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**Adding to the Westphalian Map:
Categorizing Mechanisms of National Self-determination**

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Abstract

This paper seeks to add greater definitional rigor to categorizing the mechanisms through which separatist regions become independent. In the literature, some sporadic delineation is used; however, it is not uniform nor are the definitions widely agreed upon. It is, therefore, important to categorize different ways in which new states effectively add to the Westphalian map. Six distinct mechanisms of independence emerged in this study which were then divided into four groups. Each group helps to explain how a state breakups up and under what conditions. Decolonization, irredentism, dissolution and secession are the four major groupings of national independence found in this work which help to define and categorize separatist movements. The latter two can also be delineated further to include: removal of a territory from a state (dissolution) and secession with the assistance of the international community (secession). This finding may have implications for academicians and policymakers seeking to resolve ongoing conflicts and contentions amongst regions vying for national independence worldwide. Since the number of viable separatist movements remains, this work helps to better understand the trajectory of a given contestation and how said contestation may be resolved if independence is presented as a viable option.

Introduction¹

Terminology, in many respects, can be one of the most difficult aspects of academic writing and discussion. In numerous fields, wording and issues of terminology can negate and slow meaningful debate. This is evidenced in the field of nationalism studies and a related derivative, studies of self-determination. Terms like nation, state and nation-state are often conflated in the media, academic literature and by politicians. While this may not necessarily matter to media personnel and political elites, it should be an important focus for academics. Words help to provide a more concise description of issues, philosophies and events and thus should be utilized fully in this field. Furthermore, by better delineating terminology, greater understanding can emerge and a fuller picture can be drawn. More information could be gleaned from every conflict and help to provide more tools for understanding and hopefully deterring future conflicts. In sum, better terminology and better understanding could help to stop future conflicts.

My desire with this paper is to start a dialogue on the subject of delineating different mechanisms of self-determination so that a more nuanced approach can be taken. The dialogue should, however, also remain accessible to people new to the field with a reasonable designation of terms such that they are able to enter the debate and have the ability to contribute in meaningful ways.

A further desire of mine for this paper is to facilitate increased rigor for quantitative studies of ethnic conflict. Take, for example, the most recent debate in *Ethnopolitics* which started with Shale Horowitz attempting to justify the use of quantitative studies of ethnic conflict (Horowitz, 2008). He calls for more readily measurable variables in order to

¹ The author would like to thank Mark Cassell, Andrew Barnes, Elena Pokalova, Todd H. Nelson, Pat Coy and Landon E. Hancock for their critiques of earlier versions of this paper and for some of the categorizations.

improve the rigor of quantitative studies. I believe that there are limits to what can be measured, especially with regards to ethnic conflict, but improved definitional rigor could help in this process.

The Need for Increased Rigor

Conflicts over self-determination are, quite simply, not the same. Take the case of Yugoslavia, for example. It is not enough to argue that the state disintegrated, dissolved or that secession became rampant, one must examine fully the nuances of the conflict and show exactly how the state broke-up and to best define it. To borrow from the international relations literature, one must delve into the black box to uncover the nuances of the conflict, which may help resolve other similarly complicated conflicts in the future. When one really examines the case of Yugoslavia, many different mechanisms of self-determination were actually employed, rather than the commonly asserted notion that the state simply imploded in a wave of ancient ethnic hatred. Macedonia seceded peacefully albeit with the danger of widespread war if Yugoslavia contested; Slovenia seceded after a brief ten day war; Croatia underwent a more significant war to secede; Bosnia-Herzegovina withstood a barrage of assaults from both Serb and Croat alike before partition was granted through an internationally brokered peace agreement, the Dayton Accords. In perhaps what should be described as the second wave of Yugoslav disintegration, Montenegro obtained its independence peacefully in 2006 after the Union of Serbia and Montenegro dissolved and Kosovo is currently attempting to gain international legitimacy for statehood. The Yugoslav case then, while still one country, had many different types of break-ups. By implementing better definition rigor, therefore, some delineation may be possible as to why

violence occurred in some places and not in others and why self-determination was quick in several new states but long and drawn out in others.

In Table One below, I attempt to delineate between six different mechanisms of self-determination. They attempt to draw significant distinctions between various mechanisms through which self-determination can occur; although, they are not all mutually exclusive. Thinking in these terms may better allow for conflict resolution to come about and for a broader range of options to become available. Further research may help to better draw the distinctions between the six mechanisms I have proposed below and, potentially, add to the number of mechanisms that should be delineated between.

