

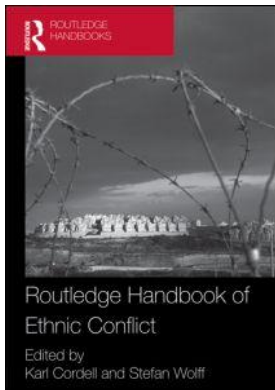
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Karl Cordell, Stefan Wolff

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Donald L. Horowitz

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13 Irredentas and secessions

Adjacent phenomena, neglected connections

Donald L. Horowitz

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To think about something makes it necessary to identify and isolate it, to fix upon it and, in fixing upon it, to reify it. Even before conscious conceptualization occurs, even in the selection of phenomena for study, concepts creep in. The more careful the thinking, the more precise the identification of the phenomena for study, the greater the isolation of one phenomenon from its neighbours, even its near neighbours. When the careful thinker says, "I mean to include this and to exclude that," the precision that makes any careful thinking possible may come at a price. Less careful but perhaps more nimble thinkers – namely, those actors whose behaviour forms the subject of social-science thinking – have a way of putting back together what careful thinkers pull apart.

Secessions and irredentas are near neighbours that can be pulled apart for analysis, properly in my view, but with points of contact and even, at times, a degree of interchangeability that might permit groups to choose one or the other and that also makes it necessary to treat the two phenomena together, in order to have a full view of each. By and large, the two have not been treated together. They have either been treated in isolation or mentioned in the same breath without an appreciation of their connections. When, however, secessions and irredentas are considered together, some rather startling conclusions emerge. Since the two phenomena are sometimes alternatives to each other, the frequency of each is, in part, a function of the frequency of the other. Furthermore, the strength of a given movement may be, in part, a function of the possibility that the alternative movement may arise. Indeed, the fate of a movement, at least in the sense that it manages to extract concessions from a central government, may depend on which course it takes,

Two distinct phenomena

Secession and irredentism are definable in distinct terms, even if we restrict ourselves solely to ethnically motivated movements. Secession is an attempt by an ethnic group claiming a homeland to withdraw with its territory from the authority of a larger state of which it is a part. Irredentism is a movement by members of an ethnic group in one state to retrieve ethnically kindred people and their territory across borders.

It will quickly be noted that disparate subphenomena are subsumed in the definition of secession propounded here. The definition might be sufficiently elastic to embrace the activity of a group that merely seeks regional autonomy or creation of a federal

system and control of its own state as a component of such a system. This was the aim of the Federal party in Sri Lanka until at least 1972 and of the Liberal party in the Sudan until 1958. The same definition of secession might also comprehend the activity of an ethnic group occupying a discrete territory within a state in an existing federal system but aiming to carve a new state out of its portion of the existing state, The Telangana movement in Andhra Pradesh is one of several such movements in India.¹ Nigeria has had many comparable movements, beginning with the United Middle Belt Congress in the 1950s. Finally, and most relevantly for connections to irredentism, this definition of secession certainly includes attempts to form separate, independent, internationally recognized states out of existing sovereign entities, as in the unsuccessful war for Biafra and the successful war for Bangladesh. In this definition, secession thus entails several forms of greater or lesser withdrawal from existing units.

Similarly, irredentism, as defined here, contains two subtypes: the attempt to detach land and people from one state in order to incorporate them in another, as in the case of Somalia's recurrent irredenta against Ethiopia, and the attempt to detach land and people divided among more than one state in order to incorporate them in a single new state – a “Kurdistan,” for example, composed of Kurds now living in Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey. Both forms of reconstituted boundaries would qualify as irredentist.

Despite their elasticity, the definitions of the two phenomena are conceptually distinct. Irredentism involves subtracting from one state and adding to another state, new or already existing; secession involves subtracting alone.

Moreover, the distinction between secessions and irredentas seems to capture some important differences in political phenomena on the ground; it is not merely a figment of the imagination of analysts. A glance at the relative frequency of the two phenomena hints at this. There are possibilities aplenty for secession and irredentism in the postcolonial world of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Most states are ethnically heterogeneous; of these, most have territorially compact minorities. Likewise, many ethnic groups are divided by territorial boundaries. Consequently, secession and irredentism are both abundantly plausible possibilities in the contemporary world. The necessary conditions, if not the sufficient conditions, for both are present, but the two phenomena are by no means proportionately represented in relation to the possibility of their occurrence. In spite of predictions to the contrary,² there have been remarkably few irredentas in the postcolonial states, but there have been a great many secessionist movements.

