

The Kosovo Clock: Accounting for the Timing of International Recognition

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Recognition of de facto states from de jure recognized states is key to becoming a fully-fledged member state of the international system. Although many new states are quickly and universally recognized, the recognition of other aspiring states remains highly contested. Previous research suggests that great power recognition decisions regarding aspiring states tend to rapidly converge toward either recognition or non-recognition, yet great power convergence has still not occurred in the case of Kosovo after more than 10 years. In cases of contested sovereignty, why do some countries extend recognition early in the process, whereas others delay recognition and some states withhold recognition altogether—what explains the timing of recognition? We investigate this question and focus on how great powers shapes the timing of recognition decisions in other countries through military and economic leverage. Specifically, we hypothesize that countries in the US sphere of influence, with strong economic and military ties, are more likely to recognize Kosovo relatively rapidly, while countries influenced by Russia are less likely to recognize Kosovo at all, or to do so only after an extended period of time. Using new quantitative data on the timing of all state decisions regarding the international recognition of Kosovo, along with great power military and economic leverage in third countries, we estimate a non-proportional survival model and find supportive evidence. Results also indicate that countries farther from Belgrade, lower GDP, fewer Muslims and more religious regulation were less likely to recognize early. Major international events, such as the ICJ ruling or the Brussels agreement, had no discernable effect; neither did vulnerability to secession, ethnic fractionalization or democratic regime type.

KEYWORDS: International Recognition, Timing, Secession, Sovereignty, Survival Modeling
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When Kosovo declared independence on February 17, 2008, Russia called for the United Nations to declare the declaration illegal and the UN Security Council went into an emergency session. Vitaly Churkin, Russia's UN ambassador, told reporters that “the resolution allowing the UN to administer Kosovo since 1999 was still in force so there could be no legal basis for any change in status.” Russia troops landed on the tarmac in Pristina, in an effort to claim control of the airfields, but were compelled to withdraw after NATO demands.¹ Meanwhile, Russia's foreign ministry warned that Western recognition of an independent Kosovo could have implications for the Georgian breakaway provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

For some new states, the process of gaining recognition is smooth and rapidly results in universal acknowledgment. However, for other new states like Kosovo, the process is drawn out and sovereignty is contested: some countries extend recognition to it early in the process, whereas others offer delayed recognition and some states withhold recognition from it altogether. The great powers are divided. In cases where statehood is significantly disputed, what explains the dynamics of international recognition? Although recognition is an important component of what it means to be a state and possess sovereignty (Coggins 2011; Krasner 1999; Sterio 2012),² the scholarly literature provides relatively few explicit predictions about which countries (or groups of countries) will extend recognition and which states will withhold it, much less about the timing of such decisions, in cases of *contested* sovereignty. Because internal wars have become one of the main sources of conflict and casualties in the post-Cold War international system (Gleditsch 2004; Lacina 2004:192; Wimmer and Min 2009:2), especially in the form of conflict between states and secessionist groups, the problem of recognition has acquired even more urgency in

¹ On the NATO-Russia deadlock at the Pristina airport on June 1999 see Jackson (2007: 216–254).

² For example, Krasner (1999:7) argues that external recognition, inter alia, “facilitates treaty making, establishes diplomatic immunity, and offers a shield against legal actions taken in other states.”

world politics (Baer 2000; Fazal and Griffiths 2014; Paquin 2010; Sambanis and Milanovic 2014; Walter 2006).

Between fully recognized new states (e.g., Eritrea, Montenegro, South Sudan, Timor Leste) and totally unrecognized entities (e.g., Azawad, Bougainville, Catalonia, Novorossiya) lies a grey area of partially recognized aspiring states, including well known places such as, e.g., Abkhazia, Kosovo, Palestine, South Ossetia and Western Sahara.³ Sovereignty, like recognition, can be more grey than black or white. The problem of failed states, and what if anything the international community should do about them, has become a particularly relevant problem since the end of the Cold War (Woodward 2017). Although cases of contested recognition occur *less frequently* than cases of full recognition or no recognition, which has been the more common pattern in international politics, their existence matters more than their numbers suggest, since they can account for a substantial amount of conflict and typically require significant attention from regional actors (Florea 2014:14–16). Given that such cases continue to exist in the modern world, and show no signs of disappearing, it follows that a better understand the politics of recognition is merited. In this paper, our objective is to investigate when and why states take sides in recognition disputes. Specifically, the paper seeks to account for the differential timing of recognition in the case of Kosovo, which initially declared independence from Serbia more than 10 years ago (February 17, 2008), and which still remains contested with three permanent members of the UNSC recognizing it, and two not recognizing it, and just about the same 3:2 proportion of recognizing to non-recognizing states in the world at large (just over 100 out of 193 currently recognize it).⁴

We argue that great power competition plays a key role in explaining the timing of recognition decisions in cases of contested sovereignty. In this case, countries in the US sphere of

³ Even some established states, notably Israel, are not fully recognized by all other United Nations (UN) members. See Mirilovic and Siroky 2015.

⁴ Kosovo MPs proclaim independence, BBC News, February 17, 2008. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7249034.stm>

influence are much more likely to recognize Kosovo relatively rapidly, whereas countries influenced by Russia should be less likely to recognize Kosovo.⁵ To examine the influence of great power influence on the timing of recognition decisions in other countries, we focus on two types of leverage. First, we assess the potential influence of economic leverage through the use of Russian and US foreign direct investment (FDI). Second, we examine the potential influence of military leverage through Russian and US transfer of arms to third countries. While the paper develops the argument that Russian and US influence is an important factor in shaping recognition dynamics, we are keen to acknowledge that domestic political factors and salient identity issues also influence recognition decisions, and we therefore are careful to take many of these alternatives into account in our final model of recognition.

After developing our conjectures further in the next section, and then discussing alternative theories that might also explain recognition dynamics, we assess our claims utilizing newly collected data. The data cover the timing of all state decisions regarding the international recognition of Kosovo, along with measures of both US and Russian influence (in the form of arms transfers and foreign direct investment). We also take alternative theories into account, particularly we assess claims focused on the role of domestic vulnerability due to prior secession, regime type, transnational religious ties, religious regulation, “critical events”, ethnic diversity, wealth and distance. The results of our estimation of a non-proportional survival model indicate evidence more consistent with the predictions of great power military and economic leverage than with the expectations derived from alternative theories. The article concludes with a discussion of the implications and limitations of this analysis along with directions for future research.

A Theory of Influence

⁵ We also examine the potential influence of the UK and France on third country decisions, and these results are shown in the appendix, since they are not the main focus of this paper.

