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Article:

Newman, E orcid.org/0000-0002-2414-5269 and Visoka, G (2018) The Foreign Policy of State Recognition: Kosovo's Diplomatic Strategy to Join International Society. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 14 (3). pp. 367-387. ISSN 1743-8586

<https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orw042>

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**The Foreign Policy of State Recognition:
Kosovo's Diplomatic Strategy to Join International Society**

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This article explores the policies and activities undertaken by Kosovo as it seeks diplomatic recognition under conditions of contested statehood and transitional international order. Existing debates about diplomatic recognition – in particular, how independent sovereign statehood is achieved – generally rest upon systemic factors, normative institutions, and the preferences of great powers. In contrast, we argue that the experience of Kosovo presents a more complex and less pre-determined process of international recognition, in which the agency of fledgling states, diplomatic skill, timing and even chance may play a far more important role in mobilising international support for recognition than is generally acknowledged. In building this argument we explore Kosovo's path to contested independence and examine the complex process of diplomatic recognition, as well as highlight the hybrid justifications for recognising Kosovo's statehood and independence. Without downplaying the importance of systemic factors, this article contributes to a critical rethinking of norms and processes related to state recognition in international affairs, which has implications for a broad range of cases.

Kosovo's declaration of independence in 2008 and its subsequent efforts to achieve diplomatic recognition have generated a range of reactions and uncertainties. Some legal scholars claim that Kosovo's independence is supported – or at least not opposed – by international law, as an exceptional case (Hannum 2011; Weller 2011). This view, which also has broad political support, takes into account the remedial case for secession after systematic human rights abuses, the context and constitutional circumstances following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and the ad hoc nature of international law on the question of secession (Bolton 2013). This is challenged by others who refer to the overruling norm of state sovereignty and territorial integrity, the necessity of having consent before permitting separation of territory from the host state, and the dangerous implications for international order that the Kosovo case presents in relation to other secessionist claims (Pavkovic and Radan 2011; Wilde 2011; Hilpold 2012; Ker-Lindsay 2012). Parallels to Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Crimea and elsewhere have fuelled debates about the broader, potentially destabilizing, consequences of Kosovo's quest for independent statehood (Milanovic and Wood 2015). The Kosovo case has also highlighted broad international divisions on the issue of secession and recognition – in this case and more generally – which polarize debates and blur the distinction between legal and political analysis. On the one hand, the US and the majority of European states and other allies strongly support Kosovo's statehood and sovereignty, and its campaign for international recognition. On the other hand, Serbia – backed by Russia – strongly opposes Kosovo's independence and proactively works to obstruct the granting of diplomatic recognition to it. China, India, Indonesia and South Africa – amongst other important states rising in international influence – have also rejected Kosovo's legal independence. A large number of states, including many located in the global south, can be found in the middle ground, seeking to balance and mantle their positions and often delaying the decision to recognize Kosovo.

Despite these controversies and divisions, Kosovo has managed to secure individual diplomatic recognition from 108 UN member states (as of May 2015), establish diplomatic relations with 70 states, and become a member of numerous international and regional organisations (Interview with Kosovo's former foreign minister 2015). As a barometer of international statehood, therefore, the rate of recognition appears to reflect an upward trajectory, although it is uncertain whether this is

towards eventual legal statehood. While Kosovo has not achieved membership of the United Nations – generally considered to be a demonstration of universal recognition – it has received a large number of individual recognitions, something that is significant politically and practically in international affairs even in the absence of UN membership and universal recognition.

Patterns of state creation and diplomatic recognition present an intellectual problem for international society. This process problematizes many international norms, it brings norms into conflict, and it does not reflect consistent patterns in historical perspective. Generally, debates about international recognition – and in particular how and why territorial entities achieve international recognition as independent states – tend to rest upon systemic factors, and in particular normative institutions and the preferences of great powers (Tir 2002; Tir 2005; Coggins 2014). While normative structures and power clearly have explanatory value, the experience of Kosovo suggests a more complex and less pre-determined process of international recognition, in which the agency of fledgling states, diplomatic skill, chance, and timing may play a more important role than is generally acknowledged. Diplomacy makes a difference and the abilities of diplomats from states that seek recognition play an important role in gaining recognition. This suggests that the practice of recognition deserves more attention alongside systemic factors, since the micro-dynamics and politics of recognition – often reflecting quite mundane pragmatic processes – play an important role in explaining where and why recognition occurs. In broader theoretical context, this points to the importance of the everyday ‘power in practice’ in understanding international relations (Adler-Nissen and Pouliot 2014).

This article suggests that Kosovo’s diplomacy has been crucial in mobilizing international support for diplomatic recognition by exploiting the circumstances of its state creation, by involving powerful states as co-owners and custodians of independence, and by reaching out directly to states that have hesitated to recognize it. Examining the discourse and politics behind the decision of states to recognize Kosovo, this article will illustrate that each act of recognition is a complex calibration of self-interest, normative solidarity, and situational circumstances. It begins by surveying debates relating to patterns of international recognition before presenting an alternative perspective based

upon the experience of Kosovo. In conclusion, the article explores the implications of this in broader international perspective.

The missing link in recognition theory

There is extensive research on the politics, legality and ethics of supporting or opposing external self-determination, and on the systemic normative and political conditions which promote or hinder recognition. Early work identified the absence of institutional mechanisms to regulate state recognition or to clearly prescribe when recognition should be extended, which leaves individual states to apply their own judgment, guided by international norms and perceptions of self-interest (Lauterpacht 1944, 385-459). As a result, the process of international recognition is the subject of long-standing debate among international lawyers, who see recognition as either declarative of statehood or constitutive of statehood. Declaratory theorists hold that ‘the political existence of the State is independent of recognition by the other States’ as long as the state fulfils certain substantive criteria (James 1991, 353; Talmon 2001). This implies that states exist ontologically prior to international society and recognition is only a formal acknowledgement of what already objectively exists.

On the other hand, constitutive theorists see recognition itself as a vital component of statehood, and the state is ‘viewed as having its genesis in recognition’ (Grant 1999, xx). Brownlie (2008, 206) thus explains how ‘the political act of recognition on the part of States is a precondition of the existence of legal rights’. Fabry (2010, 3) suggests that ‘at some historical juncture...the society of states came to exist ontologically prior to any new state’. Thereafter, sovereignty was ‘rationed and regulated by those who currently enjoy it’ (Jackson 2000, 323), so that newly self-constituted entities wishing to join international society needed to convince existing states that they are suitable candidates for admission. Reconciling these two schools of thought, Lauterpacht (1947) argues that established states have a legal duty to recognize a state when it has met certain requirements. From this perspective, compliance with the normative prescriptions of international society influences which proto-states will be recognized as states and which will not. However, the many norms of international

society have different levels of acceptance or ‘embeddedness’ so that this approach can only partially explain the criteria for the admission of new states to international society.

