

Recognizing the Obvious?
The United States Response to Secessionist Ambitions since the End of the Cold War

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Abstract. This dissertation explores the factors shaping American foreign policy toward secessionist crises since the end of the Cold War. The main research puzzle is the following: Why is it that, facing the resurgence of secessionist movements in the last 15 years, the United States reacted to it by supporting the territorial integrity of central states in some cases (Serbia, Somalia, Moldova), while recognizing the independence of secessionist states in other cases (Croatia, Eritrea, East Timor)? How can this apparent inconsistency be explained? This dissertation argues that regional stability is the main U.S. interest when responding to secessionism. It asserts that, when facing a secessionist crisis, the American government will choose the option (i.e. supporting state integrity or secessionism) that provides the greatest expected gain of regional stability depending on the evolution of the crisis. This explains why the American government's response to secessionism fluctuates from one case to another.

The performed qualitative analysis, which includes cases taken from two regional settings, the Balkans and the Horn of Africa, confirms the effect of the regional stability factor on the formulation of U.S. foreign policy. It shows that the fluctuation of the U.S. response is not caused by political inconsistency but by a coherent set of regional stability interests. The research also proceeds to the measurement of two competing arguments—namely ethnic politics and business interests. Case studies show that these domestic arguments fail to account for the research puzzle under investigation and that the regional stability argument consistently offers better explanations and predictions. Thus, this dissertation challenges liberal claims that domestic politics define foreign policy.

Résumé. Cette thèse se penche sur les facteurs qui définissent la politique étrangère américaine à l'égard des conflits sécessionnistes depuis la fin de la guerre froide. La principale question de recherche est la suivante: Pourquoi est-ce qu'à la suite de la résurgence des mouvements sécessionnistes au cours des 15 dernières années, les États-Unis ont réagi à ce phénomène en soutenant l'intégrité territoriale des États dans certains cas (la Serbie, la Somalie, la Moldavie), tout en appuyant et en reconnaissant l'indépendance d'États sécessionnistes dans d'autres cas (la Croatie, l'Érythrée, le Timor Oriental)? Comment pouvons-nous expliquer cette apparente incohérence? Cette thèse soutient que la stabilité régionale constitue le principal intérêt des États-Unis face à ce type de conflits. Lorsque le gouvernement américain fait face à une crise sécessionniste à l'étranger, il choisit l'option (appuyer l'État central ou le mouvement sécessionniste) qui offre le gain de stabilité régionale le plus probable. Cela explique pourquoi la réaction des États-Unis face aux conflits sécessionnistes varie d'un cas à l'autre.

Une analyse qualitative incluant des cas d'étude provenant de deux ensembles régionaux, les Balkans et la Corne de l'Afrique, confirme l'impact du facteur « stabilité régionale » sur la formulation de la politique étrangère des États-Unis. Cette analyse démontre que la variation de la réaction américaine face aux conflits sécessionnistes n'est pas causée par une incohérence politique mais par des intérêts de stabilité régionale clairement définis. Cette thèse évalue également l'impact de la politique ethnique et des intérêts commerciaux. Elle démontre que ces facteurs domestiques expliquent mal la problématique de recherche et que la thèse de la stabilité régionale, qui se concentre sur des facteurs internationaux, offre constamment une meilleure explication et de meilleures prédictions. Ainsi, la présente recherche met au défi les thèses dites libérales qui soutiennent que la politique interne aux États-Unis définit la politique étrangère.

Acknowledgements

All along the research process leading to the completion of this dissertation I had Robert O. Keohane's observations about academic research in mind: "No intellectual journey is smooth, since a necessary condition for discovery is confusion". And "[t]he essence of discovery is being deeply puzzled about questions on which one is supposedly an expert".¹ When I undertook this research project, I felt I knew about U.S. foreign policy and about secessionist movements extensively but I was deeply puzzled and even confused about how these topics interrelated. Writing this dissertation was, therefore, quite an endeavor and Robert Keohane was right. The research puzzle I had in mind, which can be contained within a single sentence, occupied most of my academic life for almost three years. This project led me, among other things, to spend half of 2005 at Georgetown University in Washington D.C. in order to conduct research and interviews.

Fortunately, during the process of writing this dissertation I received the support and help of several people. First and foremost I would like to thank my advisor Stephen M. Saideman for his sound and relevant advice; his guidance made a big difference. I would also like to thank Mark Brawley, Julian Durazo Hermann, Jean Laponce, Nelson Michaud and David Edelstein for their comments on my work. Thanks also to the Department of Government at Georgetown

¹ Robert O. Keohane, *International Institutions and State Power*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1989, p. 29.

University for granting me the status of visiting researcher in the winter and spring of 2005. More specifically, I would like to thank Charles A. Kupchan for his help and support as well as Andrew Bennett for his research advice.

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Finally, and just for the record, the writing of this dissertation was carried out in four different cities: Ottawa, Montreal, Washington D.C. and London (Ontario).

Jonathan Paquin
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1.

Introduction: The Research Puzzle

Introduction

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, secessionist conflicts emerged as an important security concern for the United States. In the last 15 years, secessionism has been the driving force behind several conflicts that endangered regional orders. During the Cold War, secessionist aspirations were often repressed by authoritarian regimes. The end of the communist bloc, however, awakened latent ethnic conflicts and resulted in an upsurge of secessionist movements.¹ The disintegration of Yugoslavia, the separation of Czechoslovakia and the partition of Ethiopia were all caused by secessionist movements. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the 1999 war in Kosovo were also related to secessionist struggles. These examples show that, since the early 1990s, secessionism has caused significant international disruption. While some secessionist crises threatened the stability of the Balkans (Croatia, Slovenia), of Eastern Europe (Moldova) and of the Caucasus (Abkhazia, South Ossetia), others disrupted the Horn of Africa (Eritrea, Somaliland), and South East Asia (Bougainvillea, East Timor).

As the most powerful state in the current international system, the United States has been quite concerned with secessionist ambitions and is cautious to not encourage independentist movements abroad. As Secretary of State Warren

¹ David Carment and Patrick James, "Ethnic Conflict at the International Level", in David Carment and Patrick James, (eds.), *Wars in the Midst of Peace: The International Politics of Ethnic Conflict*, Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1997, p. 1.

Christopher once mentioned, the world is made of thousands of ethnic minorities and less than two hundred sovereign states. Allowing the right of external self-determination to ethnic minorities would lead to permanent turmoil in the international system.² Joseph Nye, a former Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Clinton administration, makes a similar argument when he asserts that the political precedent that the U.S. “would create by endorsing a general right of self-determination could have disastrous consequences”. Nye argues that the United States should, therefore, be extremely cautious about “demands for secession by groups in Indonesia, Central Asia, or in many African countries” because they can create enormous violence.³

A close look at the literature on American foreign policy shows, however, that scholars have neglected the study of secessionist self-determination and treated it as an epiphenomenon of broader international events (i.e. intrastate wars, states collapse, ethnic conflicts). Several questions regarding the U.S. foreign policy toward secessionist conflicts remain, therefore, unanswered and more research must be conducted on the United States’ role, interests and behavior toward ethno-nationalist struggles in the world.

In this dissertation, I attempt to remedy the lack of research in this important domain by trying to understand what determines the American reaction toward secessionist conflicts. More specifically, this research focuses on the

² Warren M. Christopher, *Hearings: Nomination of Warren M. Christopher to be Secretary of State*, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1993, p. 72. Also cited in David Callahan, *Unwinnable Wars: American Power and Ethnic Conflicts*, New York: Hill and Wang Editions, 1997, p. 27.

³ Joseph S. Nye, *The Paradox of American Power*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 152.

variation of the American response to secessionist self-determination. Past events have demonstrated that, facing the resurgence of secessionist conflicts in the post-Cold War era, the United States has reacted in a contradictory manner by backing the host states struggling with secessionist movements in some cases, while supporting the independence of secessionist groups in others.⁴ Why is this so? Why, for instance, did the U.S. recognize Slovenia, Eritrea, and East Timor, but remain categorically opposed to the independence of Abkhazia, Kosovo, or Somaliland? How can we explain this policy variation? Can this apparent inconsistency of the U.S. response be explained by the legitimacy of each case of secession, by the regional environment in which secessionist movements emerge, or by the lobbying of U.S. ethnic groups mobilized for the independence of their ethnic kin abroad or against the breakup of their homeland? These are the main questions addressed in this dissertation and they raise an important theoretical puzzle in the field of U.S. foreign policy. In tackling this research problem, this dissertation also assesses whether the American government has developed a clear and standardized policy or a coherent strategy to face the resurgence of secessionism since the end of the Cold War.

Thus, this research does not focus on the normative dimension of the formulation of U.S. foreign policy toward secessionist self-determination movements, but rather on empirical evidences, on the underlying motives of Washington's response.⁵

⁴ I interchangeably use "central state" and "host state". They both refer to a sovereign state that is struggling against a secessionist movement.

⁵ For a normative account of how the United States should respond to ethnic secessionist movements see: Patricia Carley, *Self-Determination: Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity, and the*

Regional Stability Matters

This dissertation argues that existing foreign policy and international relations arguments cannot account for the research question under investigation. It maintains that current systemic and domestic propositions are based on assumptions that fail to capture the logic and preferences behind the American behavior toward secessionist struggles.

Therefore, this research proposes a two-step explanation stressing the importance of regional stability as the United States' paramount interest to explain the variation in the American foreign policy toward secessionism. It argues that the U.S. is a stability-seeking power and it explains why the American government has a bias in favor of state unity. Put simply, the first step of the regional stability argument maintains that the U.S. supports central states facing secessionist crises as long as they can guarantee regional stability. The second step of the model asserts, however, that if a central state is unable or unwilling to keep regional order when struggling with its own secessionist movement(s), the United States will consent to recognizing the secessionist state if, and only if, secessionists can demonstrate their ability to keep stability. In such a case, the U.S. policy shift is justified by the fact that recognition would validate an expected gain of regional stability. The model argues, therefore, that this explains why the United States departed on multiple occasions from its traditional policy of supporting territorial

Right to Secession, Report from a Roundtable held in Conjunction with the U.S. Department of State's Policy Planning Staff, Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, February 1995. <http://www.tamilnation.org/selfdetermination/95usip.pdf> (accessed September 2006). See also Patricia Carley, *U.S. Responses to Self-Determination Movements: Strategies for Nonviolent Outcomes and Alternatives to Secession*, Report from a Roundtable held in Conjunction with the Policy Planning Staff of the U.S. Department of State, Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, July 1997. <http://www.usip.org/pubs/peaceworks/pwks16.pdf> (accessed September 2006).

integrity since the early 1990s. This two-step model is presented at length in Chapter 3.

Why this Research?

Why is it important to understand the variation of the U.S. reaction to secessionism since the end of the Cold War? I consider that the resolution of this theoretical problem is pressing for several reasons. First, the United States' record of support for secessionism has strongly increased since the early 1990s, and this marked a significant departure from its traditional anti-secessionist policy. We must understand why.

Second, separatist movements constitute, at the dawn of the 21st century, an enduring challenge for the lone American superpower as well as for the international community.⁶ Take for instance the cases of Aceh, Chechnya, Dniester, Turkish Kurdistan and Quebec. By understanding how the United States reacts to secessionism, we will be better equipped to explain its policy and to predict its response toward future secessionist attempts.

Third, the U.S. can have a direct impact on the success or failure of secessionist attempts through its power of recognition.⁷ Indeed, not all acts of

⁶ David Callahan, "The Enduring Challenge: Self Determination and Ethnic Conflict in the 21st Century", New York: Carnegie Corporation, 2002. <http://www.carnegie.org/pdf/ethnicconflict.pdf> (accessed July 2006).

⁷ Achieving international recognition is one of the most important aspects of secession. Diplomatic recognition is critical to secessionist groups since it often draws the line between successful and failed cases of secession. See Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2nd Edition, 2000, p. 230. According to Alexis Heraclides, international recognition is crucial for secessionists because "ultimately, it is numerous recognitions that will transform a secessionist entity (a unilaterally-declared state contravening the strict self-determination principle) into a state". Alexis Heraclides,

recognition carry the same political weight. An act of recognition granted by the United States or by a major power has a greater impact on the process of secession than recognition granted by a weaker state. The reason for this is simple: powerful states have the political leverage to make secession a *fait accompli*. Their intervention in favor of secessionists can significantly increase the credibility of secession, regardless of the qualitative value and merits of the case. This explains, for instance, why Biafra failed to secede from Nigeria in the late 1960s or Kosovo from Yugoslavia in the beginning of the 1990s. While both of these secessionist states were recognized by some foreign states, they failed to obtain recognition from great powers.⁸ In fact, without U.S. and/or great power recognition, secessionist states cannot normally function in the interstate system and their independence has almost no value on the international scene. These states can hardly participate in international organizations, such as the United Nations, or request economic support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (e.g. the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus since 1983, Somaliland since 1991, Macedonia from 1991 to 1994).

Finally, data shows that since 1945, the United States has intervened in intrastate conflicts more often than any other major power.⁹ Patrick Regan points out that among the 76 cases of intervention in intrastate conflicts carried out by

The Self-Determination of Minorities in International Politics, New Jersey: Frank Cass, 1991, p. 49.

⁸ Biafra was recognized by Gabon, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Tanzania, and Zambia. See Stephen M. Saideman, *The Ties That Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy & International Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001, pp. 74-85. Kosovo was recognized by Albania.

⁹ Patrick M. Regan, "Conditions of Successful Third-Party Intervention in Intrastate Conflicts", *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 1996, pp. 336-359.

major powers between 1945 and 1994, the United States accounted for 46 percent of these interventions.¹⁰ Regan's analysis is a clear indication that the U.S. is the most important intervener in internal conflicts and that it has arguably the most impact. Thus, for reasons mentioned above, I assert that it is crucial for scholars and policymakers to understand the motives behind the American response to secessionist crises.

Clarifications and Research Method

Over the years, there has been great confusion over the meaning of words used to describe the process leading states to achieve independence and sovereignty. Some authors have interchangeably used the words secession, separation and partition, while others have given particular meaning to each of these concepts. For clarity purposes, this dissertation uses the word secession, which is defined here as: "the formal withdrawal from a central political authority by a member unit or units on the basis of a claim to independent sovereign status".¹¹ Moreover, the focus of this dissertation is on secessionist movements that have officially declared secession from their central state. It would be pointless to study whether or not the U.S. recognized secessionist states that never declared independence.

The concept of regional stability, which is at the center of the proposed model, should also be clearly explained. I define regional stability as a state of

¹⁰ For the same period of time, the Soviet Union (Russia after 1991) only accounted for 21% of these interventions, France for 13%, Britain for 12%, and China for 8%. Ibid., p. 345.

¹¹ John R. Wood, "Secession: A Comparative Analytical Framework", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1981, p. 110.

peace existing between sovereign states in a region. This implies the maintenance and respect of international borders (including no refugees flowing across international borders), and the nonintervention in states' internal affairs. I maintain that, taken together, these elements constitute the main interest of the United States toward secessionist conflicts as explained in Chapter 3.

This dissertation focuses on six cases of U.S. response to secessionist crises: Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Slovenia, Eritrea, and Somaliland. This selection allows for a variation in the dependent variable by focusing on cases of U.S. recognition as well as on cases of nonrecognition. This limits the problem of selection bias and strengthens the external validity of the research. Moreover, this study deals with cases taken from two different regional environments, the Balkans and the Horn of Africa. This allows us not only to measure variations between cases coming from the same regional setting, but also to appraise cross-regional variations. Through these six cases, this dissertation will therefore measure: 1) the micro-variations of the U.S. response toward each case across time (i.e. the evolution, if any, of the U.S. policy vis-à-vis each case); 2) the variations between cases within the same regional environment; and, 3) the macro-variations of the American response to secessionism by comparing the two regional environments.

To evaluate the robustness of the regional stability argument presented in Chapter 3, this research combines the method of structured-focused comparison to process-tracing. This methodological combination allows us to systematically focus on facts that are relevant for the measurement of this model as well as to

make the appropriate connections between the regional stability argument and observable outcomes. Chapter 3 will develop further on the methods used.

This dissertation also looks at two competing domestic arguments and compares them to the external argument of regional stability. As Chapter 2 shows, the two domestic propositions studied, ethnic politics and business interests, need further empirical testing. This dissertation provides additional empirical measurement by applying them to the six selected empirical cases. This will allow us to assess whether the proposed external argument offers better explanations and predictions than the two domestic propositions. Hopefully, this comparison will contribute to the debate concerning the main sources of U.S. foreign policy.

Finally, it is important to note that this dissertation does not pretend that secessionism is as important to the United States as terrorism or the proliferation of nuclear weapons for instance. In fact, the priority that the U.S. gives to these crises fluctuates depending on their intensity, on their potential consequences, and on the regions in which they occur. Even if secessionist conflicts abroad do not damage American lives and territory, they can disrupt regional stabilities and potentially the integrity of some U.S. allies. In this respect, secessionism is an important security concern for the United States.

Date Collection

This research gathers information from various sources. Through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), I requested and obtained the declassification of cables and analyses produced by the State Department and by several U.S. embassies on my cases. These released documents were highly relevant for

process-tracing as they allowed the recreation of parts of the debates and discussions within the agency. Moreover, I conducted several interviews in Washington D.C. with high-ranking government officials from the administration of George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton, as well as with former and current officials from the National Security Council and the State Department who worked on a day-to-day basis on these secessionist crises. I also relied on memoirs written by former U.S. officials who were involved in the formulation of the U.S. response to the selected cases. Finally, this dissertation extensively uses monographs and journal articles that deal with aspects of my research topic.

Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 introduces the different theories of international relations and foreign policy that deal with foreign intervention in secessionist conflicts. It shows that none of the existing models, whether domestic or international, provide satisfactory explanation for the research puzzle under investigation. This chapter concludes by calling for a new theory. Chapter 3 proposes a new model of U.S. foreign policy regarding secessionist conflicts and develops an accurate and parsimonious explanation of the question under investigation. The chapter delineates the regional stability model by presenting its assumptions and logic as well as by establishing a clear connection between U.S. security interests and the concept of regional stability. This chapter also explains in detail the methodology used and justifies the case selection. Chapters 4 through 8 are empirical. They examine how the United States reacted to cases of secession and measure the regional stability model as well as competing domestic arguments. Chapter 4

focuses on the secessionist crises in Croatia and Slovenia that occurred in 1991-92. It explains why the U.S. initially opposed the secession of these Yugoslav republics, and the reasons why Washington operated a policy shift in favor of their recognition nine months later. Chapter 5 deals with the complex case of Macedonia which unfolded from 1991 to 2004. It reviews how the crisis started and why it took thirteen years for the United States to complete the process of Macedonia's diplomatic recognition. This chapter represents an interesting case of delayed U.S. recognition. Chapter 6 completes the study of the Balkan region by analyzing the case of Kosovo in the 1990s (but leaves aside the current political issues), which is a case of U.S. nonrecognition. It focuses on the unfolding of the crises that were related to the issue of Kosovo's independence throughout the 1990s including the one that led to the NATO war. As well, it analyzes the factors leading the White House to deny Kosovo's recognition in 1999. Chapters 7 and 8 concentrate on the variation in the U.S. position towards two cases of secession in the Horn of Africa. The Eritrean secessionist struggle is analyzed in Chapter 7. This chapter highlights the reasons that led the United States to grant Eritrea's recognition after having supported Ethiopia, the central state, for years. The last empirical case presented in Chapter 8 is the one of Somaliland. This study shows why the U.S. government refused to support and to recognize the de facto state of Somaliland even though Somalilanders fulfilled most of the U.S. prerequisites for recognition. Finally, Chapter 9 reviews the performance of the proposed theoretical model. It draws general conclusions on the American stance toward secessionist conflicts, and highlights the theoretical contributions of the model.

The next chapter will put into perspective the current research puzzle and will set out the theoretical arena in which the regional stability model introduced in Chapter 3 will fit.

2. *Theories of State Intervention in Secessionist Conflicts*

Introduction

In recent years, the resurgence of ethnic tensions and the dissolution of multinational states (Czechoslovakia, U.S.S.R. and Yugoslavia) have produced international changes that generated a great deal of interest among the academic community. However, the interconnection between ethnic strife and international relations lacked a theoretical framework.¹ This lacuna pressed analysts to search for a better understanding of this neglected dimension of international relations by blurring the academic boundaries between the study of international relations and the study of comparative politics.

Harbom and Wallensteen have recently shown that around one-fifth of all the internal armed conflicts since 1945 have involved foreign states.² This probably explains why several scholars have attempted to identify the factors that explain third state intervention in ethnic and secessionist conflicts. In the literature, these factors can be divided into two categories: external and domestic.³ The

¹ David Carment, "The International Dimensions of Ethnic Conflict: Concepts, Indicators, and Theory", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 1993, pp. 137-150. Little and Rosenau have made similar remarks about the interrelationship between civil war and international politics. See Richard Little, *Intervention: External Involvement in Civil Wars*, London: Martin Robertson, 1975. James Rosenau, (ed.), *International Aspects of Civil Strife*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964.

² Lotta Harbom and Peter Wallensteen, "Armed Conflict and Its International Dimensions, 1946-2004", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 42, No. 5, 2005, p. 627.

³ I choose not to use the classic affective/instrumental dichotomy to identify the different factors causing a third state to get involved in a secessionist or ethnic conflict. Indeed, this division is often

former category assumes that the international environment is the central determinant explaining third state intervention. As for the latter, it asserts that a third state's internal politics best explain motives of intervention, and that domestic groups within the state have the greatest impact on foreign policy decision-making.

In this chapter, I first review the arguments formulated by neo-realists and neo-liberals, which argue that third state intervention is based on systemic determinants and then I examine domestic propositions. Second, I propose to evaluate whether these arguments are helpful in explaining the American behavior toward secessionist aspirations. Third, I briefly review the rather scarce literature on U.S. foreign policy toward ethnic conflicts. And fourth, I appraise the contribution of each approach to the resolution of my theoretical problem. I demonstrate that each of these competing explanations empirically and deductively fail to explain the puzzle under investigation and that a new model of

confusing since factors that may appear affective, like ethnicity, language, or regime type, can in fact be purely instrumental (i.e. they may be tools for power, ambition or economic gains for example). Stephen Saideman, for instance, focuses on ethnic ties but in a very instrumental or utilitarian fashion. He argues that politicians often refer to ethnic politics when making foreign policy decisions to bolster ethnic domestic support and thus to increase their chances of staying in power. See Stephen M. Saideman, *The Ties That Divide: Ethnic Politics, Foreign Policy & International Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

I also agree with Alexis Heraclides when he maintains that instrumental motives cannot be entirely separated from affective elements while affective factors "cannot stand on its own". See Alexis Heraclides, *The Self-Determination of Minorities in International Politics*, London: Frank Cass, 1991, p. 53.

Here are some studies that have used the affective-instrumental distinction: Astri Suhrke and Lela Garner Noble, (eds.), *Ethnic Conflict and International Relations*, New York: Praeger, 1977. Alexis Heraclides, "Secessionist Minorities and External Involvement", *International Organization*, Vol. 44, No. 3, 1990, pp. 341-378. David Carment, "The Ethnic Dimension in World Politics: Theory, Policy and Early Warning", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 1994, pp. 551-582. Rajat Ganguly, "The Consequences of Partisan Intervention in Secessionist Wars: Lessons from South Asia", *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1997, pp. 5-26.

foreign policy is needed to account for the U.S. policy variation towards secessionist efforts.

Security and Power

Neo-realists argue that security and power are states' central determinant of interstate interaction,⁴ and that states follow the same rationale when deciding whether to intervene in internal conflicts.⁵ In recent years, debates among realists have brought out two competing versions of realism known as defensive and offensive realism.⁶ The defensive version maintains, among other things, that international anarchy makes states anxious about their security and leads them to balance power and threat in order to weaken hegemonic states.⁷ Stephen Walt, who espouses such a defensive view of international relations, argues that: "when there is an imbalance of threat (i.e., when one state or coalition appears especially dangerous), states will form alliances or increase their internal efforts in order to reduce their vulnerability".⁸ Offensive realists believe, on the contrary, that

⁴ See Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948.

⁵ See Henry Bienen, "Ethnic Nationalisms and Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy", in Charles A. Kupchan, (ed.), *Nationalism and Nationalities in the New Europe*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995, pp. 158-179. Hedley Bull, "Introduction", in Hedley Bull, (ed.), *Intervention in world politics*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1984, pp. 1-6. Hans Morgenthau, "To intervene or not to intervene", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 45, 1967, pp. 425-436.

⁶ Stephen M. Walt, "The Enduring Relevance of the Realist Tradition", *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*, New York: Norton, 2002, pp. 197-230. Fareed Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics", *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1992, pp. 177-198.

⁷ Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflicts*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999. Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

⁸ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987, p. 263.

security can only be partially assured because states cannot directly measure the intentions of others. As a result, states would rather aggressively compete to maximize their power in order to protect themselves.⁹ John Mearsheimer is certainly one of the strongest proponents of this version of realism. In *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, he asserts: “states recognize that the more powerful they are relative to their rivals, the better their chances of survival”.¹⁰ In other words, the maximization of power is a necessary condition for state survival.

Defensive and offensive realists, however, have not expanded their theoretical contributions to include the international relations connected to secessionism. They have never proceeded to the scientific measurement of their propositions by demonstrating empirically that security and power are critical motives explaining third state foreign policy regarding secessionist conflicts. Stephen Saideman is one of the few scholars who has extended the defensive realist rationale to secession. By applying Stephen Walt’s balance of threat argument to secessionist conflicts, he evaluates whether security considerations drive states to support secessionist movements abroad to diminish threatening states. His objective is to measure whether or not secessionist groups within strong states receive more support than those in weaker states.¹¹ As he points out: “since balancing is ‘the most central pattern’ in international relations for realists, we ought to expect that states will tend to support the weaker states and assist

⁹ Eric J. Labs, “Beyond Victory: Offensive Realism and the Expansion of War Aims”, *Security Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 4, 1997, pp. 1-49. John J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions”, *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1994-95, pp. 5-49.

¹⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York: Norton, 2001, p. 3.

¹¹ Stephen M. Saideman, *op. cit.*, 2001.

separatist movements in the stronger, more threatening states".¹² By analyzing three secessionist crises (the Congo, Nigeria, and Yugoslavia) from which he compiled a total of 43 cases of third state intervention, Saideman demonstrates that this argument is weakly supported by empirical evidence. His study shows that the balance of threat argument was only right in predicting 15 of the 43 cases of interventions. This indicates that the balance of threat logic is not the driving force behind state intervention in secessionist conflicts. Moreover, this argument is unable to predict the behavior of states that are neither entirely threatened by central states nor by secessionist movements. As a result, this argument often leads to unpredictable observations since it "does not have a method of weighing the various components of threat".¹³

Alexis Heraclides also shows that security concerns fail to explain third party intervention. His analysis suggests that, during the Cold War, superpowers did not balance their power by supporting opposing sides in secessionist conflicts in order to increase their security.¹⁴ On the contrary, the United States and the Soviet Union tried to avoid antagonistic policies on these issues. Furthermore, I maintain that in addition to being empirically weak, the balance of threat is not a credible argument to explain the behavior of the United States towards secessionist movements. Did the United States recognize Chechnya, Tibet and Taiwan in order

¹² Ibid., p. 9.

¹³ Ibid., p. 61. Thus, among Saideman's 43 cases of third state intervention to which the balance of threat argument was applied, 19 cases were classified as indeterminate observations. Ibid., pp. 62, 95, and 145.

¹⁴ Heraclides focuses his analysis on the following secessionist movements: Katanga, Biafra, the Southern Sudan, Bangladesh, Iraqi Kurdistan, Eritrea, and the Moro region of the Philippines. See Alexis Heraclides, *op. cit.*, p. 375.

to sap the strength of Russia or China? The answer is no. Although the U.S. raised the issue of human rights abuses in Chechnya throughout the 1990s, it maintained that the Chechen secessionist issue was a Russian internal matter. Moreover, the United States refused to adopt a double-foreign policy toward China in order to deal separately with Taiwan, and it did not question China's sovereignty over Tibet. In fact, we can assume that U.S. support to major powers' secessionist movements would be likely to produce retaliation against the U.S. instead of producing greater security. For all of the above reasons, I regard the security assumption as a weak proposition that is not supported by empirical evidence.

Offensive realism leads to a different argument. By focusing on power maximization rather than on security, it assumes that strong states like the United States are tempted to support secessionist groups in weaker states to increase their relative power in geo-strategic areas. This argument maintains that weak states cannot effectively retaliate against strong interveners, and therefore that the cost of supporting secessionists is inconsequential to dominant powers.¹⁵ This argument is consistent with Mearsheimer's assertion that "great powers are rarely content with the current distribution of power" and that "they face a constant incentive to change it in their favor. [...] if they think it can be done at a reasonable price".¹⁶ Saideman once again demonstrates that secessionist groups evolving in weak states are not more likely to obtain greater foreign support from strong states than

¹⁵ David B. Carment, Patrick James and Dane Rowlands, "Ethnic Conflict and Third Party Intervention: Riskiness, Rationality and Commitment", in G. Schneider and Patricia A. Weitsman, (eds.), *Enforcing Cooperation: Risky States and Intergovernmental Management of Conflict*, London: Macmillan, 1997, pp. 104-131. Hedly Bull, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ John J. Mearsheimer, *op. cit.*, 2001, p. 2.

from other states.¹⁷ In other words, facts demonstrate that third states' relative power do not impact the level of support granted to their secessionist movements.

As for the specific case of the United States, one could make the argument that U.S. support for secessionist groups in weaker states cannot be done at a "reasonable price" because such a decision would be likely to produce instability resulting from ethnic tensions, civil war, and secessionist diffusion. The U.S. has been opposed to secessionist efforts in both strong and weaker states mainly for stability considerations. The maximization of power argument, therefore, is not convincing enough to be retained as a credible hypothesis to explain the U.S. behavior toward secessionism.

In sum, there is insufficient evidence to support the defensive and offensive realist arguments. And when applied to the U.S. case, I assert that the logic of balance of threat and power maximization would lead to effects counter-productive to the United States' interest. Therefore, I reject these propositions.

Regime and Norms

Neo-liberal institutionalists assume that international regimes inhibit states from unilateral intervention in intrastate conflicts.¹⁸ They predict that states intervene in intrastate conflicts once the international community agrees to do so

¹⁷ Stephen M. Saideman, "Discrimination in International Relations: Analyzing External Support for Ethnic Groups", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2002, pp. 27-50.

¹⁸ Lisa Martin, *Coercive Cooperation*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984. Robert O. Keohane, "Reciprocity in International Relations", *International Organization*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 1986, pp. 1-27. Arthur Stein, "Cooperation and Collaboration: Regimes in an Anarchic World", *International Organization*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 1982, pp. 115-140.

along a defined set of rules in order to enforce peace and security in the targeted state.¹⁹ This argument asserts that states do not intervene unilaterally in internal conflicts out of self-interest. Rather, third states choose to cooperate with the consent of international institutions, and then intervene if a multilateral agreement is reached. Because international norms do not legitimize unilateral actions (understood as defection from cooperation), a multilateral agreement is the *sine qua non* for intervention.

Several American foreign interventions conducted since the end of the Cold War have demonstrated, however, that norms do not have a strong impact on Washington's foreign policy. Indeed, the U.S. dominant power departed on several occasions from the noninterventionist norm. Its intervention in Haiti in 1994 was carried out mainly for security and stability reasons. The U.S. war on Iraq launched in 2003, and to a lesser extent the war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999, conducted without the approval of the United Nations, also demonstrate that multilateral agreements are not a necessary condition for U.S. interventions in the internal affairs of other states.

The Anti-Secessionist Regime

Towards the specific issue of secession, liberal institutionalists argue that because the stability of the international system is the basis for cooperation among states and economic prosperity, states obey an anti-secessionist regime that emanated from U.N. declarations and treaties on self-determination in order to

¹⁹ David B. Carment, Patrick James and Dane Rowlands, *op. cit.*

preserve the territorial status quo. Mark Zacher indicates that this regime is founded on the principle of territorial integrity which was strongly supported by the United Nations, the Arab League and the Organization of American States in the aftermath of the Second World War, and later by the Organization of African Unity.²⁰

The normative regime against secession's main objective is to limit the circumstances under which nations have the right to independence. It was created around three types of norms that are not mutually exclusive but which must be understood as an international code of conduct. First, only peoples under colonial rule have the right to declare their independence by claiming self-determination. Second, states must conform to the norm of diplomatic recognition: Only self-determined entities (i.e. evolving under colonial rules) can be recognized as sovereign states. Finally, the non-intervention norm forbids states from intervening in others' internal affairs.²¹ A third state recognizing a secessionist movement that did not qualify as a self-determined unit, would be intruding in the internal affairs of another state. Liberal institutionalists argue that states conform to these norms of behavior because they strengthen the structure of the international system by promoting stability, which guarantees mutual gains among sovereign states.

²⁰ The CSCE Helsinki Final Act in 1975 and the Charter of Paris in 1990 reiterated these norms. Mark W. Zacher, "The Territorial Integrity Norm: International Boundaries and the Use of Force", *International Organization*, Vol. 55, No. 2, 2001, pp. 221-222.

²¹ See Alexis Heraclides, *op. cit.*, 1991. See also Richard Little, *op. cit.*, p. 15-32.

Thus, this international regime constitutes a strong force against secession.²² However, I assert that liberal institutionalists have exaggerated the impact of this regime on states' foreign policy. Several states have indeed departed from this regime by supporting secessionist movements. Belgian support to Katanga and French support to Biafra in the 1960s, or Russian military and economic support to Trans-Dniester in the early 1990s are good examples that do not conform to the anti-secessionist regime. Some states have even extended unilateral recognition to secessionist states, which constitutes a violation of the regime. The Indian unilateral recognition of Bangladesh in 1971, or more recently, the German unilateral recognition of Croatia and Slovenia are interesting cases of defection from regime cooperation.²³

It is true that during the Cold War the United States' attitude towards secessionist efforts conformed to the normative regime against secession. The U.S. repeatedly condemned secessionism as highly disruptive and was strongly committed to states' territorial integrity.²⁴ Facts indicate, however, that the end of the bipolar era strongly reduced the impact of anti-secessionist norms on U.S. behavior towards secession, since Washington departed on several occasions from

²² Heraclides points out that the post-1945 international regime against secession "appears more restrictive than in the aftermath of the First World War, and in practice more hostile than even under the Concert of Europe...". Alexis Heraclides, *op. cit.*, 1991, p. 32.

²³ See Beverly Crawford, "Explaining Defection from International Cooperation: Germany's Unilateral Recognition of Croatia", *World Politics*, Vol. 48, July 1996, pp. 482-521.

²⁴ Evidence shows that during the Cold War the United States was systematically opposed to secession (e.g. Biafra, Katanga, Southern Sudan, etc.) and strongly supported host states. The American recognition of Bangladesh in 1972 was the only exception. In this case, the U.S. extended diplomatic recognition to Bangladesh because India and the Soviet Union rendered its secession inevitable. See Dan Haendel, *The Process of Priority Formulation: U.S. Foreign Policy in the Indo Pakistani War of 1971*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1977.

that regime. U.S. recognition of Croatia and Eritrea are examples showing the failure of the liberal institutionalist argument. Thus, the anti-secessionist regime proposition cannot explain the inconsistency in the U.S. response to secessionist efforts. It is, therefore, unconvincing as an explanation for my inquiry.

Civilizational Ties

In his famous 1993 article published in *Foreign Affairs*, Samuel Huntington argues that cultural ties between political entities—which he calls civilizations—will replace ideological confrontations and power politics considerations as the main source of domestic and international conflicts in the post-Cold War era.²⁵ He asserts that from now on, wars will mainly occur across cultural fault lines dividing world civilizations. According to Huntington, “[g]roups or states belonging to one civilization that become involved in war with people from a different civilization naturally try to rally support from other members of their own civilization”.²⁶ In other words, political entities sharing the same religious roots and a similar politico-economic evolution support and defend one another. To demonstrate the accuracy of his argument, Huntington gives several examples where cultural differences are a great incentive to interstate and intrastate conflicts. He maintains, for instance, that third states’ response to secessionist quarrels is shaped by cultural ties. A foreign state would, therefore,

²⁵ Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, 1993, pp. 22-49. Huntington’s theoretical model is based on the definition of eight civilizations: Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and possibly African. See also Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.

²⁶ Samuel P. Huntington, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 35.

support the side in a secessionist conflict with which it shares civilizational kin. He argues that Germany, the European Community and the United States supported and recognized the independence of Croatia and Slovenia from Yugoslavia in 1992 because these two Yugoslav Roman Catholic republics were part of the Western civilization while the other republics were either part of the Slavic-Orthodox or the Islamic cultural alliance.

Although interesting and imaginative, the cultural ties argument is flawed, at least when applied to the American behavior toward secessionism. Facts show that the U.S. often supports political entities that are not part of the “Western civilization” as defined by Huntington. For instance, the United States supported Bosnia-Herzegovina’s independence in the early stage of the Yugoslav conflict even though Bosnia amalgamated Muslim, Slavic-Orthodox and Western cultures. The U.S. also led a NATO intervention against Slavic-Orthodox Serbia to defend and support the political autonomy of Muslim Kosovo. How would the proponents of the cultural tie argument explain these decisions? First, neither of these two political entities were from Western civilization; and second, Christian Serbia had closer ties to Western civilization than did Muslim Albanians from Kosovo. So, why is it that the U.S. did not support Serbia’s struggle against separatists of the Kosovo Liberation Army? Finally, how can Huntington explain that Washington was the first state to recognize the independence of Eritrea, which is predominantly Muslim, from Christian Ethiopia? Again, if the civilizational argument were to be right, the U.S. would have stood by its “coreligionists” and supported Ethiopia’s territorial integrity.

These are a few examples showing that the United States does not obey the cultural alliance logic when responding to secessionist crises. Therefore, the motivations lying behind the U.S. decision to support one party in a separatist conflict has to be found elsewhere.

Are Integrated Models the Solution?

Lately, scholars have attempted to bring together competing explanations to better account for third state intervention. Some have argued, for instance, that no single paradigm can explain third party intervention because the world is not “black-and-white”.²⁷ The solution, they assert, is to combine neorealist and neoliberal assumptions into integrated models of foreign policy by balancing theories about security and power with those on cooperation and interdependence between states.

Carment, James and Rowlands, for instance, develop such an equilibrium model to explain third party intervention in ethnic conflicts.²⁸ Their model evaluates, among other things, the extent to which a third state is willing to give up cooperation with a host state, such as economic collaboration, in order to support its ethnic minority. This allows them to integrate liberal assumptions into their model by measuring whether domestic politics and public opinion impact a third state’s foreign policy toward ethnic and secessionist conflicts. The model also focuses on the extent to which the realist notion of material interests may lead a

²⁷ Patrick M. Regan, “Choosing to Intervene: Outside Intervention in Internal Conflicts”, *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 60, No. 3, 1998, p. 764.

²⁸ David B. Carment, Patrick James and Dane Rowlands, *op. cit.*

third state to minimize its support to ethnic kin abroad in order to maintain strong cooperation with the host state.

This proposition is praiseworthy and imaginative, but the problem with this equilibrium model is that it generates a complex theory that does not explain well the research puzzle. By trying to provide an exhaustive account of the whole story behind third party intervention, I maintain that their bipolar model ends up explaining little and creates more confusion.

Other scholars have focused their attention on domestic politics to explain third states' foreign policy toward ethnic and secessionist conflicts. They assume that decision-makers are rational actors who try to stay in power by maintaining domestic support and by taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of their state when making foreign policy decisions toward secessionist movements. Based on these premises, scholars developed three main arguments which examine the topic through the lens of ethnic politics, vulnerability, and business interests.

Domestic Ethnic Politics

Ethnic politics has been increasingly regarded as a central motive for third state intervention in ethnic conflicts.²⁹ Saideman argues, for instance, that states support the side of an ethnic conflict that shares ethnic ties with leaders' constituents. He asserts that: "ethnic politics serves as a critical dynamic

²⁹ Karen K. Petersen, "A Research Note: Reexamining Transnational Ethnic Alliances and Foreign Policy Behavior", *International Interactions*, Vol. 30, 2004, pp. 25-42. Stephen Saideman, *op. cit.*, 1997, 2001. David R. Davis and William H. Moore, "Ethnicity Matters: Transnational Ethnic Alliances and Foreign Policy Behavior", *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 41, 1997, pp. 171-184. David Carment and Patrick James, "Two-Level Games and Third-Party Intervention: Evidence from Ethnic Conflict in the Balkans and South Asia", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 1996, pp. 521-554.

compelling some politicians to support secession elsewhere while constraining others".³⁰ His work clearly demonstrates that there is a strong relationship between ethnic ties and third state foreign policy toward secessionist crises.³¹ However, despite the persuasiveness of Saideman's argument, it falls short in predicting U.S. foreign policy. As Saideman himself notes, the United States deviates from the ethnic ties explanation and, therefore, does not conform to the argument.³² He explains the anomaly of this situation by arguing that low U.S. ethnic competition could account for the wrong prediction. We could also argue that the U.S. multicultural composition transforms ethnic groups into antagonist forces that cancel out each others' efforts to influence American decision-makers. One could also assert that U.S. leaders do not pay much attention to ethnic consideration when it concerns a small portion of the U.S. electorate at the time.

Policy analysts have also focused their attention on ethnic politics to argue that U.S.-based diasporas strongly affect American foreign policy toward their homelands. They maintain that U.S. ethnic groups are now a major determinant of American foreign policy.³³ Henry Nau, for instance, asserts that the U.S. is

³⁰ Stephen Saideman, *op. cit.*, 1997, pp. 725-726.

³¹ Saideman studies three cases: the Congo, Nigeria, and Yugoslavia. His work shows that where leaders' constituents share ethnic ties with secessionists, they support secession in 21 cases out of 22; however, when leaders' constituents have ethnic ties with the host state, third state leaders' support the central government in 15 out of 17 cases.

³² Stephen Saideman, *op. cit.*, 2001, pp. 208-209.

³³ Paul Hockenos, *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism & the Balkan Wars*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003. Thomas Ambrosio, "Ethnic Identity Groups and U.S. Foreign Policy", in Thomas Ambrosio, (ed.), *Ethnic Identity Groups and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Westport (CT): Praeger, 2002, pp. 1-19. Yossi Shain and Tamara Cofman Wittes, "Peace as a Three-Level Game: The Role of Diasporas in Conflict Resolution", in Thomas Ambrosio, (ed.), *Ethnic Identity Groups and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Westport (CT): Praeger, 2002, pp. 169-197. Alexander Deconde, *Ethnicity, Race, and American foreign Policy: A History*, Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992.

gradually “losing its ethnic core” from British origin, resulting in the transformation of “its foreign policy into a patchwork of ethnic [...] particularisms”.³⁴ Some have even questioned whether U.S. foreign policy still promotes national interest or if it has been undermined by diaspora’s interests.³⁵ This is not a new issue. Glazer and Moynihan, for example, argued in the 1970s that ethnic influence was “the single most important determinant of American foreign policy”.³⁶ More recently, Shain asserted, among other things, that some ethnic groups have been able to pressure U.S. leaders to adopt supportive policies towards national self-determination movements. To illustrate his argument, Shain gave the example of the Croat-Americans who led an active campaign for the American recognition of Croatia in 1991-92.³⁷

This whole argument about ethnic diasporas was studied in several policy oriented works. However, it has not been systematically evaluated by social scientific inquiries. In some cases, analysts seem to raise examples that well support their assumptions but never perform scientific work to test their argument. Moreover, few ethnic groups are well organized in the United States, with the

³⁴ Henry R. Nau, *At Home Abroad: Identity and Power in American Foreign Policy*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002, pp. 82-84. Nau points out that: “Jewish and Slavic Americans have supported past interventions on behalf of Israel or countries in eastern Europe.” And that “pressure may grow from black, Hispanic, and Asian minorities to intervene in Africa, the Caribbean, Central America, or the Pacific”. Ibid., p. 84.

³⁵ Yossi Shain, “Multicultural Foreign Policy”, *Foreign Policy*, No. 100, 1995, pp. 69-87.

³⁶ Nathan Glazer and Patrick Moynihan, (eds.), *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975, pp. 23-24.

³⁷ Yossi Shain, *Marketing the American Creed Abroad*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

exception of Greek, Jewish, and Irish descent as well as Cuban-Americans.³⁸ Most of the groups are small associations that are not powerful enough to impact U.S. foreign policy. Most of them have little money, little political influence, and little or simply no access to the government. I am not arguing here that ethnic lobbies are not important political actors in the United States. I maintain, however, that their impact on the formulation of American policy toward secessionist movements must be weighed to other factors. Since no scientific work has been conducted in the United States to verify this assertion, my research proposes to systematically measure the accuracy of this argument.

Vulnerability

Neoliberals argue that a state's own vulnerability to internal ethnic turmoil inhibits it from supporting foreign secessionist movements. This proposition, known as the vulnerability argument, was first applied to the African regional context.³⁹ According to this claim, vulnerability explains why states embrace international norms of cooperation such as the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other states. Neoliberals assert that the common vulnerability of African states is a strong incentive for cooperation because defection in this case would be likely to result in a dangerous domino effect leading to the infinite

³⁸ Thomas Ambrosio, *op. cit.*

³⁹ Jeffrey Herbst, "Creation and maintenance of national boundaries in Africa", *International Organization*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 1989, pp. 673-692. Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood", *World Politics*, Vol. 35, No. 1, 1982, pp. 1-24.

redrawing of African borders. In a well documented study on the international dimension of secession in Africa, Zdenek Cervenka summarizes this argument:

Since many are vulnerable to external incitement for secession it was obvious to most of the O.A.U. Members that a reciprocal respect for boundaries, and abstention from demands for their immediate revision, would be to their general advantage. In order to survive, weak African governments had to be assured of the recognition and respect for their sovereignty by neighboring states, as well as any other states in a position to undermine their authority and control.⁴⁰

Neoliberals therefore argue that African states persist over time despite the strength of secessionist movements because leaders have no choice but to accept rules and norms of cooperation.

Although straightforward and parsimonious, this argument was recently proven false. Heraclides has demonstrated that multiethnic states (especially those vulnerable to separatism) are not less likely to support secessionists than homogenous states.⁴¹ Saideman also shows that the vulnerability proposition is not supported by empirical facts. His study indicates that vulnerable third states (including African states) are not deterred from supporting secessionist groups elsewhere.⁴² He concludes that international norms of cooperation among vulnerable states do not account for foreign policy decision-making.

⁴⁰ Zdenek Cervenka, *The Organization of African Unity and its Charter*, New York: Praeger, 1969, pp. 232-233.

⁴¹ Alexis Heraclides, *op. cit.*, 1990.

⁴² Saideman analyzes 30 cases of highly vulnerable third states, which intervened in three secessionist crises: the Congo, Nigeria, and the Yugoslav conflict. His work demonstrates that among the 30 highly vulnerable states, at least 16 of them supported secessionist movements. Stephen Saideman, *op. cit.*, 2001, pp. 65, 98, and 147.

This argument is different from the ‘norms matter’ type of proposition exposed previously since it presumes that domestic vulnerability to secession rather than an international regime is the central motive that inhibits states from intervening in intrastate conflicts. So, the vulnerability proposition is a domestic argument while the regime argument is systemic. However, although the vulnerability model is first concerned with states’ security and stability while the regime argument focuses on rules and norms, the expectation of both propositions is basically the same as they both assert that states follow international norms of non-intervention. It is also interesting to note that by refuting the vulnerability argument, analysts have also demonstrated that norms of cooperation do not really inhibit states from supporting secessionist efforts.⁴³

Furthermore, I assert that the vulnerability argument is not appropriate to understand the United States foreign policy behavior. The multicultural composition of the U.S. society and its emphasis on civic and constitutional nationalism makes it resistant to secessionist claims. Moreover, the indivisibility of the U.S. republic, which resulted from the 19th century Civil War, is a constitutional principle that has been an integral part of the American political culture for almost 150 years. Obviously, that does not mean that the United States is totally invulnerable to secessionist aspirations. Texas and Hawaii, for example, have a long history of separatist claims.⁴⁴ Latin Americans are also increasingly powerful in the South-West States and may eventually develop separatist

⁴³ Stephen M. Saideman, *op. cit.*, 1997, 2001. Alexis Heraclides, *op. cit.*, 1990.

⁴⁴ See, for instance, the work by Norman Meller and Anne Feder Lee on Hawaii’s separatist claim. Norman Meller and Anne Feder Lee, “Hawaiian Sovereignty”, *Publius*, Vol. 27, 1997, pp. 167-185.

ambitions. But overall, we can argue that the United States has a low level of vulnerability to secessionism compared to other Western States such as Canada, the United Kingdom, or France, which are facing strong secessionist movements respectively in Quebec, Scotland and Corsica. Thus, in addition to being empirically refuted by scholars, the vulnerability argument seems very unlikely to explain the U.S. attitude toward secessionist movements.

Business Interests

According to David Gibbs, American private business interests strongly affect U.S. policy towards secessionist conflicts.⁴⁵ Gibbs argues that politicians make policies that are in the interest of corporations with which they share strong ties. As he mentions: “politicians and business people act rationally to further their respective self-interests, and such rational behavior influences the conduct of foreign policy”.⁴⁶ Gibbs’s “Business Conflict Model” assumes that U.S. economic groups are divided according to different interests, and compete to maximize these interests. As a result, the U.S. government is frequently torn between conflicting U.S. foreign economic interests when making policies. Gibbs argues, however, that at the end of the day, the private economic connections of U.S. decision-makers are strongly reflected in the American foreign policy towards secessionist movements. Gibbs tests his argument using the 1960 Congo crisis. He shows that some U.S. economic groups favored the secession of Katanga from the Congo

⁴⁵ David N. Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines, Money, and U.S. Policy in the Congo Crisis*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

because they were expecting to replace Belgian industries in the seceding province, while other business groups opposed secession because they were tied to Belgium and, therefore, their interests lay in a united Congo. Gibbs's analysis also demonstrates that U.S. foreign policy towards the Congo fluctuated from the Eisenhower to the Kennedy administration because each government was tied to different business interests.

The business interest argument is interesting; however, Gibbs's analysis only focuses on the Congo case, which greatly limits the validity and robustness of his model.⁴⁷ Despite this empirical weakness, he argues that the argument can also apply to other situations with even more relevance because U.S. businesses had low interests in the Congo compared to other regions. I disagree with this claim and I counter argue that secessionist attempts often arise in developing countries (e.g. Eritrea, East Timor, Somaliland) where the U.S. has little economic interests, contrary to the case of the Congo, which had enormous reserves of diamonds, gold and silver.⁴⁸ Therefore, I doubt that the business interests argument effectively accounts for U.S. foreign policy variation in other cases. Considering that secessionist efforts often create disruptive effects, it is far from obvious that U.S. business groups could benefit from secession. Think about Bosnia-Herzegovina, East Timor, and Eritrea, for example, where ethnic tensions led to political and economic chaos. Rather, one could argue that U.S. business groups always favor stability and secure investments to any secessionist changes, whatever their

⁴⁷ Gibbs is aware of this problem and raises it on page 202.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 84.

interests in the host state. Furthermore, Alexis Heraclides refutes the neo-colonialist argument according to which industrialized states benefit from secessionist conflicts by treating secessionist leaders as political puppets to maximize their material interests.⁴⁹ His research, based on seven postwar secessionist movements, demonstrates, on the contrary, that Western developed states are in fact less likely than developing countries to support secessionist efforts. Back in 1960, the Congo was a freshly born state with a strong level of economic dependency on Belgium. It was also marked by a strong degree of polarization between foreign economic interests. Consequently, I believe that the case of the Congo was the exception rather than the rule.

Although I doubt that Gibbs's business interest argument accounts for U.S. policy variation, I believe that this proposition needs more investigation before being dismissed. After all, it is a common assumption to assume that U.S. economic interest is the driving force behind its foreign policy, and that the American response to secessionist crises varies on the basis of its economic preferences. Since this is a common belief, I propose to challenge this argument by testing it using other empirical cases.

The following table gives an overview of the different arguments on third states' intervention in secessionist conflicts that have been presented above.

⁴⁹ Alexis Heraclides, *op. cit.*, 1990.

TABLE 2.1: Competing Arguments

Type	Argument
External :	<p><i>Security</i> States support secessionist movements abroad to weaken threatening powers. Thus, secessionist groups within threatening states receive more support than those in weaker states.</p> <p><i>Power</i> Strong states support secessionist groups in weaker states to increase their relative power.</p> <p><i>Norms</i> States obey anti-secessionist norms because they strengthen the structure of the international system by promoting stability. This favors mutual gains among sovereign states.</p> <p><i>Civilizational Tie</i> A third state supports the side in a secessionist conflict with which it shares a civilization bond.</p>
Domestic :	<p><i>Ethnic Ties</i> U.S.-based diasporas affect the conduct of American foreign policy toward secessionism in their homelands.</p> <p><i>Vulnerability</i> State's own vulnerability to internal ethnic turmoil inhibits it from supporting foreign secessionist movements abroad.</p> <p><i>Business Interests</i> The private economic connections of U.S. decision-makers are strongly reflected in the American foreign policy towards secessionist movements.</p>

* Arguments in bold need further testing and will be systematically measured in this dissertation.