In a systematic study of the politics of state recognition of new states, Coggins (2011) showed that great powers influence recognition decisions of other great powers, such that great power recognition decisions often converge quickly. The reason is partly based on “facts on the ground” or “decisive relative strength” arguments. On this count, if secessionists defeat the government’s military, and establish control over the territory that they claim, the group’s claim will be recognized by all other states; if they are defeated or fail to gain control, they will remain unrecognized. However, the continuing existence of a number of entities that are recognized by some countries but not by others—the gray area of contested recognitions—is problematic for “facts on the ground” arguments. Several political entities have remained only partially recognized for a significant period of time (for example, many decades in the cases of Western Sahara, Israel, and Palestine). Cases of partial recognition should not persist, if the “facts on the ground” argument is correct. If one side has clear control, as it does in many of these cases, recognition should not remain contested. In the case of Kosovo (as we discuss in more detail subsequently), Serbia has not controlled the situation on the ground since 1999, and yet close to half of the world’s countries have not recognized Kosovo as an independent state.

Moreover, most cases of recognition considered in Coggins (2011) are instances of decolonization rather than secession. In cases of secession, great powers (and other countries) are less likely to converge—indeed, they sometimes openly clash—in their recognition decisions. Great powers may have an incentive to cooperate regarding recognition, especially in cases of decolonization but also in cases of secession (e.g., South Sudan, East Timor and Montenegro). Yet, at other times, their interests pull them in opposite directions (e.g., Abkhazia, Donbas, Taiwan). In the case of Kosovo, the great powers have still not converged more than a decade after the initial declaration of independence and the first recognition, following its declaration of independence in early 2008. The United States, France and the United Kingdom quickly recognized Kosovo, but China and Russia have still not. This pattern is reflected, as we will show, in the world at large when it comes to Kosovo’s recognition.

When great powers take opposite sides in a recognition dispute, they may compete and spend significant resources in their attempts to influence the recognition decisions of other countries. Ker-Lindsay (2017: 7) argues that, regarding Kosovo's status specifically, "Washington and Moscow have lobbied hard for and against recognition respectively." The reason is that the recognition decisions of small countries matter. Membership in the UN requires two-thirds support in the General Assembly (XIV Rule 136). While the most powerful states play a key role, Coggins (2018: 28) points out that an aspiring state "must secure the recognition of an overwhelming majority of its peers" in order to attain membership in the international community. Since many countries may not have a strong interest in a particular recognition dispute, they may be willing to adopt the position of their more influential partners, if the incentives align.

We expect a clustering of countries with the United States or Russia to the extent that the United States or Russia sells arms to it and makes foreign direct investments into it. Countries are usually keen to maintain the military support of their major power patron, whether the US or Russia. Arms transfers transcend mere trade or military relations; they are an essential foreign policy tool designed to acquire political influence (Pierre 1981: 3, 48). Major powers such as the Permanent members of the UN Security Council, controlled nearly 90% of the market in 2008-2016, whereby US alone accounted for more than 40% of all arms sales (Grimmett 2016: 21). Superpowers have used their dominant status in the global arms market in the past to influence foreign policies of the importers (Quandt, 1978:121-22; Menon 1986:214), balance against their rival's influence (Krause 1991: 321-325) or impose hegemony (Harkavy: 198). The US has particularly been successful at changing the importer's foreign policy through arms sales during the Cold War (Sislin 1994: 681). The Soviet Union, too, has made the importers align with their specific objectives in the Middle East and Africa (Krause 1991). These outcomes are possible because arms sales denote a close security relationship in which the recipient ultimately purchases security at the expense of its autonomy (Kinsella 1998: 9). Generally, countries that

purchase more arms from major powers have been more vulnerable to the exporter's influence on their foreign policy (Sislin 1994). While Kosovo is probably not the prime foreign policy objective of either the United States or Russia, we submit that arms transfers might nonetheless influence the importer's foreign policy toward recognition. If this logic holds, there should be a higher probability that a country recognizes Kosovo, the more arms it receives arms from US. Conversely, the recipients of Russian arms should be less likely to recognize Kosovo.

Beyond military levers, which can have economic spillovers, there are more explicitly economic ones. To the extent that local economies are dependent on US or Russian foreign direct investment or trade from the United States, they are vulnerable to the use of these sticks for influencing leaders to cast their lot with the United States. The expectation that the United States and Russia will be able to influence other countries' foreign policy positions is consistent with Lake's (2009) concept of international hierarchy. Lake challenges the realist assumption that the interstate system is anarchic and argues that we should think of some interstate relationships in terms of hierarchy and of authority as involving dominant (notably the United States and Russia) and subordinate states. In particular, Lake argues that subordinate states are more likely to join a United States-led or Russian-led coalition.

Other Explanations

Transnational religious ties

Great power zones of influence are not the only form of international ties that matters. Previous research has shown that transnational religious ties matter as well, and there are reasons to expect that such ties influence recognition decisions. The literature has already highlighted that countries are more likely to intervene in civil wars on behalf of their coreligionists who are fighting a group or a state of a different religion (Carment, James, and Taydas 2009; Fox, James, and Li 2009). This appears particularly widespread for Muslim majority states, which usually do not intervene

in secessionist conflicts on the side of non-Muslim groups (Fox et al. 2009). Scholars have also found that, in general, countries that share a dominant religious identity tend to support one another politically (Ellis 2010; Sandal and Fox 2004). There is reason to expect that this dynamic may apply in the case of Kosovo. Fox and Sandler (2004:71) point out that ethnic Albanians in Kosovo received significant support from Islamic organizations and majority-Muslim states. According to Newman and Visoka (2018: 380), “Kosovo has worked closely with the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to influence its members to recognize Kosovo.” Fox and Sandler (2004) argue that religion can matter in international relations as a potential source of domestic legitimacy. In other words, policymakers who assist coreligionists abroad may benefit from increased domestic political support. Fox and Sandler (2004) also claim that religion can act as an important source of identity that directly shapes individual worldviews.

A priori, we should expect transnational religious ties to matter more than other kinds of transnational identity ties (e.g., ethnic) in explaining recognition decisions, since the number of countries with which an aspiring state shares a dominant religious tradition tends to be larger than the number of states with which it shares a dominant ethnic identity. The coalition of potential of religion is larger than that of ethnicity.⁶ States with transnational religious ties to Kosovo (i.e., majority Muslim states) should be more likely to extend recognition to Kosovo early, all else equal.

Secession

According to some theories, the recognition of secessionist claims set a precedent that can embolden other secessionist groups (Jackson and Rosberg 1982; Herbst 1989; Vrbetic 2013; Walter 2006). States that face a domestic threat (for example, from a separatist group) will therefore prefer to deny or delay as long as possible recognition from noncore groups, whether

⁶ This is not to suggest that intra-religious cleavages exist, just as intra-ethnic cleavages do.

religious or ethnic, in other states (Mylonas 2013; Zartman 1966). Consistent with this logic, Coggins (2011) argues that vulnerability to such domestic threats reduces the likelihood that a great power will recognize a secessionist claim. How much more should this logic apply to minor powers and small states facing domestic secessionist threats, since they are on average less well equipped to contain such threats. When states perceive a significant internal threat to the dominant ethnic or religious group, this theory leads us to expect that they should be systematically more likely to back the status quo--that is, to withhold and significantly delay recognition of aspiring states.