Political theories of self-determination and secession mainly deal only indirectly with the question of recognition. On the liberal wing lies the work of Baran (1998, 42) who argues that ‘the right of self-determination and wish to secede do not have to justify secession, since they are merely exercising their right of free association’. In recent years a popular argument in political theory is the viability of a remedial right to secession. Buchanan (2007, 351-353) identifies three forms of injustice that give rise to this: 1) large-scale and persistent violations of basic human rights; 2) unjust annexation of a legitimate state’s territory and 3) the state’s persistent violations of intrastate autonomy agreements. In turn, a key theme has been the ‘reality’ of the current state system, which is extremely reluctant to recognize the legitimacy of secession and *de facto* state-like entities, given that international law does not explicitly recognize the right to secession (Holsti 2004). From a security perspective it is widely believed that secession claims can be destabilizing since they threaten the geostrategic interests of dominant states and can exacerbate intrastate conflict (Naticchia 2005). For instance, Tir (2002) argues that countries withhold recognition as a way of preventing international conflicts, and instead support internal territorial autonomy and power-sharing. In line with this, territorial federalism and autonomy within existing states is a well-established approach to preventing, managing and settling secession conflicts in divided societies (Weller and Wolff 2005). The status-quo is generally advocated as a more sustainable measure as opposed to re-negotiating the status with the host state or providing full diplomatic recognition (Lynch 2004).

The legal and normative theories of recognition provide important criteria for extending or withholding recognition in broad perspective. However, they fall short of explaining the micro-dynamics and processes of recognition in relation to how and why states recognize other (new or fledgling) states. Most of the debates are shifting away from the merits of recognition and are focussing upon the systemic factors that enable recognition under the contemporary global order which contest international law, norms and institutions. For example, Coggins (2014) provides a realist argument on the question of why new states succeed in securing international recognition. Using large-N statistical

analysis, Coggins finds that external factors, namely great power politics, have higher explanatory power for how and why recognition occurs than domestic-level explanations or the merits of independence claims. Similarly, Fabry (2010, 8) argues that '[r]ecognition by the great powers has normally preceded, and carried far more weight than, recognition by other states. Indeed, the latter have normally looked to the former for direction; where they did not, their expeditiousness was likely of little import.' Seen from this perspective, although the right of recognition is delegated to individual states, they often follow great powers in their foreign policy conduct due to political and economic dependency, membership of common security regimes, or through sharing the same ideological orientation.

Beyond these different discussions that focus on the normative and political explanations for granting or withholding recognition, there has recently been growing interest in the diplomatic and coercive measures deployed to prevent recognition of new states. Ker-Lindsay (2012) shows that the 'diplomatic counterinsurgency' to prevent recognition entails a variety of tactics, such as boycotting or breaking diplomatic relations with states that recognize break-away territories, appealing to international judiciary bodies, rewarding states which withhold recognition, utilizing public diplomacy and demonizing self-determination, and blocking participation by breakaway entities in international bodies (Ker-Lindsay 2012, 80-108). Caspersen (2012) considers the internal politics of unrecognized states, looking mainly at how they survive under conditions of constrained sovereignty, imperfect statehood, insecurity, and external rejection. Yet Pål Kolstø (2006, 723-40) is more representative of the scholarship in disregarding the diplomatic agency of new states, focusing instead upon the strengths of the breakaway entity, the weakness of the parent state, support from an external patron, and the engagement of the international community.

What this discussion shows is that prevailing claims regarding state recognition largely rest upon the broad theoretical themes of international relations – either normative or political systemic theories. The missing link in understanding what facilitates, influences or obstructs recognition is an account of the micro-politics of the process. Fabry (2012, 7) considers recognition as 'a single act with both legal and political aspects' similar to 'an act of employing military force or an act of imposing economic

sanctions or an act of expelling a foreign diplomat'. We diverge from this perspective of recognition-as-act and consider rather recognition-as-process as a more viable explanation of the current politics of recognition, building upon the work of Geldenhuys (2009) and Ker-Lindsey (2012). Considering recognition not an act but a process provides space to disentangle the micro-politics of diplomatic recognition as well as account for the complex entangling of political, economic, normative, and institutional rationales at different stages of the recognition process. The micro-politics of diplomatic recognition encompasses the discourses and practices invoked by fledging states in their pursuit of securing diplomatic recognition, as well as the dialogical dynamics and diplomatic techniques aimed at generating international acceptance and overcoming obstacles from opponents. The experience of Kosovo lies between the declaratory and constitutive theories of recognition; whereby simultaneously the political leadership promotes the existence of the Kosovo state regardless of recognition and works in constituting international legitimacy and joining international society through diplomatic recognition and membership of regional and international organisations. Although Kosovo is not representative of territorial entities seeking independence and international recognition – indeed, it is quite exceptional – it provides an interesting illustration of the political dynamics, processes and challenges that are involved in recognition campaigns.

The road to independence

Kosovo's efforts to gain independence and international recognition must be understood against a history of regional disintegration, instability and repression (Weller 2008b; Bolton 2013). The first attempt of Kosovo to achieve independence took place in July 1990 in the context of the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Although the declaration of independence did not attract international support, except from Albania, this act marked the beginning of an advocacy campaign for internationalizing the Kosovo issue and attracting international attention to human rights abuses in Kosovo (Phillips 2012; Koinova 2013). The failure of the US and key European states to include Kosovo in the Dayton Peace Accords – because of the fear that Serbia would withdraw from the peace process if autonomy for Kosovo was on the table at that point – represented a critical

turning point in Kosovo's quest for statehood (Holbrooke 1998). It led to the transformation of peaceful resistance in Kosovo into a military campaign, which secured international attention and helped to establish direct communication between Kosovo's political representatives and external actors (Clark 2000). At the peak of the Kosovo conflict, as part of the Rambouillet peace talks, Kosovo's political and military representatives agreed to extensive autonomy under Serbia conditional upon the removal of Serb armed forces and a referendum on its political future (Weller 2009). However, Serbia rejected this settlement and intensified its offensive on Kosovo, and NATO led a military campaign in 1999 which marked another turning point and opened the prospects for gradual separation from Serbia. The territory was placed under UN administration and this strengthened the political momentum for eventual independence and statehood through consolidating the internal dimensions of sovereignty (King and Mason 2006; Visoka and Bolton 2011; Zaum 2007).

