

Peaceful and Violent Separatism in North America, Europe, and the Middle East, 1861–1993

Can my theory explain secessionist violence, or the complete lack thereof, in vastly different regions and eras? To that end, I proceed in three sections.

In the first, I turn my attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since the 1980s. This conflict allows a direct comparison of my theory with its primary competitor, the reputation argument. As a binational state, one that is a “liberal” democracy no less, Israel would be expected to treat an independence movement with little recourse to violence. Given there is no possible ethnic group other than the Palestinians that would demand statehood on land controlled by Israel, it need not be concerned with establishing a tough reputation against independence movements. My argument would predict the opposite, given Israel’s security concerns with the prospect of an independent Palestine. Second, despite being one of the most important geopolitical disputes today, easily fulfilling the “intrinsic importance” criterion whose use methodologists encourage,¹ students of secessionist violence have strangely ignored it. This may be because the Israeli-Palestinian dispute may not strike some as obviously “secessionist”—notwithstanding datasets on secessionism including both the first and second intifadas.² Such a view would be wrongheaded, however: the fight between Israel and Palestinians is over whether the latter can establish a state on territory controlled by the former, the very definition of a secessionist conflict. As I discuss below, Israel’s coercive response to Palestinians’ secessionist moment, the first intifada, is consistent with my theory’s expectations, when it chose such a strategy because of security fears. These fears sprung from its rough neighborhood, featuring a history of warfare with its neighbors, and its essentializing of Palestinian nationalism, subsuming it under an “Arab” identity. In keeping with its “policing” strategy, coercion was relatively low, and Israel additionally offered tactical concessions to moderate Palestinian nationalists, at Oslo, that fell well short of statehood. That said, it is important to acknowledge

that factors that lie outside the explanatory range of my theory, such as the rise of the religious-nationalist settler lobby in Israel, and the Palestinians' ability to manufacture violence despite little third-party support, are also important to the development of the conflict, especially in the last two decades. Nevertheless, the issue of security generally looms large when one considers Israeli intransigence in the face of Palestinian demands for a state, both in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

I then examine two of the handful of completely peaceful major secessions to occur in the twentieth century, one in 1993 that dissolved Czechoslovakia into its constituent units, and the other in 1905 that separated Norway and Sweden. It is important, after all, that a theory purporting to explain the variation in state response to secessionism is able to offer insight on the cases in which the state did not seriously consider violence, let alone use it. Methodologists have noted that social science should be "concerned not only with cases where something 'happened,' but also with cases where something did not."³ A number of previous chapters showed how my argument can deal with genocidal violence, as well as less intense forms of coercion, but what about instances in which separatism generated only peaceful negotiations and concessions? As I show below, the muted external security implications of Norwegian and Slovak separatism facilitated their respective host states peacefully negotiating their exit from the polity. The "Velvet Divorce" that split the Czech and Slovak republics in 1993 was made possible by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, and the unification of Germany, all of which signaled the changing geopolitics of Central Europe. Combined with the relatively muted history of conflict between Czechs and Slovaks, ensuring that there were no deep identity divisions between the two, this benign regional environment allowed Czech leaders to peacefully acquiesce to Slovak nationalism. Similarly, almost a century earlier, the insulation of Scandinavia from traditional European power politics, and Norway's pledge to destroy border forts as a condition of its independence, mitigated any threat Sweden might have faced from the establishment of a fully sovereign Norway. As a consequence, Sweden and Norway peacefully went their separate ways.

Finally, I investigate the U.S. Civil War, even though it neither took place in the twentieth century, nor was it, strictly speaking, ethnic in nature. Nevertheless, the very fact that it does not fit the profile of the type of secessionist struggle I discuss in this book makes it a useful litmus test—if my argument can account for elements of a dispute that lies outside its original scope conditions, we can gain even greater confidence in its explanatory power. As I show below, Union leaders denied Southern independence in part based on concerns about the prospect of a geopolitically divided North America were the Confederacy to secede. They were further rankled by British and French interference in the crisis, which compelled Lincoln to escalate to a "militarization" strategy at Bull Run, setting the stage for a

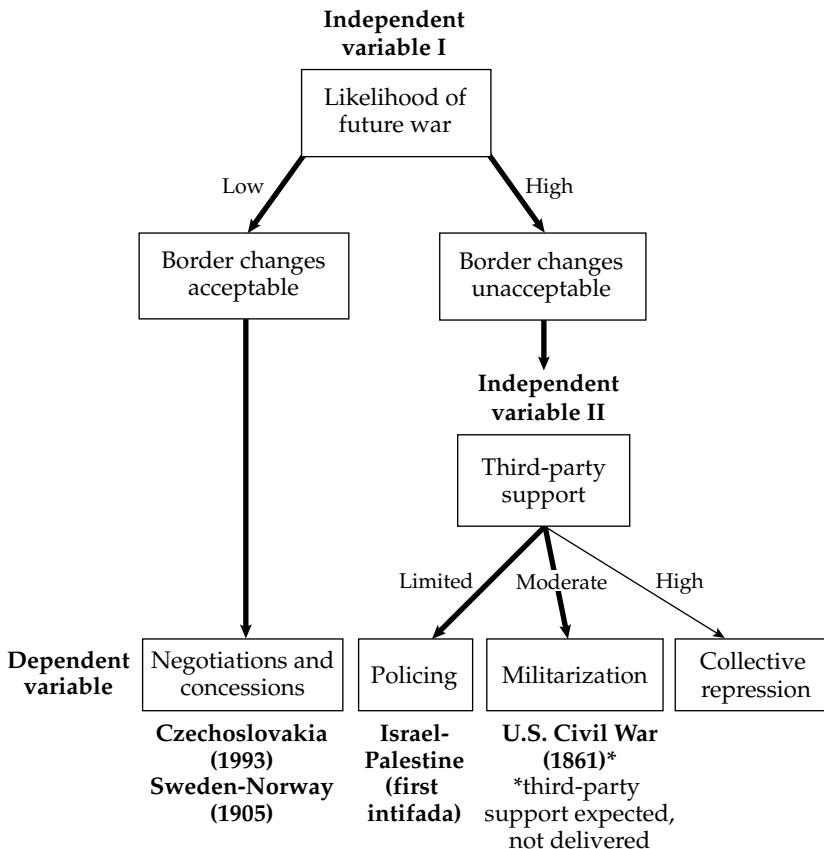


Figure 5. Variation in state response to secessionism in the Middle East, Europe, and North America, 1861–1993

larger conflagration. However, the case does not fit my theory in one important sense. Usually, the intensity of coercion is determined by how much third-party support is delivered, but in this case, such support had not actually materialized. Rather, Union leaders chose to escalate to *preempt* third-party support, undergirded by a belief that a more forthright response would signal to, especially, Britain that it should not interfere. Figure 5 summarizes the argument I develop in this chapter.

Israel-Palestine: A Unique Separatist Conflict

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is by any measure one of the most important in international politics today. It is also one of the most controversial: it

touches on themes as visceral as nationalism, colonialism, territoriality, historical memory, religion, identity, and inequity. Though scholars of secessionism have generally shied away from studying this dispute, such inattention is mistaken. At bottom, I submit, the conflict is separatist: a nationalist group (the Palestinians) under the control of a state (Israel) wishes to establish a state of its own on the territory which it inhabits, and the state in question has used a variety of methods to ensure this eventuality does not come to pass.⁴ This picture is slightly complicated by the fact that some of the territory on which the Palestinians live is not fully incorporated into Israel “proper,” but for our purposes, this technicality is just that. Israel controls and exercises authority over the Palestinian territories, and has incorporated them into its administrative web after its victory in the six-day war of 1967.⁵ In turn, the indigenous Palestinian population has carried out a liberation struggle against the Israel, aimed at the creation of a new state.⁶ This makes it a separatist movement in the strict sense of the term. As such, theories of secessionist conflict should have a great deal to say about this conflict, if little about how to solve it, an admittedly daunting task.

As it stands, however, the main alternative theory to mine is unable to provide significant analytical traction on this dispute. Arguments that revolve around internal deterrence and demography would predict peaceful concessions from Israel, up to and including a Palestinian state possessing military, paramilitary, and police forces. Given it is a binational state, comprised almost entirely of Jews and Arabs, Israel should have no precedents to fear were it to grant autonomy or independence to the Palestinians. Which ethnic group in Israel, after the Palestinians, will rise up and demand a state of their own? Unfortunately for these theories, this state of affairs has not materialized. To the contrary, Israel has used varying levels of repression to deal with the Palestinian movement and has been unprepared to acquiesce to an independent, Weberian state. Meanwhile, the institutions argument does explain important elements of this case, providing a framework to understand the influence of Israel’s religious-nationalist settlers and their political supporters. However, the importance of the far right has markedly increased in the twenty-first century. In the immediate aftermath of the first Palestinian intifada, the main object of study here, Israeli religious nationalists exercised less influence over events, with Israeli policy in the hands of centrists: a unity government, followed by a center-left government led by Yitzhak Rabin. Even these “moderate” elements, however, dismissed the possibility of a fully-sovereign Palestinian state. The question then becomes: why did this “liberal” democracy, with no other ethnicities in its midst that would conceivably rise and demand statehood, not allow for the creation of an independent Palestine?

Consistent with my theory, Israel’s coercive strategy of “policing” in response to the first intifada was conditioned by its lack of trust that its

external security would not be violated by the creation of a Palestinian state, were it to come to fruition. This lack of trust related to its rough neighborhood, one of the most militarized in the world,⁷ in which it has been the victim of Arab state aggression, especially early in its life as an independent state. In combination with this collective memory of conflict with Arab neighbors, an essentializing logic that subsumed Palestinian nationalism under the rubric of general Arab hostility to the state ensured that Palestinian identity is necessarily seen as “opposed” to Israel’s founding Jewish nationalism. Together, Israel’s conflict-prone environment and calcified view of Palestinian/Arab identity rendered it incapable of acquiescing to an independent Palestine. Simply put, Israel feared that granting a Palestinian state would result in further security problems for it. Given this logic, it was advisable to repress Palestinians in the present, pay the limited but rising reputational costs associated with such policy, and live to fight another day.

That said, we should be careful to ascribe Israeli behavior only to external security concerns, especially in the last two decades, a period in which my argument has more limited explanatory power. The rightward turn in domestic politics in Israel since the 1970s, and its acceleration since the mid-1990s, is organized around the related desire for colonizing land in “Judea and Samaria,” or the West Bank, which also helps explain its strident reaction to Palestinian nationalism. This increased prominence of the Israeli far right has added an ideological and religious dimension to a territorial conflict, and made Israeli leaders from both the right and left loathe to yield even slightly in negotiations with Palestinians. Such domestic developments lie outside the bounds of my theory. My theory also struggles to explain Israel’s “militarization” strategy in the second intifada. I would expect such a strategy only under conditions of at least “moderate” third-party support, but Palestinian groups had little material backing from external powers in the early 2000s. Nevertheless, I maintain that even in the twenty-first century, concerns about security are one of the prime drivers of Israeli intransigence on the question of a Palestinian state.

There are two questions organizing this case. First, how do we classify the Israeli response to the Palestinian quest for statehood, especially in the immediate aftermath of the first intifada? Second, to what extent was this response determined by external security considerations? Before we get to these questions, however, we must go slightly further back in time.

TERRITORY, NATION, AND STATE IN ISRAEL-PALESTINE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

It was at the end of World War I that European countries sliced Arab lands, previously under the control of the defeated Ottoman Empire, into colonial trusteeships called “mandates.” Each of these mandates, including Palestine,

witnessed a general national awakening.⁸ Unlike the others, however, the Palestinian national movement had to contend with competing claims to the same land. The movement for Jewish nationalism, known as Zionism, considered the ancient Kingdom of Israel the most apposite location for a modern Jewish state and inspired waves of migration, leading to an increase in the Jewish population, from 24,000 in 1882, or 5 percent of the population of Palestine, to 85,000 by 1914.⁹ Palestinian concerns escalated in 1917, when the Balfour Declaration—bearing the name of Foreign Secretary Balfour, who had written in a confidential memo in 1919 that “Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of greater import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land”—privileged Jewish over Arab nationalism. As a consequence, Palestinians would turn their attention to convincing the colonial power to abandon the commitment to a Jewish national home.¹⁰

Between 1921 and 1929, Jewish land possessions, settlements, and businesses multiplied in Palestine. The Jewish community, known as the Yishuv, increasingly appeared as a protostate: it had an elected national assembly, an armed defense force, an institutional architecture related to agricultural collectives, waves of new immigrants, and banking. The community's highly skilled human capital, urban nature, ideological homogeneity, and financial and political support from abroad additionally stood it in good stead. By contrast, Arabs in Palestine had no such support, nor had they built internal institutions to the same extent. Moreover, the leaders of the Palestinian national movements were drawn from only a narrow sliver of the elite and were internally divided. Palestinians simply fell short of achieving the level of cohesion and political advancement of the Jewish community, with even the revolt of 1936–39 marked by fragmentation.¹¹

The 1930s saw substantial immigration into Mandatory Palestine by European Jews escaping Nazi persecution, while Hitler's genocide during World War II deepened and broadened support for Zionism among both Jews and non-Jews.¹² Meanwhile, Jewish militant groups successfully attacked British targets in Palestine, forcing Britain to transfer its mandate to the UN in 1947. In November of that year, the UN General Assembly passed resolution 181 dividing Palestine into two states, one Arab and one Jewish. The Yishuv accepted the plan, but the Arabs' representatives, along with Arab states, rejected it. The basis of this rejection was that Jews were a third of the population and owned less than 10 percent of the land, and yet were awarded 56 percent of Palestine, including territory which was 45 percent Arab.¹³

This state of affairs led to two separate but related conflicts: one between the Jews and Arabs of Palestine, and the other between the nascent state of Israel and independent Arab states. The former began almost immediately after the passage of Resolution 181, with Arab offensives repelled by the

superior Jewish forces. By March 1948, about 75,000, mostly urban middle-class Palestinians fled the violence and chaos. More would follow with a Jewish offensive in the spring, with entire towns and villages being impelled to escape by episodes such as the Deir Yasin massacre. In all, between 250,000 and 350,000 Palestinians were expelled or fled in this first phase of the war. On May 14, the state of Israel was established, which led to five Arab states waging war on the Jewish state. Israel decisively won the war the next year, by which time the total number of Palestinians that had become refugees reached about 700,000—representing about 60 percent of the Palestinian population. Israel meanwhile controlled 78 percent of Mandate Palestine, about half more than it was allotted by Resolution 181. Egypt won the Gaza Strip on the southern Mediterranean coast, while Transjordan, which would become the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan later that year, took over the West Bank.¹⁴

The year 1948 represents a watershed moment in Palestinian history; the massive refugee outflow as a result of war is known as *naqba*—catastrophe. Before the war, Arabs had constituted a majority in the area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean, making up approximately 1.4 million out of 2 million people, and were a majority in fifteen of the sixteen subdistricts of Mandatory Palestine. By the end of the war, half had fled or been expelled, and about 150,000 Palestinians remained in Israel. As Israel's "new historians" working with archival evidence opened in the 1980s showed, "most Palestinians left because they were forced to do so either by direct Israeli attacks on their cities and villages or due to conditions of extreme insecurity." Indeed, it was known to Zionist leaders even in the 1920s and 1930s that the creation of a Jewish state within Mandatory Palestine, required the wholesale "transfer," or expulsion, of Arabs.¹⁵