Six Important features of Self-determination

Self-determination can best be defined as a determination by the people as to how they should live and under what structure(s). This can refer simply to autonomy within a state in which a given region has significant powers, its own parliament or assembly and a good working relationship with the rest of the state. If the region desires, however, it can attempt to change its border status, either by gaining independence or changing the state in which it now exists. Table One below showcases six different mechanisms of self-determination that either provide independence to a region or colony or change their borders from one state into another.

Table One

Mechanism	Features
Decolonization	Former colonial territories become independent after the colonial power agrees to allow for independence.
Secession	A territory on the periphery of a state asserts its claim for independence from the state.
Partition	A region or territory becomes independent with the help of the international community if another state is obstructing it or whether its existing state is engaging in ethnic cleansing.
Dissolution	The center collapses and two or more new states are formed from the old state.
Removal	For whatever reason, a region within a state is no longer accepted as a part of the union and is granted its independence without necessarily wanting it. The center continues as a functioning state but ousts a given territory on the periphery.
Irredentism	Another state lays historical claim to a given territory in another state.

Definitions

The distinct mechanisms of self-determination are an area of scholarship that is, in many respects, undefined and often conflated in the literature. It is, therefore, worthwhile to bring greater clarity to each mechanism of self-determination. Doing this may allow future scholars to draw more rigorous and explicit conclusions of conflict and self-determination.

Decolonization is, perhaps, the most substantial reason as to why the number of states has increased so dramatically in the last half century. The definition is quite simple therefore: a colony becomes independent from its former colonial power. This, as evidenced by much of developing world, shows how these territories have become sovereign and recognized states within the international community.

Secession is another mechanism of self-determination that is quite popular. However, it is attempted much more than it is ever achieved. What happens essentially is

that one or more parts of the periphery become agitated with the center thus leading to increased desires to leave the current union and become independent. Support for secession must first be determined, whether secession is a popular thought amongst the people of the secessionist territory or whether it is merely the agitation of a few. After support for secession is realized, perhaps through the opening of a “policy window” (Kingdon, 2003), then the regional government/organization must advance these claims to the national government. The national government can then either accept the claims and allow for a vehicle to independence such as a successful referendum or contest them in which case conflict becomes more likely. Regardless, the state in question remains in tact albeit with one or more parts missing and continues to function in the international community as it did before.

Partition occurs when a given territory has been under foreign rule in which independence becomes a necessity or if a campaign of ethnic cleansing occurs. The international community can utilize this mechanism of self-determination so as to decrease the amount of violence around the globe. I have delineated it as different from secession because it happens fairly often in cases that otherwise would likely continue with violence and ethnic cleansing. In some ways, partition could be better described as secession guided by the international community. This term, however, is quite amorphous and so partition should facilitate a better discussion.

Dissolution occurs when the center opts to dissolve the existing union and replace it with two or more states. This, in many regards, vastly decreases the likelihood for violence because the central government realizes its own shortcomings and opts for a future in which the two or more parties can be better neighbors than members of the same family.

Dissolution usually allows for a more peaceful outcome than secession because the center realizes significant problems with the state and rather than go through a messy divorce, it decides to dissolve the union quickly. In this way, the original state is dissolved and replaced by two or more new states.

Removal is another way a given territory may become independent. It seems, in some measure, abnormal that a state might give up some of its territory and force self-determination upon a region, but it can happen. If several different ethnic groups reside within a heterogeneous state it is conceivable that rather than fighting a potentially long and costly war, that one group simply expels the other which, in turn, may fulfill the wishes of the region anyway. The major difference between dissolution and removal is the direction of the effect. In a dissolution, the center is dissolving which gives independence to the periphery. In the case of removal, however, the center stays in tact and ousts the periphery from its sphere of government.

Irredentism is not necessarily a mechanism through which a given territory may become independent, rather it is a method through which a territory may become part of another country that has similar cultural ties. It is an important part of self-determination although it does not add to the Westphalian map; however, it does change the sovereignty of a given territory from one jurisdiction to another.

A Brief Discussion of Nationalism

The obvious place to start when examining the idea of national self-determination is in the major works on nationalism. It is important to start here in order to get some background on nationalism and how it may have influenced the nuances of national self-determination.

Some well known scholars spent time thinking about the idea of national self-determination even if it was not the focal point of their respective studies.