Withdrawal alone attracts many more adherents to action than does withdrawal coupled with the aim of reincorporation in another state. This seeming puzzle becomes even more perplexing when additional facts are added to the comparison. Consider just two. First, although secession is common, the victory of secessionist movements is extremely uncommon. Victory requires external assistance, which is rarely forthcoming in a volume and duration sufficient to win the war and create the new secessionist state. The Bangladesh example was (until the 1990s) conspicuous by its exceptional character. The improbability of success, however, has not deterred a significant number of secessionist groups. Second – again contrary to forecasts that wealthy regions would be more likely secessionists³ – secessionist regions are disproportionately ill favoured in resources and per capita income.⁴ Not infrequently, groups attempt to withdraw from states from which their region actually receives a subsidy.

Counterintuitively, then, in numbers that are both absolute and relative to the possibilities, secession is much more frequent than irredentism, and this despite the

enormous obstacles to success and the disadvantages most secessionist regions would face were they to succeed. By contrast, irredentism is rare, even though the first subtype of the definition of irredentism would usually involve the armed forces of one state in retrieving kinsmen across borders from another. Although irredentism would often carry with it military resources often denied secessionists, that advantage does not appear to increase the frequency of irredentas. Some behavioural features must therefore be associated with one phenomenon that is not associated with the other. Otherwise, the disparate incidence of the two phenomena cannot be explained.

This suffices to demonstrate the utility of distinguishing between secessions and irredentas. In fact, there is a whole spectrum of phenomena worth distinguishing. At one end, there are international border disputes that have no ethnic component and are therefore not irredentist. Latin American history is filled with such disputes.⁵ At the other end of the spectrum, there are territorially compact groups that nevertheless do not wholly dominate their region, which is ethnically heterogeneous. Although they may not aspire to secession, they may well aspire to homogeneity and take violent steps toward that end. A good many ethnic riots produce a stream of refugees of the victim group, which in turn fosters increased territorial segregation. Violence that increases homogenization is, to be sure, a frequent prelude to secession or irredentism – it may be that for the Albanians in the Kosovo province of Yugoslavia,⁶ but it need not be and probably is not for groups like the Assamese in India.

Having delimited the two phenomena and argued that, on the face of it, the delimitation seems useful, I now propose to put back together what I have pulled apart. I adhere to the utility of the secession–irredentism distinction, and I continue to think the differential incidence of the two is partly explicable in terms that are peculiar to the dynamics of each.⁷ Nevertheless, I intend to show that there are some fairly close connections between the two as well. For example, one reason there are few irredentas may be that many groups that have a choice between irredentism and secession find the latter the more satisfying choice. Indeed, the potential for irredentism may increase the frequency and strength of secession, but not vice versa. In short, while it makes a difference which course of action a group is embarked upon, my aim here is to elucidate the neglected interrelations between secessions and irredentas where both are possible.

Two related phenomena

The connections between secessionist and irredentist movements can be divided into three sets of issues. The first relates to the convertibility of the two types of movement. The second involves the relative frequency of secessions and irredentas. The third concerns the relative strength of the movements. These three issues are, as we shall see, closely related to each other

The convertibility of claims

To speak seriously of interchangeability – of the possibility that a movement may become either secessionist or irredentist or that it may move from one category to the other – is to limit ourselves to those territorially compact ethnic groups that span borders. Not all secessionists are in this category. Bengalis are found on the Indian side of the border as well as on what is now the Bangladesh side and what was before 1971 the East Pakistan side, but Ibo (except for some migrants to other countries) are entirely

contained within Nigeria's boundaries. The Bengalis might have become either irredentist or secessionist, but the Ibo had no irredentist option. Although a great many groups do span borders, a good many others are in the Ibo category.

Violence is frequently convertible from one form to another. Countries that experience political violence of one sort are likely to experience violence of another sort.⁸ Relatively spontaneous violence often gives way at later stages to more organized violence. Riots, for example, are a common forerunner of secessionist movements; for transborder ethnic groups, it stands to reason that if conditions are not propitious for irredentism, those groups may turn to secession, and vice versa.