Palestinians had become a Diaspora nation overnight: 10 percent were in the East Bank, 39 percent in the West Bank, 26 percent in Gaza, 14 percent in Lebanon, 10 percent in Syria, and 1 percent in Egypt. From the Israeli perspective, too, 1948 was a key moment, cementing the importance of external security in national narratives. After all, what could be more traumatic for a state's collective memory than a multipronged assault immediately on gaining a state, one created less than three years after Nazi death camps at Auschwitz, Majdanek, and Jasenova were closed? The conflicts affirmed for Israel the "myth in which the Jews are in existential danger of annihilation and must be ready to fight in the wars that are imposed on them against their will."¹⁶

The 1960s and 1970s saw an increasing indigenization of the Palestinian cause, with the birth of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) especially symbolizing control of the movement being wrested from Arab states by Palestinians.¹⁷ Israel's borders and regional environment, meanwhile, continued to be marked by danger. As a result of the Six-Day War of 1967, when Israel routed the armies of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan and

seized control of the West Bank from Jordan, the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, and the Golan Heights from Syria, a further 250,000–300,000 Palestinians became refugees.¹⁸ The 1967 war represents a critical juncture in the Israeli state’s approach to land. It marked the point at which “revisionist Zionism,” or the political movement aimed at incorporating the entire ancient Land of Israel, gained greater legitimacy domestically, and “set the stage for a war of position over the shape of the state.”¹⁹ Indeed, in many ways, Israel’s victory in 1967 was a poisoned chalice, summed up in a memorable exchange. After the victory, Prime Minister Eshkol held up a “V”-sign, only to be chastised by his wife: “Have you gone mad?” He replied: “No, this is not a V sign in English. It is a V sign in Yiddish! *Vi Krishen aroys?*” The phrase translates to “How do we get out of this?”²⁰

For their part, groups such as the PLO used terrorism and “fedayeen” raids from bases in Jordan—until September 15, 1970, when Jordan’s army began a move to crush them, expelling the PLO entirely by the next year—as well as Lebanon, whose southeast was so completely in the PLO’s hands that it was referred to as “Fatahland” in Israel.²¹ Israel’s sensitivity to these cross-border attacks was evinced in its full-scale invasions of Lebanon in 1978 and 1982,²² from which the Israeli military did not disengage until two decades later. In addition, Egypt and Syria, eager to reclaim lost territories in the Sinai and Golan Heights respectively, attacked it in 1973, catching Israel unaware and leading to the Yom Kippur War.²³ These border troubles helped cement the notion of vulnerability within sections of the Israeli body politic, which would have severe consequences for Palestinian nationalists two decades later, when their hopes for a sovereign state were denied.

THE FIRST INTIFADA AND ISRAEL’S POLICING STRATEGY

When the first mass uprising in Occupied Palestine took place in the late 1980s, the PLO’s leadership in Tunisia, along with Israel, was caught by surprise, and indeed threatened by the prospective development of an alternative, local, and younger leadership of the national movement.²⁴ The Palestinian intifada began early in December 1987, when an IDF vehicle crashed into a van transporting Palestinian workers back to Gaza, killing four and injuring seven. Rumors spread to the effect that the collision was deliberate. Matters were compounded when Israeli forces opened fire on demonstrations after the funerals the next day. In response, the Palestinians staged a national uprising, the intifada, one that constituted their secessionist moment. It was an almost entirely homegrown movement that began as a series of protests and demonstrations against “unbearable” economic conditions. Conversely, the Palestinian territories saw considerable sociopolitical development, including a burgeoning of civic institutions that formed the institutional backbone of the intifada, such as trade unions,

professional associations, students' committees, charities, newspapers, research institutes, and women's groups.²⁵

Several reasons explained the timing of the uprising.²⁶ First, both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank suffered major economic slumps in the 1980s. Between 1981 and 1985, per capita GNP fell almost 2 percent annually in Gaza and 0.7 percent annually in the West Bank. Second, Israel's control and occupation of the territories became more enveloping. For example, twenty-five hundred settlers in Gaza, constituting 0.4 percent of the population, controlled 28 percent of state land, and on average, West Bank settlers used twelve times as much water as Palestinians did. Third, Israeli policies predictably placed Palestinian development subordinate to Israel's economic needs, with the territories operating effectively as a "slave market" for the Israeli economy. Fourth, settlements expanded at pace, with the Jewish population in the West Bank almost doubling between 1984 and 1988, from thirty-five thousand to sixty-four thousand. More generally, there existed an "all-pervading element of humiliation" resulting from "the protracted state of political subjugation and economic dependence, and the day-to-day realities of military occupation [which] meant a continuous trampling of the basic rights and dignity of the inhabitants."²⁷ As Israeli historian Benny Morris sums up: "The rioters of December 1987 and the years that followed wanted to get rid of the Israeli occupation and to better their economic conditions. Most Palestinians certainly regarded independence and the establishment of their own state as a further, major objective."²⁸

Palestinians threw stones at soldiers and tanks and boycotted jobs in Israel; shopkeepers stopped accepting Israeli goods and paying taxes and were eventually even joined by Palestinians in Israel.²⁹ Rioting first began in Gaza's refugee camps and spread to camps in West Bank, before it extended into towns in both Gaza and the West Bank.³⁰ Though emanating from the ground up, this movement soon coalesced around an umbrella organization named United National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) that coordinated Palestinian political activities in the territories, before giving way to PLO leadership by the summer of 1988.³¹ The main decision maker—the "single most important national symbol and arbiter of Palestinian politics"—leading the movement at this point was Yasser Arafat.³² Importantly, Palestinians mostly refrained from violent methods in the intifada, both because doing so would play into Israeli hands but also to retain global sympathy as the oppressed party.³³

The intifada represented Palestinians' secessionist moment. The state's response was a policing strategy. It used relatively soft coercion while also making tactical concessions, all the while ruling out complete statehood, or anything approximating it, for the Palestinians. This strategy was undergirded by Israel's lack of faith in its future security should a militarized Palestine come into fruition, colored by its history of warfare

with its Arab neighbors and its essentializing of Palestinian identity, reducing it to “Arab.”

Israel’s calibration of coercion was typical of policing: it used mass imprisonment, torture, and other coercive methods of interrogation, but did not escalate repression to a point where substantial casualties resulted.³⁴ It “gradually introduced police-style riot-control techniques and equipment, deployed nonmilitary measures such as cutting of the telephone lines and economic restrictions, and created special undercover units to hunt down the uprising’s most extremist factions.”³⁵ Though there was a mass influx of troops in the territories, and shoot-on-sight orders during some curfews, Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin instituted his “beatings policy,” which called for the intensive use of clubs and sticks to break up riots. The idea behind this strategy was that broken bones were better than dead bodies and funerals, which provided further opportunities to riot and meant bad publicity abroad. However, while the policy did achieve its goal in keeping the number of dead relatively low—roughly a thousand in five years—many thousands of Palestinians were seriously injured, and many became handicapped. Israel’s most favored coercive measure was arrest and detention, imprisoning 1,000 people for every 100,000 Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. As a comparison, the figure for the United States, widely considered to have an unusually high incarceration rate, is 426. For Northern Ireland it was 120, for South Africa 240, and for the Soviet Union, at the apogee of the gulag era, 1,423.³⁶

Alongside the use of coercion, the intifada forced Israel to hold talks with Palestinian negotiators, which were held both in public in Madrid and in secret in the Norwegian capital of Oslo, culminating in two accords, signed in 1993 and 1995. Israeli concessions in these agreements were limited to recognizing the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. In addition, the accords created some institutions of self-government, in the form of the Palestinian Authority, in 60 percent of Gaza and 17 percent of the West Bank.³⁷ Such granting of limited autonomy can be seen as tactical concessions to “moderates” embedded within a larger policy of denying the Palestinians a future state, a balance typical of policing strategies. Indeed, it would be a serious mistake to conceptualize Israeli concessions at Oslo as a deal or process that was to pave the way to a Palestinian state, despite hopeful rhetoric at the time. According to a Palestinian academic, Oslo was a “very brutal political compromise” and there “wasn’t any indication formally or informally that the accord was leading to a two-state solution.”³⁸ As one diplomat told me, “we were naïve” at Oslo.³⁹

That Oslo was not seen as laying a path to a Palestinian state is attested by the fact that in its aftermath, Israel built settlements and roads that divided Palestinian land; tightened restrictions of travel between the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem; and disallowed a “safe passage” between these territories,⁴⁰ rendering the possibility of a Palestinian state more unlikely. In

interviews, Israeli researchers, journalists, and activists consistently maintained that the question of a Palestinian state at Oslo was a bridge too far and had never been seriously contemplated or envisioned by the Rabin government. Rather, in this perspective, the aim of the accords was considerably less ambitious: the creation of a framework within which trust could be built between the parties, culminating in Palestinian self-determination by the end of the decade, and preparing the Israeli public for the endgame with gradual steps.⁴¹ As several interviewees reminded me, it had been illegal for Israeli citizens to even talk to a PLO member until Oslo; the idea of a Palestinian state was simply unthinkable for the Israeli leadership. Notably, major concerns such as borders, the “right of return” of Palestinian refugees, the division of Jerusalem, and Israeli settlements were not negotiated in the accords. Instead, these so called final status issues—“landmines waiting to be blown up” in one evocative phrase⁴²—were left for a time when greater confidence and trust existed between the Israeli state and its Palestinian interlocutors. As one study puts it, Oslo “frontloaded benefits for Israel and backloaded them for Palestinians” and “did not provide much sense of urgency to Israelis to take the steps necessary for Palestinians to achieve those backloaded benefits, or even reassure Palestinians that they would actually materialize.”⁴³ As such, it is difficult to make the claim that Israeli concessions at Oslo signaled the creation of a state.

The bottom line is that in response to the Palestinian secessionist moment, Israel responded with a policing strategy, using a mix of soft coercion, centering on beatings and imprisonment rather than killings or massacres, as well as tactical concessions that fell considerably short of statehood. This Israeli strategy of policing represents a puzzle for existing accounts of separatist violence. Reputation-based arguments would predict that a state such as Israel, with no other national group in its midst that could conceivably demand independence after the Palestinians, would be happy to make substantial concessions, including independence. Arguments centering on veto points also fail to explain Israeli strategy, since at the time Rabin led a center-left government that had the support of left-wing and Arab parties in the Knesset. That such a coalition was unable to even contemplate significant autonomy or statehood speaks to a wider unease with the concept in the Israeli body politic.

PALESTINIAN NATIONALISM AND ISRAELI EXTERNAL SECURITY

I argue that a major factor that stood behind Israeli reluctance to grant a state, or anything close to one, in the aftermath of the first Palestinian intifada were concerns about external security. Consistent with my theory, Israel could not trust that a sovereign Palestine would not create problems for its security in the future, given first its militarized history with

neighbors and, second, deep identity divisions between Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews.

Security-based fears of a Palestinian state have generally been important for the center right (Likud) and center left (Labor) mainstream parties and leaders in Israel. As Rabin said in a major speech to the Knesset in 1992, “When it comes to Israel’s security, we will not concede a thing. From our standpoint, security takes precedence over peace.”⁴⁴ Both traditional parties in Israel have been “deeply opposed to Palestinian nationalism and denied that the Palestinians had a right to national self-determination” and “unconditionally opposed to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.”⁴⁵ Israel’s insistence that Palestinians not win their own state, according to scholars, is rooted in “enormous anxiety,” guarding against “further misfortune,”⁴⁶ conditioned as it was by Arab states’ aggressions against it early in its life, as well as centuries of persecution of European Jews. For the larger Israeli security establishment, its surrounding Arab population have “represented first and foremost a military threat.”⁴⁷ As insiders put it, “Israel’s national security policy has been predicated on the assumption that the nation faces a realistic threat of both politicide (destruction of a state) and even genocide. Six wars, numerous major confrontations, and ongoing violence, from low-level terrorism to massive rocket attacks, have been basic features of Israel’s external environment. A sense of nearly unremitting Arab enmity prevails, of a conflict of unlimited hostility and objectives. . . . National security issues in Israel are commonly addressed in existential terms.”⁴⁸

In the Israel-Palestine case, both “trip wires” to state coercion are set off: not only does Israel live in a dangerous neighborhood, by one metric the second-most militarized region during the twentieth century⁴⁹ but it also has deep identity divisions with the Palestinians, based on a history of conflict and a collective essentialization that subsumes Palestinian identity under a general Arab one. As my theory would expect under such circumstances, the state cannot countenance independence for separatists, lest the new state threaten its security in the future, either directly or in consort with other regional states. Israel’s behavior against the Palestinians is consistent with this expectation. The mainstream of the Israeli body politic views the creation of a Palestinian state as an apocalyptic threat, despite the massive gulf in capabilities dividing the two entities. According to one veteran Israeli journalist, security is the main issue when it comes to Israeli stubbornness against the Palestinians—despite no Arab army having confronted Israel for years, the sense of fear from Arab hostility is “very high.” For the Israeli right wing and even center, the prospect of a Palestinian state “is a direct threat on Israel,” since organizations such as Hamas are thought to be primed to take over the West Bank and launch missiles at Tel Aviv and Ben Gurion Airport on their ascent to power.⁵⁰ Other journalists agreed with this sentiment, noting

that “most of the public feels concessions will end in specific disasters for Israeli lives and families.”⁵¹

This fear of a Palestinian state results partly from Israel’s primordialist, essentialist understanding of Arab identity, through which both peaceful and violent Palestinian mobilization is subsumed under a larger feeling of victimization by its neighboring Arab states. As current Israeli prime minister and longtime opponent of Palestinian statehood Benjamin Netanyahu wrote, to make sense of the national movement, “it is necessary to go beyond the pretense that 1967 and the ‘occupation of the West Bank’ are the starting point of ‘resistance’ against the Jews. The Arab war against the Jews is in fact as old as this century.”⁵² Similarly, former Israeli prime minister Golda Meir famously remarked that “it was not as though there was a Palestinian People in Palestine considering itself as a Palestinian People and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist.”⁵³ Moshe Feiglin, a Likud politician, incredulously reacted to the very notion of a Palestinian. “‘Palestinians’? Do you know about a nation without a history? How can a nation exist without history? They are Arabs. They identify with a big Arab nation, and there are many Arab tribes.”⁵⁴ As a result of Palestinian identity being folded under a wider Arab rubric in this way, Israel’s assessment of the risks of a future Palestinian state rest on the security threats it has faced from Arab states in the past.