U.S. Response to Ethnic Conflicts

Surprisingly enough, the literature on U.S. foreign policy toward ethnic conflicts, and more specifically toward secessionist movements, is rather scarce despite the great number of intrastate conflicts that the United States has had to deal with since the end of the Cold War. Several books and articles have been published on how the U.S. and the international community responded to specific crises like the ones of Bosnia, Kosovo and Rwanda, but little work has focused on

the factors explaining the foreign policy of the United States toward ethnic and secessionist conflicts. Evelyn Farkas and David Callahan are among the rare analysts to have dedicated books to the subject. However, even if their works represent a significant contribution to this sub-field of research, they do not specifically focus their attention on the puzzle under investigation, that is, why the United States sometimes supports and recognizes secessionist states while other times it does not?

In *Fractured States and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Farkas proceeds to a comparative examination of three instances of intra-state conflicts in the 1990s (i.e. Iraq in 1991, Ethiopia and Bosnia) in an attempt to explain U.S. policy regarding partition.⁵⁰ Although interesting and comprehensive, her work is not theoretically driven and her approach does not allow the development of a consistent theoretical model that explains and predicts the behavior of the United States toward secessionist crises. As she acknowledges in the introduction of her book: "There is still no definitive account for why the [U.S.] decisions fell as they did. The following pages offer a tentative look at some of the key factors that influenced policymakers...".⁵¹ Farkas does identify some of these factors but does not insert them into a coherent theory of foreign policy.

In *Unwinnable Wars*, Callahan adopts a different approach.⁵² His policy oriented research aims at formulating policy prescriptions on how the United

⁵⁰ Evelyn Farkas, *Fractured States and U.S. Foreign Policy: Iraq, Ethiopia, and Bosnia in the 1990s*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 4.

⁵² David Callahan, *Unwinnable Wars: American Power and Ethnic Conflict*, New York : Hill and Wang, 1997.

States should respond to broadly defined ethnic conflicts. Based on the analysis of successful and failed cases of U.S. prevention and intervention in ethnic conflicts, Callahan's formulates normative proposals to avoid future ethnic conflicts and suggests circumstances under which the United States should intervene when they do occur. His rich empirical analysis of several ethnic crises contributes to the debate regarding U.S. policy toward secessionist self-determination. However, Callahan does not attempt to explain variation in the U.S. decision to intervene. Also, like Farkas, Callahan does not develop any theoretical model that could be systematically applied to empirical cases to explain this puzzle.

The same criticism can be addressed to Henry Bienen who also focused his attention on U.S. foreign policy toward ethnic conflicts.⁵³ Even though Bienen raises several interesting questions regarding why and when the United States should intervene, his analysis is purely normative and it is motivated by the will of formulating responses to ethnic nationalism that best suits American capacity and interests rather than by the aim of understanding a defined research puzzle.

Thus, recent studies that focused on the connection between American foreign policy and ethnic/secessionist conflicts have failed to produce theoretical models to make sense of U.S. policy toward secessionist conflicts. What's more, these studies have neglected the issue of secessionism per se, and none of them addressed our research puzzle.

⁵³ Henry Bienen, *op. cit.*, pp. 158-179.

Discussion

This chapter reveals that there is a rich body of literature examining third states' motives for intervention. This review examined the various arguments generated on this topic and showed that my research question fits into broader questions of interest to international relations specialists. This chapter also provides important insights into why states might decide to support secessionists and under what circumstances they may be inhibited from doing so. However, I maintain that most of the arguments presented are not convincing enough to explain U.S. behavior vis-à-vis secessionist conflicts. Scholars who developed systemic models are mainly interested in generating large-scale theories of third party intervention rather than foreign policy arguments adapted to particular states. As for the domestic models reviewed above, they do focus on U.S. foreign policy, but their predictive and explanatory strength is exaggerated by their proponents. Finally, scholars who focus on U.S. foreign policy toward ethnic conflicts remain too general in their scope of analysis and do not perform systematic measurement of the assertions and arguments that they put forward. Also, most of them remain in the policy realm and seem better at raising issues than at risking potential answers.

Moreover, this review shows that most of the work deals with third state support to ethnic and secessionist groups rather than with third state recognition of secession. There is a difference, for example, between a third party's ideological encouragement to a secessionist movement and the extension of politico-diplomatic recognition to a secessionist state. In fact, a third state that supports a secessionist group does not necessarily want to grant it formal recognition and

may simply use the issue as a political tool to achieve other goals. International support for secessionist groups has been relatively frequent and expressed in different ways. For instance, for the years 1990 to 1992, Phase III of the *Minorities at Risk Project* (MAR) indicates that 35 foreign states have expressly supported 18 separatist movements, in ways ranging from simple ideological encouragement to full-scale military intervention.⁵⁴ Diplomatic recognition of statehood has been, however, quite rare since 1945. This is because the formal recognition of secession is the ultimate level of third state intervention in an intrastate conflict. It is a very serious and consequential action, due to the fact that it often leads to the dissolution of states and to the creation of others. As a result, because of this substantive difference between simple support and formal recognition of secession, it would be wrong to conclude that factors explaining third state intervention in ethnic conflicts are logically the same as those explaining diplomatic recognition of secessionist states. The literature on third party intervention in ethnic conflicts, therefore, has limitations in explaining international recognition.

In sum, I argue that a new theoretical model focusing on American foreign policy toward secessionism in the post-Cold War era is needed for the following reasons:

- A. Domestic arguments concerning U.S. foreign policy toward secession are overstated—namely business interests and ethnic politics.

⁵⁴ See Louis Bélanger, Erick Duchesne, and Jonathan Paquin, "Foreign Interventions and Secessionist Movements: The Democratic Factor", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 38, No. 2, June 2005, pp. 443-444.

- B. Current systemic models (neorealist and neoliberal) of third states' intervention are empirically refuted and deductively fail to account for the U.S. response to secessionist efforts.
- C. Analyses of U.S. foreign policy toward ethnic conflicts are too broad and suffer from a lack of methodological rigor.
- D. Scholars have focused their attention on third states' support to secessionist groups rather than on third states' recognition of secession, which is substantively different.
- E. Scholars have neglected the study of major powers' foreign policy towards secessionism, which is a crucial aspect of the international dimension of secession.
- F. The superpower status of the United States makes it a very important third state towards secessionist conflicts.
- G. Secessionist movements remain an enduring challenge to the international stability at the dawn of the 21st century. As a result, a coherent model of American foreign policy toward secessionism is needed.

The next chapter is intended to fill the gap in the literature on U.S. foreign policy towards secessionist movements by generating a new model based on regional stability interests. This model will later be tested on case studies and be compared to the competing arguments of ethnic politics and business interests.

3.

*American Foreign Policy and Secessionism:
A Theory of Regional Stability*

Introduction

This chapter develops an argument to explain the U.S. foreign policy variation towards secessionist efforts in the post-cold war. It asserts that the maintenance—or restoration—of regional stability is the U.S.’s paramount interest when dealing with foreign secessionist quarrels and that this motive accounts for the decision to support or not support secessionist states.¹

This assertion of course raises several questions: Why should the United States care about foreign secessionist quarrels in the first place? Are these conflicts a threat to American national security and vital interests? And if the United States is really concerned with the issue of secessionism, why should it care more about regional stability than about other factors such as domestic ethnic politics or business interests when facing it? Before presenting the argument in detail, I propose to establish the connection between U.S. security and its interest in stability to elucidate these questions.

Stability and Secessionist Movements

This chapter argues that the United States adopts a defensive realist position when dealing with secessionist conflicts abroad. More specifically, it

asserts that the U.S. is a defensively positional state, a term that was initially coined by Joseph Grieco. According to 'defensive positionalism', states seek to maintain their relative position and are "sensitive to any erosion of their relative capabilities" since the preservation of their power guarantees their security in a self-help international system.² This defensive realist view of international relations was inspired by Kenneth Waltz's assertion that states' first concern "is not to maximize power but to maintain their position in the system".³ This chapter, therefore, argues that the U.S. acts along the lines of defensive positionalism as Grieco and Waltz would predict.

The U.S.' maintenance of its powerful position in the system is the goal and the driving force of its foreign policy. To succeed in this endeavor, the United States must prevent power losses that could originate from instability in the international system. In other words, I assert that stability is what defines U.S. security.

The U.S. Anti-Secessionist Bias

In the post-cold war era, intrastate conflicts emerged as the main cause of war and as the most disruptive factor to the stability of the international system. Among the different sources of intrastate quarrels, secessionist movements stood

¹ As explained in Chapter 1, regional stability is defined as: a state of peace between sovereign states, the maintenance and respect of international borders (including no refugees flowing across international borders), and the nonintervention in states' internal affairs.

² Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and the limits of cooperation: a realist critique of the newest liberal institutionalism", *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 1988, p. 498.

³ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979, p. 126. Also quoted in Joseph M. Grieco, *op. cit.*, p. 498.

out as one of the most disturbing causes of regional instability. Secessionism creates geopolitical turbulence and represents a threat to international borders. Secessionist movements are generally unstable. They can provoke civil wars (e.g. in Ethiopia, Indonesia, Moldova) and initiate state disintegration (Czechoslovakia, USSR, Yugoslavia). For these reasons, Alexis Heraclides argues that secession is “the most unmanageable of the great security challenges of the post-Cold War era”.⁴ Secessionist demands can also lead to conflict escalation by generating foreign states’ incentives to intervene in these conflicts. As seen in the previous chapter, around 20 percent of all the intrastate conflicts fought since 1945 have involved foreign powers.⁵ Germany’s recognition of Croatia, Albania’s support of Kosovo, and India’s intervention in favor of the Tamils in Sri Lanka are a few examples showing the propensity of secessionist crises to be internationalized.⁶

Conflicts resulting from secessionism can, therefore, harm the functioning of the international system by creating instability within and among states.⁷ Since stability is what defines U.S. security and dominance, secessionism is seen as a threat to Washington’s security interests. For this reason, the U.S. does not address

⁴ Alexis Heraclides, “Secessionist Conflagration: What is to be Done?”, *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 1994, p. 283.

⁵ Lotta Harbom and Peter Wallensteen, “Armed Conflict and Its International Dimensions, 1946-2004”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 42, No. 5, 2005, p. 627.

⁶ Stephen Saideman indicates that secessionist quarrels “have perhaps been the most controversial and internationalized form of ethnic conflicts”. See Stephen M. Saideman, “Is Pandora’s Box Half Empty or Half Full? The Limited Virulence of Secessionism and the Domestic Sources of Disintegration”, in David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, (eds.), *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflicts*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, p. 127.

⁷ Instability results from the increasing disjunction between the way a given regional order was configured and the current state of affairs generated by a secessionist conflict.

secessionist issues from an objective and neutral point of view, but from a pessimistic perspective.⁸ It has always been very reluctant to support secessionist movements, even those that suffered from injustice and repression, because it fears that such an action might encourage other separatist movements to seek independence, which would endanger the management of world peace.⁹ Regional stability has, therefore, precedence over the principle of national self-determination. As Henry Bienen correctly points out, U.S. decision-makers are more concerned “with stability of the state system [...], more concerned about not opening the Pandora’s box of ethnically based demands for new nation-states, than they have been concerned to support self-determination everywhere as a principle”.¹⁰ It is, therefore, not surprising that the U.S. preference is for the maintenance of large multinational countries that can accommodate nationalities and minorities rather than for small destabilizing secessionist states.

Scholars have recently found that there are approximately 5000 ethno-linguistic groups in the world and that about 300 of them are politically mobilized

⁸ Some also argue that the historical background of the United States (i.e. the American civil war) reinforces the U.S. anti-secessionist bias. The former U.S. ambassador to Canada, James Blanchard, mentions in his memoir: “the vast majority of Americans, inside and outside the government, have absolutely no sympathy or patience for the notion of secession. That’s rooted, reasonably or not, in our own Civil War...”. See James J. Blanchard, *Behind the Embassy Door*, Toronto: Sleeping Bear Press, 1998, p. 67.

⁹ See Morton H. Halperin, David J. Scheffer, and Patricia L. Small, *Self-Determination in the New World Order*, Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1992.

¹⁰ Henry Bienen, “Ethnic Nationalisms and Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy”, in Charles A. Kupchan, (ed.), *Nationalism and Nationalities in the New Europe*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995, p. 160.

to defend their interests.¹¹ This indicates that secessionism is and will remain a great source of international disruption, even if only a small portion of these groups seek independence. Supporting secessionist groups could also generate more U.S. involvement in the conflict, including possible military intervention and economic assistance. Finally, the recognition of a secessionist state may compel Washington to redefine its foreign policy toward states of the region affected by secession.

The Research Problem

If the United States is a stability-seeking power, or a defensive positionalist state, that has an anti-secessionist bias, then how can we explain its support for the recognition of several secessionist states in the post-Cold War era, such as Eritrea and Slovenia? What accounts for the U.S. departure from its a priori support for stable international borders? How can we explain that the American government agreed to such territorial modifications? This is counter-intuitive and quite puzzling.

The regional stability argument proposes an answer to these questions. By focusing on the importance of regional stability, this model is an extension of 'defensive positionalism' applied to a specific domain of research. Before presenting the argument in detail, it is important first to delineate assumptions on which the model is built.

¹¹ Ted Robert Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts*. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1993. For a list of discriminated ethnic groups see Minorities at Risk Project. www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/mar (accessed June 2006).

Theoretical Assumptions

The regional stability argument asserts that rational choices determine U.S. foreign policy on secessionism. The model first assumes that American foreign policy is the result of rational decisions made by the presidency, that is an institution composed of several agents and advisors (e.g. Secretary of State, National Security Advisor, CIA director, Secretary of Defense) who do not necessarily have the same interests and who may disagree over policies and actions to undertake.¹² The argument also acknowledges that the American government is, in the words of Richard Neustadt, one of “separated institutions sharing powers”.¹³ As a result of the mechanism of checks-and-balances, which is at the center of the U.S. political system, the President often has to cope with the legislative branch of government in matters of foreign policy.¹⁴ However, the power to recognize foreign governments and states is an exclusive prerogative of the President and the Congress cannot legally oppose such a presidential decision.¹⁵ The presidency has, therefore, a great level of autonomy in that matter.

¹² Graham Allison presents some variants on the rational policy model. See Graham T. Allison, “Conceptual Models of the Cuban Missile Crisis”, *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 63, No. 3, 1969, pp. 689-718.

¹³ Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership with Reflexions on Johnson and Nixon*, New York: Wiley, 1976.

¹⁴ For instance, the Senate has the constitutional right to advise the President during treaty negotiations and the ratification of treaties requires the agreement of two thirds of the Senators. The President must also act jointly with Congress for the nomination of Ambassadors since the Senate must give its consent to presidential nominees.

¹⁵ Following the recognition of the Soviet Union by President Roosevelt in 1933, the Supreme Court of the United States stated that the recognition and the establishment of diplomatic relations with the U.S.S.R. were clearly the decision of the President. See Louis Henkin, *Foreign Affairs and the US Constitution*, 2nd Edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. Previously, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations ruled in 1897, in connection with the Cuban struggle for independence, that “the executive branch is the sole mouthpiece of the nation in communication with foreign sovereignties... [and] therefore, a Congressional recognition of belligerency or independence would

The second assumption is that the presidency seeks to further its subjectively defined goals which are here identified in terms of regional stability. This argument assumes that the presidency selects, on the basis of cost-benefit analysis, the course of action that will bring the greatest expected stability out of each secessionist crisis. The United States foreign policy is, therefore, motivated by instrumental rationality leading to informed decisions.¹⁶ This assumption does not pretend, however, that the presidency is omniscient or that it has all the relevant information to make enlightened choices. It only assumes that it is purposive, rational, and pragmatic.

Third, on the basis of the two previous assumptions, the model assumes that the U.S. presidency possesses a fixed set of preferences towards secessionist crises (ranked in order of priority) and that these preferences determine U.S. policy choices depending on the evolution of each secessionist crisis (these preferences are presented on page 69).¹⁷

be a nullity". See Clarence A. Berdahl, "The Power of Recognition", in Green Haywood Hackworth, *Digest of International Law*, Vol. 1, Chap. I-V, Government Printing Office, Washington, pp. 519-539. See also David Gray Adler, "The President's Recognition Power: Ministerial or Discretionary?", *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 2, 1995, pp. 267-286. For more on the presidential power to recognize new governments see Gregory Weeks, "Almost Jeffersonian: U.S. Recognition Policy toward Latin America", *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 3, 2001, pp. 490-504.

¹⁶ I borrow James Morrow's definition of rationality: "choosing the best means to gain a predetermined set of ends. It is an evaluation of the consistency of choices and not of the thought process, of implementation of fixed goals and not of the morality of those goals". See James D. Morrow, *Game Theory for Political Scientists*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 17. Barry Hindess gives a similar definition of rationality. He emphasizes the predetermination of actors' goals and the consistency in the selection of means to achieve them. Hindess writes: "rationality is a property of actors who have given well-ordered ends. Actors are rational insofar as they choose between them in a consistent fashion, and they select the most appropriate of available means for the pursuit of their ends". See Barry Hindess, *Political Choice and Social Structure*, England: E. Elgar Publisher, 1989, p. 52.

¹⁷ Jeffry Frieden indicates that "in any given setting, an actor prefers some outcomes to others and pursues a strategy to achieve its most preferred possible outcome". See Jeffry A. Frieden, "Actors

The Regional Stability Argument: A Two-Step Approach

Defining regional stability as a U.S. interest allows us to rigorously analyze foreign policy. It serves as an explanatory link between the political disruption caused by a secessionist conflict in a regional environment and U.S. foreign policy decisions. To put it simply, the regional stability interest provides reason for U.S. rational actions toward secessionist crises.

The model argues that it is in the best interest of the United States that secessionist claims be managed and contained within existing state borders. Territorial sovereignty, however, is not always a guarantee of stability and can actually become, under certain conditions, a serious cause of regional disruption. For example, a state that would persecute its secessionist minority in the name of territorial integrity may end up creating regional instability as well as international tensions with other states. The Serbian military repression against secessionist Albanians in Kosovo in 1998-99 produced such an outcome and led NATO forces to intervene against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). Prior to the NATO intervention, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that more than 90,000 Kosovar Albanians had fled to Albania and Macedonia in reaction to Serbian violence, which produced a strong regional disturbance.¹⁸

I therefore argue that providing support to host states that are disruptive is not always in the U.S.'s best strategic interest and such a policy can end up

and Preferences in International Relations", in David A. Lake and Robert Powell (eds.), *Strategic Choice and International Relations*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, p. 41.

¹⁸ UNHCR also indicates that about 410,000 ethnic Albanians were internally displaced following Serb military operations. See International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), *The Responsibility to Protect: Research, Bibliography, Background*, Ottawa: The International Development Research Centre, 2001, p. 113.

encouraging regional disorder. The regional stability argument, therefore, maintains that, under certain specific circumstances and in order to maximize stability, the United States will choose to end support to a central state and to assist instead one or several of its secessionist entities. The model proceeds in the following two steps.

First Step: the U.S. Supports State Integrity

Scenario 1: The model argues that the United States will support state unity as long as the central governments of this state maintain external stability by containing—either peacefully or by force—a secessionist crisis within its borders. Canada is a prime example of a state that peacefully managed a secessionist movement and preserved external stability. The referendum on Quebec secession held by the Quebec government in 1995 was a democratic exercise which had the approval of the Canadian state. The debate over the issue of Quebec's independence was peaceful and democratic, and it was limited to Quebec and Canada. No international dispute resulted from this event. During the referendum campaign, the Clinton administration supported Canadian national unity but stated, at the same time, that the issue was a Canadian internal affair.¹⁹

¹⁹ The traditional U.S. policy toward the Quebec secessionist issue can be summarized as follows: 1) the U.S. preference is for a united Canada, and 2) the U.S. does not want to interfere in Canadian internal affairs. When President Clinton visited Ottawa in February 1995, five months after the election of the secessionist Parti Québécois in Quebec, it is in these terms that he stated the U.S. position regarding the issue: "In a world darkened by ethnic conflicts that literally tear nations apart, Canada has stood for all of us as a model of how people of different cultures can live and work together in peace, prosperity, and respect." He added: "The United States, as many of my predecessors have said, has enjoyed its excellent relationship with a strong and united Canada, but we recognize, [...] that your political future is, of course, entirely for you to decide." See James J. Blanchard, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

Scenario 2: The stability argument predicts that the U.S. will adopt a similar policy in favor of state integrity in cases where a central government maintains external stability but relies on military repression to prevent territorial breakup. The Indonesian war against secessionists in Aceh—the far West province of Indonesia—is a good example that illustrates this scenario. Following the Indonesian military crackdown in the secessionist province, the United States reaffirmed its support to Indonesia’s territorial integrity and encouraged Jakarta to improve its political relationship with Aceh so that unity could be maintained. The U.S. support was reiterated despite Jakarta’s military operations in Aceh, which caused more than 15,000 deaths and 6,000 displaced persons from 1977 to 1999 and about 2000 deaths in recent years.²⁰ Moreover, the U.S. support was reaffirmed even if the Indonesian government constantly rejected Aceh’s proposal to hold a democratic referendum on the political future of the province.

The stability argument asserts that, facing such cases of military intervention against secessionists, the U.S. will support host states but will be worried about potential regional disorder. Indeed, although there may be no immediate external instability resulting from domestic warfare against secessionists, the long-term consequences of such actions are hard to predict and may lead to external turmoil.

As the two cases mentioned above show, secessionists can be treated very differently by their central governments. Quebecers were allowed to express

²⁰ See Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000, p. 359. See also Gautam Kumar Jha, “Indonesia and the ‘Free Aceh Movement’”, *Institute of Peace & Conflict Studies*, Article no. 1054, June 17, 2003. <http://www.ipcs.org/newKashmirLevel2.jsp?action=showView&kValue=1063&subCatID=null&mod=null> (accessed June 2006).

themselves in a referendum on secession, while Acehese were brutally repressed. However, what is important to mention here is that both Canada and Indonesia managed to contain secessionism within their borders and were successful at maintaining external stability in their regional environment (North America and South East Asia respectively). This explains, according to my model, why the United States issued similar responses to both cases.

Scenario 3: In the case where a central state is unable to guarantee external stability but is open to negotiation with secessionists and/or to third party mediation, the model predicts that the United States will remain committed to state integrity. The U.S. will estimate that supporting the central government remains the best way to restore order. The expected stability benefits that would eventually procure the unity of the host state exceed the cost of the external disorder currently produced by the secessionist conflict. Therefore, as long as the central state demonstrates its openness and/or capacity to settle its internal secessionist crisis, the U.S. will categorically oppose secessionist efforts and support state unity.

This would explain why the American government remained committed to Moldova's unity during its war against Trans-Dniester's secessionists. Following Trans-Dniester's declaration of independence in 1991, the Moldovan government was unable to contain the conflict within its borders and the crisis created important regional disorder. Russian forces quickly intervened in Trans-Dniester to protect Russian populations, and Romanian citizens crossed the border to

express their solidarity for Moldovan authorities.²¹ Within a few months, several thousands of Russian-speaking Transdnistrians fled to Ukraine because of the war and by the summer of 1992, there were more than 100,000 refugees.²² At the same time, however, the government of Moldova demonstrated its desire to settle the issue by initiating negotiations with secessionists and by accepting foreign mediation.²³ The government of Moldova agreed to provide economic and cultural autonomy to Trans-Dniester and a political agreement sponsored by Russia, Ukraine, and the OCSE was reached by the two parties in 1997.²⁴ Throughout the conflict, the United States supported Moldova's government. Although Washington was not directly involved in peace negotiations, it was represented within the OCSE.²⁵ The attitude shown by the Moldovan state during the secessionist conflict had a decisive impact on the evolution of the U.S. policy. The government of Moldova's will to resolve the crisis led the Americans as well as regional powers to uphold their support in favor of its integrity and to oppose the

²¹ Russia armed and trained Trans-Dniester's paramilitary forces in early 1992 and some Russian leaders described the new Trans-Dniester republic as "Russian soil". Later that year, the Russian Fourteenth Army became directly involved in the secessionist crisis by being engaged in a full-scale battle against Moldovan arm forces. See Vladimir Socor, "Moldova's 'Dniester' Ulcer", *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 1, January 1st, 1993, pp. 13-14.

²² Airat R. Aklaev, "Dynamics of the Moldova-Trans-Dniester ethnic conflict (late 1980s to early 1990s)", in Kumar Rupesinghe and Valery A. Tishkov, (eds.), *Ethnicity and Power in the Contemporary World*, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1996.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 16. In 1992, several international delegations visited Moldova in an attempt to resolve the crisis. For example, the Council of Europe, the Office of the U.N. Secretary-General, and OSCE representatives all visited Moldova.

²⁴ Vladimir Kolossov and John O'Loughlin, "Pseudo-States as Harbingers of a New Geopolitics: The Example of the Trans-Dniester Moldovan Republic (TMR)", in David Newman, (ed.), *Boundaries, Territory and Postmodernity*, London: Frank Cass Publishers, 1999.

²⁵ *Ibid.* In a meeting with Moldova's President Mircea Ion Snegur held in 1992, U.S. President George Bush and Secretary of State James Baker assessed that Moldova's treatment of its Russian ethnic minority was fair and nondiscriminatory.

self-proclaimed Transdnestrans Moldovan Republic.²⁶ Had Moldova acted in bad faith by being opposed to political negotiations and mediation, the model predicts that the U.S. would have reconsidered its diplomatic options and may have supported Trans-Dniester's independence.

So far, the logic of the stability argument leads us to predict that the U.S. will support host states either because they contain their secessionist factions within their borders or because the maintenance of host state's integrity provides opportunities for the restoration of stability. I maintain, however, that this consistency in the U.S. response to secessionist crises will not hold in cases where the central state is neither open to negotiations and/or foreign mediation, nor able to contain its secessionist crisis within its borders.

Scenario 4: If the host state fails both at the domestic and at the external levels, the theory predicts that the U.S. calculation of costs and benefits will radically change and that the presidency will be pressed to modify its position. The United States will conclude that the host state no longer has the capacity to resolve the crisis and that it is a central obstacle to the restoration of regional stability. The model then argues that American decision-makers will consider the support and the recognition of secessionist states as a political tool to bring back stability and peace in the disputed region.

I argue in Chapter 4 that at some point in time, Yugoslavia fell into that category of states. The Yugoslav federal government was paralyzed in the early

²⁶ Since its unilateral declaration of independence in 1991, Trans-Dniester has not been recognized by the international community. See Robert M. Cutler, "Moldova/Transdnistria", *Foreign Policy in Focus*, Self-Determination Conflict Profile, 2001. <http://www.selfdetermine.org/conflicts/moldova.html> (accessed July 2006).

1990s as a result of Serbian and Croatian opposition over state reforms. This led Slovenia and Croatia to secede from the federation in 1991. This event had several major consequences: it resulted in a war between Croatia and Serbia that quickly spread to Bosnia; it precipitated Yugoslavia's disintegration; and produced a large amount of refugees that fled to neighboring states. As a result of the disturbance, Yugoslavia could no longer either initiate domestic negotiations between its republics or contain the conflict within its borders. When it became clear that the federation could no longer hold and that the recognition of secessionist republics was the only way to slowly restore stability in the Balkans, the United States shifted its policy and acknowledged independence in 1992, even though it had been one of the strongest supporters of Yugoslavia's territorial integrity until then. Yugoslavia serves, therefore, as an unfortunate example of what happens when external stability and internal negotiations fail.

Measuring the First Step of the Argument

The variables 'external stability' and 'internal negotiation' are at the center of the U.S. decision to support or not support central states and these variables, as we have seen, constitute the first step of the theory. It is important to mention that the central state must simultaneously fail internally and externally for such a policy change to occur on the part of the United States. The external stability variable is intimately linked to the Westphalian conception of sovereignty, which

is based on states' territoriality and on the principle of the non-violation of states' sovereignty.²⁷ A derogation from this principle will produce interstate instability.

But how do we know whether a central government fails to maintain external stability? What accounts for its variation? I trace here two main indicators that allow us to measure fluctuation in stability. The presence or absence of cross-national refugees is the first indicator. Intrastate conflicts resulting from secessionist attempts can produce international refugees, which constitutes a violation of sovereign states' borders. Cross-national refugees are likely to disrupt the internal order of neighboring states, to unbalance their ethnic composition, to inflict higher economic costs on them, and even to foment ethnic conflicts. Host states that fail to contain their populations within their borders while struggling against secessionists will, therefore, cause regional instability. In a recent study, Salehyan and Gleditsch show that cross-national refugees are a major cause of the diffusion of intrastate conflicts and of regional instability.²⁸ Moreover, Myron Weiner indicates that a "host country's decision to grant refugee status [...] often creates an adversary relationship with the country that produces the refugees". Weiner notes that democratic regimes often face this problem because they "allow their refugees to speak out against the regime of their country of origin".²⁹

²⁷ Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

²⁸ Idean Salehyan and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Refugees and the Spread of Civil War", *International Organization*, Vol. 60, 2006, pp. 335-366.

²⁹ Myron Weiner, "Security, Stability, and International Migration", *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1992-93, p. 107. Weiner's article focuses on how refugee flows create domestic and regional conflicts. He also identifies when cross-national refugees are perceived as threats.

The second indicator has to do with whether or not opponents violate the territorial integrity of contiguous states during the secessionist dispute. The intrusion, for instance, of secessionist fighters or of the central government's military into neighboring states as part of a political or military tactic may create great regional disturbance and increase the chances of interstate dispute. Alexis Heraclides demonstrates that contiguous states are naturally inclined to intervene in secessionist conflicts at their doorstep.³⁰ It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that the territorial violation of a contiguous state by either the host state or the secessionists risks accelerating the intervention of the contiguous state in the conflict.³¹

Indicators of the failure of internal negotiation are very straightforward. They are essentially the main factors preventing a political resolution of a given secessionist crisis. The host state will fail at the internal level if it is categorically opposed to political negotiations with secessionists; if it rejects third states or international organizations' mediation (e.g. UN, OCSE, AU, etc.); if it uses military repression against secessionists; or finally, if the central government is paralyzed or collapses, therefore making any resolution of the conflict impossible.

³⁰ Alexis Heraclides, "Secessionist Minorities and External Involvement", *International Organization*, Vol. 44, No. 3, 1990, pp. 341-378. Siverson and Starr argue that most of the states can only use their military capability for short distances. Therefore neighboring conflicts represent a real opportunity for states to intervene. See Randolph M. Siverson and Harvey Starr, *The Diffusion of War*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991.

³¹ For instance, the large amount of East Pakistanis who fled to India as a result of the West Pakistani repression against the Bengali secessionist movement in the early 1970s accelerated India's involvement in the secessionist crisis and led to an Indo-Pakistani war in 1971.

TABLE 3.1:
First Step of the U.S. Stability Calculation

<p>External Stability</p> <p>Indicators of a Central State's External Instability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The secessionist crisis produces cross-national refugee flows- Antagonists violate the sovereignty of contiguous states
<p>Internal Negotiations</p> <p>Indicators of Central State's Failure to Negotiate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The central government refuses to negotiate with secessionists and rejects third party mediation- Central authorities exercise military repression against secessionists- The central government is paralyzed or collapses

The model assumes that the host state does not necessarily have to exhibit all these types of instability to be considered a disturbing agent by the United States. Rather, the theory argues that the U.S. may undertake a significant political shift in favor of the secessionists if at least one external and one internal indicator simultaneously show a breakdown in stability. Thus, a central state can lamentably fail at the external level by causing strong regional disorder and still be backed by the U.S. if it shows internal efforts to settle the issue. Conversely, the U.S. presidency will support a central state that contains secessionism even if it is achieved through political and military repression.

Second Step: the U.S. Supports Secession as a Last Resort

In the event that the central state fails at both levels, the argument predicts that the United States will raise the possibility of supporting secessionists. The model asserts, however, that before seriously considering politico-diplomatic recognition of secessionist states, the U.S. will want the assurance that secessionist leaders are able to maintain external and internal stability. American decision-makers will not be interested in recognizing a new state that is likely to replicate the instability of the predecessor state. Moreover, a secessionist movement that would act in bad faith in the first phase of the negotiation process with the central government, in order to force a political deadlock or purely to provoke the collapse of the host state, will be unlikely to qualify for recognition as the United States will perceive that movement as a disruptive force on regional stability.

Scenario 5: If the secessionist group succeeds in showing internal and external stability, the United States will grant recognition, which is expected to produce a net gain of regional stability.³² I argue in Chapter 7 that the United States committed itself to recognize Eritrea's independence because the Ethiopian government had become unable to assure regional stability, while the Eritrean authorities fulfilled domestic and external criteria of stability.

Scenario 6: If the secessionist state is unable to achieve stability, however, the U.S. recognition will be denied and the status quo will be maintained. I argue

³² This gain, however, is an expectation rather than a certainty, since the U.S., like any other state, operates in a state of uncertainty and usually possesses incomplete information for making foreign policy decisions.

that this is what happened to Kosovo, which failed to obtain international recognition in the 1990s because of a lack of internal and external stability.³³

Measuring the Second Step of the Argument

As in the first part of the argument, the second step is composed of two variables: external stability and internal stability. To meet the external requirements of stability, the model argues that the secessionist group must first accept their former internal boundaries as their new international borders. Territorial revisionism through irredentism, for instance, would not be tolerated. Mark Zacher shows that since 1945 all the new states that were created through state breakups have kept (whether or not they wanted to) their former internal borders as legal international ones. Zacher points out: “states generally desire predictability regarding the international territorial order. They do not like secessions, but if they are going to occur, they do not want the successor states fighting over what their boundaries should be”.³⁴ The United States is definitely not an exception here. The model also asserts that secessionist states must avoid

³³ However, the political status of Kosovo, established by the Rambouillet agreement and by the 2001 Constitutional Framework, is an interesting international development that arose out of the failure of both the Former Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and Kosovo to guarantee regional stability. Instead of maintaining the status quo, the U.N. created a new model of non-Westphalian state sovereignty—Kosovo remains officially part of FRY, but is administered by the U.N. and Belgrade has no effective power within it. This new kind of “flexible” sovereignty conferred to Kosovo may actually be seen as part of a new generation of responses from the U.S. and the international community to situations where a secessionist state cannot remain part of a host state nor become fully independent because of instability. See John Doyle, “International Mediation in Ethnic Conflict and Practical Models of Non-Westphalian Sovereignty: From Kosovo to Northern Ireland”, paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association in Montreal, March 2004.
http://64.112.226.77/one/isa/isa04/index.php?click_key=1&PHPSESSID=a98365db7a459f4d446ea5644da87151 (accessed July 2006).

³⁴ Mark W. Zacher, “The Territorial Integrity Norm: International Boundaries and the Use of Force”, *International Organization*, Vol. 55, No. 2, 2001, pp. 234-235.

intervention in the internal affairs of other sovereign states. Secessionist governments pursuing political revenge or an aggressive foreign policy toward neighboring states will clearly fail the test of external stability. As explained in Chapter 5, Greece argued that the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had irredentist ambitions because it referred to itself as “Macedonia” which was already the name of a Greek province. This partly explains why the United States suspended its decision to recognize Macedonia’s independence. Secessionist leaders who produce cross-national refugees by their policies and actions will also fall short. Moreover, the secessionist state must be at peace with its neighbors when asking for recognition. I assert that the United States will be reluctant to recognize secessionist entities that might engage in an inter-state war. Finally, a secessionist group must have a defined territory within the host state (i.e. region, canton, province, republic, state) to qualify for recognition. Secessionists who cannot juxtapose their claim to self-determination to a defined territory will fail to be recognized since international recognition implies that the recognized unit exercises sovereignty over a defined piece of land. A secessionist state that would not have legally defined internal boundaries within a host state would be likely to be the victim or the instigator of territorial revisionism and might experience political crises with foreign contiguous states and/or with its predecessor state over territory.

As for the internal dimension of stability, it partly refers to Krasner’s domestic definition of sovereignty, which he explains as “the organization of public authority within a state and the level of effective control exercised by those

holding authority”.³⁵ I argue that the effective control of the territory by secessionists is a prerequisite for stability. Secessionist leaders who fail to achieve such control might face intrastate conflicts and recurrent instability.

Moreover, secessionist authorities must provide guarantees that their state’s internal boundaries will be maintained following independence. Any change of intrastate boundaries undertaken by secessionist leaders will necessitate public consent. This indicator was inspired by the principle of the unchangeability of borders contained in the Helsinki Accords that was signed by the members of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) which included the United States.³⁶ Another important aspect of internal stability is legitimacy. The regional stability argument assumes that the internal stability of a secessionist state is not limited to the political control exercised by its leaders, but it also includes the political legitimacy of the new state. Secession, as well as the authority of secessionist leaders, has to be legitimized by public consent, otherwise instability will be likely to remain or to reemerge in the future. Thus, a popular consultation on the issue of independence has to be held by secessionist authorities—assisted by international actors if necessary—to measure the extent to which the population living in the secessionist territory agrees to secede and to renounce being part of the host state.

The respect and the protection of minorities and human rights will also be taken into account by the United States as an important aspect of internal

³⁵ Stephen D. Krasner, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

³⁶ The Helsinki Act established principles guiding relations between states such as territorial integrity, inviolability of frontiers, respect for minority rights and peaceful settlement of disputes. See Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, *Final Act*, Helsinki: CSCE, 1975.

legitimacy. A military junta that would unilaterally proclaim independence without taking into account the will of the people and human rights would definitely fail the test of internal legitimacy. In a similar vein, David Callahan argues: “democratically inclined secessionists present a better case for independence than do nationalists who seek statehood for chauvinistic reasons and offer no guarantee of democracy. There is little appeal in backing the creation of new states that are likely to be authoritarian.”³⁷ Here is a summary of the indicators of secessionist states’ stability:

TABLE 3.2:
Second Step of the U.S. Stability Calculation

<p>External Stability</p> <p>Indicators of external stability of the secessionist state:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Secessionists respect international borders (including no cross-national refugees)- Secessionists demonstrate that no interstate war is likely to occur following independence (absence of irredentism, revenge, and aggression)- The secessionist group must have a defined territory within the central state (region, canton, province, republic, state, etc.)
<p>Internal Stability</p> <p>Indicators of internal stability of the secessionist state:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Secessionist authorities achieve effective control of the territory- Leaders respect internal boundaries, or modify them with public consent- Secessionists agree to hold a democratic referendum on independence- The new state respects human and minority rights

<http://www.osce.org/about/13131.html> (accessed June 2006).

³⁷ David Callahan, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

Unlike the first part of the argument, in which the host state could fail at one level and still be supported by the United States, the second step of the model represents a much harder test for those who want to leave a host state. Secessionists must not only succeed at maintaining external and internal order, but they must also obtain domestic legitimacy in order to be recognized by the U.S. This difficult test is justified by the fact that secession has more international implications than the maintenance of the territorial status quo. Indeed, secessionist states break with the international principle of states' integrity and may occasion unexpected consequences such as the spillover effect. The international recognition of secession is, therefore, a risky exercise. As Robert Young points out, "even peaceful secessions are times of much disruption and uncertainty. They mark profound changes in the relations between peoples and between states".³⁸ Therefore, before providing support and recognition to secessionists, the model argues that the U.S. will make sure that the seceding state meets stability criteria defined in terms of state authority, territorial control, and popular consent.

The model also predicts that the U.S. will delay or withhold recognition if a secessionist group partially meets the criteria of external and internal stability. Diplomatic recognition will then be withheld until secessionists demonstrate sufficient capability to maintain order.

Moreover, it is important to note that not all empirical cases will chronologically follow the two steps of the argument. Some secessionist cases can

³⁸ Robert A. Young, "How Do Peaceful Secessions Happen?", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 27, 1994, p. 782.

clearly demonstrate, right from the beginning of the crisis, that they are able to maintain stability but will not be recognized by the United States because their host state will be able to properly manage the conflict.

Furthermore, if a host state that initially failed to maintain external stability and to negotiate with secessionists improves its ability to handle the secessionist crisis, then the United States could move back to the first level of the argument and focus its diplomatic efforts on supporting the integrity of the state. This is an important theoretical precision that makes the stability model more of an axis of foreign policy options rather than a one-way linear process. The United States will not hesitate to move back and forth from one step of the argument to the other step in order to maximize what it perceives as an improvement in regional order.

The model also argues that the United States will not recognize the independence of great powers' secessionist movements (e.g. Chechnya, Corsica, Northern Ireland, Tibet) because it would be extremely harmful to its stability and security interests. Even if the U.S. is the dominant power, its support for secessionist movements evolving within other great powers could lead the American government to face economic reprisals, military escalation and maybe nuclear threat from these states. In the previous chapter, I criticized the balance of threat argument for similar reasons. I argued that it is very unlikely that the Americans would support the independence of Taiwan or Chechnya, for instance, to weaken China and Russia even if they become at some point highly disruptive states and fail to contain their secessionist movements.

Moreover, these great powers (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom) are all permanent members of the U.N. Security Council. Supporting

their secessionist groups could significantly harm the conduct of international diplomacy and the management of the international political system. It would be, therefore, irrational to argue that the United States would support great powers' secessionist movements to maximize its stability benefits since it is evident that such an action would jeopardize its security. The expected reaction of the United States toward secessionist conflicts occurring within great powers is, therefore, consistent with the regional stability argument. I argue that, unless a great power disintegrates, as in the case of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States will not move to the second step of the stability model regardless of how great powers deal with their secessionist movements.

Intervening Variable: Do Regional and Great Powers Matter?

The international dimension of secessionist conflicts is of course more complex than simple interstate dyadic relations. The decision making process leading the U.S. to support or not support secessionist efforts is not only affected by its relationship with the host state and with the secessionist movement but is also influenced by the position of regional and great powers on the issue. Indeed, as one unit of the international system (be it the most powerful unit), the United States must interact with the other states of the system and some of them can potentially play an important role in the secessionist conflict. Thus, the model argues that Washington's response to secessionist movements is multidimensional and that the actions of other powers can affect the application of U.S. foreign policy toward secessionist crises. As a result, the recognition/nonrecognition of secessionist states by regional or great powers will be treated as an intervening

variable. This variable will allow for the measurement of the real impact of regional stability on the United States' reaction to secessionist attempts by showing the extent to which other powers can compel the U.S. to recognize secessionist states or inhibit it from doing so.

I define the intervening variable in terms of recognition versus nonrecognition of secessionist states by regional or great powers rather than in terms of support versus non-support to these states. Indeed, supporting a secessionist group is likely to increase tension between a third state and a host state but will not produce structural changes. The diplomatic recognition of a secessionist state, however, has a direct impact on the regional system, that is to say on the regional environment of the secessionist state since it potentially makes independence a *fait accompli*. Here I argue that it is the issue of whether or not other powers choose to recognize secessionist states that can impact U.S. foreign policy decision-making. The theory asserts, however, that although the American government takes into account other states' foreign policy when making its own decisions on the matter, the cost-benefit analysis of the U.S. presidency will be first and foremost dictated by its regional stability interests no matter what the policy of other great powers may be on the issue.

FIGURE 3.1: The U.S. Regional Stability Argument

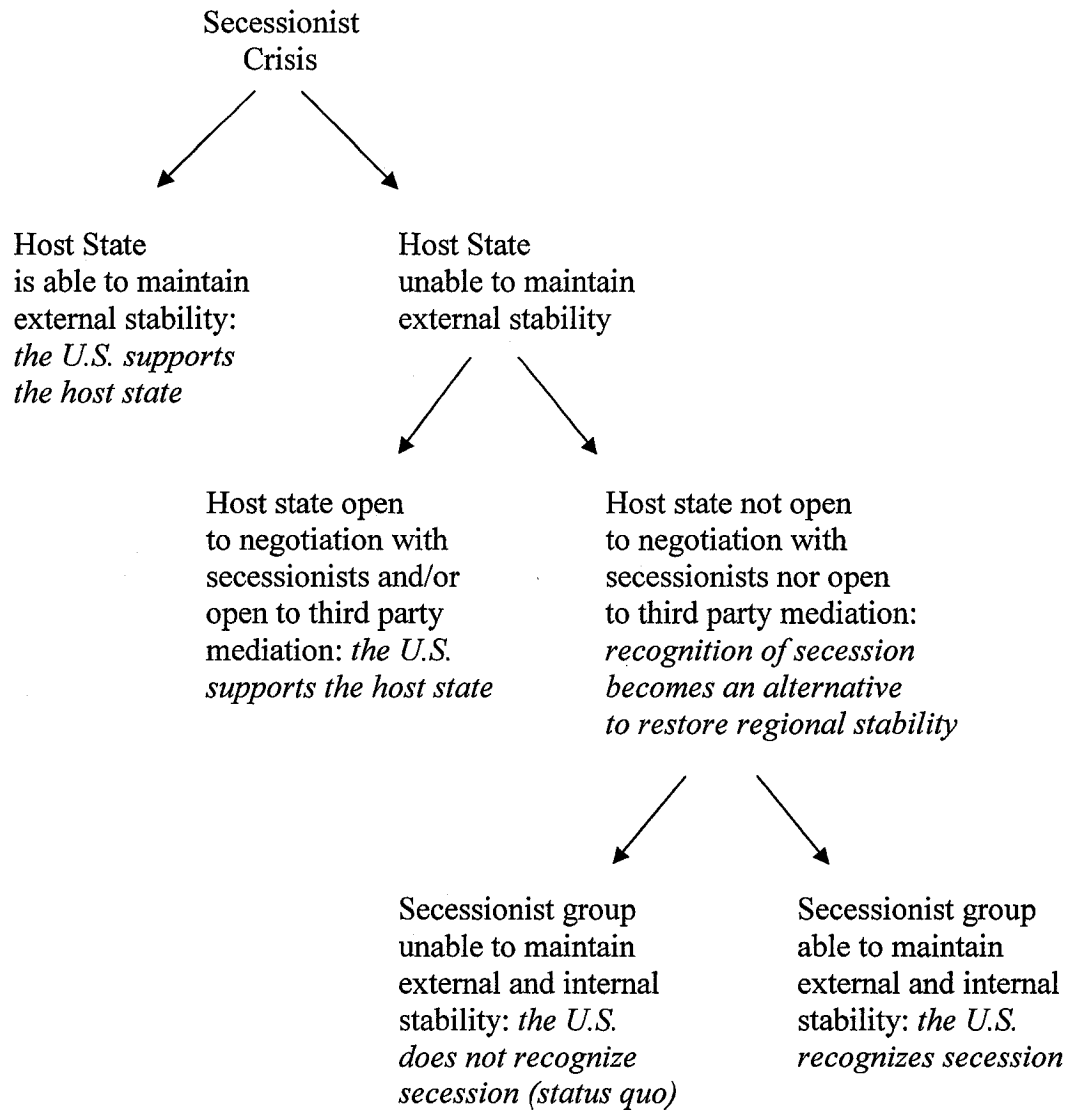
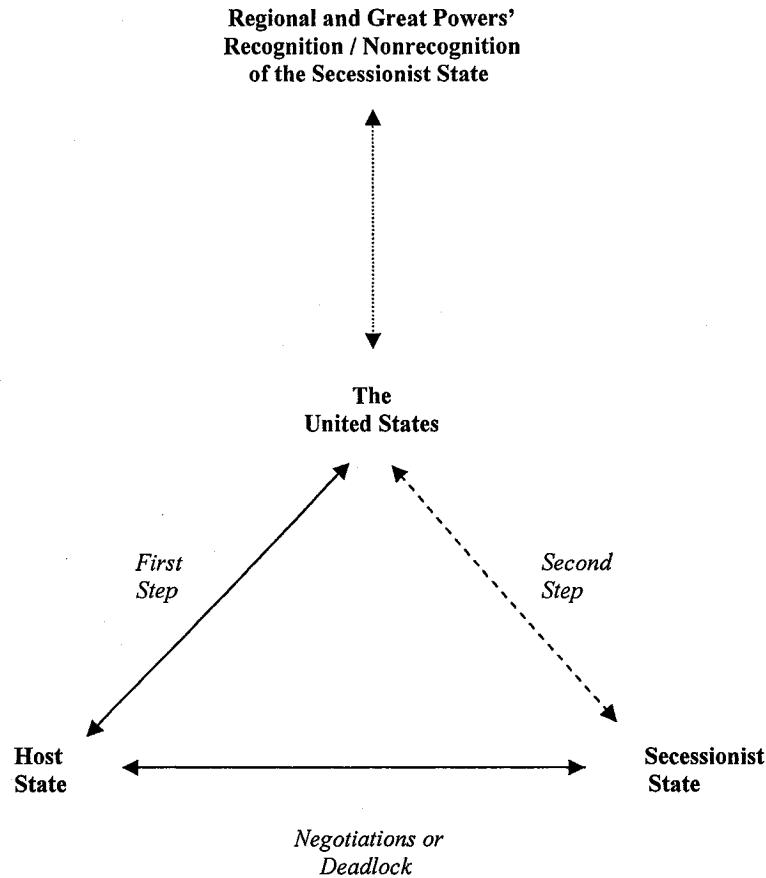


FIGURE 3.2: The Dynamics of the Model



The U.S. Stability Preferences

The regional stability argument defines the United States' preferences towards secessionist conflicts. These preferences—which are ranked in order from the most to the least favored outcome—identify U.S. foreign policy choices that will be made depending on the evolution of the crisis. Preferences are ranked as follows:

1. The host state is able to maintain external stability and negotiates with secessionists and/or is open to third party mediation. Outcome: Regional stability. Examples: Canada (Quebec), France (Corsica), Spain (Basque Country).
2. The host state is able to maintain external stability but rejects negotiations with secessionists or third party mediation. Outcome: Stability but a risk of regional disorder. Examples: Georgia (Abkhazia), Indonesia (Aceh).
3. The host state is unable to maintain external stability but is open to negotiation and/or to third party mediation. Outcome: Instability but the restoration of regional order remains possible. Example: Moldova (Trans-Dniester).
4. The secessionist group demonstrates ability to maintain external and internal stability, while the host state does not. Outcome: The U.S. extends diplomatic recognition to the secessionist state. Examples: Eritrea (Ethiopia), Slovenia (Yugoslavia).
5. The secessionist group is unable to guarantee external/internal stability and the host state represents a clear obstacle to regional stability. Outcome: Status quo. The U.S. does not recognize secession. Examples: Kosovo (Serbia), Tamils (Sri Lanka).

Built on rationalist assumptions and previous deductions regarding the behavior of U.S. foreign policy towards secessionist crises, the regional stability model generates the following testable hypotheses:

Hypotheses

H1: The United States opposes secession if the host state maintains external stability.

H2: The U.S. opposes secession if the host state is open to negotiation with secessionists and/or to third party mediation.

H3: The U.S. recognizes the secessionist state if it demonstrates the ability to maintain internal and external stability, while the host state does not.

H4: The U.S. opposes secession if the secessionist state does not demonstrate clear ability to maintain internal and external stability even if the host state likewise lacks ability to maintain order.

Theoretical Contribution

Most of the time, the concept of stability is imprecisely used in the literature on U.S. foreign policy and very little explanation is offered as to how this concept impacts the behavior of the United States. As for the notion of “national interest”, for example, the concept of stability is often used without proper definition and often draws from intuitive thinking rather than from sound theoretical justifications and explanations. Alexander George and Robert Keohane point out that national interest is “so elastic and ambiguous a concept that its role as a guide to foreign policy is problematical and controversial”.³⁹ The same observation applies to the concept of stability. It performs poorly as a scientific concept when not properly defined and operationalized.

This research attempts to clarify the ambiguous notion of stability that is often used to explain U.S. policy toward secession. It is often assumed, for instance, that the United States opposes secessionist movements because it values stability; or that secessionism must be contained because it is inherently unstable and challenges the international status quo (i.e. the geopolitical order). These arguments, however, do not account for variations in U.S. policy.

The stability model that I propose provides theoretical mechanisms that establish a clear connection between U.S. foreign policy and regional stability. On the basis of these mechanisms, the theory generates a rationalist explanation that accounts for the fluctuation of U.S. foreign policy toward independentist states. In

³⁹ Alexander L. George and Robert O. Keohane, “The Concept of National Interests: Uses and Limitations”, in Alexander L. George, (ed.), *Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy: The Effective Use of Information and Advice*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1980, p. 217.

other words, it provides a theoretical understanding as to how the notion of stability plays on the American behavior toward secessionism.

The regional stability model is also testable and parsimonious. It could be disproved if one could demonstrate, for instance, that the United States had recognized a secessionist state, while the host state was still able to maintain external stability or was open to negotiations. It would also be wrong if someone could show that the U.S. extended recognition to a secessionist group that could not maintain stability.

Finally, it should be kept in mind that the function of a theory is to simplify the complexity of a phenomenon without losing the essence of what we perceive as reality. As Kenneth Waltz indicates in his seminal *Theory of International Politics*, a theory “is not an edifice of truth and not a reproduction of reality [...]”. A theory is a depiction of the organization of a domain and of the connections among its parts”.⁴⁰ Thus, the regional stability theory seeks to isolate the main variables that affect American foreign policy and to explain how they interact together to produce the observable outcomes. As a result, the purpose of this research is not to raise the myriad of factors that may play a role in the U.S. foreign policy decision-making but to circumscribe the major variables on which the theoretical model can be operationalized and generalized to other cases.

