

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**INSTITUTE OF POLITICAL STUDIES**



**MASTER'S THESIS**

**Explaining the Kosovo's recognition and its withdrawal**

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**Bc. Jan Dostál**

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Institute of Political Studies  
Department of International Relations

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withdrawal**

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Author of the Thesis: Bc. Jan Dostál

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Supervisor: doc. PhDr. Jan Karlas, Ph. D., M. A.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis is focused mainly on the recognition of Kosovo, its subsequent withdrawal and finding factors influencing both of these acts. In order to identify them, it firstly introduces the theoretical and historical background, inter alia the debate between declaratory and constitutive theory, the brief history of Kosovo and existing explanations for both recognition and derecognition. Apart from building on previous literature, it develops a new distinction, between internal and external factors of (de)recognition, the former being connected with the characteristics of the country itself, whereas the latter with the influences of other states. Secondly, it conducts a quantitative analysis including recognition as a dependent variable and the individual factors representing independent variables. Thirdly, three cases of derecognition, Suriname, Palau and Ghana are presented in a brief descriptive analysis. The results show that both internal and external factors influence recognition to the same extent. Specifically, transnational religious ties (percentage of Muslims, or Orthodox), economic wealth and influence of other states, either by following their example (voting coincidence with the USA in the UNGA), or through alliances (membership in NATO) proved as highly significant, with domestic vulnerability, regulation of religion and ethnic ties also playing a role. In contrast, internal dynamics, especially a change in the government, seems to matter less in the case of derecognition than external factors, like a possible offer of financial aid in exchange for it. The countries could also only emulate the behaviour of others from the same region with no specific reason of their own.

## **Abstrakt**

Tato práce je zaměřena především na uznání Kosovo, jeho následné stažení a nalezení faktorů ovlivňující oba dva tyto činy. Ve snaze identifikovat tyto faktory je nejprve představeno teoretické a historické pozadí, mimo jiné také debata mezi deklaratorní a

konstitutivní teorií, krátká historie Kosova a existující vysvětlení jak pro uznání, tak pro oduznání. Mimo navázání na předchozí literaturu je nově rozlišováno mezi vnitřními a vnějšími faktory (od)uznání, přičemž to první je spojeno s charakteristikou země samotné, zatímco to druhé s vlivem ostatních států. Následně je provedena kvantitativní analýza s uznáním jako závislou proměnnou a s jednotlivými faktory představující závislé proměnné. A poté jsou v podobě deskriptivní analýzy prezentovány tři případy oduznání, Surinam, Palau a Ghana. Výsledky ukazují, že jak vnitřní, tak vnější faktory mají na uznání stejný vliv. Konkrétně náboženská pouta (procento muslimů, nebo pravoslavných), ekonomické bohatství a vliv ostatních států, ať už následováním jejich příkladu (shoda v hlasování s USA ve VS OSN), nebo skrz aliance (členství v NATO) se ukázala jako obzvláště významná. Zranitelnost, regulace náboženství a etnická pouta taktéž hrají roli. Naproti tomu na vnitřní dynamice, zejména na změnách ve vládě, záleží v případě oduznání méně než na vnějších faktorech, jako možné nabídce finanční pomoci výměnou za něj. Země taktéž mohly pouze napodobovat chování ostatních z jejich regionu, aniž by k oduznání měly nějaký vlastní důvod.

## **Keywords**

Kosovo, Recognition of States, Theory and Practice of Recognition, Withdrawal of Recognition, Derecognition, Factors influencing Recognition, Factors influencing Derecognition.

## **Klíčová slova**

Kosovo, uznání států, teorie a praxe uznání, stažení uznání, oduznání, faktory ovlivňující uznání, faktory ovlivňující oduznání.

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In Prague on 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 2021

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## Introduction

The Republic of Kosovo has declared its independence on Serbia on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 2008<sup>1</sup> and since then has attempted to become a member of the international community by seeking recognition from other states. Its existence, establishment and status in general still remains an issue for disputes, hence it still belongs to the group of states with contested recognition. That means some other countries in the world did not express their intention to acknowledge Kosovo as an independent state in an official statement or did not establish diplomatic relations with it (for various reasons). In fact, even the exact number of states that did or did not do so is surrounded by a veil of unclarity. The official site of the Kosovo's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) cites the number 115 (mfa-ks.net, 2021),<sup>2</sup> but a few countries claim that the act of recognition never took place (such as São Tomé and Príncipe, arquivo.pt, 2013). The matter becomes more complicated with the fact that some of those mentioned in the list later decided to change their decision and withdrew their recognition. The Serbian authorities assert 18 nations revoked their initial support for Kosovo (The Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2020), although again several of them subsequently denied it. Nevertheless, aside from those ambiguities, why did some governments decide to recognize Kosovo and others did not? Accordingly, what motivation lies behind the withdrawal of this act?

This thesis aims to answer these questions, it is primarily focused on finding possible factors that could influence both moves. Although disagreements would arise on their legality and significance, they still could serve as an important sign of foreign policy orientation. Despite some efforts (especially Mirilovic & Siroky, 2017), the issue has not been studied systematically and in the case of derecognition (other term for the withdrawal of recognition) almost not at all. The relevance of this topic thus lies in the relative scarcity of scholar research in this area, especially in the case of derecognition. Moreover, as they have happened quite recently (from 2016 until now, 2020) and could influence also the overall balance in the international arena against Kosovo (more United Nations members now oppose than support its independence), it can shed some light also on the current situation of Kosovo and its future.

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<sup>1</sup> More specifically, the Assembly of Kosovo has passed a declaration of independence of the Republic of Kosovo on Serbia. See UNHCR (2021).

<sup>2</sup> To be exact, it lists 117 entities, including Cook Islands and Niue, which are both a dependent territory of New Zealand (albeit with a certain autonomy in foreign affairs). These two are not considered here as a fully independent state.

The possible explanations of either act can be in general divided into two groups: internal and external. The former refers to the those with origin inside the (de)recognizing state, they can be attributed to the characteristics of the country itself, like its economic strength or population, or to the situation in it, e. g. the regime type (or change of governments in the case of derecognition). The latter entails those coming from outside the state in question, either in form of a direct (economic incentives from other states) or indirect influence (membership in alliances, emulation of others' behaviour). In case of recognition, a quantitative approach is used, all factors are treated as independent variables, with the objective to determine their correlation with the recognition as a dependent variable. A generalized linear model, as well as Cox proportional hazards model is applied to the data from various databases. The results confirm earlier hypotheses that especially transnational religious ties (percentage of Muslims, but also percentage of Orthodox) and American influence plays a big role and that GDP per capita, domestic vulnerability and regulation of religion matter as well. It adds that also following the suit of others (emulation) and ethnic ties (percentage of Albanians) could be possibly highly relevant.

However, a final answer to the issue of derecognition could not be provided due to the unavailability of data. Three cases are selected (based on several criteria, alphabetically): Ghana, Suriname and Palau. Three hypotheses are laid out in a descriptive analysis: the composition of government changed, thus the new one reversed the action of its predecessor; the move was done in an exchange of financial aid or under other pressure from bigger states or the first derecognizing state set an example that the others only imitated. In particular, any form of economic incentive is practically impossible to be proved and linked with the decision itself. Although most of the evidence based on the cases suggests that this scenario holds the highest probability in the cases presented, no definitive conclusion can be reached.

The thesis proceeds as follows: Firstly, a general overview is given, with a summary of the theories of (de)recognition, then the case of Kosovo is set into this context. Existing explanations for recognition are introduced, possible ones for derecognition are offered. Secondly, the analysis itself is summarized, the independent variables are identified and operationalized. Finally, a conclusion with implications and also limitations of the research is made.

# **1 The (de)recognition of states and the case of Kosovo - overview**

Firstly, the issue of recognition and its withdrawal should be addressed in general and in connection to the case of Kosovo. That is connected to a broader question of what constitutes a state in general. A big debate on this topic can be found in the literature and an in-depth analysis of states' theories falls outside of scope of this thesis, it focuses more on the recognition aspect. The term itself should be defined, although different theoretical approaches would disagree already on its meaning and significance. Nevertheless, recognition will be perceived as getting acknowledgement of the same status when establishing contact with other states. The next section will develop its theoretical and legal background.

## **1.1 Theories and forms of recognition**

As the most prominent theoretical understandings of recognition should probably be named these two streams of thought: declaratory and constitutive (some would maybe add third, discretionary). The former in short states that some objective, general rules under which an entity becomes state exists in the principles of international law (Nicholson & Grant, 2019, p. 25). What would these rules include? The Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States cited (by e.g. Lauterpacht, 2012, p. 419) as a source for international law in this area, lists four necessary qualification for every state: a permanent population, a defined territory, a government and a capacity to enter into relations with the other states (Montevideo Convention, 1933, Article 1). Despite the fact, that several objections could be made, like the limited applicability of this convention,<sup>3</sup> or unclarity of the last aspect, the most important message of this approach would say that recognition is not included in this list. In other words, to become a state, one does not require recognition from others, as long as all of the other conditions are met. (American Law Institute, 1987, p. 202). The act itself is therefore considered more as a political, although it comes with some legal implications. Critics of this theory have pointed out inter alia to several examples in practice not entirely in line with its expectations, raising questions like to what degree the government is supposed to exercise

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<sup>3</sup> Only 19 states are part of the Convention. However, it is still regarded as a source of customary international law in this regard (Lauterpacht, 2012).

control over the former two (which could be manifested on the case of Somalia, Kreijen, 2004, p. 355).<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, for constitutive scholars, recognition is in fact seen as the primary and only requirement that any state has to fulfil. Not that the other aspects would not matter, states may choose to grant recognition based on them, but they may ignore them, accept basically any entity on the same level as themselves and by that making them states (Nicholson & Grant, 2019, p. 28). This view results into an implication that in fact any international legal norm is constituted, its relevance depends on whether the parties to it regard themselves as states. Any of them can decide to (not) agree on its applicability in relations to the others, based exactly on recognition of them. That has been criticized as basically relativizing the whole system of international law, which would in the constitutive prism only set of bilateral agreements with no universal value (Ibid, p. 29). Discretionary theorists hold similar views in the sense that they emphasize the autonomy of the recognizing state, but for a different reason. They highlight the lack of regulation of recognition in international law in this area, deny any general rules and leave it for the sole interpretation of the state, which can decide for itself (Visoka, 2019, p. 319). We could certainly name other theories, or combinations of those two in some hybrid form, nevertheless it would probably prove more beneficial to turn now to different forms and effects of recognition.

Recognition can take place in many forms, but in general we can distinguish between two main ones: *de facto* and *de jure*. That was elaborated upon by e. g. Lauterpacht (1945, pp. 179), who draws the distinction between them on the basis of durability of such act, *de facto* in contrast to *de jure* being provisional in its nature. Nonetheless, he views them both as legal acts according to international law (pp. 164). Other authors have divided it differently, Kelsen (1941, pp. 605) has noted that recognition comprises of two acts: a political act and a legal one. As the name suggests, the former does not constitute any legal obligation (e. g. signed in a form of a mutual treaty), whereas the latter does. However, to him this distinction is different from the one between *de facto* and *de jure* recognition. This typology could also be linked with the withdrawal of recognition, which will be discussed in the next section.

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<sup>4</sup> That refers to the so called “failed states,” who are in short not able to secure this control in full extent, but still are put in the same category as other states. See e. g. Rotberg (2013).

## 1.2 The issue of derecognition

Given the fact that there was no consensus on the meaning of the act of recognition, we would not expect it also in the case of derecognition. In fact, this topic has not received much attention and thus is not really much specified in the literature. Even the term “derecognition” itself has not been used frequently. Probably firstly has been attempted to systematically study this issue by Visoka in 2019, where he operates with the term derecognition and delineate its meaning as “*a political decision to withdraw a recognition of the international legal sovereignty of a state or government*” (p. 316). However, as we could expect from the discussion about recognition itself, not everybody would agree especially with the purported pure political nature of the act. From the perspective of the declaratory theory the decision has no effect, when a state ceases to fulfil any of the criteria, it automatically loses the status. In addition, the Montevideo Convention explicitly states that “*recognition is irrevocable*” (Montevideo Convention, 1933, Article 6). In comparison, for the constitutive attitude the move itself results in the change in position to a non-state, at least in the eyes of the derecognizing actor. In a similar fashion it can be argued that a de facto recognition due to its characteristics could be at any time taken back. The same can be said about the political part of Kelsen’s notion of recognition, which is also possible to be later withdrawn, the state is allowed to reverse its original action (1941, pp. 180). But since there is the second, legal part of the decision, could that one be revoked? The answer to that would be most likely not. On the contrary, from the discretionary point of view, the possibility of derecognition remains in the hands of the state. All of the theories would perhaps agree on two scenarios in which derecognition could be considered legitimate: if the recognized state violates fundamental norms of international law (e.g. uses force) or in the case of dissolution or succession.<sup>5</sup> That is connected with the following issue: Does the actor by derecognizing some entity ipso facto recognize another entity? Or reversely, to what extent can recognition of one state limit recognition of another state, when the former is for example claiming the territory of the latter? Can we distinguish in this sense also between derecognition de jure (by derecognition as such) and de facto (by recognition of other states)? Another problematic question in this area arises when e. g. a coup d’état takes place – to what extent can recognition and its withdrawal be attributed to a certain government? And is it

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<sup>5</sup> It should be differentiated between the situation in which the state completely ceases to exist and/or is replaced by a successor (does not fulfil any of the three criteria) and a situation when it still functions, but there are others claiming its territory and/or population and/or government.

allowed to take back derecognition and re-recognize the country? And we could continue also by debating over sovereignty and more can be brought to the general theoretical and legal considerations, but it might become less abstract after introducing some current examples of contested recognition and then also the practice of derecognition, all having some implications for the concepts as such.