Evidence for the claim that security was the main driver of Israel’s refusal to concede a state can be found at the Madrid talks that preceded the Oslo negotiations, where Israeli hawks pressured Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, insisting “that the West Bank was an important buffer between itself and Jordan, and a Palestinian entity, let alone a Palestinian state, would represent a military threat to Israel’s existence.”⁵⁵ Though Shamir and Likud were soundly defeated by Rabin’s Labor and other left-leaning parties in 1992, the two “differed more in style than substance”⁵⁶ when it came to negotiating. Rabin’s strategy at Oslo was to go only so far as to grant administrative control to those territories unimportant to Israel’s security, as well as “retain final military control throughout the *whole* of the occupied territories.”⁵⁷ Indeed, security issues were the “hardest nuts to crack” in the Oslo negotiations according to contemporary reports, with one Labor Knesset member warning that “the negotiation is not just a perpetual festival of Israeli gestures. It’s based on give and take, and in this case, give and take means they accept our terms as far as security arrangements are concerned.”⁵⁸ That security was the overarching Israeli concern during Oslo is also revealed by the fact that, against tradition, Rabin assigned major negotiating responsibilities to serving generals in the IDF; this reliance on serving officers was a “natural” outcome when, as one retired officer put it, “problems of security are so predominant in any of the negotiations.” Besides, for the broader Israeli public at the time, “the sight of

IDF officers rather than politicians shaping the peace accord is reassuring. The average Israeli will judge peace with the Palestinians by one criteria—personal security—and ‘the public feels better if security arrangements are negotiated by generals rather than by [Deputy Foreign Minister] Yossi Beilin.’”⁵⁹

In consonance with this theme, Benjamin Netanyahu, then leader of the Likud Party in opposition, claimed that “Palestinian autonomy, although not a Palestinian state, was something that he could accept and even support on the condition that it provided for exclusive Israeli responsibility for security, external borders and foreign relations,” which was not the case with the agreements then.⁶⁰ When Netanyahu gained power in 1996 after severely criticizing Oslo and promising to undo the accords, one anonymous government official was blunt about the changes in the offing: “The whole world can jump up and down, but there is no way to achieve a Palestinian state under Likud. This is the red line.”⁶¹ As the *Financial Times* noted in 1996 after Netanyahu and Arafat visited the White House, “The underlying problem is that the Israeli prime minister does not accept the principles behind Oslo. . . . He believes security requires a buffer of occupied land insulating the Jewish state from its Arab neighbors.” As a consequence, “he has told his supporters at home he will go no further along the route charted by the Rabin and Peres governments which was leading to a Palestinian state.”⁶² Sure enough, with Netanyahu’s election “the Oslo process effectively came to an end.”⁶³

Indeed, more than most, Netanyahu—the dominant figure in Israeli politics over the last two decades—personifies the views connecting a history of conflict with Arab neighbors to predictions of security problems an independent Palestinian state will pose. The same year he was elected leader of Likud, Netanyahu published a book in which he “viewed Israel’s relations with the Arab world as one of permanent conflict, as a never-ending struggle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness.” Compromise with the PLO “was completely out of the question because its goal was the destruction of the State of Israel. . . . The PLO was ‘constitutionally tied to the idea of Israel’s liquidation.’” The very title of the chapter on the PLO in Netanyahu’s book *A Place among Nations* speaks volumes: “The Trojan Horse.” He wrote that it was “all too easy for anyone familiar with Israel’s terrain to imagine, precisely as Arafat promises, that a PLO state implanted ten miles from the beaches of Tel Aviv would be a mortal danger to the Jewish state.” For Israel to secure its cities, it must militarily control essentially all the territory west of the Jordan River. “To subdivide this land into two unstable, insecure nations, to try to defend what is indefensible, is to invite disaster. Carving Judea and Samaria out of Israel means carving up Israel.”⁶⁴

We can find evidence of the centrality of Israel’s dangerous neighborhood and history of conflict not just in its refusal to grant a state, but also in

its specific demands during negotiations with the Palestinians. For instance, while Oslo divided Palestinian sovereignty into several sectoral and geographic zones, Israel controlled security not just for Israeli areas, but also for the “mixed” zones—the so-called Area B—while Palestinians were given control of security in Area A only, about 3 percent of the landmass of the occupied territories.⁶⁵ More tellingly, throughout the Oslo process, Israel’s view of a future Palestinian state entailed an Israeli military presence in the Jordan valley as well as a Palestinian state that would be demilitarized.⁶⁶ In my interviews, Israeli journalists and former negotiators emphasized that a demilitarized Palestinian state was a *sine qua non* for the Israeli body politic to even consider territorial concessions. These interviewees were often puzzled when I even brought up the question of demilitarization, given how “obvious” Israeli demands were on this issue relative to thornier issues, such as Jerusalem, refugees, and settlements.⁶⁷ In this view, the presence of another Arab army in the West Bank is a red line for Israel’s security, given the Jordan Valley’s importance to Israel historically. Importantly, this insistence that Palestine be demilitarized is not just deeply but also widely felt, with both left and right subscribing wholeheartedly to it. For instance, at the infamous failed accord of Camp David under the supervision of Bill Clinton, Ehud Barak of the Labor Party ostensibly made “the most far-reaching Israeli concessions ever made”—but still insisted that an independent Palestinian state be demilitarized and that Israel control a “thin strip” of the Jordan valley for security purposes.⁶⁸

For their part, Palestinian interviewees, including journalists covering the Oslo talks as well as negotiators and scholars, made clear to me that their side was well aware of Israeli resolve on this question. In their telling, the Palestinians felt compelled to agree to nonmilitarization as a signal of assurance to the Israelis that they were interested only in gaining a state and not using it to fight wars, happy to delegate their future border security to international actors.⁶⁹ In this telling, a Palestinian army would be of little use in a conflict against the militarily superior Israelis or any of the major Arab states.⁷⁰ As such, it was smart strategy to put their future security in the hands of outside actors—“bear-hug the international community to provide security” in one Palestinian analyst’s words—and reassure Israel of its peaceful intentions in the future to the extent possible.⁷¹

Doubtless, the idea that the Palestinians must assure Israel of its security in order to win a state justifiably appears “twisted logic” to some.⁷² Is it not the case that the Palestinians are a stateless minority oppressed by a powerful state enjoying a regional nuclear monopoly as well as the unflinching backing of world’s only superpower? How can an actor so weak assure a state so strong? Such a viewpoint, reasonable as it is on the surface, ignores the difference between absolute and relative power. As a regional hegemon, Israel is assuredly more powerful than, and continues to assert dominance over, the Palestinian nation. However, as IR scholars

point out, states care deeply about not just absolute power but also relative power. Were the Palestinians to win a state, Israel's security environment would become more challenging, at least marginally. An independent Palestine would still be vastly weaker than Israel, but because of the military, economic, demographic, and institutional benefits of statehood (chapter 1), it would have caught up relatively. More importantly, even if the leaders of an independent Palestine were solely interested in peaceful relations with Israel, the thorny question of nonstate actors and militant groups, using such a state as a base for attacks, would be left unanswered. As such, Palestinian statehood represents an adverse shift in the balance that would be unpalatable for a state like Israel, which having fought numerous interstate wars and nonstate actors, is consistently obsessed with maintaining its security.

Indeed, the tragedy from the point of view of common Palestinians is that there is only so much they, and their leaders, can do to placate Israel. Israel's history of conflict with Arab states in its early years of statehood, which Palestinians bear little responsibility for, has had significant path-dependent effects, leaving Israel suspicious of any changes in the regional balance of power.⁷³ Such rapid changes in the balance of power, as I argue in this book, inhere in any separatist demand. Palestinian negotiators seem to be aware of this dynamic; their relative comfort giving up claims to an army in negotiations—as opposed to their strident stance on issues such as Jerusalem, refugees, and settlements—are explicitly aimed at providing assurance to Israel. Nonetheless, there are elements of independence that the Palestinians simply cannot negotiate away, such as internal sovereignty and the existence of “hard” international borders, which necessarily reduce Israeli security. As one Israeli peace activist told me, even if the threat of Arab armies from Iraq, Jordan, or Syria crossing the Jordan River through the West Bank is largely “fantastical” today thanks to a peace agreement with Jordan and the geopolitical weakening of Iraq and Syria, the threat of “military terrorism,” that of militant groups inside an independent Palestine, such as Hezbollah, showering Israel with rockets and mortar fire remains. This leads to the belief that holding on to the West Bank as a security buffer is “worth it,” given the alternatives.⁷⁴ Even the prospect of international forces, including troops from the United States, being stationed on the border as a “trip wire” would not satisfy this insecurity, since Israel prefers operational flexibility to handle its own security, which international border forces would limit, and sound public and technical relations with the United States, which might be threatened by the presence of American forces on their border.⁷⁵

For mainstream Israeli leaders, then, concerns about external security led to a refusal to grant the Palestinian national movement a state in the 1990s. Conditioned by wars both at its birth and early in its life as a state, Israel saw its surrounding Arab populations as implacably hostile to it. Given it

saw Palestinians as Arabs first and foremost, it should not surprise us that Israel feared the security consequences of a new “Arab” state on its border. As such, Israel sought to ensure the lack of meaningful territorial concessions to the Palestinians under its control. It further stipulated that to the extent that Palestinians enjoyed any autonomy, they would not exercise sovereign control of their borders, nor would they be allowed an army, meaning that even if a Palestinian “state” were to somehow come to fruition, it would still lack some of the core elements of widely accepted definitions of the modern, Weberian state. These demands reveal a great deal about dominant Israeli concerns with the prospect of a Palestinian state: its future external security.

SINCE THE FIRST INTIFADA AND OSLO

Since the failed Oslo process in the 1990s, Israel has become even more wary about the security consequences of territorial loss. In interviews, Israeli journalists, academics, and activists, even those from the left, have emphasized the unhappy experiences after concessions elsewhere, including the Sinai, Lebanon, and Gaza. From this perspective, the state has already experienced a proverbial trial run of an independent Palestine, after the withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, the results of which were not encouraging: an increase in rocket attacks from the territory. As Benny Morris noted, “Israel’s leaders quite naturally feared that a similar unilateral pullout from the West Bank would be followed by a far more dangerous rocketing of the state’s main population centers, Jerusalem and the greater Tel Aviv area. It is today clear that no Israeli leader will initiate a pullout from the West Bank—unilaterally or in agreement with the Palestinians—before the IDF acquires the technological capability to protect its population centers from short-range missile attacks.”⁷⁶ My interviews revealed just how widely pervasive the view that transferring control of territory only invites more aggression is in Israel today, rendering the traditional “land for peace” equation dicey from the Israeli perspective—how can they be sure, given their history, that conceding land will actually lead to peace?⁷⁷ Overall, the right wing’s views that “they want to destroy us, they want to finish us” are very popular today.⁷⁸ Indeed, on the eve of the 2015 elections, two-thirds of Israelis strongly or moderately agreed with the claim that “no matter which party forms the next government, the peace process with the Palestinians will not advance because there is no solution to the disagreements between the sides.”⁷⁹ In 2010, 80 percent of Israeli Jews believed that “the Palestinians have not come to terms with Israel’s existence and would destroy Israel if they could” and 74 percent agreed that “there will be no change in this position even if a peace agreement is signed.”⁸⁰

Alongside Israeli fears, Palestinian frustration has also increased manifold since Oslo. This is because the empowering of the religious-nationalist

settler lobby within Israel in the last two decades has added an ideological dimension to an already complicated territorial conflict, pushing the country toward “fanaticism and radicalism”⁸¹ and making concessions even less likely. Right-wing religious nationalism has risen in Israel since the 1967 war and even more so since the 1977 elections—partly a consequence of a more politically active community of lower-class Sephardic Jews. Included in this group are mainstream rightwing parties such as Likud and the National Religious Party, as well as radical nationalist parties such as Tehiya, Kach, Moledet, and the National Union Party in the 2000s.⁸² In recent times, this religious-nationalist camp has “through different political parties, far exceeded its proportionality” in the Israeli Knesset.⁸³ They view the Jews as the chosen people, the rightful owner of the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. That is, they are advocates of so-called Greater Israel, precluding territorial concessions to the Palestinians, who are considered aliens in this land, untrustworthy, and the sworn enemy of Israel and the Jewish people. This “subculture,” equal parts religious nationalism and racist fanaticism, was born out of Israel’s successes in the 1967 war, which included the conquest of the West Bank—known as Judea and Samaria to the adherents of this subculture—which convinced “many Orthodox rabbis and teachers that they were living in a messianic era and that salvation was at hand.”⁸⁴

This rightward turn has been responsible for one of the primary impediments toward a solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: the issue of settlements. The Israeli policy of establishing Jewish settlements in occupied territories began in earnest by the Labor government after the 1967 war, was accelerated considerably since 1977, when Likud came to power,⁸⁵ and has shown precious little signs of abating, up to the present day. As such, Israeli leaders’ decisions on how to deal with Palestinians are not just conditioned by Israel’s checkered relationship with its Arab state neighbors, as my theory would predict, but also by a fear of crossing an increasingly vocal and racist coalition in domestic politics.⁸⁶ Naftali Bennett, a rising star within the far right movement and one with serious chances to become prime minister soon, put it simply in 2012: “There are certain things that most of us understand will never happen: ‘The Sopranos’ are not coming back for another season, and there will never be a peace plan with the Palestinians. . . . I will do everything in my power to make sure they never get a state.”⁸⁷

The right-wing and settler lobby made a show of strength after Oslo, when it did “everything within their power to obstruct the spirit and letters of” the accords.⁸⁸ According to interviews with both Israeli and Palestinian journalists and researchers, the open-ended nature of the agreement, with final-status issues kicked down the road, left considerable time and space for spoilers from both sides to dent and possibly extinguish the potential of a Palestinian state.⁸⁹ Israeli settlers considerably quickened their takeover

of Palestinian land as a preemptive measure, their population doubling in the territories during the 1990s.⁹⁰ From eighty thousand before Oslo, the number of settlers in the West Bank and Gaza today is half a million. Jewish settlements in the aftermath of Oslo created “facts on the ground,” meaning that while the final status of a Palestinian state was suspended midair, so to speak, the territory on which such a state would be organized was taken over. These settlers were given political backing by right-wing Israelis, including those from secular parties such as Likud’s Ariel Sharon, both in and out of government. Most damagingly, an Israeli settler named Yigal Amir assassinated Rabin in late 1995—a “knockout blow” to the peace process.⁹¹ Amir’s murderous act ended the life of the one Israeli leader from the center left with the gravitas and standing to stand up to the settler lobby—Rabin had served in Israel’s war of independence and led it to dramatic victories in the 1967 war—and thus ended any possibility of meaningful Israeli concessions toward a Palestinian state, even a demilitarized Bantustan version of it. Between the security-motivated views objecting to Palestinian independence, personified by Netanyahu, and the religious-nationalist angle, personified by Bennett, arguably more important than security concerns since the turn of the century, the prospects for Palestinian statehood seem very grim indeed. Even more unfortunately, the unique nature of the conflict means that the option usually considered by restive minorities second-best to independence—assimilation in the host state, or in this case, a “one-state solution” where Palestinians enjoy rights as full citizens of a binational state—is also not on the cards.

THE SECOND INTIFADA AND ISRAEL’S MILITARIZATION STRATEGY

Within this general context of Israeli fears and Palestinian frustration, another uprising erupted in the early 2000s. The collapse of the Oslo process led to an impasse that forced Bill Clinton to convene a summit with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat at Camp David in 2000. The summit was a failure. Later that year, Ariel Sharon, the Likud leader of the opposition, visited the Temple Mount, which provoked demonstrations that day and the next. These demonstrations marked the beginning of the second intifada: once more, the Palestinians rose to “shake off” the Israeli occupation. Israel’s response to the second intifada, a “militarization” strategy, is a failed prediction of my theory, which would only expect such an escalation in the presence of “moderate” third-party support, which the Palestinians lacked in this instance.