⁴⁰ Kenneth N. Waltz, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

Methodology

In order to test whether the regional stability argument accurately explains U.S. foreign policy variations toward secession, I propose to compare my model to the business interests and ethnic politics propositions which have been presented in Chapter 2. These domestic considerations are arguably the most serious rival hypotheses to my model since they have been relatively influential in the recent years. My aim is to demonstrate that the American policy fluctuation toward secessionist quarrels does not primarily depend on its domestic political process but rather on the systemic effects of international relations. To achieve this goal, I selected empirical cases of secessionist attempts that are likely to validate the ethnic politics and business interest argument. For each of these cases, I first test my own theoretical proposition, and then see whether the competing theories do a better job at explaining the research question. If these domestic explanations are as good as their proponents suggest they should succeed these empirical tests.

Case Selection

Instances of secession are limited and, therefore, the selection of cases cannot be randomly generated. For this reason, I have selected cases that are significant for the measurement of my research hypotheses. Here I proceed to a systematic analysis of cases picked in two different regional contexts namely the Balkans and the Horn of Africa. For each region, I assemble recognized and unrecognized cases of secession. The Balkan context also includes a case where recognition was delayed, for a final total of six cases. The cases are: Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Slovenia (Balkans); Eritrea and Somaliland (Horn of

Africa).⁴¹ Croatia and Slovenia are treated together since the United States issued the same policy toward them and recognized their independence at the same moment.

I compare Croatia and Slovenia to Kosovo because these cases evolved in a similar regional context although they had a very different political fate. Croatia and Slovenia are former Yugoslav republics that were recognized by the U.S. in 1992, while Kosovo failed to achieve recognition. Macedonia is also included because the United States delayed its recognition for a long period of time. Its independence was declared in 1991 but was only recognized by the U.S. in 1994 and the Clinton administration waited until late 1995 to send an ambassador to Skopje, the Macedonian capital.

As for Eritrea, it is the only successful case of secession that happened in Africa in the post-cold war era. Eritrea formally seceded from Ethiopia in 1993 after more than 30 years of war. It is one of the most recent cases of secession. As for Somaliland, Eritrea's secessionist neighbor, it attempted to secede from Somalia in 1991 by declaring itself the independent Republic of Somaliland. However, contrary to Eritrea, it has never been recognized by the international community. Thus, although these two cases are very similar given that they come from the same sub-regional context and that they both emerged from collapsing states in the early 1990s (Ethiopia and Somalia), they experienced very different outcomes.

⁴¹ The case of Bosnia-Herzegovina was left out because it is not an instance of secession but rather the result of Yugoslavia's disintegration. When the Bosnian population opted for independence in late February 1992, Yugoslavia had already ceased to exist. Yugoslav president Mesic had declared the end of Yugoslavia in September 1991 when it became apparent that the central government had lost control over the Yugoslav People's Army.

These cases provide very different dynamics as well as a good representation of the U.S. foreign policy variation toward secession. I am hoping that this selection will confirm the generalizability of the model. Moreover, by selecting for variation in my dependent variable, I counter the problem of selection bias. Indeed, this selection of cases represents the whole range of possibilities on the empirical axis of cases (i.e. recognition vs. nonrecognition cases). This selection will, therefore, allow for a proper estimation of the strength of the model.

TABLE 3.3: Case Studies

Region	U.S. Response	
	Recognition	Nonrecognition
Balkans	Croatia Macedonia Slovenia	Kosovo
Horn of Africa	Eritrea	Somaliland

I chose not to include cases of secession from the Soviet Union since it was a superpower. Therefore, as long as the Soviet Union remained, the U.S. did not step forward to recognize the Baltic States, for instance, which were the first to secede.⁴² The United States issued recognition to these former Soviet Republics only once Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine agreed to dismantle the U.S.S.R. in

⁴² Nikolas K. Gvosdev, "The Formulation of an American Response to Lithuanian Independence, 1990", *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 1995, pp. 17-41.

December of 1991. Acting otherwise could have jeopardized U.S. security and stability interests as explained previously.

How are U.S. Foreign Policy Decisions Framed?

To be accurate, the U.S. theory of regional stability must take into account the internal process of U.S. foreign policy decision-making so that it can explain the causal mechanism that generates observable outcomes (i.e. recognition versus nonrecognition of secessionist states). This is not an easy task. The U.S. foreign policy apparatus includes a large number of foreign policy actors and the information concerning inter-agency debates on foreign policy issues is sometimes scarce. Despite these difficulties, I attempt to shed some light on the causal process or sequence of events that intervenes between my independent and dependent variables. To achieve this objective I use the method of process-tracing.⁴³ By tracing the processes of U.S. decision-making through detailed case studies, this method helps to circumscribe the number of potential causes that explain the variation of my dependent variable (recognition vs. nonrecognition). This method allows me to demonstrate the extent to which the independent variables of the regional stability model really influence U.S. decision-makers toward secessionist crises abroad. The understanding of the causal explanation is crucial. As George and Bennett argue:

[E]ven when rational choice theory or other formal models predict outcomes with a fairly high degree of accuracy, they do not constitute acceptable causal explanations unless they demonstrate

⁴³ Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005. See especially chapter 10, pp. 205-232.

(to the extent the evidence allows) that their posited or implied causal mechanisms were in fact operative in the predicted cases".⁴⁴

Thus, each case study will attempt to reconstitute the U.S. decision-making process toward the secessionist conflict under investigation. To study the causal process of U.S. foreign policy decision-making I focus on what Alexander George calls the individual and the small group contexts of U.S. policy making. The individual context concentrates on the discussions that the President has with one of his Cabinet members or close advisors (e.g. his Secretary of State). As for the small group context, it focuses on the President's meetings with a few advisors coming from different governmental spheres (e.g. National Security Council meetings, Oval Office meetings with foreign policy experts).⁴⁵

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, one of the core assumptions of the model is that the presidency makes rational decisions but that it is not a monolithic body. Several executive agents and advisors have their own views toward foreign policy issues, which often lead them to compete to influence the President's decisions. By focusing on the individual and the small group contexts, this research will attempt to identify executive actors, among those who have foreign affairs responsibilities, who emphasize the importance of regional stability at the expense of other interests, and to analyze whether these actors are the most

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 208.

⁴⁵ Alexander L. George (ed.), *Presidential Decision Making in Foreign Policy*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1980, p. 11. George also mentions the organizational context as part of the foreign policy machinery. This context involves the whole bureaucracy that is concerned with foreign policy issues. However, I chose not to integrate this third context into the analysis. Although relevant for certain types of foreign policy studies, the organizational context would move the analysis away from the straightforward objective of finding whether agents and advisors who emphasize stability considerations have the most influence in the decision making process.

influential in the decision-making process toward secessionist conflicts. For the regional stability argument to be valid, the analysis should demonstrate that executive agents who promote regional stability have more influence in the decision-making process than those who emphasize other policy concerns such as ethnic politics or private business interests. The study should also show that the preponderant influence of stability-seeker agents is consistent throughout the different cases.

Measuring Regional Stability and Domestic Variables

I now turn to the systematic measurement of both my regional stability model and rival propositions by testing them on selected case studies. To achieve this task, I combine the “method of structured, focused comparison” with process-tracing.⁴⁶ I formulate a limited number of theoretical questions that are systematically asked for all cases in order to measure the veracity of competing arguments. The aim of asking such standardized questions is to structure empirical inquiry. Thus, the research will produce comparable data and will facilitate the identification of similarities and differences among chosen cases. More generally, as Alexander George mentions: “these questions are designed to illuminate the orientations of a leader to the fundamental issues of history and politics that

⁴⁶ For a complete explanation of this comparative method of research, see Alexander L. George, “Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison”, in Paul Lauren (ed.), *Diplomacy: New Approaches in Theory, History, and Policy*, New York: Free Press, 1979, pp. 43-68. Some interesting research has used structured, focused comparison. See for instance Charles A. Kupchan, *The Vulnerability of Empire*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994. Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1974.

presumably influence his calculation and choice of foreign policy”.⁴⁷ Moreover, the “structured, focused comparison” is also characterized by the fact that it selectively analyzes aspects of historical cases that are relevant to the analysis. Therefore, the treatment of historical accounts of secessionist conflicts that occurred in Central Europe and in Africa in the post-Cold War era is limited to what is relevant to answer the standardized questions. The set of questions that will be systematically asked are as follows.

Regional Stability: Does the U.S. presidency always support the host state when it maintains external stability? If so, does the United States sustain this policy in cases in which the host state is unable to guarantee external stability but attempts to negotiate with secessionists and is willing to let a third party intervene? If this is the case, what happens when a host state fails to keep external stability and refuses to negotiate with secessionists; does the U.S. revise its policy and consider recognizing secession? If so, is U.S. recognition of secessionist states granted only to those that achieve internal and external stability? If “yes” is the answer to the above four questions, it will then be possible to conclude that the regional stability argument explains the U.S. behavior and that it can be generalized to other empirical cases.

Moreover, a few questions derived from process-tracing of U.S. foreign policy decision-making are included in the analysis. Do executive agents promoting the interest of regional stability have the most influence on the President’s decisions? Is this influence consistent through time? A set of questions

⁴⁷ Alexander L. George, *op. cit.*, 1979, p. 56.

concerning rival theories will also be applied to the selected sample of cases, and they are as follows.

Rival Domestic Arguments: Are U.S. ethnic groups that share ties with protagonists in the secessionist conflict abroad well-organized at the national level? Do these groups represent a considerable number of U.S. voters? If so, do these ethnic groups exercise pressure on the U.S. government and, more specifically, on the executive branch? Is the foreign policy decision regarding the secessionist crisis in accordance with the interests of the strongest ethnic group involved in the issue? As for the business interests argument: Do American multinational corporations (MNCs) have significant economic interests in the central state or in the secessionist entity? If it is the case, do American firms influence the decision-making process? Does the U.S. executive response to the secessionist effort conform to the interests of powerful MNCs or, more specifically, to U.S. firms with which U.S. executive agents keep strong ties?

These straightforward questions provide clear research guidance and will allow us to compare empirical findings. The “structured, focused comparison” is thus a good answer to Kenneth Waltz’s observation that “without some guidance we can know neither what information to gather nor how to put it together so that it becomes comprehensible”.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Kenneth N. Waltz, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

The U.S. Recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, 1991-1992

Introduction

The secessions of the Yugoslav republics of Croatia and Slovenia from the Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia in 1991 are among the first instances of effective secessions to happen in a non-colonial context since the foundation of the United Nations.¹ By precipitating the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the Croatian and the Slovenian government compelled the United States to formulate a response to their claims and to express its preferences toward secessionist issues in the emerging post-cold war order. As this chapter will demonstrate, the American response to the Yugoslav secessionist quarrel was primarily guided by its interests in regional stability rather than by domestic considerations.

Before measuring the accuracy of the U.S. regional stability argument as it applies to Croatia and Slovenia, a review of events leading to the Yugoslav secessionist crisis is presented. The purpose here is not to investigate in detail the causes of the Yugoslav demise but to sketch the political context in which the United States got involved in the conflict.²

¹ Bangladesh was the only other case of successful secession to happen since 1945.

² Several books have been written on the dissolution of Yugoslavia. For good analyses of the conflict see for instance: Viktor Meier, *Yugoslavia: A History of its Demise*, London: Routledge Editions, 1999. Sabrina Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to Ethnic War*, 3rd Edition, Boulder: Westview Press, 1999. See also Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995.

A Brief Review of the Secessionist Crisis

The secession of Croatia and Slovenia arose from the failure of Yugoslav political elites to create a new state designed to accommodate growing divergent interests among the republics. At the turn of the 1990s, the central source of contention concerned the issue of power sharing between the Yugoslav federal state and the republics. The northern republics of Croatia and Slovenia, which were more economically developed than the southern republics, favored a strong decentralization of power from the central government and the creation of a Yugoslav confederation. Two main factors explain these demands: Croats and Slovenes wanted to safeguard their economies from Yugoslavia's rapid economic decline as well as limit Serbia's growing influence in the central government.³ Serbia and Montenegro, on the contrary, supported the maintenance of a centralized federal government as well as a strong federal control of the economy. The polarization between republics was intensified by the rise of Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia in the late 1980s and by the election of nationalist parties in Croatia and Slovenia at the first multiparty elections in 1990. Following the elections, the Croatian and the Slovenian parliaments declared the sovereignty of their respective republics (i.e. the right to make all kinds of decisions including the right to secede) and adopted constitutional amendments to suspend federal laws on their territory.⁴

³ Milica Zarkovic Bookman, *The Economics of Secession*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992, pp. 95-97.

⁴ Susan L. Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

The turning point of the Yugoslav crisis came in May 1991 when Serbia, Montenegro, and the no longer autonomous republics of Kosovo and Vojvodina, opposed the election of Croatia's Stjepan Mesic as the new Yugoslav President to protest against Croatia's constitutional demands.⁵ This incident transformed political tensions into a major constitutional crisis that led to the collapse of the entire federal system. Constitutionally, the failure to elect Mesic at the rotational presidency left Yugoslavia without a State President and without a commander in chief of the Yugoslav People's Army (YPA). Following this political rebuff on the part of Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia and Slovenia held referendums on independence to press demands for the creation of a Yugoslav Confederation.⁶ Their strategy was simple: either negotiate a confederal union that would provide greater autonomy to republics, or else secede from Yugoslavia if no confederal agreement can be reached.

Facing Serbia's refusal of decentralizing federal powers, Croatia and Slovenia proceeded to make unilateral declarations of independence on June 25, 1991 and seized control of their borders. The Yugoslav federal government declared these unilateral actions illegal, and ordered units of the YPA stationed in Croatia and Slovenia to take control of Yugoslavia's international frontiers. This intervention marked the beginning of a ten-day war with Slovenia's national

⁵ Together, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Vojvodina had the majority of representatives in the Yugoslav federal council. See Milan Andrejevich, "State Presidency Deadlocked over Election of State President", *Report on Eastern Europe*, RFE/RL Research Institute, June 7, 1991, p. 21.

⁶ In Slovenia, 94.6 percent of those who voted agreed to secede. In Croatia, 92 percent favored independence, although Croatia's Serbian minority boycotted the referendum. See Milan Andrejevich, "The Croatian and Slovenian Declaration of Independence", *Report on Eastern Europe*, RFE-RL Research Institute, Vol. 2, No. 29, July 19, 1991.

troops, which was eventually transformed into a major ethnic conflict over internal borders in Croatia, and later in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The United States' Response

The resolution of the Yugoslav constitutional crisis was not a top priority for the administration of George H.W. Bush. In the summer of 1991, the U.S. was dealing with major international transformations, among which the Soviet political disintegration was certainly the most demanding. This issue was directly related to the security of the United States since it raised concerns about the Soviet nuclear arsenal and the stability of the Eurasian continent. The political aftermath of the Gulf War was also at the center of President Bush's foreign policy. The State Department was deeply involved in the Middle East peace negotiations that followed the liberation of Kuwait and suffered, in the words of Richard Holbrooke, from a "post-Iraq Fatigue".⁷ The relative weight of the Yugoslav crisis was therefore minor for the Bush administration, and U.S. policy-makers treated it as a simple regional dispute.⁸ As Brent Scowcroft, President Bush's National Security Advisor, would later observe about the Yugoslav conflict: "[Secretary]

⁷ Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, New York: The Modern Library, 1998, p. 26.

⁸ In his memoir, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker is unambiguous about this. He writes: "unlike in the Persian Gulf, our vital national interests were not at stake [in Yugoslavia]. The Yugoslav conflict had the potential to be intractable, but it was nonetheless a regional dispute. Milosevic had Saddam's appetite, but Serbia didn't have Iraq's capabilities or ability to affect America's vital interests, such as access to energy supplies. The greater threat to American interests at the time lay in the increasingly dicey situation in Moscow, and we preferred to maintain our focus on that challenge, which had global ramifications for us". See James A. Baker, III, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995, p. 636.

Baker would say 'we don't have a dog in this fight.' The President would say to me once a week 'tell me again what this is all about'."⁹

With the end of the Cold War, Yugoslavia was no longer the neutral buffer zone protecting Western Europe from a potential Soviet continental invasion and, as a result, it lost its geopolitical importance in Washington. Susan Woodward points out that Yugoslavia became "unnecessary to U.S. vital security". It was being removed from a special category in the U.S. State Department [...] and returned to its pre-1949 category".¹⁰ The Bush administration was also very pessimistic about the future of Yugoslavia and judged that nothing could really be done to avoid its disintegration.¹¹ For these reasons, the U.S. was not inclined to take a leading role in the Yugoslav conflict, and was pleased to follow the leadership of the European Community (EC) on this matter. As U.S. Secretary of State James Baker indicates: "The Bush administration felt comfortable with the EC's taking responsibility for handling the crisis in the Balkans. The conflict seemed to be one the EC could manage. More critically, Yugoslavia was in the heart of Europe, and European interests were directly threatened".¹² The European Community had indeed much more at stake in the Yugoslav conflict. Two of its members, Greece and Italy, respectively shared borders with the Yugoslav Republics of Macedonia and Slovenia, and the prospect of Yugoslavia's

⁹ Cited in Richard Holbrooke, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

¹⁰ Susan L. Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

¹¹ James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will: International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, 203-04. See also David C. Gompert, "The United States and Yugoslavia's Wars", in Richard H. Ullman, (ed.), *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars*, New York: A Council on Foreign Relations Book, 1996, p. 122.

¹² James A. Baker, III, *op. cit.*, p. 636.

disintegration raised the issue of ethnic conflicts and instability in the whole region.

The United States Supports Yugoslavia's Unity

Even if the Bush administration did not see the Yugoslav crisis as a central issue, it did formulate clear preferences toward it. The primary U.S. interest was to avoid, and then, to contain war in the Balkans. From the early days of the Yugoslav secessionist crisis to the formal disintegration of Yugoslavia, which happened in the fall of 1991, the United States supported the unity of the federation and was categorically opposed to the unilateral secession of its constituent republics. At that time, the White House was deeply worried that war would breakout in Yugoslavia as a result of secessionist attempts, and Secretary Baker stressed the importance of peaceful negotiations.¹³ During his visit to Yugoslavia, a week before Croatia and Slovenia declared independence, Baker

¹³ See Warren Zimmermann, "The Last ambassador: A memoir on the collapse of Yugoslavia", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 2, 1995, p. 11. President Bush had also declared a few months earlier that the United States "would not reward" republics that would choose to secede unilaterally. See *The Economist*, "The road to war", Vol. 320, No. 7714, July 1991, p. 45.

According to David Gompert who served on the National Security Council as special assistant to President Bush and as senior director for Europe and Eurasia: "The top floors of the State Department and the West Wing of the White House saw clearly a year before the fighting began that Yugoslavia was being led toward the abyss by a few demagogic politicians". See David C. Gompert, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had warned the administration in December 1990 that Yugoslavia would probably disintegrate by the end of 1991. In a prophetic analysis, the CIA concluded that "Yugoslavia probably will break up in the absence of a confederal arrangement [...]. The military may oppose Slovene and Croatian moves by trying to impose unity by force, splitting the Army along ethnic lines and hastening the country's breakup". See Central Intelligence Agency, "Yugoslavia: Dissolution Accelerating", December 28, 1990. <http://www.foia.cia.gov> (accessed July 2006).

mentioned: "Instability and break-up of Yugoslavia, we think, could have some very tragic consequences, not only here, but more broadly, in Europe, as well".¹⁴

The Yugoslav State Maintains Stability

The unilateral declarations of independence issued by Croatia and Slovenia in June 1991 had a disastrous effect on the Yugoslav state. The central government was increasingly paralyzed as Croatian and Slovenian federal officials gradually returned to their republics. Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Markovic, however, was still in a position to exercise control on the YPA and his decision to send troops into Slovenia asserted—at least in the short term—Yugoslavia's sovereignty. The Yugoslav state, therefore, managed to contain secessionists inside its borders, no cross-national refugees resulted from secessionist attempts, and Belgrade remained at peace with its foreign neighbors. At the internal level, Prime Minister Markovic demonstrated his willingness to negotiate with secessionists in the summer of 1991 by welcoming the EC mediation. Markovic was even ready to accept the secession of the republics as long as it would be democratically negotiated with the federal government.¹⁵

¹⁴ James A. Baker, III, "US Concerns About the Future of Yugoslavia", *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, Vol. 2, No. 26, July 1, 1991, p. 468. The fear inspired by the breakup of Yugoslavia led the U.S. government to support a variety of constitutional reforms such as a confederal arrangement. The Bush administration even indicated that it would accept a peaceful disintegration of Yugoslavia. Secretary Baker writes in his memoir: "while we supported the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia and existing republic borders and would not accept unilateral changes, the international community, of course, recognized that if the republics wanted to change borders by peaceful, consensual means, that was an altogether different matter". James A. Baker, III, *op. cit.*, 1995, p. 480.

¹⁵ Warren Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, New York: Times Books, 1996, p. 135.

In addition to being able to maintain the stability of Yugoslavia's international borders and being open to negotiations, Prime Minister Markovic had been strongly supported by the United States since his accession to power in 1989. With the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s, Markovic came to symbolize democracy and market reforms in Yugoslavia. Warren Zimmermann, the last U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia, indicates that "[w]ithin the [Bush] administration there was little dissension: Prime Minister Markovic, as a democratic figure striving to hold the country together, should receive continued support."¹⁶ Markovic was also a strong supporter of liberal economic reforms for his country. As Zimmermann recalls:

Markovic made a successful visit to the United States in October 1989. He met President Bush, Secretary of State Baker [...] some Congressional leaders, and U.S. businessmen and bankers. During their meeting the President reaffirmed his strong support for Yugoslav independence, unity, and sovereignty, and welcomed Markovic's commitment to market-oriented economic reform and democratic pluralism.¹⁷

Markovic's openness had also allowed the European Community to negotiate a cease-fire between the Yugoslav army and Slovenian troops in July 1991. This demonstrated the central state's good will and illustrated Belgrade's determination to settle the crisis. The cease-fire supervised by Brussels established a three-month moratorium on Croatia and Slovenia's secession, which aimed to facilitate a political compromise on Yugoslavia's future.¹⁸ Moreover, Serbia had consented in

¹⁶ Warren Zimmermann, "Yugoslavia: 1989-1996", in Jeremy R. Azrael and Emil A. Payin, (eds.), *U.S. and Russian Policymaking with Respect to the Use of Force*, Santa Monica: RAND Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, 1996, p. 183.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Lenard J. Cohen, "The Disintegration of Yugoslavia", *Current History*, November 1992, p. 373.

early July to the election of the Croatian candidate, who had initially been boycotted by Milosevic, to the post of President of the collective state presidency. This was seen in the United States and among EC members as a positive step forward toward the resolution of the conflict.¹⁹ In this context, and despite the fact that the Yugoslav central government was increasingly paralyzed, the United States did not reach the second step of the regional stability model since the Yugoslav central state was not only able to maintain its external stability but was also open to negotiate with secessionists. Throughout this period, the question of whether or not the U.S. should recognize Croatia and Slovenia's independence was not even debated among U.S. foreign policy agencies.

This political situation, however, did not last very long and European efforts to settle the dispute collapsed in the fall of 1991 when the YPA agreed to retreat from Slovenia but moved simultaneously to Croatia to bring assistance to the Serbian minorities living in the Krajina and Slavonia regions. The intervention of the YPA in Croatia complicated the nature of the Yugoslav conflict by emphasizing its ethnic dimension. This event had a major impact on the U.S. perception of the conflict. The intervention of the former YPA in Croatia was seen in Washington as a Serbian war of aggression against Croats and the Bush administration, as well as the European leaders, began to seriously question the legitimacy of the YPA and its real motivation in the conflict. The secession of Croatia and Slovenia had led to a rapid "serbianization" of the Yugoslav army and as a result the YPA quickly became a military instrument at the service of Serbian

¹⁹ *Keesing's Record of World Events*, "Yugoslavia: Approach of Civil War", Vol. 37, No. 7-8, August 1991, p. 38374.

interests. As Richard Holbrooke would later argue: "In the brief war in Slovenia the Yugoslav Army seemed to be defending the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia; when that same army went to war only a few weeks later against Croatia, it had become a Serb army fighting for the Serbs inside Croatia".²⁰

External Instability Emerges

At the first meeting of the United Nations Security Council on Yugoslavia in September 1991, the United States for the first time adopted a pro-active attitude toward the conflict. James Baker expressed his great concern about Yugoslavia's external stability as several thousand Croats began to flee to other countries to escape Serbian aggression. He declared that the Bush administration was highly concerned about "the dangerous impact on Yugoslavia's neighbors who face refugee flows, energy shortfalls, and the threat of a spillover in the fighting".²¹ Robert Pearson, who was the Executive Secretary of the State

²⁰ Richard Holbrooke, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30. David Gompert mentions that "by mid-1991 the officer corps of the once-multiethnic YPA had become almost entirely Serbian". David Gompert, *op. cit.*, p. 143. See also Warren Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, *op. cit.*, p. 142. Because of the intensification of the conflict in Croatia, the three month moratorium on independence reached in early July 1991 did not help to resolve the crisis. At the expiration of the three month period in October, Croatia and Slovenia declared formal and immediate secession. See *Facts On File*, "New Yugoslavia Truce Appears to Hold; EC Delays Sanctions; Croatia, Slovenia Formally Secede", *World News Digest*, Vol. 51, No. 2655, October 10, 1991, p. 762.

The changing nature of the Yugoslav conflict led the Europeans to call for a U.N. peacekeeping intervention in Yugoslavia. The European Community also created a Peace Conference on Yugoslavia chaired by Britain's former Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington as well as an Arbitration Commission known as the Badinter Commission. The role of the commission, headed by the French constitutional judge Robert Badinter, was to establish criteria for international recognition and to evaluate the merits of the republics' secessionist claims along these criteria. The Bush administration strongly supported these initiatives but was still reluctant to become more involved in the crisis. The U.S. presidential election was just a year away and President Bush's advisors thought that nothing could really be done to stop the conflict.

²¹ James Baker, "Violent Crisis in Yugoslavia", *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, Vol. 2, No. 39, September 30, 1991.

Department, also noted that Hungary was in the process of democratization and Yugoslav refugees were threatening its stability as well as the stability of central Europe.²² Refugees were mainly fleeing to Austria, Germany and Hungary. Six months after Baker's address to the UN Security Council, the CIA reported that Germany had taken more than 135,000 refugees and Hungary 48,000.²³

Baker also pointed out that Serbia and the YPA bore a special responsibility for the Yugoslav conflict, "The apparent objective of the Serbian leadership and the Yugoslav military working in tandem is to create a 'small Yugoslavia' or 'greater Serbia'".²⁴ Baker also warned Serbia that the use of force to modify Yugoslavia's internal boundaries or external borders was "simply not acceptable". The issue of Yugoslavia's safeguarding internal borders was extremely important to the U.S. Like the Europeans, the United States believed that changes in republics' intrastate borders would create more violence and would

²² Interview with Robert Pearson, Washington D.C., February 14, 2005. Ambassador Pearson was the Executive Secretary of the Department of State from 1991 to 1993.

²³ Central Intelligence Agency, "Yugoslavia: Update on Trends in Population Displacements and Relief Efforts", *Directorate of Intelligence*, Office of Resources, Trade, and Technology, June 9, 1992. <http://www.foia.cia.gov> (accessed July 2006). The estimated number of Yugoslav refugees in Europe in the summer 1992 was 415,795. See Iva Dominis and Ivo Bicanic, "Refugees and Displaced Persons in the Former Yugoslavia", *RFE/RL Report on Eastern Europe*, Research Report, Vol. 2, No. 3, January 15, 1993, p. 2. According to Sabrina Petra Ramet, by the summer 1992 the number of refugees in Germany was up to 200,000, and several other countries had also taken refugees: Sweden 40,000; Switzerland 13,000; Netherlands 4,000. See Sabrina Petra Ramet, "War in the Balkans", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 71, No. 4, Fall 1992, p. 79. According to Judith Pataki, 12,000 Yugoslav refugees, mainly from Croatia, had already fled to Hungary in September, 1991. See Judith Pataki, "Refugee Wave from Croatia Puts Strain on Relief Efforts", *RFE/RL Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 2, No. 39, September 27, 1991, p. 12.

²⁴ James Baker, *op. cit.*, September 30, 1991.

open the Pandora's box to internal boundaries revisionism throughout Yugoslavia.²⁵

Baker's speech to the Security Council marked a turning point in the evolution of the U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia. For the first time, Washington designated Serbia and the former YPA as the main aggressors in the conflict and as a threat to regional stability. In an attempt to restore peace and to establish a cease-fire in the Croatian republic, the U.S. voted in favor of U.N. resolution 713 establishing a "general and complete embargo on all deliveries of weapons and military equipment to Yugoslavia".²⁶ Then, in November, U.N. Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar named U.S. former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance as his personal envoy to mediate the war in Croatia. Vance's objective was twofold: to reach a cease-fire in Croatia and eventually establish a U.N. peacekeeping operation in Yugoslavia.²⁷

As the YPA's aggressive behavior intensified in Croatia in the fall, Yugoslav President Mesic officially declared on September 16 that Yugoslavia

²⁵ This is why the United States refused, for instance, to address the issue of Croatia's Serbian self-proclaimed republic of Krajina. Peter Galbraith points out: "We were insistent on the internal borders remaining unchanged in Yugoslavia because then you would have just had a mess trying to define them [the new internal borders]." Phone interview with Peter W. Galbraith, January 23, 2005.

²⁶ U.N. Security Council, *Resolution 713: Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*, 3009th meeting, 25 September 1991. *Facts on File*, "EC Imposes Sanctions On Yugoslavia", World News Digest, Vol. 51, No. 2660, November 14, 1991, pp. 858-859. See also David Binder, "U.S. Suspends Trade Benefits To All 6 Yugoslav Republics", *The New York Times*, December 7, 1991.

²⁷ Moreover, the White House along with the G-7 powers called for the creation of a U.N. peacekeeping force in Yugoslavia, which led to the adoption of U.N. Security Council resolution 721. As stated in this resolution, the Security Council "Approves the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, and expresses the hope that they will pursue their contacts with the Yugoslav parties as rapidly as possible so that the Secretary-General can present early recommendations to the Security Council including for the possible establishment of a United Nations peace-keeping operation in Yugoslavia". See U.N. Security Council, *Resolution 721: Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*, 3018th meeting, 27 November 1991.

had ceased to exist. This declaration came following the refusal by the Minister of Defense of Yugoslavia to comply with President Mesic's request that the YPA stop fighting in Croatia.²⁸ By then, the U.S. was much more realistic in its approach. It concluded that Yugoslavia could not be saved, and that secessionist republics would eventually have to be recognized as sovereign states. As Lenard Cohen points out: "By this point in time, it had become apparent to most observers that there was very little chance of restoring Yugoslavia's unity [...] and that the most urgent matters at hand were to end the fighting in Croatia and to prevent a further expansion of violence".²⁹ The question was no longer how the U.S. could help to maintain Yugoslavia together but when and under which conditions it should recognize secessionist states.

The Conditionality of U.S. Recognition

In the fall of 1991, the State Department clearly understood that the conditionality of the U.S. recognition of secessionist states could be used as a way to contain and reinforce regional stability in the Balkans. The main question was how to play the "recognition card". Even if the Yugoslav state had collapsed, the secessionist states were still not in a position to keep the stability of their borders since war was raging in Croatia. Thus, there was a risk that conflict could resume at anytime in Slovenia and that it could spread to Bosnia-Herzegovina. The State Department and the NSC believed, therefore, that premature or uncoordinated

²⁸ See Susan Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

²⁹ Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia*, Boulder: Westview Point, 1993, p. 232.

recognition of secessionist republics would risk intensifying violence by irritating Serbia and the former YPA.

In a note sent to Secretary Baker, the director of the State Department's policy planning office, Dennis Ross wrote: "U.S. interests will not be served by uncoordinated, ad hoc declarations and recognitions—or rejections."³⁰ Baker reported to President Bush that the U.S. should coordinate a collective nonrecognition policy with the European Community to invalidate, or at least to reduce, the destabilizing effect of secession. Such a common policy was seen among U.S. executive agents as an important political lever to moderate the behavior of Yugoslavia's protagonists and to find a peaceful agreement between them.³¹ As Baker indicates in his memoir: "each of the republics craved legitimacy in the West, and withholding recognition (or conferring it) was the most powerful diplomatic tool available. Earned recognition was one of our key points of leverage over the combatants".³² The United States, therefore, decided in conjunction with the European Community that the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia would be withheld as long as the Yugoslav conflict would not be resolved peacefully. Although the U.S. only played a supporting role in the early phase of the Yugoslav conflict, empirical evidence indicates that it was pro-active in coordinating the Western policy toward secessionist republics.

³⁰ James A. Baker, III, *op. cit.* p. 638.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 483. Thomas Niles, who was the U.S. Ambassador to the European Community until September 1991, points out that France, Greece, and the United Kingdom, were the strongest proponents of the U.S. nonrecognition policy. Phone interview with Thomas Niles, January 29, 2005.

³² James A. Baker, III, *op. cit.* p. 638.

Moreover, on the basis of a policy recommendation issued by the State Department which suggested that the U.S. should develop a “philosophical and practical framework” to evaluate the merits of the Yugoslav secessionist states,³³ the State Department unveiled a list of criteria that would guide its decision to grant or deny recognition once negotiations were completed between the Yugoslav protagonists. Secretary Baker declared that recognition was to be granted to Yugoslav secessionist republics that would respect the five following criteria:

- 1) Determining the future of the country [i.e. seceding republic] peacefully and democratically.
- 2) Respect for internal and external borders.
- 3) Support for democracy and the rule of law, by promoting the democratic process.
- 4) Safeguarding human rights, including equal treatment of minorities.
- 5) Respect for international law and obligations, especially the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris.³⁴

This extensive list of criteria departed from the traditional standard of state recognition, which was developed in the 1930s at the Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of the State. This convention had ruled that to be recognized as a sovereign entity, a state had to possess four qualifications: a permanent population; a defined territory; a government; and the capacity to enter into relations with other states.³⁵ The United States’ new guideline for state recognition

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ These criteria were unveiled before the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in the Fall of 1991. Louis Henkin, Richard Crawford Pugh, Oscar Schachter and Hans Smit, *International Law*, Third Edition, West Publishing Co., 1993, p. 250. The Charter of Paris was signed by CSCE members in 1990. The Charter had the objective of reinforcing the protection of human rights, democracy, and rule of law in Europe that were part of the Helsinki Final Act. For more information on the Charter of Paris, see Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Charter of Paris for a New Europe*, Paris, 1990.
http://www.osce.org/documents/mcs/1990/11/4045_en.pdf (accessed July 2006).

³⁵ Marc Weller, “The International Response to the Dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia”, *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 86, No. 3, 1992, p. 588.

was unique to the extent that it integrated normative criteria that reflected its democratic values and its strong interest in regional stability.³⁶

The guideline reveals the importance that the Bush administration gave to the internal and external stability of the secessionist states. Although these criteria were not mutually exclusive, points 1, 3 and 4 refer to internal legitimacy, to the governing ability, and to the democratic stability of the secessionist states. Principles 2 and 5 refer to both internal and external elements of stability. Point 2 implies, for instance, that a secessionist state that either pursued irredentism or unilaterally redrew its internal territorial divisions would fail the test. Point 5 requests that secessionist leaders obey international norms of state conduct, such as respecting the territorial integrity of other states.

By designing the guidelines, the State Department wanted the assurance that recognized republics would not perpetuate instability by replicating Yugoslavia's ethnic tensions on a smaller scale. These criteria had as an aim the assurance that newborn states would conform to certain standards of internal order and governance so that regional stability would endure. More generally, the conditionality of recognition was a way to socialize seceding states so that they

³⁶ These criteria were codified in the Helsinki Final Act and in the Charter of Paris. In December 1991, the European Community issued its own guideline for recognition. The guideline was very similar to that of the United States. The EC Doctrine of Recognition included the five following criteria: 1) Respect for the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, the Final Act of Helsinki, and the Charter of Paris with regard to the rule of law, democracy and human rights; 2) Guarantees for the rights of minorities and for the rights of ethnic and national groups; 3) Respect for the inviolability of all frontiers which can only be changed by peaceful means and by common agreement; 4) Acceptance of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation; 5) Commitment to settle by agreement all questions concerning state succession and regional disputes. See European Community, *Declaration on the Guidelines on the Recognition of New States in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union*, International Legal Material (I.L.M.), [December 16, 1991], 1992, p. 1487.

would conform to the rules and values of the international system and would not develop into aggressive (or revisionist) states.

These principles of state recognition also reflected the evolution of the U.S. policy toward secessionist movements. For the first time in its history, the United States elaborated clear principles on which its decision of whether or not to recognize secessionist states would be made. The guidelines did not only seek to address the Yugoslav crisis but were actually seen as a standard for evaluating future independentist claims around the world. It is not a coincidence that the guidelines were set down in late 1991. With the forthcoming disintegration of the Soviet Union, the U.S. suddenly had the opportunity to emphasize liberal principles throughout Central and Eastern Europe without fearing political tensions with the USSR. To a certain extent, criteria contained in the U.S. guidelines for state recognition were a prelude to the set of conditions that Central and Eastern European States would have to meet to join NATO and the European Union later in the 1990s.

The evolution of the Western policy toward the Yugoslav conflict, however, was not a linear process. Indeed, in December of 1991, Germany decided to break unilaterally from the common Western policy by recognizing the independence of Croatia and Slovenia despite widely expressed objections by the United States and the EC members.³⁷ In order to avoid diplomatic confrontation and disunity within the community, EC foreign ministers reluctantly agreed to

³⁷ For a good analysis of the German defection see Beverly Crawford, "Explaining Defection from International Cooperation: Germany's Unilateral Recognition of Croatia", *World Politics*, Vol. 48, July 1996, pp. 482-521.

follow Germany and granted recognition to the two republics in January 1992. This decision resulted in several international consequences: it ended the Western diplomatic front toward the issue of recognition; it marginalized the U.S. policy of nonrecognition; and it made the secession of Croatia and Slovenia a fait accompli.

The Bush administration, however, remained steadfast in its policy and hoped that its position would counter-balance the effect of the EC recognition of the two republics.³⁸ The U.S. was worried that recognition would break the Serbian-Croatian ceasefire that had been reached in early January by U.N. envoy Cyrus Vance.³⁹ The U.S.'s main objective was to preserve the cease-fire so that the United Nations could begin the deployment of its peacekeeping force in the region. These two elements were seen, in Washington, as the main conditions for the restoration of stability in the Balkans. Indeed, as long as war was raging in the former Yugoslavia, secessionist states could not secure their national borders.

The U.S. Recognizes Secessionist States

In early 1992, the prospect of a war in multiethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina had a major impact on the U.S.'s perception of the Yugoslav conflict. Ethnic tensions between Croats, Serbs and Muslims in Bosnia were intensifying as the government announced its intention to hold a referendum on independence in late February.⁴⁰

³⁸ *The New York Times*, "U.S. Not Jumping on Bandwagon", January 16, 1992.

³⁹ The unconditional ceasefire between Croatia and Serbia set the ground for the deployment of the United Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) in Croatia in April of 1992.

⁴⁰ The result of the referendum showed the extent to which Bosnia-Herzegovina's politics was polarized. Of the 64.4 percent of voters who cast votes (mainly Croats and Muslims), 99.7 percent favored independence. Most of the Bosnian-Serbs, however, who represented 36 percent of the population of Bosnia, chose to boycott the referendum. See Leonard J. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 237. See

The United States predicted that ethnic conflict in Croatia would soon spread to Bosnia as the Bosnian Serbs were expected to oppose independence and to react violently to the results of the referendum. This led the United States to undertake a major transformation in its strategy. While recognition had been seen as a disruptive action that could have intensified violence by irritating Serbian authorities, the U.S. came to the conclusion that nonrecognition would not stop Serbia's violent irredentist ambitions.

A few days before the Bosnian referendum, Thomas Niles, the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, wrote to James Baker that since it was almost certain that the Bosnian Muslims and Croats would vote for Bosnia's independence, the United States should recognize this republic to "reinforce stability" and to deter Serbia's eventual attempt to annex Bosnia's territory populated by Serbs.⁴¹ This position was also supported by the NSC. Brent Scowcroft who was President Bush's National Security Advisor formulated the same recommendation: "We were hoping that the conflict would not spread into Bosnia and that we might be able to keep the Yugoslav army from invading Bosnia if we recognize the independence of Bosnia."⁴² Niles also recommended

also Colin Warbrick, "Recognition of States Part 2", *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 2, April 1993, p. 435.

The Bush administration saw the tense situation in Bosnia as the result of the European decision to recognize Croatia and Slovenia. Bosnia was seen as "a victim of circumstance", which was somehow forced to consider independence as a way to escape from Serbia's domination and aggression. It is hard to establish whether the European Community's recognition of Croatia and Slovenia really caused the intensification of violence and spread the conflict to Bosnia-Herzegovina. What is clear, however, is that this is how the Bush administration perceived the issue, and that the intensification of violence to Bosnia ultimately led the U.S. to recognize the independence of the Yugoslav republics.

⁴¹ James A. Baker, III, *op. cit.* p. 639.

⁴² Interview with Brent Scowcroft, Washington D.C., February 8, 2005.

that in order to maximize the effect of this strategy, the U.S. should coordinate a common Western recognition of Bosnia. This would render Bosnia's independence effective and would deter violence between Serbs and Croats. Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger added another dimension to this strategy. He recommended that the United States recognize the Yugoslav republics that sought international recognition all at once (i.e. Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia).⁴³ According to him, the nonrecognition of some republics would leave them vulnerable to potential aggressive actions on the part of the new sovereign republics. Eagleburger wrote: "My concern all along has been that a halfway policy on recognition would invite Serbian and Croatian adventurism in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Macedonia".⁴⁴ This argument convinced Baker to adopt a global policy on recognition to avoid violence that would result from a differential treatment of republics.

Thus, in the winter of 1992, the Bush administration came to see diplomatic recognition as a stability-making action rather than as a decision leading to more disruption. Since recognition was to transform Yugoslavia's internal boundaries into international borders, Washington saw it as a political dam against Serbia's ongoing aggression against neighboring territories and expected that this could slow down the diffusion of war. Recognition of Croatia's

⁴³ The current chapter does not focus on the case of Macedonia since it will be analyzed in the next chapter. Macedonia declared independence in September, 1991 following a winning referendum on secession. In January 1992, the Badinter Commission, which was in charge of evaluating whether seceding republics met the EC criteria for recognition, ruled that Macedonia met all the EC requirements.

⁴⁴ James A. Baker, III, *op. cit.*, p. 640.

international boundaries, for instance, meant that Milosevic could not hope to obtain a recognized conquest of Croatia's territory. Moreover, the diplomatic recognition of secessionist republics meant that the United Nations would take actions in cases where the sovereignty of these states was violated. Peter Galbraith who became the first U.S. Ambassador to Croatia indicates:

Once you recognize these countries as independent states, the republican boundaries became international borders not internal domestic borders. And international borders would be extremely hard to change by force. I mean internal borders you can change, but international borders basically nobody has successfully changed them by force since 1945. [...] Because of the difficulty or the near impossibility [to change international borders] it would be a deterrent to Serbia from trying.⁴⁵

The new position of the U.S. administration on the issue, therefore, was contradictory to its initial policy. When Bosnia declared its independence, however, the U.S. main objective was to contain, if not, to isolate Serbia. The Yugoslav federation no longer existed at the time and the deployment of the United Nations Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) in Croatia, which gathered 14,000 UN peacekeepers, provided stability guarantees for recognition. This was part of the U.S. strategy for Serbia's containment.⁴⁶ With a major contingent of U.N. peacekeeping troops in place (the second-largest UN force deployed since 1945), the U.S. believed that the recognition of the northern republics of Bosnia, Croatia, and Slovenia was a more realistic and efficient way to restore stability than waiting for a general agreement among republics, which became unlikely as

⁴⁵ Phone interview with Peter W. Galbraith, January 23, 2005.

⁴⁶ UNPROFOR was established by Security Council resolution 743 in February 1992 for a period of twelve months. The mission was officially deployed on April 7, 1992. Its objective was to end fighting in Croatia and to create conditions for stability.

time went on. Thus, although changing its policies, the Bush administration remained constant in its objectives of containing war and restoring regional stability in the Balkans. As Viktor Meier summarizes: "American decision-makers came to the conclusion that it was senseless to wait for a 'global solution' for all Yugoslavia. The alternative of independent states on the foundation of the former republic boundaries seemed to have established itself".⁴⁷ The U.S. support for Bosnia's independence was also a strategic move to regain political leverage on the Yugoslav issue, and to be diplomatically consistent with Western Europe. By extending recognition to Bosnia, Washington moved away from its diplomatic isolation and was able to work in tandem with the Europeans.

The United States and the European Community finally reached an agreement in Brussels in March 1992 on a common policy of recognition toward secessionist states. U.S. officials declared that they were ready to work in tandem with the EC now that the Bosnian referendum had been held and that a U.N. peacekeeping force was to be sent to the former Yugoslavia.⁴⁸ The U.S. then convinced the EC to recognize Bosnia and proposed in return to recognize Croatia and Slovenia. As Patrick Moore argues, the key aim of the Washington-Brussels agreement "was precisely to guarantee the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina and thereby preserve as much stability in the Yugoslav and Balkan

⁴⁷ Viktor Meier, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

⁴⁸ Barbara Crossette, "Baker Hints at U.S. Shift on Slovenia and Croatia", *The New York Times*, March 10, 1992. According to David Binder, the Bush administration's "rationale was that it would serve no purpose to extend recognition until the United Nations had completed plans for positioning a peacekeeping force of 14,400 in the war zones of Croatia". See David Binder, "U.S. Set to Accept Yugoslav Breakup", *The New York Times*, March 12, 1992.

areas as possible”.⁴⁹ The common U.S.-EC declaration emphasized the need for internal stability in the secessionist republics by pointing out that the internal borders of Yugoslav republics should be maintained and that they should not be changed “by force or absent mutual consent”.⁵⁰

The United States extended recognition to Croatia, Slovenia as well as to Bosnia-Herzegovina on April 6, 1992 one day before the arrival of UNPROFOR in Croatia, and accepted the republics’ pre-crisis borders as their legitimate international frontiers.⁵¹ Macedonia, however, was left out and failed to obtain U.S. recognition despite the fact that it pursued independence democratically without any violence. The next chapter will deal with this issue.

Were Croatia and Slovenia Stable Enough?

Slovenia was a good candidate for recognition as it quickly achieved internal and external stability. Fighting in Slovenia in July 1991 was brief and the Yugoslav army quickly withdrew from the territory, which stabilized the Slovenian state. This event made Slovenia a de facto independent state. The ethnic homogeneity of the republic also facilitated peaceful relations with both Croatia

⁴⁹ Patrick Moore, “The International Relations of the Yugoslav Area”, *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 18, May 1st 1992, p. 34.

⁵⁰ The U.S. and the EC also reiterated the importance of the “strong protection for human rights and the rights of all national and ethnic groups in all republics”. See Department of State, “US-EC Declaration on the Yugoslav Republics”, *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, Vol. 3, No. 11, March 16, 1992, p. 210.

⁵¹ *Facts On File*, “Bosnia-Herzegovina Gains EC, U.S. Recognition”, *World News Digest*, Vol. 52, No. 2681, April 9, 1992, p. 252.

U.S. recognition came three months after the European Community’s decision to recognize Croatia and Slovenia and more than nine months following Ljubljana and Zagreb’s unilateral declarations of independence. The European Community recognized the independence of Bosnia the day before the United States did.

and Serbia and it contributed to fostering Slovenia's external stability. The Slovenian government also demonstrated that it fully respected international borders. As Thomas Niles indicates:

Although supportive in a way of Croatia, Slovenes really didn't get involved [in Croatia's war]. They announced that they fully respected all of the borders of the former Yugoslavia—the internal and the external borders [...] and that they were at peace with all their neighbors.⁵²

Moreover, the Slovenian referendum on independence showed a clear public consent for secession and gave strong internal legitimacy to secessionist leaders. Following the referendum, constitutional reforms were also adopted that guaranteed minority rights. In fact the only reason why Washington did not recognize Slovenia before April 1992 was the instability in Croatia. The Bush administration thought that a simultaneous recognition of both republics would avoid disruption. Thus, although the political situation in Slovenia was better than the one in Croatia, the American government did not make a distinction in terms of policy, and Slovenia remained in the U.S. "diplomatic waiting room" until Croatia was able to offer some guarantees of stability.

In contrast to Slovenia, Croatia only partially met the U.S. requirements for stability, which shows that this case does not perfectly fit the model. In January of 1992, Croatia had also failed to meet the requirements for recognition issued by the European Arbitration Commission headed by Robert Badinter. The commission, however, had declared that Slovenia met all the criteria.⁵³ The

⁵² Phone interview with Thomas M.T. Niles, January 29, 2005.

⁵³ *The Economist*, "Yugoslavia: Wreckognition", January 18, 1992, p. 49.

judgment of the Badinter Commission did not prevent members of the European Community from extending recognition to Croatia at the same time as Slovenia. In terms of external stability, the Croatian government of Franjo Tudjman respected international borders (although his government would eventually pursue irredentism in Bosnia) and had consented to a cease-fire with the Serbs under the supervision of the United Nations. The U.N. agreement, however, was precarious and did not constitute a solid guarantee that no interstate war would occur following recognition (the cease-fire indeed lasted only a few months). At the internal level, the Croatian government had held a democratic referendum on independence for which an overwhelming majority of Croats had supported secession. However, despite the referendum result and the mandate to realize independence, the Tudjman government did not have complete control of Croatia's territory. Zagreb had indeed lost one-third of its territory to Serbian troops in the fall of 1991 (i.e. the Krajina and Slavonia regions). Furthermore, Tudjman had failed to provide sufficient constitutional guarantees to its 600,000 ethnic Serbs.⁵⁴

How can we explain then that the United States consented to recognize the independence of Croatia if Zagreb did not obtain a very high stability score? The complexity and the magnitude of the Yugoslav conflict led the State Department and the National Security Council to conclude that the cease-fire between Serbs and Croats and the U.N. peacekeeping operation in Croatia provided sufficient

⁵⁴ According to Susan Woodward, Croatia failed to offer clear protections for the rights of Serbs and other minorities. "Instead of revising the constitution," writes Woodward, "the [Croatian] government proposed a constitutional law, which [...] had little legitimacy with the Croatian public and did little to dissuade Serbs from their fears of discrimination". See Susan Woodward, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-191.

conditions for stability such that Croatia could be recognized.⁵⁵ The fact that Washington came to perceive recognition as a strong deterrent to Serbian aggression in Croatia and in Bosnia also accelerated the decision to recognize the republic. Even if the Croatian state was not as stable as Slovenia, its recognition by the United States had the objective to prevent a much greater level of instability in the region. At that time, the behavior of the Serbian army was inappropriate and the U.S. administration felt that there was no other choice but to recognize Croatia. David Gompert, NSC Senior Director for Europe and Eurasia, emphasizes the difficulty of the issue to U.S. foreign policy makers. We were trying “to maintain some principles, trying to keep our eye on everything else that was going on in the world, but [...] we were also trying to make decisions in a way that would not foster violence [in the former Yugoslavia].”⁵⁶

The American attitude toward Croatia’s independence, therefore, fell into the larger framework of stability even if each of the internal and external indicators of stability were not met by the Croatian government. On the day the United States recognized Croatia, Margaret Tutwiler, the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, made clear, however, that despite its decision to recognize the independence of Croatia, the U.S. government expected Zagreb to conform to

⁵⁵ The cease-fire, however, did not last very long since a few months later the Croatian army fought to regain control over its Serbian-populated regions. Cease-fires reached in 1993 and 1994 between Serbs and Croats were also broken by Croatia, which led military offensives to get control of the Serbian region of Krajina. Thus, facts reveal that the U.N. intervention in Croatia and the U.S. recognition of the republic did not solidify Croatia’s internal stability. Croatia finally agreed to a permanent cease-fire in December 1995 by signing the Dayton agreement. See Department of State, “Background Note: Croatia”, *Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs*, October 2004. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3166.htm> (accessed July 2006).

⁵⁶ Interview with David C. Gompert, Washington D.C., January 25, 2005.

the U.S. principles of internal stability especially those regarding minority rights. Tutwiler declared: "We expect Croatia [...] to extend strong constitutional and legal protections to the human rights of Serbs and considerable autonomy to Serbian majority areas".⁵⁷

Inside the Executive Black-Box

The literature on the Yugoslav disintegration as well as declassified documents from the State Department and interviews conducted in Washington D.C. show that executive agents who worked on the resolution of the Yugoslav issue in 1991-92, stressed the importance of the regional stability factor over other considerations such as domestic politics. In the State Department, Dennis Ross, the director of the policy planning office; Robert Pearson, the Executive Secretary of the Department; Thomas Niles, the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs; Warren Zimmermann, the U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia; Lawrence Eagleburger, the Deputy Secretary; and James Baker emphasized stability issues. In the National Security Council, main actors like David Gompert, the special assistant to President Bush and senior director for Europe and Eurasia; Jonathan T. Howe, the NSC Deputy Assistant to President Bush; and NSC advisor Brent Scowcroft also emphasized regional stability in their assessment of the crisis. These policy makers all supported the continuation of Yugoslavia until the federation fell apart.⁵⁸ There was also a consensus among these agents on the fact

⁵⁷ Margaret Tutwiler, *Daily Press Briefing*, U.S. Department of State, April 7, 1992.

