

THE GREAT POWERS' RECOGNITION: CRUCIAL FOR KOSOVO AND IRAQI
KURDISTAN SECESSION

By

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Abstract

Both Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan's secessionist movements, in a journey for self-determination and state-building, suffered mass crimes and ethnic cleansing from the host states; however, only Kosovo acquired a positive final outcome, *de jure* independence. The major powers in both cases employed military interventions to protect civil and human rights against Serbia and Iraq at the end of the 20th century. The theories of secession differ, and there is no consensus in defining the criteria for state-building and the international institutional process of recognition. Thus, many secessionist movements escalate into ethnic conflicts requiring international involvement. The historical similarities between these two cases beg the question: Why has the international community recognized Kosovo as an independent state and not Iraqi Kurdistan? Are foreign or domestic factors more important in explaining these different outcomes in these cases? In the comparative case study of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan, I use as a guide Coggins' (2014) explanatory theory for the Great Powers' recognition based on the decisions made on the international level--geostrategic/external security--and the domestic level--national distinctiveness and mobilization, institutional empowerment, and decisive relative strength. I employ the method of *Most Similar Systems Design* between Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan to highlight the similarities of national indicators in both cases and emphasize the importance of the external support and the international context in the coordination of dynamics of secession. Based on the case study of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan, the presence of a strong ally supporting secession triggers a different final status. The Great Power's relations with the home state, rivals, and allies influence the decision for recognition of secessionists. The Great Powers' support, crucial for recognition applies especially to the Yugoslavian and Soviet disintegrations, and might find applicability in other secessionist cases.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Similar Secessionist Movements: Different Recognition Outcomes	1
Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan’s Secessionist Paths (1974-2008).....	4
Chapter 2: Towards a Theory of Secession and Recognition.....	10
Secession in Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan	12
Theoretical Debate on the Causal Mechanism of Secession	17
Chapter 3: A Case Study of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan.....	32
Chapter 4: Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan’s Secessionist Dynamics: Domestic and Foreign Factors	37
Ethnic Mobilization	39
Political Institutions	46
Relative Strength.....	50
Geopolitical Interests	53
Chapter 5: Future Implications of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan’s Secession.....	58
References.....	65
Appendix.....	73

List of Tables

Table 1: <i>Domestic Level Hypothesis: Ethnic Mobilization</i>	45
Table 2: <i>Domestic Level Hypothesis: Political Institutions</i>	50
Table 3: <i>Domestic Level Hypothesis: Relative Strength</i>	52
Table 4: <i>International Level Hypotheses: Geopolitical Interests</i>	57
Table 5: <i>Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan's Secessionist Dynamics</i>	73
Table 6: <i>Theories of Secession</i>	74

Chapter 1: Similar Secessionist Movements: Different Recognition Outcomes

On February 17, 2008, from the early morning euphoria was present in the capital of Kosovo, Prishtina. On Sunday, at 3:00 pm, the citizens of Kosovo were impatiently waiting for the Kosovo's Assembly to start an extraordinary session with 109 deputies present in the parliament, special guests, and media. At 3:45 pm, Hashim Thaçi, the Prime Minister of Kosovo, read the declaration of independence, "We, the democratically-elected leaders of our people, hereby declare Kosovo to be an independent and sovereign state. This declaration reflects the will of our people and it is in full accordance with the recommendations of UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari and his Comprehensive Proposal for the Kosovo Status Settlement" ("Kosovo Declaration of Independence," 2008). Immediately afterward the celebration in the streets of Pristina began with the inauguration of "Newborn" monument symbolizing the birth of the newest country in Europe and the world. After suffering from the violent conflicts, Kosovo's independence marked the end of Yugoslavian disintegration. On February 18th, the United States was among the first to recognize Kosovo's independence, in following days, major European and regional countries also extended their official recognition.

On that same Sunday, for Iraqi Kurds, it was an ordinary peaceful day in Erbil, the capital of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Iraq. In the streets, Kurds were enjoying freedom and prosperity, preoccupying about daily events, and cultivating close social relations with each other. Kurds did not forget the suffering of the past caused by the Iraqi government, but for a moment enjoyed the presence of a free day, full of hope. For some period, Kurdish political leaders upheld the status quo of *de facto* Kurdistan within the Federation of Iraq. Instead of declaring independence, the KRG was focused on maintaining the political power, improving the economy, exploring new oil fields, and controlling distributive resources and services; though,

Iraqi Kurds never stopped aspiring for independence. As a popular Kurdish narrative considers mountains as Kurds' best friends in the time of struggle; in the case of the KRG's recognition, Kurds were waiting for international friends.

Both Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan had similar secessionist paths in the last decades, their host states conducted systematic cleansing in areas where Albanians and Kurds represented a majority population, and both groups suffered mass crimes and received humanitarian interventions. In both cases, the central governments employed discriminatory policies and violence against civilians to weaken nationalistic movements for democracy, freedom, and independence. Host states failed to accommodate peaceful movements requests for autonomous governance and instead intensified oppressive policies. Scholars' reference nationalistic ideas for statehood to drive both conflicts; however, Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan represent reactionary nationalistic movements also. As a result of the intensive oppression against civilians, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was formed to oppose the Serbian military and police structures, and the Kurdish "Peshmerga" forces fought against the Iraqi state's violent campaigns. Both Albanians and Kurds formed military resistance against the host states to protect civilians and territory. The violent conflicts escalated to humanitarian crises with a large number of refugees requiring the international community engagement.

In both cases, a coalition of major powers employed military interventions against authoritarian regimes of the Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, in 1991, and the Serbian president, Slobodan Milosevic, in 1999. The United States and major European countries led the air campaigns with the participation of some regional countries. Likewise, in both cases, international support brought peace and created conditions for citizens to pursue political, civil and human rights and a more prosperous future. In 1992, the Kurdistan Regional Government

was formed after organizing the first free democratic elections; while in 2008, Kosovo declared independence from Serbia and received wide international recognition. Indeed, Kosovo has become a successful story and began the road towards Euro-Atlantic integration, whereas Iraqi Kurdistan has only accomplished internal sovereignty and still aspires for independence. The historical similarities beg the central question: Why has the international community recognized Kosovo as an independent state and not Iraqi Kurdistan? Are foreign or domestic factors more important in explaining these different outcomes in these cases?

The thesis studies the explanatory causation and dynamics of secession focusing on the importance of the Great Power's support, the United States, in a state-building process of both cases. In the literature, the bottom-up approach is mainly used - scholars give greater relevance to domestic political factors in acquiring international support, in which a state satisfies domestic conditions and then seeks recognition. However, Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan fulfill the domestic preconditions of secession but only Kosovo has independence because of the Great Powers' recognition due to international level considerations. By "Great Powers" in line with a summit agreement, the Declaration of Rambouillet, I am referring to the Group of Seven (G7) including "seven leading industrialized nations: the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Japan, Canada and Germany" ("G7 Summit," 2016). Since the first organized summit in 1975, states' participants including European Union representatives meet annually to discuss "global economic issues and foreign, security and development policy" ("G7 Summit," 2016). The mission of G7 is to ensure "peace, security and a self-determined life all around the world" ("G7 Summit," 2016). Using Coggins' (2014) secession framework, I conduct a comparative case study of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan to show how the United State's geopolitical, internal, and systemic interests support the state formation of secessionist

movements. In both cases, the compliance of the Great Power's interests on the geostrategic security only ensures successful recognition. Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan's similar secessionist movements have a different final status of independence because of a level of support of the Great Power, the United States.

The thesis proceeds as follows: the historical background is used to control for domestic variables and focuses on the period from 1974 to 2008 to compare both secessionist movements. Following, the literature review explores the explanatory causal and predictive theories of secession in theory and practice, including research on Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan. After, the methods section presents the use of the *Most Similar System Design* in the comparative case study, explores the relevance of both cases, and selection of evidence for the main argument, how the Great Powers' support determines a state formation. Afterward, the case study applies Coggins' (2014) theory of recognition including six hypotheses on domestic and international levels, to derive a qualitative analysis of both cases. Finally, the thesis provides opinions on further developments in the Kurdistan Regional Government, summarizes the main arguments on the decisions of the Great Powers to support secessionist movements in gaining international recognition, and evaluates the applicability of the case study to different secessionist cases.

Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan's Secessionist Paths (1974-2008)

The source of the ethnic conflict between Serbia and Kosovo dates back to the adoption of Yugoslav Constitution 1974 when Serbs began with systematic discrimination, human rights abuses and violence against the Albanian majority population. Kosovo from 1974 to the dissolution of Yugoslavia had a status of an autonomous region, and the same rights to vote like the other six republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and

Macedonia. The culmination of the oppressive Serbian policy was achieved during the 1990's when Albanians were denied the right to language, education, media, employment, and integration in public institutions. The dispute over Kosovo's self-governing status began in 1989 when Serbia revoked Kosovo's autonomy and started applying systematic discrimination against the Albanian majority population. During the 1990's, the source of the ethnic conflict in Kosovo followed the rise of Slobodan Milosevic to power and the culmination of Serbian ultra-nationalism to change the governing system in Kosovo. Serbian nationalism was based on a mythology of rebuilding the Great Serbia, protection of Serbian nationals and religion in all territories of Yugoslavia, at any price, including oppression and extermination of other nationals. Serbian oppressive policies led Kosovo Albanians to mobilize the secessionist movement, organize demonstrations, and lobby for the international community's support for self-determination rights.

Kosovo's secession was organized on the ideology to protect national identity, to self-govern within the territory and achieve freedom, democracy, and independence. The Albanian self-determination movement was reactionary to Serbian persecution and revocation of previous rights. The ethnic wars in Yugoslavia caused a large number of refugees. As a result of the Serbian oppressive regime, "863,000 civilians sought or were forced into refuge outside Kosovo and an additional 590,000 were internally displaced. Moreover, evidence exists of "widespread rape and torture, as well as looting, pillaging and extortion" (Kosovo, 2000, pp. 2-11). From 1991 to 1999, Serbia was engaged in wars with Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo based on claims to protect Serbian nationals and stop the disintegration of Yugoslavia. As a result of the Serbian nationalistic campaign against other ethnic groups in Yugoslavia, the international community came in help to stop Milosevic's authoritarian regime.

However, the international community did not support Kosovo's struggle for independence in the beginning because the Yugoslavian disintegration brought violent conflicts in the Balkans. During the Dayton Agreement in 1995, which solved the crises in Bosnia, Kosovo did not have the support of an international community to solve the question of its future (Kosovo, 2000, pp. 2-11). The turning point in foreign engagement to solve Kosovo's secession occurred because of Serbia's increased violations of human and civil rights, and the Albanian lobby for freedom. The Albanian peaceful movement established parallel institutions functioning until 1997. The escalation of the Kosovo war began in February 1998, in Prekaz, where a Serbian massacre of 58 Albanians took place. The armed conflict between the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and Serbia lasted from February 1998 to March 1999. After failed diplomatic efforts in Rambouillet, France, to achieve an agreement between parties, the NATO alliance began the air attacks against the Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). The United States, major European countries, and the United Nations supported Kosovo's reconstruction and coordinated the negotiations over the governing status of Kosovo.

The independence of Kosovo was successfully achieved with the determination of the Albanian majority population and the support of the United States and the international community. Kosovo's secession went through the path of organizing the peaceful resistance, creation of a defensive militia, war, international intervention, and protectorate. The second stage included the development of political institutions, negotiations, declaration of independence, and recognition. The Democratic League of Kosovo (DLK) led Kosovo's peaceful secessionist movement, and the KLA led the military defensive campaigns. In March 1999, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) bombing of the FRY took place to end "the culmination of a deliberate policy of oppression, ethnic cleansing and violence pursued by the Belgrade

regime under the direction of President Milosevic” (NATO, 1999). In June 1999, a peace agreement was achieved where the United Nations’ (UN) Resolution 1244 authorized the deployment of the NATO’s Peacekeeping Forces, Kosovo Force (KFOR), and the establishment of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). In the meantime, the Kosovo’s Provisional Government was established. After exhausting talks with Serbia, based on the UN special envoy, Ahtisaari’s Plan, the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo on February 17, 2008, declared Kosovo an independent and sovereign state and received wide international recognition in coordination with the United States and major European allies (Kosovo, 2000, pp. 2-11). Kosovo suffered ethnic cleansing and was the last story of Yugoslavian disintegration, the United States and major European countries supported Kosovo against the Serbian oppressive regime to bring peace and stability to the Balkans.