The second intifada saw more violence than the first, with the IDF adopting a “more hard-line approach,” closer to a militarization strategy than policing.⁹² The casualty rate of the second intifada was double that of

the first.⁹³ In the earlier episode, the IDF's central message was that "there is no military solution to the intifada, only a political solution," while in the second, it preferred "exacting a price." Security forces killed more than a hundred Palestinians in the first month alone, the large majority being unarmed civilians.⁹⁴ "By the second week it had opened fire with all the weapons in its arsenal: in addition to using snipers, it shot missiles from Apache helicopters on demonstrators and their buildings, and it fired from tanks on Beit Jallah and Ramallah in response to small-arms fire on Giloh and Psagot." Such force "would have been more appropriate in a war against a standing army but was totally out of place against stone-throwing civilians."⁹⁵ Indeed, Israel viewed the second intifada much more as a war than the first. It used air power to a considerable extent, and then launched a number of "invasions" of West Bank towns, resulting in significant numbers of civilian casualties.⁹⁶ This calibration of violence had support from Israeli society, which in fact demanded even more forceful action.⁹⁷ From the Israeli perspective, "this was war, not a case of a nation seeking to overthrow its oppressors, end its occupation, or struggle for liberation."⁹⁸ As a result, casualties soared: "The first 18 months of the second intifada, ending February 2002, witnessed nearly as many deaths (1,136) as the 69 months of the first intifada (1,265)."⁹⁹

My theory would expect that the increasing intensity of the Israeli response between the first and second intifadas, from policing to militarization, would be due to differences in third-party support for the Palestinians. While we have sound reasons to believe that certain elements of the Palestinian movement, especially Hamas and Hezbollah, enjoyed financial and military aid from hostile regional powers, such as Iran or Syria,¹⁰⁰ my interviewees stressed the nonimportance of third-party support in explaining Israeli behavior in the second intifada. Respondents emphasized that to the extent that the involvement of third-parties was invoked by the Israeli leadership, it was a public relations tactic more than a whole-hearted belief in the perils of regional involvement.¹⁰¹ Instead, there were three main considerations when explaining the harsher Israeli response in the second intifada. First, the movement it was responding to was itself deadlier: while Palestinians staged a peaceful movement in the late 1980s, mostly throwing stones and Molotov cocktails, the second intifada was considerably more violent, led by Hamas and featuring suicide bombers within Israel "proper."¹⁰² Second, there were differences in domestic politics.¹⁰³ The reaction to the first intifada was in the hands of a unity government and a center-left government, while in the second intifada, it was the right-wing Likud Party led by the hawkish Ariel Sharon that was mostly in charge.¹⁰⁴ Third, there was already an Israeli security presence in the territories in the first intifada, while the second was more akin to an "invasion," with Israeli tanks and troops moving in to Palestinian cities and towns.¹⁰⁵ As such, the form and

function of Israeli policy in the second intifada was significantly different from what occurred a decade prior.

While my theory can explain Israel's choice of coercion over concessions in the second intifada, it fails when explaining the intensity of coercion. Specifically, the conspicuous absence of "moderate" third-party support in explaining Israeli escalation from policing to militarization is a drawback for my argument and serves as a reminder of the necessarily imperfect fit of general models to specific empirical contexts in social science. That said, even unmet expectations can sometimes prove constructive for scholars, if theoretically useful answers can be found for the argument's failed prediction. In this case, one clear lesson is that the intensified lethality of rebel violence resulting from higher levels of third-party support, pushing governments to escalate from "policing" to "militarization," can be just as easily produced from other sources. For instance, the Palestinian Authority "accumulated tens of thousands of guns during the 1990s," which were used in the second intifada,¹⁰⁶ signifying that vast increases in material capabilities can be generated from within under some circumstances. Second, the failed prediction shines a light on the importance of the splintering of the Palestinian movement, similar to the role factionalization played in Indian Punjab in the late 1980s (chapter 3). The factionalization of the Palestinian movement generated incentives for various organizations to increase violence, unlike when the movement was relatively unified in the first intifada.¹⁰⁷ Finally, Palestinian militants also adjusted tactics, employing suicide bombing more regularly than ever before. During the 1990s, there was an average of three suicide attacks per year, which increased to over twenty a year during the second intifada.¹⁰⁸ These developments in conjunction meant that the Palestinian movement had a level of lethality that a movement in other circumstances may have required "moderate" third-party support to reach.

Overall, my theory has a great deal to say about the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Confronted by the first intifada, the Israeli state responded by refusing to countenance an independent, Weberian state on the Palestinian territories, adopting relatively light coercion to keep in check a movement enjoying "limited" third-party support, and making tactical concessions to "moderates" that fell well short of statehood. Consistent with my argument, this "policing" strategy had its roots in Israel's militarized history with its neighbors and its deep identity divisions with Palestinians, who it considers no different to the "Arabs" that it fought over decades, leaving it fearful of the security consequences of a new state on its borders. These security fears, exacerbated by Palestinian militant violence aimed at independence, continue to dominate to the present day and render the prospect of a Palestinian state, in control of its borders and security, an exceedingly unlikely prospect. However, developments that lie outside the explanatory range of my theory—such as the rise of the religious nationalist settler

lobby in Israel, and the ability of Palestinian movement to generate significant violence in spite of no significant third-party support—have also played an important role in the continuation of violence, especially in the aftermath of Oslo. Most important, my theory cannot explain why the second-best option usually available to ethnic groups denied independence, that of assimilation in the host state, is denied to the Palestinians. This implausibility of a one-state solution, alongside Israel's rejection of "two states for two peoples" partly due to security fears, has created the perfect storm of pessimism and despair that so pervasively mark the Israeli-Palestinian relationship.

Peaceful Secessions in Northern and Central Europe

Completely conciliatory responses by states to separatist movements, where the center is prepared to relinquish territory during peaceful negotiations, are quite rare in international politics. When they do occur, such "negotiations and concessions" strategies often result in the ethnic group expressing satisfaction with the state's concessions, as in contemporary Quebec or Scotland. In exceptional circumstances, however, the ethnic group will continue pressing demands for an independent state in the face of concessions, in which case a peaceful split should occur.

I expect these peaceful splits, and peaceful responses to secessionism by states more generally, under a relatively narrow set of conditions: only when governments do not foresee security troubles, from either regional rivals or the newly created state, in the future. Such a positive prognosis of the state's external security would require residence in a relatively pleasant neighborhood as well as a lack of deep identity divisions between the two actors. Historically, these conditions are most likely to obtain in the comfortable, optimistic, post-security regions of North America and Western Europe in the twenty-first century, which is why we see, for instance, Britain not consider violence against Scottish secessionism nor Canada against the Quebecois. The question posed in this section is: to what extent did these conditions match those in Czechoslovakia at the end of the twentieth century and Scandinavia at the beginning of it? The relative paucity of the non-violent strategies in the empirical record increases their importance when evaluating any theory of separatist conflict; if my argument has trouble accounting for these cases, we should have serious doubts about its plausibility.

In Czechoslovakia's Velvet Divorce, external security considerations were taken off the table, creating the conditions under which Czech leaders could concede territory unworriedly. For one thing, the regional security environment underwent dramatic changes in the lead-up to the secession, with the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the

unification of Germany. For another, the Czechs had little to fear from an independent Slovak state, given the relatively warm historical relations between the two groups; identity relations were at worst “indifferent.” Additionally, the Czechs handsomely won the separation agreement, which granted them a massive preponderance of military power. Given their economy was much weaker than the Czechs’, the Slovaks could not have plausibly closed that gap. With military and security considerations sidelined, the focus turned to economic and diplomatic issues. On these measures, the Czechs were only too happy to let the Slovaks secede, since they believed, correctly, that the Slovaks would dilute their reform agenda and shift their desired focus away from Western Europe and Western institutions more generally. Thus the Czechs acquiesced to Slovak demands for separation eagerly and peacefully.

Similarly, my theoretical argument sheds lights on two main aspects of the Scandinavian case. First, the region enjoyed an extremely and atypically benign security environment, which rendered future security threats less important, thus opening up space for a potential peaceful response. Second, the Swedes only took coercion against Norway off the table in 1905 once they were assured of a demilitarized zone along the new international border and the destruction of the latter’s forts, speaking to their concerns about a future dyadic threat.

THE VELVET DIVORCE: CZECHOSLOVAKIA SPLITS IN 1993

The Velvet Divorce in the former Czechoslovakia, which birthed the Czech and Slovak republics, was by no means inevitable, given that the ethnic divisions in the state were not as pronounced as others in the region.¹⁰⁹ But the Slovaks, or at least their political representatives, argued for and demanded greater freedom and autonomy once communism collapsed in the late 1980s. The Czechs did not get in their way. When the breakup did occur, officially on midnight of January 1, 1993, it was a completely peaceful outcome; “virtually painless” and without “a nose being bledied.”¹¹⁰

This peaceful split could have occurred only in an environment of minimal external threats, where border changes were almost meaningless for security. Indeed, that is precisely where the Czechs found themselves in the early 1990s. The dissolution of the Soviet Union, the unification of Germany, and the end of the Cold War rendered the region’s environment wholly benign. Additionally, the Czechs had little reason to fear an independent Slovak state. The relatively warm relations between the two ethnic groups over the previous century resulted in muted identity divisions, especially compared to other ethnic dyads in the region. As such, when the Slovak leader Vladimír Mečiar used his electoral victory in 1992 to press for (at least) a confederal state, Václav Klaus and the Czechs were only too happy to acquiesce to a split.

The Czechs and Slovaks shared a common history to the extent that both republics were part of the Habsburg Empire that collapsed at the end of World War I. There were, however, significant differences in the ways they had been controlled: the Czech lands were more loosely governed from Vienna, while the Slovaks were strictly ruled by the Hungarians. There were significant differences in the social and economic makeup of the regions too. The Czech region was a thriving, industrial region which contributed nearly 70 percent of the Habsburg Empire's industrial output, while the Slovak region was generally organized along more feudalistic lines, where a rural economy dominated. Largely as a consequence of these historical differences, the Czechs were known for their "urbane and secular culture," whereas Slovaks practiced a "deeply religious (mainly Catholic) brand of nationalism."¹¹¹ The Czechs developed a society with full literacy by the nineteenth century that contained an industrial working class and a bourgeoisie that evinced cultural, social, and intellectual capital. The Slovaks, on the other hand, were more impoverished and agrarian, and often pejoratively described as "economically and politically primitive."¹¹²

When the Habsburg Empire collapsed in 1919, the independent state of Czechoslovakia was born. Almost immediately, there was cause for consternation for the Slovaks. The first would-be president of Czechoslovakia, Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, signed an agreement in Pittsburgh in 1918 that promised a considerable degree of autonomy to the Slovaks, including the provision of their own Diet, administration, and the use of Slovak as a language of instruction in schools as well as officialdom. Unfortunately, the Pittsburgh Agreement, as it came to be known, was never implemented.¹¹³

Twenty years later, the republic's life came to an abrupt end, when Nazi Germany occupied the Czech lands. The Slovaks enjoyed a brief period as a nominally independent state under the stewardship of a fascist priest named Jozef Tiso. The taste of independence was never forgotten in Slovakia, providing the impetus for a drive to greater autonomy and freedom in later decades.¹¹⁴ It is noteworthy for our purposes, however, that the Czechs and Slovaks never fought one another during the war, though they were technically on different sides from 1939, when Nazi Germany occupied Bohemia and Moravia, until 1944, the year of the Slovak uprising. This lack of violent conflict paved the way for muted identity divisions down the road.

After the war, the state was reunited as Czechoslovakia and brought under the ambit of the Soviet Union. Under communism, the Slovak lands especially saw Soviet-style industrialization, with the introduction of heavy steel and armaments factories. Politically, the state lay securely within the sphere of influence of the Soviets, who crushed various uprisings and revolutions, most brutally in 1968. The so-called Prague Spring of 1968 was important also because of its impact on intra-Czechoslovak institutions and relations. In the lead-up to 1968, the Czechs and Slovaks were working on

plans to make the state a federation, with one central government and two republican governments, one for each ethnic group. Up to that point, the Slovaks had a state government but the Czechs did not, lending credence to the Slovak belief that the central government was, in fact, a Czech enterprise. A similar structure was prevalent with respect to the Communist Party: there was a Slovak wing and a central wing, but no specific Czech wing. The reforms being discussed at the time would have created a Czech state government as well as a Czech wing of the Communist Party. The Soviet invasion changed those plans, at least in part: the plans for revamping the state went through, but party reforms were squashed. Following the late 1960s, Czechoslovakia formally became a federal state.¹¹⁵

The communist era was notable for cementing the status of the Czech region as more preeminent than Slovak lands. “During 42 years of communist rule, everything went through Prague,” leading to a Slovak sense “of being at the end of the line, not at the front of the line.”¹¹⁶ By the late 1980s, Eastern Europe was thrown into turmoil by the domino-like revolutions that evicted the Soviet presence in the region. The Czechoslovakian manifestation was the Velvet Revolution of 1989, led by playwright turned dissident, Václav Havel, which released the Soviet shackles from Czechoslovakia. It is to that period we now turn.

FROM VELVET REVOLUTION TO VELVET DIVORCE

After the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, the newly free Czechoslovak state went about instituting a series of economic reforms, making the country more promarket and capitalist. These reforms affected Czech and Slovak societies unequally. The more educated and economically advanced Czechs benefited greatly from the market-oriented direction of the new state, while the Slovaks disproportionately suffered. By the early 1990s, the unemployment rate in the Czech lands was amongst the lowest in Europe—only 3 percent—while in Slovakia it was about four times higher. Growth rates in the Czech regions were higher than those in Slovakia too. The uneven nature of the impact of economic reforms was the primary stumbling block in Czech-Slovak relations and eventually caused the dissolution of the state.¹¹⁷

Such an outcome was not foreordained, however. There was an air of optimism after the first elections in postcommunist Czechoslovakia in 1990. The recently imprisoned dissident Václav Havel led a new federal government. The main winner in the Czech lands was the Civic Forum, and its sister organization, Public against Violence, dominated the vote in Slovakia. The state governments in the Czech lands and Slovakia were led by Petr Pithart and Vladimír Mečiar, a former communist.¹¹⁸ After the 1990 elections, the state promised to address many of the main Slovak complaints as they pertained to the institutional makeup of the state. Havel, who held

considerable sympathy for many Slovak grievances, held negotiations with Slovaks on the formation of new federal and republic constitutions. But his promises would not go far enough for Slovaks, who felt that Prague was not sufficiently helpful in dealing with its economic crisis.¹¹⁹ Polls showed that the feeling was mutual for the Czechs, and both ethnic groups thought that the state behaved more favorably toward the other ethnic group. In January 1992, for instance, 52 percent of Slovaks believed that the federal government benefited the Czech nation while 41 percent of Czechs believed the same about the Slovaks.¹²⁰

Levels of general dissatisfaction with the political and economic status quo began to grow more acute by 1992. By May, three-quarters of the Czech population and 86 percent of Slovaks were unhappy with the overall political situation. This created space for populists to conflate ethnic with economic concerns, particularly in Slovakia.¹²¹ Mečiar, especially, held the Czechs responsible for the lack of development and growth in Slovakia, and favored a more personalist, statist form of government and economic expansion, perhaps predictably, given his communist background. These competing visions to choose from—a promarket, pluralist policy favored by the Czechs and a more nationalistic and ethnically defined state favored by the Slovaks—set the stage for the 1992 election. Mečiar sought to exploit nationalistic sentiment in Slovakia with an economic populist message,¹²² though he was careful not to campaign on a platform of independence, keeping his goals ambiguous.¹²³

The elections proved to be Slovaks' secessionist moment and paved the way for the separation of the state.¹²⁴ In Slovakia, Mečiar's party, now named Movement for a Democratic Slovakia, after Public against Violence had been disbanded, won 37 percent of the vote for the Slovak parliament and 33.5 percent of the vote in the federal parliament. In total, Mečiar's party won 74 out of 150 seats in the Slovak parliament. "We need a politician like this right now," said one voter in Bratislava. "Meciar is a tough guy. He can defend us. Things must be put in order vis-à-vis the Czechs. They must stop getting a better deal."¹²⁵ Notably, no parties that were allied with major Czech parties won more than a negligible percentage of the vote. In the Czech lands, meanwhile, the Civic Democratic Party, led by the promarket reformer Václav Klaus, won similar totals, with 30 percent of the vote for the Czech legislature and 34 percent for the federal parliament.

