conflict, we need a theory to guide our search.

What is lacking is not knowledge about particular countries, conflicts and facilitating factors. Rather, what is missing is a framework that ties these disparate cases, conflicts and factors together in a coherent fashion. A robust theory should reveal that the cases are each particular instances of a more general phenomenon. The framework should be judged by its internal coherence and by its ability to explain variation in recursive secessionist violence across and within cases.

Recursive secession is a particular form of secession, one that typically occurs in the early stages of a new state that itself recently emerged from secession, and one of the greatest threats to the emerging state’s stability, security and prosperity. Although recursive secession constitutes a persistent pattern worthy of explanation, discussions of secession and ethnic conflict more generally have devoted surprisingly little attention to this specific form of violence. Nonetheless, there are good reasons to believe that factors affecting related forms of violence should bear on this phenomenon too. It would be prudent first to consider explanations that have already been proposed and to build upon them when it seems reasonable to do so. It is this task to which I now turn my attention.
2.1.1 Extant Explanations and New Directions

The vast literature on secession and conflict has been reviewed elsewhere. A wide range of explanatory variables and less or more convincing causal mechanisms linking them to conflict have been identified. If there is an Achilles' heal, it is that many—though certainly not all—of these accounts are relatively static or display a large degree of inertia. Factors that do not change over time cannot, at least on their own, explain changing behavior among the key actors. It therefore cannot illuminate the timing of secessionist conflict. Environmental or geographic factors are good examples.

The problem of explanation confronts us not only in a temporal sense, but also

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10 Many excellent literature reviews exist to which the reader should refer for a more comprehensive treatments than space permits here.; For a recent treatment, see E. Jenne, Ethnic Bargaining, Cornell University Press, 2007.; A. Pavkovic with P. Radan, Creating New States: Theory and Practice of Secession, Ashgate, 2007.

11 This need not imply that all relatively static factors are irrelevant, but rather that they are neither necessary nor sufficient to explain the timing of conflict. J. Mahoney ‘Toward a Unified Theory of Causality’, Comparative Political Studies, 41: 412, 2008.; Ibid. ‘Qualitative Methodology and Comparative Politics,’ Paper prepared for delivery at the 2005 Annual Meetings of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., September 1-4.; Ibid. ‘A Tale of Two Cultures: Contrasting Quantitative and Qualitative Research,’ Political Analysis, June, 2006.

12 Without a territorial base, a secessionist movement is unlikely to emerge. Just as concentration facilitates collective action, dispersion inhibits it. Yet spatial concentration exhibits a large degree of inertia, and therefore is not particularly well suited to explain change and transformation. Even if secession is not logistically possible if the group is completely dispersed throughout the new state, it is not necessary that the entire group be located in one territory. Rather than spatial concentration, which is typically cited because it is believed to enable collective action, I argue that a territorial base—rather than concentration per se—is what puts secession on the menu in some places and times, but not others. A territorial base is a geographic location in which the minority is typically a majority, a plurality or one of the larger groups, and in which it possesses a large degree of control over the local economic, political and military resources. The distinction may appear small, but it is critical: all secessionist movements possess a territorial base, but not all secessionist movements are spatially concentrated. See: M.D. Toft, The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory, Princeton University Press, 2005.; See E. Jenne, S. Saideman and W. Moore, ‘Separatism as a Bargaining Posture,’ Journal of Peace Research, 44, 5, 2007, for an empirical evaluation of spatial concentration.
when we glance at variation cross-nationally. That is, when we seek to understand why secessionist violence emerged here rather than there, we possess many explanations that emphasize factors which are too prevalent to discriminate between violent and peaceful cases. Just one example of this kind of explanation is commonly called ‘grievance theory’ and holds that groups are more likely to turn to violence and mobilize against the government, not surprisingly, when they possess severe grievances resulting from economic or political disadvantages. Many ethnic groups have grievances against the central government, against the majority ethnic group and against other minority groups, but only on occasion does that perceived injustice imply any particular behavior, in part, because it does not adequately account for collective action potential.

Quite a few ethnic groups suffer—often for many years—without taking any action or by periodically engaging in little more than peaceful protest. The Roma are perhaps the aggrieved ethnic group par excellence, having the most weighty

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grievances against governments across Europe, and yet there has never been any secessionist movement among the Roma.\footnote{Z. Barany, The East European Gypsies: Regime Change, Marginality, and Ethnopolitics, Cambridge University Press, 2002; E. Jenne, ‘The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe: Constructing a Stateless Nation,’ in Jonathan Stein (ed.) The Politics of National Minority Participation in Post-Communist Europe: State-building, Democracy, and Ethnic Mobilization, Armonck, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000.; cited in Jenne et al. 2007.} Of course, a key reason that Roma have not mobilized for secession is that they lack other characteristics that would facilitate collective action, such as a territorial base, organizational structures and, above all, serious external sponsors. Grievances are widespread and (for the most part) constant, leaving us empty-handed to explain why recursive secession is rare and variable. The point is not that grievances are irrelevant—we can learn a lot by examining them critically—but that they only facilitate mobilization under limited circumstances.

The same arguments that militate against political discrimination as a causal condition also impair explanations based upon economic discrimination and inequality. Some of these arguments focus on economic disadvantages—that is, being relatively poor compared to the majority, and lacking opportunities to redress those disadvantages—while others focus on relative economic advantages—that is, being comparatively wealthy, and not wishing to use that wealth to subsidize poorer regions. These motivations may be associated with claims against the state and even ethnic violence—indeed most ethnic violence involves some form of grievance, often of the economic sort—but economic inequality is rarely sufficient of itself to generate the extreme form of ethnic mobilization that is necessary to elicit an attempt at recursive secession.\footnote{Horowitz 1985[2000]; 2001.} Group-level economic and political considerations certainly
come into play for all actors involved, but not always in a straightforward manner. Current research only allows us to say that political-economic structures seem to define the range of feasible actions and may become salient at historical conjunctures, when political opportunity structures disengage. But generally speaking, these structures are static—and constants cannot credibly explain variables.

Other scholars have looked at institutions, particularly federal institutions, arguing that they provide a measure of autonomy to regions and groups that serve as infrastructural focal points which facilitate various forms of collective action, such as secessionism. These explanations have considerable plausibility, particularly if we look at recent events in Eastern Europe. The majority of successful secessions in that region possessed some form of institutional autonomy - often federal arrangements - prior to their secession. The Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia are examples. However, these institutional arguments raise as many questions as they address, including (1) why federal arrangements elsewhere in the world have not led to secession, (2) why, despite decades of federal arrangements, secession happens at particular junctures and not at others and (3) why secession occurs in


\[ \text{19 See Roeder's work on the role of institutions, especially after the fall of the Soviet Union.} \]
the absence of federal arrangements or in pre-federal times, for example, as with
the secessionist conflicts from the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires between 1830
and 1914, where none possessed federal institutions and very few possessed an form
of autonomous status. Finally, autonomous status is not exogenous, as advocates
seem to imply, but frequently endogenous to external actors and to ethno-territorial
heterogeneity. This argument is found prominently among explanations focusing on
the post-Soviet space, where autonomy and federalism was prevalent. As I show in a
study of Georgia’s conflicts (Chapter 6), where this explanation has been promoted,
the explanation of autonomy is superficially attractive but ultimately unsatisfying
because, \textit{inter alia}, (1) it leaves cases with autonomous status that did not expe-
rience violent conflict unexplained, (2) it does not explain why non-autonomous
regions experiences lower levels of violence that failed to escalate, (3) it does not
adequately address why cases with marginal levels of autonomy engaged in violent
conflict before cases with actual autonomy, (4) the granting of such status was endo-
genous, as Saparov has shown, to the period following World War I, and an earlier
(Bolshevik) attempt at conflict resolution, in this case to solve an earlier civil war

In addition to largely inductive work, there is a large deductive literature on
ethnic conflict that has centered around information problems, bargaining indivisi-
What is noteworthy is not only that the credible commitment framework does not provide a complete or fully coherent set up to explain war, or peace for that matter, but that much of the theorizing and analysis has focused solely on the host state and the minority group at the expense of how these groups interact with third party actors. It is clear that these groups do not interact in a vacuum, but three actor games can be considerably more complicated. Not surprisingly, most models involve two players.

This is unfortunate because, even though these conflicts often occur within states, bracketing the international context and international actors is inferentially problematic. As the constitutive theory of statehood has long recognized, recognition is the *sine qua non* of secessionists’ efforts to become new states. Even when secessionist movements do not gain wider recognition (e.g., Northern Cyprus), a minimum requirement for their success and sustenance seems to be that at least one state is willing to offer its support (e.g., Turkey). Such support, if and when it exists, casts a long shadow over bargaining between the two internal actors.

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Domestic level explanations have received the lion’s share of scholarly attention at the expense of international factors. It would be a mistake to focus exclusively on either domestic or international factors; future work should focus on the interaction of domestic and international attributes. Drawing attention to the importance of international actors raises important and difficult questions—in particular, when and why third parties interfere at some times but not at others, and whether their involvement and secessionist conflict are jointly determined—that I will try to address theoretically here and empirically in later sections.

2.2 Theorizing Third-Parties

The two-player bargaining model is a good baseline, but it is not complete. Adding a third player into a two-player model greatly expands our analytical leverage, enabling us to account for outcomes and behavior that would otherwise strain the imagination. For example, we have numerous examples of protracted conflicts between relatively small minorities and comparatively strong host states. In a two-player model, holding strategy constant, we would expect the latter to crush the former swiftly. Instead, we witness many drawn out disputes. These protracted conflicts have forced analysts to invent ad-hoc explanations of such ‘anomalies’.

Introducing a third player produces a straightforward change in the balance of power between the central government (of the new secessionist state) and the mi-

\[25\] Important exceptions to two player approaches on which I draw here include work by Saide-
man, Jenne, Stroschein, Cetinyan, et al..

\[26\] Some domestic level explanation, such as mountainous terrain enable us to make sense of some of these protracted disputes, but the manner in which such terrain is currently measured (percent of total territory that is ‘mountainous’) is not entirely satisfactory.
nority group over whether it will receive some form of autonomy or exit the state altogether, i.e., pursue recursive secession. In other words, bringing in a third player enables us to explain why, among new secessionist states with very similar endowments (i.e., structural conditions, ethnic composition, state capacity), some experience recursive secessionist violence, while others (with similar endowments) experience stability and peace. In addition, third-player involvement is highly volatile, not only across cases, but within them too, providing a key to variation within cases over time.

Third parties have played a vital role in every case of recursive secessionist conflict.\(^{27}\) It is no accident, for instance, that Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Tskhinvali) both sought secession from Tbilisi after it broke from the Soviet Union, while Kvemo-Kartli (an ‘Azeri’ area) and Samtskhe-Javakheti (an ‘Armenian’ area) did not, despite all four possessing distinct ethnic enclaves and facing a weak center that neglected their needs. Despite the Azeris and Armenians being larger minorities than either the Abkhaz or Ossets, the former two had little or no support from the obvious third-parties, Azerbaijan and Armenia, while the former two had significant external support from Russia and North Ossetia-Alania.\(^{28}\) Third parties enhance the power of one group at the expense of the other, modifying the dynamic between them. A focus on these external actors complicates the story, but it dramatically increases the realism. To the extent that the presence of third-parties

\(^{27}\)Third parties, however, have not played a key role in every case of secession, e.g., Slovakia from Czechoslovakia, secessions from the fSU and some of the secessions from the former Yugoslavia. Even though third parties played little or no role in the emergence of secession in these cases, their international recognition necessary involved third parties, e.g., the Badinter Commission.

\(^{28}\)See Part 6 of this dissertation for a full analysis of this case, *Secession in the Caucasus, War and Peace in Georgia: A Sub-National Study.*
shifts the balance of relative power toward one party and away from the other, any model that ignores this shift will inaccurately evaluate the game being played and will misjudge the outcome. Third party support, or the prospect of third party support, is highly variable over time and space. Unlike individual or elite theories that are also dynamic, it directly affects relative power. As such, it enables scholars to explain why some groups (possessing all or some of the above mentioned attributes) engage in secessionist violence, but others do not. In addition to more cross-national predictive power, this shift in focus can potentially explain the timing of secessionist conflict, illuminating why the same group shifts its demands over time, sometimes advancing more moderate claims, such as language rights, and at other times making more radical demands, such as secession.

Imagine for a moment the two players’ ideal points—the host state’s and the minority group’s—placed on each extreme of a line. The two players bargain over a revision of the minority’s status. The minority desires more autonomy from the host state, and the host state tries to yield as little as possible without inciting a violent rebellion, which would be even more costly to suppress. In the absence of a bargain that satisfies each party, the host country prefers the status quo and the minority group prefers secession, but each actor has just enough power to prevent the other from obtaining its ideal outcome.

Since neither party can obtain its ideal outcome, each actor would like to gain as much as possible—or, equivalently, to concede as little as possible. At the same time, each actor would like to expend the least amount of effort to achieve its ob-

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29The line is finite, so technically it is a line segment. The ideal point need not be at the extremes, but this is a simplification that does not change the basic structure or the outcome.
jective. Their preferences are diametrically opposed—what one gains, the other loses. In most such two-player games, the balance of power between the host state (that emerged via secession) and the minority group is fixed—though battlefield developments and strategy can change the balance—and neither side possesses private information about its capabilities or resolve. How much is the host state willing to concede to the minority group? How much will satisfy the minority group to tip its calculus in favor of remaining in the new state?

A slightly more formal way to think about the bargaining dynamic is to imagine the possible outcomes, $\Theta$, as placed along the abscissa (X-axis). Although this axis represents a continuum of outcomes, three discrete outcomes are given special attention: $\Theta = \{S\ldots A\ldots Q\}$—secession, autonomy and the status-quo. The minority Group, $G$, has a utility function, denoted $U(G)$, over various possible arrangements with the host state, ranging along a continuum from the status-quo, $Q$, to autonomy, denoted $A$, to secession, $S$. The group is assumed to have the following preference ranking: $S > A > Q$. That is, the group prefers secession the most, status-quo the least and autonomy an intermediate amount.

arrangements. The state’s preference ordering is the mirror image of the group’s: $Q > A > S$. That is, the state prefers the status-quo more than any other arrangement, because it requires the fewest concessions. Needless to say, autonomy is less desirable than the status-quo because it requires offering considerable concessions to the group. Secession is the least preferred outcome for the host state because it must cede its own territory.

The two actors engage in dividing a fixed quantity, $\pi$. The outcome of bargaining is a combination of $(x, y)$, where $x$ is the amount that the state obtains and $y$ is the amount that the group gains, such that $X = \{(x, y) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : x + y = \pi; 0 \leq (x, y) \leq \pi\}$. If each player obtains a payoff of 1 from its most preferred outcome, -1 from its least preferred outcome, and 0 from an intermediate outcome, a symmetric bargain would yield zero to each actor. Of course, there is nothing to prevent one side from demanding more than the equilibrium from the other side - and threatening to fight if its demand in not satisfied - but this demand is not credible, since neither side can gain more than its relative power permits.

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31 Exception to this preference ordering include, possibly, the Czech part of Czechoslovakia and Denmark with respect to Iceland.

32 Toft has suggested allowing secession also involves a reputation cost and that this cost is highest when the state faces multiple potential secessionists, e.g., Georgia would still face Adjarians and South Ossetians if it conceded to the Abkhaz, Russia would still face multiple groups if it conceded to Chechens, etc.

33 This follows the bargaining literature, beginning with early work by Schelling and Rubinstein.

34 I ignore the discount factor, $\delta$, which typically represents the amount of the pie destroyed by fighting, or the relative impatience of the actors.

35 This does not mean that is no disagreement over relative power before the conflict, that is disagreement over where the new equilibrium lies exactly. For explanations of war that rely upon asymmetric or private information, see Blainey 1988; Bueno de Mesquita, B., The war trap. New Haven, CT.: Yale University, 1981; Fearon, op. cit., 1995; Powell, R., In the Shadow of Power: States and Strategies in International Politics. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999; Slantchev, B., ‘The Principle of Convergence in Wartime Negotiations,’ American Political Science...
As always, the model can be significantly more complicated, but all these models assume that, because secessionist conflicts begin within states, the driving factors must also be located within states. Undoubtedly, some of the sources of recursive secession are to be found within states. The role played by international actors is so large in these conflicts, however, that ignoring them will produce a severe distortion that results from overemphasizing domestic and underemphasizing international politics.

The first point worth noting is that the international actor has its own distinct preferences over the outcome of the bargaining. Even though it may enter on one side of the conflict, its interests are almost never identical to those of the actor on whose side it enters. Nonetheless, by weighting in on one side or the other, even in part, external actors affect the balance of power between the host state and the minority, either by helping the minority to secede, helping the host state to preserve the status-quo, providing incentives for moderation on both sides or ensuring that the host state and the minority do not reach an agreement.

Consider Figure 1. The utility functions of the host state and the minority are identical to those in a two-player model and constitute the core ‘cross’. That is, the host country prefers the status quo and its utility decreases as the outcome departs from status quo via autonomy to secession. The utility of the minority group is the mirror image: it prefers secession and its utility decreases as the outcome departs.

Review, Vol. 97, No. 4, pp. 621-32, November, 2003.; Cf. Powell 2006 for a complete information explanation of war that relies of a credible commitment mechanism. Wittman, D., op. cit., for a rebuttal: ‘In these incomplete or asymmetric information cases, the conflict itself is seen as a mechanism for reducing uncertainty and eliciting information. See Meyerson and Satherwaite (1983) who demonstrated that, in a market situation, not all Pareto improving bargains will be made when there is asymmetric (two-sided private) information, and Fearon (1995) for further elaboration.’ Wittman, fn. 18., 2008
from secession via autonomy to status quo. Their utilities intersect at one point, which represents an outcome that each actor prefers neither the most nor the least—to give that outcome a name, let us call it ‘autonomy’, even though the outcome need not mean formal autonomous status.

Now add one third party actor. In order to go beyond claims that external actors somehow ‘matter’, it is necessary to specify the identities of the external actors, what motivates them and why they provide and then withdraw support. In more formal language, we might say that external actors’ utilities represent preferences over the possible outcomes. It is precisely this volatility and variability in its preferences that enables us to explain variation in recursive secession. Figure 1 depicts four ideal types of third party actors, each denoted with a heavy-long dashed line. $U(T)$ is the utility function of the third party actor, $U(S)$ is the utility function of the host state and $U(G)$ is the utility function of the potential secessionist group.

In the top panel, the third party actor is a status-quo player, preferring to keep things as they are if at all possible. This might be considered an actor that fears repercussion at home or an actor that, for other reasons, strongly supports the territorial foundations of the state system—let us call this first type the ‘Westphalian fundamentalist’. Spain’s or Slovakia’s current position on Kosovo’s recent independence serve as examples.

The second panel from the top depicts the opposite, possibly an irredentist state, one that seeks to generate secession. Serbia’s position on Bosnia fits this mold. The third panel from the top depicts a third party actor that might be called the ‘Meddling Neighbor’. This type prefers whatever policy maximizes the difference between the two domestic actors’ preferences. It benefits from an unsta-
ble situation, because it weakens the host state and makes the group dependent, therefore maximizing its influence over both actors simultaneously. Russia’s role in Georgia has characteristics of this type–Moscow does not want, at least formally, to recognize the independence of either Abkhazia or South Ossetia, yet it clearly does not desire for Georgia to reintegrate these regions, for that would directly challenge its influence on its southern border, and would also send the wrong message to separatists in Transdniestria and Crimea in, respectively, Moldova and Ukraine.

The bottom panel depicts the ‘Moderate External Actor’, a state (or possibly supra-state) actor that would prefer most a compromise solution. Moderation need not imply altruism. It only means that this type gains the least utility from the extremes—the status-quo or secession—and the most from finding a middle ground. The official EU position on Montenegro is one recent example.

The purpose of formalizing this simple three player model is to illustrate (in a crude and stylized manner) how the entry of an international actor shifts the outcome that would have otherwise been obtained in a purely domestic and less realistic two-player game.

2.2.1 Why Third Parties Are Central

Having detailed various ideal types of third parties and their preferences, it makes sense to pause for a moment to ask why third parties are worth considering. The primary reason, in my view, is that the relative bargaining power of the two ‘domestic’ actors is a function of their access to external support. Relative bargaining power

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36 In other work, I am developing a model of multiple external actors. For this chapter, I try to simplify the exposition of the basic logic by not making explicit reference to the simultaneous involvement of multiple third party actors.
influences the group’s expectations of success in its pursuit of secession. These expectations, in turn, shape behavior. To the extent that this reasoning is accurate, third party involvement will affect the equilibrium that the two internal actors are able to reach and how long it will take for them to achieve it.

Some empirical studies appear to support this proposition. For example, Balch-Lindsay, Enterline and Joyce (2008) show that third-party involvement decreases the time until the supported group achieves military victory and increases the time until a negotiated settlement is reached.\footnote{Balch-Lindsay, D., A.J. Enterline and K.A. Joyce, ‘Third-Party Intervention and the Civil War Process’, \textit{Journal of Peace Research}, Vol. 45, No. 3, 345-363, 2008.} Saideman (1997; 2001; 2003; 2007) shows that third party behavior is crucial for the success and feasibility of various solutions to the conflict. Horowitz (1985: 230) argues that ‘whether a secessionist movement will emerge is determined by domestic politics, by the relations of groups and regions within the state. Whether a secessionist movement will achieve its aims, however, is determined largely by international politics, by the balance of interests and forces that extend beyond the state....Secession [thus] lies squarely at the juncture of internal and international politics.’

Moreover, international politics determine not only whether the secessionist movement will achieve its aims, as Horowitz observes, but also has some bearing on the claims the group will make in the first place, and upon the likely reaction of the host state to those claims. As a rule, the host state will need to take the claims of a group with external support more seriously than it will one without such support. Further, it is to be expected that the group will be less willing to compromise with the host state government when it enjoys the prospect of external support. In such
cases, group demands may shift from language rights to autonomy to secession, and vice versa. When support appears to be on the wane, claims will peter out. The reverse is also true. In short, the group’s and host state’s relative bargaining power depends, in good measure, upon the distribution of power and interest outside the host state.

Although the presence of a third party that can credibly threaten to intervene alters the calculus of both the host state and the potential secessionists, it does so in divergent directions. Assuming that the third party intervenes on behalf of the secessionists, anticipation of third party intervention will tend to make the host state behave in a more conciliatory manner toward the group and will tend to make the potential secessionists more confrontational toward the host state.

Needless to say, the provision of special rights to sub-state groups is costly for the host state. It would prefer to concede as little as possible to the potential secessionists without eliciting a violent reaction, for that would be even more costly to suppress. In general, then, we may expect this to alter the equilibrium outcome, by moving it closer to outcomes preferred by the potential secessionists, and farther away from those preferred by the host state. As a result of this modification, we should not be surprised if the ultimate resolution, whether it assumes the form of autonomy, secession or a modified status-quo, will take longer to reach.

Even if the minority group escalates its claims in anticipation of receiving third party support—as it looks down the game tree—greater demands have a tendency of eliciting stronger reactions from the state. If third party support is less than was expected, or if it disappears entirely—perhaps because the group has become too radical and third party support has become too costly—the state’s reaction
can deliver an overwhelming blow to the minority, putting the movement ‘out of commission’. Perceiving this show of force as disproportionate, the minority group is forced into a set of more extreme choices—ceding all claims or escalating them—thus making compromise less likely. When third party support is expected, but does not ensue, the consequences tend to be devastating. The obvious question, then, is timing - that is, when third parties promise to enter, but do not, and when they enter, only to exit in short succession. To address these important questions, we need to be more specific about third party preferences and motives.

2.2.2 Third Party Preferences and Motives

The claim up to now has been that the group’s relative power is an increasing function of its internal and external resources, where the latter are determined by the prospect of reliable outside support. So far, however, I have said little about who the third parties are, aside from discussing the four preference types in Figure 1, and why third-parties might support potential secessionists, given that such action is costly.

The terse replies to these questions can be given at once: (1) third parties are typically either states, international organizations or diasporas (2) third party preferences vary by type, but their primary motivation for involvement is strategic, that is, to increase regional political and economic influence, and (3) the level of effort is the minimum required to obtain the desired returns on their investment. Let us now expand on each of these answers.

Three kinds of third party actors are (i) state supporters, (ii) supra-state sup-
porters and (iii) sub-state supporters. Although I recognize that all three kinds can play an important role, I focus in this chapter upon the first type—foreign states—because they are the most common and the most consequential for recursive secession. During the Cold War especially, state supporters (particularly the Soviet Union and the United States) were by far the most common. These two actors are no longer pouring the amount of funding into sub-state movements as they once were, yet regional actors, both of the state and non-state sort, have filled some of the vacuum left by the superpowers.

Neighboring states, in particular, are now the most common sources of external support. Like the superpowers, these neighboring states are strongly motivated by strategic interests. Ethno-religious affinity and ideology occasionally provide the official justification for support, but these are rarely ends in themselves and often serve only for domestic consumption, whereas realpolitik reasons are almost always close at hand.

This is because third-party support from states is just another instrument of foreign policy. Third parties, like the other actors involved, are sensitive to costs and intervention is costly, so third parties expect returns in proportion to the risk associated with their investment. One frequent form that this return assumes is

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38 In writing this section, I benefited particularly from Byman, D. et al., Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements, National Security Research Division, RAND 2001.


40 By contrast, emigre groups seem more often motivated by ethno-religious affinity. The most common form of support from emigre groups is money. Other forms of support are not unheard of, however. Particular, groups with strong lobbies can offer political pressure on their host states to become involved. I ignore refugee groups here. Unlike emigre groups, they cannot offer money, because they are typically poor, but can provide safe havens and manpower. On non-state supporters, see Byman et al., op. cit., 2001.
regional influence, especially within the host state. When the host state recently seceded from the potential state supporter—and this is often a contiguous state—the supporting state’s influence often suffers a dramatic decline, but supporting sub-state groups, particularly ethnic kin, in the new state offers the potential to recover lost influence. Russian support for groups in the ‘near abroad’, such as in Georgia, Tajikistan and Moldova, seem to have been motivated by this agenda, at least in part. Even if the secessionist movement often fails to achieve its ultimate objective, the third party can still achieve its goal by using its support as a bargaining chip in negotiations with the host state.

Related to this motivation is the opportunity to destabilize neighboring states through indirect support, which is less costly than direct intervention and can often produce the same, or similar, result of weakening one’s adversary. Even this lesser form of support can force the host state to divert resources that might be put to more productive uses in order to fight or bargain with the potential secessionists. The group, by contrast, can usually continue its campaign of secession through violence with comparatively few resources. For these reasons, third parties may have perverse incentives to prevent the resolution of a conflict and to encourage a protracted conflict because instability, rather than settlement, better serves its strategic interests.41

Irredentist states have perhaps the most obvious rationale for offering support. On balance, their goals are aligned with the separatists. Prima facie, they seek to ‘redeem’ ethnic kin, enabling them to separate from the host state and potentially

41 Third parties, and very often the secessionists themselves, may also have an interest in protracted conflict because it enables crime and corruption to continue unabated, especially when that crime and corruption reaches to the highest governing levels.
join the irredentist state. Using Minorities at Risk data, Saideman (2002; 2007) analyses the number of states supporting particular groups and the intensity of this support. He finds that ethnic ties influence the international relations of ethnic conflict more than other explanations, such as ‘vulnerability’ and ‘relative power’. This motive often seamlessly combines ethnic ties with territorial gains. Even when secession is not achieved, the third party stands to gain by creating an autonomous region in a neighboring state that is sympathetic to its interests. Irredentism may be ‘the prerogative of the few’ but it is a particularly resilient form of state support when it does obtain.

Irredentism appears most frequently in transitioning host states, for these states tend to have weak centers and lack the capacity to control their entire territory. This situation often coincides with one in which former majorities have become instantaneous minorities, thus providing groups with a powerful motive to accept the support being offered. Third party support promises a reversal of fortune in the new nationalizing state. For the third-party supporter, the protection of ethnic kin in neighboring states provides a convenient pretext for more realpolitik objectives and simultaneously serves to bolster domestic nationalist credentials. Arab state support for the Palestinian cause is a prime example.

The host state need not be an adversary. It is often sufficient if it is a neutral

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state that could in principle align itself with an adversary. Israeli involvement in support of Southern Sudan and Ethiopia fits this rationale. Arab states supported Eritrea largely because of Israel’s support for Ethiopia. Pakistani support for some groups has invited counter-support from India, and Indian support for some groups has invited Chinese support for the other side. These sorts of regional rivalries often spur support. However, such support can depart as quickly as it came. In fact, Horowitz has noted that ‘a willingness to meddle and weaken one’s enemy is common enough. But sufficient staying power is a rare thing.’

External states’ motives are sometimes internal to it, that is, to discourage demonstration effects. Naturally, this sort of motive is particularly relevant for external states that possess multiple potential secessionists. Russian motives often seem to fit this model. Of course, its wars in Chechnya send strong signals to groups elsewhere in the federation, including, but not limited to, Tatarstan as well as Daghestan and other areas in the northern Caucasus. Russia’s recent invasion of Georgia also sent clear signals to other former satellites that seek to free themselves from its dominance, and potentially join NATO, especially Moldova and Ukraine. Related to this motive is the desire of the external state to prevent demographic shifts within its own border, as in India, to prevent the emergence of a bigger Bengali group in India or, as in Russia, to prevent an influx of Ossetians, creating pressure on the delicate balance that exists on the border between North Ossetia-Alania and Ingushetia in the Prigorodny region, a tension that has existed since 1917 and that resulted in the first large-scale ethnic war on the territory of the new Russian Federation in late October 1992.

In most cases, third-party support is motivated by a mix of interests but, whatever window dressing is given in public, strategic and realpolitik reasoning is almost always present. Strategic motives make such support relatively plentiful, but it also makes it ephemeral. When strategic interests change, external support tends to follow suit. Support from lesser actors—such as emigré groups—can often be more enduring, but is typically insufficient.

The amount of effort a third party will expend depends upon the intensity of its preferences and upon the amount that it needs to expend in order to obtain its desired outcome which, in turn, will depend upon the group’s strength independent of the third party. Rare are third states that have as much interest in secession as the group itself. Stronger groups are more likely to obtain support, because offering such support is less costly, but they are less likely to need it. As Horowitz (1985: 272) remarks: ‘No foreign state will risk committing itself to a movement that appears weak...yet, to grow in strength, a movement may require outside help. Hence, the very strength that attracts foreign support is also hard to build without foreign support to begin with.’

Furthermore, stronger groups are more attractive investments because the probability of needing to intervene is lower. Even if intervention becomes necessary, the amount of help needed will be minimal. It is for this reason that the third party is typically the last actor to enter the game, and this is why Horowitz has argued that internal politics explains the existence and emergence of secessionist sentiments, but international politics determines whether this sentiment escalates and whether it ultimately achieves its aim.

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Finally, there is the issue of timing. If military, financial and diplomatic support comes at an early stage of the movement’s fight against the host state, this can establish the viability of the movement, enhancing its longevity, and depriving the host state of a speedy and straightforward victory. External support makes a movement in its infancy more credible as a challenger to the host state government and decreases the chances that the movement will fracture internally. This is important because many movements are crushed before they get off the ground. The mere duration of a movement’s existence can increase the chances that the group will receive a more beneficial settlement from the host state.\footnote{Byman et al., \textit{op. cit.}, 2001.}

I would not wish to imply that domestic structure is immaterial. Implicit in this discussion of dynamic third parties are at least two structural conditions located within the post-secessionist state that facilitate recursive secession—the host state’s capacity and ethnic heterogeneity—and it is to making these two factors, and their interaction, explicit that I wish to devote the penultimate section, balancing a potential international bias with domestic politics.

### 2.3 Structural Prerequisites and Qualifications

#### 2.3.1 Ethno-Territorial Heterogeneity

Recursive secessionist violence, prompted by the probability of external support, is a particular problem for post-secessionist entities with low state capacity and high ethnic heterogeneity. As a matter if definition, ethno-territorial heterogeneity is a numerical and spatial demographic distribution characterized by a small number
of spatially concentrated ethnic groups. We can understand heterogeneity as existing along a continuum where one end is homogeneous, or in effect one group as in Norway, and the other end is many small groups, a fractionalized situation, as in Tanzania.

In argue that, in homogeneous post-secessionist states, all else equal, transitions are typically imposed on negligibly sized minorities and reflect almost entirely the majority’s preferences. In fractionalized states, where no single group can credibly claim to rule alone and the opportunities for cross-cutting cleavages are abundant, transitions can result in compromise or conflict, but conflicts are typically localized and rarely escalate to the national level. In heterogeneous states—political entities populated by a small number of relatively large groups (t2 ≤ n ≤ 6)—the outcome of transitions depends upon the relative balance of power among the groups, with relatively evenness inducing violence and imbalance promoting restraint, but it also depends upon other contextual factors, such as state capacity (weak states), which have been emphasized by comparativist scholars.

What is the logic that links heterogeneity and violent conflict? According to a recent review of this voluminous literature on this topic, at least three logics link the two. The first focuses on the security dilemma that results from uncertainty about

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48 In the next chapter, I discuss current measures of ‘ethnic heterogeneity’, propose both a framework in which all such measures can be understood and create a new measure which, in the empirical chapters, appears to capture important aspects of ethnicity as they relate to secession and conflict. Siroky, ‘Ethnic Heterogeneity: Conceptualization and Measurement,’ Typescript. 2007. On the importance of spatial concentration—and geo-demographic factors more generally—see, e.g., M. Toft, The Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory, Princeton, 2005.


50 Kalyvas, op. cit., 2007, p. 419.
other groups’ intentions. A related but distinct explanation invokes commitment problems that arise when two groups confront one another without the ability to credibly commit to non-violent solutions to their disagreements. The third logic links heterogeneity to conflict over territory between spatially concentrated ethnic groups.

The hypothesis linking heterogeneity and conflict itself is hardly new. Dating back at least to Rousseau, heterogeneity has been viewed as a key cause of problems for states, yet there is considerable confusion about what is meant by heterogeneity and how it operates to creates these supposed problems. My basic claim is straightforward: peaceful outcome—that is, no recursive secession—are more likely when states are either highly homogeneous or extremely fractionalized, all else equal. This implies that, by contrast, recursive secessionist violence is more likely the ethnic distribution is heterogeneous, holding third party support and state capacity constant. If true, the question remains why.

Some have suggested a positive relationship between parity between groups or factions and a successful post-secessionist transition. In this setting, neither group, it is argued, can dominate and impose its solution through the use of force, so bargaining prevails. For example, Rustow (1970) has argued that bargaining


54See McFaul, M., *Russia’s Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin*, 47
based on the inability of either large group to dominate will produce peaceful and more democratic, ‘second-best solutions’\textsuperscript{55}

Waltz (1979) is famous for making a parallel argument about stability in the international system under bipolarity (e.g., during the Cold War)\textsuperscript{56} In the context of democratic consolidation, Przeworski (1991, 87ff) has suggested an information interpretation of parity, arguing that the uncertainty (about the balance of power) increases the probability of compromise without resorting to violence, thus producing a stable min-max solution\textsuperscript{57}

This project turns these proposition on their head. Relatively equal balances of power do not produce compromise, but conflict\textsuperscript{58} To see this, consider the alternative structures and the likelihood of compromise in each setting. Compromise is much more likely to emerge in a fragmented state, where no single group could ever succeed through imposition, and where countervailing alliances will predictably balance against any potential hegemon. In a fractionalized setting, compromise is inevitable at the national level.

Consider a highly homogeneous state. In this setting, ‘imposition’ is more likely to be the process through which a new order is established. In ethnically homogeneous societies, members of the weaker groups can defect to the stronger at lower cost, since the smaller group has negligible means to enforce in-group be-


\textsuperscript{56}But this is over-determined by those who have also attributed Cold-War stability to nuclear weapons and secure second-strike capabilities.


\textsuperscript{58}McFaul, op. cit., 2001, 17.
behavior and few benefits to dissuade potential converts, thus facilitating a stable non-violent outcome. Inevitable imposition and necessary compromise—but not obdurate contestation—can lead to a stable outcome.

Parity may provide stability between states, but it tends not to does so within them. The reasons are many. The first logic is informational—that is, parity creates some uncertainty—but the interpretation is the mirror image of Przeworski’s. The probability of winning a war is difficult to estimate under any circumstance, but is especially so in the immediate aftermath of secession. At parity, each group is uncertain about the probability of winning a war, because war against groups with roughly the same capabilities will be risky, difficulty and costly. Why does this lead to war? First, since each side has some grounds for believing its group is a contender for a better bargain, parity does not make groups risk averse—as in Przeworski, Rustow, and Waltz—but rather gives them fewer incentives to compromise to anything less than their share of the state’s power. This is particularly true in the immediate aftermath of a secession, as the new state takes form and sets its course in determining the character of the state: above all, its borders and its division of economic and political resources, even if it may be less so once the rules of the game have been set as in the modern international system.


Moreover, the costs of assimilating a small group are smaller than those associated with assimilating the preferences of a larger minority group, since these are likely to be more diverse, and will dilute the preference homogeneity of the majority. For this reason, a large group and a small one (or many small ones) can often produce stable outcomes. However, a small number of large groups, with distinct ideal points, cannot reach a compromise solution and form a coalition. A new secessionist state comprised of a large number of small groups, each of which is more homogeneous internally, may find it easier (and more essential to their survival as distinct entities) to mobilize along purely ethnic lines. If small groups can more easily solve the collective action problem, but the cleavages that emerge are not sufficiently broad or deep to reach the highest levels of the state, then recursive secessionist violence is unlikely.

Given uncertainty about the future, one might presume that groups near parity would hedge their bets to lock in a reasonable compromise, constraining each actor, and preventing any single group from dominating the others. But this would be wrong. Near-parity provides groups with minimal incentives to hedge bets, since each can envision victory and is not concerned about extinction. Parity can therefore generate strong incentives to bargain harder, making the ‘transitional moment’ longer, more uncertain and more costly for all sides.

After secession, intrastate groups interact in a new strategic setting and under a new balance of power. The true balance of power remains particularly uncertain near parity, though it can remain certain locally. Over time, the true balance is

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revealed through costly interaction. As Blainey notes: ‘War usually begins when two
nations disagree on the relative strength and wars usually cease when the fighting
nations agree on their relative strength.’

The initial gridlock in a heterogeneous post-secessionist state is partly due to an
‘explosion of political participation’, and this explosion generates conflict. When
groups are endowed with equal power, the conflict will be protracted. Clear im-
balances in power—homogeneity states—are likely to produce quick transitions;
fractionalized ones are likely to do the same, though at a slower rate and through
a distinct mechanism.

In short, parity is important for understanding conflict because it implies a
claim to an equal share of the power, the privilege and the prestige available to
a new state. All else equal, evenly balanced, polarized groupings imply more
intense distributive struggles. John Stuart Mill possessed a similar understanding
of heterogeneity.

66 Consider the tension that has emerged in recent years between Tibetan and Han Chinese as a result of Chinese policy, an effort to change the ethnic mix of Tibet by promoting a massive influx of ethnic Han Chinese. See: Zoe Murphy, ‘Dalai Lama at critical crossroads,’ BBC News, 10 March 2009. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7921862.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7921862.stm)
67 Mill, J.S., *Representative Government*, Chapter 16: Of Nationality, as connected with Representative Government. ‘The cases in which the greatest practical obstacles exist to the blending of nationalities are when the nationalities which have been bound together are nearly equal in numbers and in the other elements of power. In such cases, each, confiding in its strength, and feeling itself capable of maintaining an equal struggle with any of the others, is unwilling to be merged in it: each cultivates with party obstinacy its distinctive peculiarities; obsolete customs, and even declining languages, are revived to deepen the separation; each deems itself tyrannised over if any authority is exercised within itself by functionaries of a rival race; and whatever is
Contrary to the popular belief that parity creates stability, I argue that there is a powerful motive for conflict when groups are strong relative to one another. The actual effects of these ethnic distributions will depend on the state’s capacity to address the issues and the involvement of third party actors.\(^{68}\)

### 2.3.2 State Capacity

In many of the states that emerged from secession, the state is relatively weak. Yet it would be imprudent to pretend that all post-secessionist states are equally weak and thus to ignore variation. The main reason why considerations of host state power are critical is that the amount of internal and external power a group will require to engage in recursive secession will depend upon the strength of the host state. In weaker host states, less will be required to create a belief among the minority group that it can prevail in its pursuit of secession.

When the host state is weak, the potential separatists may still have grounds to believe that they can mount a sufficient challenge to the center in order to obtain concessions. Asking for more, but accepting less, is the nature of bargaining.

Due to terminological ambiguity, it is useful to provide a distinction between two types of state capacity, one that has been more prominent in the comparative

\(^{68}\)I recognize that ethnic composition and state capacity are not always fully independent, and can influence one another. One can imagine that state capacity is partly dependent upon the state’s ethnic composition. In a constructivist sense, one can imagine that the salience and size of ethnic groups is partly dependent on state capacity. Since neither variable is conceived of in this project as the response variable, and their mutually reinforcing effects depend upon the range of the variables at play, the two are evaluated as an interaction effect between two explanatory variables.
politics and one that has been prevalent in the international relations literature. According to Mann, the two essential types of state capacity are coercive and infrastructural, the former focusing on the state’s role in providing protection, the latter on the state’s role in providing public goods. Some states have one, or the other, some have both, and some have neither.

A strong state, with high state capacity on both dimensions, can credibly commit itself to the protection of groups that may mobilize against it and provide political order. Just because a strong state can credibly commit itself to providing order and goods, however, does not mean that it will have incentives to do so. A weak state, by contrast, cannot provide order or credibly commit itself, even if it wished to do so.

While state weakness may be bad for other reasons, it cannot lead to significant conflict without heterogeneity. Rather than any single factor, it is the variation in internal and external sources of bargaining power, combined with these structural configurations, that explain why some newly secessionist states experience significant violent intrastate conflict in the immediate aftermath of independence–e.g., recursive secession–while others maintain peace.

The new state has no track record of keeping promises; indeed it has almost no track record at all. In weak, heterogeneous states, the largest group may be able to engage in short term extraction, but it is not large enough to impose a long-term stable solution against the will of the second and third largest groups without devoting excessive resources to preventing an uprising. For long-term stability, the

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majority must offer minority groups more than they could potentially gain from fighting.

In weak states, that is, those with low levels of state capacity, whether a new secessionist state will experience recursive secession will depend less upon rules and institutions and more upon power and interest. Third parties are precisely so crucial, because they tilt the distribution of power.

One might wonder why a group that can credibly threaten recursive secession would not instead seek to control the center, since this would not require establishing a new state, but only changing control of an existing one. The reason is that such a position is rarely tenable. Since groups rationally seek to engage in bargaining at the highest level that promises a reasonable chance of success, whether the conflict will occur in peripheral pockets or at the center will depend upon the territorial base of the groups. It makes little sense for a peripheral ethnic group, 90% of whose population is concentrated in one corner of the new state, to aim for control and influence much beyond that pocket.

By contrast, when a group holds major cities and hubs, throughout the land, it is conceivable that the objective could be control over the center. Indeed, it would be odd for an influential group in the center to seek territorial autonomy in the periphery. However, it would make perfect sense for a peripheral group, with a large, regionally-concentrated core, to do so.

In any new state, whether it emerged through secession or decolonization, the internal structure is neither completely anarchic nor entirely hierarchic. If all goes well, these states creep toward the hierarchical pole over time—establishing rules and norms that govern appropriate behavior and punish inappropriate action. In other
words, at the outset, ‘power and interest, rather than rules or external authorities, produce outcomes.’

Strong states can often ameliorate the most pernicious tendencies of heterogeneity. Typically, this is done by incorporating (or compensating) all groups in all parts of its territory. Weak states, that is those with low state capacity, cannot credibly commit themselves to protecting minorities from the threat of violence, expropriation, discrimination or extinction. Under these threats, and with no foreseeable protection, these groups have an incentive to arm themselves, to pursue outside support, and to appoint a ‘specialist in violence.’ In doing so, members of threatened or marginalized groups can pursue their interests without the perpetual fear of random destruction. In weak states, the center (or what there is of one) will tend to react to contentious politics, the arming of sub-state groups and increased protest with repression. Repression, however, is very often the straw that breaks the separatists’ backs, making a return to a unified state increasingly unlikely and escalating the probability of recursive secession.