On the other side, Kurdish national movements in Iraq have historically fought to protect national identity, language, autonomy, and independence. In 1974, the Saddam Hussein promised Kurds greater rights and autonomy and instead of fulfilling the agreement began with systematic discrimination and oppression. In 1988, Iraqi authoritarian regime organized systematic cleansing of Iraqi Kurds, the “Al-Anfal (The Spoils)” was an aggressive operation of “underdevelopment, political and cultural repression, destruction, ethnic cleansing and genocide” against Iraqi Kurds (O’Leary, 2002, pp. 17-20). As a result of the Iraqi government’s operation, “some 1,200 villages were destroyed. More than 180,000 persons are missing and presumed dead”(O’Leary, 2002, pp. 17-20). Under the supervision of Saddam Hussein, the Anfal operation included the use of chemical weapons against Kurdish towns and villages in Iraq. A chemical attack in Halabja, just in one day killed 5000 Kurdish civilians (Aziz, 2011). Mass executions mainly of Kurdish boys and men diminished organized resistance against the Iraqi regime. From

August 1990 until February 1991, the United States' led a coalition of the Great Powers in the Gulf War to stop the occupation of Kuwait threatening the stability and security of the Middle East. To Kurdish Peshmerga forces' opposition, concentrated on a regional border, the Iraqi government responded with ethnic cleansing of the Kurdish civil population. The humanitarian crises obligated the Gulf War coalition to create a protective zone for Kurds in the Northern Iraq.

The international community's support for Kurdish secessionist movement removed the control of Hussein's regime in Northern Iraq and stopped the extermination of Kurds resulting in the beginning of the democratization of the KRG. The Kurdish "safe haven" enabled the KRG to establish self-governing institutions and cooperate with the United Nations and international organizations to rebuild the society, infrastructure, economy and oil industry. In April 1991, the uprising of Kurds and Shia in Iraq against the central government resulted in the UN resolution 688 dividing Iraq into two parts. The United States and Turkey led the alliance of eleven states based on the resolution 688 to provide a safe haven - protective zone in order to enable humanitarian assistance and safety for refugees along the Iraqi-Turkey's border (O'Leary, 2002, pp. 17-20). The newly created conditions established the Kurdistan National Assembly, "designed to protect the Kurdistan Region from the violence of Iraq's former Ba'ath regime" ("About the Kurdistan Regional Government," 2016). In 1992, the international intervention against the Iraqi authoritarian regime enabled the Kurdistan Regional Government to achieve self-governing autonomy.

After the first free and democratic elections took place in 1992, the KRG enforced administrative autonomous rights and improved a standard of living through managing important oil resources, and establishing qualitative services for citizens of Iraqi Kurdistan in cooperation with international institutions. The governing power in Iraqi Kurdistan was divided between two

major parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). In 2005, the Federal Government of Iraq enacted a constitution recognizing regional autonomy and a decentralized federal system (O'Leary, 2002, pp. 17-20). In the aftermath, Kurds have played an important role in the Federal Government of Iraq, actively engaging in a political system, running for the federal presidency for several years; concurrently, ensuring the constitutional rights for self-governance of the KRG. In 2007, the United States' military forces withdrawing from Iraq began; the United States' goal was to leave stable leadership and an undivided state on ethnic and religious bases. In favor of the Iraqi territorial integrity, Joseph B. Biden, Vice President of the United States, and Les Gelb, president emeritus of the United States Council on Foreign Relations, enacted a proposal for federal unification of three identities as in the Bosnia's case. Although, the plan was unsuccessful because of the inability to establish a viable Iraqi government (Ahmed & Gunter, 2007). The United States' policy of protecting the territorial integrity of Iraq, based on regional security, influenced the Kurdish political parties' acceptance to participate in the Federal Government of Iraq.

Chapter 2: Towards a Theory of Secession and Recognition

The theories of secession differ and there is no consensus in defining the criteria for state-building and the international institutional process of recognition. According to the literature, some of the factors leading to secession are national identity, host states' oppression and discrimination, group organization, institutional capabilities, and private interests. Scholars mainly study secession in Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan referring to nationalistic movements, violent conflicts, humanitarian crises, and international interventions. Secessionist movements share the ultimate goal to build a state with a full sovereignty and international recognition. In practice, some secessionists achieve more successful *de jure* independence, whereas other movements have a greater autonomy or *de facto* state, or the central government suppresses the self-determination movements' attempts. However, in defining a newly established state, Coggins asserts, "Statehood does not inhere in governmental control on the ground alone. Without external legitimacy, an actor is not a state" (2014, p. 8). For a long time, the supporters of self-determination and secession promoted a liberal perspective on withdrawing from the union, federation, host state, or political entity. In the past, secession occurred both as a result of peaceful agreements, and violent conflicts.

Secession emerged following the Napoleonic war period, collapse of British and French colonies, and breakdown of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires as a result of national movements at the beginning of the 19th century. After WWII, the United States President, Woodrow Wilson, introduced the right to "self-determination" of minorities in multiethnic states as a new "universal principle" and a peace solution ("*Theories of secession*", 1998, pp. VIII-X). In theory, if the host state has a record of violation of human rights, a minority group should have the right to separate. However, in practice, "recent history demonstrates that self-

determination seeking groups are able to exercise their independence option only if they enjoy the Great Powers' support" making secession dependent on consideration of the international community (Sterio, 2010). Scholars from comparative politics, international law, and international relations study secession. Political science scholars have developed the most theoretical studies on secession focusing on the questions of causality, moral rights, and justifications. International law considers norms, law, and customary practices in defining legitimacy of secession. International relations' studies of secession mainly focus on questions of power, security, and cooperation. In the post-Cold War period, most of the secessionist movements have an ethnic character and are characterized by host state violent policies and conflicts entailing the international interventions.

The explanatory theories of secession and recognition are classified as non-causal, causal, and causal predictive theories. Existing research on secession is characterized by disagreement on variables causing secession and explanation of a lack of secession because of different factors. Studies of secession differ in defining the dynamics of domestic and international environments in achieving *de jure* independence. One group of scholars considers separatists acquiring a *de facto* state first and then seeking recognition. Another camp supports aspiring states' unilateral declaration of independence based on the "Remedial Right" as a result of suffered injustices from the host state. Other scholars consider the involvement of Great Powers' and support as necessary from the beginning to coordinate successful secession. Moreover, scholars differ giving greater relevance to foreign or domestic factors in acquiring international recognition. Therefore, a comparison of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan's similar movements with different outcomes would help eliminate some of the causal explanations. Among the scholars of secession, a dilemma still exists on the causes of secession; therefore, Coggins' (2014) causal

explanatory theory of secession and recognition will help compare and analyze the two similar cases.

Scholars study secession through two main approaches: bottom-up and top-down. The bottom-up approach focuses on domestic factors of a state motivating the international community to recognize secessionist movements' aspirations for independence. On the other hand, the top-down approach gives a greater relevance to the geopolitical interests of the Great Powers, foreign domestic security and the international system in coordinating the acceptance of a new state. In literature, the bottom-up approach is mostly used in defining the causes of secession. However, since the disintegration of Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union during the 1990's, and especially Kosovo's independence in 2008, scholars have given more attention to the top-down approach. I apply Coggins' (2014) theory studying both domestic and international factors; however, giving greater relevance to the international environment in achieving successful secession and recognition.

Secession in Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan

In the literature, some scholars give greater relevance to domestic political situations, others consider international involvement as an essential factor in Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan's secession. Scholars supporting domestic factors identify secessionists' strategies to achieve recognition from the system level including both political practices and normative criteria. Secessionist movements focus on domestic political factors to gain international support. One of the scholars argues, in the case of Kosovo, the viability for independence was strengthened through the people's commitment to "self-determination, remedial secession, and democracy and minority rights" (Caspersen, 2015, p. 393). Another argument considers control of territory,

Kosovo's independence followed Serbia's lack of control of the Albanian majority population in Kosovo. Kosovo secessionist movement was reactionary; over 90% of Albanians controlled the territory and voted for independence, and Kosovo was an international protectorate developing democratic institutions (Coppieters, Emerson, Bugajski and, & Trenin, 2008, pp. 175-177). Moreover, a qualitative analysis of normative theories of succession highlights the suffered violence of a group as a pivotal factor in ensuring the international community's support. The Albanians suffering from collective ethnic cleansing and the secessionists' political claims were critical for international recognition of Kosovo's independence (Roseberry, 2013, pp. 857-866). Relevant for the case study, Kosovo secessionist struggle for independence characterized with suffered injustices and the host states' de-legitimacy to govern with the territory resulted in the Great Powers' support for Kosovo.

Scholars supporting the bottom-up approach consider domestic ethnic secessionist politics and humanitarian crises as pivotal in achieving foreign institutional support. Based on the perspective of "earned sovereignty," as a result of the host state caused injustices; Kurds satisfy the required political conditions of shared sovereignty through the establishment of the KRG's self-governing institutions. Aligning with the Great Powers' interests, Kurds gained the international community's support and achieved the major UN members' provision (Packard, 2013, pp. 177-205). In comparison to Kosovo's independent state, the KRG is defined as a "state-like entity," a recognized region in a federal structure (Watts, 2014). The Iraqi Constitution recognizes the KRG regional autonomous status and Iraqi Kurds can declare independence based on the free will of joining the federation, the UN Charter on the right of self-determination, and the Montevideo Convention on fulfilling states' conditions (Packard, 2013). Additionally, because of the new constitution, Iraqi Kurds' greatest achievement was Iraqi

recognition of Kurds' autonomy, language, and a nation distinct from the Arab people (Romano, 2010, p. 1358). The fulfillment of the domestic conditions of secession, the convention on human rights, and the UN charter represent a baseline for self-determination and some of the common attributes relevant for the case study of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan.

In the case of Iraqi Kurdistan, some scholars argue in favor of domestic factors causing secession through the democratization of a de-facto state, instead of international support and recognition influencing the domestic institutional building. In this respect, Kurds challenge the international level perspective; Kurds first built a *de facto* state and then sought recognition, unlike the Palestinian approach (Mansour, 2014, pp. 1182-1188). In the case of the KRG's state-building, "there is a positive relationship between de facto statehood and democratization" because of elite pressures to manage internal conflicts and establish a political regime (MacQueen, 2015, p. 2). Moreover, civic engagement in managing "symbolic and material resources of the state" created a greater political space for debate and representation, influencing positive democratization effects evaluated through "organizational autonomy, political discourse and systemic representation and contestation"(Watts, 2014, p. 139). Currently, the KRG has more "stability, economic development and political pluralism" than the rest of the country (Hassan, 2015, p. 1). Evaluation of the KRG's state-building process suggests a positive correlation between self-determination and democratization.

However, most of the research findings on Kosovo support the top-down approach, arguing for the importance of foreign factors in state formation. The evolution of international support for Kosovo, from autonomous status to full sovereignty lays on the approach of an "exit strategy," after trying all possible diplomatic means, the international community suggested Kosovo's independence as a solution to the violent conflict between Albanians and Serbs. The

international community's necessity to recognize Kosovo's independence occurred as a solution to cease escalating regional instability (Ker-Lindsay, 2009, pp. 141-142). Additionally, the United States government's official decisions to recognize Kosovo's independence as a unique case of secession are based on the: "unusual combination of factors found in the Kosovo situation - including the context of Yugoslavia's breakup, the history of ethnic cleansing and crimes against civilians in Kosovo, and the extended period of UN administration - are not found elsewhere" (Borgen, 2008, pp. 4-5). Scholars use Kosovo's case to present a complicated multilateral issue for the international security between three parties: the United States and Europe, the United Nations, and Russia. The United States and Europe perceived Kosovo as a regional issue to advance "western multilateral cooperation in NATO" (Hughes, 2013, p. 992). The UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, advocated an international intervention in Kosovo to adapt the "right to protect" (Hughes, 2013, p. 992). On the other side, the Russia's engagement in Kosovo was because of strategic interests to "counterbalance and compensate for [Russia's] weakness" in comparison to NATO (Hughes, 2013, p. 992). Scholars supporting top-down approach give relevance to the presence of domestic factors necessary for secession; however, the importance of the Great Powers' politics and support is considered superior in achieving successful recognition.

Kosovo's independence is often referred to as a *sui generis* (a unique case); however, after Kosovo's unilateral declaration in 2008, coordinated with the international community, the top-down approach of secession gained a greater relevance among scholars. In the context of Yugoslavian disintegration and the post-Cold War period after 1989, Kosovo represents a case inciting widespread interest related to self-determination, secession, state formation, international intervention, and responsibility to protect. Some scholars see Kosovo's independence as a

significant event in “an ongoing transformation of the international system since the end of the Cold War. [Kosovo] is not a unique case, as is often suggested, but rather, it has generic consequences for ... the relationship between states and peoples” (Economides, 2013, p. 823). Others believe Kosovo independence to have a positive impact on the stability of the international system, making other host states vigilant to find peaceful solutions instead of using force against secessionist movements (Joseph, 2013, p. 9). Another importance of foreign factors illustrated with the Kosovo’s case is seen in the ability to have a positive outcome of secession, as a result of Great Powers’ expected recognition of independence (Coggins, 2011, p. 462). For instance, during the Kosovo’s status negotiations held by the UN special envoy, Marti Ahtisaari, the Albanian position was clear “nothing but independence” over accepting what was offered by Serbs “everything but independence” (Rubin, 2006). The top-down approach is best represented in the Kosovo case, illustrating the relevance of coordination among the Great Powers’ geostrategic interests, stability of the international system, and responsibility to protect.