After winning in their respective regions, Klaus and Mečiar began negotiations. Mečiar pushed for a separate constitution for the republics, which would take precedence over the federal constitution. Indeed, Mečiar had demanded a separate constitution for the Slovaks as far back as September 1991.¹²⁶ Moreover, the very fact that Klaus was the leader of the Czechs made Mečiar even more intransigent, since a large proportion of Slovaks held Klaus personally responsible for the economic reforms that had

damaged their region. Klaus, however, refused Mečiar's solution, arguing that such a step would invalidate the unity of the country.

The pair exercised considerable influence on events after the election, without input from wider institutions such as parties or interest groups.¹²⁷ This lack of popular participation was significant because by most accounts, support for a complete split, if gauged in a referendum, would have been around 30 percent at the most, and probably closer to 20 percent.¹²⁸ As one voter said, "I voted for Mečiar. Lots of people voted for Mečiar. But they definitely did not vote for a split."¹²⁹ Indeed, polls showed that small majorities in both regions favored a solution other than secession, though a majority of Slovaks did desire greater distance from the Czechs, possibly in a confederal state.¹³⁰ However, this opposition to the split was mostly silent, with civil society not deeply established and formal mechanisms for dissent not in place. As such, common people against the split resigned themselves to their lack of influence and delegated all decision-making to Klaus and Mečiar.¹³¹ Both Klaus and Mečiar had personal agendas too, eager to exercise power and be "masters of their own domain."¹³²

Though the negotiation took place between "two tough-minded guys," it was carried out in a "calm, civic way."¹³³ At bottom, the issue was that each side's most preferred option for the future direction of the state—the Czechs preferred a strongly centralized unitary state, the Slovaks a loose confederation—were directly opposed. However, each side's second-most preferred option was the same: the dissolution of the state.¹³⁴ A strategy of "negotiations and concessions" saw the two leaders reconcile themselves to a split, pledging to ensure its peacefulness. The timetable for dissolution was laid out in advance, with three agreements signed on July 23, August 26, and October 6, each of which dealt with the particulars of the divorce.¹³⁵ Finally, the Czechs and Slovaks peacefully separated at midnight on December 31, 1992. Hilde's succinct summation of the divorce is well-put: "The problem of finding a new model for the common Czech and Slovak state, while at the same time reforming not only the economy but the whole of society away from the socialist model, proved to be too heavy a burden."¹³⁶

EXTERNAL INSECURITY: CONSPICUOUS BY ITS ABSENCE

There were a number of reasons the split between the Czech and Slovak ethnic groups was as peaceful as it turned out. One central factor was the benign regional environment that the state found itself in.¹³⁷ In the lead-up to the Velvet Divorce, external security considerations were simply not a significant part of the calculus of the main players, especially on the Czech side.¹³⁸ As Kraus notes, "The sense of euphoria surrounding the altogether unexpected collapse of communism and the end of the Cold War temporarily eliminated any sense of external threats to Czechoslovakia."¹³⁹ Interviews of former diplomats; political officials; Czech, Slovak, and Western

academics; and other observers of the region unanimously confirm that security issues were neither discussed by the principals nor a major concern during the negotiations to split the country.¹⁴⁰

There were two elements that encapsulated the shifting geopolitics of the region. First, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the entry of a unified Germany into NATO, and the signing of the Maastricht Treaty brought about a pervasive optimism in the region, and especially in central Europe. For this region, the dominant notion that suffused this period of European integration was that outside threats were diminishing and that there was little reason to worry about borders.¹⁴¹ In Czechoslovakia, Soviet troops as part of the Warsaw Pact were removed in a matter of months—unlike in places such as Poland, where the process took years—supplementing the feeling of the “return to Europe” that was the main driver of Czech behavior. With the Czechs’ erstwhile major threat, the Soviet Union, no longer on the map, alongside the unification of Germany, the Czechs’ security environment represented a sea change.¹⁴² Three-fifths of their borders were suddenly with German-speaking Europe, with which the Czechs felt a closer cultural affinity, as well as buffers in the form of Slovakia and Ukraine between it and the still-transitioning Russia. In fact, the environment had changed to such an extent that the major threat the Czechs faced from the east involved further unrest in, and disintegration of, the Russian state, following the putsch attempt against Yeltsin, rather than a military assault from it.¹⁴³ Unlike in 1919, when the Czechs actually believed they were too small to survive in Europe on their own, there were no such concerns in the 1990s.¹⁴⁴

To the extent that any party was even slightly concerned about the external implications of separation, it was the Slovaks, not the Czechs. The active and anxious 600,000-large Hungarian minority in the Slovak lands, combined with the revanchist rhetoric of Hungary, whose leader loudly proclaimed that he was the prime minister of 15 million Hungarians—that is, Hungarians in both Hungary and Slovakia—and a dispute over a dam on the Danube, all constituted cause for concern, but certainly not to the Czechs.¹⁴⁵ To the contrary, Havel and Jiří Dienstbier, the Czech foreign minister, believed so strongly in their external safety that they momentarily believed NATO would follow the Warsaw Pact into oblivion: the continent was safe, aside from the threat of instability from breakup of Soviet states.¹⁴⁶ Perhaps the most revealing measure of how sanguine the Czechs were about the security environment were the drastic cuts in its armed forces: before the divorce, the united state had a military of 200,000, while the independent Czech Republic’s army was a tenth of that size.¹⁴⁷

Second, and relatedly, the Czechs were eager to turn to the west politically, economically, and socially. A senior Foreign Ministry official put it simply as the divorce was being finalized: “Eventual membership in the European Community is the No. 1 foreign policy objective of the Czech

Republic.”¹⁴⁸ Czechs saw themselves as integrated members of Western European culture—as one American diplomatic official reminded me, Prague is further west than Vienna—and saw Slovaks as closer to Russia.¹⁴⁹ A split would leave most of the Czech Republic bordering German-speaking Europe, while Slovakia would continue to share 90 percent of its borders with other Visegrad group states (Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary).¹⁵⁰ More important than social-cultural divisions, the Czech leadership, especially the so-called Chicago school economist Klaus and his promarket allies, saw their future in the EU and in Western institutions and markets more generally.¹⁵¹ Slovaks, at least those such as Mečiar, saw them themselves tied to Russia, not least because of significant gas and oil imports from there,¹⁵² and were more skeptical of Klaus’s “shock-treatment” market reforms.

This goal of “Returning to Europe,” was, according to Czech scholars, not conducive to an escalation of political violence.¹⁵³ For their part, Western institutions such as NATO organized training programs for military, civilians, and parliamentarians, and extended aid.¹⁵⁴ As part of these efforts, NATO extended assurances to the new states about their future security, especially regarding territorial defense.¹⁵⁵ Former NATO officials with extensive experience in Eastern Europe told me that the peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia “would have been a different story had both institutions [NATO and EU] maintained closed doors. . . . If we didn’t have those institutions, I don’t think it would have ended up like it did, they were necessary but not sufficient conditions for such a [peaceful] transition.”¹⁵⁶ While one should not overstate the role of NATO—a former U.S. ambassador to Slovakia with extensive experience in Czechoslovakia before the split told me that “we weren’t pushing them to join NATO” due to concerns about the reaction in Russia,¹⁵⁷ and some Czech leaders, as mentioned, thought NATO was on the way to being obsolete—it is fair to say the pull of the European Community, and European institutions more generally, rather than NATO specifically, exercised a significant influence on the Czech leadership.

While the general regional security environment was unthreatening, what made the Velvet Divorce truly possible was the complete lack of dyadic threat a future Slovak state would pose to a future Czech one. For one thing, Slovakia would lack the capabilities to mount a serious threat to the Czechs, given the particulars of the separation agreement. Specifically, discussions in the lead-up to the divorce suggested that federal assets would be distributed territorially—in this case, possession was 100 percent of the law—while all other assets would be divided in a 2:1 ratio favoring the Czechs, in proportion to their population advantage. From a military point of view, this would be wholly beneficial to the Czechs, since 80 percent of military assets were located on their territory.¹⁵⁸ Additionally, it was not just quantity but quality of hardware that was crucial. At the

time of the separation, “roughly 95 percent of all Czechoslovak combat aircraft were still deployed in Czech lands, and the only planes based in Slovakia were some obsolete MiG-21s. All the federal army’s antitank helicopters were deployed in Bohemia, as were 70 percent of its main battle tanks and armored combat vehicles, including all modern ones. Moreover the Czech Republic was well protected by a mix of short-, medium-, and long-range air defense missiles, whereas Slovakia was only partly covered.”¹⁵⁹ The reason for this lopsided nature of military installations was that the Czechs were closer to the East-West dividing line in the Cold War, and as such, the best and most modern forces, equipment, and bases were stationed there. Slovakia would also have to start from scratch with respect to creating a defense ministry and a military command and organization.¹⁶⁰ These terms were not especially appealing to the Slovaks, but they could object little under the circumstances.¹⁶¹ Nor could they easily make up the difference in capabilities, given that their economic strength was well behind that of the Czechs, and the gap between them was only expected to grow after independence.¹⁶² The only military advantage the Slovaks had over the Czechs was a more-than-proportionate share of the officer corps of the army,¹⁶³ but even here, the Slovak advantage was mitigated. During the split, many Slovak officers elected to stay in the Czech Republic, typified by one Slovak officer explaining that, “I am neither a good Slovak nor a bad Slovak. I’m an army officer. My wife and children are Czech. It makes no sense for me to return to Slovakia.”¹⁶⁴ This position, shared by many of his colleagues, left the Slovak army, according to a former NATO official, with “the B-team in terms of officer corps.”¹⁶⁵

More important than the imbalanced terms of divorce was the muted identity division between the Czechs and Slovaks. There was no history of violent conflict between the two ethnic groups, no bloodthirsty calls for revenge for crimes past.¹⁶⁶ A *Washington Post* editorial captured this notion when it noted that “having had a very different history, Czechs and Slovaks will proceed differently from the way Serbs and Croats did. Yugoslav-style mayhem is not the danger in Czechoslovakia.”¹⁶⁷ Almost all my interviewees cited a lack of historical enmity and violence between the Czechs and Slovaks, especially relative to other ethnic dyads in the region, as the primary cause of the peacefulness of the split.¹⁶⁸ In fact, by the standards of Eastern Europe, the two ethnic groups had fairly cordial relations. They were briefly on opposite sides during World War II, when the Czech lands were occupied by Nazi Germany, while Slovakia was an independent state for the duration of the war under fascist Jozef Tiso, who hoped to win territory in the eventuality of a Nazi victory, but Slovaks’ uprising in 1944, which cost sixty thousand lives, “cleansed their soul.”¹⁶⁹ More important for our purposes, there were no mass atrocities akin to the Yugoslavian Croat-Serb dyad during or after the war. That type of intense, inter-ethnic hatred simply did not exist in the Czech-Slovak case.¹⁷⁰ As one Slovak nationalist

said in the run-up to the 1992 elections, “Our sovereignty movement is like a grown-up son moving out and looking for his own apartment. It doesn’t mean he is angry with his parents. But he just wants to speak in his own name, have his own identity.”¹⁷¹ Journalists reported that the general mood characterizing the 1992 election was “of passive anger rather than hysteria.”¹⁷² This relatively muted history of conflict translated into identity relations that were at worst “indifferent,” resulting in a sanguine outlook on the future by Czech leaders. The warm relations between the two independent republics since, stretching to over two decades, confirms the Czech prognosis.¹⁷³

Thus, when it came to both military capabilities and intentions, the Czechs had little reason to believe the Slovaks would prove a security problem in the future. Combined with the benign regional environment, this meant that security considerations were relegated to a tertiary—if that—concern for the Czechs, and economic and cultural considerations came to be dominant.¹⁷⁴ My interviewees were unanimous that economic considerations are what drove the split for both sides: Klaus and the Czechs wanted “shock treatment” economic reforms, while Mečiar wanted a more gradual shift from a command economy. The Czechs felt that Mečiar and the Slovaks would slow the pace of reform. With that in mind, Czech leaders such as Klaus were not just tolerant of Slovak secession, but positively eager. They believed that economically speaking, they would be better off without the Slovaks than with them. They would no longer have to subsidize Slovakia’s weaker economy to the tune of \$1 billion annually, about 7 percent of the national budget.¹⁷⁵ As Kramer notes, “Klaus’s determination to consummate the split as rapidly as possible in 1992 was based in part on his judgment that attempts to retain a unified state would merely cripple his economic program and make Slovakia even more of an economic burden.”¹⁷⁶ The institutional makeup of the state, with ample veto points in the legislative process, shared equally between Czechs and Slovaks, juxtaposed with the election results that gave right-of-center reformers power in one region but a former communist in another, meant that “almost no form of cohabitation [was] feasible.”¹⁷⁷ Moreover, the Czechs felt, correctly as it turned out,¹⁷⁸ that Mečiar’s authoritarianism would be problematic for admission to European institutions, and that this goal could be achieved more rapidly going alone. As a *Financial Times* report summarized, “The likelihood is that the western Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia, freed of the need to subsidize the economically weaker Slovakia, will now move faster on economic and other reforms. Such policies should allow them to fulfil the preconditions for membership of the E[uropean] C[ommission] while Slovakia, with its inefficient heavy industries, risks sliding backwards economically.”¹⁷⁹ An influential Prague weekly, *Respekt*, printed a headline that captured the prevailing attitude: “Alone to Europe or together to the Balkans.”¹⁸⁰

For the Czechs, then, Slovak demands for separation, far from representing a threat, were an opportunity to pursue political and economic goals that might not have been possible otherwise. To describe their response as sanguine would be understating it; they positively welcomed the chance to separate, once the Slovaks had set the process in motion. But this outcome was possible only because security concerns were taken off the table, in turn due to assessments of Slovak capabilities and intentions in the future. The existence of a benign security environment and the muted identity divisions between the two ethnic groups meant that the state could peacefully negotiate secession.