⁵⁸ Thomas Niles declares: "There was uniform support within the national security agency for effort to preserve the unity of a Yugoslav state. Nobody though, as far as I can recall, that the

that recognition of independence should be conditional on the domestic stability of seceding republics as well as to their respect for international borders. As Jonathan Howe recalls, we were “a group of colleagues coming together trying to work out what was the sensible position for the U.S. to take. It was not a hugely divisive issue even though different people had different perspectives and points of view. Sometimes issues are very divisive. This one was not a big one.”⁵⁹ In sum, there was no interagency disagreement on the course of action to follow. There was rather a consensus on the fact that both internal and external dimensions of stability should guide the U.S. response toward the issue even if the case of Croatia shows that broader stability considerations also guided the U.S. decision to recognize Zagreb.

Were Regional and Great Powers Influential?

Another important question to ask is what kind of impact did regional and great powers (the intervening variable) have on the U.S. behavior toward the Yugoslav secessionist crisis? To measure the importance of this variable, we have to look for critical events or turning points in the evolution of the international dimension of the secessionist crisis that were caused by regional or great powers and see whether the U.S. behavior changed accordingly. The German decision to unilaterally recognize Croatia and Slovenia in December 1991 was the only significant critical junction produced by a regional power to disturb the linearity of

disintegration of Yugoslavia was a desirable thing to happen”. Phone interview with Thomas M.T. Niles, January 29, 2005.

⁵⁹ Phone interview with Jonathan T. Howe, March 3, 2005.

the Western response to the crisis. This event led the European Community as a whole to recognize the two republics in January of 1992, and several other countries (Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Hungary, Malta, Norway, Poland, Romania, Sweden, and Switzerland) immediately followed suit.⁶⁰ However, as shown above, this event did not cause the U.S. policy to change. The strong consensus existing within the presidency on the fact that the basic conditions for stability would have to be in place before recognition could be granted led the Bush administration to withhold Slovenia and Croatia's recognition for another three months. The Bush administration patiently waited for a U.N. mission to be deployed in Croatia before making its move. In fact, the U.S.-EC agreement on the recognition of secessionist republics reached in Brussels in March 1992 stipulated that the United States' support for Croatia and Slovenia's independence had to go together with the deployment of the U.N. peacekeeping force.⁶¹ This shows the determination with which the Bush administration treated the issue as well as the emphasis that it placed on regional stability.

The empirical record indicates, therefore, that the German defection from the western consensus on nonrecognition did not directly affect Washington's response to the issue. The disintegration of Yugoslavia in the fall of 1991 had made the independence of Croatia and Slovenia inevitable and the United States was fully aware of this. Thus, the German action simply stressed this inevitability.

⁶⁰ Patrick Moore, "Diplomatic Recognition of Croatia and Slovenia", *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 4, January 24, 1992, p. 9.

⁶¹ Patrick Moore, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, No. 18, May 1st 1992, p. 33.

Did Ethnic Politics Matter?

This section focuses on the impact of the Croatian-American lobby on the U.S. executive decision to recognize the independence of Croatia. I chose to leave aside the study of the impact of the Slovenian-American community since this diaspora group is much smaller and less organized than its Croatian counterpart.⁶²

The American Croats represent a relatively powerful ethnic group. This diasporic community gathers around 2.5 million people, is well organized at the national level, and has large clusters located in “swing” states such as, for instance, Ohio. By concentrating on the activities of the Croatian-Americans, I choose the case that is more likely to validate the proposition sustained by many scholars that ethnic diasporas impact the formulation of U.S. foreign policy toward secessionist conflicts.

To measure the accuracy of the ethnic diaspora argument, this research has looked at variations in the U.S. policy toward Croatia that could have been caused by Croatian-American lobbies. Evidences indicate that the Croatian-American community was highly mobilized throughout the Yugoslav conflict and was very active in promoting the cause of Croatia’s self-determination following the secession of the republic in June 1991. The Croatian diaspora contributed to the

⁶² During the 1990 U.S. census, 124 437 Americans have declared to be of Slovenian descent and only 87 500 of them indicated that Slovenian was their only ethnic origin. See Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia, *Slovenian Heritage in USA*, http://www.gov.si/mzz-dkp/veleposlanistva/eng/washington/slovenian_comm.shtml (accessed June 2006).

Moreover, Slovenian-Americans are dispersed in several cities throughout the United States and do not constitute large ethnic constituents that could significantly impact the result of a U.S. Presidential election, for instance. The largest cluster of Slovenian-Americans in the early 1990s was located in the State of Ohio with 49 598 people out of a total state population of more than 10 million. There are also Slovenian-Americans in Pennsylvania (14 584), Illinois (11 743), Minnesota (6 614), Wisconsin (6 478), and a small population in California. See *ibid.*

establishment of an office of the Republic of Croatia in Washington and Croatian organizations launched lobbying campaigns in the White House and Congress.⁶³ The Croatian organizations also hired professional lobbying firms, such as the public relations firm Ruder Finn Global Public Affairs, to promote Croatia's claim for independence and to shape the debate in Washington in a way that would give a positive image of the Croatian government. Croatian-American associations also helped to organize U.S. Congressional hearings on the situation in Croatia and were successful in enlisting well known Congressmen, such as Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole (R-Kansas), to support Croatia's declaration of independence.⁶⁴ Moreover, in the summer of 1991, more than 35,000 Croatian-Americans rallied in Washington urging the Bush administration to recognize the secession of Croatia.⁶⁵ According to Pero Novak, who lobbied the U.S. government in favor of Croatia's recognition and who is now President of the Ohio Chapter of the Croatian-American Association (CAA), the American Croats clearly had an impact of the U.S. final decision to recognize Croatia.⁶⁶ On the CAA's website it is even written that "being directly involved in the U.S. recognition of Croatia" is

⁶³ Yossi Shain, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66.

⁶⁴ Paul Hockenos, *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism & the Balkan Wars*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003, p. 130.

⁶⁵ Embassy of Croatia, *Croatian-Americans: The Bridge between Two Homelands*, <http://us.mfa.hr/?mh=182&mv=1075&id=587> (accessed June 2006).

⁶⁶ Correspondence with Pero Novak, January 26, 2005.

one of the main achievements that the organization accomplished in the last 15 years.⁶⁷

Thus, there is evidence that strong political pressure was put by the Croatian American lobby on both Congress and on the White House (political rallies, letters to Congress members, etc.) in the summer and fall of 1991. However, if Croatian-Americans were so pro-active in the weeks and months following Croatia's secession and obtained the support of influent Congress members like Robert Dole, why did U.S. recognition of Croatia come only in April 1992, almost ten months following the independence of the republic? One would expect that if Croat Americans were truly influential, the U.S. would have proceeded earlier with recognition, perhaps even before Germany unilaterally recognized the republic in December 1991. Yet, in the summer and the fall of 1991 the State Department and the NSC were working toward the formulation of a coherent Western policy of nonrecognition for the Yugoslav secessionist states. Despite the strong political determination of Croatian-American organizations, the Bush administration was strongly opposed to Croatia's secession and maintained this position even after Germany and the other EC members recognized the republic. There was, therefore, no change in the U.S. policy toward Croatia's independence until 1992.

As seen above, until the fall of 1991, the United States was convinced that a unified Yugoslavia offered the best opportunity to keep stability in the region. The question of whether or not the U.S. should recognize Croatia was not even an

⁶⁷ Croatian American Association, "Croatian American Association Celebrates its 15th Anniversary", <http://www.lijepanasadomovinahrvatska.com/folder/CAA-15thTH%20ANNIVERSARYYY.htm> (accessed March 2005).

issue. There is no evidence indicating that the Bush administration was influenced by ethnic Croats during that time. It seems that the Croatian-Americans were simply ignored by the Bush administration. According to Thomas Niles, who was Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs and later worked closely on the issue of Croatia and Slovenia's recognition, U.S. decision-makers did not pay attention to these ethnic lobbies when they formulated the U.S. position toward the issue.⁶⁸

David Gompert who was involved in the recognition of the Yugoslav republics and who often met with Croat-American organizations also categorically dismissed that the Croatian-American lobby was an important factor in President Bush's decision to recognize Croatia. "I learned from them," he did remark, "but at no point, as far as I know, did somebody in the White House make a calculation that, if we recognize Croatia, we will pick up some votes in Cleveland. It really wasn't the way that the White House functioned".⁶⁹ Robert Pearson, who was the Executive Secretary of the State Department, and Peter Galbraith, the first Ambassador to Croatia, shared this view.⁷⁰

In his memoir, James Baker explains that the U.S. government resisted pressure from the Croatian-Americans to recognize Croatia because it believed

⁶⁸ When asked whether Croatian-American associations influenced President Bush's policy toward Croatia, Thomas Niles declared: "We paid no attention to them". Phone interview with Thomas M. T. Niles, January 29, 2005. This view is shared by David Gompert. Interview with David C. Gompert, Washington D.C., January 25, 2005.

⁶⁹ Interview with David C. Gompert, Washington D.C., January 25, 2005.

⁷⁰ Interview with Robert Pearson, Washington D.C., February 14, 2005. Phone interview with Peter W. Galbraith, January 23, 2005.

that a premature recognition could compromise the United Nations' effort to achieve a cease-fire in the former Yugoslavia. Baker indicates:

After the EC decision, I had Larry Eagleburger talk to Cy Vance. He told us to wait at least two weeks, and preferably a month, before moving ahead with recognition. That would allow time to begin the deployment of a U.N. peacekeeping force. Vance felt that our decision to withhold recognition had had an important restraining effect on the Serbs and had discouraged Milosevic and Tudjman from carving up Bosnia. This put us in a difficult position domestically with the Croatian-American lobby, but I told the President at lunch on January 24, 'We can and should take the public and congressional heat. We should do all we can to support Vance's efforts, because our best hope for resolving the crisis is maintenance of the cease-fire and introduction of U.N. peacekeepers.' The President agreed, and so we waited.⁷¹

President Bush's decision to focus the U.S.'s attention on regional stability considerations alienated him from the Croatian community at home. As Gompert notes, all along during the Yugoslav crisis, "George Bush declined to recognize Croatia despite intense pressure from the influential Croatian-American community, which as a result deserted him in the election of 1992".⁷²

One could wonder, however, whether the Serbian-American lobby was partly responsible for President Bush's refusal to recognize Croatia. This would imply that a "horse race" between the two diasporic communities was the reason for why the U.S. recognition came so late. It is true that Serbian-Americans were mobilized in the early 1990s (mainly through the Serbian Unity Congress—SUC) and that the Serbian diaspora tried to influence the debate in Washington. However, Congress Representative Helen Delich Bentley (one of the most

⁷¹ James A. Baker, III, *op. cit.*, p. 639.

⁷² David C. Gompert, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

prominent Serbian-American voices in the U.S.) indicates that the Bush administration quickly identified the Serbs as the aggressors in the conflict and opposed Slobodan Milosevic policies. With such a clear bias against the Serbs, it was difficult for the Serbian community to influence the Bush administration. According to Warren Zimmermann, it did not help the Serbian community that it was unable to distinguish Serbia's legitimate political claims from the actions undertaken by Milosevic. Moreover, despite one million Serbian-Americans, the Serbian lobby was unable to orchestrate a public relations campaign in favor of Serbia, while the Croatian lobby was quite successful at rallying support.⁷³ There was, therefore, no "horse race" between Serbian and Croatian-Americans and the two communities did not cancel each other's effort to influence U.S. decision-makers, which could have explained the delay in the U.S. decision to recognize Croatia.

In sum, I do not pretend that the Croatian community did not have an impact on the U.S. perception of Croatia's bid for independence or that it did not help to shape the debate in Washington. I do assert, however, in the light of the previous analysis, that the pressure exercised by the Croat-Americans did not have an impact on the process by which the Bush administration came to recognize the Republic of Croatia nor did it influence the speed with which the U.S. recognition was granted.

⁷³ Paul Hockenos, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

Did Money Talk?

David Gibbs maintains that connections between decision-makers and private business interests affect the conduct of U.S. foreign policy toward secessionist crises (see Chapter 2). Did American decision-makers share ties with U.S. corporations involved in Yugoslavia in the early 1990s? If yes, were private economic interests of U.S. executive agents strongly reflected in the American response to the Yugoslav secessionist crisis?

Following the demise of Yugoslavia in 1992, policy analysts and some State Department officials argued that Lawrence Eagleburger and Brent Scowcroft—who were respectively, Deputy Secretary of State and National Security Advisor under President Bush—had supported for too long the unity of Yugoslavia and failed to answer adequately to interethnic violence in the Balkans because they had cultivated strong ties over the years with the Yugoslav regime. Some even suggested that because they had business interests in Yugoslavia in the 1980s, both officials had a strong bias against Croatia and Slovenia's secessionist attempts.⁷⁴ According to Roy Gutman, the pro-Yugoslav bias of Eagleburger and Scowcroft led them to support the State Department view according to which Yugoslavia should be supported as long as possible and Croatia and Slovenia should not be recognized.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ See Roy Gutman, *A Witness to Genocide*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1993, pp. xxiv-xxv. See also David Binder, "Eagleburger Anguishes Over Yugoslav Upheaval", *The New York Times*, June 19, 1992.

⁷⁵ Their private interests "enhanced their support for the State Department analysis that unity was the best option and that Slovenia and Croatia were the problem". Roy Gutman, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

As U.S. Ambassador to Yugoslavia from 1977 to 1981, Lawrence Eagleburger established close connections with the Yugoslav political elites and became friends with Slobodan Milosevic who was then the head of the largest bank of Serbia. Once retired from the U.S. government, Eagleburger and Scowcroft worked from 1984 to 1988 respectively as president and vice-president of *Henry Kissinger Associates Inc.*, a New York consulting firm that offered strategic consulting services to international companies. During this time, both men maintained close ties with Yugoslav leaders and dealt with several Yugoslav and Serbian state-owned companies. As president of *Kissinger Associates*, Eagleburger joined the board of Yugo America, the American division of a Serbian car company that was owned by Global Motors Inc., and served on the board of the Ljubljana Bank.⁷⁶ The money Eagleburger earned from business dealings with Yugoslav state companies, however, only represented a small fraction of his salary at *Kissinger Associates*. According to David Binder, Eagleburger earned \$5,000 a year from business ties to Yugoslavia (e.g. Yugo America and the Ljubljana Bank) while his total income at *Kissinger Associates* was \$900,000 a year.⁷⁷ Moreover, Yugo America went bankrupt and closed its doors in 1989, which greatly reduced Eagleburger's economic involvement with Yugoslavia.

Upon returning to the State Department and the NSC in 1989, Eagleburger and Scowcroft attempted to stay away from the Yugoslav crisis to avoid being

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. xxiv-xxv.

⁷⁷ See David Binder, *op. cit.*, June 19, 1992.

subject to particular scrutiny, even if they no longer had official business ties to Yugoslavia. Susan Woodward maintains that they “were inclined to keep some distance from the Yugoslav imbroglio because questions about their private business ventures with Yugoslavia [...] had already threatened public embarrassment over possible conflicts of interest”.⁷⁸

There is little doubt that Eagleburger and Scowcroft were biased in favor of Yugoslavia’s state unity. For decades they had built strong relationships with Yugoslav leaders throughout the federation.⁷⁹ However, to argue that their past private business interests in Yugoslavia, which had been relatively minor, guided their actions toward the crisis is doubtful. President Bush and Secretary Baker were also strongly in favor of the maintenance of Yugoslavia and yet they had not maintained business ties with Yugoslav companies in the past. It seems that the aversion of the Bush administration to changes in international politics as well as Eagleburger and Scowcroft’s personal attachment to Yugoslavia explain why the U.S. overlooked the obvious collapse of the federation and why they were slow to react. Eagleburger and Scowcroft simply could not conceive—despite the information they received from the CIA and the Embassy in Belgrade—that Yugoslavia would break apart. As Lenard Cohen writes: “Eagleburger’s experience in Yugoslavia—he had been ambassador to Belgrade during the early 1980s, and had extensive business ties with the country from 1984 to 1988—had convinced him that Yugoslavia would not ultimately disintegrate because, as he

⁷⁸ Susan L. Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

⁷⁹ Brent Scowcroft was assistant air attaché to Belgrade in the early 1960s while Eagleburger worked for the economic section of the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade.

put it, the ‘Yugoslavs know well what would happen to them if they divided’”.⁸⁰ In fact, the U.S. belief that state unity was the only possible way to avoid war, led it to adopt an approach based on wishful thinking that confused its desire for stability with the reality of the conflict.

Moreover, even if business interests would have explained why the U.S. waited so long before granting recognition to Croatia and Slovenia, it would still not have elucidated why the Bush administration decided to reverse its policy in April, 1992. Thus, David Gibbs’ model also fails to explain the change of policy in favor of recognition. In sum, no evidence was found to support the argument that U.S. business interests accounted for the variation in the American response to Croatia and Slovenia’s secessionist bid.

Conclusion

Observed facts point in the direction of the regional stability model. In the initial phase of the Yugoslav conflict, the United States conformed to the first step of the stability model. It supported the central state, which attempted to maintain external stability by securing its international borders. The Yugoslav federal government, led by Primer Minister Markovic, was also willing to negotiate with Croatia and Slovenia’s secessionist leaders and welcomed the European Community’s efforts at mediation

As predicted in Chapter 3, the United States revised its policy and moved to the second step of the stability model once it became clear, in the fall of 1991,

⁸⁰ Lenard J. Cohen, *op. cit.*, 1993, p. 215.

that Yugoslavia was disintegrating and could no longer handle constitutional reforms or maintain its international borders. The Bush administration, however, did not immediately proceed to the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia since war in the Croatian republic produced high instability. As facts indicate, the cease-fire and the deployment of UN peacekeepers were essential conditions for recognition to be granted by the United States.

The analysis also shows that the case of Croatia does not perfectly fit the second step of the regional stability model. This does not mean, however, that the case goes against the logic of the theory. Indeed, the desire for regional stability was clearly the main motive behind the U.S.'s recognition of Croatia. The purpose of recognition was to improve the security of the Croatian state and to discourage Serbia's aggressive behavior toward neighboring states. The American decision was, therefore, shaped by stability considerations.

More generally, the analysis reveals that the United States' policy toward Yugoslavia was indecisive. First, the U.S. showed its inability to find a peaceful resolution to the crisis. Second, it took a long time for the Bush administration to conceive of political alternatives to Yugoslavia's unity. If, on the one hand, Washington was aware of the risk of a civil war, it failed, on the other hand, to understand the determination of secessionist republics who wanted to separate from Yugoslavia. Finally, the administration failed to manage the transatlantic quarrel over recognition and was quickly outstripped by the decision of Germany and the EC to grant international recognition.

The following chapter examines the case of Macedonia's secession, which was recognized by the United States after a period of delay. This case will allow us

to extend the scope of the regional stability model by considering whether the instability of Macedonia accounted for the U.S.'s decision to withhold recognition for more than two years.

5.

*Macedonia: A U.S. Delay of Recognition in Four Episodes,
1991-2004*

Introduction

The American recognition of Macedonia's independence is a special case to the extent that it did not follow the normal process by which the United States usually grants recognition to emerging secessionist states. It took thirteen years and three successive administrations for the U.S. to complete Macedonia's process of diplomatic recognition. The saga began in the fall of 1991 with the declaration of independence of the republic from the rump Yugoslav federation and it ended with the U.S. recognition of Macedonia's constitutional name in 2004. During this period, the United States first delayed recognition for more than two years. Then, the Clinton administration recognized the secessionist state in 1994 under the temporary designation "Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (FYROM) because of strong political tensions between Greece and Macedonia. Yet, the first U.S. ambassador to Skopje, Macedonia's capital, was only named in 1996 after the White House had delayed extending full diplomatic relations to FYROM at the ambassadorial level. Finally, the last chapter of the saga was written in 2004 when the administration of George W. Bush, in an unexpected and unilateral decision, recognized the republic under its constitutional name, the Republic of Macedonia in a decision that was opposed by the European Union and even more strongly opposed by Greece.

As a result of its complexity and richness, the Macedonian case makes an important contribution to this research by allowing for intra-case comparisons. The different episodes of this saga will be broken down into different units of interactions and will be treated as separate cases for the purpose of this analysis.¹ As Richard Lebow notes, the benefit of the intra-case comparison is that it “builds variation within a fundamentally similar political and cultural context”.² Thus, by breaking this case into an intra-case analysis, I increase the number of points of measurement for the testing of the regional stability model.

This chapter will proceed by looking at the following four intra-cases: 1) The U.S. withholding of Macedonia’s recognition in 1992; 2) The American diplomatic recognition of “FYROM” in 1994; 3) The extension of full diplomatic relations to the republic in 1995-96; and 4) President Bush’s recognition of Macedonia’s constitutional name in 2004. By using these four sub-units of analysis, this chapter will evaluate whether Macedonia’s internal and external stability were the main factors in explaining the American behavior toward the republic across time and, more specifically, whether these factors account for the U.S. delay of diplomatic recognition.

Competing propositions will also be measured. Facts show that the independence of Macedonia awakened the powerful Greek-American lobby which opposed, for historical reasons, the recognition of the Yugoslav republic under the

¹ For more on intra-case analysis see Richard Ned Lebow, “What’s so Different about a Counterfactual?”, *World Politics*, Vol. 52, No. 4, 2000, p. 562. See also Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005. Especially Chapter 8.

² Ibid.

name Macedonia. The strength of the Greek-American community and its mobilization against recognition will allow me to seriously test the validity of the ethnic politics proposition. The analysis will look at the evolution of the American stance toward Macedonia to detect whether the pressure exercised by the Greek-Americans may have caused the U.S. policy toward the issue to fluctuate over time.

As for the business interest argument, the fact that Macedonia's secession originates from the same political context as that of Croatia and Slovenia limits the addition of new and relevant information to validate or refute this proposition. This chapter, therefore, only provides a brief treatment of this argument. Before proceeding with the analysis, I first retrace the main events leading Macedonia to secede from Yugoslavia in the fall of 1991 as well as the political context in which the United States intervened.

A Quick Look at the Secessionist Crisis

Prior to the outbreak of the Yugoslav crisis in 1991, the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia was in favor of the maintenance of a strong federal government. As Yugoslavia's poorest republic and as one of the smallest in terms of population (around two million inhabitants), Macedonia greatly benefited from federal economic resources as well as from Belgrade's military protection.³ When Croatia and Slovenia raised their voice in favor of a Yugoslav confederal arrangement,

³ Yugoslavia guaranteed Macedonia's protection against its foreign neighbors (i.e. Albania, Greece and Bulgaria), and unity among the six republics acted as an internal balance of power which prevented powerful republics from establishing domination over the others. See John Phillips, *Macedonia: Warlords and Rebels in the Balkans*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2004, p. 49.

however, the Macedonian government chose to support decentralization. Kiro Gligorov, the President of Macedonia, believed that by fulfilling Croatia and Slovenia's political demands, Yugoslavia would remain united and that this was in the best interest of his republic.

Political events did not turn out as Macedonia expected, however. Consecutive meetings held by the presidents of the six Yugoslav republics in the spring of 1991 resulted in a major political failure to compromise on the country's future. As seen in Chapter 4, Serbia and Montenegro firmly rejected the idea of massive decentralization of federal powers and vetoed the election of the Croatian candidate to the rotating Yugoslav presidency. Moreover, Serbian official declared that in the event that Yugoslavia would collapse, Serbia would annex the "artificial nation" of Macedonia to recreate the Greater Serbia of the pre-1945 era.⁴ The increasing domination of Serbia on the federal political scene and its overt territorial aspiration over Macedonia compelled Skopje to rethink its political options. In May of 1991, Gligorov declared that in the event of Croatian and Slovenian secession, Macedonia would follow suit to preserve itself from Serbia's domination.⁵

When Croats and Slovenes seceded from Yugoslavia in June of 1991, the Macedonian parliament immediately adopted a declaration asserting Macedonia's right to secede, and the government announced that a referendum on independence

⁴ Duncan Perry, "Macedonia: Balkan Miracle or Balkan Disaster?", *Current History*, March 1996, Vol. 95, No. 599, p. 113.

⁵ Nina Dobrkovic and James Pettifer, "A chronology of events in Yugoslav-Macedonia relations, 1990-8", in James Pettifer, (ed.), *The New Macedonian Question*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999, p. XXI.

would be held.⁶ Macedonia participated nonetheless in political negotiations sponsored by the European Community in the summer of 1991 in the hope of finding a solution to the Yugoslav crisis. However, when the Serbian dominated Yugoslav People's Army (YPA) invaded Croatia, hope for a peaceful compromise vanished and Macedonia chose the path to independence. The option of remaining within a reconfigured Yugoslav state controlled by Serbia was clearly not viable.⁷ As a result, a referendum on Macedonia's independence was held in September of 1991 and secession was officially declared by the Macedonian parliament in November.⁸

The case of Macedonia is very similar to that of Croatia and Slovenia to the extent that it emerged from the same constitutional crisis. What is different, however, is that Skopje did not achieve the same political outcome as the two northern republics. While Croatia and Slovenia were recognized as sovereign states by the European Community and by the U.S., respectively in January and in April of 1992, Macedonia was left in the diplomatic waiting room and Washington denied it recognition for more than two years. How can we explain this U.S. diplomatic deferral? Why is it that the Bush administration, which refused to deal separately with Croatia and Slovenia, withheld Macedonia's recognition at the expense of increasing the insecurity and the vulnerability of the republic? This chapter provides an explanation.

⁶ See Jens Reuter, "Policy and economy in Macedonia", in James Pettifer, (ed.), *Ibid.* p. 33.

⁷ *The Economist*, "Next on the list", Vol. 322, No. 7745, February 8, 1992, p. 46.

⁸ Among those who cast ballot, 74.4 percent opted for independence. However, Macedonia's Albanian minority boycotted the election. See John Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

Episode 1: The Bush Administration Delays Macedonia's Recognition

The United States had already moved to the second step of the regional stability model when Macedonia declared independence. The Yugoslav federation was indeed in an advanced stage of disintegration, and State Department officials were focusing on when and under what conditions the U.S. should grant recognition to Macedonia and to the other secessionist republics.⁹ In contrast to Croatia, and to a lesser extent Slovenia, Macedonia managed to secede without any violence. The fact that the former YPA was already involved in a brutal war in Croatia (and later in Bosnia) partly explains Macedonia's ability to secede peacefully. By January 1992, the Macedonian government had removed all its representatives from federal institutions and the YPA completed its withdrawal from the republic in March.¹⁰

The peaceful and democratic nature of Macedonia's secession placed the republic in a very good position to be recognized by the United States and by the European Community. In early 1992, the Badinter Commission had ruled that Macedonia and Slovenia were the only two republics to meet the European criteria

⁹ A few days after Macedonia declared its independence, Yugoslav President Mesic proclaimed the end of Yugoslavia. See Chapter 4 pp. 91-92.

¹⁰ Serbia's president Slobodan Milosevic, who was then in control of the YPA, was reluctant to open another front in Macedonia. Moreover, Serbia had little incentive to fight in Macedonia since very few Serbs were living in this republic in comparison to Croatia or Bosnia, which contained large clusters of Serbian populations. The republic was also not economically appealing for Serbia as it only contributed 5 to 7 percent of Yugoslavia's GDP. As a result, the Macedonian government managed to sign an agreement with Milosevic on the withdrawal of former Yugoslav troops from Macedonia. See Duncan M. Perry, "Macedonia: A Balkan Problem and a European Dilemma", *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 25, June 19, 1992, p. 37.

Moreover, the adoption of a new constitution by the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in April 1992 indicated that Belgrade implicitly agreed to the secession of Macedonia. Indeed, the new constitution referred to Serbia and Montenegro as the only two components of the new FRY.

for state recognition.¹¹ Macedonia was also in line with the principles included in the U.S. guidelines for state recognition (see Chapter 4). As a result, the State Department was of the opinion that recognition would bring greater stability to the republic by transforming its republican frontiers into international borders. This was seen as a major deterrent against possible Serbian or Greek aggression. In a note sent to Secretary of State James Baker in the winter of 1992, Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger stated his appreciation of Macedonia and Bosnia's process toward independence and argued in favor of their recognition. He wrote:

[O]n the issue of principle, both Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina will have met every criterion regarding recognition. They have used a democratic process to establish the groundwork for their declaration of independence; they have both moved very reluctantly toward independence recognizing that the situation in Yugoslavia has left them with no alternative as a simple matter of self-preservation; their governments are, at least by standards of the region, representative and committed to the principles of democracy.

Eagleburger concluded his analysis by warning that nonrecognition of Macedonia "could create real instability, which less than mature players in Serbia and Greece might decide to exploit".¹² This analysis reveals the extent to which the internal and the external dimensions of stability of the secessionist states were U.S. key concerns.

In terms of internal stability, Macedonia had held a successful referendum on independence with a majority of three-quarters in favor of secession. The

¹¹ As explained in Chapter 4, the Badinter Commission was the European Community's commission headed by the French constitutional judge Robert Badinter. The role of the commission was to evaluate which Yugoslav republic met the EC criteria for state recognition

Macedonian government had also achieved effective control of the republic's territory, it respected internal borders, it guaranteed minority rights, and it was committed to liberal democracy. Moreover, a new Macedonian constitution that was adopted following the declaration of independence guaranteed civil rights to all Macedonian citizens and described Macedonia as a civil state as opposed to the "state of the Macedonian nation", as it was previously defined, in order to reassure its own minorities.¹³

As for the external dimension of its stability, Macedonia had a well defined territory (i.e. recognized republican borders) and respected international borders. The Macedonian government had also amended its constitution to prove that it had no irredentist ambitions toward Greece's neighboring province of the same name. The amendment denied any territorial ambitions "prohibiting interference in the internal affairs of other states, and reaffirming the inviolability of existing frontiers".¹⁴ In a word, both Washington and Brussels viewed Macedonia as a first rate candidate for diplomatic recognition.

¹² James A. Baker, III, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1995, p. 640.

¹³ See Patrick Moore, "The International Relations of the Yugoslav Area" *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 18, May 1st 1992, p. 33.

¹⁴ Ibid. Greek officials had denounced article 49 of the Macedonian constitution, which stated that "the Republic cares for the status and rights of those persons belonging to the Macedonian people in neighboring countries". Greece maintained that this constitutional statement implied that the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had territorial aspirations toward the Greek province of Macedonia. See Duncan M. Perry, "Macedonia: A Balkan Problem and a European Dilemma", *op. cit.*, p. 40. The constitutional amendments adopted by the Macedonian Parliament on January 6, 1992 stipulated that: 1) "The Republic of Macedonia has no territorial pretensions towards any neighboring state"; 2) that the international borders of Macedonia could only be changed in accordance with accepted international principles in that matter; and 3) that "Macedonia will not interfere in the sovereign rights of other states or in their internal affairs". See Jens Reuter, "Policy and economy in Macedonia", in James Pettifer, (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 32.

Greece Steps In: External Instability Arises

The Greek government of Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis quickly cast a shadow on Macedonia's hope to achieve international recognition. Athens argued that because Macedonia was the name of its northern province, famously known for being the native soil of Alexander the Great and Aristotle, the former-Yugoslav republic of Macedonia had no right to refer to itself as 'Macedonia'.¹⁵ Greece requested that the government of Skopje remove the word Macedonia from its constitutional name as a condition for recognition even if the republic had adopted constitutional amendments to eliminate any irredentist suspicions that the Greek authorities may have had.

As a member of the European Community, Greece led a vigorous campaign against the recognition of Macedonia and managed to veto the EC decision to recognize the republic in January of 1992.¹⁶ The European Community was clearly embarrassed by Athens's attitude but remained loyal to Greece. Since Prime Minister Mitsotakis was an advocate of the Maastricht Treaty, EC members agreed to delay recognition to Macedonia in order to save the Mitsotakis government from possibly losing the upcoming election. The name issue had become a burning electoral issue in Greece. In return, Mitsotakis consented to sign the Maastricht Treaty, which gave birth to the European Union, and supported EC economic sanctions against Serbia.

¹⁵ The Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia represents approximately one-third of geographic Macedonia. The other two-thirds are under Greece's sovereignty.

¹⁶ Marlise Simons, "Europeans Put Off Macedonia Issue", *The New York Times*, February 25, 1992.

Although the State Department had initially concluded that Macedonia deserved to be recognized and that this was the best option to reinforce its stability, the Bush administration ultimately delayed recognition in April of 1992 because of the growing political tension between Greece and Macedonia over the name issue. The Greek opposition to Macedonia definitely had a major impact on the U.S. policy, not so much because the Bush administration was supportive or empathetic to Athens's position, but because the political dispute between Athens and Skopje was a great source of regional instability. The U.S. feared that by recognizing Macedonia it would intensify the already exacerbated Greek nationalist feeling toward the issue, and might provide the justification for a Greek-Macedonian conflict.¹⁷ Following Macedonia's declaration of independence in 1991, hundred of thousands of Greeks had demonstrated for months against Macedonia's recognition, and the Greek army had been very active on the Macedonian border by conducting maneuvers to intimidate the government of Skopje.¹⁸ In this context, Macedonia could not guarantee that peace and harmony would prevail following its recognition and, therefore, the Bush administration concluded that Macedonia was not in a position to sustain its external stability.¹⁹

Macedonia was evolving in a very insecure regional setting and had been conquered several times in the past by its neighbors, which made the Bush administration extremely cautious about the instability resulting from the name

¹⁷ Interview with General Brent Scowcroft, Washington D.C., February 8, 2005.

¹⁸ John Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

¹⁹ Interview with Marshall Freeman Harris, Washington D.C., February 17, 2005.

issue.²⁰ Albania had always been sympathetic to the faith of the ethnic Albanians living in Macedonia, and extremists in Tirana had made the case for the creation of a Greater Albania which would include parts of Macedonia. As for Bulgaria, although it was the first state to recognize the independence of Macedonia, it refused to acknowledge the existence of a distinct Macedonian nation and several Bulgarian politicians considered Macedonians to be Bulgarians under a different label.²¹ Serbian nationalists also referred to Macedonia as being what used to be South Serbia before 1945, and Serbia could have easily used the pretext of a Greek-Macedonian war to try to split Macedonia's territory with Greece.²² Most of these scenarios would have probably led Turkey to intervene on the side of Macedonia since the republic held a large Muslim minority. This explains why the U.S. administration was worried that a conflict between Greece and Macedonia could have sparked a regional conflict in which Greece and Turkey, two NATO members, could have clashed against each other.²³ In sum, since the stability of Macedonia was synonymous with peace in Southern Europe, the conflict between

²⁰ Macedonia is made of 1.3 million of Slav-Orthodox Macedonians, between 400,000 and 500,000 Albanians, 100,000 Turks, as well as of several small ethnic minorities such as Bulgarian and Serbian minorities. In the past, geographic Macedonia had been successively conquered by Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and the Ottoman Empire. See Duncan M. Perry, "Macedonia: A Balkan Problem and a European Dilemma", *op. cit.*, pp. 35-36.

²¹ Sabrina Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the War for Kosovo*, Third Edition, Boulder: Westview Press, 1999, p. 176.

²² Serbian President Milosevic had discussed with Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis the possibility of partitioning Macedonia in the early 1990s. See John Phillips, *op. cit.*

²³ As David Gompert, President Bush's NSC senior director for Europe and Eurasia, argues: "[t]he chief American strategic concern during the Bush administration and later under Clinton was to keep the Yugoslav conflict from spreading southward, where its flames could leap into the Atlantic alliance". See David C. Gompert, "The United States and Yugoslavia's Wars", in Richard H. Ullman, (ed.), *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars*, New York: A Council on Foreign Relations Book, 1996, p. 136.

Greece and Macedonia over the name issue was seen in Washington as a very important concern.

Two other important factors contributed to delay U.S. recognition. First, Greece was a NATO ally and the United States had historically maintained close ties with Greek governments. Hence, the U.S. did not want to oppose Greece by recognizing Macedonia and it did not want to spoil long standing Greek-American relations. Second, the U.S. desired to act in conjunction with the Europeans on the issue. The U.S. and the EC (from now on the European Union—EU) had just ended their disagreement over the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, and President Bush was, therefore, reluctant to move unilaterally on Macedonia. These complementary factors were certainly part of the cost-benefit equation that led the Bush administration to defer diplomatic recognition.

This first episode demonstrates that policies and politics obey very different rationales. On paper, Macedonia was one of the best candidates for recognition. In practice, however, the Macedonian issue threatened to destabilize the southern Balkans and, ironically enough, the peaceful Macedonian republic turned out to be the only seceding state that directly threatened the interest of a NATO ally and a member of the European Union (i.e. Greece). On the day the United States extended recognition to Croatia and Slovenia, Macedonia was, therefore, left aside.

The U.S. indicated in April of 1992 that the purpose of the delay in recognition was to allow Greece and Macedonia to settle their dispute.²⁴ In a letter

²⁴ Ibid., p. 38. By the summer of 1992, only seven countries had recognized the independence of Macedonia and established diplomatic ties with Skopje: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia,

sent to a member of Congress who requested that the U.S. clarify its stance toward Macedonia, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for legislative affairs, Steven Berry, summarized the U.S. position on the issue:

While the United States takes very seriously Greek concerns regarding its security and is sensitive to the Greek government's concerns about the potential for instability on its northern border as violence in Yugoslavia continues, President Bush fully endorses Macedonian President Gligorov's efforts to maintain calm and stability and to lead his people to full independence through negotiations with the EC. The United States in no way condones the spread of violence to Macedonia. Above all, we seek solutions which are acceptable to the EC, Greece, and Macedonia noting that a close and friendly relationship between Greece and Macedonia is an important element in Balkan stability and regional prosperity.²⁵

This reveals the extent to which tensions between Athens and Skopje inhibited the United States from recognizing the republic. More broadly, this episode illustrates that the international dimension of secession (i.e. how international actors react to secessionist cases) can have an impact on the United States calculation of stability and on its decision to recognize or not secessionist states.

Did the Greek-Americans Play a Role?

At this point, the Greek diaspora was not an important factor in the U.S. cost-benefit analysis. In fact, the Greek-American campaign against Macedonia seriously began in the summer of 1992, a few weeks after the U.S. decided to delay recognition. There is no empirical evidence showing that the Greek-

Lithuania, the Philippines, Slovenia, and Turkey. Russia had recognized Macedonia in May but waited for the European Community's recognition before exchanging ambassadors. See Sabrina Ramet, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

²⁵ Department of State, October 22, 1992. Unclassified Document, case 200502041. Unclassified on June 15, 2005.

American diaspora caused the Bush administration to withhold Macedonia's recognition.

Following the U.S. delay of recognition, however, the Greek-Americans launched an aggressive and expensive campaign against Macedonia in the summer of 1992. Their objective was to transform President Bush's delay of recognition into a permanent rejection of Macedonia's independence. Greek-Americans sent letters to their representatives in Congress to promote their views. The Hellenic-American National Council also sponsored a rally in Washington D.C. against recognition, which gathered more than 20,000 Greek-Americans.²⁶ A Hellenic organization called the "Americans for the Just Resolution of the Macedonian Issue" even paid for two full-page advertisements in *The New York Times* in April and May of 1992 to make its case against the recognition of Skopje under the name Macedonia. The maneuver was directed toward President Bush. The organization argued that the "recognition of Skopje as the Republic of Macedonia would only legitimize its extremist and false claims upon sovereign Greek territory".²⁷

The mobilization of the Greek-American lobby was significant but can hardly explain why the U.S. government sustained its delay of recognition. According to Thomas Niles, who acted as the Under Secretary of State for European Affairs at the time, the pressure exercised by Greek-Americans was not

²⁶ Duncan M. Perry, "Macedonia: A Balkan Problem and a European Dilemma", *op. cit.*, p. 40.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

a major issue for the Bush administration in 1992.²⁸ NSC David Gompert also points out that the administration of George H.W. Bush was, for better or for worse, relatively insensitive to the Greek-American lobby.²⁹ The fear of a conflict between the Greek ally and Macedonia that would destabilize the entire region, and the U.S. desire to act conjunctly with the Europeans, appear to be the main reasons explaining the decision of the Bush administration.

The decision to delay recognition, however, was only a political band-aid on an unresolved political issue and Macedonia remained a real puzzle to the United States. On the one hand, it is true that the recognition of Macedonia would have probably contained the Bosnian conflict from spreading southward by transforming Macedonia's republican borders into international ones, but on the other hand, such a decision would have infuriated Greece. The nonrecognition of Macedonia also carried its share of problems.³⁰ It probably reduced the tension between Athens and Skopje, but it greatly increased the instability and the vulnerability of the Macedonian republic vis-à-vis Serbia. Moreover, the lack of recognition was a great threat to Macedonia's economic viability since foreign aid and loans were only available to sovereign and recognized states.³¹

²⁸ Phone interview with Thomas M.T. Niles, January 29, 2005.

²⁹ Interview with David C. Gompert, Washington D.C., January 25, 2005.

³⁰ Marlise Simons, "For the Name of Macedonia, a Burst of Greek Pride", *The New York Times*, April 17, 1992. Macedonia's foreign minister, Denko Maleski declared: "If the European Community and the U.S. government leave this land in a state of limbo, I'm afraid that our neighbors will get ideas". Blaine Harden, "In Europe: New World Order vs. Old Nationalisms; Greece Blocks Recognition of Macedonia", *The Washington Post*, June 10, 1992.

³¹ Without recognition, the republic was not eligible for economic assistance from the World Bank or from the International Monetary Fund, and could not receive direct foreign aid from the U.S. or the EC. President Bush's effort in 1992 to provide 10 million dollars in aid to Macedonia, for instance, was blocked by the House of Representatives. Democrats on the House Foreign Affairs

In sum, the recognition issue soon became a catch-22 situation and it placed the U.S. in a very delicate position. In the weeks following its decision to delay recognition, the Bush administration stated that it would support any rapid solution on the name issue that could satisfy both parties and President Bush told Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov that the recognition of his republic was only a matter of time.

The Greek-Macedonian struggle, however, reached new height later in 1992 when Greece, which was determined to win the name battle, chose to increase pressure on the Macedonian government by closing its border to the republic and by imposing an oil embargo against Skopje. Macedonia counter-attacked by adopting a new national flag that pictured the Star of Vergina, which appeared on the tomb of Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great. This move was seen by the Greek authorities as a falsification of Greece's history and as a direct provocation. The adoption of the new flag bolstered Greek nationalist passions and dashed hopes for a quick resolution of the conflict.

Enter President Clinton

The election of Bill Clinton in 1992 did not result in any variation in the U.S. policy toward Macedonia's recognition. As time went on, however, and as the conflict resulting from Yugoslavia's disintegration threatened to consume the whole southern Balkans, the U.S. interest in the region slowly moved from a

Committee objected the allocation arguing that Macedonia was not recognized by the United States as a sovereign country. See Don Oberdorfer, "Macedonia Appeals for Recognition, Aid", *The Washington Post*, November 10, 1992.

peripheral to a core concern. A few weeks after he took office, President Clinton made clear to his senior foreign policy advisors that the U.S. had to be more involved in the Balkans. "If the United States doesn't act in situations like this", he declared in reference to the war in Bosnia, "nothing will happen".³² Since the U.S. recognition of Macedonia depended on the resolution of the Greek-Macedonian dispute, the Clinton administration made two important decisions that strengthen the stability of the republic without aggravating the tense political situation.

First, the White House consented for the first time since the beginning of the Yugoslav crisis to send U.S. troops to the Macedonian republic as a substitute to diplomatic recognition in order to reinforce Macedonia's security. As Richard Holbrooke points out: "The situation was so explosive that the United States made its only exception to the policy of not sending troops to the region [...] in order to prevent the war in Bosnia from spreading to the south and igniting a general Balkan conflict".³³ This decision came after the CIA had warned the White House that a Serbian attack on Macedonia was imminent and that this conflict could consume the region.³⁴ Thus, in May of 1993, 300 U.S. soldiers joined the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) for Macedonia, which already counted 700 U.N. troops.³⁵ The deployment of these troops along the Macedonian border

³² Ivo H. Daalder, *Getting to Dayton: The Making of America's Bosnia Policy*, Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000, p. 9.

³³ Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, New York: The Modern Library, 1999, pp. 122.

³⁴ John Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

³⁵ *The New York Times*, "300 U.S. Troops in Macedonia To Try to Contain Balkan War", July 13, 1993. The UNPROFOR in Macedonia had been authorized by the UN Security Council in late 1992. Its mandate was to protect Macedonia's border with Albania and Serbia. The creation of the UNPROFOR-Macedonia was recommended by the UN Secretary General following a request

with Serbia gives a clear indication of the importance that the United States gave to the stability of the republic, especially given that the government of Skopje had not formulated demands for any U.S. protection force.³⁶ This decision was part of the U.S. containment strategy in the region, which attempted to build a *cordon sanitaire* around Serbia to contain Milosevic's regime from committing further aggressions. This measure, however, placed the United States in a very odd position: American troops were sent to protect the territorial integrity of an unrecognized entity.

Second, the Clinton administration agreed to sponsor the admission of Macedonia to the United Nations in April of 1993, despite the fact that it had not yet recognized the republic. The objective here was to encourage Greece and Macedonia to settle the name issue through the auspices of the United Nations. Greece had reluctantly agreed to U.N. admission of the Yugoslav Republic under the provisional name Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) to show its good faith and its will to resolve the issue. Macedonia was thus admitted as the 181st member of the U.N. through a Security Council resolution under the name FYROM.

At first look, this event is puzzling since it raises the question of why the U.S. opposed Macedonia's recognition but sponsored its candidacy to the U.N.

made by the Macedonian government. See Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War*, Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995, p. 295. See also Nikolaos Zahariadis, "External Interventions and Domestic Ethnic Conflict in Yugoslav Macedonia", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 118, No. 2, 2003, p. 269.

³⁶ However, according to Elizabeth Drew, the decision to send U.S. troops in Macedonia was "a way of putting the emphasis on containment and of looking like the United States was doing something about the war in the Balkans". See Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge: The Clinton Presidency*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994, p. 161.

This also raises the issue of the difference between sponsoring a state's admission to the United Nations and issuing diplomatic recognition. If the U.S. were opposed to U.N. recognition of FYROM, it could have vetoed the Security Council resolution, but it did not. And neither did England and France, two important members of the European Union with permanent seats on the U.N. Security Council. How can we make sense of this U.S. decision then?

Macedonia's admission to the U.N. allowed the United States (and the EU members) to advance its stability agenda in the Balkans without increasing tensions between Athens and Skopje. The welcoming of Macedonia as a member of the U.N. bolstered the stability of the republic by underlying the inevitability of its independence. This was made without compelling the White House to change its official position on the issue.³⁷

Episode 2: President Clinton Recognizes Macedonia as FYROM

Toward the end of 1993, six members of the European Union (Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, and the Netherlands) decided to disregard Greece's sensibilities toward the Macedonian issue and recognized the independence of Macedonia as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).³⁸ The decision was issued days before Greece took over the revolving

³⁷ According to Marshall Freeman Harris, who served in Macedonia in the early 1990s as a State Department official, the U.N. recognition of FYROM was seen in Washington as a first step in the inevitable process of Macedonia's recognition. Interview with Marshall Freeman Harris, Washington D.C. February 17, 2005.

³⁸ By then, more than 40 states had extended diplomatic recognition to the republic. See Paul Lewis, "Europe to Defy Greece on Ties to Macedonia", *The New York Times*, December 12, 1993.

presidency of the EU. Despite the fact that Greece had shown openness by accepting FYROM's admission to the U.N., the Europeans remained upset about Greece's counter-productive campaign on the name issue, which impeded progress on the matter for almost two years. The nonrecognition of Macedonia also had a bad effect on both the EU and the U.S.'s attempt to strengthen economic sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro in 1992-93. Since Macedonia was not recognized and could not, therefore, obtain economic support from the United States or from international economic organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank, Skopje was compelled to violate U.N. sanctions by trading with Serbia in order to sustain its economy.

The EU decision to disregard Greece's objection created a window of opportunity for Washington. The Clinton administration had the option to move along with the Europeans to advance its agenda of regional stability in the Balkans without being condemned by Greece as the instigator of the measure. Moreover, the timing for recognition was better than in 1992 since tensions between Greece and Macedonia had significantly diminished and the two parties had undertaken negotiations. In early 1994, the Clinton administration decided to follow the Europeans despite Greece's strong resistance.³⁹ The Clinton administration justified its decision to recognize FYROM by stating that there was "a potential

See also Loring M. Danforth, *The Macedonian Conflict: Ethnic Nationalism in a Transnational World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 151.

³⁹ Interview with Anthony Lake, Washington D.C., April 4, 2005.

for instability to grow” in the South Balkans and that the recognition of the republic as a sovereign state would increase its stability.⁴⁰

The White House also emphasized the importance of the internal and the external stability of the republic in the justification of its decision:

Today, the United States extended formal recognition to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and declared its intent to establish full diplomatic relations. [...] This action will help promote stability in the region. We join nearly every other country of Europe in taking this step. In extending formal recognition, we have taken into account the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's commitment to peaceful cooperative relations and its respect for the territorial integrity of all of its neighbors, and the inviolability of existing boundaries. [...] We recognize that Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia have outstanding differences which we expect will be resolved through good faith negotiations. [...] We also take note of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's commitment to democratic principles, to human rights, to the creation of an open, free market economy and to its desire to seek peaceful solutions to problems in the regions.⁴¹

According to Matthew Nimetz, who was President Clinton's special envoy to Macedonia in charge of the Greek-Macedonia crisis in 1993-94, recognition had first and foremost the objective of fostering Macedonia's stability. The purpose was “to reinforce the recognition of sovereignty and to give them [the Macedonians] equality with countries that might be hostile”.⁴²

⁴⁰ David Binder, “U.S. to Recognize Macedonia”, *The New York Times*, February 9, 1994. Moreover, the American recognition of the republic had a positive impact on its economy. The U.S. administration provided some 76 million dollars in foreign aid to Skopje in the next four years, which shows that diplomatic recognition can carry tangible economic benefits. See Sabrina Petra Ramet, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-187.

⁴¹ The White House, “U.S. Recognition of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, *Statement by the Press Secretary*, February 9, 1994.

⁴² Phone interview with Matthew Nimetz, February 18, 2005.

Greece's reaction to the U.S. decision was immediate. President Clinton was depicted as a traitor and the U.S. consulate in Thessaloniki was attacked by angry Greek protesters who threw eggs at the consulate's windows. More importantly, and as a direct reaction to the U.S. recognition of FYROM, Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou—who defeated Mitsotakis in the 1993 election—announced the imposition of a major trade embargo against Macedonia to retaliate against Washington's recognition of the republic.⁴³

Greek-Americans vs. Macedonian-Americans

The U.S. decision to recognize Macedonia's independence was made despite the strong opposition expressed by the Greek-American community, which indicates that the Greek diaspora was not the main factor influencing the Clinton administration. But what about the Macedonian-American community? Did this diaspora play a role?

According to Ivan A. Lebanov, the president of the Macedonian Patriotic Organization (MPO), the Macedonian-Americans played a significant role in the U.S.'s recognition of FYROM. The Macedonian Patriotic Organization worked with several members of Congress and "there were many trips to Washington, thousands of letters, hundreds of faxes and tons of paper used by *the Macedonian*

⁴³ Ibid., p. 284. Greek Prime Minister Papandreou declared that he was forced to impose the embargo to protect Greece's national security. He pointed out: "this is a real threat to our national security, because Skopje's aim is to gain an exit to the Aegean Sea. We closed the border after six EU countries recognized Skopje... We had to remind the world there is a problem concerning stability and security in the region". Cited in John Shea, *Macedonia and Greece: The Struggle to Define a New Balkan Nation*, North Carolina: McFarland, 1997, p. 285.

Tribune”, MPO’s news paper, to promote the independence of Macedonia.⁴⁴ For Lebanov, the answer is clear, the U.S. recognition did not just happen, Macedonian-Americans made it happen.

This small Macedonian community, which gathered less than 40 thousand Americans, may have made the Clinton administration aware of Macedonia’s political and economic difficulties.⁴⁵ However, during their battle for recognition, Macedonian-Americans were competing against the Greek-American lobby, which was better organized at the national level and represented a community of 1.1 million Americans (the largest Greek community outside of Greece). If the Greek-American lobby, which had strong connections to Congress members in both Houses and strong ties to an influential member of the White House (President Clinton’s senior advisor George Stephanopoulos), failed to dissuade President Clinton from recognizing Macedonia, it is very unlikely that the Macedonian Americans were able to influence the Clinton administration. Indeed, we can seriously doubt that the White House made the calculation that it would be profitable to please the Macedonian-Americans at the expense of alienating the large Greek-American community.

The Clinton Administration Backtracks

The recognition of FYROM had a major impact on the mobilization of the Greek-Americans. Within a few days, the American Hellenic Educational

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 183. The Macedonian Patriotic Organization was established in North America in 1922. One of the central aims of the organization has been to promote Macedonia’s independence.

