

THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION:

UNDERSTANDING DIVERGENT LEGITIMACY OUTCOMES IN AFRICAN SELF-DETERMINATION MOVEMENTS

Why do some self-determination movements (SDMs) receive international recognition, while others with comparable state-like capacity remain unrecognized?

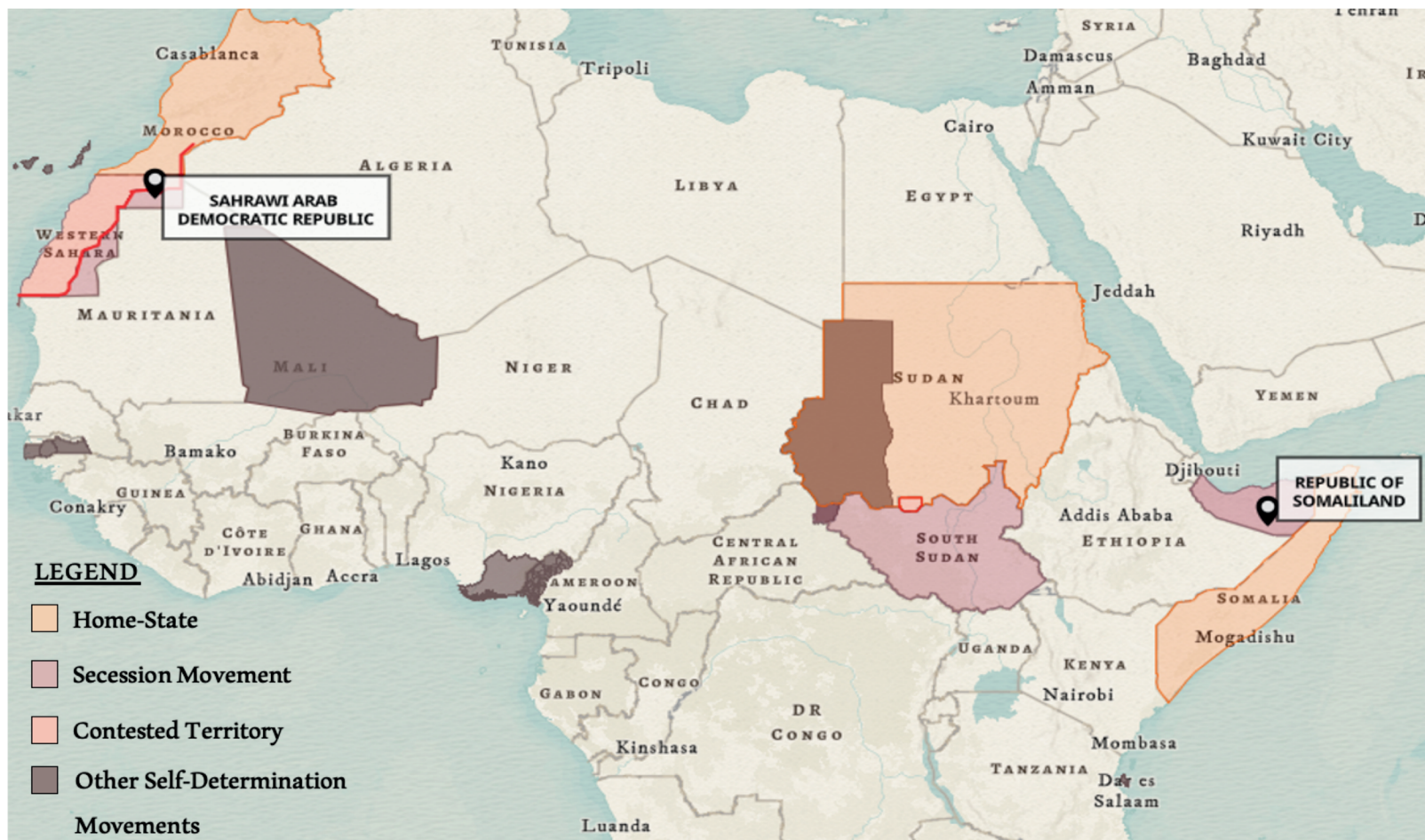
BACKGROUND

- State-like capacity and human rights abuses do not lead to international recognition.
- Recognition grants access to financial markets
- Recognition is a selective political act

KEY DEFINITIONS

- **Home-State Consent:** Formal agreement to secede from the parent state.
- **P5 Exogenous Pressure:** Interests of the United Nations (UN) Security Council Permanent Members (P5) that bypass regional norms.
- **AU Veto:** African Union (AU) norms protect existing colonial borders, which discourages secession.

FIGURE 1: African Secessionist Claims



Note. Since 1993, only Eritrea and South Sudan (2011) have successfully gained statehood via home-state consent.

METHODOLOGY

Mill's Method of Difference & Process Tracing

- **Cases:** South Sudan, Somaliland & Western Sahara

Data Collection

- **Sources:** UN Digital Library & AU PAPS Digital Repository.
- **N:** 1084 primary documents
- **Coding:** Analyzed diplomatic texts and language for sentiments and thematic indicators.

