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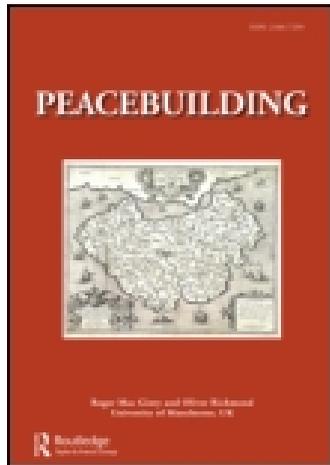
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Understanding state responses to secession

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The response of states to acts of secession on their territory has been subject to relatively little attention in the academic literature. Drawing on the examples of Cyprus and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), Serbia and Kosovo, and Georgia and South Ossetia and Abkhazia, this article posits that there are in fact six reasons why states oppose acts of secession. These are: emotional attachment to the territory; internally displaced persons; economic factors; historical and cultural issues; fear of further secession; and national pride. Following on from this, the piece emphasises that subsequent efforts to prevent the secessionist territory from being recognised must be seen in the context of processes to resolve the situation arising from the act of secession. In some cases, this may be reunification. In others, it may be an agreed separation. At other times, it may be about leaving the door open for a military solution. In other words, opposing secession is a response to a tangible grievance. Opposing recognition is about shaping the conditions to redress that grievance. A better understanding of the specific dynamics of, and interrelationship between, these two factors would seem to be crucial for peacemakers.

Keywords: secession; recognition; Cyprus; Serbia; Georgia; Kosovo; Abkhazia

Introduction

Why do states contest acts of secession?¹ It may seem like a straightforward question with a relatively simple answer: states want to preserve their territorial integrity. However, while valid at a basic level, this answer fails to acknowledge the complex variety of reasons why a state would wish to preserve its territorial integrity. Upon deeper examination, it would appear to be the case that there are in fact a wide variety of reasons why states actively oppose attempts by separatist entities to secede. In some cases, there are tangible physical issues that shape the response. For example, the territory may have economic value or historical or cultural significance. At other times, a more psychological explanation prevails. There may be a fear – real or imagined – that an act of secession by one part of a

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¹As Kohen has stated, ‘secession is the creation of a new independent entity through the separation of part of the territory and population of an existing State, without the consent of the latter. Yet, secession can also take the form of the separation of part of the territory of a State in order to be incorporated as part of another state, without the consent of the former. When a new state is formed from a part of the territory of another state with its consent, it is a situation of “devolution” rather than “secession”.’ Marcelo G. Kohen, ‘Introduction’, in *Secession: International Law Perspectives*, ed. Marcelo G. Kohen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3. The elements of ‘devolution’ and ‘secession’ are covered in detail in chapters 8 and 9 of James Crawford, *The Creation of States in International Law*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

territory may lead to attempts by other territories to break away. Sometimes, the response may be driven by a widespread sense of frustration or injustice. Drawing on the cases of Cyprus, Serbia and Georgia,² this article will show that there is rarely a single reason why a state opposes an act of secession. Rather, while there may be a single predominant factor, in reality there are up to six factors that can play their part in shaping the response.

At the same time, it is also important to understand that the reasons why states contest secession are very different from the reasons why they subsequently seek to prevent a territory from being recognised on the international stage. Whereas contesting secession is about the relationship a state has to a territory, preventing recognition is about shaping the processes that will ultimately determine the future relationship of the territory with the 'parent' or 'metropolitan' state; as the state from which a territory is seceding is commonly known. In most cases, preventing recognition is about maintaining the possibility of reunification, either by peaceful or military means. In some cases, though, it can pave the way for separation. As will be shown, an understanding of these various underlying factors and preferences may help external actors formulate better conflict management and resolution strategies.

The reasons for opposing secession

Although the reasons why groups try to secede have been explored in detail,³ less work has been conducted on why states oppose the attempted secession of a part of their territory. At least six main reasons why they may contest an act of secession can be identified.

Emotional attachment to defined boundaries

Perhaps the most obvious reason why a state chooses to contest the secession of part of its territory is the wish to maintain formal sovereignty over a specific piece of land. While this may be based on economic and resource factors, or on the cultural and religious significance it has, territory can also have innate emotional significance.⁴ Countries have borders that we are often conditioned to accept and recognise from a young age; for example, by drawing maps as schoolchildren. This can have a profound impact on the way in which we come to understand and attach value to the boundaries of a state, no matter how artificial they might once have been. In this sense, what is being referred to here is not the loss of tangible assets. It is about a challenge to the way in which people come to

²This article is based on interviews with key foreign policy officials in Serbia, Cyprus and Georgia conducted throughout 2011 and 2012. Using their titles at the time of their interviews, the figures interviewed include: Vuk Jeremić, the Serbian Foreign Minister; Bozidar Djelić, the Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia; Borko Stefanovic, the Political Director of the Serbian Foreign Ministry; Grigol Vashadze, the Georgian Foreign Minister; Eka Tkeshvili, the Deputy Prime Minister of Georgia; Timur Ioakobashvili, the Georgian Ambassador to the United States; Giorgi Badridze, the Georgian Ambassador to the United Kingdom; Ghia Nodia, the former Minister of Education of the Republic of Georgia; Nicos Emiliou, the Permanent Secretary of the Cyprus Foreign Ministry; Stella Ioannides, Attorney of the Republic of Cyprus; Averoff Neophytou, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Cyprus House of Representatives; Leonora Gavrielides, the Director of the Press and Information Office. The author is also grateful to the various international officials and external analysts who provided comments and analysis on condition of anonymity.

³See Viva Ona Bartkus, *The Dynamic of Secession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁴Jan Penrose, 'Nations, States and Homelands: Territory and Territorialism in Nationalist Thought', *Nations and Nationalism* 8, no. 3 (2002): 278–9.