Progressive Association collected 30,000 signatures against President Clinton's decision.⁴⁶ Several leaders of the community, among which Representative Michael Bilirakis of Florida and Senator Paul Sarbanes of Maryland, asked President Clinton to reverse its decision to recognize FYROM and managed to convince George Stephanopoulos to talk to President Clinton about it.⁴⁷ Members of a national Hellenic group also pressured the U.S. Congress "to urge that President Clinton rescind American recognition of the Republic of Macedonia", which led Congress to pass a resolution asking the president to reconsider its decision.⁴⁸

Under the auspices of George Stephanopoulos, leaders of the Greek-American community (Greek Orthodox Archbishop Iakovos, Senator Sarbanes, and a dozen prominent Greek-Americans) managed to meet with President Clinton in a private meeting in the White House to discuss the Macedonian problem. The meeting was attended by Vice-President Al Gore and National Security advisor Anthony Lake. Neither Secretary of State Warren Christopher nor any State Department officials were present at the meeting. Following the reunion, President Clinton chose to backtrack from its initial decision to extend full diplomatic relations to FYROM (e.g. to send an ambassador and to open an Embassy in

⁴⁵ The 2000 U.S. census listed 38,051 Macedonian-Americans. Michigan was the State that gathered the largest cluster of Macedonia-Americans with 7,801.

⁴⁶ Hanna Rosin, "Why we flipped on Macedonia", *The New Republic*, June 13, 1994, p. 11.

⁴⁷ Marshall Freeman Harris, "Macedonia: The Next Domino?", *The National Interest*, Spring 1999, Vol. 55, pp. 44-45.

⁴⁸ John Shea, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

Skopje). The president indicated that no ambassador would be sent to Skopje as long as the name and the flag issue remained unresolved with Greece.⁴⁹

The Greek-American crusade clearly impacted Clinton's foreign policy decisions toward Macedonia. Commenting on this rather unusual episode of foreign policy making, Marshall Freeman Harris, who served in Macedonia in the early 1990s as a state department official, writes:

The normally automatic process by which diplomatic relations immediately follow recognition was halted, not because some U.S. national interest was invoked but because, in one of the most hysterical moments of the new presidency, Greek-Americans persuaded White House adviser George Stefanopoulos to intervene with Clinton.⁵⁰

Moreover, the Greek-American lobby managed to make the U.S. postal service deliver mail to FYROM instead of to Macedonia and it also intervened with American phone companies so that long distance calls from the U.S. to the republic be logged under the name FYROM instead of Macedonia.⁵¹

Interagency Disagreement

By delaying the establishment of diplomatic relations to FYROM, President Clinton was hoping to avoid further antagonizing the Greek-American community. This decision, however, led to an important interagency disagreement between the White House and the State Department. Officials from the State Department were upset about the drastic turn of events and openly denounced the

⁴⁹ Hanna Rosin, *op. cit.*, p. 11. Sabrina Petra Ramet, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

⁵⁰ Marshall Freeman Harris, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

White House decision contending that President Clinton was “bowing” to pressure from the Greek-Americans.⁵² Former Secretary of State James Baker characterized the Clinton administration as being “confused” and “inconsistent” on the issue and accused the President of “failure to stand up to pressure from the Greek-American community”.⁵³

As tensions between Greece and Macedonia had significantly decreased over the last year, the State Department was strongly in favor of extending diplomatic relations to Macedonia to strengthen its security toward its neighbors. Following the U.S. recognition of FYROM in February of 1994, Secretary of State Christopher had urged President Clinton to name an ambassador to Skopje to give added weight to recognition. In an interview with *The Washington Post*, some State Department officials also declared that delaying establishment of full diplomatic relations with Macedonia would empower and legitimate Greece’s recent decision to impose a trade embargo against Macedonia.

Facing this interagency discord, the White House defended its decision by pointing out that it had succeeded in reaching a middle-ground position on the issue. Its recognition of the republic satisfied the need for greater stability in the South Balkans, and the delay in sending an ambassador satisfied the Greek-American community. White House officials also argued that the maintenance of

⁵² Steven Greenhouses, “State Dept. Criticizes White House on Macedonia Ties”, *The Washington Post*, April 19, 1994.

⁵³ John Shea, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

the decision to recognize FYROM was a clear demonstration that the administration had not “caved in to political pressure”.⁵⁴

This U.S. interagency division clearly shows that the U.S. government is not monolithic and that agencies within it sometimes have different views and interests. The State Department was primarily concerned with the stability of the Balkans and, in contrast to President Clinton, did not have to cope with the U.S. domestic dimension of foreign policy. This explains the gap between their respective positions toward Macedonia.

Did the Greek-Americans Really Play a Major Role?

The intervention of the Greek-American community did cause the reversal of President Clinton’s decision to exchange diplomatic relations with Macedonia. However, one could wonder whether the Greek-American lobby would have been as successful without the presence of a Greek-American in the White House? In other words, can this episode really give credit to the ethnic politics argument or does it simply show that the personal beliefs and interests of U.S. officials, such as George Stephanopoulos, often determine the decision-making process?

Regardless of the real impact of the Greek-American lobby, I argue here that the American decision to postpone the extension of diplomatic relations was relatively insignificant considering that the U.S. had not reversed its recognition of

⁵⁴ Steven Greenhouse, *op. cit.*

the republic. As Anthony Lake points out, this decision did not signify a “reversal of course” in the U.S.’s foreign policy toward the republic.⁵⁵

Moreover, even if Greek-American pressure slowed the process by which full diplomatic relations were established following FYROM’s recognition, it failed to stop it. According to Marshall Freeman Harris, the Greek-Americans were condemned to lose the battle over the recognition of Macedonia. They managed to win a fight by making the Clinton administration retreat from its earlier decision to send an ambassador, but they did not manage to win the war of recognition.⁵⁶

Episode 3: The U.S. Extends Full Diplomatic Relations to FYROM

In the months following the admission of FYROM to the United Nations, the organization hosted a series of talks to tackle the Macedonian issue but none of them produced any significant progress. Things started to move forward in the fall of 1995 when U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Richard Holbrooke (who was working on a peace plan to end the Bosnian war), undertook discussions with both Athens and Skopje. After a few meetings with the leaders of the two states, Holbrooke squared the circle by making Greece and Macedonia agree on an interim agreement of mutual recognition in which they consented to normalize their relations. Under this agreement, Athens and Skopje agreed to recognize their mutual frontiers, the inviolability of their borders, and their respective

⁵⁵ Interview with Anthony Lake, Washington D.C., April 4, 2005.

⁵⁶ Interview with Marshall Freeman Harris, Washington D.C., February 17, 2005.

independence. Macedonia also agreed to adopt a new flag and, in counterpart, Athens lifted its economic embargo.⁵⁷ The two states also exchanged liaison officers and agreed to begin commercial negotiations. Finally, both parties began serious negotiations on the name issue.⁵⁸

On the day of the agreement, Richard Holbrooke talked to George Stephanopoulos to inform the White House of the new development. Holbrooke recalls: "I call George Stephanopoulos, the President's senior advisor, who was also the key Administration connection to the Greek-American community. When he heard the news, George's voice [...] broke for a moment. He said he would immediately call key members of the Greek-American community, starting with Senator Paul Sarbanes of Maryland".⁵⁹ This anecdote shows the extent to which Stephanopoulos was involved in the issue and it reflects his strong connection to the Greek-American lobby.

It is in the context of mutual agreement between Greece and Macedonia that the United States established diplomatic relations with FYROM at the ambassadorial level by upgrading its Liaison Office to an Embassy in February of 1996. The U.S. decision was made after Skopje and Athens had shown a clear commitment to respect each other's sovereignty and had made efforts to find a solution to the name dispute. This interim accord acted as the missing piece of the puzzle that guaranteed Macedonia's external stability. Indeed, as a result of the

⁵⁷ Richard Holbrooke, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-127. See also Duncan M. Perry, "Macedonia: Balkan Miracle or Balkan Disaster?", *Current History*, March 1996, Vol. 95, No. 599, p. 115.

⁵⁸ John Philipps, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁵⁹ Richard Holbrooke, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

accord, political tensions dropped significantly, and virtually eliminating the probability of an interstate conflict between the two states.⁶⁰

For Matthew Nimetz, who was named UN special envoy to Macedonia to resolve the crisis with Greece in 1994, the establishment of a U.S. Embassy in Skopje greatly strengthened the security of the Macedonian state. He indicates:

In smaller countries, you have to understand how important it is to have an Ambassador of the large superpower, which we are, and until that happens there is always a question of whether there will be support for the very survival of the country. And this is a country in the Balkans that never had a history of being an independent country. So, I think that it was a high priority in Skopje to have not only formal U.S. recognition, and a membership in the UN, but a tangible U.S. demonstration of support.⁶¹

After signing the accord with Athens, Macedonia was also able to internationalize and to institutionalize its status as sovereign state by joining a series of international organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP).

Episode 4: The U.S. Recognizes FYROM as the Republic of Macedonia

The fourth and last episode of the Macedonian saga took place under the presidency of George W. Bush and concerns the U.S. recognition of the constitutional name Macedonia which, at the time of this writing, is still opposed

⁶⁰ In response to the U.S. recognition of its republic, Macedonian Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski declared: "The establishment of full diplomatic relations with the U.S.A. at ambassadorial level, is an event of exceptional, I'd say historic, significance for the republic of Macedonia. It's something we have been anticipating for a long time, aware that this would contribute, to a great extent, to the strengthening of Macedonia's position not only on a bilateral basis in relations with the U.S., but overall in the international community, as well". See John Shea, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

⁶¹ Phone interview with Matthew Nimetz, February 18, 2005.

by Greece. Conventionally, the diplomatic recognition of a new state comes with the recognition of its constitutional name. Macedonia once again failed to experience the conventional process of recognition as the United States recognized its constitutional name ten years after it recognized its independence. The question to ask here is why the U.S. suddenly felt the need to recognize the name "Macedonia" while Athens and Skopje had still not entirely resolved their contention regarding this issue? This is even more puzzling considering that the EU members were waiting for a final agreement on the name before completing Macedonia's recognition process. What kind of incentives led the U.S. to make such a bold decision?

Macedonia's Growing Internal Instability

In the years following its independence, Macedonia faced growing internal divisions between its Slavic orthodox majority and the Muslim Albanians who constituted the largest minority with approximately 23 percent of the population.⁶² The Albanian minority was poorly represented within political institutions and only a few ministers of the government were Albanian Muslims. In the second half of the 1990s, ethnic Albanians rose up against discrimination and began to express their grievances more vocally. They requested more political autonomy and better constitutional recognitions. Hence, Macedonia soon went from the status of a

⁶² At that time, a large portion of the Albanian community had boycotted the referendum on independence. Albanians argued that they enjoyed more power under the communist Yugoslav federation and that the new Macedonian constitution might not respect Albanian rights. Under Yugoslavia, Albanians had the constitutional right to be educated in the Albanian language in Kosovo and they had better educational opportunities. Moreover, they could fly the Turkish and the Albanian flag on special occasions. These rights and privileges were removed when Macedonia seceded from Yugoslavia in 1991. See Susan Woodward, *op. cit.* p. 262.

secessionist state struggling for independence to the one of a host state facing an Albanian autonomist movement.

The growing political tension in Macedonia eventually led to ethnic violence in early 2001. Albanian insurgents from Macedonia's National Liberation Army (NLA)—an offshoot of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA)—launched several attacks in the northwest of the republic.⁶³ Insurgents asked for the recognition that ethnic Albanians were equal to the Slav majority; for the recognition of Albanian as an official language; for the creation of an Albanian state funded university; and for a better representation of Albanians in the armed forces, police, and civil service.⁶⁴

The conflict that erupted in January 2001 produced more than 120,000 displaced persons, before a ceasefire between the NLA and the Macedonian authorities could be reached in July.⁶⁵ With the assistance of special representatives from the United States and the European Union, a political accord

⁶³ Some argue that the conflict was in fact imported to Macedonia by members of the KLA who wanted to create a Greater Albania. Although the idea of a Greater Albania might have motivated a certain fringe of Macedonia's Albanian community, most of the ethnic Albanians only asked for more autonomy within Macedonia. Moreover, the Kosovo war in 1998-99 is often cited as a determining factor that boosted the ethnic Albanian community of Macedonia to request more power and recognition. According to Zahariadis, the crisis in Kosovo "served as the catalyst for bringing an end to the idyllic portrayal of ethnic relations in FYROM". See Nikolaos Zahariadis, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

⁶⁴ John Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁶⁵ P.H. Liotta, "Spillover Effect: Aftershocks in Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia", *European Security*, Vol. 12, No. 1, Spring 2003, p. 97. In June 2001, the President of Macedonia Boris Trajkovski asked for NATO military assistance to resolve the crisis. The North Atlantic organization agreed to provide a peacekeeping force but only once a peaceful agreement would be settled between Macedonian and Albanian political leaders. See Suzette R. Grillot, Wolf-Christian Paes, Hans Rissler, and Shelly O. Stoneman, "A Fragile Peace: Guns and Security in Post-conflict Macedonia", *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*, June 2004. <http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2004/sas-mkd-30jun.pdf> (accessed July 2006).

known as the Ohrid Agreement was signed in August.⁶⁶ Following the signing of the agreement, NATO sent ground troops—as requested by Macedonian Prime Minister Hari Kostov—to lead “Operation Essential Harvest” mandate to demilitarize the NLA and restore order in the republic.

The implementation of the Ohrid accord, however, turned out to be more difficult than expected. Although the agreement had officially put an end to the crisis, ethnic tensions persisted and a significant portion of Slavic Macedonians opposed certain aspects of the agreement. The main political contention between Slavs and Muslims concerned the modification of the municipal boundaries, which was to give more power to the ethnic Albanians in important Macedonian cities.⁶⁷ In the summer of 2004, Slavic nationalists mobilized and called for a referendum on a proposal to override the decentralization law, which was to redraw municipal boundaries.

While international observers initially estimated that the nationalist proposal had little chance to succeed and, therefore, that it did not threaten the survival of the Ohrid agreement, opinion polls showed, ten days before the vote, that no less than 43.5 percent of Macedonians would oppose the decentralization

⁶⁶ This agreement addressed the core Albanian demands: greater civil rights were guaranteed for Albanians (i.e. political, cultural, and religious rights); better representation of Albanians in the civil service and in the police force; the recognition of the Albanian language as an official language in districts where Albanians formed the majority; and a double-majority parliamentary system was created. The system required that at least half of the Albanian representatives in Parliament vote in favor of a bill for it to come into law. This measure gave Albanians a veto power over Macedonia’s political life. See Ted Galen Carpenter, “Kosovo and Macedonia: The West Enhances the Threat”, *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Winter 2002, p. 30. See also *The New York Times*, “Macedonia Appeals for World’s Help to Restore Stability”, November 17, 2001.

⁶⁷ The redrawing of municipal boundaries made “ethnic Albanians a dominant force in 16 of 84 districts and gave them more control over schools, healthcare and jobs in those areas.” See *Los Angeles Times*, “Macedonia; Bid to Abolish Albanian Autonomy Fails”, November 8, 2004.

law in the referendum. Thus, days before the vote, the yes side was gaining momentum and the referendum threatened to put an end to the three-year peace agreement that had been reached in 2001 by the U.S. and the EU.⁶⁸

In the first days of November 2004, officials from the Macedonian government called on the Bush administration for help and support.⁶⁹ As a key instigator of the Ohrid peace plan, the U.S. administration saw the accord as the best way to preserve stability in the southern Balkans. The agreement was seen in Washington as Macedonia's first step toward a successful multiethnic state, and as the only credible solution to ensure Macedonia's eventual integration into the European Union and NATO. In a 1999 interview, Christopher Hill, the first U.S. ambassador to Macedonia, revealed the important role that Macedonia was playing in the region and the U.S. commitment to reinforce its cohesion: "Macedonia", he said, "has an important role as a factor of stability in the Balkans... ultimately, as a multiethnic state, we very much want to see it succeed, and we're going to stand by it, and help ensure that it does succeed".⁷⁰ The strong U.S. support to the Ohrid agreement clearly reflected Hill's point of view.

A few days before the referendum, the State Department was worried that a winning referendum might destabilize Macedonia and that ethnic conflicts might

⁶⁸ James Pettifer, *Macedonia: Recognition, Referendum, Resignation*, Conflict Studies Research Centre, Balkans Series, Defense Academy of the United Kingdom, Sandhurst, December 2004, p. 4. <http://www.da.mod.uk/CSRC/documents/balkans/04%2839%29-JP.pdf> (accessed June 2006).

⁶⁹ Interview with a State Department official, Washington D.C., February 25, 2005.

⁷⁰ John Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 74. As Matthew Nimetz recalls: "The administration was concerned about the referendum, and felt that recognition would help the government there to defeat the referendum". A winning referendum "would have lead to the unravelling of the Ohrid accord, which would have lead maybe to the breakup of the country". Phone interview with Matthew Nimetz, February 18, 2005.

resurface. The Macedonian issue literally became short-term crisis management for the U.S. administration.⁷¹ On November 3, the day after the reelection of President Bush, members of the State Department and of the National Security Council met to discuss measures to secure the survival of the Ohrid agreement. The option of recognizing Macedonia's constitutional name was then retained by U.S. top officials. This option was seen as a measure to appease Slavic nationalists who had been struggling for the right to use the name Macedonia since the independence of the republic in 1991.⁷² This recognition was expected to bring more confidence to the Slavic majority as well as more evidence of the U.S. support of Macedonia's territorial integrity. Certain members of the State Department who attended the meeting pointed out, however, that the Greek-American community would clearly be angry at the U.S. if the Bush administration was to move on with recognition.⁷³ Despite this domestic consideration, Secretary of State Colin Powell recommended to President Bush that he recognizes Macedonia's constitutional name. The decision was made in a very short period of time and resulted from a relatively large consensus on the issue between the State Department and the NSC.⁷⁴ It is not a coincidence that the

⁷¹ Interview with a State Department official, Washington D.C., March 10, 2005.

⁷² James Pettifer argues: "there is an entrenched and obstinate constituency within the Slav-Macedonian community, perhaps between a third and a half of them, who do not really accept Ochrid at all and have no real intention of putting it into practice. It is to these people that the US decision to recognize the name Macedonia was directed. In late summer 2004 they had begun to move into a rejectionist position in the referendum campaign". See James Pettifer, *Macedonia: Recognition, Referendum, Resignation*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁷³ Interview with a State Department official, *op. cit.*, February 25, 2005.

⁷⁴ According to State Department officials who have been interviewed by the author, the United States would have been unable to make such a quick decision if foreign policy agencies had

Bush administration recognized the constitutional name of the republic 24 hours after the U.S. presidential election. The administration knew that the decision would alienate the Greek-American community and the White House was aware that it would have been politically costly to make such a unilateral decision before the election.

During the State Department daily press briefing that followed the U.S. decision, officials emphasized the importance of stability. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher declared:

The fact that the referendum is coming up is part of the equation. We are certainly looking for ways to support the full implementation of the Ohrid Agreements, including the decentralization that's so important to that, and we felt therefore this was the appropriate time to take the step. [...] The point is to show support for a multiethnic society in Macedonia as they proceed in a direction that we feel contribute to their own stability and the stability of the region, and by taking this step in terms of recognizing Macedonia under its chosen name we feel that we bolster that progress.⁷⁵

For the first time since the breakup of Yugoslavia, the United States had made a decision on recognition without consulting its European counterparts beforehand. The U.S. did not attempt to bring EU countries on board because it did not want to offend and isolate Greece, which still opposed FYROM's use of the name Macedonia.⁷⁶ The Bush administration, however, was so determined to save the Ohrid agreement that it only informed the Greek government of its decision to

disagreed on the issue. Interview, *op. cit.*, February 25, 2005, and Interview, *op. cit.*, March 10, 2005.

⁷⁵ Richard Boucher, *Daily Press Briefing*, U.S. Department of State, Washington D.C., November 4, 2004. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2004/37819.htm> (accessed July 2006).

⁷⁶ Interview, *op. cit.*, February 25, 2005.

recognize Macedonia once the decision was made, a lack of delicacy that infuriated Athens. However, as much as Secretary of State Colin Powell repeated that the U.S. decision “was not aimed at upsetting Greece”, this did not prevent Athens from taking offence at the U.S.’s decision.⁷⁷ The Greek government declared that regardless of the U.S. stance on the issue, it would not recognize FYROM as the Republic of Macedonia and that it would oppose its integration in the EU and NATO as long as a compromise was not be reached on the name of the republic.

This last episode of the saga shows that the U.S. cost-benefit analysis produced a different outcome than ten years earlier. It was clearly more important in 2004 to foster Macedonia’s order and internal cohesion than to manage Greece’s feelings toward the issue.⁷⁸ This can be explained by the fact that the Greek-Macedonian tension of the early 1990s, which inhibited President H.W. Bush from recognizing the republic, was much less significant in 2004. Indeed, as a result of the 1995 interim accord, Athens and Skopje had normalized their relations and Greece had become the largest economic investor in Macedonia in the second half of the 1990s. In the late 1990s, the two states also agreed to build an oil pipeline that crossed both states and they signed a bilateral security accord. Moreover, Greece had supported the Macedonian government during the 2001 conflict against Albanian insurgents.⁷⁹ This growing economic and military

⁷⁷ Patrick Quinn, “Greece Complains to the United States over Reported Macedonia Recognition”, *Associated Press*, November 4, 2004. Interview, *op. cit.*, March 10, 2005.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Greece offered, among other things, material support to Skopje to prevent the breakup of the state. See Nikolaos Zahariadis, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

interdependence made any interstate conflict very unlikely, and this explains why this factor was no longer part of the U.S. cost-benefit analysis.⁸⁰

The Macedonian referendum was ultimately defeated on November 7, 2004 because of a low turnout.⁸¹ It is difficult to measure whether the U.S. decision to recognize Macedonia really had an impact on the referendum result. We can assume, however, that it did influence the outcome in a positive way since supporters of the proposal to override the decentralization law were fewer than polls had shown the week before.⁸² Those who saw the U.S. move as purely symbolic and as a reward for Macedonia's help during the Kosovo war and for its support in the invasion of Iraq in 2003 have misread the meaning of Bush's decision. The main objective of the American recognition was to help maintain Macedonia's internal stability and to reinforce order in the whole region. This episode shows that, once again, recognition was a tool to foster the U.S.'s interest in regional stability in the Balkans and that this focus remained relatively consistent over the years.

⁸⁰ John Phillips, *op. cit.*, pp. 59 and 182.

⁸¹ The Macedonian constitution required that at least 50 percent of the population cast ballots for the referendum to be valid, while only 26 percent of the eligible voters voted. This was a major victory for the supporters of the Ohrid agreement.

⁸² According to James Pettifer: "The great short term achievement of the American recognition decision is that it cut the ground from under the feet of the rejectionists in the Slavophone community, and reinforced the minority who are prepared to accept, if not like, the Ochrid Accords". See James Pettifer, *Macedonia: Recognition, Referendum, Resignation*, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

The Second Crusade of the Greek-Americans

Twenty-four hours after the U.S. decided to recognize the Republic of Macedonia, the head of the Greek-American Church, Archbishop Demetrios, sent a letter to President Bush asking him to revoke his decision.⁸³ Ten days later, Archbishop Demetrios, accompanied by members of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and by Greek-American leaders from Boston, New York and Washington D.C., met with U.S. top officials hoping to persuade them to change their mind. At the State Department, the Greek-American lobby met in private with Secretary Colin Powell, Undersecretary for Political Affairs Marc Grossman, and with Assistant Secretary for European Affairs Elizabeth Jones.⁸⁴ During the meeting, Powell explained that the decision to recognize the name was irrevocable and that the U.S. objective was not to hurt Greece. According to a State Department official, Secretary Powell declared: "We knew that the decision would create great pain to you but we had no choice. The objective was to reinforce stability in Macedonia".⁸⁵ The Greek-American delegation then headed to the National Security Council to meet with National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice. Deputy National Security Advisor Fran Townsend and President Bush's senior political advisor Karl Rove attended the meeting. Once more, the Archbishop asked that the U.S. revoke its decision but he basically received the

⁸³ *The Financial Times*, "Archbishop Demetrios Asks U.S. President to Revoke Recognition of 'Republic of Macedonia'", November 6, 2004.

⁸⁴ *World Council of Hellenes Abroad*, "Powell and Rice Discuss Macedonian Issue with Archbishop Demetrios", November 15, 2004.
http://www.sae.gr/EN/Nea_Eidiseis/nea_omogeneias_in.asp?nid=37 (accessed August 2006).

⁸⁵ Interview, *op. cit.*, February 25, 2005.

same answer from NSC top officials.⁸⁶ The delegation finally went on to Capitol Hill to meet with Greek-Americans from the House of Representatives and to conduct strategic meetings with Greek-American Senator Paul Sarbanes from Maryland. In the weeks following its visit to Washington, the Greek-American delegation sent numerous letters to Congress members in an ultimate attempt to influence the White House's decision. Despite time and energy spent, the Greek-American lobby bitterly failed to modify the U.S. recognition of the name Macedonia.

In contrast to the 1994 crusade, which led President Clinton to backtrack on his position, the 2004 crusade was a total failure. It is hard to know whether the outcome would have been different with a Greek-American adviser in President Bush's administration. If we use the 1994 episode as a counterfactual, however, we can assume that the Greek-American lobby would have been more influential in 2004 with a key ally like George Stephanopoulos in the White House.

Another difference between 1994 and 2004 is the election factor. There was a midterm Congressional election coming in 1994 and so President Clinton certainly did not want to alienate the Greek-American community. Whereas in 2004, the recognition of Macedonia's constitutional name happened hours after President Bush's re-election and well ahead of midterm elections. This factor has probably influenced both administrations in their policy toward Macedonia. I argue that, although secondary to the analysis, this factor should not be undermined.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Regional Stability or Ethnic Politics?

What can we learn from the four intra-cases presented above? First, the quest for regional stability was clearly the main factor guiding the U.S. foreign policy toward Macedonia. Recognition was initially delayed in large part because the republic could not guarantee its external stability (i.e. war was likely with Greece, which was also a U.S. ally). Then, recognition was conferred to FYROM in order to reduce its vulnerability toward Serbia's aggressive behavior once the prospect of a war with Greece became less of a concern. The constitutional name of the Macedonian republic was finally recognized by Washington in 2004 in an attempt to secure the implementation of the Ohrid agreement, which aimed to strengthen the internal stability of the republic and by extension prevent regional disorder from spreading.

Matthew Nimetz argues that U.S. administrations made a clear connection between the internal and the external dimensions of Macedonia's stability during the whole saga of recognition. The first concern for the U.S. was the "stability of international borders", declares Nimetz, "then internal stability was connected to it. Is this country going to be stable internally or will Macedonia enter into internal black-holes without a leadership and with internal strife? [...] Elements of internal strife could have affected [Macedonia's] international stability because of its ethnic issues".⁸⁷ The previous analysis precisely demonstrates that the connection between these two dimensions of stability guided the American response to Macedonia.

⁸⁷ Phone interview with Matthew Nimetz, February 18, 2005.

This analysis also cast serious doubt on the validity of the ethnic politics argument to explain the U.S. behavior toward secessionist movements. The Greek lobby was not a major variable in the Bush administration decision to delay recognition in 1992. This lobby failed to prevent President Clinton from recognizing the independence of the republic in 1994, and failed again ten years later when it attempted to pressure the Bush administration to reverse its decision to recognize Macedonia's constitutional name. In fact, the Greek-Americans only had an impact on the formulation of the U.S. policy from March 1994 to September 1995, that is in the interlude between the American recognition of FYROM and the extension of diplomatic relations to the republic. We can also question whether the Greek-Americans would have been as successful in 1994-95 without the help of President Clinton's senior adviser George Stephanopoulos, who was working from inside the White House in support of the interests of this ethnic community. Thus, although one would expect the ethnic argument to perform well in the Macedonian case because of the strength of the Greek-American community in Washington, this study shows that this argument performs poorly overall.

The Business Interest Argument

In Chapter 4, we have seen that the Bush administration had a clear preference for Yugoslavia's unity, but that the business interest model developed by David Gibbs did not account for this inclination nor for the reversal of policy that led the U.S. to recognize Croatia and Slovenia in 1992. This argument faces the same problem in the present case study. How could private business interests

explain the U.S. delay of Macedonia's recognition for almost two years, while Yugoslavia had already ceased to exist?

The U.S. had no economic investment in Macedonia in the years following its independence. Marshall Freeman Harris, who accompanied U.S. Ambassador Robert Frowick to Skopje in 1992 to establish a CSCE observation mission, recalls that: "we were virtually the only Westerners in town" and that "there was only an American library in the city" to illustrate the absence of U.S. private investors in the republic.⁸⁸ In fact, if U.S. top officials would have been involved in multinational corporations that were interested in doing business with Macedonia, we can assume that the U.S. government would have been logically opposed to the Greek economic embargo against the republic in 1992 and in 1994. The American government would have also certainly been eager to recognize the independence of Macedonia in order to provide development aid to sustain its economy. This, however, did not happen.

The business interest argument, however, was seriously raised in 2004 to explain the U.S. decision to recognize the constitutional name of the republic. John Phillips argues, for instance, that the Bush administration was really concerned about the stability of Macedonia because its interest lay in the construction of a 1.13 billion dollar pipeline that would run from the Black Sea to the Adriatic to supply the U.S. demands for oil. Phillips writes: "American commercial interests in Macedonia center on a project to build a trans-Balkan pipeline designed to

⁸⁸ Marshall Freeman Harris, "Macedonia: The Next Domino?", *op. cit.*, p. 44.

secure a passage for oil from the Caspian Sea”.⁸⁹ The project expected that the pipeline would run through Albania, Bulgaria and Macedonia and that it would transport oil extracted in Central Asia. In February of 2005, three months after the U.S. recognition of Macedonia’s constitutional name, the President and CEO of the Albanian-Macedonian-Bulgarian Oil Corporation (AMBO), Edward Ferguson, indicated that he was negotiating with Exxon Mobil and Chevron Texaco to build the line.⁹⁰

One can, therefore, wonder whether the decision to recognize Macedonia’s name had as its main objective the preservation of internal stability in the republic in order to maintain the confidence of private investors. This argument was strongly refuted by State Department officials.⁹¹ It is a fact that the U.S. government ordered studies to evaluate the feasibility of the project (the U.S. Trade and Development Agency had published papers on the issue in May 2000), but the trans-Balkan pipeline project was apparently not part of the decision to recognize Macedonia’s constitutional name.⁹² The project was not even raised as a concern when U.S. officials debated the issue of recognition in November of 2004. When asked whether U.S. officials had personal economic interests in corporations that were doing business with Macedonia in 2004, a State Department official replied: “You are totally off the track”.⁹³

⁸⁹ John Phillips, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁹¹ Interview with a State Department official, *op. cit.*, March 10, 2005.

⁹² *Ibid.* Interview with a State Department official, *op. cit.*, February 25, 2005.

⁹³ Interview with a State Department official, *op. cit.*, March 10, 2005.

The constraints of space and time do not allow me to provide a definitive answer on whether private economic interests impacted the U.S. position on the constitutional name issue in 2004. This question deserves further investigation. This chapter demonstrates, however, that profound security issues were related to the survival of the Macedonian state and that these issues were at the center of the U.S. decision-making process. In this context, it appears very unlikely that any economic interests that governmental officials could have had were important enough to influence the course of the U.S. decision process toward Macedonia.

Conclusion

At first glance, the evolution of the American policy toward Macedonia seems rather inconsistent. The U.S. response went from a withholding policy in the early 1990s to a unilateral recognition of Macedonia's constitutional name in 2004. The analysis demonstrates, however, that defensive realism (i.e. defensive positionalism) shaped the foreign policy of successive U.S. administrations. It shows that the variations in the American response toward the Macedonian issue was not the result of a disparity in U.S. foreign policy interests but mainly the effect of the evolution of Macedonia's internal and external stability.

After having presented the case of Croatia and Slovenia in Chapter 4 in which the U.S. granted diplomatic recognition, and then presenting the Macedonia case, which is an instance of recognition delay, we will now turn to the American position toward the secession of Kosovo from Serbia, which is an interesting case of U.S. nonrecognition. This chapter will complete the analysis of the U.S. policy variation toward secessionism in the Balkan regional context.

6.

*Kosovo: A Case of U.S. Nonrecognition,
1991-2005*

Introduction

At this writing, Kosovo is still officially a province of Serbia.¹ Its declaration of independence issued in 1991 has never been recognized by the United States or by any other state except Albania. The purpose of this chapter is rather straightforward. Its aim is to answer a simple question: Why has the United States never recognized the independence of Kosovo? Although the issue of Kosovo's self-determination is well documented and a large amount of literature has been published on the 1999 NATO intervention against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), no research has provided a sound, comprehensible, and exhaustive answer to this research question.

In the 1990s, the most common explanation as to why Western states were opposed to Kosovo's secession was constitutional. According to the argument, Kosovo did not have the constitutional right to secede because it was a province of Serbia rather than a Yugoslav republic. When the Yugoslav war broke out in the summer of 1991 and intensified in the spring of 1992, the European Community and the United States emphasized this legal argument and used it as a pragmatic tool to contain further fragmentation of the Yugoslav territory (i.e. the fragmentation of constitutive units of the Yugoslav federation). The argument was,

¹ Here I use the Serbian name 'Kosovo' instead of the Albanian name 'Kosova' for two reasons: First, the province is still officially part of Serbia; and second, Western states still refer to the province as Kosovo. The spelling does not imply that the author supports one side or another.

however, mainly rhetorical and was more a reflection of Washington's will to follow the EC leadership than the expression of a well defined policy on the issue.

As this chapter will demonstrate, the fact that Kosovo was part of the Serbian republic does not explain why the United States did not recognize its independence. Based on the regional stability model exposed in Chapter 3, this chapter makes the argument that Washington was opposed to Kosovo's secession mainly for regional stability considerations. Throughout the 1990s, the Federal Republic of Yugoslav, composed of Serbia and Montenegro, was able to avoid war in Kosovo and was successful at containing the conflict within its national borders. Although the U.S. government developed a strong bias against the regime of Slobodan Milosevic, Washington supported the territorial integrity of the FRY because stability was preserved.

Things significantly changed, however, in 1998-99 when the Kosovo conflict extended outside of the FRY's national borders as a result of the refugee crisis, and when it became apparent that Belgrade was unwilling to negotiate with Kosovo secessionists and was opposed to third party intervention. In early 1999, all the conditions were reunited for the United States to move to the second step of the model and to evaluate the option of the international recognition of Kosovo. This option, however, was quickly dismissed as the province was neither in a position to maintain its internal order or to guarantee its external stability. Yet, since the political status quo in the region was "untenable" in the words of U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, the Clinton administration relied on NATO

air-strikes to compel Slobodan Milosevic to accept a U.S.-Western peace plan for Kosovo.

Thus, fourteen years after its unilateral declaration of independence, Kosovo is still struggling to obtain international recognition, while Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia were all recognized more than ten years ago. This case of nonrecognition is an interesting empirical contribution to this research because it represents an additional piece to the puzzle in the analysis of the variation of the U.S. foreign policy toward secessionism.

It is important here to delimit the timeframe of this study as the Kosovo secessionist issue is still underway in contrast to previous cases studied. Since it is next to impossible to study a “moving target”, this chapter limits the scope of the analysis to the 1991-2005 period and does not include recent developments on the issue.

Following a brief historical background of the Kosovo crisis and the presentation of the U.S. policy toward the issue, this chapter will evaluate in its last section the importance of U.S. ethnic lobbies in the formulation of the American policy toward Kosovo. On the contrary to the two previous chapters, however, the business interests argument will not be addressed here. The Kosovo crisis does not allow to validate or to refute David Gibbs’s argument according to which American policy toward secessionist movements reflects the interest of corporations with which U.S. foreign policy makers share strong ties. Indeed, there were virtually no U.S. business interests in Serbia or in Kosovo during the 1990s. The disintegration of Yugoslavia, the war in Bosnia, and the Kosovo crisis, had for

consequence to repel U.S. private investors.² Moreover, throughout most of the 1990s, the U.S. maintained tough economic sanctions against Belgrade, which inhibited multinational corporations from investing in the FRY.³ Thus, Kosovo is not a fertile ground on which the business argument can be seriously evaluated.

The Origins of Kosovo's Secession

The adoption of a new Yugoslav constitution in 1974 gave considerable political autonomy to Kosovo.⁴ The province, however, was never conferred the status of a republic mainly because ethnic Albanians, who formed the majority of the Kosovo population, were recognized as a national minority rather than as a Yugoslav nation.⁵ Despite this, Serbia perceived Kosovo's constitutional gains as a political loss over its own republican affairs.⁶

² Interview with James O'Brien, Washington D.C., April 12, 2005. Phone interview with Daniel Hamilton, April 11, 2005.

³ Ibid.

⁴ The province had representation in the Federal Chamber of the Yugoslav Assembly, and had veto power on federal decisions that affected its future. This recognition provided Kosovo with similar rights as the six republics. See Ivo H. Daalder and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo*, Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2000, p. 9. According to a 1981 census, ethnic Albanians composed approximately 78 percent of the Kosovo population. See Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War*, Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995, p. 340.

⁵ In the post-world war II era, Yugoslav leaders decided that ethnic Albanians of Yugoslavia were not entitled to the status of a constitutive nation of the federation because Albania was the nation of all ethnic Albanians. Richard Caplan, "International Diplomacy and the Crisis in Kosovo", *International Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 4, 1998, p. 748. The 1974 Yugoslav Constitution indicated that the Albanians of Kosovo and the Hungarians of Vojvodina were regarded as "nationalities" and did not have a right of self-determination or secession under the Constitution on the contrary to the six nations of Yugoslavia. See Roland Rich, "Symposium: Recent Development in the Practice of State Recognition", *European Journal of International Law*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1993, p. 39.

⁶ See Miranda Vickers, *Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998, p. 178.

Tensions rose in the 1980s between the ethnic Albanian majority—who controlled Kosovo’s political institutions—and Kosovo Serbs. Ethnic Albanians wanted Kosovo to be recognized as a full Yugoslav republic, while Kosovo Serbs argued that they were discriminated and repressed by the Albanian-dominated authorities. These political tensions were further intensified by the political ascension of Slobodan Milosevic who became President of Serbia in 1987. Milosevic made himself the defender of the Serbian minority of Kosovo and engaged his regime in a re-conquest of Serbia’s control over the autonomous province. In 1989, the Kosovo Assembly was forced to vote for a constitutional amendment that revoked the autonomy of the province.⁷ Milosevic argued that the intervention of Serbia within Kosovo’s internal affairs was necessary to counter Albanian separatism and to end the Albanian repression of the Serbs.⁸

The decision to repeal Kosovo’s autonomy initiated a sequence of events that further antagonized Serbs and Albanians. In July of 1990, the provincial Assembly of Kosovo unilaterally declared the province an independent Yugoslav republic.⁹ What is unusual here is that Kosovo Albanians attempted to secede from

⁷ On the day of the vote, the Kosovo Assembly was surrounded by Serbian tanks and police officers. See Tim Judah, *Kosovo: War and Revenge*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, p. 56. Kosovo and Vojvodina were the two autonomous republics of Serbia. They both lost their autonomous status in 1989.

⁸ Ibid., p. 235. Serbia’s constitutional reform allowed Belgrade to directly intervene in Kosovo’s security, financial, judicial, and social policies. Kosovo continued to exist officially as a distinct province, but the coup had undermined its status of being a federal unit in Yugoslavia. With tight political control over Kosovo, Vojvodina (the other autonomous province of Serbia that lost its autonomy), and over the small Slavic neighboring republic of Montenegro, Milosevic became in the late 1980s the most powerful leader of Yugoslavia by controlling half of the votes on the Yugoslav federal presidency. The other votes on the federal council were those of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia.

⁹ Milan Andrejevich, “Kosovo: A Precarious Balance between Stability and Civil War”, *Report on Eastern Europe*, RFE/RL Research Institute, Vol. 2, No. 42, October 18, 1991, p. 26.

a federated state (Serbia) rather than from the federation. Secession was not used as a means to achieve independent statehood but rather to reach equality with the other republics.¹⁰

Belgrade reacted to the secessionist attempt by dissolving the provincial government of Kosovo and by taking executive and administrative control of the province. A new Serbian constitution was also adopted, which defined Kosovo as a region within the Serbian Republic.¹¹ This led Kosovo Albanian deputies in exile to create the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, which had its headquarter in Zagreb (Croatia).¹² Kosovo Albanians also launched a campaign of civil disobedience and refused to be involved in the official state structures controlled by Belgrade. The Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), headed by Ibrahim Rugova, put in place a set of parallel institutions (including schools, hospitals, and local governments) that coexisted with the official state structure.¹³ Although these institutions were declared illegal, Milosevic never used force to bring them down

¹⁰ This rather unusual decision can partly be explained by the fact that an outright declaration of secession from Yugoslavia would have provided Serbia with the legitimacy and the excuse to crush Kosovars' aspirations. See Tim Judah, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

¹¹ Michael Salla, "Kosovo, Non-Violence and the Break-up of Yugoslavia", *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 1995, p. 428. The province of Vojvodina also lost its autonomy. Vojvodina counted around 25 percent of ethnic Hungarians and the large majority of its population was Serbian. This is far different from Kosovo, which had nearly 90 percent of ethnic Albanians in the early 1990s.

¹² The Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo in Zagreb adopted a constitution that proclaimed Kosovo a Yugoslav Republic. Albanian deputies in exile went to Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Turkey, Western Europe and the United States. See Milan Andrejevich, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

¹³ In the 1990s, Ibrahim Rugova was elected and reelected President of Kosovo. Belgrade, however, has never recognized the legality of these elections. See Julie Mertus, "Will Kosovo Explode Next?", *The New York Times*, October 21, 1995.

mainly because the disobedience movement was peaceful and, therefore, Belgrade was able to keep control of the province without military intervention.¹⁴

The reason why Kosovar secessionists remained peaceful was pragmatic. On the contrary to Croatia or Slovenia, for instance, Kosovo had no republican army to defend itself. The use of violence against Serbia to achieve independence would then have been counter productive and even suicidal. As Rugova explained:

We are not certain how strong the Serbian military presence in the province actually is, but we do know that it is overwhelming and that we have nothing to set against the tanks and other modern weaponry in Serbian hands. [...] In fact, the Serbs only wait for a pretext to attack the Albanian population and wipe it out. We believe it is better to do nothing and stay alive than to be massacred.¹⁵

The disintegration of Yugoslavia, however, which began with the secession of Croatia and Slovenia in the summer of 1991, radically modified the political calculation of Kosovo Albanians. With the departure of the northern republics, there was no longer a counter weight to Serbia's political power. In this context, members of the Kosovo Assembly in exile in Croatia adopted a declaration of independence from the rump Yugoslav federation, and in late September of 1991, the assembly organized a non-authorized referendum across Kosovo to validate the declaration. Among the 87 percent of Kosovars who cast ballot, 99.87 percent

¹⁴ The movement headed by Ibrahim Rugova was one of the most important peaceful resistance movements since Gandhi's resistance to British colonialism in India and Martin Luther King's civil rights movements in the United States. In a cable sent to the State Department, however, the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade mentioned: "This precarious balance [between Kosovo and Serbia] is based on fear, however, and could crumble quickly if extremists on either side push too hard". U.S. Department of State, August 1992. Unclassified Document E53, case 200502018. Unclassified on December 13, 2005.

¹⁵ Tim Judah, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

voted for independence.¹⁶ Belgrade immediately declared that the referendum was unconstitutional and that the declaration of independence was null and void. Despite Serbia's opposition, the Assembly of Kosovo officially declared the independence of the province in October of 1991. A few days later, Albania became the first (and only) state to recognize Kosovo independence.

The U.S. Response: No to Kosovo's Secession but No to Serbian Aggression

The Bush administration initially followed the European Community's leadership and rejected Kosovo's request for international recognition.¹⁷ The argument put forward by Brussels, which was supported by the conclusions of the Badinter Commission, was that Kosovo was an integral part of Serbia rather than a constituent republic of the Yugoslav federation and therefore that it did not have the right to secede.¹⁸

As stated in the introduction, this legal argument was used as a tool to avoid the endless division of the Yugoslav territory. According to a top advisor to President Clinton and to Secretary of State Albright for Kosovo, "it was easy to

¹⁶ Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History*, New York: New York University Press, 1998, p. 347.

¹⁷ In the early 1990s, the United States focused its attention on the Persian Gulf, on the Soviet disintegration, and on the German reunification. These major international events led the United States to follow the leadership of the European Community on the whole Yugoslav issue.

¹⁸ Miranda Vickers, *op. cit.*, p. 252. This double standard based on the international law principle of *uti possidetis juris* served Brussels and Washington's diplomatic objectives of containing the war in Yugoslavia and stopping the endless division of Yugoslav republics. According to *uti possidetis juris*, the former boundaries of the constitutive units of a state become international borders protected by international law when the central state ceases to exist. This principle has for aim to protect the territorial integrity of states by avoiding the endless division of their territory. Thus, the six Yugoslav republics had a right to secede and to transform their national borders into international ones. Kosovo, however, which had the status of an autonomous province, had no right to break apart from Serbia. See Marc Weller, "The International Response to the Dissolution of the

base a decision on the fact that Kosovo was different from the Yugoslav republics. [...] It was a convenient way of making a distinction, which served a purpose”.¹⁹

The United States, however, adopted a more proactive approach toward the Yugoslav crisis when the conflict in Croatia spread to Bosnia and expanded the zone of instability. The American position, which until then echoed the EC legal assessment of the right of each Yugoslav republic to secede, was replaced by a more geostrategic and pragmatic assessment of the conflict. In the spring of 1992, the main questions that were tackled by the National Security Council and the State Department were how to terminate the war in Yugoslavia and how to stabilize the Balkan region. It is with these puzzles in mind that the United States approached the Kosovo crisis.

FRY Keeps External Stability

In the fall of 1992, the Bush administration evaluated the FRY's internal and external stability. Although Belgrade was using political repression against Kosovo Albanians and deprived them from their basic constitutional rights, Serbia was able to contain the effects of the Kosovar secessionist crisis within its national borders. As Secretary of State Madeleine Albright writes in her memoir: “Kosovo was extremely tense but not at war”.²⁰ Slobodan Milosevic was also able to preserve FRY's external stability. There was no flow of Kosovo-Albanian

Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia”, *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 86, No. 3, 1992, p. 86.

¹⁹ Interview with a former U.S. official who asked to remain anonymous. Virginia, April 28, 2005.

²⁰ Madeleine Albright, with Bill Woodward, *Madam Secretary: A Memoir*, New York: The Easton Press, 2003, p. 483.

refugees crossing international borders (unlike in Bosnia and Croatia) or any other type of interstate disruption.

As a host state, the FRY succeeded where the former Yugoslav federation had failed in 1991. As seen in chapter 4, the Yugoslav People's Army had intervened to prevent the secession of Croatia and Slovenia. This response provoked internal disorder (especially in Croatia) and external instability as a large number of refugees crossed the border to find safe haven in Hungary, Austria, and Germany. In the case of the FRY, the declaration of independence of Kosovo did not produce war or significant disruption. As a result, the U.S. maintained its support for FRY.

Moreover, the idea of recognizing Kosovo's independence was perceived as the worst option for regional stability. In a region where ethnicity and borders did not match, the cohesion and survival of the states surrounding Kosovo (i.e. Albania, Bosnia and Macedonia) became a central geopolitical concern in Washington, and the recognition of Kosovo was perceived as a threat to the cohesion of neighboring states. In a cable sent to the U.S. Embassy in Belgrade, Secretary of State Eagleburger wrote: "While there is terrible human suffering in Bosnia, Kosovo exceeds its potential for destabilizing the area beyond former-Yugoslavia's borders. The U.S. supports restoration of Kosovo's autonomy, but is not in favor of independence". Then he added: "nothing should be done that would encourage the Kosovars to rebel. They would be crushed".²¹ In addition to Secretary Eagleburger's opposition to Kosovo's independence, the U.S. embassy

²¹ U.S. Department of State, December 1992. Unclassified Document E15, case 200502018. Unclassified on November 29, 2005.

in Belgrade concluded in an analysis that: “a shift in Western policy to support Kosovo independence [...] could embolden Albanian extremists and/or trigger an irrational response from Milosevic (or local Serb extremists) that would have the support of most Serbs and provoke the feared confrontation”.²²

The White House also made clear that it was firmly opposed to Serbia’s military repression against Kosovo Albanians.²³ In late December of 1992, the U.S. Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger sent a warning message to Serbian President Milosevic—known as the Christmas Warning—in which he informed Belgrade that the United States would not hesitate to use force against Serbia if it ever use military repression against Kosovo.²⁴ This warning, which became an integral part of the U.S. policy toward Kosovo, was reaffirmed by Secretary of State Warren Christopher a few weeks after President Clinton took office. Christopher declared: “We remain prepared to respond against the Serbians in the event of conflict in Kosovo caused by Serb action”.²⁵ The destabilizing effect of a

²² U.S. Department of State, December 1992. Unclassified Document E45, case 200502018. Unclassified on November 30, 2005.

²³ The U.S. position was clearly exposed by Under Secretary Kanter to Kosovo secessionist authorities in October 1992. Kanter indicated that “while the United States government does not recognize Kosovo as an independent state, we call on Serbian authorities in the strongest terms to cease repression of the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo not to engage in the use of force, and to restore all the elements of autonomy which were taken away from Kosovo in 1989”. U.S. Department of State, August 1992. Unclassified Document E16, case 200502018. Unclassified on December 14, 2005.

²⁴ The cable warning was sent to the U.S. Chargé d’Affaires in Belgrade. The cable was accompanied by an instruction that the message be read to Milosevic ‘verbatim, without elaboration, and face to face’. See Tim Judah, *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74. The U.S. government possessed credible information according to which Slobodan Milosevic was planning a military intervention to crush the Albanian secessionist movement. See Alex J. Bellamy, *Kosovo and International Community*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan Press, 2002, p. 34.

²⁵ Ivo H. Daalder and Michael E. O’Hanlon, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

potential Serbian attack against Kosovo was seen in Washington as a direct threat to the stability of the Balkans and, therefore, to the stability of the European continent, which the U.S. viewed as a vital national interest. The Christmas Warning was, therefore, purely motivated by regional stability motives rather than by human right principles.

Thus, both the secession of Kosovo and Serbia's military crackdown in the province to prevent independence would have destabilized Kosovo and probably inflamed the whole southern region of the Balkans. The "no to secession but no to aggression" policy reflected one of the main geostrategic concerns of the United States in the 1990s: avoiding the diffusion of the Kosovo conflict to surrounding states. This fear was expressed well by David C. Gompert who served as the special assistant to President Bush and as the senior director for Europe and Eurasia on the National Security Council:

Washington feared that a Serbian assault against the Albanian Kosovars would consume the entire Southern Balkan region in a conflagration that would pit one NATO ally against another. Hostilities in Kosovo would probably spill into Albania proper. This in turn could incite the large Albanian minority in Macedonia and lead to Serbia or Greek intervention there. Bulgaria and Turkey would then feel pressure to act in order to prevent Greek control of Macedonia. Where the Bosnian war could be contained, conflict in Kosovo most likely could not.²⁶

The Clinton administration made a very similar assessment of the potential turmoil in the region. Elizabeth Drew who was a member of the first Clinton administration writes:

²⁶ David C. Gompert, "The United States and Yugoslavia's Wars", in Richard H. Ullman, (ed.), *The World and Yugoslavia's Wars*, New York: A Council on Foreign Relations Book, 1996, pp. 136-137.

Officials believed that if Serbia, which hadn't been stopped in Croatia, exacerbated the situation in Kosovo, with its majority population of Albanians, or moved on Macedonia, which borders Serbia, Albania, Bulgaria, and Greece, the Albanians, the Greeks, and the Turks wouldn't sit by.²⁷

The warning message certainly had an impact on Belgrade's treatment of Kosovo since no attack was launched against ethnic Albanians from 1992 to 1998. It is hard, however, to measure the real impact of it since we do not know how Milosevic would have behaved otherwise. What we know is that the absence of Serbia's military intervention in Kosovo cannot be solely attributed to the U.S. military threat in this respect. Serbia was already militarily involved in Croatia and Bosnia and the opening of a third military front in Kosovo would have been difficult to manage.²⁸ The peaceful resistance movement that emerged in Kosovo in the early 1990s also allowed Serbia to maintain internal stability without having to rely on force.

The case of Kosovo is therefore different from those of Croatia and Slovenia where the United States quickly moved to the second step of the model by recognizing their independence. In this case, the ability of the FRY to maintain stable international borders, the absence of Serbia's military crackdown in the province and Rugova's peaceful resistance movement for independence explain why the U.S. kept supporting the FRY's territorial integrity. Some members of the Bush administration also feared that the recognition of Kosovo would have created

²⁷ See Elizabeth Drew, *On the Edge: The Clinton Presidency*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994, pp. 147-148.

²⁸ As the American Embassy in Belgrade summarized in a cable sent to the State Department: "for now both sides have a vested interest in avoiding bloodshed—the Serbs cannot afford another front right now and the Albanians do not want to face a massacre". U.S. Department of State, September 1992. Unclassified Document E49, case 200502018. Unclassified on December 13, 2005.

a precedent that would have further destabilized the region by bolstering other secessionist movements such as the Serbs in Croatia and in Bosnia who sought the international recognition of their independence.²⁹

This unique combination of factors also explains why Kosovo received relatively little attention from Washington for most of the 1990s in comparison to Croatia or Bosnia. As Tim Judah explains: "Kosovo was always just an after-thought. It was the place that the diplomats knew they should do something about, but were not sure what and anyway had more important things to do".³⁰ Throughout the 1990s, the Bush and the Clinton administration avoided taking concrete actions in Kosovo that could have generated regional disorder. They estimated that it was better to do nothing than risk causing violence in the province and the region by intervening in one way or another.