### **1.3 Contested recognition**

By the term “contested recognition” it is meant recognizing entities (as “states” in this context could be disputed) which do not receive universal acknowledgement (by all the already accepted states), it is therefore not implying the dubious nature of the act itself. Scholars would disagree on the name, characteristics and limits of this category, mainly due to its ambiguous nature. The so-called *de facto* states (Pegg 1998), quasi-states (Kolstø 2006) and unrecognised states (Caspersen 2012) share in common possessing the functional capabilities (government), population and in most cases also territorial control but international recognition is more or less limited (Bouris & Fernández-Molina, 2019). However, examples like Palestine shows that even the element of authority over the land can be limited, leading to a conclusion that only unchallenged fact about this category of “states” is probably their unclear status and their declared independence. Except Kosovo and Palestine, we can identify the following as belonging to this group (in alphabetical order): Abkhazia, Northern Cyprus, South Ossetia, Taiwan, and Western Sahara.<sup>6</sup> Existence of these mentioned is admitted by at least one other widely recognized state (i.e. a UN member). The list can include other entities, such as Artsakh (Republic of Artsakh, formerly Nagorno-Karabakh), Somaliland (Republic of Somaliland) and Transnistria (Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic). Many more rebel groups with control over some part of territory, but with even more unclear status under international law (like the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics) can be found, which would however bring the debate to other issues and complicate it. In general, we could say about all these contested states that their position varies in terms of number of recognitions, ranging from 0 in the case of Somaliland (Bragg, 2015, p. 3) to 139 for the State of Palestine (palestineun.org, 2021), which have been granted the United Nations (UN) observer status. That can thus show us the difference between the abovementioned

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<sup>6</sup> By their official name: Republic of Kosovo, State of Palestine, Republic of Abkhazia, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Republic of South Ossetia, Republic of China, and Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR).

theories and practice, especially in the current globalized and more interconnected world. On the one hand, recognition does to a great extent form at least the status of and perception about the state itself, in other words influences the relationship vis-à-vis other states, on the other hand it is still largely confined by the abilities of the government (in many areas, like its administrative or enforcing role).

This discussion can also be demonstrated in other dimensions: membership in various international organizations (IOs). It can be argued that all states seek full membership in the United Nations (UN) as the only global and universal IO, as its nature implies the full inclusion of them. Of course, plenty of regional organizations exist and these states join them too, this can also be presented as an aspect of the recognition issue. In this regard, we should not forget about other parts of the UN system, especially about the 15 UN specialized agencies, as they also aim for the incorporation of the entire world (United Nations, 2021).<sup>7</sup> For example, Palestine enjoys the privileges of membership in the UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Kosovo is participating in the organs of the World Bank Group (The World Bank, 2021). That suggests that although the contested states might not have established diplomatic relationships with the other members of the IO (which is the most common manifestation of recognition), they possess the same set of rights and privileges as them. This fact may be criticized, nevertheless it can have implications for the position of the state, e.g. somehow lessen the impact of the formal recognition. More could be written about this matter, which is however not so closely linked to this thesis, therefore the attention will now turn to the practice of derecognition.

#### **1.4 Derecognition in practice**

Despite the expectation that derecognition should occur quite rarely, few cases preceding the Kosovo one should be introduced, all having in common their contested status. But before that, Visoka (2019, p. 322-3) claims that in practice the process of derecognition consists of three phases. Firstly, the independence and sovereignty of the state, which will be derecognized needs to be questioned by someone else (in other words, it has to obtain the contested status), both domestically and internationally. Secondly, other countries have to be persuaded to change their position by someone or something.

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<sup>7</sup> Although that has been undermined by withdrawals from some of them, especially UNESCO and UNIDO. For details about withdrawals from UN specialized agencies see e. g. Imber, 1989.

Most often, it is done by the state contesting the status of the other one and it can lead to some “*diplomatic signalling*” of a new stance on the issue, in the form of e.g. representatives’ statements expressing the change. And finally, the decision is formalized, most often by sending an official note verbale declaring this intention and also by interrupting mutual diplomatic and other (economical, political) contacts. How can this be illustrated on specific examples? Most notably, the situation of the Republic of China (Taiwan) will be more closely examined.

After the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949, China was split into two parts, with both having territorial claims over the whole territory and asserting their represent China as such, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC). As a result of that, states did not formally recognize both of them at the same time and when shifting the recognition mostly from the latter to the former, they effectively derecognized the latter. Already during the 1950s and 1960s, among others the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Sweden, and France shifted their recognition of China from the ROC to the PRC (Bressi, 1972, p. 820). Question remains, if the “facts on the ground” (change in control over the territory) do (or do not) mean this shift could be interpreted as succession, as a recognition of a new state replacing the old, which should be distinguished from derecognition of a still existing state (but in contrast, the ROC has still existed, has fulfilled the three Montevideo criteria). And could that be said also about all the states that changed their initial acknowledgement of the ROC because of its replacement in the UN by the PRC in 1971? After the UN General Assembly (UNGA) has passed the Resolution 2758, which has basically enabled that the PRC has taken the position to represent China to the UN instead of the ROC (United Nations, 1971), a lot of states previously endorsing ROC have recognized PRC, including also the United States in 1979. This act has been labelled as derecognition and studied by e. g. Sheikh (1980). Until the 1990s, the ROC has pursued the policy of not establishing contacts with a state that recognizes the PRC (that holds true also vice versa – so called “One China” policy, BBC, 2017), wherefore derecognition in this context has happened de facto by recognition of the other. In contrast, states can now recognize both PRC and ROC (and similarly, Kosovo and Serbia, or both Israel and Palestine). In addition, the ROC has maintained unofficial ties also with states which do not formally recognize it. Several states have since derecognized the ROC, leaving it currently with 15 states with mutual



formal diplomatic relations (Political Geography Now, 2019).<sup>8</sup> Most recently (from 2016 until 2019), 7 states have backed their initial support of ROC, including El Salvador, São Tomé and Príncipe and Solomon Islands (Ibid), which can be most likely classified as cases of derecognition.

Furthermore, other states have also revoked their decision about Western Sahara (SADR). For example, India has withdrawn its recognition of SADR in 2000 (Dasgupta, 2000). As an interesting example in this regard could serve the case of Malawi. That has recognized SADR in 1994, then withdrew it in 2001, then again resumed diplomatic contacts in 2002, again terminated them later that year, again re-established them in 2008, interrupted them in the same year, again resumed them in 2014 and finally derecognized SADR in 2017 (mapexpress.ma, 2017). This practice can provide a new perspective on the theoretical considerations about the significance of recognition and possibility of derecognition outlined in previous sections, for the purpose of brevity not further explored here. Compared to the quite high number of precedents, little has been done in the quest for possible motives of derecognition and this thesis aims to address that by analysing the specific case of Kosovo, which will be now put into a historical context.

### **1.5 Kosovo – sui generis or not?**

Describing the entire history of Kosovo falls outside the scope of this thesis, nonetheless at least the development from the dissolution of Yugoslavia should be summarized. One of the main roots of the conflict over Kosovo is based on its ethnic composition, most of its population belongs to the Albanian ethnic group, unlike the rest of Serbia (92.9% are Albanians, Britannica, 2011). Before the dissolution, Kosovo was incorporated into the Serbian Socialistic Republic, although it has received the status of an autonomous province in 1974. However, it was deprived of that following the rise to power of Slobodan Milošević in 1989 (Britannica, 2021) and subsequently proclaimed independence (which was suppressed by the Yugoslav forces, Reuters, 2008). Following the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, most of the Yugoslavian republics have declared independence and also fought over it with the central authority (Croatian War, Bosnian War). Kosovo representatives have instead employed the strategy of passive resistance (1999, The Kosovo Liberation Army, p. 1). That was seen as unsuccessful and changed after 1995 into a violent clash

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<sup>8</sup> Including the Holy See, which is only an UN observer.

that escalated into the Kosovo War of 1998-9, which included also cases of ethnic cleansing and genocide and also a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military involvement.<sup>9</sup> It was not until June 1999, when both parties agreed to cease fire and the Kumanovo Treaty was concluded, where it was agreed to confide the administration of Kosovo under international supervision (The Economist, 2012). That was realized by establishing the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and sending a NATO peacekeeping mission Kosovo Force (KFOR), both having the mandate of the Security Council, according to its Resolution 1244 (UNMIK, 1999). This solution was designed as provisional and the final status of Kosovo was thus supposed to be resolved by further negotiations, which began in 2006. The UN Special Envoy Marti Ahtisaari proposed a plan of gradual independence under the supervision of the European Union (EU), although not explicitly operating with the term “independence” (US Department of State, 2008). However, this proposal was rejected by Serbia and Russia, therefore the negotiations failed. As a reaction to this fact, Kosovars decided to unilaterally declare independence on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 2008.

The reactions to the declaration have been mixed. On the one hand, a number of countries have in reaction recognized Kosovo and established diplomatic relations with it. On the other hand, others have criticized it as being in violation of national (Serbian Constitution) and international law and also setting a precedent for other potential contested territories. The notion of Kosovo constituting *sui generis*, as expressed in the declaration, has been thus questioned (by e.g. Bardos, 2018). The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has been subsequently requested to provide an advisory opinion on the legality of the declaration. The ICJ has concluded in 2010 that since no “*prohibition on declarations of independence*” is contained in international law, no violation of it has been found (International Court of Justice, 2010). This outcome did not resolve all the issues, namely it has not specified if the existence of Kosovo itself could be in line with the principles of international law, because the attention was aimed only on the text of the proclamation. Ryngaert and Sobrie (2011, pp. 467-8) claim that the ICJ did not provide a clear answer about Kosovo’s independence, which increased the uncertainty about conditions for a state recognition. Following this continuing ambiguity, another dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia was convened under the auspices of the EU. That has produced some results, brought some progress towards normalizing the relationship

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<sup>9</sup> More details about the Kosovo war can be given by e.g. Biebier (2003).

between the two parties. Specifically, the Brussels deal in 2013 has inter alia disbanded all Serbian institutions in Kosovo and both sides pledged to not hinder the other's efforts to gain EU membership (The Guardian, 2013). Nevertheless, Serbia has not yet officially recognized Kosovo and many other countries have not as well. The question of reasons behind the differences between those who do recognize and those who do not is supposed to be answered. Given also the uncertainty about its legal status, what determines the decision to recognize Kosovo? But before that, the recent development, especially with the connection to some states' withdrawals of the recognition, will be presented.

### **1.5.1 Withdrawal of Kosovo's recognition**

Not only that theories vary over the significance of recognition, but the practice also shows that unclarities remain in this regard. Conflicting reports exist over the recognitions from Nigeria, Oman and Uganda. Even the Kosovo authorities admit that some states hold a different view that was initially presented, which was demonstrated in the case of Nigeria and Uganda. It was claimed by the Kosovo's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), that Uganda sent a note verbale on 5 December 2011 with the purpose to establish official relationships with Kosovo (Wayback Machine, 2014), which was later disputed to take place, even by the US State Department (Balkan Insight, 2013). Uganda is also not anymore listed on the official site of MFA as recognizing Kosovo. The situation behind the Nigerian example resembles the Ugandan one, with also having the same result. Similarly, the stance of Oman is contested by Kosovo's representatives themselves. Together with some unconfirmed reports of two countries revoking their recognition already in September 2011 (without any further details, Balkan Insight, 2011), it was denied that earlier announcement of Oman in February 2011 could be counted as an official acknowledgement of Kosovo's independence (Ibid). However, in a short time it was again asserted Oman has in fact recognized Kosovo (Kosovo thanks you, 2011), only to be later again refuted (Arab News, 2012), but still being displayed on the official website. These concerns are focused on the validity of the recognition itself, apart from that, 18 countries are believed to change their initial decision about Kosovo.

The Serbian Foreign Ministry (as for now, 2021) claims following states have withdrawn their recognition (in alphabetical order): Burundi, Central African Republic, Comoros, Ghana, Dominica, Guinea-Bissau, Grenada, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, São Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, Suriname and Togo (list of sources announcing derecognition is available in

Appendix 1).<sup>10</sup> Basically all have been questioned by the Kosovo's government, they have been labelled as “fabrications,” “Serbian propaganda” or “fake news” (see e.g. IBNA, 2018), nonetheless some have been recalled by the countries themselves. More specifically, the recognition from São Tomé and Príncipe has been approved by its Council of Ministers in 2012, but not by its President (Telanon, 2013), who has to be consulted by the Constitution in this matter.<sup>11</sup> The communication from the President should thus be considered as invalidating the recognition itself, not as withdrawing it. In addition, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia reacted to the statements of their derecognition immediately, or after a short time with a disclaimer that their position is the opposite. Liberia reaffirmed its bilateral relations with Kosovo just a few days after the revocation was announced in June 2018 (mofa.gov.lr, 2018) and Guinea-Bissau has proceeded similarly. The first country that has without any major doubts derecognized Kosovo was Suriname in October 2017, followed by Burundi in February 2018, with several others joining in 2018, mainly in November, then Palau and 4 others have decided so in 2019 and finally, Sierra Leone has done it in March 2020 (see the list of sources in Appendix 1). Taken together, by my own counting, 113 countries have at some point recognized Kosovo, of which 15 have altered this decision, therefore now only 98 maintain this position (as for now, 2021). Putting now aside all the ambiguities surrounding the process, significance, validity and durability of both acts, what possible motives driving states to (de)recognize Kosovo (or other potential states) were suggested in the literature?

## 1.6 Existing explanations for recognition

In general, we could divide the explanations given for the difference between entities achieving statehood (including widespread recognition) and those who did not succeed into two groups: domestic-level and international explanations. Coggins (2011) in her analysis elaborates on both of them, with the former entailing three possible hypotheses: higher degree of minority mobilization, institutional empowerment and military strength of the individual entity determines the likelihood of accomplishing statehood (p. 446). In sum, that forms what could be categorized as “facts on the ground,” which could influence the success of the effort to acquire the status of a state. After testing her hypotheses, she finds that especially those secessionists that possess the “decisive

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<sup>10</sup> Other countries (or their representatives) have considered taking back the recognition of Kosovo. The President of Czechia, Miloš Zeman has for example talked about this possibility in September 2019 (iDNES, 2019).

