

# CROSSROADS

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

*Crossroads* is an interdisciplinary, undergraduate research journal published by the Honors School at Monmouth University. The contributors are Junior and Senior Honors thesis students whose work has been chosen by the Honors Council as representing the most original, thoroughly researched, and effectively argued theses in their fields.

*Crossroads* is made possible through the support of Monmouth University and the generosity of our benefactor Ms. Jane Freed, class of 1981. The articles in this volume include works in the fields of: Biology, Chemistry, English, Political Science and Psychology.

Deep gratitude must also be given to the Chief Advisors and Second Readers. It is through their inspiration and support that our Honors School students succeed. In particular we must thank the following faculty: Dr. Acevedo, Dr. Campbell, Dr. Dooley, Dr. Doss, Dr. Fury, Dr. Lewandowski, Dr. Littman, Dr. Palladino, Dr. Schreiber, Dr. Truhlar, and Prof. Vujnovic. Without their mentorship, the students would be missing out on a key component of their experience in the Honors School.

Additionally, we must thank Ms. Erin Hawk and Ms. Reenie Menditto for their help in advising and supporting all thesis students. Without their care and attention, *Crossroads* would not be what it is today.

Lastly, we must thank Ms. Jennifer S. Van Alstyne for her editorial assistance as well as Professors Neil Graves, Kenneth Mitchell and John Tiedemann; the Honors Thesis Advisors.

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# UP-REGULATION OF HYPOXIA-INDUCIBLE FACTOR-1 FOLLOWING *E. COLI* AND *P.* *AERUGINOSA* LIPOPOLYSACCHARIDE-INDUCED INFLAMMATION IN THE RAT TESTIS

DHARM PATEL

*BIOLOGY*

## ABSTRACT

Bacterial infections and resulting inflammation of the male reproductive tract is known to impair fertility through mechanisms that include decreased sperm mobility through the tract, blockage of the tract and reduced androgen output. Hypoxia-Inducible Factor-1 (HIF-1) is a transcription factor that is considered the master regulator of hypoxia. Recent work has revealed that HIF-1 is involved in inflammatory pathways and is important for cross-talk between hypoxic and inflammatory pathways. We hypothesized that HIF-1 in the rat testis is upregulated following lipopolysaccharide (LPS)-induced inflammation. Inflammation was induced via intraperitoneal administration of LPS from *E. coli* and *P. aeruginosa* for 1, 3, 6, and 12 hours ( $n = 3-5$  animals/time point) at a dosage of 5 mg/kg body weight. Physiological effects of LPS-induced inflammation in the testis were confirmed via a decrease in serum testosterone levels following LPS treatment. Western Blot analysis of testicular cytoplasmic protein extracts demonstrated an increase in HIF-1 $\alpha$  protein. Messenger RNA (mRNA) levels of HIF-1 $\alpha$  were measured in LPS-treated and saline injected rats via quantitative polymerase chain reaction (qPCR) which demonstrated no change in testicular HIF-1 $\alpha$  mRNA. To examine potential mechanisms involved in

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the up-regulation of HIF-1, protein levels and DNA binding activity of nuclear factor- $\kappa$ B (NF- $\kappa$ B) were measured. Western Blot analysis shows no change in NF- $\kappa$ B and I $\kappa$ B protein levels while Electromobility shift assays (EMSA) suggest a decrease in NF- $\kappa$ B binding activity following LPS treatment. We conclude that HIF-1 $\alpha$  protein is upregulated following LPS-induced inflammation. However, in contrast to other tissue types, in which HIF-1 is up-regulated through transcriptional activation via NF- $\kappa$ B, we conclude that HIF-1 is not upregulated through an increase in *HIF-1 $\alpha$*  mRNA. These novel results demonstrate that the testis is physiologically distinct in responding to LPS infection and inflammation. Further experiments will be performed in the future to examine mechanisms responsible for the up-regulation of HIF-1 $\alpha$  protein and effects of inflammation on downstream targets of HIF-1 $\alpha$ . The overall objective of this work is to elucidate the link between hypoxic and inflammatory responses in the testis at the molecular level following inflammation.



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# GREEN CHEMISTRY AND FUNCTIONALIZED ORGANIC COMPOUNDS

GILLIAN SHAW  
*CHEMISTRY*

## ABSTRACT

Selective oxidation of carbonyl groups to their corresponding acids in compounds containing both alcohol and aldehyde groups is of growing interest in the specialty chemicals and pharmaceutical industry. Compounds containing alcohol and carboxylic acid functional groups are used in waterborne and powder coating systems. An example of a compound that is of interest to both the coatings and pharmaceutical industries is dimethylolpropionic acid (DMPA). The current reported synthesis and production of DMPA is carbon inefficient requires a lot of energy and is not catalytic. Research efforts to date have focused on a novel “greener” synthesis of DMPA. Green chemistry and the impact of this research will be presented.

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Lauren Bonfiglio has been my lab partner over the last two and a half years. She has been my sounding board for ideas and has helped move the project forward in many ways. She should also count as a third reader as I've asked her to revise my work several times.

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Dr. Topper was willing to devote time to me to ensure that I learn about computational chemistry and that a computational analysis could be included in the thesis work.

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Monmouth University School of Science SRP Monmouth University.

# THE TROUBLES AND QUESTION OF IDENTITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND 1969-2007

TERENCE BODAK  
*POLITICAL SCIENCE*

## THE BEGINNING OF THE TROUBLED TIMES

For much of the last third of the twentieth century, Northern Ireland was immersed in an ongoing conflict centered on the ethno-political divide between its mainly Protestant Unionist and Catholic Nationalist communities over the constitutional status of the state. The question that lay at the heart of the debate was primarily a territorial one: was Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom or leave to join the Republic of Ireland to once again unite the Irish Isle? This period, 1968-1998, now referred to as the Troubles, reinvigorated the debate between Unionists, who wished for Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom with England, Scotland, and Wales, and, the Nationalists, who wished to secede from the United Kingdom and unite with the Republican South. Since the Troubles were such a significant event in Western European history, it is paramount to investigate and attempt to understand their origins and root causes. In today's world, it is somewhat of an anomaly to have a Western nation, let alone a European nation, be consumed with an issue that invokes images of civil disorder on such a large scale. Many people assume that such conflicts within Western nations are something of the past and believe that such an internal divide is only something a nation in a different part of the world, such as the Middle East in 2011 might experience. Moreover, many people hold the belief that a conflict between two European states is

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practically impossible because of how closely linked their economies have become and because of the formation of the European Union (EU). The Troubles ended only thirteen years ago: this is a recent history that should not be forgotten because of the lessons that can be learned from its understanding.

To fully understand the Troubles the history of Northern Ireland itself must be understood. From 1919 to 1921, Ireland fought the United Kingdom in a war for independence – a final culmination of centuries long tension between the Irish and the British. The government of the United Kingdom, hoping to keep intact the union between the two Isles, issued the Government of Ireland Act<sup>1</sup>, which divided Ireland into two separate political entities: “Northern Ireland”, which consisted of “the parliamentary counties of Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry and Tyrone, and the parliamentary boroughs of Belfast and Londonderry”<sup>2</sup> and “Southern Ireland,” which comprised the rest of Ireland not defined as “Northern Ireland.”<sup>3</sup> The act, also known as the “Fourth Home Rule Bill,” allowed for the two new political entities to create their own home rule governments, consisting of the king, a senate, and a house of commons<sup>4</sup>; the aim of the legislation was to form a government better suited to deal with the issues of the Irish people. As Ireland already considered itself to be independent from the UK, the act failed to do what it was intended to do. Instead, the Irish Civil War ended after the passing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty<sup>5</sup> and created the Irish Free State on 6 December 1921 – which consisted of all counties of Ireland. Northern Ireland, showing its loyalty to the crown, opted out of the Free State and rejoined the UK just three days after the Treaty’s passage. This created tension between the UK and the Republic of Ireland for the next

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Ireland Act, 1920 (1920), Government of the United Kingdom , accessed from the National Archives of the United Kingdom on 22 September 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, section 1

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, section 1.2

<sup>5</sup> Anglo-Irish Treaty (6 December 1921), , Government of the United Kingdom , accessed from the National Archives of Ireland on 22 September 2011.

eighty-five years – the question of Northern Ireland and its people lay at the center of conflict.

For the next forty years, tensions built up in Northern Ireland over the mistreatment of minorities – mainly Catholics. Tensions turned to conflict in the late 1960s between the two ethno-political groups as a result of debates over civil rights in Northern Ireland; violence broke out between the two sides, fueled by violent interaction between Unionist and Nationalist paramilitary groups, made worse by the intervention of British Special Forces.<sup>6</sup> On 5 October 1968, police prevented a large number of people from participating in a march for civil rights<sup>7</sup>, resulting in an outbreak of violence. Many historians, including Paul Bew<sup>8</sup> and Tim Pat Coogan<sup>9</sup>, consider the violent response by police and protesters over the civil rights march to be the official start of the Troubles.

The United Kingdom sought a peaceful resolution by addressing the issue at the center of the divide, specifically the constitutional status of Northern Ireland and its people. The majority of people in Northern Ireland desired a peaceful resolution as well, the paramilitary organizations of both nationalists and unionists notwithstanding. Although most wanted a peaceful resolution, such a resolution was difficult to agree upon because of the high level of polarization between the vast distance between opposing political figures, such as the Unionist Ian Paisley and the Nationalist Gerry Adams. During the more than thirty years of the Troubles, many peace attempts failed before peace was finally achieved in the late 1990s with the Belfast Agreement.<sup>10</sup> The issue moved closer to resolution with the St. Andrews Agreement<sup>11</sup> in 2009.

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<sup>6</sup> Tim Pat Coogan, *The Troubles: Ireland's Ordeal 1966-1996 and the Search for Peace* (Boulder, Colorado: Roberts Rinehart Publishers, 1996), 60-61.

<sup>7</sup> Coogan, *The Troubles*, 60-61.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Bew, *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity 1789 – 2006* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 489.

<sup>9</sup> Coogan, *The Troubles*, 60-61.

<sup>10</sup> Belfast Agreement, published by the Northern Ireland Office of the United Kingdom, accessed on 8 October 2011.

<sup>11</sup> St. Andrews Agreement, published by the Northern Ireland Office of the United Kingdom, accessed on 8 October 2011.

This paper will focus on two closely related elements of the period of the Troubles: its cause and its resolution. Although the Troubles broke out over a civil rights demonstration aimed at fighting the injustices towards religious minorities, this paper will argue that it was nationalism, not religion that divided the people of Northern Ireland. To prove that nationalism was at the root of the conflict, this paper will seek to answer two questions: What divided the people of Northern Ireland? How do the people of Northern Ireland self-identify themselves? From the onset of the founding of the province of Northern Ireland, the dominion has been divided over the issue of whether to remain with the UK or join with the Republic of Ireland; personal feelings on this issue relate to identity and security. If a person identifies with Ireland and believes he or she may be better protected against violence by being part of the Republic, then he or she will favor a nationalist identity associated with the Republic; otherwise, he or she will identify with and favor remaining in the United Kingdom. Certain historians, such as Roger Mac Ginty, argue that Unionists and Nationalists tend to interpret and remember events of the Troubles in different ways, often with a sympathetic slant towards their own beliefs.<sup>12</sup> If true, this theory would indicate that the people of Northern Ireland think of themselves not as individuals, but as members of a larger group. Due to fact that Unionists and Nationalists were split over the issue of the statehood of Northern Ireland, this argument points to the predominance of nationalism over religion.

Although certain issues require time in order for a successful resolution to take place, this paper argues that resolution of the Troubles took too many years for a peaceful resolution to be reached between the parties involved; that were proposed did not directly address the issues of the conflict. This paper argues that the Troubles could have ended earlier than it did if those responsible for making policy understood that national identity and nationalism was at the heart of the problem and

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<sup>12</sup> Roger MacGinty "Policing and the Northern Ireland Peace Process", in *Politics and Performance in Contemporary Northern Ireland* ed. Harrington, John P. and Eliza Mitchell (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 103.



properly addressed the issues that resulted from this. This paper argues that the reason that the 1998 Belfast Agreement, also known as the Good Friday Agreement, was so successful was because it directly addressed the real issues of the Troubles in a way that was agreeable to both sides. To support this argument, this paper will seek to address the following question: What specifically was different about the Belfast Agreement that made it work compared to earlier proposed settlements, such as the Sunningdale Agreement, that failed? In this regard it is significant that the Belfast Agreement was not formed by one party, nor did it involve a single player in the conflict: it involved Nationalists and Unionists, British and Irish, as well as international representatives from the United States.

Political psychologist Daniel Bar-Tal argues that in conflict situations, a successful peaceful resolution must include concessions made by both sides, as well as an understanding of why the concessions are being made<sup>13</sup>. When a policy is not favorable to all parties involved and is supported mainly by one party, it cannot succeed because it simply reinforces the position of only one party; the others involved will feel excluded and attacked, thus ensuring the likely continuation of the conflict. The Belfast Agreement most certainly fits the description of the former. To actually resolve the Troubles, a policy had to do more than simply stop the fighting between the two sides and form an agreement of cooperation. Bar-Tal refers to conflicts such as the Troubles as intractable<sup>14</sup> – meaning that they cannot be resolved simply through conflict resolution, but must reconcile differences to produce a lasting outcome. In this sense, a successful policy in Northern Ireland needed to be strong enough to reconcile Unionists and Nationalists - not just bring about a temporary peace between them. The Belfast Agreement has done this. Further investigation into the language and context of the agreement will shed light into why it worked where previous attempts failed; this will show that above all else, the formulators of the Belfast

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<sup>13</sup> David Bar-Tal, "From Intractable Conflict through Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation: Psychological Analysis" *Political Psychology* 21-2 (2000), 354.

<sup>14</sup> Bar-Tal, "Intractable Conflict through Conflict Resolution", 352.

Agreement understood the Troubles – and that although a current event, it had a history and legacy that also needed to be addressed.

### THREE ARGUMENTS ON THE CAUSE OF TROUBLES

There has been much effort and many works published by historians and political scientists to try to describe the Troubles and identify the reasons why such a widespread and long-lasting conflict developed in Northern Ireland. Because of the complexity of the Troubles, scholars have provided a number of different explanations for its causes. For Example, Michael Roe, among others, feverishly claims that religious conflict was the sole factor that fueled the Troubles, using segregated communities as his evidence. Others, like Geoff Gilbert, take a more philosophical approach when describing the Troubles, stating that because every person has a complex identity, it is impossible to break the people of Northern Ireland into distinct groups who opposed each other. Historians like Kristen Williams and Neal Jesse argue because the people of Northern Ireland have such a complex identity – and in general identity issues – that nationalism as the cause of the Troubles is both a safe and strong argument to make.

#### *THE RELIGIOUS ARGUMENT*

The argument that religion was the cause of Troubles is one of the most common because Nationalists and Unionists tended to have different religious affiliations. In “Forgiving the Other Side: Social Identity and Ethnic Memories in Northern Ireland”, Michael Roe and his co-authors put forth the argument that religious conflict was the catalyst of the Troubles and that this allowed for the conflict to last the length of time that it did. Roe argues that the Troubles involved a conflict of group identity between two very polarized groups, but finds religion as the main source of division between nationalists and unionists. Roe states that, “clearly the dominant role of religion and religious symbols in the Troubles as a definer of group identity in this role it has been associated

with social stratification, social attitudes, and social control.”<sup>15</sup> In this argument, Roe identifies the conflict between nationalists and unionists not as a conflict between two politically based groups, but as a conflict between two religious-ethnic groups. I argue that this simplifies the conflict of the Troubles; with Roe’s argument the Troubles becomes just a conflict between Protestants and Catholics – I do not believe that the Troubles was something this simple. If the Troubles were a period of religious conflict within the dominion of Northern Ireland, it would not have been as politically charged and as big of an international issue as it was.

Roe furthers his argument that religion was at the center of the Troubles by identifying the trend of segregation between Protestants and Catholics whereby their geographical residence was a direct result of the Troubles. Roe states that, “Over the years, intimidation has caused the relocation of tens of thousands of both Protestants and Catholics, resulting in a patchwork of increasingly segregated Protestant and Catholic working-class urban neighborhoods and rural towns. This long history of conflict has led to the emergence and maintenance of Catholics and Protestants as distinct ethnic groups.”<sup>16</sup> While it is true that Northern Ireland saw an increased number of religiously segregated towns during the 1990s, I argue against Roe’s assertion that the segregation had occurred due to the emergence of defined ethnic groups based on religion. I argue that there are other factors to consider when analyzing the segregation trend. When analyzing the situation in terms of nationalism, it can be argued that in order to escape tension, discrimination, and violence, people of a similar background can escape that by living in communities together, which may build a sense of community and reinforce nationalism. It has little to do with religious identity, but more with comfort levels and quality of living. Instead of

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Roe, et al, “Forgiving the Other Side: Social Identity and Ethnic Memories in Northern Ireland” in Harrington, John P. and Eliza Mitchell, eds. *Politics and Performance in Contemporary Northern Ireland* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 146.

<sup>16</sup> Roe, “Forgiving the Other Side”, 122.

viewing segregation as a trend of Catholics and Protestants migrating towards each other, one must also consider political reasons as to why people would move to a different location; essentially those forced to move because of the conflict can be looked at as political refugees.

The basis of Roe's argument is his application of Breakwell's Identity Process Theory to the Troubles in order to analyze the conflict. Breakwell's Identity Process Theory

proposes that identity should be conceptualized in terms of a biological organism moving through time which develops through the accommodation, assimilation and evaluation of the social world: the selection of information to be accommodated, assimilated and evaluated is governed by three principles: distinctiveness, continuity, and self-esteem.<sup>17</sup>

Roe argues that applying Breakwell's theory to the Troubles can help make clearer the basis of the Troubles. In explaining the Troubles through the prism of the Identity Process Theory, Roe states that, "continuity is demonstrated when members explain their group's present identity with consistent constructions of the past; for instance, unionists assert their 'Britishness' by constructing their past with memories from Britain's history, while nationalists assert their 'Irishness' by constructing their past memories from the history of Ireland."<sup>18</sup> Roe's application of Breakwell does not point towards religion as the factor that unites the two groups, but instead uses words like "Britishness" and "Irishness"; these words do not have connotations of religiousness, but more so give indications of nationalism, yet Roe insists that religion plays the larger role in describing the reason for division and conflict. A reevaluation of the use of Breakwell's theory on the Troubles points to nationalism, and not religion as argued by Roe.

### *THE NON-CATEGORICAL ARGUMENT*

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<sup>17</sup> Clare L. Twigger-Ross and David L. Uzzell, "Place and Identity Process" *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 16, (1996), 206.

<sup>18</sup> Roe, "Forgiving the Other Side", 124.

As identity played a major role in the Troubles, it is important to analyze how a classification of identities impacts the understanding of the division of the Northern Irish population during the conflict. This is crucial when it comes to the issue of self-identification as a member of a minority of the population. When the issue of minority rights is brought into to the debate of the Troubles, a discussion involving the rights of Catholics in Northern Ireland often ensues. The argument that there was an issue of Catholics' rights being violated in Northern Ireland leads to the argument of a religious issues, but Geoff Gilbert, professor of Law at the University of Essex, argues that there is a double standard when the word minority is used in the context of the Troubles. Gilbert states that, "the Catholic-nationalist community is a minority in Northern Ireland, but the Protestant-unionist population is a minority in the island of Ireland as a whole."<sup>19</sup> Analyzing the Troubles in this sense sheds a different light onto the argument that religious minority rights were at the center of the conflict; no-matter the outcome of the Troubles, there would be a minority population with a concern about its rights. Whether the group was Catholic or Protestant, Unionist or Nationalist, there would be the concerns of a minority that needed to be addressed.

Concerning the issue of religious minorities in a conflict such as the Troubles, Gilbert argues that there are situations when using religion as the sole identifiers of a group is proper – such as the rights to worship, the right to practice one's religion, and the legal recognition of the religion<sup>20</sup>, but there are times when religion is only part of the equation. Gilbert states that "some minority groups identified by their religious affiliation are properly national or ethnic minorities – religion is merely one factor which distinguishes them from the other groups, including the majority, in the population."<sup>21</sup> When a group can be identified by labels other than religious identity, those other factors have to be taken into

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<sup>19</sup> Geoff Gilbert, "The Northern Ireland Peace Agreement, Minority Rights, and Self-Determination" in *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 47-4 (October 1998), 944

<sup>20</sup> Gilbert, "Minority Rights", 943.

<sup>21</sup> Gilbert, "Minority Rights", 943-944.

consideration – religion cannot be the focal point of identity. This is what has happened with the Troubles: for the simple fact that most Nationalists tended to be Catholic and most Unionists tended to be Protestant, religion is given a spotlight. Yet the fact that most Nationalists tended to be in favor of the Republic and most Unionists tended remain loyal to the Crown is ignored

This is the reason why Gilbert argues against classification of groups in conflict. Gilbert states that there is a, “futility of attempting to define a ‘minority’, a ‘nation’ or a ‘people’, or trying to classify them as either ethnic, national, religious or linguistic.”<sup>22</sup> Gilbert correctly asserts that it is difficult to accurately define such groups, but his argument against classification into groups is difficult to grasp; it is impossible to not provide labels for groups and attempt to classify them as such. When analyzing conflicts at the micro level, Gilbert is correct to argue that classifying all people in a conflict into certain groups is futile due to the individual differences that a person may have in a group, but looking at any conflict at the macro level will reveal a common factor between groups of people. Similarly, in a database, individual records will be unique, but as more records are added and similar elements are shared between records of individual tables, there is a necessity to use primary keys to link tables and records. If the Troubles were its own database, nationalism would most certainly be the primary key that linked all similar records together.

### *THE NATIONALISM ARGUMENT*

Identifying a group by a single idea, such as religion, can be effective in certain situations, but when a conflict such as the Troubles dealt with a more encompassing spectrum of issues, it is difficult to point to a single factor and label it as the cause. As nationalism incorporates a multitude of factors, it is more accurate to describe identity conflicts such as that of the Troubles, as a nationalistic one. Kristen P. Williams and Neal G. Jesse provide the same argument as this paper: national

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<sup>22</sup> Gilbert, “Minority Rights”, 950.

identity was at the heart of the Troubles. For the Troubles, Williams and Jesse state that the obvious dilemma was that Catholics in Northern Ireland believed that they were Irish, and in opposition to them were the Protestants, who identified themselves as British.<sup>23</sup> Catholics identified themselves as Irish. Protestants identified themselves as British. If these statements were reversed, a much different argument would present itself. Different religious groups identified themselves with different nationalities – not the other way around.

Williams and Jesse also present an interesting, (but obvious) theory: if nationalism was the cause of the problem, nationalism should be addressed and used to solve the problem as well. As stated before, the Troubles of Northern Ireland fit the description of an intractable conflict. Williams and Jesse argue that, “institutional mechanisms can ameliorate such conflicts through promoting overlapping identities, changing perceptions of the enemy, and reducing ethnic security dilemmas.”<sup>24</sup> Just as there is something similar that links together members of the same group, so too can there be a common element that can link enemies together. Williams and Jesse argue that in order for enemies to look at each other in a different light – that is as equals – the negative element that separates them has to be overcome – in the case of the Troubles, the issue of security.<sup>25</sup> Williams and Jesse state that, “as long as the in-group views the out-group in negative terms and perceives them as a threat to its own identity, a lack of trust between the groups is likely...the need to reduce the security dilemma involves establishing trust, credible commitments, and a changed image of the enemy.”<sup>26</sup>

If nationalism creates this problem, then how can it hope to solve it? To better understand, one needs to look to further than the essence of nationalism and what creates national identity. Williams and Jesse argue that a national identity can be created simply when by

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<sup>23</sup> Kristen P. Williams and Neal G. Jesse, “Resolving Nationalist Conflicts: Promoting Overlapping Identities and Pooling Sovereignty: The 1998 Northern Irish Peace Agreement”, *Political Psychology* 22-3 (September 2001, pg 571-599), 573.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 574.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

having “leaders mobilizing people to the primordial attachment that individuals have toward their nation, thereby socially constructing national identity. Symbols of the nation, such as parades, holidays, flags, national anthems and ties to the family and community are means by which leaders can promote national identity and nationalism.”<sup>27</sup> Since nationalism and national identity are easy to manipulate, leaders affect nationalism in an identity crisis like the Troubles to make the peoples of the groups involved so that there is something that both sides can associate with. As nationalism comprises many different elements, it is easy for a nationalist to have multiple identities; a person can be an Irish Protestant in favor of ties to the United Kingdom or a British Catholic in favor of the re-unification of the Irish Isle. Williams and Jesse argue that it is the multiple identity aspect of nationalism that provides the necessary parts to end conflicts. Williams and Jesse state that, “the creation of institutions that overlap identities and provide credible commitments can overcome the enemy images and security dilemmas that hinder the development of trust between conflicting groups.”<sup>28</sup>

All three of these arguments provide an insightful examination of the Troubles, contributing in their own way to the ever-expanding research into the conflict in Northern Ireland. Although this paper agrees with and advocates the nationalism analysis, it does not completely dismiss the other two arguments. Although this paper does not agree with the argument for religion as the major catalyst for the Troubles, it does recognize that religion did play a role in defining who a person was, and thus one’s national identity. The non-categorical argument is also valid towards the analysis of the Troubles, because there most certainly were a number of people who could not be grouped into the two general categories of “British” or “Irish”. However, in every conflict, there will always be the outliers who cannot be easily classified, but they nonetheless must be recognized and factored into any solution. Based on how the Troubles ended the argument for nationalism is the strongest

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 575

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 576



argument to be made about the basis of the Troubles, and thus is examined at a deeper level.

## AN CÁS DO NÁISIÚNACHAS

As the Troubles lasted for such a long period of time, there were many failed attempts at not only peace, but resolutions to the official issue at hand – the constitutional status of the dominion of Northern Ireland. Although the Troubles had much to do with the question of political authority for Northern Ireland, that is, was it to be London or Dublin that the Northern Irish looked to for central power, there was the serious factor of identity that needed to be factored into any resolution of the issue. Before the Belfast Agreement of 1998, there was little effort by the parties involved – the British, the Irish, and the various political parties of Northern Ireland – to fully address the issue. This failure to address the issue of identity resulted in failed policies that only furthered the violence and resentment shared between the parties involved, which continued the Troubles until the issue of identity was finally addressed in the Good Friday Accords, which effectively ended the Troubles and brought the people of Northern Ireland closer to reconciliation.

### *SUNNINGDALE: THE AGREEMENT AND ITS COLLAPSE*

One of the most notorious attempts at reconciling the Troubles was the Northern Ireland Constitution Act of 1973, which was the legislation that resulted from the Sunningdale Agreement. Jack Holland, author of *Hope Against History: The Course of Conflict in Northern Ireland*, argues that the Sunningdale Agreement did little other than leave a legacy of a “gloomy reminder of the dangers of ambitious reform than as a beacon showing the way forward.”<sup>29</sup> Starting on 6 December 1973, a four day conference was held in Sunningdale, England, to address the question of Northern Ireland. Almost two years prior to the

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<sup>29</sup> Jack Holland, *Hope Against History: The Course of Conflict in Northern Ireland* (New York: Henry Hold and Company, 1999), 68.

meeting in Sunningdale was the infamous episode of the Bogside Massacre, more commonly known as “Bloody Sunday”. As violence was escalating, the time for a meaningful resolution had come; instead, however, Northern Ireland got the Sunningdale Agreement.

When the Sunningdale Conference was held, it was championed as the British, the Irish, and the parities of the northern counties working in parallel with each other<sup>30</sup> to resolve the conflict. However, not every major political party of Northern Ireland was involved at the conference, dooming it from the start. In his article, “Sunningdale and after: Britain, Ireland, and Ulster”, Keith Kyle states that “There was one big snag, a cloud no bigger than a preacher’s head. There were two additional protestant parties a distinctive section of a third, all in the Assembly, all rejecting the constitution and hence not invited to Sunningdale.”<sup>31</sup> It would be the noninvolvement of these parties at Sunningdale that would play a major role in the failure of the Agreement.

Three main issues were addressed at Sunningdale: the creation of an official political relationship between Northern Ireland with the Republic through the revival of the Council of Ireland, the Republic of Ireland’s recognition of Northern Ireland as part of the UK, and the prosecution of fugitive members of the Irish Republic Army, who committed violent acts against Unionists in Northern Ireland. These three issues set the Sunningdale Agreement up for failure. Kyle argues that the British believed that the latter two stipulations of the agreement were a price that the Irish had to pay for the revival of the former<sup>32</sup>; this “gotcha” mentality of the British was not an effort of compromise, but a way of conceding to the Irish what they wanted, while still retaining official control of the northern counties and gaining access to the IRA at the same time. Although this game of politics addressed the issue of the constitutionality over the lands of Northern Ireland and introduced the concept of power-sharing, it did little to address the needs of the people.

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<sup>30</sup> Keith Kyle, “Sunningdale and after: Britain, Ireland, and Ulster” *The World Today* 31 (November 1975), 439.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 440

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

Of the entire 54 page “Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973”, only one section addressed the rights of the people. Part III of the Act, “Prevention of Religious and Political Discrimination” states that the parliament of Northern Ireland cannot create discriminative legislation towards a single religious or political group, that members of parliament cannot be discriminatory towards these groups, and created the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights – which was created to monitor discriminatory laws.<sup>33</sup> While the Council of Ireland created the power-sharing between the UK and Ireland, it did not address the issue of individual identities. As the Sunningdale Agreement required Ireland to recognize the northern counties as part of the UK, the people of Northern Ireland could be Irish in spirit if they wished, but were legally British subjects.

Although the Sunningdale Agreement was championed as a bipartisan effort upon the creation of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act of 1973, the reconciliation of the Northern Irish people did not happen; the opposite of the goal happened – the Northern Irish became more polarized, and the efforts of Sunningdale collapsed as the Troubles lived on. Holland argues that the Sunningdale Agreement failed because it sought to do too much too soon in terms of the relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic.<sup>34</sup> Although the minority Nationalists of Northern Ireland were pleased with the progress in the relationship, the loyal unionists feared what was to come from a further strengthening the ties of the north with the Republic. In protest, the Ulster Worker’s Council (UWC) – a unionist organization – protested the passing of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act of 1973, by going on strike.<sup>35</sup> Members of the UWC included workers at the power plant in Larne, who lowered the output of electricity and essentially shut down the city<sup>36</sup>; Unionist politician William Craig declared that “Sunningdale must be scrapped

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<sup>33</sup> The Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973, Part 3, Government of the United Kingdom, accessed from the National Archives of the United Kingdom.

<sup>34</sup> Holland, *Hope Against History*, 68.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 70.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*.

and if it was not, its supports had to realize that ‘there will be further actions taken against the Irish republic and those who attempt to implement the agreement.’”<sup>37</sup> Although the UWC had already crippled Belfast with its’ protests, the Ulster Volunteer-Force (UVF) took things further with violence, setting off four car bombs in the northern counties, resulting in numerous casualties<sup>38</sup>; any hope for the Sunningdale Agreement and a peaceful end to the Troubles died in May 1974.