The following example illustrates the attitude adopted by the U.S throughout most of the 1990s. In June of 1993, a CSCE report indicated that the FRY was using brutality against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. Belgrade reacted to this report by expelling the CSCE mission. Despite the alarming report and despite Milosevic's refusal to cooperate any further with the CSCE, the U.S. maintained a soft line toward Belgrade. The Christmas Warning was not carried out mainly because Serbia's behavior toward ethnic Albanians, although high reprehensible, did not produce war in Kosovo or external turmoil in the region. President Clinton, therefore, limited his comments to indicating that his administration supported the

²⁹ Richard Caplan, *op. cit.*, p. 755.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

reestablishment of the CSCE Mission in Kosovo, and announcing economic assistance to the province.³¹ As Alex Bellamy, who has written on third states intervention in Kosovo, argues: “Because there was no violent conflict in Kosovo its future was viewed as a price worth paying for peace in the western Balkans”.³²

In a document entitled “U.S. Policy on Kosovo” sent by the State Department to U.S. Embassies in the Balkans in the summer of 1993, the Department clearly exposed its policy on Kosovo:

- We have been concerned about the situation in Kosovo because of longstanding tensions there arising from Serb repression of ethnic Albanian Kosovars and because of the high risk of conflict there spreading into—or involving—neighboring countries which have Albanian populations.
- We seek to deter the Serbs from taking violent action in Kosovo. President Bush’s “Christmas” message to Milosevic was specific and clear: We are prepared to respond against Serbia in the event of a conflict in Kosovo caused by Serbian action.
- In our frequent contacts with Albanian Kosovar leaders such as Dr. Bukoshi and Dr. Rugova, we have made clear that they must continue to exercise caution in their approach to the Serbian and “FRY” governments so as not to provide Serbian authorities an excuse to initiate a violent crackdown. We also have made clear repeatedly that we do not support their independence.³³

This document shows that the United States was concerned by the FRY’s potential external instability that could have been caused by Serbia’s military crackdown in Kosovo. The Christmas Warning clearly underlined the American concern to that respect. As for the issue of independence, once again it was categorically rejected.

³¹ Alex J. Bellamy, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 65. The U.S. Congress had a different view on the issue and human right violations in the former Yugoslavia raised serious concern among Congress members. As in the case of Croatia and Slovenia, the U.S. Congress focused on principles of human rights and self-determination, while the executive branch of government was first and foremost concerned with systemic considerations such as peace and regional stability in the Balkans.

³³ U.S. Department of State, July 1993. Unclassified Document E28, case 200502018. Unclassified on November 29, 2005.

Toward the FRY's Internal and External Instability

The Dayton peace agreements which brought the Yugoslav wars to an end had the ironic effect of radicalizing the Kosovo secessionist movement. Since the success of the agreement depended in large part on Slobodan Milosevic's good faith and willingness to negotiate with his Croatian and Bosnian counterparts, Chief American negotiator Richard Holbrooke and U.S. General Wesley Clark agreed to exclude the issue of Kosovo from the peace talks as requested by Milosevic. This political concession from the part of the United States facilitated negotiations and helped to reach peace in Bosnia.

The fact that Kosovo representatives were muzzled at Dayton was perceived in Pristina as an act of betrayal and contributed to radicalizing the secessionist movement. The Dayton episode demonstrated that Ibrahim Rugova was unable to make tangible progress toward independence and international recognition. Hence, Rugova gradually lost credibility among his people and a growing number of Kosovars became convinced that armed resistance was the only way to achieve independence.³⁴ These events favored the emergence of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

In 1996 the KLA launched several attacks against Serbian police officers and ethnic Serb civilians and this served as a pretext for Milosevic to launch military operations in the province. Soon, the relative state of peace that had

³⁴ This opinion was enhanced by the fact that the Bosnian-Serbs who had used force against Bosnian-Croats and Muslims in their fight for independence had gained significant concessions at Dayton. The Dayton Peace Accord created two political entities within Bosnia-Herzegovina: the Bosnian-Croatian Federation and the Serbian Republic of Bosnia (Republika Srpska). Bosnian-Serbs obtained control of a large part of Bosnia-Herzegovina (49 percent of the territory) and got control of their own political system.

existed in Kosovo since 1991 was transformed into a state of recurrent mutual aggression between ethnic Albanians and Serbian troops.

FRY Becomes an Obstacle to Regional Stability

As mutual attacks between Serbian troops and members of the KLA became frequent in the fall of 1997, the International Contact Group—a transatlantic group of government officials composed of the United States, Russia, England, France, Germany and Italy—urged Belgrade to negotiate with Kosovo secessionists, to allow the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to send an observation mission in Kosovo and Vojvodina, and to grant a special status to Kosovo.³⁵ The Contact Group declared: “We do not support independence and we do not support maintenance of the status quo. We support an enhanced status for Kosovo within the FRY.”³⁶ Belgrade, however, rejected the demands formulated by the Contact Group and argued that the issue of Kosovo was an internal affair and nobody else’s business. Milosevic refused to adopt a conciliating approach toward Kosovo arguing that KLA members were pursuing a full-fledged civil war to obtain independence.³⁷ As a result, Belgrade maintained

³⁵ Marie-Janine Calic, “Kosovo in the Twentieth Century: A Historical Account”, in Albrecht Schnabel and Ramesh Thakur, (eds.), *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention*, New York: United Nations University Press, 2000, p. 28.

³⁶ See Dick Leurdijk and Dick Zandee, *Kosovo: From Crisis to Crisis*, Burlington: Ashgate Editions, 2001, p. 29. This position was reiterated several times by the State Department. See *The New York Times*, “U.S. Reinstates Sanctions”, March 6, 1998.

³⁷ It is worth noting that the KLA had been listed as a terrorist organization by the State Department in 1998, which placed the U.S. administration in a difficult position.

military repression on Kosovo secessionists and the province gradually fall into a state of war in early 1998.³⁸

In the United States, the State Department and the Department of Defense (DoD) debated whether to update President Bush's 1992 Christmas Warning. According to a Clinton administration official: "The United States' view remains the same as it was in December 1992—that we're not going to sit back and accept a major Serb military operation in Kosovo".³⁹ Secretary of State Madeleine Albright condemned Belgrade for the instability and violence in Kosovo and made clear that Slobodan Milosevic had to accept third party mediation or that otherwise he would face reprisals.⁴⁰ Albright declared: "Kosovo had implications for the entire region. We could not allow the Serbs to define it as purely internal matter".⁴¹ The Secretary also told the international press that she did not want "a repeat of 1991 [...] when the international community did not react with sufficient vigor and force [toward the Yugoslav crisis]".⁴²

In addition to the increasing internal disorder within Kosovo, the government of the FRY gradually lost control over its external stability. In June of 1998, after the KLA had seized about 40 percent of Kosovo's territory, Belgrade

³⁸ See Chris Hedges, "Serbia's Police Crush Protest By Kosovo's Ethnic Albanians", *The New York Times*, March 3, 1998.

³⁹ See Philip Shenon, "U.S. Says It Might Consider Attacking Serbs", *The New York Times*, March 13, 1998.

⁴⁰ Slobodan Milosevic was President of Serbia from 1987 to 1997 and President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from 1997 to 2000.

⁴¹ Madeleine Albright, with Bill Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 485.

⁴² Steven Erlanger, "U.S. and Allies Set Sanctions on Yugoslavia", *The New York Times*, March 9, 1998.

launched an attack against Albanians with tanks and helicopters to crush the secessionist movement. This action produced more than 100,000 Albanian refugees who flee to Albania and Macedonia to escape the war. By the fall, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that there were around 90,000 Kosovo refugees in neighboring states.⁴³ By the end of the year, Serbia's military intervention had produced an international refugee crisis that disrupted the entire southern Balkan region. The effect of the crisis was particularly felt in Macedonia where the large amount of Kosovo Albanian refugees threatened to modify the ethnic composition of the country. Macedonian authorities were worried that more Albanians would lead to more political demands from their part and to a stronger claim for the creation of a Greater Albania, which would imperil the very survival of the Macedonian state.⁴⁴

The war in Kosovo really became a U.S. top priority in the fall of 1998 once it became clear that the government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia refused to negotiate with secessionists and failed to keep its external stability. The Clinton administration was highly concerned that the situation in Kosovo could end up being a repetition of the 1992-1995 Bosnian war. Secretary Albright declared: "We are not going to stand by and watch the Serbian authorities do in

⁴³ International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), *The Responsibility to Protect: Research, Bibliography, Background*, Ottawa: The International Development Research Centre, 2001, p. 113.

⁴⁴ Albania's independence was recognized by Western powers in 1913. However, the state included only half of the Albanian population of the Balkans. Large Albanian minorities remained in the western part of Macedonia and in Kosovo. This is a patent example where political and ethnic borders do not match.

Kosovo what they can no longer get away with in Bosnia".⁴⁵ At this stage, coercive diplomacy was perceived as the only credible option available to resolve the issue.

Christopher Hill, the U.S. ambassador to Macedonia who worked closely with Richard Holbrooke to end the war in Bosnia in 1995, was then appointed special envoy to Kosovo. His mission was to find a political settlement to the crisis. Hill came up with a proposal calling for a cease-fire, for the withdrawal of Serbian police and FRY military forces from Kosovo, and for the return of Kosovo Albanian refugees in the province. The plan was backed by the threat of a NATO military intervention in the event where Milosevic refused to comply with U.S. demands. Acting under the threat of air strikes, Milosevic agreed to reduce the number of Serbian military forces in the province and allow 1800 international observers to enter the province under the supervision of the OSCE.⁴⁶

This agreement eventually failed, however, because Kosovo's shadow government and KLA representatives were not bound by the accord. In fact, secessionists quickly took advantage of the fact that Milosevic was constrained by NATO to intensify their military campaign against Serbian troops in Kosovo. These actions caused fighting to resume and led to the collapse of the agreement. Albanian secessionists were clearly responsible for the failure of the accord and in early 1999 the U.S. and Western Europe were back to square one as far as diplomatic initiatives were concerned.

⁴⁵ Madeleine Albright, with Bill Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 485.

The Use of Force as a Last Resort

With the assistance of Madeleine Albright's closest advisor, James O'Brien, U.S. Ambassador Christopher Hill elaborated a new plan in early 1999, which attempted to reconcile the interests of Belgrade and Pristina. The Hill-O'Brien proposal, which was introduced and debated at Rambouillet (near Paris), specified that Kosovo would remain part of Serbia but that it would enjoy a large degree of self-determination. The plan also included the deployment of an international implementation force with a large NATO military component to enforce the agreement. The proposal finally called for a three year interim period before the issue of Kosovo's independence would be addressed. The option of independence remained on the table mainly to please Kosovo Albanians and to insure their cooperation.⁴⁷ Kosovo representatives approved the proposal but the Serbs, this time, rejected it because they refused any deployment of foreign forces on their territory.

The failure of this "last chance" accord sealed the faith of the FRY. The Milosevic regime was identified as the main obstacle to the reestablishment of stability in Kosovo and, in March of 1999, NATO began its strikes (Operation Allied Force) against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The purpose of the war was to compel Milosevic to accept the Rambouillet terms. The NATO campaign

⁴⁶ As a result of Serbia's compliance to the U.S. requirements, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright suspended U.S. threat to use force against Belgrade without lifting, however, the order authorizing NATO air strikes.

⁴⁷ Because Kosovo Albanians repeatedly asked for a referendum on independence, the U.S. consented during the Rambouillet negotiations to write a letter to the Albanian delegation promising a referendum after three years.

was in fact the multilateral application of the Christmas Warning issued six years earlier by President Bush.

Kosovo Failed the Test of Stability

The question of whether Kosovo's independence should be recognized was then raised within the U.S. foreign policy apparatus but was never seriously debated.⁴⁸ A consensus already existed on the fact that Kosovo did not possess the necessary attributes to be recognized as a sovereign state, and the State Department and the NSC agreed that recognition would create more problems that it would resolve.

First, Kosovo Albanians were not in a position to keep the internal stability of their province. The province had no viable state structure and offered no guarantee that the Serbian minority would be represented in, and protected by, Kosovo's institutions.⁴⁹ Moreover, Kosovo did not possess coercive capacities. It did not have a national army to defend itself against Serbia, and the United States was not interested to send troops in Kosovo against active Serbian opposition in order to secure its independence.⁵⁰

The international borders of Kosovo constituted another problem. Serbia and Macedonia had not delimited their common border when Yugoslavia broke

⁴⁸ Washington was no longer preoccupied by the precedent that the recognition of Kosovo could have created since both Serbian secessionist movements in Croatia and Bosnia had been settled. The Croatian army had expelled its Serbian minority out of Croatia in late 1995, and the Dayton accords provided the Serbs of Bosnia with substantial autonomy within Bosnia-Herzegovina.

⁴⁹ Phone interview with Daniel Hamilton, April 11, 2005.

⁵⁰ This point was raised by James O'Brien who negotiated the Rambouillet agreement in 1998-99. See interview with James O'Brien, Washington D.C., April 12, 2005.

out in 1991. As a result, the southern frontier of Kosovo, which bordered Macedonia, was still not officially demarcated.⁵¹ James O'Brien who negotiated the Rambouillet agreements in 1998-99 points out:

[Kosovo] had none of the attributes of a state. It didn't have recognized international boundaries. It didn't have control over its territory. It didn't have the ability to secure its borders. And it didn't have a government of its own. It had elected a shadow government and established quite remarkable shadow institutions, but it did not have any of the attributes. This is part of why no government considered seriously recognizing a Kosovo independent state.⁵²

Second, Kosovo failed to guarantee its external stability. There was a real concern in the Clinton administration that the recognition of Kosovo would be the first step toward the creation of a Greater Albania. According to a 1995 survey, 43 percent of Kosovo Albanians had expressed their desire to join Albania rather than to obtain independence.⁵³ In addition, KLA representatives had declared in early 1998 that its arm struggle against Serbia had for main objective to unify Kosovo and Albania.⁵⁴ This was a clear indication that Kosovo Albanians would have not restricted their political ambitions to the national borders of Kosovo. Daniel Hamilton, who acted as the U.S. Special Coordinator for Southeast European Stabilization in the late 1990s, emphasized this problem: "If you listen to some of the more extreme elements in Kosovo, recognition was simply the first step toward

⁵¹ The frontier was finally demarcated in 2001 following an agreement between Serbia-Montenegro (formerly FRY) and Macedonia.

⁵² Interview with James O'Brien, Washington D.C., April 12, 2005.

⁵³ The remaining 57 percent desired independence. See Ivo H. Daalder and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *op. cit.* p. 8.

⁵⁴ Duncan Perry, "Kosovo", *Current History*, March 1998, Vol. 97, No. 617, p. 122.

a greater Albania, which would have gone far beyond the borders of a Kosovar state”.⁵⁵ This point of view is also shared by a former high-rank U.S. official: “The ideologues who have talked about a greater Albania were a great concern. And the fear of borders being redrawn by force or by coercion was a real fear”.⁵⁶

While international recognition had been used by the United States as a political tool to reinforce regional stability in Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia, it was viewed in Kosovo as a stimulus for greater disorder and bloodshed. As former President Clinton’s advisor on Kosovo argues: “The reason why we didn’t and still haven’t recognized Kosovo was largely a result of our analysis of the likely consequences of such a step for stability in the Balkans. [...] The analysis was that the recognition of Kosovo’s independence would create more conflict, more violence, and more confrontation in the region”.⁵⁷ Secretary Albright emphasized this stability concern before the *U.S. Institute of Peace* a month before NATO launched its military campaign. She declared: “The KLA, as it is known, offers a deceptive simple answer to the tragedy of Kosovo—independence from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. But there is no guarantee that independence would lead to peace in Kosovo and ample reason to fear that it could undermine stability elsewhere in the region”.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Phone interview with Daniel Hamilton, April 11, 2005.

⁵⁶ Interview with a former U.S. official who asked to remain anonymous. Virginia, April 28, 2005.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Madeleine Albright, “The Importance of Kosovo”, *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, Vol. 10, No. 1, January/February 1999, p. 4.

Third, the opposition of the European Union to the independence of Kosovo was another element in the U.S. calculation. Brussels refused the emergence of a new Muslim state at the door step of Western Europe. Furthermore, Southern Balkan states with Albanian minorities such as Macedonia and Greece saw the recognition of Kosovo as a threat to their national unity because it was susceptible to bolstering the idea of a Greater Albania. In her memoir, Madeleine Albright writes:

Our reluctance to endorse independence was shaped less by principle than by a pragmatic assessment of attitudes in the region. Macedonia and Greece strongly opposed independence for Kosovo because they feared it might inflame separatist ambitions within their own ethnic Albanian populations. [...] More generally, some Europeans feared that an independent Kosovo would become a hotbed of Islamic extremism and organized crime. We couldn't achieve our goals in Kosovo without support from Europe, and we wouldn't have Europe's support if we backed independence for Kosovo.⁵⁹

The fact that European allies were opposed to Kosovo's independence probably dissuaded the Clinton administration from looking farther into that direction. The U.S. did not want to be isolated on the issue and was not ready to accept alone the consequences of recognition. This point, however, appears less convincing than the two previous arguments presented above. It seems that the U.S. did not promote the independence of Kosovo not mainly because the European Union opposed it, but because the province was a hopeless case for independence, for which it was not worth fighting for. It would have been pointless to persuade Brussels on the need to recognize Kosovo if the secessionists were a priori unable to guarantee the internal and the external stability of their province. We can

⁵⁹ Madeleine Albright, with Bill Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 490.

assume, however, that if Kosovo would have been stable (i.e. functioning institutions, arm forces, defined territory, minority rights) and if the unification with Albania would not have been an argument for independence, the U.S. would have probably considered recognition and tried to convince its European counterparts to accept it. After all, Chapters 4 and 5 show that Germany unilaterally recognized the independence of Croatia and Slovenia in 1991 despite Washington's opposition, and Greece succeeded at preventing the EC and the U.S. from recognizing the independence of Macedonia in 1992. If two middle powers like Germany and Greece were able to influence Washington and Brussels's foreign policy to this regard, we can assume that the U.S. superpower would have succeeded at influencing Brussels on the necessity to recognize Kosovo.

Madeleine Albright's determination to use force against Serbia despite Brussels's initial reluctance is a good example showing that the U.S. did not bow to European opposition. In 1998-99, Secretary Albright was indeed able to convince the 19 NATO members to intervene militarily in Serbia's internal affairs.

In sum, the Serbian host state represented a major obstacle to regional stability but Kosovo was not recognized because it was not in a position to ensure its own stability. As Morton Abramovitz bluntly points out, the United States did not recognize Kosovo "because it wanted to end the war and it didn't feel that it could end it if it had recognized independence".⁶⁰ In this context, a U.S.-led NATO intervention appeared to be the only viable option to move forward toward

⁶⁰ Interview with Morton Abramovitz, Washington D.C., May 2nd, 2005.

peace and stability in the Balkans. The NATO air campaign lasted 78 days until Milosevic consented to the terms of the Rambouillet proposal.

Kosovo: Between Secession and Status Quo

Resolution 1244 adopted by the U.N. Security Council in June 1999, following the NATO air campaign, stipulated that Kosovo was officially part of Serbia but that it would be administrated by the United Nations. The resolution established the U.N. Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) as the ultimate authority in the province, but did not address Kosovo's final status. UNMIK's main task was to build up a civil administration in the province and to gradually transfer political authority to this administration to bring autonomy and self-government to Kosovo.⁶¹ The resolution also authorized NATO to be in charge of a Kosovo peacekeeping force (the Kosovo Force—KFOR), which included 50,000 NATO troops as well as Russian forces. KFOR's mission was to secure the environment and to supervise the disarmament of KLA members. Moreover, the resolution called for the withdrawal of all Serbian forces from Kosovo and for the return of Albanian refugees to their home. In sum, resolution 1244 transformed Kosovo into a de facto U.N. protectorate but reaffirmed at the same time the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the FRY.⁶²

⁶¹ Steven J. Woehrel and Julie Kim, *Kosovo and U.S. Policy*, CRS Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, Updated June 9, 2005.

⁶² Albrecht Schnabel and Ramesh Thakur, "Kosovo, the changing contours of world politics, and the challenge of world order", in Albrecht Schnabel and Ramesh Thakur (eds.), *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention*, New York: United Nations University Press, 2000, p. 5.

A Model of Quasi-Sovereignty

The Rambouillet draft agreement that led to the adoption of U.N. resolution 1244 represents a new model of conflict resolution to the extent that it departed from the traditional Westphalian conception of sovereignty.⁶³ Instead of resolving the issue of Kosovo by recognizing its independence, by promoting its partition from Serbia, or by re-integrating it to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the United States and Europe created an unprecedented model of quasi-sovereignty for Kosovo without making any final decision on its final political status. This singular development departs from the prediction stated in Chapter 3. The regional stability model predicts that in the case where both the host state and the secessionist state fail to guarantee stability, the status quo will be maintained and the U.S. will adopt a wait-and-see approach. In the present case, however, the status quo failed to meet President Clinton's will to establish a lasting peace in southern Europe. America's long term plan was to establish liberal democracy in the Balkans and to integrate the region into a united Europe. The resolution of the Kosovo crisis, therefore, was a burning issue that necessitated intervention.

The U.S. Strategy Behind Rambouillet

One of the central objectives of the Rambouillet accord was to provide Kosovo with democratic state structures to better evaluate its long-term viability before making a final decision on its status. In this respect, UNMIK elaborated a

⁶³ John Doyle, "International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts and Practical Models of Non-Westphalian Sovereignty: From Kosovo to Ireland", 2004 (unpublished manuscript). http://64.112.226.77/one/isa/isa04/index.php?click_key=1&PHPSESSID=a98365db7a459f4d446ea5644da87151 (accessed July 2006).

Constitutional Framework for Provisional Government in 2001. A first elected government was formed in 2002 and the most recent democratic elections were held in the fall of 2004. Another objective was to play for time. By putting the final political status of Kosovo on hold, the United States and Europe wanted to let the political context evolve so that new solutions could emerge. Washington hoped that a new generation of Serbian leaders would eventually replace the Milosevic regime and be more open toward Kosovo. The terms of the Rambouillet accord also allowed the Clinton administration to test a certain number of theses. The Serbs argued that once Kosovo had self-government, secessionists would stop fighting for independence. Kosovars retorted that they would never renounce to their claim for independence.⁶⁴ The accord, therefore, permitted a test of these statements.

The three year interim period also allowed for changes to the nature of the debate. Instead of focusing on the final status of Kosovo, UNMIK emphasized the importance of democratic standards. The issue of whether Kosovo and the FRY would eventually integrate the EU became one of the focal points of discussion with the adoption of the policy known as "Standards before Status".⁶⁵ With this policy, the U.S. and Europe proposed a bargain to the Balkan region. They agreed to integrate the Balkans to the Euro-Atlantic community, but asked that Balkan

⁶⁴ Interview with James O'Brien, Washington D.C., April 12, 2005.

⁶⁵ The United Nations, *Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan*, March 31, 2004. <http://operationkosovo.kentlaw.edu/symposium/resources/KSIP%20final%20draft%2031%20March%202004b.htm> (accessed June 2006).

states (including Kosovo) conform to European political standards.⁶⁶ This conditionality policy, however, was badly received in Kosovo and many believed that this approach was intended to weaken their aspiration for independence.

Toward the U.S. Recognition of Kosovo's Independence?

After more than half a decade of U.N. administration in Kosovo, the population remains deeply polarized along ethnic lines and the Serbian and Albanian positions appear irreconcilable. Belgrade remains firmly opposed to the independence of the province, while ethnic Albanians still call for a referendum on independence.

The decision on the final status of Kosovo remains the main puzzle that confronts the United States and Europe. In the long-term, it is quite possible that the unresolved status may produce more instability than it was initially intended to resolve. A major riot that left 19 dead and 900 injured in Pristina in March of 2004 reminded the U.N. that further delay on the final status of Kosovo may be a time bomb.⁶⁷ Ethnic Albanians increasingly view the U.N. presence in the province as a way to defer indefinitely the final resolution on the status. UNMIK had initially fixed mid-2005 to review the issue of the status, but the decision was postponed. Political leaders in Kosovo also argue that the non-resolution of the status is economically costly because the province cannot find foreign investors or obtain

⁶⁶ Phone interview with Daniel Hamilton, April 11, 2005.

⁶⁷ International Crisis Group, *Collapse in Kosovo*, Europe Report No. 155, April 22, 2004. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=2627&l=1> (accessed June 2006).

loans.⁶⁸ Furthermore, because Kosovo is not a sovereign state, it cannot join international organizations, which alienates Kosovar Albanians. In this context, it is quite possible that the non-resolution of the political status of the province may generate internal conflicts and provoke a return to regional instability. Testifying before Congress in May of 2005, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns recognized that the status quo in Kosovo was “no longer sustainable or desirable”.⁶⁹

There is now a consensus among U.S. foreign policy experts that the United States will eventually recognize the independence of Kosovo.⁷⁰ Returning to the regional stability model, one of its main assumptions is that the U.S. presidency chooses, on the basis of cost-benefit analysis, the option that carries the greatest expected regional stability. As time goes on, it appears that the option of independence for Kosovo is susceptible to bringing more stability than alternative policies. A former advisor to President Clinton on Kosovo points out: “I think the United States will recognize Kosovo’s independence in the next two or three years for the same reasons it didn’t before. Because we think that recognition will not create further fragmentation in the region and a failure to recognize would actually create a higher danger of instability”.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Nicholas Wood, “Still Deeply Divided, Nervous Kosovo Goes to Polls This Weekend”, *The New York Times*, October 23, 2004.

⁶⁹ Steven J. Woehrel and Julie Kim, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁷⁰ See Interview with James O’Brien, Washington D.C., April 12, 2005. Phone interview with Daniel Hamilton, April 11, 2005. Moreover, in a 1999 interview, U.S. officials declared that Kosovo would eventually become independent. See R. Jeffrey Smith, “U.S. Officials Expect Kosovo Independence”, *The Washington Post*, September 24, 1999.

⁷¹ Interview with a former U.S. official who asked to remain anonymous. Virginia, April 28, 2005.

To be consistent with my model, Kosovo would have to guarantee both its internal and external stability to obtain U.S. recognition. Facts indicate that in the recent years, the U.S. and UNMIK have adopted policies that focused on this double dimension of stability. A document called “Standards for Kosovo” set out by the U.N. mission in Kosovo 2003, emphasized the importance of the rule of law and of minority rights in the province. The document also pointed out that Kosovo will have to be “in stable and peaceful relationships with its regional neighbours” before any decision on its status could be made.⁷² Of course Kosovo’s relation with Serbia remains tense, but the province has focused, in the last six years, on building democratic institutions, which strengthened its internal stability. Moreover, the recent settlement of the Macedonian crisis through the Ohrid Agreement (see Chapter 5), which gave greater representation to the ethnic Albanian minority, increased stability in the region and reinsured U.S. policy makers who feared that the recognition of Kosovo could destabilize Macedonia.

I argue that if the U.S. eventually recognizes Kosovo, it will be because the province will have met UNMIK standards of stability. And that any further delay on the status will be motivated by the same kind of considerations.

What About Albanian-Americans and Serbian-Americans’ Roles?

Interestingly enough, despite its rather small size, the Albanian-American lobby was more active and influential than the Serbian-Americans with respect to the Kosovo issue. The Albanian community, which includes between 350,000 and

⁷² The United Nations, *Kosovo Standards Implementation Plan*, *op. cit.*

400,000 people clustered mainly in Boston, Chicago, Detroit and New York, managed to be heard in Congress and was successful at framing the debate in Washington. In the early 1990s, Albanian-Americans appealed to State Department officials, to members of Congress and to the media to heighten government awareness of the problem of human rights in Kosovo and to promote the idea of independence. The impact of this diaspora was tangible. From January to March of 1992, four resolutions were introduced by Senators and Representatives in favor of the recognition of Kosovo.⁷³ For the period 1988-96, conservative estimations indicate that the Albanian-American diaspora spent more than 11 million dollars on public relations, political contributions and lobbying in Washington.⁷⁴

When the Kosovo crisis reemerged in 1998, the Albanian community already had several allies in Congress, Senator Bob Dole being the most well known, who promptly argued for a NATO intervention against the FRY. During that year, the Albanian American Civic League and the National Albanian American Council (NAAC) were very active and influential. They collected over 120,000 dollars for members of Congress who were sympathetic to the Kosovo cause.⁷⁵ Moreover, the NAAC had regular access to the White House and to

⁷³ Alphonse D'Amato (R-New York), Bob Dole (R-Kansas), Larry Pressler (R-South Dakota), and Claiborne Pell (D-Rhode Island), were the main supporters of Kosovo's independence in the Senate. William Broomfield (R-Michigan), Ben Gilman (R-New York), Tom Lantos (D-California), and Dick Swett (D-New Hampshire), were the strongest proponents of its independence in the House of Representatives. See Peter R. Prifti, *Confrontation in Kosova: The Albanian-Serb Struggle, 1969-1999*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, pp. 206-207.

⁷⁴ Paul Hockenos, *Homeland Calling: Exile Patriotism & the Balkan Wars*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003, p. 243.

⁷⁵ Danielle S. Sremac, *War of Words: Washington Tackles the Yugoslav Conflict*, Westport: Praeger Editions, 1999, p. 217.

President Clinton's foreign policy team. During the year 1998, most Albanian-Americans a change in their strategy by shifting their political and financial support from Rugova's Democratic League of Kosovo to the KLA. Albanian-Americans became strong supporters of the KLA and sent weapons to the organization.⁷⁶

Despite its active involvement in the Kosovo crisis, the Albanian-American lobby did not make any progress on the issue that mattered most to Kosovo Albanians, namely the independence and diplomatic recognition of the province. As Paul Hockenos points out: "Regarding national independence, the very essence of their struggle, the Kosovar Albanians were no closer to their ultimate goal. Despite their new legion of 'friends in Congress', U.S. policy had not budged on Kosovo's status".⁷⁷ In fact, regardless of the number of supporters for Kosovo's independence in the U.S. Congress, the decision to recognize new states is the prerogative of the executive branch of government. And for reasons mentioned previously, the Clinton administration judged that the recognition of Kosovo would create greater instability in the region and, therefore, was opposed to this option.

The Serbian-Americans

Was the Serbian-American community, which includes around one million Americans, powerful enough to prevent three successive U.S. presidencies from

⁷⁶ See Stacy Sullivan, "From Brooklyn to Kosovo, with Love and AK-47's", *The New York Times Magazine*, November 22, 1998, p. 52.

recognizing Kosovo's independence? Facts indicate that the Serbian-American community was politically weak and badly organized throughout the 1990s. The anti-Milosevic bias, the fragmented nature of the Serbian-American community, and its lack of involvement in the public relations battle in Washington account for the failure of the Serbian-American lobby to have any impact on the formulation of the U.S. foreign policy towards Kosovo.

As demonstrated in Chapter 4, the Serbs were quickly identified by the Bush administration as the aggressors during the Croatian and Bosnian wars. In the case of Kosovo, the U.S. was quick to condemn Belgrade for massive human rights violations in the province and, as early as in the fall of 1991, the U.S. government had a clear bias against the Milosevic regime, which made things difficult for any attempt by the Serbian-Americans to influence the U.S. on the Kosovo issue. In a discussion with Acting Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger in 1992, Congresswoman Helen Delich Bentley, a Serbian-American leading figure, was told: "If you want to help your people, dump Milosevic".⁷⁸ This shows how bad the State Department views were toward the Serbian regime. Representative Bentley was really the only point of access that the Serbian-American lobby had in Congress. Years later she recalled: "We wanted to lobby for the Serbian cause to let people know that Serbians aren't all bad guys. People were only getting one side of the story [in the United States]".⁷⁹ And when Helen

⁷⁷ Paul Hockenos, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

⁷⁸ Paul Hockenos, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

Delich left Congress in 1994, the Serbian community lost most of its political strength on Capitol Hill.

Moreover, despite its large size, the Serbian-American community had no strong tradition of political organization and was divided over whether or not to support the Milosevic regime.⁸⁰ This lack of cohesion, which remained throughout the 1990s, significantly weakened the Serbian lobby in Washington. The Bosnian tragedy also seriously damaged the credibility of the Serbian Americans in their attempt to influence the White House. Serbian American organizations that had supported Serbia before and during the Bosnian war were embarrassed and remained relatively quiet toward the Kosovo issue in the second half of the 1990s.⁸¹

Finally, while Albanian-Americans relied on public relations firms in Washington to promote the independence of Kosovo, Serbian-Americans were not significantly involved in the public relations battle. As Danielle Sremac points out: “The Serbs did not hire professional help and missed out on establishing contacts with U.S. policymakers and opinion makers in Washington”.⁸² Overall, the impact of the Serbian-Americans was overshadowed by the actions undertaken by the other Yugoslav ethnic groups including the Albanian-Americans. As a result, the

⁸⁰ See Warren Zimmermann, “Yugoslavia: 1989-1996”, in Jeremy R. Azrael and Emil A. Payin, (eds.), *U.S. and Russian Policymaking with Respect to the Use of Force*, Santa Monica: RAND Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, California, 1996, pp. 178-181. See also Brad K. Blitz, “Serbia’s War Lobby: Diaspora Groups and Western Elites”, in Thomas Cushman and Stjepan G. Mestrovic, (eds.), *This Time We Knew: Western Responses to Genocide in Bosnia*, New York: New York University Press, 1996, p. 196.

⁸¹ Interview with James O’Brien, Washington D.C., April 12, 2005.

⁸² Danielle S. Sremac, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

U.S. view on the whole Yugoslav crisis quickly went in a direction that was against Serbian-American perceived interests.

When the Kosovo crisis became internationalized in 1998, the Serbian Unity Congress (SUC), one of the most influential and organized Serbian interest group in the United States, strongly opposed the NATO use of force against Serbia. The organization sent letters to the press, to Congress members, and to the Clinton administration. The SUC also sponsored a demonstration against the use of force before the State Department in October of 1998.⁸³ These actions, however, did not prevent the Clinton administration from bombing Serbia.

Thus, ethnic groups in Washington failed to influence the U.S. government on the issue of Kosovo's secession. The White House remained opposed to independence for reasons of stability, not to please Serbian-Americans. As for Albanian-Americans, their influence was strategically greater. They were effective, quite good in getting attention for their cause, and had strong advocates in Congress. At the end of the day, however, the support expressed by some Congress members in favor of independence was not materialized by the U.S. presidency.

Moreover, State Department archives on Kosovo, which were recently unclassified, do not refer to domestic ethnic politics issues. The role and impact of both diaspora groups are absent from analyses produced by the State Department

⁸³ Rachel Paul, "Serbian-American Mobilization and Lobbying: The Relevance of Jasenovac and Kosovo to Contemporary Grassroots Efforts in the United States", in Thomas Ambrosio, (ed.), *Ethnic Identity Groups and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Westport (CT) : Praeger, 2002, pp. 104-105.

apparatus.⁸⁴ In addition, every former State Department officials and former U.S. negotiators involved in the Kosovo crisis that were interviewed for this research point out that ethnic lobbies were insignificant in the formulation of the U.S. response. As Daniel Hamilton indicates: “These ethnic groups were just too small and the stakes here were too big. They did not have any influence [on the issue of recognition]”.⁸⁵

Conclusion

The argument according to which Kosovo was not recognized as an independent state because it was a province of Serbia does not explain why the U.S. remained opposed to its independence. Kosovo was not recognized for two main reasons: first, because the FRY succeeded in containing the crisis from 1991 to 1998; second, because Kosovo clearly failed the test of internal and external stability at the end of the 1990s when Belgrade became the main obstacle to the restoration of stability in the province. Thus, the case of Kosovo tends to validate the regional stability model. It highlights the crucial importance that regional stability played in the American response to the Kosovo crisis. As long as the effects of secessionism were contained within the host state’s national borders, Kosovo remained an issue of secondary interest in Washington. When the crisis

⁸⁴ See Office of Information Programs and Services, U.S. Department of State, Case Control No. 200502018. Documents unclassified in November and December 2005.

⁸⁵ Phone interview with Daniel Hamilton, April 11, 2005. This was also the opinion of, Morton Abramovitz, James O’Brien, and Morton Halperin. Morton Halperin was the Director of the policy Planning Staff in the State Department. He was also advising Secretary Albright on Kosovo. See interview with Morton Halperin, Washington D.C., April 21, 2005.

produced a large flow of international refugees, however, Kosovo became a central issue for the Clinton administration.

This study also reveals that the regional stability model undermines how crucial was the resolution of the Kosovo conflict for the Clinton administration in 1999. In Chapter 3, the model predicts that the simultaneous failure of the host state and of the secessionist state to keep stability will lead the U.S. to adopt a wait-and-see approach. The Kosovo war shows, instead, that the status quo was undesirable for the Clinton administration and that it harmed the U.S. stability interests in the region. Thus, the model did not predict that the American superpower could rely on military intervention to restore order when there is a stability impasse resulting from a secessionist crisis that goes against the vital interests of the United States.

The next chapters will focus on the regional context of the Horn of Africa. By analyzing the case of Eritrea and Somaliland, these chapters will highlight the U.S. foreign policy variations in matter of diplomatic recognition in this particular region of the world.

7.

*Eritrea's Independence and U.S. Regional Interests,
1989-1993*

Introduction

The independence of Eritrea from Ethiopia in 1993 is the only case of successful secession to happen in post-colonial Africa. It was the first time that a secessionist state achieved independence from a sovereign African state. While several African secessionist movements failed to break from their central state (e.g. Biafra, Cabinda, Casamance, Katanga, Southern Sudan, Western Sahara), Eritrea seceded and obtained diplomatic recognition after 30 years of war against Ethiopia, the longest secessionist struggle ever fought in Africa.

Eritrea is a unique case to the extent that the Ethiopian government agreed to its secession in 1991 mainly because it no longer had the power and the authority to oppose it. In the beginning of the 1990s, the Eritrean secessionist army of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) had become more powerful than the troops of the rump Ethiopian government, which collapsed in May of 1991, and it had more military capacity than the transitional government that eventually took control of Ethiopia in July of 1991. This unusual situation, therefore, compelled Addis Ababa to negotiate the secession of Eritrea. The refusal to allow Eritrea's independence would have led Eritrean secessionists to resume fighting and eventually to defeat the central government of Ethiopia.

The case of Eritrea is highly relevant to this research because the fate of this secessionist state was partly linked to U.S. geo-strategic interests. From 1952

to 1991, American governments consistently opposed the secession of Eritrea because, as it will be shown later, it was perceived as going against their interest of maintaining stability in the Horn of Africa. Interestingly enough, the reversal of this position in 1991 in favor of Eritrea's independence was made to pursue the same objective: regional stability in a changing political context. Moreover, the United States played a crucial role in the process leading to Eritrea's secession. In contrast to the Yugoslav cases studied previously in which other foreign powers were also involved (i.e. members of the European Union), the U.S. was the only foreign power engaged in the resolution of the Eritrean issue. Hence, regional and great powers did not act as a determining variable in the U.S. decision process as it was partly the case, for instance, with Germany toward Croatia and Slovenia or Greece in the case of Macedonia.¹

Following a brief historical background of Eritrea's political evolution, this chapter will take a detailed look at the critical period that began in 1989 with the U.S. involvement in the Ethiopian civil war and ended in 1993 with the official recognition of the independence of Eritrea. This focus will allow us to evaluate whether the regional stability model explains the initial U.S. policy in favor of Ethiopia's unity as well as the shift in favor of Eritrea's secession which occurred in 1991.

¹ The position of the European Community toward the Eritrean issue was similar to the one of the United States, which was to support a federal or confederal arrangement between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Following the U.S. policy shift in May of 1991, the EC aligned its position with the U.S. and supported Eritrea's right to secede.

Historical Background

In contrast to almost all African states, Ethiopia does not have a colonial past. It was a member of the League of Nations in the 1920s and 1930s and was only occupied by Italy from 1936 to 1941, until the allies liberated the Horn of Africa from Mussolini's imperialist ambitions.² Eritrea, however, has a very different political history. It was an Italian colony from 1889 to 1941 and was administered by the British as a United Nations trust territory during the 1940s. This colonial legacy strengthened Eritrea's separate identity and certainly complicated its relations with Ethiopia after the Second World War.³

In 1950, the political future of Eritrea was debated between the great powers but no consensus could be reached on its final status. The Soviet Union argued that Eritrea should become an independent state while the United States and the United Kingdom supported a federal union of Ethiopia and Eritrea. The British, who were still administering the territory by then, relegated the issue to a U.N. commission of investigation, which recommended the creation of a federation with Ethiopia. Despite the fact that a large segment of the Eritrean population wanted independence (mainly among the Eritrean Muslim populations), the U.N. Security Council adopted a resolution creating the Eritrean federation which went into effect in 1952.⁴ This resolution made Eritrea

² During the Italian occupation, Ethiopia was merged with Eritrea and with parts of the current Somalia into what was called Italian East Africa.

³ John W. Harbeson, "The Horn of Africa: From Chaos, Political Renewal?", *Current History*, Vol. 90, No. 556, May 1991, p. 221.

⁴ Most of the Eritrean Muslims favored the independence of Eritrea while a large segment of the Christian populations supported the integration of Eritrea within Ethiopia to create a greater Ethiopia. Some Muslims also supported irredentism and wanted to unite parts of Eritrea with

an autonomous unit under Ethiopia's sovereignty. A separate Eritrean constitution was established as well as an Eritrean Parliament in Asmara, the capital of Eritrea.⁵ Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, however, never fully accepted the idea of a federation.⁶ As Alexis Heraclides notes: "Federated Eritrea was, if nothing else, an anomaly within despotic Imperial Ethiopia".⁷ Haile Selassie's ultimate objective was to annex Eritrea under a greater Ethiopian Empire. To this respect, the autonomy of Eritrea was systematically violated by the Ethiopian authorities during the 1950s. The Eritrean flag was also abolished and the Eritrean constitution was suspended. The Ethio-Eritrean federation officially ended in 1962 when Eritrea was annexed into Ethiopia and declared the fourteenth province of the Ethiopian empire.⁸

The erosion of Eritrea's autonomy prior to 1962 led to the emergence of secessionist organizations. The Eritrean Liberation Movement (ELM), which mainly consisted of Christians, and the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), a Muslim dominated organization, rose up respectively in 1958 and 1960. The Ethiopian

neighboring Sudan. See Paul Henze, *The Question of Eritrea*. <http://www.african-geopolitics.org/show.aspx?ArticleId=3063> (accessed June 2006).

Eritrea represented 9 percent of Ethiopia's territory. With around 3 to 4 million inhabitants, Eritrea contributed 8 to 10 percent of Ethiopia's total population. See Alexis Heraclides, *The Self-Determination of Minorities in International Politics*, London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1991, pp. 179-180.

⁵ Ibid., p. 178.

⁶ As it will be seen in the next section, the Emperor consented to the federation to maintain a close relationship with the United States.

⁷ Alexis Heraclides, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

⁸ The Ethiopian army surrounded the Eritrean administrative building in Asmara and compelled members of the Eritrean Assembly to vote in favor of the annexation of Eritrea to Ethiopia. This is reminiscent of how the Serbian government of Slobodan Milosevic ended the autonomous status of Kosovo in 1989. See Ruth Iyob, *The Eritrean Struggle for Independence: Domination, Resistance, Nationalism, 1941-1993*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 94.

authorities responded with violence to these secessionist insurgencies, but failed to resolve the Eritrean secessionist issue. This political stalemate was partly responsible for the creation of a military committee in Ethiopia known as the Derg (which means “council” in Amharic—an Ethiopian language). This Marxist military committee ultimately overthrew Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974 and Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam became the head of the government of the People’s Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (GPDRE). This was a major turning point in Ethiopia’s history.⁹

After a brief attempt to appease Eritrea’s secessionist demands, Mengistu chose to pursue Haile Selassie’s repressive policy against Eritrean secessionists. The brutal ruling of Mengistu and his will to crush secessionism by all means galvanized Eritrean nationalism and mobilized the population (Muslims as well as Christians) in favor of independence. Within a few years, the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front—formerly the ELF—, and the ELM successfully fought Ethiopia’s troops and were able to take control of most of Eritrea’s territory with the exception of Asmara and some major towns.¹⁰ Moreover, the creation of the Marxist republic of Ethiopia favored the emergence in the province of Tigray of the Tigrean People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), a non-secessionist organization that

⁹ The military coup of the Derg was also motivated by the fact that Emperor Selassie was an autocratic leader who favored Ethiopia’s Christian community at the expense of the Muslims.

¹⁰ The ELM and ELF (the future EPLF) fought against each other in the 1960s and 1970s for control of Eritrea. By the late 1970s, the EPLF led by Isaias Afwerki had become the most prominent front in Eritrea and led the final war of liberation against the government of Addis Ababa in the early 1990s.

fought to replace the repressive Marxist regime of Mengistu.¹¹ The TPLF, which originally was a small rebellion group, was trained and armed by the EPLF. From 1975 to 1991, in coordination with the EPLF, the TPLF achieved several military defeats over the GPDRE. This circumstantial alliance between the Eritrean secessionists and the Tigrean rebels ultimately led them to defeat the central government of Mengistu in May of 1991.

Following the fall of the GPDRE, the Eritrean People's Liberation Front entered Asmara and established control over Eritrea's territory, which made the province a *de facto* independent state. Meanwhile, the Tigrean People's Liberation Front took control of Addis Ababa with the help of EPLF units and constituted an Ethiopian transitional government. This new government recognized Eritrea's right of self-determination and agreed to a referendum on Eritrea's independence. In April of 1993, when asked the question: "Do you want independence from Ethiopia?", 99.8 percent of the 98.5 percent of Eritreans who cast ballots voted in favor of secession in a referendum monitored by the United Nations. Following this result, Eritrean leaders officially declared independence and the United States recognized the new state.¹²

¹¹ Roy Pateman, "Eritrea Takes the World Stage", *Current History*, Vol. 93, No. 583, May 1994, p. 228.

¹² Dan Connell, "Eritrea", *Foreign Policy in Focus*, International Relations Center, Vol. 2, No. 45, September 1997. <http://www.irc-online.org/fpif/briefs/vol2/v2n45eri.html> (accessed June 2006). See also David Pool, *From Guerrillas to Government: The Eritrean People's Liberation Front*, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2001, p. 162.

Washington Supports Ethiopia's Sovereignty over Eritrea: 1952-1991

The international dimension of the Ethiopian-Eritrean issue is crucial to understanding why Eritrea did not obtain independence in the aftermath of the Second World War, and why it finally became a sovereign state in 1993. As it will be demonstrated, the political evolution of both Ethiopia and Eritrea was intimately linked to American strategic interests in the region.

As early as 1942, Eritrea became an important geostrategic position for the United States.¹³ After having taken control of the Italian communications station (Radio Marina) in Asmara during the war, the U.S. employed it to relay military messages and to monitor Soviet radio communications. In 1948, Emperor Haile Selassie and U.S. Secretary of State John Marshall agreed that the U.S. would maintain its military presence at the Asmara station in exchange for its support of the integration of Eritrea into Ethiopia.¹⁴

Following the recommendation of the U.N. commission of investigation, the United States (backed by England) managed in 1950 to make the Security Council vote on a resolution that created the federation of Ethiopia and Eritrea despite the reluctance of the Soviet Union. Following this resolution, the U.S. signed a mutual defense treaty with Ethiopia, and Radio Marina (renamed Kagnaw Station) was converted into a 60 million dollar military complex.¹⁵ Eritrea thus became an important link in the U.S. world-wide communication network. As

¹³ Okbazghi Yohannes, *Eritrea, A Pawn in World Politics*, Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1991, p. 211.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

¹⁵ In exchange, the United States designed most of Ethiopia's infrastructures following World War II and sent the largest share of its African economic aid to Ethiopia. See Dan Connell, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

Yohannes points out: “The Ethiopian-Eritrean federation was installed by the Western powers under the leadership of the United States purely for geopolitical considerations. This UN-sanctioned federation in essence became a denial of Eritrea’s right to national self-determination.”¹⁶ When Ethiopia annexed Eritrea by force in 1962, the United States remained silent because this action served its interests. The annexation increased Addis Ababa’s control over Eritrea’s political life facilitating U.S. operation in the province.

U.S. Interests in Ethiopia Decrease but Support for Unity Remains

With the development of satellite technology in the 1960s and 1970s, the communication facilities of the Kagnew Station became obsolete and, as a result, the United States gradually lost its interest in Eritrea as a geostrategic position.¹⁷ When the Ethiopian Emperor was overthrown by a Marxist military coup in 1974, the U.S. had already reduced its military personal and investment in the region. Moreover, the rise of Mengistu to power in the mid-1970s ended friendly U.S.-Ethiopian relations. The new Marxist regime abrogated the mutual defense treaty with the U.S. and by the late 1970s, the influence of the U.S. government in

¹⁶ Okbazghi Yohannes, *op. cit.*, p. 258. Cited in Raymond C. Taras and Rajat Ganguly, *Understanding Ethnic Conflicts: The International Dimension*, New York: Longman Publishers, 2002, p. 216.

¹⁷ Moreover, the development of Diego Garcia—a British Island in the Indian Ocean—as an alternative U.S. emplacement in the region contributed to demote the Kagnew station. See Richard Sherman, *Eritrea: The Unfinished Revolution*, New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980, p. 143.

Ethiopia was barely existent as Mengistu broke his relations with the West and moved into the Soviet orbit.¹⁸

Despite its ideological setback, and regardless of its aversion to Mengistu's Marxist regime, the United States maintained an anti-secessionist policy toward Eritrea. Washington expressed its desire for internal negotiation between Addis Ababa and Asmara and wished that the conflict would be resolved within the Ethiopian political frame.¹⁹

Interestingly enough, the U.S. government did not redefine its policy in the Horn by supporting Eritrea's independence in order to weaken the Ethiopian regime and the Soviet influence in the region. Even if Ethiopia was using brutal military means to crush secessionism in Eritrea, including the bombing of major Eritrean cities, and that Ethiopia's repressive rule resulted in over 100,000 casualties and caused a major famine, the United States categorically refused to support EPLF leaders because they advocated Eritrea's secession. Moreover, Washington's mistrust of Eritrea's long-time inclination to socialism, and the precedent that a U.S. support to secessionism would have engendered (i.e. bolstering secessionist movements across Africa) led the U.S. to adopt a different strategy. Instead of violating the norm of states' territorial integrity cherished by

¹⁸ Mengistu also announced that U.S. military facilities in Ethiopia (especially in the Eritrean province) would be closed down. *Ibid.*, p. 144. Soon after the Derg declared Ethiopia a socialist state, the Soviet Union sent more than 11 billion dollars in arms to Addis Ababa. With this support, Mengistu was able to temporarily reoccupy most of Eritrea's major cities. However, by the end of the 1980s, the EPLF had regained most of the territory it had lost. See Dan Connell, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

¹⁹ At a Senate Subcommittee hearing in 1976, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs William E. Schaefeke declared: "Our emphasis of the Eritrean question has been on the need for internal negotiations to resolve the status of Eritrea within Ethiopia... The movement to establish an independent Eritrea is not something we either acknowledge or recognize". *Ibid.*, p. 145.

the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Washington applied the containment doctrine to prevent Marxist diffusion in the Horn. The strategy consisted of encircling Ethiopia by arming its neighbors: Somalia, Sudan, and Kenya and by investing in Somalia, which became the new client state.²⁰ As the U.S.-Ethiopian relations worsened after 1974, the United States increased its military and economic assistance to the Somali government and made its Embassy in Mogadishu (the capital of Somalia) one of the most important diplomatic missions in Africa.²¹

Thus, despite the variation over time of U.S. strategic interests in Ethiopia, and despite the rather drastic change in the nature of its relations with the Ethiopian regime, the United States remained committed to Ethiopia's territorial integrity.

U.S. Involvement

The reasons leading the United States to become involved in the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict in the late 1980s were far different from those behind Washington's involvement in the Yugoslav conflict. The Horn of Africa was not part of the U.S. main strategic interests, and with the end of the Cold War, the Horn of Africa had lost much of its strategic value. If the Yugoslav war threatened

²⁰ Dan Connell, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

²¹ Within a few years, the U.S.-Somali relations replaced those that Washington had maintained with Ethiopia over the last 20 years. The Somali partnership allowed the U.S. to keep its influence in the region as well as to retain a certain control on the Red Sea. This will be seen in more details in Chapter 8. See Herman J. Cohen, "Somalia and the US long and troubled history", *Race and History*, January 21, 2002. http://www.raceandhistory.com/cgi-bin/forum/webbbs_config.pl/noframes/read/115 (accessed June 2006).

the security and stability of the European continent and the functioning of the European economy, the brutal conflict in Ethiopia did not affect the well being of the United States or that of any of its allies. Thus, the Ethiopian civil war was not a priority for the Bush administration and, prior to the 1990s, the U.S. had never seriously attempted to resolve this secessionist conflict (especially from 1952 to 1974 when the U.S. had a great influence in Ethiopia).²² So why is it that the U.S. intervened in the Ethiopian conflict if it no longer had influence or apparent interests in Ethiopia?