Smith (1991) describes two routes to national formation: civic-territorial and ethnic-genealogical. His overall work is, with regards to national self-determination, a response to some of the predominant empires of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially in cases where an existing ethnies is mobilized for the purposes of national self-determination. He does delineate between the ideas of decolonization and secession, but does not go any deeper here. In a way, he begins to build upon the ideas formulated in Horowitz's typology which is discussed later.

Gellner (1983) articulates the importance of industrialization, education and high culture as the keys to nationalism. He does not spend a great deal of time on secession which was probably fairly outmoded at the time of his writing. Nonetheless, he does hit on some important points with regards to irredentist politics, the notion of claiming and regaining regions that belong to a given state at least from their own perspective.

Anderson (1983) describes the nation as an "imagined community" which is given credence through the rise of print-capitalism. His discussion of nationalism, while touching on the idea of national self-determination, does not go into depth on the subject matter. However, he does describe numerous examples of states and their breakups especially with regards to some of the more temporary units created as colonial empires began to collapse in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Breuilly (1982) approaches nationalism in a different way. He regards the traditional factors leading to nationalism such as culture, ideology, identity and class, as secondary factors to the issue of power. Power is desired because it leads to control over

sovereignty which, in the right circumstances, can be an incredible motivating factor for asserting increased nationalist tendencies.

This brief survey of some of the major scholars of nationalism reveals that the idea of national self-determination is addressed more so in passing than as a central theme in their respective works. They spend much more time building a theory of nationalism rather than national self-determination.

The term “national self-determination” was, historically, used to describe all forms of national self-determination. Alfred Cobban (1945) described the concept of national self-determination and argued that it was not an absolute right. The best way forward, Cobban argued, is to examine each case individually. What this begins to infer is the notion that each case is different. For a significant period of time after Woodrow Wilson’s “Fourteen Points” speech in 1918, national self-determination came to the fore. This was the primary way of describing how demands were asserted; they were, however, lumped together under one term rather than delineated between.

This changed in the 1960s and 1970s as Lee Buchheit (1978) describes the notion of secession as an encompassing term for national self-determination and, most interestingly, asserts that it is only seen as legitimate after it has been internationally recognized. The terminology, therefore, began to expand as cases of secession were recognized differently from cases of decolonization and irredentism.

Terminology, as in most disciplines and sub-disciplines, can be a significant stumbling bloc in properly presenting and debating ideas and describing similar processes across academic disciplines. Debates are, at times, rendered useless because of terminology; one person is advocating one issue as opposed to another without the

appropriate level of understanding between the two. This is evident in my discussion as there are many definitions surrounding the study of national self-determination including: decolonization, secession, disintegration, partition, dissolution and breakups among others. Some clarification, therefore, is needed in order to delineate what pertains to what. However, as space is limited, I will focus on the major terms: decolonization, secession and partition before moving on to a discussion of recent works on the idea of dissolution.

Decolonization

Decolonization is the most obvious form of national self-determination such that former colonial territories became independent once public opinion shifted towards decolonization (Jackson, 1993). Moreover, the economic plight of the European powers after World War Two also contributed to decolonization. There were other reasons to for decolonization but for the purposes of this paper, I will keep this concise answer. Decolonization can be delineated from other mechanisms of national self-determination since the colonial region never agreed to the union in the first place. After all, “they are not seceding from that to which they never belonged” (Bookman, 1993).

Decolonization, in many respects, began with India in 1947 before moving to Africa, starting with Ghana (formerly the Gold Coast) in 1957. African colonial territories became independent throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s when the British and French pulled out of the majority of their holdings. Portuguese colonial holdings, in contrast, did not become independent until 1974, after the country had transitioned from authoritarianism to democracy (Spruyt, 2000). Decolonization, therefore, was more or less complete in the matter of a few decades. The vast majority of these territories became independent states simply through the withdrawal of the colonial power. However, in more

recent years, decolonization has again become important to small entities and referenda have been invoked as a means to test the public's desire for independence.

In some instances, the colonial territory has voted against obtaining its independence. Bermuda, for example, held a referendum in the 1995 which was rejected by the people (Kauffman and Waters, 2004). This does not mean that independence is not going to happen; just that it is not going to happen now.

Despite this example and the continued relevance of decolonization today, this mechanism is not the most prominent form of national self-determination, especially in more recent decades as described above. Secession is, in many respects, a term that has dominated the literature regarding national self-determination. This is not because it is more common than decolonization; rather it is more widely sought than decolonization because relatively few territories can make the claims of independence through decolonization. Many others, however, simply do not agree with their situation in their present state and assert the desire to leave.