### *FADING HOPE: THE PERIOD OF NO PROGRESS*

After the collapse of Sunningdale there were numerous attempts in the 1980s and early 1990s to resolve the conflict in Northern Ireland, but like Sunningdale, there was no success. Holland argues that the hope that the Troubles would end peacefully died shortly after Sunningdale, in 1977. Holland states that, “By 1977 a pall of despair had settled on Ulster. The optimism of the civil rights days were spent; the destructive energy of the paramilitaries which seemed for a time as if it might settle the question one way or another, was exhausted; a peace movement had come and gone without changing anything.”<sup>39</sup> This sense of hopelessness and failure that all methods of conflict resolution had been exhausted was detrimental to the process of peace. While all parties involved most certainly wished for the end of the Troubles, this pessimistic attitude towards the ending of the Troubles made calls for peace empty and unanswered.

Just like with Sunningdale, the grievances of the people and the issue of nationalism would be ignored for many years. The question of the constitutional status of Northern Ireland would remain unanswered, and instead, politicians from the UK and Ireland would walk a fine line when discussing the Troubles, in hope to not further then tensions and violence that had become so common. However, in this period of non-action from 1973 – 1993, Andrew Reynolds, author of “A Constitutional Pied Piper: The Northern Irish Good Friday Agreement” argues that in

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 84.

the period of non-progress between Sunningdale and the early 1990s, the most significant act of the Troubles was the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, as it established an Intergovernmental Conference of British and Irish ministers to deal with the question of Northern Ireland.<sup>40</sup> In regards to the Intergovernmental Conference, the Anglo-Irish Agreement stated that:

The Conference will bring together the British and Irish Governments to promote bilateral co-operation at all levels on all matters of mutual interest within the competence of both Governments. The Conference will meet as required at Summit level (Prime Minister and Taoiseach). Otherwise, Governments will be represented by appropriate Ministers. Advisers, including police and security advisers, will attend as appropriate.<sup>41</sup>

Although this was not an instance of power sharing, the Anglo-Irish agreement recognized the importance of the British and Irish governments working together to resolve the issue, as the question of Northern Ireland impacted both countries; the Intergovernmental Conference was meant to facilitate this at the ministerial level, but the Summit level meetings of the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach were just as important. Reynolds states that leadership at the Summit level played an important role in re-engaging the two governments in talks to end the Troubles, but it took men of dedication to make this work.<sup>42</sup>

The major problem in the time period between Sunningdale and Good Friday was that of peace; as anger and frustration on both sides of the conflict grew, so did the level of violence. Without a peace between warring paramilitary organizations, there was no chance of resolution on the state level. However, it seemed that there would be no peace unless the governments acted in a way the signaled a fair resolution was

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<sup>40</sup> Andrew Reynolds, "A Constitutional Pied Piper: The Northern Irish Good Friday Agreement" *Political Science Quarterly* 114-4 (Winter 1999-2000), 613.

<sup>41</sup> Anglo-Irish Agreement (1985), Strand 3, Part 2, Points 3 & 4, published by the Northern Ireland Office of the United Kingdom, accessed online 18 October 2011.

<sup>42</sup> Reynolds, "A Constitutional Pied Piper", 613.

coming. Until 1993, the major focus of ending the Troubles was placed on advocating for members of paramilitary organizations to lay down their arms, however, there was nothing that gave these groups confidence that if they stopped the violence that the government would make meaningful progress. This change and the possibility for an agreement like the Good Friday Accords was made possible by the Downing Street Declaration. British Prime Minister John Major and Irish Taoiseach Albert Reynolds met at 10 Downing Street in an effort to make a joint declaration of their dedication to end the Troubles. Instead of making a statement of intent, the two leaders actually addressed the main issue of the Troubles: the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. The Downing Street Declaration addressed the issue by stating that:

The Prime Minister, on behalf of the British Government, reaffirms that they will uphold the democratic wish of the greater number of the people of Northern Ireland on the issue of whether they prefer to support the Union or a sovereign united Ireland...The British Government agree that it is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish...[The Taoiseach] confirms that, in the event of an overall settlement, the Irish Government will, as part of a balanced constitutional accommodation, put forward and support proposals for change in the Irish Constitution which would fully reflect the principle of consent in Northern Ireland.<sup>43</sup>

In this joint declaration, the governments of the UK and the Republic of Ireland both made meaningful concessions that signaled there were leaders who were willing to work with those on the opposing side to bring an end to the conflict. This declaration also addressed a main concern of each side: the self-determination of the Irish people – both of

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<sup>43</sup> Downing Street Declaration, Points 3 and 7, issued by the Office of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, and the Department of the Taoiseach of Ireland, 15 December 1993, accessed online on 18 October 2011.

the north and the south, as well the recognition of the United Kingdom's claim to the territory. This newfound seriousness and action towards the issue at hand, instead of simply advocating for peace and resolution, was enough proof that paramilitary organizations needed to agree to a ceasefire so that further resolutions could be worked on and become reality. Richard English argues in his book, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA*, that although the hard-line Irish republicans were untrusting to the Downing Street Declaration at first, this soon changed after Gerry Adams was granted a short term visa to the United States to meet with President Bill Clinton. English states, "Irish republicans were being listened to, and were apparently enjoying an opportunity to talk."<sup>44</sup> This gave the IRA the confidence to agree to ceasefires, which led to the unionist paramilitary to agree as well. As there were leaders in place who wanted to seriously address the Troubles and the constitutional question of Northern Ireland, the grievances of the peoples of Northern Ireland could also be addressed. Although the original ceasefire was broken and a new one agreed upon, as well as changes in politicians over the next four and half years, the precedent was set and the road to Good Friday was being paved.

### *GOOD FRIDAY AND DUAL IDENTITY*

The title for Jack Holland's book, *Hope Against History*, is the perfect description for Belfast Agreement and the ending of Troubles. Because the conflict had lasted so long and had claimed the lives of so many, the odds were in favor of history that the conflict would continue. Although the framework and starting points for discussion had been laid out in the Downing Street Declaration and ceasefires agreed to by paramilitary groups, there was little hope in Northern Ireland that a real peace and settlement would be accomplished. Although there was little hope in the people, a changed attitude of leaders gave resolution the chance that it needed. In the past, Andrew Reynolds states that "electoral

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<sup>44</sup> Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 273.

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institutions had been the intellectual battlegrounds that formed the backdrop to the battlegrounds on the streets.”<sup>45</sup> Just people fought passionately, as well as biased, in the streets, so did the politicians – concessions to the other side did not happen often. However, the work of Prime Minister Major and Taoiseach Reynolds changed this. When the talks that led to Belfast Agreement began, this was kept in mind and emotions were kept in check.

The focus and determination of the leaders to accomplish a meaningful agreement was important, but that alone could not ensure that an agreement would happen. The leaders at Sunningdale were also determined and focused on getting an agreement accomplished, but of course, one of the fatal flaws of Sunningdale was the exclusion of certain political parties. As stated earlier, nationalism is something that is comprised of multiple identities, and political party affiliation has come to be part of nationalism. As such, those who are affiliated with excluded parties feel left out, and thus do not feel like they are being accounted for in the resolution of conflict. This lesson was learned at Sunningdale, so the talks for the Belfast Agreement would include all, not just some of, the eight major political parties of Northern Ireland, the governments of the UK and the Republic of Ireland, as well as international representatives from the United States. This coalition of diverse representatives ensured that the vast majority of the population was represented, as well as the concerns of the international community.

Prior to the election of Bill Clinton as President of the United States, the US had adopted a stance of non-intervention into the Troubles, as seen by the inactivity of previous Presidents. However, Clinton decided that the US needed to take a more active role, and established the “United States Special Envoy for Northern Ireland”, of which Senator George J. Mitchell agreed to chair.<sup>46</sup> For Mitchell, his decision to chair the special commission was made out of naivety to the situation. Mitchell stated, “I flew to Northern Ireland expecting an easy,

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<sup>45</sup> Reynolds, “Constitutional Pied Piper”, 615.

<sup>46</sup> Bill Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 645.



non-controversial entry into serious negotiations. I could not have been more wrong.”<sup>47</sup> Although Mitchell had been involved with Northern Ireland previously and fully understood the situation, the level of intensity in the talks caught him off guard. Nonetheless, Mitchell stayed determined and kept the talks on track.

Unlike in the Sunningdale negotiations, there was not an independent outside chair to the talks. While the US had its obvious allegiances to the British, Mitchell, being an outsider, gave the talks an unbiased leader who was equally discriminatory towards improper actions by all parties involved. Mitchell had established a set of principles for the peace talks to follow.<sup>48</sup> To participate in the peace talks, Mitchell states that, “any party wanting to participate in the negotiations had to pledge compliance with Mitchell Principles of democracy and nonviolence...each party then and there [had to] make clear its total and absolute commitment to the principles.”<sup>49</sup> For those parties that violated the Mitchell Principles, their participation in the peace talks would be suspended for a time determined by Mitchell as the chair. With the future of Northern Ireland at stake during these talks, Mitchell’s principles forced parties wanting to help shape it in check. Mitchell would use this rule on certain occasions, such as the breaking of the ceasefire by the IRA, which resulted in the suspension of the Sinn Fein, or the suspension of Progressive Unionist Party and the Ulster Democratic Party for strong language and action by the Ulster Volunteer Forces. Although Mitchell was the target of criticism by some parties involved, he received the praise of Gerry Adams – leader of Sinn Fein. Adams credits Mitchell’s style of leadership as one of the contributing factors to ensuring talks would be productive.<sup>50</sup> Although there were periods of emotional outburst at times, Mitchell’s past experience in

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<sup>47</sup> George J. Mitchell, *Making Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999),

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 45.

<sup>50</sup> Gerry Adams, *A Farther Shore: Ireland’s Long Road to Peace* (New York: Random House, 2003), 310.

dealing with emotional Senators in the US Senate proved to be beneficial in keeping control of the talks.

With Mitchell's ability to control the emotions of the parties involved and a ceasefire in place, the talks could focus on the question of the constitutional status of Northern Ireland with free from distractions. The parties worked with due diligence to accomplish something that previous leaders had failed to do for not only the past thirty years of the Troubles, but the past few centuries of conflict between the British and the Irish. When US President Clinton visited Northern Ireland in 1995 he gave a call to arms to the peace makers and reconciliators of Northern Ireland in a way similar to Kennedy's call to Americans during his inauguration speech of 1960. Clinton inspired the people of Northern Ireland by asking them, "Are you going to be someone who defines yourself in terms of what you are against or what you are for? Will you be someone who defines yourself in terms of who you aren't or who you are? The time has come for the peacemakers to triumph in Northern Ireland..."<sup>51</sup>. Although the talks were filled with tension, temporary suspension of parties, and occasional emotional outburst, these talks were unfamiliarly focused on the issue of Northern Ireland. Although the simply political question to answer at these talks was the status of Northern Ireland, there was also the issue of the people of Northern Ireland. However difficult the decision of whether to keep Northern Ireland part of the UK or to reunite it with the Republic of Ireland was, satisfying the people was a much more delicate issue. Either choice on the status of Northern Ireland would bring displeasure to a certain segment of the Northern Irish population. The issue of Northern Irish identity was to take center stage and play a vital role in the resolution of the Troubles. Unlike the Sunningdale Agreement, the Belfast Agreement not only addressed the constitutional issue of Northern Ireland, it also addressed the issue of the people. The talks for the Belfast Agreement agreed that the issue of rule in Northern Ireland lay with the Northern Irish people themselves. The two governments of the UK and the

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<sup>51</sup> Clinton, *My Life*, 646.

Republic of Ireland decided that Northern Ireland was to remain the dominion of the United Kingdom, if the people of Northern Ireland voted in support of the reunion of the Irish Isle, the governments of the United Kingdom and Ireland would respect these wishes and put forth a process so that this would happen in a timely manner.<sup>52</sup> The language of the Belfast Agreement dictates that:

It is for the people of the island of Ireland alone, by agreement between the two parts respectively and without external impediment, to exercise their right of self-determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish, accepting that this right must be achieved and exercised with and subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland.<sup>53</sup>

The political issue was settled with this important clause, but the issue of Northern Irish identity was of more importance. The governments and political parties of the Belfast Agreement concluded that the people Northern Ireland had the right to not only self-determination, but the right to self-identify as they pleased: a person in Northern Ireland could identify as British, Irish, or both – enjoying the privileges associated with citizenship of both countries. The Belfast Agreement states that both the governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland jointly agree to, “recognize the birthright of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both, as they may so choose, and accordingly confirm that their right to hold both British and Irish citizenship is accepted by both Governments and would not be affected by any future change in the status of Northern Ireland.”<sup>54</sup>

After months of talks, George Mitchell had set a deadline of midnight on 10 April 1998 for talks to expire and resolution to be in

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<sup>52</sup> Northern Ireland Act 1998 Part I, 1.1 and Part I, 1.2, Government of the United Kingdom, accessed from the National Archives of the United Kingdom on 9 November 2011.

<sup>53</sup> Belfast Agreement, 2.1.ii

<sup>54</sup> Belfast Agreement, 2.1.vi

place or the Troubles left unsolved once again. The deadline passed, but as the agreement was so close to coming to, Mitchell allowed for it to expire and talks to continue. Mitchell notes the strong leadership of Prime Minister Tony Blair and Taoiseach Bernie Ahern in the concluding weeks were of grave importance for a deal to be worked out, but suggests that it was the 25th hour international intervention of President Clinton via late night phone calls that insured that the deal would be accepted. Mitchell states that, "The calls were helpful. The delegates knew the president well from their prior meetings with him. They knew how well he understood the issues. They were impressed that he would stay up all night, to follow the negotiations, to talk with them."<sup>55</sup> The Belfast Agreement was far from perfect, but the leaders of the parties involved knew that there a fairer agreement could not be formulated to be used as a starting point for reconciliation. The agreement was to end the Troubles, ensure peace, and start Northern Ireland down the path towards reconciliation. At 5:36PM local time on 10 April 1998, the Belfast Agreement was signed by the governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, as well as the eight major political parties of Northern Ireland. Mitchell famously stated at a live press conference:

I'm pleased to announce that the two Governments, and the political parties of Northern Ireland, have reached an agreement. The agreement proposes changes in the Irish Constitution and in British constitutional law to enshrine the principle that it is the people of Northern Ireland who will decide, democratically, their own future.<sup>56</sup>

Although the governments and political parties had put their differences aside and were able to work out what was perceived by them as a fair and equal agreement, the true acceptance of the Belfast Agreement was to be based on the reaction of the people. With the Sunningdale Agreement, the governments and political parties present

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<sup>55</sup> Mitchell, *Making Peace*, 178.

<sup>56</sup> Mitchell, *Making Peace*, 181.

believed that they had a good deal in place, but nonetheless, enough of the peoples of Northern Ireland rejected the deal, leading to its collapse. The real strength of the Belfast Agreement came to light after the elections in Northern Ireland and the Republic on its official acceptance. The referendum votes in both the North and the Republic indicated that the people of “both Irelands” were ready for peace and agreed with the terms of the Good Friday Agreement. On 22 May 1998, both the North and the Republic sent their people to the polls to vote on the referendum to officially accept the Belfast Agreement. In Northern Ireland, 81.1% of eligible voters turned out to the polls, with 71.1% voting in approval of terms of the Good Friday Agreement.”<sup>57</sup> The result in the Republic was much of the same: of the 55.6% of eligible voters for the referendum, 94.4% voted in its favor.<sup>58</sup>

Although there were those who voted against the referendum to accept the agreement, there was no noticeable protest of a large segment to force the failure of the agreement like with Sunningdale. The emotion of George Mitchell following the signing of the Belfast Agreement on 10 April 1998 was shared by so many of voters following the results of the referendum vote on 22 May 1998. Mitchell states, “Despite the exhaustion, I felt an exhilarating surge of accomplishment. We had done it. After seemingly endless negotiations, an agreement was within reach. What had seemed so impossible for so long was about to happen. I could hardly believe it.”<sup>59</sup> The peoples of “both Irelands” accepted the terms in great support of it; with this support, the Troubles were officially over and the path for reconciliation in Northern Ireland began.

### *NORTHERN IRELAND TODAY*

For as much support and praise that the Belfast Agreement received, it was of course, not a perfect document. However, it was the best that peacemakers could achieve given the circumstances. President Mary

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<sup>57</sup> Voting Results of the Good Friday Agreement, provided by “Access, Research, Knowledge”, Economic & Social Research Council, accessed on 17 November 2011.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Mitchell, 5.

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Robinson of Ireland (1990 – 1997) argues that even though the Belfast Agreement was not perfect to either side; its addressing of nationalism was significant in ending the Troubles.<sup>60</sup> Although the Belfast Agreement would not physically be amended, it would be reaffirmed and reinforced by later agreements, most notably the St. Andrews Agreement of 2006. The concept of dual identity prevailed, however, the aspects of the power-sharing between the United Kingdom and the Republic in terms of the executive and the ministerial conduct code of the Northern Irish Assembly were heavily revised in Part 2 of the St. Andrews Agreement.<sup>61</sup> This reinforcement and reevaluation of the Belfast Agreement indicated a desire by governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland to maintain the peace and work at continuing the process of reconciliation. This dedication has benefitted the people of Northern Ireland greatly.

After the acceptance of the Belfast Agreement in 1998, the social implications of the Troubles did not immediately disappear, but tension between Nationalists and Unionists have begun to lessen. Ashlean Burke, a college student near the border of the “two Irelands” states that, “although the trouble may not be as widespread today, bomb scares are still often heard of, and minorities experience exclusion and violence due to their political and religious views... to some extent the troubles were resolved through the agreements but there are still remnants of the past in Northern Irish Society today.”<sup>62</sup> Much like after segregation was ended in the United States, racial tension was still high and has slowly dissipated as the country moved further away from the initial end, so did the divide of Northern Ireland. Although there are still differences in certain areas of the Irish isle, action of the governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic are hard at work setting examples for the Anglo and Irish people. Burke adds that

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<sup>60</sup> Robinson, Mary. Interview by Terence B. Bodak, Jr. Oral Conversation. West Long Branch, NJ, 5 April 2011.

<sup>61</sup> Northern Ireland Act of 2006 (St. Andrews Agreement), Government of the United Kingdom, accessed online 9 November 11.

<sup>62</sup> Burke, Ashlean. Interview by Terence B. Bodak, Jr. Online Correspondence. 4 May 2011.

Today the relationship between the North and the Republic are good. Both governments and the two police forces now work together. Recently Gerry Adams received a generous Southern vote and claimed his seat in the Dáil. The relationship between the republic and the United Kingdom is currently good. Mary McAleese has invited Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh on a State visit to the Republic; this is a true indication of the advances made in the relationship between Ireland and the UK.<sup>63</sup>

So long as the various political parties of Northern Ireland, the two governments, and the peoples of Northern Ireland stay dedicated to lasting peace and to keep its relationship strong, the legacy of the Belfast Agreement will continue to set an example for other intractable conflicts to follow in order to achieve peace and move towards reconciliation as well.

The Troubles of Northern Ireland provides an interesting case study for understanding not only intractable conflicts, but also conflicts based on the issue of identity. For the dominion of Northern Ireland, the question of identity not only divided the people in terms of nationalism, but also played a significant role in determining its own constitutional status. Although the Troubles will forever be remember for the blood spilt and the lives cost over the issue of identity, it should be used as a lesson for other intractable conflicts or developing intractable conflicts in the world. When conflicts are so polarized like Northern Ireland was during the Troubles, any small instance of violence that seems insignificant can result in a domino effect and plunge a nation into violent clashes. Instead of playing politics, leaders of intractable conflict countries must head the Northern Irish example and work to resolve issues in a manner that the vast majority of the people affected by the conflict can agree to, or face their own troubles.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

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### THE NORTHERN IRISH MODEL

#### *for Intractable Conflict Resolution*

This model has been created from the research and analysis of the Troubles of Northern Ireland in the paper, "The Troubles and The Question of Identity in Northern Ireland, 1969 – 2007". Although the debate for Northern Ireland began after it was created following the independence of the Republic of Ireland from the United Kingdom in 1920, the conflict between the people of Northern Ireland, as well as between the peoples of the British and Irish isles, had a historical precedent of conflict. As such, the Troubles of Northern Ireland was a mixed intractable conflict – one that involved domestic as well as international considerations.

Before the Troubles were ended with the Belfast Agreement on 10 April 1998, many failed attempts were taken to end the troubles. However, the Belfast Agreement was able to address the complex issue of the Troubles and effectively establish peace and thus resolve the Troubles, putting Northern Ireland down the path of reconciliation. Based on the success of the Belfast Agreement and the events leading up to it, this model will provide guidelines for other intractable conflicts, present and future, to follow for effective conflict resolution.

Although parts of this model may be perceived as something obvious to conflict resolution, after years of conflict and tension many parties involved can easily lose sight of how to properly act in the situation. Regardless of how common sense some of these elements may seem, it is necessary for conflicting sides to follow each step at a steady operational pace to ensure successful resolution.

#### *I. PURPOSE*

The purpose of this model is to provide guidelines for nations involved in an intractable conflict in order to resolve the conflict. This model can be used different types of intractable conflict.

1. Definition of Intractable Conflict:

a) For the purposes of this model, an intractable conflict is defined as a conflict within a nation or between two nations that have historically had long periods non-confrontational tension, interrupted at times by short periods of intense violence, relative to the length of the conflict.

## 2. Examples of Intractable Conflict:

### a) Domestic

i. A conflict that is between two or more groups within the same state or nation. Examples of this include the conflict between northern and southern Sudanese in the former united country of Sudan and the sectarian divide in Iraq.

### b) International

i. A conflict that is between two or more individual countries or territorial entities. An example of this would be the conflict between the Israel and the Palestinian Authority over the Holy land.

### c) Mixed

i. A conflict centered in a single nation between two or more groups of people that has direct involvement of surrounding nations. An example of this would be the Troubles of Northern Ireland.

## *II. DECLARATION OF INTENT FOR RESOLUTION*

Before meaningful talks can proceed between the involved parties of the conflict, they must be proven to be meaningful.

### 1. Past Failure and Loss of Hope

a) In most intractable conflicts, attempts at resolution fail for numerous reasons, including failure of leadership, failure to address proper issues, and overall weakness of the resolution. As previous attempts fail, parties involved will undoubtedly lose hope that a proper resolution will happen. This declaration will renew confidence and hope so that when resolution is created, it will more likely be supported by the people.

## CROSSROADS

### 2. Identification of issues

a) For talks to be meaningful and lead to a resolution, the issues to be discussed must be identified before they are to take place. When arguments about which issues to be discussed during talks between participants arise, this takes the focus off of the goal of resolution. The identification of the issues before hand limits the talks to discuss only the issues that affect the conflict itself.

### 3. Acknowledgement of positions

a) After long periods of non-confrontation defined by verbal attacks, the position and desires of the opposing side often become lost in the rhetoric of conflict. In this declaration of intent for resolution, both sides must recognize the opposing sides' position and desires for the resolution. By acknowledging the opposing sides, a mutual understanding is established prior to talks taking place.

### 4. Ceasefire of Paramilitaries and Vigilantes

a) Unless talks are proven to be meaningful before they commence, the most passionate members of the conflict, those who are members of paramilitary organizations or a negative byproduct of this failure of resolution is the inability to control paramilitaries and vigilantes. Members of paramilitary organizations as well as individual vigilantes act out of passion, for they are dedicated to their cause. Without peace, talks cannot be justified as meaningful.

## *III. THE INDEPENDENT MEDIATOR*

For an intractable conflict to be resolved through talks, it must be administered by an independent mediator, who has experience in dealing with resolution in high tension environments.

1. In regards to this model, an independent mediator is defined as a person who is not affiliated with any of the participants of the intractable conflict; this person will not be a beneficiary of the resolution in any way.

2. The independent mediator should possess most of the following qualities

- a) Past experience in dealing with resolution
  - i. The mediator should have dealt with high tension situation in the past and actively worked to resolve them through an independent manner.
- b) Strong leadership
  - i. Drawing on past experiences of mediation, the independent mediator should have ability to control a room full of emotion. During the talks to end an intractable conflict, emotion outbursts will happen. The mediator should not aim to prevent these, as they are a healthy expression, but should instead focus on controlling the emotions and refocus the group.

The mediator should also be able to prevent these emotional outbursts from having a negative impact on the talks.

- c) Ability to separate oneself from the talks
  - i. this person must be able to leave the business in the room at the end of the day and not let it consumer him or herself. While the mediator should be working outside of the given time period, he or she must not become emotionally involved to the situation other than having a dedication to move the situation further towards resolution.

#### *IV. PARTICIPANTS*

For talks to formulate a resolution that is successful, it is vital that all entities involved in the intractable conflict be invited to participate.

##### 1. The Problem of Exclusion

- a) Any entity left out of the talks will feel slighted and not involved in the resolution. This exclusion can lead to failure through the means of breaking a ceasefire, or failure of people represented by the entity to approve of the resolution upon its conclusion.

## CROSSROADS

### 2. Rules for Participation

a) Each participant must be required to act in a civil manner in order to be allowed to participate. Failure to act in proper manner will result in temporary suspense from talks. Suspension can also take place for the failure to guarantee peace/ceasefires.

## *V. FORMATION OF THE AGREEMENT*

The agreement must be formed with equal contributions by all participants of the talks. This should not be a one sided affair.

### 1. Failure to participate

a) Participants that are not contributing will be addressed by the independent mediator and be required to contribute, or face suspension. Participants are required to contribute because failure to do so provides an opportunity for blame to be placed on contributors if failure results from the resolution. The success or failure of the resolution will be attributed to all parties involved.

### 2. Over active members

a) Participants who are contributing at a rate much greater than others will be required to abstain from contributing for a period of time set by the independent mediator. The over action of one participants allows for domination of the talks; for a multi-lateral approach to resolution, this must be avoid. Failure of the participant to abide by the abstention set forth by the mediator will lead to suspension for a period of time determined by the mediator.

## *VI. DEADLINE FOR AGREEMENT*

In order to ensure that the participants of the talks are working with dedication to form a meaningful resolution, there must be a deadline for an agreement. This deadline gives a finish line to the talks and forces the participants to work a deal out, and not focus on emotional and political distraction for their actions. This deadline will be set by the independent mediator and does not have to be set at the outset of the talks.

## *VII. VOTE OF THE PEOPLE*

Without the acceptance of the people affected by the agreement, the agreement will fail and the conflict will continue.

### 1. Union of politics and people

a) Although governments may agree on the politics of the issue and accept the agreement, the people directly affected by this agreement of government over political issues must also accept it. As the people deal with the conflict on a daily basis, they are the ones who will make the agreement successful or doom it to failure. To show that the agreement is acceptable to the people who it will impact, a democratic vote of support must be taken by both sides of the conflict. If the agreement is rejected, it will not work, and those involved in resolution talks must form a new agreement.

## *VIII. REINFORCEMENT OF RESOLUTION*

Although resolutions formed to end intractable conflicts may be approved of by the leaders of the parties involved as well as the people that they affect, these resolutions would undoubtedly not be perfect in their first form. As such, there needs to be constant reinforcement and reevaluation of policies.

### 1. Scheduled Intervals

a) There should be set scheduled intervals when policies will be reevaluated. For intractable conflicts, a period of five years for reevaluation is sufficed. Policies that working should be reaffirmed and policies that are found to be lacking, should be changed to better suit the situation. Both the reaffirmation and change in policies should be approved by both the parties involved and the people they affect, just as the original resolution.

### *IX. CONCLUSION*

Just like any resolution, this Northern Irish Model is of course imperfect. It is not to be a specific procedure to follow, but as a guideline or syllabus as to what must be done in order to formulate lasting resolution. The unique qualities of individual intractable conflict will undoubtedly need to change certain aspects of this model. If the core outline of this guideline is followed, the resolution to the intractable conflict stronger than if it was not. If peace was possible in Northern Ireland based off of the principles of this guideline, then any conflict can have a chance at a successful resolution.



# A STRUCTURAL REALIST APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING STATE-LEGITIMACY

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past ten years, a number of states have attempted to gain official recognition from the international community. However, only East Timor (2002) has been successful in this pursuit. In 2008, both Kosovo and South Ossetia declared independence, but have yet to gain similar international legitimacy. Although Kosovo and South Ossetia meet the necessary domestic requisites (territory; support of the population; government; etc) set forth by the United Nations (UN) and a host of other international organizations that determine the criteria for international recognition, they remain illegitimate in the eyes of the world. Because of this, one may argue that domestic prerequisites which are often posited as the strongest indicators of whether or not an aspiring state will gain international acceptance, lack the level of significance that they appear to possess. Thus, one must take into account the role that the international community itself plays in the process.

To evaluate the role that the international community plays in defining state recognition, I will utilize a structural realist approach and argue that state recognition is ultimately based on the determination of the world's leading powers; i.e. those powers with the largest economies and/or most powerful militaries. This structural realist approach takes into account 1.) the power relationships between states within a region, 2.) who the world's leading powers are, and 3.) how these powers influence international recognition.

## CROSSROADS

Since realism asserts that power and power relations among/between states is the crucial factor in both providing security and explaining state behavior, it will be a useful guide in this analysis. The states that will be examined are: East Timor, Kosovo, and South Ossetia. The model that will be developed and utilized will evaluate the response of the most powerful actors (China, Russia, and the United States) in the international community towards each aspiring state. This will demonstrate that power is the ultimate determinant of state recognition. In other words, a model will be employed that allows scholars to attempt to determine the likelihood of a state gaining legitimacy. This model will evaluate aspiring states by placing them into one of three categories: very likely (those aspiring states that pose little to no threat to the regional/international balance of power); unlikely (those states that pose a threat to the regional/international balance of power; and possible (those states that face some international opposition, but in the long run, have a strong chance of gaining official recognition.) (See Table 3)

Historically, there have been two sets of factors (internal and external) that contribute to a state receiving international recognition. The internal factors refer to those variables connected to the domestic realm of the territory in accordance to the classical political definitions of what constitutes a state. They may require a state to have sovereignty, a willing populace, legitimate government, a high degree of civil society, enumerated rights, etc. External factors, on the other hand, incorporate the ways in which the different states in the world (and in particular the most powerful states) perceive the aspiring state(s). The model that the paper develops demonstrates that external features (such as an aspiring state's influence in the balance of power of a particular region or the historical relationship between the aspiring state and a dominant global/regional power) are stronger indicators for state recognition.

International law delineates certain basic requirements that aspiring states need to satisfy. These criteria include territory, population, government, and capacity to enter into relations with other states (Orakhelashvili 2008). These four standard components have to

be fulfilled in order for the aspiring states to be formally recognized. In other words, a state must have sovereignty. Another important internal dynamic is to evaluate how people living in the seceded territory view the relationship between themselves and their government. The aspiring citizens must identify themselves with the aspiring state, give consent to the pursuit of independence, as well as consider their government legitimate. These components themselves depend on several different factors. For instance, ethnic cleavages appear to have had a tremendous influence on international legitimacy. If one segment of the population wants to secede and another segment that is in control of the government refuses secession, tensions may erupt into violence and an increased potential for civil war. Domestic factors, especially those democratic features, within the secessionist region are supposedly designed to protect its ability to gain legitimacy.

This paper will suggest and attempt to provide supporting evidence that the international recognition of most of the *de facto* states eventually comes down to how important the powerful states perceive the seceded region or the parent state. If a powerful state's interest in the region is counteracted by another equally powerful state, problems will arise, and most often the aspiring state(s) will not achieve full international recognition and complete statehood. If, however an aspiring state does not threaten the regional, economic, political, or military stability of a powerful state(s), then statehood will most likely be granted.

## II. REALIST PERSPECTIVE: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Realists assert that states as unitary actors determine the climate of the international arena. This understanding has serious implications for aspiring states because their legitimacy is reliant upon the decisions of the most powerful actors in the international community. If an aspiring state is likely to upset the balance of power it will not gain legitimacy. Since realism maintains that power and power relations are crucial in providing security and explaining state behavior, the realist paradigm will provide the most effective rationale as to how

international factors influence the perceived legitimacy of a state. More specifically, the school of thought known as structural realism will be applied.