Between 1999 and 2005 the international administration of Kosovo focused on statebuilding and peacebuilding, essentially ignoring the Kosovar Albanian demand for independence and the Serbian contestation of Kosovo's *de facto* political existence through parallel structures (Chesterman 2004). This triggered local resentment and resistance, which culminated with a cycle of ethnic violence in spring 2004. Following this, the UN initiated the process for defining Kosovo's future political status through UN-mediated peace talks between Kosovo and Serbian authorities (UN Security Council 2005). The final status negotiations began in February 2006 and lasted for 14 months, with 17 rounds of direct talks between Kosovo and Serb delegations at the highest level, and 26 expert missions undertaken by the Office of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the future status process for Kosovo (UNOSEK) to Kosovo and Serbia as part of shuttle diplomacy to facilitate the negotiations (UNOSEK 2007). While there was modest progress in agreeing on how to share power in Kosovo between Albanians and Serbs, both parties remained divided when it came to the overall political status of Kosovo (Ker-Lindsay 2009). The desired outcome for Serbia throughout the negotiations was extensive autonomy for Kosovo within Serbia with the possibility to re-negotiate after twenty years. On the other hand, Kosovo Albanians demanded full independence from Serbia, with institutional safeguards for minorities, including

extensive decentralization and local self-governance for the Serb minority (Bolton 2013). The international community was divided between those who supported Kosovo's independence, those who were more neutral and open to a negotiated compromise, and those who opposed Kosovo's independence for various reasons, whether due to their relationship with Serbia or because of the perceived repercussions that Kosovo could have on other secessionist and contested territories around the world (Muharremi 2008; Weller 2009). Additional peace talks led by the Troika (consisting of EU, US and Russian representatives) did not manage to change the position of the Kosovo parties.

In March 2007 the UN Special Envoy leading the negotiations, Martti Ahtisaari, published the key provisions of his proposal, concluding that '[i]ndependence is the only option for a politically stable and economically viable Kosovo. Only in an independent Kosovo will its democratic institutions be fully responsible and accountable for their actions. This will be crucial to ensure respect for the rule of law and the effective protection of minorities' (United Nations Security Council 2007, 4). Serbia rejected the Ahtisaari proposals on the grounds that Kosovo's independence breached Serbia's sovereignty, it violated international law, it would set a negative precedent, and above all it represented a one-sided imposition by the UN Special Envoy's office, which was supposed to be a mediator rather than an arbitrator (United Nations Security Council 2007). Following the failure of two rounds of negotiations Serbia, backed by Russia, rejected the Ahtisaari proposal, which resulted in the decision of the UN Security Council not to endorse the Secretary-General's proposal. (Despite these dynamics, Robert Gates (2014), former US Secretary of Defence, suggested that disagreements between US and Russia on the placement of missile defence system in Europe played a role in Russia's blocking of Kosovo's independence.) After these events, Kosovo declared its independence on 17 February 2008 – in close cooperation with the US and major European states – and began implementing the Ahtisaari proposal unilaterally. In the Declaration of Independence elected representatives of the Assembly of Kosovo committed to establish a 'democratic, secular and multi-ethnic republic, guided by the principles of non-discrimination and equal protection under the law' (Assembly of Kosovo 2008). They agreed to the obligations contained in the Ahtisaari proposal and the new international presence. One day after Kosovo's coordinated declaration of

independence the government of Serbia adopted a decision to annul the declaration (Government of Serbia 2008). These dynamics problematized the independence of Kosovo, but also opened up space for a difficult and incremental process of international recognition and legitimization.

Kosovo's recognition tactics

During and after its supervised independence, diplomatic recognition remains a national priority for Kosovo, and certainly the priority for foreign policy (Interview with a Kosovar diplomat 2014). It represents one of the most important aspects for upholding and consolidating, both internally and externally, the sovereignty of Kosovo. The absence of universal recognition is perceived as a threat to Kosovo's political existence, which undermines domestic sovereignty and could affect its territorial integrity (ibid). Diplomatic recognition has become a crucial challenge for the normal functioning of the country as well as its aspiration to join the Euro-Atlantic community, the UN and other international organisations. However, without overwhelming recognition and the support of the UN Security Council members (notably, Russia and China) Kosovo cannot become a full member of the UN, and this severely limits its political, economic and societal development. Recognition is also essential for the membership of Kosovo in regional organisations and especially for integration into the European Union. A lack of universal recognition also negatively affects foreign investment and the integration of Kosovo's citizens into a range of global networks.

Kosovo – as of May 2015 – has been formally recognized by 108 UN member states. Its statehood is recognized by all its neighbours except Serbia, a majority of European countries, 23 out of 28 member states of the EU, 24 out of 28 NATO member states, all seven member states of the G-7, and a number of countries from all continents. The principal reasons provided for recognition are that Kosovo's independence has enhanced regional peace and stability, it has upheld minority protection, it has strengthened state capacity, and it has facilitated self-determination as a last resort against a background of injustice and suppression by Serbia (Bolton and Visoka 2010). Between 2009 and 2014 Kosovo accredited 22 diplomatic missions and 14 consular missions in

countries across a wide geographic area (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo 2014). Kosovo has strengthened its international personality through signing over 100 international bilateral and multilateral agreements, including over 70 involving the process of treaty succession. It has established diplomatic relations with 70 countries that have recognized its independence. In 2009, Kosovo was admitted as a member of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, with approximately 100 states voting in favour of Kosovo's membership in those two organizations. Subsequently, Kosovo was admitted as a full member in the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (in 2012); as a participant member in the Regional Cooperation Council (in 2013); as a part of the South-Eastern Europe Cooperation Process (in June 2014); and as a member of the International Olympic Committee (in December 2014). Kosovo's bid for membership in UNESCO has received wide support among the EU member states and the US.