2.4 Conclusion

Some have argued that the only certain solution to recurring violence between two territorially concentrated distinct groups living within one state is to create two states where there was previously one. Presumably, this should take the form of


two western style states, but rarely is this the case: the creation of a new state where none existed before will often produce more violence than would otherwise be present. A common form that this violence assumes is recursive secession. Secession may be the only feasible option in some exceptional cases, but it should rarely be the first choice for resolving domestic disputes.

Violent conflict after secession tends to assume one of two forms and, in the worst cases, it assumes both at once. The first type is an interstate conflict between the rump state and the new secessionist state, and the second type is a new secessionist conflict within the post-secessionist state. It is this second kind that I have focused upon in this chapter. When secession is under consideration, this second type is rarely fully understood because the focus is upon secession as a solution. Yet secession is also the source of new problems. Recursive secession is one of those problems and, with careful analysis, it is a problem that we can and should try to understand better than we now do.

This chapter has argued that this problem cannot be understood with structural, static domestic factors alone. These play a role, of course, but they cannot explain recursive secession, which is dynamic, variable and inherently international in character. Researchers have tended to assume that, since secessionist conflict occurs within states, its primary determinants necessarily also lie within states. To be certain, some of the sources of secession are to be found within states. Largely absent from these accounts—or only implicit—is the essential role played by external actors. It is this role that I have tried to bring to the fore in this chapter.

In particular, I have attempted to consider what types of third-party actors might become involved, when and why they do so (and do not), and at what cost,
focusing on the tradeoff between security and autonomy and the risk of abandonment versus entrapment. Having overlooked—or only implied—the role of structural factors, I draw attention to two such factors in the penultimate section—ethnic heterogeneity and state capacity. Together with external actors, these form the essential elements in the logic of recursive secessionist conflict.

The chapter has proceeded in four steps. In the first section, I introduced the project and sought to show how this chapter fits into it. In the second section, I provided an analytical review of the existing literature, highlighting a gap—or bias—that I try to fill in the remainder of the chapter. In the third section, I sketched an explanation involving a simple model without an external actor and then introduced third party actors, their motives for entering and exiting, as well as the costs associated with receiving such support. In the final section, I refocus on internal politics by discussing the problem of weak states and the logic of ethnic heterogeneity.

Comparative and international politics are in need of an analytical theory that specifies the key political, economic, ideational and material conditions that result in the establishment of internally coherent, stable and peaceful post-secessionist states. This chapter suggests that focusing on the interaction of differentiated third party actors and theoretically derived measures of heterogeneity and state capacity brings us closer to crafting such a theory. In the next chapter, I focus on creating a new theory-driven measure of heterogeneity, and examining its relationship with current measures and the outcome of ultimate interest—conflict, in its sundry forms.
Figure 2.2: Four Types of Third Party Actors
Chapter 3

Heterogeneity and Conflict

In order to carry out the empirical analysis required of the hypotheses outlined at the end of Part Two, we must first be more specific and careful about what is meant by ethnic heterogeneity and how to measure it. The first part briefly reviews why ethnicity is important for a number of political outcomes, focusing on a hypothesized curvilinear relationship between ethnic heterogeneity and civil war. ELF, a widely used measure of ethnic diversity, is examined; then new and old criticisms are enumerated. The second part of the chapter introduces a new measure of heterogeneity—HET—to address many of the most fundamental issues, and discusses the theoretical motivation behind its construction. Inter alia, one significant advantage of HET is that it evaluates the relative proportions of the ethnic groups, consistent with the theoretical literature, whereas ELF devotes the greatest weight to the most dominant group as a result of squaring the proportions. Empirical and hypothetical examples of the differences are discussed.

Data are generated for a broad spatial and temporal sample in order to compare the performance of HET with ELF. The new measure and data are then subjected to empirical examination in the context of the debate over how, if at all, ethnic heterogeneity is related to conflict. In the context of secessionist states—i.e., based on an original data set covering all secessionist states from the beginning of the nineteenth
century to the present—the relationship between ethnic heterogeneity and conflict, matching on other covariates, is investigated. The measure is also evaluated using a second data set drawn from a widely cited large-N study. On these samples, and for the dependent variables examined, HET does a considerably better job than ELF of explaining variation in violent conflict. These results cast doubt on some prominent empirical findings and related theoretical claims about the irrelevance of ethnic heterogeneity, while lending support to an alternative line of reasoning that posits a curvilinear relationship between ethnic diversity and intrastate conflict.

The results also demonstrate the importance of matching theory and measures more closely. Theoretically, the chapter clarifies the manner in which ethnicity is alleged to matter in theories of conflict and develops a new measure of ethnic heterogeneity to match that theoretical intuition. On an empirical level, the chapter establishes a robust, though non-linear, relationship between ethnic heterogeneity and violent secessionist conflict.

The relationship between ethnic diversity and conflict is rife with disagreement: some studies claim that there is a strong linear relationship (Vanhanen 1999), such that more diversity means more conflict; others argue for a more nuanced nonlinear relationship, for example, suggesting that highly fractionalized and highly homogeneous states, though obviously distinct, both have peace-promoting characteristics that ethnically heterogeneous states lack (Horowitz 1985; Bates 1999); still others suggest that there is no ‘significant’ relationship at all (McRae 1983; Fearon and Laitin 2003). A case in point of the last claim is David Laitin and James Fearon’s influential article, titled ‘Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War’ (Fearon and Laitin 2003), which found that more ethnically diverse countries have been no more likely
to experience significant civil violence in time-series data covering 161 countries from 1946-1999. Specifically, Fearon and Laitin found that their estimates for the effects of ethnic and religious diversity do not achieve statistical significance, provided that per capita income is taken into account. The theoretical conclusion that follows would be astounding, if it were true. It would be comforting to learn that a more peaceful future awaits ethnically divided states. This chapter, alas, shows that even after accounting for per capita income, the evidence points unequivocally to a higher risk of violent conflict among ethnically heterogeneous states.

Other studies have also found a statistically insignificant relationship between ethnic diversity and civil war, but Fearon and Laitin’s article is certainly one of the most well done, widely read and most strongly argued. In some circles, especially in the large-N literature on civil war, their finding has become broadly accepted. There are a wide range of reasons why scholars should exercise caution and pause before accepting the claim that there is no meaningful relationship between ethnic diversity and civil conflict, however. I cannot explore all of them in this paper. One obvious and important reason that I will address here is a conflation of an index of fractionalization with the concept of ethnic heterogeneity. Fearon and Laitin’s analysis is first-rate. Their conclusion about the relationship between ethnic diversity and conflict is undermined by their use of a flawed measure of ethnic heterogeneity—ELF, which measures ethnic fragmentation. I will discuss the distinction in greater detail in the following pages, but the point is simple: ELF is not the only measure of ethnic heterogeneity and it may not the best one—if the measure is a matter of

¹For an excellent discussion of a number of possible sources for inconsistent findings in the civil war literature, see: H. Hegre and N. Sambanis, 2006, ‘Sensitivity Analysis of Empirical Results in Civil War Onset,’ Journal of Conflict Resolution, 50, 4, 508-535.
convenience, as the saying goes, so too is the result.

The vast majority of large-N studies that would be relevant to this debate employ the same measure of ethnic diversity—ethno-linguistic fractionalization or ELF—originally calculated in 1960 by Soviet researchers for 129 countries by summing the squared shares of ‘ethno-linguistic groups’. According to a large body of theory on violent conflict, however, it is not ethnic ‘fractionalization’ (a large number of small, splintered groups) that should be associated with conflict, but ethnic ‘heterogeneity’ (a small number of large, internally cohesive groups). There is a lot of evidence and theory suggesting that ELF is not the appropriate measure of the theoretical concept. Although discontent with ELF is high, alternatives are still few and far between. Until that changes, and new measures that match particular theories are created, progress on this front will be slow.

In this chapter, I wish to raise several additional issues that have not received adequate attention. Most fundamentally, I wish to provide the theoretical motivation for a new measure, and to offer an empirical application. The main advantage of a new measure of ethnic heterogeneity is that it comports more closely to the theoretical literature on ethnic conflict. The new data point to a robust, non-linear relationship. It follows that ethnic diversity matters a great deal, and helps us to understand and to explain meaningful variation in the incidence of secessionist

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2 Chandra and Wilkinson 2007 for two measures of ethnicity, ECI (the ethnic concentration index) and EVOTE (the percentage of the vote obtained by ethnic parties); Posner 2004 for PREG; Fearon 2003; Esteban and Ray 1994 for Polarization; Sambanis 2002, 2006; Horowitz 1985; Collier 2001 for Dominance; Alesina, Devleeschauwer, Easterly, Kurlat and Wacziag 2003; Collier 1998; Ellingsen 2000; Reynal-Querol 2002. ‘The use of the ethno-nationalist fractionalization index [in studies of conflict] has so far not been supported by convincing causal mechanisms’ See: Cederman and Girardin 2005. For the original ELF data, see Atlas Narodov Mira, 1964.

3 For exceptions, see Chandra and Wilkinson 2007; Posner 2004; Esteban and Ray 2008.
violence.

The first part of this chapter discusses why heterogeneity is an important social scientific concept and how it has been used (and abused) in political science scholarship. I then examine ELF (and, implicitly, the analyses that employ it) in greater detail, devoting some space to some old and new criticisms of the index. This leads naturally to introducing the new measure of heterogeneity, HET. This chapter provides the theoretical motivation behind its construction, generates new data for a broad spatial and temporal sample of states, and compares the two indices. The third part utilizes HET to analyze variation in violent secessionist conflict since the beginning of the nineteenth century using an original data set. At least in this sample of states and for the dependent variables examined here, the empirical analysis indicates that HET does a better job than ELF of partitioning variation in violent conflict. The penultimate section replicates Fearon and Laitin’s results, exchanging ELF with HET. On the the same sample of states, the analysis reveals that ethnic heterogeneity is a power predictor of conflict, contrary to the claims in the original article.

The results cast doubt on some prominent empirical findings and related theoretical claims in the quantitative conflict literature. The chapter suggests that advancing the debate about the empirical and theoretical relationship between ethnic diversity and conflict requires a better match between theory and empirics than has been standard to date. Users of disparate measures of ‘ethnic diversity’ (dominance, fractionalization, fragmentation, polarization, and (here) heterogeneity) should first discuss the type of diversity that is of primary interest and should differentiate among disparate types of conflict (identity wars, irredentist conflicts, international
crises, militarized interstate disputes, etc). This chapter represents an effort to make the match between theory and measure with one concept, in one setting.

3.1 Heterogeneity: Motivations

What is heterogeneity? How does it differ from fractionalization? Why is it relevant? As the questions imply, this section seeks to define, differentiate and motivate the use of heterogeneity—specifically ethnic heterogeneity—in political science research.

Heterogeneity is a key concept in many fields of study, e.g., biology, sociology, economics, physics, computer science, medicine and, of course, political science. Every population contains sub-populations and most cross-population comparisons involve an effort to understand heterogeneity, the causes of its emergence and its persistence, as well as the effects it may have on outcomes of theoretical interest. It is hardly surprising that a comparable concept exists in many scientific disciplines and across sub-fields.

In all these fields, it is vital that meaningful measures are created and adopted to depict the system under examination, for the choice of measure influences the conclusions that follow. Poor choices can cause considerable confusion, while good choices can reveal regularities that advance the debate. The properties of various measures are often so disparate that confusion is bound to result when they are treated as if they were interchangeable. Each measure will capture a certain aspect of the concept, and may be useful therefore for different objectives. The abundance of possible measures is to be welcomed. Pretending that each is equally appropri-
ate for all scenarios, or that one size fits all research purposes, should be shunned because it will almost surely increase stupefaction. Treating fractionalization, diversity, heterogeneity, dominance, evenness, fragmentation as if they were all measures of the same concept – ethnic diversity – is bound to produce peculiar findings.

In particular, heterogeneity is too frequently confounded with fractionalization. ‘Heterogeneity’, as I will use the term here, denotes a situation in which a small number of groups are near-parity in demographic power (as in Bosnia or Iraq). By contrast, ‘fractionalization’ describes a situation in which a large number of groups are splintered and dispersed throughout the state (as in Tanzania or Papua New Guinea). ‘Homogeneity’, as distinct from both the previous two scenarios, portrays a situation in which one group in effect has a preponderance of demographic power (as in Japan or Norway). The third type is less interesting for our purposes. It is the confusion of the first with the second that constitutes the focus of this chapter.

The conflation of fractionalization with heterogeneity is especially problematic because the literature on ethnic conflict suggests that countries with a high level of fractionalization may in many ways be strategically similar to ones that are highly homogeneous. This is not captured in fractionalization indices, which give a very low value to homogeneous countries (.9, .1) and very high values to countries with many tiny groups (say, 10 groups, each with one-tenth of the total population). A

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4This is even more the case when researchers take the actual values of the index as irrelevant so long as statistical significance is achieved. For a sufficiently large N, substantively unimportant differences will produce small p-values. This should not be our yardstick. Instead, we should judge whether the substantive effect is significant and whether the values of the measure, and changes in them, match our theoretical intuition.

highly heterogenous country (.6, .4) is treated as an intermediate value on a continuum (typically around 0.5), when in fact it should be orthogonal (or perpendicular) to both extremes. A linear model will have great difficulty recovering that non-linear relationship in the index: it is like trying to find a line that fits parabola – any line selected will be a poor choice.

Consider a hypothetical country with only two ethnic groups: the first group is 60% of the total population, and the second group constitutes the remaining 40%. This would be a highly heterogeneous country, according to my definition of heterogeneity, but it would not be a highly fractionalized one: the ELF value would only be .48 on a scale between 0 and 1. By contrast, the new measure of heterogeneity–HET–would have a value close to 1. This same exercise can be completed for the full range of theoretically possible values, but it should already be clear that the two measures capture a different aspect of the ethnic structure.

3.1.1 What is fractionalization?

The most pervasive measure of fractionalization is really a variation of the so-called Simpson Index. Scholars of American political behavior use it when they seek to measure and estimate ‘district diversity’ in studies of voting behavior, third-party entry and public goods distribution. The comparative political party literature utilizes a transformation of the same index, which it calls the ‘Effective Number of Parties (ENP) to describe party systems and partisan configurations. The Laakso-

Both measures (indexes) have [0,1] as support.

Taagepera’s index (1979) is another name for the same. The inverse of the same measure is also widely used in studies of income inequality, where it is widely known as the Herfindahl Index or the Hirschman-Herfindahl Index.  

Measures of ethnic fractionalization, based upon the Simpson Index, have found a prominent place in the economics literature. Research has suggested that fractionalization is correlated with many other undesirable outcomes, such as low economic growth, lower levels of trust, lower levels of local public spending and higher non-response propensities in survey research.

Scholars studying political and military conflict, especially in the large-N tradition, have increasingly sought to test the effect of ethnic diversity. For the most part, this testing has been done almost exclusively with one measure of ethnicity, and various transformations of it, such the inverse \( \frac{1}{ELF} \), the complement \( 1 - ELF \) and the complement squared. As Cederman and Girardin (2007) write: ‘almost without exception, quantitative assessments of the role of ethnicity in internal conflicts rely on various versions of the ethno-linguistic fractionalization index (ELF).’

My goal is not merely to question the theoretical conclusions drawn from empirical analyses.

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using ELF. Rather, I hope to show that we can do better, theoretically and empirically. To that end, I develop a new measure of ‘ethnic heterogeneity’—HET—that is constructed more directly from theory.


Ethnically heterogeneous states, i.e., states possessing a small number of large groups, possess a natural tendency to compete over scarce resources. Each group, when it is sufficiently large relative to the others, has a viable claim to running
the state and to reaping the benefits of control. When a small number of large
groups compete over scarce resources, each has a legitimate fear of receiving a
disproportional share of the benefits. In well regulated system, this fear may be
mitigated, but in post-secessionist states, which generally possess weak centers of
power, with low state capacity, local heterogeneity is often associated with conflict.
Having removed the rump state’s ‘yoke of oppression’, each group is particularly
sensitive to new forms of ‘alien rule’\textsuperscript{13} As a result, near-parity (i.e., heterogeneity)
often produces conflict through competition, fear, and instability, especially when
third parties extend support to some groups at the expense of others. In cases when
the state is too weak to credibly commit to mitigating this clash of claims, violent
conflict becomes the resolution mechanism.

By contrast, when the state is homogeneous, it is clear to whom the state be-
longs, at least at an ethnic level\textsuperscript{14} When the state is highly fractionalized, it is
also clear to whom the state belongs—it is clear that the state belongs to no one
group alone. It follows that any attempt by one group to dominate will induce
other groups to form defensive alliances, and thus to tame ethnic ambitions that
might lead to large-scale, state-wide violent conflict. As we move on to consider the
mathematical details of various indices, it is important to keep in mind these the-
oretical distinctions and the practical consequences they possess for understanding
and explaining the emergence of violent conflict.

\textsuperscript{13}See: M. Hechter, \textit{Alien Rule and Its Discontents}, Paper presented at Duke University (Spring
2007) and ASU (January 2006), MS.

\textsuperscript{14}Of course, ideological divisions can create new forms of heterogeneity.
3.2 ELF: Previous Criticisms

We have said that ELF is the most common measure of ethnic diversity, but we have not defined the measure or said how is it constructed. It makes sense to avoid the overly narrow, data-based definition of ELF (only indexes calculated using the original Soviet data). Rather, in a general, formula-based manner, ELF is just Simpson’s Index:

\[ S = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \sigma_i^2, \]

where \( \sigma_i \) is the share of group \( i \) out of a total of \( n \) groups.\(^{15}\) In political science, ELF is typically taken in to be \( 1 - S \).\(^{16}\) The Laakso-Taagepera index is the inverse, \( \frac{1}{1-S} \), and yields what is sometimes called the ‘effective number of groups’. While ELF is certainly quite suitable for some research purposes, assuming groups are properly defined, it seems poorly suited for studying situations of potential or actual conflict.\(^{17}\)

Posner (2004) has provided the most sustained critique of ELF to date, and locates three problems: ‘two with the measure itself and one with the way it is ordinarily used’. He claims that these problems ‘call into question the findings that have been reported to date about the relationship between ethnic diversity and economic performance.'\(^{18}\) Posner’s first problem is ‘the underlying ethnographic data

\(^{15}\)A crucial point that seems often overlooked is that it makes no mathematical sense to compare this version of the index across countries with disparate numbers of groups.

\(^{16}\)Also NB: \( HH_n = \frac{1}{N} + N = \Psi \) where \( N \) is the number of groups, and \( HH_n \) is the Herfindahl-Hirschman index. overit.

\(^{17}\)Given suitable groupings (Posner 2004), it could potentially be motivated by an appropriate behavioral interpretation (Vigdor 2002). Posner shows how a modified version, PREG, is appropriate for certain public goods problems and for some economic growth issues.

from which the ELF measure is constructed.’ These data may indeed be suspect - I cannot independently judge the data for all 129 countries - but the critique is not of the measure *per se*, but with the underlying data used to construct the measure.\(^{19}\)

Posner’s second critique is that ELF ‘summarizes the ethnic landscape of a country with a single statistic, as all ethnic fractionalization indices do.’ This, Posner avers, ‘obscures features of the ethnic diversity that may be highly relevant to the relationship between ethnicity and economic growth.’ One number can capture a lot, but a single number will not capture everything. Fair enough.\(^{20}\) Nevertheless, it is almost always the goal of an index to reduce the full data’s dimensionality into a summary of those data - otherwise, we would just present all the raw data. This may be feasible for a small number of observations, but as \(n\) increases, that becomes increasingly unrealistic. Summaries are useful because they reveal key aspects (e.g., abundance and relative evenness of groups) in the data. They are less useful when they obscure other aspects, naturally. There is nothing preventing a researcher from including measures of additional aspects of the ethnic landscape, such as the spatial distribution of the groups, their internal cohesion, the salience of divisions, the relative growth rate, etc., when theory dictates doing so. Some authors have done just that.\(^{21}\)

\(^{19}\)If the data were ‘fixed’ by using the appropriate groups, and fed into the same formula, the result would be unproblematic (assuming the other problems were also addressed) as I understand Posner’s points. Indeed, this is roughly what Posner proposes in his new measure, PREG, which is the ELF index where the number of ‘political relevant groups’ are redefined, by collapsing two or more groups into one, or ignoring others. A potential problem here, inter alia, is that \(s_i\) may not sum to one, but this could be solved by rescaling, dividing by the maximum.

\(^{20}\)The term ‘sufficient statistics’ is used to describe how many numbers are needed to know ‘everything’ about the distribution: the normal has two sufficient statistics, the mean and the standard deviation; the Poisson has one, the exponential one, beta two, gamma two, etc. Not all distributions have such statistics.

\(^{21}\)Scarritt and Mazaffar, 1999, introduce a multilevel grouping for Africa states. Alesina, De-
Posner’s third criticism is the most interesting. His basic point is that the ethnic groups (or religious, linguistic, racial, etc.) are defined incorrectly as they relate to political competition: ethnic divisions that are relevant for linguistics may not be important for politics. Many groups could be distinct from the point of view of ethnicity, but if they coalesce at an ethno-political level (that is, if ethnic groups ‘fold’ into political groups), then counting them separately will misrepresent the country’s ethnic diversity, at least the ‘politically relevant’ portion of it.\(^{22}\) For example, I discovered two distinct ways in which previous researchers have grouped Jordan - one school has 98 % Arab, 1% Circassian, and 1% Armenian, but another has group Palestinian 57.5 %, Transjordan Arabs 40 %, 1 % Circassian and 1% Armenian. The decision, not surprisingly, bears consequences.\(^{23}\)

Having redefined the groups so that they relate to those involved in macroeconomic policymaking, Posner calculates a measure that he calls PREG for a sample of

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\(^{22}\)Posner cites Kenya, where there are 40 ethnic groups, but only three ethno-political coalitions, and the latter rather than former reflect the relevant ethnic landscape when it comes to his outcome of interest, economic growth. The key for Posner is in counting the ‘right groups’. Over time, these may shift and, for each dependent variable, these may be distinct. The idea is attractive in principle, but there are three problems I can see: one, the definition of the explanatory variable is defined in terms of the dependent variable, making endogeneity a potential concern; two, the measure shifts the number of groups country by country and year by year, making cross-country comparison virtually meaningless, without any standardization for the number of groups; and three, the new measure redefines the groups but not generate a new index. PREG (Politically Relevant Ethnic Groups) is really just ELF with different groups.

\(^{23}\)See: email exchange, arabs of levant, 50 years ago vs. today.
African countries. This is done by feeding the new groups into the old fractionalization formula, Simpson’s Index. The result is a more theoretically driven definition of the groups, but also the reproduction of many of the same problems that Posner himself highlighted. PREG address the first criticism - for many African countries - and also touches on the third problem - the grouping problem, but does not at all address the second. Like Posner, I seek to redress a set of specific problems.

3.2.1 Additional Problems

Several additional issues merit attention. Three concerns problems with the index and three related to problems with testing its effect. The first is that the ELF index possesses a linearity that is not corroborated by theory or evidence. If the relationship between ethnic diversity, as measured using ELF, and intrastate conflict is non-linear, then the index will mislead. ELF treats the situation that is most likely in theory to heighten the risk of conflict as if it were some only moderately ‘diverse’. In part, this is a result of the formula used to calculate the ELF index, which disproportionately weighs the size of the largest group.\footnote{Horowitz 1985; Rothschild and Foley 1988; Sambanis 2002: 229-230; Collier and Hoeffler 2001; Elbadawi and Sambanis 2000b; Bates 1999; Reynal-Querol 2002; Elligsen 2000. Others have suggested that it is linear for some types of violence, but non-linear for others. Sambanis 2001a.} It may be possible to patch ELF up using polynomial transformations, but it is almost as easy, and is perhaps more prudent, to begin ‘from scratch’. Since the index is weighted towards most abundant groups, it is less sensitive to differences between the number of groups than the alternative that proposed here.

Second, the ELF index is not independent of the number of groups, even though the very validity of cross-country comparisons crucially depends upon it. In fact, the
index is correlated with the number of groups, since its lower bound occurs at $1/N$ (Figure 1). A country with 3 groups cannot have a lower value than one with 10, when all groups have equal proportions. For example, a country with 10 groups, all of equal size (0.1) has a value of .1 (or .9 if 1 - the measure is used). By contrast, a country with three evenly distributed groups has a value of .33 (or .67 for the 1 minus case). Although it can be computed for any number of groups, it falters when used to compare countries with disparate numbers of groups because of this dependency.

One solution is to take this or any normalized index and multiple it by a factor $1 - (1/N)^\theta$, $\theta \approx 4$. A more elegant solution is to compare the cumulative densities of countries which, on account of the different number of groups, live in different ‘measure spaces’: in other words, without accounting for the number of groups on which the calculation is based, cross-country comparisons are essentially meaningless. The next figure depicts this problem and the subsequent one presents a corrected index that account for the number of groups.

These two problems can be solved, in principle, by constructing a non-linear function of the index and the number of groups. This function should relates the two quantities (non-linearly) to a new index. Standardized by the number of groups, meaningful cross-country comparisons could be made and the debate would presum-

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25 One solution is to generate an index that is a positive transformation of the two factors - the number of groups and the index. That might look as follows: $f(x, y) = \eta^{-1}(\eta(x) + \eta(y))$, where $\eta(x) = x^\gamma - 1$, $\gamma \approx 4$, $x = \sum(\theta_i^2)$, $y = n$ and $\eta^{-1}$ is the inverse cdf of $\eta$, therefore $f(x, y) = [x^{-\gamma} + y^{-\gamma} - 1]^{-\frac{1}{\gamma}}$. This is sufficient to show that the transformation is statistically significant in F and L’s regression, using their data, but it is more of a patch solution than a new construction.

26 This is an analogous to a conversation in which two blind people think they are discussing the geometry of the same size, but one is discussing a triangle (a country with three groups) while the other is discussing a square (a country with four groups).
Figure 3.1: ELF Index Increases in the Number of Ethnic Groups.

This solution is feasible, but not elegant. The following contour plot depicts how the index would have to be transformed to account for the number of groups (group abundance) and the non-linearities hidden in the ELF index. The way to read the contour plot is look for a combination of the number of groups (x axis) and the value of the index (y-axis) that is theoretically meaningful. For example,

\[ U = \sqrt{\sum n_i^2} \]

where \( n_i \) is the abundance of the ith group. This can then be converted to a dominance measure as follows:

\[ DOM = \frac{(N-U)}{(N-\sqrt{N})} \]

and an evenness measure:

\[ EVE = \frac{(N-U)}{(N-(N/\sqrt{S}))} \]

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\(^{27}\) One might wonder why it is not possible simply to include the two measures - the one of group diversity and the other of group abundance - as two separate covariates. This would be an elegant solution if the two were not correlated. An alternative is to calculate: \( U = \sqrt{\sum n_i^2} \), where \( n_i \) is the abundance of the ith group. This can then be converted to a dominance measure as follows:
Figure 3.2: ELF Index, Adjusted for the Number of Ethnic Groups Using a Mixture of Normals. For any given number of groups, the ELF index expresses the full range of values \([0,1]\) and its minimum is no longer \(1/n\).

A situation with two groups (distributed .6, .4) would produce an index value of about 0.5. That combination of an index value (.5) is the way the index reflects that distribution for a fixed number of groups. That combination of the x and y coordinates corresponds to an area on the contour surface with a value close to 1. That would be the value of the new index after accounting for non-linearities and the number of groups.

Clearly the relationship (like the theory) is non-linear in non-obvious ways, and these are not well captured in the current index. Even if this proposed fix were
Figure 3.3: Contour Plot of hypothetical index that matches theoretical predictions and adjusts for the number of groups involved in the calculation of heterogeneity.

adopted, it is likely that it would be missed in a linear model. As I suggested previously, the reason is because drawing a line through a parabola will tend to miss the most noteworthy aspects of the shape (Figure 4).

Either we may elect to use only non-linear models to evaluate the effect of ethnic heterogeneity, or we can construct a measure that is monotone, intuitive and less recondite than the contour plot.

Third, and this plagues all indices including my own, ELF does not include any measure of the groups’ spatial concentration, and users rely on the index’s
Figure 3.4: A hypothetical parabolic relationship and linear estimator

assumption of *substitutability*. There is no place in the formula itself to include such data, even if they were widely available.\[^{28}\] There are two solutions at least. One is to include an additional covariate, possibly based on MAR’s multinomial ‘group concentration’ variable. A second solution is to weight the index by spatial concentration, giving more weight to territorially concentrated groups, and less to dispersed ones. If the data were widely available, this would be an straightforward solution. The increasing availability of geo-referenced data should make the production of panel data sets with sub-national ethno-territorial data possible in the

\[^{28}\]See project by Cederman on Geo-referenced ethnic groups.
near future. A third solution would be to compute a spatial diversity index separate from the relative proportions diversity index and find an appropriate transform that makes theoretical sense.

3.3 Heterogeneity, Entropy and Theory

In this section, I introduce, justify and develop a new measure of ethnic heterogeneity. One critical criterion for evaluating a new index is that it should match our theoretical intuition. Consider Country A with three groups (.5, .3, .2).

On a scale from 0 to 1, HET generates a value of .93, indicating a high degree of ethnic heterogeneity. By contrast, for the same country, ELF would only create a measure of .62. This country is Bosnia, a highly heterogeneous country. ELF does not yield a value that matches our theoretical intuition, whereas HET does. HET is based upon the ‘Shannon Index’, in fact upon two Shannon indices. When combined in the way I am proposing, HET is known as the ‘Kullback-Leibler Diver-

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29 In addition there are also problems related to testing and data. First, many authors rely upon a time-invariant measure of the concept in their longitudinal data set, creating an odd situation for modeling and for interpreting because what was a continuous variable has become a categorical one. When the global intercept is included, moreover, this seriously undermines the explanatory power of other constants in the equation. It would be more natural, in the absence of time-varying data, to treat such indexes in a multilevel data analysis as a random country effect (or varying country intercept). Second, several researchers use ethnic shares data from 2002 to compute their measure of ethnic diversity, but claim to have an effect representing the entire post World War II period. Even if we expect ethnic structure to change slowly, or possess inertia, the measure is unavoidably endogenous at a temporal level. Using the original 1960s data would be a quick solution that could increase confidence in the exogeneity of the data. A compromise solution would be to use both data sets, the one at the beginning of the period and the one at the end, to interpolate data for the interim period, but this is less than ideal and would require strong assumptions. I address this problem for a subset of cases–all post-secessionist states–by collecting time-varying data. Third, observational data should be ‘matched’ to increase the validity of comparisons and reduce model dependence.
gence Criterion’ or ‘Relative Entropy’. When HET is 1, we have identified a highly heterogeneous polity, and when HET is 0, we have identified an ethnically fractionalized one and when HET has an low-to-intermediate value we have identified an ethnically homogeneous one. Importantly, an ethnically heterogeneous state is at one extreme, and not stuffed between fractionalization and homogeneity. Rather, it is homogeneity that is centered (non-symmetrically) between fractionalization and heterogeneity.

HET thus more accurately represents theories of ethnic heterogeneity that posit a non-linear relationship between diversity and conflict, expecting the latter to be most likely when the former is structured as a split between two or three groups near demographic parity. This theoretical expectation is formalized in one distribution, one of the Shannon Indexes. The actual situation in any given country is formalized in the second Shannon Index. HET is a summary of the relationship between the two Shannons. To be exact, it is the degree to which the two Shannons diverge from one another. In this sense, it can also be thought of as a distance, where zero distance means that the measures are identical and one means that they are very different. This is reversed by subtracting from one to make it more interpretable.

A slightly more mathematical, but brief, explanation follows.

\[
S[p_i] = - \sum_i p_i \log_2 p_i 
\]

(3.1)


\footnote{It is actually the cdfs that are compared. This also avoids issues associated with comparing across different metric spaces and has a venerable tradition.}
In the mathematical literature, this is often defined as the Shannon entropy of a random variable, \( \zeta \), which makes the joint entropy of \( p_1, ..., p_n \)

\[
S[p_1, ..., p_n] = - \sum_{p_1} ..., \sum_{p_n} p(p_1, ..., p_n) \log_2 p[p_1, ..., p_n]
\] (3.2)

and which is directly related to the mutual information of two random variables: \((\zeta, \eta)\). We can think of the distribution of the proportions of ethnic groups in a country as a random variable.

\[
\text{In}(\zeta, \zeta) = \sum_{\zeta \in \zeta} \sum_{\zeta \in \gamma} p(\zeta, \zeta) \log_2 \frac{p(\zeta, \zeta)}{p(\zeta)p(\zeta)}
\] (3.3)

Relative entropy (or KLDC) is a function of two probability density functions - one representing a theory or a prior, \( \tau(\zeta) \), and one representing empirical data about the distribution of ethnic groups in any country, \( \epsilon(\zeta) \). The formula that relates these quantities for continuous and discrete distributions are shown below; \( \tau \) and \( \epsilon \) denote the densities of the \( \tau \) and \( \epsilon \) probability distributions (in the continuous formula):

\[
HET = (\tau||\epsilon) = \int \tau(\zeta) \log_2 \frac{\tau(\zeta)}{\epsilon(\zeta)} d\zeta
\] (3.4)

\[
HET = (\tau||\epsilon) = \sum_{\zeta} \tau(\zeta) \log_2 \frac{\tau(\zeta)}{\epsilon(\zeta)}
\] (3.5)

\(^{32}\)When the natural logarithm is used, the entropy information is defined in terms of bits, which is generally considered to be more interpretable. When the base 2 logarithm is used, it is defined in terms of nats.

\(^{33}\)The Kullback-Leibler Divergence Criterion (KLDC) is a measure in the more general Ali-Silvey class of information-theoretic distance measures.
A Bayesian interpretation of the index is adopted here, which means that the HET is interpreted as a ‘distance’ or the ‘divergence’ between a prior theoretical (τ) and an empirical posterior (ε) distribution. (ε) usually represents data or observations: in this case, the proportions of each ethnic group.\[^{34}\] The measure (τ) typically represents a theory, a model, a description or an approximation of τ.\[^{35}\] For example, Horowitz (1985) suggests that a 60/40 distribution of two coherent ethnic groups is a dangerous situation. Other suggest that 50-50 is still worse. HET can represent such beliefs formally within a Bayesian framework of inference and mathematical information theory. If we pick a country with two groups that are distributed exactly according to our prior expectation of a high conflict configuration, we will produce a value of zero (representing zero additional information). This is essentially the situation in Guatemala or in Morocco. If we decide to take the inverse, then we will produce a value of 1, which has a more intuitive relation to conflict, because the index is high when the probability of conflict is high, and vice versa.

HET has a number of useful properties: it is non-negative and is \(\equiv 0\) iff \(τ(ζ) ≡ ε(ζ)\).\[^{36}\] Although it does not satisfy the triangle inequality, KLDC is nonetheless often thought of, and used as, a measure of ‘distance’ between two distributions of ethnic proportions, \(τ(ζ)\) and \(ε(ζ)\).\[^{37}\] For one sample data set, I determined

\[^{34}\]The empirical distribution depends on the data source, the unit of analysis and the year.

\[^{35}\]The theoretical distribution may be thought of as a subjective Bayesian prior.

\[^{36}\]See: the non-negativity result is also called Gibbs’ inequality; see Cover and Thomas, *Elements of Information Theory*, Wiley, 1991, Theorem 9.6.1 for properties of differential entropy, relative entropy and mutual information, Theorem 16.1. in chapter on ‘Inequalities in information theory’.

\[^{37}\]In a multidimensional setting, Shannon mutual information is defined (1948), see Frieden 2004, p. 37, for details. For proofs, see Cover and Thomas (1991). Other disciplines have other interpretations, such as the experimental design Bayes d-optimal. S. Kullback and R. A.
that the new index and the ELF index have a bivariate correlation that cannot be
distinguished from zero (Figure 5). The null plot below, which plots the values of
one index against the second, illustrates that same result.

Figure 3.5: Null Plot of ELF v. HET

The simplest measure is the number of groups, but this pays no attention to the
frequencies in each group (or their proportions) and just counts the total number
of groups. This is often transformed by a function of the population size or area

Leibler (1951). op. cit.; S. Kullback. op. cit., 1959. When the logarithms are base 2, HET
is usually called ‘the Shannon information gain’ between the prior and posterior distributions,
http://cm.bell-labs.com/cm/ms/what/shannonday/shannon1948.pdf
because, as a rule, more groups are associated with more population and territory. This is sometimes sufficient, but not for our purposes. HET, and the Shannon entropy on which it is based weighs each group exactly by its relative frequency. ELF, and the Simpson index on which it is based, devotes greater weight to to the most dominant group (mathematically, this is the result of summing the squares of the frequencies).\textsuperscript{38} The Shannon entropy, however, weights groups by their relative frequencies. When the first group is very large relative to the other groups, the Shannon entropy will be less than the Simpson index.\textsuperscript{39} For this reason, among others, the Shannon entropy (or the exponent of the Shannon entropy) is more likely to recover the heterogeneity that is invoked in the literature.

I generate data for the new measure, HET, based upon two priors: the uniform (perfect evenness) and the 60-40 prior. An obvious advantage is that the measure can be adapted to accommodate alternative beliefs about the ethnic configuration that places countries at highest risk of experiencing violence, so that the priors I have selected based on theory are subject to revision, and can be continuously updated to incorporate new theory and information as it becomes available. Nevertheless, these priors are not arbitrary and have a considerable amount of theory to recommend them. Finally, HET is easy to calculate and interpret. In the next section, I apply the new measure of heterogeneity to a substantive problem, but first to gain a better intuition about the new measure, and the difference between heterogeneity and fractionalization, consider a list of ten very ‘heterogenous countries’, and ten ‘fractionalized ones’, according to HET.

\textsuperscript{38}The square of a smaller proportion will be even smaller, so small groups hardly contribute to the sum.

\textsuperscript{39}Once transformed the the Effective number, so that the comparison is valid.
3.4 Ethnicity and Conflict After Secession

Abkhazia. Bosnia. Chechnya. Daghestan. Eritrea. There is probably a secessionist conflict in the twentieth century for most letters of the Latin alphabet. As a matter of definition, secession is ‘an attempt by an ethnic group claiming a homeland to withdraw with its territory from the authority of a larger state of which it is a part’\[40\] Secession (together with decolonization) accounts for a large number of new states whose viability and stability can have wider ramifications.

A secessionist state is a state that entered the international system through the process of secession from another recognized state or federation of states\[41\] Over the twentieth century, roughly 60 new states have emerged via secession, e.g., Slovakia from Czechoslovakia, Eritrea from Ethiopia, both in 1993; Norway from Sweden in 1905; Montenegro from the Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2006; Kosovo from

\[\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{HET} & \text{ELF} & \text{BOTH} \\
\hline
\text{Heterogeneous} & \text{Fractionalized} & \text{Homogeneous} \\
\text{Bosnia} & \text{Cameroon} & \text{Japan} \\
\text{Djibouti} & \text{Gabon} & \text{Norway} \\
\text{Guatemala} & \text{Ghana} & \text{Portugal} \\
\text{Iraq} & \text{Kenya} & \text{Slovenia} \\
\text{Moldova} & \text{Tanzania} & \text{Tunisia} \\
\end{array}\]

Table 3.1: Empirical Examples


\[41\]Similarly, a decolonized state is a state that entered the international system through the process of decolonization from a colonial state.
Figure 3.6: The total number of ‘recognized states’ over time overlaid with two splines of span 0.1 and 0.6. Roughly one half of the increase is due to secession and the other half, especially immediately after World War II is due to decolonization.

Serbia in 2008. At least another three dozen groups are, in varying degrees, pursuing secession today (e.g., in Abkhazia, Baluchistan, Kurdistan, Ogaden, Quebec, South Ossetia, Transdnieistra, etc.). ‘Secession,’ according to one scholar, ‘lies squarely at the juncture of internal and international politics.’

As many scholars and observers have noted, it is not often that one finds a state willing to part with its territory and associated populations without a fight. Most

---


In this section (and in the broader dissertation project), I seek to map some of the conditions under which secession, by separating the warring parties, could potentially diminish the death toll and quiet the violence; and when it is more likely to result in new civil wars, or to escalate a domestic dispute into an interstate conflict.\footnote{Horowitz, \textit{op. cit.}, 1985, p. 590-592.} In short, which factors influence whether a post-secessionist state has a reasonable chance of becoming stable, peaceful and prosperous? Based upon an analysis of the conditions under which past secessionist states have succeeded or failed in establishing peaceful internal and external relations, what can be expected from current secessionist movements if, as some have recommended, recognition were in the offing?

The key proposition examined in this chapter is that the risk of conflict for post-secessionist states turns, in good measure, on its ethnic heterogeneity, using the entropy measure introduced in the previous section. This is not to imply that other factors are irrelevant, or that the effect of heterogeneity is entirely unconditional and orthogonal to other relationships. Rather, the claim is that ethnic heterogeneity, when conceived, measured and estimated in a manner that matches our theoretical intuition, can provide important insight into the likelihood that a new secessionist state will become stable, peaceful and prosperous, after controlling for other variables, such as state capacity and external aid. That analysis will in
turn shed light upon debates over the conditions under which secession is likely to be a factor favoring stability and peace rather than instability and conflict.

Some scholars have argued that secession is usually not a solution to conflict; in part, this is because it ‘cannot produce the sorts of states and deliver on the kinds of promises that its proponents claim it can’.[46] Namely, skeptics argue, secessions cannot actually produce ‘homogeneous homelands’. This is both because borders cannot be drawn so as to include only one group and exclude all the others and because groups that looked homogeneous before the break in the new state context. Put differently, secession may not be the political analog of marital divorce, an analogy that some have suggested.[47]

‘In point of fact, neither secessionist states nor rump states are homogeneous...sometimes secession is the least bad alternative, but it is rarely to be preferred... There is no clean break....What looks homogeneous today in an undivided state in which large groups oppose each other can look quite different after a secessionist state establishes itself’.[48]

Kaufmann, among others, has suggested that population transfers can help create homogeneous homelands if needed. But ‘population transfer’, say sceptics, only

---


[47] Tullberg and Tullberg, op. cit., 1997; Cf. Horowitz, op. cit., 1998: 191. Tullberg and Tullberg (1997: 4) write: ‘A separatist solution is analogous to a divorce.’ Also see A. Buchanan’s work on this subject (e.g., Secession: The Morality of Political Divorce From Fort Sumter to Lithuania and Quebec Westview Press: 1991). There are also practical issues that make such an analogy flawed: the number of states is in the hundreds, but the number of current ‘groups’ in the thousands.) See Laitin, ‘Ethnic Cleansing, Liberal Style’, MacArthur Foundation, manuscript., for its discussion of Van Evera’s nation/state ratio logic.

sounds hygienic. It is difficult to think of a group that has volunteered to be transferred *en masse*. American Indians did not do so voluntarily in the early American Republic, and neither did Sudeten Germans after World War II. There is little reason to believe that any group would, at any time, anywhere.

Nonetheless, as a simple empirical observation, it is true that some post-secessionist states are relatively homogeneous and other are more heterogeneous after secession. It is also true that some experience conflict, sometimes quite a lot, while others manage to maintain the peace internally and externally. Among these states, then, is there a relationship between heterogeneity and internal conflict after secession? It may seem prosaic to inquire whether ethnic heterogeneity is related to internal conflict, but prominent empirical studies challenging this result require us to reexamine the evidence. I try to do this using logistic regression and a non-parametric, algorithmic method called Random Forest. Let us begin in reverse.

The dependent variable in each of the eight models is an indicator of whether a civil war occurred in the first fifteen years after independence. The evidence indicates that civil war transpired in just under half of the countries (46%). Since the dominant category (by a tad) is peace (54%), our best guess might be to predict...

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49 Horowitz, *loc. cit.*, 592, emphasis in original.

50 Due to space constraints, I cannot fully discuss Random Forest here. See any of the paper written by Leo Breiman, or my working paper, ‘Navigating Random Forests and Related Algorithms,’ Duke University, MS 2008.

51 The logistic regression is run on non-parametrically matched data.

52 Civil war is defined consistent with the literature on civil war onset, see Fearon and Laitin 2003; Sambanis and Doyle 200x; Collier and Hoeffler 2000. Colonial wars are not, as in F & L 2003, included, except in Algeria. The models I estimate in Chapter 4 have secessionist civil wars as the dependent variable, but all civil wars are included here to increase comparability with the original article.