In addition to muted external security considerations, however, there were other factors at play that allowed for a peaceful split. Some interviews emphasized the importance of the Czech leadership and its enlightened character, especially when it came to Havel—"if he was [Slobodan] Miloševic, you would've had conflict"—and how drastically it differed from contemporary Eastern European politics.¹⁸¹ These interviewees emphasized that, unlike in other parts of Eastern Europe, such as Poland, the revolution in Czechoslovakia was led by intellectuals based in Prague coffeehouses. These enlightened leaders yearned for democracy, "the institutionalization of freedom" in their words, and sought to build "a democracy without adjectives."¹⁸² It is important, however, not to overstate the case for enlightened leadership playing a decisive role in the peacefulness of the split. Havel served more as a "guiding light" or a moral force and had "almost no influence" on actual events in 1992.¹⁸³ He did not get along with Klaus, who ensured that Havel was shunted from the negotiations. Additionally, he was considerably more popular in the Czech lands (and the rest of the world) than he was in Slovakia, whose heavy armaments industry suffered considerably from his dictum that the state, after the collapse of communism, would no longer be an exporter of arms.¹⁸⁴ Unlike Havel, the two personalities directly involved, Mečiar and Klaus, were not especially enlightened. Mečiar, while not a full-blown fascist, had rightist, "proto-authoritarian" leanings; according to Western diplomatic officials, he was "a nasty piece of work" with a background in intelligence services. Meanwhile, Klaus, who in retrospect was just as authoritarian and nationalist as Mečiar, was an "egomaniac" similar to Donald Trump, according to a Western diplomatic official.¹⁸⁵ The main difference between the two was that the people behind Klaus were not as uniformly authoritarian as those behind Mečiar.¹⁸⁶ Regardless, the decision makers involved in the split had more nationalistic, authoritarian tendencies than the coffeehouse intellectuals that led the Velvet Revolution.

A factor probably more important than the leadership involved was the neat dividing line between the two groups, their "clear, undisputed frontiers" in Martin Bútora's words.¹⁸⁷ Several interviewees commented that there were "historical" borders between the Czech and Slovak lands; there

was no “fight for the furniture.”¹⁸⁸ Additionally, there were few ethnic enclaves left over, with Czechs being 1 percent of the population in the Slovak lands and Slovaks making up 4 percent of the population in the Czech lands. As such, there was no fear about the fate of conationals left behind an enemy state’s borders,¹⁸⁹ a fear much more strongly prevalent in the former Yugoslavia. The absence of these fears, and security fears more generally, allowed Czech leaders to accept territorial loss with little trepidation, signing off on the country’s Velvet Divorce less than half a decade after its Velvet Revolution.

SEPARATION IN SCANDINAVIA: NORWAY-SWEDEN IN 1905

After spending nearly a century together, Norway and Sweden separated into independent nation-states in 1905. Norway had been loosening the knot that bound the two for decades, and the early twentieth century saw it untied. Notably, it was a completely peaceful event. Though there was, temporarily, a threat of military action by the Swedes, King Oscar and his government decided against the use of force, and Norway gained its statehood in a negotiated settlement. The separation is generally considered to be one of the very few cases of peaceful secession in the twentieth century.¹⁹⁰

While several idiosyncratic factors facilitated the peaceful dissolution of the Norway-Sweden union, limiting the number of generalized lessons we can draw from it, the case forms important material to test my argument because we have so few cases of a state employing a “negotiations and concessions” strategy against secessionism. Can my theoretical claim, that states will adopt peaceful methods against separatists only when they are unconcerned about future war, be sustained given the evidence from events in Scandinavia in 1905? For instance, we would have cause for concern if Sweden’s peaceful response to Norway’s demands for independence took place amidst intense interstate rivalry or a militarized history between the two peoples. To the contrary, as I detail below, the muted nature of geopolitical competition in the region, along with Norway’s pledge to demilitarize its border and raze its forts, helped create the structural conditions—a sanguine sense of external threat—under which Sweden felt assured acquiescing to territorial loss.

The story of the Norway-Sweden union began in 1814, after the Napoleonic wars. For more than four centuries, Norway had been part of Denmark, but that arrangement came to an end when Denmark foolishly dragged the union into the Napoleonic wars and declared war against Sweden. Norway consequently had to face an onslaught from a much stronger Sweden, which it did a fair job of repelling, despite worse military equipment and training. At the same time, Sweden lost a third of its territory to Russia in 1809, including Finland, setting off panic in Sweden about its vulnerability. The Swedes deposed their king and joined the alliance led

by Britain and Russia, which defeated France in 1812. In return for its help in victory, Sweden's two great power allies agreed that Sweden should get compensation for its loss of Finland. Relatedly, Sweden's military threatened Denmark and requested that Norway be handed over to it. Owing to its weakness, Denmark agreed and gave Norway to Sweden by the Treaty of Kiel on January 14, 1814.¹⁹¹

As was standard practice in the high politics of warfare and territorial exchanges in contemporary Europe, nobody had bothered to ask Norway whether it wished to be part of this union. This was especially important because the timing of the transfer took place just as nationalism was beginning to take root and spread on the European continent.¹⁹² Norway would have much rather been independent, or at the very least enjoyed more autonomy than it did under Denmark. Negotiations to that end led to a standoff, which in turn resulted in a short, sharp military battle, in which Sweden asserted its superiority. Along with military dominance, Sweden also enjoyed the support of Russia and Britain. Mindful, however, of maintaining goodwill with the people it aimed to assert sovereignty over, Sweden pressed for a negotiated settlement early in the conflict, and Norway finally relented. On August 30, 1814, the union between Sweden and Norway was established by the Treaty of Moss, with its designated head of state the king of Sweden.¹⁹³

Union wasn't easy. It took until 1875 for the two political units to share a common currency and coinage. Their bodies of law were distinct, despite sharing ancient foundations. Their economies were so similar that their primary trade partners were other states in Europe, not each other. The two units had a common foreign policy, it is true, as well as cooperation in areas such as railroads, communication, and shipping, but most other instruments and levers of power were located at the state level, including legal supremacy, budgetary decisions, trade policy, citizenship, civil service, ministries, and the courts.¹⁹⁴ That said, autonomy had limits, given that "the acts of the Norwegian parliament would require approval of the Swedish King-in-Council."¹⁹⁵ Overall, Norway resisted attempts aimed at greater political integration, such as plans for a confederal legislature in the 1850s or closer cooperation in 1871.¹⁹⁶ Most important, the two units retained independent militaries.¹⁹⁷ This would have important consequences when push came to shove at the beginning of the twentieth century, as we shall soon see.

THE PRELUDE TO DISSOLUTION

The main issue dividing Norway and Sweden was the former's lack of separate consular services, and more generally, where constitutional and legal control of diplomatic and consular officials within the union would lie. Norwegians believed that their shipping and trade interests were

misrepresented by Swedish consuls, who were biased in favor of Sweden,¹⁹⁸ an important concern given Norway's "growing merchant marine, which by the late nineteenth century was far larger than Sweden's and heavily engaged in the carrying trade between foreign ports. There were differences as well between Norwegian and Swedish trade policies, especially when Sweden in 1888 established protective tariffs while Norway continued to favor free trade."¹⁹⁹ The issue was not just economic but also symbolic, given foreign affairs was the area in which Sweden exercised power over Norway most clearly.²⁰⁰

Matters escalated in 1892. The Norwegian minority government, led by the Conservative Party and Emil Stang, reached an agreement with the Swedes on the larger question of representation in foreign policy. The deal would leave the nationality of the foreign minister undefined—but assumed to be Swedish—and would make him responsible to a union council featuring three Norwegians and three Swedes. The compromise, however, was not satisfactory to the so-called pure wing of Venstre Party, the most radical party in Norway at the time. Venstre leaders such as Wollert Konow and Carl Berner unequivocally rejected the agreement. The Storting, Norway's legislature, passed a resolution that proclaimed "Norway's right to safeguard its foreign affairs in a constitutionally adequate manner." Stang interpreted the resolution as a vote of no confidence and resigned, and in his place the Swedish King invited the radical Venstre to form the new government led by Johannes Steen. Upon assumption of power, Steen and the radicals, supported by the moderates and the conservatives, passed a resolution in the Storting that asserted its right to legislate on a Norwegian consular system, voted in a law for separate consuls, and appropriated budgetary funds for their functioning. Such a unilateral move was anathema to King Oscar, who was aware that the Swedish cabinet would resign if he countenanced the developments taking place in Norway. The king predictably vetoed the resolution, which in turn led to resignations from Steen and his fellow ministers, kicking off a three-year political crisis that lasted until June 1895.²⁰¹

What helped end the crisis was the threat of military action by Sweden. In February 1895, the Riksdag, Sweden's legislature, almost unanimously rejected Norway's consular service demands. More ominously, the king called a meeting of the Secret Committee, which had last been brought together during the Crimean war. Military supplies for unspecified purposes were voted for, and we know now that the Swedish General Staff had detailed plans prepared for moves against Norway. It was evident that Sweden was sending a message, and by June 1895, Norway received it. The Storting, in a lopsided 90–24 vote, called for a reopening of negotiations on the matter.²⁰²

There is little doubt that Norway's relative military backwardness was the main cause of its retreat.²⁰³ With the memory of its acquiescence to

perceived Swedish bullying in sharp relief, Norway went about modernizing and improving its military capabilities. More attention, and money, was budgeted for the army. The navy was updated, including the purchase of warships. Norway also built fortresses along its southeastern border with Sweden and stockpiled munitions.²⁰⁴

NORWAY AND SWEDEN GO THEIR SEPARATE WAYS

A crisis remarkably similar to the one from 1892 to 1895 took place in 1905, but with a dramatically different result: Norway's independence.

Just as in the 1890s, the main issue was whether Norway would enjoy separate consular representation. There was initial promise in working out a compromise between the two hardened positions, as Sigurd Ibsen, son of the well-known playwright, put together a plan for separate consular establishments under one single diplomatic staff for two kingdoms. A joint commission was put into place—itself an advancement after Norway's insistence in the mid-1890s that there was nothing to negotiate—and there was genuine promise in the commission's deliberations. It all came crashing down, however, when Swedish premier E. G. Boström played spoiler by inserting six clauses in a prospective agreement that would have confirmed Norway's dependent position in the union in 1904.²⁰⁵

On February 7, 1905, the Joint Cabinet recognized the failure of the negotiations, and the Norwegian coalition government, which had been elected on a platform to negotiate, was disbanded. According to one contemporary observer, Norwegian anger was widely palpable, and citizens were "united with a determination to repudiate every Swedish encroachment."²⁰⁶ In mid-March, a new coalition government led by Christian Michelsen took charge and displayed its resolve immediately. The Storting once again passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a separate consular service, knowing full well that the king, as in 1892, would veto it. Sure enough, he did, and in a prearranged move, the entire Norwegian cabinet resigned en masse. The king refused to accept the mass resignations, since a replacement government could not be formed.²⁰⁷ The Norwegians went ahead with their final step, which included the Storting unanimously resolving to dissolve the union, owing to "the king's ceasing to function as king of Norway."²⁰⁸ It was a bold and provocative step, Norway's secessionist moment.

At this juncture, Sweden faced a choice: to use coercion or not. Norway had, after all, just unilaterally declared itself free of the Swedish king's sovereignty. Sweden did temporarily consider military action to keep the union alive, but thought better of it. Crown Prince Gustav summed up the prevailing attitude in Sweden, arguing that "Sweden should herself propose a divorce rather than to be, so to speak, kicked out of the union."²⁰⁹ The Rikstag followed suit and accepted the dissolution of the union, so long as Norway met four conditions.²¹⁰

Two of these conditions had more to do with Sweden's pride than anything else: it demanded that Norway hold a plebiscite on the question of independence—to ascertain that it was truly what the people wanted, and not merely a product of the machinations of politicians—and that Norway submit itself to bilateral negotiations without any reference to the unilateral actions taken earlier. The third related to organizing a conference that dealt with the logistics of the separation, including access to transfrontier water-courses and guarantees for the unimpeded migration of the nomadic Lapps. The fourth was the most important, and most interesting for our purposes. It called for the demilitarization of the border zone up to ten kilometers, as well as the destruction of all the Norwegian forts on the border.²¹¹ Ultimately, Norway came to accept each of these demands, and though hard feelings lingered on both sides, there was also a great deal of relief. By the fall of 1905, the disunion was final, and Norway was an independent state, all down to Sweden adopting "negotiations and concessions" as a strategy at Norway's secessionist moment.

SWEDEN'S SANGUINE SUMMATION OF ITS SECURITY

This case highlights and illustrates certain important aspects of the theory I proffer in this book. First and most important, a completely peaceful secession such as the Norway-Sweden dissolution could take place only in a very benign security environment. The region was not a battleground for power politics; as Parent puts it, "Sweden and Norway generally stayed out of world politics, and world politics generally returned the favor."²¹² Throughout the nineteenth century, Scandinavia was involved in "very little international conflict . . . from 1864 to 1914, Sweden and Norway were not involved in any notable international incident; the union hardly had a foreign policy."²¹³ For the most part, Sweden assumed a position of neutrality in intra-European affairs.²¹⁴ As such, it is reasonable to assert that Sweden had little to fear from rapacious European powers when it came to the security consequences of losing substantial territory. Moreover, in the same year as the disunion, the great powers' focus was on other matters, most notably the fallout from the Russo-Japanese war as well as burgeoning colonial rivalries in Morocco.²¹⁵ The overall external environment, from Sweden's perspective, was benign, thus affording it greater latitude in its dealings with Norwegian nationalism.

Second, it is instructive that Sweden did not reconcile itself to a peaceful split until after it attained guarantees regarding the status of the forts Norway had constructed on the border. Lindgren describes the forts' importance, noting that "their thin line of guns and masonry walls pointed directly into Sweden from the sea on the south to almost the sixty-first parallel north of Hamar. They barred Swedish armies from a direct attack on Oslo and could be breached only by fierce fighting and heavy losses of

men.”²¹⁶ Indeed, one contemporary media report conveyed that the destruction of Norway’s forts was the central Swedish concern during negotiations.²¹⁷ The Swedish demand to raze the forts directly stems from the commitment problem that makes granting statehood such a thorny proposition: a host state needs to be confident that the separatists will not turn its new guns on it for it to consider concessions that could ultimately lead to letting go of its territory.

On the other hand, while confidence that its future security would not be violated set the stage for Sweden’s response, there were additional causes for the peacefulness of the split. One factor unique to the Scandinavian case was the relatively weak political and administrative ties between the two units, which made the split more acceptable than it otherwise would have been. More important, the fact that each side had its own military was crucial in Sweden acquiescing to territorial loss. This was because as scholars almost unanimously point out, Sweden did briefly consider military action to keep the union alive, but backed off, in part owing to little chance for long-term military and political success.²¹⁸ It is important to underscore why exactly Sweden’s prospects for military success were not assured. As mentioned above, Norway spent the decade before the 1905 crisis revamping and modernizing its military capabilities. It raised loans to build its two first ironclad warships and constructed additional forts on its coasts. It also budgeted more money for annual military purchases and stockpiled munitions. By strengthening its defenses before moving for disunion, Norway ensured that an invasion by Sweden would not result in an easy Swedish victory. While helpful to its cause in the immediate term, this military strength would have posed a problem for Norway’s demands for independence had it not been accompanied by credible assurances that Sweden would not fall victim to it in the future. Norway had to thus reassure Sweden, explaining its decision to destroy its forts along the border.