The “theory of vulnerability” was used to explain external support for secession (Jackson and Rosberg 1982:18; Herbst 1989; Touval 1972). This may help explain why it does not always constrain states from supporting separatist groups in other countries and why the empirical support for the theory has been mixed. Unlike covert support for secessionists, however, citizens in the recognizing state can directly discern whether and if so *when* their state has extended external recognition. If states care about the symbolism of their decision, and the message it sends to domestic audiences, recognition decisions should be more strongly guided by the logic of domestic vulnerability, since they are more overtly visible.

Democracy

Regime type potentially plays a large role in the timing of recognition decisions, with democracies mostly aligning with the US position and against the Russian position in cases where the two major powers have staked out clear positions. Graham and Horne (2012) argue that support by a foreign patron is crucial to the survival of “unrecognized states.” They model the international community as a unitary actor that opposes secession from states that are “members in good standing of the international community,” while being “much less protective of the territorial integrity of pariah states, such as those guilty of mass atrocity crimes” (Graham and

Horne 2012:18). Consistent with this expectation, Bélanger et al (2005) show that rebels within democracies are less likely to benefit from an external intervention on their behalf by other democracies. The reason is that democracies are viewed as more sensitive to individual rights than authoritarian states, which tend to restrict such rights at home (Davenport 1999).

If true, then democracies should be less likely to support aspiring states that seek to secede from other democracies early on, but more likely to support states that seek to secede from non-democracies in the early stages of the recognition process. Kosovo initially broke from Serbia when it was non-democratic, but Serbia democratized prior to the 2008 declaration of independence. This could imply that democracies should be more likely to recognize Kosovo, and to do so early, since Kosovo Albanians pushed for independence from the authoritarian Milosevic regime. However, Kosovo's declaration of independence occurred after Milosevic was overthrown and Serbia democratized, so the effect might be washed out or ambiguous.⁷

Regulation of Religion

According to Gill, “[t]he serious study of religion and politics is [still] relatively new because the dominant thinking in sociology and political science has long considered religion increasingly irrelevant in social life” (2001:135). However, there is an emerging literature on the role of religion and religious institutions in shaping patterns of state institutions, economic performance, policy preferences, voting and popular mobilization (Dzutsati, Siroky, and Dzutsev 2016; Grzymala-Busse 2012; Warner 2000), and in international relations (Fox and Sandler 2004; Sandal and James 2010).

Although we have learned more about religious institutions and domestic politics and economics, we know less about the effects of religious institutions on international policy

⁷ A third possibility is that democracies evaluate whether the parent state (Serbia) or the aspiring state (Kosovo) is more democratic and base their recognition decisions accordingly.

outcomes. There is reason to expect that religious regulation has important international implications (Mirilovic and Siroky 2015; 2017). Henne (2013) argues that states with extensive government regulation of religion (especially authoritarian ones) are more likely to support UN resolutions that condemn religious defamation.⁸ In short, religious regulation may shape international relations because it negatively influences recognition decisions regarding aspiring secessionist states. Numerous states feel threatened by noncore religious groups, especially those that proselytize. To the extent to which a state perceives a threat from such groups, this perception is often reflected in its institutions, specifically those organizations charged with regulating religion. These institutions vary considerably cross-nationally in terms of the extent to which they tolerate or discourage religious proselytization. Restricting proselytization may be a reaction to perceived or anticipated threats from a domestic group of the same religion advocating a different interpretation or from a minority group. For example, China's efforts to regulate Islam in Xinjiang province are connected to Beijing's concerns about a potential secessionist threat in the province (Potter 2003; Han and Mylonas 2014). Horowitz (2000:222) claims that the effort by majority groups to enforce an official religion may occur among majority groups that feel vulnerable.

Religious regulation can reflect the perception of domestic vulnerability to secessionist threats and also a sense of vulnerability to foreign, notably Western, influences. For example, Sarkissian (2015) argues that some religious restrictions in Russia (that is, targeting religious groups not regarded as traditional in Russia) are motivated by concerns about foreign allegiances and about groups with strong organizational structures based outside of Russia. Moreover, freedom of religion is an important American value, which has influenced the dominant values of the contemporary international system. Religious regulation can be contrary to this value, and countries that engage in it may be concerned about the extent of American international

⁸ Henne (2012) has also found that interstate disputes between religious (that is, with state favoritism for a religion, among other factors) and secular states are more likely to involve the use of force.

influence.⁹ They may be particularly reluctant to support a secessionist claim that is backed by the United States, as is the case with Kosovo.

Critical Events

Critical events and institutional endorsements in the world that relate to this dispute can potentially influence the decision calculus of third states. In the case of Kosovo, the International Court of Justice's Advisory issues an opinion regarding Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence in 2010. It ruled that Kosovo's declaration of independence did *not* violate international law, thereby granting it additional legitimacy, and potentially encouraging other states to recognize it. Addressing this event also sheds light on whether and how international institutions influence recognition decisions. In 2013, there was a second seminal event. Officials from Belgrade and Pristina reached the Brussels Agreement, which officials from Kosovo claimed constituted "in a way" Serbia's recognition of Kosovo's independence. Serbian officials emphasized that the Brussels Agreement facilitates "Serbia's way toward Europe."¹⁰ We therefore investigate how, if at all, the Brussels Agreement may have affected the decisions of the remaining non-recognizing countries to formally recognize Kosovo.

[Table 1 summarizes key expectations of our theory as well as other explanations.](#)

⁹ The correlation between percent Muslim and religious regulation is 0.52.

¹⁰ Under the agreement, Serbia did not recognize Kosovo's independence. See <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34059497>

Table 1: Summary of Main Explanations

ARGUMENT	EXPECTATION
MILITARY AND ECONOMIC LEVERAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US arms transfers will have a positive impact on recognition, while Russian arms transfers will have the negative effect on recognition. • US FDIs will have a positive impact on recognition, while Russian FDI will have the negative effect on recognition.
TRANSNATIONAL RELIGIOUS TIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The larger the Muslim population of a country, the higher the probability the country would recognize Kosovo
SECESSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countries that faced secessionist movements in the past are less likely to recognize Kosovo
DEMOCRACY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democracies should be more likely to recognize Kosovo
REGULATION OF RELIGION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countries with stricter regulation of religion should be less likely to recognize Kosovo
CRITICAL EVENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2010 ICJ opinion and the 2013 Brussels agreement are likely to encourage recognition

The Kosovo Conflict

Before proceeding to the data and analysis, some readers may find some brief contextual information on the case helpful. The contemporary conflict over Kosovo’s status has its roots in the collapse of Yugoslavia (SFRJ), a federal structure consisting of six republics, all of which are now independent states. One of SFRJ’s republics, Serbia, included two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina. The population of Kosovo is majority Albanian by ethnicity and mostly of Muslim religion, with a minority that is Serb by ethnicity and mostly of Christian Orthodox religion. SFRJ’s constitution of 1974 significantly increased the autonomy of Kosovo and of

Vojvodina. Many Albanians in Kosovo continued to push for republic status to be granted for Kosovo, including 1981 demonstrations calling for this. Slobodan Milosevic came to power within Serbia in 1987, reduced the autonomy of the autonomous provinces, and imposed repressive policies in Kosovo.