<sup>11</sup> Article 82 of the Constitution (Constitute, 2021).

relative strength,” in other words greater ability to defeat the government renders them more prone to become a system member (a state) (Ibid, p. 457-8). However, as Mirilovic & Siroky (2017) rightly observe, this result does not confirm that the “facts on the ground” do convince other states to grant these entities an official recognition. In fact, the very existence of the group of “contested states” (introduced earlier) makes this explanation problematic. Most of them, including Kosovo, do in fact have the necessary capacities to effectively control territories, which should provide them the automatic acknowledgement of others. However, contested states and also differences among them in terms of the number of recognitions still exist, which makes us turn to the international level.

Coggins distinguishes three broad categories of possible sources of motives behind recognition: external security, domestic security and coordination. Following this classification, three specific hypotheses are suggested: states tend to recognize on the base of whether it would weaken their enemies/friends, or whether they face a secessionist challenge themselves, or act according to the stance of Great Powers.<sup>12</sup> Albeit all of these explanations hold logically and possibly also empirically and will be thus used, a different typology will be employed, together with adding possible new factors identified by Mirilovic & Siroky (2017) and later of my own.<sup>13</sup> The typology draws a line between internal and external factors of recognition, where the former denotes any aspect, that is connected to the characteristics of the country itself and the latter aggregates any influence that comes from the outside, from other states. Despite the name of “external security,” the source of the first Coggins category can be found on the inside – the amity between states is namely shaped by its regime type (or ideology more broadly), or by its ethnic composition, therefore it will be merged with the domestic security concerns in the internal group. The “coordination” category, understood as the influence of Great Powers, will be replaced by (and extended by other factors) the external label.

We can list these factors as previously found to possibly influence recognition on the internal level: ethnic composition, regime type, domestic vulnerability, economic development, distance to the potential state, regulation of religion and religious

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<sup>12</sup> As a definition of Great Power, she uses the Correlates of War (COW) operationalization for Major Powers. After World War II, it equals the five Permanent Members of the UNSC plus Germany and Japan, whose inclusion is however controversial.

<sup>13</sup> It will be emphasized more times, but correlation effect, not causal connection is sought both in their analysis and here, although possible logic behind the effect is offered.

composition. To give more details, it is expected that states with the similar ethnic as the claimant one will welcome its independence. As this expectation could not work on the systemic level, it was modified to claim that the larger the percentage of the respective ethnic, the higher the probability of recognition. Furthermore, democracies should favour new democratic states and autocracies should behave similarly. In addition, a country, which is itself fragmented, either in general more ethnically diverse, or even subjected to a secessionist claim would probably less likely acknowledge the existence of a new state. Thenceforth, the richer the country, the more/less probable is its recognition. Also, the further away from the situation, the less interest would possibly a state express towards its new to-be peer. The last two factors linked with religion were identified by Mirilovic & Siroky (2017) to be salient in Kosovo's case and their general applicability is yet to be (dis)proved. Regarding the regulation, the less religious freedom is constrained in the state (either by the government, or by the society in general), the higher its support for Kosovo. As for the last, the higher the percentage of Muslims in the state (and hence, the stronger transnational religious ties), the more likely its recognition of Kosovo (with majority of Muslims). What about the external influences?

As already mentioned, powerful states play a big role in forming the opinion of others. Weaker actors are supposed to act according to their stronger counterparts, based on what alliances they belong to, or they can be directly offered an e.g. economic incentive from them. Due to special concerns, the precise definition of power (and who is powerful and who not) will be left out, for our purposes especially the position of the United States of America will bear relevance. Not only that the USA still ranks as number one in various indicators (economic, military strength, etc.), but is quite involved particularly in the case of Kosovo (for example, NATO intervened in the Kosovo war in 1999). The countries in (in)formal alliances with the US (the NATO above all) should thus follow its stance (i.e. recognize Kosovo). On the other hand, those in the anti-American camp should maintain their antagonistic position. Moreover, the US can exert their economic leverage over other countries to get them to recognize Kosovo. The influence of the powerful (in Kosovo's case, the US) has been confirmed as significant in both studies, therefore it will be kept also in this analysis. Motives for recognition were presented, the attention will now aim at the explanations of derecognition.

## 1.7 Possible explanations for derecognition

Despite still being a quite unexplored topic, some potential motives for derecognition were given, especially by Visoka (2019). He argues five rationales could lie behind derecognition: economic benefits, domestic political dynamics, geopolitical interests, conflict resolution and statehood capacity (p. 324). The last one resembles the domestic level of explanation for recognition and means that the situation in the derecognised state has changed in a way it endangered its ability to function as a state. That was not only shown as problematic in the case of recognition, but also even Visoka admits that this reasoning is not used in practice as a justification for derecognition (only one recent example is mentioned, p. 326), therefore it will be left out from further analysis. The rest were backed by some empirics, the first can clearly be put into the category of external factors, the second into the internal one, the others seem unclear, therefore all will be now presented a bit closer.

The first entails an economic incentive offered in exchange for derecognition, mostly in the form of providing aid, or even bribing the representatives of the state. It presupposes the derecognizing countries belong to the group of weaker, more vulnerable, who are susceptible to the threats from the stronger ones. It could be compared to the role of the powerful states in forming opinions of others. Only in the case of derecognition the state offering the incentive is not the world superpower (USA), but rather the one claiming the territory of the derecognized state (for ROC the PRC, for Kosovo Serbia) or its ally (for Serbia Russia). For example, it has been observed that both PRC and ROC resort to “chequebook” or “dollar” diplomacy, where they offer states financial aid in exchange for recognizing one side and derecognizing the other (Visoka, 2019, p. 324; Sharman, 2016 p. 571).

In contrast, for the second one, the roots of the decision to derecognize are in the internal situation of the derecognizing country. Specifically, derecognition was done by a different government than recognition, elections occurred between those two, in which opposition came to power. Putting now aside Visoka citing examples that question the validity of the recognition itself (like the São Tomé and Príncipe case), he seems to connect the internal change with the first, economic incentive explanation – the initial decision to recognize has been altered because it has been conducted under pressure (p. 324). Looking apart from the specific reasons behind recognition and also the question of saliency of this issue in the debates in these countries (and to what extent is derecognition

really relevant by itself, not by its economic consequences), this change in position can be driven by a change in the government.

Furthermore, derecognition can be influenced by geopolitical interests of the state, which I consider as very close to the factor that describes the role of the powerful states. In my understanding not only that Visoka illustrates this explanation with examples of recognition (p. 325, which I do not see as relevant in this context), it seems also that the broad geopolitical orientation was often connected to some specific material incentives (e.g. supply of weapons). It should also be emphasized, that derecognition should be seen as a change, which implies that geopolitical interests would also need to alter, which looks unlikely. Therefore, this particular motive will be merged together with the first as one, summarized as the role of influence of the more powerful states on others.

In addition, concern for conflict resolution is listed among the justifications used for derecognition. Although this is often cited in the official note verbale announcing the decision, it is unclear to what extent it portrays the whole picture. Even Visoka acknowledges that in reality this is used only used as part of a “diplomatic discourse,” that these efforts to diplomatically resolve the conflict are sometimes abused for counter-recognition campaigns of the states that oppose admitting the new state (for SADR Morocco, for Kosovo Serbia) (p. 325). And we are again faced with the issue of the role of the more powerful states and their potential offers to others. Of course, it can be debated to what extent Morocco and Serbia could be seen as “powerful” and thus can influence the decision of others. Nevertheless, both are able to offer economic incentives in exchange for derecognition to relatively weaker actors. In sum, derecognition can be both influenced by internal and external factors. The former comprises of a possible change in the government, whereas the latter entails the influence of other states, most often more powerful, it can include some form of side-payment or pressure from them. With bearing this in mind, the analysis will now move to presenting its specific setting, research questions, hypotheses, method, data and last, but not least its results.



## 2 Analysis: Factors of recognition

Being aware of the theoretical background, this study will firstly try to identify the possible factors that could influence the decision of states to recognize Kosovo. In the first step, it will proceed regardless of the form of recognition and its subsequent revocation, which will be dealt with in the second part. As envisaged, the factors will be divided in two groups, depending on the source from which it came, internal (from inside the individual states) and external (from the outside). It should be noted already at this point that these categories could sometimes overlap, they are used as a simplification of a complex reality. In addition, the final decision to recognize is always taken by internal actors (most often by the government), therefore the internal element could not be entirely ruled out. Nonetheless, the distinction aims to systematically list all aspects and to see whether either of the two directions prevails over the other or not. Before naming the specific factors, the first research question thus stands as follows:

**RQ1:** *What factors could explain the difference between those states who recognized Kosovo's independence and those who did not?*

### 2.1 Internal

Regarding internal factors, we are taking into account those that could be attributed to the country itself, its characteristics and the situation inside it. The existing explanations were introduced in the previous chapter, they will be now presented in detail together with adding new ones. Mirilovic & Siroky (2017) have tested their theory of a potential influence of religion on recognition decision, which was shown as especially relevant in Kosovo's case. It can take two forms: either domestic regulation of religion or transnational religious ties. The former refers to the degree to which the government or the society in general constrain religious freedoms – if the institutions in the state tolerate or suppress religious proselytization. This builds on the theory of vulnerability, which is utilized also in another separate factor and claims that states confronted with a domestic threat (for example, from a separatist group) tend to not to grant recognition to separatist groups, whether religious or ethnic, in other states, because it would set a precedent (Mylonas 2013; Zartman 1966). The extent to which a state regulates religion is considered as an indicator of “*its perceived vulnerability to noncore religious groups,*” which may potentially pose a secessionist threat (Mirilovic & Siroky, 2017, p. 672). It is therefore expected that the more a state controls the religious scene at home the less likely

it is to recognize Kosovo. As for the transnational religious ties, that is based on the religious identity of the country (shaped by the composition of the population according to its beliefs), which in general motivates states to support politically those with the same one as theirs (Ellis 2010; Sandal & Fox 2004). As a consequence, beneficial to the country's leaders, their domestic legitimacy may be enhanced by this move (Fox & Sandler, 2004). Despite the fact that these affinities between religious groups cross national borders, the logic behind that remains domestic, wherefore it is included as an internal factor. Given that majority of Kosovo's population declare themselves as Muslims (95.6%, Britannica, 2011), other mostly Muslim countries should more likely side with Kosovo than the others (Mirilovic & Siroky, 2017, p. 673). The first two hypotheses thus follow:

**H1:** *Factors that would significantly differentiate between the two groups of states could be attributed to the internal characteristics of the countries, especially to the degree of regulation of religion.*

**H2:** *Factors that would significantly differentiate between the two groups of states could be attributed to the internal characteristics of the countries, especially to the percentage of Muslims.*

Other factors which proved as significant in the internal group include also the general domestic vulnerability of the country. The logic was provided, this is just to note that in the general sense it will be regarded as a separate factor, to account for a potential threat from all kinds of minority groups inside the country (ethnic, religious, etc.).

**H3:** *Factors that would significantly differentiate between the two groups of states could be attributed to the internal characteristics of the countries, especially to its domestic vulnerability.*

Furthermore, the results of their analysis imply that rich countries tend to support Kosovo more than the poor ones (p. 680), therefore a measure of wealth is also incorporated (GDP per capita). It is not entirely clarified what lies behind the relation, it is probably connected to the role of the US, as most of its allies tend to belong to the wealthier states (as well as the in-majority Muslim Middle Eastern countries). However, correlation effect, not causation is found, so the factor will be kept in this analysis too.

**H4:** *Factors that would significantly differentiate between the two groups of states could be attributed to the internal characteristics of the countries, especially to its economic wealth (GDP per capita).*

Other aspects did not receive sufficient support to be confirmed, but in order to validate their results, it will be included as well. They listed the following control variables: general ethnic diversity of the population, the characteristics of the regime (democracy or autocracy), the state's general geographical location (its distance to Belgrade) and a possible solidarity with fellow Albanians in countries with a significant minority of them (p. 677-8). The analysis will be supplemented by few variables of my own, firstly the size of the countries' population, to possibly account for differences between small and big states in relation to Kosovo, where the former could favour a new small state more than the latter.<sup>14</sup> Then in opposition to percentage of Muslim also the suggested ratio of orthodox Christians in the state (who should sympathize more with Serbia than Kosovo) will be added as well as possible influence of Serbian minority in the country. I will also compare the statistical significance of the internal factors with the external ones, thereby determining which variant could be regarded as more influencing. The next hypotheses thus claim:

**H5:** *Factors that would significantly differentiate between the two groups of states could be attributed to the internal characteristics of the countries, especially to its general ethnic diversity.*

**H6:** *Factors that would significantly differentiate between the two groups of states could be attributed to the internal characteristics of the countries, especially to its regime type.*

**H7:** *Factors that would significantly differentiate between the two groups of states could be attributed to the internal characteristics of the countries, especially to its geographical location (distance to Belgrade).*

**H8:** *Factors that would significantly differentiate between the two groups of states could be attributed to the internal characteristics of the countries, especially to the size of Albanian minority.*

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<sup>14</sup> Population could be considered as the most common measure for the size of the country, although there is no consensus about the definition of smallness and what criteria could be included in it. From the big amount of literature about small states we can mention e.g. Thorhallsson (2006).

**H9:** *Factors that would significantly differentiate between the two groups of states could be attributed to the internal characteristics of the countries, especially to the size of its population.*

**H10:** *Factors that would significantly differentiate between the two groups of states could be attributed to the internal characteristics of the countries, especially to the percentage of Orthodox.*

**H11:** *Factors that would significantly differentiate between the two groups of states could be attributed to the internal characteristics of the countries, especially to the size of Serbian minority.*

## **2.2 External**

The external factors, in other words the influence of other states on the recognizing one, seem to be equally relevant as the internal ones. As was already noted, it could be measured by the membership in (in)formal alliances with a powerful state, or by its economic incentives in the respective state. For this purpose, Mirilovic & Siroky (2017, p. 677-8) included in their analysis independent variables membership in NATO, as well as in the socialist camp and also the amount of US foreign investment in the country as a sign of possible leverage. Members of NATO are especially more likely to recognize Kosovo than non-members, on the other hand neither the ideology (socialism) nor the amount of US investments correlates with the recognition of Kosovo. Question remains, whether the measures of the category of ideology make sense, it is namely operationalized as mentions of socialism in the country's constitution. That does not necessarily determine its anti-American stance, for example Portugal's constitution contains references to socialism,<sup>15</sup> but Portugal is as well a member of NATO. However, no institutional framework exists on the antipathy towards the US (the Commonwealth of Independent States was considered, but it is limited only to former republics of the Soviet Union). Moreover, like in the first case, all of the mentioned indicators will be a part of my analysis as well to confirm the results, thus the next three hypotheses are formulated:

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<sup>15</sup> In the Preamble (dre.pt, 2021).