According to structural realism, the states behavior is determined by the power structure in the zero-sum world. In this literature review, the discussion will begin with the assessment of classical realism and the historical antecedents of this school. Next, I will look at the theory of structural realism and how modern scholars have explained the power dynamics of the international system. Lastly, I will examine the role of the modern state and how the emergence of new states affects the power structure(s) in the world.

Realism traces its roots to the fifth century B.C. Greek historian, Thucydides (461 B.C) who is considered the father of realism. Thucydides was the first to define interstate relations in terms of power, anarchy, and the system of the states. He ascribes the reasons for the Peloponnesian War to the increased competition between the city-states of Athens and Sparta. According to Thucydides, the war was inevitable, as the two equally powerful states could not exist in harmony. The "Melian Dialogue," perhaps the cornerstone of realist thought, highlights the anarchic nature of international relations and the ability of powerful states to manipulate the system in their favor. "Strong do what they can and the weak accept what they must" (Thucydides 1998, 403) – this is the universal definition of realism.

Following renaissance, certain theorists argued that it was humanity's flaws that led to the assumptions that realists depend on. Machiavelli (1979) saw humans as inherently self-interested, aggressive, fickle, and selfish, who are pursuing material gain. Because of this condition, only those who have the power and the ability to manipulate people survive. The international arena is also subject to this rule; military and economic capabilities along with decisive actions determine the dominant actors, which is why armed conflicts are considered inevitable. Hobbes (1963), famously asserted that the humans are self-interested animals, motivated by the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain. He also compared relations of states in the anarchic system to

the behavior of individuals in the “State of Nature”, since the sovereign states will always pursue their agenda and the strong will be the ones to survive.

Modern definitions of realism build on these earlier writings. Morgenthau (1973) outlined six principles of political realism, the most comprehensive definition which became the basis for realism's contemporary development. They are as follows: 1. Political realism asserts that politics is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. 2. The main concept that guides realism in international politics is power, which distinguishes political realm from others and allows for some kind of systematic measurement of the international arena. 3. Power and interest are variable in content and are not permanent. They are determined by particular political and cultural contexts in which the policies are formulated. Power can be defined in different terms as it is “anything that establishes and maintains control of a man over man” (Morgenthau 1973, 10). 4. Universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of the states. Consideration of political consequences comes before the moral factors. 5. Aspirations of particular nations have nothing to do with the moral principles that govern the universe. 6. Political realism is autonomous from other disciplines, as it explains every political event through the lens of power.

Furthermore, Morgenthau (1973) argued that international politics is the struggle for power, which he defined as the “means to nation's ends” (Morgenthau 1973, 29). Power itself is a complex phenomenon and whether a state is powerful or not depends on its: a.) geographic location (island state v. land-locked state), b.) natural resources (food and raw materials), c.) industrial capacity (ex: Congo has vast amounts of uranium, but no industrial capacity, hence there is no shift in its position of power), d.) military preparedness (technology, leadership, and quality of armed forces), e.) population (its distribution throughout the territory and trends play major importance), f.) national character and national morale, and g.) both the quality of diplomacy and that of the government. States that possess this power, try to maintain the status quo applying policies that aim at preserving it, thereby

competing with or directly opposing other powerful states. Hence, states reach the equilibrium, balance of power, which is the main stabilizer for international politics (Morgenthau 1973). Haas (1953) added to this approach by defining the balance of power as the simultaneous search for the preponderance of power by the sovereign participants.

Another main concept of political realism is the idea that the international system is anarchic. Niebuhr (1949) maintained that the international community lacks a world government that could integrate states under one cohesive form of leadership and constitution. Such formation neither exists nor can it ever be created by means of international organizations, since it goes against the main assumptions that govern the behavior of states. States as sovereign entities will not relinquish their autonomy and allow the interference of outside forces.

These main characteristics created a foundation for the subdivision of realism called structural realism, which became one of the most prominent schools of thought in the second half of the twentieth century. Kenneth Waltz (1979), arguably the most influential structural realist thinker, delineates some of the main characteristics of realism: as states compete with each other for power, they choose a course of action that best serves their self-interest, and the success of the policies is determined by the preservation and the strengthening of the state. Waltz (1979) maintained that international system is anarchic, arguing that the order is not imposed by a hierarchic authority but as has developed by the interactions of formally equal political entities. States are the main units in the system, which have formally equal capabilities, similar functions, and compete for the same goals. Lastly, states are differentiated by the capabilities they have; namely great powers shape the international political structure. The shifting of dominance and the interaction between these states, are what determine the character of the international system. Waltz (1979) also distinguishes between the bipolar and multipolar systems; the former representing the dominance of two powers and the latter the dominance of multiple powers. Perhaps the most important contribution for the structural realism was Waltz's discussion on balance of power and the concept of the zero-sum world.

According to him, states strive for relative gains against each other, and power gained by one state is power lost by the other. This kind of shifting of scales between great powers shapes the international politics.

As long as the power balance in the system remains constant, the policies of these states will continue. Waltz (1993) argued that the constancy of American foreign policy towards the third world, during the Cold War, can be explained by the fact that American power was counteracted by the Soviet Union, and the security interest was the priority. As the demise of the Soviet Union created unipolarity, American foreign policy emerged not by external security interests, but by internal political pressure. In other words, unbalanced power creates insecurity for other weaker states, and the incentives for the emergence of new powers. As long as the international system remains anarchic, the behavior of states will continue to be unchanged.

Waltz's influence resonated in the theories of other structural realist thinkers as well. Mearsheimer (2006) described the international system as a "dog-eat-dog environment", where there is a constant possibility of war and that all states are potential threats. States have to depend on themselves for survival. The more power a state has, the less likely it is to be attacked. There is constant competition for power, and the powerful states, who would otherwise be satisfied by their position, are forced by the structure of the system to behave like revisionist states. Building on the basics of structural realism, Gilpin (1981) endorsed the idea that the international system is determined by the struggle for wealth and power by the independent actors under the condition of anarchy. Unlike Waltz (1979), whose view of international structure is more or less static, Gilpin (1981) introduced the idea of change of the power structures in the system itself. He argued that the system starts with the state of equilibrium, which is upset by the growth of capabilities of one state over another. This results in disequilibrium, and ultimately leads to the change of the structure of the system. This kind of system-level change allows for the hegemonic powers, and implies that the conflict can occur even under hegemonic structure, for reasons independent of the balance of power system. Buzan, Jones and Little

(1993) also agreed with Waltz's idea of structure as the main influence for state behavior, however they were dissatisfied by the inability of Waltz' theory to explain change and more specifically the demise of the Soviet Union. Hence, they stressed the economic competitiveness rather than military might, and maintained that structural imperatives create the prerequisites for internal change.

The collapse of the Soviet Union shook the core of structural realism, and the world became fascinated with ideas of cooperation and interdependence. When the Soviet Union collapsed and the immediate threat had ended, many saw this as a victory of liberalism. Structural basis still remained popular however; even liberal thinkers such as Keohane (1986) agreed that the systemic approach is the most effective in explaining the behavior of states, while stressing the role of international institutions as the facilitators of the information sharing and cooperation. However, Krasner (1994) and Waltz (2000) maintained that international institutions, as liberal as they may sound, are created by the powerful states to serve their own agendas; in essence they reflect the distribution of power in the world. Jervis (1999) emphasized the fact that international institutions are tools of powerful states and do not have an ability to create successful and cooperative interstate relations where they do not exist. He does not discard the correlation between the existence of international institutions and cooperation, however he points out the flawed causal relationship between the two. Mearsheimer (1994) also discounted the claims of liberal institutionalists, such as Keohane, claiming that international institutions have little to no influence on the behavior of states. States act according to the pressures of international structure. The failure of international institutions to prevent the Bosnian war is one of the notorious examples.

Since a state is the main actor in structural realism the appearance of new states usually shifts the balance of power. The post-World War II developments make this case clear. Decolonization and the emergence of the new European states after the defeat of Germany, prompted the two great powers the United States and the Soviet Union to create spheres of influence (Krasner 1999). Although the great powers



championed the Western ideal of the Westphalian sovereign state and promoted this model to the rest of the world, they did not hesitate to compromise it when their own interests were in question. Krasner (1999) argued that the great powers disregard the considerations of sovereignty in favor of their own power considerations. The characteristics associated with Sovereignty – territory, autonomy, recognition, and control do not provide the accurate description of how many entities have become sovereign states. What Krasner (1999) established is that external actors, and more specifically the powerful actors, have historically infringed on sovereignty of these entities and shaped their internal structure in ways that suited their own agendas.

### III. RESEARCH DESIGN

Realism best explains this particular model of state recognition because it maintains that powerful states create the climate of international relations. The distribution of power in the world influences the nature of international politics. As structural realists of the twentieth century contend, the anarchic international system determines the behavior of the states, and the internal dynamics have little to no effect. In the system of “self-help,” the power position of the state overrides every other consideration (Waltz 1967). If international politics is determined by power, states that lack natural resources, industrial capacity, and military preparedness...cannot influence international affairs (Morgenthau 1973). Weaker states become important only if the major actors in the system perceive them as having some sort of intrinsic value, i.e. geographical location, natural resources, military alliance, etc.

Another feature of the system that deserves attention is its competitive nature. In a zero-sum world, the advance of one state will be copied by another, in order to achieve a balance. The states will not allow one another to get a disproportionate amount of power, whether it is military or economic strength. In this kind of environment, one that emphasizes state power as the main determinant, weak states suffer. But what is more, the aspiring states are in an even worse position because they depend on the determination of the main powers in order to

achieve independence and recognition. In the Westphalian system of states, there is an incentive to become a state.

Although this paper argues that the main determinants for aspiring states come from the actions of the most powerful states (external variables), internal variables that have long been held as the standard for legitimacy must first be considered in order to demonstrate their partial irrelevance. These internal variables have served as the criteria of statehood established at the 1933 Montevideo convention and are the following: (a) a permanent population, (b) defined territory, (c) government, (d) capacity to enter relations with other states. Article III of the Montevideo Convention affirmed that the existence of a state does not depend on the recognition by other states. On the other hand since the Congress of Vienna in 1815, it has been the case that the recognition of a state by the international community endows it with the rights and duties of a full-fledged international entity. This is referred to as the constitutive theory of statehood and those that subscribe to this view believe that because of the primitive nature of the international legal system, existing states have to recognize that the criteria of statehood is met in a particular aspiring state (Raiç 2002). For the purposes of this thesis, full recognition is defined by UN membership.

Appendix A, Table 1 demonstrates whether or not the 193 members of the United Nations fulfilled the Montevideo Convention criteria of statehood at the time of admission. Each state is simply marked with “yes” or “no” under each criterion. This designation was given using the information from United States State Department and the United Nations country profile databases. According to Table 1, twenty-one states did not qualify for the “population” criterion, while thirty five lacked the “territory” component, thirty-three the “government” component, and twenty-seven the component labeled as the “capacity to enter relations with other states.” Some states, such as former colonies, did possess all four criteria; however their independence was sponsored by colonial powers.

Table 2 offers more of an in-depth look at the states admitted after 1991. This is the date of the collapse of the Soviet Union, and was

chosen for two reasons: first, it marks the transition away from the Cold War power structure, and second, it demonstrates the year that the former Soviet states gained independence which drastically changed the borders of Europe. What we see in this table is that all of the post-communist states lacked at least one criterion but were still granted full recognition.

In order to demonstrate that the Montevideo Convention criteria have a minor effect over the emergence of new states, case studies of three recent examples of aspiring states: East Timor, Kosovo, and Abkhazia and South Ossetia are reviewed. All three have attempted to gain international recognition, however, only East Timor has been successful in its pursuit. Why is this the case? All three possess the necessary internal prerequisites, but seem to be viewed differently by the world's leading powers. Qualitative analysis is favored for the purposes of this paper, since looking at the real life context is imperative for drawing accurate conclusions about the nature of international politics and answering the question posed.

Table 3 illustrates the following hypothesis: If the major powers are interested in keeping the aspiring state integrated they will not support the self-determination of the seceding region. On the same token, if the most powerful actors see personal gain in granting recognition, or do not see any national interest in keeping the state together, they will grant the aspiring state with international legitimacy.

## IV. CASE STUDIES

### *EAST TIMOR*

The realization of East Timor as a formally recognized state represents a good example of how a state gains legitimacy by UN standards. East Timor's independence is largely due to the interference of the international community and not so much the result of the formation of identifiable characteristics of a state consistent with the definitions provided by international law. The fact that East Timor had no significant ties with what are conceived as the major powers of the

world, played a large role in it receiving more or less unanimous international recognition. This should not be mistaken however that East Timor's road to statehood was a smooth one. On the contrary, it was a long and bloody course that for a long time was neglected by the entire world and only remembered in 1999. In order to understand this process the history of East Timor must be considered.

East Timor is the largest island of the Indonesian Archipelago, which consists of over 13,000 islands. In the 15th century Portugal entered the archipelago and by the 18th century it became an official colony. During this time, Timor did not make up a significant part of the Portuguese empire, serving mostly as a place of political exile. Throughout the eighteenth century, the Dutch contested the region in their endeavor to create the Dutch East Indies. The decades of hostility was resolved by the nineteenth century's Treaty of Lisbon signed by the Netherlands and Portugal, which gave the Dutch authority of the western part of the Timor Island, and Portugal the eastern part. By the twentieth century, East Timor was a fully established Portuguese colony, however the geographical remoteness allowed for the stronger sense of separateness and an independent political system (Maogoto 2007). It was controlled indirectly by the Portuguese empire until 1912 when a major uprising was put down. Only then did the Portuguese gain effective control over the entire territory. It must be considered, that East Timor could never have turned into a valuable part of the empire because it lacked significant trade relations; East Timor only produced moderate amounts of coffee, coconut products, and sandalwood (Evers 2001).

During the Pacific War (1942), Japan invaded the Timor Island. The Australian and Dutch allied troops tried to maintain the territories, and the struggle for the control of Timor resulted in a death toll of 60,000 and the complete destruction of the Timor infrastructure. The end of World War II saw the independence of the Dutch territories of the island. On August 17, 1945 Indonesia declared independence. At the time, The Netherlands was weakened by the German occupation and the Indonesians were able to dominate the Archipelago. The Dutch still tried

to retain the colony, but the small scale military confrontations ended with the Indonesian victory and the emancipation of Indonesia from Dutch colonial rule (Maogoto 2007).

At this time, East Timor was put on the back burner, since after World War II it was handed back to Portugal. The Indonesians acknowledged it as a Portuguese colony, and themselves busy with the struggle over New Guinea and West Irian with the Dutch, they left the eastern part of the island alone. This continued until 1974, when the fascist regime of Portugal fell, and the new democratic government was shaking off its colonies. The new governor from Portugal visited East Timor at this time, with the purpose of facilitating East Timor's transition to independence. East Timor already did have some sort of governing structure, and during the Portuguese visit, three political parties were formed: Timorese Democratic Union (UDT), Revolutionary Front of Independent Timor (Freitlin) and Timorese Popular Association (Apodeti). After the 1975 elections two parties, UDT and Freitlin emerged with the most votes and started to gather support for independence. This chain of events did not particularly please the Indonesians, who along with being apprehensive of the Marxist leaning Freitlin were also alarmed by the dangerous precedent that the independence of East Timor would set for Indonesia's other separatist provinces such as Aceh and West Irian. Even Australia, the most influential regional power, did not support the independence of East Timor because the Australian government had determined to strengthen ties with Indonesia (Maogoto 2007). In fact, having the entire island under Indonesian control would make it easier for Australia to make the use of the vast natural resources of the island. Accordingly, Australia was pro-Indonesian from the very beginning.

On November 28, 1975, Freitlin declared independence in lieu of a UDT staged and Indonesian supported coup against the Marxist oriented party. After nine days, Indonesian military invaded East Timor and by 1976 it became one of Indonesia's administrative provinces. This move on Indonesia's side was negatively received by the international community. The UN did not recognize East Timor as part of Indonesia

and voiced support for the self-determination of East Timor in multiple resolutions. The UN based its support on Portugal's interest in the region and the legal theories of people's right to independence. However Indonesia did not heed any of these statements, since the rhetorical and formal support of the UN did not translate into any sort of action. The ineffectuality of the international community in respect to the support of East Timor, resulted in more than three decades of oppressive Indonesian rule (Maogoto 2007).

Beginning in 1976, the Indonesian military used violent measures against the resistance of the East Timorese. Attempts to subdue the rebels killed thousands of people. Many peaceful protests were brutally stifled and the massive repressions against the innocent civilians called for greater international attention (Maogoto 1991). For the most part the Indonesian government directed their anti-resistance campaigns at Freitlin party members, but soon the government realized that the Freitlin party itself did not represent any kind of military threat but enjoyed the large popular support which was the moving force behind the resistance movement. The Indonesian military responded to this with widespread arrests and killings of not only the independence supporters but their relatives and friends as well. From the military perspective, the war against the guerrilla movement was extremely costly, problematic, and ineffective for the Indonesian government, so they turned their efforts to the destruction of farm fields and forcible evacuation of the residents from the villages to stop the food production. These disproportionate policies perpetuated a famine in 1978-1979 (Evers 2001). Every family in East Timor was greatly affected by this traumatic experience in one way or another, which strengthened a sense of common national identity and instilled a renewed zeal for resistance movement.

For the Indonesian government, East Timor's struggle for independence was a minor glitch to maintain a successful statehood after the struggle with the Netherlands for self-determination. They considered the Indonesian state as the only legitimate political entity that should have remained on the island as a result of the war with its

former colonial power. East Timor's secession seemed senseless to say the least. For the Indonesian government actions to stifle the self-determination of East Timor meant getting rid of the last remnants of the colonial era (Evers 2001). The continual repressions more or less slowed during the 1980s when the results of the elections in East Timor were published. According to Indonesian sources, in these elections 100% of the population voted, out of which 90% were in favor of the Indonesian President Suharto's Ruling party Golkar. The Indonesian government interpreted this as the desire of the East Timorese to remain under their control (Evers 2001). It must be said that Australia was supporting Indonesia's policy towards East Timor from the very beginning. The Australian government turned a blind eye towards the human rights violations and accepted the official explanations and reports without further inquiring their accuracy. As a regional power, Australia was looking to establish close ties with the resource-rich island. Additionally, Australia was interested in the newly discovered oil fields in the Timor Trench, close to East Timor (Evers 2001). It would not make sense for Australia to condemn Indonesian's actions, since getting hold of the oil trenches would be much easier if already allied Indonesian's controlled the entire island. If East Timor had achieved independence, there would be the element of uncertainty for the Australian government; the East Timorese might not have been willing to cooperate. On the other hand, even if East Timor did cooperate, dealing with two governments that were hostile towards each other would create too many complications.

During the Indonesian occupation, the position in which East Timor found itself was anything but satisfactory. First of all, almost a third of the population was eliminated during the anti-resistance struggle of the late 1970s. If this was not enough, in their endeavor to politically integrate East Timor, Indonesians took unfair economic advantage of the region. The poverty rate in East Timor was twice the rate compared to Indonesia, and the infant and maternal mortality rate was one of the highest in the world (Traub 2001). The distribution of employment was also disproportional. The Timorese occupied low level clerical and unskilled positions while Indonesians took all the mid and

high level jobs and administrative positions. Particularly good example of this was the fact that in the education sector, elementary teachers were Timorese, while high school teachers Indonesian. The local Indonesian government members in East Timor also personally enriched themselves through engaging in corrupt practices and getting involved in various types of commercial enterprise, which economically exploited the East Timorese. (Traub 2001).

Among the numerous cases of human rights violations was the 1991 Santa Cruz (Dili) Massacre. At the beginning of the 1990s Indonesian government believed that the guerrilla groups of the Timorese no longer posed a significant threat; they had deluded themselves that the resistance movement was finally defeated. The Indonesian government was mistaken however, as the resistance movement was not dead, but had changed its methods to diplomacy. In 1991, the Portuguese delegation was due to arrive in Dili for independence talks, however the visit was cancelled. The peaceful pro-independence demonstration of the Timorese, triggered by the cancellation of the visit, deteriorated into the confrontation between the demonstrators and the Indonesian militia which resulted in the brutal death of 250 Timorese (Moore 2001).

This tragic event gravely altered Indonesia's position in the eyes of the international community. Even though the UN did not recognize the integration of East Timor to Indonesia, during the more or less quiet 1980s the UN committees focused mostly on human rights violations and took little notice of the self-determination of East Timor. After 1991 however, the independence movement of East Timor gained new dimensions, and the UN started to pay more attention to the Timorese (Chinkin 1996).

Not much changed in the situation of the Timorese until 1998, when Indonesian president Suharto was forced out of the office. New president B. J. Habibie was more lenient and inattentive towards East Timor, as he was much too preoccupied with trying to gather support in Indonesia. Underestimating the strong anti-Indonesian sentiments in East Timor, he let the Timorese hold a referendum in 1999. It must be



mentioned that he had also overlooked the fact that his own militia was not very supportive of the Timorese. In April of 1999 a new outburst of violence took place in East Timor. Members of the Indonesian militia started breaking into the houses of local citizens and slaughtered Timorese families with machetes. Until this moment the UN had considered East Timor as the internal problem for Indonesia, however they were unable to ignore the bloodshed that ensued. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan asked Jakarta to stop the activities of the militia; however Indonesians did not heed this request. The UN did not press this issue and simply sent 300 unarmed police officers there. The violence escalated to the degree that the UN had to postpone voting twice. The referendum was finally held in August of 1999, where out of 98% registered voters, 80% voted against being part of Indonesia. As the results were published, the Indonesian militia intensified its activities. The militia moved from town to town, looting and burning every house on its way. The degree of economic damage was indescribable; virtually every piece of personal wealth in East Timor's rural and urban area was destroyed, burned, or stolen (Traub 2001).

It took the destruction of the entire region and the death of thousands of civilians for the UN and the international community to pay attention to East Timor. As is the case in many similar situations, all of what happened in 1999 could have been avoided had the international community reacted earlier. The UN's neglect becomes particularly unjustifiable if one considers the experience it had with the former Yugoslavian states, especially Bosnian civil war. The brutality and human rights violations committed by the Indonesian militia were not unique to 1999; it had been going on throughout the course of the twenty five year long occupation. If nothing else, the Dili Massacre of 1991 should have raised questions and prompted action. If the UN had intervened at any point before, an entire infrastructure and economy of East Timor would not have to be rebuilt from scratch before gaining independence.

Nevertheless, the Security Council finally authorized the peacekeeping mission in September of 1999, after Portugal and Australia demanded their action. The United States also threatened to veto the

loan applications by Indonesia in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Traub 2001). Interestingly enough, Australia which had been opposed or neutral to Timorese independence, now asked to lead the peacekeeping forces. This “Historic Policy Shift” (Fernandes 2008) could be accounted to Australia’s severed relations with the new president J. B. Habibie, as the Indonesian government was perceived to have hidden and tempered with the records of the rotation and the activities of their militia (Fernandes 2008).

The arrival of Australian soldiers was ineffective in respect that the Indonesian militias had already destroyed East Timor. After a short military confrontation with the Australians, the Indonesian militia’s resistance practically withered away. East Timor became a peacekeeping mission for the UN (Traub 2001). Through reconstruction efforts and a sponsorship of the self-determination of the people, the UN would redeem itself from the negative backlash it received during the break-up of the Yugoslavia. It was also solely a UN project, since there could not have been involvement from NATO, OSCE, or other organizations.

Although the Australian forces managed to restore order, the Indonesian militia had destroyed infrastructure, civil administration, and virtually every home. The UN needed to rebuild everything from zero in order for East Timor to become an independent country. Accordingly, under the Chapter VII in resolution 1272, the Security Council established a United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). This body was given the overall responsibility over the administration of East Timor and the power to exercise the legislative, executive and judicial authority. In other words, UNTAET was an interim government. Additionally, UNTAET would have a representative who would serve as a transnational administrator and oversee all aspects of UN activities in East Timor, including enacting laws and suspending the existing ones (Matheson 2001). The UNTAET administrator repealed all the laws that applied to East Timor during the Indonesian occupation and took charge of legislative and judicial appointments as well as fiscal and budgetary matters. Another mission United Nations Mission of Assistance for East Timor (UNAMET) was created as the return and

rehabilitation of the refugees was set as one of the priorities along with revival of economic activity, reconstruction of infrastructure, and recruitment and training of local civil servants. Indonesia did not offer any resistance and agreed to end any ties with East Timor to facilitate the transition to independence (Matheson 2001).

Ironically, during the 1999-2001 period, the UNTAET staff was blamed for elitist and colonialist practices as they were setting up the basic governing structures and bureaucratic organs in East Timor. The major complaint was that the UNTAET decision making process did not include the cooperation with the East Timorese nationals. In general, the UNTAET functioned independently of the local citizens and did not put the democratic practices it preached into action. Nevertheless, in spite these controversies, the UNTAET successfully managed to divert \$191 million dollars in assistance during the 1999-2001 period as well as the budget of \$70 million maintained by foreign donors (Phillpot 2006).

The UNTAET mission continued up until December 2001, to allow for a successful transition to independence. The elections were held in August 2001, when the government of East Timorese nationals was formed. The UN maintained the authority on the island until the necessary conditions for statehood were met (Evers 2001). The long process ended on May 20, 2002 when President Xanana Gusmão was sworn in and on September 20, 2002 East Timor was officially admitted to the 191st member of the United Nations (GA 10069).

Looking at the long process of East Timor's road to independence, more specifically the period from 1999 to 2002, we cannot help but ask a question as to how legitimate was the claim for self-determination that the East Timorese people had. Moreover, the speedy membership to the UN also raises questions about how East Timor fitted the standard definitions of statehood at that time. Self-determination, the nationalist claim to homeland, becomes very complicated for East Timor, since the East Timorese have a common ethnic ancestry to Indonesians, after all, the two are located on the same island. First of all, the fact that East Timor was occupied by Portugal and the West of the island by the Dutch had contributed to the formation of

different ethnic identity. Also, East Timor, being a remote colony, had been more or less independently governed by the locals, and lastly the struggle under the Indonesian occupation built the sense of unity against the common enemy. However, as the United Nations took over the administration of the island, “the common enemy incentive” was no longer applicable, which explains why shortly after the admission to the UN the political and ethnic cleavages became more apparent; the two regional ethnic divisions Kaladi versus Filaku became a major obstacle for forming an unified nation with focused political goals. These two groups are not particularly friendly to each other, as Kaladi consider themselves more supportive of independence than Filaku, a distinction that creates opposition in the legislature (Sahin 2007).

UN officials argue that the Kaladi/Filaku competition was an artificial one, invented by the Portuguese colonizers, however the ethnic violence that erupted in spring of 2006, demonstrated that artificial or not the division exists and it interferes with the unity of Timor-Leste (Sahin 2007). By the same token is not East Timor as a state artificial as well? East Timor could have stayed under Indonesian authority, and Kaladi/Filaku opposition would still exist, same way as there would be opposition between East and West of the Timor Island. International law clearly delineates that a state has to have a defined population willing to be part of that state. Interestingly enough in case of East Timor, we have a 50/50 division.

### *KOSOVO*

Kosovo, the last remnant of the former Yugoslavia, represents an interesting case study for developing a structural realist argument for the recognition of states. In a way, because of its location and historical alliances, Kosovo is more complex than previous case studies. This case study demonstrates that Kosovo has an intermediate likelihood of becoming a fully recognized state. In order to draw objective conclusions, we must examine the history from the 1980's, when the “Kosovo question” first surfaced in the discourse of international relations.

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia was the only Eastern European state that was seen as a potential ally of the United States. The fact that Yugoslavia was more or less dependent from Soviet control, gave the U.S. hope that it may use them against the USSR (Woodward 2000). The violence that broke out with the break-up of Yugoslavia could have been prevented if the major powers had heeded the early warning signs that were already apparent after Yugoslavian president Tito's death in 1980 and had intervened at the right time; however the questions that were asked by the policymakers of the United States and Europe were not focused on the potentiality of brutal conflict, but on how it would affect them and if their legislatures would vote for the money (Woodward 2000). Yet, the inactivity caused the United States and key international organizations (United Nations and NATO) their own soldiers' lives and expenditures, both diplomatic and military, to stop the war in Kosovo and bring about the peace agreements (Woodward 2000).

There were three major explanations to the conflict. The first was the ancient ethnic hatred school of thought, championed by American scholars that claimed that the economic crisis of the 1980's opened up the Pandora's Box of centuries long ethnic cleavages between the diverse groups in the former Yugoslavia, among them Serbs and Kosovar Albanians. Second explanation emphasized the inevitability of the nation-states in the modern era. Mostly considered as a European explanation, this theory maintains that if nations vote for the independence, it should be thus granted. The third school focused on nationalist leaders that incited violence and sowed seeds of aggression in order to maintain power (Woodward 2000).

Regardless of the explanation, it does not alleviate the blame on the United States and the international community for neglecting the entire region to descend into a civil war and ethnic cleansing. The early warning signs, the indicators which would have hinted at the potential development of events in the 1990s, were evident throughout the 1980s but had been disregarded.

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First and foremost, the U.S. policy towards Yugoslavia had been relied on one leader, Tito, who held the entire federation together and represented a communist leader defending his land from the Soviets. His death in May of 1980 should have been recognized as sign of the declining federal authority. (Rogel 2003). The second sign, a much more apparent issues, was growing nationalist tension, as Slovenia and Croatia declared independence. The reason the warning signs were disregarded is rooted in the strategic importance of Yugoslavia (Woodward 2000). The international community and the United States were so pre-occupied with 1980's Cold War to keep the federation together, that they did not pay attention to the turmoil that was going on behind the scenes.

Another important mistake that was made by the American side during the late 1980's was largely related to economics. At this time Yugoslavia had economic problems and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had to get involved with a stabilization program. However, the policies of the IMF focused on the role of Yugoslavia in the European Community (EC), and that the only way it could be accepted by Europe would be if it remained unified. Slovene disobedience to this policy was disregarded. The pressure from the U.S. made the IMF toughen conditions on loans, and at the same time Washington announced that the special relationship between the two countries as well as financial assistance would end (Woodward 2000). In other words, the country that was dealing with changing leadership and declining federal authority, surfacing ethnic turmoil, and crippling economic challenges was largely left alone by everyone.

A blind eye was turned to the crisis that erupted in Kosovo. The first signs of it were seen after Tito's death, and escalated into a full blown war in 1998. Everything started with a student protest at Pristina University demanding edible cafeteria food and less crowded dormitories (Rogel 2003). The country at this time was experiencing a severe economic crisis and growing foreign debt. The federal government sent troops from Belgrade. Violence ensued, and hundreds of students were detained and interrogated. This eventually was viewed

as the Serbian government's avenger against the Albanians, and the Kosovar intellectuals soon began to draft outlines for reforms.

As a result, by the end of the 1980s Kosovo came under the Serbian police rule. It seemed like the student demonstrations triggered the ethnic tensions that were festering for decades. As the situation in Kosovo aggravated, many ethnic Serbs began resettle in Kosovo in order to claim it as part of greater Serbia (Rogel 2003). The nationalist sentiments resurfaced under the crumbling federation and moribund Soviet Union. Both Serbs and Albanians, perceived Kosovo, the tiny enclave, which had been deemed autonomous since 1970s, populated by 2 million people, 90% of which were Albanian, as their historic property. Serbs claimed that Kosovo was the heart of the first Serbian state, established in 1100s and the cradle of the Serb Orthodox Church. Also, Kosovo was the place where the War of Kosovo of 1389 was fought between the Serbs and the Turks (Bandow 2009). On the other hand, Albanians maintained that the land belonged to the Albanians long before the Serbs had arrived (Rogel 2003). Whatever the case, at the end of the 1980s Albanians outnumbered Serbs, and according to their claim, they had the right to self-determination and statehood.