'visualise' their state. In the case of Cyprus, geography would appear to play a particularly important psychological role. As an island, there is a natural border to the country. Notwithstanding the existence of other divided islands in the world, such as Hispaniola and New Guinea, there is nevertheless a sense that the division represents an affront to the natural order of things.⁵ The fact that the Cypriot flag is the only flag of a UN member state that carries a map of the country means that the very idea of a whole and united island is a powerful image in the minds of many Greek Cypriots. In addition, many Greek Cypriots believe that the island is essentially theirs ('Cyprus is Greek'). Although the Turkish Cypriots may have lived on the island for 400 years, they are still seen as newcomers inhabiting a land that has been Hellenic for thousands of years. Even among moderate Greek Cypriots, preserving the sovereignty of the island as a distinct unit is considered to be an important reason for contesting the existence of the TRNC.⁶

For Serbs, the issue of the attachment to the idea of a specific territorial shape is rather more complicated. While Kosovo may be regarded as the heart of medieval Serbia, the modern boundaries of the province do not correlate with Kosovo's historic borders. Determined after the end of the Second World War, parts of the region now lie in neighbouring Montenegro. At the same time, a parcel of land that was traditionally a part of central Serbia was added to northern Kosovo by Tito to give the province a greater Serbian presence. Attitudes are also shaped by the realisation that with the land comes the people and that over 90% of Kosovo's almost two million inhabitants are ethnic Albanians who have no allegiance whatsoever to the Serbian state. Trying to incorporate them back into the state, even under the loosest form of autonomy, would be immensely disruptive. While Kosovo will continue to have deep symbolic religious and cultural resonance for Serbia, there is a widespread acceptance among Serbs that Kosovo is now lost;⁷ even though the 2006 Serbian constitution, enacted during the UN sponsored status process, specifically states that Kosovo is an intrinsic part of the country.

As with Cyprus and Serbia, the loss of territory also plays an important part in shaping Georgian attitudes towards South Ossetia and Abkhazia. As one observer put it, it reflects a view of, 'how Georgia was, and how it should be'.⁸ In the case of Abkhazia, there is certainly a lot of emotional attachment to the territory, as well as a deep sense of nostalgia. It is also significant that many senior Georgian politicians claim ancestral links to the territory.⁹ However, as with Serbs in Kosovo, Georgians were never an outright majority in Abkhazia. Instead, they were a plurality; inhabiting the region alongside Russians, Armenians and ethnic Abkhazians.¹⁰ In the case of South Ossetia, while the exact

⁵Most Greek Cypriots also oppose the presence of the British military bases on the island, but view them as the lesser of two evils to be addressed following a solution. 'A New Era in Relations with Britain', *Cyprus Mail*, June 6, 2008.

⁶Greek Cypriot official, comments to the author, April 2011.

⁷This was repeatedly made clear to the author by officials and ordinary citizens during trips to Serbia in February, August and September 2011.

⁸External analyst, comments to the author, December 2011.

⁹International official, comment to the author, October 2011.

¹⁰As has been asked elsewhere, 'whose land is it anyway? Does this land belong to the indigenous Abkhazians who were forcibly ethnically cleansed from this territory by Stalin and who at the time of Georgian independence in 1991 constituted only 17 per cent of Abkhazia's population? Or is this now an integral part of Georgia, a land settled, with the support of Stalin, by hundreds of thousands of his fellow Georgians?' 'Conclusion', in *De Facto States: The Quest for Sovereignty*, ed. Tozun Bahceli, Barry Bartman, and Henry Sebrnik (London: Routledge, 2004), 250.

ethnic makeup of the region is fiercely contested,¹¹ the emotional ties of the general population to the territory are generally less pronounced than in the case of Abkhazia.¹² Rather, opposition to secession appears to be shaped by the acute sense of insecurity arising from a Russian military presence in a territory that cuts right into the heart of Georgia and threatens the capital city, Tbilisi.¹³

Return of internally displaced persons

Although there may be an important emotional attachment to the territory, there are usually practical factors that shape the opposition to acts of secession. For example, in all three cases, the existence of large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) – although they are usually more commonly referred to in all three countries as ‘refugees’ – is a key issue. As well as posing a practical problem for the state, inasmuch as they have to be housed and supported, they can also be significant active or passive political, or politicised, actors. In some cases, they form strong lobbying groups to defend their interests. In other cases, they are used by the government to highlight to the rest of their citizens and to the wider international community the human effects of the conflict. In the case of Cyprus, it is estimated that the 1974 invasion of the island resulted in the forced dislocation of 160,000 Greek Cypriots. This group represents a powerful voice in society and they have formed a number of bodies to promote their interests, such as the Kyrenia Refugee Association and the Famagusta Refugee Movement. At the same time, successive governments have also sought to maintain and bolster their position and visibility in society as a means by which to maintain a claim to the north.¹⁴

Refugees also play a central role in Georgia’s opposition to the secession of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.¹⁵ At present, it is estimated that there are approximately 273,000 displaced persons in Georgia.¹⁶ Of this number, it is believed that approximately 20,000 are displaced ethnic Georgians from South Ossetia.¹⁷ The vast majority of them are from

¹¹As the International Crisis Group (ICG) notes, ‘The figures are highly politicised and difficult to verify, but the pre-1991 population of 98,000 has declined sharply due to two decades of political and economic instability. The de facto authorities claim a current population of 72,000, 80 per cent of which is ethnic Ossetian. The Georgian government says it is between 8,000 and 15,000. International observers calculate around 20,000, with considerable seasonal fluctuation. A comprehensive and probably reasonably accurate study by an independent Russian researcher estimates 30,000, including around 17,000 in Tskhinvali, a few thousand each in Java, Znauri, Dmenisi and Akhagori villages and a handful in high mountain villages.’ See ICG, ‘South Ossetia: The Burden of Recognition’ (Program Report No. 205, 7 June 2010), 2.

¹²Western diplomat, comment to the author, October 2011.

¹³International official, comment to the author, October 2011. While Abkhazia is four to five hours’ drive from the capital, South Ossetia is only 70 kilometres away; less than an hour’s drive from Tbilisi.

¹⁴Stefan Ege, ‘Re/Producing Refugees in the Republic of Cyprus: The Case of Refugee Mothers’ (paper presented at the PRIO conference, Nicosia, Cyprus, November, 28–29 2008), 2. Refugees have been provided with a wide range of social and financial benefits. Moreover, refugee status can be passed down the male line. ‘Millions in Grants for Children of Refugee Mothers’, *Cyprus Mail*, May 4, 2011. As a result, there are now more classed as refugees in Cyprus than there were in 1974.

¹⁵This was emphasised in an interview with a senior Georgian diplomat, March 2011.

¹⁶Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, ‘Georgia: IDPs in Georgia Still Need Attention’, 31 December 2010.

¹⁷ICG, ‘South Ossetia’, ii.