Why states recognize Kosovo

Kosovo's independence and its attempts to gain international recognition have triggered much controversy among academics, diplomats and policy-makers and the merits of this campaign are both political and polarized. Kosovo's case for statehood has often been overshadowed by international law debates on self-determination, the role of great power politics in state formation, and the inevitable alignment of Kosovo with the US and other major western powers (Weller 2008a; Ker-Lindsay 2009; Milanovic and Wood 2015). However, to date there are no serious studies which examine the reasons why states have recognized Kosovo. In this section we examine the public justifications provided by states which have recognized Kosovo, and these generally reflect the specific circumstances and context of Kosovo, including its recent history. Clearly, public justifications are not necessarily a true indication of motivations, but the political framing and choice of narrative of states is politically significant. The majority of states that have recognized Kosovo so far have combined multiple justifications, balancing the exceptional circumstances of the case for statehood with broader geopolitical interests.

The emergence of Kosovo's statehood from the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia, the suppression of Kosovo's autonomy and human rights abuses by the Milosevic regime against the Albanian majority population in Kosovo, the humanitarian intervention which paved the way for a UN transitional administration of Kosovo, and the failure of Serbia to accept the UN sponsored negotiations for defining Kosovo's final status provided exceptional circumstances in favour of Kosovo independence (Muharremi 2008; Weller 2009; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo 2013). These contextual conditions have provided some weight to the remedial claim for statehood and independence, despite the objections of Serbia, Russia, China, India and Brazil, amongst others. Furthermore, the case for Kosovo independence was supported by the 2010 ICJ advisory opinion, which found that 'the adoption of that declaration did not violate any applicable rule of international law' (International Court of Justice 2010, 14). It was notable that when Honduras and Egypt recognized Kosovo they explicitly referred, in their recognition statements, to this advisory opinion (The Embassy of Honduras in Spain 2010; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Egypt 2013).

A large number of states have justified their decision to recognize Kosovo based on its commitment to build a multi-ethnic and democratic state. For example, Austria based its decision on the assumption that the new state of Kosovo will operate 'based on the principles of democracy, rule of law and the respect of human rights, including the rights of ethnic communities. The full commitment to respecting these principles, in particular securing the equal participation of all communities in the political process, is a precondition for being integrated in the circle of democratic-pluralistic states of Europe' (Austrian Government 2008). The normative framing of the declaratory support for Kosovo's independence is at odds with some criticism of standards of democracy, rule of law, and minority protection in Kosovo, however (Freedom House 2015). While many countries have based their decision for recognition on such standards this has largely corresponded to Kosovo's expression of commitment rather than the realization of normative conditionality for statehood (see Caspersen 2015). Interestingly, domestic factors in Kosovo – an exception being the dialogue with Serbia – have not appeared to be a major justification of states for delaying the recognition of Kosovo. Perhaps this could be explained by the fact that a majority of states that have not yet recognized

Kosovo do not base their diplomatic conduct on normative considerations and conditionality.

Another factor which explains why Kosovo has received broad international recognition concerns the co-ownership of its statebuilding process with the international community under US and European leadership. The declaration of independence and the campaign for recognition were not unilateral acts but in fact closely coordinated with key regional and global actors. Kosovo's leaders have intentionally cultivated this strategic dependency to promote international political support and engagement for its campaign for statehood. The same approach has also been used in pursuing international recognition more widely. So, the 'co-owners' and strong supporters of Kosovo independence granted Kosovo immediate recognition and have actively encouraged other states to follow suit. After 2008 the US and UK proactively mobilized their diplomatic networks in support of Kosovo, encouraging other countries across the globe to move towards recognizing Kosovo's statehood (UK Government 2008; Interview with a Kosovar diplomat 2014). They have consistently used the UN Security Council meetings on Kosovo to call other member states to recognize Kosovo. Around 53 countries recognized Kosovo within the first year of its independence, and most of them did so immediately in the days and weeks after the declaration of independence.

The prevalence of contextual arguments in favour of recognizing Kosovo was supplemented with regional geopolitical considerations. A large number of states that have recognized Kosovo have justified their decision by the expectation that Kosovo independence would bring regional stability, would contribute to international peace and security, and would also normalize inter-state relations in the Balkans (Bolton and Visoka 2010). Croatia also referred to regional stability when it argued that 'independent Kosovo will be developed as a democratic state of equal citizens in which human rights will be firmly respected, and which will be based on the rule of law. By that, basic preconditions will be created for the Republic of Kosovo to act as an important and responsible factor of peace and stability in the region' (The President of Croatia 2008). Similarly, Montenegro expressed the hope that Kosovo 'will give contributions to development and strengthening of good-neighbourly relations and regional cooperation, and to the

European and Euro Atlantic perspective of the region and its stability' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Montenegro 2008).

While the close allies and supporters of Kosovo have granted recognition with conditions attached to supervised independence, after 2011 the external momentum in support of recognition declined, leaving it mainly in the hands of Kosovo's own diplomatic abilities and activities to advance recognition further. After 2011 the political leadership in most of the Euro-Atlantic states which had been closely involved in resolving Kosovo's final status finished their terms in office, giving way to subsequent leaders who were less active in lobbying for recognition. Kosovo has also been increasingly seen as being within the zone of stable countries on the global political agenda, in contrast to other regions of the world, and this has also had the effect of giving it less attention in recent years. Kosovar diplomacy has therefore driven the continuing campaign for international recognition across the world.

The micro-politics of Kosovo's diplomacy for recognition

Notwithstanding the power of normative and geopolitical arguments and the co-ownership of Kosovo's independence with leading global actors, the third dimension that explains Kosovo's success in attracting diplomatic recognition is what Hoxhaj (2014) calls the 'smart' diplomatic efforts of Kosovo. It is in this sense that Kosovo's experience illustrates that it is not broad principles alone which determine the outcome of recognition campaigns, but also events and tactics. The micro-politics of recognition involves the pragmatic actions of Kosovo and its international partners in the quest for recognition alongside complex lobbying. In understanding the micro-politics of recognition, it is important to examine recognition as a process and a series of acts, as well as explore the techniques and arguments invoked as a smart power and persuasion approach.