On the other side, recognition of Iraqi Kurdistan instead of governing status quo might contribute more to the stability of the Middle East region. Some scholars argue the KRG’s independence in the near future might result in pacifying the different Kurdish movements across borders, improving the integration of minorities, enhancing democracy and strengthening territorial integrity. Recognizing Kurdish ethnic and cultural aspirations conveys a new geopolitical stability in the region (Fuller, 1993). Another suggestion considers Yugoslavian context as an example to dissolve Iraq into three states for geostrategic interests to disable the possibility of autocratic regimes and civil wars (Kissinger, 2004). Moreover, the “earned sovereignty” model for the Iraqi Kurdistan’s independence is proposed, “based on its success in Montenegro, Northern Ireland, and Kosovo ... and the similarity between the religious and

ethnic conflicts in these countries and Iraq” (Hadji, 2009). The KRG in obtaining the United States’ and international community’s recognition, can embrace the “earned sovereignty” approach, seceding from the host state with “minimal disruptions” (Hadji, 2009, p. 515). The escalation of ethnic conflicts, refugees, and violation of human rights are threatening the stability of the international system. Related to the stability of the region, Turkey has a greater influence on the KRG’s independence than any other country in the region. A positive shift in Turkey’s foreign policy towards the Iraqi Kurds might influence the United States to redefine a foreign policy toward supporting the KRG’s independence.

Theoretical Debate on the Causal Mechanism of Secession

Theories of secession lack a comprehensive systemic framework clearly defining the dynamics of creating a separate and independent statehood. Explanatory theories of secession are classified based on an approach of analysis of the secessionist process (see Appendix for Table 6): “non-causal and causal theories” focus on the content of past and present conditions primarily, and “causal/predictive theory” additionally examines future projected outcomes (Radan & Pavkovic, 2013, p. 174). Some theories lack a universally predictive explanatory power of a secessionist model because of the complex and different dynamics of secessionist cases in practice. John R. Wood (1981) was the first to establish a substantial theoretical framework of a non-causal study of secession. Based on the Wood’s theory, “secession is the outcome of a dynamic interaction of a series of conditions and collective actions” with the possibility to result or not in the founding an independent state. Wood identifies patterns of variables of secession without testing the casual relationships or predictive power of further secessionist implications.

Wood outlines the process of secession through defining the preconditions for movements to satisfy in mobilizing against the host state. Wood (1981) defines the non-causal explanatory process of secession dynamics including: “the preconditions of succession, the rise of a secessionist movement, the response of central governments, the direct precipitants of succession, and the resolution of secessionists crises by armed conflicts.” The host state might respond with accommodation or suppression of secessionist demands for independence. If the host state uses violence against a secessionist group the conflict might escalate with an unclear final outcome of secession. Wood does not identify causal paths of secession that might predict the final outcome because of the complexity of secession in practice (Radan & Pavkovic, 2013, pp. 179-180). However, Wood provides a comprehensive framework of variables contributing to the further study of the secessionist attributes.

Anthony B. Smith’s (1986) causal/predictive theory of Separatism and Secession is limited to nationalistic ethnic ideologies and tested on modern states in Europe and North America. According to Smith (1986), to achieve statehood, the host state: “1) must establish scientific bureaucracy by secular education to promote homogeneity 2) the discrimination and lack of job opportunities lead ethnic elite to turn away from the state and its bureaucracies 3) existence of ethnic revival as a sequence of events which unfolds a purpose and identity in time.” Smith argued, a governments’ failure to accommodate secessionist movement is the causal necessary factor of secession. However, in practice, some secessionist movements founded on nationalistic ideas, despite the readiness of the government to find acceptable solutions achieved secessions, “Iceland from Denmark, Norway from the United Kingdoms of Sweden, Slovakia from the Czech and Slovak republic, Slovenia from the SFRY” (Radan & Pavkovic, 2013). Because of unacceptable causal explanations of government responses to secessionist

movements, Smith's theory does not stand. However, Smith addresses an important question: will the secessionist movement, once acquires public support, proceed with declaring independence despite the government's accommodations? (Radan & Pavkovic, 2013). Other secessionist theorists, Hechter (1992) supports the idea that the host state might stop the withdrawal whereas Horowitz (1981) does not see government accommodations relevant for predicting the causes of secession. Overall, according to Smith, the host states' discriminatory and violent policies of an ethnic group drive secessionist movements' determination for independence.

Donald R. Horowitz's (1981) causal/predictive theory tests recent countries independence in Africa and Asia with the aim to predict the timing of secession. Horowitz assumes "sheer economic interests and group apprehension" to cause secession. Horowitz (1981) defines two main hypotheses of secession based on the status of a group on development indicators: "1. Backward groups in backward regions and in advanced regions will attempt to secede earlier than advanced groups in the state 2. and Backward groups in backward regions will also attempt to secede more frequently than any other group." However, the argument does not apply to cases of "Slovenes and Croats, advanced groups in advanced regions, seceded earlier than the backward groups in backward regions (Macedonians, Bosnian Muslims) of the SFRY." Similar cases are found in the Soviet Union where "advanced groups in advanced regions – Latvians, Estonians, Lithuanians as well as Georgians – seceded earlier than many backward groups in backward regions"(Radan & Pavkovic, 2013, p. 185). Horowitz raises the important question of the timing of secession and provides predictive claims based on a group status; however, his arguments are refuted by cases in practice.

Michael Hechter's (1992) causal rational choice theory identifies a pivotal drive of secession based on an individual pursuit of private interests. Hechter classifies the major characteristics of secession based on "group identity, a precondition for any secessionist attempt and the primacy of private interest." The main hypothesis states "for a group to attempt to secede, it is causally necessary (but not sufficient) that its members believe that the secession will bring them more private benefits than remaining in the host state"(Hechter, 1992). However, the Hechters' theory does not apply to secessionists in Norway, and especially in the Irish Free State, where secessionists could not take private interests into consideration, as a violent conflict has increased the costs to remain within the host state as well was (Radan & Pavkovic, 2013). Hechter's theory offers a minor contribution to explaining secession, as Hechter fails to describe the secessionist dynamics accurately.

Finally, Bridget Coggins (2014) evaluates casual explanatory hypotheses of recognition on both domestic and international levels, however giving greater relevance to foreign factors in the formation of new states. Coggins' theory includes three main arguments on the international level, "without external legitimacy, an actor is not a state ... existing members parochial concerns ... meaningfully shape their preferences for or against new states ... and ... international system incentivizes leaders to coordinate their recognition" (Coggins, 2014, pp. 8-10). The dynamics of recognition include both domestic factors, "national distinctiveness and mobilization, institutional empowerment and decisive relative strength" and foreign factors, political interests on "geostrategic external security, domestic security and systemic stability" (Coggins, 2014, pp. 44-54). In the case study of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan, I contest domestic security and systemic stability hypotheses on the international level because the research question is causal and not predictive, and as 2008 only apply to Kosovo. Moreover, I find

systemic stability hypothesis applicability only to the alliance of Group of Seven and not as Coggins' refers to the Great Powers based on "Correlates of War" data (Singer & Small, 1994): the United States, Russia, China, Japan, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Italy. In a case study of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan, I adapt Coggins' theory as a guide to analyzing six hypotheses on both domestic and international approaches.

In the *national distinctiveness and mobilization* level, ethnicity is an important variable in organizing the secessionist movement and demanding the self-determination right. In literature, ethnic distinctiveness is often referred to drive the creation of a new state (Beissinger, 2002; Hale, 2000; Horowitz, 1985). Since 1931, secession was inspired on the preservation of ethnic identity; of 259 movements, 141 had a unique language, and 113 distinct religions from the home states' population (Coggins, 2014, p. 50). Organized secessionist movements have stronger demands for a separate state, especially arguing on the self-determination right, as a result of the central government discrimination, violence and preservation of cultural identity. Escalation of the violence occurs when a state employs the military to prevent secession and mobilized groups forming guerilla to respond to the governments' oppression (Coggins, 2014; Ker-Lindsay, 2012). In practice, cases exist when the home state does not employ violence against separatists and utilizes peaceful means to accommodate secessionists. However, even then strong ethnic mobilized groups argue for the formation of a new state on the basis of unequal representation in a political system and distribution of resources. Groups with national distinctiveness are more likely to receive the Great Powers' recognition; drawing from Coggins (2014, p. 50) the following hypothesis:

H1: *Mobilized ethnic groups have a higher chance to become a state.*

In *institutional empowerment* level, Coggins (2014) focuses on the domestic institutional structure in explaining the formation of a new state. Institutions empower certain groups for secession to enjoy the benefits of self-governance (Brancati, 2006; Lapidus & Zaslavsky, 1992; Roeder, 2007). The two explanations of institutional secession include postcolonial period and ethnic federations. Colonies are enforced through the central institutions and lack of controlling the power of nations, from the distance, made the anti-colonial secessions more successful. After the twentieth century, an ethnic institutional composition of the state created more favorable conditions for achieving independence. The Ethnic Segment State Theory, ”emphasizes institutional capability for ethnic leaders to achieve public support for self-determination demands and organize “political-identity hegemony” for national interests (Roeder, 2007). The Soviet and Yugoslavian disintegrations support the argument in practice. Institutions support the capacity building of secessionist movements and positively affect the state-building. Institutional empowered groups are more likely to receive the Great Powers’ recognition, drawing from Coggins (2014, p. 52) the following hypothesis:

H2: *Groups with political institutions have a higher likelihood to build a state.*

In the *decisive relative strength* level, secessionist movement’s relative strength compared to the host state is another argument of determining the positive secessionists outcome. Powerful movements easier obtain the control over territory in competing for authority with the host state; the studies of internal war and violence support this hypothesis (Brancati, 2006; Crawford, 1999; Fearon, 2004; Heraclides, 1990). Dis-balance of power and stronger rebellious groups are more likely to ensure lasting peace (Toft, 2010). Secessionists are more likely to achieve independence as victories from the escalated war. From 1931 to 2000, of 41 secessionists war, “16 favored the host state or ended in a stalemate, 15 in favor of secessionists,

and 10 remained active”(Coggins, 2014, p. 53). However, in practice, there are cases when material weaker states achieve statehood, such as Algeria from France (Connelly, 2002, p. 256). Other cases receive external recognition even without full control of territory and people, such as the case with East Timor (Chopra, 2002). The dynamics of secession is undefined when a war ends in the favor of the host state, or a dispute remains unresolved, or peaceful agreement is achieved. However, the argument of relative strength supports the independence of victorious party from the war, especially when the Great Powers diplomatically or military intervene, drawing from Coggins (2014, pp. 66-67) the following hypothesis:

H3: *Relative stronger movements have a higher probability to form a state.*

In the *geostrategic/external security* level, the Great Powers’ geopolitical interests are important in recognizing an aspiring state. Major powers when considering the recognition of secessionist movements follow “a logic of strategy, alliance, and enmity”(Coggins, 2014, p. 45). Countries give great relevance to the security of the international environment; recognition of the secessionist group is used to ensure an advantage in regard to the host states’ and opponents’ status quo causing instability of the system. Recognition is not “cheap talk” because occurs very rarely; instead diplomatic or material support and interventions are more costly actions but not as detrimental as recognition for the positive outcome of secession (Heraclides, 1990; Horowitz, 1985). States’ motive for external support is to gain a relative advantage in relation to opposite parties. Countries prefer more to support the formation of a new uncertain state than to continue a relation with a conflictual host state. Oppositely, if states have good relations with a host state, the breach of a territorial integrity and recognition of a secessionist movement less likely will occur. From the external security perspective, decisions for recognition result in drawing from Coggins (2014, p. 46) the following three hypotheses:

H4: *Great Power opposing a home state will be more likely to recognize secessionists.*

H5: *Great Power with a rival opposition will be more likely to recognize secessionists.*

H6: *Great Power with the lack of allies' opposition will be more likely to recognize secessionists.*

In the *domestic security*, on the international level, the third state recognition is also based on the internal security concerns, if a recognizing state faces domestic secessionist movements. In literature, having internal secessionist movements are also referred to as “vulnerability” argument of states to recognize foreign secessionist movements. Destabilizing internal factors of potential domestic secessionist groups challenge states’ recognition (Saideman, 1997). States concerned more with the stability of domestic than international factors are less likely to support secessionists abroad, as states’ legitimacy decreases in opposing internal secessionists. The domestic security hypothesis challenged with diverse ethnic composition is important for the stability of the Great Powers’ foreign policy. In practice, some of the cases challenged with the domestic separatists are “China in Tibet, Taiwan, and Xinjiang and Russia in Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia” (Coggins, 2014, p. 47). Moreover, leaders concerned for authority are more likely to negotiate recognition, if domestically states are not challenged with secession. The decision for recognition of a state, based on the existence of domestic challenge or not, drawing from Coggins (2014, p. 47), applies only to Kosovo and not Iraqi Kurdistan because of a timeline framework of the study.