53 For comparison, F & L’s data set on civil war has a 43% of the countries included experiencing a civil war during the period observed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariate</th>
<th>M1</th>
<th>M2</th>
<th>M3</th>
<th>M4</th>
<th>M5</th>
<th>M6</th>
<th>M7</th>
<th>M8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>HET Index</td>
<td>-4.10</td>
<td>-4.30</td>
<td>-4.36</td>
<td>-4.57</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>-4.72</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(-2.40)</td>
<td>(-2.42)</td>
<td>(-2.47)</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>(-2.49)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per capita</td>
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<td>-.0002</td>
<td>.</td>
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<td>-.0002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-1.63)</td>
<td>(-1.64)</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>(-1.74)</td>
<td>(-1.72)</td>
<td>(-1.53)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Population Density</td>
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<td>.</td>
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<td>-.0003</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>-.00006</td>
<td>-.0003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.40)</td>
<td>(-0.48)</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>(-0.10)</td>
<td>(-0.46)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy Score</td>
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<td>.</td>
<td>-0.036</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELF Index</td>
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<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>-.452</td>
<td>-.057</td>
<td>-.313</td>
<td>-1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.40)</td>
<td>(-0.05)</td>
<td>(-0.26)</td>
<td>(-0.80)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
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<td>.331</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>.504</td>
<td>.602</td>
<td>2.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.86)</td>
<td>(0.74)</td>
<td>(2.52)</td>
<td>(2.46)</td>
<td>(0.958)</td>
<td>(0.83)</td>
<td>(0.99)</td>
<td>(2.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log likelihood</td>
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<td>-37.89</td>
<td>-37.80</td>
<td>-37.51</td>
<td>-43.39</td>
<td>-41.12</td>
<td>-41.09</td>
<td>-37.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Sensitivity | 62.07%| 58.62%| 58.62%| 62.07%| 20.69%| 58.62%| 58.62%| 65.52%|
| Specificity | 73.53%| 70.59%| 70.59%| 73.53%| 79.41%| 52.94%| 52.94%| 70.59%|
| Correctly Classified | 68.25%| 65.08%| 65.08%| 68.25%| 52.38%| 55.56%| 55.56%| 68.25%|

**Figure 3.7**: Logistic Regression Models of the Onset of Civil War After Secession; Estimated binomial GLM with logit link in R via ML.
peace in all cases, just as our best guess in a most large conflict data bases where about 98% of country-years contain no conflict. If we did that, which is not unreasonable lacking additional information, we would be wrong 46% of the time and right 54% of the time. This figure shows survival estimates using random survival forests, and tells that about half the cases failed within the first 15 years: the top left panel illustrates this fact.

**Figure 3.8:** Baseline Survival Estimates Among Post-Secessionist States

However, a model with just one variable–ELF–would be worse than that baseline.

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54Survival modeling of civil and international war is not explicitly covered in this chapter. On Random Forest, see any of the paper written by Leo Breiman, or my working paper, ‘Navigating Random Forests and Related Algorithms,’ Duke University, MS 2008.
by a small margin $\mathcal{M}_4^{55}$. This supports the criticism that some authors have launched that ELF is ‘worse than nothing’. By contrast, a model $\mathcal{M}_1$ with just one co-variate—HET—would dramatically improve prediction (68.25%). In fact, a model with HET is as good as the best models estimated here $\mathcal{M}_1$, $\mathcal{M}_4$ and $\mathcal{M}_8$. Each of these three has a correct classification rate of 68.25%, yet the distribution of the errors (false positives and true negatives) is disparate.$^{56}$

In terms of substantive effects, shifting the HET measure from the 10th to the 90th percentile, while holding constant the other covariates, results in a change of predicted probability of a civil war from .47 to .86 - a huge substantive effect.$^{57}$ Doing the same through the IQR (inter-quartile range) from the 25th to the 75th percentile produces a change in the predicted probability of a civil war from .58 to .78 - also a large effect. Holding income per capita at the 10th percentile, and shifting HET again from the 10th to the 90th percentile results in a change of the predicted probability of a civil war from .36 to .77. Doing the same when income per capita is held at the 90th percentile produces a change in the predicted probability from .15 to .52. This evidence does not lend support to the claim that, accounting

---

$^{55}$ The bivariate correlation between the first and each subsequent co-variate is indistinguishable from zero. For example, in Model 4, it is not legitimate to include a measure of income per capita in the same specification with regime type scores on account of multi-collinearity. Triplet dependencies also exist, and are treated (when detected). Copula densities for doing so are under development. Of course, many statistical programs will provide an estimate, a standard error and so on, but assumptions upon which valid inferences depend are violated in the process. At least as measured here, income per capita is a stronger predictor of the response than the regime type scores. Many other covariates have been included in the literature, but the focus here is upon three covariates—HET, ELF and GDP per capita—controlling when possible for population density and political regime.

$^{56}$ Maximizing sensitivity would lead us to choose one model; maximizing specificity would lead to a different model, minimizing the total error would lead to three equally good models, and minimizing the log-likelihood would lead to another choice.

$^{57}$ These estimated marginal effects are based upon $\mathcal{M}_8$, the one with the smallest log-likelihood.
for per capita income, ethnicity has had no effect on the probability of civil war onset.

3.4.1 Random Forest Modeling

Let us see whether we can do any better with a non-parametric approach called Random Forest. Whereas the previous models were essentially descriptive, these models are predictive and based upon out of sample testing (in the literature, called ‘out of bag’). These out of bag estimates also enable us to estimate ‘relative variable importance’ using a number of distinct criteria for judging ‘importance’ (Figure 10). The tell a similar story among the top variables, suggesting that HET is an important predictor, and that population density and per capita income follow in second and third. Depending upon the criterion used to determine importance, reduction in MSE or Gini purity, ELF and the Polity score rank in last and second to last place. Of course, these lower ranked factors could be relatively more important than others that have not been included, but they are certainly relatively less important than those which have been included.

This table (Figure 8) is comparable to the previous one in the sense that it tries to evaluate the model’s accuracy: the logistic regression is not done on out of sample data, and is therefore to be taken as descriptive. The table in Figure 8 is based upon ‘out-of-bag’ data using Random Forest. In effect, that means about a 1/3 of the data are left out of the estimation and used to evaluate the model based on the other 2/3 of the data.58 The randomness in random forest also prevents over-fitting, because predictors and cases are both randomly selected automatically. What can

58 Comparison with n-fold cross-validation.
we conclude from this analysis? At least for these measures and methods, post-
secessionist countries with a high degree of ethnic heterogeneity are significantly
more likely to experience civil violence than states that are either more homogeneous
or more fractionalized. The results also suggest the superiority of HET over ELF,
at least for the objectives pursued in this chapter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$M_1$</th>
<th>$M_2$</th>
<th>$M_3$</th>
<th>$M_4$</th>
<th>$M_5$</th>
<th>$M_6$</th>
<th>$M_7$</th>
<th>$M_8$</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sensitivity Pr$(+</td>
<td>D)$</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>69 %</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specificity Pr$(-</td>
<td>-D)$</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>74 %</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correctly Classified</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>72.5 %</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Confusion Matrix estimated through random forest in R.

3.5 Replication of Fearon & Laitin

I present possible models of these data - the first is the original in Fearon and Laitin
(2003). I would not venture to make bold claims upon any of these regressions.
Nonetheless, this is the field upon the discussion must occur for a number of good
reasons. Using these data, a replication and robustness check reveal that the result
is not sturdy, and that the theoretical claim requires qualification.

Consider four alternative models. Changing nothing else, let us simply examine
the issue of multi-collinearity in the first model. Specifically, ignore the fact that
ELF may not accurately measure the theoretical concept of heterogeneity, ignore
the functional form, ignore that the data are cross-sectional and the analysis is
Consider just the correlation between religious fractionalization and ethnic fractionalization, or that between ethnic fractionalization and per capita income. In regard to this latter correlation, there is the added issue of exogeneity since previous research has studied them typically on opposite sides of the equation.\footnote{\cite{EasterlyLevine, Alesina et al, Posner et al}} Income per capita, as is well known, is highly correlated with regime type scores (around \ldots\ldot
and this correlation moves toward .6 when oil countries are excluded. Population size is, as mentioned previously, correlated with the number of ethnic groups (which is excluded from the specification) and that, in turn, is highly correlated with the ELF index. The sum total is a twisted yarn of correlation from which it is quite difficult to extract reliable inferences. Disentangling that yarn fully is beyond the scope of this chapter, but removing one or two threads is sufficient to indicate that the main theoretical claim requires considerable qualification. That said, minor specification changes to \( M_1 \) in \( M_2 \) completely change the interpretation. Previously insignificant results become highly significant.\(^6\)

As previously noted, ELF is correlated with an omitted variable—the number of groups—upon which it depends critically for meaningful interpretation and calculation. For this reason, \( M_4 \) introduces a measure that is a non-linear function (based on a mixture of two normals) that reflects the situation depicted in the contour plot presented earlier. The estimate of the effect is evidently significant. \( M_5 \) ignores all complaints lodged against the first specification, and plugs in the new measure—HET. The effect is extremely strong and is consistent across a variety of additional specifications (not presented here). If the data were available and a more appropriate method of estimation were adopted, the effect could be shown even stronger. Even with these drawbacks, it is sufficient to cast doubt on F and L’s claim and to suggest that, for some theoretical purposes, HET is a better measure of the concept described in the literature. Data requirements plague all potential measures of ethnic diversity. The effect of ELF cannot be truly ‘tested’ in a lon-

\(^6\)A key cause is multi-collinearity, but there are probably a half dozen contributing factors that would take us far from this chapter’s objective. NBB: Bosnia, Croatia and Djibouti are dropped in FL because of missing data on GDP pc.
gitudinal research design matrix when it is constant over time. The regression treats it inappropriately as a categorical variable. Rather, it should vary not only between but also within countries. Given current data limitations, it is probably most appropriately treated as a country-level predictor in a multilevel (preferably non-linear) model. Even if these data were available, however, ELF might not be consistently related to civil war onset in a linear model context, because it can not recover the non-linearly relationship with conflict posited it in the literature. A simple square polynomial on ELF is sometimes insufficient to induce the appropriate non-linearity in the presence of multi-collinearity.

At the end of the day, changing the specification slightly changes the result, and changing the measure also changes the result. Consequently, it would be premature to dismiss the link between heterogeneity and conflict solely on the basis of the ELF index and conventional regression analysis. It is of course possible to contort ELF in such a way that it obtains ‘statistical significance’, but that should not be our goal. Rather, we should use an index that captures the notion of heterogeneity HET and relates in an uncomplicated manner to quantities of interest, such as the probability of civil war, given various ethnic constellations.

61 Sambanis (2000: 239) writes: ‘the full explanatory power of panel estimators is lost due to the fact that many important explanatory variables are time-invariant’. These ‘variables’ are supposedly continuous, but are treated as categorical country-level intercepts.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the relationship between heterogeneity and violent secessionist conflict. In the process, it has been necessary to consider why efforts to test the effect of heterogeneity using a fractionalization index have been plagued by problems. On the basis of logistic regression analysis of conflict on the ethno-linguistic fractionalization index, it has been suggested that ethnic heterogeneity is unrelated to conflict. This chapter shows that the theoretical conclusion does not follow from the statistical result. The conclusion, it would seem, is the result of conflating the fractionalization index with the concept of heterogeneity. There are of course other sources: 1) non-linearities hidden in conventional parametric analysis, 2) the inclusion of colonial wars (and the exclusion of others, such as Bosnia, Croatia and Djibouti because of missing data), 3) using the ELF index without accounting for the number of groups, 4) an exclusive post World war II scope, and 5) the use of cross-sectional, observational and dependent explanatory variables in a longitudinal design and analysis.

This chapter has discussed these problems and suggested that different measures of heterogeneity, an extended temporal and spatial scope and a more appropriate modeling strategy lead to different substantive conclusions that imply a clear link between heterogeneity and conflict. These results challenge recent some quantitative assessments of the role that ethnicity plays in facilitating (and thwarting) violent conflict.

While the results represent only a first cut at the data, they call into question a prominent empirical result and related theoretical claim, suggesting that subsequent chapters should not ignore the potential role of ethnic heterogeneity. At the same
time, the chapter provides a new measure of an important concept in the literature. Lacking a better alternative, empirical inquiry on this front has been slow. This chapter seeks to redress this state of affairs by offering the theoretical and empirical foundations for a new measure of heterogeneity, providing new data for a wide range of region-country-years and offering some suggestive empirical findings that will be explored further in subsequent chapters.

The main advantage of a new measure of ethnic heterogeneity is that it is constructed with theories of ethnic conflict in mind, unlike fractionalization indices which were designed for entirely different purposes and settings. Once our theories are better matched with our empirics, the analysis suggests that ethnically divided countries are indeed more likely to experience significant violent conflict. The data analysis presented here point to a robust, non-linear, relationship. At least in this sample of states and for the dependent variables examined here, HET does a better job than ELF and other measures of explaining variation in violent conflict on a subset of important cases—post-secessionist states. The final section provides a brief replication and extension of Fearon and Laitin’s results, exchanging ELF with HET and with other alternatives, on a temporally more restricted but spatially broader sample of countries.

The purpose of this chapter has been to introduce a new measure of ethnic heterogeneity and to provide a plausibility probe. The result presented here, tentative as they are, cast doubt on some prominent empirical findings and related theoretical claims in the literature. Advancing this debate requires a better match between theory and empirics than has been standard to date. Further research should specify how the preferred measure of ethnic diversity (dominance, fractionalization, frag-
mentation, polarization, or heterogeneity) relates to the theory of ethnic conflict. This chapter represents an effort to make that match in one domain, applied to one measure of ethnicity—ethnic heterogeneity—and one kind of violence—secessionist conflict.

Using both generalized linear models and non-linear algorithms grounded in statistical learning theory, the results of the analysis indicate that the link between ethnic heterogeneity and violent conflict is strong; dismissing it solely on the basis of the evidence that has been presented so far would be premature. Armed with a new measure, the next chapter provides a quantitative analysis of the dissertation’s primary questions about the incidence, intensity and timing of violent secessionist conflict. A range of statistical tools—Random Forests, Support Vector Machines, Bayesian Model Averaging, Bayesian non-parametric modeling—is brought to bear on the data analysis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$M_1$</th>
<th>$M_2$</th>
<th>$M_3$</th>
<th>$M_4$</th>
<th>$M_5$</th>
</tr>
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<td>Prior War</td>
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<td>-1.46</td>
<td>-.679</td>
<td>-.63</td>
<td>-.87</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(-3.02)</td>
<td>(-4.15)</td>
<td>(-2.13)</td>
<td>(-1.99)</td>
<td>(-2.73)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Per capita income</td>
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<td>-.78</td>
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<td>-.51</td>
<td>-.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-4.73)</td>
<td>(-7.14)</td>
<td>(-5.69)</td>
<td>(-6.13)</td>
<td>(-5.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>log(population)</td>
<td>.267</td>
<td>-.364</td>
<td>-.37</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3.64 )</td>
<td>(-9.26)</td>
<td>(-10.22)</td>
<td>(-3.4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>log(mountainous terrain)</td>
<td>.220</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.13</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.61 )</td>
<td>(2.03)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-contiguous state</td>
<td>.408</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.37</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(.78 )</td>
<td>(4.08)</td>
<td>(4.73)</td>
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<td>1.01</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(2.18)</td>
<td>(3.76)</td>
<td>(3.18)</td>
<td>(2.4)</td>
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<td>New State</td>
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<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5.87)</td>
<td>(4.09)</td>
<td>(4.14)</td>
<td>(4.1)</td>
<td>(4.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instability</td>
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<td>.413</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(1.63)</td>
<td>(1.96)</td>
<td>(1.99)</td>
<td>(2.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.043</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.16)</td>
<td>(2.19)</td>
<td>(2.17)</td>
<td>(2.05)</td>
<td>(1.49)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ethnic Fractionalization</td>
<td>0.168</td>
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<td>-3.97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.45 )</td>
<td>(-3.02)</td>
<td>(-3.0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Fractionalization</td>
<td>.287</td>
<td>-3.27</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>-.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.56)</td>
<td>(-3.70)</td>
<td>(2.88)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Fractionalization Sq.</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted ELF</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HET</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-3.82</td>
<td>(-4.66)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interceptor</td>
<td>-6.783</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-9.21)</td>
<td>.069</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>6316</td>
<td>6316</td>
<td>6316</td>
<td>6316</td>
<td>6316</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.3:** Z-scores in parentheses. $M_1$ is equivalent to column 1 in F & L, 2003. $M_2$ adds a random country effect. $M_3$ replaces that covariate, adds ELF squared, and removes two variables. $M_4$ is column 1, minus the ELF and Religious Fractionalization, plus a mixture of two normals adjusting for the number of groups. $M_5$ uses the new measure, HET.
Chapter 4

Secessionist Conflict Across Time and Space

When someone is honestly 55% right, that’s very good and there’s no use wrangling. And if someone is 60% right, it’s wonderful, it’s great luck, and let him thank God. But what’s to be said about 75% right? Wise people say this is suspicious. Well, what about 100% right? Whoever says he’s 100% right is a fanatic, a thug and the worst kind of rascal.

‘A well schooled person is one who searches for that degree of precision in each kind of study which the nature of the subject at hand admits.’

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1.3.23

On the basis of several original data sets covering the universe of de facto secessionist states since the Congress of Vienna, which is provided in the appendix, and new measures of ethno-territorial heterogeneity and external actor involvement, this chapters explores the primary determinants of variation in violence associated with the aftermath of secession. Spatial and temporal variation is scrutinized using a range of quantitative algorithmic and Bayesian techniques to evaluate ‘hold-out’ subsets of the data, which provide the foundation for descriptive and predictive inferences to be drawn about the antecedents and determinants of violence after secession.
4.1 The Universe of Secession

Secession is a world-wide phenomenon, a feature of the developing world and the developed world, a watershed event that is neither limited in space nor in time. The aim of this chapter is to explore patterns in secession, its causes, consequences and modalities, across time and space, using a variety of quantitative methods and drawing upon a series of new databases on secessions and conflict collected from historical sources. The specific assumptions and algorithmic machinery behind these methods is discussed only in passing here in order to leave sufficient space for the analysis of substantive results. The focus in this chapter is upon enhancing our understanding of secession and conflict in world politics by taking advantage of developments in statistics, computer science and probability theory in combination with our regional, historical and substantive knowledge. Citations and references to other parts of this project and other works is provided, however, for the reader who wishes to learn more about the methodological aspects of the findings.

The objective of this chapter is to examine, describe and analyze broad patterns of conflict after secession. The specific causal mechanisms through which ethno-territorial heterogeneity and third party actors influence the aftermath of secession will be covered in more detail in the case study chapters. In this chapter, I attempt to show that my argument regarding the effects of these variables applies broadly, even after controlling for a variety of potentially confounding factors. In particular, I demonstrate that modest ethnic heterogeneity is a powerful predictor of violence after secession controlling for the prior involvement of external actors; and that third party actors are important, controlling for initial degrees of heterogeneity.

The chapter summarizes a series of descriptive, inferential and predictive analy-
sis, based on new cross-sectional, longitudinal and survival data, and using a range of statistical learning methods and estimation techniques, including classification tree methods based on recursive partitioning algorithms, non-parametric Random Forest ensemble methods for classification and survival data as well as Bayesian model averaging via adaptive sampling.

4.2 Trends and Patterns

Of the roughly sixty new states created through secession, how many produced peaceful and stable states? Why did some survive the initial years of statehood while others found themselves embroiled in deadly disputes almost immediately?

The answer to these questions of course depends on how we define peaceful and stable. Almost any definition will possess some strengths and weaknesses, but what concerns us is whether the definition we employ alters the inferences that an impartial spectator would draw. Taking a conservative stance to this thorny issue, the project considers a variety of battle-death and temporal thresholds, conducting separate analysis for various forms of violence and for 5, 10, 15, 25, and 50 years after secession.

The definition of peace utilized here excludes, most obviously, the secessions that produced ‘recursive secession violence’ within the borders of the new state following the initial break. As defined in previous chapters, recursive secessionist violence is an organized armed conflict between a rebel group, usually ethnically and territorially differentiated, and a central government or ruling elite resulting in at least 10 battle related deaths where the rebels aim at secession or a degree of
territorial autonomy through violent means if necessary that would be paramount to secession.

This definition distinguishes recursive secessionist violence from other forms of conflict. For example, it classifies as distinct coup attempts, which seek to control the center by overthrowing the government, a kind of conflict that is not uncommon after secession and on which I have collected separate data. Further, this definition distinguishes recursive secessionist violence from an ethnic riot, which could escalate into recursive secessionist violence but is at least at the outset distinct. Aside from having different aims and organizational structures, recursive secessionist conflicts are also different using the battle death threshold, claiming more than 10 conflict related deaths, whereas deadly ethnic riots need only claim 1. Coups and riots are important forms of violence after secession that are explored in a follow-up project, but are bracketed in this analysis in order to focus the scope conditions on a set of more strictly comparable political phenomenon.

On balance, the definition is broad in that it includes events that are typically considered ethnic civil wars, or simply civil wars, while also covering lower intensity conflicts with an ethnic and territorial character. At the same time, the definition is narrow in that it excludes low intensity events and other forms of political violence such as protests, riots and coups that do not aim at ethno-territorial separation. Post-secessionist states that avert recursive secessionist violence are considered peaceful and stable for this analysis, though they may be beset by other hardships, including human rights abuses and human security concerns, and other

1A small proportion of armed conflicts possess mixed aims; some factions seek the control the center while others aim at autonomy of secession.
kinds of political conflict.

We have so far not mentioned how we will address the problem of interstate conflict after secession. It would make little sense to consider a post-secessionist state peaceful or stable if it only avoided recursive secessionist violence but was engaged in a protracted irredentist or secessionist war with its neighbor or with the rump states. External actors figure prominently in most recursive secessionist conflicts, over one-half according to my count; their potential involvement significantly alters the expectations of all other actors, sometimes tipping the balance of power in favor of one actor at the expense of the others. Indeed, some external actors play such a large role in internal wars of other countries that the very distinction between intrastate and interstate wars becomes blurred.

Think only of recent conflicts in the former Communist world: was the conflict in Kosovo intrastate, interstate or both? Was the recent war in Georgia a secessionist conflict, an interstate war between Russia and Georgia, or both? How about the conflicts in the early 1990s in the former Yugoslavia so ingrained in the public consciousness as civil wars par excellence? Conflicts in other parts of the world present a similar dilemma of taxonomy. Further, conflicts that begin as one type may develop into the second, for objectives pursued through violence are subject to constraints and opportunities that change over time, especially but not exclusively the strength of the central government. Since conflicts are not necessarily born as intrastate or interstate, and commonly assume characteristics of both, rigid classification can obscure more than it enlightens. For the cases in my universe, I have examined the role of external actors, coding the degree, the type and the intensity of their involvement from a military, diplomatic and economic standpoint.
Armenia does not have any internal conflicts though it is engaged in an interstate, irredentist war with Azerbaijan and has the potential for the same in the Javakheti region of Georgia. Similarly, Eritrea has not experienced a recursive secessionist conflict since it separated from Ethiopia, but it has repeatedly fought on both sides of the border against Ethiopia at the interstate level. Any reasonably inclusive understanding of peace and stability ought to keep cases such as these in full view even if deems them excludable on taxonomic grounds.

With those definitional issues on the table, we can now state how many post-secessionist states produced peaceful and stable polities, and how many experienced recursive secessionist violence. Of all the secessionist states included in the data set, 51% experienced recursive secessionist conflicts within 5 years of separation; 53% 10 years, 54% within 15 years, 66% within 25 years and 70% within 50 years. The following table shows the proportion that were involved in recursive secessionist violence, by time period, after \( \alpha \) years: 5, 10, 15, 25, and 50.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>After 5 Years</th>
<th>After 10 Years</th>
<th>After 15 Years</th>
<th>After 25 Years</th>
<th>After 50 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before WWI</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before WWII</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After WWII</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Cold War</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Proportion of post-secessionist states involved in recursive secessionist violence

After World War II, recursive secessionist conflict was somewhat less likely than

\( ^2 \)The definition adopted is based on the definition from PRIO (Peace Research Institute Oslo), which is described more fully in their documentation. It involves in its essence the same criteria, but the battle death threshold is 10, and is denoted as a war if greater than 1000.
before the war, taking the proportion of all secessionist cases within the relevant
time frame, but was still a significant proportion of secessionist outcomes (≥ 50%) as it was following the Cold War. Among those post-secessionist states that experienced such violence after secession, the average time to conflict was roughly 8 years after de facto separation. Like many skewed distributions, the expectation of this one reveals as much as it conceals, since about one-half of all cases survived less than five years and one-third experienced recursive secessionist violence within the very first calendar year. As the slowly increasing time trend from 5 to 50 years illustrates, most though certainly not all post-secessionist states that experience recursive secessionist violence find themselves involved in conflict within the first five years after separation.

In total, approximately 30% of secessionist cases averted recursive secessionist violence during the period under observation. Several of these ‘peaceful’ cases experienced other forms of instability, such as coups, riots or militarized interstate disputes, which are not included unless they assumed a significant recursive secessionist component. The number of secessionist states that avoided all these forms of violent conflict is only about one-fifth. Considering other forms of violent conflict unconditional on the occurrence of recursive secession, we see similar patterns: 51% experienced militarized interstate disputes (MID) with the rump state within the first twenty years after separation, either as targets and initiators; 53% were involved in an international crisis event (ICB); and 63% experienced at least one violent riot within ten years of independence.

Calculation based on MID levels 4, 5 and 6; ICB event within first 10 years of de facto statehood; Riot data based on Lexis/Nexis and Banks et al.
Only 10% of post-secessionist states avoided all relevant forms of violent conflict, a figure that I think conveys just how common violent conflict is following secession, but this number reflects a composite of many disparate types of conflict: internal, external, central and peripheral, high and low-intensity. If we reduce the scope of violence to one type of internal conflict and one type of external conflict—recursive secessions and interstate disputes between the rump and the secessionist states—the data suggest that roughly 30% of post-secessionist states were peaceful. If we added the stipulation that there were no interstate disputes with neighboring states, then that number would drop to 15%. And if we added the requirement that no civil wars over the central government could occur to be considered peaceful then the figure would drop to 12%. If we look at recursive secessionist violence, as this project does, then about half of the cases are peaceful.

When we look more closely at the cases that averted violence of any kind—for example, Andorra, Iceland, Montenegro, Norway, Slovakia—we see that they share a few characteristics: they tend to emerge from loose unions with the rump state through a gradual process of disassociation, that they are relatively wealthy, and for the most part ethnically homogeneous states. Meddling neighboring states are also absent from all these cases, a fact that, with the exception of Iceland, was not solely a function of geography. This is not to say that some of these cases were not involved in conflicts after the cut off point (15 years in this calculation) or for reasons unrelated to the secession (Iceland’s Cod Wars). Even Norway, a prototypical peaceful secession, was hardly as clear cut as the stylized history of its relations with Sweden would suggest. A reevaluation of the history at the one hundredth anniversary of separation revealed that the period leading up to separation was ac-
tually quite fraught with ethnic tensions, and involved a spiraling arms race, border fortification, war plans and war games already in the 1890s. ‘Militarily speaking,’ said Axel Rappe, Head of the Swedish General Staff, ‘it would be right to strike down Norway.’... The Germany Emperor supported Sweden, and declared that the Swedes should ‘strike down with iron fist the rebels to the west.’ Why war was averted is an interesting, and somewhat idiosyncratic story, that was ultimately determined by a single Swedish vote in favor of negotiation before military strikes.

The table below provides a break down of the various forms of violent conflict that occur after secession with the associated proportion of cases that experienced each kind of conflict. The table shows a number of noteworthy figures. First, very few post-secessionist states fully avoid violent conflict in all its forms. Of course, it is important to treat violent riots differently from protracted recursive secessionist violence, for the former are typically not as serious as the latter, even though such

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5Idem., p. 8.

6These forms of violent conflict are distinct, but not always mutually exclusive, so the numbers do not sum to 100, and the final category includes the set theoretic union of the former categories. $T_i$ varies slightly by category, and is defined below. Recursive secession, defined as a violent attempt at secession within a new secessionist state or the rump state, is evaluated at 5 and 10 years after secession for the secessionist state, and 5 and 20 years for the rump state. Violent riots, measured as involving 100 or more casualties and wounded, are drawn from Banks et al., and measured at 10 and 20 years after secession, with missing data completed by author based on LEXIS/NEXIS.; Internal war of a non-secessionist character aiming at the center is drawn from Fearon and Laitin as well as Sambanis and Doyle for post-WWII, and from Gleditsch at al. before WWII, with missing data completed by author using same coding inclusion and exclusion criteria. $T_1$ is 10 years after secession and $T_2$ is 20 years. International crisis is defined using the International Crisis Behavior data set, measured at 10 and 20 years. Militarized Interstate Dispute, v. 3.2, are defined using the MID data set, and level 3 or above within the first ten and twenty years. $T_1$ and $T_2$ for the ‘any kind of violent conflict’ category are 5 and 15 years after secession.
distinctions may appear arbitrary from the perspective of the participants. Second, the table shows that the two most common forms of violent conflict are recursive secessions (in the secessionist or rump state) and militarized interstate disputes (with any other state), so they will form the bulk of material for this study with more attention devoted to the former than the latter. The sum total of these two proportions exceed 100 because some states were unfortunate enough to experience both kinds of violent conflict in close succession or even simultaneously.

The clear picture that emerges from the data is that violence after secession is quite common, frequent enough to cause pause among scholars and policymakers who believe that secession will produce peace. The cases in which it will produce complete peace are rare indeed. If our requirements for peace are less stringent, there is more hope. Almost half of all secessionist states avoid recursive secessionist violence, two thirds avoid non-secessionist internal wars that aim to overthrow the government, and approximately one half avoid militarized interstate disputes with their rump state. Whether the glass is half-empty or half-full will depend on one’s baseline—if these odds are compared to constant daily violence in an undivided state, secession may be the less bad alternative and taking the gamble may not seem so risky.

We shall not be able to treat all these forms of violent conflict with equal care. Since each kind of conflict possesses a disparate dynamic, it would be a sort of empirical stretching to treat them all in one sweep, so I shall focus much of the attention on the problem of recursive secessionist violence, because it is an incessant

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7In the book version of this project I devote more or less equal attention to the intrastate and interstate dimensions.
source of problems for new secessionist states, because it has been less studied than other forms of violent conflict and because it goes to the core of the debate over secession’s ability to resolve rather than merely reorder ethnic conflicts by creating new ones.

What these sundry statistics of deadly quarrels suggest is that, on the one hand, conflict after secession is sufficiently common to cause pause among partition optimists, but also that violence after secession is not inevitable, peaceful secession is possible and might be encouraged under some fairly specific conditions. However, the numbers presented so far speak only to the frequency, and not to whether there is any rhyme or reason to the incidence of violence after separation. The theory suggests, and the subsequent analysis will show, that there is considerable structure and regularity in post-secessionist violence, and this structure can guide and enhance our approach to secessionist claims in other areas of the world, but first a word about data and methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict Type</th>
<th>$T_1$</th>
<th>$T_2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recursive secessionist violence (in secessionist state)</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recursive secessionist violence (in either rump or secessionist state)</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent riots</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military intervention: Internal war aiming at center</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International crisis</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militarized interstate dispute (w/ any state)</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Militarized interstate dispute (w/ rump state)</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any kind of violent conflict</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Violent Conflict After Secession
4.3 Data and Methods

To systematically explore the space of explanatory variables, which can exceed one hundred in some civil war data sets, and reduce the data dimensionality, I utilize algorithmic methods that (recursively) partition the explanatory space, taking into account non-linearities, interdependencies and multi-collinearities, and extracting important predictors and their non-linear thresholds.

These methods have been developed with three well known problems and possible solutions in mind: 1) Rashomon’s paradox - the multiplicity of good models, 2) Occam’s razor: the conflict between simplicity and accuracy, 3) Bellman’s curse of dimensionality. One of the first efforts to address these problems, Classification and Regression Trees (CART), ‘uses a set of predictors to subset the data such that within each subset, the values of the response variable are as similar as possible. It represents a powerful non-parametric tool to discover non-linearities and other patterns that might be missed using a more conventional generalized linear models approach. CART does not require an implicit assumption that ‘the underlying relationships between the predictor variables and the dependent variable are linear or follow some specific non-linear link function’, or even that they are ‘monotonic’. CART has been a staple of the statistical learning community for some time, and has illuminated a wide range of applications and problems, while Random Forest remains somewhat more experimental.

In addition to CART, which creates a single tree, the analysis relies on recent advances in ensembles of trees called forests that have emerged in recent years with an impressive record of predictive accuracy and scientific utility. A critical move in the advancement of decision tree analysis has involved the creation of hundreds of
trees - a forest - and multiple layers of randomness, including random selection and permutation of predictors. Sampling, voting and averaging over trees—the mechanisms used to construct the forest—have been shown to yield extremely accurate and robust estimates of variable importance and unbiased estimates of the out of sample error rate, producing one of the most powerful statistical tools available today, Random Forest.

The theoretical aspects of these methods are carefully described elsewhere, especially in the classic reference on the subject, written by Breiman et al. (1984) and Breiman (2001a). For our purpose, it suffices that CART serves two purposes: it clusters the observations into groups with similar values on the response variable and explanatory variables, and also shows exactly how (the path through which) these clusters were constructed using an easy to understand tree diagram showing which predictors are split and on which values. Factors, both ordered and unordered, as well as interval and ratio level variable types, are handled seamlessly and nonparametrically within one framework. For these reasons, CART a good place to begin exploring the data.

4.4 Cross-National Comparisons: CART Models

Recursive secessionist violence, the dependent variable in this analysis, is a series of binary indicators: did the secessionist state under consideration experienced recursive secessionist violence within the first 5, 10, 15, 25 or 50 years after separation? This is not the only metric of whether a post-secessionist state was successful, but it is quite reasonable to deem it a necessary condition.
Figure 1, which displays the results from this analysis, should be read from the top down: the top of the inverted tree indicates the explanatory variable with the greatest ability to partition the variance in the dependent variable. Rebel-supporting third party state actors that provide material (e.g., military and economic) assistance prior to the onset of violence constitute the principal and proximate antecedent to the escalation of ethnic tensions into recursive secessionist violence. The analysis indicates that, if third parties are involved in this manner (and we therefore proceed down the right branch), the second most powerful explanatory variable, the new heterogeneity metric, further partitions the cases into two—those with an extremely high probability of violence and those with a moderately high probability.

Specifically, the cases falling down the right-right branch are those where a third party actor was involved and in which the value of the heterogeneity index is below .41 (on a scale ranging from zero to one). Recall that values close to zero characterize cases with a small number of large ethnically defined groups—i.e., heterogeneous cases. The predicted probability of recursive secessionist violence for cases with these values on their explanatory variables, all else constant, is very high—.91—nearly guaranteeing violence.

On the other hand, third parties are not the only actors and potential secessionists are rarely mere pawns—despite promises external support, rebel groups may determine that it is in their interest not to escalate tensions beyond the point of no-return. This is more often likely to be true in non-heterogeneous cases, but it can be true in fractionalized and homogeneous settings as well. Indeed, although there are no systematic data on rebel group decision making for the a large-N test, the
data are consistent with an interpretation that third party involvement in a non-heterogeneous setting is less likely to foster violent conflict than in states with other ethnic structures. Proceeding down the right-left branch sequence, we have cases where a third party was involved providing material assistance to a rebel group in a less heterogeneous country, where the predicted probability of recursive secessionist violence is significantly less than in comparable heterogeneous cases—.58—but the chance of conflict is still far from negligible.

To identify cases with an equal or lower probability of secessionist violence than these two clusters, we need to return to the top of the tree, and proceed down the left hand side branches. On the left, third parties are not involved, so we should

Figure 4.1: Classification tree using a recursive partitioning algorithm
expect less recursive secessionist conflict, all else equal, and that is what the data demonstrate. When third parties are not involved, determining whether a potential recursive secession erupts into violence depends primarily on the wealth level of the state in question, for wealth is a proxy for the extent of goods at the central government’s disposal with which it can buy off the rebels and also for the state’s capacity and bureaucratic infrastructure to in fact redress the group’s claims against it.

The available data are consistent with this story: the predicted probability of conflict in poorer states without third party involvement is comparable to the probability of states with third party involvement but without high levels of heterogeneity. In this sense, a poor state serves as a functional equivalent for heterogeneity and third party involvement combined, even though the mechanisms are distinct.

In wealthier states without third party involvement, the probability of recursive secessionist conflict is approximately zero. That said, we should not fail to consider the possibility that third parties may be less likely to become involved as nosy neighbors or irredentist actors in wealthy states in the first place, since better endowed states can more easily secure their borders and peripheral populations. The data do not provide evidence for this conjecture, however. In fact, among states with wealth levels beneath the mean, third party party involvement was slightly less likely than it was in states above the mean wealth level in the data set. Moreover, if we look only at cases that experienced recursive secessionist conflicts in the first five years, then we see that third parties were actually considerably more likely to interfere in wealthy states than in poor states.

We might also wonder whether third parties are more likely to become involved
in heterogeneous states. This concern also turns out to be unsupported by the data. The correlation between the two variables is close to zero and statistical tests indicate conditional assumptions hold. Among countries with a level of heterogeneity above the mean, the proportion of third party interference was roughly the same as in countries with a level of heterogeneity below the mean, and the same is true if we consider only cases of recursive secessionist conflict within the first five years of separation.

These concerns are not warranted based on the available data. Further, even if there were data based concerns, they would not present a problem for the statistical methods utilized in this project; unlike conventional parametric modeling, CART results do not depend on independence among the explanatory variables. In fact, the branches can be interpreted as interactions between prior and subsequent variables, represented by branches, where the combination of the two variables into a terminal node is the equivalent of an upper right orthant from their interaction.

Another concern relates to parsimony. There is no doubt that other factors come into play, and the more extensive (unpruned, terminus technicus) tree contains many more splits, but these splits add increasingly less to the story, and come at the cost of interpretability. The trees presented here are pruned to a tradeoff between accuracy (verisimilitude) and interpretability (parsimony). In principle, the algorithm can split the cases using all predictors into increasingly small and homogeneous groups until each terminal node is comprised of one country. In this case, however, we would soon realize that we have the actual data and not a model of the data.

In order to make robust inferences, we would like to have a reasonably sized proportion of the total cases in each of the terminal nodes. If each case were its
own terminal node, we could severely constrain our ability to make more general
inferences. In constructing this tree, then, we have specified that each terminal node
must have at least 10 cases, allowing us to make somewhat general claims about
the entire tree. Given this specification, the number of cases in each terminal node
is between 11 to 19, and is on average roughly 15 per node. The total tree shows
that we used three informative variables, and ignored many noisy ones, in order to
split the 60 cases into four less or more equally sized bins, an approach that should
yield benefits in terms of increased confidence in the results at the expense of some
accuracy. Since we are interested at this point in exploring the data, rather than
predicting future cases, this is a trade-off well made.

![Figure 4.2: Predicted Probability Class: 4 classes](image)

Figure 4.2: Predicted Probability Class: 4 classes
Proceeding in this manner, Figure 2 displays the probability associated with each class of cases, where each class contains between 10 and 20 cases and is represented graphically as a terminal node. The same procedure is followed to examine a modified dependent variable that adjusts the period after separation to 50 years. Making this adjustment, the same three variables remain powerful predictors, although their order (and therefore the interpretation) changes. Before wealth and heterogeneity were on separate sides of the tree, here they are directly related. Figures 3 and 4 show that relatively poor states with high levels of heterogeneity are virtually assured of experiencing recursive secessionist violence. A second class of cases is constituted by secessionist states that are either a) poorer and less heterogeneous or b) wealthier but have third parties engaged on behalf of potential secessionists. These possess are middle to high probability of experiencing recursive secessionist violence. By contrast, consistent with the previous figures, wealthier countries with no third party involvement have a negligible probability of suffering from recursive secessionist violence. With some slight modification, both figures tell a similar story, identify the same predictors, and suggest substantively that poverty, heterogeneity and third party involvement, independently and in combination, significantly increase the probability of recursive secessionist violence.

4.5 Random Forests and Support Vector Machines

Classification and regression trees have many advantages that have made them popular methods even as other methods have been abandoned and new methods
developed. Despite its advantages, however, developments in computing power and randomization have produced methods with greater accuracy and robustness to noise, the ability to handle more complex relationships and ‘small n, large p’ problems. The most recent of those developments is Random Forest, a method that builds and improves upon CART in a number of ways, including greater stability and accuracy. In exchange for these features, Random Forest abandons the single interpretable tree since it is constructed from an ensemble or committee of trees.

A number of visualization tools have been suggested instead of the single tree, including marginal plots and variable importance plots, both of which I utilize in the analysis below. Together with previous developments, such as Bagging, Boosting
and Bumping, Random Forest has already received careful attention and vetting in the statistics and computer science communities as well as in applied settings from renal cell carcinoma classification and financial forecasting to genetic and biomedical analysis. The details of the method have been covered elsewhere and will only receive a cursory discussion here.

Random Forest has five advantages over more conventional quantitative approaches used in political science research: it produces highly accurate forecast models for a large number of input variables, estimates the importance of variables

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8For overviews and discussions of this method, see Breiman 2001, Siroky 2009, Hastie, Tibshirani and Freeman 2009
in determining classification, possesses a good method for estimating missing data and maintains accuracy when a large proportion of the data are missing, provides an experimental way to detect variable interactions, and computes proximities between cases, useful for clustering, detecting outliers, and (by scaling) visualizing the data. In short, it offers an excellent tool for forecasting conflict and peace after secession. Despite these desirable features, it is of course always important to check whether the methods predictions are reasonable in light of qualitative case-based analysis. The interaction between the model’s predictions and case expertise has improved both and has helped to create more accurate models and less idiosyncratic results.

In sum, Random Forest serves a number of purposes within a unified framework, e.g., describing the relationship between predictors and responses, forecasting, variable selection, identifying interactions and outliers, missing data imputation and classification. Random forest is also unique in handling both missing data and out-of-sample testing within a single framework. The method is appropriate for mixed discrete and continuous predictors and responses, and also offers an elegant approach for survival analysis.

This analysis takes full advantage of these features, revealing in a systematic manner that variation in recursive secessionist violence is replete with structure, a

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topic to which I shall return shortly. Figure 5 depicts the results from a Random
Forest classification using one of the key visualization methods for Random Forest
classification—the Variable Importance Plot, in effect, a dot-chart that ranks the
variables from most to least important in terms of parsing the variance in the
occurrence of recursive secessionist violence.¹⁰

Figure 5 shows that third party involvement on the rebels’ behalf is of critical
importance in determining whether latent tensions ultimately escalate into violent
challenges against the central government’s territorial integrity. Consistent with
first-hand qualitative evidence from the Balkans and the Caucasus, as well as with
secondary accounts from Africa, Asia and elsewhere, the external dimension of
internal disputes is vital. The finding is intuitive, but has not been demonstrated
at the cross-national level and has been treated in a slapdash fashion in the related
civil war literature, if not ignored altogether.

It usually goes without saying that rebel groups tend to have fewer capacities at
their disposal than the governments from which they seek separation. That imbal-
ance can be redressed in a dramatic manner when third parties elect to bolster rebel
groups for ethnic, ideological or strategic reasons. The initially unfavorable balance
of power can also be shifted when the central government is weak, a condition that
afflicts many new states and which would seem to invite third party meddling and
nosy neighbors to sort out old territorial disputes and initiate new ones by reduc-

¹⁰For more discussion of how importance is measured and current controversies, see Breiman
2002; Strobl et al. 2007; Strobl and Zeileis 2008; Siroky 2009. Importance of a given variable
is determined by calculating how much prediction error decreases (or increases) when the out of
sample data for the variable is permuted while all others remain constant, tree by tree as the
forest is randomly constructed, see Liaw and Wiener 2002 and Breiman 2002 for the definition of
all four measures of importance.
ing the expected cost and potential repercussions of doing so. That this variable emerges as important consistently across all estimations and measures (Figure 6) of importance provides confidence in the result, and indicates that the related civil war literature, at least its quantitative faction, suffers from a pernicious form of omitted variable bias.