The Kosovo conflict escalated in the late 1990s, with the advent of Kosovo's Liberation Army (KLA) which used violent tactics to oppose the Milosevic regime and push for Kosovo's independence. In 1999 NATO intervened against Serbia by launching an aerial bombing campaign. The Milosevic regime escalated an ethnic cleansing campaign that forced many Albanians to flee Kosovo. The conflict ended with the adoption of UN Resolution 1244, which confirmed the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia,¹¹ while also referencing "a political process designed to determine Kosovo's future status, taking into account the Rambouillet accords¹²." Milosevic withdrew Serbian forces from Kosovo, and UN Resolution 1244 also made provision for an international security presence in Kosovo. Following the withdrawal of Serbian forces, many ethnic Serbs fled Kosovo to escape a campaign of violence and intimidation by Albanian forces. Serbs were again targeted in the 2004 riots in Kosovo in which their homes and Orthodox monasteries in Kosovo were destroyed or damaged.

Kosovo declared independence in 2008 and Serbia has refused to accept Kosovo's independence or recognize Kosovo as an independent state. In the last 10 years, both sides have sought to encourage or discourage other countries regarding recognizing Kosovo. The US is a key supporter of Kosovo's independence and international recognition. Americans and many other Western countries have recognized Kosovo and have argued that human rights violations inflicted by the Milosevic regime on Kosovo's Albanians make it impossible for Kosovo to remain a part of Serbia. Proponents of Kosovo's independence have also claimed that Kosovo is a unique case

¹¹ The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia consisted of Serbia and Montenegro. Montenegro became independent in 2006.

¹² Serbia previously rejected the Rambouillet Accords.

that does not set an international precedent for other secessionist claims. Russia, China, India, Brazil, and other countries including some EU and NATO members (e.g., Spain and Greece) have refused to recognize Kosovo. These countries and other opponents of recognition tend to emphasize international norms of sovereignty and territorial integrity. They disagree with the claim that Kosovo is a unique case, and worry about its implications for other secessionist disputes.

Data and Methods

The unit of analysis is the country-month recognition decision¹³, and the key criterion for case inclusion is the UN Membership. This yields 193 countries for 120 months, that is, 12,889 total observations covering all countries from 2008 to 2018. To measure the timing of recognition, we use data from <http://www.kosovothanksyou.com/> which indicates the exact date of recognition, if it has occurred. Our unit of time is the recognition month, which is denoted as 1 if recognition happened in that month, and then dropped from the data, and 0 up until the month of recognition. It is marked as censored if it has since 2008 still not extended recognition (by February 2018, 10 years after the initial declaration of independence).¹⁴

To capture the sources of leverage and assess our theory, we consider both economic and military sources of influence that the US and Russia has over other countries. First, in terms of economic leverage, we include one indicator of the amount of FDI that the US invests into other countries from the Bureau of Economic Analysis,¹⁵ and another indicator for the Russian FDI.¹⁶ Russian FDI is measured as quarterly net inflows/outflows from the Russia to a given country in millions of US dollars. US FDI is measured in the same way, but on annual basis, since that is

¹³ The source for recognition data is <http://www.kosovothanksyou.com/> (last accessed January 24, 2019).

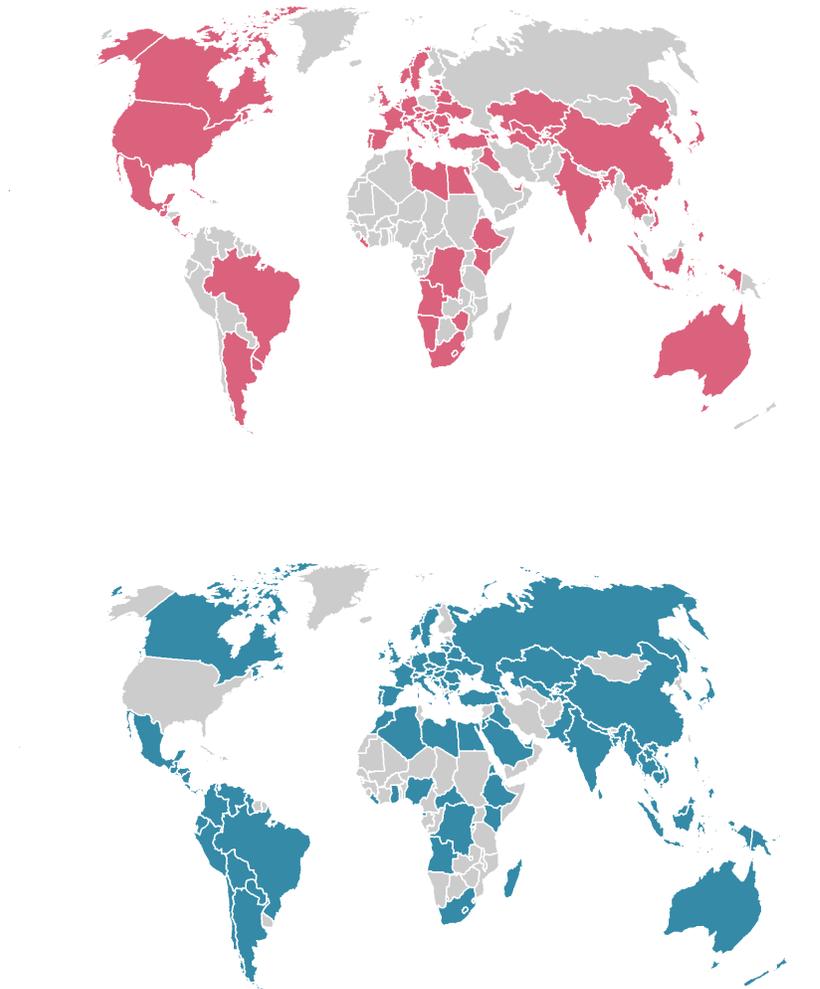
¹⁴ No country has officially recognized Kosovo since February 2018

¹⁵ Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Direct Investment Abroad: Balance of Payments and Direct Investment Position Data, Financial transactions without current-cost adjustment, available at: <https://www.bea.gov/international/di1usdbal> (Accessed on January 12, 2019)

¹⁶ The Central Bank of the Russian Federation, External Sector Statistics, available at: <http://www.cbr.ru/eng/statistics/?Prtid=svs>, (Accessed on January 12, 2019).

the most granular level of data that is publicly available on US FDI. Figure 1a shows the main recipients of the Russian and US new FDI measured as a total amount for the period 2007-2017 in the millions of US dollars. Over the last decade, Russia has invested into 91 countries while the US invested into 121 countries.