Secession

Perhaps the most prominent work on secession has been done by Horowitz (1985). The development of his typology of separatist movements delineates his ideas into four quadrants: advanced and backwards regions in advanced and backwards states. While there is some proof to the contrary, Horowitz's typology has been well received in the field especially with regards to states in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. Secession, as evidenced in the three examples below, is a more nebulous term however and its contours do need further investigation.

Moore (2001), in a more philosophical piece, examines the ethics of secession and the legitimacy of nationalism. She is quite reasonable in her approach, arguing that it is good to accommodate different national groups, but there are limits to self-determination. Perhaps these limits could be better described through a more nuanced investigation of the mechanisms of national self-determination.

Young (1995) describes secession in the Czechoslovak case when trying to draw parallels to the case of Quebec just prior to their 1995 referendum. He presents numerous similarities between the two cases, but the trajectory of the respective break-ups would be much different. Canada would continue to function as a unified state simply with less people, less territory and less overall wealth. Secession, therefore, is overused in the literature and not necessarily as well described as it could be. It has room for some greater clarification.

Ayres and Saideman (2000) use a similar term, separatism, to describe the cases of Czechoslovakia, Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. It is an all purpose type term, like partition, that would help to explain breakups in a broad range of cases. Unfortunately, it does not delineate between the cases at all. There is a need, therefore, to clarify what secession is and what it is not.

Partition

Another term, partition, is used with some regularity in the literature and is also difficult to pin down. In the literature, partition can mean one of two things. First, it can be as Radha Kumar (1997) infers, a sense of outside intervention and negotiation that helps to provide independence to regions that have been overly abused as part of a given state. Ironically, Kumar does describe the breakups of the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia as examples of

dissolution, but is more concerned with the overall idea of partitioning states. Kaufmann (1998) agrees with Kumar for the most part but does delineate between secession and partition to try and decipher whether international intervention increases or decreases the costs of ethnic conflict. However, he too is more concerned with the theoretical implications of partition rather than trying to examine the idea of secession. The term partition is also given a second meaning by Sambanis (2000) in reference to the idea that any border adjustment constitutes the idea of partition. This is done more so for the ease of creating a dichotomous variable for his quantitative study rather than figuring out the nuances of each breakup which, to be fair, would be an exhaustive and time consuming project in and of itself.

Partition, like secession before it, is not very well defined. In many quantitative studies, it is easier to create a larger sample size by grouping similar cases; but in reality, much is lost when this is done. This leaves the concept of dissolution. Dissolution is an important study area especially in multinational states since identity is naturally split between two or more groups. The issue of political access/power does much to influence policy in the country.

Dissolution

Dissolution is underdeveloped, in some respects, because only the more recent cases of Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia have been classified as such. Furthermore, studies on the break-ups in Eastern Europe tended to include Yugoslavia which drew interest in delineating between peaceful and violent break-ups (Bunce, 1999).

However, dissolution is relevant also to personal unions like Norway-Sweden.² A personal union is an agreement, whether forced or mutually agreed upon, between two or more parts. The two parts are governed by the same monarch but their laws and institutions remain distinct. Both unions were designed in such a way so as to facilitate a break-up if one of the sides deemed it necessary. In the design of the personal union, especially in the case of the latter, the union was designed to facilitate dissolution.

Dissolution is also important for loose confederal arrangements like the Union of Serbia and Montenegro which dissolved in 2006. The two parts, along with autonomous regions like Kosovo and Vojvodina, comprised a “rump” Yugoslavia after the four secessions of the early 1990s. Even though the union was short lived, the 2003 Belgrade Agreement still needed to be dissolved in order to give Montenegro independence (Darmanovic, 2007).

Bunce (1999) describes state disintegration in her comparison of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. In this type of comparison, the term disintegration might best fit all three cases. However, she does use the terms dissolution to describe the Czechoslovak and Soviet cases and successfully delineates between this and secession.

MacCormick (2000) describes the potential for dissolution, specifically with regards to the constitutionality of Scotland dissolving the 1707 Act of Union with Britain. In this way, MacCormick is describing dissolution in a slightly different, more legalistic manner. However, the basic idea of dissolving the existing union remains the same. His focus is solely on dissolving the Act of Union whereas my definition would refer to dissolving the United Kingdom as a whole.

² Dissolution is not limited to Europe, but is the focus of my study. Other examples include: the West Indian Federation which dissolved in the early 1960s after the notable secession of Jamaica, and the short-lived United Arab Republic (Egypt and Syria) among others.