Abkhazia; particularly the southernmost Abkhaz district of Gali,¹⁸ which forms the boundary between Abkhazia and the rest of Georgia.¹⁹ As in the case of Cyprus, the Georgian government has sought to politicise the issue of IDPs in order to maintain its claim to the territories.²⁰ Indeed, until 2007, the stress on return was such that refugees were effectively prevented from being integrated into Georgian society. However, following the August 2008 conflict, the emphasis has now shifted. While the right to return is still stressed, steps have been taken to ensure that refugees are given better housing and stronger rights.²¹ Unlike Cyprus, though, refugee groups do not tend to be particularly well organised in Georgia.²² Having said this, their importance as political actors at home, and their potential to be significant lobbyists on the international stage, has been recognised by the Georgian government.²³

In the case of Kosovo, the question of refugees tends to have less resonance than in Georgia or Cyprus. Although approximately 230,000 Serbs and Roma have been displaced from Kosovo since 1999,²⁴ few believe that many will ever return – even though they have an internationally recognised, and supported, right to do so. In part, this is because of the widespread belief among refugees that Kosovo independence will not be reversed and that it is better to stay in Serbia and get on with rebuilding their lives than live under Albanian rule. As a result, in recent years the numbers living in refugee centres has declined significantly as more and more have moved out to establish new lives elsewhere in the country.²⁵ This view is undoubtedly shaped by the difficult conditions facing those who have returned to Kosovo, with the Serbian media often reporting that they have faced attacks, robberies and harassment.²⁶ But, unlike the Greek Cypriots, and to a certain extent the Georgians, they do not seem to form the strong types of associations or groups to maintain some sort of a community spirit, or to put pressure on the government. This would appear to be because a number of IDPs have simply accepted that they will not return to Kosovo and are more concerned with building a new life in other parts of Serbia.²⁷

¹⁸This may explain why polling suggests that, in the case of Abkhazia, 90% of displaced persons would consider returning if Georgia was able to reassert control over the territory. Magdalena Frichova Grono, *Displacement in Georgia: IDP Attitudes to Conflict, Return and Justice* (Conciliation Resources, February 2011). Interestingly, the poll data used for the study showed that fewer would consider returning if Abkhazia was to gain full recognition without Georgian recognition (9%) than if Abkhazia were integrated into Russia (11%) or if it continued in its current contested state (12%). If Georgia were to recognise Abkhazia as an independent state then 17% would consider returning. This is still far lower than the number who would consider returning if Georgia was able to exert full sovereign control over the territory.

¹⁹World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, Minority Rights Group International, 'Abkhazia Overview', August 2008.

²⁰This was stated to the author by a number of external political observers during 2011.

²¹UNHCR, 'Protection of Internally Displaced Persons in Georgia: A Gap Analysis', July 2009, 7.

²²Western diplomat, comment to the author, October 2011.

²³Senior Georgian official, comments to the author, December 2011.

²⁴Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 'Serbia: Ten Years after Displacement, Returns Remain Stalled But Integration Prospects Improving', 22 December 2010.

²⁵'Serbia Sees Some Success in Integrating Refugees', *Financial Times*, June 13, 2011.

²⁶'Attack on Serb Returnees, "Act of Vandalism"', B92, 22 April 2010; 'Serb Returnee Student Harassed by Kosovo Police', B92, 30 June 2011; 'Kosovo Serb Returnees' Homes Robbed', B92, 24 July 2011.

²⁷Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 'Serbia: Ten Years after Displacement', 22 December 2010, 7.

Historical, cultural and religious significance

Another important factor that shapes a state's reaction to an act of secession is the historical, cultural and religious importance of the territory to the country. This is seen most obviously in the case of Kosovo. As well as being the site of a major medieval battle between the Serbs and the Ottomans that has come to play an important part in the Serbian national consciousness,²⁸ and is still commemorated every June, Kosovo holds deep religious significance for Serbs. Indeed, the province's formal name is *Kosovo i Metohija* (often shortened to Kosmet), which translates as 'Kosovo and Church Lands'. It is home to numerous monasteries and churches, four of which have been recognised as world heritage sites by UNESCO.²⁹ As Patriarch Irinej, the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church, explained during his enthronement, in January 2010, 'Kosovo is our Holy Land, our Jerusalem.'³⁰

Abkhazia is also home to a number of ancient churches and monasteries, including the New Athos Monastery. However, as Georgian officials readily admit, none define the nation in the same way those in Kosovo are central to Serbian identity.³¹ Nevertheless, there are concerns in Tbilisi about the fate of these sites, and attempts are being made to include UNESCO in efforts to ensure that they are protected and preserved.³² More generally, the historical links between Georgia and Abkhazia are emphasised. Georgian officials stress that the region has always been a part of Georgia, broadly defined to include various different entities, for 3000 years and argue that it was only an independent entity for 12 years, during Soviet rule.³³ Additionally, with half its population being ethnically Georgian at the start of the 1990s, Sukhumi is still regarded as essentially being a 'Georgian' city.³⁴ In contrast, South Ossetia appears to have little intrinsic historical and cultural significance for most Georgians. Rather, it is just seen as a traditional part of Georgia.³⁵

In Cyprus, the most important religious site in the north of the island is the Ayios Apostolos (Holy Apostle) Monastery, which lies at the very tip of the panhandle that stretches out to the east of the island. Described as the 'Lourdes of Cyprus',³⁶ it is an important pilgrimage spot for Greek Cypriots. In addition, there are many other churches

²⁸As one observer put it, 'The loss of Kosovo, the cradle of Serb civilisation, to the Ottoman Turks over 600 years ago was felt as keenly as the loss of Jerusalem by the Jews to Roman imperial forces.' Ivor Roberts, 'Partition Is the Best Answer to the Kosovo Question', *The Independent*, December 5, 2007.

²⁹Decani Monastery was recognised in 2004. UNESCO, Decision, 28COM 14B.47, Nominations of Cultural Properties to the World Heritage List. UNESCO, Decision 30COM 8B.53, Extension of Properties Inscribed on the World Heritage List (Medieval Monuments in Kosovo).

³⁰'New Serbian Orthodox Patriarch Irinej Enthroned', BBC News, 23 January 2010. It is not clear whether this requires formal Serbian sovereignty over the whole territory. Serb officials appear to have suggested that if a solution can be found over the key religious sites, as well as on the question of the Serb north of Kosovo, then the demand for sovereignty over the rest of the territory might be dropped. International Crisis Group, 'Kosovo and Serbia after the ICJ Opinion' (Europe Report No. 206, 26 August 2010), 18–19.

³¹Senior Georgian diplomat, comments to the author, March 2011.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid. As the official noted, the argument that Stalin was responsible for ending Abkhazia's independence and forcing it under Georgian rule is incorrect. He was the one who was responsible for splitting it off in the first place.

³⁴Western diplomat, comment to the author, October 2011.

³⁵International official, comment to the author, October 2011.