Figure 1a: Russian (in red) and US (in blue) Net FDI (2007-2017)



Second, in terms of military leverage, we focus on US and Russian arms transfers to each country using data from SIPRI's Arms Transfers Database.¹⁷ This indicator measures “the number of weapon systems or subsystems delivered in a given year” from either the US or Russia to a given country. After dividing the indicator by 100 to normalize the scale, we then lag the score by one year for the purpose of our analysis to account for possible endogeneity.

Control Variables

We also seek to account for several plausible alternative explanations, which we include as controls in our statistical model.

To measure transnational religious affinity, we focused on demographics rather than formal institutions, and therefore coded the percentage of a country's population that is Muslim.¹⁸ To investigate domestic vulnerability to ethnic separatism, we used data from the Griffiths database on secessionist movements, which includes all secessionist groups (not only those involving “at risk” minorities).¹⁹ We coded countries as “vulnerable” if they had an active secessionist movement 10 years prior to Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence. To account for differences and clusters of democracies, we also include an indicator of democracy for the year prior to the declaration of independence. We use a regime-type indicator from Cheibub, Gandhi, and Vreeland (2010), which codes a country as a democracy if its executive and legislature are chosen in elections contested by more than one party and alternation between

¹⁷ P. Holtom et al. (2013). Trends in international arms transfers, 2012. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (Stockholms internationella fredsforskningsinstitut)(SIPRI).

¹⁸ The source is the ARDA (Association of Religion Data Archives) at www.thearda.com. An alternative indicator could be whether Islam is the official state religion. The results do not change if we use this alternative.

¹⁹ Griffiths, Ryan. (2015) Between Dissolution and Blood: How Administrative Lines and Categories Shape Secessionist Outcomes. *International Organization* 69(3):731–751. Griffiths, Ryan. (2016). *Age of Secession: The International and Domestic Determinants of State Birth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

parties in power occurs (that is, when the ruling party loses an election, a peaceful transfer of power occurs).

To measure religious regulation, we use a standard measure of the extent to which religion is regulated, both formally and socially, from the Association of Religious Data Archives (ARDA). The variable is composed of two parts. The formal regulation of religion (GRI) varies on a scale from 0 to 10 and measures the extent to which the government allows freedom of religion, allows proselytizing and conversion, and allows for foreign and other missionaries to operate within the country. The second part of the measure is the social regulation of religion (SRI), which also ranges from 0 to 10, and assesses social attitudes toward “nontraditional” faiths and toward proselytization within the country by members of those faiths. We use the additive index of religious regulation for each country as the main indicator of religious regulation. The two indices are highly correlated and thus jointly form a single explanatory “factor,” which is more efficient to estimate than two correlated variables.

One advantage of examining the timing of recognition decisions, rather than treating the recognition decision as a yes or no issue, is that the former approach allows us to assess whether particular events can influence recognition decisions. We assess the impact of two such events. First, in 2010, the International Court of Justice’s Advisory opinion regarding Kosovo’s unilateral declaration of independence ruled that Kosovo’s declaration of independence did not violate international law. We examine whether or not that ruling led to an increase in the number of recognitions among the remaining 125 countries that had not yet extended recognition at the time of the ICJ decision. Addressing this questions matters in terms of evaluating whether and how international institutions influence recognition decisions. Second, in 2013, officials from Belgrade and Pristina reached the Brussels Agreement, which officials from Kosovo claimed that it constituted “in a way” Serbia’s recognition of Kosovo’s independence. Serbian officials

emphasized that the Brussels Agreement facilitates “Serbia’s way toward Europe.”²⁰ We examine whether the Brussels Agreement, by supposedly displaying a weakened resolve by Belgrade to oppose Kosovo’s independence, affected the decisions of the remaining 95 non-recognizing countries to formally recognize Kosovo.

Finally, we also included each county’s ethnic fractionalization index (Alesina, Devleeschauwer, Easterly, Kurlat, and Wacziarg 2003),²¹ its logged gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (Gleditsch 2002), and distance from Belgrade.²²

Who recognized Kosovo?

Since its declaration of independence on February 17, 2008, Kosovo has been recognized by 117 countries,²³ while 76 countries refused to follow suit. The bulk of recognitions came within the first three months following the declaration of independence when 35 states recognized Kosovo. Among these early recognizing states was the majority of EU members, US and its NATO allies. Overall, 53 countries, or nearly a half of all recognizers, recognized Kosovo in 2008. Figure 1 shows that the pace of recognitions began to slow down rapidly from mid-2008, displaying a slow drip of recognitions, usually no more than one and a maximum of two per month. By the end of 2014, recognitions became quite rare and larger time gaps started to appear

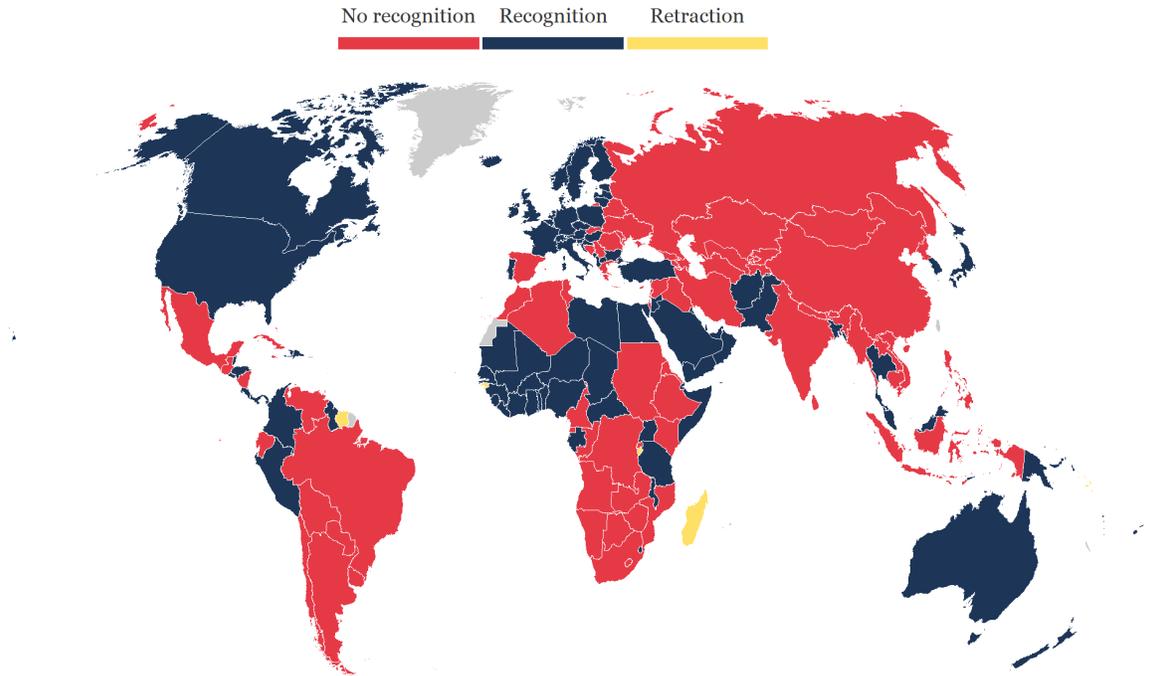
²⁰ Under the agreement, Serbia did not recognize Kosovo’s independence. See <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34059497>