Underpinning the convertibility of movements is the mutability of ethnic-group claims, of international relations, and of transborder ethnic affinities. Groups (and states) are not born irredentist or secessionist; they can and do move back and forth from integrated participation in the state of which they are a part to a posture of secession or irredentism.

To begin with, whether a group is integrationist or secessionist depends, in large measure, on its assessment of its prospects in the undivided state. The Ibo were the most prominent proponents of one Nigeria. With a considerable investment in human capital, they had migrated all over Nigeria in their quest for employment. Perhaps one Ibo in four or five lived outside the Eastern Region before 1966. But when recurrent violence, culminating in the massacres of September–October 1966, drove the Ibo back to the east, then and then only did the Ibo become secessionist. Meanwhile, the Hausa travelled in the opposite direction, from their openly secessionist inclinations of mid-1966 to their strong role in suppressing the Biafra secession and preserving an undivided Nigeria.

The Ibo and Hausa were not alone in altering their collective objectives. The Sri Lankan Tamils are as reluctant a group of secessionists as may be found, but secessionist some did become, especially after the bloody anti-Tamil riots of 1983.⁹ The southern Sudanese, on the other hand, were divided and, even when not divided, were ambiguous about what they wanted during the civil war of 1963–72. For some groups, the dominant theme was a settlement within the Sudan; for others, it was southern independence. At times, one or another of these themes was ascendant; at other times, both were heard simultaneously, even from the same speaker. In 1972, an abrupt settlement of the war, on terms of regional autonomy, was reached. Following the resumption of hostilities in the southern Sudan in the 1980s, guerrillas fighting in the south declared as their goal the democratization of the entire country, rather than merely the liberation of the southern Sudan.¹⁰ Like the Nigerians, the southern Sudanese have, at various times, moved in various directions.

That flexibility extends to irredentism, it is no secret that many Kurds advocate the creation of a Kurdistan out of portions of several independent states. During most of the post-World War II period, however, regional autonomy and secession, rather than irredentism, have been the stated Kurdish objectives.¹¹ There is an obvious reason for this. Kurds in Iraq have required assistance from Iran to make any claim effective. From time to time, Iran has provided substantial aid. Without any doubt, no such aid could be expected for a movement that pursued the irredentist objective of unification of all the Kurds, including those in Iran.

To put the point sharply, the propensity for an irredentist ideology to emerge among an ethnic group to be retrieved is directly related to the likelihood that the putative irredentist state will espouse a similar irredentist ideology. That propensity is inversely

related to the likelihood that the emergence of an irredentist claim will produce denial of the international assistance that would be accorded to secessionists or, even worse, will produce suppression of the irredentists.

To make matters more complex, it is not merely ethnic groups that are fickle in their objectives. State policies supporting or opposing secessions and irredentas also change. In 1975, Iran abruptly terminated military assistance to Kurds in Iraq and eventually closed its border to them, thereby dooming their movement. In 1987, India ceased its assistance to Sri Lankan Tamil secessionists, reached an agreement with the Sri Lankan government providing for Tamil regional autonomy instead, and attempted to suppress by armed force Tamil guerrillas in Sri Lanka itself. Periodically, Somalia, perhaps the most persistently irredentist state in the postcolonial world, has embarked upon a policy of détente with Ethiopia, which at other times is the target of its irredenta.¹² State policy in pursuit of irredentism tends to be inconstant.

That inconstancy drives some potential irredentists to secession instead. For a time in the 1970s, it seemed as if the connections between the Malaysian state of Sabah and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the Philippines might support an attempt to link the two politically. The ethnic identity of the Chief Minister of Sabah was Suluk, as was that of a good many Philippine Muslims engaged in the combat, and the Chief Minister had relatives across what had always been a permeable water boundary. But there are Malaysians of Suluk origin only in Sabah, and they are a distinct minority even there. No leaders in Kuala Lumpur were Suluk. Eventually the Chief Minister was voted out of office, and the remote possibility of irredentism was stillborn. The MNLF never turned its struggle in an irredentist direction.