The same can be said of the new heterogeneity metric, which consistently arises at the top of the list of important predictors. States with a small number of large groups (i.e., those with a high index value)—for example, Bosnia, Moldova or Macedonia—are more prone to recursive secessionist violence than states which are ethnically fractionalized, constituted by many small groups, such as Dagestan and Tanzania, or homogeneous, such as Poland and Norway. Qualitatively or quantitatively viewed, however, heterogeneity cannot be the whole story. In substantive terms, however, it is reasonable to think of it as a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for violence, since latent tensions based on heterogeneity may escalate into violence or be curbed, either as a result of outside forces or a particular government policy toward the aggrieved ethnic region. All else equal, however, heterogenous post-secessionist states are more conflict prone than similar states with different ethno-territorial structures.

Figure 6, which provides the results from four distinct methods of ranking importance, drawing from fifty potential predictors. The first three measures basically agree on all the important variables, and nicely separate the signal from the noise, enabling us to reduce the model dimensionality, build more parsimonious models

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11 The measure is more fully discussed in Part 3, Ethno-territorial Heterogeneity and Secessionist Violence.

12 The mathematical details of each variable importance measure are covered in Breiman 2001.
and interpret the substantive results, in addition to providing more confidence in the results that any single metric could offer alone. The fourth variable importance measure is more lenient in this respect, and would not reduce the dimensionality of the problem to a sufficient degree.

The benefits are significant in this problem, and can be even more so as the number of potential predictors grows, allowing us to ignore over forty variables and focusing attention on the important handful, while retaining approximately the same predictive accuracy. A natural question that arises in this context is just how accurate the model is in terms of predicting out of sample data. Fortunately, Random Forest possesses a built-in feature to estimate the misclassification error.

Figure 4.5: Random Forest Variable Importance Plot
Figure 4.6: Multiple Random Forest Variable Importance Measures, allow us to identify the few informative variables and ignore the other dozens of noise variables.

The baseline for such predictions is also an important concern, and something we can compare to other estimation techniques and to intelligent guessing from the data. In dyadic conflict data, where 97% of the observations have a zero (peace) and the remaining three have one (war), we would be right 97% of the time if we simply guessed peace all the time, meaning that any proposed model ought to do at least as well, a standard that virtually all international conflict models fail to meet. In our universe, roughly one-half of the cases experienced the outcome within five years, so we could guess the more prevalent category, but would only be right about half the time. Needless to say, Random Forest does considerably better than
intelligent guessing.

Figure 7 shows the misclassification rate, which is just the average of the false positives and false negatives, on randomly selected out of sample data. The number hovers between 25% and 30%, which is certainly not a negligible amount of error but undoubtedly represents a dramatic improvement from the baseline, especially in view of fairly daunting data limitations. The typical way to make an unbiased estimate of the test set error is cross-validation on new data or a test set, but Random Forest runs this test internally, constructing each tree from a different bootstrapped sample of the training data while leaving out one-third of the cases from the bootstrap sample and in the $k^{th}$ tree, which is constructed from the out-of-sample cases. The algorithm then votes on each case, deciding in which class it belongs, and makes the final determination using a simple majority voting rule. Sundry tests have shown this procedure to produce unbiased estimates of the misclassification error.

Armed with this OOB misclassification error, an important issue is how the Random Forest model compares with other sophisticated methods and with more conventional approaches. In order to conduct a comparison with Support Vector Machines and Logistic Regression, I completed ten repetitions of 10-fold cross-validation, using the `errorest` functions in the `ipred` library from CRAN. Table 2 displays the results of this experiment, and indicates that Random Forest compared favorably with another statistical learning technique that has garnered wide ranging respect and with the logistic regression model.

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13 According to Breiman’s documentation online, ‘...take $j$ to be the class that got most of the votes every time case n was oob. The proportion of times that $j$ is not equal to the true class of n averaged over all cases is the oob error estimate....this has proven to be unbiased in many tests.’
Figure 4.7: Dynamic Random Forest Out of Bag Misclassification Rate

We can also use Random Forest to identify outliers, highlight influential data points and inspect cases that are poorly predicted by the model. Outliers, typically understood as ‘cases that are removed from the main body of the data,’ can also be understood in the Random Forest context as ‘cases whose proximities to all other cases in the data are generally small.’\textsuperscript{15} An extension of this approach that could result in enhanced identification is to define outliers relative to their class\textsuperscript{16}.

\textsuperscript{15}Breiman for further details

\textsuperscript{16}The average proximity from case $n$ in class $j$ to the rest of the training data class $j$ is: $\bar{P}(n) = \sum_{cl(k)=j} prox^2(n,k)$, so that the raw outlier metric for the $n^{th}$ case is $\frac{n}{\bar{P}(n)}$ and the final outlier measure involves subtracting the median from each raw measure and dividing by the absolute deviation from the median of each class.
Figure 8 displays the results of the exception analysis, pointing our attention to two prominent spikes in the data.

Closer inspection of these two data points revealed, first, that I had mis-coded Turkmenistan, and second, that North Cyprus was poorly captured in the model. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), a de facto independent state on the northern third of the island, was misclassified in the violent category even though it has averted recursive secessionist violence for decades. Two likely reasons account for the error, one relating to a missing variable and the second to measurement error. The first is that the Turkish Army maintains a large force in the TRNC, having invaded the island in 1974 following a Greek Cypriot military coup, which drastically alters the situation on the ground in favor of stability. Relatedly, the demographic figures available for the initial time period fail to account for the fact that, soon after separation, almost 200,000 Greek Cypriots abandoned their homes and fled to the Greek part, homogenizing the northern part and making internal conflict less likely than the public numbers suggest. Qualitative information which would have helped to classify the cases correctly was not incorporated in the quantitative measurements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M-1-RF</th>
<th>M-2-SVM</th>
<th>M-3-Logit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specificity</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct Class</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Comparisons via 10x ten-fold cross-validation.
Figure 4.8: Exception Analysis, North Cyprus and Romania from Ottoman

4.6 A Longitudinal View - Random Survival Forests

We have so far ignored information about exactly how long these post-secessionist states survived before their first recursive secessionist conflict emerged, instead relying upon thresholds of 5, 10, 25 and 50 years. We can be more precise and also account for the fact that the observation period for some countries is longer than others, namely that there is some potential right censoring in the data. Since it is similar to the classic Random Forest method, it shares many of its desirable properties. In the survival context, the absence of model based assumptions is particularly welcome since most survival models, such as the Cox model, make overly restrictive
assumptions on the hazard function. The details of the method are discussed extensively elsewhere, so we can focus on the application to the problem of recursive secessionist violence here[17]

Figure 9 shows the partial plots for the Random Survival Forest, which enable us to evaluate how the ensemble estimated survival rate varies as a function of the important predictors. The vertical axis represents the number of expected deaths, ranging from approximately 30 down, which is approximately 50% of the data set, or the proportion that experiences recursive secessionist violence within the first five years after secession[18]

The right panel displays the partial plot of HET, the continuous heterogeneity metric, and the left panel displays the partial plot of External actor involvement on the rebels’ behalf, here measured as a simple indicator variable. The interpretation of both is graphically clear: as HET decreases, so too does the expected number of recursive secessionist conflicts from a high of 50% to a low of 25%, a drop of one-half; and when external actors are involved on the rebel’s side, the expected number of recursive secessionist conflicts roughly doubles.

Figure 10 shows four plots of the ensemble survival curves and mortality estimates. The top left panel displays the ensemble survival function for each case in the data set as well as the overall ensemble survival, which is represented by the bold red curve, and the Nelson-Aalen estimator, which is represented by the green curve. The top right panel compares the estimator of the survival function with this

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17For technical details, see Breiman 2001 on Random Forest, and Ishwaran and Kogalur 2007 for survival splitting rules, ensemble estimation and concordance error rate calculations.

18The axis, which indicates the expected number of deaths, is calculated as $\sum_{k=1}^{N} N_k \hat{H}_k(t^*_k|x)$ for a given value of $x$. Ishwaran and Kogalur 2007 for details.
Figure 4.9: Random Survival Forest Partial Plots for Two Variables. Values on the vertical axis represent expected number of deaths for a given predictor, after adjusting for all other predictors. Dashed red lines for continuous predictors are 2 standard error bars.

estimator. The bottom left panel displays the stratified unique event times in four quartiles and the non-stratified score in red. The bottom right panel is displays the estimated hazard over time for events (blue) and censored observations (black).

Figure 11 depicts something we have already seen in the context of the classic Random Forest, namely the error rate and the variable importance plot. The error rate floats between 10% and 20% across 100 trees, achieving its minimum around 25 trees. That error is quite respectable, and represents an improvement over the classic Random Forest, even though the two rates are not directly compa-
The Variable Importance Plot indicates a handful of informative variables, including external actors and ethno-territorial heterogeneity, but also the number of neighboring states, the time period, and the regime type. Additional investigation suggests, for these other variables, that in general more neighbors means a shorter survival period, probably as a proxy for overlapping ethnic population pockets, or proximity to potential threats, but also that very many neighbors, six or more, is associated with a longer survival period, that democracies are less likely to survive, and that post-Cold War cases have a shorter survival time than secessions from the pre-WWII and pre-WWI periods.

Figure 12 serves as a robustness check, and explores the entire model space to...
Figure 4.11: Error rate for Dataset as a function of trees (left-side) and out-of-bag importance values for predictors (right-side).

determine whether these variables remain important in all the top models, where top is determined using the BIC criterion for model selection. The image-plot shows the results of a Bayesian model averaging implementation for survival data. It displays the top twenty models, ranked by the log Bayes factor, using the Bayesian Information criteria as a prior on the model space. If a variable is colored, it belongs in the model, and if it is black, it ought be excluded. The top three variables—heterogeneity, state capacity and external involvement—belong in virtually all of the top twenty models, providing a reasonable degree of confidence that the results are not artifacts of the method, that the importance of the key explanatory variables
is robust across model specification, and that the findings from the case studies generalize to a much broader population in space and time.

**Figure 4.12**: Bayesian Model Averaging using Adaptive Sampling
Chapter 5

Secessionist Conflict in the Balkans

This chapter analyzes the onset of violent secessionist conflict in the Balkans in an effort to appraise the potential of secession to resolve ethnic conflicts and to evaluate competing theoretical and empirical claims. The study draws upon my field research in Kosovo and Montenegro, the two newest states to emerge from the former Yugoslavia, upon historical data and the scholarly literature.

Three ‘entities’ are given special attention in the analysis: (1) the newly independent secessionist state, of which we observe six examples not including Serbia, (2) the successor rump state (first Serbia and Montenegro and then Serbia alone) and (3) the sub-state minority, in this case, the successor state’s ethnic kin left on ‘the wrong side of the border’, the irredenta. The research design is based on the idea of ‘clustered case studies’, which have the notable advantage of holding constant many temporal, regional and international variables, while still revealing systematic variation within a dissolving federation/empire. In principle, this should make our inferences about the mechanisms that produced conflict in some case, but peace in others more robust and reliable. The focus is upon two time periods: the end of the Second Yugoslavia (1990-2008) and, in a more cursory manner, the end of the Ottoman period (1830-1914).

The main factors that motivate and constrain the behavior of these actors in my
account include: (1) ethno-territorial heterogeneity (also known here as ‘overlapping population pockets’), (2) relative state strength (capacity), and (3) external support, in this case, an irredentist rump state. The account aims to illuminate variation in the empirical record of conflict behavior within a geographically delimited territory and to place the events in Kosovo within a broader theoretical and empirical framework. The analysis lends support to the plausibility of several important propositions about violent secessionist conflict, bolsters some of the findings discussed in other chapters and uncovers some of the causal mechanisms linking these factors to the incidence of recursive secessionist violence.

A dynamic debate over the effects of partition and secession has emerged in recent years. On the one hand, the peaceful consequences of Slovakia’s secession from Czechoslovakia, Norway’s from Sweden, Iceland’s from Denmark, or Macedonia’s from Yugoslavia demonstrate that an amicable divorce is possible and years of protracted bloodshed preventable. On the other hand, many cases from Bosnia and Biafra to Taiwan and Timor-Leste illustrate just the opposite: secession makes matters worse, ratchets the quarrel upward, and creates an interstate conflict out of a domestic dispute. When and why we observe the first type of secession, rather the second, is the subject of this chapter. The previous chapters examine the problem using quantitative methods of inquiry, while this chapter and the next probe the problem qualitatively. The focus in this chapter is on the Balkans, a region that only a century ago was ruled by two empires, Austro-Hungary and the Ottomans, but is now home to more than one dozen sovereign states.

The first section explains why I selected the Balkans and the second systematically examines the empirical evidence using a ‘clustered case study’ approach. The
analysis seeks to account for variation in violent secessionist conflict involving the
secessionist state, the rump state and its ethnic kin group ‘on the wrong side of the
border’ (within the new secessionist state). This kind of conflict is central to the
debate because both secessionist states and rump states have incentives to engage
in conflict with each other not only before, but also after, independence. Compared
to other third party types, irredentist rump states seem particularly inclined to
resolve disputes through force. The leader of the rump state may be motivated to
use force, inter alia, by ‘the benefits of retaking (some of) the land lost to the seces-
sionist state, while the secessionist state’s leader may be motivated by the benefits
of acquiring even more land.1 When the location of the leader’s ‘citizens’ coincides
with the disputed territory, a convenient pretext for intervention is afforded.2
Moreover, when the new state is too weak to monopolize the use of force throughout
its territory, irredentist states are tempted to stoke separatist violence hoping to

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1 J. Tir, ‘Keeping the Peace After Secessions.’ J. of Confl. Res. 49 (2005), 713.; T. E. Hachey,
The problem of partition: peril to world peace. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1972.; A. Heraclides,
‘The ending of unending conflicts: Separatist wars,’ Millennium 26: 679-707, 1997.; J. L. Levy,
‘Loss aversion, framing effects, and international conflict: Perspectives from prospect theory,’ In
Handbook of war studies II, M. I. Midlarski (Ed.), Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press,
C. Kaufmann, ‘Possible and impossible solutions to ethnic civil wars,’ Int’l Sec. 20 (1996), 136-
with Negotiated Settlements to Ethnic Civil Wars,’ Security Stds., 13 (2004), 230-279; S. Werner,
‘The precarious nature of peace,’ Amer. J. of Pol. Sci. 43 (1999), 912-34.; D.L. Horowitz,
Partition Work? A New Empirical Examination’, Paper presented at the annual meeting of the
International Studies Association, Hilton Hawaiian Village, Honolulu, Hawaii, Mar 05, 2005.; J.
as a solution to ethnic war,’ World Politics 52 (2000), 437-83.; M. E. Brown, (Ed.) Ethnic conflict

2 Most recently, Russia used this pretext to intervene in Georgia and continues to use it in
order to maintain its ‘peacekeepers’ throughout the country, outside the previously defined zone of conflict.
readjust the territorial settlement in their favor.

This chapter examines these claims against evidence generated at two critical junctures in world politics—the end of the Ottoman Empire in Europe and the end of the Cold War in the Western Balkans—while holding many temporal, regional and international variables constant. The chapters begins by discussing why the Balkan Peninsula, after the Ottoman period and after the Cold War, provides a suitable empirical setting to address the debate. The analysis suggests that a focus on three factors provides a parsimonious and powerful explanation of variation in violent secessionist conflict. The final section briefly considers how this framework might illuminate other cases and what it implies about the possibility of conflict resolution via secession.

5.1 Why the Balkans?

Balkan history is an intricate tale of near constant competition among the major powers for influence, filled with irredentism, secessionism and instability. For any study that claims to understand how variation in violence in associated with any one of these phenomenon, much less all three, the Balkans represent an important and relatively large test set.\(^3\) Indeed, aside from the Soviet Union, the Balkans (both after the Ottoman Empire and Yugoslavia) represent the largest single cluster of

\(^3\) Appropriately, one of the classic papers addressing these issues focuses on the Balkans (and the Middle East) in the post-Ottoman period, see: M. Weiner, ‘Matching Peoples, Territories and States: Post-Ottoman Irredentism in the Balkans and in the Middle East’ in D. Elazar (ed.), *Governing Peoples and Territories*, Jerusalem Institute for Federal Studies, 1982. This chapter builds upon Weiner, among others, by examining the more recent wave of Balkan secessions.
secession in recent history.

In statistical theory, this clustering of cases renders the observations correlated, thus compromising the assumption of independence on which large-N inference often relies. Yet this dependence among cases has advantages too: for one, it ensures that some spatial and temporal factors remain constant, saving scarce ‘degrees of freedom,’ and thus providing an opportunity to explore the effect of variation in more theoretically interesting factors—e.g., the distribution of ethnic groups, the strategic interests of key actors and the relative balance of power among them—on variation in violent international conflict.


5On statistical independence, see Abraham de Moivre, who was one of the first to write on it, in De Mensura Sortis, seu, de Probabilitate Eventuum in Ludis a Casu Fortuito Pendentibus, 1711, 215; Cf: Abraham de Moivre, The Doctrine of Chances, or, A method of calculating the probability of events in play, London : W. Pearson, 1718, 4, where he writes: ‘...if a Fraction expresses the Probability of an Event, and another Fraction the Probability of another Event, and those two Events are independent; the Probability that both those Events will Happen, will be the Product of those Fractions.’; See, more generally, S.M. Stigler, Statistics on the table: the history of statistical concepts and methods, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999.
At the geographic borderlands between Europe and the Middle East, between the former Austro-Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, the Balkans remain highly variable from the point of view of ethnicity, language, religion, development, institutions, and culture. While most of the states in the region have a dominant ethnic group, ethnic group borders and political frontiers in the Balkans are rarely, if ever, coterminous (e.g., Figure 1). The mere mention of Greater Albania, Greater Bulgaria, Greater Greece or Greater Serbia reveals how potentially plentiful these problems are in the Balkans. Each new Balkan state that emerged after the Ottoman Empire, according to one scholar, looked to a ‘golden era’ of historical greatness that invariably coincided with its largest territorial size.\(^6\) In fact, irredentism after the end of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans was probably ‘the single most important determinant of how states behaved and how they developed in the Balkans.’\(^7\)

The medley of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups in the Balkans only highlights the obvious: ethnic identity has always been more fluid than were political borders in the Balkans (e.g., Figure 1).\(^8\) Consider the fact that only about half of Albanians actually reside in Albania proper: the other half live primarily in Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Greece (Figures 9-10). More than a quarter of the

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\(^7\)Ibid., *op. cit.*, 1982, 108.

region’s Serbs reside outside Serbia, especially in Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Croatia, but also in small pockets in Hungary (Szentendre, Pecs, Szeged), Italy (Trieste), Macedonia (Kumanovo), Romania (Banat) and Slovenia (Bela Krajina). The same was true of Greece, from independence in 1830 until the First Balkan War, eighty years later. Greece’s victory in that war resulted in her territory expanding from 25,000 to 42,000 square miles and her population increasing from 2.7 to 4.8 million.\(^9\)

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Figure 5.1: Ethnic Groups in Eastern Europe

*Source: Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection, University of Texas in Austin*
Opportunities for irredentism, secessionism and instability in the Balkans are copious, both for predators and for prey. Greece, for example, has seized these opportunities repeatedly; yet other ‘states,’ such as Macedonia, have repeatedly been the object of irredentism: Albania, Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia all laid claim to Ottoman Macedonia, simultaneously, on the basis of ethnicity, religion, language or historical precedent.\textsuperscript{10} Similarly, after independence in 1912, Albanian territory

was the object of irredentism, claimed in the south by Greece (which withheld recognition for more than a decade), to the east by Bulgaria, on the coast by Italy and in the north by Serbia (Figures 9-10).  

The Balkans also continue to be of special interest from the perspective of international politics. One need only recall that a world war followed in the wake of the fatal shots fired in Sarajevo. The region was again center stage at the century’s end, when NATO planes bombed Serb positions and targets in Bosnia (Operation Deliberate Force) and in Kosovo (Operation Allied Force).

Finally, the region is noteworthy for its varied political-institutional history, which includes empires, kingdoms, fascist regimes, communist regimes, democratic

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11 On Albania and irredentism, see P. Kola, *The Search for Greater Albania*, London: Hurst and Company, 2003.; relevant sections in *After Empire: Multinational Empires and Nation-Building, The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman and Habsburg Empires* (Ed. K. Barkey and M. Von Hagen), Westview Press, 1997.; J. Pettifer and M. Vickers, *The Albanian Question: Reshaping the Balkans*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007.; The Greek state, for example, continues to pursue a policy of ‘Hellenizing’ the population in southern Albania through incentivization schemes, such as (relatively) large pensions and EU passports to Albanian citizens who can speak Greek and who profess Orthodox Christianity. Greece also continues to play Balkan hardball today with its neighbors, especially with Macedonia, whose initiatives it blocks, whose legitimate efforts to join the European Union are sabotaged and whose official name Greece refuses to recognize, but also with Albania (over its Greek minority), especially in Himara and Dhermi, two regions along the southern Albanian coast. The point is that irredentism sometimes entails explicit military operations to annex territory, but it can also frequently involve subtle political and economic pressures. The Balkans if rife with both types of irredentist behavior, making it ideal to explore the full spectrum of irredentist behavior.

12 This event was of course symbolic of the struggle between the Austrians and the southern Slavs over control of borderlands such as Bosnia–Herzegovina. On the beginning of World War I in the Balkans, see R.C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913: prelude to the First World War*, London: New York: Routledge, 2000, γ.; A. W. Spencer, ‘The Balkan Question—The Key to A Permanent Peace,’ *The American Political Science Review*, 8, 4 (Nov., 1914), 563-582.

regimes, and all sorts of hybrids. For these reasons, among others, the Balkan Peninsula constitutes an apt area to begin thinking comparatively about violence after secession. Though focused on one geographic region, this chapter examines very general political phenomena—irredentism, secessionism, state formation and violent conflict—that speak to a wide range of cases in other parts of the world from India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, to Iran and Iraq, to Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia, to Czech and Slovakia, and so on. The remainder of this chapter examines the project’s theoretical expectations in light of observed variation in violent international conflict between the secessionist state and the rump state, and then places the main findings within the context of the broader project.

5.2 The Empirical Record

The previous sections set forth the main features of the model as well as the rationale for the empirical case selection. In this section, I turn my attention to the empirical evidence from secessionist and post-secessionist politics. My primary concern is to show that the suppositions, conjectures and patterns outlined in the previous part are germane.

5.2.1 Part I: Sunset on The Second Yugoslavia

I begin with the second Yugoslavia, born in the wake of World War Two. The first wave of secessions from this post-war southern Slav union included the departures of Slovenia, Macedonia, Croatia and Bosnia, and the second wave added Montenegro in 2006 and Kosovo in 2008. The challenge confronting social scientists is to
explain why, in the first wave, the former two largely avoided recursive secessionist conflict with the rump state after secession, while the latter two did not. Extant explanations provide a good place to begin, but ultimately fall short because they tend to be either too shallow (identifying proximate triggers) or too deep (relying on distant legacies).14

Consider the first two secessionist states, Slovenia and Croatia, which separated

from Serbia simultaneously. Both countries are predominantly Catholic, both former territories of the Austro-Habsburg (rather than Ottoman) Empire, and both the wealthiest of the former Yugoslav republics, yet the outcomes of the two cases could not have been more dissimilar: the former parted peacefully, while the latter left in a fit of violence. The first place that the model suggests we look for an explanation is ethnic-heterogeneity—or what I will call here ‘overlapping population pockets’, which I define here as an ‘overlapping population pocket’ as a territorial cluster of one ethnicity, surrounded on at least one side by another ethnic cluster, and typically akin to the majority ethnicity of a neighboring state.\textsuperscript{15}

In Croatia, Serbs have long constituted the smaller of the two main ethnic groups. Before the war at least, Serbs constituted 10-15\% and were distributed in two connected population pockets: mostly in places like Biskupija, Borovo, Donji Lapac, Dvor, Erdut, Ervenik, Gvozd, Knja\v{c}, Negoslavci, Trpinja, Vrhovine, and some others along the border with Serbia (Table 1, Figure x).\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{15}Overlapping implies that the ethnic minority is a majority in a neighboring state. Often this will be the rump state (e.g., Serbs in Bosnia; Russians in Kazakhstan, Turks in Bulgaria, etc.), but it can also be a fellow secessionist state (e.g., Armenians in Azerbaijan or Azeris in Armenia); For a variety of majority-minority configurations and a fascinating study of ethnic geography and intolerance, see: G. Massey, R. Hodson, D. Sekulic, ‘Ethnic Enclaves and Intolerance: The Case of Yugoslavia,’ \textit{Social Forces}, 78: 2. (Dec., 1999), 669–693. Pockets, by definition, are spatially concentrated, typically in a small number of connected segments of territory. In addition to this spatial quality, overlapping population pockets are often defined by a temporal feature of the landscape: ‘ethno-territorial roots’ sometimes harken back to an historical kingdom that included the territory in question (e.g., Kosovopolja for Serbs, Lviv/Lvov for Poles, Vardar Macedonia and Western Thrace for Bulgarians, Kiev/Kievskaya Rus for Russians, Upper Uhry for Hungarians, etc.). The point is simply that the temporal, spatial and numerical features of overlapping population pockets are politically relevant variables that influence the probability of war after secession.

\textsuperscript{16}According to the 1981 census, and the 1991 census, \textit{See: Republic Of Croatia, Central Bureau Of Statistics, Croatian Census, http://www.dzs.hr/} Although the numbers are disputed by all sides, it is probably safe to assume that the Serb population dropped about one-half from 1991 to 2001. Of course, this is also true for Croats living in Serbia. According to the 2001 census, the population is Croat 89.6\%, Serb 4.5\%, other 5.9\% (including Bosniak, Hungarian, Slovene, Czech,
contrast, Serbian presence was, and had always been, marginal (Table 2). Serbs in Slovenia were mostly migrants from the 1970s and 1980s, and never formed a concentrated ethnic enclave.\(^{17}\) Historically, Serbs never had much of a presence and Roma). The official categories in the 2001 census include: Albanians, Austrians, Bosniaks, Bulgarians, Montenegrins, Czechs, Hungarians, Macedonians, Germans, Poles, Romanies, Romanians, Russians, Ruthenians, Slovaks, Slovenians, Serbs, Italians, Turks, Ukrainians, ‘Vlasi’, and Jews. Only Serbs constitute more than 1 percent of the total population. At the county level, some groups, such as Italians in Istria or Roma in Medimurje, reach a few percent of the county.

\(^{17}\) According to data from 1921 Slovenia, Serbs and Croats together compose only 1.0% of Slovenian territory. Source: Winkler, 1931, 14; cited in Eberhardt, op. cit., 1996, 362. Where in the same year, Croatia had 17% Serbs. Source: Kocsis and Kocsis-Hodosi, 1998; cited in Eberhardt, op. cit., 1996, 363.; Bosnia-Herzegovina for 1921 had 44% Serbs, a number which perfectly matches

Figure 5.4: Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Ethnic Proportions, 1991

in Slovenia and, despite confederation for almost 70 years, little intermixing or migration occurred.[18] The situation is Croatia was diametrically opposed, where Serbs have comprised between 11-17% of the population since the turn of the century (Table 3), and possessed a majority in much of Krajina (Table 1).

Furthermore, the overlapping population pockets in Krajina possessed extensive external support from Belgrade. Veljko Kadejević, Minister of Defense from 1988-1992, viewed the role of the Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija (JNA) as: ‘protecting the Serbian people in Croatia so all districts in which Serbs are a majority would be liberated in all ways from the presence of the Croatian army and Croatian rule.’[19] By contrast, Serbia intended to expel Slovenia (and Croatia minus the Serb

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areas). Already on 28 June 1990, well before the war began, Milosević explained to Borislav Jović, President of Yugoslavia until the outbreak of the war in 1991, that the objective was to hold onto to all of current Yugoslavia, expel Slovenia and Croatia, and to annex the Serb-inhabited parts of the latter.\footnote{N.b., Milosevic was a Montenegrin, Stalin was Georgian, Napoleon was Corsican and Hitler was Austrian, Tito was Croatian...a small-N pattern?: T. Judah, The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia, New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1997, 169; R. Dizdarevic, Od smrti Tita do smrti Jugoslavije, Sarajevo: Svejdok, 1999, 291.; cited in Ramet, op. cit., 2006, 382, fn. 9.; B. Jović, The Last Days of the the Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia, cited in Jane Pellez, ‘Serb Chief Painted as Warmonger by Ex-Aide,’ New York Times, Dec. 16, 1995. For an excellent study of Soviet attempts to remove (stigmatized) minorities whose loyalty was questioned from the borderland to a more remote, internal location, see T. Martin, ‘The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing,’ The Journal of Modern History, 70: 4 (Dec 1998), 813-861.} Milosević also noted to Kučan that ‘we should reach some agreement on Slovenia’s desire to leave Yugoslavia...[but]...we could not let Croatia go, because Croatia is bound to Serbia by blood,’ meaning the Krajina part of Croatia.\footnote{Communique of 23 January 1991, cited in Ramet, op. cit., 2006, 487, and in A. Lebor, Milosevic: A Biography, Bloomsbury, London, 2003.}

Although the presence of overlapping population pockets in one case, and their absence in the other, perfectly covaries with the presence of conflict in one case and its absence in the other, relative state strength merits careful attention. The extent of Serbia’s support for the Republika Srpska Krajina (RSK) in Croatia, which was exposed in painstaking legal detail at the International Criminal Trials for Yugoslavia (ICTY), was crucial in fomenting violent conflict.\footnote{Weighing the Evidence Lessons from the Slobodan Milošević Trial, December 2006, 18:10 (D): http://hrw.org/reports/2006/milosevic1206/4.htm. Cited therein, see: Testimony of Milan Babic, Trial Transcript, November 20, 2002, p. 13116 (describing how Milosević told him to describe the Krajina as coming out in favor of FRY, not Serbia ‘so that his direct links with Serbia would not be seen, links to what was happening in Krajina.’); Slobodan Milosević, Statement of April 2, 2001, admitted into evidence as Exhibit P 427.3 (a).} Although the trial, which may have been flawed in a number of important respects, did not con-
vict Milosević, since he died in prison, it plainly demonstrated the magnitude of Belgrade’s role in the war. Ante Markovic, former Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, noted: ‘these Serb controlled districts had no other major source of finance than Serbia.’

One key means of support was financial: Milan Babić, the first President of the Republic of Serbian Krajina, testified that, ‘[the National Bank of the RSK] practically operated as a branch office of the National Bank of Yugoslavia.’

Former U.S. Ambassador to Croatia, Peter Galbraith, corroborates this in his description of Krajina as ‘a completely impoverished region that could not exist even at the very low level that it existed without financial support from Serbia.’

In addition to financial support, Serbia provided virtually all the military support. The trial confirmed this and also revealed the mechanisms through which it was transferred. One means was to characterized arms as ‘humanitarian aid’ or ‘hunting equipment’. Another was simply for the Jugoslav National Army (JNA) to leave weapons behind. The Serbian Ministry of Defense, the Serbian Ministry of the Interior and the so-called Association of Serbs and Emigrants of Serbia were

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23 Statement of Radovan Karadžić, former president of Republika Srpska (Bosnia), and Statement of Ante Markovic, former Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Exhibit P569(a), para. 25.
Table 5.1: Ethnic Structure of Krajina, 1991, by Municipality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Total Pop. (N)</th>
<th>Croats</th>
<th>Serbs</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knin</td>
<td>42,954</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benkovac</td>
<td>33,378</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obrovac</td>
<td>11,557</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gračac</td>
<td>10,434</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donji Lapac</td>
<td>8,054</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titova Korenica</td>
<td>11,398</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>75.4%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vojnić</td>
<td>8,236</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>89.4%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virinmost</td>
<td>16,599</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glinia</td>
<td>23,040</td>
<td>34.9%</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dvor</td>
<td>14,555</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>86.5%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kostajnica</td>
<td>14,851</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>62.9%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>195,051</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>74.0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The amount of evidence linking Belgrade’s sponsorship, the Serb population pocket and the Croatian conflict is so overwhelming that no reasonable doubt remains about the extent of Serbia’s role in fueling and funding the conflict. Milosević called it removing the ‘fifth column,’ while Tudjman called it the ‘humanitarian moving of peoples’, but both leaders agreed perfectly on one thing: ethnic homogeneity by any means possible.

Table 5.2: Ethnic Structure of Slovenia, 1900-1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slovenes</td>
<td>86.2%</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
<td>97.0%</td>
<td>96.5%</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
<td>90.5%</td>
<td>87.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croats</td>
<td>NA %</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarians</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbs</td>
<td>NA %</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>11.9%  (10.0 G)</td>
<td>4.3% (G.1)</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Croats</td>
<td>68.9 %</td>
<td>69.8 %</td>
<td>79.2 %</td>
<td>79.6 %</td>
<td>79.4 %</td>
<td>75.1 %</td>
<td>78.1 %</td>
<td>89.6 %</td>
</tr>
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<td>Serbs</td>
<td>16.9 %</td>
<td>16.8 %</td>
<td>14.4 %</td>
<td>15.0 %</td>
<td>14.2 %</td>
<td>11.5 %</td>
<td>12.2 %</td>
<td>4.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italians</td>
<td>6.1 %</td>
<td>6.1 %</td>
<td>2.0 %</td>
<td>0.9 %</td>
<td>0.4 %</td>
<td>0.3 %</td>
<td>0.4 %</td>
<td>NA %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germans</td>
<td>2.9 %</td>
<td>2.6 %</td>
<td>1.4 %</td>
<td>NA %</td>
<td>NA %</td>
<td>NA %</td>
<td>NA %</td>
<td>NA %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarians</td>
<td>2.4 %</td>
<td>1.8 %</td>
<td>1.0 %</td>
<td>1.2 %</td>
<td>0.8 %</td>
<td>0.6 %</td>
<td>0.5 %</td>
<td>NA %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2.8 %</td>
<td>2.9 %</td>
<td>3.0 %</td>
<td>3.3 %</td>
<td>5.2 %</td>
<td>12.5 (Y) %</td>
<td>8.8 %</td>
<td>5.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
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<td>100.0 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3: Ethnic Structure of Croatia, 1921-2001

Contrast this with Slovenia, where the conflict lasted only 10 days (hence its nickname, Desetdnevna vojna - The Ten Day War) and killed ‘only’ 100 people.\(^{30}\) In good measure, Slovenia’s comparatively peaceful outcome was due to Slovenia’s lack of any overlapping Serb population pockets—and thus the absence of related claims or counter-claims (Table 2, Figures x).\(^{31}\) According to Ramet, neither Milošević nor Jović had any ‘territorial ambitions’ in Slovenia precisely because there were


virtually no Serbs. The ‘only’ interest was in Serb-inhabited areas. Milošević and Kučan had agreed in a meeting on 24 January 1991 that Slovenia would secede, and Yugoslavia would not resist. According to the Milošević–Kučan arrangement, reported in Jović’s diary, ‘Slovenia was to be left in peace.’ Branko Mamula, former Minister of Defense, confirmed that ‘Milošević was opposed to the use of force in Slovenia, or even to any effort to secure the northern and western borders of Croatia. Milošević’s priority was to redraw the borders so that the Serbs of Croatia would be included within an expanded Serbian state.

Belgrade’s decision not to pursue a full scale invasion of Slovenia was a strategic calculation based on three factors: a) resources needed for more central conflicts in Croatia and Bosnia; b) the loss of contiguity with Slovenia, following Croatia declaration of independence, which negatively affected its war-fighting capacity, and c) the absence of any deep or dense Serb population pockets in Slovenia.

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33 Ramet, op. cit., 2006, 392ff. Borislav Jović also stated that the main areas of interest were the Serb-inhabited parts of Krajina, Srem and Slavonia (Figure x). D.A. Dyker and I. Vejvoda (eds.), Yugoslavia and After: A Study in Fragmentation, Despair and Rebirth, NY: Longman, 1996. Also see: 1995 BBC documentary, The Death of Yugoslavia, with interviews and footage of all notables.

34 Interview with Milan Kučan, President of Slovenia, 6 September 1999, Interview with S. Ramet; cited in Ramet, op. cit., 2006, 392.


37 Less than 50,000 Serbs, according to 1991 census, and mostly dispersed. Although there are
Looking at these two cases, clustered in time (having both declared independence on 25 June 1991), and space (though Slovenia was not contiguous with Serbia proper once Croatia seceded), suggests the model’s *prima facie* plausibility, but the ‘n’ is only two. Confidence in the model increases when we consider the case of Bosnia, which is virtually synonymous with violence.

Serbs constitute the second largest of the three main ethnic groups in Bosnia (Table 4, Figure x).\(^{38}\) Proportionally, Bosnia hosts the largest Serb concentration in the region outside of Serbia proper. Before the war, Croatian claims on Bosnian territory were also substantial, thus granting Bosnia-Herzegovina the dubious honor and good fortune of having two overlapping population pockets, one Croatian, one Serbian\(^{39}\).

Like the conflict with Croatia, the Bosnian episode was terribly violent. Accord-

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\(^{38}\) Serbs were the largest ethnic group earlier in the century, according to data in 1921, 1948, and 1953. Data from 1971 indicate the beginning of the relative decrease of Serbs and increase of Muslims.

\(^{39}\) Bosnia-Herzegovina was fully incorporated into the self-proclaimed Independent State of Croatia during World War II and a good portion of the country has always been ethnically Croatian (Figure 6). The fact that the conflict killed more people than Croatia and Slovenia together and ended in *de facto* partition would seem to suggest that two overlapping population pockets is worse than one. This does not exclude the possibility that three overlapping pockets may have a different impact than two. Bosnia killed about 200,000, Croatia 150,000 and Slovenia about 100. These could be standardized for days in conflict to increase comparability but are left in raw form for the reader to manipulate. The case of Bosnia-Herzegovina suggests a further implication for the theory: a linkage between dual-irredentism and the probability of partition. Data for Table 4 from P. Eberhardt, *op. cit.*, 1997, 399.
Table 5.4: Ethnic Structure of Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1921-1995

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>30.7%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbs</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croats</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to rough battle death estimates, it was the bloodiest of the secessions from the former Yugoslavia (Table 9). In large part, this was because of the size of the Serb overlapping population pocket and because of the dual involvement from Belgrade and Zagreb, each in support of their co-ethnics. The JNA had armed the forces of Republika Srpska to the teeth. Radovan Karadžić, former president of Republika Srpska (Bosnia), testified to this effect: ‘...without Serbia, nothing would have happened, we don’t have the resources and we would not have been able to make war.’ The Bosniaks allegedly received external support from some Muslim states (and later from NATO), thus making the war fully internationalized and ensuring it would continue longer than any side could sustain on its own.

Croatia’s role was also essential: months before the secession of either Slovenia or Croatia, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and Serbian President Slobodan Milošević had devised a partition plan for dividing Bosnia, using a strictly ethnic

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41 Radovan Karadžić, former president of Republika Srpska (Bosnia), to the Assembly of the Republika Srpska, May 10-11, 1994, Exhibit 537.2(a), op. cit., 60.

42 There was an embargo on weapons to Yugoslavia, yet British Intelligence showed that Iran was making direct deliveries. See: R.J. Aldrich ‘America used Islamists to arm the Bosnian Muslims: The Srebrenica report reveals the Pentagon’s role in a dirty war,’ The Guardian, Monday April 22, 2002.; Also see C. Wiebes, Intelligence and the War in Bosnia, 1992-1995. London: Transaction Publishers, 2003, 157-218 on ‘secret arms supplies and covert actions’.
Before Milosevic invaded, Tudjman had schemed with him to divide Bosnia between them and throw out the Muslims. But after Milosevic double-crossed him, Tudjman brought Croatia into the Bosnian war on the side of the Muslims. Then in 1993, when he thought he could build a Croat state in Bosnia, Tudjman turned on his allies....

Overlapping population pockets were an essential cause of the conflict (Figures x). Neighboring states, each seeking to expand claims to territory by physically expelling the others, ensured the escalation of the conflict, however. The Dayton Accords formalized an end to three years of violence by making Republika Srpska one of the two constituent parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina and by creating three ethnically homogeneous enclaves (Figure x). Areas controlled by the Bosnian Armed Forces witnessed a change in ethnic structure from 56.9 % in 1991 to 74.1 % in 1995, the areas controlled by the Croat Defense Forces experienced a similar change from 49.0 % in 1991 to 95.6 % in 1995, and the areas controlled by the Army of the


45Croat pockets, though the smallest proportionally, were also the most concentrated, especially along the border with Croatia and the coastline. This includes: Grude, Posušje, Duvno, Lištica, Čitluk, Ljubuški, Neum, Orašje, Livno, and Kresevo, where Croats range from 99.8 to 70.2 % of the population.

Serb Republic from 47.5 % in 1991 to 89.2 % in 1995.\footnote{Consistent with the model, Bosnia-Herzegovina’s secession led to recursive secessionist violence, the conflict was more violent than the conflicts in Croatia or Slovenia, and its resolution produced a peace that remains more fragile.}

Macedonia, the final case in the first wave, seceded at the same time as Bosnia-Herzegovina almost unnoticed, avoiding conflict with Serbia, and becoming an independent political unit for the first time in 1600 years. Like Slovenia, Macedonia

Table 5.5: Ethnic Structure of Macedonia, 1948-1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Macedonians</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
<td>66.0%</td>
<td>69.3%</td>
<td>67.0%</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turks</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albanians</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbs</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By the time Macedonia seceded, moreover, Serbia’s state strength was already diverted in two other wars, one with neighboring Bosnia-Herzegovina and the other with Croatia. Still, Milosević refused to recognize Macedonian independence for five years and only in 2001 did the two states reach an agreement on border demarcation. Despite tensions, Macedonia was a relatively peacefully secession.

The first wave of secession, then, involved two cases of war between the rump and secessionist state after secession and two cases of peace: Slovenia and Croatia.

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48 Serbs, about 35,000, do not constitute any ethnic enclave and make up less than 2% of the state’s population, about the same proportion as in Slovenia. Using the new heterogeneity metric, the KLD with a uniform prior on two groups is .92 for Macedonia, and .95 using Horowitz’s 60/40 priors, because the Albanian population pocket in Western Macedonia, Kosovo and neighboring Albania is Macedonia’s core problem in the region.


50 Yet the overlapping population pocket of Albanians in Macedonia lead to violence in 2001 and continues to severely hamper Skopje’s ability to control its western territories. L. Georgievski, a Slav Macedonian, suggested the ethnic partition of Macedonia in Drevnik, 18 April 2001, where positive reactions by Macedonian Albanians, Xhaferi and Thaci, were also included. Table below from P. Eberhardt, op. cit., 1997., 410-411., compiled from Konačni rezultanti, Popis stanovništva, Petrovic, Census 1994. Cf. Dispute with Greece over official name.
declared independence simultaneously, as did Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina several months later. Why Macedonia and Slovenia got away from Belgrade without much bloodshed, while Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia each fought protracted wars for three years is captured consistently in the model. First, the violent cases both possessed overlapping Serb population pockets, while the peaceful two lacked overlapping Serbs population pockets. In addition, Belgrade supported both overlapping population pockets financially, militarily and logistically, transforming an intrastate conflict into an interstate one. Serbia’s geographic position in the region made Belgrade strongest in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia, with which it is contiguous, and weakest in Slovenia, with which it does not share a border, and in Macedonia, from which it is separated in large part by Kosovo. The model does well in separating the secessionist states that emerged peacefully and became responsible states from those that entered the state system screaming violently because the rump state refused to unshackle it. In the next section, I extend the analysis and examine the model’s performance on the second wave of secessions from the third Yugoslavia–Kosovo and Montenegro, followed a brief discussion of secessionism, irredentism and interstate violence at the end of the Ottoman period.

5.2.2 Part II: Vetëvendosje, Kosovo and the Third Yugoslavia

‘The Bosnian model will be repeated here,’ warned Albin Kurti, leader of Levizja Vetevendosje. In the aftermath of the first wars of Yugoslav succession, Kosovo

51 Bosnia–Herzegovina and Croatia both have highly dense and very deep overlapping Serb population pockets, Slovenia and Macedonia have neither.

52 Movement for Self-Determination in Kosova, Interview with Albin Kurti, Prishtina, Kosovo, July 2007. Albin Kurti is the leader of the movement for Self-Determination, and former em-
was the first to try to leave (under the banner of Vetëvendosje!), yet Montenegro (whose separation the Badinter Commission sanctioned, together with the other four republics, already in 1992) was the first to succeed.\(^{53}\) Kosovo’s secession resulted in war, and concluded with NATO warplanes pounding Serb positions in a 78 day campaign. Montenegro, by contrast, separated peacefully, and has so far averted interstate conflict, but tensions between Podgorica and Belgrade have been high and violence cannot be ruled out yet.\(^{54}\)

Overlapping population pockets and relative state strength enhance our leverage in explaining conflict in Kosovo and peace in Montenegro. Overlapping population pockets are present in both Kosovo and Montenegro, it is true, but these pockets presented a more serious problem in Kosovo, for one, because they are more geographically concentrated and, above all, externally sponsored by Belgrade (and backed by Moscow).\(^{55}\)

Despite NATO intervention, EU objections and eight years of UN rule, Belgrade continues to provide extensive support to Kosovo’s Serb population. According to Kurti:

ployee in the office of the General Political Representative (GPR) of UÇK, under Adem Demaçi, Kosovar Albanian political prisoner, who spent 28 years in prison and was recognized by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience.