²¹ Alesina, Alberto, Arnaud Devleeschauwer, William Easterly, Sergio Kurlat, and Romain Wacziarg. (2003) Fractionalization. *Journal of Economic Growth* 8(2):155–194. An alternative measure from EPR on group concentration could explore the idea that it is not secession per se, but the potential for it, that inhibits recognition.

²² Neighboring countries may be systematically more interested in the dispute and behave differently in terms of recognition (Weidmann, Kuse, and Gleditsch 2010).

²³ By the end of 2018, 10 countries retracted their recognition, which would reduce this number to 107. These include Burundi, Comoros, Dominica, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Madagascar, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands, and Suriname. We include them here as recognitions, since they did extend recognition at one point. The additional modeling complexity to account for these few retractions would result in more loss of interpretability than is worth it, since the main results do not change when they are excluded.

Figure 2: International Recognition of Kosovo (February 2008-February 2018)



Method

We estimate a Cox nonproportional-hazards (PH) regression model for time-to-event data with time-varying covariates.²⁴ This method allows us to analyze recognition as a dynamic process and to assess the effects of quantities that vary over time.²⁵ In our case, the main time-varying covariates are US/Russian FDI and arms transfers.²⁶ Following Box-Steffensmeier and Jones (2004: 136), we correct for the non-proportional hazard by including an interaction between natural logarithm of time and each covariate in violation of the PH assumption. If the interaction term coefficient is positive, then the initial effect of the coefficient term on recognition magnifies

²⁴ The main assumption of this model is that the effect of a time-varying covariate on the survival probability at time t depends on the value of this covariate at that same time t (or, if specified, the lagged value of t).

²⁵ Fisher, L.D. and Lin, D.Y., 1999. Time-dependent covariates in the Cox proportional-hazards regression model. *Annual review of public health*, 20(1), pp.145-157.

²⁶ We use Cox PH with time-independent covariates for our Models 1-3 on secessions since all the variables are constant over time. The main assumption underlying this model is that the hazard ratio comparing any two specifications of predictors does not change over time. Retractions do not affect this assumption.

over time. Conversely, if the interaction term is negative, then the passing of time decreases the effect of the constitutive coefficient on recognition.²⁷ The relative size and sign of the interaction and constitutive terms' coefficients indicate the rate at which a covariate's effect shifts over time. A small interaction term coefficient relative to the constitutive term coefficient indicates slow change, whereas a large interaction term coefficient relative to the constitutive term coefficient indicates fast change.

Licht (2011) suggests that interpreting the results of the NPH model based solely on the exponentiated coefficients for the constitutive term and interaction term of the time-varying covariates is insufficient. In addition to the coefficient plots with hazard ratios, we therefore report and plot the marginal effects for the time varying covariates (FDI and arms transfers) using 1000 simulations for each of the models.

Analysis and Discussion

We model the timing of international recognition as a function of US/Russian leverage, along with controls, in Figure 3.²⁸ Consistent with our expectations, we find that US arms sales increases the hazard of recognition, significantly speeding up the timing of recognition. On average, importers of US weapons are more likely to recognize Kosovo by roughly 26% for every additional 100 pieces of military hardware. Some of the major importers of US weapons such as Australia, Canada, Italy, Norway, and the United Kingdom have recognized Kosovo within the first year after the recognition. Others, like Egypt, Kuwait, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates have followed suit.

Over time, however, the effect of US arms sales becomes negative, which means that the passing of time decreases the effect of US arms transfers on a country's recognition timing.

²⁷ This does not necessarily imply that the effect of fades over time but that time may overwhelm the initial effect (Licht 2011: 235).

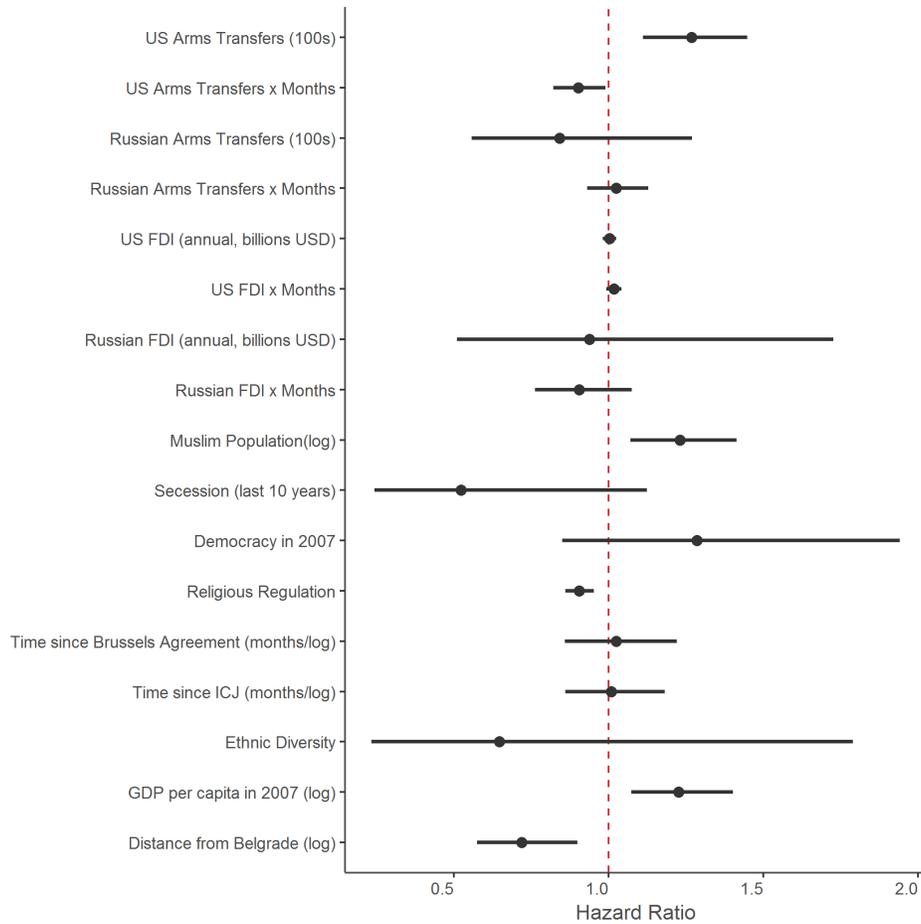
²⁸ In the appendix, we report the model with main IVs as well as a base model with controls.