The southern Philippine example brings us to one final aspect of convertibility: the convertibility of ethnic affinities. To define irredentism as an attempt to retrieve kindred people across boundaries is to assume that kindred people know each other, that kinship and ethnicity are firm. It is by now well established, however, that ethnic identity is variable over time and over context. Consider, for example, the case of Malays in southern Thailand. There is no doubt whatever that migration and interchange between them and Malays in the northern Malaysian states of Kedah and Kelantan have been considerable, and there are still family ties across the border.¹³ To most Malays, however, the “Pattani Malays” of southern Thailand seem rather foreign, and their distance is accentuated by the Indonesian origin of many Malays in southern Malaysian states. One of the major problems with irredentism is that the ethnic affinity of the core of a putative irredentist state may not extend to people at and beyond the periphery, and those are the very people who are to be retrieved.

The relative frequency of movements

Like some of the other forces conducive to the convertibility of movements, the variability of group affinities across borders extends also to the relative frequency of secessionist and irredentist claims. Because of the common reluctance of people at the centre to see nominally kindred people on the periphery as truly members of the same ethnic group, and for many other reasons as well, irredentist action on the part of the potential retrieving state is distinctly uncommon. I shall not rehearse all of these reasons here, because they have been laid out carefully elsewhere.¹⁴ I shall merely touch on a few that bear on the comparative frequency of secessions and irredentas.

For several reasons, the foreign-policy goals of most putative irredentist states (apart from the actual goal of retrieval) can be achieved better by encouraging secessionist movements by groups located in antagonistic states than by encouraging irredentism. For one thing, there is the easy reversibility of the policy. As the Iranians demonstrated in 1975, aid to secessionists can be terminated abruptly in return for a *quid pro quo*. Carefully rationed Malaysian assistance to the Moro secessionists in the Philippines helped persuade the Philippine government to abandon its claim on the Malaysian state of Sabah. Ethiopia has helped southern Sudanese secessionists in order to discourage Sudanese help for secessionists in Ethiopia. Typically, when the objectives are achieved, the aid is terminated – which is one reason why there are many wars fought by secessionists but few that they win. Even the government of India was able to reverse its policy of support for the Tamil secessionists in Sri Lanka in return for a regional autonomy agreement. The Sri Lankan Tamils are a kindred people, which many secessionists who receive aid are not,¹⁵ but there was no irredentist claim advanced in their behalf. Aid to irredentists, however, is underpinned by an ideology of common fate that hardly lends itself to abrupt termination. Indeed, when the Somali regime did disengage from war in the Ogaden the decision helped precipitate the Somali coup of 1969, because kindred groups in the armed forces did not wish to abandon Somalis of the Darood subgroup on the Ethiopian side of the border,

If adjacent states find irredentism unattractive, the feeling is reciprocated by many discontented, territorially compact, transborder ethnic groups. Groups like these, with the potential to be retrieved, find retrieval by the putative irredentist state undesirable. This may be because that state is poorer or less prestigious or more authoritarian than the state in which they are now encapsulated. Baluch would rather be in Pakistan or be independent than be in Afghanistan, even if Afghanistan were at peace. Toubou in northern Chad might equally prefer several alternative fates to merger in Qaddafi's Libya. Ethnic affinity across borders is not enough by itself to make merger attractive.

One reason fostering the reluctance to be incorporated is so obvious that it has escaped notice altogether: the interests of political leaders of a potentially secessionist region. They are generally willing to accept independence, even though independence often means an economic position for their state that is inferior to the one it enjoyed as part of an undivided state, partly because with independence they will no longer have to compete for leadership positions with all the other political leaders in the undivided state. By partitioning their area within sovereign boundaries they also keep out competition for leadership. The ready willingness of so many backward regions to attempt secession soon after independence owes something to the interests of leaders who felt unable to compete in the wider arena.

The same logic applies to the response to the prospect of annexation in an adjacent, albeit ethnically kindred, state. Irredentism will re-merge not just populations but leadership pools. True enough, the ethnic affinities of the annexing and the annexed peoples may be more felicitous, but for leaders this may be more, rather than less, dangerous. If there is a sharp disparity of ethnic identification between the population of a given region and the population of the rest of the state in which it is currently merged, leaders of the group dominant in the region at least face no external challenge to their leadership of that group from leaders of the population in the remainder of the undivided state; by the same token, they are unable to aspire to leadership positions in the undivided state. This is the pre-secession situation. In the post-secession situation, those leaders still face no external challenge to their leadership, but now their group leadership

becomes state leadership, for the region has achieved sovereignty. If, instead of secession, the choice is merger into an existing, adjacent state via irredentism, regional leaders have not achieved sovereignty and also are no longer immune from external challenge. Quite the opposite. Ethnic affinities across the irredentist border open the way to challenges to their leadership from ethnically kindred leaders of the annexing state.