The outcome of Kosovo's campaign for diplomatic recognition rests mainly in the pursuit of recognition by individual states. This strategic approach was the only option left after the UN Security Council did not endorse the UN Secretary General's special envoy's comprehensive settlement for Kosovo, which had suggested a supervised

independence for Kosovo. Although in the past groups of states have pushed for collective recognition of new and emerging states (Grant 1999, 170-171; Caplan 2005, 64), in the case of Kosovo there was insufficient support within the UN, EU or NATO to provide Kosovo with collective recognition. Within each of these organizations there were a number of states that, for various reasons, withheld or delayed their recognition of Kosovo. The most significant example of this was set out first by the European Union just one day after Kosovo declared independence. The EU Council (2008) noted that ‘Member States will decide, in accordance with national practice and international law, on their relations with Kosovo’. Therefore, while the EU took the decision to collectively recognize the other former Yugoslav republics, in the case of Kosovo the EU provides for individual recognition. Although there was extensive support for Kosovo amongst EU member states as a consequence of their close involvement in Kosovo over the previous two decades, five EU member states – fearing that recognition of Kosovo could have repercussions in their own countries – shaped the EU decision to favour individual recognition. While Greece and Cyprus had reservations because of the Northern Cyprus, Spain did not recognize Kosovo because of secessionist claims in Catalonia, and Slovakia and Romania feared that recognition of Kosovo would bring internal complications related to national minorities (KFOS 2012; Ker-Lindsay 2015). Despite these differences, the EU Council (2008) underlined its ‘conviction that in view of the conflict of the 1990s and the extended period of international administration under SCR 1244, Kosovo constitutes a sui generis case which does not call into question these principles and resolutions,’ referring to the UN Charter and resolutions relating to state sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The evidence suggests that Kosovo has not taken international recognition for granted, and nor does it accept that its status is a pre-determined condition of structural forces and norms. It has tried to cultivate a strategic approach for seeking recognition based on situational practices, support and guidance from state patrons, the utilisation of formal and informal networks of influential personalities, and the invocation of normative discourses. Three years after independence, in 2011, the Government of Kosovo launched the ‘Strategy for the Achievement of Full International Recognition of the Republic of Kosovo’, which aimed at providing momentum for the international recognition

campaign (Government of Kosovo 2011, 3). The strategy identified six possible obstacles that could affect the process of lobbying for international recognition: 1) Russian rejection of the Ahtisaari proposal and the inability to achieve a consensus within the UN Security Council; 2) lack of unity among EU members on Kosovo independence, which could create the image of Kosovo being an unresolved European issue; 3) categorisation of Kosovo as a secession case and not a state created out of the violent dissolution of a multinational federal state; 4) lack of immediate interest for recognizing Kosovo by a large number of states that do not have a firm position on Kosovo or are politically and geographically remote from Kosovo and the region; 5) shift of global priorities and policy attention away from the Balkans; and 6) the departure from the international political scene of influential personalities during the state formation process (Government of Kosovo 2011).

In response to this, Kosovo decided to orient its recognition strategy in five directions, for which it has developed a new bureaucratic structure, a proactive diplomatic service, and an active diplomatic representation abroad (Government of Kosovo 2011; Interviews with Kosovo diplomats 2014). The first strategic direction includes working with individual states and adjusting its approach to seeking recognition based on their foreign policy and position towards Kosovo independence. The second strategic direction includes working with states – including those which have taken an undefined stance or are resistant towards Kosovo's independence – to incrementally constitute the case for formal recognition. The third strategic direction targeted specific states on the assumption that a decision by one state would result in recognition or create pressure for recognition amongst neighbours or members of regional political arrangements. The fourth strategic direction includes working with multilateral mechanisms to establish links with individual states and gain collective recognition from international organisations. The final strategic direction involves working with distinguished former statesmen and women and utilizing public diplomacy for attracting positive visibility and political momentum.

As a part of this strategic thinking Kosovo realized from an early stage that recognition is not a single act, but a complicated process with multiple stages. From this experience it has approached the recognition-as-process across a number of stages and

approaches involving direct and indirect contacts with other states as illustrated in Table 1. At the forefront of the recognition campaign between 2011 and 2014 was Kosovo's minister of foreign affairs, whose lobbying campaign achieved 31 recognitions, establishing diplomatic relations with 38 countries, and making official visits to over 25 countries that had not recognized Kosovo (Interview with Kosovo's former foreign minister 2015). Particular attention has been given to developing contacts with states which have not yet extended recognition but where there is sufficient reason to believe that they are open to persuasion. In this regard, building personal relations, countering the objections and counter-recognition efforts of Russia and Serbia, and understanding the diplomatic code of conduct of the target state have been key tactics (Hoxhaj 2014). Serbia and Russia have constantly tried to undermine Kosovo's lobbying efforts through sending their ambassadors or special envoys before or after Kosovo visits these countries to advise and pressure against taking any affirmative decision (Interview with a Kosovar diplomat 2014). The main arguments used by Serbia and Russia are that Kosovo independence was against international law and it has a destabilizing effect in the Balkans. While these counter-recognition efforts have had an impact, they apparently have slowed down the recognition process rather than reversed it.

Often the decision to recognize Kosovo has been made during a visit to the target state, but there have been many cases when the decision was taken after several months of extensive diplomatic exchanges and lobbying as part of multilateral events (Interview with a Kosovar diplomat 2014). The more the diplomatic communication was intensified at the ministerial and ambassadorial level the higher were the chances for recognition as all these small efforts helped creating a critical momentum (Hoxhaj 2013b). Kosovo has worked closely with key Euro-Atlantic partners and has utilized its special relationship with these states. Kosovo diplomacy has coordinated closely with the US, UK, Germany, France, and Turkey, among other states, which has helped Kosovo establish direct contacts with states which do not recognize it. For instance, the UK was instrumental in lobbying Commonwealth countries in support of Kosovo, while France has used its influence in Francophone regions (Interview with a Kosovar diplomat 2014). On the other hand, Turkey has been instrumental in lobbying for Kosovo recognition to the Arab and Islamic countries (Ibid). This targeted strategy has required intensive multi-layered

communication with supporting states and with states from which Kosovo seeks recognition.

Table 1: Kosovo's diplomatic efforts for attracting diplomatic recognition

- Send regular requests for establishing diplomatic relations to individual states
- Lobby for recognition through powerful states and former Western diplomats and statesman
- Utilise bilateral and multilateral forums to arrange informal meetings and seek recognition from targeted states
- Seek membership in regional and international organizations to build international legitimacy and increase chances for individual and collective recognition
- Arrange special visits to the states that have not yet recognized Kosovo
- Build personal relations and direct communication with Ministers of Foreign Affairs and make them 'friends' of Kosovo and lobbyists for Kosovo recognition
- Pursue an incremental approach to recognition, and when formal recognition is not possible enter in alternative institutional cooperation arrangements
- Use public diplomacy to attract recognition and improve the international image of Kosovo
- Imitate and develop an institutional culture of diplomatic rituals and practices similar to other regional and European neighbours
- Take a proactive stance towards global and regional issues, which have the potential to reward Kosovo with recognition from particular states
- Work proactively and intensively with targeted groups of states and deploy various strategic responses to convince these states to recognize Kosovo.