However, given that the interaction term coefficient is smaller than the arms transfers coefficient, this change is relatively slow. By contrast, Russian arms sales are negatively related to the timing of recognition, as expected, and its effects increases over time, but the effects are not statistically significant.

We find a small positive effect of US investment on a country's decision to recognize Kosovo. For any given month, a unit-increase in US investment increases the hazard of recognizing Kosovo by around 1%. However, this effect is not statistically significant at 95% level. Likewise, we find a negative and insignificant effect of Russian investment on the hazard of recognition. Although the direction of these effects is consistent with our expectations, neither economic ties to the US or Russia has a strong effect on the timing of recognition.

We also assess several alternative theories. Consistently with the arguments emphasizing transnational religious ties, across all the models included in the analysis, an increase in the share of the population that is Muslim has a statistically significant effect reducing the time to recognition (in other words, countries with large Muslim populations tended to recognize Kosovo relatively quickly). We then looked at whether countries that experienced secessionism in the past would be more constrained to recognize Kosovo's unilateral secession from Serbia. While the estimate is in the expected negative direction, the effect of secessionism on recognition is not statistically significant, casting doubt on the "vulnerability theory". Similarly, democracies are more likely to recognize Kosovo early, as anticipated, but the effect is not discernable from zero. By contrast, we find a robust support for the importance of religious regulation - stricter religious regulation is associated with a lower probability of recognition, consistent with previous work on recognition and religion.

Figure 3: Full Model of Recognition



Note: Presented is the Cox Non-Proportional hazard model with point mean estimates and 95% confidence intervals. The vertical dashed line is the line of no effect.

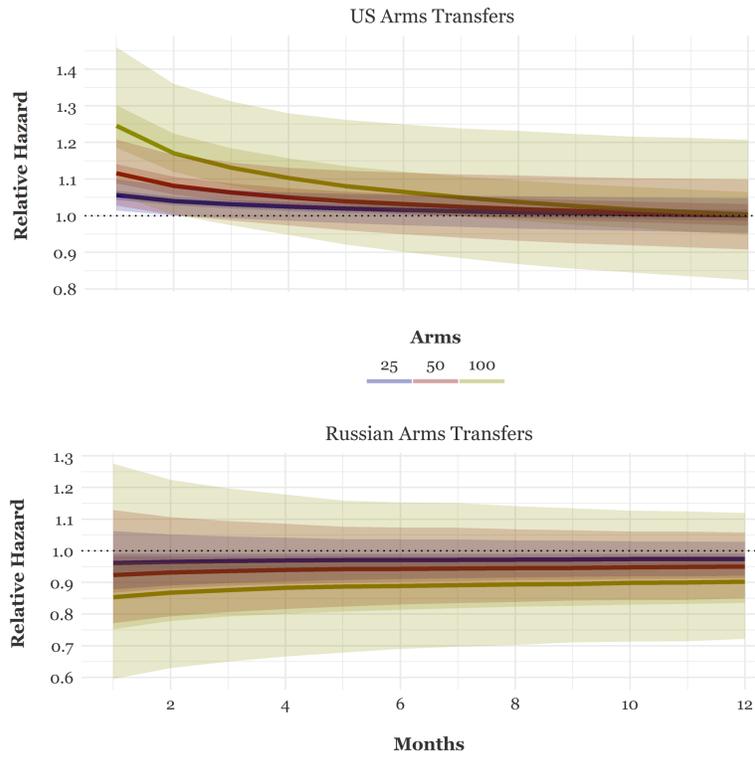
We also examined whether two landmark events, the 2011 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the legality of Kosovo’s declaration of independence and the 2013 Brussels agreement on normalization between Belgrade and Pristina had any influence on prospective recognitions. Both coefficients are slightly positive, indicating that they marginally increased the likelihood of recognition in the aftermath, but neither effect is statistically significant. Finally, we note that the richer countries were more likely to recognize Kosovo, countries far away from Kosovo were less likely to recognize it, and ethnically more diverse countries were slightly less likely to recognize it, but the effect was not significant.

Following Licht's advice to check for substantial effects of covariates that fail to achieve statistical significance, we create 1,000 simulations based on the full model for FDI and arms transfers over the first 12 months to show the relative hazard of different levels of these covariates on recognition. Figure 4 examines the effect of US and Russian arms transfers by plotting the relative hazard based on 1,000 simulations for three cutoffs over the first year. US arms sales have a positive effect in the first two months upon the declaration - countries buying 100 pieces of military hardware from the United States are 25% more likely to recognize Kosovo in the first month following the declaration of independence. However, this effect diminishes over time such that it drops to 10% by the fourth month, and at the end of the first year there is no longer any discernable effect on the timing of recognition. All of this suggests that the US was successful at persuading its closest military allies and clients to promptly recognize Kosovo, but this stimulus was sapped by the end of the first year after independence was declared. By contrast, Russian arms exports have had a negative and smaller impact on recognition. For countries that purchased 50 units, the hazard of recognizing Kosovo is lower by 7.5%, while for the importers of 100 units it is lowered by -15%. The influence of Russian weapons on non-recognition quickly erodes by the third month, although it does not completely disappear even at the end of the year.

Figure 5 displays the substantial effects of US and Russian FDI on recognition, and that these effects vary considerably over the first year for different cut-offs. Although these effects were non-significant on "average" (Figure 3), it is clear from this graph that the relative hazard is in the envisaged direction, but is only significant for large sums of FDI.²⁹

