

**Ker-Lindsay, James. 2012. *The Foreign Policy of Counter Secession: Preventing the Recognition of Contested States*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 240 pp., £50.00.**

“The Foreign Policy of Counter Secession: Preventing the Recognition of Contested States” is a new entry in the rich literature on the issue of secession and recognition. What is special about this book is that it analyses this phenomenon from a different angle. Until now, two perspectives have dominated the subject. Firstly, authors have focused on a theoretical discussion about secession and recognition in the context of the international law. Secondly, many publications have been dedicated to breakaway territories and their efforts to be recognized. On the other hand, Ker-Lindsay’s book presents the issue of recognition from a new perspective. The author decided to focus on the foreign policy of parent states, that is, states that wish to prevent a part of their territory from being recognized as an independent state. To be more specific, the author analyses the efforts of the governments of Serbia, Georgia and Cyprus to prevent the recognition of Kosovo, South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Northern Cyprus.

James Ker-Lindsay is not new to the topic. As Eurobank EFG Senior Research Fellow at the London School of Economics he specializes in conflict, peace and security in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean. The author has extensively published on the issue of Cyprus and Kosovo, and “The Foreign Policy of Counter Secession” represents a continuation of his previous research. However, it aims to understand the issue of secession and recognition in more general terms than those geographically limited only to South East Europe.

The book is clearly written and well structured, which makes presented ideas easy to understand even for readers who are new to the topic. Its strength lies in the fact that James Ker-Lindsay locates the foreign policy of counter secession in a wider debate on the issue of recognition. In the introductory part, the author presents the relevant literature on recognition of secessionist territories and explains the most important terms connected with the subject. Afterwards, he presents how the idea of recognition has transformed during the centuries and what it means in the modern times. Many references to the most important literature on the subject can be very helpful for a reader who wishes to broaden his/her knowledge.

The second part of the book focuses on the foreign policies of Serbia, Georgia and Cyprus that aim to prevent the recognition of Kosovo, Northern Cyprus, Abkhazia and Ossetia. All of these entities declared independence (unilateral secession) and received some

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degree of international recognition. It is worth underlying that the analysis is based on in-depth interviews with politicians from mentioned states, which provided James Ker-Lindsay with first-hand insight into each country's counter secession policy: how it had been designed, developed and implemented.

The main part of the analysis is preceded by a brief presentation of each of the four case studies, focusing on history, background of the problem, key issues at stake, the current level of international recognition and the involvement of third actors. This chapter is well thought-out and prepared as it sums up the most important developments of the last decades. A reader new to the topic will receive sufficient information to understand the analysis presented in the section of the book that follows, and a reader well acquainted with those issues can simply skip this part. The author continues to present how Serbia, Cyprus and Georgia have planned, developed and implemented their counter secession policy. The book explores legal, political and diplomatic tactics and tools that the states use to prevent breakaway entities from gaining recognition. In his analysis, James Ker-Lindsay focuses on such variables as the role of third actors, international organizations and judicial bodies.

The main theoretical conclusion is that, generally, states are very conservative when it comes to recognition of new entities, which allows the parent states significant structural advantages over breakaway territories. However, there is no regional solidarity regarding this subject; the decision on recognition is politically motivated and taken on a case-by-case basis, very often regardless of the efforts of the parent state.

It is interesting that nowadays the role of international organizations in a counter-secession strategy is rising, as they allow to address a large group of states at the same time. Parent states use them as a forum to strongly oppose the membership of breakaway territories in various organizations or any form of cooperation with them, ranging from financial institutions to cultural and sport bodies, because they could suggest the right of a breakaway entity to independence. On the other hand, and this comes as a surprise, the role of judicial bodies in foreign policy of counter secession proved to be lesser than expected. The legal route can yield significant results, but there is always the danger of an unwelcome opinion.

Finally, in the concluding part, the author sums up the entire book. It was somewhat disappointing that James Ker-Lindsay did not formulate some general patterns of counter secession policy in the international relations; instead, he placed his conclusions only within the context of the chosen case studies.

Certainly, *The Foreign Policy of Counter Secession* represents a timely input to discussions on the issue of secession and recognition, on both academic and political levels. The main advantage of this book is that it addresses a new issue that has not been analysed in a comprehensive way, namely the foreign policy of counter secession. However, the main portion of the book seems very general. An alert reader would expect an analysis

of greater depth, especially considering the fact that it is the first book fully dedicated to this topic. Consequently, readers may sometimes have an impression that the book has been designed for people who are new to the topic, rather than for those with previous knowledge of the subject. Nonetheless, “The Foreign Policy of Counter Secession” is worth reading, and contributes to a better understanding of the analyzed phenomenon.

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