The second strategic direction of Kosovo has been to work with states that have accepted Kosovo independence in a *de facto* or indirect way in order to change their position incrementally towards formal recognition and the establishment of diplomatic relations. Through this process Kosovo's diplomacy has tracked countries that have not recognized Kosovo, as well as those countries that maintain an undefined or hostile stance towards Kosovo independence and that have wished to cooperate indirectly with Kosovo. In practice, there are a number of states that have accepted Kosovo recognition but not formally recognized it. Acceptance entails diplomatic communication and exchange, as well as institutional and technical cooperation. The most interesting examples of this level of recognition are Serbia and some of the EU member states that have not yet

recognized Kosovo. Despite the fact that Serbia has not officially recognized Kosovo and has undertaken an active campaign to obstruct Kosovo's international recognition there are numerous indications in recent years that Serbia has softened its stance on Kosovo's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and statehood. Serbia has agreed to enter negotiations with the most senior Kosovo government representatives indicating recognition of them as legitimate counterparties in the negotiation process (KIPRED 2013). The agreement on Kosovo's regional participation and representation permits Kosovo's membership in regional organizations under the condition that Kosovo is represented with a reference to UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) and the ICJ advisory opinion on Kosovo declaration of independence.

In the 'First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalisation of Relations' between Serbia and Kosovo, Serbia agreed to dismantle its parallel structures in Kosovo and accepted their integration into Kosovo's political, legal, and local institutions. Another agreement between Kosovo and Serbia on inter-border management represents a critical turning point for Serbia to recognize Kosovo's borders and its territorial integrity (IBM Agreed Conclusions 2011). Moreover, with the agreement on exchanging liaison officers in both capitals, Serbia took the first step to permit Kosovo to have a diplomatic office in Belgrade, which represents a small yet significant step in the gradual consolidation of diplomatic relations as two independent states (Liaison arrangements 2013). So, all these small steps speak of Serbia's acceptance but not formal recognition of Kosovo as an independent and sovereign state. While the EU has played an important leveraging role, Kosovo's diplomacy was not a passive factor; rather its proactive diplomacy in Brussels and major European capitals has influenced the pro-Kosovo stance of Germany and the UK, who have been the strongest voice for Kosovo in the EU.

In turn, lack of recognition does not signify the absence of formal or non-formal diplomatic communication between governments, and often this space for interactions is utilized tactically by aspiring states to bargain and negotiate eventual diplomatic recognition. Relevant examples are Greece, Slovakia, and Romania that have not yet recognized Kosovo but have accepted institutional cooperation with Kosovo as a temporary measure for delaying or substituting formal recognition. The institutional cooperation has taken different shapes with each of these states, but it primarily came as a

pragmatic necessity for facilitating Kosovo's progress in the EU integration path. Some of the examples of this institutional cooperation include: recognition of the Kosovo passport, voting in favour of advancing Kosovo's integration in the EU, contributing with military and civilian personnel in Kosovo, undertaking arrangements for economic cooperation, the operation of liaison offices in Kosovo, officially receiving Kosovo's most senior government and diplomatic officials, and supporting Kosovo's membership in regional and international organisations (Hoxhaj 2013a). Therefore, Kosovo's engagement with these non-recognizers can be considered to be strategically synchronized towards keeping the channels of communication open, establishing institutional cooperation in order to create the right momentum, and creating the conditions for recognition and the establishment of diplomatic relations (Interview with former foreign minister of Kosovo 2015).

The other group consists of states that have taken a passively negative stance towards Kosovo's statehood. These states may resist or defer recognition of Kosovo for various reasons, including a perception of unforeseen consequences that could harm their near and far interests. This is the case with Spain and Cyprus who have not recognized Kosovo for internal reasons, and have constantly tried to maintain their neutrality towards Kosovo's independence by obstructing Kosovo's equal treatment in the EU integration process, and by avoiding engaging with Kosovar diplomats at all costs. They have required the EU to include an article in the Stabilization and Association Agreement with Kosovo which holds that this contractual relation with Kosovo does not constitute recognition of Kosovo (Interview with a Kosovar diplomat 2014). The position of Spain and Cyprus has undermined EU unity in common foreign policy related to this case and has often served as a sensitive issue that has frustrated most of the EU member states that have recognized Kosovo.

As part of the second strategic direction for recognition there is the group of states – such as Russia – that proactively use their political and economic capabilities to oppose Kosovo statehood and recognition. While Serbia is gradually accepting Kosovo's status as part of the EU-facilitated dialogue for the normalisation of bilateral relations, its foreign policy is also attuned towards preventing Kosovo from joining the international society. Serbia and Russia have anticipated which countries Kosovo would seek

recognition from and are pre-emptively seeking to impress upon these states the danger that recognition of Kosovo would bring to bilateral relations, and wider implications for international law and stability. There are also cases of Russian visits taking place after Kosovo's request for recognition as well as protest notes in response to states accepting Kosovar representatives (Interview with a Kosovar diplomat 2015). However, after Russia's war with Georgia and recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia it changed its discourse on Kosovo and reduced its obstruction of Kosovo's campaign for recognition (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation 2008). In turn, following the annexation of Crimea in 2014, Russia referred to the ICJ ruling on Kosovo and implicitly softened its stance on Kosovo further, thus accepting that each case of the recognition of independence is exceptional (President of Russia 2014). However, countries such as China, India, Indonesia, and South Africa have completely ignored Kosovo's request for recognition (although Brazil has recently recognized Kosovo's passports). There is informal diplomatic communication between Kosovo and Russia and China that is channelled through their liaison offices in Kosovo, although so far this has not produced any indication of a change in their position (Ker-Lindsay 2015).

The third strategic direction of international recognition has been the targeting of groups of states that are located in a particular region or are part of a common political, economic, and cultural sphere. Examples of such groups are Arab countries, African regions, and Caribbean and Pacific islands. With these groups of states Kosovo has applied a differentiated strategy of arguments for recognition depending on the political geographies and the convergence of key foreign policy values (Interview with Kosovo's former foreign minister 2015). For example, Kosovo has invoked its success in democratic consolidation and statebuilding when it requested diplomatic relations with other consolidated democracies. With regard to Asian states, Kosovo has emphasised how the country is a sovereign and stable state and does not have a tendency to interfere in the internal affairs of other states. In the case of African and Latin American nations, Kosovo diplomats have emphasised the analogies of Kosovo independence with other cases of decolonisation and external self-determination. With middle-eastern countries, Kosovo has highlighted religious affinities and inter-faith tolerance as a basis for granting Kosovo diplomatic recognition. Finally, with regard to Oceania-Pacific, Kosovo

diplomats have highlighted solidarity between small states and mutual support as a basis for recognition and the establishment of diplomatic relations.