In Kraus and Stranger's (2000) edited volume of the break-up of Czechoslovakia, the authors utilize the term dissolution to describe the break-up of the state. However, in some of the chapters, the term secession is also used to refer to this case. This would be correct when describing the Slovak separatist movement, but the way the Czechoslovak state actually broke up was through mutual parliamentary dissolution.

In a similar vein, Svec (1992) also describes the "Velvet Divorce" in Czechoslovakia as a case of dissolution but it remains unclear exactly what that means. His article, published before the actual dissolution of Czechoslovakia, does much to provide insight on the process of dissolution even if it is not properly specified at the time.

Removal

This specific designation of "removal" as a category of national self-determination is based solely upon the case of Singapore. In 1965, Singapore was effectively removed from the Federation of Malaya created in 1957 (Young, 1995). The Malaysian leader consulted his cabinet on the removal of Singapore from the union and Lee Kuan Yew was forced to negotiate the independence of his new state as best he could (Young, 1995). This, one can imagine, must have been extremely difficult and is quite unique in global politics.

Irredentism

While the subject of irredentism has received little attention, it is well documented by a select number of authors. Landau's books (1981; 1985) examine pan-Turkism, Saideman and Ayres (2000) put together a logit analysis of irredentism and Carment and James (1995) compare the affects of irredentism versus non-irredentism on interstate conflict.

Synthesizing Terms

In some ways, Table One is quite a difficult way to proceed when discussing self-determination. While six terms can be useful, some overlap and one is so rarely utilized that it is perhaps difficult to imagine that it would happen outside of the one case. For this reason I have delineated between four mechanisms and two sub-mechanisms to facilitate the discussion on self-determination and to allow for greater nuances within the areas of dissolution and secession.

I have left the terms decolonization and irredentism alone as they are well developed and represents fairly clear and cogent definitions. While irredentism does not provide a region with independence in the same way that the other terms do, it does provide them with self-determination. Moreover, irredentism changes the physical state in which the region exists. There are many reasons for this, both internal and external, that have relevance to this discussion on self-determination.

Table Two

Mechanism	Sub-mechanisms	Reason for Categorization
Decolonization		Clear, well defined in the literature
Secession		A region makes a clear attempt to gain independence. It is useful to delineate this from dissolution
	Partition	Overlaps significantly with secession and also might be classified as secession with the help of the international community
Dissolution		The center dissolves which splinters the state into two or more parts. This is useful because it delineates the opposite trajectory to secession.
	Removal	Only the case of Singapore really constituted removal. For this reason it should be included with dissolution because the union was dissolved albeit arbitrarily by the rest of the state.
Irredentism		Like decolonization, this term is well defined in the literature even if it used by a limited number of scholars.

Therefore, I am left with four distinct features of self-determination. The literature, perhaps most clearly delineated decolonization right now and so this can be left. Similarly, irredentism is well developed enough that it can stand alone. Secession and partition, however, have much in common. Put concisely, partition is really just secession guided by the international community through an agreement or accord. While a significant part of de jure sovereignty is recognition by others, the difference is obvious. If we return to our

example of Yugoslavia mentioned in the outset of this paper, the cases of Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina evidence this. Slovenia seceded after a brief ten day war. It emerged victorious in its conflict with Slobodan Milosevic's forces and gained full de jure independence once other states recognized it. Bosnia-Herzegovina, on the other hand, gained independence after it was successfully partitioned through the Dayton Accords. International recognition was forthcoming after the Dayton Accords but only through partition was the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina possible.

In this illustration, the differences between secession and partition are more obvious. Nonetheless, the international community is involved in some way, shape or form in both instances. For this reason, I consider partition a sub-mechanism of secession. It should remain this way for the purposes of simplicity. This makes it more accessible to the media and policymakers.

Furthermore, removal should be considered a sub-mechanism of dissolution because of its sui generis nature. Until further cases of removal become evident, this sub-mechanism only serves as a confusing part of the discussion. While it remains extremely important to Singapore and Malaysia, the broader literature should instead focus on the idea of dissolution.

These delineations leave us with four distinct mechanisms of self-determination: decolonization, secession, dissolution and irredentism. In this way, I have better categorized important terms in the field but have left it accessible to media personnel and policymakers. Hopefully, this will add a greater nuance and rigor but keep it accessible and understandable to new people entering the field or the interested layperson. More nuanced academic debate can then explore the sub-mechanisms of self-determination. Overall this

should help to provide a better understanding of how states break-up and the conflicts that may surround them. By extrapolating further, we may be able to save lives and limit conflicts through greater understanding.

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