The administration of George H.W. Bush got involved in the Ethiopian civil war for three main reasons. First, the Bush administration wanted to increase its cooperation with the Soviet Union on international issues. Back then, the Soviet Union wanted to “disengage from Ethiopia with dignity” as it went through an economic crisis and could no longer provide assistance to Ethiopia.²³ For this reason, Moscow was in favor of a U.S. involvement in the conflict and Washington saw the issue as a good opportunity to strengthen ties with the government of Mikhail Gorbachev.²⁴ Hence, after 15 years of quasi-absence from Ethiopia (the U.S. no longer had an ambassador in Addis Ababa and was represented by a chargé d’affaires), the U.S. took up the challenge.²⁵

²² For an interesting distinction between U.S. primary and secondary interests toward ethnic conflicts, see David Callahan, *Unwinnable Wars: American Power and Ethnic Conflict*, New York: Hill and Wang Editions, 1997.

²³ Moscow had informed Mengistu that it would not renew its defense and cooperation agreement with Ethiopia.

²⁴ Herman J. Cohen, *Intervening in Africa: Superpower Peacemaking in a Troubled Continent*, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000, p. 20.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

Second, in the late 1980s around 20,000 Jewish Ethiopians (the Falashas) wanted to immigrate to Israel to escape the intense civil war and the famine. They felt that their security was no longer assured in Ethiopia. This issue became a major concern in Washington and President Bush expressed personal interests for the fate of the Falashas. Members of U.S. Congress who represented Jewish constituents also raised their concern and pressed the Bush administration to take concrete actions to facilitate the departure of the Jewish Ethiopians. This was one more incentive for the U.S. to get involved in the war.

Third, hunger in Ethiopia was another concern in Washington. Throughout the 1980s, the U.S. government had been one of the main providers of humanitarian aid to Ethiopia to counter the famine in the region. By the late 1980s, the Bush administration reached the conclusion that by intervening in the Ethiopian conflict it could help to end the civil war and the humanitarian crisis. As a result, the Jewish Ethiopians could more easily depart from Ethiopia. All of these factors were part of the equation and motivated the U.S.'s initial decision to intervene in the conflict.²⁶

The issue of Eritrea's secession was not a factor that played in the United States' decision to be involved. In fact, it just happened that the Falashas and the hunger issues were intimately linked to the tough secessionist war in Eritrea. As the next section will show, however, the U.S. intervention turned out to have a more far-reaching effect than expected. Indeed, American officials decided at

²⁶ Ibid.

some point to address the Eritrean secessionist question in order to strengthen regional stability in the Horn.

Toward the Collapse of the Ethiopian Government: 1989-1991

The reign of the Derg regime was marked by a progressive loss of political control over Ethiopia's territory. Throughout the 1980s, the regime of Mengistu fought on several fronts against the EPLF, which captured most of Eritrea's strategic locations. The Derg also fought against the TPLF, which occupied most of Northern Ethiopia. Toward the end of the 1980s, other liberation movements such as the Oromo Liberation Front also emerged in the South of the country.²⁷ In early 1990, Mengistu acknowledged for the first time that the Ethiopian state was on the verge of dismemberment and that the national army had to fight with more determination against the multiple insurgent fronts to keep Ethiopia united.

External Instability but Internal Negotiations are Still Possible

When the United States became involved in the conflict, the external stability of Ethiopia was no longer preserved. The Ethio-Eritrean war had created a major spillover effect and between 500,000 to 600,000 civilians had taken refuge mainly in Sudan, but also in Kenya and Djibouti. There were also a considerable number of emigres and exiles in Arab states (80,000-100,000).²⁸ According to

²⁷ John W. Harbeson, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

²⁸ David Pool, "Eritrean Independence: The Legacy of the Derg and the Politics of Reconstruction", *African Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 368, July 1993, p. 394. See also June Rock, "Relief and Rehabilitation in Eritrea: Lessons and Issues", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1999, p. 133.

Robert Houdek, who was U.S. Chief of Mission to Ethiopia from 1988 to 1991, the refugee crisis was taken very seriously by the State Department and it was one more reason why Washington got involved in the conflict.²⁹

In terms of internal negotiations, Mengistu had refused to negotiate with Eritrean secessionists until the late 1980s and he had used military means to bring Eritrea to heel. The rapid decline of Soviet aid and the severe famine, however, compelled the Ethiopian government to come up with a peace initiative that included negotiations with Eritrean secessionists.³⁰ Following his first official meeting with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman J. Cohen, Mengistu expressed desire to end the war. He introduced market-oriented reforms and promised to facilitate the emigration of Jewish Ethiopians. At this point, there was external instability resulting from the conflict, but Mengistu was open for change and accepted third party mediation. Thus, as the regional stability theory predicts, this openness was good enough for the U.S. to maintain its support of Ethiopia's unity.

In 1989, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter was chosen by Ethiopian and Eritrean leaders to conduct peace negotiations. These semi-official peace talks, however, did not produce any significant progress. Negotiations held in Atlanta and in Nairobi (Kenya) in the fall of 1989 failed because the Derg regime refused to allow a U.N. observer mission to assist negotiations, as requested by Eritrean secessionists. Addis Ababa argued that allowing a U.N. presence in Ethiopia

²⁹ Phone interview with Robert Houdek, May 25, 2005.

³⁰ Herman J. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

would further internationalize the conflict.³¹ Mengistu also refused to implement a cease-fire during peace negotiations; a proposition that had been put forward by the United States. Eritrean secessionist leaders were not more inclined to compromise since their military victory had started to alter the balance of force in their favor.³²

Following these negotiation attempts, the EPLF launched an attack against the Ethiopian army on the Red Sea coast and captured the port of Massawa—Eritrea's main port. This victory marked the beginning of the end for Mengistu as his troops located in Asmara were isolated and could no longer be supplied on the ground. The Tigrean People's Liberation Front also made significant progress against Mengistu's army and was able to move closer to Addis Ababa.

In the light of a rapidly declining military situation, Mengistu appeared willing to resume peace talks with secessionists under the auspices of the U.S. and showed signs of flexibility. To demonstrate its good faith, the GPDRE allowed international food relief to reach the Eritrean population, which until then had been forbidden.³³ State Department officials also hosted informal talks in Washington D.C. between the Ethiopian government and Eritrean secessionists in the fall of 1990. At this occasion, the representative of the Ethiopian government, Tesfaye

³¹ Mengistu only accepted the proposal of a U.N. observer mission in 1991 when his regime was on the verge of collapsing.

³² Other talks hosted by the Italian government in Rome at the end of 1989 between the Tigrean People's Liberation Front and the Ethiopian government ended in deadlock for similar reasons. See John Young, *Peasant Revolution in Ethiopia: The Tigray People's Liberation Front*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 167.

³³ *The Washington Post*, "Ethiopia Said Willing to Seek Peace; Eritrea Is Urged to Reciprocate", November 15, 1990.

Dinka, introduced the draft of a new Ethiopian constitution that guaranteed special autonomy for Eritrea. Assistant Secretary Cohen declared: "I believe the Ethiopian government has effectively shown great flexibility in recent weeks and I would ask the EPLF to reciprocate."³⁴ EPLF leaders, however, kept requesting a referendum on independence, which was the centerpiece of their strategy, and categorically refused the idea of political autonomy within Ethiopia.

Mengistu Acts in Bad Faith

Although the Ethiopian central government seemed open to negotiations and ready to devolve constitutional power to Eritrea, it soon appeared that Mengistu was not acting in good faith and that the GPDRE was not really interested in achieving a negotiated peace settlement with the secessionists. The State Department realized that the Ethiopian host state was involved in peace negotiations to buy time in order to reestablish its military authority in Ethiopia and defeat the insurgent movement. To achieve this objective, the Ethiopian government made two tactical decisions. First, it supported the U.S. coalition against Saddam Hussein's invasion of Iraq (Ethiopia had a seat at the U.N. Security Council at the time of the Gulf War). Mengistu believed that cooperating with the U.S. on the Iraqi issue could be the first step toward a U.S.-Ethiopian alliance against Arab influences in the Horn of Africa. Through this alliance, Mengistu was hoping to defeat secessionist insurgents in Eritrea (even if

³⁴ Ibid.

secessionists were from both Muslim and Christian backgrounds) and to consolidate his regime. As Herman Cohen recalls:

What [Mengistu] wanted was to find a substitute for Soviet military support in the form of a trilateral anti-Arab alliance grouping Ethiopia, the United States, and Israel. Until the very end in May 1991, Mengistu's overriding aim was to win military victories in his unwinnable internal wars.³⁵

Mengistu's second tactical decision was his "visas for arms" policy. To rebuild his military, the Ethiopian leader used the Falashas in an attempt to obtain weapons from Israel. Mengistu literally blackmailed the Israeli government by making it clear that there would be no Falasha emigration without arms in exchange. Thus, in early 1991, the Bush administration came to the conclusion that the regime of Mengistu was an obstacle to the resolution of the civil war and that his policy of the open hand toward Eritrea was a bluff.

In April of 1991, after several unsuccessful attempts at peaceful negotiations, the EPLF and TPLF launched their final offensive against the Mengistu regime. In Washington, the issue of the Falashas became central. Both the White House and members of Congress worried that Ethiopian Jews could be the victims of the intensification of the civil war. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Shamir even appealed to President Bush for an intervention in favor of the Falashas. In response to this appeal and to pressure from Congress, President Bush named Rudy Boschwitz, a former Republican Senator who had the fate of the Falashas at heart, as his special envoy to Ethiopia. Boschwitz's first assignment

³⁵ Herman J. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

was to deliver a message asking the Ethiopian government to facilitate the departure of the Jews.³⁶

The U.S. government also intensified its involvement in the conflict by sending high-level officials to Ethiopia. In addition to Rudy Boschwitz, NSC director for Africa Robert Frasure, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Irving Hicks also traveled to Ethiopia to push for the departure of the Falashas and to find a peace agreement between the GPDRE, the EPLF and the TPLF.³⁷ American officials first met with Mengistu in Addis Ababa. During the meeting, Mengistu consented to a rapid departure of the Falashas if the United States agreed to cover the costs of the airlift operation.³⁸ The Ethiopian leader also asked the Bush administration to organize a new round of peace negotiations with the insurgent movement. The State Department agreed to resume peace talks but indicated that these negotiations would begin only once the emigration process of the Falashas was underway.³⁹ The peace conference finally began in London on May 27 following the rapid and successful departure of most of the Falashas.

³⁶ John M. Goshko, "U.S. Plea for Ethiopian Jews Led to Mediator Role; Marxist Government, Rebel Groups Sought American Involvement in Attempt to End Strife", *The Washington Post*, May 30, 1991.

³⁷ Peter J. Schraeder, "U.S. Intervention in the Horn of Africa Amidst the End of the Cold War", *Africa Today*, Vol. 40, No. 2, 1993, p. 8.

³⁸ The United States provided \$15 million in assistance for the airlift of 18,000 Falashas from Addis Ababa to Tel Aviv. For more on this issue see Stephen Spector, *Operation Solomon: The Daring Rescue of the Ethiopian Jews*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

³⁹ NSC Director for Africa Robert Frasure traveled to Sudan to meet with Issaias Afwerki the leader of the EPLF and with Meles Zenawi the head of the TPLF, and they both agreed to meet in London in May to begin peace negotiations with the Mengistu regime. On May 24-25, 1991 the Falashas were airlifted to Israel. The U.S. and Israel had to pay \$35 million to the Ethiopian government in "exit fees" for the operation.

Ethiopia's Central Government Disintegrates

In the days preceding the London conference, the political context in Ethiopia substantially changed. The EPLF launched its final attack on Asmara forcing 200,000 Ethiopian troops to surrender.⁴⁰ The Eritrean secessionists then established a Provisional Government in Eritrea (PGE), which was in control of the entire Eritrean territory. Meanwhile, the TPLF army was literally waiting at the doors of Addis Ababa ready to enter the city. Facing his imminent defeat, Mengistu abandoned his government on May 21st fleeing to Zimbabwe.⁴¹ Before leaving, he designated his Vice President Tesfaye Gebre-Kidan as the new President of Ethiopia.

Soon after the U.S. delegation began negotiating with representatives of the different parties in London, the U.S. Chargé d’Affaire in Addis Ababa, Robert Houdek, informed Assistant Secretary Cohen that the Ethiopian government was no longer able to defend the capital against rebel factions. Since the central government of the Derg was in an advanced stage of disintegration, the U.S. government made an important decision. Assistant Secretary Cohen, who chaired the peace talks in London, agreed to let the TPLF enter Addis Ababa to maintain order. This was part of Herman Cohen’s strategy of a “soft landing”, that is to settle the conflict by minimizing turmoil and violence. The U.S. was really

⁴⁰ Paul B. Henze, *Ethiopia: The Fall of the Derg and the Beginning of Recovery Under the EPRDF (March 1990-March 1992)*, Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1995, p. 19.

⁴¹ The U.S. Chargé d’Affaires Robert Houdek had convinced Mengistu of “the hopelessness of his situation” and of the inevitable defeat of his army. Houdek’s pressure apparently convinced Mengistu to leave Ethiopia. See Paul Henze, “Ethiopia and Eritrea: The Defeat of the Derg and the Establishment of New Governments”, in David R. Smock, (ed.), *Making War and Waging Peace: Foreign Intervention in Africa*, Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1993, p. 63.

concerned that the collapse of the Mengistu regime could produce chaos that would aggravate the war. The State Department was still shaken by the collapse of law and order that resulted from the overthrow of the Liberian government in 1990 and of the government of Somalia in early 1991, and Cohen was determined to prevent a similar state of anarchy emerging in Ethiopia.⁴²

The U.S. decision to support the TPLF entry into Addis, however, became highly controversial because it was made without the approval of Ethiopia's Prime Minister Tesfaye Dinka who attended the London conference.⁴³ This decision drastically changed the dynamic of the talks in London. Representatives of the GPDRE, led by Tesfaye Dinka, refused to acknowledge the disintegration of their regime and chose to leave the conference to protest against what they called the "Cohen's Coup". Several Ethiopians were also opposed to the TPLF's take over in Addis Ababa and saw it as the replacement of one dictatorial regime by another one. Many argued in Ethiopia that the U.S. had literally authorized a military coup.

The U.S. Supports Eritrea's Right to Secede

The second major U.S. decision in London was less expected than the first one. At a press conference, Secretary Cohen declared that he was in favor of a referendum on Eritrea's independence while stating that he hoped that Eritreans

⁴² Evelyn Farkas, *Fractured States and U.S. Foreign Policy: Iraq, Ethiopia, and Bosnia in the 1990s*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003, p. 56.

⁴³ Acting Ethiopian President Tesfaye Gebre-Kidan had apparently informed Robert Houdek that he consented to let the TPLF enter the capital because it was the only way to enforce order in Addis Ababa. This lack of communication between the new Ethiopian president and the prime minister, who was in London attending the peace talks, shows that the Derg regime was in an advanced phase of disintegration. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

would choose to remain in Ethiopia.⁴⁴ This declaration had the effect of a bomb having been dropped. For the first time since the Second World War, the United States expressly supported the right of a secessionist state to conduct a referendum on independence. This goes without saying that this statement departed from the U.S. traditional policy of supporting Ethiopia's territorial integrity. It was the first time in almost 50 years that the U.S. recognized Eritrea's right to become a sovereign state.

Cohen justified this decision by emphasizing that Eritrea's situation, from a legal point of view, was different from the other African secessionist movements. The Assistant Secretary stressed the fact that Eritrea was never allowed to exercise its right of self-determination. Eritreans were indeed compelled to join the Ethio-Eritrean federation in 1952 following a U.N. Security Council decision, and was illegally annexed by Ethiopia in 1962. Hence, supporting a referendum on Eritrea's independence was a way to repair an historical mistake.

The unique character of Eritrea, however, is a constant rather than a variable. Eritrea's right of self-determination had been denied since 1952 and successive U.S. administrations from President Truman to Reagan had never attempted to rectify this injustice. Therefore, this argument cannot explain why the U.S. suddenly reversed its policy. Assistant Secretary Cohen even recognized years later, during an interview with the author, that this legal argument was an excuse to justify the U.S. support to self-determination. "We felt it helped us feel

⁴⁴ Herman J. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 54. This decision was badly received in Addis Ababa and riots emerged in the streets of the capital. Ethiopians protested against the U.S. support for a referendum on Eritrea's independence. See Peter J. Schraeder, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

comfortable because we were always worried with the Organization of African Unity (OAU). But the OAU reached the same conclusion as we did, which was that secession was inevitable and that we couldn't stop it".⁴⁵ The emphasis put on this international legal argument had also as its aim the prevention of criticism of U.S. foreign policy inconsistency in matters of international recognition. It was a way to avoid creating a political precedent.

Explaining the U.S. Policy Shift

The U.S. decision to support Eritrea's referendum on independence was surprising since the U.S. delegation went to the London conference with a policy of supporting Ethiopia's territorial integrity.⁴⁶ So why this shift? The explanation must be found in the political rather than in the legal realm.

The central government of Ethiopia was no longer viable when the parties met in London in May of 1991 and the disintegration of the regime had become a great source of instability. Moreover, the Mengistu government had failed to contain the secessionist crisis within its borders and had used peace negotiations to buy time against Eritrea's secessionists. The central government of Ethiopia was, therefore, a major obstacle to stability. Facts indicate that the U.S. consented to a referendum on Eritrea's independence because this was the only option to end the war and to reestablish stability in the Horn. In other words, the independence of Eritrea, or at least the right to conduct a free referendum on the issue, was seen as

⁴⁵ Interview with Herman J. Cohen, Washington D.C., May 16, 2005.

⁴⁶ Herman Cohen points out: "As far as Eritrea was concerned, we went to the London conference with a policy of not recognizing secession pursuant to the principles of the Organization of African Union". Correspondence with Herman J. Cohen, May 23, 2005.

a tool to foster regional stability in both Eritrea and Ethiopia; the only way to stop civil war and the devastating famine. As Evelyn Farkas properly points out: “the U.S. defense of the territorial sanctity of Ethiopia was only abandoned when it became an obstacle to continued negotiations and peace. In short, the United States decided to support Ethiopia’s partition because it became necessary in order to achieve peace and stability.”⁴⁷

A denial of Eritrea’s right to secede may have caused war to resume in Ethiopia. According to Farkas: “there was an implicit recognition that not accepting the *fait accompli* would lead to more fighting”.⁴⁸ In addition, the fact that the EPLF had a more powerful military than the TPLF, which was then in control of Addis Ababa, contributed to the U.S. policy shift. Eritrea was a *de facto* independent state in May of 1991, and any attempt by the new Ethiopian transitional authority to reclaim Eritrea by force would have resulted in a failure. Thus, the changing nature of the domestic context in Ethiopia forced the U.S. to formulate a new pragmatic approach. Since Eritrea’s independence was unstoppable and given that the Ethiopian host state was powerless toward it, the U.S. decided to use its power to grant recognition to facilitate the resolution of the conflict (as in the case of Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia) and to impose, as it will be shown later, conditions of recognition. This was the only way that the U.S. could keep a certain control over the process leading to the inevitable independence of Eritrea.

⁴⁷ Evelyn Farkas, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

Dealing with the OAU

The U.S. delegation in London declared itself in favor of a referendum on Eritrea's secession before consulting with the Organization of African Unity on the subject, which was unprecedented. Before pushing further in that direction, however, the U.S. checked with the OAU to see whether it supported its new stand. The United States had always backed the OAU's principle of the maintenance of post-colonial international borders to contain potential secessionist aspirations.⁴⁹ As Herman Cohen indicates: "We were keen supporters of the cardinal principle of the Organization of African Unity—that colonial boundaries inherited by African states should be left intact to preclude demands for hundreds of ethnically based ministates".⁵⁰ This time, however, the U.S. went ahead of the OAU by supporting Eritrea's right to self-determination, which left the organization with very little option but to back this policy.

In this context, the OAU recognized that Eritrea had never had the chance to decide its own political future and that a referendum on secession was, therefore, a legitimate action. American officials also sought the approval of surrounding states (i.e. Djibouti, Egypt, Kenya and Sudan), which all gave their

⁴⁹ See Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, "Why Africa's Weak States Persist: The Empirical and the Juridical in Statehood", *World Politics*, 1982, Vol. 35, No. 1, p. 18.

⁵⁰ Herman J. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 22. At a Congressional hearing held in February 1990, Hermann Cohen declared: "Ethiopia will be able to achieve a durable peace only by means of a negotiated political solution. The outlines of that solution are not hard to see. Ethiopia must remain whole". See Ruth Iyob, *The Eritrean Struggle for independence: Domination, resistance, nationalism, 1941-1993*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 44.

consent to Eritrea's secession. This was a way for the U.S. to secure regional stability following Eritrea's independence.⁵¹

Absence of a Consensus Within and Between U.S. Foreign Policy Agencies

The consensus that existed between U.S. foreign policy agencies on the issue of Ethiopia was based on the need to collaborate with Gorbachev, to change the Ethiopian regime, and to end the war. Prior to Herman Cohen's unilateral decision to support a referendum on Eritrea's independence, there were serious doubts among U.S. national security bureaucracies about the positive aspect of Eritrea's independence. The Department of Defense (DoD) and the National Security Agency (NSA) worried that an independent Eritrea could become a hotbed for Islamic extremism. Following the policy shift, the State Department argued that the new Eritrean government was in control of its borders and, therefore, that it was not susceptible to being manipulated by radicals or by regional powers hostile to U.S. interests.⁵²

The decision of Assistant Secretary Cohen to support Eritrea's right to secede was made without prior approval by the State Department or the National Security Council. To the question "Why did the U.S. change its policy toward Eritrea's right to secede?" Walter Kansteiner, who worked for the Policy Planning staff at the State Department before replacing Robert Frasure as NSC Director for Africa, declared: "The U.S. didn't [change its policy], Cohen just said it. That's

⁵¹ Walter Kansteiner indicates: "If you want to mess with borders, you better get the five surrounding countries and the country that is splitting to all agree". Interview with Walter Kansteiner, Washington D.C., May 18, 2005.

⁵² Peter J. Schraeder, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

the wonderful thing about being the Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, no one else cares”.⁵³ In this case, however, the Bush administration did care and the latitude of the Assistant Secretary created tensions and disagreement within the State Department. A few hours after his controversial statement, Cohen received a call from Secretary Baker. The Secretary expressed strong concern about the new and unexpected policy toward Eritrea. As Cohen himself recalls:

Baker expressed concern about my endorsement of self-determination in Eritrea [...]. The German government, he explained, was exerting pressure on the United States to recognize the independence of Slovenia and Croatia. The United States was resisting because we feared that unilateral declarations of independence in Yugoslavia could lead to violence. My support for a referendum in Eritrea could open the door to press accusations of policy inconsistency. If self-determination is good enough for Eritrea, why isn't it good enough for Croatia and Slovenia? I protested that consistency is not necessarily the best way to deal with specific country problems, an argument he found naïve.⁵⁴

In an interview with the author, Herman Cohen added: “Baker didn't really disagree [with my decision]. I think that if I had asked his opinion before I did what I did, he would have said: well you should stay out of it. Let them make their own announcement”.⁵⁵ Baker was apprehensive and anticipated tough questions from the press such as why the U.S. opposed Croatia and Slovenia's independence, which both had held a winning referendum on independence, while it supported a referendum on Eritrea's secession? Fortunately for Baker (and for Cohen), the press did not emphasize the inconsistency.

⁵³ Interview with Walter Kansteiner, Washington D.C., May 18, 2005.

⁵⁴ Herman J. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁵⁵ Interview with Herman J. Cohen, Washington D.C., May 16, 2005.

This intra-agency debate could have been avoided if Cohen had obtained the approval of Secretary Baker before making such a substantial policy modification. This disagreement could also have been avoided if the representative of the NSC at the London peace conference, Robert Frasure, had made sure that this decision regarding Eritrea did not conflict with other U.S. positions. After all, the role of the NSC is precisely to coordinate policies between foreign policy agencies. In a correspondence with the author, Herman Cohen points out:

Frasure was kind of taken aback by this ruling on my part, but he did not object. I remember telling him at the hotel that I had taken a 'battlefield decision'. He laughed and said ok. In retrospect, Frasure should have objected because he represented the NSC. At that level, he should have known that we were trying to stop the independence of Slovenia and Croatia. I certainly was unaware of it.⁵⁶

If the American participation in the relief of the Jewish Ethiopians was an express decision from the White House, U.S. involvement in the resolution of the Eritrean secessionist conflict and in the partition of Ethiopia were initiated by one man: Assistant Secretary Herman J. Cohen. At no point in time did the White House instruct the U.S. diplomat to work on the Eritrean secessionist question and even less to preside over the splitting of Ethiopia.⁵⁷

A Unilateral Declaration of Independence is Excluded

To achieve their "soft landing" strategy, American officials in London discouraged EPLF leaders from issuing a unilateral declaration of independence

⁵⁶ Correspondence with Herman J. Cohen, May 23, 2005.

⁵⁷ Paul Henze, "Ethiopia and Eritrea: The Defeat of the Derg and the Establishment of New Governments", in David R. Smock, (ed.), *Making War and Waging Peace: Foreign Intervention in Africa*, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington D.C., 1993, p. 62.

(UDI) in 1991 because they believed that it would further destabilize Ethiopia. Assistant Secretary Cohen also warned Isaias Afwerki, the leader of the EPLF, that the United States and Western European states would not recognize Eritrea if it unilaterally seceded from Ethiopia. Cohen went even further by indicating that the U.S. would withhold the recognition of both the new Ethiopian government and of the Eritrea secessionist state if Addis Ababa and Asmara concluded an immediate separation. Thus, Washington was ready to oppose the independence of Eritrea in 1991 even if the new Ethiopian government would have supported it. This was a unique scenario.

Cohen also stressed the importance that Eritrean secessionists withhold their declaration of independence for a period of two years and that they wait for a U.N. sponsored referendum before officially seceding from Ethiopia. This two-year period was meant to allow for the new Ethiopian and Eritrean governments to consolidate their power, to facilitate economic negotiations, and to establish favorable conditions for a stable transition toward Eritrea's independence.

In this context, secessionist leaders made the calculation that the costs of issuing a UDI would clearly exceed the benefits. For one thing, as mentioned above, Eritrea was already a *de facto* independent state. A unilateral secession would not have granted much additional power to Eritrea and, on the contrary, would have deprived Eritreans from Western recognition and from U.N. endorsement. Such a disruptive decision could also have stained cooperation with Addis Ababa and with Western capitals at a time when Eritrea needed economic emergency relief to recover from its civil war. Thus, a UDI would not have been a

rational decision.⁵⁸ Commenting on the EPLF decision, Robert Houdek, who was the U.S. chargé d'affaires in Addis Ababa from 1988 to 1991 and who became the first U.S. Ambassador to Eritrea from 1993 to 1996, declared: "It was a very smart maneuver. If the EPLF had declared independence the day they walked into Asmara, a lot of African members [and the United States] would have been uncomfortable with that".⁵⁹

The 1991-1993 Transitional Period

At the end of the London peace conference, parties agreed to meet in Addis Ababa in July to decide on the transitional phase. By then, the Mengistu regime had disintegrated. From May to July, there was in fact no official government in Ethiopia and the Tigrean People's Liberation Front assumed the function of the transitional government. It is ironic that the TPLF, which was helped and trained by the Eritrean secessionist front in the 1970s and 1980s, came to power in 1991 as the new government of the host state from which Eritreans attempted to secede.

In July, three important decisions were made at the Addis Ababa conference: 1) The TPLF officially recognized the right of Eritreans to decide on their political future in a referendum supervised by the United Nations. Even if some members of the transitional government of Ethiopia were opposed to the independence of Eritrea, there was nothing that the transitional government could

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 75. When the war ended in 1991, about 85 percent of Eritreans depended on international food relief. See *The Christian Science Monitor*, "Eritrea's Path to Independence After a 30-year war, residents of this Red Sea land struggle to rebuild and win recognition for their dreams of sovereignty", January 15, 1992.

⁵⁹ Phone interview with Robert Houdek, May 25, 2005.

have done to prevent it.⁶⁰ The EPLF had the strongest military and it was in Ethiopia's interest to maintain friendly and cooperative relations with Eritrea. Meles Zenawi, the TPLF leader, called the anticipated secession of Eritrea an "unfortunate" event but argued that the maintenance of good economic relations with Asmara would minimize the disruptive effect of the breakup. Zenawi also made clear to U.S. officials that Ethiopian nationalists would not go to war in the future to reclaim Eritrea back.⁶¹ Ethiopia's consent on the secession of Eritrea facilitated the international community's acceptance of the breakup. This avoided creating a political precedent in which a secessionist state would have unilaterally seceded without the approval of its central state. 2) The EPLF, which attended the Addis Ababa conference as an observer, announced that Eritrea would stay out of the new Ethiopian transitional government as they had already set up their own government in Eritrea. The EPLF also agreed to defer for two years the referendum on Eritrea's independence. And 3) the Ethiopian government negotiated a free access to the Eritrean port of Assab on the Red Sea.⁶² Assab became a free transit port for goods entering Ethiopia.

⁶⁰ In the early 1990s, Ethiopia was facing five different rebellious movements (e.g. Afars, Eritreans, Oromo, Somali and Tigray) among which the Eritreans and Tigray were the most powerful. It is important to mention here that the Addis Ababa conference approved the right of the Ethiopian nationalities to self-determination, which included the right to secede. However, only Eritrea used that right and had the actual capacity and will to function independently. The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), for instance, was discouraged by the United States from holding a referendum on independence. In his memoir Cohen writes: "I discouraged [OLF leaders] from pursuing this policy objective, arguing that it was a nonstarter with the international community and could be traumatic for Ethiopia. I advised [them] to aim for a federal system which would give a measure of self-determination to the Oromos". Herman Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁶² John Young, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

From May of 1991 to the referendum on independence in 1993, Eritrea was an independent state in all but name. Neighboring states like Sudan, Egypt and Yemen even established an official diplomatic presence in the Eritrean capital.⁶³ Eritrea, however, remained officially part of the Ethiopian state until it formally proclaimed its independence in April 1993.

Strengthening Eritrea's Internal and External Stability

American representatives also fixed conditions for an eventual recognition of Eritrea's independence. In addition to compelling Eritrea to renounce unilaterally declaring secession and to agree to hold a democratic referendum, the U.S. expected Eritrean secessionists to create basic democratic institutions, to enact free market reforms, and to maintain peaceful relations with neighboring states. These facts tend to validate my model. The U.S. persuaded Eritrean leaders that they first needed to establish their legitimacy and show that they could maintain internal and external stability before being recognized.

During these two years, relations between Ethiopians and Eritreans were constructive. The Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) reaffirmed its decision to support Eritrea's right to secede and indicated that it would recognize the result of the referendum.⁶⁴ Addis Ababa and Asmara also worked together to implement democratic reforms and affirmed that regional stability and peace were

⁶³ *The Christian Science Monitor*, *op. cit.*, January 15, 1992.

⁶⁴ Addressing the General Assembly of the United Nations in the fall of 1991, Ethiopia's Ambassador to the UN declared that Ethiopia "respects the right of the Eritrean people to freely determine their future in an internationally supervised referendum". See Roy Pateman, *Eritrea: Even the Stones are Burning*, Lawrenceville: The Red Sea Press, 1998, p. 238.

prerequisites for economic development in the Horn. The two states also signed trade and communication agreements, and established a mutual defense pact.⁶⁵ The Provisional Government of Eritrea also proceeded to major political reforms. It introduced, among other things, the rule of law and conducted a civic education program. Meanwhile, Ethiopia's transitional government drafted a new constitution that proclaimed a new peaceful and democratic order.⁶⁶ Then, in late 1992, the OAU announced that it would send observers during the referendum process and the UN General Assembly passed resolution 47/114 establishing the United Nations Observer Mission to Verify the Referendum in Eritrea (UNOVER). In 1993, when the referendum was held, Eritrea had thus shown evidence of internal and external stability.⁶⁷

The referendum was finally held on April 23-25, 1993. Observers from the United States, the UN, the OAU, the Arab League, the United Kingdom, Ethiopia, Egypt, Russia, Yemen, Sudan and Tunisia were present for a total of 536 foreign

⁶⁵ Ruth Iyob, *op. cit.*, p. 137. See also *The Washington Post*, "Ethiopia Proposes Eritrea Vote In Exchange for Port Access", July 4, 1991.

⁶⁶ Paul Henze, *op. cit.*, 1995, p. 27.

⁶⁷ During this two-year delay, however, Eritrea did not have full access to international aid since it was not a sovereign state. Furthermore, the United States suspended its development aid to the Eritrean government because the PGE had refused to adopt drastic liberalization policies. See *The Christian Science Monitor*, "An Opening for Democracy in Eritrea", April 30, 1993. The U.S., however, remained one of the main economic contributors to Eritrea during the transitional period and partly funded the referendum on independence.

In August 1992, the United States reopened its Consulate in Asmara and a World Bank mission to Eritrea, which gathered representatives from the United States, the European Community and members of the UN Development Program, promised a fund of \$140 million for Eritrea's reconstruction after its independence. See *The Christian Science Monitor*, "Eritrea Gets Fast Start Rebuilding Economy After Decades of War, Broken Infrastructure is Addressed", February 3, 1993.

observers.⁶⁸ Following the vote, OAU representatives validated the result and Eritrea declared its independence on April 27. The United States immediately recognized the new state and the international community followed suit.⁶⁹ Ethiopia granted formally recognition to Eritrea on May 3rd and the official celebration of independence was held on May 24, the day of the second anniversary of the liberation of Asmara by the EPLF troops.⁷⁰ Eritrea became a member of the United Nations in June of 1993, and its diplomatic recognition allowed it to join the IMF and the World Bank.⁷¹

Does the Eritrean Case Validate the Regional Stability Model?

The answer is yes. As long as the Mengistu regime was in power and showed willingness to resolve the Eritrean secessionist conflict, the U.S. remained committed to Ethiopia's unity despite the fact that external stability was no longer preserved (i.e. massive cross-national refugee flow). From the day of the U.S. involvement in 1989 to the collapse of the Ethiopian government in 1991, Assistant Secretary Cohen and the State Department remained patient and attempted on multiple occasions to bring the parties together. Thus, the case of

⁶⁸ Ruth Iyob, *op. cit.*, p. 139. One quarter of the 1.2 million registered voters were living outside of Eritrea (in Sudanese refugee camps, in Ethiopia or in Western countries).

⁶⁹ Although some states had already given their support and granted de facto recognition to Eritrea (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, Yemen), the United States was the first state to recognize de jure the independence of Eritrea following its declaration of independence. See Kinfe Abraham, *Ethiopia From Bullets to the Ballot Box*, Lawrenceville: The Red Sea Press, 1994, p. 58.

⁷⁰ *Facts On File*, "Eritrea", World News Digest with Index, Vol. 53, No. 2735, April 29, 1993. See also U.S. Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, Background note: Eritrea. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2854.htm> (accessed August 2006).

⁷¹ Peter Woodward, *The Horn of Africa: Politics and International Relations*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2003, p. 107.

Eritrea does validate the first step of the regional stability model. At no point in time, prior to the collapse of the Mengistu regime, did the United States support Eritrea's secessionist aspirations.

The model also explains the U.S. policy shift in favor of Eritrea's independence. As the theory predicted in Chapter 3, the U.S. will undertake "a significant political shift in favor of the secessionists if at least one external and one internal indicator simultaneously depict a breakdown in stability".⁷² This is precisely what happened in the case of Ethiopia. Not only did the secessionist war cause external instability but the central government was not seriously interested in negotiating, and was ultimately paralyzed and collapsed. Taken together, these indicators caused the U.S. policy shift.

Assistant Secretary Herman Cohen, however, was the main agent responsible for the U.S. change in policy. His decision to support Eritrea's right to hold a referendum on secession left Secretary Baker and the White House with a *fait accompli*. Cohen's decision in London does support the regional stability argument. It seems, however, that if Cohen had consulted with the Secretary of State before committing the U.S. to a new policy, the American government would have stayed out of the debate and would have let Ethiopia and Eritrea make their own announcement regarding the referendum.

Moreover, one could wonder whether the internal and external stability factors really justify the shift in U.S. policy. The fact that the Eritrean secessionist army was the predominant military force in Ethiopia in 1991 made Eritrea's secession unstoppable, and this could be enough to explain why the U.S. supported

⁷² See Chapter 3, p. 57.

Eritrea's secessionist self-determination. To this we can answer that, from 1989 to 1991, secessionist rebels were more powerful than the central government and won most of the fights against it. Yet, the United States maintained its support of Ethiopia's integrity. I argue that the fact that Mengistu became an obstacle to internal negotiations, combined with the cross-national refugee problem, are what initiated the U.S. policy shift. As for the distribution of power which was increasingly favorable for the Eritrean secessionists, it contributed by accelerating this shift.

The second step of the regional stability model also explains the U.S. management of the last phase of the conflict. Between 1991 and 1993, the U.S. negotiating team was focusing on the internal and external stability of Eritrea. First, Cohen received the assurance that the Eritreans would pursue a cooperative foreign policy with Ethiopia as well as with neighboring states, which all accepted Eritrea's secession. External stability was thus quickly secured at the Addis Ababa conference in July 1991. As for internal stability, the EPLF already had effective control of Eritrea's territory when it took over Asmara in May of 1991 and secessionist leaders rapidly established a well-functioning government. During the two-year transition period, the Eritrean government implemented democratic and liberal reforms, followed by a democratic referendum on independence. As Evelyn Farkas indicates: "the [U.S.] decision to allow partition was made to advance the prospects for stability and security on the Horn. The means by which it was implemented demonstrates most clearly the U.S. concern about stability".⁷³ In

⁷³ Evelyn Farkas, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

April of 1993, Eritrea fulfilled the U.S. criteria of stability and was ready to be recognized. Overall, the regional stability argument performs well.

Competing Arguments

To what extent do ethnic politics and private business interests explain the fluctuation of the U.S. position toward Eritrea? As far as ethnic lobbies are concerned, there was a consensus among Ethiopian and Eritrean Americans on the need to overthrow the Mengistu regime. This consensus reflected the cooperation between the TPLF, the EPLF, and the other rebel factions that were fighting against the Derg regime. Until 1991, Ethiopian and Eritrean American lobbies spoke with the same voice in favor of a regime change in Addis Ababa. Both diasporic communities, however, which consisted of around 100,000 U.S. citizens, were ethnically divided and could only agree on the overthrow of Mengistu. There was no consensus on who should rule in Addis Ababa following the downfall of the Derg and most Ethiopian Americans were opposed to Eritrea's independence.

When the U.S. government made the decision to support a referendum on Eritrea's secession, the cooperation between Ethiopian and Eritrean Americans abruptly ended. The Ethiopian American community mobilized and demonstrated against the U.S. policy shift. One leader of the Ethiopian community declared that: "If it [the U.S. government] lets Eritrea secede, there is no way the government can deny it to any other group, which is the dismemberment of Ethiopia".⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Cited in Evelyn Farkas, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

Eritreans in the United States were less numerous than the Ethiopian Americans but they were unified behind the EPLF. The large majority of them were in favor of Eritrea's independence when the Mengistu regime fell apart, and they all pushed in the same direction even if they were not organized into one main ethnic association. Moreover, Eritrean Americans were successful at lobbying members of Congress and convinced some of them of the importance of Eritrea's secession. They gained support especially among the Subcommittee on African Affairs of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.⁷⁵

However, despite the fact that Eritrean Americans were vocal on Capitol Hill, and that they pressured Congress members, facts indicate that they failed to impact the Bush administration. As one policy-maker points out: "The demonstrations in the streets of Washington really didn't matter. What mattered were the conversations we had with Meles Zenawi [the TPLF leader and with Isaias Afwerki of the EPLF] in London".⁷⁶ Moreover, as mentioned previously, the U.S. decision to support Eritrea's right to secede was made by Assistant Secretary Cohen and the decision was taken in London, far from Washington's political scene. No evidence indicates that the Eritrean American community impacted Herman Cohen's perception of the issue in the weeks prior to the London conference.

Generally speaking, ethnic lobbies are influential to the extent that they can impact the election or reelection of politicians. This is why elected representatives

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 67.

⁷⁶ Interview with Walter Kansteiner, Washington D.C., May 18, 2005. Robert Houdek agrees with this point of view. Phone interview with Robert Houdek, May 25, 2005.

usually pay attention to the opinion of ethnic communities especially when they are concentrated in important states or ridings. In the case of Eritrea, the U.S. decision to support self-determination was not made by the President or by his political entourage, but by a non-elected high-level public servant, who had not consulted the White House before making the decision. The phone conversation that Assistant Secretary Cohen had with Secretary Baker, hours after his controversial declaration, shows that the State Department and the White House had not planned this policy shift. It is therefore very unlikely that the Eritrean American diaspora played a role in the redefinition of the policy. In fact, Baker and Cohen were both focusing on international factors. Secretary Baker was trying to preserve Yugoslavia's unity and was worried about policy inconsistency, while Assistant Secretary Cohen's main objective was the end of the Ethiopian war and the stabilization of the Horn of Africa. Thus, the ethnic politics argument falls short in explaining the policy variation.

Facts also indicate that the business interest argument does not explain the situations under investigation. In the aftermath of the Second World War, American corporations did have economic interests in Ethiopia. Pan-American airlines obtained landing rights from the Ethiopian government for its long-distance trip to Asia. The New York based Sinclair Oil Company explored petroleum on the Ethiopian territory. And Shell operated an oil reserve in Massawa (Eritrea) for the use of the U.S. navy.⁷⁷ In the mid-1970s, however, colonel Mengistu nationalized U.S. properties without providing any

⁷⁷ Okbazghi Yohannes, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68, 210.

compensation in return and, as a result, American business interests in Ethiopia became non-existent.⁷⁸ By the time the Bush administration came to power, U.S. corporations had received compensations from Mengistu but Ethiopia was no longer seen as a safe place to invest.⁷⁹ Ethiopia was still officially a communist state and the 30-year civil war had destroyed infrastructures and produced high instability. During the rule of the Derg, the only substantial U.S. investment in Ethiopia was made by the Kalamazoo Spice Company from Michigan.

The U.S. chargé d'affaires in Addis Ababa, Robert Houdek, does not recall that U.S. corporations ever pressured the Bush administration for or against Eritrea's secession. He points out: "the only kind of business interests that I was pushing for was with Ethiopian airlines. I wanted to make sure that they continue to buy Boeings. And they bought Boeings with Pratt and Wittney's engines on".⁸⁰ Boeings had helped the Ethiopian government to create Ethiopian airlines following the Second World War and this U.S. corporation wanted to maintain this long standing tradition following the downfall of Mengistu. Assistant Secretary Cohen concurs with Houdek. He has never been aware of any U.S. private firms that could have pressured the Bush administration in one way or the other toward the issue of Eritrea.⁸¹

The U.S. decision to support Eritrea's independence, therefore, can hardly be explained by U.S. business interests in the region. The central question that

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 228.

⁷⁹ Interview with Herman J. Cohen, Washington D.C., May 16, 2005.

⁸⁰ Phone interview with Robert Houdek, May 25, 2005.

⁸¹ Interview with Herman J. Cohen, Washington D.C., May 16, 2005.

should be asked is how can the political outcome of the Eritrean issue (i.e. independence or integration) affect the interests of U.S. corporations if there was effectively no U.S. investment in Ethiopia and in Eritrea? In this context, it is hard to see how an independent Eritrea could have bolstered or damaged U.S. business interests. It could be argued, however, that the liberalization of Eritrea's economy and the overthrowing of the communist regime in both Eritrea and Ethiopia during the transition period did fall under U.S. medium and long-term economic interests as it created private investment opportunities.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the external instability of the Ethiopian host state was not sufficient in itself to compel the United States to move to the second step of the regional stability model. Indeed, from 1961 to 1991, hundreds of thousands of Eritreans and Ethiopians fled Ethiopia to neighboring states to escape the war. Yet, the U.S. only shifted its policy in favor of Eritrea's independence once it became clear that the central government of Addis Ababa was no longer able and willing to resolve its internal secessionist crisis. At this point, the idea of secession emerged as a tool to restore order, and this is consistent with the regional stability model developed in Chapter 3.

The events of the 1991-93 transitional period also tend to validate my model. The U.S. persuaded Eritrean leaders that a unilateral declaration of independence would isolate Eritrea. Secessionist leaders were rather encouraged to establish a functioning and democratic government. Then, they strengthened their ties with the new Ethiopian government, and proceeded with a referendum on

independence supervised by the United Nations to validate the legitimacy of the breakup. It is only once Eritrea fulfilled these criteria that the United States extended recognition.

The next chapter will focus on the nonrecognition of a secessionist movement in the Horn of Africa. Somaliland, which is near Eritrea, was never recognized by the United States or by the larger international community. Once more, the regional stability model will be applied to this case to evaluate whether it is accountable for the U.S. position.

8.

*Somaliland: A Nonrecognized Independent State,
1991-2005*

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to understand why Somaliland, the northwest region of Somalia that seceded in 1991, is still unrecognized as an independent state despite its relative level of stability in comparison to the rest of Somalia. More specifically, this chapter will attempt to explain why the United States, whose role was important in the independence of Eritrea (the neighboring state), has been opposed to Somaliland's secession for over 15 years.

Based on the regional stability theory, this chapter argues that until 1997, the United States did not seriously raise the issue of Somaliland's recognition because, like Somalia, it was unstable. Since 1997, however, Somaliland has experienced a period of uninterrupted stability and democratization. Its government has developed a dynamic economy, created functional democratic institutions, and Somaliland now has most of the attributes of statehood. It has its own passport, national currency, flag, and license plates. Meanwhile, Somalia has undergone war and chaos and has been without effective government since 1991. Yet, despite Somaliland's achievements, which have been made without any foreign assistance, it is worth noting, the United States remains opposed to its independence. If we follow the assumptions of the regional stability model, the United States should now recognize Somaliland in order to promote stability in this troubled region of Africa but it does not do so. Why?

This chapter argues that Somaliland is an exceptional case. The failure of the U.S. assault mission in Mogadishu in October 1993, during which 18 U.S. Army Rangers were killed, partly explains why Washington has still not granted recognition to Somaliland, despite its fulfillment of most of the stability indicators introduced in Chapter 3. Since the failed military operation of 1993, a “Somalia aversion” has affected the conduct of the U.S. policy toward Somalia and Somaliland. The American government has refrained from being involved in the Somalian quagmire, and the State Department does not see how it could be beneficial to be involved one way or another in Somalia/Somaliland. This chapter, therefore, maintains that the casualties in Mogadishu is causally relevant in the explanation of the U.S. attitude toward Somaliland and that it partially undermines the predictive nature of the regional stability model.

As in the case of Kosovo, studied previously, I must delimit the timeframe of this chapter since the Somaliland secessionist issue is still underway. The scope of the analysis is limited to the 1991-2005 period and does not include recent developments such as the overthrow of the Transitional Government of Somalia by Islamic extremists in 2006. Before beginning the analysis of this case, a brief historical synopsis of Somaliland will be introduced to provide a better outlook of the issue.

Historical Background

After more than 60 years as a British colony (1897-1960), British Somaliland declared its independence from England on June 26, 1960 and was

recognized by 35 states including the United States.¹ British Somaliland joined with Italian Somaliland five days later to form the Republic of Somalia to pursue the dream of uniting all the Somali people within one state.² Despite the fact that the two Somalilands had different colonial pasts, their union was looked upon as a great prospect for political stability since the new Republic of Somalia was the only state in Africa that was ethnically, linguistically, and religiously homogeneous.³

Despite their several common attributes, the two former colonies failed to develop a sense of nationhood. They had very different economies, unique colonial experiences, and different institutions.⁴ Moreover, political parties were based on clan loyalties, which emphasized regional interests and divided the north and the south. These discrepancies led British and Italian Somaliland to disagree on the terms of the Act of Union and the new President of Somalia, Aden Abdilla Osman, decided to unilaterally authorize the unification through a political decree that established a unitary state.⁵ The Act of Union thus never obtained the consent

¹ Henry Srebrnik, "Can clans form nations? Somaliland in the making", in Tozun Bahcheli, Barry Bartmann, and Henry Srebrnik, (eds.), *De Facto States: The quest for sovereignty*, London: Routledge, 2004, p. 225.

² The territory populated by the Somali people was divided by the colonial powers in the late 19th century. The British occupied the Northern region (British Somaliland) and the North of present-day Kenya. The French took French Somaliland (now Djibouti), the Italians occupied the South (Italian Somalia), and the Ethiopian Empire took up the Ogaden region. See Rakiya Omaar, "Somaliland: One Thorn Bush at a Time", *Current History*, Vol. 93, No. 583, May 1994, p. 232.

³ One could have expected Somalia to be in a better position to keep stability and peace than Ethiopia, for instance, which brought several ethnic and linguistic groups together with large Christian and Muslim populations. But recent history has proven the opposite.

⁴ Somaliland and Somalia traded less than one percent of their production to each other. Somaliland was mainly doing business with neighboring Arabic states, while Somalia was trading with Italy. See Henry Srebrnik, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

⁵ Several Somalilanders favored a federation, while people from the south wanted a unitary state.

of politicians from former British Somaliland and no official international treaty on the union was ever signed between the two states.⁶

Furthermore, Somalilanders opposed the adoption of Somalia's constitution because the document was seen as reflective of southern thinking and Italian values.⁷ Nevertheless, the constitution was adopted because the large majority of the population in former Italian Somalia (which represented two-thirds of the total population of Somalia) voted in favor of it. The Somalia experiment, therefore, started off on the wrong foot and suffered from a deficit of legitimacy.⁸

A military coup, orchestrated by Somalia's chief of the armed forces, Siad Barre, in 1969 drastically transformed Somalia's political landscape. The constitution and the assembly of the Republic were suspended, private industries were nationalized, and the new military regime established a socialist state with the support of the Soviet Union.⁹ In the second half of the 1970s, Siad Barre pursued an aggressive foreign policy that aimed to unite all of the Somali people

Ibid.

⁶ Peter Woodward, *The Horn of Africa: Politics and International Relations*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2003, p. 65.

⁷ Henry Srebrnik, *op. cit.*, p. 212. Most Somalilanders chose to boycott the unification referendum and more than 50 percent of those who exercised their right to vote were opposed to the constitution.

⁸ Also, the main government positions and the majority of the seats in the Mogadishu Parliament were held by Southern Somalians. Throughout the 1960s, Somaliland felt politically and economically marginalized. See Ismail I Ahmed and Reginald Herbold Green, "The Heritage of War and State Collapse in Somalia and Somaliland: Local-Level Effects, External Interventions and Reconstruction", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1999, p. 116.

⁹ A treaty of friendship and cooperation was signed with the USSR in 1974. Rakiya Omaar, "Somalia: At War with Itself", *Current History*, Vol. 91, No. 565, May 1992, p. 230.

living in Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya into a Greater Somalia.¹⁰ The first action undertaken by Barre was to invade Ethiopia's Ogaden region in 1977, which caused his regime to lose the support of the Soviet Union in favor of Ethiopia.¹¹ This event eventually compelled Barre to withdraw his troops from Ethiopia and to carry out a major political realignment.¹² In 1978, following the war with Ethiopia, Somalia requested U.S. economic and military assistance, and soon the Americans became the most important provider of foreign aid to Somalia.¹³ In exchange, the U.S. obtained the right to use naval and military facilities in the port of Berbera located in the North (i.e. in Somaliland), which had previously been used by the Soviets.¹⁴

The U.S. support of Somalia was purely pragmatic and must be viewed through the lens of Cold War politics. As former Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Herman Cohen, indicates: "Because of Somalia's strategic position, US

¹⁰ There were about 350,000 ethnic Somalis in surrounding states. See Herman J. Cohen, *Intervening in Africa: Superpower Peacemaking in a Troubled Continent*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000, p. 198.

¹¹ Terrence Lyons and Ahmed I. Samatar, *Somalia: State Collapse, Multilateral Intervention, and Strategies for Political Reconstruction*, Washington D.C.: the Brookings Institution, 1995, pp. 14-15. Siad Barre exploited Ethiopia's vulnerability following the military coup against Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie in 1974 (see Chapter 7) to launch its war. Following Moscow's decision to support Ethiopia in the war, Somalia ended its friendship agreement with the Soviet Union.

¹² This retreat caused more than 650,000 ethnic Somali to flee Ethiopia to Somalia for fear of being persecuted by the Mengistu regime for complicity with Somalia. Peter Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

¹³ Between 1980 and 1990, 75 percent of all Somalia's military equipment was coming from the United States. Matthew Bryden, "Somalia: The Wages of Failure", *Current History*, Vol. 94, No. 591, April 1995, p. 146.

¹⁴ In 1979, the United States took over the former Soviet facilities in the port of Berbera and upgraded the station by investing \$35 million. The U.S. used this strategic location to keep an eye on the Persian Gulf against any potential Soviet invasion. See Herman J. Cohen, "Somalia and the US Long and Troubled History", *Race and History*, January 2002.
http://www.raceandhistory.com/cgi-bin/forum/webbbs_config.pl/noframes/read/115 (accessed June 2006).

diplomacy felt obliged to cultivate close and cordial relations with one of the world's most vicious despots, Mohammed Siad Barre".¹⁵

The Emergence of the SNM

In the early 1980s, a group of exiled Somalilanders in London created the Somali National Movement (SNM). This movement assembled businessmen, religious leaders, intellectuals and former army officers from the Isaak clan—the largest family clan in Somaliland—and its main objective was to overthrow Barre's regime.¹⁶ Military operations conducted by the SNM were based in Ethiopia with Addis Ababa's support.¹⁷ It is worth noting that the SNM, which eventually declared the independence of Somaliland, was initially not a secessionist movement. In fact, in the 1980s most of its members saw Somalia's unity as being inviolable and fought for the establishment of a federal state.¹⁸

The SNM's war against the central government reached its peak in 1988 when the SNM made significant progress by defeating the troops of Siad Barre in Hargeisa (the capital of Somaliland) and in Burao. The response of the central

¹⁵ Herman J. Cohen, *op. cit.*, 2000, p. 197.