\(^{53}\)Vetëvendosje! is the name of a Kosovar Albanian movement. It translates as ‘Self-Determination!’.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Total Pop. (N)</th>
<th>Albanians</th>
<th>Serbs</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Vitina</td>
<td>53,584</td>
<td>77.2 %</td>
<td>13.6 %</td>
<td>0.1 %</td>
<td>9.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gnjilane</td>
<td>110,464</td>
<td>78.1 %</td>
<td>17.7 %</td>
<td>0.1 %</td>
<td>4.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gora</td>
<td>17,102</td>
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<td>0.4 %</td>
<td>94.1 %</td>
<td>1.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zvečan</td>
<td>9,609</td>
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<td>81.8 %</td>
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<td>1.2 %</td>
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<td>Zubač Potok</td>
<td>11,805</td>
<td>46.7 %</td>
<td>53.2 %</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Kosovska Kamenica</td>
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<td>16,291</td>
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<td>88.3 %</td>
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<td>Novo Brdo</td>
<td>8,553</td>
<td>67.8 %</td>
<td>31.4 %</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>22,200</td>
<td>100.00 %</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>Podujevo</td>
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<td>98.1 %</td>
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<td>0.0 %</td>
<td>0.3 %</td>
</tr>
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<td>82.4 %</td>
<td>9.6 %</td>
<td>2.9 %</td>
<td>5.1 %</td>
</tr>
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<td>Strpce</td>
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<td>32.9 %</td>
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<td>0.0 %</td>
<td>0.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vučitrn</td>
<td>78,877</td>
<td>88.7 %</td>
<td>7.2 %</td>
<td>0.7 %</td>
<td>3.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glogovac</td>
<td>53,802</td>
<td>99.9 %</td>
<td>0.1 %</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kučani</td>
<td>37,055</td>
<td>98.5 %</td>
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<td>0.0 %</td>
<td>0.8 %</td>
</tr>
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<td>28.4 %</td>
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<td>14.5 %</td>
<td>0.8 %</td>
<td>7.0 %</td>
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<td>29,523</td>
<td>64.2 %</td>
<td>21.0 %</td>
<td>0.7 %</td>
<td>14.1 %</td>
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<td>Priština</td>
<td>205,093</td>
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<td>15.2 %</td>
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<td>5.0 %</td>
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<td>58,399</td>
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<td>1.4 %</td>
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<td>0.2 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uroševac</td>
<td>95,156</td>
<td>85.9 %</td>
<td>8.9 %</td>
<td>2.0 %</td>
<td>3.2 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Štimlje</td>
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<td>92.4 %</td>
<td>4.2 %</td>
<td>1.8 %</td>
<td>1.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dečani</td>
<td>49,465</td>
<td>97.6 %</td>
<td>1.6 %</td>
<td>0.2 %</td>
<td>0.6 %</td>
</tr>
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<td>Dakota</td>
<td>120,947</td>
<td>93.3 %</td>
<td>2.6 %</td>
<td>0.3 %</td>
<td>3.8 %</td>
</tr>
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<td>Istok</td>
<td>57,928</td>
<td>79.7 %</td>
<td>12.6 %</td>
<td>4.5 %</td>
<td>3.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klina</td>
<td>51,723</td>
<td>83.5 %</td>
<td>11.4 %</td>
<td>0.3 %</td>
<td>4.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maleševo</td>
<td>45,669</td>
<td>98.9 %</td>
<td>1.1 %</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orahovac</td>
<td>59,942</td>
<td>92.0 %</td>
<td>6.8 %</td>
<td>0.3 %</td>
<td>0.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peć</td>
<td>132,455</td>
<td>79.4 %</td>
<td>11.3 %</td>
<td>5.2 %</td>
<td>4.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prizren</td>
<td>175,413</td>
<td>75.6 %</td>
<td>6.5 %</td>
<td>11.1 %</td>
<td>6.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suva Reka</td>
<td>63,981</td>
<td>94.8 %</td>
<td>4.7 %</td>
<td>0.1 %</td>
<td>0.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,954,747</td>
<td>82.2 %</td>
<td>11.0 %</td>
<td>2.9 %</td>
<td>3.9 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.6: Ethnic Structure of Kosovo, 1991, by Municipality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albanians</td>
<td>65.0 %</td>
<td>73.7 %</td>
<td>77.4 %</td>
<td>90.0 %</td>
<td>88 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbs</td>
<td>20.0 %</td>
<td>18.4 %</td>
<td>13.2 %</td>
<td>6.3 %</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>6.3 %</td>
<td>2.1 %</td>
<td>3.7 %</td>
<td>2.0 %</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turks</td>
<td>7.6 %</td>
<td>NA %</td>
<td>NA %</td>
<td>0.3 %</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.6 %</td>
<td>5.8 %</td>
<td>5.7 %</td>
<td>1.4 %</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.7: Ethnic Structure of Kosovo, 1921-2002
'There is no doubt that Belgrade finances them [the Serb population pockets in Kosovo] directly. Belgrade sustains parallel structures of government and private security forces....and a special line in the budget for activities in Kosovo...Time legitimizes the de facto partition.'

Serwer, Bajraktari, and Parajon confirmed the existence of such funds in a USIP Peace Briefing from March 2007 and provided a figure of $150 million per annum. Serbia’s strategy, according to Kurti, is:

‘to create a frozen conflict in the north and to encircle the valley of Preseva...to have an Albanian Republic in Serbia just as there is a Serb Republic in Bosnia. The problem is that Serbia is more powerful. The government of Albania is not that active in balancing Belgrade regarding Kosovo. Tetovo, Prishtina and Tirana are too moderate to induce any restraint in Serbia.’

Tirana, a natural ally of Kosovo, is unusually silent. As one observer noted, ‘the voice of Greece is heard more about Kosovo than the voice of Albania.’ Tirana’s politicians don’t deny it: Lulzim Basha, the current Albanian Foreign Minister,

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56 Interview with Albin Kurti, Prishtine, Kosovo, July 2007. Mr. Kurti is currently on trial in Kosovo for calls to resistance, disobeying police authority and organizing mass protests. He is under ‘House Arrest’ as he awaits a highly political trial. As of February 2008, ‘the case against Albin Kurti was suspended as a result of the refusal of the Bar Association of Kosova to take part.’ Newsletter Levizja Vetevendosje!, February 7th 2008.

57 D. Serwer, Y. Bajraktari, and C. Parajon, ‘Kosovo: What Can Go Wrong?’, USIP Peace Briefing, March 2007; in the section ‘Serbia’s Effort to Maintain Sovereignty or Divide Kosovo’, the authors write: ‘Belgrade could continue to finance Serb-populated territories in Kosovo (it currently provides about $150 million per year).’

58 Kurti, loc. cit., 2007

59 Interview with Kristo Frasheri, Tirana, Albania, June 2007.
explained that:

‘Tirana is keeping quiet about the Albanian minority outside its borders, because it has been directed to act so by the U.S. and the E.U. if we wish to gain entrance into NATO and the EU—and admission to both these clubs is widely seen as desirable....even if we were to disregard this advice....it would hurt more than help...Tirana’s too weak to do much...even diplomatically.’

Pellumb Xhufi, previous Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Albanian Ambassador to Malta and later Italy, basically agreed:

‘an Albania in NATO and the EU will be in a much stronger position to help ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and Macedonia than an Albania outside of these institutions. If Albania is viewed with distrust by its neighbors because of expansionist claims on other states’ territories where ethnic Albanians reside, this will harm rather than help the cause of Albanians everywhere.’

Belgrade takes a more proactive role. As recently as 2008, before the presidential elections in Serbia, both Tadić and Nikolić visited several Serb population pockets in Kosovo, each making strongly worded speeches. According to local media, even

60 Interview with Lulzim Basha, Albanian Foreign Minister, Tirana, June 2007.
61 Interview with Pellumb Xhufi, former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, former Ambassador to Malta and Italy, current MP, Tirana, June 2007.
the significantly more moderate Tadić told Serbs [in a small Eastern enclave] that ‘Serbia will never give up our Kosovo and our people...I shall do everything in my power for us to exist here, for Serbia to exist in Kosovo, because the Serbian people live in Kosovo through you.’

Currently, Serbs control about one-fourth of Kosovo’s territory, in large part thanks to the extra-territoriality of Orthodox Church property. Some believe that Serb pockets will create a Trojan horse, a fifth column, based in five municipalities, three in the north, Strpce in the south and Novo Brdo in the East, thus cutting off the Albanian population pocket in Serbia on the Kosovo border in Presevo valley. The operative metaphor is the city of Mitrovica. As Albin Kurti described it:

‘the division of Mitrovica means that there will never be peace. It will be another Jerusalem, Nicosia, Mostar...a divided town that is a formula for an eternal frozen conflict...the next war will be worse than the last one...it will be like the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 - Serbia will enter as in Croatia and Bosnia...and we will have no army, because we are not allowed one,...Serbia’s ambitions are partly caused by our weakness’

Albania and Albanians remained relatively quiet during the early years of the post-Cold war period, the next wave of self-determination conflicts in the region all turned on the Albanian question: the Kosovo War (1999), the conflict in Preševo Valley (2001), and the internal conflict in western Macedonia (2001, 2004).
Montenegro’s secession has been attributed to decisive Albanian votes, despite the fact that a comparatively small number of Albanians live there. As Christopher Hill said, ‘we spent the 1990s worrying about a Greater Serbia. That’s finished. We are going to spend time well into the next century worrying about a Greater Albania.’

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**Figure 5.6:** ‘Ethnic Albania’ [Shqiptari e Madhe] Overlaid on Political Map  

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The peaceful Kosovar Albanian movement to restore autonomous status, led by Ibrahim Rugova, had significant support for many years, but impatience over time increased support for a more violent approach, advocated by UÇK (KLA). The conflict lasted about three years (1996-1999), killing somewhere between 10 and 20,000 people, creating hundreds of thousands of refugees, igniting tension in neighboring Macedonia, and only ending with external (NATO) intervention.

Since the cessation of full-scale violence in 1999, the northernmost Serb population pockets in Kosovo has remained a focal point of conflict: on 17 March 2004, the two ethnic groups faced off on either side of the Ibar bridge in Kosovska Mitrovica, the exact point separating Albanians and the largest Serb cluster in the northern part of Kosovo. Although dozens still died over the subsequent weeks and years, KFOR prevented an escalation of the violence to the level of 1999. The key source of this conflict was (and remains to this day) the deep and dense overlapping population pockets, Belgrade’s support and Moscow’s machinations.

Even though UNMIK technically governs all of Kosovo, its reach does not extend to the northernmost regions bordering on Serbia, where Belgrade’s parallel insti-
tutions operate as if partition had already transpired. The UN and NATO have quietly assented to this state of affairs, despite vociferously condemning partition in the abstract. Indeed, the UN’s ‘Ahtisaari’ Plan, which recommends ‘supervised independence’ for Kosovo and extensive autonomy to the Serb areas effectively sanctions partition, though without using the dirty word.\textsuperscript{71}

Tensions are high, yet the likelihood of interstate conflict with Serbia now is low simply because of NATO’s overwhelming presence and Serbia’s relative weakness.\textsuperscript{72} Serbian leaders have indicated that, although they oppose the unilateral declaration of Kosovo as independent and view it as ‘unlawful’, Belgrade does not intend to use force, according to Tadić’s statements in 2007 and 2008.\textsuperscript{73} Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic also said that Serbia will do ‘whatever is in its political, diplomatic, and economic power, also on an international level’ [to contest] any ‘unlawful decision’ on Kosovo’s independence.\textsuperscript{74}

In the worst case scenario, Serbia figures, it will retain the northern population pocket where ethnic Serbs reside and which overlaps with many mineral resources. Serbia has been preparing for this, while opposing the partition in principle. Serbian Foreign Minister Jeremic said that ‘virtually all Serbs in Kosovo would not associate


\textsuperscript{72}See: Camp Bondsteel, an end-use facility with 955 acres (360,000 square meters) and a perimeter of roughly 7 miles. See the description at: \url{http://www.globalsecurity.org/} P. Eberhardt also writes (394): ‘In view of the current military and economic weakness of Serbia, the probability of renewed Serb-Croat conflict is very low. However, the Serbs would not easily consent to give up Kosovo.’ This is, of course, also true for other Serb conflict dyads.

\textsuperscript{73}Various statements reported in RFE/RL NEWSLINE Vols. 11-12, 2007-2008.

\textsuperscript{74}Interview with Vuk Jeremic, \textit{Der Spiegel}, January 14 2008. Some possible non-violent reactions that have been mentioned include imposing a trade and travel embargo, cutting off electricity supplies to Kosova, or water supplies from the Gazivoda Reservoir on Kosova’s border with Serbia.
themselves’ with an independent Kosova. That, he warned, [could] ‘open up a Pandora’s box and lead to a division of Kosovo.’ He argued, ‘Serbia would like to maintain everything within the confines of international law...[but] there is reality, and there are people who may see things differently.’

One very highly placed political leader in Kosovo, preferring to remain anonymous, noted that ‘only when Serbia does not have any more expansionist ambitions toward Kosovo will Albanians cease to view Serbs in Kosovo as an existential threat.’ Despite Serbia’s policy, Police in Kosovo spoke of the extensive guarantees that the Serb minority would receive, claiming it exceeded, in some respects, the rights of any other minority in Europe. Nevertheless, it is possible that the Serb part of the country may declare secession following Kosovo’s declaration of independence, as Republika Srpska did, or the right to be annexed to Serbia. It will be difficult to reverse the de facto partition that has been cemented over the past nine years. In this sense, the situation is eerily like the Bosnian model. The EU mission preparing to take over the administration of Kosovo, we are told, is even preparing a Bosnian-style mission.

The curtain has only just fallen on Kosovo, having declared independence on 17 February 2008 and been recognized by the U.S., the E.U. Turkey and many others throughout the week. Yet it is already possible to offer an initial evaluation of the model against the empirical record of the second wave of secessions. If NATO troops

75 Interview with Vuk Jeremic, Der Spiegel, January 14, 2008.
76 Ibid., Interview with Vuk Jeremic, Serbian Foreign Minister.
77 Interview with Author, Prishtine, Kosovo, July 2007.
were to act more like UN troops in most of the conflict zones, it is likely that serious
violence would erupt within the first days after secession. Kosovo, as was noted, has
a dense population pocket directly abutting Serbia’s south-western border. Serbia’s
roots in Kosovo are also deep, even mythical. With Russian support, Serbia
continues to resist Kosovo’s independence. Russian power has buttressed the Serb
state, just as NATO power has done for Kosovo. NATO won the war, but Russia
will block the peace. NATO’s presence currently substitutes for the new Kosovar
state’s weakness, but NATO’s mandate will become increasingly dubious over time.

Montenegro, the last and the smallest of the six republics to leave the former
Yugoslavia, seceded without much attention. In Montenegro, the ethnic situation is
complicated by the proximity of Montenegrin and Serbian identity. Serbs represent
a majority in northern Montenegro (in Pljevlja) and southern Montenegro (Bay of
Kotor, Herceg Novi). The demographers of Montenegro have shown that Serbs
were ‘only’ about 10% in Montenegro in 1991, and much less in previous counts. If
anything, net Serb migration to Montenegro has been negative since independence.

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79 See the infamous 1985/6 ‘Memorandum from the Serbian Academy of Sciences [Memorandum Srpske Akademija, Jesen 1986]; for the text, see http://www.hic.hr/images/domovinski-rat/Memorandum-SANU.pdf Stefan Nemanja for early presence of Serbs in Kosovo.

80 See 2003 census. The most recent 2003 data indicate that Montenegrins makes up about 43%), followed by Serbs (32%), and then a distant third and fourth, Bosniaks (8%) and Albanians (5%).

81 Statistički Godišnjak 2006 - Statistical Office of Montenegro; The number of Serbs in Montenegro grew from about 50,000 in 1981 to over 200,000 in 2003, or from 10 to 30% of the population. Serbs are an absolute or relative majority in many municipalities, mostly along the north-eastern border with Serbia, such as Andrijevica, Berane, Herceg Novi, Pljevlja, Pluzine and Zabljak. The data suggest less about in-migration and more about identity. The census, after all, was taken in the same year as the referendum on Montenegrin independence. The new census strongly reflects the fact that the category ‘Yugoslav’ is now all but meaningless and the distinction between ‘Serb’ and ‘Montenegrin’ is more salient than it was in the previous census. The number in each group, especially between Montenegrin, Serb and Yugoslav, varies considerably between censuses. It is widely agreed that these variations are due to identification changes and not to migration or changes in birth rates. See: Kocsis, op. cit., 1992, 21.; Eberhardt, op. cit., 1997, 364.
Yet the overlapping population pocket is unable, without Belgrade’s backing, to do much more than boycott the referendum.

Russian support of Montenegro’s independence, but not Kosovo’s, is also noteworthy. Even before the referendum in July 2006, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Russia ‘respects Montenegro’s vote to seek independence from Serbia’. Montenegro, for its part, also had 25,000 troops and 25,000 more in the reserves, so Koštunica would have had to calculate on war with Djukanović. Furthermore, the Badinter Commission had already given Montenegro, as a former republic, the right to secede in 1992, provided it fulfilled certain conditions, especially regarding minority rights. All five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council recognized the referendum’s result. In addition to the external support for Montenegro’s secession, the Serbian state was weak internationally, its leaders facing trial in the Hague, and domestically, the economy devastated and the political system divided. A decade of war had taken its toll and without external support, Belgrade could hardly afford to oppose the judgement of all five members of the UN Security Council, including Russia, and go to war with Podgorica.

Tensions may be high between Belgrade and Podgorica, but the fact of the matter is that Montenegro has so far managed to avoid international conflict with Serbia. This is not because Belgrade does not desire access to the sea, but because the lack of state strength and external support constrain Serb actions. In short, the cost of conflict would be too high.

The overwhelming majority of Serbs boycotted the referendum on Montenegro’s

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--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Montenegrins | 86.6% | 87.4 | 67.2% | 68.5% | 62%
Serbs | 3.3% | 3.5% | 7.5% | 3.3% | 9.2%
Albanians | 5.6% | 5.9 | 6.7% | 6.5% | 6.6%
Muslims | NA | NA | 13.3% | 13.4% | 14.6%
Yugoslavs | 1.5% | 1.4 | 2.1% | 5.3% | 4.25%
Croats | 2.3% | 1.6 | 1.7% | 1.2% | 1.0%
Other | 0.5% | 0.5 | % | % | %
Total | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100% | 100%

Table 5.8: Ethnic Structure of Montenegro, 1921-1991

independence, which barely passed by 0.4% (55.4% in favor) Montenegro received Serbia’s recognition on 15 June 2006, after it had been recognized by all five United Nations Security Council Members, in addition to Iceland, Switzerland, Estonia, the EU, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia. Indeed, more than a year after Montenegro’s independence, Serbia has yet to appoint an ambassador. Aleksandar Simić, an advisor to Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica, described Montenegro as ‘a quasi-state made on a separatist wave.’

The reason why there has not yet been violence in this case, while there was considerable bloodshed in others, was not the lack of demand, i.e., not the absence of overlapping Serb population pockets, but the absence of supply. By 2006, Serbia was severely constrained and fundamentally weakened state, a fraction of its for-

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mer self, like Hungary after Trianon or Turkey after San Stefano. Fifteen years of fragmentation, dissolution and international military involvement had taken their toll, forcing Serbia to choose its battles more carefully. The battle for Belgrade was (and still is) Kosovo, not Montenegro. Moreover, the lack of previous violence between Serbs and Montenegrins, compared to the ethnic cleansing between Kosovar Albanians and Serbs, implies that Serbs can expect better treatment in Montenegro than in Kosovo.

Because the lack of instability in Serb-Montenegrin relations stems from Serb weakness, rather than the absence of a compelling ethnic geography, Belgrade may still seek to regain lost territory as its strength recovers and the opportunity arises. Tables 9 and 10 summarize some of this evidence. The model possesses a respectable degree of plausibility on one cluster of crucial cases in three waves (Slovenia–Croatia, Bosnia–Macedonia, Montenegro–Kosovo), yet could still benefit from further out-of-sample testing. The next section takes us toward that goal by providing additional empirical evidence from the end of the Ottoman Empire. The next chapter complements this one by examining sub-national variation within Georgia.
Table 5.9: Summary of Evidence I from 1990-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Secessionist State</th>
<th>Rump State</th>
<th>Pocket State (% in 1991)</th>
<th>State Capacity</th>
<th>Battle Deaths</th>
<th>War Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>Serbia/Yug.</td>
<td>No (1-2%)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>Serbia/Yug.</td>
<td>Yes (10-15%)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>150k</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Bosnia</td>
<td>Serbia/Yug.</td>
<td>Yes (30-40%)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>200k</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>Serbia/Yug.</td>
<td>No (1-2%)</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/08</td>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>Serbia/Mont.</td>
<td>Yes (5-10%)</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>10-20k</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/06</td>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>Yes (3-30%)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.10: Summary of Evidence II from 1990-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interstate Conflict with Serbia Present</th>
<th>Interstate Conflict with Serbia Absent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OPP no</td>
<td>Montenegro (Too soon)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2.3 Part III: The End of Osman’s Dream

This section briefly considers the model against additional evidence from the end of the Ottoman Empire in an effort to test the model on ‘out-of-sample’ data. The objective is to see whether the model continues to have the ability to partition variation in violence that involved new minorities and new states, including Turkey, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, Rumania and Serbia. The challenge is to explain why two successor states (Greece and Bulgaria) were involved in serious conflict with their minorities (and Turkey) after independence, while the other successor states (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia) largely averted such violence.

The Balkan peninsula is the product of three major empires, each of which contained many nationalities and none of which possessed internal frontiers. This led one historian to note that ‘...all the Balkan states were products of the nineteenth century, [but] their modern shape was the production of the twentieth’. 

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87 The title of this section is taken from the preeminent founding myth of the Ottoman empire in which Osman, the first sultan, had a dream at the house of Edebali, a holy man, about the divine authority with which Osman and his descendants would rule vast territories in the Balkans and beyond. R. Linder, Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia, Bloomington, Indiana University, 1983, 37; cited in C. Finkel, Osman’s Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1923, London: John Murray, 2005, 2.


89 Though they did not avoid conflict with each other.

90 E. Boyar, Ottomans, Turks and the Balkans: Empire Lost, Relations Altered, Library of Ottoman Studies 12, Tauris Academic Studies, 2007, 42.; This is especially true of Greece, which was created in 1830, but formed (and transformed) itself over the next hundred years. Greece engaged the declining empire militarily, often with significant external support from the Great Powers, in order to realize its claims to territories such as the Aegean Island, Crete, and Macedonia.; E.
and the maps show that the problem was not only the number of nationalities but also their spatial distribution, a result that came about through war, expansion, and migration, both forced and voluntary.  

Greece was the first to secede (1830), with British blessings. Sixty years later,

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Figure 5.7: Dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, 1683-1923. Dark Blue markings indicate territorial changes around 1913, and Red marking around 1920-22. Source: Map from ‘Historical Atlas’, W.R. Shepherd, 1923

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92 D. Gondicas and C. Issawi (Eds.), *Ottoman Greeks in the age of nationalism: politics, econ-*
under Russian duress, Turkey signed the Treaty of San Stefano (Yeşilköy, March 1878), which resulted in an independent Serbia, Montenegro and Romania, and an ‘autonomous’ Bulgaria (that included most of what is now called Macedonia, Figures x).\textsuperscript{93} Albania and Bosnia, also with the blessing of the Great Powers, seceded later, as the last remnants of Empire on the Balkan Peninsula (Figures x).\textsuperscript{94}

Nationalism in the Balkans (and elsewhere) was a slow-awakening beast, spurred to consciousness in part by the successful unification of ethnically German and ethnically Italian territories into new ‘nation-states’\textsuperscript{95} The core criterion for German and Italian unification was common ethnicity, a point not lost on the Balkan (especially Christian) elite\textsuperscript{96} ‘Serbia,’ according to Langer, ‘must be the Piedmont


\textsuperscript{93}Russia proposed the Bulgarian state, but France and Britain objected. The Treaty of Berlin (July 1878) addressed several objections to the size of Bulgaria, redrew the borders, and returned control of Macedonia to the Turks, while Austro-Hungary obtained control over Bosnia. The former upset Bulgaria, and the latter perturbed Serbia.

\textsuperscript{94}M. Koller and K. Kerpat, (Eds.), \textit{Ottoman Bosnia: A History in Peril}, Center for Turkish Studies, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.; G.W. Gawrych, \textit{The Crescent And The Eagle: Ottoman Rule, Islam and The Albanians, 1874-1913}, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Although not the subject of this chapter, an interesting question is why these two ‘Muslim’ European regions were the last to secede. In the Bosnian case, the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (which annexed the territory before the war) played a key role.

\textsuperscript{95}For a comparison of Italian and German unification, see: D. Ziblatt, \textit{Structuring the State: The Formation of Italy and Germany and the Puzzle of Federalism}, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006.

of the Balkans and unite all the southern Slavs...under one rule.\footnote{97} Baron Kalláy, Austrian Representative to Belgrade, reported in 1873 that ‘the idea that Serbia is called upon to play among the Slavs of Turkey the role of Piedmont is so firmly rooted in Serbia that Serbs can no longer understand that the Slavs of the different Turkish frontiers should seek aid and protection from any state except Serbia.’\footnote{98} In 1874, a Belgrade based newspaper wrote that ‘[Serbia’s] natural mission is to free

\footnote{97}{W.L. Langer, \textit{European alliances and alignments, 1871-1890}, New York, A. A. Knopf, 1931, 61.}

her brother peoples of the Balkan Peninsula from the Asiatic yoke...’

At the same time that independence movements chipped away at the empire from the inside, a series of wars against Russia, financed by France and Britain, in addition to unsuccessful conflicts against France, Austria and Italy, expedited the Ottoman Empire’s demise and hastened its partitioning. This combination of internal and external pressure set the stage for multiple secessions. International congresses at Trianon, San Stefano, Berlin, Paris, and Lausanne enshrined the various border changes and ethnically based population transfers, resulting in the loss of more than one-third of Ottoman territory, and setting in motion the post-secession struggles that are the subject of this chapter.

Once independent, each emerging state looked to its past territorial grandeur and to its ‘ethnic borders’ to determine its ‘real borders’ and to justify foreign policy (Figure x). The aftermath of empire in this region left each state with a majority and a minority from another state, sometimes several minorities from multiple neighboring states. According to one scholar, ‘there was not a single state in southeastern Europe that either did not make irredentist claims upon its

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neighbor or was not the object of irredentist claims, and often both.\footnote{103}

Irredentist claims were common enough, but only two of all seven Balkan states created after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Greece and Bulgaria, ended up in serious conflicts with their minorities and the rump state\footnote{105} Turkey and Greece engaged in militarized disputes throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries over Greek and Turkish minorities and the territories they occupied: e.g.,

\footnote{104}{M. Weiner, \textit{op. cit.}, 1982, 106.}

\footnote{105}{Armenia, which also engaged in conflict with Turkey, but was not a Balkan nation. Still, it follows the model if it were to be extended to the Caucuses.}
in 1854 (Blockade of Pireaus), in 1866 and 1868 (Crete), in 1878 (Thessaly), in 1882 (Karalih), in 1885 (Bulgarian Independence), in 1896-7 (Greco-Turkish War), in 1908 (Crete), in 1919 (Anatolia) and in 1925 (Greek Patriarch), not to mention all the interstate conflicts since that time, especially over Cyprus.

Figure 5.10: Greek Claims at the Paris Peace Conference
Source: Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection, University of Texas

Bulgaria and Turkey were also in conflict, though less frequently, in Eastern Rumelia, in Thrace, and most notably in the First Balkan War. By contrast, the other five secessionist states—Romania, Serbia, Albania, Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina—averted recursive secessionist violence (and conflict with Turkey), though
each had plenty of disputes with each other

Greece and Bulgaria were also the only post-Ottoman states in the Balkans with significant overlapping Turkish population pockets (Table 3) The geographic density and the historical depth of these ethnically Turkish territories, which both Bulgarians and Greeks claimed as their own, set Greece and Bulgaria on a path toward conflict distinct from that taken by other post-secessionist states in the Balkans after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

Less than one-third of Greeks were located within the borders of the new Greek state, and uniting them became the cornerstone of Greek foreign policy Thessaly and the Aegean Island, including Crete, were under Ottoman rule when the new state was established. As one historian noted, ‘in Epirus, Thessaly and Macedonia, were a large number of Greeks, who, ardently desiring union with the brethren in the kingdom, still remained subject to the rule of the Sultan.

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106 These disputes are discussed briefly in the subsequent section.

107 Turks began to settle in Bulgaria after the Battle of Nicopolis (now Nikopol) in 1396. M.B. Bishku, ‘Turkish-Bulgarian Relations: From Conflict and Distrust to Cooperation over Minority Issues and International Politics,’ Mediterranean Quarterly, 14, 2, Spring 2003, 77-94.; K. Karpat (Ed.) The Turks of Bulgaria: The History, Culture, and Political Fate of a Minority, Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 1990. As for Greece, the former name for Istanbul, Constantinople (or simply Polis, as some Greeks call it), illustrates the extent of Turkish presence on Greek-claimed territory.


noted that ‘we have made her a state, it is true, but a state in fetters, and saddled by conditions under which no race of men, however intrinsically capable of self-government, could be expected to prosper.’110 ‘The Megali Idea’ was so powerful in the century following Greek independence that ‘disagreements among politicians centered on the issue of how to achieve this goal, not whether it was worth struggling for...’111

The situation was less extreme in Bulgaria, where Russia rather than Britain sponsored independence, but the size of the Muslim/Turkish population in Bulgarian-claimed territory was considerable: over one-third of the new state’s population was Turkish. According to another source, which included eastern Rumelia and Dobruca, Muslims (probably Turks and Pomaks together) numbered 1.5 million, and non-Muslims (mostly Bulgars) numbered only 1.25 million.112 According to Cvijic, ‘the large islands of Turkish population are...the group of eastern Bulgaria, the Thracian group, extending from Constantinople to lake Tahihiro, near Seres; the Vardar group...and the enclave of Kailar’.113 Among the post-Ottoman Balkan successor states, only Greece had a mixed population of comparable proportions, and a foreign policy so strictly irredentist in tenor.114 Post-Ottoman successor and rump state behavior illustrate the extent to which the theoretical framework remains

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112K. Kerpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristic*, Madison, Wisconsin, 1985. One obvious source of the dramatic difference in the size of the Muslim population is accounted for by the 1877-78 Russo-Turkish war, which eliminated more than half the Muslim population through forcible migration and murder. K. Kerpat, *op. cit.*, 1990, 12, n. 23.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1888</th>
<th>1900</th>
<th>1910</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgarians</td>
<td>1,345,507</td>
<td>1,570,599</td>
<td>2,888,900</td>
<td>3,523,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims/Turks</td>
<td>527,284</td>
<td>480,593</td>
<td>539,700</td>
<td>504,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greeks</td>
<td>11,444</td>
<td>10,975</td>
<td>70,900</td>
<td>50,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>123,684</td>
<td>131,267</td>
<td>123,700</td>
<td>143,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,007,919</td>
<td>2,193,434</td>
<td>3,744,300</td>
<td>4,337,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5.11**: Bulgarian Population Figures, 1881-1910.

germane on new data, and partitions the variation in violence after secession.
Figure 5.11: Ethnic population pockets, 1914.
Magenta = Turks. Source: Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection, University of Texas

Part IV: War Among Ottoman Successor States

Although the focus of this chapter has been on variation in interstate conflict between successor states and the rump state, a few words are in order about war among the successor states themselves, for these cases also illustrate how the new
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Secessionist State</th>
<th>Rump State</th>
<th>Pocket</th>
<th>State Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Albania</td>
<td>Ottoman/Turkey</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1832</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Ottoman/Turkey</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878/1908</td>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Ottoman/Turkey</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>Ottoman/Turkey</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Bosna</td>
<td>Ottoman/Turkey-AH</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>Montenegro</td>
<td>Ottoman/Turkey</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>Serbia</td>
<td>Ottoman/Turkey</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5.12:** Summary of Evidence I from the Ottoman Empire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict Present</th>
<th>Conflict Absent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OPP yes</td>
<td>Greece (1854, 1866, 1868, 1878, 1882, (1885, 1896-7, 1908, 1912, 1919, 1925) Bulgaria (1908, 1912, 1915), Serbia (joined alliance, 1912)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPP no</td>
<td>Montenegro (later 1st Balkan War) Serbia (later 1st Balkan War) Romania Albania</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5.13:** Summary of Evidence II from the Ottoman Empire
nations in the Balkans fought over their overlapping population pockets and how relative state strength elevated the dispute to the interstate level. Macedonia, a case covered extensively elsewhere, is only the most infamous.\footnote{M. Weiner, “The Macedonian Syndrome: An Historical Model of International Relations and Political Development,” World Politics, 23, 4 (Jul., 1971), 665-683. In addition to conflict with Turkey, Greeks and Bulgarians were also in conflict with one another over Macedonia. Greece for historic reasons and Bulgaria for ethnic ones. ‘Macedonia’ thus acquired the title ‘une salade Macedoine,’ or ‘una Macedonia di frutta’. Interview with Kristo Frasheri, Tirana, Albania, June 2007. Cf. R. Davison, op. cit., 1977, 31.} Consider Hungarian claims to Vojvodina (Yugoslavia) and Transylvania (Romania), where Hungarians reside, Serb claims to Austria’s southernmost province, Carinthia, also on account of ethnicity, Albanian and Serb claims to Kosovo, for historic and for ethnic reasons, or Greek claims to southern Albania (or ‘northern Epirus’), on the basis of Orthodox believers living there. Bessarabia, defined by the Dniester River on the East and the Prut River on the West, was claimed by both Romania and Russia on the basis of co-ethnic population pockets.\footnote{On Serb claims, for example, see the Serbian National Assembly declaration after the outbreak of WWI in Niš: ‘[our goal is] the liberation and unification of all our unliberated brethren’—in a word, irredentism. Quoted in P. Brankanović, Istorija Jugoslavije, 1918–1988, vol. I: Kraljevina Jugoslavija 1914–1941, Belgrade: Nolit, 1988, 11; cited in Ramet, op. cit., 2006, 40, fn. 22.; R.L. Wolff, The Balkans in Our Time, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1956, 143.}

Although Albania possessed overlapping population pockets in five neighboring states, state weakness deprived it of the capacity to sponsor (or ‘to redeem’) co-ethnics. On the contrary, Albania was the object of irredentism. Consider the problem in the south with Greece, which concerns two population pockets around Korçë (Koritza) and Gjirokastër (Argyrokastron).\footnote{On the dispute over whether this area was Greek or Albanian, in terms of language and religion, see Wolff, op. cit., 1956, 149.} After the Treaty of Berlin, Chameria went to Greece, parts of Albania and Macedonia to Bulgaria and Kosovo.
Greece refused to recognize Albanian independence until 1923, more than ten years after most states. In the aftermath of World War I, Greece considered all Albanian Muslims in Greece as Turks, and therefore concluded that they should be transferred to Turkey with other Turks, following the international treaty signed between the two states in 1923 at Lausanne. World War II saw many of these issues resurface. External efforts to redraw the border in the South of Albania in Albania’s favor met with fierce Greek resistance. According to Wolff, the Italian General Tellini, then in charge of the international border commission, was murdered, moments after having determined that the ethnic Greek areas around Korçë would be awarded to Albania. The issue escalated, when Italy seized Corfu, and was defused when the international border commission intervened with the threat of force. Greeks refused to leave the area until late in 1924, and only then under the threat of force. The issue of Northern Epirus was formally submerged in 1926 with the signing of a peace agreement between Albania and Greece, but it continues to plague Greek-Albanian relations today. Consistent with the model, those conflicts arose from the competing ethno-territorial claims to areas where overlapping population pockets, extensive external Greek support, and Albanian state weakness were all salient.

Overlapping population pockets also made the north, where Albanians and Serbs both laid claims to Kosovo, a problematic piece of land. The Conference of Am-

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119 In the first ‘national movement’, Albanians from all these lands organized at League of Prizren (Albanian: Lidhja e Prizrenit), and prevented their annexation to the Balkan’s Slavic states. Greece was compensated with Thessaly.

120 Wolff, op. cit., 1956, 149.
bassadors had agreed that Kosovo would belong to Serbia in 1913, but agreement over the actual borders was not achieved until a decade later. Like the Greeks, the Serbs sought to deport many of the Albanians to Turkey, considering them unwanted remnants of the Ottoman empire. Belgrade also promoted ‘settlers’ to Kosovo, changed property rights, and closed Albanian schools. Despite the presence of extensive overlapping Albanian population pockets in five neighboring states, Albania’s weakness as a state has perennially prevented it from making credible irredentist claims on its stronger neighbors. The specter of Greater Albania is more of chimera than a challenge to regional stability.

5.3 Summary

This chapter clearly displays the degree to which regularities in overlapping population pockets and relative state strength, combined with external support for separatism, govern state and ethnic group behavior after secession. The empirical evidence, drawn from the Balkans during two time periods, points in the same direction as the evidence discussed in other chapters and shows why irredentist third party actors constitute a particularly troublesome intervener-type. These three variables provide a powerful and parsimonious partition of the variation in violent secessionist conflict, admittedly missing some lesser disputes, but capturing the major ones. This chapter shows that when these conditions are satisfied, the model and the evidence point in the same direction.

121 Wolff, op. cit., 1956, 148.

122 Only when a major sponsor, Italy during World War II, or NATO in Kosovo, has Albania ever played a more than symbolic role in the affairs of its co-ethnics.
When overlapping population pockets were present, conflict was more likely. Conversely, when such pockets were shallow, sparse or scarce, conflict with the rump was usually averted. The unequal spatial, historical and numerical distribution of ethnic Serbs and ethnic Turks throughout the seceding territories of Yugoslavia and the Ottoman Empire is directly related to variation in violent secessionist conflict. The model enhances our understanding of violent secessionist conflict in the Balkans. By providing a theoretical framework that can generalize to other contexts, it also illuminates ethnic conflict and secessionist violence in other hot-spots outside the Balkans, for example, in the Caucasus.

For simplicity, I have assumed throughout this analysis that ethnic groups are more or less coherent actors. I recognize that consensus is just as frequently lacking within groups as it is between them. In Bosnia, for example, Croats could not agree on whether they preferred to be annexed to Croatia, or to fight for a unified Bosnia under Izetbegović; and similarly, could not agree, even within the highest ranks, upon an approach to Krajina Serbs. Among Serbs too, there were significant internal divisions: consider, on the one hand, Vojislav Šešelj, and the Women in Black on the other hand. On the other hand, even many dissident and opposition voices (e.g., Vuk Drašković) agreed with the basic principle of ‘all Serbs in Serbia’, at least in certain areas. Greek leaders could also not agree on many details of the Megali Idea, especially on the right strategy to attain it, though all agreed it was a ‘great idea.’


I am aware of these and other shortcomings. Building upon the intra-federation and intra-imperial clusters examined in this chapter, the next chapter offers a analysis that exploits a different form of clustering based on a sub-national study of Georgia grounded in my field research and archival work in the Caucasus. While this chapter has focused upon the interaction of domestic conditions with an ‘irredentist third party actor,’ the next chapter focuses on the interaction of these domestic factors with a ‘meddling third party actor’—Russia.

The next chapter explains why Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Tskhinvali) both experienced violent secessionist conflict with Tbilisi after it broke from the Soviet Union, while Kvemo-Kartli (an ‘Azeri’ area) and Samtskhe-Javakheti (an ‘Armenian’ area) did not, despite all four possessing distinct ethnic enclaves and facing a weak center that neglected their needs. I argue that, although the Azeris and Armenians are larger minorities than either the Abkhaz or Ossets, the former two had little or no serious support from the obvious third-parties, Azerbaijan and Armenia, while the latter two had significant external support from Russia and North Ossetia-Alania. Highlighting the presence of external support in former two cases, and its absence in the latter two, offers considerable analytical leverage over variation in the incidence and the intensity of violent secessionist conflict in the Georgian case.
Chapter 6

Secessionist Conflict in the Caucasus

For us Georgians, the sun does not rise in the east but in the north, in Russia.

– Eduard Shevardnadze

An unrivaled laboratory for examining the problem of recursive secessionist conflict in a focus and comparative manner is the Caucasus, specifically Georgia, a secessionist state with four ethno-regions, each potentially primed for recursive secession following Georgia’s separation from the Soviet Union. Evaluating the issue at the regional-level, within a single country and time period, has a number of distinct advantages; one is that it provides natural controls for factors that vary across states, such as regime type and state capacity, but remain largely constant within them. Moreover, it directs the measurement of several factors, for instance mountainous terrain and grievances, to their appropriate theoretical level, the region, thereby serving to isolate causal effects at the level of the secessionist unit itself.

This chapter presents a theoretical framework to explain variation in recursive secessionist violence. The theory is contrasted with five competing explanations and is tested against data from Georgia’s ethnic regions, some of which avoided organized violence, and some of which did not. On the demand side, the core argument rests upon a curvilinear conceptualization of ethno-territorial heterogeneity and conflict; on the supply side, it emphasizes the role of particular types of external actors in the escalation and diffusion of internal conflicts—the international dimension of internal conflicts. This argument is evaluated and contrasted with alternative explanations that have been suggested in the literature. Drawing upon archival evidence, elite interviews, regional and district-level data collected during field research in Georgia, the analysis evaluates the relative consistency of the various theoretical expectations with the empirical record.
6.1 Geography, History and Ethnicity

An impressive 600 mile mountain range, ‘the largest and perhaps the highest mountain in the world,’ according to Herodotus, spreads from the northwest to the southeast, and divides the Caucasus into two; the northern part—comprising sundry ethnic groups such as Ossets, who speak an Iranian language, the Kalmyks, a Mongolian mountain people, as well as Paleocaucasian peoples such as the Chechens, Ingush and several Circassian subgroups—is today part of Russia, at least formally, while the southern Caucasus consist of three de jure independent states—Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia—each formerly a Soviet Republic. The Southern Caucasus is no less complex than its Northern counterpart, and includes sub-national entities such the Abkhaz and Meskhetian Turks in Georgia, the Lezgin and Talysh in Azerbaijan, as well as Yezidi Kurds in Armenia.

The Caucasus region is an ethnic mosaic, a ‘museum of peoples’ comprised of Iranian, Turkic, Slavic and Caucasian nations, Muslim, Christian, Jewish and Buddhist faiths, subtropical climates and snow-capped mountains and alphabets that have no counterparts in the rest of the world. ‘We Romans,’ Pliny wrote, ‘did business there with 130 interpreters.’ At the crossroads of civilizations—the Ottoman

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4Pliny, *Natural History: An Account Of Countries, Nations, Seas, Towns, Havens, Mountains, Rivers, Distances, And Peoples Who Now Exist, Or Formerly Existed, Book VI*. Available online:
Turkic, the Safavid Persian and Tsarist Russian—the Caucasus have historically been the gateway through which armies marched in pursuit of wrenching power away from their regional competitors. The result is a region of ethnic, linguistic and religious complexity like few others.\(^5\)

Consider Georgia, only 4.5 million people, roughly the population of South Carolina, and the size of West Virginia or Sri Lanka. It contains 16 officially recognized ethnic groups, including lesser knowns like the Laz, Bats, Hemshins and Yezidi-Kurds along with household names such as Abkhaz, Armenians and Ossets. Georgians are the titular nationality, but they comprise less than 70% of the total population, and less than 5% in some regions. Georgians themselves can be sub-divided into more than a dozen sub-ethnic groups. According to the Georgian Academy of Science in 1926, Georgians were made up of Kartlians, Kakhetians, Tushes, Pshav-Khevsurians, Armenians, Javakhs, Meskhetians, Klarjetians, Taos, Adjarians, Guruls, Imerelis, Rachvels and Lechhumians, which implies that Mengrelians, Chans, Svans and Batsbs—who are now deemed Georgians—were once considered separate ethnic groups. Demonstrating the fluidity of ethnicity, the Linguistic Academy submitted an entirely different list in 1937, while in the same year the Academy of Soviet Anthropological Sciences claimed that both of the lists were incorrect—Georgians, in its view, consisted only of Mengrelians, Lazis, Svans, Batsbs and Adjarians.\(^6\) This debate over the proper taxonomy only testifies to what

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\(^6\)Archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia (II), Fond 14, File 152, p. 84.; Cf.
I have been saying—by any metric, Georgia is a byzantine museum of peoples.