As Serbian nationalism intensified during the late 1980s and early 1990s so did the Albanian sentiment to be separated from the Yugoslavian Federation and liberated from Serb domination. Serbs kept sending troops and tanks, and took away the autonomous status of Kosovo in 1989, while Kosovars began to establish a quasi-state with quasi-institutions, which collected taxes and organized schools. As Yugoslavia was breaking up, and descending into civil war, new states kept appearing, Kosovo was surprisingly on the sidelines, and kept opening up schools and hospitals (Rogel 2003).

The only reaction during this time coming from Washington was the gentle reminder to Serbia to leave Kosovo alone. President George H.W. Bush in 1992 in his so called "Christmas Warning" stated that if Serbia considered a violent crackdown on Kosovo, the United States would consider military action. Coming into office in 1993, President Clinton's Foreign Secretary Warren Christopher once again reaffirmed

the U.S. intentions to respond against Serbia under the circumstances of Serb military action in Kosovo (Ivo and O'Hanlon 2000).

At this time however, the US viewed Kosovo as an integral part of Serbia and only applied pressure on the latter to address the human rights situation and grant Kosovo greater autonomy and self-government (Ivo and O'Hanlon 2000). Failure to address the issue of Kosovo in the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement with Slobodan Milosevic on the Bosnian War made the region a remnant of the break-up of Yugoslavia; a time bomb that would soon explode. The US even established a virtual diplomatic presence in Pristina in 1996, by opening cultural centers and the US information agency. Despite all of this, there was no actual tangible effort to resolve the issue of Kosovo before it would escalate into war (Ivo and O'Hanlon 2000).

There are two main issues that we have to take in consideration when analyzing a lack of United States military support. First of all, going against Serbia meant confronting Russia, since the two countries had a long established partnership. The Cold War had ended only several years before, and the Clinton administration was attempting to foster friendly relations with the newly elected progressive President of Russia, Boris Yeltsin. This kind of confrontation would bring back the Cold War attitude. Secondly and more importantly, President Clinton came to the White House in the wake of the Gulf War, and any support for military involvement would be extremely unpopular. Not to mention the fact that during this period he was facing the possibility of impeachment and his interest in the international relations was limited (Hehir 2006).

As 1998 came around the violence in Kosovo escalated on both sides. NATO, which was monitoring the former Yugoslavian Republics after the Dayton Peace, was beginning to discuss the "legality to use force." The issue at hand was that since NATO only intervenes when a member state is attacked, starting military action in Serbia would be infringing on its sovereignty. The United States favored the intervention, despite the fact that it meant going against the will of Russia, which claimed that if this was brought up in the Security Council, Russia would veto it. At the same time however, Russia had growing domestic



problems and it was unlikely that they would use any military force to defend Serbia (Rogel 2003). The final turning point in NATO's decision to intervene was the March 1999 massacre of eighty-five Albanians in order to undermine the Kosovo Liberation Army's (KLA) growing importance. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) observers quickly determined that the perpetrators were from the Serbian side. On March 24, 1999 the NATO mission in Kosovo began (Rogel 2003).

Between 1998 and 1999 the United States policy towards Kosovo had changed drastically. Before, the United States did not necessarily support the Kosovo Liberation movement. The United States was not negotiating with the independence activists and supported Serbian sovereignty. In June of 1998, three U.S. diplomats among them Richard Holbrooke, who later became one of the main U.S. characters associated with the War of Kosovo, were sent to meet with the KLA leaders, after which the United States began championing the self-determination of Kosovar Albanians. During this time the Clinton administration continued further distancing themselves from Milosevic and Serbia. Secretary of State Madelyn Albright also commenced talks on NATO involvement in the conflict. With U.S. support, the United Nations Security Council also passed Resolution 1202 for the immediate ceasefire in Kosovo (Holbrooke 2007). It has to be mentioned that the lessons learned in Bosnia had influenced how Washington approached the issue of Kosovo. The administration believed that the NATO air strikes would compel Milosevic into ceasefire and surrender. U.S. diplomats argued that if the same was done in Bosnia a myriad of casualties would have been avoided (Holbrooke 2007).

Next step of the U.S. and its allies, that essentially made the NATO mission inevitable, was the peace negotiation in Rambouillet. The allies gave Milosevic an ultimatum to stop the massacre in Kosovo, or Serbia would lose control over the region. The negotiations proved to be unsuccessful (Hehir 2006). The number of unsuccessful peace negotiations, the prolonged process of disagreement on whether to intervene or not, and the international actors' indecisiveness on what

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was the better policy towards the former Yugoslavia exacerbated the conflict in Kosovo to the point of no return. At first, it was forgotten and neglected, because the United States did not perceive it to be in its national interest, and later there was too much pressure to act and too little agreement on what was the best way to solve the problem with the least amount of effort.

NATO started air strikes on Kosovo on March 24, 1999. After 78 days of intense bombings, President Milosevic agreed to give up his positions and surrender. According to a congressional report that was based on the accounts of the UN and OSCE observers during the course of these 78 days, Yugoslav forces moved rapidly to displace 1.5 million Albanians, which was 90% of Kosovo's population. The total number of Kosovar Albanians killed by Serbian forces was more than 10,000; many others were raped or tortured. The allied forces, using air attacks inflicted damage on Yugoslavia's infrastructure and military. After Milosevic agreed to the peace plan and the demands of the US and its allies, NATO military action was officially announced to be over on June 9, 1999 (Kim 2008).

The proposed peace agreement included a request for the immediate withdrawal of the Yugoslavian forces from the territory of Kosovo and provided Kosovo with greater autonomy under Yugoslavia. UN peacekeeping forces would remain to observe the execution of the peace plan there. The Security Council also passed Resolution 1244. It was this resolution that helped design the blueprint for the eventual independent status of Kosovo (Kim 2008). It affirmed Serbia's authority over Kosovo and established interim international control until the decision about its independence was made (Bandow 2009). The United States was the most important actor in devising this peace plan and the UNSC resolution, and it follows that the United States would have much weight in the final outcome of Kosovo's status.

The U.S. continued to influence the post-conflict administration, including the financial responsibility for the civilian administration as well as the participation in KFOR peacekeeping mission. The United States also established the United States Agency for International

Development (USAID) office in Pristina and contributed overall \$350 million in foreign aid between 1999 and 2002, which constituted the 15% of the total reconstruction funds. The United States had to also pressure the European Community to fulfill the requirements for the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) to become operational. Moreover, United States forces contributed to the building of the law enforcement agencies in post-war Kosovo (Orr 2004). This high degree of involvement in building up Kosovo after the war can be construed as the United States' attempt to avoid dealing with the status Kosovar statehood. UN resolution 1244 left this point open, and the United States would attempt to put it off further in time as long as possible. The reason for this was the United States' reluctance to confront Russia, as Russia's support for Kosovo's secession was out of the question.

In 2005, the UN assessed the functionality of the governing institutions and economic situation in Kosovo. The report concluded that it was unlikely that the two ethnic groups with the region would be able to coexist (Kim 2008). During the course of the next two years the political situation in Kosovo remained unstable, since the rapidly changing power structure inside the region did not allow for coherent government formation. In 2007, elections were held, marked by low voter turnout and little unrest. The new Thaci government, decided to cooperate with the United Nations for the process of the declaration of independence. A new constitution was adopted by the legislature and on February 17, 2008 Kosovo declared its independence.

The United States had been involved in promoting Kosovo's self-determination since 2005 and was one of the first countries to recognized Kosovo's independence. In fact, President George W. Bush did so on February 8, 2008. He also encouraged other countries to do the same; however this has not proven successful. In 2009, Vice President Joe Biden visited Kosovo and other former Yugoslavian republics, and pledged to support the government dealing with its many challenges, such as building functioning institutions, dealing with organized crime, and mending the differences with ethnic minorities. In October 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also visited Kosovo. This time she

stressed the importance of building a strong democracy in Kosovo where the ethnic minorities live in harmony and the rule of law is respected (Woehrel 2010).

There are some aspects of the issue of Kosovo's statehood on which the United States does not have much influence. The Americans expected that, after recognizing Kosovo, other states would follow suit. However, it did not happen. The EU was divided on this issue from the beginning. The fact that some of the former Yugoslavian states are already part of the EU makes it difficult for Europe to develop a coherent policy for Kosovo.

Russia on the other hand, has always been on the side of Serbia and it is highly unlikely that it will support Kosovo's independence. Serbia's historical alliance with Russia can be traced back to the early medieval period when Serbs and Russians were both converted to Christianity by Greek Orthodox clergy, who then created the Cyrillic alphabet that both nations use. Also, both people belong to the Slav family and have similar languages, the fact which facilitated the friendly relations between the two regions. The two countries remained associated throughout the centuries, and supported one another in domestic insurrections or international conflicts. During Soviet era, Serb dominance in the former Yugoslavia was also a result of this relation. After the simultaneous dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, and particularly since 1993, the two core countries Russia and Serbia were prompted by their common Orthodox past continued to remain allied internationally and support each other's interests against the policies of the United States and in some cases the European Union (McKenzie 1996).

Another reason why Russia refused to give diplomatic recognition to Kosovo is the fact that Russia has several autonomous republics in its federation that are constituted by ethnic minorities. Kosovo sets a dangerous precedent for these regions, and it is possible that Russia would face a host of self-determination issues on its own territory.

What we see here is a conflict of interests between two of the world's major powers. On one side is the United States, trying to protect the credibility of its policies and maintain a foothold in Eastern Europe. On the other side is Russia motivated by its historical alliance and the possibility of setting a dangerous precedent, also willing to retain influence in the region. Cold War rhetoric aside, the fate of Kosovo will be decided by these two P5 members. As far as the internal structure goes, Kosovo is more or less a fully functioning state.

Since the declaring its independence, Kosovo's government has taken an expansive stance towards the economy. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, the general government balance of Kosovo was more than 7% surplus of GDP. This has shifted to a 2.7% deficit since 2008. The deficit has been financed by the accumulated savings, sales of assets and foreign donations. Increased government spending has been the main driver for this growth; the highway building project and an increase in public sector wages and benefits account for most of the government spending. The IMF projects Kosovo's economy to grow by more than 5% by the end of 2011. According to IMF August report, the strong institutional framework, legal capacity, and defined property rights in Kosovo are crucial for the successful growth of the economy (IMF 2011). However, when discussing the positive aspects of the economy, it should not be disregarded that almost half of the population is unemployed and the country depends heavily on foreign remittances.

A state's level of civil society is an important indicator of the successful development of an aspiring state. CIVICUS in its 2011 report identified the lack of civic engagement as the major weakness of civil society in Kosovo. Although there are more than 4,500 NGOs registered in Kosovo, a large percentage of them are international groups that employ foreign observers and represent empty bureaucracies having little or no involvement from the Kosovar citizens. The level of organization and the practice of values are considered as a major strength of the civil society. The strong institutional framework and the formal governance and management systems allow for the healthy development and emergence of civic groups. The groups have highly

democratic values listed on their internal documents, however most of the time these values are not translated into action. Overall, for the newly emerged aspiring state that recently acquired a government, the development of civil society in Kosovo is worthy of praise (CIVICUS 2011).

### *ABKHAZIA AND SOUTH OSSETIA*

Abkhazia and South Ossetia, two aspiring states in the South Caucasus, present a quandary for experts in international law. On one side there is the issue of self-determination of peoples and on the other side there is a conflict of interest between regional and international actors. The two de facto regions, officially under the authority of Georgia have unwavering support from Russia, the regional power. While Georgia has been strengthening ties with the United States and Europe, procuring its policies in favor of the territorial integrity of Georgia. The two aspiring states seemingly satisfy the UN criteria for statehood, however only six UN member states (Russia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Nauru, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) have recognized them officially. In order to understand this complex case and draw conclusions about the legitimacy of the two de facto states, we must first take a look at the key historical events in the region.

The background of South Ossetia and Abkhazia more or less corresponds with that of Georgia, since the two regions have been part of Georgia for most of its existence as a coherent state. Georgia itself, after experiencing the entire spectrum of political existence, from a mini empire to being completely annexed by another states, achieved short-lived independence, from Russia in 1918 as a result of the Russian Revolution. Georgia's Independence was short-lived because it only lasted three years, until the Bolshevik forces invaded Tbilisi on the February 25, 1921. The government of Georgia fled the capital that night. This day marks the beginning of the seventy years of Soviet Georgia. South Ossetia and Abkhazia were the products of Lenin's policy of "self-determination of the national minorities" (Goltz 2009). Georgia was subjected to this policy, as it was granted the Autonomous Republic of

Abkhazia, the Autonomous District of South Ossetia, and the Autonomous Republic of Adjara. The latter was supposed to accommodate the minority of Georgian Muslims, who were not ethnically separate at all. The three autonomous regions were not homogeneously Abkhazian, Ossetian, or Muslim; instead they were populated with an equal number of Georgians (Goltz 2009). This arrangement would inevitably give rise to civil strife with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

For Abkhazia and South Ossetia the seventy years under the Soviet Union was mostly quiet. Despite the fact that it experienced severe repressions for independence movements, Georgia, appeared to be a more or less content member of the Soviet Union. Abkhazia, because of its beaches and mountains became a vacation spot for Moscow's most privileged. The independence movement in Georgia which started underground in 1950s had gained momentum throughout the 1980s, as the Soviet Union was withering away. It culminated in the peaceful demonstration of April 9, 1989 in the main square of Tbilisi which was violently put down by Soviet forces. Nineteen people died as a result of Soviet use of tanks and poisonous gas (Goltz 2009). After this tragic event, Zviad Gamsakhurdia emerged as a leader for the independence movement, and after the October 1990 elections his party Round Table/Free Georgia was a victor gaining majority in the assembly. The process of Georgia's independence was strengthened by the November 1990 elections in which Gamsakhurdia was voted as a Chairman of Georgia's Supreme council and the referendum of March 1991 where 90% of the Georgian population voted against the continued relationship with the Soviet Union. On April 9, 1991 Georgia declared independence. On May 26, 1991 Zviad Gamsakhurdia was elected as the first president of Georgia; a position that he would not keep for very long. (Goltz 2009).

The newly formed fragile state had more serious problems than the lack of unity between the government leaders; the three autonomous regions were not pleased with their placement in Georgia. Gamsakhurdia's motto "Georgia for Georgians" gave the impression that the ethnic Ossetians and Abkhazians were an undesirable minority. The

proclamation of Georgian and not Russian as the national language also angered them. This latent discontent when fueled by Russian military support resulted in a military confrontation between the Georgians and the Ossetians. This conflict had to be resolved by the OSCE intervention and the ceasefire in 1992. Parallel to the conflict in South Ossetia, Georgia descended into a civil war, as the para-military group headed by Jaba Ioseliani ousted Gamsakhurdia from office and allowed for a return of the former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze. Zviad Gamsakhurdia had to flee to Chechnya, as the streets of Tbilisi were in turmoil (Goltz 2009)

Simultaneously, the situation in Abkhazia was everything but calm. The autonomous republic populated by equal numbers of Georgians and Abkhazians, as well as Russians, Greeks and Germans, boycotted the March 1991 referendum. Abkhaz police began forcibly removing Georgians from their homes and ousting them from Abkhazia. Shortly after the admission of Georgia to the UN, on August 14, 1992 the Abkhaz militia blew up the bridge that connected Abkhazia to the rest of Georgia. The punitive forces were sent by Shevardnadze to Abkhazia headed by Tengiz Kitovani. The Georgian forces returned to Tbilisi victorious, however this war was not close to being over. The Abkhaz leadership fled to the Russian military base and recruited Circassian volunteers from the northern Caucasus, whose extreme brutality during the war was particularly appalling. In the beginning of the war, the Georgian forces did not have much trouble of regaining control of most of Abkhazia, however later it became apparent that Georgians were not only fighting Abkhazians, but a coalition of the mountain people equipped strangely enough with Russian technology and weapons (Goltz 2009). The war continued until the September 27 of 1993, when Sukhumi, capital of Abkhazia fell to the Abkhaz coalition. Georgians living in Abkhazia were either killed due to massive ethnic cleansing or were forced out of their homes, which created a huge refugee influx to Georgian cities (Goltz 2009). Interestingly enough, the West did not pay attention to these brutalities, and very few account the human rights violations that took place during this much-forgotten war.



The rest of the 1990s were peaceful but marked with economic hardships for Georgia. Abkhazia and South Ossetia had declared independence and existed more or less peacefully and separate from Georgia, while strengthening their ties with Russia. Georgia under Shevardnadze began building Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline as it started to foster ties with the West and developing friendly relations with Russia. Slowly Georgia rose from the devastation caused by the civil war as it sought the NATO membership and was admitted to the Council of Europe. (Lanskoy and Areshidze 2008) Georgia's move towards the Western integration angered Russia which led to an abrupt change of policy towards Georgia. Vladimir Putin, the new president of Russia, implemented a new visa regime for Georgia a move which went against the Commonwealth of Independent States' (CIS) agreement. On the other hand, it started giving out Russian passports to the inhabitants of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

The period between the 1999 and 2002, was marked with two main developments. First, the Georgian government went down the path of extreme corruption and lost public support. Second, the Russian government started overtly supporting the separatist states of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, by providing military equipment and economic assistance. Russian-Georgian tensions were rising as the occasional bombings in the surroundings of South Ossetia became more and more frequent (Ilariononov 2009).

After the Rose Revolution of 2002, the new government of Georgia under the leadership of Mikheil Saakashvili, took an openly westward course in foreign policy by voicing Georgian aspirations of joining NATO, while announcing the territorial integrity of Georgia as his number one priority. His election promise was to return Abkhazia and South Ossetia to the Georgian people. During the period of 2003 to 2008, the tensions between Russia and Georgia escalated as Georgia deepened its security relationship with the United States. The low-intensity armed conflict, with occasional exchange of fire had been regular during these years. Following Kosovo's declaration of independence in February 2008, the Russian government began independence talks with South

Ossetia and Abkhazia. In April 2008, the Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel announced that states with territorial disputes would not be able to join NATO. In response, Putin in his address to the press declared that Russia would do anything to prevent Georgia's membership to NATO (Illarionov 2009).

The controlled conflict and exchange of fire during the summer culminated in the outright confrontation between the Georgian and South Ossetian military forces on August 8, 2008 (Allison 2008). There are many versions as to who opened fire first, and which side was to blame, the discussion which is irrelevant for the purposes of this case study, but we have to emphasize that South Ossetia was receiving military and political support from Russia. Additionally, immediately after the initial confrontation, the Russia's elite paratroopers and the elements of 76th Air Assault Division were airlifted into Tskhinvali. The Russian troops went deep into Georgian territory and took Gori, some groups reached as far as the Western part of Georgia (Allison 2008). The war ended with an inevitable Georgian defeat. On August 26, 2008, Russian president Dmitry Medvedev recognized the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In his statement he defended the freedoms of the two nations, and blamed Georgia for depriving the minorities the respect they deserved (Medvedev 2008). After this address, he made Russia appear as a champion of freedom and self-determination of ethnic minorities, which was hypocritical to say the least since Russia did not recognize the independence of Kosovo. Also, we must add that the Russian president did not mention the legal arguments for intervening, which left the questions about the legitimacy of the action.

Despite Russia's influence in the region, no other member of the CIS or any of the Central Asian states closely allied to Russia, have followed suit and recognized South Ossetia (Trenin 2011). The reason of this could be the simple fear of setting a precedent. Even if these countries have historically been Russia's partners, and their governments are being supported by Russia, the Central Asian states basically consists of ethnic divisions and autonomous districts very much like that of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Internationally

recognizing the two Georgian regions in Georgia would mean giving the green light to self-determination of these groups, something that none of these states would benefit from. The only other UN member states that granted recognition to South Ossetia and Abkhazia were Venezuela, Nauru and Nicaragua, Vanuatu and Tuvalu. Close ties between Venezuela and Russia is not a secret, and shortly after the recognition, Hugo Chavez signed a \$2 billion arms deal with Russia, in addition to the trade of \$4 billion worth of Russian weapons (BBC 2009).

The recognition of the two states by Russia also brings up the issue of Kosovo. Having seemingly similar positions, and given Russia's newly assumed role as a "savior of nations," Medvedev should have been signing the recognition of Kosovo simultaneously. However, it is not as simple as it seems. The language of international law, unfortunately allows for multiple interpretations, and while the two cases seem to have a lot in common, Russia has been labeling Kosovo case a "unique" as they persistently continue to support Serbia (Borgen 2009). As the Russian Foreign Minister stated in 2009, in a way recognizing South Ossetia was a response to the international community's glorification of Kosovo, "we will not agree to legal nihilism in international affairs, with the attitude towards international law as a 'draft pole' and as the 'fate of the weak' or with any attempts to 'cut corners' to the detriment of the international legality" (Lavrov 2008).

International law however is not as clear on the issue of self-determination as it sounds. The case of Abkhazia and South Ossetia is regarded as secession, an act which is frowned upon by the international community. However, in many similar cases the secession receives widespread support and sponsored statehood. This only points to one explanation: that international law has the potential for multiple interpretations and the interpretations of the most powerful have more weight (Borgen 2009). The two aspiring states in the Southern Caucasus, have the necessary preconditions for statehood, permanent population, defined territory, effective government, and the ability to enter relations with other states, however as is the case in many similar situations, the government can be considered dependent on the influence of the

Russian Federation (Gazzini 2009). Although, the fact that East Timor's government was not self-sustaining but reliant on the UN did not present a predicament for it to achieve worldwide recognition.

In the case of South Ossetia and Abkhazia there are other factors that must be considered. We are looking at the influences of external powers, such as Washington versus Moscow and their conflicting regional interests. Some even regard the leaders of Georgia, Abkhazia, and South Ossetia as the agents of the United States and Russia. The fact that Georgia was so strategically close to Russia is considered to be the main reason for the United States continued support for the democracy in Georgia (Mullerson 2009).

Georgia had been a strategic ally for the United States since the late 1990s. The U.S. viewed Georgia as a strategic corridor to the Middle East, as well as a source of military support for its efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Georgia had become one of the key participants and supplier of troops in Afghanistan. Additionally, according to American thinkers, Georgia became a major ally in the Black Sea region for the United States, as it held a pivotal geographic location between Europe and Central Asia, and would be a strategic point for providing stability in Europe and Greater Middle East (Lynch 2006). This would explain the numerous financial packages given out by the United States, as well as sponsorship to NATO membership and support to the Saakashvili government in building a stable democracy and providing territorial integrity. After the 2008 war, the United States pledged \$1 billion in assistance for various sections of the economy, defense, and post-war reconstruction (Vershbow 2009).

Russia also has stakes in the region and Georgia's Western orientation is directly against Russian interests. First, Russia still has the Soviet military bases in Georgia, and despite Saakashvili's insistence Moscow has been dragging its feet to remove the troops. As President Putin said, Russia was humiliated by Georgian pressure to withdraw (Lynch 2006). The reason for Russian reluctance was the fact that Russia needs the opening to strategic ports in the Black Sea, particularly in Abkhazia. The main reason however for supporting the independence of Abkhazia

and South Ossetia is the increased U.S. presence in the South Caucasus. To Russia, the Caucasus is the same security system, and the developments in the Southern Caucasus affect the Russian controlled Northern Caucasus as well. For Russia, a NATO member state or the close ally of Georgia meant the weakening Russian influence of the Northern Caucasus regions (Lynch 2006).

This sort of conflict of interests has created a tough situation for the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and their statehood(s) will remain undetermined for quite some time.

## V. CONCLUSION

Do the internal variables (population, territory, government, capacity to enter relations with other states) matter for an aspiring state to achieve full legitimacy? The three case studies have demonstrated the irrelevancy of these criteria. East Timor, Kosovo, and South Ossetia do not have much in common. One is a former Portuguese colony in the Pacific, another, a former autonomous region in Serbia, and the last two - post-Soviet breakaway regions in Georgia. Their struggle for independence is not similar in any respect and neither are the regional and international factors that influence their status. The three however illustrate the nature of the international system and the role that powerful states play in granting full recognition to aspiring states.

When East Timor became part of the UN, it is questionable whether or not the criteria were satisfied. First of all, its population consisted of two ethnic groups, one of which was not as eager for self-determination as the other. Second, the territory was not stable, as borders with Indonesia were still disputed. Lastly, the island was administered by the UN and the decisions in the government were made by UN officials, excluding the Timorese Nationals. East Timor is a perfect example of UN sponsored statehood. If not for the efforts of the UN, there would not be an independent state of East Timor. Essentially, East Timor was invented by the UN, which built a state from the ruins of Indonesian occupation. The ease, by which the independence was obtained for East Timor, has to do with the fact that there was no major power involved in

the process. Unlike the other two case studies, the United States, Russia, and China had neither prior ties with East Timor or Indonesia nor any particular national interest in the region. This is why the UN was successful in obtaining full international recognition for East Timor. We can conclude that aspiring states like East Timor, which do not represent a subject of interest for major powers are very likely to gain legitimacy, even if they do not satisfy the specific criteria for statehood.

On the other hand, Kosovo, seemingly exhibits all four requirements however still has yet to receive full recognition. The UN also took over the administration of Kosovo, but it was not as successful as in East Timor. According to the model, the reason lies in the level of interest that the United States and Russia have for Kosovo. The fact that Russia has historical ties with Serbia is making the statehood of Kosovo questionable. However, the United States has had a stake in keeping the European Union (EU) conflict free, by promoting the independence of Kosovo. Keeping Serbia's territorial integrity would strengthen Russia's foothold in Eastern Europe, an outcome that would not be favorable either for EU or the United States. As a result, aspiring states that have the geopolitical location and great power ties comparable to Kosovo, have a possible chance of gaining legitimacy.

Lastly, the aspirations of statehood of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, are even more uncertain. If they become independent states, Russia will have the advantage of controlling a very important geographic corridor. However, this is unlikely to occur because the United States supports Georgia's territorial integrity for largely the same reason. The stakes are too high for both countries. Their independence alters the power structure in the region. According to the model, aspiring states that have the ability to alter the power structure as much as Abkhazia and South Ossetia are not likely to achieve full recognition.

Although the three states have aspired for independence, they have had mixed results in gaining international recognition. Unfortunately, even though there are international laws and regulations in place, they are only taken note of when they do not affect the objectives of a small number of powerful states.

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## APPENDIX

**TABLE 1: ALL UN MEMBER STATES**

State	Date of Admission to the UN	Permanent Population	Defined Territory	Government	Capacity to Enter Relations with other States
Afghanistan	1946	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Albania	1955	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Algeria	1962	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Andorra	1993	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Angola	1976	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Antigua and Barbuda	1981	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Argentina	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Armenia	1992	No	No	No	No
Australia	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Austria	1955	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Azerbaijan	1992	No	No	No	No
Bahamas	1973	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bahrain	1971	No	No	Yes	No
Bangladesh	1974	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Barbados	1966	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Belarus	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Belgium	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Belize	1981	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Benin	1960	Yes	Yes	No	No
Bhutan	1971	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Bolivia	1945	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1992	No	No	No	No
Botswana	1966	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Brazil	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Brunei	1984	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bulgaria	1955	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Burkina Faso	1960	Yes	Yes	YES	YES
Burma	1948	Yes	Yes	No	No
Burundi	1962	Yes	No	No	No
Cambodia	1955	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cameroon	1960	No	No	No	No
Canada	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cape Verde	1975	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Central African Republic	1960	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chad	1960	Yes	Yes	YES	Yes
Chile	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
China	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Colombia	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Comoros	1975	No	No	Yes	Yes

## CROSSROADS

Congo, Democratic Republic of	1960	No	No	No	No
Congo, Republic of the	1960	No	No	No	No
Costa Rica	1945	Yes	Yes	No	No
Cote d'Ivoire	1960	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Croatia	1992	No	No	No	No
Cuba	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cyprus	1960	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Czech Republic	1993	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Denmark	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Djibouti	1977	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Dominica	1978	Yes	Yes	No	No
Dominican Republic	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
East Timor	2002	No	No	No	No
Ecuador	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Egypt	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
El Salvador	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Equatorial Guinea	1968	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Eritrea	1993	Yes	No	No	No
Estonia	1991	Yes	Yes	No	No
Ethiopia	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Fiji	1970	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Finland	1955	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
France	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gabon	1960	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Gambia	1965	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Georgia	1992	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Germany	1973	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ghana	1957	No	No	Yes	Yes
Greece	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Grenada	1974	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Guatemala	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Guinea	1958	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Guinea-Bissau	1974	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Guyana	1966	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Haiti	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Honduras	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hungary	1955	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Iceland	1946	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
India	1945	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Indonesia	1950	Yes	YES	No	Yes
Iraq	1945	Yes	Yes	YES	Yes
Iran	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ireland	1955	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## CROSSROADS

Israel	1949	No	No	Yes	Yes
Italy	1955	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jamaica	1962	Yes	Yes	YES	YES
Japan	1956	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Jordan	1955	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kazakhstan	1992	No	No	Yes	Yes
Kenya	1963	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Kiribati	*1999	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Korea, North	1991	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Korea, South	1991	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kuwait	1963	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kyrgyzstan	1992	No	No	Yes	Yes
Laos	1955	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Latvia	1991	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lebanon	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lesotho	1966	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Liberia	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Libya	1955	Yes	Yes	No	No
Liechtenstein	1990	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lithuania	1991	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Luxembourg	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Macedonia	1993	Yes	No	No	No
Madagascar	1960	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Malawi	1960	Yes	Yes	No	No
Malaysia	1957	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Maldives	1965	Yes	Yes	No	No
Mali	1965	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Malta	1964	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marshall Islands	1991	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Mauritania	1961	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mauritius	1968	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mexico	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Micronesia	1991	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Moldova	1992	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Monaco	1993	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mongolia	1961	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Montenegro	2006	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Morocco	1956	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Mozambique	1975	No	Yes	No	Yes
Namibia	1990	Yes	No	Yes	YES
Nauru	1999	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nepal	1999	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Netherlands	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
New Zealand	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nicaragua	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Niger	1960	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## CROSSROADS

Nigeria	1960	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Norway	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oman	1971	Yes	Yes	No	No
Pakistan	1947	No	No	Yes	Yes
Palau	1994	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Panama	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Papua New Guinea	1975	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Paraguay	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Peru	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Phillippines	1945	Yes	Yes	No	No
Poland	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Portugal	1955	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Qatar	1971	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Romania	1955	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Russia	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rwanda	1962	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Saint Kitts and Nevis	1983	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
saint Lucia	1979	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	1980	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Samoa	1976	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
San Marino	1992	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes



Sao Tome and Principe	1975	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Saudi Arabia	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Senegal	1960	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Serbia	2000	No	No	Yes	Yes
Seychelles	1976	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sierra Leone	1961	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Singapore	1965	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Slovakia	1993	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Slovenia	1992	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Solomon Islands	1978	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Somalia	1960	Yes	No	No	No
South Africa	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
South Sudan	2011	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Spain	1955	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sri Lanka	1955	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sudan	1956	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Suriname	1975	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Swaziland	1968	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sweden	1946	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Switzerland	2002	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Syria	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tajikistan	1992	No	No	No	No