Russia opposed the international interventions and international recognition of Kosovo because of domestic secessionist challenges and traditional relations with Serbia based on political, ethnic, and religious ties. Main reason for not recognizing Kosovo, Russia is facing powerful domestic secessionists in Chechnya, Dagestan, and Ingushetia (Coggins, 2014). In the

past, Soviets for some time because of strategic gains supported the 1946 Republic of Mahabad in Iran (King, 2013). Kurdish suppressed movement in Iran achieved to take the control of the territory for several months and after Russian withdrawal, Iran acquired the territory back. However, the dissolution of Soviet Union represents a favorable international environment for Kurds (Bruinessen, 1998, pp. 39-52). Russia was not strategically invested in Iraqi Kurdistan and constrained with domestic secessionist movements in the North Caucasus did not support the KRG's independence.

Russia has systematically exterminated Chechens, peoples of Dagestan, and Ingush for decades. Chechens are majority Muslims and represented a most organized group fighting against the Russian government. Chechens requests for the status of union republic were denied and oppressive policies made Chechens declare independence in 1991. Since 1994, Moscow led several attacks on Chechens with the strategy to regain the control over territory. In the meantime, Russia achieved to suppress Chechens' aspirations for independence diffusing insurgency movements and imposing the Russian rule to the Chechen government. However, Chechnya still remains an insurgency active place driven with political Islam (Coggins, 2014). After Russia announced the end of counterterrorism activities in Chechnya, since 2003 conflicts escalated in neighboring territories of Dagestan and Ingushetia (Campana & Ratelle, 2014). Ingushetia suffered the most from the conflict in Chechnya because of offering support for insurgency activities. From 2007 to 2011, in Dagestan and Ingushetia, the rise of violence was characterized with increased killings of civilians. The insurgent groups in the North Caucasus region were mainly targeting "police, military and government officials and infrastructure," however in recent years, insurgent groups were organizing bombing attacks in urban areas against civilians (O'Loughlin, Holland, & Witmer, 2011). Russia continues to organize

counterinsurgency operations in the North Caucasus region, control the economy, and lately involve in the corruption activities with separatists in order to make them switch to pro-Russian policies for the region.

China has condemned NATO's intervention in Kosovo for employing military force against Serbia without the United Nation Security Councils' approval and did not recognize Kosovo's independence constrained with domestic secessionists. Most importantly, the China's position towards Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan independence reflects the importance of China's government giving to territorial sovereignty over self-determination rights faced with active domestic secessionist movements in Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang (Coggins, 2014). The Peoples Republic of China referred constantly to the "One-China" policy, urging for the use of force in case Taiwan declares independence. Taiwanese have rejected China's policy becoming a hostage of China's unwillingness to discuss a proposed two-state conceptualization. Taiwan is *de facto* independent, however on request for international recognition and achieving an agreement with China over a decades' long dispute for the sovereignty of Taiwanese territory (Otopalik, 2006). Furthermore, the China's conflict with Tibet is over the questions of territory and control having implications for China's national influence in the region. Dalai Lama, a spiritual and political leader of Tibet has not achieved to negotiate a peaceful agreement with China. Increased terroristic activities and des-stability of the region influenced the Tibetan independent movement to organize military groups against China (Dickinson, 2009). Similar to Russia, China also faces the Turkic Uighur secessionists of Islamic faith organized in Xinjiang region. Regional Muslim countries have supported Xinjiang secessionist movement aspirations' for independence on an ongoing conflict with China in the western part of the country (Coggins, 2014, p. 199). China

faced with three active secessionist cases shares a similar position with Russia in recognizing external movements.

Russia and China represent the oppositional block to the G7 recognition of Kosovo's independence. Russia and China, constrained with domestic secessionist movements, condemned Kosovo's unilateral withdrawal from Serbia arguing to set a precedent for global secessionist movements. Russia and Serbia have traditionally good relations based on ethnic and cultural ties. The cooperation between China and Serbia achieved the peak during communist regime sharing similar ideologies and expanding mutual economic interests. As 2008, the Iraqi Kurdistan did not declare independence. Russia and China were not active Great Powers in providing support for the KRG's independence faced with domestic secessionist movements.

Lastly, in the *systemic stability level*, the Great Powers give relevance to the international system stability in supporting secessionists. Besides unilaterally pursuing national interests, major states prefer to coordinate recognition with other states at the international level. In the case of a lack of consensus, states' leaders will favor maintaining the status quo. However, extraordinary cases exist when states recognize competing sovereign authorities. The Great Powers prefer coordinated instead of unilateral recognition, "to maintain their social standing and security, to maintain international stability, and to reproduce the state-centric international order"(Coggins, 2014, p. 48). Coordinated recognition allows fast state-building and the Great Powers' recognition occurs quickly. In a case when recognition is of external strategic interest, a major power unilaterally, or a group of the Great Powers, utilize diplomatic and military means to achieve a positive outcome of secessionists' independence.

The Great Powers maintain the stability of the international system and control the membership of new states. When the Great Powers oppose the creation of a new state,

difficulties arise in recognition. In the case of conflictual recognition, a state-building is gradually possible with the unilateral support of a Great Power but other states might prefer to remain neutral. Contested cases might escalate to large conflicts across the border, destabilizing the security system and requiring international interventions. Recently, exceptional cases for systemic stability are Russian unilateral support and recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the Group of Seven (G7) coordinated recognition of Kosovo (Coggins, 2014, pp. 47-48). The recognition of Kosovo's, South Ossetia's, and Abkhazia's independence differs from recognition of anti-colonial secessionist cases because of the Great Powers' unique interpretation of norms in these cases. A comparative study of the United States recognition of Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence has created circumstances for Russia to recognize secessions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Fabry, 2012, p. 671). A model shows how "occupying power acts as a trustee, the beneficiaries of the trust are members of a political community, and what is held in trust is the right of that people to self-determination" (Feldman, 2004, p. 79). In addition, some of the foreseen duties of the occupying power are to support new authority in the establishment of democratic institutions, law, and order.

The regional states positions towards secessionists also influence the Great Powers' considerations for recognition, especially when regional states have an alliance with the Great Powers. Regional states relevant for the case study of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan are: Montenegro, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Albania; and Turkey, Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Israel. Lack of support for secessionists represents a threat to "regional stability and international norms" (Dickinson, 2009, p. 551). However, international politics decides which aspiring secessionist movements will succeed to become new states because the "international system is inherently social; therefore any aspiring state's membership

also depends on the acceptance of its peers” (Coggins, 2011, p. 432). The Great Powers’ involvement is crucial for the international system stability and the coordination among states, drawing from Coggins (2014, p. 48), applies only to Kosovo and not Iraqi Kurdistan because of a timeline framework of the study and referring to G7 as the Great Powers without Russia and China.

Kosovo’s unilateral declaration was coordinated with the United States and nations of the Group of Seven (G7). On February 17, 2008, Kosovo adopted the declaration of independence after decades of long disputes with Serbia over the territory. The path to Kosovo’s independence included organizing Kosovo’s movement, demonstrations against oppressive Serbian regime, exhausted diplomatic means, war, several unsuccessful negotiations with Serbia, the formation of the Kosovo’s provisional government, and the UN protectorate. Serbia conducting ethnic cleansing in Kosovo lost governing legitimacy with the territory. Tony Blair, the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, argued for a “new internationalism” in the Kosovo’s case “the brutal repression of ethnic groups would be not tolerated and those that commit these crimes would have no place to hide” (Kagan, 2007). On the other hand, Russia, China, and other states supporting Serbia challenged with their own secessionists “believed recognition would set a dangerous precedent for secessionist movements worldwide”(Coggins, 2014, p. 1). However, Kosovo has become a successful story of building a democratic country and embracing European values after a long conflict with Serbia and culmination of the Yugoslavian disintegration.

The United States in coordination with nations of the Group of Seven (G7) recognized Kosovo’s independence because of the systemic stability. An independent Kosovo contributed to the stability, security, and democratization of the Balkans. Serbia during the Milosevic’s regime started four wars in the Former Yugoslavia. Moreover, the United States considerations to

intervene in Kosovo include strengthening NATO's cooperation with Europe and diminishing the Russian influence in the South East Europe. In addition, the United States' support for Kosovo's independence includes both humanitarian and security considerations. Overall, the international involvement to end ethnic wars in the Balkans contributed to the Europe's stability and because of a multilateral consensus also to the stability of the international system.

On the other side, as 2008, Kurds have achieved the greatest level of autonomy within the Federation of Iraq and continue to cooperate with Western powers and lobby for international recognition of Iraqi Kurdistan besides strong regional countries opposition from Turkey and Saudi Arabia. At the international level, the Group of Seven (G7) alliance-coordinated recognition of Kosovo is followed with opposition from BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). However, the lack of coordination of BRICS is evident because, in August 2008, Russia alone recognized Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as a reaction to Kosovo's coordinated independence, and BICS did not follow the same path to recognize the Russian-supported new countries. The United States' support for Kosovo's independence caused other Great Powers of G7 to follow the same path and recognize Kosovo. Similarly, the United States not recognizing the Iraqi Kurdistan's independence influenced other Great Powers of G7 to not undertake recognition. The harmony of the international system relies on the coordination between the majorities of Great Powers to grant or deny a new state membership in order to ensure systemic stability.

I conduct one of the first in-depth analyses of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan. The strengths of the comparative case study are exceptional characteristics found in the two cases: the similar historical timing of secessionist movements for independence; suffered mass crimes and ethnic cleansing; both nations populate regional pan-states, and international interventions taking place.

Based on common attributes, Iraqi Kurdistan should have a similar final status like *de jure* independent Kosovo, enjoying the support of the majority of the Great Powers. However, the two cases have different outcomes; Iraqi Kurdistan still aspires for *de jure* independence. The different outcomes between two very similar cases enable me to highlight the crucial role of the Great Powers in achieving international recognition and consolidation of a *de jure* independent state. Domestic hypotheses analyze variables of the state-building dynamics in acquiring a membership in the international system. However, the bottom-up approach fails to clearly define the control and authority of the aspiring state. Therefore, I give greater relevance to the top-down approach - external influence on the state formation, based on considerations of the Great Powers' on geostrategic interests. Examining literature on secession, a need for conducting more qualitative and quantitative studies on similar secessionists' movements is evident.

Chapter 3: A Case Study of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan

A method of qualitative case study best applies for comparison of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan's similar secessionist movements. I employ the *Most Similar Systems Design* to identify a missing hypothesis of Coggins' (2014) recognition theory causing a different secessionist outcome in one of the cases. Case study analysis develops historical backgrounds, factual evidence and comparison of cases through tracing the causal relationships of variables and explaining the events preconditioning an outcome (Sprinz & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2004, pp. 20-28). Some of the case studies' advantages allow systematization and evaluation of qualitative variables, identification of new variables, accessibility of possible causal effects within variables, tracking of historical paths, and the inclusion of theories' dependable relations (Sprinz & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2004, pp. 33-34). The systematic case study highlights the building blocks of a process and the interaction of variables. The method allows a case study of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan to identify a missing independent variable of secession causing a negative result of the dependent variable, lack of *de jure* recognition.

I use Coggins (2014) Causal Theory of Recognition as a source for the variables to be analyzed in the cases of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan. Coggins' theory evaluates independent explanatory variables based on the Great Powers' interests and the dependent variable resulting in international recognition. The dependent variable of secession produces two outcomes: "de facto independence (domestic sovereignty) and de jure recognition (external sovereignty)" (Coggins, 2014, p. 62). I use the historical trajectory of these cases to control for domestic variables, including the similarities of both secessionist movements, suffered moral injustices, international interventions, and timing of the conflicts. In the case study of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan, assessment approaches enable evaluation of secessionist timeline until 2008 when

Kosovo achieves independence, identification of the existence of similar hypotheses in both cases, and comparison of two cases to identify the missing variable causing a different outcome of secession.

A comparative case study has several advantages for highlighting the similarities and differences causing different secessionist dynamics. A case study allows developing “new hypotheses as well as testing of existing ones” (Sprinz & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2004, pp. 19-20). A case study enables evaluation of dominant variables in individual cases and tracing of “possible causal mechanisms” (Sprinz & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2004, pp. 19-20). A case study develops “historical explanations” of specific cases and achieves great levels of “construct validity” (Sprinz & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2004, pp. 19-20). A case study method utilizes dependent observations to build “complex relationships: path dependency and multiple interaction effects” between cases (Sprinz & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2004, pp. 19-20). Moreover, a case study allows each case to have “a large number of observations on intervening variables and many qualitative measures of independent and dependent variables” without overriding (Sprinz & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2004, pp. 19-20). A case study allows tracing Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan’s secessionist movements through analyzing similar domestic factors and identifying divergent foreign factors causing a different outcome in international recognition of one of the cases.