**H12:** *Factors that would significantly differentiate between the two groups of states could be attributed to the external influences on the countries, especially to its membership in NATO.*

**H13:** *Factors that would significantly differentiate between the two groups of states could be attributed to the external influences on the countries, especially to its membership in the socialistic camp.*

**H14:** *Factors that would significantly differentiate between the two groups of states could be attributed to the external influences on the countries, especially to the number of US foreign investments in the country.*

Apart from that, it should not be forgotten about possible American influence as one of the first recognizing states for other states outside NATO, setting a pioneering example that other states only followed. This assumption is based on the one of the four principles of global diffusion, emulation, as defined by Simmons et al. (2006, pp. 789 – 801). It stems mainly from the constructivist thought and it can take on several forms, from which the one derived from group theory will be chosen, suggesting that states imitate the behaviour of other ones, if they develop mutual sociocultural linkages to them and even in some cases they can act so contrast to their own interests. Given the fact, that the USA serves as the pioneering country in this context,<sup>16</sup> it has been controlled partially by the membership in NATO, nevertheless outside of NATO we would find other states, especially in Europe and Oceania, which could be simply emulating the US position. Therefore, another independent variable will be used as a measure, the voting coincidence of countries with the USA in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), which could imply similar foreign policy in general. To be clear, this serves only as a proxy variable for testing this factor, not directly accounting for the linkages to the US, but rather aggregating them. It is expected that the higher coincidence, the higher likelihood to recognize Kosovo. The final hypothesis thus stands:

**H15:** *Factors that would significantly differentiate between the two groups of states could be attributed to the external influences on the countries, especially to a*

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<sup>16</sup> Strictly said, Costa Rica recognized Kosovo as the first country, a day before the USA. Admittedly, the notion of emulation of others behaviour still depends on their power, namely on their “soft power” (Nye, 1990), in short appeal of their ideas, ideology. It has been sometimes criticized to be limited by the material capacities of the state (its “hard power”) (Kearn, 2011).

*sociocultural linkage to the pioneering recognizing country (the USA, measured by the voting coincidence in the UNGA).*

### **2.3 Data and method**

A quantitative approach is used in order to determine the correlation effect between the various independent variables (the factors presented above) and the dependent variable (recognition of Kosovo). That understandably has its advantages and disadvantages. The biggest drawback was already highlighted, but once again, correlation does not mean a causal effect can be established. On the other hand, it is more suitable for a systematic study such as this one. Two possible methods were considered: multiple regression, in particular the generalized linear model (the logit model with a binomial link function), as described by e.g. Dunn & Smith (2018) and used by Mirilovic & Siroky in their analysis and survival analysis, specifically the Cox proportional hazards model, originally developed by David R. Cox in 1972 (Cox, 1972) and applied in several areas, including international relations. It was decided to employ both and compare their results, the detailed process will be given later, since both use the same data, the sources of which will be now presented.

It was already alluded to the ambiguities around which states do (not) recognize Kosovo and if they then withdrew it. The official website of the Kosovo MFA provides the primary data about recognition, withdrawals are not considered, but a control test should include them too (the sources for their announcement are given in the Appendix 1). The dates of the recognition for the survival analysis are taken from the “Kosovo thanks you” website.<sup>17</sup> The beginning is set on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 2008 and the end date on the 31<sup>st</sup> of September 2020, number of days between the declaration of independence is observed. For countries not recognizing Kosovo, the number is automatically set on the end date (thus, at 4725 days), but the value of the dependent variable remains 0 (for states recognizing 1). The data for the independent variables are collected from various sources, the complete list is given in the Appendix 1. The specific values are then summarized in an Excel spreadsheet in Appendix 2.

The universe of cases involves all the UN member states, ISO identifications were ascribed to the states together with their Correlates of War (COW) codes and region

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<sup>17</sup> There seems to be some misprints in the dates on the official MFA site.

pertinence.<sup>18</sup> However, for some countries the data was missing or not disclosed, therefore the final number of observations in the end consists of 176 states. The data available for these cases is still provided. It is important to note that a simple cross-section analysis was chosen, not time-series cross-section. The values for the individual independent variables are thus considered as relatively stable over time. Moreover, this design was employed by Mirilovic & Siroky (2017) and thus is applied also here for comparability. All values are therefore from the year 2007, as the year preceding Kosovo's declaration of independence or the closest year available. This logic was chosen also because it could tell us what characteristics determine the states' (non)recognition of Kosovo before it proclaimed independence. In general, we could have ended here with constatement that the measures (and thus, the data) should match the dataset by Mirilovic & Siroky (2017); some variables were added, but all the existing variables were kept. However, discrepancies between primary sources cited in the article and the dataset published were found (the dataset matches their results, but primary sources of several variables vary significantly). I am not still entirely clear about the cause (most likely the primary sources were updated in the meantime<sup>19</sup>), but since these discrepancies involve also variables like distance between capital cities, it is shown from which sources the data was taken.

The regulation of religion is measured by an additive index of the Government Regulation of Religion Index (GRI) and Modified Social Regulation of Religion Index (MSRI) (see Grim & Finke, 2006 for information on the GRI) as collected by the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) in the 2008 International Religious Freedom Data (Harris et al., 2019). Both can vary from 0 to 10 (the higher the more regulation), the additive value thus can range from 0 to 20. Percentage of Muslims and Orthodox Christians (theoretically from 0 to 100) is as well obtained from ARDA, specifically from the Religious Characteristics of States Dataset project (Brown & James, 2019). To test the influence of domestic vulnerability to separatism, the Griffiths database is used (Griffiths 2015), in particular a variable coding whether there was a secessionist movement active in the country in the year 2007, or not (it is a binary variable; other

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<sup>18</sup> South Sudan gained independence on 9 July 2011 (BBC, 2018) – later than Kosovo, its inclusion could be problematic, but in the end some data for it were missing, therefore this observation (together with several others) was deleted.

<sup>19</sup> All data were accessed in March 2021, whereas Mirilovic & Siroky did so in 2014-6 (see the article for exact dates).

possible sources mentioned in the original article were considered, but the values were not significantly distinctive from these).

In contrast, different measures will be utilized to examine the role of wealth. The figures of GDP per capita will be taken from the World Bank, in current US dollars in the year 2007. For comparison, the data compiled by Gleditsch (2002, v.6 last updated in 2014), which is based on the GDP in relation to the Purchasing power parity (PPP) estimates, will be employed.<sup>20</sup> The decimal logarithm of the values is then used to avoid data skews (it is therefore further denoted as log GDP per capita). Each country's ethnic fractionalization index as developed by Alesina et al. (2003) is also included to account for general ethnic fragmentation, where the index can take any value between 0 and 1 (the higher the more fragmented). Regarding the indicators of democracy, two possibilities were cited in the original article, either the Cheibub et al. (2010) typology, or the raw Polity 4 score (Marshall et al., 2014) with a cut-off at 6 or 7, since both render similar results, the first was chosen here, using its binary aggregate variable democracy.<sup>21</sup> To control for a potential role of the physical distance from the situation as influencing the interest in (not) recognition, the distance in kilometres between Belgrade and the capital city of the individual country is included (from the Cshapes dataset worked out by Weidmann et al., 2010). In order to investigate the possible ethnic ties, a percentage of Albanians and Serbians in the country (again theoretically from 0 to 100) is provided with the help of each country's census data, summarized in two respective Wikipedia pages.<sup>22</sup> Although it might be possible to use a dummy variable coding countries with significant Albanian (or Serbian) minority with 1 and the rest with 0, the interval variable was chosen as Mirilovic & Siroky (2017) also use it. The last internal factor, size of population, is taken from the UN World Population Prospects (2019).<sup>23</sup> The decimal logarithm of the values is then used to avoid data skews (again further denoted as log population).

Concerning external factors, information about membership in NATO in 2007 is available at its official website (NATO, 2021), a simple binary variable coding it is thus added. In contrast, the constitutional mentions of socialism are supposed to condition the

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<sup>20</sup> For a discussion about these measures of GDP and the difference between them see e.g. Investopedia, 2021.

<sup>21</sup> In general, in democracy an alternation between parties in power takes place and more than one party participates in the elections. For details see Cheibub et al. (2010).

<sup>22</sup> Despite the standard to not cite Wikipedia in academic studies and possible measurement errors, since these numbers often are only estimates, it still serves as an approximated indicator of the influence of transnational ethnic ties.

<sup>23</sup> The values are shown in thousands of inhabitants.



country's opposition to the USA and its actions, these are again compiled at a Wikipedia page. The amount of country A's foreign direct investments (FDI) in the country B (manifested as the fraction of its total GDP) can serve as a sign of possible economic influence of A over B. In this sense, the US FDI in the country as a fraction of its GDP was constructed from the data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (US FDI) and the World Bank (GDP).<sup>24</sup> And last, but not least, the voting coincidence (in percent, from 0 to 100) with the US in the UNGA is reported in the annual summary of Voting Practices in the United Nations of the US Secretary of State (2008). An alternative is offered by Voeten in his agreement score (between 0 and 1, it is multiplied by 100 for comparability) between USA and the respective state in the 62<sup>nd</sup> UNGA session (as the only one in 2007, Voeten, 2013). Unlike other variables like demographic characteristics, the FDI and voting coincidence could be more volatile (they are more susceptible to changes over time), but due to the design of the analysis and the comparability with other independent variables it was decided to take the values also from only one year (2007).

The first method for data analysis remains the same as in Mirilovic & Siroky (2017), specifically the straightforward generalized linear model (that is, the logit model with a binomial link function). They decided to use two other statistical models on the similar principle but relax the i.i.d assumption (a multilevel model with a random effect for the region, and a mixed-effect model). They produced similar results but take the geographic region as the clustering factor (of which there are 11 distinct regions coded in the dataset). It was decided to use at least the MLM (modelling random effect for the region) as a comparison.<sup>25</sup> The main difference between this method and the next, survival analysis, lies in accounting for the time in which the country recognizes Kosovo.<sup>26</sup> The Cox proportional hazards model specifically estimates the hazard ratios of the country recognizing Kosovo given the factors included and in what time other countries did so. There is not enough space to discuss the details of the method, moreover as more important than the hazard ratios are seen the probabilities of factors having some significance. However, it should be emphasized, that the results of the two methods can

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<sup>24</sup> Several countries were not included in the dataset, it was assumed that the amount of US investments in them is insignificant (therefore close to zero). For few other countries, the data was disclosed, in these cases NA is displayed as the value (which leads to deleting these cases).

<sup>25</sup> Both the baseline and MLM models are estimated in the statistical language R (R-CRAN 2014). For the former, the glm function with a binomial family "logit" link (GLM) is used. For the latter, the lmer function is used to estimate a multilevel model (Bates et al. 2015; Bliese 2013; Pinheiro et al. 2014).

<sup>26</sup> The original survival analysis works with death as the main event of interest, but it was applied to other events. It could be seen as problematic that death is of course irreversible unlike recognition. Only for this purpose, recognition will be regarded as irrevocable.

vary, some factors can be more (or less) significant when taking into account time.<sup>27</sup> For example, some factors (including those with less relevance in the general setting) could have more influence on how fast the states recognized Kosovo than on the fact itself. However, the influence of individual factors that would show as statistically significant in the general setting, is expected to remain statistically significant also in this context, only the effect could be weakened/strengthened a little. The script in R with the complete implementation of the methods is attached as Appendix 3.<sup>28</sup> The analysis will now present the process and the results of these methods and discuss their implications.

## 2.4 Results

Before including all variables into one analysis, Pearson's correlation coefficients should be computed in order to determine possible correlation between independent variables. That could influence their statistical significance, when a strong relationship is found between them, it could render one of them insignificant, when in fact it is. In other words, we should avoid the effect of multicollinearity, to discover another relationship than we looked for. The alternative measures of a few variables have complicated the task of creating all possible combinations, however it should be noted, that none of them changed the coefficients significantly. Hence, only the basic correlation matrix is presented in Appendix 4. According to the Quinnipiac University estimates for interpreting the strength of correlations (Statistics How To, 2021), some issues arose. Strong positive relationship (above 0.4) was identified between the regulation of religion and percentage of Muslims in the country, as well as between voting in the UNGA and regime type, log GDP per capita and membership in NATO. On the other hand, a strong negative relationship (below -0.4) exists between voting in the UNGA and percentage of Muslims, as well as between the latter and regime type. No very strong relationship was discovered, there is a moderate or weak relationship between several other variables, but this was not considered as potentially problematic. It was not deemed so in the study by Mirilovic & Siroky (2017), nevertheless it was decided to perform three analyses: one with all variables, one without voting in the UNGA and percentage of Muslims and one

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<sup>27</sup> The method would be thus arguably more suitable to time-series analysis to consider also changes in the independent variables over time. Despite this fact, it can be used also in cross-section analysis such as this one. Moreover, most of the factors are quite stable over time (since 2007 until now).