The American Civil War

Perhaps no secessionist war has been studied as much as the U.S. Civil War. It is the only conflict in this book that has entire academic journals dedicated to its study.²¹⁹ Interestingly, despite this attention, and notwithstanding some notable exceptions, little research has focused explicitly on the role of external security in the U.S. Civil War. This probably has something to do with the paucity of international relations specialists among the vast legions of scholars who have studied the conflict. It is not as if the question is immaterial or uninteresting; when I first began researching the material for this book and presenting my findings to scholarly audiences, I would regularly hear from American (and American-based) questioners: does your theory have anything to say about our Civil War?

The finer details of the U.S. Civil War have been more than adequately addressed in the voluminous literature devoted to it. Of particular concern to me is first, why the North did not let the South secede, and second why Lincoln changed his preferred policy of dealing with Southern secessionists, from advocating patience and a blockade, to a military strike at Bull Run in the summer of 1861.²²⁰ The escalation to a “militarization” strategy, taking place between April and June of 1861, necessitated both sides raising massive armies—a million men for the unionists, 400,000 for the Confederates—and laid the groundwork for a long, bloody war.²²¹ In other words, understanding this decision holds great import for understanding why the Civil War developed as it did, or even why a civil war erupted in the first place.

As I argue below, one of the main reasons Northern leaders could not countenance the Confederacy was that they were concerned about the future balance of power on the American continent if their state divided, and were especially wary of an expansionist Britain taking advantage of competition between the Union and an independent Confederacy. Though there were assuredly other factors responsible in Lincoln’s refusal to let the south secede, external security was foremost amongst them. Furthermore, when it comes specifically to Lincoln’s escalation at Bull Run, recent IR scholarship has shown that its timing was aimed at forestalling British recognition of, and material support to, the Confederacy. The mere threat of third-party support, rather than its delivery, prompted Lincoln to escalate, an interesting application of my theory.

For our purposes, this case is significant because it shows the power of my argument for explaining events and processes in unlikely situations, which in turn can lead to greater confidence in the underlying mechanisms. Strictly speaking, the U.S. Civil War was neither ethno-nationalist in nature nor did it take place in the twentieth century, which goes against the grain of other conflicts studied in this book. However, if external security considerations, including fears of the future balance of power and third-party support behind the secessionists, were operative in an episode that looks superficially different to the others under investigation, we can be more secure that, in general, internal policies are often determined by events and phenomena outside the state. The U.S. Civil War is generally thought to be the product of slavery, political economy, and “state’s rights,” but the evidence suggests that foreign relations and external security had an important role to play in the crisis.

THE SECESSIONIST CRISIS AND ITS ESCALATION

The United States was less than one hundred years old when it plunged into a secessionist crisis in the second half of the nineteenth century. Unlike all the episodes of secessionism covered in this book, the U.S. Civil War was not strictly ethnically based. Indeed, the United States was probably at its

most homogenous, ethnically speaking, on the eve of its Civil War.²²² That said, its similarity to other crises covered lies in its decidedly regionalist nature; it is sometimes hard to tell when region-based grievances end and where ethnic-based grievances begin, given ethnic groups' proclivity to gather within certain territories.²²³

In this particular case, the regional divisions that marked the country were primarily economic, and later, social. The South's was a primarily export-based economy, the Northwest grew and supplied food, and the Eastern and Middle States constituted the country's commercial and manufacturing base.²²⁴ This economic regionalism resulted in a "natural" divergence of interests: the South opposed tariffs, given its reliance on trade, while the North and West supported them. The South was against the use of public funding to expand transportation and communication networks, the landlocked North naturally disagreed. The South did not favor central banking, as opposed to the North, which housed the centers of capital.²²⁵

Most of all, the people of the North had very different views on slavery than those of the South, and these differences had only been widening since the beginning of the century.²²⁶ As the United States aggressively expanded its territory at a dizzying rate—from 890,000 to 3 million square miles of land, and a sixfold population increase between 1790 and 1850—the question of whether slavery would be expanded to the new territories suddenly brought tension to the fore.²²⁷ Would the United States be a country that had legal slavery or not, and if so, to what geographic extent would it be legal?

The 1860 election brought into sharp relief the different values, interests, and ideologies of the two parts of the country.²²⁸ The Republican candidate for president, Abraham Lincoln, was understood to oppose slavery, the exact issue with which Southern separatism was inextricably bound up. Southern states deemed Lincoln's election the last straw, their collective sentiment captured well by one Georgia editor: "The election of Lincoln is merely the confirmation of a purpose which the South had hoped would be abandoned by the opponents of slavery in the North. It is a declaration that they mean to carry out their aggressive and destructive policy, weakening the institution at every point where it can be assailed either by legislation or by violence, until, in the brutal language of [Senator] Charles Sumner, 'it dies like a poisoned rat in its hole.'"²²⁹

Southern nationalism did not exist as anything other than opposition to the North—cultural affinity and shared practices notwithstanding—but given the import of the slavery issue, it need not have.²³⁰ The economic implications of slavery and abolition were considerable enough; as one contemporary writer noted, "It was not safe to trust eight hundred million dollars' worth of Negroes in the hands of a power that says we do not own the property, that the title under the Constitution is bad, and under the law of God still worse."²³¹ The people in slaveholding states were determined

to defend slavery and “force the Yankees to recognize not only their rights but also their status as perfectly decent, respectable human beings.”²³² Simply put, if slavery was not welcome in the Union, then the Union was not welcome in the South.

When elected, Lincoln claimed that he did not wish to eradicate slavery where it existed, only that he would not permit its expansion, but this did not convince the South, nor did it address the South’s biggest grievance, which was the Northern refusal to return fugitive slaves.²³³ Southern whites could not fathom a world in which black Americans were free: there were far too many of them to deport, and the idea that they could physically stay in their midst while not being servile was anathema.²³⁴ These differences meant that, functionally speaking, only two out of three goals—peace, union, and abolition—could be reached simultaneously. The South chose slavery over union, when on March 4, the six most southern states voted to secede.²³⁵ A civil war seemed to be in the offing when Southern soldiers fired on and took over Fort Sumter in South Carolina in April. At this secessionist moment, the North had to decide whether it valued peace more than the Union.

THE NORTHERN RESPONSE

Abraham Lincoln had some decisions to make.²³⁶ Lincoln cared, or seemed to care, a great deal more about the union than abolition. In other words, his priority appeared to be maintaining the territorial integrity of the United States, not necessarily fidelity to particular principles. “My paramount objective,” he said, “is to save the Union and it is not either to save or to destroy slavery. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps save the Union, and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union.”²³⁷ At another point, Lincoln was explicit about his hierarchy of preferences: “My paramount object in this struggle *is* to save the Union, and is *not* either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing *any* slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing *all* the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing *some* and leaving others alone I would also do that.”²³⁸

Indeed, Lincoln’s antislavery stance did not extend into warm feelings for American blacks. Lincoln had been a career “colonizationist,” which meant that he favored deporting masses of emancipated slaves to other parts of the world because, as he told a delegation of Negroes in 1862, “it is better for us to be separated.”²³⁹ His reasoning was that “We have between us a broader difference than exists between almost any other two races. Whether it is right or wrong I need not discuss, but this physical difference is a great disadvantage to us both, as I think your [black] race suffers very greatly, many of them by living among us, while ours suffer from your presence. In a word we suffer on each side. If this is admitted, it affords a

reason at least why we should be separated." This was perhaps an unsurprising position for a politician who believed of blacks that "not a single man of your race is made the equal of a single man of ours."²⁴⁰

The bottom line is that secession would not be allowed. Lincoln's immediate response to Southern secessionism was marked by caution,²⁴¹ employing a wait-and-see policy on how to deal with the crisis in general and the Southern assault on Fort Sumter in South Carolina in particular. Republicans in the North were internally divided on these questions, with four positions taking hold: hardliners wished for a more coercive response from Washington, moderate Republicans emphasized the law-and-order aspects of Southern secessionism, "conciliationists" argued that the North should grant certain concessions so that the forces of disunion would be weakened in the less polarized states of the Upper South, while a nontrivial minority supported peaceful disunion.²⁴² In the early months of 1861, congressional Republicans mainly supported the conciliatory position, hoping to internally divide the South.²⁴³ Lincoln had to balance firmness and magnanimity; he had to encourage Southern unionism while not providing further fuel for secessionists, all the while keeping his own party united and focused. His main objective in the early stages of the crisis was to play for time.²⁴⁴

Lincoln displayed this moderate strain in his inaugural address. He reiterated that he had no intention of threatening slavery in states where it was already legal, that the government did not have the ability to stamp it out even if he personally wanted to, and that his utmost concern was maintaining constitutional rights and laws, such as the return of fugitive slaves, collecting import duties, delivering mail, and defending public property. He claimed that such actions would not represent taking the fight to Southern secessionists, but rather constituted self-defense. He closed memorably: "In *your* hands, my fellow countrymen, and not in *mine*, is the momentous issue of civil war. . . . You can have no conflict, without being yourselves the aggressors, with *you*, and not with *me*, is the solemn question of 'Shall it be peace, or a sword?'"²⁴⁵

Meanwhile, by the end of February, the seceded states had taken over most federal property, had a written constitution, and a government.²⁴⁶ Lincoln's policy continued to be characterized by patience, believing that if he supplied enough rope to the secessionists, they would hang themselves,²⁴⁷ summing up his strategy thusly: "The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion—no using of force against or among the people anywhere."²⁴⁸ Indeed, Lincoln continued to be conciliatory, and even softened the stance outlined in the inaugural address.²⁴⁹ These words, forswearing the use of force, represent Lincoln's initial response to Southern secessionism, characterized by caution and prudence

within a law-and-order framework, and form the baseline against which we can judge later deviations from it.

DISALLOWING SECESSION AND ESCALATION: THE BRITISH CONNECTION

Republicans grew increasingly impatient across the North. More crucially, supplies at the captured Fort Sumter were running low, and the more immediate question became whether to evacuate the fort or to attempt supplying it with provisions, almost assuredly baiting an attack.²⁵⁰ In addition, by March, the first Confederate tariff went into effect, lowering import duties and directly challenging Lincoln's inaugural pledge to "collect the duties and imposts."²⁵¹ By late March, onlookers were becoming anxious: when, and what, would Lincoln decide? His military advisers had suggested evacuating the fort, and five of his seven cabinet advisers concurred, including his closest adviser, Secretary of State William Seward.²⁵² Evacuation was not such an easy call, however, because of the symbolism inherent in abandoning a fort "in the principal city of the most radical secessionist state," South Carolina.²⁵³ As time went on, the division became increasingly partisan.²⁵⁴

By early April, Lincoln opted for resupplying the fort, which had predictable consequences: it came under attack, and on April 14, it was abandoned. Many historians consider the attack on the supply expedition to Fort Sumter as the beginning of the Civil War, but this emphasis is probably overstated. The three months following the Fort Sumter attack have been deemed a "phony war," with both sides committed to essentially defensive military strategy, more hold than take. One important development in this period, however, was the formal institution of blockade by Lincoln, on April 16, a policy that had been much discussed.²⁵⁵

It is Lincoln's change of heart by late June, however, that really changed the trajectory of the conflict. Now, rather than advocating stalling and delay, Lincoln chose a more aggressive strategy. On June 25 and 29, Lincoln summoned his war council for a pair of meetings, organized to authorize an invasion of the South.²⁵⁶ This escalation—from a purely defensive strategy resembling policing to a more aggressive militarization—would set the stage for the long, brutal war that was to follow. The question is: what caused it? More generally, why were Lincoln and his advisers against Southern secession?

While there were a number of factors that contributed to the Union disallowing the South's secession, concern about external security is an underappreciated one. Specifically, a divided America would shift the balance of power on the continent toward Britain. Suspicions abounded that the British, given their strategic location in Canada and the Caribbean, would be favorably predisposed to a division of the United States and a

reconfiguration of the balance of power on the continent.²⁵⁷ In Seward's words, "The new confederacy, which in that case Great Britain would have aided into existence, must, like any other new state, seek to expand itself northward, westward, and southward. What part of this continent or of the adjacent islands would be expected to remain in peace?"²⁵⁸ This eventuality, of an expansionist Confederacy locking horns over territory with the rump Union, would leave only one winner, geopolitically speaking: Britain. As one historian states, "British leaders welcomed the prospect of the permanent division of the vast territory of the United States between two nations" because it would eradicate the threat of American expansionism to Mexican independence and British rule in Canada.²⁵⁹ Another scholar argues that it was a "popular" belief amongst the American leadership that Britain "would welcome the South into the family of nations as a strategic move designed to divide America and permit England to expand both above and below the republic" while encasing "the Union with a stronger Canada to the north and a Confederate friend to the South."²⁶⁰ The suspicion was mutual: Britain considered the United States an aggressive, expansionist power and held particular distaste for Seward, "a chauvinistic supporter of Manifest Destiny" and "foremost, an American imperialist," who longed for the annexation British Canada.²⁶¹

Notably, the interpretation that Britain wished for a divided America for its geopolitical purposes was widely shared, with the Russian ambassador to London claiming that "at the bottom of its heart, [Britain] desires the separation of North America into two Republics, which will watch each other jealously and counterbalance one the other. Then England, on terms of peace and commerce with both, would have nothing to fear from either; for she would dominate them, restraining them by their rival ambitions."²⁶² As one historian notes, "In the earlier years of the war the collapse of the Union seemed at first fight to offer considerable advantages and opportunities to Great Britain," including "the most effective and permanent solution of all Britain's difficulties of defense and diplomacy in America. Palmerston himself had held up the prospect of 'the Swarms [separating] from the Parent Hive' as the one real consolation for an ultimate acquiescence in American expansion."²⁶³ In other words, the Northern leadership was acutely aware of the deleterious consequences of territorial loss for its future security, especially with regard to the future balance of power with Britain, and just as my theory would predict, acted to prevent a change in borders.

Consistent with this theme, there is good reason to believe that when escalating Northern strategy at Bull Run, Lincoln was guided by external factors relating to Britain and its relationship to the Confederacy. In particular, Lincoln and his advisers were concerned with the prospect of European, and especially British, recognition of the Southern separatists, which would strengthen the rebels' resolve and possibly lead down the slippery

slope to military aid. Indeed, according to Poast, “Lincoln and his cabinet considered the possibility of British recognition to be *the primary threat* facing the United States with respect to the secession crisis.” Furthermore, “key members of Lincoln’s cabinet believed and/or received credible information that exercising force against the South could forestall such recognition” while “failure to act might lead the Europeans to perceive *de facto* Southern independence.”²⁶⁴ If this argument is accurate, it suggests that external conditions were not just operative in Lincoln’s calculus, but central to it.