A case study analysis develops the historical concept of cases through tracing the causality and explaining certain events preconditioning an outcome. The three underlying approaches for the assessment of hypotheses: process, congruence, and the counterfactual evaluation enable the construction of a case study (Sprinz & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2004, pp. 20-28). *Process tracing* observes effects of independent variables’ causation in a secessionist

process and summarizes the continuity of effect to a final status (Sprinz & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2004, pp. 20-28). *Congruence testing* provides a base for testing independent variables' values and similarity in causing the dependent variable to change (Sprinz & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2004, pp. 20-28). *Counterfactual analysis* sets counterfactual conditions, in order for *Y* to appear, *X* must be present, creating a precondition for satisfying a final result (Sprinz & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2004, pp. 20-28). In an individual case, the counterfactual analysis might prove why a positive outcome does not occur (Sprinz & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2004, pp. 20-28). I will utilize three evaluation processes of case study to identify missing variables in the analysis of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan.

Furthermore, a case study enables construct validity in order to measure the theory's applicability to both cases with comparing contexts through qualitative analysis of phenomenological events. Evaluation of divergent events might identify new variables contributing to the relevance of the cases. A process of observing individual cases in operational conditions traces the causal mechanism (Sprinz & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2004, pp. 34-35). Theories justify historical moments and cases application under certain conditions. Indeed, case studies provide the advantage of setting a complex path relations' system showing different variables' interactions, possibly causing a same final outcome (Sprinz & Wolinsky-Nahmias, 2004, pp. 34-35). I apply a method of a small n-model of comparative case study comprised of two cases and evaluate variables determining a final outcome of secession in both cases. A comparative case study of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan enables the confirmation of similar domestic factors, organizing secessionist movements, conflict, and intervention; and divergent elements of foreign factors, regional countries' influence and the Great Powers 'support for secession.

I evaluate different explanatory theories of secession and recognition to increase the legitimacy of case selection and case study analysis. The Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan's case study lacks generalization to all types of secession; for example, peaceful withdrawal from the host state, the case study finds applicability only among violent secessions in the post-Cold War period. To control for domestic factors, I limit the criteria to cases driven by ethnic secessionist movements, a similar timing of conflict occurrence, suffering state oppression, ethnic cleansing, mass crimes, and international interventions to stop the violent conflicts. In addition, I conduct multiple levels of theory analysis in both cases, including applying domestic and foreign factors relevant to secession to identify the cause and effect relationships of independent variables. I primarily use secondary data on historical and political events in Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan to build a comparative case study. I limit the bias selection of cases, data, and theories providing in the discussion chapter an analysis of changing variables after Kosovo's independence in 2008, and an evaluation of different explanatory, causal, and predictive theories of secession applicability to Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan. The causal theories of secession and recognition differ in defining the criteria, and only some theories predict the final outcome of secession referring to diverse practical political implications.

In building the case study of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan, I mainly use academic secondary data to construct the process of secessionist dynamics through collecting evidence on events and analysis of national identity, the organization of secessionist movement, institutional building, political activities, regional trade, bilateral relations, and foreign policy. For illustration, mobilized minority groups are defined in the existence of a distinct ethnic identity from the host state, characterized through "common culture, shared history, common myth, national essence, the flag, national anthem, language, spirit of people and folklore" (Aziz, 2011,

p. 4). The Freedom House's reports on the level of democracy of countries define the regime type of the host state, as well as academic sources on governing policies and institutionally organized events. Academic articles, news sources, intergovernmental and international organizations' reports provide evidence on the oppression of the mobilized group. *Minorities at Risk* data and academic sources provide analysis of events and policies on territorial control, popular legitimacy, and viability of independence. Articles, reports, and analyzes of international governments' foreign policies provide evidence on formal and informal bilateral relations with secessionist movements characterized through international interventions, material aid, institutional capacity building, civil society, and economic trade. In the case study of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan, the presence of theoretical variables and analysis of causal effects on a final outcome of secession in both cases are validated.

In addressing the research question, I use Coggins (2014) theory of recognition as a guide to develop hypotheses based on historical and political evidence of secessionist movements and causal inferences of the international environment. I employ the method of *Most Similar Systems Design* to combine and compare the theoretical discussion of both cases and to assess hypotheses causing the final outcome of international recognition. The case study explores how similar cases influenced by similar nature of domestic factors and more or less plausible international conditions determine different final outcomes of secession. The hypotheses on the international level, including the Great Powers' geopolitical interests, domestic security, and systemic stability determine different dynamics of recognition in Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan. The case study also evaluates the preconditions of fulfilling the minimum required domestic conditions. However, the main focus of the case study is on the importance of foreign factors causing a positive secessionist outcome, *de jure* recognition.

Chapter 4: Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan's Secessionist Dynamics: Domestic and Foreign Factors

Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan have similar secessionist movements, yet different recognition outcomes because of a different level of the United States' support to coordinate independence. Both cases fulfill hypotheses on the national level; however, the KRG differs from Kosovo in the Great Powers' decisions on geostrategic security. Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan have common domestic variables such as organization of secessionist movements, institutional empowerment, territorial homogeneity, the host states' organized exclusionary policies and mass crimes, militarized anti-government groups, and international interventions. However, on the international level, the United States had a conflictual position towards Serbia and supportive towards Iraq; Russia was a strategic rival of the United States in Kosovo, and geostrategic enmity did not exist in the KRG; the United States coordinated Kosovo's recognition with nations of the Group of Seven (G7) and Iraqi Kurdistan still aspires for international recognition. The main reason between *de jure* Kosovo and *de facto* Iraqi Kurdistan is the United States' geopolitical relations with the home states, rivals, and allies.

Similar domestic factors for state-building in both cases are not sufficient for *de jure* recognition. On the domestic level, in both cases, the postcolonial historical injustices represented the source of citizens' aspirations for independence. Institutional empowerment enhanced popular support and the viability of independence. Both Albanians in Kosovo and Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan represent a majority ethnic population of over 90%. In both cases, the host state involved discrimination and assimilation policies to suppress secessionists' movements. The majority of the population's determination represents public support for independence characterized through democratically elected representatives. In both cases,

Albanians and Kurds represent distinct oppressed ethnic groups. Similarly, the KLA was fighting against Milosevic's military and police system, and Peshmerga to stop Hussein's Anfal operation against civilians. Moreover, in both places international interventions took place, the United States leading the coalition forces of 39 countries against Iraq, known as the "Gulf War" in 1990-1991; and NATO in Kosovo against Serbia in 1999. The United States acceptance of a new state, based on the international level considerations, represents a crucial factor for *de jure* recognition.

Foreign support created a new environment for secessionists' greater autonomy and formation of separate states. The Great Powers' external motives for intervention consider the geopolitical, domestic, and systemic stability including regional stability, human rights, democratization, and security of the international order. After 1992, the United States supported the KRG's autonomy but only within the Iraqi Federation, and without official support for recognition of Iraqi Kurdistan's aspirations for independent statehood. In 2008, Kosovo declared independence in coordination with the United States and major European countries; however, Iraqi Kurdistan did not declare independence because of a lack of the Great Powers' support. The United States is a major decision-making power in the coordination and recognition of both cases. The United States led the intervention in Kosovo, supported reconstruction and capacity building of Kosovo, coordinated international community's talks on Kosovo's status, and was among the first countries to recognize Kosovo.

The United States did not support the formation of the independent Kurdistan state in Iraq. The United States' considerations on the geostrategic level for the decision to keep the KRG within Iraq include the stability and security of the Middle East region. The United States' foreign policy on Iraqi Kurdistan encompasses the strong objections of regional countries for an

independent Iraqi Kurdistan, including opposition from Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Syria because of their own different domestic Kurdish movements. Furthermore, the United States' policy was balancing tensions between Saudi Arabia, opposing Kurdish independence, and Israel, supporting the formation of a new state in the region. Moreover, some scholars argue the United States supported the Iraqi territorial integrity because of the oil price stability. After the Iraqi war in 2003, maintaining a good international image influenced the United States' policy to leave a stable and united democratic Iraq instead of supporting the KRG's independence; supporting the KRG could have contributed to the further division of Sunni and Shia and the possible formation of three separate states in Iraq. Most importantly, on the issue of the Iraqi Kurdish independence, the United States did not have a strong enemy opposition, and in Kosovo's case, Russia was leading the oppositional block against the United States and NATO's intervention. Two other major powers, Russia and China, strongly opposed Kosovo's independence, constrained with active domestic secessionists conflicts and traditional good relations with Serbia, arguing for claims of territorial integrity and seeing Kosovo as a precedent for other secessionist movements. For the United States, Kosovo had a greater geopolitical and systemic stability importance than Iraqi Kurdistan.

Ethnic Mobilization

Albanian national identity is shaped through historical injustices over disputed territories, antagonistic neighboring countries, and suffered discriminations and crimes. Albanians populate four regional countries: Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Serbia. Kosovar Albanians have strong ties with the state of origin, Albania, embracing a standardized language, culture, mythology, collective memory, flag, anthem, economy, and national identity. The Albanian

language has two main dialects: Gheg and Tosk, and in Kosovo, Gheg is the dominant dialect. Albanian nationalism is characterized through ethnic relations connected to a territory. Albanians for centuries have cultivated a strong harmony between different religions, Islam, Christianity, and Orthodoxy, and praised a nation more than any other identity characteristics. Kosovar Albanians have strong ethnic and cultural ties and therefore resisted central governments' assimilation policies for many decades.

Historically, Serbia has tried through oppressive policies to change the composition of Kosovo's territory habituated with the majority of the Albanian population. Kosovar Albanians situation in the Former Yugoslavia was characterized through continuing demonstrations, high level of territorial concentration and group mobilization ("Minorities at Risk," 2006b). The disintegration of Yugoslavia began with President Tito's death in 1980, disproving the social communist idea of uniting different ethnic groups in a federative country. Many experts see Milosevic's ultra Serbian nationalism as a "persistent cause of Yugoslavia's conflicts" (Coggins, 2014, p. 83). Slobodan Milosevic's authoritarian regime triggered four wars in the Former Yugoslavia with Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo. The Serbian mythology of Kosovo as a cradle of Serbian civilization and the orthodox church has given the Serbian minority in Kosovo "disproportional political significance" (Coggins, 2014). Milosevic fanned the ethnic tensions in Kosovo between Albanians and Serbs in order to rise to power. Many experts believe the Serbian Academy of Science's support for Milosevic's plan of creating a "Great Serbia" escalated the ethnic wars in Yugoslavia.

In 1981, Albanian demonstrations were organized with calls for equality and the changing of the status of Kosovo from an autonomous region to a constitutive republic like other entities in Yugoslavia. In 1989, mining employees organized a hunger strike in response to

Serbian oppression. Serbia responded with violence and established a state of emergency with a large presence of police and military forces killing Albanian officials, jailing peaceful protesters and students, and closing the University of Pristina. In 1989, Serbia revoked Kosovo's autonomy, escalating the Serbian systematic oppression of the Albanian majority population. The dismissal of Kosovo's assembly and economic discrimination against Albanians resulted in the loss of 100,000 jobs (Coggins, 2014, p. 93). After Slovenia and Croatia declared independence, Kosovo declared independence from Serbia for the first time on October 11, 1991. Albania was the only country to officially extend recognition. Kosovo Albanians initially supported the idea of unification with Albania; however, the security and economic situation created in post-communist Albania and the unresolved autonomous rights of Albanians populating the Balkans disabled such a policy (Coggins, 2014, p. 111). Kosovars had been demanding independence the longest; however, the Serbian regime suppressed the Kosovo's president, Rugovas' peaceful movement (Coggins, 2014, p. 107). In 1995, the United States led the negotiations with parties to achieve the Dayton's Agreement for Bosnia; however, the agreement did not address the question of Kosovo's governing status.

The KLA's leaders opposed Dr. Rugovas' peaceful efforts after the international community failed to provide a solution in Rambouillet, France for Kosovo governing status and began military campaigns against Serbian forces. Failed diplomatic efforts for Kosovo's independence led to the formation of the Albanian military force, KLA, gaining great popular and financial support (Coggins, 2014, p. 111). In 1998, Serbia implemented a major systematic campaign against the KLA, conducting ethnic cleansing, and mass crimes against the Albanian civil population (Coggins, 2014, p. 110). In 1998, the Freedom House's report considered Serbia "not free" in the world ranking, based on three criteria (1=best, 7=worst): freedom 5, civil

liberties 6, and political rights 6 (*Freedom House: Yugoslavia, 1999*). Serbian police were accused of breaching civil and human rights. Milosevic was controlling media in Serbia. Citizens were denied the right to change the government (*Freedom House: Yugoslavia, 1999*). Human Rights organizations were reporting Serbian forces' abuses of the Albanian population, property, and mosques as a humanitarian crisis.