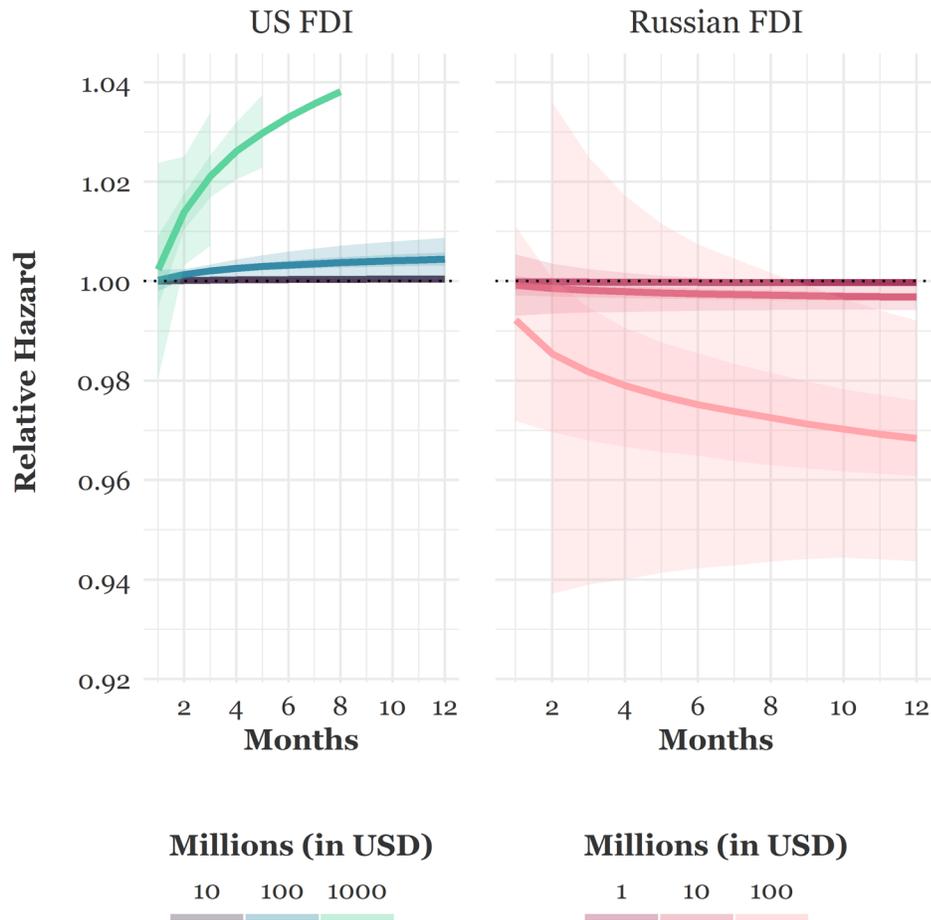
²⁹ We choose 10 times higher cut-offs for US FDI to reflect the empirical distribution.

Figure 4: Relative Hazard of Arms Transfers over First 12 months



Note: Relative hazard is the ratio of the hazard at time t to the baseline hazard, whereby 1 indicates no effect. Different lines show relative hazard ratio for selected cut-offs. The area of corresponding color indicates 95% confidence intervals. The dotted horizontal line is the line of no effect.

Figure 5: Marginal Effect Plot of Model 1 (FDI)



Note: Relative hazard is the ratio of the hazard at time t to the baseline hazard, whereby 1 indicates no effect. Different lines show relative hazard ratio for selected cut-offs. The area of corresponding color indicates 95% confidence intervals. The dotted horizontal line is the line of no effect.

Recipients of low levels of US FDI are *not* more likely to favor recognition, but countries that receive more than USD 100 million and are much more likely to favor recognition over time. Most notable examples of countries that received a few hundred million dollars in US FDI annually and recognized Kosovo include key US partners in the EU (Germany, France, Italy the Benelux), Asia-Pacific (Australia, Japan, and South Korea), Latin America (Colombia), Middle East (Egypt, Jordan and Turkey) as well as the Gulf countries and Pakistan. At USD 100 million, the relative hazard starts at a very low level and increases quickly over time. Countries that receive US investments of USD 1 billion start at a low chance of recognition but the effect

increases quickly over time. In the third month after the declaration of independence, the hazard is at the probability of 1.02, while in the eighth month it jumps to 1.04. That represents a twofold increase in the hazard of recognition within five months. In other words, it doubles the chances of recognition in that time frame for countries receiving large amount of US FDI. In the case of Russian FDI, we see a reversed pattern. Recipients of USD 100 million have a hazard of 0.99 at the outset, and that decreases to 0.97 by the end of the year, indicating that countries with large amounts of Russian FDI are slightly less likely to recognize Kosovo at the outset, and that this effect increases over time (rendering recognition less and less likely). However, for countries that receive less Russian FDI, there is no significant effect or any change in effect over time. Table 2 summarizes these results as they relate to the theories of recognition.

ARGUMENT	RESULT
MILITARY AND ECONOMIC LEVERAGE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US arms transfers: SUPPORTED; effect diminishes quickly over time • Russian arms transfers: SUPPORTED only for high values of arms; effect diminishes slowly over time • US FDI: SUPPORTED only for high values of FDI; effect strengthens over time • Russian FDI: SUPPORTED only for high values of FDI; effect strengthens over time
TRANSNATIONAL RELIGIOUS TIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUPPORTED
SECESSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOT SUPPORTED
DEMOCRACY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOT SUPPORTED
REGULATION OF RELIGION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SUPPORTED
CRITICAL EVENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NOT SUPPORTED

Washington's and Beijing's impact on the recognition decisions of other countries regarding Kosovo is asymmetrical. While the US has played a central role in supporting the push for Kosovo's independence, and has influenced many NATO and non-NATO allies recognizers,³⁰ Russian influence is only one of many factors influencing countries not to recognize Kosovo. These include domestic political factors, such as the religious regulation and to a lesser extent vulnerability to secession at home. Simultaneously China and Brazil are not a part of the Russian zone of influence, and the reasons why they have not recognized Kosovo have primarily to do with factors other than Russian influence.

Conclusion

Theoretical and empirical work on the international recognition of aspiring states is still relatively sparse, even though international recognition plays an important role in explaining whether or not new states emerge and in explaining the outcome of secessionist conflicts. This article proposes a theory that emphasizes the role of great power competition and leverage on the timing of recognition. We offer evidence suggesting that countries receiving large amounts of US arms sales are much more likely to recognize Kosovo early on, but this effect diminishes quickly over time and disappears by the end of the first year. Russian arms exports have had a negative and smaller impact on recognition, again for countries receiving large amounts of Russian arms. The effect also erodes over time, although it does not completely disappear even at the end of the year. When it comes to economic leverage, we find similar effects. Countries that receive large amount of US investments are much more likely to extend recognition over time. By contrast,

³⁰ There are 25 NATO members, and at least 15 major non-NATO allies and partners that have recognized Kosovo. The non-NATO allies include Afghanistan, Australia, Bahrain, Egypt, Japan, Kuwait, Morocco, New Zealand, Oman, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Thailand, and United Arab Emirates.

countries receiving large amounts of Russian FDI are slightly less likely to recognize Kosovo at the outset, and this effect increases over time.

Consistent with previous research, we also find strong positive effects of transnational religious ties, and strong negative effects of religious regulation, on the timing of recognition. However, alternative explanations based on domestic vulnerability to secession, ethnic fractionalization and critical international events such as the Brussels Agreement and the ICJ decision, though widely discussed, are not supported by the available evidence.

Mutual recognition is the cornerstone of sovereignty in the international system. Without extensive international recognition, aspiring states cannot enjoy the status and privileges reserved for states. Although the study of secession has spawned a large literature, a related issue—international recognition—has been mostly overlooked. Given the numerous active secessionist movements around the world, and a growing number of aspiring states with contested patterns of recognition, the results may apply more broadly than might appear at first glance - exactly how broadly is a question that will have to be determined by future research.

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