³⁶'Seven Days of Solitude', *Guardian*, October 13, 2001.

and religious sites in the TRNC, many of which have fallen into disrepair since 1974. Other important sites are Salamis, which was the capital of the island during the middle of the first century BC; the Bellapais Monastery, made famous by Lawrence Durrell in his *Bitter Lemons of Cyprus*; and the Crusader castles along the Pentadactylos mountain range.

Economic factors

The economic consequence of losing territory is also an important factor that shapes the way in which a state reacts to an attempt at secession. This is particularly significant in the case of Cyprus. In addition to having lost 36% of the island's overall territory, the areas now under Turkish Cypriot control were, prior, to 1974, important economic and commercial regions. For example, Famagusta was the island's main port. Morphou, in the north-west of the island, was the main citrus growing area. In addition to losing their homes, many tens of thousands of Greek Cypriots lost valuable commercial land as a result of their displacement. The growth of tourism over the past three decades, and the general rise in property prices, means that in many cases these properties are worth a considerable amount to their owners. Indeed, a report by the University of Cyprus, published in July 2010, estimated that the invasion and division of the island had cost Greek Cypriots – private individuals as well as companies, not the state or the Church – over 109 billion euros since 1974.³⁷

By way of contrast, the economic argument would appear to go the other way in the case of Serbia's relationship with Kosovo. It is more of a drain on Serbia than a benefit. There is really very little of economic worth in the territory, apart from mining. Kosovo was always one of the least economically productive parts of the former Yugoslavia. Indeed, it was subject to significant funding from the central government – often much to the resentment of others within the federation. Even now, the economic costs of trying to keep Kosovo a part of Serbia would be high, if not prohibitive.³⁸ Indeed, this is a key point that has been raised, both in Serbia and internationally, to support the argument that Belgrade should relinquish the province. In fact, along with the generally negative political consequences that would arise if Kosovo were ever to be reintegrated into Serbia, the costs of having to fund Kosovo, while still having to deal with a recalcitrant ethnic Albanian population actually make keeping Kosovo a rather unattractive proposition in many ways. To this extent, efforts to keep Kosovo appear more to do with emotional attachments than economic considerations.

In the case of Georgia, the picture is less clear concerning the economic benefits of retaining control over South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Certainly, South Ossetia offers very little in terms of tangible economic advantage. It is mountainous and has no industry. Moreover, there is very little agriculture.³⁹ Indeed, at present most of its economic activity centres on the black market. It seems clear that even if it were to be reintegrated, there is little prospect that the overall economic situation would change. It certainly does not seem

³⁷ 'Turkish Invasion Has Cost Cyprus over €100 Billion', *Cyprus Mail*, July 28, 2010. The report also noted that the Turkish Cypriots had lost 2.2 billion euros in the same period through lack of access to their properties in the south.

³⁸ See, for example, Vladimir Gligorov, 'Costs and Benefits of Kosovo's Future Status' (The Vienna Institute of International Economic Studies, November 2007).

³⁹ Georgian diplomat, comments to the author, March 2011.

likely that it will ever play an important part in the Georgian economy.⁴⁰ On the other hand, Abkhazia would seem to be more important. In agricultural terms, it has a citrus growing industry and is an exporter of hazelnuts. But perhaps its greatest economic value lies as a tourist destination. It has long been regarded as a good holiday destination for Russian tourists, but with tourism to Georgia growing Tbilisi believes that Abkhazia could be attractive to a wider international market. Moreover, the Georgian government has been taking steps to make the country more attractive as a destination for foreign investment, and hopes to pursue EU membership eventually. Georgian officials therefore argue that Abkhazia's reintegration, albeit with a high degree of autonomy, would ultimately benefit everyone concerned.⁴¹ For the meantime, however, they admit that the country can survive economically without the two territories.⁴²

Preventing further territorial loss

Another reason why states appear to contest acts of secession is the fear that if they let one part of their territory gain independence then others might wish to follow. This is a major worry for Serbia.⁴³ Many fear that if Kosovo is relinquished, pressure for independence may grow in the northern province of Vojvodina, which is largely inhabited by Serbs but has traditionally had a high degree of autonomy, and in the southern Sandzak region, which has a large Muslim population and has seen a steady rise in tensions in recent years.⁴⁴ On the whole, such fears are appreciated by outside officials, who insist that Kosovo's independence cannot be a precedent for the secession of other parts of Serbia. Indeed, the international community has tended to take a firm line on this point. For example, when ethnic tensions flared in the Presevo Valley, a largely Albanian inhabited area that lies next to Kosovo,⁴⁵ it was firmly stated that the region would not be allowed to integrate with Kosovo. Occasionally, however, Serbian suspicions have been fed by careless statements by diplomats. Perhaps the most noteworthy case concerned the German ambassador in Belgrade at the time of the Kosovo status process. In comments that were widely reported in the media, he stated that if Serbia insisted that Kosovo should remain an integral part of Serbia because it had been so since 1912, then Hungary could try to claim Vojvodina, which only became a Serbian province in 1918. The remarks caused an outcry in Serbia and an official protest to the German government resulted in a formal apology from the diplomat.⁴⁶ Nevertheless the comments further strengthened the view that if Kosovo were allowed to secede then it would just be a matter of time before other territories would as well. Indeed, this in part explains why the issue of granting Vojvodina more autonomy has been so hotly debated in Serbia.⁴⁷

Like Serbia, the fear of further disintegration plays a part in Georgian thinking.⁴⁸ Although now back under full Georgian control, the Adjarians nevertheless retain a

⁴⁰Western diplomat, comment to the author, October 2011.

⁴¹Georgian diplomat, comments to the author, March 2011.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³'If We Give in over Kosovo, Other Regions Will Follow', B92, 20 June 2011.

⁴⁴'Serbia's Sandzak Becomes Balkans' Latest Hot Spot', Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 28 September 2010.

⁴⁵'Presevo Valley Tension', BBC News, 2 February 2001.

⁴⁶'Zobel Apologizes, Government Sends Protest', B92, 12 April 2007.

⁴⁷'Serbian Parliament Ratifies Vojvodina Statute', *Southeast European Times*, December 1, 2009.