At a political level, modern Georgia is divided into regions, four of which merit special attention in this study on account of their secessionist potential: Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli. Despite the considerable conflict potential in all four regions, as I will illustrate shortly, the latter two avoided egregious ethnic conflict, while the former two clearly did not. That the latter two regions—Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli—have so far avoided conflict has meant that they have also received significantly less scholarly attention. This despite the fact that they contain Georgia’s two largest minorities—Armenians and Azeris—that each is compactly settled on the border with their respective ethnic kin states, Armenia and Azerbaijan, and that both groups possess considerable grievances against the central government in Tbilisi.

This sub-national variation in violence simply demonstrates that ‘the eruption of conflict is not inevitable....by accident or design, regimes may take measures that mitigate severe ethnic conflict.’ Why? All of these regions possessed several oft-cited preconditions for secessionist conflict—e.g., significant ethnic and economic grievances, some degree of territorial concentration, considerable cultural differences, mountainous terrain, and ethnic kin in a neighboring state—but only two engaged in violent secessionist conflict, while two potential separatists remained

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quiet. What accounts for the difference? In particular, what explains the occurrence of violent secessionist conflict in some regions and not in others, and what accounts for the escalation and moderation of violence within conflict zones?

As these questions imply, this paper concerns theories, patterns and policies. Examining cases that produced recursive secession as well as ‘near-miss’ cases will illuminate the factors, circumstances and policies that curbed ethnic tensions and prevented them from escalating into organized secessionist violence. The analysis first examines the causes of the violent (and near-violent) conflicts, region by region, and then evaluates five competing explanations in Georgia. The empirical evidence is drawn from archival materials, interviews and conversations with high-level ministers and decision makers in the Saakashvili and Shevardnadze governments along with members of academia, think tanks and non-governmental organizations.

6.2 Georgia: Bosnia of the Caucasus

Of the three southern Caucasian states, Georgia is by far the most ethnically heterogeneous. Georgians (now including all the sub-ethnic groups mentioned above)

8The emerging literature on this problem was probably spawned by Svante Cornell’s seminal work, Autonomy and Conflict, and also by Stuart Kaufman’s Modern Hatreds. The former, which includes Adjara, argues that the variation in violence is a result of autonomous status, while the later, which excludes Javakheti, that it was due to symbolic politics.

9Archival material is drawn primarily from the Georgian Archives of the Ministry of the Interior, the Archives of the OSCE Mission in Georgia and the Central Arcives of the OSCE in Prague. I am grateful to a number of individuals in Georgia for the special interest they expressed in this project, including Temuri Iakobashvili, the Minister of Regional Reintegration, in charge of conflict resolution in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Professor and Ambassador Aleksander Rondeli at GFSIS (President, the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies), Professor Davit Aprasidze at CIPDD (Caucasus Institute for Peace Democracy and Developement and Ilia Chavchavadze University) and Dr. Ryan Grist, Deputy Head of the Organisation for Security Cooperation in Europe Mission in Georgia (OSCE-MiG) until the middle of August 2008 when he was asked to take a ‘permanent vacation’ by the Head of Mission.
make up about 65% of Georgia, whereas Azeris comprise over 90% of Azerbaijan and Armenians over 97% of Armenia.\textsuperscript{10} Georgia is perhaps the most independent-minded (or rebellious, depending on your viewpoint) of the three southern Caucasus countries, having been the first to declare independence from the Soviet Union in April, four months before Azerbaijan and five before Armenia.\textsuperscript{11} Georgia is also the Southern Caucasian state that has been most brutally ravaged by violent internal ethno-territorial conflicts, and the baseline for conflict in the Caucasus is high in view of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. Since its independence from the Soviet Union, Georgia has experienced conflict in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, a civil war over its central government, a \textit{coup d'etat} revolution of Roses and an interstate war with Russia.

To understand why Georgia has been the site of so much violence, in particular secessionist violence, it would be wise to unpack Georgia’s separatist problem into four, first covering the near-misses—Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli—and then tackling the cases of overt conflict—Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Before getting ‘dirty with data,’ however, we need to think theoretically and comparatively about Georgia’s ethno-territorial problems.

\subsection*{6.2.1 Thinking about Georgia’s Ethno-Territorial Problems}

Georgia possesses four regions populated by potential secessionists—Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Javahketi and Kvemo Kartli.\textsuperscript{12} Violent conflict erupted on multiple occasions in these regions, often leading to armed conflict and human displacement. The presence of these regions on the map of Georgia has been a source of contention, with both external and internal actors seeking control or influence.

\textsuperscript{11} April, August and September 1991.
\textsuperscript{12} Adjaria, an autonomous region on the Black Sea bordering Turkey, is excluded from the
occasions in Abkhazia and in South Ossetia, but not in Javakheti or Kvemo-Kartli. In Javakheti, which is home to the largest ethnic minority, the Armenians, who live homogeneously in the Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda districts, there has been mobilization around the goal of self-determination, but it has not escalated into organized violence. Similarly, in Kvemo Kartli, which is a heavily Azeri area of Georgia bordering Azerbaijan, there has also been some speculation about separatism, and even ethnic riots, but the region has generally been quite reticent, despite having its fair share of grievances against the central government and other oft-noted preconditions of separatism, a point to which I shall return.

Rather than resolving the conflicts that exist, some scholars suggest that secession merely reorders them. That usually happens in one of two ways, either by escalating them into interstate disputes between the post-secessionist state and the so-called rump state, or by bringing the conflict down to the sub-state level, generating recursive secessions.

Sometimes called *matrioshka* nationalism, recursive secession is simply a second order fracture: a secession from a secessionist state. In the case being considered, Georgia broke away from the Soviet Union and then Georgian regions attempted analysis on theoretical grounds. Its inclusion would not change the results offered here, but it should be excluded from an analysis of ethno-regions because it is not one. Adjars are ethnic Georgians, as they themselves insist, and speak Georgian. By religion, they are mostly Muslim (rather than Orthodox), having been conquered by the Ottomans in 1614 and later converted, but having then been acquired by Imperial Russia from the Ottoman Empire during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, and finally ceded by Turkey to the Soviet Union in the Treaty of Kars in 1922. The treaty divided the Batumi District of the Kutaisi Governorate into a northern half, with the port city of Batumi, which went to Russia and then Georgia, and the southern half, with the city of Artvin, annexed by Turkey. The treaty ensured that the northern half was granted autonomy within Soviet Georgia.

\[13\] See the planned but aborted ‘March on Marneuli’, which had its parallel in the ‘March on Tskhinvali’.
to break away from the newly independent Georgia, and so on. Center-periphery relations between Moscow and Tbilisi are replaced by parallel struggles between Tbilisi and the various peripheral centers within Georgia, in this case, with Sukhumi, Tshkinvali, Akhalkalaki and Marneuli/Rustavi. The logic of recursive secession is akin to a domino effect. One ethnic Osset put it laconically: ‘You from him and I from you’.

The factors driving some regions but not others into recursive secessionist conflicts with Tbilisi are sundry, but the theory suggests, and the analysis will show, that two factors deserve pride of place—ethno-territorial heterogeneity and external support. I argue that regions where the primary ethnic group was sizeable but not fully dominant—where the ethno-demographic distribution was roughly bi-polar (heterogeneous), rather than unipolar (homogeneous) or multipolar (fractionalized)—were most likely to witness violent ethnic conflicts and pursue secession. By contrast, in regions where a minority ethnic group numerically dominates or where numerous ethnic groups exist in small proportions, inter-ethnic relations should be comparatively tame, provided of course that external actors remain on the sidelines or serve to restrain. This understanding of the role of ethnic heterogeneity is consistent with a curvilinear relationship between heterogeneity and conflict advanced in the theoretical literature and identified in at least one study of Africa.\footnote{Donald L. Horowitz, Ethnic Groups in Conflict, University of California Press, 1985 [2000]; on Africa, see: Robert Bates, ‘Ethnicity, Capital Formation, and Conflict,’ Working Paper No. 27. Center for International Development, Harvard University, 1999; cited in Andreas Wimmer, Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict: Shadows of Modernity, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 86, fn. 2; Cf. P. Collier and A. Hoeffler, ‘Fgreed and Grievance in civil war,’ Oxford Economic Papers, 56, p. 563–595, 2004; Marta Reynal-Querol, ‘Political systems, stability and civil wars,’ Defense and Peace Economics, 13, 465–83, 2002.} Concerning external actors, I argue that their involvement determines whether
or not an ethno-region’s grievances against the central government will translate into political demands or escalate into a secessionist movement, highlighting the crucial but too frequently overlooked international dimension of internal conflicts. An external actor’s influence operates primarily through its impact upon sub-state group’s expectations of success in a potential conflict with the center. It also figures prominently in the sub-state group’s calculations about the prospects of secession versus some lesser demand.15

Thinking about the Georgian case in this way shows that both Abkhazia and South Ossetia possess an ethno-demographic distribution that can be characterized as polarized, split between a small number of large groups, where none truly dominates, so each has a claim to govern, giving rise to a precarious zero-sum setting, a point to which I shall return later.16 By contrast, Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli are ethno-regions that can be characterized as mono-ethnic regions, areas in which one ethnic group numerically dwarfs all others. In both cases, Armenians and Azeris comprise more than 90% of the local population. For all intents and purposes, Tbilisi is powerless in this demographic setting because of the prohibitively high monitoring costs associated with governing in an area where daily business occurs in a language the central government does not understand, and where the locals do not understand the language of the titular nationality. Tbilisi must therefore rule, if at all, by proxy, through local power structures.

Beyond sheer numbers, scholars of ethnic conflict have often pointed to spatial


concentration as a factor that increases the probability of separatism. The intuition is clear enough—secession is easier to envision and to execute when the sub-state group’s population is compactly allocated in one area of the country, and when that region is a borderland rather than an island in the country’s core. The empirical findings on this front have been mixed, however. While a certain level of concentration and ethnic group size is needed to enable secession, scholars have overlooked the fact that the logic of ethno-territorial heterogeneity is premised on a tipping point model rather than on a monotonically increasing scale. More concentration and more size need not necessarily increase the probability of conflict. Separatism is most likely, in fact, when the sub-state group is somewhat compact in spatial terms and reasonably large in numeric terms, but does not dominate its region on either dimension, and competes with another large group, typically the country’s largest ethnicity. By contrast, overwhelming spatial concentration creates a sense of security, makes it simpler for the sub-state group to impose its will on any remaining groups at the local level, and in some sectors even to dictate the rules of the game entirely. The local majority can impose considerable monitoring and other costs on the attempt to impose ‘alien rule’, possibly substituting the need for out-and-out secession with a high level of local control. Feeling less threatened, the sub-state group is also less likely to overreact to spikes in inter-ethnic tensions. In short, the logic of ethno-heterogeneity posits a curvilinear relationship

17 Compare, for example, Chechnya versus Tatarstan in this regard.


19 On the concept of alien rule, see Michael Hechter, Alien Rule and Its Discontents, Manuscript in progress, 2008.
between diversity and conflict, making fragmented and highly homogeneous regions less likely to engage in separatist conflict than polarized, heterogenous ones.

Although there are no truly fractionalized regions within Georgia above the village level—that is regions with numerous small groups—we need not look far to find one. Dagestan, just across the border, fits the fractionalized mold fairly well: thirty plus distinct ethnic groups reside in Daghastan, and over eighty languages coexist. The largest group, the highland Avars, account for no more than 27% of the population—some of the remaining 29 groups include the Dargins (15%), the lowland Kumyk (13%), the Lezgins (11%), the Laks (5%), Tabasarans (4%), Rutul (1%), Nogai (1%), Mountain Jews (0.5%), etc.20 It is hardly an exaggeration to call Dagestan a fractionalized country.

When the Soviet system collapsed, nationalist movements emerged to fill the vacuum in Dagestan, as elsewhere, but these movements had almost no chance of success in an area with a population that is comprised of more than thirty ethnic groups, with the largest accounting for only 27% of the total population. Any successful movement at the national level that hoped to make it in Makhachkala, Dagestan’s capital city, and to the Gossovet, the State Council, required the support of several additional ethnic groups. Politicians with a limited nationalistic agenda, and therefore a particularistic appeal, failed to receive significant support from other

20 Quoted in Robert B. Ware and Enver Kisriev, ‘Ethnic Parity and Political Stability in Dagestan,’ Europe and Asia Studies 53, 1, 2001, pp. 105-133; cited in Christoph Zuercher, ‘Wars that Did Not Happen’, p. 187, in Ibid., The Post-Soviet Wars: Rebellion, Ethnic Conflict and Nationhood in the Caucasus, New York University Press, 2007. Note that Dagestani is a civic identity, as there are no Dagestani ethnics in Dagestan. In a 2001 representative survey, more than 75% identified primarily as Dagestani, and only 10% with their ethnic group, as the most important reference point in their identity; quoted in Ware, Robert B, Enver Kisriev, Werner J. Patzelt, Ute Roericht, ‘Democratization in Dagestan,’ delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, September 1, 2001; cited in Zuercher, op. cit., p. 194
ethnic groups.

Any single group that aspired to dominate the others, or to secede, had to face cross-cutting cleavages and provisional counterbalancing alliances, for such a scenario would have deleteriously affected all the remaining groups. In fact, the smaller ethnic groups—the Kumyks, the Nogai and the Lezgin—were disproportionately among those who resisted breaking away from Russia, fearing that in an independent Dagestan they would fare even worse. For these reasons, inter alia, it was not a zone where ethnic tensions escalated into violent conflict.\footnote{Another major reason, the discussion of which would take us too far afield in this paper, is the complicated electoral procedures laid down in the constitution. See Zuercher, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 196-7.} Although Dagestan is hardly an exemplar of the modern, democratic republic, it is nonetheless an island of stability in a region not known for inter-ethnic accord, having dodged the sort of ethnic conflicts, and secessionist violence, that is distinctly associated with its immediate neighbors—Chechnya, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

But ethno-territorial heterogeneity is only part of the story, and the main reason is that it is more or less constant over time. It is true that an ethnic cleansing can sometimes radically change an ethnic landscape, producing a demographic reversal of fortune as it did in Abkhazia, but such an extreme strategy is less common than some of the literature and gruesome media images would have us believe.\footnote{On ethnic cleansing, see H. Zeynep Bulutgil, \textit{Territorial Conflict and Ethnic Cleansing}, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, October 2008.} In any case, demographic balances are typically slow changing factors, displaying considerable inertia and changing too gradually to explain variation in timing.

To account for why secessionist conflict has only now broken out—and not before—the theory requires a more dynamic supply-side component. The role of
external support from third party actors fits the bill quite well. This factor is too
often ignored in the analysis of intrastate conflict because it is external to the state
in which the conflict occurs. Internal conflicts, it is assumed, ought to have in-
ternal causes, but logically, and I will show empirically too, external support for
internal insurgents should have an overwhelming impact on ethnic group decision
making and on its capabilities vis-à-vis the central government’s armed forces. All
else equal, the government’s armed forces tend to be significantly stronger than
the separatists’ forces, even in relatively weak states such as Georgia, but third
parties can radically shift the balance of power and fundamentally alter the would
be separatists expectation of succeeding, escalating a conflict that could have been
curbed.

The analysis of Georgia’s ethno-regions below scrutinizes these theoretical claims
against the empirical record. I hope to make evident that ethno-territorial het-
erogeneity and the behavior of external actor account for most of the systematic
variation in violence among Georgia’s disaffected ethno-regions. The shadow cast
from outside the state itself acted as the smoking gun in the two conflict cases,
burning in the background while the belligerents brawled it out in the battlefield,
and acting in the two near-misses as the cooling pad that served to dampen tensions
that easily could have escalated into violence. In what follows, I present evidence,
from eyewitness reports, archival documents and elite interviews that testifies to the
role played by heterogeneity and by external support, exposing the effect of these
factors on the escalation and diminution of Georgia’s latent conflicts.

In order to understand the two recursive secessions within Georgia—South Os-
setia and Abkhazia—it is essential to account for the near misses: why did ethno-
regions that were good candidates for recursive secessionist conflict fail to escalate into violent conflicts? Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli were near-miss secessionist regions on account of past inter-ethnic tensions and grievances against the government. In addition, both ethno-regions possess potential sponsors just across the border, considerable demographic size, spatial concentration, isolation from the capital as well religious, ethnic and cultural differences with ethnic Georgians. The fact that these regions experienced significant ethnic tensions—but did not generate secessionist violence—deserves explanation. The literature on ethnic conflict has largely ignored these near-miss secessions; this is all the more reason to inspect them closely, before they become the next hornet’s nest of separatism.23 At the same time, we need to take a range of competing explanations seriously, which is the task of the next section.

6.2.2 Competing Explanations

Having outlined an argument premised on the role of ethno-territorial heterogeneity and third party involvement in order to explain variation in recursive secession within Georgia, we should ask what competing explanations that have been suggested in the literature suggest as alternatives?

One of the most prominent explanations for ethnic conflict in general, and secessionist conflict in particular, is ‘grievances,’ particularly grievances by the sub-state minorities against the central government. It is indisputable that central governments, especially in new secessionist states, tend to leave minorities in the new state

23Stuart Kaufman, Modern Hatreds, p. 123ff, discusses the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and notes that conflicts in Ajaria and the Azeri regions were averted, but makes no mention of the potential conflict in Javakheti. Cf. Cornell, Autonomy and Conflict, p. 196ff, an important exception to this general omission.
to fend for themselves, frequently with dire consequences, since such states are often formed on the basis of a nationalist claim to independence. As Gamsakhurdia said, echoing a mantra that independence leaders frequently repeat, ‘Georgia for Georgians.’ What the remaining 35% of the country feels, quite rightly, is fear. And this fear is often the start of a spiral that produces a security dilemma between the majority and the minorities - every defensive action by one is perceived as an offensive threat by the other - and the prospect of living with heterogeneity fades because trust is superseded by fear. This logic is true, as far as it goes, but it has important shortcomings if we wish to explain variation across time and space. The basic reason is simple - grievances are felt across space by many groups, whereas very few of them resort to violent secessionist conflict, and persist for many years within the same dyad, but the secessionist conflict emerges at some points in time and not others, and varies in intensity over time, meaning that serious grievances may be necessary but are not sufficient for latent conflicts to escalate into violence.

The same criticism applies to religious differences, which have rarely been politically salient in the Caucasus, and remain a poor important predictor of conflict. The Abkhaz and the Ossets in Georgia, both predominantly Orthodox by denomination, are much closer to ethnic Georgians than Azeris or Armenians. In fact, the Abkhaz are partly Georgian, being a mix of North Caucasian tribes and Georgian sub-ethnicities, Svans and Mingrelians, although the language is distinct from Georgian, with 67 consonants but only two vowels. In terms of religion, the starkest

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25Technically, there are only two vowel phonemes, but several more vowel allophones used for
difference exists between the Georgians and the Azeris in Georgia, who are Muslim, 25% Shia and 75% Sunni, yet the least severe conflict exists in this dyad.\(^{26}\) By contrast, the most similar dyad is the Georgian-Abkhaz one, but there we find the highest level of conflict. It is clearly not religious and cultural differences, at least in and of themselves, that account for variation in violence in a cross-sectional sense and certainly, as a static factor, it cannot get us very far in terms of temporal variation.

A number of studies have suggested that mountainous terrain is a critical factor to consider because it enables smaller rebel forces to hide and minimize the importance of offensive weaponry, multiplying their real relative power, and creating the conditions for a successful insurgency.\(^{27}\) The Scots, the Swiss, the Chechens, Yemenites, Afghanis, Iraqi Kurds, the Apache Chiricahua all seem to validate this reputation of the ferocious highlander.\(^{28}\) The logic is compelling. At the cross-national level, however, where this variable is typically measured as the percentage of the country that is mountainous, the finding flounders. If the logic is meant to apply to the region in which the potential separatists reside, then why would the pronunciation. 67 is the standard number given for the Bzyp dialect.

\(^{26}\)This ratio is reversed in Azerbaijan proper, see Cornell, op. cit., p. 112


\(^{28}\)For an excellent read on this tradition, see Yoav Karny, Highlanders: a journey to the Caucasus in quest of memory, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.
percentage of land that is mountainous be a reasonable proxy? Nonetheless, assuming the correct measurement of the variable, it would remain entirely static and therefore incapable of explaining temporal variation. At the cross-sectional level of analysis, the role of rough terrain is also dubious, casting doubt on Fearon and Laitin’s claims. The two areas that were most mountainous were Javakheti and Abkhazia, whereas most of South Ossetia and Kvemo Kartli are flat, so this does not fit the theoretical expectation: one case in each category was conflictual and one was peaceful. Moreover, when we examine the Abkhaz case, i.e., the conflict-rough terrain combination, more closely, we find that the logic Fearon and Laitin outlines does not stand up to scrutiny, since the Abkhaz conflict was dominated by offensive warfare not defensive insurgency and the Osset conflict occurred openly on the plains just north of Tbilisi. This is not to say that conflict and rough terrain do not sometimes go hand in hand, or that mountains (like dense forests) do not provide cover for insurgencies, only that the relationship in these cases is non-existent.

Economics have been posited to play various roles in stoking separatism. One of the most commonly cited factors is economic viability; that is, if the group or region has the potential to exist as an independent economic entity, then it can more easily envision and achieve separation from the state of which it is currently a constituent part. The most economically viable region is Abkhazia, which in a certain sense is already self sufficient; Kvemo Kartli also has relatively good prospects for economic survival because of its agricultural endowment, yet only the former pursued secession. At the same time, South Ossetia is economically destitute, with no obvious means of economic support outside of smuggling, yet it was the first of all the regions to seek separation. Javakheti is perhaps equally hopeless from an economic
viewpoint, yet it did not pursue secession, so again the empirical data do not reflect the outcome predicted by the theory. The analysis strongly points toward ethnic and emotional sources for recursive secession aspirations in Georgia and not toward economic motivations. That is not to say that independence from Georgia would not have benefited some sectors of society, only that the secessionist movements in Georgia were not primarily motivated or sustained by economic considerations. Although the ethno-regions complain of economic problems, these problems exist in all the ethno-regions, primarily because investments have gone largely to Tbilisi, and secondarily to Kutaisi, the second largest city in Georgia. None of the interviews or archival materials indicate that economic motivations prompted their push for separation. Instead, they cite fear of ‘Georgianization,’ especially but not exclusively during Gamsakhurdia’s reign, and the need to guarantee the survival of their distinct ethnic identity. This fear and motivation was most keenly felt in ethno-regions that were ethnically heterogeneous and polarized between Georgians and the main minority group, and less so in regions where the minority was a local majority.

Another competing argument concerns the role of autonomy in generating the conditions for conflict. Indeed, *prima facie*, it is true that Abkhazia and South

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29 On Soviet nationality policy, and autonomy levels under the Soviet system, see Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984; Richard Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society*, Routledge, 2nd ed. 1996, Ch. 9-11. On the role of the autonomous status in creating the conditions for secession, see Cornell, *op. cit.*, 2001, and Zuercher, *op. cit.*, 2007. The case of Adjara, which is not considered explicitly in this study because it is not an ethno-region (Adjars are ethnic Georgians, only Muslim), was an autonomous republic but did not attempt to secede and thus cuts against the otherwise compelling autonomy argument. Cornell explains this anomaly by referring to Abashidze’s non-radical leadership. In any case, Adjara is unusual in many respects, most importantly for this study is that it was the only autonomous region in the former Soviet Union not to have a titular nationality. As such, Derluguiian characterized it as a ‘land without a people...there was an Ajaria, but not
Ossetia both had some form of administrative autonomy during the Soviet period, and the other two ethno-regions, Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli, did not. The logic linking autonomy to secession is outlined most powerfully in Svante Cornell’s work, *Autonomy and Conflict*, where he argues in effect that autonomy provided the intellectual and political experience and networks to pursue secession successfully when the opportunity arose. To be sure, there is a strong logic of collective action and mobilization that underlies this argument and it needs to be taken seriously. Despite these strengths, however, there are some important concerns that should cause pause. The first is that South Ossetia possessed a lower level of autonomy than did Abkhazia - it was an autonomous ‘district,’ whereas Abkhazia was an autonomous region. According to Elise Giuliano, ‘Russia’s autonomous republics look considerably more like states than the lower-ranked autonomous oblasts and autonomous okrugs, insofar as they had their own legislatures, executives, and judiciaries....in addition, compared with lower-ranked territories, ASSRs were allowed greater, albeit symbolic, representation in the federal government...’

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31Elise Giuliano, ‘Secessionism from the Bottom Up: Democratization, Nationalism and Local
of autonomy is one of degree, then we should expect Abkhazia to have been the first one to secede, since it possessed the characteristics associated with argument in greater abundance, whereas South Ossetia possessed them only pro forma, but it was actually South Ossetia that pursued secessionist first, not Abkhazia.\footnote{Consider the role of autonomy in a more comparative perspective. Looking to the other side of the mountain range, it will be noted that the Supreme Soviet elevated 4 of the 5 autonomous oblasts (Adygeya, Gorno-Altai, Karachai-Cherkessia and Khakassia) to the status of autonomous republics on 3 July 1991, yet not a single one of these subsequently sought secession.\footnote{At best, autonomy is a background condition that makes recursive secession more likely, but even this is far from clear. Autonomy it is a completely static factor, unable therefore to illuminate the timing, the intensity or the course of the conflict, and therefore of limited use in predicting secessionist violence.}\footnote{Indeed, the more interesting question is where autonomy comes from and why it is revoked. The retraction of autonomous status has frequently triggered secessionist sentiments, though not invariably or immediately. The mobilization that results from the retraction of autonomy sometimes produces, or strengthens if already present, a secessionist movement. Take, for instance, the retraction of autonomy in Adjara. See Giuliano, op. cit., 2006, p. 277, n. 5.}}

\footnote{Furthermore, Adjara, an autonomous republic within Georgia since the 1930s, would have produced a strong secessionist movement, certainly stronger than an autonomous oblast such as South Ossetia. Despite possessing the alleged advantages of ARs - among them networks, institutions and leadership - Adjara was quiet and was eventually fully reintegrated into Georgia.}

\footnote{Richard Sakwa, \textit{Russian Politics and Society}, Routledge, 2nd ed. 1996, p. 179; Giuliano provides compelling reasons for excluding these cases from her study, see Giuliano, \textit{op. cit.}, 2006, p. 277, n. 5.}
tonomous status in Kosovo, or the elimination of autonomy in South Ossetia.\footnote{Milosevic began to remove the autonomous rights of Kosovo in 1989 after his June 28 at the so-called Gazimestan speech. South Ossetia’s autonomy was unilaterally revoked on December 10, 1990 by the Supreme Soviet of the Georgian SSR. Vojvodina’s autonomy was effectively revoked in 1990. See Jenne, Ethnic Bargaining: The Paradox of Minority Empowerment, Cornell, 2007. Ajara’s autonomy was not revoked, but Gamsakhurdia’s threat to do so provoked considerable protest in Ajara.} That said, recursive secession occurs without autonomy and without its retraction, making it neither necessary nor sufficient. The Soviet Union had many autonomous administrative units, and was in fact divided into 87 entities at one point: 15 autonomous Soviet socialist republics, 6 kraya, 49 oblasti, 2 federal cities, 5 autonomous oblasti, and 10 autonomous okrugi.\footnote{For an excellent investigation of why certain autonomous republics pursued secession, based upon the role of popular support for nationalism, while others remained quiescent, see Giuliano, op. cit., 2006. Giuliano directs attention to the endogenous sources of popular support, and not only elite level strategic manipulation of the masses. In future work, I hope to examine this among the Caucasian cases considered in this paper.} The vast majority of autonomous entities, republics and oblasts, were non-secessionist, including Adygea, Chuvashia, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Kalmykia, Karachay-Cherkessia, Karelia, Komi Republic, Mari El, Mordovia, Nenets Autonomous Okrug, North Ossetia-Alania, and Udmurtia.\footnote{North Ossetia was the first Russian autonomous republic to declare sovereignty, well before Chechnya in fact, but it did not actively seek secession, and became highly integrationist after the 1992 conflict with neighboring Ingushetia.} Outside the current Russian federation, we observe a similar phenomenon among political entities such as Gaugazia in Moldova, Sardinia in Italy and Vojvodina in Serbia, which can not by any stretch of the imagination be considered separatist. In the Caucasus, there were 9 ASSRs and AOs, but only 3 (possibly 4 if we include the Chechen part of the Checheno-Ingushskaya ASSR) pursued greater independence and, significantly, all did so with significant external
The impetus for independence frequently stemmed from outside the territory itself. In other words, autonomy is endogenous to external support. South Ossetia was, within Georgia, equivalent to one of the autonomous oblasts, established by the Russian 11th Red Army in 1922. Abkhazia was a Socialist Soviet Republic (SSR Abkhazia) with the unusual status of a ‘treaty republic’ associated with the Georgian SSR. In 1931, Stalin made it an autonomous republic (Abkhaz ASSR) within the Georgian SSR. Taking a long view, it will be noted that autonomous status was itself a political decision reached during the course of the development of states, here the Soviet Union, and something to be explained in itself. Some autonomous statuses were granted, others were revoked, some were elevated and others were demoted, each for political reasons, more often to prevent instability than to encourage it. In other words, the granting of autonomous status within Georgia, even if and where it was devoid of real content, was in all cases endogenous to third party support, which was the primary trigger for recursive secession in Georgia when and where it transpired.

In short, autonomy is not a cause of secession, as Cornell and others have suggested, either in general and or specifically in the Caucasus. Though it provides an obvious focal point for mobilization, it would be a serious exaggeration to consider it a primary cause of secession. Quite the contrary, some authors have shown

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37 ASSRs in the Caucasus: Kabardino-Balkarskaya, Severo-Osetinskaya, Checheco-Ingushskaya, Adzharskaya, Nakhichevanskaya. AOs: Adygeyskaya, Karachayevo-Cherkesskaya, Yugo-Osetinskaya and Nagorno-Karabakhskaya.

38 See 1925 Constitution of SSR Abkhazia, Art. 3.

39 See 1990 USSR Supreme Council law on autonomies.

40 On Russia’s autonomous units, see Richard Sakwa, Russian Politics and Society, Routledge,
that autonomy bears a strong relationship to peace, rather than conflict, both in the developed world (e.g., Spain, Germany, United States, Switzerland, Australia) and the developing world (e.g., Nigeria, India, Mexico, Ethiopia).

41 True that autonomy has been seen by those examining the former Soviet Union as creating the building blocks ‘necessary for the rise of nationalist movements.’ Yet only union republics (e.g., Georgia, Ukraine, etc.), which had the highest level of autonomy in the former Soviet Union, actually seceded from Russia, whereas lower levels of autonomy (autonomous republics, oblasts, okrugs), such as those which existed within the Russian Federation or within Georgia, did not offer significantly more powerful focal points than non-autonomous but territorially concentrated ethno-regions, such as Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli. More comparative evidence suggests a striking observation: according to Alfred Stepan, ‘every single longstanding democracy in a multilingual and multinational polity is a federal state.’ According to Larry Diamond, autonomy ‘has done more to relieve or contain secessionist pressures than to stimulate them.’ At a minimum, evidence of autonomy’s positive effect on secession remains mixed. Rather than a clear cause of secession within the Soviet Union or within Georgia, as Cornell argues, autonomy’s impact remains a subject


for further research.

Finally, a crucial issue to consider is whether the two negative cases (Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli) are really possible secessions, rather than would be attempts at irredentas, by Armenia and Azerbaijan respectively. It is true that the boundary between secession and irredentism may be ‘pulled apart for analysis...[but possess] points of contact and even, at times, a degree of interchangeability that...makes it necessary to treat the two phenomena together, in order to have a full view of each.\textsuperscript{45} The analysis here illustrates that what the analyst can distinguish only with difficulty, political reality can conflate just as easily. All four cases here expose the commingling of secession and irredentism.

Assuming the distinction could be drawn, and that Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli were irredentas, rather than secessions, it might be argued that the differences in outcome could be attributed to blurring an important distinction that bears on their differential incidence.\textsuperscript{46} For reasons outlined carefully elsewhere, irredentist action is conspicuously rare when compared to the profusion of secessionist movements.\textsuperscript{47} This may help to explain why assistance from Armenia and Azerbaijan was modest, but not why assistance flowed freely for South Ossetia and Abkhazia from the so-called ‘Confederation of the Caucasus’ and from the Kremlin. The reluctance of Armenia and Azerbaijan to espouse irredentist claims did not drive ethnic movements toward secession, as some have suggested it might, but has served to subdue local secessionists and irredentists.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{45}Horowitz, \textit{op. cit.}, 1991, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{46}Horowitz, \textit{op. cit.}, 1991, p. 9ff.
\textsuperscript{48}Horowitz, \textit{op. cit.}, 1991, p. 20.
The cases also suggest that whether an aggrieved ethnic group states its goal as secessionist or irredentist is not entirely under its control. Each region possessed a potential state to join across the border and could in principle choose whether to separate from Georgia as the end goal or as a means to join a neighboring state. Not all ethnic groups have both options, of course, as previous studies have shown. The Bengalis, who live on both sides of the border that is now defines Bangladesh, ‘might have become either irredentist or secessionist,’ whereas the Ibo, entirely contained within Nigeria, had only a secessionist option. No such clear distinction applies to Georgia, where all four regions possessed both options, at least in theory. In practice, Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli had only a secessionist option, not because they did not possess ethnic kin on the other side of the border, but because of policy in Baku and Yerevan. The reason that external sponsors in the north were more enthusiastic about redeeming their ethnic kin than were external sponsors in the south had less to do with the ethnic groups claims and objectives than it had to do with the sponsor’s domestic concerns and foreign policy goals. Propounding an elastic definition of the phenomenon that incorporates both sub-concepts together appears justified, at least for the Georgian cases.

Whether a movement assumes one or the other form is far from given at the outset. Secessionist movements can develop over time into irredentist ones, and vice versa, as conditions on the ground make one or the other more or less attractive. If secession involves subtracting from one state, while irredentism involves adding to another, after the subtraction is achieved, then the former would seem to be

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necessary for the latter, and should treated accordingly. Moreover, if Javakheti or Kvemo-Kartli are deemed irredentist, rather than secessionist, then South Ossetia and, to a lesser extent, Abkhazia should be seen in the same light. South Ossetia has almost since the very beginning sought unification with North Ossetia, a republic in the Russian federation, and is therefore probably the clearest case of an irredentist agenda, though it is not entirely obvious that North Ossetia is equally enthusiastic about the merger, and it is not to be taken for granted that regional elites in South Ossetia look forward to becoming provincial mayors in the enlarged republic. In any case, with a population of no more than 70,000, and no economic means of survival outside smuggling, it is hard to see how South Ossetia could become a meaningfully independent state.

The situation in Abkhazia is somewhat more complex in this regard, but is nonetheless typical of small secessionist groups that rely significantly on external actors to advance their agendas and escalate their claims. Reliant upon external support, ethnic group aims can become easily subjugated to the external actor’s agenda. For example, most Abkhaz want independence from Georgia, not integration into Russia. But what the Abkhaz get will depend largely on what Russia gives. It seems to have received a lot when Russia recognized it in the summer of 2008, but appearances can be deceiving; some clues, as I have suggested, can be uncovered in Russia’s half-hearted effort to obtain wider recognition for the two statelets. Russian interests are served quite well by the lack of recognition that

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Abkhazia and South Ossetia have received around the world, for it means that both new states will remain fully subordinate. Nothing has changed on the ground for the Abkhaz or the Ossets, only now the door is wide open for a more substantial Russian military presence along the Black Sea and deep within Georgia, strategic positions that could present serious problems for NATO if and when it comes to include Ukraine and Georgia. Having vetoed the renewal of the OSCE monitoring mission in December 2008, which forced the Mission in Georgia to close shop and sent international monitors on their way, Russia has a free hand in the region, something it has not had since at least 1991. Needless to say, the Kremlin’s hardliners are happy. Pro forma recognition also served to end to irredentist clamor in North Ossetia, just as Indian intervention did in the case of Bengali irredenta. The point is simply that, in the Caucasus as elsewhere, secessions and irredenta are disparate but profoundly interdependent phenomena.

\footnote{For more on the connection, see Horowitz, \textit{op. cit.}, 1991, pp. 9–22.}
6.3 Evaluating the Empirical Record

6.3.1 Javakheti: The Ticking Bomb

Javakheti is a remote region, bordering on Armenia and Turkey, comprised almost entirely of ethnic Armenians who were settled there from eastern Anatolia between 1828 and 1830 after the Russian Empire, under General (Count) Paskevich, annexed it from the Ottoman Empire. After war with the Ottoman and the Persians, the Armenians in these territories, who supported Russia in the conflict, were deemed traitors by Turkey. At the mercy of the Russian tsar, Count Melikov, an ethnic Armenian, pleaded for and received assistance. Russia, true to its style of assistance, used the opportunity to move these Armenians into Javahketi and thus to weaken the ‘rebellious Georgians’ who were less than tickled with Russian rule. The Armenian settlements created Russian footholds throughout the southern Caucasus, into Karabakh, Nakhichevan, and elsewhere, that for the most part still exist today.


54 Paper Accuses Armenian Nationalists Of Stirring Up Ethnic Trouble In Georgia,’ 7 Dyhe’has, Tbilisi, in Georgian 2 Jul 99; BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union - Political, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, July 15, 1999, Thursday. According to Soviet data from the beginning of the war, the ethnic balance of power between Armenians and Azerbaijanis was approximately 75–25 in favor of ethnic Armenians, a distribution of ethnic groups that is consistent with the theoretical expectations about the dangers associated with ethnic heterogeneity. Like the aftermath of the war in Abkhazia, the losers of the war, the Georgians in Abkhazia and the Azeris in Nagorno-Karabakh, underwent a mass exodus, significantly shifting the demographic situation on the ground, see: Natsionalnyi Sostav Naseleiniya SSSR, po dannym Vsesoyuznyi Perepisi Naseleiniya 1989, Moskva: Finansy i Statistika; cited in Human Rights Watch, ‘Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh,’ December 1994, p. xiii; Similarly, in Chechnya, Russians comprised approximately 25% (30% according to Elizabeth Fromgen, cited below) of the populations at the end of the Soviet era, and that number has decreased dramatically in large measure as a result of the wars. The other secessionist Russian republic, Tatarstan, was similarly divided between
Perceptive Georgian scholars become visibly uncomfortable when confronted with the question of secessionist conflict in Javakheti. Candid observers confess that it is the most worrying secessionist problem Georgia currently faces. According to an archival document, quoting an anonymous source in the Georgian government, the ‘real danger of demands for autonomy in South Ossetia is that similar claims would also be made by the significant Armenian and Azeri minorities.’ 55

All indicators of conflict propensity suggest that Javakheti possesses a high likelihood of conflict, just as precarious as the situations in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, making the absence of conflict there still more puzzling. 56 According to Tom Trier, Director of the European Centre for Minority Issues in Tbilisi, and long time Georgia observer, Javakheti is ‘the next hot spot in Georgia.’ 57 A number of Georgian sources, for instance the paper Dilis Gazeti, report that separatist sentiment in the region continues to pose a serious threat to Georgia’s territorial integrity. 58 This is


57 Interview, Tbilisi, July 2008.

58 ‘Ethnic Armenians In Southern Georgia Demand Autonomy,’ Kavkasia-Press news agency,
exacerbated by Tbilisi’s apparent indifference to the region’s despair.\footnote{Dilis Gazeti, Tbilis, 27 April, 2002. The presence of Russian troops is also an aggravating factor.}

The problem of Javakheti is not new. It can be traced to the wake of World War I, when both Armenia and Georgia sought to establish independent states without first sorting out their borders. Historical maps only made matters worse, since Georgia could claim much of Armenia (and Azerbaijan), and Armenia could claim much of current Georgia, including the capital city. The newly formed states turned to force to resolve the issue, resulting in an armed interstate conflict in December 1918. Before the issue was resolved, however, both sides fell victim to the Bolsheviks, their short lived republics losing independence for the next seventy years.\footnote{For more detail on these years, see, e.g., Firuz Kazmzadeh, \textit{The Struggle for Transcaucasia, 1917-1921}, Oxford: Georgia Ronald, 1951.}

When the Soviet Union collapsed, the issue resurfaced, but Armenia’s preoccupation with the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, and its geographic, historic and cultural isolation from Tbilisi, meant that the issue remained peripheral in Georgian politics. In practice, Javakheti became a ‘country within a country,’ one where visitors from Tbilisi were greeted by locals as if they were foreigners: ‘Oh, you are from Georgia,’ one Armenian Georgian pronounced, ‘welcome to Javakheti.’\footnote{Interview, OSCE Office of the High Commissioner on National Minorities, July 2008. Although Armenians reside elsewhere in Georgia, including a large proportion in Abkhazia, they numerically dominate Javakheti and its capital Akhalkalaki.} An ethnographic team, lead by Lia Melikishvili, reported a similar experience during ethnographic field research in Javakheti. She describes her chance encounter with

a good looking young Armenian woman in the *Georgian* village of Zhdanovo who insisted on inviting the team to visit her home and then explained why:\(^{62}\)

‘I was born in Georgia, in Batumi, and grew up there. Then I married in Armenia. When I saw you, I immediately placed you as Georgians and my heart gave a leap. I felt I really must invite you to my home’ - when asked in which district of *Armenia* she was married, she replied - ‘Here, in Zhdanovakan [in Georgia]’

The village was *de jure* in Georgia, but *de facto* in Armenia. The conflation of the latter with the former was apparently widespread among practically all residents, most of whom regarded their residence in Armenia as a fact that went without saying. Maps in circulation in the region also include Javakheti, as well as much of current Georgia, as Armenian territory. Javakheti’s main city, Akhalkalaki, is elevated on a mountain top at 5000 feet, surrounded by desiccated volcanoes, and the Georgian currency, the Lari, is hardly used. Instead, the Russian ruble is the currency of choice and Armenian Drams are widely accepted.\(^{63}\) According to Zurab Zhvania, Chairman of the Georgian Parliament, [the problem is] ‘the region’s link with the center’.\(^{64}\)


\(^{63}\) Azeri daily says Georgia helpless in the face of Armenian separatism,’ *Qazet*, Baku, in Azeri, 8 Feb. 2002 pp. 1, 5; supplied by the BBC Worldwide Monitoring.

\(^{64}\) Parliament speaker satisfied with visit to southern Georgia,’ *Prime-News news agency*, Tbilisi, in Russian, 10:09 GMT 15 Sept. 1997.
This state of affairs is captured aptly in the title of an article from the early 1990s, ‘South of country virtually cut off from outside world,’ which reports on some of the region’s grievances against the central government, including that the region, sometimes dubbed Georgia’s Siberia, has not received a single tonne of solid fuel in over a year, gas supplies have been cut and many roads are permanently blocked with snow.\textsuperscript{65} In fact, the road from Akhalkalaki to Yerevan is considerably more traveled and well maintained than the roundabout leading to Tbilisi, a road in such disrepair that only 4 x 4 vehicles can travel it, and then only part of the year.\textsuperscript{66}

The economy too is more closely tied to Armenia than it is to the rest of Georgia. Most students pursue university education in Yerevan, and not in Tbilisi. Georgian language media has not reached the region since the end of the Soviet Union; only Armenian TV programs beamed from Yerevan are received; even telephone calls from Javakheti are routed through Yerevan.\textsuperscript{67}

Grievances, therefore, run as high here as they do in the other ethno-regions—Kvemo-Kartli, Abkhazia and South Ossetia—but these grievances have been insufficient on their own to generate a violent recursive secessionist movement. Moreover, the isolation from the rest of the country that Javakheti seems to embody is, to a lesser or greater degree, characteristic of the country as a whole, and testifies to the role of state weakness in secessionist conflicts. Although state weakness contributes to any serious explanation for why Georgia experienced two secessionist


\textsuperscript{66}Cornell, \textit{op. cit.}, 2001, p. 199.