On the other side, the Kurdish nation was founded in a mountainous region within four nations: Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria in a mainly agrarian society, with a tribal dialectical language and a long tradition of national governments' discriminatory policies trying to assimilate Kurds. The Kurdish language has four major dialects: Sorani, Kurmanji, Gorani and Zaza spoken within different regions; in Iraq, Sorani is a dominant dialect. Kurds have a high level of territorial concentration in the Northern Iraq and differ in religion, culture, residence, race, and languages from Iraqi Shia majority population. Before international intervention taking place against Saddam Hussein's regime, Iraqi government repressed Kurds ("Minorities at Risk," 2006a). In the modern Iraqi Federation, the constitution recognizes Arab and Kurdish as official languages (Article 4) and Islam as the official religion (Article 2), also "multiple nationalities, religions and sects" (Article 3) are acknowledged ("Iraqi Constitution," 2005). Contemporary Kurdish nationalism begins in 1992 with the founding of the Kurdish Regional Government and achieving a de facto state. New generations of Kurds grow up in the KRG without the direct influence of the Iraqi regime and having to know the Arabic language. Kurdish nationalism of shared memory of ethnic survival is symbolized through the celebration of Nawroz (New Year) on March 21 (Aziz, 2011). Following factors contribute to mobilizing the Kurdish independence aspirations: Kurds, an ethnic group cultivating a distinct Kurdish language from the host state, a

large diaspora abroad, developing a mass public culture, a history of genocidal violence and oppressed rights, and refugees.

The aspiration for Kurdish independence dates back to injustices occurred with the Treaty of Sevres (1920). Kurdish national aspirations for the secession of Ottoman territories were acknowledged; however, “the treaty was never ratified; it was superseded in 1923 by the Treaty of Lausanne, which ignored the promises of the Sevres blueprint” (Gidon, 1994, p. 104). In the aftermath of suffered historical injustices, nationalistic movements were organized promoting different ideas for Kurdish autonomous rights. After 1970, the absorption of Kurds into broader societies was difficult because of demographic characteristics such as a large concentration in cross-border regions, tribal style of life, national conciseness enlightenment influenced with mobilization of ethno-revolutionist movements worldwide, and increased forced migration and oppression of Kurds in the region (Bruinessen, 1998, pp. 39-52). Other ethno-national movements in the world influenced Kurdish national movements to organize. The systematic violence against the Kurds in the Middle East region led to migration enabling a greater access to education and social mobility. Moreover, media and internet mobilized the massive public culture and Kurdish national consciousness (Bruinessen, 1998, pp. 39-52). The political mobilization of Kurds in Iraq increased institutional participation in the transitional period from a religious to a secular state. Increased national campaigns had a tendency to assimilate minority ethnic groups in newly promoted national states after the post-colonial period.

However, the post-colonial countries did not achieve to assimilate Kurds in the Middle East region because of the strong Kurdish nationalism based on the territorial association, common mythology, national flag and anthem, economy, symbolism, and collective suffering. Iraq’s government during the colonial transition has recognized Kurds as a distinct ethnic group,

offering official posts in order to have access to oil fields in Kurdish territory. Iraq's transition to independent republican state was followed by the pan-Arabic politics of Iraqi identity which fostered the "ethnicization of Kurdish nationalism" (Natali, 2005). Regional countries' assimilation policies and adversary towards the Kurds has changed the Kurdish nationalism during the history. Some scholars argue Kurds have faced challenges in capitalizing on Kurdish nationalism to push for independence because of shared agrarian, religious and cultural ties with majority populations. Moreover, political struggles between Kurdish major parties PKK and KDP over governing power contributed to the further marginalization of Kurds. Kurdish leaders constrained with obtaining political and economic power in Turkey and Iraq diverged on promoting united national interests. Divided Kurdish leaders between aspirations for regional autonomy and cross-states independence further weakened the Kurdish oppositional block against host states (Natali, 2005). However, the sacrifice of the Kurdish movements PKK, KDP, PUK, and Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) overall strengthened the Kurdish nationalism (Anderson, 2007). Kurdish movements have played an essential role in awakening national consciousness.

After employing chemical weapons against Kurds in Halabja in 1988, and occupying Kuwait in 1990, the United States led the Gulf War coalition against Saddam Hussein's regime. During Saddam Hussein's regime, Iraq was an authoritarian country. The first Freedom House's report in 1998 and later in 2003 during the Iraqi War considered Iraq "not free" in the world ranking, based on three criteria (1=best, 7=worst): freedom 7, civil liberties 7 and political rights 7 (*Freedom House: Iraq* 1998, 2003). During the Gulf War, Turkey refused to recognize the full status of Kurdish refugees from Iraq, which further strengthened the ethnic identity of Kurds. The regional countries' inability to acknowledge cultural differences and to guarantee Kurds

liberal rights as equal citizens have moved Kurds towards retaining a national identity (Bruinessen, 1998, pp. 39-52). After international intervention in Iraq and establishment of the “safe haven,” in 1992, first free elections were organized in the Kurdistan Regional Government. In 1998, the United States mediated an agreement between PUK and KDP unifying the Kurdish position in governing with the Iraqi Kurdistan.

Both Kosovo’s and Iraqi Kurdistan’s secessionist movements were organized on the idea of protecting ethnic nationalism and self-determination rights. Kosovo Albanians and Iraqi Kurds promoted national identity based on a unique language, culture, anthem, flag, and mythology. In both cases, religious distinctiveness existed from the host state. The majority of Albanians and Kurds are Sunni Muslims, Serbs are Orthodox and Iraqi’s are divided between majority Shia and Sunni. As a result of the host states oppression, discrimination and marginalization policies both cases represented a high minority risk compared to total population. Both movements utilized peaceful diplomatic means and organized military forces to protect civil population. During 1990’s, the Serbian and Iraqi governments conducted ethnic cleansing against Albanians and Kurds (Table 1).

Table 1

Domestic Level Hypothesis: Ethnic Mobilization

H1: Mobilized ethnic groups have a higher chance to become a state (are more likely to receive Great Power recognition).		
Variables	Kosovo	Iraqi Kurdistan
Ethnic, religious and linguistic differences	Albanian/Serbian Sunni Muslim/ Orthodox	Kurdish/Arabic Sunni / Sunni-Shia Muslims
Minority at risk compared to total host population	High risk	High risk
Pre-existing regime type	Authoritarian	Authoritarian
Events of organization of secessionist movements	Peaceful and military reactionary	Peaceful and military reactionary
Oppression of mobilized group	Discrimination and ethnic cleansing	Discrimination and ethnic Cleansing

Source: The hypothesis and variables adopted from Coggins (2014).

Political Institutions

Before 1989, Kosovo had as high a level of territorial control as Slovenia and Croatia; however, after 1991, as a result of oppressive policies, Kosovo had the lowest degree of territorial control and least likely viability of independence; however, popular legitimacy was strong. In 1992, the president Rugova led the Albanian parallel shadow government structures organizing political resistance and offering education and health services. The government “provided social services, schools and hospitals,” also, successfully established a fund collecting taxes from Albanians in Kosovo and diaspora (Coggins, 2014, p. 109). Popular support for Kosovo independence and the Rugovas’ government enjoyed the popularity of 99.75% of Albanians (Coggins, 2014, p. 110). In 1995-1996, Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) was formed as a reactionary movement against Serbian military to protect the remaining civil population and Kosovo’s territory. In 1998, KLA claimed to control 25% of Kosovo territory, mainly in Drenica

region (Coggins, 2014, p. 110). Compared to other Yugoslavian provinces Kosovo “was the least developed,” Serbia has exploited natural resources in Kosovo and censored resources for “investments in infrastructure and education”(Coggins, 2014, p. 111). During the 1990’s, Albanians were forced to support themselves working in agriculture and black markets (Coggins, 2014, p. 111). The parallel Albanian shadow government showed the ability to organize a stable economy and readiness to establish a viable state. After international intervention in 1999, Kosovo again retained the high level of territorial control.

Furthermore, Kosovo had a strong organized diaspora, organizational capacity and the support of groups lobbying for international recognition of Kosovo’s independence. After deployment of KFOR and establishment of UNMIK, the UN protectorate retained the full control of the Kosovo’s territory. International aid helped Kosovo revitalized economy and infrastructure and build self-governing institutions. In 2008, Kosovo successfully realized independence from Serbia with the support of international community. On suggestions of the Marti Ahtisari’s Plan, Kosovo became a democratic multiethnic state, based on secular foundation. The United States and major European countries helped coordinate Kosovo’s independence and recognition. Kosovo is seen as the last story of Yugoslavia’s disintegration bringing stability to the Balkans. Kosovo as a new democratic state enjoys western allies and regional countries support for the Euro-Atlantic integration aspirations.

The United States intervention in Iraq has made the prospects for Kurdish prosperous future and self-governance ability. In 1991, after the Bath regime used chemical weapons against Kurds, the Kurdish diaspora lobby in Europe achieved the internationalization of the Kurdish struggle with the “safe haven” in Iraq resulting in the removal of Hussein’s control of the Kurdish areas (Bruinessen, 1998, pp. 39-52). Newly created conditions in the KRG allowed the

spread of Kurdish nationalism, language, education, history, territory and media (Natali, 2010). Iraqi Kurdistan, as a self-controlled enclave, set an example of the Kurdish ability to self-govern and created more plausible conditions in neighboring countries for Kurds without putting in risk their territorial integrity (Anderson, 2007). The KRG represents a “state-like entity,” a recognized region in a federal structure. Receives 90% of its income from Iraq, has representatives in assembly, and led the presidency of Iraq for several years (Watts, 2014). The KRG’s formation led an agreement between PUK and KDP to: “exercise self-determination; the foundation of Kurdish nationalism, KRG as a primary authority, avoid entering war with each other” (Watts, 2014, p. 151). After the Iraqi war in 2003, a relative gain for Kurds was to strengthen self-governing capacities through participation in the Federation of Iraq and not to declare independence without coordinated international recognition.

The 2005 Iraqi Constitution leaves behinds 80 years of an authoritarian regime and reflects liberal democratic values of modern state without ethnic, religious and political discrimination. The Kurds were the catalyst for positive enforcement of a “liberal, pro-minority rights, and decentralized system” (Romano, 2014, p. 191). The constitution is broadly accepted, 78% of Iraq’s citizens voted in favor of constitution (“Q&A: Iraq's constitution,” 2005). According to the Article 112 (“Iraqi Constitution,” 2005), federal government has the authority to manage existing oil and gas fields, however Kurds justify exploitation of newly discovered sources without Iraq’s supervision based on the discovery of new oil fields not mentioned in the constitution; therefore, considered an allowed action (Romano, 2014). Kurds agree to share the revenues from oil with Iraq; however, the KRG is acting independently of Baghdad in managing new sources. Kurds consider most significant for institutional empowerment the Article 115, “in the case of dispute ... all powers ... belong to the authorities of the regions and governorates”

over federation except exclusive powers ("Iraqi Constitution," 2005). Moreover, the Maliki's government obstructed organizing a census on disputed territories of Kirkuk foreseen with the Article 140 ("Iraqi Constitution," 2005). In addition, the Articles 120 and 121("Iraqi Constitution," 2005) allow the KRG to organize security forces called Peshmerga, mainly financed out of the 17% budget allocated from the Federal Government of Iraq. Kurds agree to remain in Iraq under the notion of "voluntary union" (Romano, 2014, p. 204). Kurds willingly agree on federation to use the benefits from oil revenues to strengthen the self-organizing institutions until achieving a self-sustaining government.

Both Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan's secessionists' movements promoted national sovereignty linked to territory. As a result of international interventions in both cases, Albanians and Kurds achieved a high level of territorial control resulting in the Kosovo's case with international recognition of Kosovo's borders and the KRG's *de facto* autonomy. Both Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan went through a transitional period of building democratic institutions and self-governing authorities. In both cases, mass mobilization within Kosovo and the KRG, regional countries and diaspora supported the national leadership to achieve independence. The international community supported Kosovo's institutions in building a viable democratic state ensuring political participation of all ethnic groups based on the Ahtisaari's Plan. The 2005 Iraqi Constitution acknowledged Kurdish identity and rights to political participation and free will of joining the Iraqi Federation. Kurds' viability for independence increases with the right to organize a referendum on the questions of the KRG's independence (Table 2).