There are also, of course, wider opportunities for leaders of the annexed region in the larger irredentist state as a whole, but these are more circumscribed than they might at first appear. First, leaders from the newly annexed region must break into what is likely to be a crystallized political situation and do so from a merely regional base, with at best imperfect knowledge of the new state and its political patterns. Second, because ethnic affinities are rarely undifferentiated, the newly annexed area stands every chance of being regarded as at least subethnically different in composition (in dialect, accent, family ties, or customs) – in short, as truly peripheral¹⁶ – and its people, cousins though they are, are likely to be viewed as rustics who lived too long under an alien regime. So the position of the annexed region as peripheral newcomer is an enormous impediment to the national-level ambitions of its leaders should irredentism succeed.

Given this structure of opportunities and constraints, is it not obvious that secession will be the preferred alternative of most ethnic leaders in separatist regions? Of course, leadership interests are not always overriding. Leaders may be, and sometimes are, overruled by an avalanche of mass ethnic sentiment.¹⁷ Moreover, the particular structure of opportunities and constraints will vary from one situation to another, and some regional leaders may prefer irredentism to secession, just as many prefer continuation of the region in the undivided state of which it is currently a part.¹⁸ But where withdrawal from that state is the preferred option, most leaders, most of the time, will think in terms of becoming leaders of the sovereign state, rather than risking reincorporation into another, larger state, the behaviour of which toward a newly annexed region is, in any case, impossible to foretell. Overall, leadership interests are a major explanation for the frequency of secession and the infrequency of irredentism.

Reluctance to be annexed by an adjacent state may also derive from the heterogeneity of the irredentist state. Even assuming transborder ethnic affinities are intact, the retrieving state may contain a plurality of ethnic groups, so that a decision in favour of irredentism will not necessarily be a decision resulting in ethnic self-determination, much less domination in the new state. The Ewe and the Bakongo (of the Democratic Republic of Congo [Kinshasa] and the Republic of Congo [Brazzaville]) are in this position. Even if adjoining states containing other Ewe and Bakongo wished to retrieve them – which they do not – the presence of still other powerful ethnic groups in the retrieving state would deter acceptance of the offer.

Moreover, such potentially irredentist groups – the Kurds are also among them – cannot practically go the alternative route and opt for multiple secessions, carving out of several existing states a new, homogeneous Ewe, Bakongo, or Kurdish state. One secession is difficult enough; it has long odds. But multiple secessions threaten the very governments whose aid across borders is the indispensable component of success. I have already noted the unwillingness of the Kurds in Iraq to take a position regarding Kurds in Iran that would have precluded Iranian assistance. The same applies to all such transborder groups; for this reason, potential irredentists are much more likely to engage in their own separate secessions.

As a matter of fact, virtually everything I have said thus far points in the same direction. If claims are convertible from secession to irredentism and vice versa, if

transborder affinities are imperfectly developed, if state policy is at best inconstant, and if there is frequently a reluctance to retrieve or to be retrieved, the sum of all of this is a powerful structural bias against the incidence of irredentism. What that means is that discontented groups will tend to look favourably on secession, rather than on irredentism, where both are possible. The Malays of southern Thailand, who might have become irredentist but find no such invitation from across the Malaysian border, are likely to find secession an attractive alternative. As noted earlier, the many compact groups that do not span borders do not, by definition, have an irredentist option. In practice, neither do most of the many transborder groups have an irredentist option.

In short, all else being equal, the fewer the irredentas, the larger the number of secessionist movements. And since irredentas are rare, secession is by far the more frequent movement of territorially compact ethnic groups. The opposite conclusion also seems likely: *ceteris paribus*, if for some reason the various inhibitions on irredentism were to decline and irredentism were to become more common, there would also be fewer secessionists.

That is not to say that there is only a finite amount of ethnic discontent available or a finite number of movements possible among territorially compact ethnic groups. It is only to make the important point that the two types of movement are closely related and frequently are plausible alternatives to each other. The behaviour of many groups in one direction or another is structured by the availability or absence of the other option. Since there is no reason to think the inhibitions on irredentism will in fact decline – particularly because irredentism, unlike secession, depends on the presence of two willing parties whose interests and affinities are rarely identical – secession is likely to remain by far the more common movement.