## CROSSROADS

Tanzania	1961	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Thailand	1946	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Togo	1960	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tonga	1999	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Trinidad and Tobago	1962	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tunisia	1956	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Turkey	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Turkmenistan	1992	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Tuvalu	2000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Uganda	1962	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ukraine	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
United Arab Emirates	1971	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
United Kingdom	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
United States	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Uruguay	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Uzbekistan	1992	Yes	No	No	Yes
Vanuatu	1981	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Venezuela	1945	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vietnam	1977	No	No	Yes	No
Yemen	1947	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Zambia	1964	No	Yes	No	No
Zimbabwe	1980	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

**TABLE 2: STATES ADMITTED AFTER 1991**

State	Date of Admission to the UN	Permanent Population	Defined Territory	Government	Capacity to Enter Relations with other States
Andorra	1993	82,000	<u>Not contested</u>	<u>Not autonomous</u> - Ruled by the Spanish Bishop and the French President	<u>Yes</u> - as defined by 1963 Vienna convention for Diplomatic Relations
Armenia	1992	<u>Not defined</u> - Large Part lives in the contested region	<u>Contested</u> - conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh	<u>Illegitimate</u> - falsified elections in 1991, unpopular among citizens	<u>No</u> -Closed borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan due to Nagorno-Karabakh conflict
Azerbaijan	1992	<u>Not Defined</u> - Problems with minority in the contested Nagorno-Karabakh	<u>Contested</u> - Conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh	<u>Unstable leadership</u> during the Karabakh war. President elected <u>after</u> the admission in 1993	<u>No</u> - Closed borders with Armenia after the Karabakh war
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1992	<u>Not Defined</u> - Conflict between Muslim Bosniaks Orthodox Serbs Catholic Croats	<u>Contested</u> - Conflicted borders with Serbia and Croatia	<u>Unstable leadership</u> : Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian political parties all vying for leadership.	<u>No</u> - Ethnic conflict between Bosniaks Serbs and Croats. War with Croatia

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Croatia	1992	<u>Not Defined</u> - Conflict between Serbs and Croats	<u>Contested</u> - Conflicted borders with Bosnia and Serbia	<u>Unstable Leadership</u> - Elections held after recognition	<u>No</u> - War with Bosnia and Herzegovina
Czech Republic	1993	<u>Defined</u> - 10 million Czechs	<u>Uncontested</u> - Peaceful division of Czech and Slovak lands in 1992	<u>Stable</u> - Democratic Elections held in 1992	<u>Yes</u> - Kept multiple treaties of Czechoslovakia
East Timor	2002	<u>Not Defined</u> - two ethnic groups mixed between East Timor and Indonesia	<u>Contested</u> - Territorial disputes with Indonesia	<u>Not Autonomous</u> - Administration taken over by UN	<u>No</u> - Conflict with Indonesia
Eritrea	1993	<u>Not Defined</u> - heterogeneous Tygrinia and Tigre people	<u>Contested</u> - Territorial disputes with Yemen	<u>Unstable Leadership</u> - Constitution adopted and elections held after the admission in 1997	<u>No</u> - conflict Ethiopia and neighboring countries
Estonia	1991	<u>Not Defined</u> - 25 % Russian, that identified themselves as Russian	<u>Not contested</u>	<u>Unstable Leadership</u> - constitution adopted after the admission in 1993	<u>Yes</u> - established ties with EU in 1994
Georgia	1992	<u>Defined</u> - 5 million Georgians	<u>Contested</u> - Territorial Disputes over Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Adjara	<u>Unstable Leadership</u> - Constitution adopted after admission in 1995. Admitted in the middle of the civil war between two competing government forces	<u>No</u> - Strained relations with Russia

Kazakhstan	1992	<u>Undefined</u> - 16 million, 13 Ethnic groups	<u>Undefined borders</u> with Russia, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan until 2005	<u>Stable Leadership</u> - President -former leader of the Communist party.	<u>Yes</u> - Stable diplomatic relations with other states
Korea, North	1991	Defined	Not contested	Stable Leadership	yes
Korea, South	1991	Defined	Not contested	Stable Leadership	yes
Kyrgyzstan	1992	<u>Not Defined</u> - ethnic Kyrgyzs constitute only 22%	<u>Undefined borders</u> with Russia Kazakhstan and China	<u>Stable Leadership</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Lithuania	1991	<u>Defined</u>	<u>Uncontested</u> - Former soviet borders	<u>Unstable Leadership</u> -The Communist leadership had resigned.	<u>Yes</u> - Solidarity from other European states, Sought EU membership
Macedonia	1993	<u>Undefined</u> -two ethnic groups Macedonians and Albanians	<u>Contested</u> - Disputes with Albania, changes made after the admission	<u>Unstable Leadership</u> - Political instability in 1993, severe confrontations between major party leaders	<u>No</u> - Border disputes with Albania

## CROSSROADS

<b>Marshall Islands</b>	1991	<u>Defined</u>	<u>Contested</u> - Territorial claims on other islands	<u>Not Autonomous</u> - stable government, sponsored by U.S.	<u>Yes</u> - Under United States Protectorate
<b>Micronesia</b>	1991	<u>Defined</u>	<u>Undefined Borders</u> - Marshall Islands and Palau left the federation.	<u>Not Autonomous</u> - US administered trusteeship	<u>Yes</u> - United States protectorate
<b>Monaco</b>	1993	<u>Defined</u>	<u>Uncontested</u>	<u>Stable Leadership</u>	<u>Yes</u>
<b>Moldova</b>	1992	<u>Undefined</u> - Ukrainians, Russians, Moldovans	<u>Contested</u> - De Facto breakaway region of Transnistria	<u>Unstable Leadership</u> Popular Front and Communist Party. Elections held after admission in 1994	<u>Yes</u> - Sought European Integration
<b>Montenegro</b>	2006	<u>Undefined</u> - 30 % Serbs identifying with Serbia	<u>Uncontested</u>	<u>Stable Leadership</u>	<u>Geared towards European Integration</u>
<b>Nauru</b>	1999	<u>Defined</u>	<u>Uncontested</u>	<u>Stable Leadership</u> - Independent government since 1968	<u>Yes</u> - close ties with Australia and Japan
<b>Nepal</b>	1999	<u>Defined</u>	<u>Uncontested</u>	<u>Stable Leadership</u>	<u>Yes</u>

Palau	1994	<u>Defined</u>	<u>Uncontested</u>	<u>Not Autonomous</u> - UN trusteeship	<u>Yes</u> - Close ties with US
Latvia	1991	<u>Undefined</u> - Latvians 70% and Russians 20%. Discrepancy over the extension of Citizenship	<u>Uncontested</u>	<u>Unstable Leadership</u> - Elections held after the admission in 1994	<u>Yes</u> - Sought EU membership
San Marino	1992	<u>Defined</u>	<u>Uncontested</u>	<u>Stable Leadership</u>	<u>Yes</u>
Serbia	2000	<u>Undefined</u> - Kosovar Albanian issue	<u>Undefined Borders</u> Kosovo	<u>Unstable Leadership</u> -Tense political climate after the removal of Milosevic from power	<u>No</u> - Geared towards European Integration but there was opposition from nationalists
Slovakia	1993	<u>Defined</u>	<u>Uncontested</u> - Peaceful division of Czech and Slovak lands in 1992	<u>Stable Leadership</u> - Democratic Elections held in 1992	<u>Yes</u> - Agreed to keep all the treaties that Czechoslovakia had signed
Slovenia	1992	<u>Defined</u>	<u>Contested</u> - Border issues with Croatia up until 2009	<u>Stable Leadership</u> - Elections held in 1992	<u>Yes</u> - Geared towards European Integration
South Sudan	2011	Defined	Uncontested	Stable Leadership	Yes

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<b>Tajikistan</b>	1992	<u>Undefined</u> - Ethnic groups from Garm region protested independence	<u>Contested</u> - border dispute with Uzbekistan	<u>Unstable Leadership</u> - Civil war in 1991 which lasted until 1997. Election was held after the admission in 1994	<u>No</u> - hostilities with Russia and Uzbekistan
<b>Tonga</b>	1999	<u>Defined</u>	<u>Uncontested</u>	<u>Stable Leadership</u> - Commonwealth nation with stable constitutional monarchy	<u>Yes</u> - British Influence
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	1992	<u>Undefined</u> - Turkmen, Uzbeks and Russians	<u>Contested</u> - Border discrepancies with Uzbekistan	<u>Stable Leadership</u> - Former leader of soviet republic became the president	<u>Yes</u> - Joined CIS right after dissolution of Soviet Union
<b>Tuvalu</b>	2000	<u>Defined</u>	<u>Uncontested</u>	<u>Stable Leadership</u>	<u>Yes</u> - Close ties with Fiji, New Zealand, Australia, and Britain
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	1992	<u>Defined</u>	<u>Undefined Borders</u> - discrepancies with Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan	<u>Unstable Leadership</u> - First election after the admission in 1994	<u>Yes</u> - Joined CIS right after dissolution of Soviet Union 1991



**TABLE 3: THE MODEL FOR RECOGNITION**

<b>State</b>	<b>Level of interest of the global powers</b>	<b>The likelihood of the states being recognized</b>
East Timor	Low	Very Likely
Kosovo	Medium	Possible
Abkhazia and South Ossetia	High	Unlikely

# THE DRAGON'S PEARL

COURTNEY LUK

*ENGLISH WITH A CONCENTRATION IN CREATIVE WRITING*

## PROLOGUE

Its shimmer reflected the red and yellow blaze of heat, the warmth of destruction. Pink turned into gray and drifted as dust. Magma bled into newly formed cracks, splitting roundness into jagged edges. It threatened to be shattered, broken and irretrievable. Its once pure form became tarnished from glowering intensity. The scent of ash buried the gemstone that was destined to be cradled in relentless arms and banished from light. While it loosened its grasp on existence and caved into its own hollow body, the delicate pearl was licked by the flames of immortality.

## CHAPTER 1

Mei stepped into the coffeehouse, letting the door close with a chime behind her. She knew he would arrive shortly. After ordering a white hot chocolate, she took a seat at a small table in the back corner. Here, she was able to see the front door from a distance. She sipped at her drink and set up her laptop. A man in an overcoat walked in. A young woman rushed out. Mei glanced at her watch. It was almost half past three. He would be here at any minute. She took another sip and opened a document. Mei typed a few meaningless words and looked at the door again when she heard the chime. Two teenage girls opened the door, while giggling about some boy that just ambled by them. Mei took another sip and swished the hot drink. She heard the chime again. He had arrived right on time.

His slick, raven-colored hair fell just above his eyes and reached down to the base of his neck. It poked out on the left and was softly spiked upwards. He was neither lanky nor built. His slightly haggard face was the center of attention, but more specifically his eyes. They neither resembled chocolate nor coffee, neither light nor dark. They were of great depth, almost searching for a deeper meaning in

every person he noticed. His eyes fixed on Mei, recognizing her from the days before. She gasped quietly, huddled over her laptop, frantically banged away on her keyboard, and gulped her hot chocolate. Within minutes, she felt a presence hovering behind her.

"You were here yesterday, too," he commented with a slight smirk adorning his face.

Mei searched her mind for an excuse. "Well, yeah. I'm writing my report. I work better over here I guess."

"Let me clarify. You have been here every day for the past week. That must be a long report."

She waved her hands, gesturing to make light of the accusation. "Well, no. I mean yes. It is a rather long paper."

He turned to sit elsewhere, coffee in hand. "Oh, well good luck with that."

"Would you like to sit down?" Mei instinctively offered.

He raised his eyebrows questioningly. "Sure, I suppose." He pulled out the chair across from her.

"I'm Mei," she said with a smile.

"Gong."

"So, you come here every day?" Mei asked nonchalantly. "I haven't noticed you before."

He stared at her quizzically. "I'm not sure about that. You stare at me every time I walk in, like you're waiting for me or something. I just pretend not to notice. Besides, you wouldn't have asked that question if you hadn't already known the answer."

Mei was at a loss for words. She shook her head, trying not to seem embarrassed. This situation was worse than a child getting caught stealing; this involved emotional turmoil and possible ridicule. "I'm sorry, I don't think I've seen you before. I'm usually lost in thought. I tend to do that, you know."

"Of course," he replied. After a pause, he continued, "So, how's that essay going? Or have you just been waiting for me?"

She laughed at his comment, but his expression was serious. "Well, I kind of want to crawl in a hole and die," she mumbled incoherently. "My essay's okay. It's about E.T.A. Hoffmann<sup>1</sup>. Are you

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<sup>1</sup> E.T.A. Hoffmann was a Romantic author in Germany with famous works, such as "The Sandman" and *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King*. A signature feature in his works was the

familiar with him?"

Gong nodded as he sipped his coffee. "Yes, his work is rather intriguing, don't you think?"

Mei grinned at her successful conversation changer. "Of course. Do you go to Vails Gate<sup>2</sup>?"

"No, it's not my forte."

"Oh, well are you working?"

"I'm an artist. Painting mostly."

"That's really cool. What do you like to paint?"

"Scenery, not many people."

"Oh, I would love to see some of your work."

"Yeah, well that makes one of you," he muttered.

"What?"

Gong gestured towards the door. "Nothing, I should probably be going."

Mei nodded in reply. "All right, it was nice meeting you, Gong."

He rose from his seat and pushed the chair in. "Same to you. Maybe I'll see you again tomorrow if you're still not finished with that paper." The smirk on his face showed that he was kidding for the first time in the conversation.

Mei's face lit up at his demeanor. "Yeah, we'll see. It's a pretty long essay."

"I'm sure it is," he said as he headed for the exit.

Mei let out a sigh of frustration. She closed her eyes and chugged the rest of her hot chocolate, which was now sickeningly cold. Ecstatic that he noticed her but annoyed that he recognized her, she tucked her laptop into her messenger bag and strolled towards her dorm at Vails Gate University. How could she be so obvious? At least Gong did not completely humiliate her. He was peculiar, blunt if anything. He was obviously observant, his artistic nature showing. The uncertainty of whether or not he was friendly or simply studying her lingered in Mei's head. Maybe he did want to see her again; or, maybe he was trying to see if she was the stalker type. She sighed again. He was definitely more

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surprise, twist(ed) ending. As seen in "Councillor Krespel," the real world and dreams possibly fuse together, creating a confusion of what is reality. This idea is reflected throughout my story.

<sup>2</sup> Vails Gate University, an apocryphal college

mysterious than she, as his intentions were unknown.

\*

Gong sat up on his bed and leaned against his headboard. With a deep breath, he closed his eyes slowly. It was the dreams<sup>3</sup> again. He had been experiencing them for three months now. They were not recurring dreams; these dreams were different. The intensifying story continued every night and jostled him awake during the wee hours. Gong ran his hands through his hair. The dreams were becoming more lucid. They resembled a sort of search, a quest for something valuable. All Gong could remember from the first dream was brightness, abstract visions masked with brilliant colors of mostly reds, oranges, and yellows. Then all of a sudden, the image turned dark, grays and blacks. At that moment, Gong awoke, sweating as if he had been in an inferno. When he rose from his bed and stumbled to the thermostat, he realized the heat was on full blast. He turned it down, thinking nothing of it. The next few dreams involved various colors, blues and gold, greens and reds all bleeding into one another. In the midst of shades, there were two distinguishable forms, one snake-like and the other bird-like. The figures were at odds with one another, clashing talons with gripping claws. Gong figured it was his subconscious expressing his inner turmoil as an artist. But now, the snake-like creature was in search of something.

Gong peeked at the clock by his bed. 4:56am. Merely illuminated by bars and convenience stores, the city was still dark and the dry October wind knocked on his window. He wandered into his studio and flipped on the light. His favorite paintings, each etched with his signature, "L. G. Long," decorated the walls. Waterfalls flowed into lakes, which trickled into puddles, soon to be stolen by the blazing sun. Autumn trees shaded wooded terrain, keeping secrets within. Arctic hills reflected untouched snow glistening in the moonlight, accentuating eternal abandonment. However, these images<sup>4</sup> were overshadowed by Gong's current paintings, occupying the middle of the room. These were parts of a single painting series based on his dreams. The canvases followed his nightly tales; he started with warm colors and gracefully

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<sup>3</sup> The dream state, a part of the imagination, is an aspect in Romantic literature. Imagination was considered the "creative power" that allowed individuals to fuse "reason and feeling" and distinguished reality and nature (Melani).

<sup>4</sup> Romantics were heavily concerned with the beauty of nature and the tranquility of the "organic" oasis (Melani).

## CROSSROADS

added the cool ones he dreamt.

Gong scrutinized each painting and picked up his paintbrush. He closed his eyes once again, struggling to recall an exact image from his dream. He opened a jar of paint and dipped his brush. He flicked the blood red color onto his latest painting. He watched some drip slightly, mixing with the golden fiery color that he had come to appreciate.

\*

Mei quickly threw on her ivory cashmere scarf and pulled up her black ankle boots over blue jeans. Her soft midnight locks were curled at her shoulders and fluttered over her black peacoat. A hint of blush on her cheeks brought color to her fair complexion. Her eyelids were dusted with a light taupe to match her eyes. A gold necklace that spelled out “Fung” rested below her collar bone. After one last glance in the mirror, Mei grabbed her keys and cell phone and left her dorm room. She had been itching to go back to the coffeehouse for the past three days, but she had rejected the temptation. Instead, she had focused on her classes and the never-ending pile of homework that grew larger every day. Her roommate’s insistent interrogations about Gong had begun to irritate Mei as well. After a few days, Mei had supposed it was okay for them to run into each other again, meticulously planned on her part of course.

As she approached the street corner closest to the coffeehouse, Mei scanned the sea of pedestrians for Gong. There was no sign of him, but she was a couple of minutes early anyway. She slowly walked into the building and looked dejectedly at the line, or lack thereof. She advanced to the cashier and ordered a white hot chocolate, tapping her foot nervously. Mei checked the time on her phone and stuffed it back into her coat pocket. He would be here soon.

“A white hot chocolate,” the cashier with an obnoxious grin said in a perky tone as she held out the drink to Mei.

“Thanks,” Mei replied, dropping two quarters into the tip jar.

She walked to the condiments stand and picked up a stirring stick. Diligently, she stirred the hot chocolate, blending the flavors and buying time. She heard the chime; like clockwork, he had arrived. Mei felt his eyes on her and, in mere moments, his presence.

“Hello, again,” he said.

Mei turned around with a smile, trying not to look so eager. “Hey, what’s up?”

He stared at her intensely. “I’m just getting my coffee like I

always do. You haven't been here for a few days."

She shrugged her shoulders. "Finished my report. How have you been?"

"Fine. You don't have your laptop with you."

"I just stopped by for some hot chocolate. Can't live without it for long, you know?" Mei felt uneasy under his harsh gaze and accusations.

"You knew I was coming here at this time."

She looked down at her drink, still stirring. "I'm free at this time. I'm in between classes."

He dismissed the obvious and smirked at her. "So I guess I'll see you tomorrow, too."

She chuckled. "Possibly. How's your artwork coming along?"

He furrowed his eyebrows. "It's been three days."

"Right. I would love to see it sometime. Do you have pictures or anything?"

Gong motioned for her to sit down at the nearest table. Mei leisurely pulled out a chair in an attempt to conceal her enthusiasm but only succeeded slightly, as she could not hold back a tiny grin. As they both sat down across from each other, they sipped their drinks in unison. He smiled warmly at her and she preserved that vision in her memory. The curvature of his lips and the squinting of his eyes made their way into her mind as they settled into a permanent home. He took his phone from his black jacket pocket and pressed some buttons. "My phone is quite old, so the pictures are not that good."

"I bet the paintings are great, though. You're probably really good at capturing scenes and landscapes," Mei remarked.

He handed her his phone. She flipped through photos of his work, including the ones on his studio's walls. He waited for commentary. Mei looked up at him, his exquisite face causing her to hesitate. She scrounged her brain for some intellectual comments. "They're beautiful. They really portray the scene, but at the same time, have a mysterious quality." It did not work out like she had hoped.

Gong nodded. "You're not much of a critic, huh? But, yes, that's what I'm going for. Things are never what they seem to be, you know?"

"Yeah, thanks for letting me see them," Mei said as she returned his phone.

"You're welcome. You seemed interested, so I might as well

show them to the only person who wants to see them.”

She raised an eyebrow. “No, I can’t be the only one who’s interested. I bet you have a lot of people buying your work.”

“No, not really. I’m the epitome of the classic starving artist, but I do live in an apartment. So I guess I’m one step above that.”

Mei laughed. “I would buy that waterfall picture. That’s more water than we’ve seen in months. But even in your picture, it’s almost non-existent.”

“Funny thing is that I did it before the drought. I’ve been working on a series lately.” Gong fidgeted with his cup of coffee. For once, he was the nervous one.

“That’s great. What’s it about?”

“Just these weird dreams I’ve been having. Too much coffee I guess,” he suggested, waving his cup towards her.

“What kind of dreams?” Mei pried.

“I don’t know. Nothing exciting.”

“Oh, well then keep drinking coffee for that burst of inspiration.”

“Yeah, do you want to join me for dinner tomorrow night?”

Mei stared at him in both shock and confusion. She should not have been so surprised; he had been pretty straightforward during their previous conversation. His sudden, more than thrilling, invitation only topped his anxious behavior, which only intrigued her further. She was unsure if she was caught up in his piercing gaze or his artistic enthusiasm, but she just had to find out. She needed to be with him, spend time outside of the tiny coffeehouse. Once Mei realized that she had been drifting into her own thoughts, she jumped in her chair. “Oh, yeah, of course,” she answered.

“Great, I’ll meet you by the dorms around six,” he said, preparing to leave.

She looked at him confused. Then her expression morphed into one of delight. “Sure, see you then.”

Leaving Mei with his phone number written on a napkin, Gong nodded and ambled out of the coffeehouse. She swirled her hot chocolate and tapped her fingers on the table. She wondered what her roommate would think of her situation now. Mei could almost hear her high-pitched squeals of delight overflowing with excitement and her constant orders to call him. However, she was unsure if she was excited or nervous, probably both. His physical features dominated her interest more than



anything else; his persona entangled her thoughts, making her dizzy. While she wanted to keep seeing him, she did not have any reasons as to why she wanted to see him. Maybe not to anyone else her age, but to her this was frightening to the core. Nevertheless, she just had to know what Gong was thinking and how he thought it. And more than she would have liked, he took control of her mind, always demanding to be the subject of utmost attention. He stole her away from everything else with feather light kisses.

## CHAPTER 2

Gong buried his face into his pillow and groaned. Restlessly tossing and turning, he had not managed to fall asleep for the past two hours. Thoughts of Mei fluttered through his mind, delaying the inevitable dream that he knew would be more relentless than the night before. It was either one or the other with him lately. He often questioned his feelings for Mei, mostly considering her to be “just another girl.” On the contrary, upon seeing her today, he could not help but want to see her in a place other than the coffeehouse. Then again, when he asked her to dinner, he regretted it immediately, which confused him. Did he dislike her, find her creepy and bizarre? Or was she beautifully whimsical? The weirdest part about her was that she was incredibly interested in him, as if he was some kind of world-changing man. He knew he consumed her thoughts. She was nothing but obvious in her feelings. Forcing these notions away, Gong slammed his eyes shut, choosing the savage dream over Mei. He prepared his mind for the onslaught of vivid imagination that insisted on torturing him.

\*

The gorgeous creature stretched its wings, which spanned about fifteen feet. It lit up its surroundings with its various colors, each more vibrant than the next. Reds hugged greens, blues kissed oranges, and yellows danced with violets. Her feathers were more than beautiful, entrapping the eyes of every creature that even dared to give her a fleeting glance. However, she was more than just that. The phoenix<sup>5</sup> held ultimate control over fire, giving her the responsibility of warming the

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<sup>5</sup> Mark Schumacher mentions in his description of the Chinese Phoenix mythology that the female deity represents “justice, obedience, fidelity,” virtue, and peace. She also symbolizes fire and the sun, the counterpart of the dragon.

## CROSSROADS

heavens in which she lived. With a flap of her wings, she could change winter into summer; with a shake of her feathers, she could cause volcanoes to erupt. Inevitably, the volcanic region became her home. She would fall asleep alone in her bed of flames and wake up the same way. No other creature could withstand the conditions that she fostered.

The phoenix craned her neck to watch over the horizon. He had been on his search since he had lost the pearl. She had been moderating the sun's intensity to keep the drought at bay, but she needed him.

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Displaying his radiant golden scales, the snake-like creature flew through the cerulean sky. Reds, blues, and greens laced his body and ended at the tip of his tail. He was a magnificent creature, stretching at least twenty feet long. The snake body gave way to four vicious claws and a daunting scowl. His tongue hung out from in between his pointed teeth. Two whiskers whipped in the gentle wind. The dragon<sup>6</sup>, clearly in distress, scouted the area with explicit direction. His beady eyes darted left to right. He needed something, just had to have it now.

The dragon's power over the waters was three months ago, when his pearl<sup>7</sup> was stolen by the winds. He had held the pearl close to himself for centuries; suddenly, fate took it away. What did it mean? He was the only one who could complete his task, and now, he was nothing. His world suffered due to the lack of rainfall. Soil sucked up any droplets of water that blessed it. Most creatures used the diminishing ocean as an oasis. The air grew warmer, dryer, begging for rain; even a few drops would suffice.

The dragon soared through the cloudless sky and dove into valleys as he approached. As he raced towards the volcanic dwelling of his enemy, he started to hesitate, knowing that he could not go much further. He felt the heat on his face and the fervent dryness breathing down his throat. The dragon flew up to the tallest mountain and peered

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<sup>6</sup> According to John P. Painter, the dragon, as noted in Chinese mythology, is a masculine symbol for "ultimate abundance, prosperity, and good fortune." He also represents great power and success. This benign creature can control the waters, such as the oceans and rainfall. He can dwell in the seas or mountainous regions in the heavens (Painter).

<sup>7</sup> Painter also notes that the dragon's pearl is typically pictured under the dragon's chin or in the air and pursued by one or two dragons. It is usually a spherical shape with jagged flames rising from its surface. The pearl represents wisdom, truth, life, and immortality. It is also the source of the dragon's power.

over the summit, where he was then able to look over the inaccessible land with suspicion. It was the only place he had left to search and he knew that was where he needed to go. His jewel was in captivity, detained by the phoenix. The dragon's teeth matched his sharp claws under the raging sunlight; then sensing his unforgiving gaze, she lifted her head. The phoenix remained still, unsure if she should depart. She wanted to help him, but he was angry, ready to attack at any moment. With that in mind, the bird spread her wings and rose into the air.

He dove for her, colliding with her delicate but unyielding body. His snake-like scales brushed her right wing as he charged as fast as he could, making sure he could escape in nearly no time at all. Hissing and casting his eyes on her again, he swiftly retreated to the mountaintop. As soon as she recovered from his attack, she looked back at him so intently as if she was attempting to send him a message through her eyes. She wanted to reason with him, tell him that she was not against him, for the phoenix knew that they were lifelong partners<sup>8</sup>. The heavens needed him for water and her for warmth. Their opposite principles did not faze her, and she wanted him to know that. However, as he kept his vicious glower, she knew that he did not consider her plea.

## CHAPTER 3

Mei gracefully brushed back the lock of hair that drooped in front of her eye. She could see Gong's uncomfortable expression, which still managed to grace his face as the candlelight flickered from side to side. Nervously, she picked at her angel hair pasta with her fork, forgetting her spoon. Immersed in thought, Gong barely touched his shrimp scampi but was not bothered by the silence between them. Mei, however, was struggling to find something, anything, that would strike up a conversation. She had already brought up his new art series, her midterms, and her roommate's crazy weekend at a sorority house. He hardly responded to any of these topics, only providing minimal commentary. Even if he showed little interest in anything she had to say, she still did not want to leave. She wanted to prolong this night for as

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<sup>8</sup> The dragon and the phoenix symbolize the yin and yang idea of harmony. The two opposing entities form a bond that can create conflict or peace. They are seen "as mortal enemies or as blissful lovers," allowing them to be conventional representations of a husband and a wife (Schumacher).

long as possible, eternity if she had the choice. The waitress had asked how they were doing about four times already and every time, Mei answered, "Good, thank you." She even had to refuse two boxes for their leftovers the last time their waitress visited them.

Finally, Gong spoke up with a sigh. "I'm sorry, Mei. I'm just a bit distracted."

A hint of a smile garnished her lips. "It's okay. What are you thinking about?"

"My dreams again. Nothing to worry about."

She raised an eyebrow at his nonchalant statement. "Are you sure? You seem bothered. What are they about?"

"I'm not really sure. They kind of continue every night from where they left off the night before. It's really weird."

"Oh, well maybe there's some kind of explanation for them. Maybe they're trying to tell you something," she joked, waving her fingers in his direction.

He gave her his signature smirk. "Yeah, maybe, like I should become a dragon or something."

"What?"

"My dreams involve the dragon and phoenix from the Chinese myths. It's pretty crazy."

She jumped in her chair and tossed her hands up eagerly. "I remember those. That must be pretty interesting then! You know, my name is Wong Mei Fung<sup>9</sup>."

He laughed at her sudden excitement. "I know. I saw your necklace. Mine is Lee Gong Long<sup>10</sup>."

Mei mirrored his half smile. "Maybe you're dreaming about me," she said as she took a sip of her water.

Gong's grin dropped into a slight frown. His eyebrows furrowed, showing his perplexed reaction. "No, I don't think so." He motioned for the check to their waitress, who was eyeing their table like a hawk for the past twenty minutes.

Within seconds, the waitress brought them the check and Gong slipped thirty dollars into the black cushioned envelope. "Have a good

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<sup>9</sup> A traditional Chinese name starts with the person's surname, followed by his/her first and middle names. Mei's name means "Beautiful Phoenix."

<sup>10</sup> Gong's name means "Powerful Dragon."

night," the waitress said.

Gong led Mei outside and started walking to the university. Mei just about had to jog in order to keep up with him. "Gong, what's wrong? Did I say something?" she inquired frantically. "I didn't mean anything by it!"

Without turning back to look at her or to make sure that she was keeping up, he replied, "It's okay."

Ten silent minutes later, they arrived at the residential part of campus. Mei followed behind him, panting and holding her side. Gong watched her as she caught her breath. "I hope you had a good time tonight," he mumbled.

She mustered a grin. "Of course, you?"

"We shouldn't do this again, okay? Don't question it or follow me at the coffeehouse. Just let me be, okay?"

Mei gazed at him, confused at his stinging words but growing lost in his eyes. They complemented the color of his hair, the sheen that it possessed every time the wind blew. His perfectly angular cheekbones emphasized his thin lips. But her greedy eyes only drew back to those two spheres that stared back at her, trying to make her disappear. "Why?" she stuttered.

Gong took half a step away from her. "I told you not to question it. It's just not a good idea, okay? Please, just let it go," he said as he sauntered further away, his back facing Mei.

He did not look back once; she could not take her eyes off of his vanishing figure until he was clearly gone, intent on not returning. Mei brushed hair away from her eyes, making room for the stream of tears that she knew would make their way down her tinted cheeks. She felt bewildered and caught off guard. Dinner was not completely awful; she had tried to not be rude and had been careful about what she ordered. She tried her best to keep the conversation moving, being sure to include both of their interests. She did not think she was boring; maybe she had tried too hard. Guilty, she could not even apologize if she offended him or was the cause of the incident. She stood motionless in the cool, dry night. Stars illuminated the pathway before her. In a few moments, she stepped on the path towards home.