Table 2

Domestic Level Hypothesis: Political Institutions

H2: Groups with political institutions have a higher likelihood to build a state (are more likely to receive Great Power recognition).		
Variables	Kosovo	Iraqi Kurdistan
Territorial control and effective authority	Widespread de facto authority	Widespread de facto authority
Popular legitimacy	Strong	Strong
Projected viability of independence	High	High

Source: The hypothesis and variables adopted from Coggins (2014).

Relative Strength

Serbia lost the governing jurisdiction of Kosovo's territory and people as a result of oppressive and discriminatory policies, ethnic cleansing, and mass deportation of the Albanian population. Milosevic's regime in Kosovo caused an estimated 10,000 casualties, around a million deported, and hundreds of thousands of houses burned and demolished (Report, 1999). In 1995, the international community sacrificed Kosovo with prolonging a status solution in order to focus and solve Bosnian war involving three ethnic groups: Bosnian Muslims, Serbs, and Croats (Coggins, 2014, p. 131). However, human rights abuses, mass crimes, and expulsion in Kosovo made the international community determined to solve the Kosovo's struggle for independence. The Kosovo conflict represented a regional security issue with the potential to escalate to a higher level having Turkey supporting Kosovo and Greece backing Serbia (Coggins, 2014, p. 132). On March 24, 1999, the United States led the NATO coalition airstrikes against Serbia. After the NATO's victory, the Serbian government "no longer had authority within Kosovo" (Coggins, 2014, p. 133). On June 10, the Security Council authorized the UNMIK to govern with the territory. The goals of the United Nation's mission included

infrastructure reconstruction, protection of human rights and determining the Kosovo's governing status.

The European Union funds stimulated the Kosovo's economy, the NATO's military forces, KFOR provided air space and borders security, and UNMIK issued passports and organized local and international police. On the other hand, Serbia supported the Serbian enclaves in Kosovo to organize parallel institutions to resist Kosovo's authorities and independence. On March 17 and 18, 2004 violent riots started between Albanians and Serbs in the Northern Kosovo and proliferated to other parts driving the international community to actively look for the solution of Kosovo's independence (Coggins, 2014, p. 133). After declaring independence, on July 11, 2008, Kosovo organized an international donors conference in Brussels, 37 countries and 16 international organizations pledged "approximately \$1.9 billion (including \$400 million from the United States), in support of the socio-economic reform priorities" ("The Case for Kosovo," 2008). The international presence and aid in Kosovo helped revitalized Kosovo's society, economy, and self-governing institutions.

On the other side, in 1991, a coalition of 39 nations led the Gulf War against Saddam Hussein's regime after invading Kuwait and exterminating Kurds in Iraq. Anfal campaigns, including the employment of chemical attack in the city of Halabja, resulted in the extermination of "at least 50,000 Kurdish civilians"(Wong, 2006). The United Nations Security Council enacted sanctions against Iraq during the Saddam Hussein's regime. After 1991, the foreign aid transformed the Kurdish region from underdeveloped to most stable region of the country and has impacted the KRG's decision to participate in the federal government (Natali, 2010, p. 105). The Kurdish quasi state "emerged of the dictatorial Baathist regime and hostile regional governments" (Natali, 2010, p. 30). The KRG benefited from 2005 constitution gaining greater

autonomous rights such as hydrocarbons law, investments and foreign trade (Natali, 2010). Lack of trust between Iraq and the KRG endangered a future cooperation (Natali, 2010). The KRG president, Barzani limited Kurdish borders to Iraq, as part of bargaining for achieving easier international recognition. In 1991, Kurdish modern globalization began and the United States and United Kingdom's 2003 war in Iraq further enforced the KRG's peaceful development.

Both Serbian and Iraqi governments conducted organized systematic campaigns against civilians. A large number of exterminations, rape, property damage and refugees evoked international interventions. Both interventions were conducted successfully removing Milosevic's and Hussein's' authoritarian regimes. In 1991, the NATO and Coalition's intervention established a "safe haven" in the Iraqi Kurdistan enabling Kurds to return back, organize free elections, establish a multiparty system, found the Kurdish Regional Government, gain control over oil platforms, and acquire autonomy. In 1999, similarly, the NATO's intervention in Kosovo enabled the return of refugees, revitalization of the economy, and formation of self-governing authorities. The Kosovo's government developed capacities to provide services to citizens and established democratic institutions preparing the road for independence in 2008 (Table 3).

Table 3

Domestic Level Hypothesis: Relative Strength

H3: Relative stronger movements have a higher probability to form a state (are more likely to receive Great Power recognition).		
Variables	Kosovo	Iraqi Kurdistan
Violence level	Mass Crimes	Mass Crimes
War victory prospects	NATO	NATO and Coalition
International Intervention	1999	1991

Source: The hypothesis and variables adopted from Coggins (2014).

Geopolitical Interests

Europe has transformed from war-torn continent to peaceful institutionalized and diplomacy oriented because of the transnational cooperation with the United States. Europe's pacifism lays on exported security from the United States (Kagan, 2007, p. 3). The United States' humanitarian interventions in Bosnia and Kosovo preserved transatlantic unity and stability with Europe (Kagan, 2007). The United States' hegemonic power controls the democratic rule of law using military force if necessary to maintain the international order (Kagan, 2007, p. 3). The United States' support for Kosovo included considerations of the strategic threat from Russia, bipolarity, and an ideological threat of totalitarian regimes and international terrorism. The United States' strategic interests were to stop Milosevic's totalitarian regime in conducting humanitarian crises and threatening the stability of Europe, coordinate and enforce the NATO's presence in the South East Europe, and diminish the Russian influence in the Balkans. After the Cold War, the United States' involvement in the Gulf War positioned the United States as a hegemon, and the dissolution of Soviet Union ended the multipolar period (Coggins, 2014, p. 96). On the other side, Russia's support for Serbia was based on traditional relationships between two countries; also, Russia perceived Serbia as a corridor of Russian influence to the Balkans and eventually to Europe. The United States' decision to intervene in Yugoslavia besides humanitarian considerations to stop ethnic wars of Serbia had geostrategic advantages in regard to weakening the Russian influence in the South East Europe, and strengthening NATO's unity and presence in Europe.

Geopolitical security and systemic stability stand at the core of the United States' policy of state recognition. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the United States has become a

unipolar power. The United States is a “stability-seeking power,” supports or deters secessionist movements based on increasing regional stability, the Great Powers conducted the study from 1944 to 1994, in total included 76 cases of international interventions and the United States is leading with 35 cases (Paquin, 2004). If the host state fails to accommodate secessionist movements and risk the stability of the region, the United States will intervene and support the secessionists promising to ensure stability instead. If the home state negotiates and accommodates secessionist movements, the United States will support the territorial sovereignty of the central state (Paquin, 2004). However, the United States “gives up some freedom on the use of its power in exchange for agreed-upon principles and institutional processes that ensure durable and predictable postwar order” (Ikenberry, 2001, p. 53). The United States considers its international image when supporting secessionist movements.

At the beginning, the United States was resistant to get involved in the Yugoslavian dissolution, and thought Europe should act instead because of the nearby conflicts; however, the European Union’s diplomatic efforts were limited. In 1991, the United States’ was reluctant to recognize Kosovo’s first declared independence. The United States’ policy shift occurred after Serbia conducted mass crimes in the Former Yugoslavia. The turning point of international pressure against Serbia, seen as an oppressive state of human rights threatening the regional stability, was achieved once “Milosevic suppressed the secessionists with force and began targeting civilians” (Coggins, 2014, p. 114). In 1995, the Serbian paramilitary forces conducted genocide against Bosnian Muslim population escalating the situation in Bosnia. In 1998, Serbia conducted the systematic ethnic cleansing of Albanians; killing thousands of civilians and forcing a large number of refugees to flee in Albania, regional, and Western countries. In the meantime, the United States was involved in spreading democracy and counter fighting

totalitarian regimes and terroristic groups, which are causing humanitarian crises and threatening the stability of the world.

In the Kosovo's situation, the United States opposed Serbian regime, had the support of the Group of Seven (G7) for Kosovo's intervention and recognition, and Russia, a strategic rival of the United States, was leading the oppositional block. In 1999, the United States led the NATO's intervention in Kosovo against Serbia and the UN established a protectorate in Kosovo. Russia, a Serbian traditional ally, was strongly opposing the United States led intervention in Kosovo threatening with a multilateral escalation of the situation. In 2001, the Serbian president, Milosevic was arrested and trialed for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity by the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in Hague, Netherlands. Moreover, in 2001, Kosovo established Provisional Institutions of Self-Governance. After existed diplomatic means for the Kosovo status, in 2008, Kosovo Assembly unilaterally declared independence in coordination with the United States and nations of the Group of Seven (G7) invoking a large wave of recognitions by regional and worldwide countries (Table 4).

On the other side, the Middle East allies, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq influenced the United States' policy on not recognizing Iraqi Kurds' independence. However, the United States support for Kurdish autonomy dates back to 1970's, when the United States supported the KDP to organize against the Iraqi regime (King, 2013). Kurds have organized a revolution against Saddam Hussein's oppression policies and false promises for autonomy; however, the revolution was suppressed. In 2003, the United States policy on Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and "war on terror" considered Kurds as a strategic partner for the security of the Middle East region resulting in support for oil industry, democratization, capacity building and modernization of the KRG (Natali, 2010). However, the United States was contained in supporting the KRG'

independence because of multilayered interstates' interests involved and strategic partnership, both Turkey and Saudi Arabia feared the reflective aspirations for autonomies of Kurds in the region. In some periods, bilateral relations between Ankara and Baghdad were among the strongest in the region, based on "common enemy Kurds, external rivals such as Iran and Syria, as well as common ideological and political affinities" (Bengio, 2014). The United States and Turkey are considered to have "a model partnership;" both states have several policies aligned, the war in Afghanistan and Iraq and foreign policy on Syria, Serbia, Bosnia, Caucasus and NATO (Yilmaz, 2011). In 2008, the stability of the United States' alliance in the Middle East had a greater importance for regional security than recognizing the KRG's independence.

A regional influential actor, the Saudi Arabia was part of the Gulf coalition against the Saddam's regime but not supportive of the Kurdish independence because such an action might trigger self-determination initiatives of different ethnic groups in the Arab world. Arabs also perceive the Kurdistan being an Israeli's plan to divide Arab states and to contribute towards the legitimacy of the Israeli states' recognition based on building new states in the Middle East (Bengio, 2014). Besides, the United States' foreign policy on the Middle East is mainly based on the United States-Israeli partnership. "Israel lobby" on domestic politics largely influences the United States' foreign policy on the Middle East. The strong strategic partnership between the United States and Israel is based on growing threat of terrorist activities in the Middle East (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006). However, the United States policy of containment in recognizing Iraqi Kurds' independence maintained the alliance with Turkey and Saudi Arabia and did not allow further tensions with another of the United States' strategic ally, Israel.

The United States had the allies' opposition in the Iraqi Kurdistan's case, supported the formation of the new Iraqi Government, and does not have a strategic enemy, among the Great

Powers to strongly oppose the recognition of the KRG's independence. In 1991, all the Middle East regional countries supported NATO in creating a "safe haven" for Kurds. However, after formation of the KRG in 1992, Saudi Arabia and Turkey opposed the idea of the independent Kurdish state in Iraq. Saudi Arabia weights the leverage of Arab nationalism in the region against Israel, Iran, and Turkey. Until 2008, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, and Syria opposed the KRG's independence worried about the proliferation of Kurdish requests for independence in their territories. Most importantly, the United States recognition of Iraqi Kurdistan is constrained with the United States' strong partnership with Turkey and Saudi Arabia. After the end of the Iraqi 2003 war, the United States was supportive of the newly established Iraqi government and encouraged the KRG's regional autonomy and participation within the Iraqi Federation because of potential dissolution of Iraq into three states and further Shia-Sunni division. Most importantly, in 2008, the United States did not have a strategic rival opposition in the case of the KRG's independence (Table 4).

Table 4

International Level Hypotheses: Geopolitical Interests

H4: Great Power opposing a home state will be more likely to recognize secessionists.		
H5: Great Power with a rival opposition will be more likely to recognize secessionists.		
H6: Great Power with the lack of allies' opposition will be more likely to recognize secessionists.		
Variables	Kosovo	Iraqi Kurdistan
Great Power's relation with the home state	Conflictual	Supportive
Great Power rival opposition	Russia	Absent
Great Power's allies opposition	Absent	Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq

Source: The hypothesis and variables adopted from Coggins (2014).