To understand why the prospect of British recognition of the Confederacy so concerned Lincoln and advisers, it is necessary to first appreciate British incentives for supporting the South. Southern independence would not just shift the geopolitical balance of power in favor of Britain. The British also stood to gain economically from supporting the Confederacy, mainly due to its reliance on Southern cotton. Under normal conditions, the British, owing to their antislavery stance, could reasonably be expected to support the North over the South, and there was considerable evidence initially that Britain would side overwhelmingly with the forces arrayed against the slave trade—reportedly, Prime Minister Palmerston had read *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* three times and was vehemently antislavery.²⁶⁵ However, Northerners themselves, including Lincoln, diminished the role slavery played in the crisis, so as to not alienate significant numbers of racist Northerners, as well as Unionists in the South and the border states of Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, and Missouri.²⁶⁶ This rhetorical strategy—emphasizing the sanctity of the Union and the need for law-and-order, rather than race or slavery as the guiding principles of Northern policy—unwittingly let the British off the hook; no longer did they have to choose between moral and strategic considerations.²⁶⁷ After all, if the Unionists themselves claimed the crisis was not about slavery, then the British were free to support the South over other principles, such as states’ rights,²⁶⁸ as well as crasser, instrumental reasons.

These instrumental reasons boiled down to one issue: cotton. More than one-sixth of Britain’s population relied on the textile industry—“Lancashire depends on South Carolina,” in the words of the editors of *The Times*—and over one third of its exports were directly tied to cotton.²⁶⁹ American cotton first gained a larger share of the European market than Indian cotton in 1796, providing higher yields and proving easier to yarn, and cemented its dominance through the nineteenth century.²⁷⁰ Southerners were not just aware of British dependence on their cotton, but eager to use it as leverage. This view came to be known as the “King Cotton” thesis and enjoyed widespread acceptance and popularity, including among “operatives, manufacturers, merchants, government agents, prime ministers, all.”²⁷¹ In the words of South Carolinian James H. Hammond, “Without firing a gun, without drawing a sword, should they make war on us we could bring the world to

our feet. The South is perfectly competent to go on, one, two, or even three years without planting a seed of cotton. . . . What would happen if no cotton was furnished for three years? I will not stop to depict what every one can imagine, but this is certain: England would topple headlong and carry the whole civilized world with her, save the South. No, you dare not make war on cotton. No power on earth dares to make war upon it. Cotton is king!"²⁷² In December 1860, a week before South Carolina declared secession, Texas Senator Louis T. Wigfall agreed, boasting that "I say that cotton is King, and that he waves his scepter not only over these thirty-three States, but over the island of Great Britain and over continental Europe."²⁷³ Part of the South's leverage came from the domestic political economy of both Britain and France, since each had substantial numbers of workers tied up in the textile industry, and these workers were "restless and rebellious and easily persuaded to revolution."²⁷⁴ More than 80 percent of Britain's cotton supply emanated from the South and by May 1861, the South cut off cotton exports to Britain aside from Southern ports to demonstrate its standing. Luckily for Britain, it had a year's supply in surplus, but the message was sent: "The vital interests of their empire would come into play in about a year's time: Lancashire's cotton mills could not run without cotton."²⁷⁵

These geopolitical and economic incentives for Britain to support the South caused Lincoln and his confidantes, particularly Seward, to cast a wary eye across the Atlantic. They were apprehensive about the potential of Britain recognizing the Confederacy, both because it would provide legitimacy to the rebels and because it would open the doors for more explicit, material support, conceivably tipping the material balance in the South's favor.²⁷⁶ For instance, were the British to recognize the Confederacy, it would gain access to British ports and the right to negotiate military and commercial treaties.

As such, Lincoln and Seward's overarching objectives during the secessionist crisis were to prevent diplomatic recognition of Confederate independence by European powers and to limit any form of European support for the Confederacy, material or otherwise.²⁷⁷ As Seward wrote to U.S. Minister in Britain, Charles Adams, "The agitator in this bad enterprise [secessionism], justly estimating the influence of the European powers upon even American affairs, do not mistake in supposing that it would derive signal advantage from a recognition by any of those powers, and especially Great Britain. Your task, therefore, apparently so simple and easy, involves the responsibility of preventing the commission of an act by the government of that country which would be fraught with disaster, perhaps ruin, to our own."²⁷⁸ Seward also vociferously emphasized to diplomatic representatives from other great powers, especially Britain, to not interfere in the crisis, to the point that his warnings were dismissed as "the rantings of a demagogue than as pleas for restraint and vision to preserve world peace."²⁷⁹ In correspondence to the U.S. minister in London, Seward wrote

that "I have never for a moment believed that such a recognition could take place without producing immediately a war between the U.S. and the recognizing power." At another point he warned that "British recognition would be British intervention to create without our own territory a hostile state by overthrowing this Republic itself," adding parenthetically that "when this act of intervention is distinctly performed, we from that hour, shall cease to be friends and become once more, as we have twice before been forced to be, enemies of Great Britain."²⁸⁰ To the U.S. minister in Paris, he struck a similar tone: "Foreign intervention would obligate us to treat those who yield it as allies of the insurrectionary party and to carry on the war against them as enemies."²⁸¹ Regardless of their reception, Seward's ideas, and his message to diplomatic officials in London, were clear: "Every instruction you have received from this department is full of evidence of the fact that the principal danger in the present insurrection which the President has apprehended was that of foreign intervention, aid, or sympathy; and especially of such intervention, aid, or sympathy on the part of the government of Great Britain," adding that "foreign intervention, aid, or sympathy in favor of the insurgents, especially on the part of Great Britain, manifestly could only protract and aggravate the war."²⁸² Meanwhile, Northern concerns about British support and recognition were matched by Southern obsession with securing it, for the same reasons that it was opposed by the Unionists: it could potentially tip the balance. Historians consider European recognition of Southern independence the "paramount Confederate foreign policy goal," or "the Confederacy's chief objective in foreign affairs," especially during the first two years of the war.²⁸³

This, then, was the international context in the spring and summer of 1861, with Northern decision makers aware that Britain would sooner or later have to pick a side.²⁸⁴ Within that period, there were indications that Britain was indeed moving toward recognizing the Confederacy. First, the British pledged neutrality in the conflict, which despite appearances, was not necessarily innocuous behavior: Charles Sumner, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, classified the proclamation as "the most hateful act of English history since the time of Charles 2nd."²⁸⁵ Neutrality so offended the North because it granted coequal belligerent status to the South—as opposed to "rebels" or "insurgents," which is how the North preferred to refer to the Confederate states. As Seward said to Richard Lyons, British minister to the United States, "to us, the rebels are only rebels, and we shall never consent to consider them otherwise. If you wish to recognize their belligerent character, either by addressing an official declaration to us, or by your actions, we shall protest and we shall oppose you."²⁸⁶ In addition, neutrality, and its attendant belligerent status, bestowed on the Confederacy advantages, including the right of its vessels to confiscate enemy goods, the right of entry to British ports with prizes from privateering, and the right to borrow money and buy material for its

armed forces as combatants rather than bandits.²⁸⁷ Neutrality, the Unionists complained, “awarded stature and credibility to the Confederacy,” and was perceived as “the first step in a process leading to recognition of Southern independence.”²⁸⁸ Additionally, the method and timing of the declaration of neutrality—the day of Adams’s arrival in England, May 13, and without consultation, as had been previously agreed—was cause for chagrin.²⁸⁹ As Adams delicately put it after his arrival, “The action taken seemed, at least to my mind, a little more rapid than was absolutely called for by the occasion.”²⁹⁰

Second, British foreign secretary Russell announced a concert between Britain and France, pointedly without consulting the U.S. government, to arrange for a unified position on the question of neutrality, raising the specter of a joint European intervention in North America by two states that already had considerable stakes on the continent. Indeed, France did not attempt to hide its eagerness to intervene in some way: Napoleon III wished for a stronger foothold in North America, and given the presence of not one but two civil wars on the continent—Mexico was also in the midst of internal conflict, and was more vulnerable to foreign intervention given its indebtedness to European states—the time seemed ripe. France also had more reason to be concerned about the effects of a blockade: it received 93 percent of its cotton from the South, with the corresponding figure for Britain at 80 percent.²⁹¹ The announcement of a joint policy did not please Union officials. As Seward put it to Adams on June 19, “When we received official information that an understanding was existing between the British and French governments that they would take one and the same course concerning the insurrection which has occurred in this country, involving the question of recognizing the independence of a revolutionary organization, we instructed you to inform the British government that we had expected from both of those powers a different course of proceeding.”²⁹²

Third, Russell himself had agreed to meet representatives from the Confederacy and hear their case for recognition, albeit in an unofficial capacity, on May 4.²⁹³ This meeting greatly angered Union officials; in a dispatch written by Seward but watered down by Lincoln and finally presented to Russell by U.S. minister in Britain Charles Adams, the British were told that even unofficial contacts with Confederate representatives would be cause for the termination of all diplomatic contact with London.²⁹⁴ Seward wrote to Adams, noting firmly that “intercourse of any kind with the so-called commissioners is liable to be construed as the recognition of the authority which appointed them. Such intercourse would be none the less hurtful to us for being called unofficial, and it might be even more injurious, because we should have no means of knowing what points might be resolved by it.”²⁹⁵

It was under these circumstances that Lincoln decided to go on the offensive, abandon his previous policy of patience and caution, and launch an

invasion of the South. As Poast argues, for Lincoln and his cabinet, “staving off foreign intervention required taking aggressive measures against Southern forces.”²⁹⁶ The evidence for the claim that Lincoln’s escalation was catalyzed by the prospect of British interference is that, first, Lincoln’s advisers who supported aggressive measures were cognizant of the threat of foreign recognition and explicitly cited it as a cause for more forthright policy in their communications on the issue. For instance, in April, Attorney General Edward Bates noted in his diary that the Union should choose aggression because the Southern states “warm up their friends and allies, by bold daring, and by the prestige of continued success—while we freeze the spirits of our friends everywhere, by our inaction and the gloomy presage of defeat.” The week before the attack on Manassas, he wrote to a friend, and once again, raised the importance of signals sent and received in foreign capitals: “Foreigners do not understand why we should allow a hostile army to remain so long almost in sight of the Capitol, if we were able to drive them off.” Similarly, General Scott argued that a more offensive strategy would aid in forestalling recognition of the Southern government abroad.²⁹⁷

Second, the historical record shows that the British themselves would have been “impressed” with more aggressive action against the South. After a June 17 meeting with Seward, British minister Lyons wrote a letter to Russell in which he commented on the slow pace of Northern action—“if the advance is to go on the same rate, it will take about half a century to get on to Florida.”²⁹⁸ The particulars of the meeting that led to this letter are suggestive. Given the widespread British belief that the use of force by the Union would command more respect across the Atlantic, and given that this letter was written immediately after meeting Seward, who “no doubt calculates upon the effect which may be produced upon the governments of Europe by the events of the Month,” according to Lyons, it is conceivable and perhaps even likely that Seward left the meeting all the more convinced that more aggression would quell the prospect of British recognition.

Third, while we lack direct knowledge of Lincoln’s thinking in the run-up to Manassas—primary evidence for Lincoln’s thoughts and beliefs is often found in the diaries of John Hay, his private secretary, but between May 12 and August 22, Hay did not write anything because “the nights have been too busy for jottings”²⁹⁹—we do have on record his reaction to the consequent defeat at Bull Run. Meeting with Senator Orville Browning after the defeat, Lincoln reported feeling “melancholy” on account of the fact that “they [Britain and France] were determined to have the cotton crop as soon as it matured” and that the British were “now assuming the ground that a nation had no right, whilst a portion of its citizens were in revolt, to close its ports or any of them against foreign Nations.” This deep concern over the foreign reaction to the defeat at Bull Run was cause for Lincoln’s consternation for at least a year. Thus while we do not have direct evidence

connecting foreign intervention and the attack at Manassas in Lincoln's mind, the circumstantial evidence is, at the very least, broadly suggestive that the signals sent to foreign capitals was one of the main reasons for choosing a more aggressive policy vis-à-vis the South.³⁰⁰ Unfortunately for the Union, their forces were routed at Bull Run—"Bull's Run" should be known as Yankee's Run," in Palmerston's memorable words. Yet despite the defeat, and further inquiries of the possibilities of formal recognition, the British did not change their position that the South had not yet won independence, and thus recognition would be imprudent.³⁰¹

I do not mean to suggest that the threat of foreign intervention was the *only* factor driving Lincoln and his cabinet to the attack at Manassas. It is to say, however, that the external security implications of Southern secessionism were certainly operative in the decision-making calculus of figures such as Lincoln and Seward at this important juncture. Union officials were concerned about how British and French recognition could further aid the cause of the Confederate independence, an eventuality unacceptable to the Union's future external security due to the intense power competition it would lead to on the continent, and instituted an escalation of Northern policy, with one eye fixedly gazing across the Atlantic. This escalation led, in part, to a serious conflagration that claimed almost a million lives, but would keep the country united.

To the extent that Lincoln and his advisers were concerned about the prospect of a more evenly divided North America, whereby the United States would be one of two or even three equal powers rather than the regional hegemon, my theory can account for Northern opposition to Southern secessionism. Where the U.S. Civil War departs from my theory is that in this case, the host state opted for a harsher response against secessionists to *preempt* foreign support, rather than as a reaction to it. Furthermore, this case also draws into question my insistence (chapter 1) that material support, particularly in the form of arms and training, is more important than financial support and certainly more important than diplomatic or political support. Indeed, this episode demonstrates that under certain conditions, the promise or execution of "mere" diplomatic support can be seen as the first step on a slippery slope that ends in full-blown cooperation and can result in as aggressive a response as any other. This interesting application of my argument in a case of secessionism that was neither strictly ethnic nor in the twentieth century therefore lends it greater credence overall, while also drawing into question the precise role of third-party support.

In this chapter, I have endeavored to considerably broaden the sample of cases examined. I have shown that the lack of external security concerns, both dyadically and regionally, allowed Swedish and Czech leaders to treat Norwegian and Slovak separatism respectively with peaceful concessions

that ultimately led to secession in both cases. Conversely, serious concerns about what an independent Palestine would mean for its security have impelled Israel to use coercion against Palestinian nationalists. Even in the nonethnic case of the U.S. Civil War, worries about British aid to Southern secessionists resulting in an independent, expansionist Confederacy forced Union leaders to escalate at a crucial time in 1861.

The reputation argument would expect peaceful concessions in both the Sweden-Norway and Czechoslovakian cases, but for different reasons than mine: those states were both binational, leaving no other potential groups to deter. However, in my investigation, I was able to uncover little evidence of reputational concerns among Swedish or Czech leaders. Moreover, the problem with relying on binationalism is made clear when one considers the Israel-Palestine case and U.S. Civil War, where this argument would expect peace, in complete contradiction to events.

The veto-points argument explains important elements of the Velvet Divorce and Israel-Palestine cases: in the former, concessions to Slovaks were made more credible by the fact that the entire spectrum of the Czech body politic was behind them, while in the latter, Israel's notoriously divided internal politics have meant right-wing parties can stall concessions, especially in the aftermath of Oslo. It is less immediately clear what this argument can do to explain Swedish concessions to Norway and the U.S. Civil War, given that both saw highly centralized decision-making result in opposing reactions: peace in Scandinavia, war in North America.