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Gong held his phone, contemplating whether or not to call Mei. He had done this a dozen times over the past week. He sat on his bed,

## CROSSROADS

wondering what she was doing at this very minute. Was she studying or pounding away at the keys? Was she replaying the recent events and conversations until she memorized every minute detail? Surprisingly, she had not called him since their night out, for she struck him as the type who would call exactly eighteen hours later, prying for some kind of explanation for his sudden anger. For once, he took the time to think things through and realized that maybe calling her was the best thing to do. He wanted to be a gentleman about it at least. Then again, would she matter to him in a month and what did she even mean to him? But more importantly, why was he as equally enthralled with her as she was with him?

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Mei swished her white hot chocolate while she sat impatiently at the table in the back corner of the coffeehouse. She was anxiously waiting for him again. This time, he called her the day before and asked her to meet with him at the coffeehouse at the usual time, a few minutes past 3:30. She was so nervous that she hardly slept that night yet ecstatic to meet him once again. Tossing and turning, she conjured up various scenarios of how their meeting would play out. In one vision, Gong apologized profusely and begged her for another chance. He swept her off her feet and never let go of her hand. In another, they just sat across from one another, gazing into each other's eyes, entranced by the other person's presence. In a third, he whisked her away, where they would experience adventure and endless possibilities, never once being separated.

Gong entered the building and automatically zeroed in on her figure huddled over hot chocolate. He approached her table and took the chair across from her, just like she had imagined. "Hey," he said casually.

Mei searched his eyes for emotion, finding concern and apprehension. "Hey," she answered.

"Thanks for coming down here today. You didn't have to after I just left you there last week."

She brushed a lock from across her eye. "No problem. What's up?"

He fidgeted with his fingers and tugged at his sleeve's cuff. "I still have those dreams. You know, the ones I told you about earlier? You're the only person I told and maybe you're the only one who can help me figure them out. I feel like I should know or at least have an inkling of

what my mind is telling me, but the visions seem so vague. Maybe I just don't remember them right by the time I wake up, but I'm not sure."

Mei stared at him quizzically. She knew that his dreams intrigued him, perhaps bothered him a bit, but not so much that he felt the need to confide in her. She was hesitant in her response to his uncertain ramblings. "Well, tell me everything that goes on. Maybe I can interpret them for you."

He smiled at her gratefully. "There's the dragon and the phoenix like I mentioned. The dragon lost his pearl and he's upset at the phoenix, as if she was the cause of all this. It sounds strange, but the winds<sup>11</sup> took it from him. Still, I think that the phoenix might have it."

"Does she know that she has it and is just hiding it from him?"

"I'm not sure."

"Why would she take it anyway? It's not like she can use it, you know?"

"Yeah, that's what I don't understand. He can't control the ocean or provide rain. How could he suddenly lose it?"

"I have no idea. Maybe you lost something and you're searching for it."

Gong juggled with the idea. "You think? I don't know." He folded his cuff and then unfolded it. "It's really weird. The creatures in my dreams, besides the dragon and phoenix, are suffering without water, but no one can find the pearl. No one is looking for it. The animals just flock to the ocean."

Mei folded her arms. "I don't know. Maybe you don't like the drought<sup>12</sup> that we're in. Don't worry. It'll rain eventually."

Gong stared at her. "Only if my dreams tell it to."

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Staring into her bright computer screen, Mei tapped her fingers on the desk in front of her and reached for the half-empty container of Tylenol that was quickly diminishing over the past several days. She had been trying to type up another essay, but thoughts of Gong kept her mind occupied. She popped a pill into her mouth and chased it down with

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<sup>11</sup> For this story, wind represents fate. It is destiny that the dragon loses his pearl in this way.

<sup>12</sup> Vails Gate has been experiencing a drought for the past three months. This parallels the drought in Gong's dream and is one of the significant aspects tying these two realms together.

water. Out of all the guys in Vails Gate, she had to be interested in the one who can manipulate the weather<sup>13</sup>, or at least thinks he can. Gong kept her intrigued since she first saw him because she wanted to find the deeper meaning that she strongly thought he possessed. Now, he confided in her and he was, in her point of view, kind of nuts. Mei wished she had not just walked out after their argument, their semi-loud debate over his presumed powers.

With that in her mind, her phone buzzed on the tabletop and twitched every few seconds, rotating almost 360 degrees. Gong's name was displayed above his phone number. Her heart pounded in her chest; at that moment, he was perfectly mysterious again. He was the epitome of beauty and the object of her fascination. Within a mere second, she flipped open her phone and held it to her ear. "Hello?"

"Hey, Mei. I just wanted to apologize for yesterday at the coffeehouse. I guess I scared you away talking about my dreams," Gong said, trying to make light of the situation with a slight chuckle.

Mei's expression contorted into one of perplexity at his unexpected apologetic demeanor. "Yeah, it's just weird that you think you can control the weather or something."

"I don't think I can control the weather. I think that I can see the source of the drought. Maybe there's a connection between the dragon and our lack of rain."

"I'm not sure," Mei replied hesitantly, wondering how to steer the conversation towards something else.

As if reading her mind, Gong said, "Anyway, I want to make it up to you. Do you still want to see my artwork? I can come get you and we can swing by my apartment. You can see the studio. Are you still interested?"

Again, she was at a loss for words. While she wanted so much to go and take him up on his offer, she could not push aside his interpretation of his dreams. She was uncertain if she should take him seriously. Maybe he could not find an explanation, so he decided to somehow connect them to real life in his own way. Still pondering on his delusions, she gave in to her desire and agreed to visit him that evening.

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<sup>13</sup> This is an example of the Romantic notion of the supernatural taking place in the natural world.



The fifteen minute walk from the university to Gong's apartment was surprisingly not completely silent. Mei had been afraid to strike up a random conversation with him, fearing that she would somehow offend him. Instead, he started asking her about her classes and literature studies. They discussed the pile of work that still remained waist-high even though she finished essay after essay, her roommate's constant drama-filled social life, and her mother's insistent calls to make sure that she is concentrating on her schoolwork and eating properly. Mei enjoyed the change of pace and just as easily forgave him for his previous faults.

They climbed the three flights of stairs leading to Gong's home. Holding her hand, he led Mei inside. Cream colored walls were decorated with several paintings, furniture was properly aligned against the walls, and the carpet was clear of lint. Clothes hung on hangers in closets and the dishes were stacked in cabinets. His small apartment felt homey, a feeling that she missed more than she thought. He lit a candle on the rounded kitchen table, wafting the aroma of jasmine throughout the rooms. He brought her into his studio, which was adjacent to the kitchen. "So this is it," he said.

Surveying the numerous paintings that acted as wallpaper, Mei noted his signature on the bottom right of each one. She marveled at graying docks and receding waves, relished in deserted beaches, and savored lush pastures. She scrutinized the images that were placed on easels taking up the center of the room. Then she recognized the abstract colors and knew it was his latest series, his rendition of his own dreams. Ignoring these paintings, she turned to him. "These are gorgeous, Gong. You're really talented."

He smiled and pointed to his walls. "Thank you. These are only my favorites up here."

She tucked in that stubborn lock of hair that fell in front of her face. "Thanks for showing me. They're really beautiful."

Gong held out his hand to her. "Come on, I made dinner."

She took his hand in hers as they stepped into the kitchen. He took out two plates of freshly tossed salad and turned the flame on to cook the awaiting pasta, while she took a seat at the table. He delicately placed the plates on the table as well as two cups of sweet tea. Mei looked up at him. The dinner was similar to the one they ate at the restaurant the week before. The candlelight whipped from side to side in between the couple. "Wow, I really didn't expect this, Gong," Mei said,

breaking the inevitable silence.

"I just wanted to make it up to you. I can be romantic when I want to be," he retorted with his glimmering smirk and equally shimmering eyes that hardly left hers.

Inviting Mei to place her soft hand upon his, Gong left an open palm on the table. At that very moment, to her satisfaction and utter surprise, she realized that he was just as infatuated with her as she was with him. She took hold of his hand, as if it was a silent reply that she felt the same way. He squeezed hers lightly, confirming that he understood.

After dinner and dessert, Gong and Mei sat on his loveseat and flipped channels. He held her tight as she stopped on *Monsters, Inc.* Mei fished in her pockets for her phone. "I should probably let my roommate know that I'm coming back late."

Gong kissed the top of her head. "Would you like me to walk you back now? You have class tomorrow, right?"

She shook her head. "No, I have Fridays off."

"I should probably get you back anyway. You don't want to worry her."

Mei giggled at this. "It's Thirsty Thursday. She won't even notice. She might not even be back."

"Oh, then I can keep you to myself for a bit longer."

"Yes, you can. Besides, I really like this movie."

They continued to sit beside one another, while the noise of the movie created a soundtrack in the background of their motionless dance. As the film came to its ending, so did the night. Mei's head rested on Gong's chest, the beat of his heart rocking her into a deep slumber. Their hands were clasped together, both clutching the other's core. Their subconscious minds met and melded together, forming a spiral that dropped them into a realm that only they could imagine.

## CHAPTER 4<sup>14</sup>

As they spilled over the ocean's surface, the burning sun's rays painted their orange glow over her pale skin and illuminated her brown eyes and soft black tresses. The light wind nipped her cheeks, giving them a dewy blush. She turned her head towards him and he felt his

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<sup>14</sup> This chapter exemplifies the fusion between the supernatural and reality.

heart doubtlessly skip every other beat. Her look of astonishment matched his. Tracing the lines of her face with his hand, he ensured himself that she was in fact standing next to him. When she returned his gesture with a hauntingly pleasant smile, he withdrew his hand. He glanced over the cliffside; waves crashed violently against it. Squinting, he peered towards the rising sun. The environment was peaceful, tranquil. Waves repeatedly smacked its enclosing walls. Once, twice, and again. Shaking the mountains nearby, a stream of gold and blue rocketed from the water. It jolted high into the air, towering over the two people. They looked up. The dragon bore his pointed teeth. His majestic face held the large pair of eyes that stared back at them; however, somehow, his looming silence was more frightening.

Petrified, Mei muttered, "Gong?"

His throat became dry. "This is it. This is my dream. This is real."

She wanted to look at him, to understand this turn of events, but she could not release her sight from the dragon's invisible chains. With a snarl, the dragon slithered in another direction, diving back into the depths of the ocean. Mei felt faint, collapsing in Gong's arms. He breathed heavily, grasping her body in hopes that she would wake from her sleep. "We're just dreaming. We'll wake up and everything will be okay."

Her eyes fluttered as she tried to regain her balance. "Now you got me dreaming about these things. This isn't real!"

She was angry now. Reasoning with her was already out of the question, more so since he himself could not find reason in this. He stood her upright and held her firmly out of desperation. "No, this is my dream. This is exactly how it's been for a while now. I never told you how it looked, the scenery. You've seen my paintings or splotches of color, but this is what it looks like. You're in my mind or in reality or something else. I have no idea what's going on, but I know that you're here with me tonight."

Mei rushed to the edge of the precipice. "Well, if this is all in your head, then if I jump off of this cliff, I'll be okay! When you wake up, I'll be all right!"

Gong raced to her side and grabbed hold of her forearm. "No, you can't just jump!"

"Why not? Maybe I'll even wake up as soon as I start plummeting, like one of those falling dreams!"

"Will you just relax for one second?" he yelled.

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Without a word, she took a seat on the rocky ground. He followed suit, considering her impulsive idea. She gazed at the horizon displaying sky blue and golden yellow. He grabbed her hand, but she had no reaction. "This is beautiful, Gong, but we're kind of lost on a mountain with a dragon roaming around."

Gong hesitated before saying anything. "We need to find the phoenix. As I said before, she has the pearl."

"What makes you think so? You can't just blame her like that!"

"It's the one place the dragon hasn't searched yet," he answered calmly.

She finally looked him in the eyes. "You're serious about this, aren't you?"

"Well, yeah. I've been having this same dream for months! Of course I'm going to take it seriously after a while. What's different is that I'm actually here right now. Not only with you, but before, I could only see what is going on. I can see the dragon searching and the phoenix being attacked, but I didn't have a presence here. Now I do."

"Do you think it's because I'm here?"

He paused again. "Maybe."

"Okay, so how am I here?"

Gong pulled his knees to his chest. "Maybe because we fell asleep next to each other. That's the only difference."

She nodded her head, taking in her surroundings. "Remind me never to do that again."

He managed to chuckle. "Whether or not my suspicions about the connection between my dream and home are correct, I think I need to fix things here. I need to find the pearl so maybe this nightmare will leave me alone."

"Maybe I can help. Of course, just for tonight," she passed him a smile. "Tell me again everything that you know so far, everything that has gone on here."

Gong told her how the winds carried the pearl away, out of the dragon's reach. He mentioned the dragon's endless search and the phoenix's attempt to help him, which resulted in the attack. His interpretation was vague, but it seemed to satisfy Mei's curiosity. When he stopped talking, she asked, "In your life, what do you hope to find? Maybe even accomplish."

He cast his eyes upon the sunrise. "A companion<sup>15</sup>, someone who understands me. And in turn, I want to understand her."

She waited a moment or two to respond. "So you haven't found that yet?"

"No," he replied, motionless.

"Maybe you're trying to find that and your subconscious knows it. Maybe you're like the dragon, trying to find something you once had."

"I haven't had that though."

"Well, either way, maybe you just need someone to help you, like the dragon needs the phoenix. If you let someone in, then that person might open up to you, too. You need someone else in order to find what you're looking for, someone to help you accomplish the goal you set in front of you."

He turned to her. "Do you think that's why I'm dreaming this?"

"Maybe," she replied. "Now, this dream is kind of weird because, don't forget, I'm in it with you! And I really don't think I'm a figment of your imagination because I'm really me, believe me. So maybe, just maybe, this dream is more than a message to you. Find the pearl and find what you're really looking for in the process."

He raised his eyebrow.

She blinked, rewinding the conversation in her head. "Now I'm the crazy one."

Lightening the mood, he smirked at her. "So do you believe my idea that this is somehow connected to home?"

"Now, I didn't say that," she answered, mirroring his demeanor. "I said that this may help you find what you're looking for."

"Oh, well then we better figure out a plan. You're the smart one. How do you suppose we get this pearl back from the great beyond or whatever abyss it may be in?"

"You think the phoenix has it, right?"

"Yes, that's the only place the dragon hasn't looked as far as I know."

"Now we know where to start."

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<sup>15</sup> The Romantics emphasized the importance of individualism and working towards one's own personal goals (Brians). Gong's individualistic nature embodies this idea, as he is also trying to find a companion to benefit his own needs.

They followed the source of the rising smoke and the odor of ash. The air was hot and hazy, but they still had a long way to go, as they followed the pathway from their original location. From the mountainside, they could see most of the volcanic region. With each passing step, the temperature grew warmer and sweat dripped from their foreheads, accumulating on their moist skin. Growing tired, the two stopped to rest. Panting and wiping her face with her sleeves, Mei collapsed on the scorching rock. Gong sat down next to her, squinting towards the source of the heat. "There's no way we can go any further, Mei," he muttered.

She turned to him slowly. "Yeah, but how are we supposed to find the pearl?"

He chose not to answer her for he did not know the answer himself. A few seconds passed, then minutes. They heard a squawk, and their heads shot up to figure out the cause of the noise. A burst of color emerged from its home. It perched itself on the volcano's top to scan the surroundings for predators. With the dragon nowhere in sight, the phoenix swooped down, gliding through the air gracefully. She flew swiftly, maneuvering between volcanic barriers. She came to a gradual halt over a sea of flames. Through the whipping blaze, Gong spotted a hint of a glimmer. As quickly as he noticed it, it faded away, making him doubt the vision before him. The sight of the phoenix disappeared, followed by the scene before Gong and Mei. They vanished into the dark.

## CHAPTER 5

Flooding light throughout the room, the sun shone through the glass windows. Mei refused to open her eyes to the morning gleam and tried to will sleep to visit her again but to no avail. She buried her face into the unmoving body beside her and felt a hand run through her tousled hair. It slid down her cheek and then her soft lips. Her eyes fluttered open and she grinned tiredly. "Bad timing for morning, huh?" he snickered. He hoped that she knew what he was talking about, praying that he was not the only one still imagining the mystical creatures.

She looked perplexed. "Well, I don't know about that one. I guess I've been thinking about your dreams so much that I started dreaming about them. You were in it, too."

He interrupted her ramblings. "I know. Apparently we managed to dream the same dream, like we somehow plunged ourselves into that realm."

She blinked once, twice. "Do you know how ridiculous that sounds?"

"Yes, I know, but I really think that's what happened!" He clutched her shoulders.

She eased the pressure he put on her. "This is insane! In my dream, you told me that you're trying to find someone who understands you. That's what you need in order to put these dreams away." To stretch her cramping legs, Mei rose from the couch.

"And you said that I may find that person while I help the dragon find his pearl," he said as he spied at her from the sofa.

Her mouth formed a thin line as the truth settled in. "I was in another world with dragons and fire birds. I might not have been thinking so logically!"

Gong stood up and gently grabbed hold of her hand. "I know this is crazy, unbelievable even, but I believe that this is what I'm supposed to do. I don't know for sure if my dreams interfere with our world, but I do know that I need to help the world in my dream. That's why I'm having them. And, if you are right, maybe I'll find that understanding or whatever. Either way, I need to find the pearl. If nothing happens, then nothing happens. We're already in a drought. What more harm can I cause? If anything, it's just in my head, in my dreams."

Mei sat back down, contemplating what was now their dilemma. He did the same, not letting go of her hand. He whispered, "Mei, I'll take you home for now. Get your mind off of these things for the day and tonight we can see each other. You can stay here again and hopefully we'll fall back into that dreamland. I have never stepped foot into that world like that, and I think it's because you were here. So because of you, perhaps I can solve the problem. We can solve the problem and make this whole dream thing go away."

She simply nodded her head in agreement, hoping this nightmare would end shortly.

Gong dipped his paintbrush into crimson paint and dragged it across the canvas. He recalled the vivid images concealed in his mind's depths, including him and Mei hiking along the mountainside. He could not take his mind off the night before. It was completely unexpected that

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he would ever show up in that realm, that part of his mind, and even more so that Mei would join him there. Perhaps she was right, though. Maybe he did need to find what he was looking for. That person that he so longingly wanted to meet may become a part of him, like the pearl is to the dragon. They were both in search of something, that much he was sure.

The dragon was the creature Gong thought about more. He was powerful, regal, and most certainly divine. This majestic creature, however, seemed vulnerable, capable of being broken without his pearl. Because it was the source of his power, his purpose, the dragon appeared less than what he was. And in order to become that beautiful creature he knew he needed to be, he needed something, something more valuable than himself. Besides his name, Gong shared the need for a purpose and someone to fulfill that purpose with him. He knew Mei was right; on this journey into his mind, the realm outside of his known reality, he would find what he was looking for. With that thought, he knew he already did.

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Mei was about to toss her laptop out the window. She could not concentrate all day because of the nagging memories of Gong's dreams, which now became hers as well. How selfish could he be? He should have kept those dreams to himself, but instead he chose to bring her into it, force her mind to be taken over by mythical creatures. The nerve. He wanted her to suffer just as much as he was. Yet, she had let him. She had allowed him to entice her, lure her into his demented head. She had wanted to know more about him, what he was thinking, and boy did she get what she wanted. As they say, be careful what you wish for. Nevertheless, she was in this crazy predicament, and it seemed to her that she was only going to sink deeper into Gong's dreamland. Tonight, she would have to experience the same dream as him, but hopefully, it would be the last. They would find that pearl even if it took all night, which it probably would. But she was excited for it, not the thrill of exploring unknown lands with mystical beings, but being done with it all. She was over it; the episode should have come to a close a while ago. And quite frankly, she was ready to put it behind her and get on with her ambiguous relationship with Gong or just disappear and leave them both behind.

Nonetheless, she could not bring herself to leave. She should not



have agreed to stay in his apartment again that night. It was a creepy offering anyway. But she could not say “no” to Gong. He understood that he needed her and desperately showed her that, which might have been what she wanted all along. She was unsure why, but she desired for him not only to desire her in return but also to need her in order to move on. Maybe that was selfish, too. Either way, she was right about the whole thing. He did also need to find what he wanted most of all. And as far as Mei was concerned, that was her.

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They were huddled together on the couch once again, flipping through the channels but finding nothing good to watch. A blanket rested on their laps. Mei leaned on Gong’s shoulder and simply stared at the TV, not really watching anything. He felt like stone, still and cold. She was a flower, just waiting for the rain to come. The night was quiet. Neither of them really offered anything important to say. It was mostly full of small chit-chat in an attempt to pass the time with minimal awkward silences. They knew that they both wanted to get this dream over with. Their night together became a chore rather than a date. Mei stroked his hand, easing the tension between them. “It’ll be okay. This whole thing will be over soon,” she coaxed.

He only nodded, his mind clearly occupied with his approaching slumber. They sat with the TV illuminating their bodies, awaiting the sleep that would eventually come. The clock’s hand rested at the one, followed by the two, and soon enough the three. Still, they could not fall asleep. Gong barely moved from his place on the couch, while Mei had changed positions many times, becoming more anxious with every passing minute. With a loud sigh, Gong rose and paced the apartment, entering and reentering his studio. He walked up to Mei. “Do you want to go for a walk?”

“Sure,” she replied.

They both grabbed their jackets and ambled down the stairs of the building. They stepped into the dark night and breathed in the fresh, cool air. Gong took her hand in his, warming her delicate fingers. The couple walked a few blocks down, admiring the colored lights from the clubs and bars. The night was quiet, mirroring their dialogue. Mei began to sniffle, her nose turning pink. “Come on, let’s turn back,” suggested Gong.

“Are you sure? You tired now?” asked Mei.

"Yeah, I think we just needed some air."

She nodded as they turned around, headed for home. Growing weary, Mei brushed the back of her hand over her eye. He glided his thumb over her chilled skin, ensuring her that they were almost at his apartment. As they approached the large door, she looked at the twinkling stars and the full moon that hung high over their heads. Their brightness gave the illusion that she was able to catch a star in her hands and put it in her pocket. If only she could, then she may be able to believe in miracles.

They entered Gong's apartment, relishing the warmth that it contained. As they took their places on the couch, the blanket before them never seemed as inviting as it did then. Mei gingerly placed her head on Gong's chest for the second time, stretching her legs by the end of the sofa. He draped his arm over her shoulders and then grasped her hand. "Goodnight," he said softly.

"Goodnight," she answered, lulling herself into a peacefully fitful sleep.

## CHAPTER 6

Gong found himself on the same cliffside that he and Mei had been perched on the night before. It overlooked the volcanic region, the dwelling of the phoenix. He surveyed the heavens around him and the clouds that hung lifelessly over the drying land. They seemed to beg for water, a sip of vitality. The mist of oceans would not suffice as they breathed in the parched waves. As she attempted to grab hold of the mountainside, Mei stumbled on the rocky terrain disturbing the silent war between the ocean and the land. Gong eyed Mei, ready to catch her if need be.

"You okay?" he asked.

She nodded her head in reply. "How do you suppose we end this whole ordeal?"

He waited to respond, contemplating and picturing how his dream played out the night before. Suddenly, he recalled the moment the scene around him had begun to vanish. "Last night," he said slowly, "I saw something in the fire down there. It was glittering. What if that's the pearl?"

Mei did not know exactly what to say to his suspicion. "Wouldn't

the pearl just burn up then?"

Gong looked her in the eyes. "Mei, I really think the pearl is there. It probably has crazy powers anyway; it does belong to the dragon."

Before Mei could reply, a burning presence emerged over the mountaintop. "Gong!" she called.

The bird lingered overhead, her eyes reflecting mere softness. As large as she was, as brilliant as she appeared, the two were fearless. Up close, they could see her feathers colored in various patterns, each one different from the next. Her tail floated gracefully behind her body, fanning outwards and fluttering in the light wind. She flapped her wings slowly, naturally. Her beak was sharp yet serene. The phoenix chirped, singing the loveliest melody. Mei did not even flinch when the phoenix lifted an elegant wing and wrapped it around her tiny frame. She tried to speak to the creature in front of her, managing to force out a, "Hi."

As if answering Mei, the phoenix whistled back, telling her a story. "You're trying to help the dragon, aren't you?" asked Mei.

The creature replied cheerfully, her features lighting up her face. "Do you know where the pearl is?" The bird's eyes dropped. "I don't think she knows," Mei told Gong.

"The dragon's pearl is in your home. I saw it before. It might still be there. Won't you get it for him?" Gong asked.

The bird eyed her home, and then intensely stared into Mei's eyes. Mei stood still, taken by the creature's luminous gaze. When the phoenix's eyes softened, Mei staggered backwards. "Gong, she spoke to me!" she said in utter shock.

"Seriously? ESP or something?" Gong questioned with his eyebrows raised.

Mei shrugged her shoulders and tugged at her shirt. "She said that she can't touch the pearl unless the dragon trusts her to do so. That's why she hasn't given it to him yet."

Gong started to say something but he was interrupted by a loud crash. The slick dragon arose from the waters below, snaking around the mountain that towered over them. His eyes ferociously consumed the phoenix. Claws outstretched, he lunged towards the creature of pure beauty, slashing her chest, which caged her immortal heart. Roaring and baring his massive teeth, the dragon slithered back to the top of the mountain. A feather from the phoenix fluttered onto the rock by Mei's

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feet. She picked it up, running her fingers over the red silky hairs and stuffing it into her pocket as the bird shook off the effects of the attack. Mei held out a tender hand to the bird. "Are you okay?"

The creature chirped her tune, signaling that she was well. "If you can communicate with the phoenix, Mei, maybe I can talk to the dragon," said Gong. He turned his attention to the dragon looming overhead. "She just wants to help you."

Although the dragon disagreed with Gong, the dragon hissed in return, seeming as if he understood. The threatening creature hovered over the others, asserting his dominance. He was adamant about his accusation against the phoenix even though her tender spirit reflected innocence. The bird's eyes twinkled in the golden sun as she looked directly into the dragon's beady eyes. She struggled to make him understand her, believe that she was not to blame and her feelings true. He only shook his head in denial, his long whiskers swaying in the breeze.

As Mei comforted the phoenix, feeling the silky texture of her wing, Gong faced the dragon, mirroring the creature's arrogant disposition. Before he could muster a word, the dragon swept him off the ground. Gong landed on his back, holding on to the dragon's snake-like body, as the creature took off towards the phoenix's domain.

The pair came to a halt above the heaps of volcanic ash. In the fiery pit, Gong saw the same shimmer he noticed the night before.

"The pearl!" he shouted. The dragon roared in anger, his idea that the phoenix must have stolen his jewel never leaving his mind. Gong sensed his rage.

"She didn't take it," he coaxed. "You have to believe her and trust that she can help you if you want your pearl back. She's the only one that can go in there and get it back before it burns up." The dragon's facade did not falter.

"Please just trust her. You need the pearl to save your own world and possibly mine," said Gong.

When the dragon refused to move, Gong whispered to him. "We're tied together somehow and we're kind of the same, right? If I can trust Mei, you can trust the phoenix."

Gong gently touched his scales. "It's kind of funny that they want to help us, right?"

After a brief pause, both beings contemplating the thoughts of

the other, Gong pleaded with the dragon one last time. "At least help me end these dreams, release my mind from your claws."

The dragon swiftly headed for the mountainside, where the mystical bird waited patiently for her counterpart. She sung the most beautiful melody as Mei stroked her feathers, giving comfort to the creature before her. "It's not your fault." The phoenix chirped in response. Mei eyed the vibrant colors that adorned the bird: red, blue, green. "Do you love him?" she asked in an even softer voice.

Gong dropped down from the dragon's back and landed noiselessly beside Mei. The wings of the dragon shaded the cliffside as he drifted near the phoenix. The two creatures stared into each other's eyes once again, listening to one another's inner thoughts. Gong took Mei's hand as they watched the two converse.

The phoenix flew to the dragon's side, nuzzling her beak on his scaly cheek. His fierce teeth peeked through his parted lips. She whistled calmly, assuring him that she was able to be trusted with his unique power. Answering her affection, he growled under his breath once and then twice, wrapping his head behind her neck. Then, with the phoenix in tow, he glided towards her home and eyed his prize. As they drew near to the source of sweltering heat, the dragon hesitated going further. He glanced at the bird next to him. She looked back, the beams of the sun reflecting off of her vivid quills and even more passionate eyes. He let out another snarl of reassurance for the both of them. She grazed her wing over his back and took off into the fiery pit she considered her sanctuary.

Heat enveloped her body, blanketing her. Puffs of smoke darkened and thickened as the phoenix neared her destination. In the mess of ash and magma, she saw the shimmer that the dragon spied earlier. The bird had not known of the pearl's whereabouts before; and even if she had, she could not have done anything about it. The dragon needed to be the one who gave her permission to retrieve his jewel, and, ironically, the phoenix was the only one who could capture it from the molten pool. The pearl bobbed on the surface, riding on the flow of the deadly liquid. The phoenix lingered above the pearl. Its glimmer flickered as the smallest rays of light smacked its face as the gem found its own way out of the smog. She craned her neck over the shine. As if grabbing a fish out of water, she clenched her beak on the pearl, careful not to shatter it further. She swooped upwards towards the brighter sky, the sun glaring down on her.

\*

The dragon was perched on the mountain, craning his neck over the couple. Apprehension clouded his thoughts, rendering him unable to pay attention to the blazing inferno in the distance.

Gong leaned on the rocky wall with his arms folded, hoping this would cure his anxiety. He could just about taste the acidic freshness of the downpour.

Mei sat on the edge of the precipice. Looking over the cliffside, Mei promised herself that the phoenix would return shortly with the pearl in one solid, glimmering piece. She dwelled on the notion of continuing this agonizing journey with the afterthought that she would be able to spend more time with Gong. She would never have thought that she could be a part of this guy's dreams. And no one, especially herself, would have thought that she could be a part of them in this way.

A beautiful harmony pierced relentless silence. Wings of numerous colors fluttered in the wind and carried the body of a bird; a whimsical, feathery tail; a golden orange beak that held one ash-covered, cracked pearl. She called out once again, summoning the attention of the other three beings. Her harmonious symphony swallowed the trepidation that radiated from the awaiting crew. As her talons touched the rock, she tenderly placed the jewel in the dragon's reach. He held the damaged gem in his palm, willing it to come alive. The bird covered the pearl with her wing. Her golden eyes were warm, but not possessing the fiery vigor that bathed the jewel. The dragon hesitated; he enclosed his creased claws around his pearl and noticed the loving gleam in her eyes. She whispered something inaudible yet melodic and withdrew her wing. The dragon opened up his claws. Resting in his wrinkled palm was something extraordinarily striking. It shined to the heavens, reaching to the great depths of Earth. It was whole and its surface appeared flawless, innocent. As if it was just created, it seemed new and possessed the pure perfection of a newborn baby.

The sun bared its rays over the mountaintops, shooting down into the dying fields, where grass was a sickly beige color. Naked trees, which already shed their darkening green crisp coating, lined the forests. The sand by the ocean was hot to the touch, lying so close to the oasis, but the monotonous waves came up short every time.

Observing the parched landscape, the dragon clutched his pearl. The distant terrain began to fade into the fog, which crawled towards

them. The sun's light dimmed and the mountains started to disappear. Mei desperately grabbed Gong's hand, but neither said a word. The phoenix whistled her tune as she, too, slowly began to vanish with the dragon. But before the whole picture dissolved, Gong felt a raindrop kiss his cheek.