⁴⁸External analyst, comments to the author, December 2011.

slightly different identity to other Georgians, in rather the same way as Vojvodian Serbs often see themselves as somewhat distinct from Serbs from central Serbia.⁴⁹ Another concern centres on those areas of the country inhabited mainly by ethnic Armenians and Azeris. Although trouble has flared in these areas occasionally, they do not appear to present much of a threat at present. Although Russian ‘hot heads’ appear to want to encourage them to seek greater autonomy, if not independence, there appears to be little overt separatism among these communities.⁵⁰ Indeed, Tbilisi argues that the historical experience would actually indicate that there are benefits to be gained from pressing for greater unity, rather than fragmentation. The Georgian government argues that the successful reintegration of Adjara has highlighted the degree to which South Ossetia and Abkhazia could actually benefit from abandoning their quest for independence and pursuing autonomy within Georgia.⁵¹ Rather than exist as backwater client territories of Russia, they could in fact benefit from high levels of autonomy within Georgia – a state that hopes eventually to pursue EU membership. Nevertheless, concerns about further separatism do shape Georgian attitudes and go some way towards explaining the emphasis on centralisation in the state, and the concerns about any federalisation of the country.⁵²

However, the threat of further fragmentation following an act of secession certainly does not apply in all cases. For example, in the Cypriot case, apart from the Turkish Cypriots there are no other communities that would want independence, let alone be able to construct a viable independent state. The three other constitutionally recognised groups on the island – the Maronite, Latin and Armenian communities – are all very small, numbering from a few hundred in the case of the Latins, to around 6000 in the case of the Maronites.⁵³

A sense of injustice

In addition to the more obvious reasons as to why states choose to contest acts of secession, there is another less tangible explanation that can be identified in all the cases studied here: the sense of bitterness at the way in which the territory was lost. In many cases, it is not so much the loss of land in itself that matters as much as the circumstances in which it happened. In the case of Serbia, although many Serbs can comprehend the brutality with which Milošević confronted the uprising in Kosovo, there is also anger at the way in which NATO so readily chose to align itself with the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a body that had at one point been seen by the United States as a terrorist organisation.⁵⁴ This sense of injustice is compounded by the one-sided way in which the status process that eventually led to the unilateral declaration of independence was handled by Martti Ahtisaari and Kosovo’s key international supporters, most notably the United States.⁵⁵ In Cyprus, there is a deep sense of frustration at the way in which they were invaded and occupied by Turkey,

⁴⁹Western diplomat, comments to the author, October 2011.

⁵⁰International official, comment to the author, October 2011.

⁵¹Senior Georgian official, comments to the author, March 2011.

⁵²Western diplomat, comment to the author, October 2011.

⁵³It is theoretically possible that the Maronite community could ask for limited political autonomy for their small communities in the north-west of the island. However, this has never been raised as a possibility by the members of the community thus far.

⁵⁴‘The KLA – Terrorists or Freedom Fighters?’, BBC News, 28 June 1998.

⁵⁵During a conversation with the author, in June 2010, Ahtisaari confirmed that he had decided upon independence even before the status ‘negotiations’ began.

which maintains the second largest army in NATO.⁵⁶ Similarly, although the Georgian government has been blamed for initiating the hostilities in August 2008, many Georgians – and outsiders – believe that Russia had provoked the conflict to punish Georgia for its ties to the West.⁵⁷ A clear ‘victim narrative’ therefore exists, and with it a sense of wounded pride.⁵⁸ In all three cases, therefore, the act of secession is not seen as the product of a weak population winning control over the territory on its own. Rather, it is seen as the product of external aggression. An external power has intervened for its own ends. This gives rise to a deep sense of resentment. The fact that, in doing so, the external actor has also deprived people of their homes, confiscated key economic resources, and taken over important religious and cultural sites, only serves to compound the bitterness.

The reasons for trying to prevent the recognition of contested states

The reasons for opposing secession and the reasons for preventing recognition, although closely related, are in fact rather different from one another. The opposition to an act of secession is rooted to the real or perceived intrinsic importance that a specific territory has for the state. It is about substance. Preventing recognition, on the other hand, is about process.⁵⁹ It is about maintaining a claim to the territory in order to construct a bargaining position that will determine an eventual settlement of the dispute. Inasmuch as every act of recognition serves to cement a new political reality, and thus makes it far harder for the parent state to press for their desired outcome, the prevention of recognition is about maintaining the diplomatic upper hand. Ultimately, it is all about leverage.⁶⁰

Pursuing a negotiated reunification

First and foremost, the act of trying to prevent recognition is often perceived to be about creating the conditions for a negotiated solution aimed at some form of reunification. The more states that recognise the secessionist territory, the stronger its position becomes. Indeed, once a critical mass of recognitions has been reached, the prospects for reunification may disappear entirely. In the case of Cyprus, such concerns are mitigated not only by the decision on collective non-recognition, that makes further recognitions unlikely, it is also shaped by the fact that the internationally accepted model for a solution is a bi-communal, bi-zonal federal republic and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.⁶¹ This necessarily restricts the degree to which the Turkish Cypriots can press for a looser arrangement, or even partition, without explicit agreement of the Greek Cypriots

⁵⁶This is very much the sense one receives when one speaks to ordinary Greek Cypriots, as the author has done over the past 21 years.

⁵⁷Tomas Valasek, ‘What Does the War in Georgia Mean for EU Foreign Policy?’ (Briefing Note, Centre for European Reform, August 2008), 2.

⁵⁸External analyst, comments to the author, December 2011.

⁵⁹For an in-depth analysis of the ways in which states develop and implement policies to prevent the recognition and legitimisation of breakaway territories see James Ker-Lindsay, *The Foreign Policy of Counter Secession: Preventing the Recognition of Contested States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁶⁰Senior Serbian official, comments to author, February 2011.

⁶¹James Ker-Lindsay, *The Cyprus Problem: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 112–13.

and the UN Security Council.⁶² For Georgia, reunification would also seem to be the ultimate goal. However, as there is no UN stipulated model for a settlement, recognition could have a profound effect. At the moment, it is unclear what sort of agreement Georgia would like to secure for the two regions as, following the conflict in August 2008, the prospects for any sort of political solution appear to be rather distant. Still, the expectation is that any future settlement would be based on either autonomy or federation.⁶³ Either way, the more recognition the two territories receive, the stronger their bargaining position is likely to be.

In contrast, reunification with Kosovo seems an unrealistic prospect for Serbia. Certainly, the possibility of the full reintegration of Kosovo into Serbia has long been abandoned. After so many years of international rule, attempts to bring Kosovo back under Belgrade's full, or even partial, control are out of the question. Even the return to the type of autonomy Kosovo enjoyed prior to the 1990s was deemed to be unacceptable to the Kosovo Albanians. Therefore, during the status process, held in 2006–2007, the Serbian government proposed a formula based on more than autonomy and less than independence.⁶⁴ During the Troika talks, which were held in the second half of 2007, Belgrade expanded on this idea by presenting a model for Kosovo that was based on the special position of the Åland Islands in Finland and Hong Kong's status as a special administrative region within the People's Republic of China.⁶⁵ Today, several years after the declaration of independence, the prospect of reintegrating Kosovo even under the loosest form of autonomy is utterly inconceivable. Indeed, even options based on a federation or confederation are now completely unrealistic – especially since the dissolution of the state union between Serbia and Montenegro.