<sup>28</sup> For the Cox proportional hazards model, the `coxph` function is used, with survival object consisting of the time of the recognition and the binary variable coding (non)recognition as the event. The data was right-censored, as in the most common cases. For details about the application of the method in R see e.g. R Views (2017).

without regime type, log GDP per capita, membership in NATO and percentage of Muslims and compare their results. The estimates and their standard errors for the first one, for logit and MLM models are shown in Table 1. The estimates are rounded to three decimal digits, for variables like log GDP per capita, distance or log population are at the end multiplied by a certain number to show non-zero values (shown in the table with a symbol x), which does not change their probability. Control test coding countries which have derecognized Kosovo, as 0 instead of 1, did not affect the results, except the variable of domestic vulnerability, which becomes more significant. Alternative measure of GDP did not change the significance of variables, the alternative measure of voting in the UNGA renders the wealth variable insignificant, therefore only the one that did not do so is presented.<sup>29</sup> The exclusion of the percentage of Muslims and voting in the UNGA strongly influenced the regulation of religion, which contrary to expectations turned insignificant and the effect of distance in the same way (although in this case it was not originally expected to play a role). Not accounting for regime type, log GDP per capita, membership in NATO and percentage of Muslims lead to the same results. For the purpose of brevity, the results of the analysis with excluded variables are attached in Appendix 5 (together with a table with variation inflation factor of independent variables). A simulation of marginal effects of the relationship between regulation of religion and the probability of recognition (as well as the same with percentage of Muslims) is included in the original analysis. It was also considered to employ it and also the method of first differences to compare probabilities of recognition for different values of the independent variables. However, given the fact that no single independent variable is expected to play a far more significant role than other and that the results of the logit, MLM and proportional hazards models together with the hazard ratios already tell us the necessary information, it was decided to be left out.

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<sup>29</sup> The results from these control tests (with alternative measures/coding derecognizing countries with 0) are not shown, but the data for replication are provided.

**Table 1.** Kosovo Recognition – Logit and MLM Models.

Independent Variables	Logit	MLM
(Intercept)	-3.092 (1.223)	0.149 (0.167)
Religious Regulation	-0.031' (0.048)	-0.019* (0.008)
Percent Muslim	0.036*** (0.092)	0.006*** (0.013)
Percent Orthodox	-0.041* (0.196)	-0.004' (0.023)
Domestic Vulnerability	-0.945 (0.641)	-0.181' (0.092)
Log GDP per capita x 10 000	0.507* (0.214)	0.042* (0.017)
Ethnic Diversity	0.103 (0.876)	-0.096 (0.143)
Democracy	-0.026 (0.498)	0.003 (0.085)
Distance to Belgrade x 1000	0.174* (0.078)	0.028* (0.011)
Ethnic Ties (Albanian)	0.198 (0.260)	0.002 (0.005)
Ethnic Ties (Serbian)	-0.053 (0.118)	-0.001 (0.005)
Log Population x 100 000	-0.821 (0.616)	-0.024 (0.027)
NATO Member	1.303 (1.146)	0.197 (0.125)
Socialist	0.964 (0.788)	0.142 (0.132)
US FDI	-0.107 (0.235)	-0.016 (0.024)
Voting Coincidence with USA in the UNGA	0.077* (0.033)	0.011** (0.003)
AIC	192.15	374.54
BIC	242.87	431.61
Log Likelihood	-80.07	-169.27
Deviance	160.15	
Num. obs.	176	176
Num. groups: regnum		11

Note: \*\*\*p < 0.001; \*\*p < 0.01; \*p < 0.05; 'p < 0.1.

The results of the Cox proportional hazards model are shown in Table 2 – the coefficients together with their standard errors. The hazard ratios are modelled in Figure 1, the label of the variables may be shortened, but their order is maintained (“religion” denotes religious regulation etc.). The exclusion of selected variables did not change significance in the Cox proportional hazards model, except turning the effect of distance significant when controlling not for the regime type, log GDP per capita, membership in NATO and percentage of Muslims (as presented in Appendix 5).

**Table 2.** Kosovo Recognition – Proportional Hazards Model

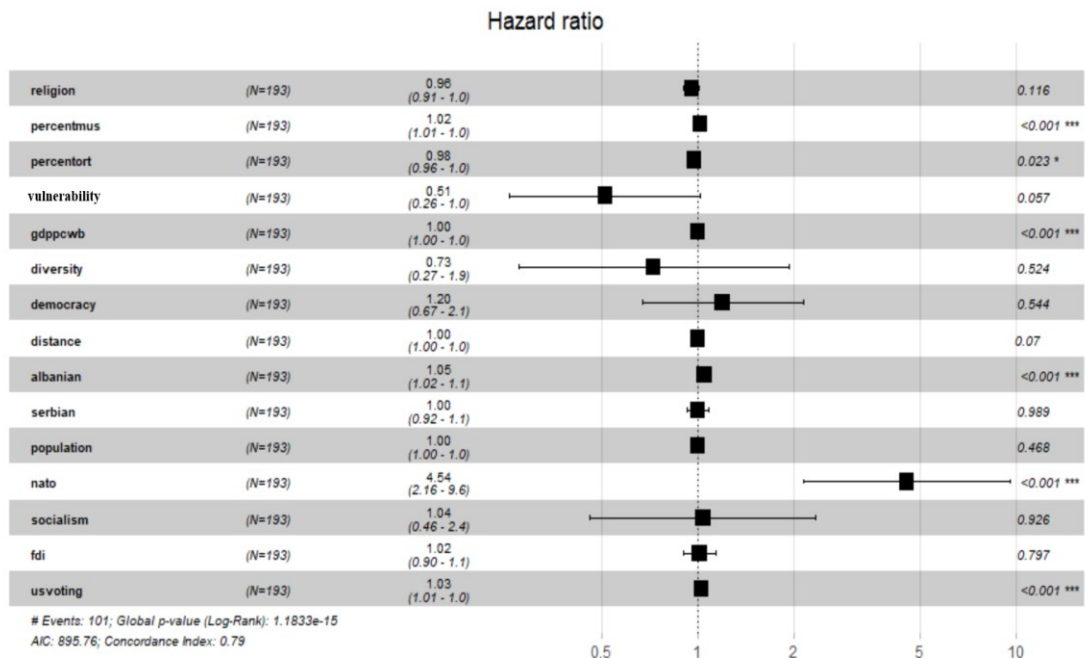
Independent Variables	Proportional Hazards
Religious Regulation	-0.044 (0.028)
Percent Muslim	0.018*** (0.047)
Percent Orthodox	-0.024* (0.107)
Domestic Vulnerability	-0.671' (0.353)
Log GDP per capita x 10 000	0.188*** (0.040)
Ethnic Diversity	-0.319 (0.499)
Democracy	0.018 (0.297)
Distance to Belgrade x 1000	0.066' (0.036)
Ethnic Ties (Albanian)	0.047*** (0.013)
Ethnic Ties (Serbian)	0.001 (0.041)
Log Population x 100 000	-0.218 (0.301)
NATO Member	1.514*** (0.380)
Socialist	0.039 (0.418)
US FDI	0.015 (0.059)
Voting Coincidence with USA in the UNGA	0.028*** (0.008)
AIC	895.76
Concordance	0.789

Num. obs.

176 (101 events)

Note: \*\*\*p < 0.001; \*\*p < 0.01; \*p < 0.05; †p < 0.1.

**Figure 1.** Hazard ratios.



## 2.5 Discussion

What can be deduced from the results above? Firstly, the similarities will be discussed. What seems to influence the most the (non)recognition of Kosovo in all methods is the percentage of Muslims in the country (the transnational religious ties). That confirms the conclusion of Mirilovic & Siroky (2017), that the more Muslims in the country live, the more likely it is to recognize Kosovo and hence the theory of solidarity among fellow believers holds some ground in this case. The effect is a bit lessened when considering the time in which the country has taken the decision, but it remains still very strong. This fact could be related to the GDP per capita of the country, the countries with more Muslims may be less economically developed, which could lead to slower reaction to Kosovo's independence (this should not be taken by any means as a general rule, as e.g. Afghanistan recognized Kosovo immediately). The hazard ratios could be interpreted in the way that the likelihood of recognition increases by 2 % if the percentage of Muslims in the country increases by 1 %, ceteris paribus. The theory is further strengthened by the opposite effect of the percentage of Orthodox Christians in the state (the more of them the less often the government recognizes Kosovo), which was not originally discovered.

But the data for this additional test were not found in the original dataset (despite the fact that it was performed), therefore it could not be replicated. Nevertheless, the religious composition of the country affects whether it sides with Serbia (majority Orthodox) or Kosovo (majority Muslim) in general, by which also the deviant case of Greece is explained.

On the other hand, the difference in the values of the variables probably caused that their second variable of interest, regulation of religion, did not receive as much support in the data. Not that it could not be labelled as completely invalid, the MLM model ascribes it a higher than 95 % probability (we can reject with higher than 95 % certainty the null hypothesis, i.e. that no relationship exists, respectively) and the logit model puts it on the verge of the 95 % threshold, it did not surpass it only by a bit. The impact decreases further in the proportional hazards model. That means that in general we could still claim that states less regulating religion tend to recognize Kosovo systematically more than the ones who constrain religious freedoms more, but this factor does not matter when controlling for the time. And indeed, some countries that regulate religion less were added to the group of Kosovo's later supporters (like Madagascar, Togo and Suriname, who interestingly then withdrew it), but the differences in the data about non-recognizing countries also moved with the significance of the relationship in general.

The next factor, on which the religious regulation assumption is based, general domestic vulnerability to a secessionist threat, tells a similar story. In particular, it has been revealed that it does not drive the likelihood of Kosovo's recognition as much as to definitively reject no relationship, although it almost crossed the line in the MLM and proportional hazards model – the probability value came close to the 95 % limit (or the probability of the null hypothesis is only 5.1, respectively 5.8 %). In addition, it could be deduced from the hazard ratios that countries with an active secessionist movement are about half as likely to recognize Kosovo than those without one. That would suggest that the role of secessionist claims in the respective state should not be after all neglected and that when the central authority is being challenged from separatists at home it would not resort to grant them recognition abroad. The result of the logit model would thus seem surprising from this viewpoint, especially in comparison with the MLM model (the variance between the first two and the third was explained). That could be clarified by the fact that the latter unlike the former includes a random effect for the region, so without this and without considering time in the proportional hazards model, it generally does not play such a big role as expected.

The differences between the methods start to manifest to a bigger extent when interpreting the influence of the log GDP per capita. In any case, the level of economic development of the country correlates with its (non)recognition of Kosovo, where the richer in general acknowledge its independence, whereas the poorer do not (said in a very simplified manner). This relationship gains its relevance even despite the discrepancies in the data collection, the alternative measure of GDP did not mean it could be invalidated. Nonetheless, the proportional hazards model reveals a far more powerful impact of this factor in the context of which countries recognized Kosovo earlier (or later) than others. Although the logarithm of the values is used, it could be implied that the wealthiest countries recognized Kosovo much earlier than the others and thus the factor belongs to the most influential ones.

In sharp contrast stands the following two variables: ethnic diversity and regime type. The estimates/coefficients of both of them, with the first being measured by the ethnic fragmentation index and the second by the openness of elections, even go in different directions depending on a model used (the relationship is positive in one and negative in second). Moreover, for the regime type we can see that the null hypothesis can be confirmed in the logit and MLM model, which means it can be argued with greater confidence that no relationship at all between these factors and recognition of Kosovo exists. No change in significance is observed in the proportional hazards model. In sum, ethnic diversity and regime type do not affect recognition.

The significance of the distance between Belgrade and individual capital cities could be considered quite surprising, especially when we take into account the fact that the relationship in fact goes in the opposite direction than expected. It looks like the further away from Belgrade a country is the more likely is its recognition of Kosovo. Even not meaningful enough when also incorporating time in the proportional hazards model (if all the variables are included), it missed the necessary threshold by only a 2 % margin. However, it should be again noted now, that correlation by no means imply causation and this connection could prove as purely coincidental. That reminds us to treat the results of this analysis with caution, but also verify that also countries very far from the situation are interested in it (which translates into their recognition).

A distinctive picture is portrayed by the individual methods concerning the ethnic ties between fellow Albanians, but not by Serbians. The latter was shown in all of them as not having any influence, therefore is not further debated. The size of the Albanian population seems to not play a role in the general setting – very far from possibly reaching



the significance level. However, in the proportional hazards model, the null hypothesis for this variable scored a very low probability value. A simple explanation can be offered: the countries with a very high percentage of Albanians (Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro) recognized Kosovo quickly, but these cases did not as much impact the big picture in the logit and MLM models as the proportional hazards model. The hazard ratios suggest the likelihood of recognition is increased by 5 % if the percentage of Albanians in the country increases by 1 %. This showed one of the main benefits of this model: some variables should not be as easily discarded as non-influential when not taking into account the time of the event. On the other hand, the size of the population of the state as such does not matter in any of the methods.

Concerning external factors, two of them as well confirmed earlier findings of no relationship with recognition: mentions of socialism in the constitution and the number of American FDI in the country. Unlike these variables, which thus are of no interest, the two others (membership in NATO and voting coincidence with the USA in the UNGA) deserve a closer inspection. In comparison with the earlier studies, the membership in a military alliance with the USA seems not to have an influence on the likelihood of Kosovo's recognition. This could be again caused by discrepancies in the data, but also by updating the list of recognizing countries (adding only non-NATO states). However, this fact changed more the results of the logit and MLM models, but not the proportional hazards one, which in contrast ranked it among the most powerful explanations. That was further strengthened by the time frame in which NATO countries extended their recognition to Kosovo. The hazard ratio shows that countries in NATO are about 4.5 times more likely to recognize Kosovo than those outside and also that they do it quite quickly. The explanatory value of this variable in the logit and MLM models could be further decreased by its correlation with the voting coincidence, despite the fact that its exclusion did not turn it significant, it was not far from reaching the threshold. The voting coincidence with the USA in the UNGA remains significant in all models, even with alternative measures applied. The hazard ratio could tell us that the likelihood of recognition is increased by 3 % if the voting coincidence of the country with the USA in the UNGA increases by 1 %.

In summary, following internal factors proved to be significant (or close to significant): regulation of religion, percentage of Muslims, percentage of Orthodox, log GDP per capita, distance to Belgrade and in the case of proportional hazards model also the number of Albanians. Especially the percentage of Muslims and log GDP per capita

excel among these in terms of the strength of the correlation effect. Regarding external factors, the newly included voting coincidence with the USA in the UNGA plays a big role in all methods when explaining recognition. Membership in NATO influences Kosovo's recognition only when considering time and partly when not including voting coincidence. The significance of variables in all models (without coefficients, only with symbols) is again summarized in Table 3. To answer which of these two groups (internal or external) shapes more the decision of states for (non)recognition: none, both matter to the same extent. States seem to be influenced both by their internal characteristics and by other states when granting recognition. With this conclusion, the inquiry will now move to the factors of derecognition and their relevance.