## CHAPTER 7<sup>16</sup>

Gong jumped, waking himself up. Mei stirred next to him on the couch. He glanced around the room. Everything was as they left it - curtains partially open and the television portraying one action scene after another. He reached for the remote to turn it off. The walls creaked from a constant thumping. "Listen," Mei said.

The thuds came in pitter-patters. It sounded light yet heavy - a barrage. He realized the source of the sound. It had become so foreign. "It's raining," he uttered in disbelief.

She smiled softly in her tired state. "It's over."

\*

Rain fell in sheets. Cars kicked up waves, turning sidewalks into streams as the water tried to escape into sewers. With each progressing step, pounding feet acted like boulders shattering the surfaces of lakes. Two pairs stood out from the rest; their march fell in sync. Each boot-clad stone led to a shin and a calf, falling from a slender thigh beside a pair of locked hands. As other folks bustled by flustered, the couple sauntered down the block as if it was bright and sunny. The wind whipped her hair, causing it to annoyingly hover in front of her face. She shouted so he could hear her over the roar of the downpour. "You must be thrilled."

"Yeah, I think we both found what we were looking for," he answered as he gently squeezed her hand.

Recalling the surreal incident, Mei slipped her fingers into her jeans pocket and pulled out a silky red feather. The fine hairs fanned outwards, reflecting the color of a glossy fire engine. She ran her thumb over the delicate softness as it was being pelted by raindrops, though the quill did not weaken. Gong noticed her brushing the feather. "You got a souvenir, huh?"

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<sup>16</sup> Coming back to the Romantic elements, this chapter displays natural human entities in a supernatural realm.

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She simply nodded and after a pause, she said in confusion, "It fell from her, so I just picked it up. I forgot about it until now."

He stopped walking and she followed suit. "The things we bring," he said, "from there to here stay with us." The rainfall continued, matting their hair to their scalps. They stood beside the brick front of the coffeehouse. Gong held both of her hands, tracing and memorizing the texture of her knuckles beneath her skin. She subconsciously held her breath as she felt his warming her cheeks. "I brought you there and back, didn't I?"

She giggled at his proud remark. "Well, I'm not sure if that's your doing or not."

He nodded his head in slight agreement while he repositioned her hair behind her ear. "Either way, you brought me the peace I was looking for, a rest from my nightmares. You found what I couldn't. For that, you're my angel, and of that, I am certain."

Mei bit her bottom lip, focusing her attention on the puddle forming under her boots, for once not being able to be captivated by those piercing eyes. She felt his arms enclose around her body. She let herself lean into his embrace, relishing in the warmth that radiated through their sopping clothes. When he did not offer more words, she mustered a few of her own. "I hope that you're mine."

"I can be if you let me."

She smiled into his chest. "I am."

Hesitant, he closed his eyes, feeling every individual drop fleetingly hit his face, neck, and hands. Gong ambled into the coffeehouse with Mei, as a man in a pea coat rushed out, latte and cell phone in hand. They shook off some of the excess water and stepped up to the cash register. "Two white hot chocolates, please?" Gong ordered.

Mei could not help but crack a smile when the now miffed employee shoved the hot beverage into her hands and Gong dropped a few bills on the counter. They left the coffeehouse and continued on in the rain. "Thanks for the hot chocolate," Mei said.

"No problem."

Listening to the heavy drizzle, they savored the silence between them, weary from the journey. The entrance to Vails Gate University soon appeared around the corner. They approached her dorm building slowly, making their time together last. Gong grasped her hands again. "I'll see you soon, okay?"



She nodded in reply. "You can call me."

"Thanks, Mei, for understanding me; it's what I wanted, what I needed."

"I just wanted you to find your pearl."

He smirked, his signature expression, and tucked her hair once again. "I'll call you," he reassured.

## CHAPTER 8

Tapping her fingertips to a monotonous rhythm, Mei fixed her eyes on the double doors of the coffeehouse. She was waiting again, but, this time, he did not show. For the past three days, he had failed to strut into the building to whisk away a coffee. On each of those afternoons at half past three, she sat at the back corner table with the large cushioned chairs. Her piercing eyes darted up as the chime rung. Once, twice, three times.

Mei flipped open her cell phone, hoping to see Gong's name under a list of missed calls. He had yet to return the slew of calls and text messages that she had sent. Hesitantly, she moved her slender fingers along the keyboard typing out meaningless words she hoped he would read. Pondering over his absence, she recalled the past events that they shared. She believed in him, believed that he could overcome his insecurities. She kept him safe, kept him at peace with himself. He had searched the far reaches of his mind for something that she was able to spot in almost no time at all. In dark, she found light.

Minutes crawled by without a sign of Gong's presence. Shoving her laptop into her shoulder bag, Mei rose from her seat. She pulled her black peacoat over her shoulders, slipped her arms into the sleeves, and slowly buttoned the front. She slung the bag over her right shoulder, then pushed in the chair beside her. As she approached the daunting doors, she covered her head with her hood. When her fingers touched the cool metal handle of the exit, she paused for a brief moment in hopes of spying the boy for whom she had been waiting. Closing her eyes, she stepped out into the darkening downpour.

## EPILOGUE

If only he could do the same for her, bless her with the angelic force that she provided for him. She was waiting for it, waiting for him to

## CROSSROADS

show her that he was the perfect fit to her distinctly shaped edges. He used to feel like he was the misplaced puzzle piece, the misshapen remainder that would not fall into place. But she trimmed him down, setting him snug beside her, making him the triumphant gem to a masterpiece of complex distortions.

He vowed to protect her the only way he knew how. He vowed to be the winged halo above her head, where her black tresses flowed out into waterfalls. With that, he willed his old nightmares, now a safe haven, to revisit his subconscious.<sup>17</sup>

Familiar mountains and valleys emerged in his blurred vision. Clear rainwater dripped from the rocky overhangs and the fresh, earthy scent wafted through the moist atmosphere. He noticed ripples in the ocean. The dragon slithered above the surface elegantly like a dolphin jumping, flying through the air. The phoenix fluttered towards him. Her beak nipped his whisker as he snaked his body around hers.

As long as the mythic bird was happy, dancing to her own melody, all was in harmony. He just needed to protect the beautiful creature, the beautiful lands that created the pathway to home. From above, he could watch her, keep her as safe as he felt beside her for as long as he wished. She had opened her arms to him; it was up to him to take her hands.

Nonetheless, he tried to free himself from the shackles he had already escaped. He had seen what he wanted to, confirmed the perfection of bliss. Shaking his tangible body, the grassy plains and precious lilacs still bloomed before him. He wiped sweat from his forehead with the back of his already moist hands. He then jumped from the precipice that they had treaded once or twice before.

The ocean retaliated, kicking up salt water onto the eroding rock. He sank deeper into the dimming depths. Soon enough, he managed

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<sup>17</sup> Gong embodies elements of the typical Romantic hero. As mentioned by Frederick Garber in his essay, "Self, Society, Value, and the Romantic Hero," he describes the Romantic hero as a self-aware outcast from society who sees the world in a different light. He tends to be motivated by his own needs, but affects others as well (321). Gong portrays these qualities because he is driven by his dreams and wants to rid himself of them. In turn, he protects Mei and comes to the realization of a world outside of himself. However, like many Romantic heroes, his personal flaws bring about his downfall. Gong's insecurity and lack of harmony within himself leads him to return to his subconscious, where he believes he can protect Mei. This is also an example of the dark surprise ending that numerous Romantic authors, such as E.T.A. Hoffmann, integrated into their works.

to fight the current and swim to the shoreline. He panted, his chest matching the rhythm of the waves. Looking out over the horizon, the sun gradually dipped into the sea. Exhausted, he sat on the hot sand and leaned on the smooth rock behind him. He glanced upwards, noting the clear skies and a very light sprinkle of stars beginning to peek out from behind the sun's looming rays. Closing his eyes, he drifted into sleep, wholly aware that he was already dreaming.

The gleaming sun forced his eyes to open. He felt the sand beneath his legs and the rocky wall on his back. He had awoken, but not yet awoken from his real slumber. Tracing the cracks on the cliffside with his fingertips, he pondered on the prison cell that contained him, more importantly the lock that confined his psyche into this safe haven. How safe it really was. His surroundings were harmless, free of Earthly venom.

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# AN fMRI STUDY OF SENSORY PROCESSING SENSITIVITY

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## ABSTRACT

The present study sought to examine the role of sensory processing sensitivity (SPS) in emotionality and empathy, and activation of the mirror neuron system (MNS). An fMRI experiment on empathic responses showed that individuals self-reporting higher levels of SPS (measured by the Highly Sensitive Person Scale) showed greater activation in regions associated with empathy and emotionality in response to facial affect images of participants' romantic partners and strangers (matched on age, gender, and attractiveness to the partner) displaying happy and sad emotions. Additionally, highly sensitive people were found to have substantial activations in the MNS across all contrasts. These results provide for a greater understanding of sensory processing sensitivity, empathy, emotionality, the MNS, and the connections between these constructs.

## INTRODUCTION

### EMPATHY

Empathy is a response to someone else's perceived emotional state (Light et al., 2009). This ability to understand and share the feelings of another fosters interpersonal sensitivity and vice versa. However, experiencing and expressing empathy may not be a simple task. Empathy requires an intricate process of neural activation through a multitude of neural networks and systems. Although the exact process of how the brain is involved in empathy is unknown, research has established a set of core brain regions that are involved in empathic responses across many studies using different experimental paradigms: the insular cortex,

inferior frontal gyrus (IFG), dorsal anterior cingulate cortex, and more (Cauda et al., 2011; Fan, Duncan, Greck, & Northoff, 2010).

## EMPATHY AND BRAIN ACTIVITY

Although there are several regions of the brain associated with empathic processing, much of the prevailing research suggests that the insular cortex is one of the key regions when dealing with emotions (Carr, Iacoboni, Dubeau, Mazziotta, & Lenzi, 2003; Craig, 2009; Straube & Miltner, 2010). The insular cortex, in particular, is a region of the brain whose functionality associates with limbic functions, sensorimotor integration (Cauda et al., 2011), and the most active emotionally-charged induction and recall (Phan, Wager, Taylor, & Liberzon, 2002).

The insula is particularly interesting as it is involved with different networks, depending on whether it is in a resting or active state. Furthermore, each portion (anterior and posterior) of the insular cortex serves very different functions. The posterior insula is associated with environmental and self-awareness, physical orientation, attention control, and somatosensory functions (Cauda et al., 2011; Straube & Miltner, 2011). The anterior insula, however, plays an integral role in attention appropriation and emotion apprehension (Jabbi & Keysers, 2008). The anterior insula, however, is more associated with emotion detection and interoceptive information. The anterior insula show connectivity with other regions of the brain also associated with emotion detection and interpretation such as the inferior frontal gyrus (IFG). The anterior insula's functionality is broad, as it has been associated with ranging functions from emotional recognition to olfactory sensory processing (Kurthetal, 2010).

The two partitions of the insula, though distinctly different, do not operate independently. Despite research supporting lateralization of the insula, many functions of each subsection integrate the other subsection. This is seen through observation of more intense emotional processing (Chen, et al., 2009; Straube & Miltner, 2011). The insula is not involved in all emotional processing though. It shows to be most active while recalling emotions than from visual or auditory stimuli (Phan, Wager, Taylor, & Liberzon, 2002).

### OTHER IMPORTANT BRAIN REGIONS

The insula is not the only region that is involved in empathic and emotional processing. The IFG, dorsal anterior cingulate cortex (dACC), superior parietal lobe (SPL), amygdala, and many parahippocampal regions, have also been found to be important for empathy and emotions (Cauda et al., 2011; Fan, Duncan, Greck, & Northoff, 2010). These regions work together to create what seems like an automatic response to others' perceived affective states. However, due to the overly subjective nature of emotions and empathy it proves difficult to study the networks involved.

### HIGHLY SENSITIVE PERSONS

Highly Sensitive Person (HSP) refers to those that have higher than average sensory processing sensitivity (SPS) (Aron & Aron, 1997), which involves an increased ability to notice small changes and a greater reactivity to stimuli in general. Nearly 20% of humans and other species are found to be particularly high on SPS. HSP and SPS are generally interchangeable as HSP refers to a heightened level of SPS.

### THE EFFECTS OF SENSORY PROCESSING SENSITIVITY

Highly sensitive individuals' increased reactivity to stimuli has implications for their temperament (Aron & Aron, 1997). A series of case studies of highly sensitive people indicated that highly sensitive people tend to express more shyness, introversion, neuroticism, negative affect, and inhibition. The impact of SPS is further expanded through association with higher arousability (Mehrabian, 1977; Mehrabian & O'Reilly, 1980). Arousability was determined to be an effect, not a cause, of having a greater sensitivity to stimulation, suggesting that this trait is prevalent for a HSP.

### EMOTIONALITY

There is no conclusive agreement regarding the relation between sensory processing sensitivity and emotionality. Though it seems logical to link the two, as SPS involves greater reactivity to stimuli,



and emotionality is increased emotional reactivity, research suggests that only small subgroups of highly sensitive people actually express emotionality (Aron & Aron, 1997). However, emotionality only refers to the outward expression of emotion. The field of introspective emotionality in regards to highly sensitive people and their SPS proves to be a gray area. There is some evidence that, despite the lack of association between SPS and emotionality, a HSP has stronger emotional responses overall (Aron et al., 2005). It seems plausible then that highly sensitive people could be more likely to exhibit greater brain reactivity in areas associated with emotions, emotional understanding, and empathy.

## NEURAL BASIS FOR SPS

Debate arises as to whether the neural processes for an HSP are simply intensified versions of those observed in someone of average SPS, or that HSPs processes stimuli through different or additional networks. Though research is minimal, some studies identify distinctive neural regions of interest that show some association to SPS: higher-order visual processing areas, the right cerebellum (Jagiellowicz et al., 2010), and the right middle frontal gyrus (Ersner-Hersfield et al., 2007).

## BEHAVIORAL PROCESSING

It cannot be directly assumed that the neural differences associated with SPS dictate an HSP's cognitive processes, so we must investigate general processing theories. Because the general processing theories do not exclude highly sensitive people, they must be applicable. By using these models, sensory processing sensitivity may be a result of a more efficient or heightened activation from their processes. Behavioral processing is believed to take place in our own motor system and involve internal action representations of others' behaviors (Carr et al., 2003; Ocampo & Kritikos, 2011). Furthermore, these action representations tend to be organized relative to actions' effective outcomes rather than what is actually happening (Ocampo & Kritikos, 2011). There is evidence that this action representation-based model of behavioral processing may also explain the mechanism for emotional processing, referring specifically to empathy (Carr et al., 2003).

### MIRROR NEURON SYSTEM

Much of the prevailing research in cognitive neuroscience relates to the discussion of a system of neural correlates that comprise the mirror-neuron system (MNS). The MNS is a theorized network associated with interpreting, organizing, and implementing the aforementioned action representations (Friston, Mattout, & Kilner, 2011). The proposed regions of the MNS share a common thread of functionality in processing both behavioral and social action. The idea for the MNS is substantiated by data regarding social cognition (Van Overwalle, 2009). The temporo-parietal junction (TPJ) and medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC) are specifically declared for their roles in the MNS: drawing inferences from perceptions and the integration of social information, respectively. Furthermore, the MNS is implicated in the processing of emotions, social cues, visual physical representations, and outcome-based understanding (Ocampo & Kritikos, 2011).

This seems to suggest that the MNS may not only be linked to social cognition but with other systems entirely. This interaction occurs by an increased activation within the insular cortex (Carr, Iacoboni, Dubeau, Mazziotta, & Lenzi, 2003; Kurth, Zilles, & Fox, 2009). This link may be the explanation for our ability to experience the world in a fluid coherent manner and may relate to emotion and sensation. These claims are substantiated through the implication of dual-related regions such as the mPFC, the insular cortex, and the IFG (Kurth, Zilles, & Fox, 2009; Shibata, Inui, & Ogawa, 2010). Due to the heightened sensory processing associated with SPS (Jagiellowicz et al., 2010) it seems likely that if the MNS is prevalent in sensory processing, an HSP would show elevated activation in the MNS's associated brain regions. Through monitoring the MNS in highly sensitive people we can hope to better understand their manner of processing.

### PRESENT STUDY

Though the networks involved in the recognition and assessment of emotion-eliciting stimuli have been studied rather extensively (Bzdok et al., 2011; Fusar-Poli et al., 2009; Jabbi & Keysers,

2008), it lacks depth in regards to whether people activate these networks through empathy or only by visceral emotion. Thus, it seems pertinent to explore this concept to determine the full functionality of the emotion- and empathy-processing network. Due to the inherent connection between sensory processing sensitivity and arousability (Mehrabian, 1977; Mehrabian & O'Reilly, 1980), we examined empathic responses as a function of SPS. The present study looks to fill the vacancy in the current research as to the relationship between highly sensitive people and empathy. We predicted that greater SPS would be linked with stronger brain responses in regions important for emotion and empathic processing. Also, although there is some research on SPS, it remains unknown how individuals with this trait process socially relevant stimuli (e.g., other's affective expression) on a neural basis. The activation of brain regions involved in empathy, emotion processing and the MNS (Shibata, Inui, & Ogawa, 2011) would lend support to the idea that individuals with greater SPS experience and express increased reactivity and arousability to stimuli. We expected that responses would be even stronger for social stimuli and to a greater extent for those of more personal relevance (a partner versus an unknown person). Investigating how SPS processes operate on the neural level would provide for greater understanding of the efficiency of stimulus-processing in the brain. Thus, the present study examined these issues by measuring brain responses to socially relevant emotional stimuli as a function of SPS, focusing on neural regions involved in empathy, emotions, and the MNS.

### HYPOTHESES:

1. Those reporting greater SPS (measured by the HSP scale) will show greater brain activations in empathy-related regions in response to socially relevant emotional stimuli.
2. Those who score higher on the HSP scale (higher on SPS) will exhibit activation in regions of the brain associated with the MNS in response to socially relevant emotional stimuli.

## TIME 1 METHODS

## PARTICIPANTS

Participants included 18 healthy right-handed adults (10 females) in a first marriage, ages 21 to 32 with a mean age of 27.50 years ( $SD = 3.13$ ). A majority of the participants were Caucasian (72.2%) and had completed a mean of 16 years ( $SD = 1.57$ ) of education at the time of the study. On average, the participants had been in their relationships for about 4.30 years ( $SD = 3.18$ ) while sharing homes with their romantic partners for a mean of 1.85 years ( $SD = 1.57$ ) with no children. Participants were recruited by flyers, newspapers, and internet ads in the Santa Barbara community seeking “Newlywed and engaged couples.” All participants provided informed consent and received payment for their participation. The study was approved by the human subjects committees at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) and Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

## MATERIALS

**HIGHLY SENSITIVE PERSON (HSP) SCALE.** This shortened scale (Aron et al., 2010) consisted of 11-items from the 27-item Highly Sensitive Person (HSP) Scale (Aron & Aron, 1997). Sample items are as follows: “Do you find it unpleasant to have a lot going on at once?”, “Do other people’s moods affect you?”, “Are you easily overwhelmed by things like bright lights, strong smells, coarse fabrics, or sirens close by?” Participants answered items either “Yes” or “No” and the Cronbach’s Alpha in the present session was 0.85.

**NEUROTICISM SCALE.** Participants completed a short-version of a neuroticism/negative affectivity scale. We used these scores to control for neuroticism by partialling out general negative affectivity, regressing mean neuroticism scores on HSP scores, and computing residuals. Correlation between the HSP scale and Neuroticism was non-significant ( $r = 0.28$ ).

**VISUAL STIMULI.** We presented digitized color photographs of the participant’s partner and a stranger (control) displaying positive and negative emotions using Presentation software (Psychological Software Tools, Inc., Pittsburgh, PA). The images of the unknown persons (strangers) were matched to each participant’s partner by sex, approximate age, ethnicity, and attractiveness. Independent raters provided attractiveness and image quality ratings for all photos.

*PARTNER PHOTOGRAPHS.* Participants provided color facial photographs of their partners displaying happy and sad affective facial expressions prior to scanning. Experimenters determined whether the photos convincingly displayed positive or negative affect and asked the participant to provide other photos if necessary.

*STRANGER PHOTOGRAPHS.* Strangers displaying happy and sad affective facial expressions were matched with the partner by gender, ethnicity, and attractiveness.

*CONTEXT-BASED DESCRIPTIONS.* Preceding the display of each facial image, participants were presented a six-second description of the image in terms of the emotion it would express and the person depicted (stranger vs. partner). Sample descriptions included: “This person is feeling very happy because something wonderful has happened to them” or “This person is feeling very sad and they are suffering because something terrible has happened to them”.

*EMOTION RATINGS.* Immediately after scanning, participants were asked to rate the emotions they experienced related to each condition and person on a scale from 1-4 (1=not at all and 4 = a great deal). The emotions rated were: anger, anxiety, fear, sadness, friendship, joy, compassion, love, passion, and pride. Mean post-scan emotion intensity ratings are shown in Table 1.

## DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

Participants were interviewed to determine eligibility criteria (first marriage, age [22-40], relationship length [ $< 7$  years], use of anti-depressants, and fMRI contraindications) and appropriate face images. Prior to scanning participants were told they would be viewing descriptions followed by images of their partner and a stranger. fMRI scanning was performed at the Center for Brain Imaging at UC Santa Barbara with a 3T Siemens magnetic resonance imaging system. Once participants were oriented in the scanner, researchers confirmed correct positioning and future accurate scanning through localized anatomical scans. The researchers then obtained 360 total functional images (repetition time of 2,000 ms) for each participant throughout the course of the experiment.

Each fMRI scanning block consisted of 4 conditions: partner happy, partner sad, stranger happy, and stranger sad. The conditions

were randomized but each included the following stimuli in sequential order: 6-second contextual description, 12-second corresponding face image presentation, followed by 12-second countback task. Following Aron et al. (2005) the countback task was utilized as an attentional control and to reduce carry-over effects between stimuli. Participants were instructed to allow themselves to think and feel as they normally would to the situations presented. While still in the scanner, participants rated their feelings related to each person, after each set of image presentations. Each trial was presented randomly 6 times for a total of 12-minutes total for the experimental session.

### DATA ANALYSIS

Data was analyzed using Statistical Parametric Mapping (SPM) version 5. For preprocessing, functional echo planar image (EPI) volumes were realigned to the first volume, smoothed with a Gaussian kernel of 6mm, and then normalized to the EPI template. Images were inspected for motion and no participant showed movement greater than 3 mm (whole voxel) motion. Utilizing residuals from simple regression analyses (HSP to Neuroticism), we found the correlations with brain activity in response to partner versus stranger affective face images. Region of interest analyses provided a basis for comparison, in addition to the use of exploratory whole-brain analyses.

**REGION OF INTEREST ANALYSIS.** Contrasts were initially screened for common activations in regions of interest (ROIs) as reported by studies and meta-analyses of neural response due to SPS (Jagiellowicz et al., 2010; Hedden et al., 2008), emotional faces (Fan et al., 2011; Fusar-Poli et al., 2009), empathy (Lamm, Decety, & Singer, 2011), emotional memory encoding (Murty et al., 2010), and romantic partner's pain (Singer et al., 2010). Per Genovese et al. (2002) we adopted a false discovery rate (FDR) with a threshold of  $p < .05$ . Lastly, we allotted a tolerance of 3mm and found anatomical confirmation with the *Atlas of the Human Brain* (Mai, Paxinos, & Voss, 2008).

**EXPLORATORY, WHOLE-BRAIN ANALYSIS.** In order to allow for findings outside of our ROIs we conducted subsequent analyses of each contrast evaluated with a  $p \leq .001$  for the purpose of exploratory analyses.

### BASE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For each contrast, the first condition was given a value of 1 while the second condition was given a value of -1. Additionally, the contrasts were controlled for neuroticism and correlated with HSP scores, both positive and negative contrast correlations reflect activations positively correlated to HSP scores. Thus, positively correlated contrast activations are activations that are significantly greater than the activations due to the second condition.

PARTNER HAPPY VS. STRANGER HAPPY. Through examining our contrast for ROIs we found positive correlative activations bilaterally in the insula, anterior parietal region, and the premotor area (PMA). Right-hemisphere localized activations were found in anterior insula/IFG, angular gyrus, SPL, BA 5,7/ intraparietal sulcus, parietal operculum, dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DL-PFC), cingulate, premotor cortex, and the primary somatosensory cortex. Lastly, activations localized in the left-hemisphere were found in the mPFC and the middle temporal gyrus. There were no significant negatively correlated activations for our ROIs on this contrast.

PARTNER SAD VS. STRANGER SAD. Through examining our contrast for ROI's we found positive correlative activations bilaterally in the insula, cingulate, and the PMA. Right-hemisphere localized activations were found in the insula, SPL, BA 5,7/ intraparietal sulcus, , DL-PFC, and the mPFC. Lastly, activations localized in the left-hemisphere were found in the anterior parietal region, thalamus, and the superior frontal gyrus. There were negative correlations in the right-hemisphere localized in the lateral orbitofrontal cortex and IFG.

Confirming our hypotheses, these findings suggest that greater SPS is positively correlated with neural activity reflecting empathy and the MNS in response to positive and negative affective displays of highly relevant social stimuli (partner facial images) in comparison to a less relevant social stimulus (stranger facial images).

## TIME 2

## METHODS

## PARTICIPANTS

Of the original 18 participants from Time 1, 13 (7 women) participants completed fMRI scanning for Time 2. Participants' ages ranged from 22 to 33 ( $M = 28.38$ ,  $SD = 3.40$ ), they had been in relationships of roughly 5.88 years ( $SD = 2.88$ ). A majority of the participants were Caucasian (69%).

### MATERIALS

The materials used for this session included the Sensory Processing Sensitivity scale, Neuroticism Scale, context-based descriptions (for the visual stimuli), and Related Feelings scale from Time 1. This session also included additional visual stimuli.

SENSORY PROCESSING SENSITIVITY SCALE. (See Time 1 for description).  $\alpha = 0.88$ .

NEUROTICISM SCALE. (See Time 1 for description).  $\alpha = 0.59$ . Correlation between HSP scale and Neuroticism was not significant  $r = 0.20$ ,  $p > .05$ .

RELATED FEELINGS SCALE. (See Time 1 for description).

CONTEXT-BASED DESCRIPTIONS. (See Time 1 for description).

VISUAL STIMULI. In addition to the Visual Stimuli from Time 1 we added both 'Partner Neutral' and 'Stranger Neutral' images. These images too were rated for attractiveness and image quality by independent raters, who found no significant differences across the stimuli.

### DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

The experimental protocol at T2 was identical to T1, except we added Partner Neutral and Stranger Neutral conditions. Each trial was presented randomly 6 times for a total of 18-minutes total for the experimental session.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

PARTNER HAPPY VS. STRANGER HAPPY. Through examining our contrast for ROI's we found no bilateral positively correlated activations. Right-hemisphere localized activations were shown in the IFG, anterior



insula/IFG, angular gyrus, the anterior and superior parietal regions, DL-PFC, cingulate, premotor cortex, and the PMA. Activation of the middle temporal gyrus was localized in the left-hemisphere. These results suggest that SPS is positively associated with greater brain activation in areas involved in empathy and the MNS in response to perceived other's positive affect, and effects were stronger for partners relative to unfamiliar persons.

**PARTNER HAPPY VS. PARTNER NEUTRAL.** Through examining our contrast for ROI's we found positive correlative activations bilaterally in the insula/IFG, superior temporal sulcus, and the middle occipital gyrus. Right-hemisphere localized activations were found in the anterior insula, IFG, IFG, anterior intraparietal sulcus, premotor cortex temporoparietal junction, angular gyrus, middle/superior temporal cortex, superior occipital gyrus/ precuneus, SPL, PMA, cingulate cortex, cingulate, pre-SMA, and the DL-PFC. Lastly, activations localized in the left-hemisphere were found in the middle temporal gyrus, precuneus, inferior occipital cortex, and the post/precentral gyrus. There were no significant negatively correlated activations for our ROIs on this contrast. These results suggest that, like the increase in activation due to familiarity, activation is increased with respect to emotion-eliciting stimuli, either through empathetic response or the MNS.

**PARTNER SAD VS. STRANGER SAD.** Through examining our contrast for ROI's we found positive correlative activations bilaterally in the superior frontal gyrus. Right-hemisphere localized activations were found in the PMA, cingulate, and the cingulate gyrus. Lastly, activations localized in the left-hemisphere were found in the insula. There were right-hemisphere localized negatively correlated activations in the lateral subcallosal area. These results suggest that SPS is positively associated with greater brain activation in areas involved in empathy and emotion processing in response to perceived other negative affect.

**PARTNER SAD VS. PARTNER NEUTRAL.** Through examining our contrast for ROI's we found positive correlations bilaterally in the middle temporal gyrus and the superior temporal sulcus. Right-hemisphere localized activations were found in the anterior insula, anterior intraparietal sulcus, inferior parietal cortex, PMA, postcentral gyrus, right cingulate, premotor cortex, DL-PFC, claustrum, and the caudate. Lastly, there were no activations localized in the left-hemisphere. There

were no significant negative correlations of our ROIs on this contrast. These results control for the confounding partner vs. stranger activation increases and suggest, due to minimal overlap with the partner happy vs. partner neutral contrast results, that the networks involved with processing sadness and happiness may be quite different as a function of SPS.

**STRANGER HAPPY VS. STRANGER NEUTRAL.** Through examining our contrast for ROI's we found positive correlations with activations bilaterally in the precentral gyrus. Right-hemisphere localized activations were found in the anterior insula, IFG, and the middle temporal gyrus. Lastly, activations localized in the left-hemisphere were found in the PMA, hippocampus, parahippocampal gyrus, and the amygdala/anterior hippocampus. Additionally, exploratory analyses revealed right-hemisphere localized correlative activations in the mPFC and subcallosal cingulate. There were no significant negative correlations for our ROIs with this contrast. Several key regions correlated with SPS found in response to strangers' happy affect (relative to stranger neutral affect) were similar to those found in response to partners' happy affect (versus partner neutral), namely the anterior insula and the IFG known for their involvement in empathy and the MNS. This suggests that SPS is related to greater responsiveness and incorporation of positive social stimuli in general.

**STRANGER SAD VS. STRANGER NEUTRAL.** Through examining our contrast for ROI's we found correlation with right-hemisphere localized activations in the middle temporal gyrus, supramarginal gyrus, and the hippocampus/ parahippocampus. Left-hemisphere localized activations were found in the PMA, cingulate gyrus, and the thalamus. No bilateral activations were found for ROIs. Exploratory analyses revealed negatively correlated activations localized in the right hemisphere in regions of the occipital lobe, and in the left hemisphere in the middle temporal gyrus. Relatively few of the regions correlated with SPS in response to strangers' sad affect (versus stranger neutral) were found in response to partners' sad affect (versus partner neutral). This suggests that relevance of social stimuli may be an important factor moderating responses to negatively valenced stimuli as a function of SPS. This may be an adaptive, perhaps learned response by HSPs, to buffer from intense responses to others' negative affect.

## CROSS-SECTIONAL RESULTS

In addition to examining ROIs for the Time 1 and Time 2 results described above. First, the contrasts were compared to each other to find common activations across time sessions. The results of these comparisons are described below. For all, comparisons there were no common negative correlations.

PARTNER HAPPY VS. STRANGER HAPPY (T1 AND T2). Through cross-examining these contrasts from Time 1 to Time 2 we found common right-hemisphere localized activations were found in the IFG, anterior insula/IFG, angular gyrus, anterior parietal region, SPL, cingulate, premotor cortex, and the PMA. Lastly, common activations localized in the left-hemisphere were found in the middle temporal gyrus. As a majority of the regional activation increase were prevalent across sessions, it seems likely that these activations are due to increased familiarity with respect to happiness.