The strength of movements

The strength of secessionist and irredentist movements – and their prospects for success – may be affected in various ways by whether they choose one or the other alternative and by whether the other possibility lurks in the background. If a transborder group attempts secession, the states hosting its population may combine to suppress the movement, as Iran and Pakistan have both suppressed the Baluch movement. If the groups adjacent to the border choose separate secessions at different times, the neighbouring governments may, on the contrary, provide assistance to the secessionists in the country across the border, on the Ethiopia–Sudan model. If, on the other hand, a movement becomes irredentist and one of the transborder segments seeks incorporation in the neighbouring state, it is quite possible that the two states will be at war over the issue.¹⁹ So the range of possibilities simultaneously affects prospects for the discontented ethnic groups and for relations between the states of which they are a part. The form of the movement thus has consequences, and the likely consequences presumably have a reciprocal influence on the form the movement takes and the objectives it proclaims.

Whether secessionists receive any significant support from the state across the border will depend, in considerable measure, on the international interests of that state and its objectives with respect to its neighbour. Where interests are perceived to be in conflict, at least some help can generally be expected, as Pakistan's receptivity to the Sikh independence movement shows. But where irredentism is in the background – even in the very remote background, as in India's relations with the Sri Lankan Tamils (despite Sinhalese suspicions of worse) – more support can be expected, at least for a time.

Indeed, because of external help of various kinds, from various sources, both the Sikh and the Sri Lankan Tamil movements engaged in armed warfare far out of proportion to the underlying and at best ambivalent sentiments of their putatively secessionist populations. The armed militants had their way because of international connections.

Where, however, irredentist sentiment is more strongly felt in the putative retrieving state, warfare may be initiated even if – and perhaps because – the authorities in the putative irredentist state are unsympathetic to the irredentist objective. I am thinking here of the warfare that made Bangladesh independent. To be sure, there were several reasons why India intervened in East Bengal in 1971. There was an unparalleled opportunity to dismember Pakistan and install a friendlier government on the eastern frontier. There was the burden of refugees and the prospect of long-simmering guerrilla warfare across borders under circumstances that might later become more favourable to Pakistan. Pakistan's retaliation for inevitable Indian assistance to the guerrillas might prove painful. But, above and beyond all the other reasons, there were incipient claims in West Bengal for the unification of all Bengalis, east and west. Had this movement succeeded, the Hindu–Muslim balance in India would have been altered permanently, and India would have assumed the burden of supporting a very poor dependent state. An independent Bangladesh was far preferable to a growing demand for a Bengali irredenta. Consequently, India's willingness to go to war to secure Bangladesh's independence was likely coloured by the alternative (and undesirable) possibility of irredentism. The success of the war produced a *fait accompli*, an independent Bangladesh that ended the irredentist clamour the government of India had no wish to encourage,

If this analysis is correct, it shows that the only successful secession from 1945 to 1991 was the result of a secessionist war conducted in the growing shadow of a potential irredenta. And if this is so, the example shows again, not merely how the two phenomena are related, but how the reluctance of states to espouse irredentist claims drives ethnic movements toward secession – in this case, secession augmented by military force that an irredenta-shy regime committed in time to forestall an irredentist movement it had no wish to encourage.

The choice of movement and the bases of action

In explaining the relationship between secessions and irredentas. I have not gone all the way back to account for the emergence of movements for ethno-territorial separatism in the first instance. To do this would require much greater explication of the course of ethnic relations within the undivided state. There is now quite a wide range of theorizing on the emergence of such movements, some more inward-looking, emphasizing intra-ethnic history, myths of origin, and connections to land, others more outward-looking, emphasizing interethnic changes within the present territory.²⁰ What is rare is a general theory that accounts for whether ethnoterritorial separatism will take a secessionist or irredentist course. The two are typically bracketed together in the literature, as if the emergence of one or the other were a matter of no consequence or a happenstance event.