**Table 3.** Kosovo Recognition – Significance of variables

Independent Variables	Logit	MLM	Proportional hazards
Religious Regulation	*	**	-
Percent Muslim	****	****	****
Percent Orthodox	**	*	**
Domestic Vulnerability	-	*	*
Log GDP per capita x 10 000	**	**	****
Ethnic Diversity	-	-	-
Democracy	-	-	-
Distance to Belgrade x 1000	**	**	*
Ethnic Ties (Albanian)	-	-	****
Ethnic Ties (Serbian)	-	-	-
Log Population x 100 000	-	-	-
NATO Member	-	-	****
Socialist	-	-	-
US FDI	-	-	-
Voting Coincidence with USA in the UNGA	**	***	****
Num. obs.	176	176	176

Note: \*\*\*\* p < 0.001; \*\*\* p < 0.01; \*\* p < 0.05; \* p < 0.1, - p > 0.1

### **3 Analysis: Factors of derecognition**

It has been shown what could influence the decision of countries to recognize Kosovo, the following section thus focuses on the motives behind its subsequent withdrawal. Firstly, the research question and general hypotheses are laid out, then they are tested in the specific case studies. It is assumed that all derecognizing countries initially promoted the supportive policy towards Kosovo independence to the point where they diplomatically recognized its status as a state. Then something happened, what eventually led them to change their attitude to the extent that they decided to undo the initial act. The question now arises: What led them to change their view, that they adopted such a measure? The second research question will thus aim to identify the possible impetus behind the withdrawing the recognition (derecognition).

***RQ2:** What factors could explain the decision of some states to withdraw their recognition of Kosovo?*

#### **3.1 Internal**

In general, we could again say that two alternatives could be distinguished, internal or external factors. This basic distinction is the same as in the case of recognition. Either the states could act by themselves and the policy change could be explained by some domestic (internal) factors, or they were in some way influenced by other countries, respectively by external factors. However, it should be noted that most of the factors of recognition could not be applied here, as they explain why countries could have decided initially about Kosovo, not why they then changed their original decision to a different one. For that to hold true the factor would also need to alter, which could be for some of them quite easily argued that it did not happen, demographic or economic characteristics could be seen as quite stable indicators (in the timeframe between recognition of Kosovo and its withdrawal).

What might be subject to change from the internal factors is the regime type, or the government composition respectively, which is based on the republican stream of liberalism, as defined by Andrew Moravcsik (1997). Other streams of liberalism, namely ideational and commercial, could also both provide possible explanation for policy change, but both are considered as inapplicable to this analysis mainly due to their irrelevance for this topic (no significant mutual trade share between Kosovo/Serbia in case of the commercial liberalism) and practical reasons (no existing data on public's attitude towards Kosovo in the derecognizing countries in case of the ideational

liberalism). For the republican liberalism, the attention is aimed on the character of the domestic political representation and institutions and on their relationship with the public interests and the state politics (Moravcsik, 1997, pp. 530). How could the character of institutions affect an individual decision of one of them? The alternation in power in executive, replacement of the ruling government (or president, dependent on the system) by a different one (or a major change in its composition) could result into formulation of distinctive policy regarding Kosovo recognition.

Indeed, it was shown that in certain African and Latin American countries, the question of changing recognition from ROC to PRC, and vice versa, even features in electoral debates, which illustrates how derecognition shapes and is shaped by domestic politics, becoming more than just a foreign policy instrument (Casas-Zamora 2009). This theory thus specifically suggests that the withdrawal of recognition in this sense would be done by a substantially different government than recognition, in terms of political parties represented in it, or individuals in case of presidential systems (based on who serves as the head of government). Both should represent different positions to this issue, one disavowing from the other in this regard. Of course, that this depends on the characteristics of the regime in question, the situation would differ in democratic and undemocratic states. In the former, the government usually alters after elections, in which either the opposition candidate defeats the incumbent, or the political parties forming the government lose their majority in the nation's assembly. In the latter, a coup d'état could take place, or the person (group) in power could change in some other way (e.g. due to death). Moreover, in democracies the ruling elite often aggregates the interests of the society, which may in fact mean that the position of public towards Kosovo changed, basing it more on the grounds of the ideational stream of liberalism. However, the focus here would be more on the results of elections and then on the possible replacement of the president as the head of government or the government as such by a different one. This explanation in any way also implicates that the change in the policy follows immediately, or in a short time frame after the change in the government and the subsequent test should take this into account. Some kind of institutional arrangement, specifically alteration in power, could serve as a first valid and testable explanation to modification of policy towards Kosovo.

**H1:** *Factors that would significantly influence the decision to derecognize could be ascribed to the internal situation in the countries, especially to a change in its government.*

### 3.2 External

Regarding the external factors, decisions could be “*conditioned by prior policy choices made in other countries,*” as Simmons et al. (2006, pp. 787-801) present by developing four mechanisms of global diffusion, namely coercion, competition, learning and emulation. Two of them, coercion and emulation, could be used also in our examples. Both were also applied in the case of recognition and introduced earlier in existing literature. The former is based on a realist perspective and the notion that power of a state matters the most in the international arena. In our context it would mean that some other state has simply forced the governments to unrecognize Kosovo. However, it does not have to always contain a direct use of force, it could also entail financial means, suggesting simply the derecognizing states were offered financial compensation in exchange with their move to withdraw their recognition of Kosovo. This resembles the factor of economic incentives for recognition and has been observed in the “chequebook” or “dollar” diplomacy the PRC (or ROC) resorts to when persuading states to derecognize the other entity. It again presupposes that the derecognizing state is more prone to accept the offer, more dependent on other states, in short “smaller” or “weaker.” We do not have space for definition of these concepts, but the important implication of this hypothesis includes the fact that the more powerful states do not derecognize. A power imbalance needs to exist between the country persuading and the one being persuaded, the latter being somehow dependent on the former. In our case, it means that Serbia (as the main player opposed to Kosovo’s independence) or Russia (as its more powerful ally, also not supporting Kosovo) would need to demonstrate this, e.g. increase their foreign investments, or other form of aid to the respective countries. The research could face difficulties in uncovering that some form of persuasion, like an offer of financial aid actually happened, because such an event often occurs behind closed doors and the actors often do not admit they have been under some pressure. This main issue with this explanation, that it could not be anyhow proved with certainty, lead also to choosing not a quantitative, systematic study of derecognition. Nevertheless, it could still serve as a possible motive behind the decision to be explored as part of the second hypothesis.

**H2:** *Factors that would significantly influence the derecognizing decision could be ascribed to external influences on the countries, especially to an offer of financial aid from other states in exchange for the decision.*

As was discussed earlier, other possible justifications for derecognition identified before, geopolitical interests, concern for conflict resolution and statehood capacity either in fact bear no relevance in practice or could be questioned as not representing the actual reasons behind the decision. On the other hand, emulation of others' behaviour could be applied here as another external factor. It was presented in the case of recognition, again the variant stemming from group theory would be chosen, arguing that states simply imitate the behaviour of other ones, sometimes even in contrast to their own interests, based mainly on sociocultural linkages to them. It would also mean that the pioneering country would need to attract others somehow to pursue this policy, possess the necessary "soft power" and there would have to exist some connection between the derecognizing countries, specifically the state which emulates would need to be somehow connected to the initiating one, by common religion, language or culture. The policy in question would also perhaps somehow attract others in terms of its efficiency, economic benefits or other aspects, which we should take into account, as no rational actor would probably just blindly copy a decision of others. That is also a reason why this explanation was put as the last, it should be first determined whether other factors did (or not) influence the decision of the state more, specifically if the economic benefits were (or not) more compelling reason for derecognition than just the fact that some other country, which is somehow close to it, did it as well. Only here the pioneering state, which others follow in their actions, would be Suriname, as the first derecognizing country. It to have an influence over others would seem as unlikely, given the abovementioned necessary qualifications, but it should not be discarded as for now, it could possibly hold some value, therefore it will be tested for in this analysis. Final factor could be thus summed as emulation of others' behaviour.

*H3: Factors that would significantly influence the derecognizing decision could be ascribed to external influences on the countries, especially to the emulation of others' behaviour.*

### **3.3 Data, method and case selection**

The analysis of derecognition differs from the case of recognition in several aspects, mainly in terms of method used. The same, quantitative approach covering the entire world was considered, but not applied mainly because of the fact that it makes no sense to include non-recognizing countries as they never can derecognize Kosovo. It was also deliberated whether to introduce or not all the 15 cases where derecognition was not

disputed by the country itself and test each hypothesis on each of them. Unfortunately, in many cases the data is lacking, especially in confirming, or refuting the second hypothesis, the role of an economic pressure on the states. This complicates also the approach finally chosen – three brief descriptive case studies of selected derecognizing states and their possible motives. We can find conflicting reports even about derecognition itself, as was mentioned. The final list was assembled from various sources presented in the Appendix 1, with the help of the Wikipedia page dedicated to international recognition of Kosovo (Wikipedia, 2021). Following countries were then chosen to illustrate the possible motives for derecognition: Ghana, Palau and Suriname. Much has been written about the topic of case selection, or sampling, taking into account only some of the observations, not all. As the main issue in this regard, we can identify representativeness, whether the characteristic of the selected cases is similar to the characteristic of the whole group, if the variances and differences within the group are reflected in the sample. The abovementioned countries should represent the various aspects of the entire group of 15 countries that have derecognized Kosovo. Firstly, they belong to three main regions: Africa, Oceania and Latin America. It could be discussed whether the two Caribbean island countries (Dominica and Grenada) can be put in the same group as Suriname, a South American state, here mainly for the purpose of brevity they can. Furthermore, the attention was also paid to different times at which the country originally recognized Kosovo and then derecognized it, Suriname being the first in this regard on the one hand and Ghana one of the last on the other. The availability of data necessary for confirming, or rejecting individual hypotheses, also played a role.

Specifically, the data about the change in government composition were obtained from the Psephos Adam Carr's Election Archive ([psephos.adam-carr.net](http://psephos.adam-carr.net), 2021), it is sought to find out whether the decision to recognize was taken when a different political party or individual was in power than later in the case of the decision to derecognize. The possibility of a financial aid offered in exchange for derecognition was attempted to be investigated with the help of the numbers from BEA about the US FDI in the countries, but they were often lacking data for the respective states. Therefore, it will be looked for any mention of a meeting between Serbian (or Russian) politicians with their counterparts in the respective countries, with a focus on whether any signs of a financial offer can be found. The announcement of the derecognition in the media listed in the Appendix 1 will serve as a source for this information. And the last possible factor, emulation of others' behaviour, will be tested as in the case of recognition, voting coincidence with the

pioneering country, Suriname, in the UNGA a year before the derecognition, 2017, taken from the Voeten database (Voeten, 2013). The three individual cases will be now introduced in the chronological order, the factors are examined followingly: first the internal change in government, then emulation of others behaviour and finally the role of an economic incentives.

### 3.4 Individual cases

Suriname was chosen mainly because of the fact that it is the first country that has taken back its recognition of Kosovo. The South American country originally recognized Kosovo on the 8 July 2016 after what has been labelled as “strong” or “sustained” lobbying from Kosovo in various organizations, like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (Visoka, 2018; Kos-Stanišić & Luša, 2018). The method of this campaign is not mentioned, it might have also included some financial incentives, nevertheless the focus should be more on the subsequent derecognition on 27 October 2017. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Suriname sent a diplomatic note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October 2017, where it conveys the decision of the government “*to revoke the recognition of Kosovo as an independent and sovereign state*” (Wayback Machine, 2018). No official explanation was given, except informing of a “*principled stance on non-interference in internal affairs of friendly countries*” (Visoka, 2018). However, two of the explanations suggested earlier could be quite easily rejected as not relevant in this case. The first, internal change in the executive seems unlikely given the short timespan between recognition and derecognition and this expectation was confirmed with the fact that no elections took place between those two. Therefore, a change in the government could not explain the change in position of Suriname towards Kosovo. Furthermore, as Suriname had come to the decision as the first country in the world, if we omit the situation in São Tomé and Príncipe, where the validity of the recognition itself could be questioned. That means it could not even theoretically imitate behaviour of a different country, hence this explanation could not hold the scrutiny. That leaves us with only one possibility, that it was done as a part of a bargain that included some form of a financial aid that was traded for the derecognition. And in fact, Suriname derecognized Kosovo just before an official visit of its foreign minister to Russia, this move thus serving as a “trade-off” for the increase of Russian investments in Suriname (Wayback Machine, 2018). The Serbian officials understandably denied involving any pressure or money in it, but there are reports



suggesting derecognition of Kosovo from Suriname aimed to “ingratiate” Russia (Kos-Stanišić & Luša, 2018). In sum, although no specific sum of the incentive is given and it could not be definitively proved that this “trade-off” happened, the data available indicate that the external factor entailing financial means played most likely the biggest role in the Surinamese case. Could the same be said about Palau and Ghana?