Keeping open military options

While preventing recognition may be important in terms of keeping the door open to reunification through peaceful means, it can conceivably also be used to maintain the possibility of a military solution to the problem of unilateral secession.⁶⁶ This approach is,

⁶²Beneficially for Nicosia, this was confirmed by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in its advisory opinion on Kosovo. 'Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo (Request for an Advisory Opinion)' (International Court of Justice, 22 July 2010), para. 114.

⁶³Ghia Nodia, comments to the author, November 2011. In the past, proposals for some form of far reaching federal settlement have even been put forward. As one Georgian official noted, 'Abkhazia will have all the rights of a sovereign state except one the right to independence.' 'Abkhazia Federation Blueprint Unveiled in Georgia', Eurasianet.org, 20 May 2004. For an analysis of some of the federal models potentially on offer at the time, see Bruno Coppieters, Tamara Kovziridze, and Uwe Leonardy, 'Federalization of Foreign Relations: Discussing Alternatives for the Georgian-Abkhaz Conflict' (Caspian Studies Program, Working Paper Series, No. 2, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, October 2003).

⁶⁴'Negotiations Lean toward Independence', *Spiegel*, February 20, 2006.

⁶⁵For an outline of Serbian proposals see Appendix F, 'Comparative Autonomy Models', in James Ker-Lindsay, *Kosovo: The Path to Contested Statehood in the Balkans* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009).

⁶⁶As Pavkovic notes, such a solution can take several forms. In some cases it may be rather minor; being simply aimed at re-establishing the parent state's military at border crossings in order to preserve 'the symbolic space of a fully independent state'. In other cases, it may be about denying separatists military control over an area, but not preventing them from exercising de facto political control. Alternatively, it may be about replacing native secessionist leaders with non-secessionist leaders. Finally, and most drastically, there is the campaign to reassert full and complete control over a territory and force the secessionist leaders and the wider population to transfer their allegiance back

however, extremely unlikely in all three cases. Having tried to use the military approach in 2008, with disastrous consequences, in November 2010, President Saakashvili told the European Parliament that, 'Georgia will never use force to restore its territorial integrity and sovereignty and that it will only resort to peaceful means in its quest for de-occupation and reunification.'⁶⁷ While there is a degree of scepticism in some quarters as to whether Tbilisi has really and truly decided to abandon the military option once and for all,⁶⁸ Georgian officials stress that it has.⁶⁹ As one official candidly explained, 'Georgia at its strongest could not beat Russia at its weakest.'⁷⁰

Likewise, military action is not an option for Cyprus. Even though Nicosia has argued that a state has the right to use force to 'exercise its authority over secessionists in the contested area (subject only to the law of human rights and international humanitarian law about the manner in which it does so), and it is appropriate for other States not to interfere in the matter',⁷¹ the idea that Cyprus could defeat the Turkish military, the second largest armed forces in NATO, is simply beyond the bounds of all credibility. Indeed, some have even suggested that there is an argument to be made that Cyprus consider unilaterally disbanding its National Guard as it would not even be a credible defence force in the event of a Turkish attack.⁷² The use of military force by Serbia is also all but inconceivable. Quite apart from the fact that Belgrade has publicly disavowed the use of military force in its campaign to prevent the secession of Kosovo,⁷³ any attempt to use force to reassert its authority and sovereignty over Kosovo would be a violation of the terms of UN Security Council Resolution 1244, which ended the conflict in the province, in 1999, and remains in force. As a result, it would seem likely that any attempt to use armed force to reassert authority in Kosovo would almost certainly be met with the strongest political, if not military, reprisals.

To achieve a consensual separation

While the general presumption is that states contest secession because they wish to retain control over a territory that had seceded, this is not always the case. In some cases, preventing recognition is about rejecting a unilaterally imposed *fait accompli* on the terms of the seceding territory and keeping the door open to negotiations that would allow the act of secession to be accepted by the metropolitan state. This is most obviously the case with

Footnote 66 continued

to the parent state. The examples he gives for the four cases are, in order, Slovenia's brief conflict against the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) in 1991, Milošević's campaign against the KLA in Kosovo, Russia's wars in Chechnya and, finally, Nigeria's attempts to prevent Biafra's secession. Aleksandar Pavković, 'By the Force of Arms: Violence and Morality in Secessionist Conflict', in *Secession as an International Phenomenon: From America's Civil War to Contemporary Separatist Movements*, ed. Don H. Hoyle (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 265.

⁶⁷'Georgia's Saakashvili Pledges Peaceful Solution to Dispute with Russia' (European Parliament, Strasbourg Plenary Session, 22–25 November 2010).

⁶⁸External analyst, comments to the author, December 2011.

⁶⁹Grigol Vashadze, 'The View from Tbilisi' (Royal United Services Institute, 16 December 2011).

⁷⁰Senior Georgian diplomat, comment to the author, March 2011.

⁷¹Republic of Cyprus, 'Accordance with International Law of the Unilateral Declaration of Independence by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government of Kosovo' (Written Submission, International Court of Justice, 8 July 2009), 11.

⁷²Senior Cypriot official, comments to the author, April 2011.

⁷³'Kosovo Declares Its Independence from Serbia', *New York Times*, February 18, 2008.

Kosovo. Having appeared to accept that, with such strong Western support, Kosovo's independence is effectively irreversible, it would seem that any future discussions between Belgrade and Pristina would be aimed at determining the price required for Serbia to accept an independent Kosovo.⁷⁴ In particular, Serbian officials hinted that they would be willing to consider some sort of territorial division of Kosovo, with the northern-most tip of the province remaining under Serbian sovereignty.⁷⁵ However, faced with intense international opposition to partition, Belgrade now appears to be pressing for greater autonomy for the Serbian communities in Kosovo.⁷⁶ In any case, there is a sense that Belgrade is now attempting to reach a deal that would allow Kosovo to gain full international recognition as a sovereign and independent state.⁷⁷ Indeed, in January 2013, Dačić, who was by now serving as prime minister of Serbia, even suggested that if Pristina was willing to offer some concessions on the Serbian communities in Kosovo, Belgrade would be willing to discuss Kosovo's UN membership.⁷⁸

Although there has been at least one prominent political figure in Cyprus who has called for some form of negotiated partition if the north could not be brought under the unified control of the Cypriot government,⁷⁹ the idea of partition remains off-limits in mainstream political debate. As one Greek Cypriot political figure explained, 'you don't just give away a part of your body; no matter how much money is on offer'.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, in private, many Greek Cypriots question whether this might not be the best solution to the Cyprus issue. If some sort of arrangement can be made to secure the return of some land, such as the areas around Morphou and Famagusta, which would allow many of the refugees to get their land back and return to their homes, then maybe it might be better to allow the north to go its own way.⁸¹ Meanwhile, in Georgia, there is little public

⁷⁴Nicholas Gvosdev, 'The Realist Prism: The Kosovo Gambit for Palestine?', *World Politics Review*, October 22, 2010.