We have seen, however, that secessions and irredentas are convertible under some circumstances but not perfectly interchangeable at all. Their widely differential frequency shows how much more attractive secession is overall. To the participants, it obviously matters enormously which course is chosen, and it follows that the conditions

associated with each course can, in principle, be specified. As they make such choices, group members and leaders resort to an array of perceptual and calculative considerations. Who are our true cousins? In which territorial unit are my political ambitions more likely to be fulfilled? Who will deploy force against us if we go in one direction or another? Neither secession nor irredentism is a spontaneous, unorganized movement, so it is hardly surprising that the strategic choice should have a heavy overlay of calculations of rational interest.

Such a conclusion should not, however, displace the role of the emotional discomfort that is customarily felt in conflict-prone interethnic relations or the perceptions of ethnic affinity and disparity that define group boundaries – neither of which is properly subsumed in any sensible scheme based wholly on rational interest. Indeed, even as we explain the preference for secession over irredentism on understandable calculative grounds, we elide an element of choice that belies the dominant role of calculation: if nearly every secession is doomed to failure, why do secessionist movements continue to arise? Until we are able to specify the mix of givens and chosens, of passionate and calculative behaviour, with greater precision, we shall continue to bracket related ethnic phenomena, the choice of which is neither an unpredictable event nor a matter of indifference to the participants.

Notes

- 1 On 9 December 2009, the Indian government announced that it would start the process of creating a separate Telangana state. This was followed by serious unrest in the existing state of Andhra Pradesh, prompting the government on 24 December 2009 to make any further action dependent on a political consensus in the existing state.
- 2 Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 105.
- 3 Immanuel Wallerstein, *Africa: The Politics of Independence* (New York: Vintage, 1961), p. 88.
- 4 Donald L. Horowitz, "Patterns of Ethnic Separatism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23, 2 (April 1981):165–195, at p. 194.
- 5 As Jacob Landau pointed out at the conference to which this chapter in its original form was a contribution.
- 6 Subsequent developments in the former Yugoslavia confirm this assessment from two decades ago: Kosovo is now an independent state, recognized by over fifty members of the UN following its unilateral declaration of independence on 17 February 2007.
- 7 Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1985), chapter 6.
- 8 Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 4–5.
- 9 The military defeat of the Tamil Tigers by the Sri Lankan government in spring 2009 may have put at least a temporary end to any further secessionist impulses among some Tamils.
- 10 The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement for Sudan includes an option for independence for the South. In late 2009, North and South reached an agreement on the terms of a referendum on the future status of the South in 2011.
- 11 Joane Nagel, "The Conditions of Ethnic Separatism: The Kurds in Turkey, Iran, and Iraq," *Ethnicity* 7, 3 (September 1980): 279–297; George S. Harris, "Ethnic Conflict and the Kurds," *The Annals* 433 (September 1977): 112–124.
- 12 While Somalia subsequently experienced a complete state collapse and has not had a functioning government for almost two decades now, irredentist impulses have kept resurfacing regularly.

- 13 David J. Banks, *Malay Kinship* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1933), pp. 25–28.
- 14 Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, pp. 281–288, section entitled “Irredentism: Prerogative of the Few.”
- 15 *Ibid.*, pp. 274–275.
- 16 This is not necessarily a reflection of the actual historical role of the region now regarded as peripheral.
- 17 Here, however, it should be borne in mind that the leadership interests are likely to be disproportionately important. Once the matter comes down to secession or irredentism it will probably also come to fighting, and the leaders will negotiate access to the crucial arms.
- 18 For a discussion of the many African groups divided by boundaries see A.I. Asiwaju, ed., *Partitioned Africans* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985).
- 19 This point is based on Myron Weiner’s comments at the conference to which this chapter in its original form was a contribution.
- 20 Compare, for example, Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 64–66, with Ronald Rogowski, “Causes and Varieties of Nationalism: A Rationalist Account,” in Ronald Rogowski and Edward A. Tiryakian (eds) *New Nationalisms of the Developed West* (Boston MA: Allen & Unwin, 1985), pp. 87–107.

Further reading

- Emerson, Rupert, *From Empire to Nation* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).
- Gurr, Ted Robert, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970).
- Horowitz, Donald L., *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley CA and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985).
- Horowitz, Donald, L., “Patterns of Ethnic Separatism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23, 2 April 1981.
- Smith, Anthony D., *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
- Wallerstein, Immanuel, *Africa: The Politics of Independence* (New York: Vintage, 1961).