The selection of Palau could be attributed to several aspects: Firstly, it represents the number of Oceanic countries derecognizing Kosovo, but unlike Suriname, it belongs to the group of the much earlier supporters of Kosovo. In particular, Palau recognized Kosovo already on 6 March 2009 (Kosovo thanks you, 2021). Furthermore, it is known for its very close ties with the USA, until it gained independence in 1994, the USA oversighted the territory under the supervision from the UN Trusteeship Council and since then its foreign policy is in general to a large extent driven by the US position. In addition, other countries in the region, especially Nauru, are known for their strategy of “selling sovereignty,” trading some rights connected with statehood, like (de)recognition, for money (Sharman, 2016, p. 571). The withdrawal of Palau’s recognition of Kosovo, which was realized on 17 January 2019, thus seems in this context as puzzling. The move was announced on 22 January 2019 and the official diplomatic note states that future *“Kosovo’s status should be resolved by dialogue with Serbia, facilitated by the European Union”* (RNZ, 2019). Apart from that, no other explanation was provided. We cannot rule out the hypothesis suggested above as quickly as in the previous case. Firstly, several elections took place between 2009 and 2019 in Palau and President Johnson Toribiong was replaced by Thomas Remengesau Jr. in 2012 elections (Palau has a presidential system very similar to the US one, only without political parties) (psephos.adam-carr.net, 2021). However, other elections were held in 2016 and Remengesau again won them. If the change in the executive really influenced the altered position towards Kosovo, why then has he not decided to execute it earlier, why wait until 2019? The saliency of the Kosovo issue to internal politics of Palau could be also questioned, further decreasing the probability of this factor. Secondly, Palau could theoretically emulate the behaviour of other countries when derecognizing Kosovo. The main problem with this explanation arises when we consider the sociocultural linkages, based on which the country should do so. Hardly a few would be found between Palau and Suriname, mainly because of their mutual distance. To illustrate, their mutual voting coincidence in the UNGA in 2017 revolves around 70 % (Voeten, 2013). It could be argued that Palau followed the suit of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, which both derecognized Kosovo before it, but

this hypothesis admittedly does not explain what makes derecognition in particular worth following. As for the last factor, possible financial offer, President Remengesau met with Serbian President Aleksander Vucic at the same time the move was announced (RNZ, 2019). Moreover, several memoranda of understanding have been secured with Serbia, which talk about friendship and cooperation and Serbia has been accused of bribing small countries, such as Palau (ABC, 2019). Other than financial benefits, like support from Serbia in other issues at the United Nations, have been also mentioned as potentially affecting the act (Ibid). Put altogether, an offer of financial aid probably influenced derecognition the most also in this case.

Ghana in this analysis should embody the characteristics of the 8 African countries that have taken back the recognition of Kosovo, which could be seen as disproportionate, or unrepresentative, but still might give us a clue about possible motives behind derecognition. As for the time context, Ghana originally acknowledged Kosovo's independence on 23 January 2012 (Wayback Machine, 2013) and decided to reverse this act on 7 November 2019. The official note verbale elaborates a little bit more (compared to previous cases) on the aspects this decision is informed by. Specifically, it asserts that "*the decision to recognise Kosovo turned out to be premature*" and "*in contravention of the UN Security Council Resolution 1244*" (media.srbia.gov.rs, 2019). This justification can be thus categorized as a concern for conflict resolution, limits of which have been already presented, in particular it does not fully explain the timing of the decision (the resolution was adopted already in 1999). What about internal dynamics? In fact, two elections, in 2012 and 2016 took place in Ghana, both to the legislative and the presidential office. With the President of Ghana serving as a head of government, the attention is paid to the latter. And in fact, Nana Akufo-Addo defeated the incumbent John Mahama in the Ghanaian presidential elections held on 7 December 2016 (psephos.adamcarr.net, 2021). Therefore, this change could influence the country's position towards Kosovo, but we again face the same issues as in previous example, timing and saliency – why in 2019 and how Kosovo matters to a Ghanaian internal situation? Unlike Suriname, the hypothesis suggesting Ghana imitated behaviour could not be invalidated and unlike Palau, Ghana's voting coincidence with Suriname in the UNGA in 2017 almost reaches 98% (Voeten, 2013). However, insufficiencies of this scenario remain, only little connection between those two countries exist. Ghana may still have decided to follow Burundi, Togo and other African countries, especially when the balance seemed to lean against Kosovo. We could imagine it as a "snowball effect," with some countries

derecognizing Kosovo, others joined just to “go with the flow.” As for the last motive, an offer of financial aid in exchange for derecognition, no mention of a meeting between the representatives of Ghana and Russia have been reported in the media, the move has been announced by Serbian Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic in Prva TV (rfel.org, 2019). That does not refute it could not have happened, some economic incentives could have been offered, just that no signs of it were found. Arriving to a definitive conclusion thus proved in this case as more challenging than in the others and it is thus still to some extent covered with a veil of uncertainty. What can be deduced in general about factors influencing derecognition?

### 3.5 Discussion

No explanation from the three suggested before proved as convincing in all of the three cases of countries derecognizing Kosovo, Suriname, Palau and Ghana. This conclusion may have resulted from the method selected, descriptive study based on publicly available data, more in-depth analysis including for example interviews with actors involved may have revealed more. Despite this limitation, we can generally say that internal factors, like change in the government, influence derecognition most likely much less than external factors. Although alternation in power took place in two of the three cases introduced and also in other not included in this selection,<sup>30</sup> the theory behind it cannot fully account for the practice. While it may play a role in some of the ambiguous situations, especially the one in São Tomé and Príncipe, it largely lacks in explanatory power for derecognition itself. Of the two external factors considered, the one containing a possible offer of financial aid seems as the most promising. From the observations, it almost looks like Serbia after Aleksandar Vučić became President in 2017 launched a lobbying campaign to get other states to derecognize Kosovo, in order to achieve majority of states opposing Kosovo’s independence.<sup>31</sup> And Russia helped, offering investments to Suriname. Serbian representatives also met with representatives of various countries, which are seen as particularly “vulnerable,” thus more susceptible to agreeing to trade derecognition for something else. Besides Suriname and Palau, this kind of meeting could have taken place also in 7 other cases. The bargain did not necessarily include financial aid in particular, Serbia was e.g. accused of offering weapons to Burundi (B92, 2018).

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<sup>30</sup> By my own counting, the government changed in total 7 of the 15 derecognizing countries.

<sup>31</sup> This could theoretically manifest e.g. in voting in the UNGA, but arguably has more only a symbolic function.

Nevertheless, as the case of Ghana exemplifies, not all of the countries announced their changed position towards Kosovo after (or during) a meeting with Serbian or Russian representatives. Furthermore, the suggestion of Suriname as a pioneering country, whose example was followed by others could also be questioned, because the others often belong to a completely different region. Still, after some states were convinced by the lobbying from Serbia or Russia, others from the same region could have joined them in derecognizing Kosovo even if they have not been offered anything themselves. The campaign could have affected them indirectly. To be clear, this does not deny something similar did not happen in case of recognition from the other side (Kosovo or USA), on the other hand, it confirms that the others do have a big influence on the individual decisions of states, at least when it comes to (de)recognition.

## Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis has revealed many levels of the debate about recognition, its theoretical background, meaning and above all its possible motives. All the contested states in general and Kosovo in particular definitively provide an important perspective to the theoretical debate between declaratory and constitutive scholars. The practice of derecognition may also have a significant impact on the individual theories and their assumptions. Further research might concentrate on putting the specific cases of recent derecognition in the context of the theories. A systemic study into factors influencing recognition of all of the contested states might also prove as useful, as this analysis focused more closely on the case of Kosovo. Furthermore, a causal connection between the individual factors and recognition itself is suggested, but not explored (correlation does not imply causation). Despite this and other further limitations of this study, especially the availability of data in the case of derecognition, which may be substituted in future attempts, it offered several important conclusions.

Firstly, even in spite of some discrepancies in the data used, it confirmed the earlier results of the Mirilovic & Siroky (2017) article and its hypothesis, that transnational religious ties (percent of Muslims in the country) influences recognition of Kosovo in general and when considering also when the country recognized Kosovo in particular. The theory was supported also by adding the variable measuring the percent of Orthodox Christians. In addition, this analysis also corroborated that economic wealth (GDP per capita) plays a significant role in affecting recognition in the broad setting and also when accounting for the time. On the other hand, differences in data and additional method impacted a little the significance of the regulation of religion and domestic vulnerability, the probability value of both factors did not reach the 95 % threshold by just a bit (except the regulation of religion in the MLM model). The added variable of voting coincidence between the individual countries and USA in the UNGA showed as highly relevant but could have negatively influenced the strength of the membership in NATO. That proved as a still potentially powerful determinant of Kosovo's recognition, especially when the context of time is embedded. The size of the Albanian minority in the country seems to matter only in the Cox proportional hazards model, which includes the variable of time. In sum, both internal and external factors, both the characteristics of the country itself and the position of other countries influences the recognition of Kosovo.

In contrast, internal dynamics, specifically a change in government probably does not explain the subsequent withdrawal of recognition as well as external factors, in particular a possible offer of financial aid or other support in exchange for the act. From the three cases introduced, Suriname, Palau and Ghana and also from those not covered, this explanation looks the most convincing. Although alternation in power took place in several cases of the 15 countries that have derecognized Kosovo, a meeting with Serbian or Russian representatives, which could have resulted in closing the “trade-off” did as well in more of them. Moreover, the announcement of the derecognition came often right after, or during such a meeting, not after a change in government. However, a mention of such a meeting could not be found for Ghana and some other countries. They could have theoretically just followed the suit of other countries in their region (not only Suriname as a pioneering country), because of the campaign launched by Serbia to get them to derecognize Kosovo, but without a specific economic, or other incentive.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2020, representatives of Kosovo and Serbia signed a deal in the White House, which some label as a “historic” event (Balkan Insight, 2020). The parties mostly agreed on normalizing their economic relationship, building infrastructure, but also on some political points. Most importantly in this context, Serbia promised to stop its quest for getting other countries in the world to derecognise Kosovo for one year and Kosovo in return pledged to not apply for membership in international organizations, also for a year (Ibid). This agreement can give us hope for bringing both parties back to the negotiating table, where they can resolve their different interests and positions, it can be a first sign of a reconciliation. That is still far away, not only this deal needs to be put in practice, which at least in term of derecognition it seems as it is, but understandably it did not resolve the crucial issue – Serbia still does not recognize Kosovo and considers its territory as its own, which would close for good this issue.

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## **List of Appendices**

Appendix no. 1: List of data sources used for the dependent and independent variables (document).

Appendix no. 2: Sheet with values of the variables for all countries (table).

Appendix no. 3: Script in R with the code used for the analysis (all methods).

Appendix no. 4: Correlation matrix of the independent variables (document).

Appendix no. 5: Logit, MLM and proportional hazards model without selected variables (document).

Project of the Thesis  
Institute of Political Studies

**Univerzita Karlova v Praze**

Fakulta sociálních věd  
Institut politologických studií

Diploma thesis project

**Explaining the Kosovo's recognition and its  
withdrawal**

Name: Bc. Jan Dostál

Academic advisor: doc. PhDr. Jan Karlas, Ph.D., M.A.

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## **Introduction to the topic**

The Republic of Kosovo, which declared independence on 17 February 2008, belongs to the group of states with contested recognition status. That in general means it did not gain yet acknowledgement from majority of the international community in the form of issuing an official statement expressing such intention or establishing diplomatic relations with it. In other words, most of countries in the world do not consider Kosovo as an independent state. Nevertheless, some governments did decide to recognize Kosovo, but the majority did not, therefore a study into drivers behind this move could prove itself as useful. However, few years ago it seemed as more states are backing its newly established peer, but some governments in the world recently (from 2016 until now, 2020) changed their minds and revoked their initial support for independent Kosovo. This phenomenon, withdrawing the recognition of a state (or derecognition), was chosen as a subject of interest because it is still relatively unexplored, but also relevant as it shifted the balance in the international arena against Kosovo. The relevance of this topic thus lies in the relative scarcity of scholar research in this area, especially in the case of derecognition, as well as in its importance to the understanding of the current situation of Kosovo.

## **Research target, research question**

This thesis attempts to analyse two issues: recognition and its withdrawal, in particular motives preceding them, wherefore it entails two main areas of inquiry. The first central question is why certain countries have recognized Kosovo and others did not? Specifically, what factors could explain the difference between those states who took a positive stand towards Kosovo's independence and those on the other side? The analysis will look both into internal and external effects, that could lead the governments to either decision, like religion, ethnicity, or the degree of the superpowers' influence on the policy of the respective state. A secondary objective is to focus on identifying the possible impetus behind the case of withdrawing the recognition (derecognition). Similarly, to the first question, it could turn out as beneficial to determine the aspects influencing the state that pursues this policy. And accordingly, both internal and external motives will be included in the study. In order to do that, an effort will be made to find possible theoretical reasonings that could help us to provide a solution to this puzzle. Other research targets also involve deepening the knowledge about recognition of contested states, with special



attention given to the case of Kosovo particularly. Last, but not least, it could also help to understand more the drives of states' foreign policy in general, as well as its changes.

## **Literature review**

Despite a few gaps and white places, there exists a significant amount of knowledge in the area of recognition and Kosovo, mainly from the theoretical, historical and legal point of view (including a couple of monographies, e.g. Proroković, 2018). The goal is not to provide an exhaustive overview, nevertheless some basic distinctions need to be made. For example, a great debate still lasts between proponents of the declaratory and constitutive theory of state recognition, or the difference between *de facto* and *de jure* should also be highlighted. Former will be described with the help of e. g. Nicholson & Grant, 2019, the latter will summarize the debate between scholars like Kelsen (1941) and Lauterpacht (1945). In short, we would not find consensus among scholars on the meaning of state recognition and its effects (thus also on the withdrawal of it). That could be most likely said also about contemporary research, the concepts became less ambiguous after the Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008. Ryngaert and Sobrie (2011) and Fabry (2012) both agree on the fact, that norms of new states' recognition changed after the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the uncertainty about what conditions (if any) should a state fulfil increased with Kosovo, South Ossetia and Abkazia independence. Furthermore, we could probably encounter even more unclear situation when it comes to withdrawal of recognition, if we find anything on the topic, which remains largely under-researched. A couple of analyses have been made about the case of the United States of America (USA) switching allegiance from Chinese Republic (Taiwan) to Chinese People Republic (China) by derecognizing Taiwanese government (see e. g. Sheikh, 1980). Probably firstly has been attempted to systematically study this issue by Visoka in 2019 in Routledge Handbook of State Recognition. In his contribution, he uses in this context the word, derecognition, and defines it.