⁷⁵Both President Tadić and Foreign Minister Jeremić suggested that this may be an acceptable solution. 'Kosovo Partition Not in the Cards', *Southeast European Times*, August 9, 2010; 'GPS with Fareed Zakaria: Interview with Vuk Jeremic', CNN, 8 August 2010. In May 2011 Ivica Dačić, then serving as Serbian deputy prime minister, even went as far as to say, in an interview with a Kosovo Albanian newspaper, that he believed that partition was now the only viable solution; although the government was quick to point out that this was not official state policy. 'Partition of Kosovo Only Solution, Minister Says', B92, 15 May 2011; 'Partition of Kosovo "Not Serbia's State Position"', B92, 16 May 2011. However, any territorial division has been strongly opposed in by leading EU members as well as by the United States. 'Kosovo Partition "Unacceptable to U.S."', B92, 11 May 2010. In private, it appears that US officials were at one point willing to consider the idea under the right circumstances. For example, it may have been suggested had the ICJ decided that Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence was contrary to international law. Senior US official, conversation with author, March 2010.

⁷⁶'Serbia Acknowledges Loosening Sovereignty over Kosovo in Platform for Negotiations', Associated Press, 13 January 2013. It is worth noting that the autonomy option was specifically identified as the most likely eventual settlement of the Kosovo issue by Spyros Economides, James Ker-Lindsay, and Dimitris Papadimitriou, 'Kosovo: Four Futures', *Survival* 52, no. 5 (2010): 99–116.

⁷⁷In fact, this seems to have been accepted by the start of 2011, as evidenced by explicit comments to the author to this effect by a number of senior Serbian officials during a visit to Belgrade in February 2011.

⁷⁸'Serbia Holds Out Chance of U.N. Seat for Kosovo', Reuters, 15 January 2013.

⁷⁹'Matsakis: I Want Unified State or Two-State Solution', *Cyprus Mail*, December 29, 2007.

⁸⁰Senior Cypriot official, interview with the author, April 2011.

⁸¹This was stated to the author on numerous occasions during the many years he lived on the island.

or private willingness to accept some form of negotiated separation. A notable exception is Eduard Shevardnadze, the former president of Georgia. Speaking to a local newspaper, in June 2011, he suggested that it would be ‘wise’ for Georgia to recognise the territory as independent. This would open the way for improved relations. As he explained, it was ‘clear Abkhazia can’t be a normal region of Georgia any longer’.⁸² But this remains a very isolated view. ‘Apart from the odd analyst or think-tanker’,⁸³ the general public and private consensus is against the separation of the two areas.

Maintaining the status quo

Although preventing recognition is about creating the conditions for a particular outcome, sometimes it is simply a part of a general strategy to buy time in the hope that new, or better, options become available. In some instances, this may be because there is no clear consensus on the type of settlement that people want at the moment. At other times, it may be that the solution on offer is generally unacceptable and there is a hope that the passage of time may create the conditions for a more favourable settlement. Another factor that can shape the attitudes of a government towards a conflict is the wish to avoid having to take the blame for losing, or having to accept formally the independence of, the secessionist territory – even if they know that this is something that needs to happen.⁸⁴ In any case, the desire to perpetuate the status quo can be a particularly important factor. For example, for those Greek Cypriots who favour a federal settlement, but are unhappy about the type of federation on offer, the current situation buys time until the situation changes and a better deal can be negotiated. At the time of the Annan Plan, many believed that as Turkey moves closer to EU membership it would be willing to offer greater concessions – needless to say, this now looks to be an increasingly high risk strategy given the poor state of Turkey’s EU accession prospects. However, sometimes perpetuating a particular state of affairs does not even have to be about buying time. Nationalist Greek Cypriots, who are unhappy about the prospect of a bi-zonal–bi-communal settlement, but realise that they cannot get the unitary solution that they want, regard the current stasis as better than having to accept a federal settlement. In this case, maintaining the status quo appears to have become an end unto itself.⁸⁵

For Georgia, a continuation of the status quo is something to be accepted, rather than something to be sought. Following the conflict in 2008, there appears to be little prospect of new talks between Tbilisi and the two breakaway territories. As one observer put it, ‘people are resigned to an idea that this is the reality and they have to live with it for a long time. Status quo is something you get used to.’⁸⁶ Of course, with the passage of time, and the prospect of some sort of negotiation process, opinions may start to change and greater divisions open up within society over the type of settlement that people actually want. If

⁸²Shevardnadze Backs Abkhazia Independence, Asaval-Dasavali Says’, Bloomberg, 28 June 2011.

⁸³International official, comment to the author, October 2011.

⁸⁴For instance, in the case of Serbia, there is a widespread understanding that Kosovo is lost, and that this is ultimately in the best interests of the country. However, no politician wants to be seen to be the one who accepts this, no matter how much they may actually be serving the country’s best long-term interests. As a Serbian saying goes, ‘the hero has not been born who can sign away Kosovo’.

⁸⁵Our View: Maintaining the Status Quo Has Become the Objective’, *Cyprus Mail*, August 29, 2010.

⁸⁶Ghia Nodia, comments to the author, November 2011.

this does happen, then it could well be the case that many of the dynamics seen in Cyprus may well come to the fore in Georgia.⁸⁷ For the meantime, though, there appears to be no conscious decision on the part of the Georgian government to perpetuate the status quo for the sake of it, or in the hope that a better settlement will arise with the passage of time.