This differentiated approach has resulted in recognition by a large number of small states across different parts of the world, and this – despite the opposition of some powerful states – is politically important in the longer term. Even though Kosovo is not a member of the UN and some of the structural constraints upon its statehood are extremely difficult to change, the large number of states that recognize it is itself highly significant since it strengthens its claim to membership of international society and allows it to exploit many of the opportunities this provides. If Kosovo's recognition only extended as far as its key supporters and patrons in North America and Western Europe its international reach would be severely limited, but the large number of recognizing states, including small states, makes a difference, and this is where the Kosovo's efforts to achieve as many individual recognitions as possible are meaningful.

The fourth strategic direction for achieving recognition has been pro-active engagement with multilateral forums and regional organizations. Kosovo has focussed upon major international capitals where most international organizations have their offices and states have diplomatic representation, such as New York, London, Paris, and Brussels, to establish initial contacts to be later followed with individual visits to these countries. The idea of lobbying through multilateral organizations has two basic goals. The first goal is to achieve membership of Kosovo in these multilateral organizations to expand international legitimacy and reinforce statehood. The second goal is the utilization of the structures and opportunities within these organizations to exert pressure and influence over member states that had not recognized Kosovo. In relation with the European Union, Kosovo has utilized the integration process in this organization for the purpose of further consolidating statehood in this way. Over the years, Kosovo has influenced the European parliament in favour of recognizing Kosovo and passing resolutions to call upon the five EU member states that have not recognized Kosovo to do so (European Parliament 2014). In negotiating the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU, Kosovo negotiated the same content as all other countries in the region – which implies sovereign equality – and has persuaded the EU to allow some access to the 'international democracy community' and the European common foreign

and security policy (Interview with a Kosovar diplomat 2015). Although Kosovo is not recognized by the EU as a whole and specifically not by five member states, Kosovo has thus managed to get similar treatment as other countries in the region in the integration process. This has increased Kosovo's international credibility and has also contributed to the recognition process more broadly.

Kosovo is pursuing collective recognition through the back door by pursuing future membership of the EU. It has framed its integration process in the EU as an opportunity for many small states around the world to have Kosovo as a European hub for their interests. Kosovo has argued that the membership of the Council of Europe (CoE) is a crucial step in the direction of joining the European Union as ratifying conventions associated with the CoE are part of the EU *acquis communautaire* and a prerequisite for advancing democracy and human rights standards in Kosovo (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kosovo 2014). Kosovo has worked closely with the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to influence its members to recognize Kosovo. Lobbying through the OIC – which represents the largest number of states in UN General Assembly – has helped Kosovo to influence UN diplomacy regarding its international status. For several years OIC member states such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Albania sponsored resolutions which have called the member states of OIC to recognize Kosovo. In 2013, the OIC Secretary-General stated that the 'OIC has always been in favour of Kosovo's independence. Almost a third of the states that have recognized Kosovo are members of the OIC...and we expect to have new recognitions in the future...OIC will continue to mobilize member states to recognize Kosovo's independence' (Government of Kosovo 2013). Later in 2014, OIC called on Russia to 'reconsider its position towards the independence of Kosovo and not to be an obstacle before the right of the people of Kosovo to self-determination' (Organisation for Islamic Cooperation 2014).

An important aspect for succeeding in the four strategic directions has been lobbying through powerful states and networks, as a pragmatic approach to utilize systemic factors and, where necessary, attempt to circumvent political obstacles. Because of the long-term and intimate engagement of key Euro-Atlantic states in resolving the Kosovo conflict and in negotiating Kosovo's final status, these countries have been the key supporters and co-owners of Kosovo's state formation and consolidation in the last

fifteen years. As a result of this Kosovo has consistently coordinated the recognition process with these states. In every bilateral meeting Kosovo has highlighted and acknowledged the support of these sponsors and their role in lobbying targeted states in support of Kosovo has been decisive. However, there have also been circumstances when the supporting powers, in line with their own foreign policy goals, have postponed responding to Kosovo's request for recognition or attempt to gain membership to certain international organizations (Interview with a Kosovar diplomat 2014). To mitigate these obstacles, Kosovo has occasionally worked with distinguished international personalities who have personal influence over certain states in the global south. In a number of cases, these individuals have been important assets in facilitating the recognition process. All such efforts make a difference; international recognition does not simply happen automatically as a condition of norms. While the United States and the major European powers have facilitated these lobbying efforts, without the diplomatic persistence from the Kosovo side many countries would defer any decision to recognize Kosovo. It was the combination of great power support together with the diplomacy of Kosovo that shaped the dynamics and outcomes of Kosovo's campaign for international legitimacy. The difference that pro-active diplomacy makes for securing diplomatic recognition is also demonstrated by the shift of emphasis in Kosovo's foreign policy after 2014 away from pursuing individual recognition and towards seeking membership in UN agencies. Since making this shift Kosovo has secured very few new recognitions, which speaks of the role of pro-active diplomacy for maintaining the issue in the political agenda of supporting states and for directly approaching states that could potentially recognize Kosovo. In the previous four years before this shift, Kosovo secured 10-12 recognitions annually.

The development and cultivation of personal relationships between Kosovo's diplomats and those of countries that have not recognized Kosovo plays an important role in keeping the issue of recognition firmly in political agendas (Interview with Kosovo's former foreign minister 2015). Direct and persistent communication has been critical in securing recognition. Kosovo has regularly sent diplomatic overtures to countries across the world with the purpose of renewing the request for establishing diplomatic relations, expressing congratulations on national days, offering sympathy at times of national

tragedy, and extending an invitation to visit Kosovo or vote in favour of Kosovo membership in international bodies. Equally, the promise of future political, economic, social, cultural and educational cooperation has secured Kosovo several recognitions from smaller countries, such as Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Guyana, Timor-Leste, Jordan, Central African Republic, Liberia, among others (Interview with a Kosovar diplomat 2015).