To some extent irrespective of its status under international law and other ambiguity surrounding (de)recognition, this thesis will focus more on the factors, that could lead to either of the decision. A detailed quantitative study of internal or external aspects influencing recognition (specifically focused on the role of religion) was done by Mirilovic & Siroky (2017) and I plan to build on their work with some modifications. When it comes to derecognition, literature on theories of policy change will be used to

guide the analysis of its explanation. This include also the main international relations (IR) theories, most notably liberalism and its streams, as elaborated by Andrew Moravcsik (1997), and policy diffusion literature, represented by Simmons et al. (2006), which includes also variants of other IR theories, constructivism and realism.

## **Conceptual and theoretical framework, research hypotheses**

The official website of Kosovo's Foreign Ministry states, that from its declaration of independence until 2018 it has been recognized by 116 countries in the world (Kosovo's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2018) and the website titled „Kosovo thanks you“ even claims 117 by September 2020 (Israel becoming the last quire recently) (Kosovo thanks you, 2020). However, not only we would not find agreement over the meaning of such move and its consequences, other sources would also dispute the number, the very existence of recognition from some countries. Thus, in order to determine which governments actually issued an official statement, in which they grant Kosovo the status of a state, most often in the form of a diplomatic note, as recognition will be understood, we need to assess it carefully. Being aware of that, this study will try firstly to explore the possible factors that could explain the decision to recognize Kosovo, irrespective of its form and its optional subsequent revocation (that will be considered in the second part). I will divide these factors in two groups, according to from where the possible reason for recognition came, internal (from inside the recognizing state) and external (from outside the recognizing state). Of course there can be some overlaps, the categories simplify the complex reality and also the final decision always could be attributed to the government of the country only, thus the internal element could not be entirely excluded, nevertheless it probably makes sense to attempt to systematically list all aspects.

*RQ1: What factors could explain the difference between those states who recognized Kosovo's independence and those on the other side?*

Regarding internal factors, we are taking into account any that could be attributed to the country itself, its characteristics and the situation inside it. I will build on the analysis by Mirilovic & Siroky (2017), who have tested potential influence of religion on recognition decision, either domestic regulation of religious freedom or transnational religious ties. They have proved that the more a state controls the religious scene at home

the less likely it is to recognize Kosovo and that the more Muslims are represented in its population the more likely it sides with Kosovo (in which also lives a majority of Muslims) (pp. 679). They attempt to develop a causal connection, still they acknowledge they have revealed a correlation between variables, not a causation. That is neither my goal, I also aim to list all aspects with possible influence, not to argue for one specific. Other factors which they identified as significant include GDP per capita, rich countries tend to support Kosovo more than the poor ones; membership in NATO, considered later and domestic vulnerability. Consistent with other authors (e. g. Coggins, 2011 or Mylonas, 2013) they argue that a threat from ethnic, religious or other minority group inside the country (in the form of autonomy or independence claims) lessen the chance to grant acknowledgment to other secessionist states, because it would weaken the central authority at the expense of the minority. They did not find sufficient support for other aspects, such as general ethnic diversity of the population, the characteristics of the regime (democracy or autocracy), or possible solidarity with fellow Albanians in countries with a significant minority of them. In order to validate their results in light of recent developments (withdrawals of recognition) I will include each abovementioned factor as possible internal explanation for recognition and in opposition to percentage of Muslim add also suggested ratio of orthodox Christians in the state (who should sympathize more with Serbia than Kosovo) as well as possible influence of Serbian minority in the country. I will also compare their statistical significance with the external ones, thereby determining which variant could be regarded as more influencing.

*H1: Factors that would significantly differentiate between the two groups of states could be attributed to the internal characteristics of the countries. These factors include regulation of religion, transnational religious ties (percentage of Muslims/Orthodox Christians), GDP per capita, domestic vulnerability, ethnic diversity, regime type and size of Albanian or Serbian minority.*

In contrast, among external factors we are counting everything that is not connected to the state itself, rather what affect it from the outside, like other states, geopolitical position, or the international system as such. For example, we could name in this category membership in international organizations (IOs), foreign investments, superpowers influence, regional pertinence, etc. What seems to matter the most in this regard, according to Mirilovic & Siroky (2017), but also Coggins (2011), is the role of

the great powers, especially the USA. In the first study, they measure it by an independent variable coding membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). On the other hand, the amount of US foreign investment in the country does not seem to condition recognition, as well as possible anti-American antipathy of the socialist camp or the state's general geographical location (its distance to Belgrade). Still, like in the first case, all of the mentioned indicators will be a part of my analysis as well to confirm the results.

Apart from that, I consider also important to not forget possible American influence as one of the first recognizing states for other states as possible pioneering state, an example that other states only followed. This assumption is based on the one of the four principle of global diffusion, emulation, as defined by Simmons et al. (2006, pp. 789 – 801). It is rooted mainly in constructivist thought and involves also several possibilities, from which I would choose the one derived from group theory, stating that states simply imitate the behaviour of other ones, even in some cases contrast to their interests, based on sociocultural linkages to them. Thus has been controlled partially by the membership in the NATO, which involves a lot of the countries culturally close to USA, nevertheless outside of the NATO we would find other small states, especially in the Oceania, which could be considered as emulating the US position. Therefore, I will use as independent variable the voting coincidence of countries with the USA in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), which could imply similar foreign policy in general, as a proxy variable for testing this factor. I will also again put in contrast their statistical significance with the internal aspects, thereby figuring out which of them play a bigger role.

*H2a: Factors that would significantly differentiate between the two groups of states could be attributed to the external influences on the countries. These include membership in NATO, or in contrast in the socialistic camp, US foreign investments in the country distance to Belgrade, or a sociocultural linkage to the pioneering recognizing country (the USA, measured by the voting coincidence in the UNGA).*

According to Serbian Foreign Ministry, totally eighteen states withdrew their recognition of Kosovo until now (September 2020) (The Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2020), among which we could name Suriname, Madagascar, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Ghana, or Dominica. Uncertainty surrounds not only the validity of this move, but even the fact if they really have done it. Some of them namely immediately after

announcement of that move reversed it and maintained committed to their initial position, specifically Liberia and Guinea-Bissau. In the case of the others, it will be taken as a fact. We thus assume these countries initially pursued a policy towards Kosovo independence to the point where they diplomatically recognized its status. Then something happened, what eventually changed their attitude so significantly that the countries decided to undo their initial action. The question now arises: What led them to change their view so dramatically, that they adopted such a measure? The second research question will thus focus on identifying the possible impetus behind the withdrawing the recognition (derecognition).

*RQ2: What factors could explain the decision of some states to withdraw their recognition of Kosovo?*

In general, we could say that two alternatives could be distinguished. Either the states could act independently on each other and the policy change could be explained by some domestic (internal) factors, or they were in some way influenced by other countries, respectively by other external factors. This basic distinction is the same as in the case of recognition, however I assume most of the factors could not be applied here, as they explain why countries have decided somehow about Kosovo, not why they then changed their original decision to a different one. For that the factor would also need to alter, which for most of them we can easily say it did not happen, demographic or economic characteristics as quite stable indicators (in the timeframe of 12 years since Kosovo's independence) do not in this regard play a role. What might be subject to change is the regime type, specifically the government composition, which corresponds theoretically to the republican stream of liberalism, as defined by Andrew Moravcsik (1997). Republican liberalism focuses on the character of the domestic political representation and institutions and how it translates the public interests into state politics (Moravcsik, 1997, pp. 530). Some kind of institutional arrangement, specifically changed composition of the government in power, could serve as a first valid and testable explanation to modification of policy towards Kosovo.

*H1: Factors that would significantly influence the derecognizing decision could be ascribed to internal situation in the countries, especially to a change in the government.*

There are other streams of liberalism, namely ideational and commercial, both provide possible explanation for policy change, but both are considered as inapplicable to this analysis due to practical reasons (no existing data on public's attitude to Kosovo in some countries) or irrelevance for the case of recognition (opinions on this topic, or mutual trade share do not exist). Regarding the external factors, Simmons et al. (2006, pp. 789-801) present four mechanisms of global diffusion, mentioned earlier, a process of how decisions “*are conditioned by prior policy choices made in other countries*” (pp. 787), namely coercion, competition, learning and emulation. Two of them, coercion and emulation, seem particularly applicable to our example. The former is based on the realist view that power of a state is what matters the most in the international arena. To be clear, it does not always mean a hard dimension of it, containing the use of force. Those coercive influence could also entail financial means, suggesting simply the states were offered a compensation in exchange with their move to withdraw recognition of Kosovo. It could take a form of increase/decrease of foreign investments, which are also listed among the possible explanations for recognition.

*H2a: Factors that would significantly influence the derecognizing decision could be ascribed to external influences on the countries, especially to a coercion from other states by financial means (change in the amount of foreign investments).*

The last one, emulation, was presented earlier in the case of recognition, again I would choose the variant stemming from from group theory, stating that states simply imitate the behaviour of other ones, sometimes even contrast to their own interests, based on sociocultural linkages to them. Final factor could be thus summed as emulation of others' behaviour.

*H2b: Factors that would significantly influence the derecognizing decision could be ascribed to external influences on the countries, especially to a sociocultural linkage to other derecognizing countries.*

## **Empirical data and analytical technique**

As already noted, some uncertainty surrounds the number of states (de)recognizing Kosovo and sources vary on information about it, therefore the analysis should always confirm the status of a respective country not only on foreign ministry pages of both Kosovo and Serbia, but also on its own government pages and also in media. The data from these sources will be compiled into a simple binary dependent variable, coding if the country is (1) or is not (0) at this time recognizing Kosovo. The universe of cases is defined by membership in the UN in 2007, which creates 192 observations. In the first step, in the case of withdrawing the move, the final position will be taken into account irrespective of the change. As an explanatory case study, this thesis will use quantitative methods for testing the connection between the independent and the dependent variables, specifically generalized linear model (that is, the logit model with a binomial link function), as described by e.g. Dunn & Smyth (2018). That means we use more independent variables (corresponding to individual factors) to determine which of them will score the highest statistical significance. I divided the factors in two categories: internal and external. In the first group I will control for religious regulation, transnational religious ties (both Muslim and Orthodox), GDP per capita, domestic vulnerability, ethnic diversity, regime type and also the size of Albanian or Serbian minority. The data will be taken either from various online sources, especially demographic characteristics from databases like CIA Factbook, or indicators like Polity 4 Index (regime type), it will be measured similarly as in the article by Mirilovic & Siroky (2017). That holds also for the external factor of membership in the NATO, or amount of the US investments in the state (FDI as the indicator), its geographical (distance to Belgrade) or geopolitical position (mentions of socialism in the constitution).

Finally, what emulating the behaviour of other states comprises of? Under that term we understand imitating what their peers do, even when they are not entirely sure if it fits their own interests. In the international realm we need to determine whether the state which emulates is somehow connected to the initiating one, by common religion, language or culture, no rational actor would probably just blindly copy a decision of others. Simmons et al. (2006, pp. 801) summarize that the “*test for the effect of shared cultural values*” should proceed “*by examining the effect of shared cultural heritage, language, and religion, controlling for effects of*” the other factors. That lead me to the decision to put it as last, because it depends on the effect of the other factors. However,

it is not applicable to all countries, as the first one obviously cannot emulate anyone, but the rest can be compared to it as a pioneer based on similar voting behaviour in the UN (which could imply similar foreign policy in general) as a proxy variable for testing this factor. Thus, I will also control for the percentage of voting coincidence with the USA in the UNGA as another aspect. Strictly speaking, we should also examine possible effect of emulation on Costa Rica as the first country to recognize Kosovo, USA is the second, but I expected the decision of USA to be followed more than the Costa Rican one. We could also control for the effect of distance from USA, differences/similarities in ethnicity (percentage of white people), language (English) and religion (Protestant Christianity) between the pioneering recognizing country (USA) and the others, but I expect the voting behaviour in the UNGA to aggregate these aspects in one indicator. In all cases data will come from 2007, the year before declaration of Kosovo's independence.

What about the possible explanation of derecognition? As in the first case, we firstly need verified information that the state decided to change its position from different sources (governmental pages, media, etc.), thus forming the dependent binary variable, coding if a country has (1) or has not (0) derecognized Kosovo. Here the universe of cases entails also 192 members of the UN, but since we only examine the motives for the withdrawal of recognition, we will focus only on the countries that have done so (the specific number and list will be determined in the analysis). What phenomena would be watched before the derecognizing decision (again a year before it was officially announced)? Firstly, how could the character of institutions affect individual decision of one of them? The replacement of ruling government by a different one (or a major change in its composition) could result into formulation of distinctive policy regarding Kosovo recognition. The withdrawal of recognition in that case would be done by a substantially different government (in terms of political parties represented in it, respectively specific individuals), the latter disavowing from the former in this regard, as a symbolic of representing different positions.

As for the other two factors, coercion and emulation, I would largely draw on what has been proposed by Simmons et al. (2006). They propose: "*one must identify the coercive actors, show that these actors support the policy in question,*" and probably most importantly reveal the "*channel through which the powerful influence policy change across borders.*" That in the realist view would e.g. mean we could find a power imbalance between the country persuading (some of the great powers) and the one being persuaded, the latter being somehow dependent on the former. That could be manifested



e. g. in the change of amount of foreign investments in the country, on the one hand decreasing from the USA (supports Kosovo), but increasing especially from Russia (supports Serbia). That could miss out some form of coercion, like threat of force or cut of financial aid, because such an event often occurs behind closed doors and the actors often do not admit it, still the general figure could tell us something. As for emulation, details were laid down in the case of recognition, only here the pioneering state is Suriname, as the first derecognizing country. That said, we should also be aware of the fact, that all of the factors could also be in some ways interlinked and in the research into this topic these linkages should also be considered.

## **Planned thesis outline**

1. Introduction
2. The (de)recognition of states and the case of Kosovo – overview
  - a. Theories of recognition
  - b. The issue of derecognition
  - c. Kosovo – sui generis or not?
  - d. Existing explanations for recognition
  - e. Possible explanations for derecognition
3. Factors of recognition
  - a. Internal vs. External
  - b. Method & Data
  - c. Outcomes
4. Factors of derecognition
  - a. Internal vs. External
  - b. Method & Data
  - c. Outcomes
5. Conclusion

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