PARTNER SAD VS. STRANGER SAD (T1 AND T2). Through cross-examining these contrasts from Time 1 to Time 2 we found no common bilateral correlated activations. Common right-hemisphere localized activations were found in the PMA, cingulate, and cingulate gyrus. Lastly, common activations localized in the left-hemisphere were found in the insular cortex and the superior frontal gyrus. Though not a substantial cross-over of regions, the implications of the specific regions that were common across sessions do suggest that familiarity affects sad emotional processing less than happy emotional processing.

## COMPOUND CONTRASTS

Once the contrast data was compared to our ROIs, the contrasts were compared to each other to find common activations across conditions. Throughout these analyses there were no common negatively correlated activations.

PARTNER HAPPY VS. PARTNER NEUTRAL WITH STRANGER HAPPY VS. STRANGER NEUTRAL. Through cross-examining these contrasts we found common right-hemisphere localized activations in the anterior insula, and IFG. As these regions are implicated empathy and the MNS (e.g., Cauda et al., 2011; Fan, Duncan, Greck, & Northoff, 2010), the results suggest that SPS is related to higher incorporation and responsiveness to

positive social stimuli. Further, due to the many differences in activated regions between these contrasts relevance of social stimuli seems to play a role in SPS.

PARTNER SAD VS. PARTNER NEUTRAL WITH STRANGER SAD VS. STRANGER NEUTRAL. Through cross-examining these contrasts we found common right-hemisphere localized activations in the middle temporal gyrus. Though little is known of the functionality of the middle temporal gyrus, some have found this region to be implicated in facial recognition (Dekowska, M., Kuniecki, M., & Jaśkowski, P., 2008). However, it could be possible that this region is part of a core network involved with processing sadness. Further it seems likely that this region too may be involved in empathy, particular of sad emotions. The discrepancies in activated regions between these contrasts lend further support for the role of familiarity in processing emotions.

PARTNER HAPPY VS. PARTNER NEUTRAL WITH STRANGER SAD VS. STRANGER NEUTRAL. There were no common correlative activations of ROIs between the Partner Happy vs. Partner Neutral and Stranger Sad vs. Stranger Neutral contrasts. This supports the ideas that there are separate systems for processing sad and happy emotions and that these systems may be further specialized based on the familiarity of the stimuli.

PARTNER SAD VS. PARTNER NEUTRAL WITH STRANGER HAPPY VS. STRANGER NEUTRAL. Through comparing these contrasts we found common right-hemisphere localized activations in the anterior insula, and middle temporal gyrus. These results support the previous suggestion that only happiness is processed through a specialized network when the social stimulus is relevant, and sadness is processed the same regardless of familiarity. The anterior insula, with its association with empathy provides support for a common ground of activation between sadness and happiness through the activation of empathy networks.

PARTNER HAPPY VS. PARTNER NEUTRAL WITH PARTNER SAD VS. PARTNER NEUTRAL. Through cross-examining these contrasts we found common correlative activations bilaterally in the superior temporal sulcus. Common right-hemisphere localized activations were found in the anterior insula, anterior intraparietal sulcus, PMA, supplementary motor cortex, premotor cortex, and the DL-PFC. Lastly, common activations localized in the left-hemisphere were found in the middle temporal

gyrus. The previous suggestion gains further support through these results; there are several common activations when familiarity is no longer a contributing factor.

STRANGER HAPPY VS. STRANGER NEUTRAL WITH STRANGER SAD VS. STRANGER NEUTRAL. Through comparing these contrasts we found common right-hemisphere localized activations in the middle temporal gyrus. Common activations localized in the left-hemisphere were found in the PMA. As the PMA is associated with the empathy network, these results are consistent with the idea of empathetic responses being enhanced by relevance.

PARTNER HAPPY VS. STRANGER HAPPY (T1 AND T2) WITH PARTNER HAPPY VS. PARTNER NEUTRAL. Through examining these contrasts common right-hemisphere localized activations were found in the IFG, anterior insula/IFG, angular gyrus, premotor cortex, PMA, cingulate, and the SPL. Lastly, common activations localized in the left-hemisphere were found in the middle temporal lobe. These results suggest that individuals with greater SPS process positive social stimuli more intensely as reflected by activation of brain areas associated with empathy (Cauda et al., 2011; Fan, Duncan, Greck, & Northoff, 2010) and the MNS (Kurth, Zilles, & Fox, 2009; Shibata, Inui, & Ogawa, 2010). Further, it seems that responses are further enhanced by relevance of the social stimuli.

PARTNER SAD VS. STRANGER SAD (T1 AND T2) WITH PARTNER SAD VS. PARTNER NEUTRAL. Through examining these contrasts we found common right-hemisphere localized activations in the PMA and the cingulate, only. In accordance with the previous comparison's results, sadness only elicited minimal responses in regions associated with SPS and the MNS, through activation in the PMA (Ersner-Hersfield et al., 2007) and cingulate (Carr et al., 2003) respectively. Though substantial activations nonetheless, the activation of the empathy network was not as comprehensive as with the partner happy condition. Specifically, regions such as the IFG, SPL, angular gyrus, and medial temporal gyrus showed common activations when the stimulus presented positive affect, while none of these regions were present for that of negative affect. These results suggest greater incorporation of positive social stimuli for individuals with greater SPS compared with negative stimuli. As mentioned previously this may be a learned, perhaps protective, response to negative stimuli at the risk of being overtaxed.

ACROSS ALL CONDITIONS AND SESSIONS. There were common correlated activations, in the right-hemisphere, for our ROIs pertaining to the PMA and cingulate across all conditions and sessions. The premotor area found across all our contrasts for social affect was found in a previous study of SPS using a different experimental paradigm (Jagiellowicz et al., 2010). This suggests that this area may be key to SPS. The cingulate area found across all conditions was similar to that found in a meta-analysis of 40 empathy studies. This is solid evidence that SPS is associated with greater responsiveness to social, affective stimuli.

### GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationship between sensory processing sensitivity (SPS) and neural responses to affective facial images of close others and unfamiliar persons. The hypothesis that individuals with greater SPS (measured by the Highly Sensitive Person (HSP) scale) would show stronger brain activations in regions involved in empathy and the mirror neuron system (MNS) was supported. Our results showed that SPS was positively correlated with brain regions for empathy and emotions, to a greater extent in response to partner-versus strangers. The second hypothesis, that SPS would confer greater activation in regions of the brain associated with the mirror neuron system (MNS) in response to affective social stimuli was supported as the insular cortex, medial prefrontal cortex, premotor area, and inferior frontal gyrus were all activated in multiple contrasts (Carr et al., 2003; Kurth, Zilles, & Fox, 2009; Shibata, Inui, & Ogawa, 2010). The MNS is known for its similar responsiveness when observing as when enacting a specific action. In the present context individuals showed activation of the MNS in response to affective stimuli suggesting that highly sensitive people observing others' affect feel as though they were experiencing it themselves. This suggests that the MNS responds to affect. It also confirms self-reports that HSPs are more sensitive, responsive, or attuned to others' moods/emotions.

The core neural network in empathy consists of the anterior midcingulate cortex (aMCC), dorsal anterior cingulate cortex (dACC), and SMA (e.g., Cauda et al., 2011; Fan et al., 2011; Chen, et al., 2009; Straube & Miltner, 2011). The cingulate was a common activation across all contrasts and sessions for this study and though comparing the data

points to the regions of interest from Fan et al. (2011) our findings fall within tolerance of the aMCC and dACC. Overall, the results of this study were consistent with the present research on emotion processing and empathy. Additionally, the activations found in the IFG were similar to those reported in Shibata, Inui, and Ogawa's (2011) fMRI study on interpersonal action. As both studies were interested in responses to incongruence, affective and action observance, it seems like that the commonality in activations may be due to similar neural network responses. This suggests that affective social stimuli may invoke a response based in interpersonal action congruency, and further supports the association between affective response and the MNS. However, the present study did not replicate the activations in the right cerebellum found by of Shibata, Inui, and Ogawa (2011), possibly due to limited ROIs for this region. To effectively judge whether this discrepancy is substantial or not, further research should look to include additional ROIs for the right cerebellum.

## STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The sample size of the study was average for a study utilizing fMRI scanning, but this study was successfully efficient in its utilization of its sample. The strict inclusion criteria allowed for considerable homogeneity of the sample through ensuring a multitude of similarities amongst the participants in the study. The homogeneity further promoted the general success of the study by providing comparable and generalizable data sets that allowed for highly representative aggregate means necessary for our analyses. Furthermore, the inclusion of a second time trial likewise emphasized the efficient utilization of the sample. This second time trial allowed for within-subjects analyses, as well as supplementary data for aggregate comparisons and contrasts. Additionally, as the entirety of the reported results is in the form of contrasts and comparative analyses of contrasts, the study cannot explicitly lay claim to activations common throughout each condition. Additionally, by relying on contrasts, it is viable that minimal differences, as well as similarities, in activations may have been overlooked. However, the contrast-focused analyses prominently highlight the effected activations relevant to the experimental manipulations.

This study lends itself to a plethora of future research directions. The most pertinent of which being further investigation of the possible causal link between SPS and affective response activations. In order to confirm the anticipated directionality and causal nature of the link, future research should look to develop a greater understanding of SPS in regards to the potentiality of a more tractable state-based SPS.

Furthermore, as the results of this study suggest elevated activation in regions associated with the MNS in affective states, it seems that the social perception of emotions and action observation are cognitively interpreted in a similar manner. Through this it is likely that, much like the actions learned in cooperation with MNS activation, the development of emotional response and perceptual cognition are likewise abetted by MNS activations. Thus, future research ought to pursue this theoretical understanding through comparison of MNS activations for emotional perception and action observation. Additionally, one could manipulate the development of emotional response and perceptual cognition with a three group design: one control group with no 'new' stimuli; one where a 'new' emotion, alongside the corresponding orientation of facial features, is introduced; and the last with just introduction of the 'new' emotion's corresponding orientation of facial features.

### **Conclusion**

The primary goal of this study was to bridge the gap between research in neural correlates of SPS and processing of affective social stimuli varying in relevance. Through this, the study managed to create a foundation for claims of the significant importance of SPS and potentiate development in understanding its integral role in social, as well is perceptual, cognition. The results, showing activations of key regions for empathy and the MNS across a variety of conditions provide good support for behavioral findings that HSPs are more sensitive to/aroused by/ responsive to others' affect. The present study showed the neural mechanisms through which SPS is associated with greater responsiveness, namely through the MNS.

By expanding on previous works in SPS (Aron & Aron, 1997), emotionality (Fan et al., 2011), the junction between the two (Aron et al., 2005), and the MNS (Shibata, Inui, & Ogawa, 2011), the results of the present study suggest that these facets are cognitively related and may develop through similar processes, if not serve similar functions. They



suggest that the MNS responds to affective stimuli as well as action-oriented stimuli. The results also provide greater elaboration of the MNS and empathy by which a trait (SPS) expresses variation. Further exploration into these seemingly interwoven concepts will give greater breadth to our understanding of long-elusive fields of psychology including, but not exclusive to: intuitive perception, empathy, social development, temperaments, and possibly even consciousness. It is imperative to explicate the existence of a conclusive link between the MNS, empathy, and SPS as the implications of such a link are endless. Every element of man's life is shaped by these constructs, for man is little more than his cognition and his social presence.

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TABLE 1

*HSP, NEUROTICISM, AND EMOTION RATING MEANS FOR TIME TRIALS*

Time		HSP		Neuroticism		Stranger Happy		Stranger Sad		
						Joy	Friendship	Anxiety	Sadness	Compassion
1	<b>Mean</b>	<b>4.08</b>	<b>2.72</b>	<b>2.11</b>	<b>1.78</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>1.83</b>	<b>1.94</b>		
	Std.Dev	1.18	1.09	0.83	0.73	0.99	0.86	0.8		
2	<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.94</b>	<b>2.50</b>							
	Std.Dev	1.27	1.14							

**TABLE 2**  
**ACTIVATION DATA POINTS AT REGIONS OF INTEREST**

TIME ONE:								
Brain region	Left				Right			
	x	y	z	P	x	y	z	P
<b><i>Partner Happy vs. Stranger Happy Contrast: Positive Correlation</i></b>								
Insula <sup>4</sup>	-39	18	3	.039	36	24	-12	.009
Anterior insula/IFG <sup>8</sup>					45	27	21	.021
Angular gyrus <sup>1</sup>					34	-72	28	.003
Anterior parietal region <sup>9</sup>	-27	-48	66	.041	27	-48	72	.005
Superior parietal lobe <sup>1</sup>					16	-63	63	.036
Superior parietal lobe (BA 5,7)/ Intraparietal sulcus <sup>1</sup>					33	-45	54	.031
Parietal operculum <sup>9</sup>					52	-22	30	.005
Dorsolateral prefrontal cortex <sup>5</sup>					36	39	27	.013
Medial prefrontal cortex <sup>10</sup>	-9	66	17	.005				
Cingulate <sup>4</sup>					9	9	60	.015
Premotor cortex <sup>10</sup>					54	9	48	.032
Primary somatosensory cortex <sup>2</sup>					48	-18	48	.000
Primary somatosensory cortex <sup>9</sup>					57	-15	42	.000
Premotor area <sup>1</sup>					24	3	57	.001
					33	-3	45	.008

## CROSSROADS

Premotor area <sup>3</sup>	-9	-3	51	.002					
Middle temporal gyrus <sup>12</sup>	-45	-69	9	.028					
<b>Partner Happy vs. Stranger Happy Contrast: Negative Correlation</b>									
Nothing significant @ .001									
Insula <sup>4</sup>	-33	18	9	.020		42	24	-12	.039
Insula <sup>3</sup>	-42	-33	21	.027					
Insula <sup>9</sup>						39	9	-12	.003
Anterior parietal region <sup>9</sup>	-27	-48	66	.018					
Superior parietal lobe (BA 5,7)/ Intraparietal sulcus <sup>1</sup>						27	-45	51	.005
						33	-45	60	.031
Superior parietal lobe <sup>1</sup>						12	-57	60	.009
Premotor area <sup>1</sup>						27	3	54	.009
						36	3	51	.009
Premotor area <sup>3</sup>	-6	-3	57	.001					
Cingulate <sup>4</sup>						12	6	60	.008
Dorsolateral prefrontal cortex <sup>5</sup>						27	45	27	.006
Cingulate gyrus <sup>2</sup>	-4	11	29	.014		10	3	45	.010
Thalamus <sup>3</sup>	-3	-21	0	.003					
Superior frontal gyrus <sup>4</sup>	-9	18	48	.025					
Medial Prefrontal cortex <sup>10</sup>						12	57	18	.001
<b>Partner Sad vs. Stranger Sad Contrast: Negative Correlation</b>									
Lateral orbitofrontal cortex						45	45	-6	.000



Inferior frontal gyrus						30	35	12	.000
Insula <sup>4</sup>	-33	18	9	.020		42	24	-12	.039
TIME TWO:									
<b>Brain region</b>	<b>Left</b>					<b>Right</b>			
	x	y	z	P		x	y	z	P
<b><i>Partner Happy vs. Stranger Happy Contrast: Positive Correlation</i></b>									
IFG <sup>8</sup>						48	27	15	.006
IFG <sup>9,12</sup>						50	21	23	.043
Angular gyrus <sup>1</sup>						33	-72	33	.001
Anterior parietal region <sup>9</sup>						27	-42	72	.046
Superior parietal lobe <sup>1</sup>						12	-63	66	.048
Dorsolateral prefrontal cortex <sup>5</sup>						33	42	27	.017
Cingulate <sup>4</sup>						12	15	54	.019
Premotor cortex <sup>10</sup>						51	6	48	.036
Premotor area <sup>1</sup>						45	0	57	.023
Middle temporal gyrus <sup>12</sup>	-44	-69	9	.036					
<b><i>Partner Happy vs. Partner Neutral: Positive Correlation</i></b>									
Anterior insula <sup>5</sup>						36	21	6	.037
IFG <sup>4,11</sup>	-42	24	3	.045		48	27	6	.004
IFG <sup>9</sup>						54	18	21	.025
Anterior intraparietal sulcus <sup>10</sup>						39	-39	45	.017

## CROSSROADS

Premotor cortex <sup>10</sup>						48	9	48	.011
Temporoparietal junction <sup>10</sup>						51	-54	21	.045
Angular gyrus <sup>13</sup>						63	-51	12	.029
Middle temporal gyrus <sup>3,12</sup>	-48	-54	9	.029					
Middle/superior temporal cortex <sup>5</sup>						60	-61	21	.015
Superior temporal sulcus <sup>10</sup>	-54	-54	3	.009		48	-54	9	.050
Superior occipital gyrus/ precuneus <sup>1</sup>						30	-72	39	.011
Precuneus <sup>3</sup>	-15	-75	21	.041					
Middle occipital gyrus <sup>7</sup>	-51	-69	-6	.031					
Middle occipital gyrus <sup>3</sup>						39	-75	-12	.017
Inferior occipital cortex <sup>5</sup>	-57	-66	-3	.044					
SPL <sup>1</sup>						27	-63	60	.035
SPL <sup>1</sup>						36	-39	42	.007
Premotor area <sup>1</sup>						30	3	57	.035
Premotor area <sup>1</sup>						48	6	54	.004
Premotor area <sup>1</sup>						39	-3	39	.038
Cingulate cortex <sup>4</sup>						3	24	42	.019
Cingulate <sup>4</sup>						6	6	57	.019
Pre-supplementary motor area <sup>5</sup>						6	18	54	.018
Dorsolateral prefrontal cortex <sup>5</sup>						42	39	21	.035
Post/precentral gyrus <sup>5</sup>	-24	-24	75	.035					
<b>Partner Happy vs. Partner Neutral: Negative Correlation</b>									

Nothing significant @ .001									
<b><i>Partner Sad vs. Stranger Sad Contrast: Positive Correlation</i></b>									
Insula <sup>3</sup>	-39	-24	18	.006					
	-42	-30	27	.015					
Superior frontal gyrus <sup>4</sup>	-9	18	48	.020		35	26	-9	.067
Premotor area <sup>1</sup>						27	6	54	.024
Cingulate <sup>4</sup>						12	3	54	.006
Cingulate gyrus <sup>2</sup>						15	6	45	.030
<b><i>Partner Sad vs. Stranger Sad Contrast: Negative Correlation</i></b>									
Subcallosal area						12	39	-3	.018
<b><i>Partner Sad vs. Partner Neutral: Positive Correlation</i></b>									
Anterior insula <sup>5</sup>						33	18	-3	.049
Anterior intraparietal sulcus <sup>10</sup>						36	-39	45	.043
Inferior parietal cortex <sup>5</sup>						45	-27	54	.038
Premotor area <sup>1</sup>						27	3	54	.045
Postcentral gyrus <sup>2</sup>						48	-27	57	.020
Cingulate <sup>4</sup>						6	6	57	.042
Premotor cortex <sup>10</sup>						45	3	33	.026
Middle temporal gyrus <sup>7,12</sup>	-42	-66	9	.019		36	-63	-3	.029
Superior temporal sulcus <sup>10</sup>	-51	-45	15	.046		51	-45	12	.049
Dorsolateral prefrontal cortex <sup>5</sup>						42	39	21	.030
Clastrum <sup>7</sup>						36	15	-6	.038

## CROSSROADS

Caudate <sup>7</sup>					9	-3	30	.026
<b>Partner Sad vs. Partner Neutral: Negative Correlation</b>								
Nothing significant @ .001								
<b>Stranger Happy vs. Stranger Neutral: Positive Correlation</b>								
Anterior insula, extending to inferior frontal gyrus <sup>5</sup>					27	27	0	.026
Anterior insula <sup>4</sup>					27	27	-6	.006
Inferior frontal gyrus <sup>4</sup>					27	27	-2	.022
Middle temporal gyrus <sup>2</sup>					51	6	-24	.032
Premotor area <sup>7</sup>	-33	27	12	.028				
Precentral Ggyrus <sup>2</sup>	-63	-3	18	.014	45	-12	24	.004
Hippocampus <sup>5</sup>	-27	-9	-15	.010				
Parahippocampal gyrus <sup>3</sup>	-27	-9	-15	.009				
Amygdala/anterior hippocampus <sup>7</sup>	-27	-9	-12	.017				
<b>Exploratory</b>								
Medial prefrontal cortex	-18	30	-12	.000				
Subcallosal cingulate	-9	54	-12	.000				
<b>Stranger Happy vs. Stranger Neutral: Negative Correlation</b>								
Nothing significant @ .001								
<b>Stranger Sad vs. Stranger Neutral: Positive Correlation</b>								
Middle temporal gyrus <sup>2</sup>					48	-48	-6	.021
Middle temporal gyrus <sup>7</sup>					12	-9	-15	.024

Premotor area <sup>7</sup>	-33	27	15	.047					
Supramarginal gyrus <sup>3</sup>						39	-42	30	.021
Supramarginal gyrus <sup>7</sup>						39	-42	30	.021
Cingulate gyrus <sup>2</sup>	-18	6	30	.023					
Thalamus <sup>3</sup>	-3	-33	3	.022					
Hippocampus/ parahippocampus <sup>7</sup>						33	-15	-21	.032
Exploratory	-27	0	30	.001					
<b><i>Stranger Sad vs. Stranger Neutral: Negative Correlation</i></b>									
Exploratory									
Occipital						3	-68	9	.000
Middle temporal gyrus	-48	-48	0	.000					

NOTE. All results are correlated with higher levels of Sensory Processing Sensitivity. P values (P) for Region of Interest Analyses are for FDR  $p < .05$ .

1 = Jagiellowicz et al. (2010) for greater SPS participants detecting minor>major changes in visual scenes, controlling for neuroticism and introversion

2 = Hedden et al. (2008)

3 = Fusar-Poli et al. (2009). Response to emotional faces

4 = Fan et al. (2011). Meta analysis of 40 empathy studies. 4.1 = all empathy studies, 4.2 results separated by affect and cognitive evaluation of affect

5 = Lamm, Decety, & Singer (2011). Meta-analysis of 32 empathy studies. 5.4 provides results for picture> cue-based.

7 = Murty et al. (2010). Meta-analysis of 16 studies on emotional memory encoding

8 = Singer et al. (2004).

## CROSSROADS

9 = Iacoboni et al. (1999)

10 = VanOverwalle et al. (2009)

11 = Liakakis et al. (2011)

12 = Mazzola et al. (2010)

13 = Ortigue et al. (2007)

## CROSS-SECTIONAL RESULTS

*PH VS. SH ACROSS SESSIONS*

Anterior insula/IFG	45	27	21	48	27	15
IFG	45	27	21	50	21	23
Angular Gyrus	34	-72	28	33	-72	33
Anterior Parietal Region	27	-48	72	27	-42	72
Superior Parietal Lobe	16	-63	63	12	-63	66
Cingulate	9	9	60	12	15	54
Premotor Cortex	54	9	48	51	6	48
Premotor Area	24	3	57	45	0	57
	33	-3	45	45	0	57
Middle Temporal Gyrus	-45	-69	9	-44	-69	9

*PS VS. SS ACROSS SESSIONS*

Insula	-42	-33	21	-39	-24	18
	-42	-33	21	-42	-30	27
	-33	18	9	-39	-24	18
	-33	18	9	-42	-30	27
Premotor area	27	3	54	27	6	54
	36	3	51	27	6	54
Cingulate	12	6	60	12	3	54
Cingulate Gyrus	10	3	45	15	6	45
Superior Frontal Gyrus	-9	18	48	-9	18	48

*PH VS. PN AND SH VS. SN*

Anterior Insula extending to inferior frontal gyrus	36	21	6	27	27	0
Anterior Insula	48	27	6	27	27	-6
Inferior Frontal Gyrus	54	18	21	27	27	-2
	48	27	0	27	27	-2

*PS VS. PN AND SS VS. SN*

## CROSSROADS

Middle Temporal Gyrus	36	-63	-3	48	-48	-6
	36	-63	-3	12	-9	-15

*PH VS. PN AND SS VS. SN*  
(none)

*PS VS. PN AND SH VS. SN*

Anterior Insula	33	-18	-3	27	27	-6
Middle Temporal Gyrus	36	-63	-3	51	6	-24

*PH VS. PN AND PS VS. PN*

Anterior Insula	36	21	6	33	18	-3
	48	27	6	33	18	-3
Anterior Intraparietal Sulcus	39	-39	45	36	-39	45
Premotor Area	30	3	57	27	3	54
	48	6	54	27	3	54
	39	-3	39	27	3	54
Cingulate	6	6	57	6	6	57
Premotor Cortex	48	9	48	45	3	57
Middle Temporal Gyrus	-48	-54	9	-42	-66	9
	-57	-60	0	-42	-66	9
Superior Temporal Sulcus	-54	-54	3	-51	-45	15
	48	-54	9	51	-45	12
Dorsolateral Prefrontal Cortex	42	39	21	42	39	21

*SH VS. SN AND SS VS. SN*

Middle Temporal Gyrus	51	6	-24	48	-48	-6
	51	6	-24	12	-9	-15
Premotor Area	-33	27	12	-33	27	15



*PH VS. SH (T1 AND T2) AND PH VS. PN*

Anterior insula/IFG	45	27	21	48	27	15	36	21	6
							36	18	-3
							48	27	6
IFG	45	27	21	50	21	23	54	18	21
							48	27	0
Angular Gyrus	34	-72	28	33	-72	33	63	-51	12
Middle Temporal Gyrus	-45	-69	9	-44	-69	9	-48	-54	9
							-57	-60	0
Premotor Cortex	54	9	48	51	6	48	48	9	48
Premotor Area	24	3	57	45	0	57	30	3	57
	33	-3	45				48	6	54
							39	-3	39
Cingulate	9	9	60	12	15	54	6	6	57
Superior Parietal Lobe	16	-63	63	12	-63	66	27	-63	60
							36	-39	42

*PS VS. SS (T1 AND T2) AND PS VS. SN*

Premotor Area	27	3	54	27	6	54	27	3	54
	36	3	51						
Cingulate	12	6	60	12	3	54	6	6	57

*ACROSS ALL CONDITIONS*

<b>Premotor Area</b> (Happy)	24	3	57	45	0	57	30	3	57
(Happy)	33	-3	45				48	6	54
(Happy)							39	-3	39
(Sad)	27	3	54	27	6	54	27	3	54
(Sad)	36	3	51						
<b>Cingulate</b> (Happy)	9	9	60	12	15	54	6	6	57
(Sad)	12	6	60	12	3	54	6	6	57

FIGURE 1

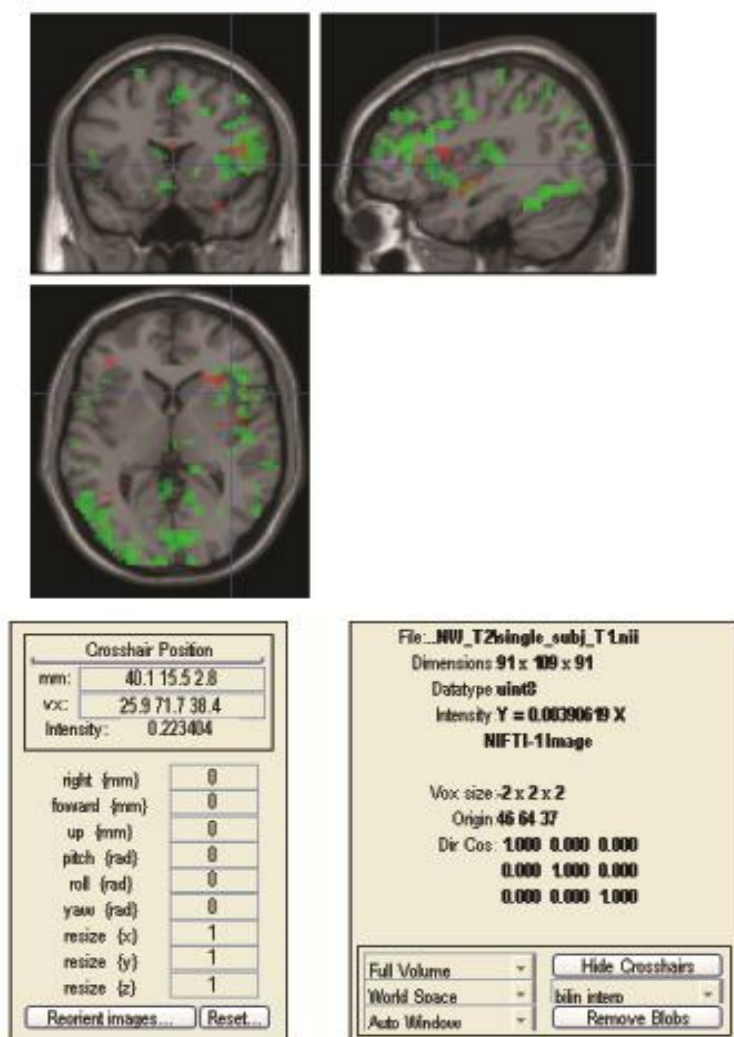


FIGURE 2

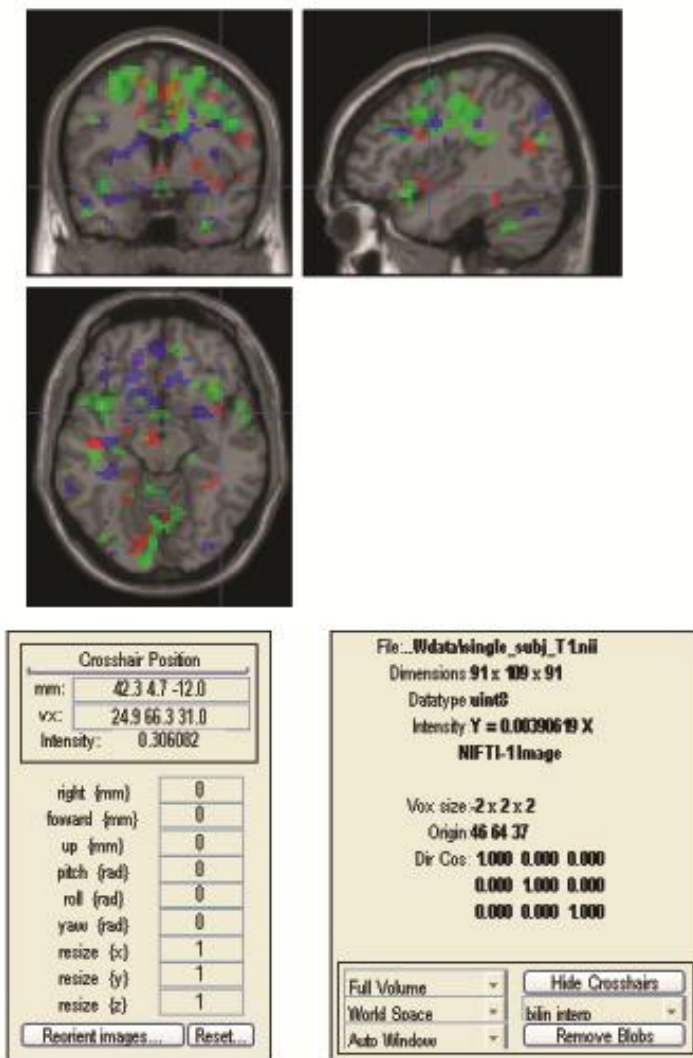


FIGURE 3