\textsuperscript{67}Interviews; Lia Melikishvili, \textit{Latent Conflict in Polyethnic Society}, Tbilisi: CIPDD, 1999, Available at: \url{http://sric.iatp.ge/lavrenti/meliqishvili/latent_1.htm}
conflicts within its borders, while other secessionist states from the former Soviet Union experienced none, all the Georgian ethno-regions under consideration here exist in the context of a weak Georgian state. As a constant across regions, it is not a factor likely to be of much help in accounting for sub-national variation, even as it significantly contributes to explaining why Georgia as a whole has experienced a comparatively high level of ethnic conflict.

What makes Javakheti especially dangerous, however, and very much a potential site of violence, is the high level of ‘weaponization’ and the strong links between fighting units in Javakheti and those in Karabakh, two enclaves that share a number of ethnic and geographic similarities. According to one article, every household in Javakheti possesses firearms.\(^68\) Local militias have resisted Tbilisi’s efforts to rein in the region closer to its orbit, to introduce Georgian language in its schools and Georgian currency in its markets. This desperate situation has prompted some scholars to note that the region is more a part of Armenia than Georgia, and has incited some local leaders, especially those associated with the movement United Javakh, to push for such a border readjustment.\(^69\)

United Javakh established itself in the wake of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, a conflict that increased nationalist sentiment among Armenians everywhere.\(^70\) In Georgia, the movement claimed to exist

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for the purpose of protecting Armenian culture, but most saw the movement for what it was, a thinly veiled ultranationalist circle with close ties to Armenian Dashnaks, a group with a clear irredentist agenda.\footnote{Dashnaks (Dashnaktsutyun), the largest group in the Armenians diaspora, allegedly seek to restore the Armenia under Tigran II, King of Armenia in the first century, BC. Voitsekh Guretski, ‘The Question of Javakheti,’ \textit{Caucasian Regional Studies}, 3, 1, 1998. The party was banned in Armenia under Ter-Petrosyan, but Robert Kocharyan legalized the party after he was elected prime minister in exchange for their electoral support. See: ‘Paper Accuses Armenian Nationalists Of Stirring Up Ethnic Trouble In Georgia,’ \textit{7 Dghe'has}, Tbilisi, in Georgian 2 Jul 99; BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union - Political, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, July 15, 1999, Thursday.}
The organization’s goal was more than cultural preservation, though possibly less than secession. Javakh representative Yervan Sherinian defined the organization as having the goal of ‘compelling the Georgian authorities to create an Armenian autonomous region within Georgia....[otherwise there may be] a divorce [with] their Georgian brothers...’\footnote{‘Ethnic Armenians In Southern Georgia Demand Autonomy,’ \textit{Kavkasia-Press news agency}, Tbilisi, in Georgian 1440 GMT 22 Aug 98; BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union - Political, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring August 22, 1998, Saturday.} Ervan Sherinyan, a leader of Javakh, told the Georgian news agency, Kavkasia Press that ‘our primary aim is to demand from the Georgian authorities autonomy for Akhalkalaki District’...adding ‘the last thing we mean by this is joining the Republic of Armenia’\footnote{‘Ethnic Armenians In Southern Georgia Demand Autonomy,’ op. cit., Tbilisi, 22 Aug 98.}

The paramilitary branch, Vikh, has been even more vocal and aggressive in its demands.\footnote{RFE/RL Newsline, 24 August 1998, quoting \textit{Caucasus Press}, 22 August 1998; \textit{Resonansi}, 24 August 1998; cited in Cornell, \textit{op. cit.}, 2001, p. 202.} The Armenian Vikh and Javakh movements are armed not only with weapons, but also with demographic numbers. According to one report, only 3.2% of the region is ethnically Georgian, while the remainder is Armenian.\footnote{This balance changed with the inclusion of the Samtskhe region, which was approximately 62 % Georgian in 1996. ‘GEORGIA: Official warns of grave demographic situation,’ \textit{Iprinda news}}
complete homogeneity and isolation has meant that Armenians do not feel competition from ethnic Georgians for positions of power and are quite comfortably in control of local affairs, reducing the urgency of separatism that the more heterogeneous regions, such as South Ossetia and Abkhazia, have felt in their relations with the central government in Tbilisi.  

Despite the threatening nature of the region and the wishes of some portion of its inhabitants, Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan said that ethnic Armenians residing in Georgia who attempt to encroach upon Georgia’s territorial integrity were ‘the enemies of the Armenian people.’ Any Armenian who is against Georgia is, in the first place, an enemy of Armenians at large and, similarly, every Georgian who is against Armenia is an enemy of Georgia. This Armenian stance of support for Georgia, of course, is reciprocated by Georgia, as evidenced, for example, by opening Georgian roads to Armenia when it was completely blockaded. 

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76 That sense of stability, however, could change rapidly if, for instance, the Meskhetian Turks, who were deported from the region to Central Asia in 1944, return en masse, a repatriation policy that has been in the making for several years and which is vigorously opposed for obvious reasons by the local Armenians. ‘Meskhetian Turks demand access to areas from which they were deported,’ Iprinda news agency, Tbilisi, in Russian 1000 GMT 15 Nov 94; Interfax news agency, Moscow, in English 1657 gmt 17 Nov 94; BBC Summary of World Broadcasts.

77 Armenian president deplores separatist trends among Georgia’s ethnic Armenians,’ Sakinform news agency, Tbilisi, in Georgian 1042 GMT 5 April 1997.

78 G. Matsaberidze, V. Meskhia. ‘Djavakheti in between real and imaginary problems,’ Sakartvelos Respublika, 13, Jan. 18, 1997; cited in Lia Melikishvili, Latent Conflict in Polyethnic Society, Tbilisi: CIPDD, 1999; Available at: [http://sric.iatp.ge/lavrenti/meliqishvili/latent_2.htm](http://sric.iatp.ge/lavrenti/meliqishvili/latent_2.htm)

79 According to Shevardnadze, Azerbaijan ‘treated with understanding the fact that Georgia was meeting its neighborly commitments to Armenia....[I] do not understand why Georgia’s cooperation with Azerbaijan had to affect Armenian-Georgian relations adversely....The time will come when the three republics will build an ideal Caucasus here and will establish an ideal peace.’ ‘Shevardnadze sees no threat to relations with Armenia,’ BGI news agency, Tbilisi, in Russian 1738 GMT 3 May 1997.
President Robert Kocharyan also issued statements testifying to Armenia’s interest in ‘a stable and developed Georgia.’ That there were forces interested in seeing a deterioration in Armenian-Georgian relations, but that authorities in these republics would not allow it, testifies to the importance of their actions. As evidence of such good will, Armenia itself detained a Javakhk leader on its territory and turned him over to the Georgian national security units. President Lev Ter-Petrosyan actually shut down the operation of an Armenian newspaper that published pieces promoting separatism in Javakheti. The primary pacifying factor in the region has actually been external to it: the absence of external support for the separatist movement, United Javakh, particularly from Armenia but also from Russia.

Even though Armenia has exerted a moderating influence on Javakheti Armenians, this may be due less to respect for Georgia’s territorial integrity than strategic necessity. According to some observers, Armenian nationalists initially discussed and weighed the prospect of ‘redeeming’ Karabakh versus Javakheti. They determined that the former trumped the latter, because it was strategically more straightforward, even though the latter was contiguous while the former was not. In any case, they agreed in a consensus on avoiding a simultaneous war on two fronts, and that Javakheti should be next. Another reason was that Armenia

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83. Cornell, op. cit., p. 204.
was cut off from the rest of the Soviet Union, later Russia, due to its relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey, leaving only Georgia and Iran as options for exports. This created a situation of mutual dependence: Armenia relying on Georgia for trade routes, and Georgia relying on Armenia for its territorial integrity. Moreover, Armenia would not be able to remain indifferent for long to a conflict involving their ethnic kin across the border, thus further isolating Armenia from the Black Sea port of Batumi and making it wholly dependent upon Iran.

Russia’s Foreign Ministry denies lending support to the region’s separatists officially, as it has done in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, although Russian officials have been known to mention Javakheti in private discussions with Georgian officials. Russia maintained a large military base in the region (N. 62) for nearly 200 years. Until its recent closure, the base employed many locals and provided health care too. Russians stress the ‘stabilizing role’ that the base has in the region in a veiled reference to what might occur should the base be forced to close, as Georgians have repeatedly requested.

Needless to say, Georgians are less certain of Russia’s interest in the region’s stability, however. The former chairman of the Parliamentary Defense and Security Committee, Gia Baramidze, has argued that the opportunity for Russia to leverage Armenian separatism is too good to simply forego and remains a permanent source of concern. Mamuka Areshidze, an independent expert on the region, concurs and

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84 Various interviews in Ministries of Conflict Resolution, Reintegration, Foreign Affairs, and Defense, June 2008; Interviews in the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies.
points to the stockpiles of weapons readily available in Russia’s N. 62 military base, including dozens of tank, armored vehicles and artillery equipment. Periodic reports surface that testify to these concerns. For example, in 1998, the Georgian State Security Ministry conducted an investigation into allegations that certain employees of its regional branch in Southern Georgia ‘are acting for Russian special services, carrying out their direct orders, and are involved in subversive activities against the Georgian state.

Some reports are significantly worse. According to one expert on the region, a large portion of the officers serving at the base and most of the soldiers are actually local Armenians, meaning that Georgian citizens are enrolled in the armed forces of a foreign (and not particularly friendly) country on Georgian territory. Beyond the legality of this arrangement, the political and military implications are distressing, providing a relatively well-trained fighting force in Georgia that is not at all integrated into the Georgian armed forces. Nevertheless, Russia has played its Javakheti card quietly, exhibiting surprising restraint in public. In private, of course, Russian officials remind their Georgian counterparts that their involvement could be significantly more proactive, and without much effort or forewarning.

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87 ‘Separatist movement in south a threat,’ *Dilis Gazeti*, 27 April 2002.
89 Cornell, *op. cit.*, 2001, p. 204.
90 Various interviews in Ministries of Conflict Resolution, Reintegration, Foreign Affairs, and Defense, June 2008; Interviews in the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies,
to some experts on the region, Russia’s restraint is also in its own interest, at least for the moment, since it seeks to weaken Georgia and to push its foreign policy in a more friendly direction, to foster ‘a manageable level of instability’, but not to create a Somaliaesque situation in the souther Caucasus.\footnote{Cornell, \textit{op. cit.}, 2001, p. 206.}

External actors in this latent conflict have exhibited a distinctly moderating influence, proving absolutely central in circumventing overt conflict and organized violence in a region that is otherwise ripe for recursive secession. What the region lacked was not so much the resolve to separate, then, as the capability to do so. That capacity could have stemmed from institutions of autonomy that other regions had, and those certainly would have helped, but ultimately the capacity to secede would have had to come from either Armenia or Russia. Both actors have determined, at least for the moment, that their geopolitical interests are better served by maintaining a tense but still controllable situation in the south of Georgia. Whether the same geopolitical interests that have dictated the pacifying policies of Moscow and Yerevan to date will remain in the future is an open question and will depend not only on Georgia’s policies but also on Russia’s internal politics, the resolution of Armenia’s war with Azerbaijan and Yerevan’s rapprochement with Istanbul.

\section*{6.3.2 Kvemo Kartli: The Sleeping Giant}

The second near-miss secessionist conflict lies in the Azeri dominated breadbasket region of Georgia, Kvemo Kartli, which is located in the southeast on the \textit{border with Azerbaijan}. The Azeris are the single largest minority group in Georgia, yet they

\footnote{July 2008.}
are the least politically active among those discussed. Much like the Armenians in Javakheti, there is a serious disconnect between the center and the region, despite its geographic proximity (25 km or 15 miles). According to National Movement member Zurab Melikishvili, current governor of the region, ‘many local people don’t even realize which state they live in.... As the local officials say, at the last Georgian presidential elections, many Azerbaijanis looked for the name of Heydar Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan, in the ballot papers....the ballot papers were printed in Georgian, and most of the local population doesn’t speak the state language. When it comes to voting the people here are prompted by what the head of their village or hamlet tells them. They are simply told which number on the list they should put a ring round.

Marneuli, a core district in Kvemo Kartli, is less than half an hour from Tbilisi, yet in a less literal sense, it is a distant land where even policemen and civil servants often do not speak Georgian. Like the Armenians in Javakheti, the Azeris in Kvemo Kartli are better connected to their ethnic kin across the border than to Tbilisi.

Despite the absence of overt organized violence, ethnic tensions between the region and the center are real, and have threatened to escalate on several occasions.

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92 There is some dispute over whether Azeris or Armenians are the largest minority in Georgia. It is clear that they are significantly larger than any of the other minorities and therefore constitute the top two.

93 Paper warns against use of Georgia’s Azeri for ‘inter-political feuding’, Zerkalo, Baku, in Russian 23 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring Trans Caucasus Unit, supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, December 30, 2003, Tuesday.

94 Interviews in Kvemo Kartli. Cf. Ibid.

In the mid 1990s, there were reports of armed border disputes based on what was described at the time as ‘a territorial claim by certain forces in Azerbaijan to the [Georgian] Kvemo Kartli region’. In 1998, over 1500 ethnic Azeris living in Kvemo Kartli gathered in the regional center, Rustavi, calling for the resignation of the governor, Levan Mamaladze, who was accused of neo-bolshevism, selling forged property certificates and arbitrary governance, in short, mismanagement. ‘The longer Levan Mamaladze is governor here,’ said one Azeri, ‘the more serious the ethnic conflict becomes. Events in Abkhazia and South Ossetia may also repeated in Marneuli...[an Azeri base in Kvemo Kartli].’ In 2004, there were violent clashes in the village of Vakhtangisi, Gadabani District, between interior troops and a special unit of the financial police after the latter seized 3 million lari (or 1.8 million USD) worth of hidden goods from six Azeri houses suspected of smuggling. Azeris attributed ethnic motives to the military-style operation and responded with force, attacking Georgian cars.


97Azeris Of Georgia Protest Against ‘Lawlessness and Neo-Bolshevism’,’ Azadlyg’, Baku, in Azeri 14 Jan 1998, BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union - Political Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, January 30, 1998, Friday. However, other prominent Azeris, such as Suleyman Suleymanov of Birlik Unity, said that the events in Ossetia and Abkhazia would never be repeated in Marneuli.

A rumor that the Azeris were seeking secession produced a reaction similar to that in South Ossetia, but the rumor was quickly dispelled thanks to efforts by the respective governments in Baku and Tbilisi to reassure one another. Like Javakheti, the pacifying role played by the obvious source of potential external support—in this case Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan—has meant that no security dilemma developed between Kvemo Kartli and Tbilisi. Indeed, various governments in Baku have made a keen effort to ensure that Tbilisi has no reason to fear a secessionist or irredentist movement in Kvemo Kartli. An Azeri newspaper writes: ‘the region will never present any kind of danger…it is peaceful here…[we support] the authorities in Georgia no matter who is in control.’

According to Alibala Akaserov, the head of the NGO Heyrat, ‘the Azerbaijanis have never had and will not have any separatist views’. Suleyman Suleymanov, editor-in-chief of the ‘Gyurdzhustan’ newspaper and president of the Union of Azerbaijanis of Georgia echoes this sentiment:

‘I do not believe that there will be any riots or disorders in the Kvemo Kartli region. The Azerbaijanis have always been loyal to any authority....I would like to emphasize that the Azerbaijanis have never been separatists. This is simply not in the nature of the Azerbaijanis who live in Georgia. There are three basic qualities which make up our char-

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100 ‘Paper warns against use of Georgia’s Azeri for ‘inter-political feuding’,’ Zerkalo, Baku, in Russian 23 Dec 03; BBC Monitoring Trans Caucasus Unit, Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring, December 30, 2003, Tuesday.

101 Ibid.
acter - sincerity, industry and obedience to the law.\textsuperscript{102}

The Azeri strategy has been to emphasize their loyalty over their voice or the exit options as the most effective means to keep Tbilisi off its back.\textsuperscript{103}

Those who see the source of conflict in relative economic inequality might expect conflict with the agrarian, poor and uneducated Azeris. Yet a quantitative study conducted in 2003 indicates that Azeris are actually better off economically than are the local Georgians.\textsuperscript{104} Whereas 42\% of Azeri villagers possessed a car, for example, only 26\% of Georgian had a car, and almost 8 times more Azeris had a satellite antenna than did their Georgian counterparts. Noteworthy is that these satellites are tuned to broadcasts from Baku and Istanbul from where households gather information about events in Tbilisi, which is less than 30 minutes away by car.

Those who see the source of conflict in religion and culture might expect a high level of conflict between Christian Georgians and Muslim Azeris, but religion has not by any account played a significant role in inter-ethnic relations. By contrast, language has played an increasing role in escalating inter-ethnic tensions. For the most past, ‘Azeris do not speak Georgian,’ confesses Alibala Askerov, head of the NGO ‘Heyrat.’ This was not much of an issue during Soviet times when Russian was the lingua franca but has become an increasing source of estrangement and conflict. Georgians have been less than understanding of Azeris who remain ignorant of their language, but only recently has the state made any effort to rectify the

\textsuperscript{102}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{104}CIPDD, Analysis of conflict factors in the region of Marneuli Gardabani (Georgia), Results of sociological research, Tbilisi Marneuli Gardabani, 2003.
problem. Even though the state has recently sought to redress the issue, it is not clear that the method of instruction is the most effective. According to a focus group in Gardabani, ‘Children often hate the lessons of Georgian because they are forced to learn by heart huge texts the contents of which they don’t understand.’

Georgians remain generally unsympathetic. As one respondent put it, ‘[Georgians] usually consider the lack of progress in learning Georgian by minorities as disrespect towards the state...and lack of good will.’

Beyond inter-ethnic ill-will, there are career consequences: employment and university entrance exams are held only in Georgian, thus disqualifying a good portion of otherwise qualified people. Currently, this linguistic problem has not resulted in an ethno-political conflict between the groups, but it has certainly not produced any rapprochement either, and has almost entirely excluded Azeris from the political process.

Given all these grievances and ethnic tensions, the role of moderate external actors in this region cannot be overstated. Both Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli are regions that depend deeply upon their connections to their respective kin states. As a result, political voices from the capitals of those states, Baku and Yerevan, carry a lot of local weight. In both cases, Baku and Yerevan, though at war with one another, see it as essential to maintain good relations with Georgia. In practice, this has produced restraint from stirring up secessionist sentiments where their ethnic kin live in Georgia. Azerbaijan and Georgia share additional interests; not least of which is energy from the Caspian. Azerbaijan needs Georgia to transport energy

\[105\] CIPDD, *Analysis of conflict factors in the region of Marneuli Gardabani (Georgia), Results of sociological research*, Tbilisi Marneuli Gardabani, 2003, p. 25.

\[106\] Ibid.

to the west as the obvious alternative route to going through Russia. Georgia, in turn, requires energy from Azerbaijan, and depends upon transit fees as a key source of income. Both states need to fulfill their obligations in this arrangement if they are to prevent the Russian monopoly on energy, a resource that Russia has repeatedly used as an instrument of its foreign policy.

Azerbaijani politicians have therefore exerted a moderating, if not necessarily democratic, influence on ethnic Azeris in Kvemo Kartli. President Heydar Aliyev himself visited the region to persuade the local population to vote for Eduard Shevardnadze and the Union of Citizens of Georgia party, an act so egregious that it elicited loud protest from the opposition Labor party leader Shalva Natelashvili. Mikheil Saakashvili also came to office in Georgia with overwhelming support in Kvemo Kartli, having campaigned to improve living conditions. Instead, resentment in the region has only increased, so it is understandable that Saakashvili has been portrayed in the Baku media as less sympathetic to Azeri Georgians than his predecessor, Eduard Shevardnadze. Rather than fanning these flames to bolster his nationalist credentials at home, however, Azeri President Aliyev personally went to Kvemo Kartli to meet with representatives of Georgia’s Azeri population, and stated: ‘The warm brotherly relationship established between us [Presidents Ilham Aliyev and Mikhail Saakashvili] is a graphic evidence of [the] inviolability of

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the Azerbaijani-Georgia relation. Aliyev has good economic motives for dampening the discontent, since bilateral trade between Georgia and Azerbaijan has tripled since Saakashvili took office and joint energy projects, including a natural gas pipeline, promise to boost bilateral trade considerably higher. There are geopolitical motives as well, for Aliyev desperately needs allies in the region, given the war with Armenia and Russia’s generally pro-Armenian policies in the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

Both of these cases—Azeris in Kvemo-Kartli and Armenians in Javakheti—have so far avoided the escalation of latent ethnic tensions into violent secessionist conflicts. The reason has to do, in the first instance, with ethno-territorial homogeneity at the local level, which actually makes secession somewhat unnecessary and indeed, from the perspectives of provincial elites, even undesirable. That is the demand size. Beyond this is the supply side, the role of moderate external actors that have exhibited a calming influence on their ethnic kin across the border. This has been indispensable in preventing escalation and in preserving peace. Armenia and Azerbaijan have not acted out of any natural distaste for separatism—in fact, Armenia is encouraging it among its ethnic kin in Nagorno-Karabakh, and Azerbaijan has been accused of doing the same in the Azeri region of Iran and Dagestan. The behavior of both states towards their ethnic kin in Georgia is dictated by their strategic interest in maintaining good relations with Georgia, an essential partner in the region for both Armenia and Azerbaijan. This interest trumps the ethnic affinity that some scholars have highlighted as key in understanding irredentist conflict. Examining these near-miss cases has served to highlight quite visibly the empirical conditions.

that prevented tension from escalating into ethnic conflict; this will prove useful in understanding the two conflict cases—Abkhazia and South Ossetia—to which I now turn my attention.

6.3.3 Abkhazia: Between Abandonment and Entrapment

Just as Chechnya conjures up images of insurgency, so Abkhazia is associated, indeed almost synonymous, with ethnic conflict. The reason, as I explain, has to do primarily with ethno-territorial heterogeneity and the involvement of third party actors in the conflict, primarily Russia but also the so-called ‘Confederates of the Caucasus’. I deal with these factors in that order, beginning with ethnicity.

The Abkhaz are native of the territory they currently inhabit, distinct from their Georgian neighbors linguistically, but united with them culturally and politically from the 11th to the 16th century, and again after 1917. Under Lenin, Abkhazia entered into a unique ‘treaty relationship’ with Georgia. According to Abkhaz, the treaty was signed under duress from Stalin and Orzhonikidze, two Georgians. Abkhaz historians generally interpret this episode in their history as a story of Stalinist victimization, since Stalin reduced Abkhazia’s status from a union republic (SSR) to autonomous republic (ASSR) within the Georgian SSR.

The Abkhaz have the facts right, but the context is contorted, and speaks to the role of ethnicity as well as the demographic balance of power in this conflict. Stalin did not specifically target the Abkhaz because he was Georgian, as many Abkhaz

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claim. He discriminated against numerous ethnic groups, deporting some so far away (to Siberia and Central Asia) that they never returned, such as Meskhetian Turks to the Fergana Valley in Central Asia, particularly Kazakhstan, as well as Volga Germans, Kalmyks, Greeks, Turks and Crimean Tatars, and simply executing others, especially so-called ‘national contingents’ such as Poles and Koreans.\footnote{112} By this admittedly brutal metric of deportation and execution, the Abkhaz were treated gently.

In support of the Abkhaz position, the Soviets encouraged the migration of tens of thousands of Georgians into Abkhazia, closed language schools and enforced the Georgian alphabet. On the other hand, however, the Abkhaz were in fact heavily over-represented throughout the Soviet period: more than half of all first raikom secretaries in the Abkhaz ASSR were Abkhaz, even though the Abkhaz comprised no more than 20% of Abkhazia by the end of the Soviet era.\footnote{113} In 1990, about 65% of the ministers in the Abkhaz government were ethnic Abkhaz.\footnote{114} Related to representation in government, the polarized ethnic balance of power—\footnote{112}The Georgian Ministry of the Interior has a vast collection of documents from the Georgian KGB and Central Committee archives on exiles. See Davit Alaverdashvili, ‘The Exile of Greeks, Turkmen, Iranians and Other Nationalities in 1949-1950,’ Archival Bulletin No. 4, MoIA.; Greeks were exiled according to Resolution No. 2214-856; Greeks, Persians and Turks according to Resolution No. 00183.; On executions, see see Stephen Rosefielde, ‘Stalinism in Post-Communist Perspective: New Evidence on Killings, Forced Labour and Economic Growth in the 1930s,’ Europe-Asia Studies, 48, 6, 1996; Simon Sebag-Montefiore. Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar, Knopf, 2004; Hiroaki Kuromiya, The Voices of the Dead: Stalin’s Great Terror in the 1930s. Yale University Press, 2007; Phillip Boobbyer, The Stalin Era, Routledge, 2000; Terry Martin, ‘The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing,’ The Journal of Modern History, 70 (December 1998): 813–861.\footnote{113}Cornell, op. cit., p. 147, argues that this elite infrastructure facilitated secession after 1989. I do not disagree with the core of the argument, but dispute its explanatory power.\footnote{114}Zuercher, op. cit., 2007, p. 120; Terry Martin, The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, Cornell University Press, 2001.}
with Georgians and Abkhaz as the two largest groups—shifted first in favor of the Georgians during Soviet times, and then in favor of the Abkhaz afterwards. After ethnically cleansing roughly 200,000 Georgians, the Abkhaz finally became a plurality in their own land, their small numbers having been a perpetual source of insecurity.

Even today, after some 200,000 or more Georgians were displaced from Abkhazia, their return remains one of the central issues upon which both sides stumble at the negotiating table. Any referendum on Abkhazia’s legal status, the Georgians argue, should occur only after the return of the Georgians who were displaced by the war. The Abkhaz initially rejected the idea altogether, but then agreed to the return of some Georgians, but only those who were not on their black list for their role in the war, creating an automatic veto that would have to be addressed on a case by case basis, and would therefore not permit the immediate return of most ethnic Georgians, at least in time for the referendum. If the Akhaz numerically dominated their region, this issue might be moot, as it was in Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli. Being a large ethnic group in the region, but having to compete with a large Georgian group, has meant that the Abkhaz, who are admittedly the titular nationality of their region, and have a special status in the mind of most Georgians, nevertheless exist in perpetual fear of being swamped demographically. Truth be told, the fear is probably justified, for their absolute numbers mean that larger nations, such as Georgians, or Russians, would easily marginalize them were it not for the positive discrimination that they receive in positions of power.

This explains why the Abkhaz feel their demotion in administrative status in the early 1920s more acutely than other regions which shared the same fate, including
Stavropol, Terek, Odessa, Khorezm and Bukhara. This episode in their history is perceived as another slight by the Georgians, even though reducing Abkhazia’s status was not uniquely Soviet or Stalinist. It was Tsarist Russia that deported all Muslim Abkhaz in 1864 to Turkey and the greater Middle East.

The constitutional reform in 1978, which transpired under Brezhnev’s watch, presented the Abkhaz with an opportunity to regain the status that they lost in 1931. More than 100 Abkhaz intellectuals seized the opportunity and submitted a letter to the Supreme Soviet in which they protested, inter alia, the ‘Georgianization’ of schools and the mass in-migration of Georgians. Moscow responded by sending Ivan Kapitonov, Secretary of the Party Central Committee, to evaluate the situation on the ground, and subsequently establishing a University in Sukhumi in 1979. Some Abkhaz also expressed themselves more forcefully in a public demonstration during October 1978 that required troops and martial law to quell. Violence returned after about 60 Abkhaz intellectuals sent another letter to Moscow, detailing their grievances, resulting in ethnic riots in Sukhumi that produced more than a

116 As a result, the Abkhaz in Abkhazia today are mostly Orthodox Christian, while those in exile are mainly Muslim. But that religious discrimination cannot be attributed to Stalin, the Soviet Union or Georgia, since it transpired under the Tsar’s watch, and religion has not since played any role in the conflict in Abkhazia.
117 Already in 1957, several Abkhaz requested to be transferred to the RSFSR control, but Moscow refused.

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dozen dead and a hundred wounded.\textsuperscript{122}

Georgia reacted by sending military forces into Abkhazia in August 1992 and occupying the capital, Sukhumi.\textsuperscript{123} The Abkhaz forces were forced to retreat until October when they launched a massive counter-attack, seizing the capital, nearly assassinating the Georgian President, ethnically cleansing almost all Georgians from Abkhazia, especially the Gali region, which one UN observer dubbed ‘an empty desert’, and creating more than 200,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).\textsuperscript{124} This episode revealed an interesting interaction between the ethnic balance of power and the involvement of external actors, the latter serving as a means to reorder the former.

How the Abkhaz achieved this military feat merits explanation, since the Abkhaz were few in numbers and even fewer in arms. The answer lies in external support from two groups: Russia, which supplied air support and heavy armaments, including T-72 and T-80 tanks along with Grad rocket launchers that ‘appeared seemingly from nowhere’; and volunteers and mercenaries, largely Chechens and Circassians, from the Confederation of Mountain Peoples of the Caucasus, a loose alliance of which the Abkhaz are members.\textsuperscript{125} The ‘Abkhaz’ bombed Georgian positions inside


\textsuperscript{125}Archives of the CSCE, Georgia Files, No. 41, Prague, 2 February 1993; Dodge Billingley,
Georgia with unmarked Sukhoi fighter planes, even though the Abkhaz possessed no air force whatsoever. More than 100,000 land mines were laid in the area before the war, another fact strongly suggesting Russian involvement. In addition to offensive support, Shevardnadze also blamed ‘Russian forces of supporting the Abkhaz by preventing Georgia from using the air force, helicopters and navy and carrying out air strikes on military and civilian targets.

The conflict resulted in a stunning defeat for the Georgians, reversing the ethnic balance within Abkhazia and crippling the nascent Georgian state. Georgians, once the clear ethnic majority in the region, were suddenly the minority; and the Abkhaz, once the minority, were now the majority. Moscow, satisfied with the new status-quo, brokered a cease fire. The cease fire has since been ‘enforced’ by Russian peacekeepers who, at the same time, are party to the conflict, and have repeatedly aided the Abkhaz in 1992, 1994, 1998, 2004, and 2008.
When the Abkhaz broke the Russian-sponsored cease fire, the Russians remained quiet and did not intervene.\(^{130}\) The reason for Russia’s forbearance in this case, consistent with its behavior on other occasions, was to increase instability, for the situation had begun to settle into a stable equilibrium, making both sides too comfortable and reducing their dependence on Russia. The Abkhaz had done too well, taking more than the Russians planned. Soon after the Abkhaz gained the upper hand, and appeared primed to fight for more, Russia began reducing its support lest it become entrapped in a level of conflict it did not desire.

It seems clear that Russia that Russia’s support influenced the Abkhaz’s expectations of success, leading them to believe that they could maintain an equal struggle against Tbilisi, which possessed a military force that dwarfed Sukhumi’s rag-tag fighting force. Initially, the extent of Russia’s support remained private information, catching the Georgian military commanders in the early 1990s completely by surprise. It was not until July of 1992 that Vladislav Ardzinba, Abkhazia’s then ‘President’, claimed that Abkhazia was ‘strong enough to fight Georgia’, hinting at guarantees of external support that had by that point in the war become apparent to all actors.\(^{131}\)

Russian and Abkhaz interested pointed in the same direction, initially at least, since both viewed Georgian independence as a threat to their security. For the

\(^{130}\) Yeltsin condemned the events and imposed economic sanctions, but did not intervene military in preventing the Abkhaz from seizing the capital or from taking Ochamchire and Gali in the southern part of Abkhazia. For an account of the military events, see Cornell, *op. cit.*, 2002, p. 173ff; Anatol Lieven, ‘Georgian Forces Routed by Rebels,’ *The Times*, 1 October 1993; Ibid., ‘Victorious Abkhazian Army Settles Old Scores in An Orgy of Looting,’ *The Times*, 4 October 1993; cited in Cornell, *op. cit.*, 2002, p. 173.

Abkhaz, Georgian independence meant ‘Georgianization,’ now without a Supreme Soviet to induce Georgian moderation. For the Russians, Georgian independence, like the independence of the other union republics, translated into a loss of influence. Abkhazia was especially important, being located on Russia’s southern border, a vital region for defense, warm waters for the Black Sea Fleet and, of course, holidays in the ‘Georgian Riviera’. Another issue was Georgia’s refusal to join the CIS. Georgia was one of the first Soviet Republics to declare independence and its soldiers refused to report for duty in the Red Army. When Georgia then refused to enter the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and later began to lean toward NATO and the West, Russian and Abkhaz interests seemed to align almost perfectly. ‘Russia made it blatantly clear that Georgia’s problems would continue until, and unless, the country entered the CIS and accepted Russian troops on its territory’....forcing Shevardnadze to accept ‘Russia’s de facto ultimatum’ and its offer of ‘neutral military’ assistance.\textsuperscript{132} Putin was even more direct: ‘we view the presence of any military organization near our border as a direct threat to our security and will retaliate with force if necessary.’\textsuperscript{133}

Russian support was always a double-edged sword. The real aim of the Abkhaz people, if not the elites, is independence, both from Georgia and from Russia. Russia is needed in pursuit of this goal, but the Abkhaz are also aware that Russia has no interest in Abkhazia’s independence, which it has repeatedly refused to recognize until it was forced to do so as a last resort after the August 2008 war.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{132}Cornell, \textit{op. cit.}, 2002, p. 173.
\textsuperscript{133}Vladimir Putin, Address to the Russian People, in Russian at: \url{http://linkgeorgia.com/}
\textsuperscript{134}Consider the implications of the 2005 elections in Abkhazia. Moscow promoted its puppet, Raul Khadjimba, a former KGB agent, to be president. Khajimba, a strongly pro-Russian hard-
Part of the reason for Russia’s reluctance to recognize Abkhazia or South Ossetia surely has to do with Russia’s own separatists at home, especially in Chechnya, and the signal that Russian recognition of breakaway republics in the Caucasus would send. Georgians claim that the Abkhaz are being used by the Russians, but of course the Abkhaz do not have many candidate sponsors to fill in Russia’s shoes.

The Abkhaz did not fail to notice that they experienced a sharp decrease in Russian support for their cause during the conflict with Chechnya. Three reasons can be offered to explain the sudden decrease in Russian support. First, some Abkhaz volunteered to fight with the Chechens in return for their earlier assistance in the conflict with Georgia, thus creating a sense among Russians of Abkhaz betrayal. Second, experiencing secessionist conflict within Russia itself dampened Russia’s enthusiasm for secession in general and for the Abkhaz secession in particular. Third, Georgian leaders explicitly supported Russia’s territorial integrity during its war against Chechnya, even if for self-interested reasons.

After Kosovo declared independence and was recognized by the United States and most European countries—to date over 50 countries—Russia began preparing the ground for Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which it declared within days of the

linen, refuses ties with the West and any form of negotiated settlement with Georgia (including a two-state union solution that Saakashvili proposed in 2004), and promotes even closer military ties with Russia. He was endorsed by Vladimir Putin personally. But the Abkhaz actually voted for Sergei Bagapsh, Khajimba’s main opponent, in what appears to have been a backlash against Russia’s hand in the elections. The Russian-controlled Abkhaz Electoral Commission declared Khajimba the winner, but the Abkhaz Supreme Court found that Bagapsh was the real winner. Khajimba’s supporters attacked the courthouse, forcing the Supreme Court to reverse its decision. Ultimately, the two opponents agreed to run on a joint ticket, and the new election, taken shortly afterward, was undisputed, with Bagapsh as president and Khajimba as vice president.

135 This policy of non-recognition was replicated elsewhere in former Soviet Union, including in Transdniestria, Gagazia and Nagorno-Karabakh.
136 The possibility of Turkey playing such a role will be discussed shortly.
end of the 2008 war in August. At least until Kosovo’s declaration of independence against Russia’s veto at the Security Council, Russia benefited more from a manageable level of stability in Abkhazia and South Ossetia than from a stable resolution. Russia finally recognized Abkhazia, but it seems to have done so half-heartedly, just enough so that it can install its military bases and ports there, but not enough to really make Abkhazia feel independent. Russia did not lobby very hard on Abkhazia’s behalf for other states to follow suit, especially in comparison with the US’s lobbying efforts for the recognition of Kosovo. In fact, Nicaragua and Venezuela are the only recognized states to recognize Abkhazia. The only other positive reactions came from a motley crew of unrecognized statelets including Nagorno-Karabakh, Transdniestria, South Ossetia, Northern Cyprus, Hamas and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Not a single state among Moscow’s close allies—Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan—extended recognition.

In the early 1990s, the strategy was similar. From Russia’s point of view, the primary goal of supporting the Abkhaz had been achieved in the initial cease-fire, making recognition unnecessary—Russia troops were on Georgian soil for the foreseeable future, Georgia had joined the CIS and had been tamed for the moment.


139. Russia allies fail to back Moscow on enclaves, Reuters, 4 September 2008.
From the perspective of Georgia, the Abkhaz offered a means for Russia to reign in Tbilisi from its westward and therefore wayward path.

The marriage between Abkhazia and Moscow is surely one of convenience—bolstering Abkhaz power in exchange for allowing a Russian military presence on its territory. Indeed, soon after recognizing Abkhazia, Russia began building three military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, including the Bombora Air Force base in the Gudauta area with a 4 kilometer long runway, and dredging the coast to establish a permanent port at Ochamchire for its Black Sea Fleet, 60 kilometers south of Sukhumi, effectively controlling the Georgian territorial waters all the way down to its border with Turkey and placing the Georgian ports of Batumi and Poti within striking distance.\(^{140}\) Since the runway terminates less than 100 meters from the coast, Russian fighter jets can take off without immediate detection from enemy radar. According to a source in the Russian Ministry of Defense, Moscow already has detailed plans for Air Force Base, including the deployment of ‘some 20 aircraft, including a wing of the Su-27s (Flanker), a squadron of the Su-25s (Frogfoot) attack aircraft, and several An-26 (Curl) transport aircraft’\(^{141}\) ‘The fundamental decision on creating a Black Sea Fleet base in Ochamchire has been taken,’ according to an unnamed Russian official, ‘this year we will begin practical work, including dredging, along Abkhazia’s coast.’\(^{142}\)

As Archil Gegschidze, former Chief Foreign Policy Advisor and current Senior Fellow at the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies,


\(^{141}\)Ariel Cohen, *op. cit.*, 6 February 2009.

\(^{142}\)Russia Plans Base In Georgian Breakaway Region,’ RFE/RL, March 19, 2009.
explained while moving his finger across the lip of the Black Sea:

Russia has almost completely lost its access to the strategic Black Sea. During Soviet times, the navy could use the west, north or east side of the sea. But one by one, this has vanished. First Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union, then Ukraine took control of Crimea, now Georgia. Abkhazia has an excellent deep water coastline, a prize that the Russian Black Sea Fleet will not relinquish without a fight. By perpetuating conflict, Russia troops and sailors will remain in need, and this coastline will stay within Russia’s sphere.  

The other access point to warm warm seas—the Baltics—also vanished from Russian control in the early 1990s, leaving only the Artic Ocean at Murmansk.  

From control of the western, northern, and southern coasts of the Black Sea, Russia’s access to the Black Sea waters was reduced to a few hundred kilometer strip of coastline near the Sea of Azof, which is documented as the world’s shallowest sea, linking the Strait of Kerch to the Black Sea to the south. It currently rents a port from Ukraine, but that is set to expire in 2017.  

143 Interview with Archil Gegeshidze, former Head, Foreign Policy Analysis, State Chancellery, Chief Foreign Policy Advisor, and current Senior Fellow, Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, July 2008. 

144 Kaliningrad also offers an ice-free naval outlet to the Baltic Sea.  

145 If, as some have proposed, Transdneister secedes from Moldova and joins Russia, then an additional access point may become available. Georgia, with its warm water outlets and Orthodox Christian orientation, has long attracted Russia’s interest, and initially the interest was mutual, since Georgia was in search of an ally to defend itself against two Muslim empires. Russia, however, has repeatedly proven unreliable as an ally, e.g., Persia’s 1795 attack against Georgia. Russia ultimately annexed the eastern part of Georgia 1801 and incorporated the remainder into the Russian empire over the next several decades, uniting all the Georgian lands for the first time in several centuries. The snag was that Georgia was again subjugated to a powerful, though no longer Muslim, neighbor. See: Cornell, op. cit., 2002, p. 146.
All sides recognize that Russia is pursuing its own interests in the conflict, and that these interests only coincide with those of the Abkhaz in part and in the short term. In the long run, Georgia wants Abkhazia back, which Russia refuses, and Abkhazia wants independence, which Russia will resist. Even though Medvedev has now officially recognized the independence of the two breakaway regions, Malkhaz Akishbaia, who heads the pro-Georgian Abkhaz government-in-exile, depicted Russia’s resolution as ‘just a piece of paper, and not something that substantially alters the existing situation on the ground.’

Russia has no intention of allowing Abkhazia or South Ossetia to become truly independent actors. Each side benefits from the arrangement, but is also keenly aware of the risks. External support from Russia constrains Abkhazia’s freedom of action, but Abkhazia has few viable alternatives. If Abkhazia were able to come to an agreement with Tbilisi, Sukhumi would probably seek to distance itself from Moscow. Moscow will not allow that to happen, however, and has not taken kindly to Abkhaz efforts to diminish its control. The Abkhaz have increasingly come to realize Russia’s geo-political interests in keeping Abkhazia in limbo. Some circles in Abkhazia are happy to take the deal—quasi-independence and Russian pensions over Georgian governance—but others would like to find a mediator with a direct interest in the conflict’s resolution.

The idea of Turkey fulfilling this role has been floated, and unofficial meetings between Georgians and Abkhaz have taken place for several years in Istanbul.

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148 See, for example, Paula Garb and Walter Kaufmann (Eds.) Proceedings of the 14th Conference
There are two factors that militate against Turkey assuming a greater role, however. First, Turkey has no real influence over either actor that would compel compliance. Second, and perhaps more fundamentally, Russia opposes Turkey’s involvement, or any international involvement, for a change in the negotiating format would necessarily diminishes Russia’s importance in the conflict, lessening its leverage over the actors and the region. The reasons are also internal to Turkey, whose hands are already tied because of its own separatist problem in the southeast. Despite these obstacles, Turkey has the distinct advantage of being a mediator that actually desires a lasting resolution to the conflict. The conflict’s resolution would ensure the security of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline, the sole pipeline from the Caspian that does not pass through Russian territory. That objective would be served by defending the territorial integrity of Georgia, while granting Abkhazia considerable latitude within it, and would be undermined by the perpetuation of the conflict. Russia’s interest, by contrast, are furthered by the keeping the conflict frozen, a policy that holds no hope for Abkhazia’s eventual independence and that impinges on Georgian sovereignty.

As Ambassador Aleksander Rondeli, former Director of the Foreign Policy Research and Analysis Center at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and President of the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS),
observed first hand in negotiations with Russian officials: ‘an important part of Russia refuses to consider us as an independent country - for them, we are simply an extension of their backyard, and so we’re not in their eyes a sovereign state and our interests can openly be ignored.’

Today, Russia’s right to control buffer zones on the territory of independent states formerly under its control is a principle that is today almost unanimously accepted in Russia. Consecutive Georgian administrations, from Gamsakhurdia to Shevardnadze to Saakashvili, have all demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops from Georgian territory, and each request has been politely refused. Pavel Sergeyevich Grachev, former Defense Minister of the Russian Federation, was adamant that ‘every measure to ensure that our troops remain there should be taken.’

His view represents an important bloc within the Kremlin that aims at restoring the Soviet Union at least militarily if not politically.