FIGURE 2: PRISONER'S DILEMMA

HOME-STATE	SDM	
	Cooperate <i>Engagement</i>	Defect <i>De-facto Exit</i>
	Cooperate <i>Consent</i>	Defect <i>AU Veto</i>
	3, 2	1, 4
	4, 1	2, 3

Payoff: 1= Worst, 2= Manageable, 3= Good/ Stable, 4= Best Possible Outcomes

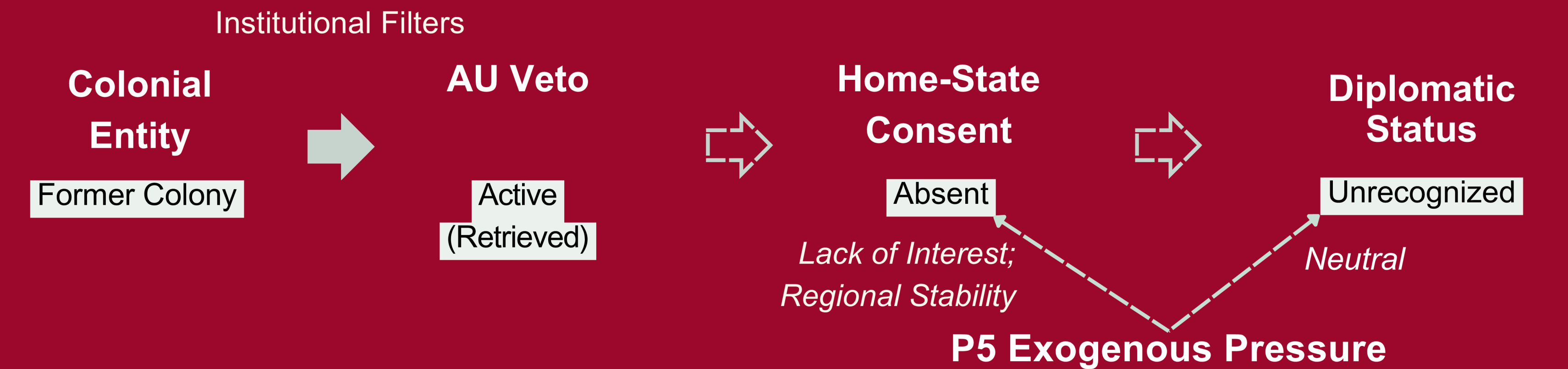
FIGURE 3: THE WIN-SET

HOME-STATE	SDM	
	Cooperate <i>Negotiations</i>	Defect <i>De-facto Exit</i>
	Cooperate <i>Consent</i>	Defect <i>AU Veto</i>
	3, 3	1, 4
	1, 1	1, 3

SOUTH SUDAN 1997-2015 (3, 3)



SOMALILAND 1991 TO PRESENT (2, 3)



WESTERN SAHARA 1975 TO PRESENT (2, 3)

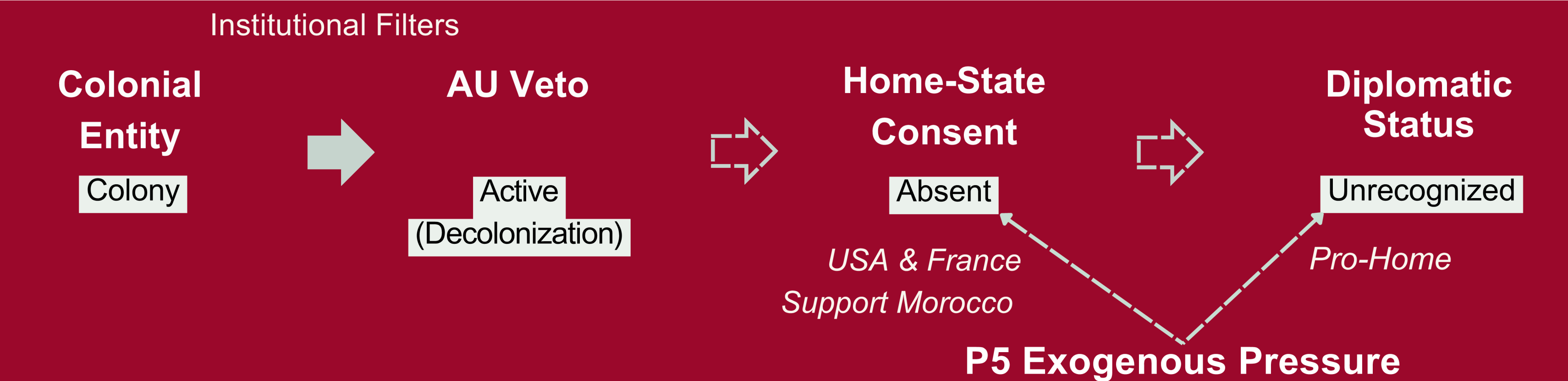


TABLE 1: Truth Table

Case Study	Colonial Entity	AU Veto	P5 Exogenous Pressure	Home-State Consent	Diplomatic Status
South Sudan	0	0	1	1	1
Somaliland	1	1	0	0	0
Western Sahara	1	1	0	0	0

Note. This table isolates the theoretical variables present (1) or absent (0) across the cases to explain the divergent outcomes.

TABLE 2: The Shift to Cooperation

Payoff Feature	Win-Set P5 Exogenous Pressure	Prisoner's Dilemma	Pro-Home State P5 Exogenous Pressure
Equilibrium	(3, 3) Recognition	(2, 3) Conflict Stalemate	(2, 3) Frozen Stalemate
Catalyst	Pro-SDM P5 interests + waived AU Veto	Neutral P5 + active AU Veto	Pro-Home State + P5 backed Active Veto
State Payoff	Subsidized "Economic Survival"	Legal title; no control	P5 backed state dominance
SDM Payoff	Full international recognition	Unrecognition	Unrecognition

Note. Diplomatic status (1) signals formal recognition, representing the win-set (3, 3) case study South Sudan.

ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

- **All Cases Share:**
 - Conflict and humanitarian crises;
 - Distinct etho-cultural identities;
 - Strategic geographical locations;
 - and natural resources.
- **These factors fail to explain variation in recognition outcomes.**