¹⁶ The Isaak clan dominates the northwest of Somalia. Around 70 percent of Somalilanders are Isaaks. See Asteris Hulianas, "The Viability of Somaliland: Internal Constraints and Regional Geopolitics", *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 2002, p. 157.

¹⁷ Ironically enough, Ethiopia and Somalia supported each others' rebellious movements. Addis Ababa supported the SNM to weaken the regime of Barre in Somalia, while Mogadishu was supporting the EPLF and TPLF which were fighting against the regime of Mengistu in Ethiopia. This logic turned out to be counter-productive since it increased the vulnerability and weakness of both states' regimes.

¹⁸ As Matthew Bryden notes: "Federalism was widely touted as the most likely post-Barre model of government". See Matthew Bryden, "Somaliland and Peace in the Horn of Africa: A Situation Report and Analysis", *UN Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia*, November 13, 1995. <http://www.h-net.org/~africa/sources/somalirpt.html> (accessed June 2006).

government was brutal. Barre ordered aerial bombardments on Somaliland's cities. The effects of this counter measure were atrocious.¹⁹ By 1990, at least 50,000 Somalilanders had died in the fighting between the SNM and the national army, and these events strengthened popular support for secession.

The SNM was not the only rebellious movement in Somalia. During the 1980s, two other organizations from the South also fought for the overthrow of Barre's authoritarian regime: the United Somali Congress (USC), and the Somali Patriotic Front (SPF). In concert with the SNM, these movements coordinated their military efforts and accelerated the fall of Barre. In May of 1990, warlords from different clans and rebellious movements controlled large parts of Somalia and the government of Mogadishu could no longer carry out its normal administrative functions. In January 1991, the state of Somalia disintegrated when the troops of the United Somali Congress, under the authority of General Aidid, entered Mogadishu and forced Siad Barre to flee.²⁰

Pro-Secessionist Sentiment Rises

In the months following the exile of Siad Barre, SNM leaders who were by then in control of Somaliland were highly dissatisfied with the way the post-Barre

¹⁹ As Asteris Huliaras indicates: "Schools were razed, water and electricity were made inaccessible, and at least 40,000 people died and half a million fled into Ethiopia". See Asteris Huliaras, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

²⁰ As Bradbury, Abokor, and Yusuf point out: "All state legislative and judicial institutions disintegrated, along with the army, banks and government-run welfare services". See Mark Bradbury, Adan Yusuf Abokor, and Haroon Ahmed Yusuf, "Somaliland: Choosing Politics over Violence", *Review of African Political Economy*, No. 97, 2003, p. 456. Siad Barre fled to the Kenyan border. One year after his overthrow, Barre had still not been offered sanctuary by any foreign countries. See U.S. Department of State, January 1992. Unclassified Document E30, case 200502026. Unclassified on January 27, 2006. Barre eventually died in exile in Nigeria.

transition was going. There was a lack of consultation between the three rebellious movements and the national conference on transition that had been planned prior to the collapse of the Barre regime never convened. Furthermore, a faction of the USC decided unilaterally to form a government in Mogadishu and named its leader, Ali Mahdi, as interim president without any prior consultation with the SNM. This decision not only alienated Somalilanders but initiated a war between the two dominant figures of the United Somali Congress: Ali Mahli and General Aidid. This war was the main cause of starvation and suffering in Somalia during the 1990s.

In the face of these developments, SNM leaders declared the independence of the Republic of Somaliland in Burco on May 18, 1991 and repealed the Act of Union of 1960.²¹ The Burco proclamation stated that Somaliland would keep the borders of the former colony of British Somaliland, and the leader of the SNM, Abd-er-Rahman, also known as “Tur”, was named president of the new Republic. Secessionist leaders also argued that since Somaliland had been a distinct geopolitical entity prior to 1960 and that it had declared independence and obtained international recognition in June 1960, the Burco declaration was not an act of secession but a “voluntary dissolution between sovereign states”.²²

²¹ Somalilander leaders argued that in addition of having suffered from Barre’s repression in the 1980s, and having been deprived from economic development since the 1960s, Somaliland had been betrayed by its southern allies. Rakiya Omaar, *op. cit.*, 1992, p. 233. Omaar indicates that Somalilanders “crossed the Rubicon of secession in May 1988.” He adds that “the scale and ferocity of the war in the north had nurtured a visceral hatred not only of the regime but of everything it represented”. *Ibid.*, pp. 233-234.

²² Quoted in Mark Bradbury, Adan Yusuf Abokor, and Haroon Ahmed Yusuf, *op. cit.*, p. 457.

However, since there was no longer a central government in Mogadishu to consent (or not) to the dissolution, the declaration was one of secession *stricto sensu*.

The American Reaction

The regional stability theory is applied here to the post-May 1991 era, that is to say, after Somaliland declared independence. Prior to this, there was no secessionist crisis in Somalia and the Bureau of African Affairs of the State Department was only focusing on the resolution of the civil war.²³ In the days following Somaliland's unilateral declaration of independence, the State Department made its position clear: the U.S. government would not recognize any new entity in Somalia. In a cable sent to American embassies in Africa, Secretary of State James Baker writes:

The Somali National Movement (SNM) recently announced northern Somalia's secession under the name 'Somaliland Republic', with boundaries apparently the same as the old British Somaliland protectorate. The import of this move is not entirely clear. It may not be fully accepted even within the SNM and may also be designed as a bargaining chip for SNM use with the self-proclaimed provisional government in Mogadishu. The U.S. of course does not recognize any new entity in Somalia. As we have

²³ Throughout the 1980s, the U.S. supported Siad Barre for strategic reasons. As Cohen recalls: "Despite Somalia's severe internal instability, CENTCOM continued to view the naval/air facility at Berbera as important to the defense of the Gulf. In Tampa, Florida, in late 1989, CENTCOM Commander in Chief General Norman Schwarzkopf pressed me on the need to maintain access to Berbera". Herman J. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 202. Therefore, even if the government of Siad Barre failed to keep external stability in the 1980s and used brutal repression against the population of Somaliland, the U.S. chose to turn a blind eye on these atrocities.

The Gulf war had a major impact on Somalia's geo-strategic value. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August of 1990 opened the way for U.S. military deployment in the Middle East (e.g. in Saudi Arabia), and as a result the port of Berbera was downgraded to a U.S. "backup contingency facility". As U.S. strategic interests in Somalia vanished at the dawn of the 1990s, the eagerness with which the American government supported Siad Barre diminished. This does not mean, however, that the administration of George H.W. Bush was indifferent to the fate of Somalia. The United States supported the central government and hoped that a peace agreement would be reached to preserve the integrity of the state.

made clear elsewhere, we do not think declaratory acts hold the key to solving Somalia's or the horn's problems. Only negotiations can do that. SNM's unilateral declaration of independence could also serve to complicate a possible initiative by African states or the OAU on the political front by introducing new juridical problems. In our actions and statements with respect to Somalia, we wish to call as little attention as possible to the SNM's UDI.²⁴

The U.S. position of nonrecognition was shaped by different factors which, when taken together, led the Bush administration to conclude that the partition of Somalia would lead to the emergence of another unstable state in the Horn of Africa. First of all, there was a chaotic situation in Mogadishu and the Bush administration wanted to avoid any hasty decision that could have worsened the situation in Somalia.

Secondly, in the absence of a central government in Mogadishu, the U.S. did not trust any rebellious groups or clans that pretended to speak in the name of the Somali people. As Assistant Secretary Cohen points out: "We did not recognize the new entity [Somaliland], because we had no confidence in any declarations in Somalia".²⁵

Thirdly, the U.S. government had difficulties in gathering reliable information on the political course of events in Somalia. This was mainly due to the fact that the U.S. no longer had an embassy in Mogadishu—violence in the capital had forced the U.S. government to evacuate and close its embassy in

²⁴ U.S. Department of State, May 1991. Unclassified Document E6, case 200502026. Unclassified on January 20, 2006. Moreover, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) reaffirmed the founding principles of the organization (i.e. sovereignty, territorial integrity, intangible territorial integrity) and categorically opposed the secession of Somaliland. See U.S. Department of State, June 1991. Unclassified Document E9, case 200502026. Unclassified on January 20, 2006.

²⁵ Herman J. Cohen, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-205.

January 1991. In addition, as unclassified cables show, U.S. embassies in Djibouti and Kenya were unable to communicate valuable information on what was happening on the ground: "We have received no reliable information on what is actually happening in the north".²⁶ In this context, the U.S. was not in a position to make a sound and enlightened decision on the issue of Somaliland.

Fourthly, unlike Eritrea, which ultimately seceded with the consent of Ethiopia, Somaliland never received the approval of Somalia to leave since there was no constitutive government in Somalia in the aftermath of Siad Barre's departure. The United States was clearly aware of this fact and raised it as an objection against secession because it feared that recognition in such a context would create a precedent.²⁷

Fifthly, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was opposed to Somaliland's secession and the United States was not interested in violating the sacred principle of state integrity cherished by the OAU.²⁸ The OAU's approach to Somaliland was far different from its approach toward Eritrea for the reason mentioned in point four.

²⁶ The cable sent to the State Department pointed out: "It appears to us that the limited hard evidence on hand permits several different speculations about what was going on up there. One possibility is out-and-out independence. Another is an attempt by the SNM to face the Mogadishu provisional authorities on a footing of equality, as a 'government' rather than a movement. This would leave open the possibility of later re-negotiating the 1960 Act of Union with the south, which some Isaaks have expressed interests in doing. A third possibility is that the declaration of independence is an attempt by one faction or group of factions to force the secession issue by announcing it publicly". See U.S. Department of State, May 1991. Unclassified Document E4, case 200502026. Unclassified on January 20, 2006.

²⁷ U.S. Department of State, November 1991. Unclassified Document E28, case 200502026. Unclassified on January 27, 2006.

²⁸ Phone interview with Robert Houdek, Washington D.C., May 25, 2005.

Thus, at this point, there was no benefit for the U.S. in supporting Somaliland's independence and the costs of making such a decision would have been considerable since they may have worsened the political environment in the Horn.

Awaiting for the Formation of a Somalian Government

In this context, the United States focused its attention on the global settlement of the Somalian crisis and, in the words of Secretary Baker, called "as little attention as possible to the SNM's UDI".²⁹ The Bush administration, however, was not as directly involved in the resolution of the Somalian conflict as it was in Ethiopia, for instance, during the same period. At that time, the Bureau of African Affairs was already involved in the resolution of several other African conflicts in Angola, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mozambique, and Sudan, and thus, suffered from 'bureaucratic fatigue'. As Herman Cohen points out: "with US forces well accommodated directly in the Gulf, and with our embassy closed, we more or less dropped Somalia from our radar screens".³⁰

In the weeks following the collapse of Somalia, the Bush administration expressed support for the restoration of a central Somalian government and encouraged Djibouti in its initiative to host reconciliation talks in June and July of 1991. The U.S. saw the restoration of peace and order in Somalia as essential to

²⁹ See quotation pp. 255-256.

³⁰ Herman J. Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 203. In fact, the State Department adopted a wishful thinking approach toward Somalia by assuming that the different Somali clans would eventually find a way to live together and to bring order back in the state. This was far from being a realist assessment of the situation on the ground.

setting the stage for an international relief effort and it remained confident that Somalia could establish a functioning government.³¹

The peace negotiations held in Djibouti in the summer of 1991 failed, however, because some warlords did not attend the talks and because SNM representatives refused to participate in the negotiations claiming that their party was not one political faction among others but the representative of the Republic of Somaliland. Ironically, these talks, which aimed to reunite Somalia, accelerated its collapse.

While Somalian political parties attempted to secure a peace agreement, Somalilanders were on a different trajectory. In the fall of 1991, SNM leaders traveled to Western countries to seek international recognition and humanitarian assistance.³² In Washington, SNM representatives delivered the following message to State Department officials: 1) The Isaaks and the other clans in Somaliland support secession; 2) Law and order prevail on the ground; 3) Somaliland is committed to liberal democracy; 4) A referendum on Somaliland's constitution will be held within two years (the referendum was actually held in 2001); and 5) Somalilanders favor a market oriented economy.³³ Despite this charm offensive carried out by the secessionists, the State Department adopted a 'wait-and-see' approach and expressed its preference for a global peace solution to end the Somalian crisis.

³¹ U.S. Department of State, July 1991. Unclassified Document E22, case 200502026. Unclassified on January 26, 2006.

³² Secessionists visited European capitals, the U.N. headquarters, Canada and the United States.

³³ U.S. Department of State, November 1991. Unclassified Document E28, case 200502026. Unclassified on January 27, 2006.

Somaliland Devolves into Chaos (1992-1996)

The peaceful state of affairs in Somaliland that was depicted by SNM representatives in Washington did not last. Clan conflicts erupted in March of 1992 when Somaliland's government attempted to take control of the Red Sea port of Berbera against the will of the local clans and warlords. This conflict was the result of the government's failure to establish demobilization programs for veteran fighters. Sub-clan conflicts also caused Somaliland's emerging economy to crumble after a few months of sustained economic activities. The absence of international recognition also worked against the economy of Somaliland since it could not acquire loans from international institutions.³⁴

In less than a year after its UDI, Somaliland was internally unstable. This is without mentioning that all the political and military factions in Somalia were opposed to its secession, which indicates that Somaliland was evolving in a semi-hostile international environment. These events confirmed the assessment of the State Department that the whole region was unstable and that a global solution had to be found, starting with the establishment of a central government in Mogadishu.

The Elders at the Center of Somaliland's Conflict Resolution Process

In late 1992, elders from the different sub-clans in Somaliland gathered in a "shir" (assembly) to find a solution to the crisis in what became the first national

³⁴ Ismail Ahmed, "Understanding Conflict in Somalia and Somaliland", in Adebayo Adedeji, (ed.), *Comprehending and Mastering African Conflicts*, New York: Zed Books, 1999, p. 244. Furthermore, the four non-Isaak tribes, which represented around 30 percent of Somaliland's population, refused to join the Isaak-clan ruling majority in the new constituted government. The non-Isaak clans are: the Dulbahante, the Gadabursi, the Warsengeli, and the Isse. See Rakiya Omaar, *op. cit.*, 1994, p. 234.

reconciliation conference. A political settlement, which among other things allocated a greater share of parliamentary seats to minority clans, was reached in the spring of 1993. This unique way of solving political problems was part of the Somaliland traditional conflict resolution structure.³⁵ This traditional mechanism will prove its effectiveness throughout the 1990s and explains, in large part, why Somaliland will eventually become a stable political entity in comparison to the rest of Somalia.

Following the reconciliation conference, Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal (who had been prime minister of Somalia in the late 1960s) was selected as the president of Somaliland and "Tur" (who had been the first president of Somaliland in 1991) was chosen as vice-president. Egal made significant progress towards political stability. He demobilized the militias that were created in the 1980s to fight against Siad Barre, and he re-established a secure environment for economic activity. The new president was unable, however, to extend administrative control over all of Somaliland's territory and met the resistance of some Isaak sub-clans over the issue of power sharing. Moreover, rebellious groups loyal to the unity of Somalia (called the federalists) and allied with Somalian General Aidid, opposed Egal's government. The fight between the secessionists and the federalists caused Somaliland to fall into a second civil war in late 1994, during which Hargeisa and Burco were seriously damaged, and 180,000 people were displaced throughout Somaliland.³⁶

³⁵ Rakiya Omaar, *op. cit.*, May 1994, p. 234.

³⁶ Mark Bradbury, Adan Yusuf Abokor, and Haroon Ahmed Yusuf, *op. cit.*, p. 461.

This second war validated, once again, the American assessment of the situation in Somaliland and kept the issue of recognition off the U.S. foreign policy agenda.

Somaliland: From Internal Strife to Growing Stability (1997-2005)

Somaliland's internal war ended with the gathering of a second national reconciliation conference, held in Hargeisa from October 1996 to February 1997. Retrospectively, this conference marked the beginning of Somaliland's institutionalization and democratization process. Isaak sub-clans, which had been fighting each other sporadically over the control of resources, decided to put an end to their division and to work together for the edification of viable political institutions.³⁷ This state of mind had a 'snowball effect'. It improved the minority clans' trust of the Isaaks, and favored their involvement in the institutionalization process of Somaliland.

Representatives at the conference also established a parliament with a two-chamber assembly inspired by the Westminster model of government. The Lower House serves as an elected assembly, and the Upper House serves as the Senate of the Clans also called the House of Elders.³⁸

Although Somaliland President Egal failed to achieve international recognition for Somaliland, he succeeded in establishing a democratic and stable government, and he was able to resume economic activities. In 1997, for instance,

³⁷ Gerard Prunier, "Somaliland Goes It Alone", *Current History*, Vol. 97, No. 619, May 1998, p. 228.

³⁸ Steve Kibble, "Somaliland: Surviving Without Recognition; Somalia: Recognised but Failing?", *International Relations*, Vol. 15, No. 5, p. 14.

the port of Berbera became a central import-export location on the Red Sea and overshadowed the port of Djibouti in terms of goods traded.³⁹ In the late 1990s, exchanges through the port were double what they were before the 1988 war against Siad Barre.⁴⁰ A vibrant private sector also emerged. Airline companies as well as electricity and telephone companies were created in order to help rebuild Somaliland's infrastructures. At the dawn of the 21st century, the economy of Somaliland was getting stronger and was in a much better position than Somalia's economy, which was even assisted by international organizations.

On the political front, President Egal carried out a political transition toward a multiparty democracy, which added value to Somaliland's democratic process.⁴¹ His government also signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and drafted a constitution that guaranteed universal suffrage. Moreover, in May of 2001, a new constitution was validated by 97 percent of Somaliland's voters in a referendum supervised by international observers. The result of the referendum was a clear majority in support of Somaliland's independence as the first paragraph of the constitution stipulated that Somaliland was an independent state.⁴²

³⁹ Ken Menkhaus, "Somalia: Political Order in a Stateless Society", *Current History*, Vol. 97, No. 619, May 1998, p. 221.

⁴⁰ Ismail I Ahmed and Reginald Herbold Green, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

⁴¹ Mark Bradbury, Adan Yusuf Abokor, and Haroon Ahmed Yusuf, *op. cit.*, p. 463.

⁴² Steve Kibble, *op. cit.*, p. 16. The international community was impressed by the referendum process but did not attach any legal value to it because there was no census in Somaliland and, therefore, it was impossible to know the proportion of Somalilanders who favored independence.

The death of President Egal in 2002 was the first serious democratic test for Somaliland since his death necessitated a political transition. The test was successfully passed and the transfer of power to new President Dahir Riyale Kahin was performed according to the constitution. This showed the viability and stability of the political system.⁴³ Finally, in September 2005, the first multiparty parliamentary elections were held. This was seen as a major step in the democratization process and as proof that Somaliland is now becoming a stable multiparty democracy.⁴⁴

Today, Somaliland has functioning democratic institutions including a judicial system and a free press, and it no longer generates refugees, which greatly contributes to its external stability. Somalilanders also have a legitimate constitution, an army, and police forces. As indicated in the introduction, it also has the main attributes of statehood including a flag and its own currency, passports and license plates.⁴⁵ Somalilanders also obtained quasi-recognition from several states: Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti exchanged quasi-ambassadorial envoys with Hargeisa.

After numerous threats to its existence in the first half of the 1990s, Somaliland managed to survive as a de facto independent state on the path to prosperity. Since 1997, Somaliland has experienced a period of uninterrupted stability.

⁴³ The following year, president Kahin was confirmed in his functions during a presidential election.

⁴⁴ Stefan Simanowitz, "Democracy comes of age in Somaliland", *Contemporary Review*, December 2005, Vol. 287, No. 1679, pp. 335-339.

⁴⁵ Mark Bradbury, Adan Yusuf Abokor, and Haroon Ahmed Yusuf, *op. cit.*, p. 458.

Somaliland's External Stability

Despite the fact that Somaliland no longer produces refugees, the external dimension of its stability is not as strong as its internal counterpart. In the late 1990s, Somaliland's territorial integrity was disputed by Puntland, a non-secessionist autonomous state established in 1998 on the northeastern side of Somalia, which claimed Somaliland's regions of Sanaag and Sool.⁴⁶ The dispute emerged when members of minority clans in Somaliland (the Dulbahante and the Warsangeli) who lived near the Puntland border felt divided in their affiliation and wanted to associate with Puntland. Somaliland argued that the two regions were part of former British Somaliland, while Puntland authorities maintained that the representatives of Sanaag and Sool expressed their desire to join Puntland and should have the right to do so.⁴⁷ Tensions arose in 1999 when the government of Puntland attempted to establish control over parts of Sanaag and Sool, an action that led to a political crisis. Until recently, Somaliland's integrity remained threatened by Puntland.⁴⁸

It seems, however, that the Somaliland/Puntland border dispute has not been a major factor influencing the U.S. nonrecognition policy. None of the U.S. government officials interviewed for this chapter raised the Puntland issue as an obstacle to Somaliland's recognition, and the literature on Somaliland, written from a U.S. perspective, does not raise this subject either.

⁴⁶ Asteris Huliaras, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

⁴⁷ Mark Bradbury, Adan Yusuf Abokor, and Haroon Ahmed Yusuf, *op. cit.*, p. 457.

⁴⁸ Asteris Huliaras, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

The U.S. Policy Remained Constant

In the second half of the 1990s and in the early twenty-first century, the United States continued to focus on the establishment of a central government in Mogadishu. The objective was straightforward: to prevent Somalia from becoming a hot bed for Islamic fundamentalism.⁴⁹ During these years, the U.S. has remained categorically opposed to Somaliland's independence.

In 1999, Somaliland President Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal visited the United States and raised the issue of recognition with State Department officials. The U.S. policy remained unchanged, however, and the State Department indicated, as it had in 1991, that a global solution must be found in order to resolve the Somalian crisis. This time, the U.S. government agreed to supply more aid to Hargeisa.⁵⁰ The U.S. government sent a delegation of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to the secessionist state in 2000. The delegation, headed by the U.S. Ambassador in Djibouti, met with President Egal and such a visit to an African secessionist state was unprecedented.⁵¹ As former Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Herman J. Cohen points out: "while awaiting for some eventual Somalian government, we are doing what we could have done if we would have recognized Somaliland. We are giving aid. So the situation on the ground is not so different".⁵²

⁴⁹ Asteris Huliaras, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

⁵⁰ Henry Srebrnik, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

⁵² Interview with Herman J. Cohen, Washington D.C., May 16, 2005.

In 2001, the U.S. supported the Arta peace process that established the Transitional National Government of Somalia (TNG).⁵³ This was the twelfth peace negotiation attempt since the collapse of Somalia. Since its creation, the TNG has not been able, however, to establish its authority over Somalia and the whole region remains an administrative ‘black hole’.

Why does the U.S. Refuse to Recognize Somaliland?

If the Somaliland/Puntland border dispute does not bother U.S. decision-makers, why is it then that the U.S. still refuses to recognize this secessionist state, which meets most of the U.S. traditional requirements for recognition? Why is it that the American government persists in supporting the formation of a Somali government after more than a decade of negotiation failures between the different family clans, while Somaliland is stable, peaceful, democratic, and has sought recognition for over 15 years? In such a case, the regional stability argument predicts that the U.S. should quickly move on with recognition in order to bolster stability in the region.

This chapter argues that the key to understanding this puzzle lies in what can be referred to as the “Somalia aversion”, which is unique to this case. To understand the impact of this intervening factor in the U.S. regional stability calculation, we must go back to the year 1993.

⁵³ Steve Kibble, *op. cit.*, p. 13. Arta is a city in Djibouti where negotiations occurred.

The 'Somalia Aversion' Factor

Following the collapse of Somalia in 1991, Mogadishu became the scene of inter-clan fighting for the control of food and other resources. In early 1992, the humanitarian crisis in Somalia hit the news in the United States and CNN provided extensive coverage of the issue. Somalia soon became a burning issue in U.S. politics. As Herman Cohen recalls: CNN, which “showed starving Somali mothers and babies on American television daily had a strong impact. Congress was inundated with mail calling for Washington to do something to stop the suffering”.⁵⁴ With a U.S. Presidential election coming in November, President Bush estimated that it was worthwhile to tackle the Somalian issue. After being abandoned by the Americans in January 1991, Somalia became a top U.S. foreign policy issue less than a year later. In August, the White House announced that the Department of Defense (DoD) would launch an emergency food airlift to Somalia called “Operation Provide Relief”.⁵⁵ The U.S. operation, however, encountered the resistance of warlords in Mogadishu who blocked the distribution of food.

In the weeks following his presidential defeat, President Bush remained steadfast to resolve the hunger problem in Somalia. In December of 1992, 28,000 U.S. troops were dispatched as part of the United Nations Unified Task Force—UNITAF. The objective of the mission was to take control of the ports of Mogadishu in order to assure the distribution of relief supplies.⁵⁶ Throughout

⁵⁴ Herman J. Cohen, “Somalia and the US Long and Troubled History”, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁵⁵ The operation was baptized “Operation Restore Hope” by the Department of Defense. A few weeks later, the U.N. Security Council adopted resolution 794 establishing a safe environment for humanitarian aid in Somalia. Peter Woodward, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

⁵⁶ The United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) eventually replaced UNITAF. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

1993, U.N. peacekeepers were being repeatedly attacked by guerilla groups led by General Mohammed Aidid. These groups wanted the U.N. to withdraw from Somalia in order to maintain their power. In reaction to this, President Clinton, who inherited the case from his predecessor, authorized U.S. troops to use force against General Aidid with the consent of the U.N. The operation, however, turned into a chaotic battle in the streets of Mogadishu. Two U.S. 'Black Hawk' helicopters were shot down by Aidid's rebels and 18 American soldiers were killed during the operation.

This marked the end of the U.S. operation in Somalia and brought into question the very reason of this involvement. Many have considered the 'Battle of Mogadishu' unjustifiable since U.S. national interests were not at stake in Somalia. This event has created an aversion among the U.S. foreign policy community that has kept the American government away from Somalia and Somaliland. Somalia remained out of Washington's radar in the second half of the 1990s,⁵⁷ and only received attention again following the terrorist attacks perpetrated against the United States on September 11th. When asked why the U.S. government was not directly involved in the resolution of the Somali conflict and why it does not recognize the independence of Somaliland, a high-ranking former U.S. official who was posted in the Horn of Africa in the 1990s answered: "Frankly there is a Somalia fatigue. What's really in it for us? Why get involved and open an embassy

⁵⁷ See Walter Kansteiner, *Somalia: U.S. Policy Options*, Hearing before the Subcommittee on African Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 107th Congress, February 6, 2002.

if it's going to get bombed the next week? Once upon a time we had 28,000 troops there and we walked out with our tail between our legs".⁵⁸

Despite the fact that Somaliland now lives in a different political reality than Somalia, in that it has been stable for almost ten years, the American government refrains itself from making any bold decision on the issue because it feels that it has nothing to gain from it. This is consistent with the realist paradigm.

The Somalia aversion argument, of course, is not part of the official justification for nonrecognition. The two factors that are most often brought up are: 1) that Somaliland never got the approval of Somalia to secede, and 2) that the OAU rejects the secession of Somaliland. Yet, chapters 4 and 5 show that the United States did recognize secessionist states that went through 'non-consensual divorce'. Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia were indeed recognized by the U.S. even if they unilaterally seceded from Yugoslavia. It is true that Yugoslavia had ceased to exist when the Americans granted recognition to these Yugoslav republics, but Somalia has also ceased to exist as a coherent political entity. If the fear of creating a political precedent is what precludes the U.S. government from recognizing Somaliland, it would seem that that precedent has already been created. Furthermore, the case of Eritrea in Chapter 7 shows that the OAU did not stop the U.S. delegation in London from supporting Eritrea's right of self-determination in 1991. So, is the unilateral character of Somaliland's secession and the OAU opposition enough to explain the U.S. nonrecognition policy? I doubt it.

⁵⁸ Phone interview with a former State Department official who asked to remain anonymous, May 25, 2005.

In fact, if the United States was convinced that the recognition of Somaliland would bring more stability to the region, it would certainly push for it. The U.S. would also have some solid arguments to justify its preference for recognition. First of all, Somaliland was a sovereign state recognized by the United States before it joined Somalia in 1960, a status that Eritrea did not have before being integrated into Ethiopia in 1952. Second, Somalilanders never fully consented to the terms of the Act of Union signed in 1960, which gives greater legitimacy to the secession. Together, these arguments are a solid justification for secessionist self-determination and constitute a fence against the spread of secessionist movements in Africa since Somaliland is a unique case. As for the moral aspect of the issue, the U.S. could emphasize the fact that Somalilanders experienced political and economic discrimination as well as military repression throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Despite these strong arguments for recognition, the American government is far from being convinced that recognition would bring more stability. Washington still views the whole region as unpredictable, and this assessment is 'path dependent' on the military defeat in Mogadishu, which was a defining stage in the temporal sequence of events that shaped the U.S. policy toward Somaliland. The current dominant view in the National Security Council and in the State Department is that as long as there is no central government in Mogadishu, nothing can be done to restore order. Some even argue in the foreign policy establishment that Somaliland did well and is relatively stable precisely because it

was not recognized.⁵⁹ This would suggest that the hope of obtaining recognition forced Somalilanders to behave and to adopt a democratic system. This argument maintains that since Somaliland is already stable, international recognition would not bring much more stability to it. Therefore, there is no rush to issue diplomatic recognition, and the American government should continue to focus on a global peace initiative that will bring order to Somalia as a whole.

Another approach, which obtains increasing support from the academic community, argues that the U.S. recognition of Somaliland would in fact improve regional stability by sending the message to the rest of Somalia that if Somalians would come together and implement democratization, as did Somalilanders, the United States would be more supportive and helpful.⁶⁰ For now, however, this view has not been endorsed by U.S. foreign policy officials.

Within the U.S. Executive 'Black Box'

The Somaliland issue has never produced any significant disagreement between U.S. foreign policy agencies. In the early 1990s, the question of Somaliland's recognition was not even on the agenda. The secession of Somaliland was treated as an epiphenomenon of Somalia state collapse and as one source of trouble among many. In early 2000, however, the issue of Somaliland's recognition was seriously studied by the African bureau of the State Department.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Interview with a State Department official, Washington D.C., May 4, 2005.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Interview with Walter Kansteiner, Washington DC, May 18, 2005.

Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Walter Kansteiner came to the conclusion, however, that recognition would produce very little benefits with significant costs. Former Assistant Secretary of State Cohen reached a similar conclusion: "The OAU cooperates with us in anti-terrorism and in all sorts of economic issues. If you weigh all that against getting them upset about Somaliland, on balance it's not worth it."⁶²

The Ethnic Politics Argument Performs Poorly

There has been no major variation in the U.S. policy toward Somaliland since 1991, which makes it difficult to analyze the impact that Somalian and Somalilander Americans had on the U.S. position. There is no policy shift that can be isolated to evaluate the influence of these diasporic groups.

Evidence indicates, however, that Somalian Americans, which form a community of over 100,000 people in the United States, have not been politically organized in Washington D.C., unlike Ethiopian Americans, for instance. The Somalian diaspora is divided by clans, it has been ineffective at raising its voice, and has failed to come up with a coherent position regarding the future of Somalia.⁶³ I came across no evidence indicating that the U.S. position on the matter could have been influenced by this ethnic group.

As for Somalilander Americans, they did organize demonstrations in Washington in favor of Somaliland's independence but they were not well

⁶² He added: "But logically, philosophically, and morally it's probably right to recognize them". Interview with Herman J. Cohen, Washington D.C., May 16, 2005.

⁶³ Interview with Herman Cohen, Washington D.C. May 16, 2005. See also Interview with Walter Kansteiner, Washington DC, May 18, 2005.

organized either, partly because they constitute a very small community in the United States; most of Somaliland's diaspora is located in England.⁶⁴ As the U.S. position toward Somaliland has remained unchanged since 1991, we must conclude that Somalilander Americans have had very little or no influence at all on the U.S. position.

Business Interests

Oil corporations such as Exxon Mobil, Total, Amoco, and Chevron held exploration concessions in the north of Somalia in the late 1980s. When Somalia collapsed in 1991, these companies declared *force majeure*, which exempted them from their legal obligations toward the government of Somalia because of conditions beyond their control.⁶⁵ Parts of the concessions that were held by these oil corporations in the late 1980s are now located within the Republic of Somaliland. But since the United States does not recognize the secessionist state, these companies have been left with a complex legal situation and hope that one day their oil concessions will be honored if a central government is reestablished in Somalia.⁶⁶

In 1991, Conoco and Phillips (now merged into ConocoPhillips), one of the largest energy companies in the United States, discovered oil fields in the North-East of Somalia close to the Somaliland border, and some of that oil lay under

⁶⁴ Interview with a State Department official, Washington D.C., May 4, 2005.

⁶⁵ *Alexander's Gas & Oil Connections*, "Somalia welcomes oil interest", Vol. 10, No. 17, September 15, 2005. <http://www.gasandoil.com/goc/news/nta53713.htm> (accessed in May 2006).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Somaliland's soil. The sites were expected to produce up to 300,000 barrels of oil per day.⁶⁷ Following Somaliland's secession, Conoco and Phillips worried about the juridical situation in Somaliland and consulted with U.S. government officials to evaluate whether it was safe to start oil exploration in the north.⁶⁸ The problem was that international law did not apply to the self-declared republic and, therefore, Conoco and Phillips and the other corporations that chose to do business in Somaliland had no juridical appeal.

That being said, I came across no evidence indicating that one or several of these oil firms have influenced, in one way or the other, the U.S. policy toward Somalia and Somaliland. I found no information indicating that there might be a connection between U.S. executive officials and the interests of oil corporations that were operating in Somalia and Somaliland. The literature on the Somalian crisis does not address this issue, and unclassified documents from the State Department do not mention or imply that politicians from the White House elaborated a policy toward Somaliland that was in the interest of oil corporations with which they share ties. Finally, interviews conducted with current and former NSC and State Department officials did not shed any light on this issue.

Logically, we could have expected American oil companies to pressure the U.S. government to recognize the independence of Somaliland so that they could pump oil in the secessionist state without any legal uncertainty or political void. As mentioned above, however, I came across no evidence that validates this

⁶⁷ U.S. Department of State, June 1991. Unclassified Document E15, case 200502026. Unclassified on January 26, 2006.

⁶⁸ U.S. Department of State, June 1991. Unclassified Document E28, case 200502026. Unclassified on January 27, 2006.

assertion. Furthermore, as we have seen, the U.S. has been constantly opposed to Somaliland's independence since 1991, which suggests that if indeed private corporations did try to pressure the White House, they failed in their attempt.

I am not arguing that the business interest argument falls short in explaining the U.S. foreign policy toward Somaliland, although previous chapters have demonstrated that this model is unconvincing. I am simply indicating that very little information is available on this issue and, therefore, that no conclusion can be reached at this stage on the ability of this argument to explain the puzzle under investigation.

Conclusion

The performance of the regional stability argument here is not as strong as it is in the other cases previously studied. In fact, the argument performs better in the period of 1991-97 when Somaliland was facing internal wars. Somaliland was perceived as one zone of conflict among many in Somalia, and the diplomatic recognition of this secessionist state was, therefore, not even on the U.S. agenda. The 1997-2005 period is a different story, however. Somaliland went through a sustained process of democratization and institutionalization. Yet, while the indicators of the regional stability model, taken together, predict the U.S. recognition of Somaliland, the American government holds fast to its policy of nonrecognition.

This chapter has argued that the case of Somaliland is an exception to the extent that an ad hoc factor explains the current U.S. policy. The failed combat operation conducted in Mogadishu in 1993 has kept the American government

away from Somalia and Somaliland. There are not many instances of U.S. military defeats in recent history. The Viet-Nam war and the 'Battle of Mogadishu' are probably the only two instances and their effects on the conduct of U.S. foreign policy should not be understated. The defeat in Mogadishu has tainted the U.S. government's assessment of the evolution of Somaliland. Regardless of the considerable progress that Somalilanders made over the years to build a stable and liberal democracy, Washington is apparently unable to extricate Somaliland from the whole Somalian picture. For this reason, this case does not perfectly fit the model due to its very unique character.

The regional stability argument assumes that diplomatic recognition is a tool to foster regional order as long as the secessionist state can guarantee its sustainability by maintaining its internal and external order. In the case of Somaliland, however, it is possible that the United States reached the opposite conclusion: that the recognition of Somaliland would not really contribute to bolster stability since the secessionist state does not generate instability. In that context, the identified cost of recognition (i.e. fear of creating a precedent, and going against the OAU) may now appear higher because the benefits of recognition seem marginal.

9. *Conclusion*

While the United States had been consistent in its approach toward secessionism during the cold war by systematically supporting host states,¹ its response to secessionist ambitions in the post-cold war was more confusing because it varied from case-to-case. Until now, no theoretical model has addressed this variation in the U.S. response to secessionist movements and explained the apparent inconsistency of its policy. The present dissertation remedies this research problem by showing that the regional stability theory performs well and explains the research puzzle under investigation. The model consistently offers better explanations and predictions than the ethnic politics and business interest arguments and challenges liberal claims that domestic politics define foreign policy.

Moreover, by comparing intra-cases (i.e. the variations within each case), by looking at different secessionist movements taken from a same regional environment, and by contrasting the U.S. reaction to secessionism in the Balkans and in the Horn of Africa, this research has maximized the points of measurement of the theory and increased its external validity. Table 9.1 and 9.2 on the next pages highlight the “score” of the argument.

¹ The case of Bangladesh being the exception that proves the rule. See Chapter 2, footnote 24.

TABLE 9.1
Typology of the U.S. Regional Stability Model:
First Step of the Argument

Host State	External Stability			Internal Negotiations			U.S. Reaction	
	Cross-National Refugees	Violation of Contiguous States' Sovereignty	Conflict Escalation	Central Govt. Negotiates with Secessionists	Military Repression Against Secessionists	Central State Paralyzed or Collapses	U.S. Expected Response	U.S. Actual Response
Yugoslavia	Yes	No	No	Yes/then No	Yes	Yes	End Support to Yugoslavia's Integrity	End Support to Yugoslavia's Integrity
FRY (Serbia-Montenegro)	Yes	No	No	Yes/then No	Yes	No	End Support to FRY's Integrity	End Support to FRY's Integrity
Ethiopia	Yes	No	No	Yes/then No	Yes	Yes	End Support to Ethiopia's Integrity	End Support to Ethiopia's Integrity
Somalia	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	End Support to Somalia's Integrity	<i>Support to Somalia's Integrity</i>

Cases in bold are successful predictions. Those in italics are incorrect predictions, which necessitate an ad hoc explanation.

TABLE 9.2
Typology of the U.S. Regional Stability Model:
Second Step of the Argument

Secessionist State	External Stability			Internal Stability			U.S. Reaction	
	Defined Territory	Respect of International Borders	At Peace with Neighbors	Effective Control of Territory	Respect of Internal Borders	Democratic Referendum / Respect for Minorities	U.S. Expected Response	U.S. Actual Response
Slovenia (1991-92)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes / Yes	Recognition of Secession	Recognition of Secession
Croatia (1991-92)	Yes	Yes	No/then Yes	No	No	Yes / No	Nonrecognition of Secession	<i>Recognition of Secession</i>
Macedonia (1991-04)	Yes	Yes	Yes <i>But Tension with Greece</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes / Yes	Recognition of Secession	Recognition of Secession (delayed)
Kosovo (1991-05)	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No / No	Nonrecognition of Secession	Nonrecognition of Secession
Eritrea (1989-93)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes / Yes <i>Sponsored by U.N.</i>	Recognition of Secession	Recognition of Secession
Somaliland (1991-05)	Yes	Yes	Yes <i>But Tension with Puntland</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes / Yes	Recognition of Secession	<i>Nonrecognition of Secession</i>

Cases in bold are successful predictions. Those in italics are incorrect predictions, which necessitate an ad hoc explanation.

The Performance of the Model

The first step of the argument is correct in explaining the U.S. reaction in three of the four host states studied (i.e. Yugoslavia, FRY, and Ethiopia). The United States supported these states as long as they were open to negotiation, and able or willing to negotiate. It is only once these central authorities failed to offer prospects for stabilization that the U.S. government considered the recognition of secessionist states as an alternative. As for the case of Somalia, an ad hoc explanation was necessary to understand why the U.S. keeps supporting a unified Somalian state, while the regional stability indicators anticipate the opposite decision. As explained in Chapter 8, this case is an exception to the extent that it is linked (even if indirectly) to the U.S. military defeat in Mogadishu.

The second step of the model also performs well. Out of the six cases of secession examined, the argument is successful in explaining four of them. Eritrea, Macedonia and Slovenia were recognized by the U.S. because they fulfilled criteria of internal and external stability, while Kosovo was not recognized for the opposite reasons. Croatia and Somaliland represent deviant cases because they did not conform to the model. I consider the case of Croatia a minor deviance since broader stability considerations were at play in this case. The recognition of Croatia was part of a U.S. strategy to contain Serbia's aggressive behavior. This consideration explains why Croats obtained recognition despite the fact that they did not meet all the stability conditions defined in Chapter 3. The U.S. strategy was more focused at that time on the transformation of Croatian republican boundaries into international borders than on Croatia's internal stability. The U.S. policy toward Croatia was, therefore,

driven by regional stability, but the means to achieve it were different than those defined in the model. Hence, the theoretical assumption of the theory still holds in this case.

Somaliland represents another challenge to the theory. In contrast to Croatia, the model expected this secessionist state to be recognized by the U.S. since Somalilanders have established a quite remarkably stable state. Yet, the American government still refuses to grant recognition to Hargeisa. As explained previously, this case is an exception.

Domestic Arguments Perform Poorly

The ethnic politics and business interest arguments do not perform well. In fact, they failed to explain the U.S. reaction to almost all the cases. Information collected indicates that these domestic sources of foreign policy were secondary factors and often marginal ones at that.

Ethnic Politics

In only one brief instance was an ethnic group able to impact the conduct of U.S. policy toward a secessionist state. As shown in Chapter 5, the Clinton administration reversed its decision to exchange diplomatic relations with FYROM in 1994 because of the pressure exercised by the Greek-American lobby. The impact of this ethnic group remained limited, however, as it did not lead the U.S. to reverse its recognition of the republic. In all the other cases and intra-cases studied from the Balkans to the Horn of Africa, domestic ethnic politics in the United States were always a secondary thought that could not seriously compete

with issues of war and peace in Ethiopia, FRY (Serbia-Montenegro), Somalia and Yugoslavia.

Business Interests

In contrast to the assessment of the ethnic politics argument, a categorical answer cannot be formulated toward the business interest argument since the available information to measure this argument was sometimes scarce. For instance, I had to renounce analyzing this proposition in the chapter on Kosovo because I was unable to collect sufficient facts. In some other cases, however, like Croatia and Slovenia, which were arguably the most important cases in terms of U.S. business interests because of their geographic location, I was able to show quite clearly that business interests were not an important factor in the foreign policy decision making. In light of collected evidence, this argument does not seem to be a significant factor. At no point in time was this model able to make a connection between the business interests of members of the U.S. executive branch of government and the recognition or nonrecognition of secessionist states.

The Role of Regional and Great Powers

The impact of these powers on the position of the United States toward secessionist conflicts was inconsistent. Germany did, to a certain extent, have an impact on the conduct of U.S. policy toward Croatia and Slovenia, and Greece had a similar impact on the American government in the case of Macedonia. To a lesser extent, the European Union also influenced the U.S. perception of the issue of Kosovo's independence. However, the Balkan cases studied previously show

that these regional powers never diverted the U.S. government from pursuing its main interest: regional stability. The Bush administration categorically opposed Helmut Kohl's decision to recognize Zagreb and Ljubljana in December 1991 and waited for a cease-fire to occur between Croatia and Serbia as well as for the deployment of a large U.N. contingent of peacekeepers in Croatia and Bosnia before granting recognition. In the case of Macedonia, the strong Greek reaction against its potential recognition as 'Macedonia' created significant tensions between Athens and Skopje, which inhibited the U.S. government from moving on with its initial decision to recognize the republic. This factor, even if it delayed recognition, did not prevent the Clinton administration from finding alternative ways to promote regional stability by deploying, for instance, U.S. troops at the Serbian-Macedonian border to contain a potential Serbian aggression. And ultimately, the American government recognized Macedonia despite Greece's objection, which tends to show that the impact of regional powers is limited. In the case of Kosovo, the European Union may have influenced the American perception of the issue in the 1990s but the lack of internal and external stability of the Kosovo state is really what explains the Clinton administration's decision to oppose recognition in 1998-99.

Moreover, in the case of Eritrea and Somaliland, the opinion of regional and great powers had a very marginal impact, if no impact at all, on the formulation of the U.S. response. The United States initially became involved in Ethiopia because the Soviet Union could no longer play a role in the region. When the Ethiopian crisis intensified in 1991, the U.S. government was really the only power involved in the resolution of the conflict. As a former colonial power,

Italy had attempted a few years before to help resolving the war but had been unsuccessful and did not influence Washington in favor or against the independence of Eritrea. As for Somaliland, Djibouti and Kenya have been particularly involved in the numerous attempts to resolve the Somalian civil war but their opposition to Somaliland independence does not explain the position of the U.S.

In sum, we can conclude with reasonable confidence that regional and great powers had a secondary impact on the conduct of American foreign policy toward secessionism.

A Coherent U.S. Policy Toward Secessionism?

This research has shown that the United States does not have a written policy toward secessionist crises. The American government has never developed a grand strategy toward secessionist aspirations that would explicitly promote, for instance, the status quo or, conversely, the aspirations of secessionist movements. The only document that comes close to such a policy is the guidelines for recognition that was elaborated by the State Department in 1991 (see Chapter 4) when the Bush administration was facing the emergence of secessionist states in the Balkans.

With the multiplication of ethnic and secessionist conflicts since the end of the cold war, political analysts, like David Callahan and Patricia Carley, have attempted to craft a coherent U.S. foreign policy to deal with these issues by tackling a fundamental dilemma of “weighing the risks to international stability of a policy that tends to favor the status quo as against a policy that indulges

nationalist aspirations”.¹ This dissertation argues that this is a false debate. Previous chapters have demonstrated that the main issue is not whether or not the U.S. should support the status quo or secessionist changes as a principle, but rather how it should maximize regional stability when secessionist crises occur. As a defensive positional state, the U.S. focused on this fundamental interest, and empirical evidence indicates that the search for stability was consistent throughout all of the cases studied. In a word, regional stability is what guided the U.S. response; not principles, not domestic considerations, and certainly not a standardized policy on the matter. It is illusive to look for a one-size-fits-all foreign policy that could address the myriad of secessionist crises. What really matters is to identify the preferences that will guide the U.S. response, and this is precisely what the regional stability theory has done.

From the Balkans to the Horn of Africa, the American government chose the option that provided the most stable outcome depending on the profile and on the evolution of each secessionist crisis. This is why the U.S. did recognize some secessionist states, while it remained opposed to the independence of other ones. This apparent inconsistency is, therefore, an illusion or an inconsistency “de façade” to the extent that it is the result of a coherent set of interests that produced different results for different crises. If we only focus on results, the U.S. approach

¹ David Callahan, *Unwinnable Wars: American Power and Ethnic Conflict*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1997, pp. 26-27. See also Patricia Carley, *U.S. Responses to Self-Determination Movements: Strategies for Nonviolent Outcomes and Alternatives to Secession*, Report from a Roundtable held in Conjunction with the Policy Planning Staff of the U.S. Department of State, Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, July 1997.
<http://www.usip.org/pubs/peaceworks/pwks16.pdf> (accessed July 2006).

seems inconsistent, but if we pay attention to process-tracing, or to the causal mechanisms leading to these outcomes, the U.S. has been consistent through time.

Spheres of Interest

This study also shows that the U.S. did not react with the same intensity and diligence toward secessionist movements in the Horn of Africa and in the Balkans. Indeed, the American government reacted more promptly to secessionism in Yugoslavia, than it did toward Ethiopia and Somalia. Although this dissertation demonstrates that regional stability was what mattered in both regional settings, evidence indicates that the American government was more concerned, for instance, by the refugees coming out of the Yugoslav secessionist wars than it was by similar problems in Ethiopia and Somalia. The reason for this is simple. The U.S. has more economic and political interests in Europe. The secessionist crises in the Balkans threatened to destabilize European economic partners and NATO allies. In the case of the Horn of Africa, secessionism did not significantly disrupt U.S. economic interests or the stability of allies. What it did, however, was destabilize the region and this is why the United States became concerned with these issues.

The differing U.S. reaction toward the Balkans and the Horn underlines the idea that stability drives American foreign policy as Washington focuses on stability where it matters most. This is another implication of the regional stability argument.

Theoretical Contributions

The U.S. foreign policy toward secessionist conflicts abroad conforms to the defensive realist paradigm as clarified by Joseph Grieco's defensive positionalism. The regional stability model shows in every case studied that the U.S. attempted to maintain regional status quo and had an anti-secessionist bias. Secessionist ambitions were perceived as sources of instability and, therefore, as going against American interests. Thus, this research not only refutes liberal arguments but it also disproves offensive realism.

However, this dissertation demonstrates that status quo and stability do not have the same meaning and imply different things. If, on the one hand, the United States is the predominant power and greatly values international status quo, on the other hand, the American government had never supported as many secessionist states as it has since the end of the cold war, which seems to go against the previous assertion.

What this research shows is that the status quo (i.e. the established order) does not always play in favor of the stability of the regional sub-systems and, therefore, in the interests of the United States. As previous chapters have demonstrated, in certain situations, the U.S. will choose to break with the status quo because it generates instability and offers no real solution to end secessionist crises. The recognition of secessionist states, which represents a violation of the status quo and an alteration of the established order, can thus be a credible tool to reestablish regional stability.

In the light of collected evidence, we can conclude that, everything being equal, the U.S. favors the maintenance of the status quo and has an anti-

secessionist bias but only as long as an established regional order serves its interests. When it no longer does so, the American government will not hesitate to alter the status quo. In other words, stability rather than status quo defines U.S. security. This leads us to assert that the United States is not always a status quo power but that it is consistently a stability-seeking state. This distinction, which has an ontological dimension, refines the defensive positional approach of U.S. foreign policy.

Moreover, this foreign policy theory is not so much about the United States as about the behavior of a predominant power. I argue that the basic assumptions and the logic of the regional stability argument could apply to other prevalent powers at any given time. Process-tracing is, however, one aspect of the model that would have to be adjusted if applied to a different state, since the governmental and institutional nature of each state is unique. Moreover, the way internal stability is defined may also vary depending on the nature of the political regime of the predominant state in question.

Validating a Common Assumption

It is always interesting, from an academic point of view, to challenge a conventional wisdom and to prove it wrong. Such an endeavor makes our work original and potentially significant as far as future paths of research are concerned. The regional stability theory, however, does not challenge common wisdoms but decodes, operationalizes, and validates a common intuition of U.S. foreign policy. In other words, it recognizes and explains the obvious. The model articulates the broad and abstract notion of stability, which is often intuitively

used to explain the American reaction to secessionist quarrels, and shows how it plays on the formulation of foreign policy.

Thus, the contribution and originality of the theory is not so much the fact that it argues that stability matters but rather that it depicts the mechanisms that connect the U.S. stability interest and the observable outcomes. It is at this level that the theoretical model makes a contribution to the literature and debates about U.S. foreign policy toward ethnic and secessionist strives.

Contribution to the Debate in International Relations

The theory developed contributes to the debates surrounding third states involvement in secessionist crises by showing that the international environment impacts the formulation of foreign policy. This assertion goes against the claims of recent theories on third state intervention, which argue that domestic incentives explain third state involvement in secessionist and ethnic conflicts (see Chapter 2). It has to be kept in mind, however, that the proposed theory is one of foreign policy and, therefore, that its contribution to international relation theory remains limited in scope by its nature.

Future Paths of Research

This dissertation does not pretend to be the definitive answer to this area of research. More case studies should be studied to increase the external validity of the theory and/or to refine it. A close look, for instance, at a third regional environment such as South East Asia would allow to compare cases like East Timor and Bougainvillea and assess whether regional stability explains why the

U.S. recognized the independence of the East Timorese in 2001 but refused to recognize Bougainvilleans who are still part of Papua New-Guinea.

It would also be relevant to focus on cases that target the robustness of the first step of the model. For instance, future research could concentrate on the case of Abkhazia in Georgia or on the Pattani region in Thailand, to assess whether the U.S. has consistently supported these central states because they were able to maintain external stability, even if they refused to negotiate with secessionists.

Another path of research could be to evaluate whether the logic of the argument applies to other U.S. foreign policy issues such as non-secessionist intrastate conflicts or the approach toward power sharing in instable multinational states. An interesting area of research, for instance, could measure whether the U.S. supports decentralization and minority representations in shaky multinational states for regional stability considerations or if, on the contrary, it supports centralization for similar reasons. Then, we could see whether the logic of the regional stability model explains the findings.

In sum, more research is needed to get a better understanding of the motives shaping U.S. foreign policy toward issues related to nationalism and state fragmentation; however, the regional stability model gives us a strong base from which to work.

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