Chapter 5: Future Implications of Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan's Secession

The thesis addresses whether foreign or domestic factors are more important in explaining the international community's recognition of Kosovo as an independent state and not Iraqi Kurdistan. The analysis, using the *Most Similar System Design* to evaluate Coggins' (2014) theory of recognition (see Appendix for Table 5), confirms that both cases fulfill the domestic level hypotheses on national secessionist mobilization, institutional capacity, and relative capability. However, on the international level, Kosovo fulfills and Iraqi Kurdistan misses the geostrategic security hypotheses. The hypotheses on geostrategic/external security take into consideration the Great Power's decision to recognize a secessionist movement based on conflictual relations with the host state, existence of Great Power rival opposition, and the lack of allies opposition. In the case study, the difference between the United States' relationship with Serbia and Iraq in early 2008 was a key factor. The United States' support for Kosovo's independence was based on the conflictual relations with Serbia; having a strategic enmity with Russia over Kosovo's status, and compliance of allies to employ NATO's intervention against Serbia, and to recognize Kosovo's independence. On the other side, after 2003, the United States was supportive of a new Iraqi government, encouraging Kurdish leaders to participate in the Federation of Iraq; strategic enmity did not exist over the KRG's status; and strong allies opposition of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq was present against the KRG's independence. Based on the case study analysis, the foreign factors have greater importance in achieving successful international recognition, the Great Power support is causal necessary variable for coordination of *de jure* recognition.

Until 2008, Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan had similar secessionist paths but with different outcomes to that point in time. On February 17, 2008, Kosovo unilaterally declared

independence, in coordination with the United States and the majority of the international community, and received a wide *de jure* recognition while the Kurdish Regional Government continues to aspire for independence. Since 2008, the Iraqi government has failed to establish a stable state, and the KRG has gained a greater *de facto* autonomy. However, a shift in regional countries' support for the KRG has occurred. The KRG has established bilateral relations, especially with Turkey, foreign consular offices have opened in the KRG, and increased trade and oil production. Most importantly, ISIL's activity in Iraq and Syria seriously destabilizes the stability of the Middle East region and international order and Kurds have played a strategic role in defeating ISIL. In the near future, international recognition of the Kurdistan Regional Government looks more plausible because of political developments on the domestic and international level.

Since 2008, the Iraqi Kurds have achieved significant democratic progress, economic development, and territorial control. With institutional foreign support, the KRG has achieved better results than Iraq in guaranteeing political freedom and civil rights; the government transitioned from tribal relationships to a multiparty system. The KRG's determination of protecting national interests from Baghdad include disputes over borders, displacement of people from the rich oil areas of Kirkuk, control of the energy sector, and the status of the Kurdish force, Peshmerga (Watts, 2014). Iraq could follow the KRG example to learn how to organize a free election with high turnout, have a multiparty system, include minorities (Arabs, Yezidi, Turkmens) and increase participation of women (Watts, 2014). The development of the civil society and media increased the public decision-making in the KRG. The Sulaimaniya protests, media expansion, and the formation of the oppositional party, Goran, represent the turning points of democratic transition and aims to change the governing system (Watts, 2014). Civic

engagement in managing resources of the state created a greater political space for debate and more representation, influencing the positive effects of democratization. Evaluating the KRG state-building process suggests a positive correlation between self-determination and democratization (Watts, 2014). The KRG's democratic governance, the rule of law, greater political representation, protection of minority rights, and an unstable Iraq increase the KRG's chances for international recognition.

The economic interdependence and regional security influenced the change of political relations between Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Iraqi Kurdistan. Ankara has made a significant positive shift in relations with Erbil, including exclusive bilateral relations, without consulting Baghdad. Challenging alliances in the Middle East, antagonizing the democratization process, and the rise of the Sunni-Shia divide have mainly influenced the change of relations (Bengio, 2014). The deterioration of positive relations between Ankara and Baghdad occurred after the Turkish oil pipeline was built in Iraqi Kurdistan as a major source of export after the Gulf intervention in 1991, the 2003 War in Iraq, and the coming to power of the Shi'a government in Iraq (Bengio, 2014). Beginning in 2011, two other major developments, the conflict in Syria and withdrawal of American troops from Iraq, created competition between Ankara and Teheran to fill the vacuum of the leader of the region (Bengio, 2014). The success of building the Kurdish quasi-state included a process of nation building, an establishment of military forces, weakness of the existent state, and external patronage (Bengio, 2014). Turkey considers the KRG a partner in neutralizing the PKK in Turkey, thus supports the Iraqi Kurdish authorities aspiring for independent statehood. Moreover, Turkey acquires economic benefits from the Kurdish oil supply and economic interdependence ensures greater security of the region. Furthermore, Turkey sees the KRG as a buffer zone in stopping the spread of Shi'ism (Bengio, 2014).

Turkey's political and economic engagement in the KRG suggests a positive outlook for the United States' potential recognition, considering the prospects of regional cooperation influencing greater systemic stability.

The KRG has good relations with Turkey based on mutual economic interests and because both want demilitarization of the PKK in exchange for recognition. From 2002 to 2013, an economic boom took place in the KRG because of oil revenues and foreign investments, especially trade with Turkey (Hassan, 2015). With 1300 operating companies, the KRG represents Turkey's second largest market after Germany (Hawrami, 2015). In 2010, Turkey and the KRG's trade was worth 6 billion dollars, mainly from building a mutual oil pipeline (Phillips, 2009). The KRG cooperates with Turkey on issues of the PKK and oil exploitation in exchange for trade investments and recognition. Furthermore, Turkey had a great influence on the United States' support of Kurds' controlling significant oil platforms on the Iraqi border. The KRG cooperates with regional governments for "external patronage, international recognition, and open borders" (Natali, 2010, p. 122). Moreover, Iraqi Kurds gave up on the idea of the Kurdistan pan-state and propagate independence exclusively for the KRG. The KRG considers Turkey a strategic partner. Turkey's recognition of the KRG will enhance bilateral relations, expand the trade of the Kurdish oil to Turkey and Europe, pacify PKK thus contributing to regional security, and improve the situation of the largest Kurdish population in Turkey.

The impact of economic considerations has transformed Turkish foreign policy towards the KRG and Iran. Turkey changed from a "regional coercive power" to a "benign" if not "soft" power relying on economic interdependence and "zero sum problem" policy with neighboring countries (Kirişçi, 2009). The policy of "rapprochement" with the Iraqi Kurds includes improving the relations with the KRG and bilateral cooperation (Kirişçi, 2009). The second

Turkish operation against the PKK's military camps was substantially different, involving mobilization of the international support, the Iraqi Government, and the KRG. Besides using official diplomatic channels, relations with the KRG involve business associations, think tanks, and media, which contribute to political cooperation, civil engagement, and economic interdependence. The Turkish foreign policy "zero problems with neighbors" encompasses expansion of economic interdependence as a tool for peace-building and provides markets for Turkish exports and business (Kirişçi, 2009). Furthermore, altering the Kurdish military activity in the region brought Iran and Turkey together and led to an increase in trade, especially of gas (Kirişçi, 2009). Turkey's recognition of the KRG increases Turkey's leadership position in the Middle East region. Turkey, along with the United States, might coordinate international support for the KRG's independence and trigger regional countries to follow the same path.

The failed states in the Middle East allowed the formation of ISIL. In the fight against ISIL, Kurds have extended their control of Iraqi territory, including the town of Kirkuk, the important oil source. The greater territorial advancement of the KRG against ISIL represents a better leverage for negotiating the KRG's independence with the Iraqi government (Natali, 2010). The KRG expects the war with ISIL to last for a long period and the three-step strategy for the security of the KRG include: stopping ISIL from occupying new territories in the KRG's area; pushing back; and defeating ISIL. Since the war started with ISIL, the KRG defeated 11,000 of ISIL's soldiers, had 1,225 casualties, and 7,000 wounded Peshmerga soldiers (Hawrami, 2015). However, ISIL recruited 10,500 new foreign fighters. In order to defeat ISIL, the KRG urges Western allies to extend the military support for Kurdish Peshmerga against ISIL fighters possessing modern weapons (Hawrami, 2015). As Iraq failed to provide support for the KRG in the fight against ISIL, the KRG faces economic difficulties to support Peshmerga forces

and refugees. In 2015, 2 million Internally Displaced People (IDP's) came to the KRG. The ISIL occupation of the largest nearby city, Mosul, represents an immediate threat to global security and specifically to KRG's existence. In 2015, the KRG protected 1,100 km² of ISIL-endangered territory (Hawrami, 2015). The Kurds' protection of the KRG's territory includes boots on the ground keeping ISIL from occupying new territories and, therefore, Kurds represent a strategic partner to the United States to defeat international terrorism.

Iraqi Kurdistan's slow march toward independence in the post-2008 environment, though this is still ongoing, seems to confirm the geostrategic variables so significant in my case study analysis: Great Power's relation with the home state, rival opposition, and allies' opposition. The United States' policy towards recognizing Iraqi Kurdistan might change because of the transformation of all three variables. The Iraqi Government's inability to establish a democratic government, after the Iraqi war in 2003, negatively affects the systemic stability and represents an additional motive for the international recognition of the KRG, as a more stable partner than Iraq. Moreover, the increase of regional infrastructure investments, oil wells, and trade enhances the KRG's prospects for independence. The KRG's independence may influence different Kurdish movements in nearby countries to cooperate with the host states and bring stability to the region. In the Middle East region, the KRG enjoys a strong support from Israel because the formation of a new state supports the Israeli's state existence, and suffers a strong opposition from Saudi Arabia because of the decline of the Arab nationalism's influence. The United States might reconsider the recognition of the KRG after the positive shift of Turkey's and Iranian policies towards the KRG. The United States might support the KRG's independence, in coordination with Turkey, and Saudi Arabia's neutrality, because ISIL is changing the map of Middle East region, threatening the Iraqi Kurds' territories, and the international system. The

international community considers both Iraq and Syria as failed states; therefore, *de jure* recognition of a new democratic Kurdish state in the Northern Iraq provides legal justification for allies to fight ISIL in order to protect the KRG's sovereign territorial integrity and international order. Similar to the Kosovo's case, the United States because of the change in geopolitical considerations might coordinate G7 and the majority of international community recognition of the KRG's government.

Great Power opposing a home state, with a rival opposition, and with the lack of allies' opposition will continue to be crucial decisions in recognition of future secessionist movements. The Great Powers' considerations on geopolitical stability determine the acceptance of new states into the international system. Secessionist groups should align with the Great Powers' interests in order to achieve support for state-building. The foreign support positively affects secessionist movements' self-governance, democratization, institutional empowerment, and viability for independence. Great Power's hegemonic interests, strategic restraint, geographical proximity, institutional feasibility, regional security, and the stability of international order represent most important considerations in recognition of secessionists. The United States, in coordination with the Group of Seven, decides on the success of secessionist movements' self-determination aspirations.

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Appendix

Table 5

Kosovo and Iraqi Kurdistan's Secessionist Dynamics

	Kosovo	Iraqi Kurdistan
Domestic Level Hypotheses:		
<i>National Distinctiveness and Mobilization</i>		
H1: Mobilized ethnic groups have a higher chance to become a state (are more likely to receive Great Power recognition).	P	P
<i>Institutional Empowerment</i>		
H2: Groups with political institutions have a higher likelihood to build a state (are more likely to receive Great Power recognition).	P	P
<i>Decisive Relative Strength</i>		
H3: Relative stronger movements have a higher probability to form a state (are more likely to receive Great Power recognition).	P	P
International Level Hypotheses:		
<i>Geostrategic/External Security</i>		
H4: Great Power opposing a home state will be more likely to recognize secessionists.	P	A
H5: Great Power with a rival opposition will be more likely to recognize secessionists.	P	A
H6: Great Power with the lack of allies' opposition will be more likely to recognize secessionists.	P	A

Note. P=present, A=absent; G7 (the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom).

Source: The hypothesis and variables adopted from Coggins (2014).

Table 6

Theories of Secession

Explanatory Theories of Secession		
Hypotheses/Variables	Type	Theory
1. The preconditions of secession: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Alienation from the host state</i> • <i>Geographical preconditions</i> • <i>Social preconditions</i> • <i>Economic preconditions</i> • <i>Political preconditions</i> • <i>Psychological preconditions</i> 2. The rise of secessionists movements 3. The response of central government 4. The direct precipitants of secession 5. The resolution of secessionist crises by armed conflict	Non-causal	John R. Wood (1981) Comprehensive theoretical framework for the study of secession
1. The establishment of scientific bureaucracy by secular education to promote ethnic homogeneity by the host state 2. The discrimination and lack of job opportunities lead ethnic elite to turn away from the state and its bureaucracies 3. Existence of ethnic revival as a sequence of events which unfolds a purpose and identity in time	Causal/predictive	Anthony B. Smith (1979) Theory of separatism and secession
1. Backward groups in backward regions and in advanced regions will attempt to secede earlier than advanced groups in the state 2. and Backward groups in backward regions will also attempt to secede more frequently than any other group	Causal/predictive	Donald R. Horowitz (1985) Predicting the timing of secession
1. Group identity, a precondition for any secessionist attempt 2. The primacy of private interest	Causal	Michael Hechter (1992) Rational choice theory of secession

Source: The hypotheses and variables adopted from Radan and Pavkovic (2013).