Already in the summer of 1992, Russian defense and intelligence officials visited Abkhazia, presumably to encourage the Abkhaz to secede, and soon after the visit the Abkhazi indeed declared their independence. When the Georgian army sought to quell the riots, an ‘Abkhaz’ army filled with Russian mercenaries recruited by the Russian intelligence crushed them, seizing control of almost the entire Northwest

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150 Interview, Tbilisi, July 2008, Tbilisi.
territories and ethnically cleansing the Georgian population.[153] A clue to how this happened lies in Abkhaz President Vladislav Ardzinba’s statement of 14 August: ‘The world knows in which situation Abkhazia has been placed,’ said Ardzinba, but we are assured of moral and material assistance...and convinced that we have the appropriate support.[154] Ardzinba was of course correct in his estimation of Russian support, which materialized when Russian troops joined the Abkhaz attack on Sukhumi in March 1993, when Russian planes bombed Sukhumi in February 1993 and, flagrantly, when Georgians shot down one of those Russian war planes over Sukhumi on March 18, 1993—an Su-27 with Russian markings—a fact confirmed by UN observers, and recovered the pilot, a Russian Major—a from the Russian air force unit stationed in Abkhazia, Major Vazlav A. Shipko.[155] The following month two Su-25s raided Sukhumi, which Russian sources justified as a reaction to the Georgian attack on the Russian seismic research center in Eshera, Abkhazia, thus further exposing Russian involvement, while Russia continued to insist on its role as the conflict’s mediator and to block UN efforts to enter in a mediation role.[156]

Other evidence of Russian involvement is also difficult to explain away and its

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impact difficult to underestimate. For example, in October, a Georgian helicopter was shot down by a heat-seeking missile, a weapon that the Abkhaz do not possess and could only have received from Russia. Georgia’s vice-premier, Alexander Kavsadze, claimed that Russia forces also prevented Georgian transport planes from taking off to bring heavy equipment to the battlefront while the Abkhaz had at their disposal ‘large battle tanks and other modern armour that the Abkhazians could have acquired only from the Russian arsenal’ [157]. Even though the Abkhaz had been using primarily fishing vessels to land troops near Sukhumi, they suddenly had access to naval vessels [158]. The Abkhaz mass media openly reported that the Russian military provided the Abkhaz with a big batch of armaments from the Gudauta military base, located on the Black Sea within the eponymous district of Abkhazia. This all occurred during the period that Russia was supposedly enforcing a cease fire [159].

Non-military evidence was abundant and blatant as well. For example, Russia sent ‘election observers’ to Abkhazia and the inauguration of Abkhaz ‘President’ Vladislav Ardzinba in 1999 was openly attended by several Russian MPs [160].

Despite such explicit evidence of support for the Abkhaz side, Russia armed both sides, just as it did in the conflict between South Ossetia and Georgia, ensuring that the conflict would endure, making a settlement between the parties less likely, ensuring Russia’s continued involvement in the region, and forcing Georgia back

into the fold. As Alexei Zverev depicts the policy:

Incredible as it may seem (although it was in line with consistent Russian policy of supplying both sides in a conflict), at a time when Russian supplied warplanes were bombing Georgian-held Sukhumi, other Russian units continued to supply the Georgian army.

Stephen Shebfield echoes this description of Russian policy toward Georgia:

Russia first helps the side it favors up to the point at which a political-military result that it consider satisfactory has been achieved. It then shifts to the role of an impartial peacekeeper, prepared to use force against those maverick extremist elements of the previously favored side who are determined to fight for a result better than the one secured for them by Moscow.

Russian support could quickly shift the balance of power between the sides, as it did on a number of occasions in this conflict. For example, the Georgian attack in August was, at least in part, a consequence of the influx of Russian arms they received just prior to the conflict. Similarly, the timing of Abkhazian declarations of secession and its resumption of a hard bargaining posture almost


immediately followed the delivery of arms and other material support. Russia’s repeated assertion of non-involvement hardly stand up to scrutiny. On the contrary, until the moment that Shevardnadze entered Georgia into the CIS and officially sanctioned Russian troops on Georgian territory, Russia continued to pursue its goal of weakening the new Georgian state by leveraging its ethno-political conflicts to compel Tbilisi to submit. As Hill and Jewett write:

A lasting peace in Shevardnadze’s Georgia was not in Russia’s interest. Russia needed to ensure its continued presence on the Georgian Black Sea Coast. When Moscow’s economic blockade and its refusal to withdraw troops failed to achieve these ends, Russia provided Abkhazia with enough firepower to force Shevardnadze to turn to Moscow for assistance...Russia ultimately assisted Georgia, not out of sympathy for Shevardnadze, or a desire for peace, but because it had exacted the necessary concessions from Georgia.

The fact of Russian involvement seems beyond dispute, and its influence on the dynamics of conflict in Georgia are equally clear from the chronology of events and the timing of the behavior of the key actors. The reasons for Russian involvement should also now be obvious. Russian policy was aimed foremost at weakening Georgia through supporting the Abkhaz forces, but only up until the point until Moscow’s objectives were satisfied. Those objectives, it seems clear in retrospect, were to compel Georgia to submit to the CIS and to the stationing of Russian troops on its territory with access to the Black Sea Coast—and later to prevent

165Bruce Clark, ‘Russian Army blamed for Inflaming Georgian War,’ The Times, 6 October 1992.
it from joining NATO. The magnitude of Russia’s intervention must be deduced from bits and pieces of evidence and so shall always remain the subject of some dispute. What is beyond contention is how much Russia achieved in the way of compliance from Tbilisi over the course of the war, especially in view of the how anti-Russian Georgia was in the early 1990s and remains today: Russian troops are spread around Georgia’s borders, the Russian Black Sear Fleet is stationed off the coast of Abkhazia, the construction of several new bases is underway, Georgia is a member of the CIS, albeit an unwilling one, and NATO prospects, once a foreseeable development, are now a distant dream. At the same time, Russia has succeeded in preventing both Turkey and the United States, both of which have been courted by Georgia (as well as Azerbaijan, Moldova, Uzbekistan and Ukraine), from assuming a more important role in the region, demonstrating to all who cared to notice that Russia is the Sheriff in town.

To be certain, Russia has not been able to fully achieve its goals in Georgia, which continues to lean toward the West and NATO, so further Russian intervention should not be ruled out of the equation. The August 2008 war was proof enough, but even Russia’s pummeling in that war did not bring Georgia to its knees. Weakening Georgia and fostering instability among Georgia’s ethno-regions remains an effective tool to be used against Georgia should it continue to pursue its goal of diversifying its alliance portfolio to include the EU and the US. Moldova, which was also considering NATO membership for a while, got the message from the August 2008 war loud and clear and has since declared neutrality, in effect renouncing its previously states goal of joining NATO.

Abkhazia, in addition to possessing the key factor from the demand side—and
ethnic balance of power—also offers Russia access to the Black Sea. Second, Abkhazia border Russia directly, unlike Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli, making it much easier to justify and to carry out logistically. Third, the Abkhaz are fully dependent upon Russia, whereas all the other regions had other potential sponsors. Fourth, as Cornell (2002) has argued, having had autonomous status from Soviet times meant that important personal networks were already in place as well as the governmental infrastructure behind which Russia’s hands could hide. Finally, Russian ethnics have long lived in Abkhazia, giving Moscow another foothold to buttress support from the Abkhaz themselves.

Taken together, these factors distinguish Abkhazia from the other regions, explaining why the Abkhaz received Russian support, while that support was weaker or non-existent in the other ethno-regions. The effect that Russian support had on the Abkhaz leaders’ expectation of succeeding in their efforts to free themselves from Georgian jurisdiction, is beyond dispute. Moreover, the timing of the offensives can be tied directly to external support, for ‘Abkhaz’ attacks were almost always coordinated with the Russian air support, and often followed lock-step after the arrival of arms deliveries from the north, where the sun rises not only for the Georgians. But why the support arrived when it did in the first place appears to have a lot to do with Russia’s geopolitical interests, namely, the first conflict when Georgia refused to join the CIS and the most recent one when Georgia was on the verge of receiving a membership action plan (MAP) to join NATO, an eventuality that Russia has resolutely resisted and remonstrated.

If Russia did not back the Abkhaz, with encouragement and material support, it seems very likely that the Abkhaz would have pursued significantly more modest
aims at the outset and that inter-ethnic tensions may never have escalated into a violent recursive secession. The Georgian army could have taken the Abkhaz forces alone in less than a day, and the Abkhaz had no illusions about it. Not until Russia promised and delivered significant support did a strong secessionist movement emerge in Abkhazia. When Russian support for the Abkhaz waned in the mid 1990s, so too their activities and the extreme character of their objectives, and when Russian support returned in the late 1990s, so too did Abkhazia’s secessionist activities. The recursive secession in Abkhazia was hardly a foregone conclusion and correlation is not causation, of course, but the ebb and flow of the conflict’s intensity and the degree of Russian support is more than stochastic - it points to a pattern that looks remarkably like cause and effect. The counterfactual thought experiment involving no Russian support for Abkhazia also strongly suggests a non-secessionist and less violent outcome than the one actually observed.

Although Abkhazia stands as the centerpiece of Russian policy toward Georgia, South Ossetia was in fact the match that sparked the flame, both in the early 1990s and most recently in the August 2008 war. The consolidation of Georgian statehood, in fact, hinges more on resolving the question of South Ossetia than Abkhazia, although both are critical, simply because South Ossetia is so much closer to Tbilisi. The next section therefore explores why and how the conflict unfolded in this otherwise desolate farm land at the foothills of the Caucasus mountains.

The case of Abkhazia demonstrates the essential role that external actors play in the escalation of internal conflicts. The Abkhaz, no more than 100,000 in number, would have been foolish to start a war with Georgia, even in its dilapidated state. Had Moscow not given a bright green light to the Abkhaz, the arms, the planes,
the vessels, the tanks and even the soldiers to drive the Georgian side back, the Abkhaz-Georgia wars, had they happened at all, would have been short. Moscow intervened—and turned a blind eye while the Akhaz raided Russian arms depots—precisely when it needed to achieve a geopolitical goal. In both the early 1990 and the later 2000 cases of conflict with Georgia, Moscow’s objective in Abkhazia has been to force Tbilisi to submit to the Kremlin’s directives: in one case, it was to join the CIS, which the Georgians did not wish to do, and then it was not to join NATO, which Georgians overwhelmingly wished to do.

The same objective appears to dictate its behavior in Transdnistria, the breakaway region in Moldova, which was also set to receive a MAP from NATO. After Moldova saw what happened in Georgia, however, it has suddenly declared neutrality with respect to all military alliances and slammed the brakes on NATO. Not accidentally, following Moldova’s conciliatory moves, Moscow began to express an interest in resolving the frozen conflict in Transdnistria.

The supply of Russian support of course would be to no avail if there was not at least some minimal demand. The precarious balance of demographic power between the two main ethnic groups in Abkhazia—the Georgians and the Abkhaz—undoubtedly nurtured latent inter-ethnic tensions, effectively transforming the positive sum game in which the Abkhaz possessed special privileges into a zero-sum set-up in which whatever was given to the Georgians was taken from the Abkhaz, and vice versa. The Abkhaz case shows that when both demand and supply side factors converge, the result is predictably explosive. As the next section on South Ossetia shows, this concatenation of causes was not unique to Abkhazia, and neither was the end result.
6.3.4 South Ossetia: Armed for Peace

The case of South Ossetia is just as important as Abkhazia, and maybe more so from Georgia’s point of view because it is located so close to the capital where over a third of the country lives. From a theoretical point, it may be even more important because, although it shares similar causes of conflict to the Abkhaz case—namely a polarized balance of power among ethnic groups, and significant external support—it has none of Abkhazia’s economic and strategic value. It is not located on the sea, and therefore provides no naval port, much less a Russian-speaking vacation spot. It lacks economic value, as nothing is produced in South Ossetia, and no natural resources appear to be present. Its one strategic advantage is that the mountain tunnel affords a coordinator linking Russia to the South Caucasus. Even with its limited economic value, it still serves Moscow geopolitically, for it provides a significant weapon in Moscow’s repertoire should it wish, as it has on several occasions, to curb Georgia’s westward tendencies. At the same time that it eliminates several confounding factors, it highlights the centrality of ethnic heterogeneity and external support.

Divided geographically into two by the Caucasian mountains, and politically by the formation of the Soviet Union, South Ossetia became part of Georgia while North Ossetia became part of Russia. Georgians prefer to refer to the South by its ancient name, Samachablo, its main city, Tskhinvali, or its province, Shida.

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Kartli, but claim that the term South Ossetia, which is introduced in 1922 after Communists took over Georgia, and is widely used on maps and in the media, is a politically loaded designation for the region that suggesting the legitimacy of Russian territorial claims with irredentist undertones.

Despite some depictions of the conflict as long in the making, Georgians and Ossetian do not have a deep history of conflict, despite periodic flash-points in the 1920s and in 1989, so the explosion of violence since 1990 was somewhat surprising to both Georgians and Ossetians. The rate of intermarriage, for example, was notoriously high during the Soviet period. It is widely believed that Stalin himself was the product of an Ossetian mother and a Georgian father, after whom he took his real name, Dzugashvili. Why, then, did relations sour when they did? What triggered the conflict?

The first fact to note is demographic. Like Abkhazia, South Ossetia is a polarized polity, populated almost in equal numbers by Ossets and Georgians, living in a checkerboard configuration that would make a partition particularly messy. South Ossetia itself has a population of merely 70,000 people, and probably less after the recent conflict, but it also has (more numerous) ethnic kin on the other side of the border.

It seems fair to conclude that the presence of these ethnic kin was less relevant

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before the construction of a mountain tunnel, completed in 1985, linking the north and the south of Ossetia. The Roki Tunnel provides a useful corridor to Georgia from Russia, not only for people but also for weaponry, most recently as the primary conduit for arms, tanks and troops during the Russian-Georgian war. The completion of the tunnel gave both the North and the South a more realistic foundation for uniting their territories. While North Ossetians may have their reservation about incorporating their southern brethren, they nonetheless provided a very useful lobbying function in Moscow for a pro-Ossetian policy. Moreover, when the war broke out, the north provided volunteer fighters and mercenaries, together with other volunteers from the Northern Caucasus, buttressing the otherwise small numbers in the south.

Beyond this support, the main trigger for the mobilization in South Ossetia was Russia, which provided heavy armaments, including heat-seeking missiles that shot down Georgian spy planes on more than one occasion, tanks and attack helicopters. The Georgians also received significant weaponry from Russia, consistent with the Russian policy of arming both sides to the conflict. With both sides armed to the teeth, the conflict commenced in full. Its resolution through nego-


171 Ironically, the tunnel’s completion happened under Shevardnadze’s watch. The Northern Ossetians have been demanding the tunnel since the 1920s, but were repeatedly ignored.


tiation, which seemed imminent on a number of occasions, was inhibited by each side’s expectations of success.

Strong evidence of Russia’s adversarial role is available from multiple sources. For example, in an archival document, a copy of which was kept in the Georgian archives of the OSCE in Tbilisi, local Russian officials in the South Ossetian region report to Yeltsin on the balance of forces during the course of the conflict. The report reads: ‘It appears that the current balance of capabilities between the sides is becoming more even. In fact, it looks as though the South Ossetian side is becoming too strong relative to the Georgian side, and it would be prudent to further supply the necessary arms to the Georgian side to rectify this imbalance.’

The conflict, not atypically, began with numerous local clashes and small ethnic riots, for the most part not widely reported in the media at the time. The OSCE internal assessment of the situation was probably the most dramatic: ‘murders, robberies, rapes and other crimes going on continuously and without practically any punishment of those committing the crimes.’ It was unclear who, if anyone, was planning these events, for they were highly disapproved of from within the inner circle of official South Ossetian leaders. The Oblast Committee First Secretary,

175Report to the Head of the Russian Federation on the Situation in South Ossetia, addressed to President Yeltsin, Appendix 4, 1992, Fond 178.


177Archives of the CSCE, Com. No. 41, Georgia Files, Prague, 2 February 1993.
Anatoli Chekhoev, told a crowd in Tskhinvali that ‘demands for unification of North and South Ossetia are groundless.’ The South Ossetian Oblast Soviet Plenum also condemned such demands.\(^{178}\)

Despite this initially cautious stance, Moscow’s backing soon increased expectations of success in the event of a conflict over secession from Georgia; moderate voices from the old guard were soon side-lined, and replaced by more radical ones (e.g., the Adamon Nykhas movement) that seemed to echo Moscow’s outlook. Gamsakhurdia’s rise to power in Georgia only worsened inter-ethnic relations, proposing his own brand of martyrdom cum nationalism on the country, raising fears among all minorities.\(^{179}\) Dissident translator of Baudelaire cum extreme nationalist martyr, Gamsakhurdia proposed a law that ethnic minorities who could not prove that their families lived in Georgia before the Russian annexation in 1801 would be forced to leave and return to their homelands.\(^{180}\) Gamsakhurdia started a war on two fronts, one against the Soviet authorities and one against ethnic minorities in Georgia. He accused Gorbachev of arming the Ossets, whom he referred to as ‘guests who had overstayed their welcome’, as a means to impose direct rule on Georgia. Ossets responded by accusing him of ‘building a nationalist regime intolerant of the Ossetian minority in Georgia.’ ‘This violence is sparked by the Kremlin,’ Gamsakhurdia said in an interview, ‘it is a pretext to declare presidential rule.’\(^{181}\)


\(^{180}\) ‘Georgians fear a Moscow trick,’ The Observer, 13 January 1991, p. 17; ‘Georgian president accuses Moscow of provoking revolt,’ The Times, 12 January 1991.

\(^{181}\) ‘Kremlin Role Questioned in Georgian Ethnic Strife,’ New York Times, 10 February 1991, Section 1, Part 1, p. 11.
Both sides are right. Moscow was no friend of separatists, whom it was fighting left and right in the Soviet Union’s dying months. The opportunity to play off Gamsakhurdia, a true irritant in Moscow’s southern side, against the desperate Ossets, who were perceived in Georgia as loyal to the Kremlin, was just the tool that Russia needed to tame Georgia’s anti-Russian rhetoric and behavior.\textsuperscript{182}

Moscow and local communist bosses who had lost power to local nationalists also welcomed the opportunity that the problems in South Ossetia presented.\textsuperscript{183} Moscow’s support was first slow and tacit, and then overt and threatening. Parliamentary Chairman, Ruslan Khas, and vice-president Aleksander Rutskoi, increasingly laid claim to South Ossetia as ‘Russian territory’. Khasbulatov was quoted in the \textit{International Herald Tribune} as saying that ‘Russia is prepared to take urgent measures to defend its citizens from criminal attempts on their lives’, and in the \textit{Washington Post} as saying that Russia might ‘find itself forced to annex South Ossetia.’ ‘It is now perfectly clear,’ said President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, ‘that Mr. Gorbachev is supporting terrorism in South Ossetia.’\textsuperscript{184}

Gorbachev allegedly told Gamsakhurdia that, if Georgia continued on its path toward independence, it ‘will have problems with its autonomies,’ just as Putin later warned Shevardnadze and Saakashvili.\textsuperscript{185} Moscow was true to its word, and used these levers against Georgia to force it to sign a union treaty with the Kremlin.

\textsuperscript{182}Georgian president accuses Moscow of provoking revolt,’ \textit{The Times}, 12 January 1991. Ossetian loyalty is a relatively new construct. Historically, Georgians were also perceived as loyal to Russia with respect to the North Caucasus. Russian troops, with significant Georgian participation, crushed revolts in North (and South) Ossetia during 1829-1830.


\textsuperscript{184}Georgian president accuses Moscow of provoking revolt,’ \textit{The Times}, 12 January 1991.

\textsuperscript{185}Cornell, \textit{op. cit.}, 2001, p. 194.
threatening otherwise to weaken Georgia by ‘encouraging the ethno-regions’. Gamsakhurdia claims: ‘Gorbachev asked me ‘Did you change your mind about the union treaty?”’. Karen Karagezyan, a spokesperson for Gorbachev, denied the conversation, however. The Georgian Parliament reiterated the charge a few months later: ‘The central government is waging an undeclared war against the republic, which has refused to participate in the creation of the so-called new federation and to sign the union treaty.’ Shevardnadze later echoes these allegation, claiming that ‘helicopters with Russian markings attacked towns and Georgian national guard positions in the region of South Ossetia.

It seems highly unlikely that South Ossetia, with a population of less than 100,000, virtually no economic production and few means of natural defense against Tbilisi, could have created a credible of a secessionist movement without explicit material support from Moscow and Vladikavkaz. Temuri Iabokahvili, currently the Georgian Minister for Reintegration, enumerated evidence of Moscow’s involvement and Georgia’s efforts to curb it by internationalizing the monitoring mission in South Ossetia, but his optimism was clearly measured and tempered by years of disappointment. The new name for the ministry, ‘Reintegration’ rather than ‘Conflict Resolution’, was more than merely a ‘semantic change’. It indicated a change in

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189 Interview, Tbilisi, July 2008.
Georgian policy, he argued, and it seemed to be working...until August 2008, when all the good will that had been developed in the effort to ‘reintegrate’ South Ossetia into Georgia was spoiled and relations reverted to the status quo ante.

According to Ryan Grist, Deputy Head of Mission of the OSCE in Georgia at the time of the August war, and seasoned military observer in locations such as Northern Ireland, Bosnia, Kosovo and Transdnistria, there was ‘clear evidence of increased military activity on both sides’ well before the conflict actually erupted. Dr. Grist, who had a closer eye on developments in South Ossetia than almost anyone else, warned of an escalation in July 2008, and said ‘something is brewing...and it may explode’, but his warnings were ignored. Ms. Hakala, Head of the Mission, who was in Finland at the time, called off the OSCE investigation and had the OSCE observers in Tskhinvali evacuated precisely when they could have been of considerable use in preventing its escalation, as they had on previous occasions. Dr. Grist, who in effect argued that the Georgians started it, but were clearly provoked by the Ossets, who in turn were emboldened and armed by Moscow, was dismissed from his post.

This is not say that Russia was not ready for conflict, having aligned hundreds of tanks on the other end of the Roki Tunnel, and evacuated children and elderly from South Ossetia in the days prior to the conflict. It had over 5000 infantry available on surprisingly short notice, and they entered Georgia proper within hours. It was not by accident that Dr. Grist was asked to ‘take a vacation,’ effective immediately, after he went AWOL to Tskhinvali in search of answers over who began the conflict.

190 Interview, Tbilisi, July 2008.
191 Interview, Tbilisi, July 2008.
His testimony was subsequently used to question Georgia’s version of events, and to place blame on Saakashvili for falling into the Russian trap set up for him. But only part of his testimony is typically quoted: he never claimed that Georgia’s actions were unprovoked. Both sides, he argued, responded to provocations with ‘disproportionate force’.192

Regardless of who started the war in 2008, the evidence unequivocally points to the role of Russia support in instigating a war in 1991 that South Ossetians officials did not initially desire and in pushing the region toward separatism and demands for unification with North Ossetia that officials declared was ‘groundless’. Once each side was armed, again unambiguously from Russia, the stage was set for a spiral of events that today seems irreversible. Other factors contributed to the escalation of tensions, but Russia’s hand gave South Ossetia a degree of military capability that triggered a level of violence that made coexistence difficult to imagine.

The reasons why tensions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia escalated into violent recursive secessions, whereas in Kvemo-Kartli and Javakheti ethnic conflict was curbed, are chiefly two. First, on the demand side, the ethno-territorial balance of power in the former two cases was bi-polar—that is, two sizeable groups, and neither truly dominant—but in the near-miss cases, the balance of power was unipolar. Unipolarity at the local level, that is regional ethnic homogeneity, can sometimes obviate the need for secession, whereas ethnic heterogeneity nurtures demand for it, creating a zero-sum setting in which what is given to one group is viewed as being taken from the other, as a result of which neither is willing to concede much to the

other, and therefore neither believes promises because they are simply not credible.

These demands can be met with various sorts of supply, however. When external actors exhibit moderation in their approach to ethnic kin, or there is no outside option, the negative effects of heterogeneity can be sublimated. External actors are not born prudent; they tend to behave moderately when circumstances require it; i.e., when the external actor calculates that it needs the good will of the neighboring state more than it needs the ethnic kin, the territory on which they reside or a domestic constituency. However, when the demand for secession within an ethnically heterogeneous region meets with willing and able third party actors, the result is recursive secessionist violence of the sort witnessed in South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and elsewhere in the world.

For reasons discussed elsewhere, nosy neighbors are most often motivated by either geopolitical interests, such as weakening a neighboring state, rolling back an encroaching alliance, or establishing a military foothold in the region. As one scholar notes: ‘irredentism is the prerogative of the few.’ This is especially so ‘in heterogeneous states, [where] irredentism is bound to be a divisive ethnic issue.’ Even in homogeneous states, such as Armenia and to a lesser extent Azerbaijan, irredentism has been a divisive issue, but the cleavage is ideological and economic rather than identity-based and ethnic reasons. Azerbaijan also faces serious economic constraints, since it needs Georgia for transport of energy from the Caspian, and Armenia needs Georgia because it otherwise landlocked between two states, Turkey and Azerbaijan, with which it has less than model relations. Why, despite the plentiful opportunities for irredentism in the Caucasus, and elsewhere in the

world, this kind of conflict has been remarkably rare remains an open question in
the literature on ethnic conflict.  

6.4 Conclusions

Despite the Marxist view that economic modernization would make differences be-
tween nationalities redundant, ethnic nationalism emerged as a viable replacement
to the discredited Communist ideology in much of the Caucasus, producing a spate
in nationalist conflict and a sag in inter-state conflict. ‘Ethnicity,’ one scholar
wrote, ‘[has] fought and bled and burned its way into public and scholarly con-
sciousness.’

The 2008 war in Georgia brought renewed attention to ethnic conflict. As Geor-
gia seceded from the Soviet Union, four ethno-regions within Georgia had the poten-
tial to secede from it. Yet only two of the four actually did so, and the question that
this paper addresses is why: what accounts for sub-national variation in recursive
secession? The argument advanced here privileges two explanation, one permissive,
internal and demand-side and the other proximate, international and supply-side,
above all others—ethno-territorial heterogeneity and external support, in this view,
account for variation in secessionist violence within Georgia better than alternative


Research, 36, 593-606; cited in Lars-Erik Cederman, ‘Nationalism and Ethnicity,’ in Walter Carl-
snaes, Thomas Risse and Beth Simmons (eds.) Handbook of International Relations, Sage, p. 409.
A related development is that the distinction between intra-state and inter-state conflict has be-
come increasingly blurred, consider the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia - was Kosovo or Bosnia
intra or inter-state? The answer is both. The same is true of the conflict in August 2008 between
Georgia-Russia-Abkhazia-South Ossetia.

196 Horowitz, op. cit., 1985, xi.
theories.

As regards the first part of the argument—ethnic heterogeneity—theory and intuition strongly suggest its significance, but empirical research, both quantitative and qualitative, has been mixed[197] Svante Cornell’s research on Georgia has suggested that examining ethnic heterogeneity is not useful for understanding variation in violence in the Caucasus, but that is because his evaluation of ethnicity is purely linear, and implies that the larger the ethnic group’s size, the greater the expected conflict. By contrast, I argue that regions where the primary ethnic group possessed a plurality but not a majority—where the ethno-demographic distribution was roughly bi-polar, rather than unipolar—were most likely to witness violent ethnic conflicts and pursue secession. This understanding of the role of ethnic heterogeneity is consistent with the curvilinear relationship between heterogeneity and conflict that has been postulated in some of the theoretical literature and has been identified in other parts of the world, for example, in Africa and Latin America[198].

In regions where the non-Georgian ethnic group numerically dominated, inter-ethnic relations were comparatively tame.

This relates to the role of external actors, whose involvement largely determined whether or not an ethno-region’s grievances against the central government escalated into a secessionist movement, highlighting the crucial but too frequently overlooked international dimension of internal conflicts. In particular, I have tried to understand how external actors influenced the sub-state groups’ expectations of success.

197 Sambanis and Hegre, op. cit., 2006.
in a potential conflict with the center and how prominently their behavior figured in the sub-state group’s calculations about the prospects of success and the desirability of secession. In two cases, Kvemo-Kartli and Javakheti, external actors exhibited a moderating influence, reassuring the central government and pacifying the potential secessionists, because their were more expected economic and political benefits to be had from maintaining friendly state-to-state relations than from engaging in irredentist adventures; while in the other two cases, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, external actors stoked the flames of secession both because it advanced their own political and economic interests and because it bolstered nationalist credentials at home, especially in the Northern Caucasus.

The empirical record demonstrates how relatively static internal conditions, such as ethno-territorial heterogeneity, and volatile dynamic international factors, especially external support, concatenate in a deadly fashion to produce and to prevent recursive secessionist violence.
Chapter 7

Conclusions

The motivating question of this project is whether, and if so under which conditions, secession can produce peace rather than war. The short answer is that secession can produce peace, but under quite idiosyncratic circumstances, restrictive definitions of peace, and with a bit of luck. Most secessions, I find, generate some form of conflict, more than half experience especially nasty forms of violence such as recursive secessionist violence or militarized interstate disputes within the first five or ten years after secession, while other secessions settle on lesser forms of violence, such as ethnic riots. What is clear from the data, however, is that secessionist rarely get away scot-free. Violence (of any kind) after secession is all too common (87%).

Even those that escape interstate conflict with the rump state, and with new neighbors, which is only about 15-20% if we consider the first 15 years of statehood, need to fend off internal enemies, which can assume a secessionist form or may seek to overthrow the central government itself. Of these, there are only a few—Andorra, Iceland, Montenegro, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia among them—that are violence free, and their circumstances do not seem to lend themselves to widely satisfied conditions—geographic separation from the rump state, ethnic homogeneity, high income levels, the result of a slow demise of a loose union and neighbors that acted with restraint. Most of these are not factors that can be easily altered because they
are given from history and determined by geography.

These results speak to the broader debate, suggesting that secession is rarely a solution to ethnic conflict. Secession does not assure the protection of remaining minorities and is not a panacea for severely divided societies. As the first systematic examination of the consequences of all secessions over such a broad temporal and spatial scope, the project shows that more often than not, secession merely reorder domestic ethnic conflicts into further violence. Theoretically, the analysis reveals a curvilinear relationship between ethno-territorial heterogeneity and conflict. Empirically, it helps to explain disparate findings in the literature on ethnic conflict and to conclusively link ethnic structure and violent conflict. As a rare effort to combine intrastate and interstate explanations, and to systematically theorize, conceptualize and operationalize both dimensions, the analysis contributes to the literature on secession and partition, and on civil war more generally, by demonstrating that what is often thought of as a domestic phenomenon is mostly a phenomenon of international politics. The international dimension of intrastate conflict is often so pronounced that the distinction between intrastate and interstate violence becomes blurred.

It would of course be naive to think that the exact same dynamics produce disparate forms of violent conflict after secession. There are strong commonalities among the varieties of violence, and some of these I have noted throughout, but considering them separately has many merits, allowing us to compare like phenomena. As a result, the project develops most completely the argument and the analysis on one prominent and pernicious form of violent conflict after secession—recursive secessionist violence. The findings from the analysis of this phenomenon
indicate that controlling for heterogeneity, external intervention predicts recursive secessionist violence; and that controlling for external intervention, heterogeneity predicts recursive secessionist violence. State weakness makes matters worse when state possess both, but can create problem under all permutations of these factors.

These results are highlighted in the cross-national and longitudinal analysis in Chapter 4 where the analysis relied on a number of powerful statistical methods to uncover patterns in the data and to predict out of sample data. In particular, the analysis began with an algorithm called CART, which segments the space of explanatory variables in such a manner as to maximize the homogeneity of the terminal nodes of the tree. In other words, divide the data so that the predicted classes (war or peace, given covariates) are similar both on the outcome variables and on their predictor values. New observations for which the explanatory values are known, or can be estimated, but the outcomes are unknown can be predicted by following the paths and branches of the predictors to the correct class. The classification trees graphically illustrates several configurations of explanatory variables, including ethnic heterogeneity, third party involvement, and income levels, that can separate the peaceful and the violent cases of secession by splitting the predictors non-parametrically. Random Forests are then used to validate some of the CART results, increasing predictive accuracy on out of sample data, identifying exceptions, measuring relative variable importance and examining marginal effects. The first version of Random Forest is for cross-sectional classification; the second is for longitudinal and survival analysis. The results reinforce one another, and are consistent with a robustness check using Bayesian Model Averaging.

The Random Forest analysis shows that third party involvement on the rebel's
behalf is of critical importance in determining whether latent tensions escalate into violent challenges against the central government’s territorial authority and integrity. In order to circumvent a potential endogeneity problem that could arise if post-secessionist conflict invited intervention, which it sometimes does in practice, I have only coded the involvement of external actors prior to the actual escalation of tensions into violent conflict. Third party actors consistently emerge as important across all estimations and variable importance measures, providing confidence in the result, and suggesting that the related civil war literature, at least its quantitative faction, suffers from a pernicious form of omitted variable bias that this study redresses.

On the demand side, the new heterogeneity metric consistently arises at the top of the list of important predictors. States with a small number of large groups (moderate heterogeneity) are more prone to recursive secessionist violence than states which are ethnically fractionalized, constituted by many small groups, or which are ethnically homogeneous. This finding is consistent with results from various case studies, but has so far eluded the grasp of quantitative researchers because of their reliance of a limited measure of ethno-demographic structure. It refutes a prominent empirical result and related theoretical claim that have gained considerable currency in the literature. It also holds out the promise of advancing other debates, for example in the public goods provision or corruption literatures, which depend on measuring ethnic heterogeneity, and it may also be able to contribute to the measurement of other political science variables that are mathematically related, such as ENP, the Effective Number of Parties in party politics literature, or district heterogeneity in the American politics literature.
On the supply side, the project provides a taxonomy of external actors that categorizes the reasons and roles that third parties may play in secessionist situations. Often states have a choice between roles that they might assume in the face of a group of potential secessionists in a post-secessionist state, and the selection of this role is itself an interesting question for which some preliminary answers have been given. The empirical finding that such actors are essential to explaining variation in violence raises the question of why third parties become involved at all. These questions have been touched upon throughout the project, and some answers have been suggested, but the jury is still out because the such an analysis would require a large-N design that accounted for all possible interveners. The first order concern in this project was their effect rather than cause, but the latter question emerges as a clear direction for future research and a viable extension of this project.

The Random Forest classification models tend to have a misclassification rate on out of sample data that hovers between 25% and 30%, which is certainly not a negligible amount of error but undoubtedly represents a dramatic improvement from the baseline of the modal category, which is approximately 50%, and is rather respectable in view of fairly daunting data limitations. I compare this performance with a Support Vector Machine and with a Logistic Regression using ten repetitions of 10-fold cross-validation. Random Forest compares favorably (i.e., lower misclassification error).

The Random Survival Forest models, which extends the analysis to the risk of violence over time, improve on this further, dropping the error rate down to between 10% and 20%. The average time of survival is roughly eight years after secession. That baseline risk, and the expected number of ‘deaths’, decreases as the
heterogeneity metric moves from ‘moderate heterogeneity’ to either fractionalization or homogeneity, and increases when external actors are involved on the rebel’s side, nearly doubling the risk of recursive secessionist conflict. Similarly, high income level is associated with a lower risk of violent conflict, a finding that is consistent with a number of studies on civil wars, political instability, and transitions to democracy.

Drawing on field research and archival evidence, Chapters 5 and 6 offer ‘clustered case studies’ of violent conflict after secession, shedding light on the mechanisms through which the key variables operate while holding constant many local and temporal factors. Chapter 5 explains intra-federation variation in violence across several waves of secessions (Slovenia–Croatia, Bosnia–Macedonia, Montenegro–Kosovo) in the former Yugoslavia. I show that patterns of overlapping population pockets relate directly to patterns of violence. Where such pockets were shallow, sparse or scarce, violent conflict was usually averted. Overlapping population pockets, relative state strength and external support for separatism influence both state and ethnic group calculations and behavior. Chapter 6 explains sub-national variation in violence after secession in Georgia at the regional level. It investigates the four ethno-regions that were primed for conflict—Javakheti, Kvemo-Kartli, Abkhazia and South Ossetia—and shows how variation in heterogeneity and external support lead some regions into war and others toward peace.

Despite the Marxist view that economic modernization would make differences between nationalities redundant, ethnic nationalism emerged as a viable replacement to the discredited Communist ideology in much of the Caucasus, producing a spate in nationalist violence and a sag in inter-state conflict. The case of Georgia reveals nuance that is not measured at the cross-national level, but probably
should be measured if appropriate data could be collected. The Georgian case shows that in regions where the primary ethnic group possessed a plurality but not a majority—where the ethno-demographic distribution was roughly bi-polar, rather than unipolar—violent ethnic conflicts were most likely, a finding that is consistent with the curvilinear relationship between heterogeneity and conflict that has been postulated in some of the theoretical literature and has been identified in other parts of the world, for example, in Africa and Latin America. At the same time, the case is inconsistent with several quantitative results and arguments about the role of complete ethno-territorial concentration. In regions where the non-Georgian ethnic group numerically dominated, inter-ethnic relations were actually comparatively tame.

In two cases, Kvemo-Kartli and Javakheti, external actors behaved moderately, reassuring the central government and pacifying the potential secessionists, because the expected economic and political benefits to be had from maintaining friendly state-to-state relations were greater than those to be expected from engaging in irredentist adventures, external involvement was to the benefit of the central government; in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, however, external actors stoked the flames of secession as a result of political and economic interests at the regional level and because it bolstered nationalist credentials at home, especially in the Northern Caucasus, where Russia is engaged in its own battle for hearts and minds. The case of Georgia illustrates how internal conditions, such as ethno-territorial heterogeneity, and international factors, especially external support, concatenate in a deadly fashion by inducing fear among the masses and expectations of success among the leadership.
Evaluating regional variation within a single country and time period in this manner has a number of distinct advantages; for one, it facilitates valid comparisons by providing natural controls for factors that vary across states, such as regime type and state capacity, but remain largely constant within them at a particular time point. Moreover, it directs the measurement of several factors, for instance mountainous terrain and grievances, to their appropriate theoretical level, the region, thereby serving to isolate causal effects at the level of the secessionist unit itself.

Returning to the original question about whether secession leads to war or peace, a few conclusions can be made with some confidence: (1) violent conflict (of any form) is quite common after secession—almost 90% experience some form of it soon after secession; (2) recursive secessionist violence and militarized interstate disputes with the rump state or with neighbors are the most common forms of violence after secession—each occurring in more than half of all cases, and a good number of post-secessionist states suffering both; (3) the incidence of these episodes of violence following secession is correlated with a handful of factors, including the degree of ethnic heterogeneity in the secessionist and rump states, the role played by external actors, and state capacity.

The implications of these results for international policy and international law are worth noting, especially given that the prospect of a secession invariably triggers a policy debate in neighboring countries, among major powers such as the United States and within international organizations over how best to react: whether it is better to accommodate, neglect or resist the self-declared state, possibly through intervention or through external support of the government’s armed forces, or instead
to assist it in its quest for recognized statehood and membership in international organization.

The Badinter Commission made a number of key decisions on secession in international law, but it is the one on the scope of self-determination which concerns us here. The Commission sanctioned the secessions from the former Yugoslavia, as is well known, but made no provision for recursive secessions. In fact, the Commission barely considered the reordering of ethnic relations in the new states at all, or about the rights and interests of those who will end up on the ‘wrong side of the new border’. International laws that provide for initial secession without provisions for recursive secession and related issues is a law at odds with reality. If, as I have shown, violent recursive secession occurs in roughly half of the cases of secession, then stipulations to protect new minorities will be needed, but the very proliferation of secession around the world indicates that something may be amiss in many arrangements for minority protection, a problem that secession cannot as a rule reasonably be expected to resolve for most aggrieved groups around the globe. International law needs to be more in line with the way secessions actually happen if it wishes to circumvent irrelevance and to save lives.

Debates about particular cases of course cannot be resolved based solely on recurrent patterns and imperfect parallels between cases, causes and consequences. Nevertheless, knowing about the universe of post-secessionist settings cannot but help us to better evaluate the prospects of a particular secession, providing guidance on how hard the international community should try to keep some states together, and when it might be more productive to let them part. The results of the investigation strongly suggest that redrawing borders in unlikely to save as many lives
as the advocates of partition promise; indeed, it is quite likely to result in new violence, both within and between states. Rather than exiting existing states, the study suggests that greater efforts to find voice for all parties within them would yield better results. The large literature on various forms of power-sharing, which is discussed extensively elsewhere, provides considerable guidance on how to enable voice and avert violence under sundry circumstances.

Policymakers considering whether to partition peoples or encourage the secession of a sub-state entity should take a sober look at the likely ethno-demographic situation on the ground after a potential split. In cases where overlapping population pockets will exist in the rump or the secessionist state, secession is highly likely to reorder tensions, rather than resolve them, into interstate disputes or intrastate and inter-ethnic conflicts. The importance of homogeneity, of course, is clear enough to the combatants, both in terms of creating a unified new state and in terms of receiving international recognition. As a result, incentives to engage in ethnic cleansing before (and after) the split are present in many cases of partition and secession, generating a particularly nasty moral hazard problem. In the absence of ethnic homogeneity, as a result of ethnic cleansing or voluntary migration, partition may require population transfers, an event that is unlikely to be as bloodless as it sounds. These considerations alone should cause policymakers engaged in dialogue with secessionist movements to pause lest they do more harm than good.

Even where the ethnic separation of the rump and secessionist state populations is relatively complete, secession frequently gives impetus to other forms of conflict that would otherwise have remained latent, especially conflict between the new secessionist state and its new neighbors, between the new central government and
its new minorities, which are often enough majorities in non-rump but neighboring states, and between factions of the majority ethnic group that is now tasked with running an actual state, protecting its people and their property, and providing services and goods to its population. The creation of a new state changes the balance of power in a regional power structure, providing opportunities to improve and defend territories, especially those on the peripheries and therefore at the intersection of the new neighbors, therefore policymakers need consider carefully not only how the rump and secessionist state will look internally, but whether neighboring states have incentives to meddle in ways that are likely to escalate tensions and increase instability.

By differentiating secessions that lead to war from those that produced peace, and the core factors associated with variation in violent outcomes, the project better positions us to judge which secessions are likely to deliver on their promises, and which are predictable failures, affording scholars and practitioners alike the opportunity to avert violent conflict along with retrospective regret based on unrealistic expectations about secession’s capacity to produce an abiding peace.
Appendix
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secessionist State</th>
<th>Albania</th>
<th>Algeria</th>
<th>Andorra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abkhazia[*]</td>
<td>ArmeniaI</td>
<td>Azerbeijan</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Biafra[*]</td>
<td>Bosnia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belarus</td>
<td>Chechnya</td>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>Cyprus, N1[*]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>EstoniaI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czechoslovakia</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EstoniaI</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Iceland</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EstoniaII</td>
<td>KingCroatsSlovSrbBos</td>
<td>Kosovo</td>
<td>Kyrgyz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>LatviaI</td>
<td>LithuaniaI</td>
<td>LithuaniaII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LatviaI</td>
<td>LatviaII</td>
<td>Mongolia</td>
<td>Montenegro1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>Montenegro2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montenegro2</td>
<td>N. Yemen</td>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>Norway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>Panama</td>
<td>Papua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PolandI</td>
<td>Pridneistrovie</td>
<td>RomaniaI</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SerbiaI</td>
<td>Singapore[**]</td>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>Slovenia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somaliland[*]</td>
<td>S. Ossetia[*]</td>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajik</td>
<td>Texas[***]</td>
<td>Timor Leste</td>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>Uzbek</td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>W. Sahara (SADR)[*]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7.1**: List of 68 de jure and de facto secessionist states, 1815–2009. [1] after a state’s name indicates the first successful secession, and implies a second. [*] Established de facto states, at least for one year, even though they remained largely unrecognized. [**] A case of expulsion rather than secession from a federation. [***] State was annexed or otherwise ceased to exist as such. Some states are excluded due to size, e.g., Kingdom of Tavolara, in effect independent from 1836–1962, recognized by Italy, but with a population of less than 100. Other exclusions are due to the brief period of independence, followed usually by defeat or annexation, e.g., Krusevo (Ottoman Macedonia), Juliana (Brazil) or Katanga (Congo) being an example of the former, and Ajaria (seceding from Turley to join Georgia) or Icaria (seceding from Turkey to join Greece) of the latter.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secessionist Movement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albanians in Western Macedonia[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baloch from Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan Basques in Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinda in Angola[2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casemance in Senegal[1][2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chittangong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corsica in France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flanders in Belgium[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaaplander in South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kashmir in India[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen in Burma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurds in Turkey and Iraq[1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mindiano in Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naga in India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab in India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec from Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandzak in Serbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland in UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Cameroon in Cameroon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Island from New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan in Sudan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Moluccas in Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibet in China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waziristan in Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Papua in Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xinjiang in China</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7.2:** Partial list of active secessionist movements (excluding those above). [1] if host state was itself a secessionist state; [2] if host state was decolonized; [3] attempted secession through referenda that was either ignored, failed to pass, or failed to be recognized (excluding those in Table A.1). Sources: Pavkovic, *op. cit.*, 2007; Unrepresented Peoples and Nations Organization: [www.unpo.org](http://www.unpo.org)
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Biography

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