In the Serbian case, the maintenance of the status quo would seem to be a rather undesirable goal. It is clear that Kosovo will not be reintegrated back into Serbia, nor will the main countries that have supported Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence rescind their decision. At the same time, Belgrade's refusal to accept Kosovo as an independent state will have an increasingly negative effect on Serbia's EU accession hopes. For instance, in June 2011, a group of German MPs, during a visit to Belgrade, told Serbian media that the German parliament would not ratify Serbia's eventual membership unless it recognised Kosovo.⁸⁸ More recently, the EU has insisted that Serbia's eventual accession depends upon the 'normalisation' of relations with Pristina.⁸⁹ While the EU currently insists that does not mean recognition,⁹⁰ especially as there are five member states that do not recognise Kosovo and thus Serbia cannot be expected to face conditions that do not apply to current members, in reality many believe that Serbia will in fact be required to recognise Kosovo before it accedes – as Ulrike Lunceke, the European Parliament's Rapporteur for Kosovo, had insisted.⁹¹ Of course, some nationalists may believe that if Serbia can continue to prevent Kosovo from being recognised, and maintain the support of key powers in the Security Council, the conditions may somehow arise for a reassertion of Serbian control at some point in the future. But this would appear to be a marginal view. For the most part, prolonging the current status quo indefinitely in the hope that conditions will change and that Kosovo could be reintegrated back into Serbia, does not appear to be regarded as a realistic option by the current Serbian government, or by a population that, by and large, understands that the territory is now lost to Serbia.⁹²

Preventing recognition as punishment or retaliation

Finally, while preventing recognition is ultimately about process, it would seem that it can sometimes be an end unto itself. Inasmuch as it has been recognised that states may seek revenge for national humiliation,⁹³ and just as a sense of injustice can be a powerful motive for contesting secession, so preventing recognition and legitimisation may be an act of punishment and revenge for an act of humiliation inflicted by secessionists and their external supporters. While the parent state may have been unable to prevent the secessionist territory from declaring independence it is in a position to try to prevent this status from being accepted on the international stage. Again, it is not so much the loss, as the way that the loss came about, that serves to drive the struggle to prevent the recognition of the secessionist state. Resolving the conflict is therefore not just about finding ways to

⁸⁷This point was made by the author to a group of leading Georgian officials at an event on lessons learned from other divided societies held in London, in October 2009.

⁸⁸'Germany Will Demand That Serbia Recognizes Kosovo', B92, 22 June 2011.

⁸⁹'Serbia, Kosovo Leaders Meet for First Time at EU', Associated Press, 19 October 2012.

⁹⁰'EU Official Reacts to "Recognition" Statement', B92, 12 September 2012.

⁹¹'No EU without Kosovo Recognition, EP Rapporteur Claims', B92, 10 November 2012.

⁹²Jelena Obradovic-Wochnik, 'Serbia, the EU and the Kosovo Issue: No Reason for Pessimism' (Focus, IEMED, 2010).

⁹³Robert E. Harkavy, 'Defeat, National Humiliation, and the Revenge Motif in International Politics', *International Politics* 37 (2000): 345–68.

deal with the practical problems created by the division – such as providing compensation for lost territory or establishing safeguards for religious and historical sites – but also finding a method to try to restore a sense of honour and self-esteem.⁹⁴ Meanwhile, preventing the breakaway territory's legitimisation serves as an act of empowerment in the face of defeat; whether openly admitted – which it rarely is – or tacitly understood.⁹⁵

Conclusion

As has been shown, there are a variety of reasons why states oppose the breakaway of a part of their territory. As an examination of the cases of Cyprus, Serbia and Georgia has shown, while the wish to maintain territory for the sake of maintaining territory is important, it is not always the most significant reason. In many cases, the existence of a large number of displaced persons plays a role in shaping government policy. Likewise, the intrinsic historical, religious or cultural symbolism of the territory can be important. In some cases, but certainly not all, economic factors prevail. The area may have important mineral reserves or provide other economic benefits, such as tourism or a vital transport and communications link. At other times, there is a fear that if one piece of territory secedes successfully then others will follow. Contesting secession may also be about loss of pride. Usually, or so it would seem, an act of secession follows a military defeat. This can have a deep impact on the parent state.

Whereas contesting secession is about defending specific interests, real or perceived, counter-recognition is about strategy and process. It is about gaining leverage over future solutions. Often, the preferred outcome is the peaceful negotiated reintegration of the breakaway territory. But this is certainly not the only option. In some cases, it is about buying time in the hope that a military solution can be found. At other times, it may be about trying to define the terms of the separation. Indeed, in some cases it can just be about buying time to decide which option, if any, to pursue. However, as can be seen, procrastination carries risks. The passage of time can affect wider perceptions of the conflict, and can consolidate the position of the break-away territory. For instance, after many years of negotiations, including the failed reunification referendum in 2004, many observers now ask whether the Greek Cypriots really want a solution based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. If not, or so the thinking goes, perhaps it is time to consider other options, including the recognition of the TRNC.⁹⁶ Similarly, preventing recognition as an act of punishment or revenge with no apparent desire for a solution carries costs inasmuch

⁹⁴As one Serbian diplomat told the author, the way in which Serbia had been treated by Ahtisaari and the states that supported Kosovo was 'humiliating'. Serbia needed to find a solution that would allow them to walk away with a modicum of dignity. When the author put this to Martti Ahtisaari, in May 2010, he said that Serbia did not deserve 'an honourable compromise'.

⁹⁵This is discernable in Georgia's approach to Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Political commentator, comments to the author, December 2011. This sense of empowerment can also be found in Cyprus, in a variety of ways. For example, it appears that one reason why Greek Cypriots voted against the Annan Plan was to thwart the will of Britain, the USA and Turkey. Likewise, vetoing Turkish entry to the European Union, while likely to prevent reunification, would give many Greek Cypriots a great deal of satisfaction. James Ker-Lindsay, 'The Policies of Greece and Cyprus to Turkey's EU Accession', *Turkish Studies* 8, no. 1 (2007): 77.

⁹⁶The prospect of a Kosovo-type solution for Cyprus, whereby some states would be encouraged to recognise the TRNC, has been raised by a number of officials from leading western states, as well as prominent EU members, in discussions with the author.

as it can lead to the loss of international sympathy. To this extent, any strategy aimed at preventing recognition must be underpinned by credible efforts to reach a permanent and viable peaceful solution. States contesting secession must recognise that the passage of time can not only change the realities on the ground, it can also change wider attitudes about those realities.

For external actors, an awareness of these various factors may provide opportunities to formulate more appropriate strategies for conflict resolution. Understanding that the underlying reasons for opposing secession, and the preferences of actors with regards to end goals, can differ considerably from one situation to another, and then being able to identify a clear hierarchy of goals for a state facing an act of secession, may help third party mediators engage in peacemaking with a more nuanced approach.

Notes on contributor

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