The final aspect of Kosovo's strategy for recognition has been its public and digital diplomacy. Kosovo's public diplomacy aimed to change the image of Kosovo from a conflict-shattered society to a prosperous and stable liberal society and investment environment, including programmes to attract foreign students to visit Kosovo (Wahlisch and Xharra 2011). This people-to-people diplomacy helped Kosovo open new channels of communication to a wide range of countries. For example, recognition of Kosovo by Timor-Leste was facilitated by a Kosovar working for the UN in East Timor (Interview 2013). Kosovo also utilized its civil society, media, and artists to visit countries that have not recognized Kosovo and shape the attitudes of host societies on Kosovo as well as indirectly generate pressure upon the governments of these countries to recognize the territory. The digital diplomacy campaign was also successful in increasing Kosovo's presence in the internet and the appearance of Kosovo as an independent state in the webpages of businesses, universities, and airports. Key Kosovar diplomats are very active in Twitter and Facebook, reaching out to wide audiences. As a part of public diplomacy for recognition, the Kosovar diaspora has also been active in celebrating the anniversary of independence with public events in major European capitals.

Notwithstanding Kosovo's pro-active diplomacy to pursue international recognition and the agency this demonstrates, systemic factors clearly limit the impact of such tactics. Systemic factors – such as the preferences of powerful states, polarization between great powers, norms which discourage secession in international politics, and the fear of precedence within many states in relation to other unrecognized territories – represent factors that no small state can overcome. Moreover, renewed confrontation between Western states and Russia over the Ukraine crisis and Middle East conflicts has the effect of polarizing political opinion more broadly, and can reduce the relevance of Kosovo's campaign for diplomatic recognition. The end to Kosovo's international

contestation is closely linked with the prospects of reaching a peace treaty and mutual recognition with Serbia, as well as joining the EU in the future. Kosovo's recognition campaign has also experienced setbacks as a result of domestic developments, including delays in forming the new government in 2014. The new foreign policy leadership in Kosovo has not made diplomatic recognition a foreign policy priority, and instead it has focused its efforts in securing membership of international organizations. Other domestic issues, such as socio-economic problems and difficulties in implementing EU-brokered agreements with Serbia have also played their part in derailing Kosovo's recognition campaign. Moreover, as Kosovo's diplomacy is young, policy action has relied on the personal agency of political leaders rather than in the continuity and stability of the diplomatic bureaucracy. These domestic political and institutional limitations have undermined Kosovo's campaign for securing diplomatic recognition, as well as illustrate the complex interplay between agency and structures both at the local and global levels in supporting and impeding the diplomatic recognition process.

Despite these challenges, Kosovo's quest for diplomatic recognition is a distinct case which illustrates the resilience of new states for navigating through the messy fabric of international society. Despite the opposition of very powerful states Kosovo has secured recognition from a majority of the world's states, and this cannot be explained solely as a function of Kosovo's friends, without reference to Kosovo's diplomacy. As this article has illustrated, accounting for the micro-politics and the interplay of systematic and situational factors provides better grounds for understanding the struggle of contested states to exist in international society.

Conclusion

This article has examined the processes through which Kosovo has secured wide international recognition under conditions of contested statehood and fragmented international support. The article has shown that recognition is not a single political and legal act, but a complex process which needs to be unpacked and critically traced to be able to capture the complex and sometimes haphazard forces and processes that enable or obstruct international recognition. The evidence in this article has suggested that multiple

and overlapping factors – not all of which can be described as systemic – have contributed to and facilitated the process of Kosovo’s extensive recognition. While the recognition process is embedded into powerful normative arguments for independence and recognition, and facilitated by the co-ownership of the independence process with key global and regional powers, a key locus for a successful campaign for recognition has been the agency of Kosovar diplomats and political representatives in utilizing multiple approaches, resources, and strategies. Kosovo would not have been able to secure 108 individual recognitions within eight years of its independence without the support of powerful patrons – notably the US and major European states – but Kosovo’s own efforts have played a crucial role in generating a momentum and support from great powers and utilizing this extensive international legitimacy to reach out independently and successfully to other countries. Notwithstanding the opposition of some powerful states, Kosovo’s persistent diplomacy, and the level to recognition this has helped to achieve, has created a situation of *de facto* membership of the international society.

The Kosovo struggle for securing diplomatic recognition signifies important patterns and implications for the future of state recognition in international politics. The possibility for global consensus for the formation of new states and for granting universal recognition is narrowing as a result of increasing polarization between existing global powers and the emerging or resurgent ones. Consequently, the recognition of states by one political bloc of states can politicize and complicate the recognition process in broader perspective. Kosovo has received wide recognition by the majority of states belonging to the Euro-Atlantic community, and no recognition from other emerging powers that are positioned behind Russia on the question of Kosovo’s independence. Over the years, it has become clear that recognition of Kosovo was caught between great power rivalries which significantly undermine many aspects of Kosovo’s quest for statehood. Although this polarization affects the prospects for recognition, pro-active diplomacy gradually shifts the grounds of these systemic challenges and shapes a new critical mass for international legitimization. The Kosovo case signifies the blurring lines between power politics and normative arguments in pursuing diplomatic recognition, while highlighting the interplay of factors in shaping international responses to state recognition.

Kosovo has invoked a differentiated strategy – and different arguments – for recognition, in line with the interests of states whose support it seeks and regional dynamics. It has built strategic relations and utilized the support of the US and a majority of European partners to reach out to other states and international organizations that have not recognized Kosovo. Hybrid justifications for recognition invoked by states – combining contextual particularism with normative universalism – have provided powerful arguments to facilitate further recognition of Kosovo and a strong base for Kosovo diplomacy to advance the quest for universal recognition. Part of Kosovo’s diplomacy has also been the attempt to make non-recognition unattractive – as a disservice to justice and democracy – and this approach has played a role in achieving recognition. Furthermore, once Kosovo reached its critical mass of being recognized by over half of the UN member states, the attraction of new recognition became much easier and faster.

The particularities of the Kosovo case require a rethink of the norms and practices that are in constant flux in a rapidly transforming global order. The analysis here demonstrates that the process of international recognition is not only a condition of systemic and power-political forces. The Kosovo experience demonstrates, once again, how decentralized and unregulated the issue of recognition is, as a political process beyond any universal normative consensus and consistency. Seen from the point of view of practice, it is rare to find a country that has a principled or consistent policy on state recognition. The norms of recognition are determined in practice and constantly evolve, making it difficult, if not impossible, to identify generalizations across many different cases. It is for this reason that theoretical generalizations of diplomatic recognition are often misguided in relation to the broad variety of practices.

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